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## THEY SAID IT

'Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent Alliances, with any portion of the foreign World. So far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it, for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements (I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy). I repeat it therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion, it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them. Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectably defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

-- George Washington, "Farewell Address," September 17, 1796.

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## SOME THOUGHTS ON FOREIGN ALLIANCES

On the surface, at least, the techy, little, on-going debate between what the *Washington Post* recently described as John Kerry's "dedication to alliances" and what George Bush's critics both at home and abroad describe as his tendency to "go it alone" is not all that important.

The principal problem with this simple comparison is that Kerry most probably would, as he claims, act unilaterally if he felt it were necessary. And just as important, President Bush would certainly opt for international help over "going it alone," whenever possible.

And despite what the Kerry crowd maintains, the President did not exactly "go it alone" in Iraq. He merely went without the unanimous support of the U.N. Security Council, which isn't the same thing. Furthermore, on a day-to-day basis, Bush participates in about as much international mumbo-jumbo as any president before him, even though he doesn't appear to be all that enthusiastic about it.

And finally, the really important debate is not over unilateral vs. multilateral action anyway, but involves the circumstances that would prompt either man to take military action in the first place. One can't be certain about these things, of course, but it seems highly unlikely, to me at least, that Kerry would have gone to war in either Afghanistan or Iraq, with or without U.N. support. After all, he did vote against the first Gulf War, *after* Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait and *after* the U.N. Security Council had given its approval for military action.

Nevertheless, the unilateral vs. multilateral issue is still an important and fascinating topic because it provides an excellent starting point from which to analyze each man's view of the world today and the role that he believes the United States should play in it. And this in turn provides clues concerning the above-mentioned important issue of when and where each might engage in a military action. With that in mind, I thought I would explore their respective positions on this issue this week, beginning with a little historical background.

It was George Washington who first publicly raised the issue of American involvement in the affairs of other nations by warning in his farewell address, delivered in September 1796, that the United States should "steer clear of permanent alliances, with any portion of the foreign world," and instead to "trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies."

This counsel is little noted today, except among academics, but it formed the basis for American foreign policy for the next century and a half. In fact, Washington's words provided the intellectual ammunition for the successful effort to keep the United States out of the League of Nations at the end of World War I, despite the best efforts of President Wilson, who was considered to be the father of the League and who was convinced that American participation in it was ordained by God.

Henry Cabot Lodge (R, MA), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relation Committee, led the fight for the opposition. But it was the now largely forgotten, yet once politically formidable Republican Senator William Edgar Borah from Idaho who delivered what in retrospect was the death blow to Wilson's dream in a Senate speech on November 19, 1919, the day of the first Senate vote against the measure. The following quote from that speech contains the heart of his argument. Wilson himself was in bed at the White House at the time, having suffered a severe stroke a few weeks earlier, but his wife was in the Senate gallery listening.

I cannot get my consent to exchange the doctrine of George Washington for the doctrine of Frederick the Great translated into mendacious phrases of peace. I go back to that serene and masterful soul who pointed the way to power and glory for the new and then weak Republic, and whose teachings and admonitions even in our majesty and dominance we dare not disregard.

I know well the answer to my contention. It has been piped about of late from a thousand sources-venal sources, disloyal sources, sinister sources - that Washington's wisdom was of his day only and that his teachings are out of fashion-things long since sent to the scrap heap of history - that while he was great in character and noble in soul he was untrained in the arts of statecraft and unlearned in the science of government. The puny demagogue, the barren editor, the sterile professor now vie with each other in apologizing for the temporary and commonplace expedients which the Father of our Country felt constrained to adopt in building a republic!

With the defeat of Wilson's effort to achieve American entry into the League of Nations, it wasn't until shortly after the end of World War II that Washington's warning against the formation of permanent foreign alliances was finally cast into the scrap heap of history.

The first step in this direction was taken on October 24, 1945 with the establishment of the United Nations. In theory at least, this wasn't really an "alliance" of the type that Washington warned against, since it did not require that the United States do anything concrete on behalf of any other nation or ideal. It was instead a kind of social club among nations that supposedly shared a common interest in peace because they had shared a common enemy in World War II.

In practice, the U.N. turned out to be little more than a utopian fantasy when it quickly became obvious that the Soviet Union had no intention of honoring any of its principles, least of all the one about promoting peace. This realization should have led to the organization's immediate dissolution. But, of course, it didn't. Instead, the United Nations set itself up as a sort of permanent international debating society and the principal international advocate of the liberal theory that was many years later put into words by Bill Clinton's first Secretary of State Warren Christopher in a book in which he described the Iranian hostage crisis as a "clear vindication of talking as a means to resolve international disputes."

