WHY AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY FAILS

Unsafe at Home and Despised Abroad

DENNIS C. JETT
Why American Foreign Policy Fails
This page intentionally left blank
For Brian, Allison, and Noa, who are my inspiration.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ix

1 Foreword and Introduction 1

2 What’s Changed and Why It’s Failing 19

3 Why It Isn’t More Apparent 43

4 How It Really Works 69

5 A Few Case Studies 107

6 Why It Won’t Change and How It Might 143

Notes 159

Bibliography 181

Index 193
I must express appreciation to my editor at Palgrave, Toby Wahl, who did not lose faith in this project even though it was a long time in reaching a conclusion. I benefited greatly from any number of discussions over the years with my colleagues at the University of Florida, especially Richard Scher, Leann Brown, and Ken Wald. They will not agree with all that is written here, but they were always willing to share their insights. Also of great help were my assistants Mabel Cardec and Ryan Kiggins; Emily Hue, Katie Fahey, and others at Palgrave; and the staff of Macmillan India Ltd.

Of most importance in bringing this book to life were my wife, Lynda Schuster, and my daughter Noa. Noa heard more about foreign affairs in general and this project in particular than she ever wanted to, but remained very supportive. Lynda has always been my toughest editor and my most vital source of insight, sound advice and moral support. For that and many other things, I will remain forever in her debt.

Gainesville, Florida
September 2007
This page intentionally left blank
Chapter 1

Foreword and Introduction

When a writer inflicts another book on the world, especially one about a complex and well-covered subject, the reader is owed an explanation. The fundamental reason I've written this book is because the term “American foreign policy” has become a misnomer. That is because the American approach to the world beyond its borders has ceased to be either a policy or a response to opportunities and challenges abroad. The aim of this book is to explain why this has come about and why such an approach has grave implications even for the world’s only superpower.

This book might appear in parts to be another of the growing number of books critical of the regime currently in power in Washington. The problem it describes, however, is systemic and will continue regardless of who is president. The lack of a foreign policy won’t depend on which party holds the White House or controls the Congress, and that should give even the partisans on both sides of the aisle pause.

The cause of this situation is not obvious, making it even more important to attempt to explain why it came about. While citizens should understand how their government works, there are good reasons why that doesn’t happen. Those who are in government, or depend on it for their livelihood, rarely believe transparency will make their work any easier. Understanding also often eludes average citizens because they don’t have the time, interest, or ability to gather enough information and examine government actions enough to understand the policies and, more importantly, the motivations behind them.

The 28 years I spent in the State Department, including two ambassadorships and service on the National Security Council (NSC), have
given me some understanding of the way the U.S. government works. Having retired, I can now consider the effects of Washington’s decisions without having any obligation to defend them. In spending the years since my retirement in 2000 in academia, I have gained an appreciation for the theories of international relations and the ways in which scholars approach the subject. I have also been left with the belief that the theories being taught provide little real understanding of how the United States relates to other countries today, and with the feeling that this doesn’t matter much on campus.

This book will offer a description of what the process of formulating foreign policy is really like, how it got that way, and why it may not change much in the future. It will also challenge conventional wisdom, the assertions of politicians, and academic theories. It won’t pretend to definitively settle the debate about how foreign policy is or should be made or about what the end results ought to be. That will never happen. The process is far too complex and subject to too many influences to ever be explained definitively in a simple theory. Some will reject this description for a number of reasons, but at least it will provide a different perspective and, hopefully, stimulate some discussion of what that policy should be and how it ought to be made.

Such a discussion is not just a theoretical exercise or an academic debate. It is critically important to the future of the United States and goes to the heart of why, thus far in the twenty-first century, American foreign policy has been a colossal failure.

When a nation is despised and distrusted abroad, it will be unsafe at home. And virtually every poll taken indicates the United States is plumbing new depths in terms of how it is perceived overseas. Even in Australia, traditionally one of America’s closest allies, as many people ranked American foreign policy as a threat to stability in the world as listed Islamic fundamentalism. In another poll, 36 percent of the Europeans questioned listed the United States as the biggest threat to global stability. Only 30 percent thought it was Iran, and a mere 18 percent put China first. A poll released by the BBC in January 2007 that surveyed 26,000 people in 25 countries showed a steady deterioration in the standing of the United States abroad. The poll found that only 32 percent of the people surveyed believe that U.S. influence in the world is mainly positive, while 49 percent consider it mainly negative.

Even among Americans themselves, confidence in the impact of the United States is falling. A majority of the Americans polled (57 percent) still believe their country to be a mainly positive influence, but this has fallen from 63 percent a year ago and 71 percent two years ago.
Some will respond to those dismal figures by asserting that foreign policy is not a popularity contest and therefore polls don’t matter. The result of this growing unpopularity, however, is that America’s soft power—the ability to persuade other countries to follow its lead and support its position on issues—is steadily being weakened. And that leaves only America’s hard power—its military might—with which to coerce others into acquiescing in U.S. efforts to achieve its goals. Or it means accepting that its goals won’t be achieved. And as the strains placed on the American military by the commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate, even the world’s only superpower has significant limitations.

American policy has become so unpopular abroad because it is designed mainly to respond to the desires and dictates of specific groups at home regardless of its impact overseas. Put another way, in the United States there is no longer any useful distinction between the way domestic and foreign policies are made. Now both foreign policy and domestic policy emanate from the same marketplace that characterizes Washington and its decision-making process.

The idea that foreign policy is just one more commodity in the Washington marketplace is contrary to what is often believed and taught. Consider this paragraph from the 28th edition of *American Foreign Policy*, an annually updated collection of articles on foreign policy that serves as a companion to popular undergraduate textbooks on the subject:

Conventional political wisdom holds that foreign policy and domestic policy are two very different policy arenas. Not only are the origins and gravity of the problems different, but the political rules for seeking solutions are dissimilar. Where partisan politics, lobbying and the weight of public opinion are held to play legitimate roles in the formulation of health, education, or welfare policy, they are seen as corrupting influences in the making of foreign policy. An effective foreign policy demands a quiescent public, one that gives knowledgeable professionals the needed leeway to bring their expertise to bear on the problem. It demands a Congress that unites behind presidential foreign policy doctrines rather than one that investigates failures or pursues its own agenda. In brief, if American foreign policy is to succeed, politics must stop “at the water’s edge.”

The book goes on to say that this belief is not shared by all who write on the topic and that there are dissenters to this view. For those who adhere to the “conventional wisdom,” foreign policy is apparently too remote, too abstract, and too critically important to the
nation’s security to be affected by domestic politics. They assume politicians recognize this and that they generally act accordingly even though they would probably admit there are exceptions.

