

# Candidates' views differ on war, peace

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The U.S. bishops' Administrative Committee adopted "Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility" as a blueprint on how Catholic social teaching should affect political participation by Catholics. Stories in an ongoing Catholic News Service series about how the stands of the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates stack up with "Faithful Citizenship" appear on pages A8-9.

Jerry Filteau/CNS

WASHINGTON — The words "unilateralism" and "multilateralism" won't make it into either presidential campaign's ads or sound bites, but Catholic peace experts say they represent an important difference between the two main candidates on questions of war and peace.

Republican President George W. Bush has a tendency toward unilateralism, while Democratic Sen. John F. Kerry espouses a more multilateral approach, according to the experts.

Catholic social teaching on inter-

national justice and peace promotes greater use of international law and international institutions as a means of protecting human rights and the common good.

The differences between the two candidates on questions of unilateralism and multilateralism are not black and white, however. "There is a different emphasis, but not much of a fundamental difference," said Gerard Powers, director of policy studies at the University of Notre Dame's Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

Jesuit Father Drew Christiansen, associate editor of the national Catholic magazine America, said the issue is important, however.

He told Catholic News Service, "I think the Bush administration, as it's articulated its foreign policy ... , would be the polar opposite of the Catholic position because it rejects multilateralism for aggressive, muscular unilateralism, even with respect to our closest allies, saying no one else will determine what our interests are or what we will do. And that includes preventive war.



Reuters/CNS

**A U.S. soldier guards the checkpoint on the outskirts of the city of Tal Afar, Iraq, Sept. 13. Experts say President George W. Bush and Democratic Sen. John F. Kerry have important differences on questions of war and peace.**

"Generally, the church has favored multilateralism, and particularly international law and the U.N. system as a way of doing that, knowing that the U.N. system is far from perfect," he said.

On preventive war, the Jesuit theologian said, the Bush administration and the Vatican "couldn't be in a more different position."

He added, "I'm not sure that the Catholic position, in terms of the actual decisions, would be any different when it comes to John Kerry, who said that he supported the war and would still go to war despite what we know now about the situation."

In "Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility," a guide for Catholics on political responsibility, the bishops' Administrative Committee repeatedly emphasized multilateralism in the conduct of the nation's foreign policy.

The bishops warned against going it alone or defining security "primarily in military terms," even after the events of Sept. 11, 2001. The document also said the United States must "work to reverse the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and to reduce its own reliance on weapons of mass destruction by pursuing progressive nuclear disarmament."

As the nation prepared to invade Iraq, the Vatican and the U.S. bishops vigorously and publicly opposed entering into such a war without exhausting the alternatives and without U.N. concurrence.

Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy spelled out the U.S. policy explicitly: "We will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting pre-

emptively against ... terrorists."

The Kerry campaign has sharply criticized Bush's unilateralism, promising that Kerry as president would mend fences with the United Nations and rebuild the international alliances that Kerry says have been damaged by the current administration.

"The main difference between Bush and Kerry on whether to go to war with Iraq was that Kerry thought pursuing it through the U.N. Security Council should be done more aggressively or differently," Powers said. "But they both basically supported, ultimately, the right of the U.S. to use force pre-emptively, without U.N. support if necessary."

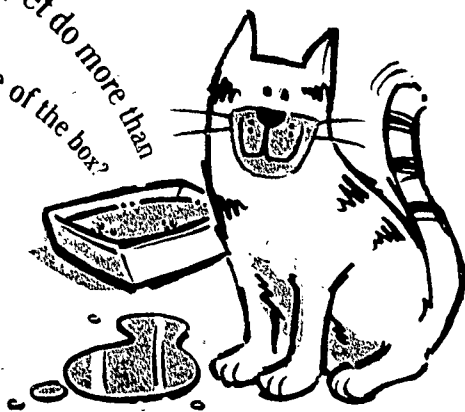
George A. Lopez, a political science professor at the University of Notre Dame and senior fellow at the Kroc Institute, told CNS that neither candidate represents "the kind of seamless garment that many of us would search for in linkages across peace-and-justice issues."

He said he thinks Kerry personally comes closer to Catholic positions "across the justice macro-lens" but his positions on other issues "are a bit wanting" from the standpoint of Catholic teaching.

Lopez said he regards the current situation in Iraq as a morass that is still deteriorating. The failure to achieve the goals of the war and post-war occupation "is a fruit of the kind of unilateral approach" taken by the administration, he said.

On the other hand, he said, "Kerry has simply told us, 'I'll do it better,' but he hasn't told us (how). He's told us that, because he'll be more multilateral, the outcomes will be better, but that's not true by definition."

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