In any case, this failure on the part of the United Nations to play a meaningful role in promoting peace led to the establishment of a series of military alliances to protect its members against the horrors of war with something more substantive than talk.

This process began in July 1947, with publication in *Foreign Affairs* magazine of an article entitled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." It advocated a policy of "containment" toward what was then universally called "Russia." Its author, identified at the time by the pseudonym "X," was later revealed to be the State Department's chief of policy planning, George Kennan.

Coincident with the article's publication, Hungary fell to a Moscow-engineered communist coup, virtually assuring the take-over of all of Eastern Europe by the Soviets. Chiang Kai-shek was losing the civil war in China. And Secretary of State George Marshall had just proposed the Marshall Plan, saying that he hoped it would keep France from falling under the influence of Communism and prevent Soviet plans for Germany from turning that nation into "a congested slum or an economic poor house."

A few months earlier, it had been revealed that Soviet spies had gained access to U.S. atomic secrets. This was followed two months later by Soviet U.N. representative Andrei Gromyko's outright rejection of a proposal by Bernard Baruch for a system of international controls over atomic production.

In his now famous article, Kennan stated that he believed the antagonism then being demonstrated by Soviet leadership toward the Western democracies was inherent in the internal system of power in the U.S.S.R. In response to this policy of antagonism, Kennan advocated a "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansionist tendencies." Among other things, Kennan advocated a system of economic and technical aid to non-Communist countries to support his containment policies.

The rest, as they say, is history. The Marshall Plan was initiated, and thus began a generous U.S. policy of aid and assistance to friendly governments around the world that continued for decades. In parallel with this economic, anti-communist policy, the "Free World" surrounded the U.S.S.R. with a chain of defense pacts against overt Soviet communist aggression.

The best known of these was, of course, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was founded in 1949 based on a document drafted in 1948 by none other than George Kennan. The original signatories of the treaty were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The NATO treaty struck right at the heart of Washington's warning, which, as I said earlier, had been a centerpiece of American foreign policy for the preceding 153 years. According to Article 5 of that treaty, the signatories agreed to the following:

"[T]hat an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it

deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

But the alliance game didn't stop there, of course. Two other similar pacts followed. The first, called the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), was formed in 1954 following the French withdrawal from Indochina. It was intended to oppose further communist gains in South East Asia. Signatories included Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Great Britain and the United States. The critical passage in its charter read as follows.

Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.

Then there was the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), which was established in 1955 and included Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Great Britain, and which, like NATO and SEATO, pledged the signatories to mutual cooperation and protection. Concerned with alienating the Arab states, the United States was not a full member of this group, but it had membership on some CENTO committees and observer status at council meetings.

SEATO was dissolved in 1977, after the fall of Saigon and the take-over of Cambodia by communist Vietnam. CENTO began to fall apart in 1974, when Turkey invaded Cyprus, and was formally dissolved in 1979, following the fall of the Shah in Iran.

In a rational world, NATO would have dissolved on the morning after the Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, its mission of protecting Europe from the

Soviet Union having been accomplished. Member states could have held an elaborate ceremony, marked by grandiose speeches about past glories and a little champagne to enhance the nostalgic mood. Not only would this have been strategically appropriate, it would have honored President Washington's admonition to avoid permanent alliances in favor of emergency ones, if the term "emergency" could be stretched enough to cover a 40 year period.

But of course, that didn't happen. Instead, NATO still limps along looking for some sort of new *raison d'être*, and honoring the words of President Reagan, who once noted that the "nearest we'll ever see to eternal life on this earth" is a government bureau.

And this brings us to the on-going debate over John Kerry's "dedication to alliances" and President Bush's alleged tendency to "go it alone."

President Bush's position on this matter appears to be quite simple. He seems to recognize that in addition to its inherent organizational weakness, the United Nations is so deeply corrupt today that it cannot be trusted even as a good debating ground, much less as the final arbiter of an important U.S. policy decision. And he certainly understands that the end of the Cold War and the related reluctance of most nations in Europe to support a strong defense establishment have reduced NATO to little more than the world's largest military theme park, where elderly men can put on nifty uniforms and play with expensive if somewhat antiquated weapons of war.