The view that domestic politics never intrudes on foreign policy could be held only by someone who has never met a politician. The idea that the two are so different may be “conventional wisdom” for many, but it is also wrong. If it is indeed widely held, then there is a considerable lack of appreciation for how the world has changed and how that has affected the process of making foreign policy.

Foreign policy is no longer so remote, abstract, or vital that it is above politics. This book will argue that three important changes have brought this change about and that the result is that foreign policy is now driven more by domestic politics than ever before. That does not mean that this happens in every case. The conventional wisdom does at times hold true, but mainly when an issue is so obscure that no significant domestic political constituency cares enough about it to try to influence it.

Those obscure issues that don’t matter domestically can be dealt with relatively free of influences other than the decision makers’ calculations of the national interest. Those issues that do matter are decided in the Washington marketplace. It is a marketplace of interests, however, not of ideas. And by responding to the interests of specific groups, Washington often sacrifices the interests of the nation at large.

There have always been influences on foreign policy that have had little to do with the national interest. Because of how the world and Washington have changed, however, the impact of such influences has reached a level where they negatively affect the nation’s security.

**What’s Changed**

There are three basic reasons why there is no longer any meaningful difference between domestic and foreign policy—the end of the Cold War, globalization, and political partisanship. These factors will be considered at greater length in the next chapter, but the argument, briefly put, is that they have changed the way foreign policy is made so much that it is no longer responsive to things foreign or consistent enough to be called a policy.

The Cold War provided the unifying theme for U.S. foreign policy after World War II because the gravity of the threat it represented was something on which all politicians could agree. While there were always debates over tactics, it was clear that the survival of the
United States was at stake and that democracy and capitalism had to triumph over Communism. With the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the immediate possibility of nuclear annihilation, there ceased to be any broad consensus about what U.S. foreign policy was supposed to achieve. There also ceased to be any particular penalty for a politician or a bureaucrat advocating a policy that yielded short-term personal or political gain even if it was against the long-term national interest.

Globalization has contributed to this situation by helping to make broad agreement over the priorities of foreign policy even harder to achieve. The ever more globalized world presents the United States with a host of problems that are less pressing and less apparent than the possibility of nuclear war. They will not reduce the country to ashes in the space of a few hours as a nuclear war with the Soviet Union once threatened to do. But they do pose a grave threat that is not being adequately addressed.

Globalization gives an advantage to anything international over anything constrained by national borders and, in the process, decreases the significance of those borders. By promoting the merging of domestic and international policy, it has reduced the border between domestic politics and international policy as well. Globalization has been under way in one form or another for centuries, but its effects are now much more profound. In 1995, President Clinton said that because of globalization, “interdependence among nations has grown so deep that literally it is now meaningless to speak of a sharp dividing line between foreign and domestic policy.” A dozen years later, the dividing line is so faint that for all practical purposes it has ceased to exist.

The diminishing divide between foreign and domestic policy has been written about for over 30 years. A 1977 article in *Foreign Affairs* uses the term “intermesic affairs” to describe the blending of domestic and foreign affairs. While the idea is therefore hardly new, the implications of a foreign policy that is made in a manner indistinguishable from domestic policymaking are not yet fully appreciated.

One implication is that the grand theories of international relations are academic exercises that cannot hope to describe today’s reality adequately. That does not stop them from being used to explain shifts in policy. When Washington changes course, there are always journalists and academics who attribute such change to one school of thought within the government having increased its influence on the president at the expense of another school. Or at times the president himself is said to have switched grand theories and to now be...
approaching the world differently. The articles don’t say it is politics as usual and the only thing that has changed is the tactics.

There are also never any articles in newspapers or scholarly journals arguing that domestic policy is determined by a single dominant and overarching approach. The analysts and pundits recognize that a wide range of interest groups take part in the political process; they also recognize the policy formulation free-for-all when it comes to domestic issues. The decisions that come out of that process are, therefore, not depicted as being the result of a consistent calculation of truly national interests; instead, they are understood to be the outcome of the pushing and pulling of the political process. A highway here, a subsidy program there, throw in a few lobbyists, and eventually it all adds up to what government does.

Tip O’Neill, the former Speaker of the House, is remembered for his adage that all politics is local. In the past, it was no great surprise when policy was local as well. Today “local” interests, which do not necessarily have much to do with what is right for the nation overall, are determining foreign as well as domestic policy.

These local interests will push the policy option they favor, and if they prevail it becomes the national policy regardless of whether it is best for the nation. The local interests will, nevertheless, always defend the result by arguing that what is best for them is right for the nation.

There are groups that will advocate a truly national policy, but they must contend with the lobbies for more limited interests. Lobbying is effective when it concentrates resources and gets the attention of policymakers. Because of that, the intense interest of a few can often trump the broad, but weak, interest of the many.

One example of this is the program for domestic sugar. The import quotas and subsidies in place keep sugar prices artificially high, thus costing taxpayers and consumers billions of dollars each year. A handful of sugar producers reap the vast majority of the benefits from the artificially high prices, and they put millions of dollars into the campaigns of politicians who are willing to make sure it stays that way. Because those few wealthy producers would each lose a ton of money if the sugar subsidies were eliminated, every consumer in the country must pay a little more for a pound of sugar, and producers in poor countries are denied free access to the American market.

Members of the sugar industry protect their welfare program and influence government decisions by pouring money into political campaigns they care about. It can be a lot of money even at the state and local level. Two sugar companies contributed over $4 million to their
preferred candidate in the Democratic primary for the governorship of Florida in 2006, only to see their man lose.8

The sugar program also demonstrates that when domestic groups are intensely interested in a policy, they can prevail even when important foreign policy interests are involved. America’s dependence on foreign oil imports is one of its greatest weaknesses. Yet, while sugar ethanol could be used instead of imported oil to fuel automobiles, a 54 cent per gallon tariff is imposed on imported sugar ethanol in order to protect domestic sugar growers.9

There has never been the expectation in domestic policy that local interests should always be subordinated to national interests. That is now the case with regard to foreign policy as well. The lack of any meaningful distinction between foreign and domestic policy has led to foreign policy becoming as inconsistent as domestic policy and has made it more susceptible to partisan politics.

Political partisanship has reached the point where politics has become a zero-sum game regardless of the issue under consideration. One party’s gain is viewed as the other party’s loss, and what is best for the nation is a secondary consideration. Today when the White House and Congress are controlled by the same party, the legislative branch of government does not function as a check or a balance on the power of the executive. And when they are controlled by different parties, cooperation between the two branches is somewhere between rare and impossible. As a result, foreign policy is now just another weapon in the partisan struggle for political dominance that characterizes pretty much everything that happens in Washington.

