

Ken Gude first published 'American elections 2008: The foreign policy positions of the leading candidates for President' as an ippr Commission on National Security briefing in February 2008.

The briefing paper can be downloaded at:

<http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=585>

In his analysis, Gude argues that the US presidential elections of 2008 could prove to be decisive in foreign-policy terms, and contrasts the position of the Democratic candidates (Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama) with those of the Republican candidates (of whom John McCain is likely to win the nomination). Both Clinton and Obama, Gude argues, would seek 'a major strategic shift in policy' in an effort to restore US 'moral authority' in the international arena. There is, he notes, a strong mandate for change given the perceived failures of the Bush administration. Moreover, Clinton and Obama agree on the need to strengthen international alliances, to reinforce the nuclear non-proliferation regime (NPT), to work towards nuclear disarmament and to deal with the threat of climate change.

All the Republican candidates, in contrast, have said that they would seek greater investment in the armed forces and that this military strength would be fundamental to their efforts to improve US security. Of the three candidates (McCain, Romney and Huckabee), McCain is unusual, however, in that he shares many Democratic concerns about the need to restore transatlantic alliances.

Whoever wins the nominations, there are - as Gude illustrates - a range of real differences between the foreign-policy positions of Republicans and Democrats. As a result, he argues, the 2008 election is of great significance:

In November 2008, the American people will choose from two divergent visions of foreign policy. No other election dating back into the last century has presented such a clear choice.