So Bush tries to use each organization whenever possible to advance his agenda, to ignore each when they get in the way of serious business, and to build ad hoc "coalitions of the willing" to meet emergency situations as they arise, much as George Washington recommended.

Kerry's position is directly and assertively opposite that of President Bush's. He quite clearly would like to reinstate the glory and importance of America's existing alliances, such as the United Nations and NATO, and would presumably be willing to form others if possible.

The two reasons that he most often states for his dedication to alliances is that they help reduce the cost of America's military obligations and provide moral legitimacy to military actions when taken. But according to a recent article in the *Washington Post* entitled "For Kerry, Thinking Globally Began At An Early Age," there is also a strong ideological element to this bent toward coalition building.

In fact, according to this article, Kerry's principal objection to the Vietnam War was that it did not have the support of NATO. The paper quotes Kerry biographer Douglas Brinkley as saying that, "He was not opposing Vietnam, he was opposing 'go it alone' intervention."

This antipathy toward "going it alone," the paper notes, came directly from his father, Richard Kerry, who, the paper says, "was one of the cutting-edge pro-NATO U.S. diplomats, dedicated to transatlantic ties." Kerry himself says he learned "the value of trying to build coalitions" while riding a bicycle around Hitler's burned out bunker in East Berlin in the mid-1950s and seeing "proof of Hitler's defeat by the Allies." The following paragraphs from the *Post* article build on this point.

- "Coalitions are what he's all about," said Rand Beers, Kerry's national security coordinator. "You go back to World War II, to the role that NATO and allies played in the Cold War. His constant refrain is about international coalitions"
- After Richard Kerry retired, he published a book in 1990 that condemned the American establishment for neglecting international institutions. A former Kerry Senate aide said that in 1991, while Kerry was deliberating over whether to vote for the use of force in the Persian Gulf War, "John was concerned that diplomacy was not being pursued strongly enough. His father kept faxing him stuff from his book."

- "What he realized as a child was the primacy of Europe in America's foreign policy," Brinkley said. "You don't get swept away in sideshows like Vietnam if it's going to damage NATO. Essentially, it's what he's saying today about Iraq." Asked how Kerry's principles of war have changed over time, Brinkley said: "I don't think he has changed since he was a boy."

Now, as I said in the beginning of this article, these attitudes toward formal alliances may seem only superficially important, since Kerry maintains that he would act alone if necessary and Bush would certainly prefer to have help rather than go it alone. But as I also said, these attitudes could become extremely important in attempting to determine when and where each would act, if at all.

For example, there is a good chance that some future president will have to decide whether to take preemptive military action against either Iran or North Korea, if either deploys nuclear weapons. And there is an even better chance that neither the United Nations nor NATO will support that president if he decides that unilateral military action is necessary to protect the United States from serious danger.

Why? Because the attitude of the European nations toward terrorism is very different from that of the United States. And this attitude is based on real differences in the vulnerability of each nation to the threat and on friendships and business arrangements that each nation has within the Muslim world. During the mid-1950s, when little John Kerry was growing up in Germany, the United States and Europe shared a common enemy and a common view as to how to deal with this enemy. Thus a strong, protective alliance between America and Europe not only made sense, but had a good chance of success. This is not the case with the modern day threat of terrorism.

France is a good example of why this is so. Unlike the United States, it has a very large, poor, and restive Arab immigrant population within each of its major cities, which it fears and wishes to keep as tranquil

as possible. It also has extensive business ties, both open and surreptitious, with Muslim nations that are up to their necks in sponsoring terrorism. And it has a long history of anti-Semitism, which gives its politicians a very different attitude toward the Arab-Israeli conflict than the United States has.

So, given the exact same circumstances, would John Kerry react differently than George Bush when considering an attack on Iran, if NATO and the United Nations opposed the action? Would Kerry decide against attacking North Korea simply because America's allies in the region couldn't reach an agreement among themselves as to whether they would support such an action?

Or, would Kerry settle for something less than the establishment of a reasonably friendly, reasonably decent government in Iraq in exchange for a happy alliance once again with France and Germany, and thus NATO? Or would he pressure Israel to grant additional concessions to the Palestinians for the same European consideration?

I don't know the answer to these questions, but I would place more trust in a president who, when making decisions concerning war and peace, placed American security far above his concern for the feelings and opinions of other nations, especially when the war in question is one against an enemy that employs terrorism as its principal weapon.