Because there were Republican majorities in the House and the Senate for his first six years in office, President George W. Bush did not cast his first veto until July 2006. Thomas Jefferson is the only president to have gone longer than that without using his veto power. Bush used his veto power to reject a bill authorizing the use of federal funds to conduct embryonic stem cell research, saying it would “support the taking of innocent human life.”10 Since he had given limited approval to such research in the past, the veto was not a model of consistency, and either his principles had changed or the political calculations about the issue had changed.

It was not a move that was generally popular even among many conservatives. A majority of Americans, including many Republicans like Nancy Reagan, former Senator Bill Frist, and Senator Orrin Hatch, support funding for such research.11 Bush’s action did please the cultural and religious right from which his most faithful supporters are drawn, however. If he would suppress scientific research that
could lead to cures for a whole host of diseases, including Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s, for the political purpose of pleasing a narrow constituency, why would foreign policy be treated any differently? The answer is, “It isn’t.”

Regardless of his motivation, there are two reasons Bush didn’t have to veto any legislation until well into his second term. First, when signing a law, he frequently appended a statement saying that he would ignore the law if he felt it impinged on his role as commander in chief. Previous presidents had made use of such statements, but none had used them as frequently as Bush, nor did they use them so often as to raise constitutional challenges to the law being signed. This practice had reached such a level that in July 2006 a task force of the American Bar Association said their use in this way was “contrary to the rule of law and our constitutional system of separation of powers.” Despite this, Congress did not see fit to seriously challenge Bush’s extensive use of signing statements.

The second reason he did not need to cast any vetoes was because compliant Republican majorities in both houses almost always gave him the legislation he wanted. Instances where they did not were extremely rare, and one of the few exceptions demonstrates the rule. When the administration attempted to turn the management of several U.S. ports over to a company from Dubai, the reaction of the media and the public was so negative that it forced large majorities in both houses of Congress to oppose the president’s position. Describing this, the Washington Post referred to the failure of Republicans in Congress to support the president as an “unprecedented Republican revolt over national security.”

Because of the degree of partisanship, there is normally little real debate in Congress about the merits of a particular foreign policy issue or its impact on the national interest. The president’s party supports what he does, and the opposition party opposes it. And in both cases, both parties are driven mainly by how that policy plays at home and whether it motivates or alienates their respective core constituencies, rather than by its impact abroad.

Why the Change Isn’t More Apparent

The effects of the end of the Cold War, globalization, and partisanship have therefore combined to create a foreign policy process that is neither consistent nor driven by international considerations. That is not readily apparent, and some may still cling to the “conventional wisdom” of foreign policy being above domestic politics, described
earlier, and simply reject the notion that things have changed that profoundly.

Others will take the opposite approach and say that foreign policy has always been affected by domestic politics and therefore nothing is new. But the threat to America’s survival posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War at least forced a consensus about foreign policy at one level. There was agreement about the purpose of foreign policy—to prevail in the struggle against Communism—although debates about the tactics of how to do so were vigorous.

Today, there is no such agreement about the purpose of foreign policy other than that it should somehow provide security in an age of uncertainty. Globalization and the internationalization of the American economy have brought many new actors and interest groups into the policy marketplace and have given them the incentive to try to affect the outcome. Foreign policy is no longer foreign to the increasing number of Americans affected by it.

Finally, partisanship is about as hard to find as a lobbyist in Washington. The presence of both may be at an all-time high. All this adds up to a foreign policy process that is affected by domestic politics as never before.

Still, there are those who argue that things are the way they have always been. It often seems as if there is greater realization abroad of the changes and their impact than there is at home. Perhaps that is because foreigners often see and feel the effects of foreign policy more than most Americans do. Or it might be due to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. They were a national trauma, and the world did change that day. As Americans watched the collapse of the towers of the World Trade Center replayed dozens of times on television, few could have been left unaffected by witnessing the exact moments when thousands of people died. Perhaps equally shocking was the realization that terrorism was not just something that happened abroad, but something that could strike anywhere and at any time in the United States.

Terrorism existed before 9/11, however, and will not disappear in the decades ahead. There will be no “victory” in the war on terrorism any more than there will be in the war on drugs. What changed is that the vast majority of Americans realized for the first time that they could become victims of terrorism.

That fear helped paralyze any serious discussion of foreign policy, at least for a time. Radical shifts in policy, such as the doctrine of preemptively attacking countries that are said to pose a potential threat, were announced and provoked little comment. Fear, the inability of the Democratic Party to come up with alternative proposals to assure
security, and the argument that “We are at war” justified everything but a serious discussion of the consequences of U.S. policies.

The rest of the world, which was initially sympathetic after the attacks of 9/11, quickly began to grow weary of American policy and of pronouncements that left no room for other opinions. People abroad also recognized the fundamental hypocrisy of a government that preaches respect for human rights and democracy but practices something else. The prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, denying the Red Cross access to prisoners, creative definitions of torture, enhanced interrogation techniques, rendition, and the establishment of an American gulag of clandestine prisons have all contributed to creating an image of America abroad that cannot be overcome simply by better efforts at public diplomacy.

It is not just America’s dispensing with every value it stands for in order to protect its security that has alienated those abroad. They, and increasingly Americans as well, can’t make the connection between American security and invading Iraq. They also see a country that has no use for international cooperation unless it is designed to serve American interests without regard to the interests of anyone else.

Opinion overseas is shaped not just by American policy but also by the American reaction, or lack thereof, to perceptions abroad. Many Americans are unaware of the unpopularity of American policy abroad and its implications. Surveys of public opinion by the Pew Research Center have found that the majority of Americans think that what happens abroad has little impact on their own lives.¹⁵ Another Pew survey in 2005 found that two-thirds of Americans “believed, quite contrary to the view of most people in other countries, that the United States paid attention to foreigners’ interests.”¹⁶

This divergence between how Americans perceive their intentions and how others do is a serious problem in an ever more interconnected world. The gravest threats the United States faces today—terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and climate change—cannot be solved by a single country acting unilaterally. Even the world’s only superpower has to rely on the extensive cooperation of others to be able to deal with these challenges.

The divergence in perceptions won’t be easily diminished, however. Americans have a great capacity for rejecting that which conflicts with what they want to believe about themselves. In addition, the “We are at war” argument can be used to justify anything, including not giving much weight to the views of others.

The cost of such attitudes and the degree to which international issues are affected by domestic politics are not more apparent for
another reason. Foreign policy is made by politicians, implemented by bureaucrats, and theorized about by academics. Because the cultures of these three groups differ so much from one another, each group might as well be speaking a different language. They do have one thing in common, however: When they write about foreign policy, they rarely make the decision-making process more understandable to the general public, and often don’t even try.

