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### **Foreign-Policy Realists Find Base in Texas**

By John McCary

Foreign-policy realists may be launching a comeback -- and one of their launching pads is in a most unlikely place.

Realist thinkers, who favor more of a pragmatic rather than ideological approach to foreign policy, are starting to find greater traction after years of being overshadowed by the neoconservatives who have dominated President Bush's administration.

As their star rises, some of those realists have created an informal base at a Texas institution founded and named after another Bush: The George H.W. Bush School of Government and Public Policy at Texas A&M University, named after the father of the current president.

The Bush School was set up in 1995, at the same university that hosts his presidential library. The first President Bush still spends time at the school, dropping into classes and meeting with students pursuing master's degrees in foreign and public service.

Now the school's profile is rising, thanks to a growing endowment, a planned foreign-policy institute and the addition of prominent academics and former policymakers, including Brent Scowcroft, a national security adviser under the first President Bush.

With the recent appointment of the Bush School's former dean, Robert Gates, as secretary of defense, realist minds in College Station may have their most important direct line to administration.

This gathering of realists under the senior Mr. Bush, widely viewed as a realist himself, appears to be part of a push by the group to influence policymaking at a time when neoconservatives are under fire amid Republican losses in the midterm elections and continued violence in Iraq.

The Bush School plans to establish a foreign-policy institute similar to ones at Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced International Studies. SAIS hosts a range of think-tank-like institutes, which mix academia with more direct policy influence. More than a dozen of its faculty members serve as advisers to the federal government; this month, Condoleezza Rice -- considered a realist when she became secretary of state -- tapped SAIS Professor Eliot Cohen to help reformulate administration policy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Bush School's version, called the Brent Scowcroft Institute for International Affairs, will be led by Mr. Scowcroft and offer one-year research fellowships to midcareer military officers and civilian government employees.

Mr. Scowcroft said he envisions the institute, which is still in the planning stages, as "a stimulating place where people will turn to for ideas and discussion on security policy," along the lines of foreign-policy institutes at SAIS and Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson school. Research fellows would study with Bush School faculty, examining foreign-policy philosophies, from hawkish to dovish, "on their merits to show which one produces better results," he said. The goal is for research fellows to come away with "a good philosophy to guide strategy."

Mr. Scowcroft, a self-described "enlightened realist" who heads his own international-business advisory group, has been an outspoken critic of the administration's Iraq policy. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month, Mr. Scowcroft called President Bush's surge plan for Iraq a "tactic rather than a strategic move" and pushed for a diplomatic initiative with Iran and Syria -- an approach the White House recently endorsed.

Neoconservatism -- not realism -- was influential early in the current Bush administration, among policymakers such as the National Security Council's Elliott Abrams, who favored a more muscular approach to diplomacy. The movement first emerged in the 1970s, sparked by hawkish Democrats who felt their party was too soft on the Soviet threat and too eager to accommodate Soviet satellites and antidemocratic allies.

Neoconservatives today argue that promoting democracy and freedom is the best way to cement pro-American leaders around the globe, even if that means some countries or even regions are destabilized in making the transition. Realists put a higher priority on maintaining stability and order in global affairs, even if that means accommodating some regimes that might not share American values.

Over the past two years, the Bush School has hired widely published realist professors, including Christopher Layne and Michael Desch. Mr. Layne, a contributing editor to realist magazine *The American Conservative*, said he chose the Bush School over other institutions in part because it encourages his publishing in forums such as *The Atlantic* magazine and newspaper op-ed pages -- a practice many other universities discourage.

"American Empire: A Debate," a book Mr. Layne co-authored last year that advocates removing American forces from other countries' internal disputes such as Iraq's sectarian war, drew a critical review by Gary Schmitt, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank that has been home to prominent neoconservatives. Mr. Schmitt's review in the *Weekly Standard* called Mr. Layne's suggestion "dyspeptic" and "quasi-isolationist."

Mr. Desch, also a contributing editor to "The American Conservative" and a member of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy -- a group of academics opposed to the war in Iraq -- has published articles critical of American intervention in internal disputes such as the Balkans.

Some members of the Bush School faculty joke that College Station is "centrally isolated" -- but location was part of the attraction for another recent realist hire, Jasen Castillo. A veteran Rand Corp. analyst who focuses on nuclear deterrence and defense strategy, Mr. Castillo has been on loan to the undersecretary of defense for policy since August. He is scheduled to start as an assistant professor at the Bush School in the fall.

Mr. Castillo said he was attracted to teaching at the Bush School, because "an academic institution allows you to question the assumptions and theories behind our policies, which is difficult to do working inside the Beltway."

The Bush School is counting on its endowment to help finance its expansion plans. As of last autumn, the endowment totaled \$27 million, a decade after its inception, said Kathy McCoy, director of marketing for the Texas A&M Foundation. The school is partly funded by the \$35 million George Bush Presidential Library Foundation.

Bush School Dean Dick Chilcoat, a retired Army general, said initial funding for the school came from supporters of the first President Bush and people who served in his administration. But the list of donors has broadened to include those "with more of a national perspective, such as Fortune 500 companies," he said.

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