And finally, I have no current concern about ignoring George Washington's warning against forming alliances that obligate the United States to defend other nations against their enemies, since the entire world seems more interested in preventing the United States from going to war rather than inducing it to do so. But I do share Washington's preference for "temporary alliances" that are formed for "extraordinary emergencies" over "permanent alliances, with any portion of the foreign world."

As George Bush has demonstrated, the temporary ones seem to work just fine in this "war against terror," and they have the additional benefit of

helping to distinguish between America's true friends and those who are in actuality friends of America's enemies. As we've seen, grand alliances such as NATO do not do this well.

## THE GREAT POLLING DEBATE

It's kind of amazing, really. Polling has become so integral a part of our presidential campaigns that just a couple of weeks ago, prior to the first debate, John Kerry's support among Democratic bigwigs was said to be eroding quickly and angrily, based on little more than the fact that he was down somewhere between 6 and 11 points in most major polls. Likewise, after that initial debate, George W. Bush's backers went from joyous and steadfast in their support to cranky and concerned, because the polls shifted dramatically and showed their guy's lead evaporating almost overnight.

But did that one debate really change things so dramatically? Did Kerry really get such a big bounce that the outcome of the election could hinge on that one meeting? In other words, are the polls that show Kerry tied or slightly ahead meaningful? Are any polls meaningful? Does polling really even have any predictive value in presidential campaigns? The answers to these questions are, of course, far from obvious. But more and more, I question the ultimate value of most of the polls we have seen this presidential campaign season, and I am hardly alone in doing so.

It would be easy, given the apparent shift in voter sentiment over the past couple of weeks, to dismiss skepticism about presidential polls as excuse making by flummoxed Bush supporters. But the fact of the matter is that there has been considerable doubt cast on the presidential polls for several weeks now by several well-informed pundit-types. And their concerns are only beginning to make sense, now that the tide of polls has, to a certain extent, turned against the President.

The primary worry of poll skeptics over the past couple of months has been the party identification component of the respondent samples. As I noted last week in a rundown of the early polls that showed a significant Kerry bounce immediately after the first debate, the breakdown of party ID in a poll's sample is a good predictor of both the likely results and the amount of suspicion the poll will generate.

In mid-September, for example, Democrats had every right to be dubious about the *Newsweek* poll that showed President Bush leading by 11 points, given that the respondent sample was far more Republican in composition than the general electorate is believed to be. Similarly, the respondent sample in last week's *Newsweek* poll, which showed a huge and unforeseen swing to Kerry and actually showed the challenger leading the race, contained far more Democrats than Republicans and was probably too heavy with Democrats by several percentage points.

This pattern of oversampling Republicans a few weeks ago and oversampling Democrats today is hardly one that is unique to *Newsweek*. Indeed, several major polls have shown similar patterns in respondents' party ID over the same time period. Nearly all the polls that showed a high single-digit or double-digit lead for the President in September and that showed a huge swing to Kerry last week have raised more than a few eyebrows with regard to the party ID of the samples. In fact, the consistency of the party ID skew is a large part of the reason that the problems with these polls, which now appear significant, had gone largely un-commented-upon until recently.

Though the percentage of the population that purports to be Democratic is probably ever so slightly larger than that which professes alliance to the GOP, it is not unprecedented that polls would show a greater percentage of Republican respondents. Most of the time, such Republican-heavy samples are assumed to be flukes and, when they prove not to be replicable, are dismissed thusly. But this year, in late August and early September, the oversampling of Republicans was notably consistent, showing up both in several different polls by different polling companies and in the same polls repeatedly.

That consistency, in turn, led some to speculate that perhaps the polls were detecting a partisan shift. This too would be a bit unusual but hardly unprecedented. Indeed, polls have found that respondent samples were markedly more "Republican" than one would expect given the breakdown in society a handful of times before, the last time being in the run up to the 1994 Congressional midterm election, an election, you may recall, in which Newt Gingrich, Dick Armey, and Bob Dole swept the Republicans to majority control of both houses of Congress for the first time in forty-some years.

But this year, things played out a little differently. As quickly as the shift to the GOP appeared, it vanished. And by last week, the party ID variable had been completely inverted, showing more *Democrats* in respondent samples than one would expect. The aforementioned *Newsweek* poll showed Democratic respondents jumping by 11 points over the course of three weeks, and other national polls showed a similar breakdown in party ID, some even more dramatic. A Gallup poll last week, for example, showed a 16-point swing to the Democrats (8 points down for Republicans; 8 points up for Dems). And this, naturally, caused more than a little head scratching among pundits and analysts, particularly those who, like us, lean to the right.