Politicians will always claim they are acting in the national interest, but they rarely act out of anything other than self-interest. Getting reelected is their primary objective, unless they want to become former politicians. And motivating their base—their most faithful supporters—is the key to their reelection. Electoral success is ensured by maintaining the active support of these core constituencies, and foreign policy can be used to turn out that vote.¹⁷

Books That May Not Help

When politicians write books, their purpose is usually to justify their actions and improve their place in history. If they have reached a certain level of prominence, there are also financial rewards for giving one’s version of recent events. In publishing today, the celebrity of the writer has more to do with the success of a book than does what is written. So, what had been highly classified records of conversations with foreign leaders become, a few years later, the grist of memoirs. None of these reasons for writing a book motivates the author to describe how the policies were really made, however.

Unlike the politicians, the bureaucrats who implement foreign policy generally don’t write books or articles. They don’t in order to avoid becoming victims of the partisan policy struggle and because the culture of the bureaucracy affords neither the time nor any professional reward for publishing. Career civil servants almost never reach the level of fame required to make a publisher interested, and, as implementers of policy, their accounts tend to be insufficiently glamorous to overcome the lack of name recognition. Their career success also depends on impressing their superiors with their bureaucratic skills, not their literary ones.

Books written by academics are usually no more helpful in understanding the policy process. They tend to describe policymaking as if it were an experiment in physics. For political science to be a science, it has to be reduced to variables that can be controlled and measured so that individual events can be interpreted as part of broad trends. While some attempt to quantify foreign affairs, others take a more
historical approach. They search for evidence of patterns of events that fit into overarching approaches towards international relations.

No one would postulate a general theory for explaining domestic policy, because it is generally accepted that it is too politicized to be predicted so easily. There is no mathematical formula or general theory for foreign policy that can explain what has happened, however, any more than there is for domestic policy. The process is too messy, and it is subjected to too many forces and influences to be reduced to historical patterns or numerical equations. Also, such theories are not dynamic and tend to ignore changes they can’t explain or that don’t fit their mold. In constructing a theory or formula, it is easier to ignore things like the growing number of lobbyists and nongovernmental organizations or the effects of globalization than it is to admit they have an impact on policy.

The academics define and defend their theories because they know their success will be determined by the opinions of their peers. The phrase “publish or perish” aptly describes the importance of getting into print, but the only kinds of publications that really count are books and articles that have been evaluated by their peers. When academics weigh the value of their publications, an article in the most obscure peer-reviewed journal is worth more than an opinion piece in the *New York Times*.

There is another group that devotes itself to research on policy issues. They might be considered a subset of academics, although they have an agenda that differs from that of academics on college campuses. This group is composed of those who work at the think tanks that have proliferated in Washington and elsewhere. They also have to publish their research, but they cater to a different readership. They don’t care about peer-reviewed journals, because they must instead get their views into the mainstream media in order to be seen as having influence on the public and policymakers. They, for the most part, have therefore become little more than lobbyists operating under a different name.

The oldest think tanks, like the Brookings Institution, were set up to be nonpartisan and to do objective analysis. The more recently established ones, like the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Heritage Foundation, were set up by conservatives perhaps because, in the words of the comedian Steven Colbert, “Reality has a known liberal bias.”

These organizations have become one more element in the partisan political struggle. Since they depend on generating income to survive, they will define the nation’s interests as what the organization’s biggest
financial supporters believe they are. \(^\text{18}\) Conservative think tanks have raised hundreds of millions of dollars in this way. In response, progressive think tanks have been created. They make no effort to hide the fact that their mission is to provide the liberal point of view. In fact, they use that rationale as the basis of their appeal for financial support from the like-minded. \(^\text{19}\)

One academic, in explaining his motivation for writing a textbook on foreign policy, said if he were able to show “how foreign policy flows from ideas about how best to promote legitimate values, including the national interest,” it would counter some of the cynicism that is so prevalent among contemporary students. \(^\text{20}\) There are worse outcomes than cynicism when it comes to considering how public policy is made, however. Gullibility is one. And if someone wrote a book on domestic policy with the stated intention being to demonstrate that it never arose from anything less noble than the national interest, would that book be taken seriously?

There are a couple of other problems with teaching the academic theories as if they are all that is necessary to gain an understanding of the way nations interact with one another. Promoting grand theories whose names end in “ism” tends to categorize people as proponents of one theory or another, making them “ists.” The “ists” tend to defend their particular “ism” and discount any differing opinions. If one describes oneself as, say, an “aggressive realist,” for example, where does that leave those in other camps—a collection of “passive surrealists”?

To believe that politicians are guided in their views of the world by these general theories is to assume they get up each morning and follow the principles of that theory rather than do what is necessary to get reelected. To teach that such theories guide nations and politicians is to leave students unprepared to understand the real world. Worse still, these students may reach a position of authority or influence themselves someday and attempt to apply the theories themselves. People don’t react as if they are elements in an experiment in physics, however, and nations don’t either.

For all these reasons, there are few books on foreign policy that really attempt to explain how the policy is made and why. Reading newspapers instead of books often doesn’t help much. Journalists tend to record the day-to-day utterances of the policymakers without offering much insight or analysis, particularly when the mechanics of government and policymaking are concerned.

Take Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s announcement of her plan for “transformational diplomacy” for instance. This grand design
was laid out in a January 2006 speech and was supposedly a blueprint for a complete overhaul of the way the State Department conducts diplomacy. While the few news stories about the speech might have avoided criticism in the name of objectivity, there were virtually no opinion pieces about what should have been an important issue. What little was written provided no real insight into what was happening and why.21

The real reason that diplomacy supposedly has to be “transformed” is because the current administration’s foreign policy has been such a failure. And it is always easier for the policymakers to blame the bureaucrats than it is to take responsibility for their own actions.

The media do matter in the making of foreign policy, but not because they try to affect the policy or even analyze it insightfully very often. They matter because they set the agenda and force government to defend what it is doing or at least to explain why it is doing nothing. Generally, when it comes to international issues, public opinion is too weak and too diffuse to matter. But if public awareness of a particular problem is mobilized by the media, then the policymakers have to take time to pacify public opinion. When the policy is made in a marketplace of interests, press coverage is generally an unwelcome distraction when policymakers get down to the real business of making decisions.

**How It Really Works**

No book can fully unlock the secrets of the policymaking process or provide an explanation for everything that happens and make it understandable. Nor will this book, but it will provide a different perspective on some of the influences on policymaking. It will then be up to the reader to see whether that perspective is more consistent with the facts than the academic theories or the assertions of politicians are.

One could argue that rejecting the academic theories is simply another way of creating one more of them. Because of the breadth of foreign policy, a single “theory” can’t explain what is happening, however. Foreign policy covers an incredible range of issues. Everything from WMD and relations with major powers to the most mundane and arcane aspects of U.S. relations with the most obscure and unimportant countries of the developing world are all elements of foreign policy.

And not all foreign policy is created equal. Some parts of it are cared passionately about by some people, while other parts of it aren’t of
much interest to anyone other than a handful of specialists. Decisions with regard to the former are likely to be made at a political level. Decisions about more mundane issues are pushed down the bureaucratic food chain. Just where they land depends on whether there is an interest group that cares about the outcome, and, if so, how intensely they care and how effective they are as a lobby.

Another factor that determines where the decision is made is the media. The press does not make the policy, but whatever they cover demands the attention of policymakers, who then have to explain the policy and defend the actions taken regarding that policy or at least justify inaction without admitting there is no policy. When energized by the media, public pressure can force policymakers to better explain the policy, repackage it, or sometimes even change it.

One example of this was the reaction mentioned earlier to the news that the Bush administration planned to allow a Middle-Eastern company from Dubai to take over the operations at six U.S. seaports. Congressional Republicans were forced by public opinion to revolt over the issue and, after initially threatening to veto any congressional action, President Bush had to back down. Without the media attention, the public pressure would not have been created and the decision would have quietly gone forward.

The attention of the media is inconsistent and limited, however. It also responds to a pack mentality. One part of the media will cover an issue in order to keep up with other media outlets already covering it. Because only a handful of stories can be covered, a story that receives attention on a slow news day would have been ignored on a day when other events were competing for the headlines. And a day or so without new developments to report will mean that the media will move on to the next story.

So how does foreign policy get made? Explaining the marketplace of interests in which foreign policy decisions are made is a bit like explaining movements in the stock market. Everyone knows that there are certain factors that affect stock prices. General economic conditions from the macro level down to an individual company’s characteristics and performance on the micro level all go into the mix of things that determines whether the market in general and individual stocks in particular go up or down.

Having a sense of what affects stock prices is not the same as being able to accurately predict which way they are going to move, however. (If you could do that, you would be on your yacht in the Caribbean and not reading this.) If the market rises in the wake of good news, it is responding to fundamental economic conditions.
If it falls despite good economic indicators, profit taking is often the excuse offered. The movement of the market is not random, but on a day-to-day basis it does defy accurate prediction.

In the case of foreign policy, there is a spectrum of policymakers whose motivations run from purely political to completely bureaucratic. On the political end of the scale are the president and other elected politicians in the Congress. Moving toward the middle of the spectrum, there are the appointed politicians and cabinet members, as well as the bulk of the undersecretaries and assistant secretaries at State, Defense, and all the other departments who owe their jobs to the president who appointed them. At the other end are the career bureaucrats who have worked their way up through the ranks by years of service in various administrations.

The most important factors in decision making on the political end of the spectrum are, not surprisingly, political ones. The key to reelection for a politician is to motivate the political base of his or her party to go to the polls and vote. The concerns of the core constituencies, those who turn out and vote faithfully for one party or the other, are therefore the political factors that matter most.

For the appointed politicians, loyalty to the president is essential, but there is a large element of bureaucratic politics involved in decision making as these officials struggle to maintain their power. That power, in no small measure, is determined by their access to and influence on the president and, to a lesser extent, the other elected politicians. Appointed politicians don’t have to worry about running for office, but that does not mean they are indifferent to their employment prospects once they leave government, or to their place in history.

Therefore, no book or theory can come up with the definitive explanation for foreign policy, because there is none. The factors cited as having an impact on the decision-making process can come together one way on one day and differently the next.

That may not be a very satisfactory explanation for those who hope to see a pattern in human behavior. It does, however, provide a way of understanding seeming inconsistencies: Why, for instance, Africans are dying because of family values. Why $10 billion a year is being spent to deploy a missile-defense system that does not work against a threat that does not exist. Why our public diplomacy efforts are such a failure, and why that doesn’t matter much in Washington. Why teenagers in Africa have a right to automatic weapons to slaughter their countrymen. And why such inconsistencies
and self-defeating policies won’t end regardless of which party is in power.

**Why It May Not Change**

Some will reject this description of the way foreign policy is made. For ideological or other reasons, they will prefer to believe in the nobility of their leaders, the goodness of their intentions, and the consistency of their purpose. Those who live in a faith-based reality have no problem denying or ignoring inconvenient facts and have no lack of media outlets and pundits ready to ratify their worldview. Government policy is determined by what the policymakers do, however, and not just by what they say.

Others will argue that the notion that American foreign policy is coherent and a response to international challenges was never completely true in the past and, thus, this book adds nothing new. The degree to which both have become false is not generally appreciated, however, and both are now much less true than ever before. To make matters worse, the process of foreign policy becoming less foreign and less of a policy is not going to reverse itself in the future. Unless, that is, people have a better understanding of what is happening and why.

Some will argue that things aren’t that bad and that U.S. foreign policy has made the nation strong and secure. People who believe the contrary will be dismissed as haters of America or, worse still, liberals. Such is the nature of much of what passes these days for debate on public policy. Perhaps it has always been so, but back before President Reagan eliminated the “fairness doctrine,”23 those using the airwaves had to present opposing points of view and there was at least a semblance of balance. Now it seems that much of the media is populated by people without an argument or the means to formulate one. They think it is enough to have a firmly held opinion of their own and to label anyone who disagrees with them with a term they consider derogatory.

They particularly like to attack anyone who, they claim, doubts America’s greatness or criticizes the way its power is used. It is true that the United States is the world’s only superpower and accounts for somewhere between a third and a half of the world’s military spending.24 The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown the limits of that power, however. Fighting two insurgencies, one major and one minor, has stretched the American armed forces to the breaking
point and cannot be sustained. The irony is that many of those who claim to support American troops ignore that simple fact and act as if the United States can impose its will anywhere in the world simply because it is the most powerful nation on earth. The United States is the world’s only superpower, but that does not make it all-powerful.

Books with happy endings sell better than those ending less happily, even ones on foreign policy. This book won’t have a happy ending. Instead, in the final chapter it will discuss why the lack of a foreign policy that is consistent and responsive to challenges abroad may have become a permanent feature of the U.S. government. Regardless of the party in power, its core constituencies will have to be catered to, money will corrupt the political process, and the ever-changing focus of the media will determine what gets attention.