The more suspicious types among the right-wingers assumed that the dramatic shift in polling samples was simply part of the mainstream media's plan to help Kerry by manufacturing a comeback based on the assumption that any perception of momentum might translate into actual momentum. Similarly conspiracy-inclined but less extreme observers agreed that the skew may have been intentional, but suggested that the media merely wanted a story that lasted through election day and had accordingly decided that the close election storyline played much better than the landslide.

And as unsatisfying as either of the two conspiracy-laden explanations may be, the media/pollster's official explanation is hardly more fulfilling. According to the pollsters, given that the samples are large enough

to approximate the general population, the shift in party ID must be assumed to be an actual shift in partisan sentiment. Such an explanation may well pacify my statistics professor and might not technically be “impossible,” but calling it “exceedingly unlikely” would be a gross understatement.

Now, I should note that not all pollsters had the kinds of problems with voter ID shifts that *Newsweek*, Gallup, (*NYTimes*, *Time*, etc.) have had. Some, most notably political diviner extraordinaire John Zogby, weight their samples in order to keep a constant proportion of Republicans to Democrats from survey to survey. And while many pollsters consider sample weighting a controversial control measure, there is no question that it has worked well for Zogby. As I noted last week, “over the past few presidential election cycles” Zogby “has produced the most accurate final vote total predictions and . . . in 2000, [was] the only pollster to detect the late surge by Al Gore and consequently to predict a Gore victory in the popular vote.” Equally important, Zogby’s polls this year have been among the very few that have been relatively stable, with no dramatic event-induced swings for either candidate.

At first blush, one would have to assume that this spells bad news for President Bush, since the Zogby poll has been a statistical dead-heat for a couple of weeks now, and as of last night actually showed Kerry with a slim one-point lead. And given the propensity of undecided voters to break overwhelmingly for the challenger, Zogby’s numbers right now make the election look less and less like a close contest and more and more like a landslide – *in Kerry’s favor*.

Last week, I suggested that if Zogby is right and his numbers hold over the next three weeks, then President Bush is in serious trouble. But I also noted that Zogby presumes this election to be no different that any previous election and forecasts accordingly, something that I believe could render his model ineffective at measuring voter sentiment in the post-9/11 world.

In the methodology section of his polls, Zogby describes his weights thusly:

Reported frequencies and crosstabs are weighted using the appropriate demographic profile to provide a sample that best represents the targeted population from which the sample is drawn. The proportions comprising the demographic profile are compiled from historical exit poll data, census data, and from Zogby International survey data.

Translated into English, this means that Zogby’s presidential tracking poll uses a weighting scheme of 39% Democrats, 35% Republicans, and 26% Independents, which is roughly the same breakdown in party ID as has been generated by exit polls taken over the last handful of presidential elections. This scheme makes a certain amount of sense, but, in my opinion and that of a great many others, it ignores the shift in partisan affiliation to the GOP since 9/11.

As I have noted several times over the past year-and-a-half, the partisan divide that as recently as the 1970s favored the Democrats by a ridiculous percentage has slowly but surely been closing, and since 9/11 has become statistically insignificant. In other words, it is quite possible, if not likely, that Zogby weights his polls too heavily in favor of Democrats, by perhaps as much as three or four points.

Does this mean that Zogby’s polls, like the non-weighted polls are worthless in an honest evaluation of the state of the campaign? Certainly not. Again, as I noted last week, Zogby has a knack for picking these things, and “if I were running a campaign, I would feel much more comfortable about the outcome if Zogby were picking my guy to win.” That said, what this does mean is that Zogby, while historically prescient, is not infallible. His numbers should be seen as indicative of trends in support and of the general state of the campaign, but not as a precise measure of expected vote totals.

And this, I guess, is the lesson with all the polls this election season. Weighted or not, most of them have some value. But they are not nearly as predictive as the pollsters and mainstream media would have us believe. Given several additional factors, including the reality of the Electoral College, the much-discussed but as of yet unquantified replacement of land-lines with cell phones in a growing percentage of households, and the greater propensity of Democratic voters to participate in phone surveys, most polls should be viewed as indicative of general trends and little else.

In sum, then, if, over the next three weeks, one candidate or the other opens up a double-digit lead, then that will be a pretty good sign that he is likely to win. But if no one manages to take such a lead, I'm afraid we'll likely have to wait until well into the evening on November 2<sup>nd</sup> to know the final outcome. And depending on whom it is you're pulling for, that will either be a lot of fun, or no fun at all.

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