That should not imply that there is no hope for making the policy process better. That will happen, however, only if more people take an interest in it, inform themselves, and attempt to influence it. If the influences on the policy reflect a wider array of interests than those of lobbyists and the core constituencies, then the policy will more closely reflect the national interest.

Bismarck said that laws are like sausages: It is better not to see them being made. The same is true for foreign policy today. But to ignore what is really happening is to leave the future of the United States in the hands of sausage makers.
When their policies appear to be failing, politicians often argue that it will take time before a definitive assessment is possible. They rarely acknowledge any error of judgment or execution and instead argue that history will recognize their wisdom and foresight.

In the case of President George W. Bush, some members of the jury have already reached a verdict. A survey conducted in early 2004 by the nonpartisan History News Network found that 81 percent of the 415 historians who responded considered the Bush administration a failure. In another poll done in 2006 by the Siena College Research Institute, 744 history and political science professors from across the nation were asked how they rated Bush. Nearly 70 percent of them rated him a failure, while another 20 percent said he was below average. Two-thirds of the professors said he had no chance of improving his ratings.¹

The failing and below-average marks given the Bush administration are not limited to professors, and the grades in foreign policy are even worse than those in domestic policy. A survey of more than 100 of the most distinguished American foreign policy experts in mid-2006 showed that 84 percent of them believed the United States was not winning the war on terror and that 86 percent believed the world was becoming less safe for America.² The poll included both Democrats and Republicans, and according to one participant, “foreign-policy experts have never been in so much agreement about an administration’s performance abroad.”³

This chapter will consider why the Bush administration’s policy is considered a failure by so many experts. (Those who think Bush
belong on Mount Rushmore are clearly reading the wrong book.) Those failures are not just due to the faults of the man or his administration. They are also due to changes in the environment in which foreign policy is made.

A successful foreign policy would protect American interests abroad and make Americans more secure at home. Those goals can be accomplished by either the use of power or persuasion or a combination of both. American power has been sapped, however, and its military might stretched to the breaking point by its commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Military operations in Afghanistan were essential to eliminating the safe haven that its government had provided the Al Qaeda terrorist organization. Military operations in Iraq were not essential, and are proving to be a monumental blunder.

When President Bush first described the “axis of evil” in his January 2002 state of the union speech, he was referring to Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. During the Bush administration, North Korea has acquired nuclear weapons, and Iran has acquired the means to make them. But the U.S. government chose to invade Iraq—the one country among the three that had no nuclear weapons or any prospect of obtaining them soon. And nuclear weapons were not the only missing piece of evidence in the case for war. The report issued by the Senate Intelligence Committee in September 2006 made clear that Saddam Hussein had no WMD, no ties to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and no relationship with Al Qaeda.⁴

One of the justifications that President Bush offered for his decision to invade was that he acted because of Saddam Hussein’s failure to abide by United Nations Security Council resolutions. He refused to go back to the Security Council to seek a resolution authorizing the use of force, however, because he knew he would fail. Another excuse he and other administration officials offered on hundreds of occasions leading up to the war was that Iraq was an immediate threat because it had WMD.⁵

When those justifications proved false, supporting democracy in Iraq became the default rationale for the invasion. But the degree of sectarian strife that has been created between the Shiite majority and the Sunni and Kurdish minorities makes it plain that a functioning democracy in which the ruling majority respects the rights of the minorities will be a long time coming in Iraq. If anything is exported from Iraq to the rest of the region, it will be sectarian tension and instability rather than democracy. The possibility that the chaos may spread has become one of the main arguments for keeping American troops there.
In a country that was an artificial construct of the colonial powers in the twentieth century, the citizens are not going to put their national identity above their religious or ethnic one. Other countries in the region care more about limiting American power and the threat they see posed by democracy than they do about seeing a stable Iraq.

Finally, Iraq’s biggest asset is its oil, and the corrupting influence of oil has greatly hindered democracy in those countries where oil is the principal export. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman observed that there is a direct and inverse relationship between oil prices and democracy. As the former goes up, the latter goes down.\(^6\) It is hardly a surprise, therefore, that the U.S. Comptroller General told Congress in July 2006 that there is “massive corruption” in Iraq’s government-controlled oil industry.\(^7\)

Given the lack of any democratic tradition in Iraq, the deepening sectarian divide, the unhelpful influence of its neighbors, and the corrupting effects of oil, the chances for any democracy worthy of the name taking root there are slim to none. And without some semblance of democracy, the last justification left for invading that country will fall, leaving no doubt that this particular foreign policy adventure was a huge and tragic mistake.

Other justifications are offered, but they are equally unconvincing. “The world is a better place without Saddam Hussein” is one such argument. Better for whom? The hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have been killed or wounded because of the American invasion have not been asked for their opinions. And a full-scale invasion with all its attendant collateral damage was not the only way to remove him from power. Slobodan Milosevic was forced from office in Bosnia, and it did not cost the life of a single American soldier.

Another rationale for the invasion is that it was necessary because Saddam Hussein was a threat and deposing him has made us safer. There is, however, no shortage of threats in this world, and a wise government addresses those that are most pressing in ways that do not debilitate our national strength.

The war has also not made America safer, as it has provided a useful training ground and recruiting device for terrorists. One British ambassador, in off-the-record remarks that were leaked to the press, described President Bush as the “best recruiting sergeant for Al Qaeda.”\(^8\) And it is not just outside experts who have reached that conclusion. The U.S. intelligence community concluded in late 2004 that Iraq has provided terrorists the opportunity to train, recruit, and enhance their technical skills.\(^9\) In a National Intelligence Estimate put out in April 2006, it was the unanimous opinion...
of 16 U.S. intelligence agencies that “the American invasion and occupation of Iraq has helped spawn a new generation of Islamic radicalism and that the overall terrorist threat has grown since the Sept. 11 attacks.”

The efforts of the Bush administration in Iraq are creating unintended consequences, much as the Reagan administration’s campaign to rid Afghanistan of Soviet domination did. It will leave a legacy of trained and motivated terrorists, making the possibility of a future terrorist attack on the United States more likely instead of less likely for years to come.

Not only has the invasion failed in its goals, but its cost is staggering and growing. Some economists, even ones from conservative think tanks, predict the bill for the war will exceed $1 trillion, and possibly $2 trillion. The human cost already includes tens of thousands of American soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead or wounded. To that add the cost of 4 million Iraqis who have either fled the country or remained in the country but were displaced from their homes.

This was not the war that administration officials expected or described to the American people before the invasion. Nor was it the war that the neoconservative cheerleaders for an aggressive foreign policy promised either. Vice President Cheney asserted our troops would be greeted as liberators. Various officials claimed the operation would end quickly. And Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz confidently claimed that Iraq’s oil exports would pay for its reconstruction after the war. And President Bush on May 1, 2003, strode across the flight deck of the Abraham Lincoln, stood under a banner that read “Mission Accomplished,” and declared victory in the battle of Iraq. He also said major combat operations had ended. At that point in time, only 137 American servicemen had died. By the fourth anniversary of that speech, the death toll stood at over 3,300, and there was no end to the conflict in sight.

It is therefore not surprising that when Tom Ricks, the Washington Post’s well-respected Pentagon correspondent, wrote a book on the American military adventure in Iraq, he entitled it Fiasco. The book’s first sentence sums up the conclusion reached by Ricks and many others: “President George W. Bush’s decision to invade Iraq in 2003 ultimately may come to be seen as one of the most profligate actions in the history of American foreign policy.”

Invading Iraq was not just an isolated failure of judgment, however. It was consistent with the Bush administration’s approach to the world. Whenever international accords and understandings coincide
with American interests, they are respected and cited as a justification for American policy, just as UN Security Council resolutions were used to make the case for the invasion. Whenever they do not coincide with American interests, the United States ignores and often undermines them.

But Iraq is more than a problem of the Bush administration’s approach to the world or a failure in judgment. It is a symptom of what the foreign policy process has become and what that process will be even after Bush leaves office. The debate, which is already under way and which will no doubt continue for years to come, is whether the Bush administration simply got everything wrong about Iraq or whether it had some motivation for its actions there that it has refused to acknowledge.

Kevin Phillips, a former Republican strategist, writes that oil was one of the critical factors behind the war and that administration officials had to mislead the public about that fact.\(^1\) This, he believes, was motivated in large part by the concern that “biblically attuned prowar constituencies would have been alienated by any emphasis on oil or any oil-related peril to the U.S. dollar.”\(^2\)

Administration officials were as wrong about the cost of the war as they were in their assertions that America would be greeted as a liberator. It is true that a couple of hundred demonstrators welcomed the American troops and took apparent pleasure in tearing down statues of Saddam Hussein; the other 27 million Iraqis did not bother to express their opinions, however.

The proponents of the war, almost none of whom had ever seen combat or spent time in uniform, perhaps believed their own claims that the war would be quick and cheap. The initial military phase was rapidly accomplished, in part because of the Iraqi army’s refusal to stand and fight. Once the occupation began, the real flaws in the American plan revealed themselves. That is why book after book describes the planning for and management of postwar Iraq as somewhere between inept and nonexistent.\(^3\) New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman observed, somewhat in jest, that Barnes & Noble was going to have to devote its basement to a new section just for books critical of the war.\(^4\)

In the run-up to the war, dissenting voices were ignored and intimidated. Only the intelligence information and analysis that supported the drive to war were listened to and presented to the American public and Congress.

The administration officials also adopted a best-case scenario and refused to consider any other. They hoped that after a rapid and easy
war, the victors would write the history. They were counting on the fact that victory in Iraq would speak louder than anyone who might doubt the official rationale for the invasion.

But the real reason for the inexorable march to war was not to eliminate WMD that did not exist, to promote a democracy that won’t take root, or to control the oil. The march to war was the result of a foreign policy designed to meet domestic political needs. Bush needed to motivate his base to get reelected. He could not do that by running on a domestic policy that consisted largely of tax cuts for the wealthy and little else.

The initial military objective in Afghanistan came quickly and easily. The Taliban government, which had provided a haven to Al Qaeda, was driven from power in a matter of weeks with a minimal commitment of U.S. forces. A wider war was needed against a weak, but identifiably evil, opponent in order to provide a flag big enough for Bush to wrap himself in. Bush’s political advisors calculated that patriotic Americans would rally to their president in a time of war. It was a way for the administration to demonstrate it had a strong and aggressive foreign policy that would supposedly improve the country’s security in the wake of 9/11.

To believe otherwise is to think that Washington simply got everything wrong about Iraq or that, at some point in the future, the situation there will improve so dramatically that it will make American efforts worth the cost. A more plausible explanation is that Bush needed to ensure his reelection and saw invading Iraq as the key to doing that. The decision to go to war has to be one of the most fundamental choices a president can make. If it can be driven by domestic politics, why should not any other foreign policy decision be as well?

It would not be the first time in history that has happened. President Polk led the country into a war with Mexico to gain more territory for his constituents. And the escalation and de-escalation and ending of the Vietnam war under two presidents was driven more by domestic considerations than by considerations having to do with Southeast Asia itself.

Whether one believes the Bush administration has been devious or merely dumb and regardless of the long-term outcome, the immediate results of invading Iraq are not ambiguous. The war has not only dissipated American military strength in a wasteful and counterproductive way, but has also undermined the ability to use persuasion as an alternative to military power. Persuasion relies on other governments supporting American policy goals, but that becomes difficult
when there are doubts about the motivations behind those goals. A large and growing number of people abroad consider the United States a rogue nation and one that can neither be reasoned with nor trusted.

In October 2003, a blue-ribbon panel of experts issued a report that concluded that “hostility toward America has reached shocking levels.” It cited a report by the Pew Research Center that stated, “the bottom has fallen out of Arab and Muslim support for the United States.” In a speech two years later, a former American ambassador to Saudi Arabia made it clear that the situation had not improved. He asserted that “our relations with the Arabs and Muslims generally are at a historic nadir.”

And it is not just in the Muslim world where there is a profound lack of trust in the United States and its policies. The distrust extends to our traditional allies as well. In a poll done in Australia, those interviewed were evenly divided over whether the greatest threat to the world today comes from American foreign policy or Islamic fundamentalism. Relations with Latin America were described by one observer as “at their lowest point since the end of the Cold War”; another observer noted that those relations had plunged to their lowest point in decades in 2005, but he still predicted they would get worse in 2006.

Some might respond, So what? Foreign policy is not a popularity contest, and a country’s policies should be dictated by its interests, not by public opinion polls overseas. Perceptions abroad do matter, however, because they influence how foreign governments react to what the United States is trying to achieve. The opportunities to use persuasion instead of power diminish when the willingness to cooperate with American aims declines abroad. When persuasion becomes less possible, more power, or at least intimidation, must be used to obtain the same goal. And with the American military stretched to the breaking point by its commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is clear that even the world’s only superpower has its limitations.

In the age of globalization, creating a deep-seated hatred abroad will also result eventually in more acts of terrorism at home. Those threats will force us to spend a great deal more for homeland security or will make it necessary to go about the world striking preemptively. And the latter can easily strengthen rather than weaken the terrorists. The prisoner abuse at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib will provide motivation to terrorists for generations to come to think of the United States as an enemy and a potential target. This is the price we will be paying for decades to come, and it is a direct result
of a foreign policy designed to respond mainly to the demands of domestic politics.

**Politics No Longer Stops at the Water’s Edge**

In a simpler time, a large part of foreign policy was determined by the State Department. In 1958, in response to the launching of the first satellite by the Soviet Union, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee decided to undertake a broad review of “the conditions and trends in the world and of the policies and programs of the United States with respect thereto.” The hearings it held were mainly “limited to receiving testimony from the principal officers of the Department of State concerned with the various geographic parts of the world.” During this era, writers as well as senators tended to focus on the State Department. A book published in 1960 about the “key” role played by the State Department in making foreign policy is entitled *The Policy Machine*.

Neither congressional testimony nor books about foreign policy would be limited to the State Department today. In the last four decades, foreign policy has become inherently more complex, and the role of the State Department has diminished as both the number of decisions and the number of people trying to influence them have grown.

The foreign policy process has become much more complicated because of three fundamental changes in the world: the end of the Cold War, the growing partisan divide between the two major political parties, and globalization. The result of these three changes is a foreign policy that is more politicized, harder to make, and harder to predict.

Shortly before the end of World War II, Senator Arthur Vandenberg gave a speech in the Senate in which he announced that his approach to foreign policy had switched from isolationism to internationalism. Two years later, as the Cold War was beginning, Vandenberg became chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Though a Republican, he worked closely with the Truman administration to support initiatives such as the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Vandenberg used the phrase “Politics stops at the water’s edge” to underline the need for a bipartisan foreign policy.

While there were often partisan arguments over tactics, the need for capitalism to confront and prevail over Communism provided a basis for agreement that was widely accepted. Once the Cold War
was won, however, that unifying theme of American foreign policy disappeared.

As Theodore Sorensen described it in a 1992 article in *Foreign Affairs*, the presidential elections later that year were the first ones following the end of the Cold War, and the man who won would face a world of both unmatched opportunity and opacity. The opportunity was unmatched because the United States had become the world’s only superpower, with no immediate military threat or imposing rivals. The opacity was unprecedented, because in the post–Cold War era there were no clear ideological distinctions between friend and foe and no clear way to distinguish between real dangers and mere problems.

When President Clinton took office a few months later, the catch phrase of the campaign—“It’s the economy stupid”—carried over into the way the administration viewed the world. The White House quickly became immersed in domestic issues, particularly those in which it was taking a beating in the press and popular opinion—for example, gays in the military and reforming the health-care system. Clinton paid less attention to foreign affairs, perhaps because he felt more comfortable dealing with domestic issues. And, at least at first, there were no immediate international problems that required much of his time.

It was also a question of style. As is true at the start of any new presidency, the new administration came into office determined to demonstrate that it was different from its predecessor. For the Clinton administration, that meant the size of the White House staff, particularly the NSC, was to be reduced; black-tie state dinners for foreign dignitaries were no longer in style; and even phone calls to foreign leaders, a commonplace tool of diplomacy during the presidency of George H. W. Bush, became impossible to schedule.

Thanks in no small part to controversies surrounding domestic issues, two years after Clinton took office, the Republicans took control of the House of Representatives. They brought to an end 40 years of Democratic dominance in the House, and they arrived in power with an agenda. Led by Newt Gingrich and determined to put their stamp on foreign and domestic policy, they issued a statement of principles that they called the “Contract with America.” In it they declared their dedication to ensuring that U.S. troops would be deployed only to support missions that were in the interest of U.S. national security. They also declared their dedication to reinvigorating a national missile defense, to accelerating the expansion of NATO, and to increasing defense spending. While the Republicans had won
control of Congress, they still resented the fact that Clinton had ousted an incumbent Republican from the White House.

The Cold War had ended, the threat of nuclear war was gone, and American power was indeed unchallenged. Had the Republican-controlled Congress and the Democratic president worked together, they could have made the most of that unmatched opportunity. Instead, all that the end of the Cold War removed was the one underlying theme of American foreign policy on which politicians of all stripes could agree. There was not just a lack of agreement on how America’s unprecedented might should be used. Foreign policy became another arena in which the partisan politics of Washington would be played out. And partisanship has increasingly become the dominant theme of politics as the divide between the parties has become deeper and wider than ever before.

The Republicans took control of the House promising to make Congress fairer and more open. Once they tasted power, however, they dropped talk of reforming the institution. Instead of implementing term limits for members as well as committee chairmen, making ethics laws tougher, and providing more power for individual members and the minority party, they took a different course. They set about consolidating their power in the hands of congressional leaders, leaving rank and file members and even committee chairmen with no real authority or even much influence.

As a result, relations between the White House and the Republican-controlled Congress went from bad to worse. The Republican majority took advantage of the president’s personal scandals to launch extensive investigations and a move to impeach him. When an air attack was launched against Iraq, Republican leaders accused Clinton of using the attack to frustrate further action on impeachment. A Washington Post article reporting on the criticism began with the observation that “the unwritten rule that politics stops at the water’s edge was rudely shattered yesterday, as many congressional Republicans who have long distrusted and reviled President Clinton sharply criticized his motivations in bombing Iraq on the eve of a House vote on impeachment.”

The tone in Washington did not improve when Clinton left office, even though President Bush took over promising to “put politics behind us and work together.” That apparently meant that everyone should forget that his mandate consisted of losing the election by over half a million votes. Even Republicans came to admit that Bush was more interested in implementing his agenda undiluted by bipartisan input than in changing the tone in Washington, to which he paid
only lip service. Long-time Washington observers began to question whether civility would ever return. The national unity that followed the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, provided only a brief respite, and soon politicians as well as journalists were characterizing the atmosphere as being at an all-time low.34

In Congress, as it passed legislation, the majority increasingly seemed unwilling to even acknowledge the views of the minority. Democrats were excluded from drafting sessions, and House leaders actively discouraged bipartisan efforts. On one occasion, a committee chairman ordered the Capitol police to break up a meeting of Democrats who were on his committee.35 On another occasion, when a major bill was going to be negotiated in a conference committee comprised of both House and Senate members, Republican leaders said they would allow no House Democrats and only two Democratic senators into the room.36 Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert set the example for letting partisan politics take precedence over everything else. He repeatedly stated he would work to ensure that Congress passed only those bills that had the support of a majority of House Republicans regardless of the number of Democrats who supported them.37 In other words, he would prevent a bill that had 323 congressmen in favor of it if the remaining 112 opposed it and were Republicans.

Republican efforts aimed at consolidating their power extended beyond partisan maneuvers within Congress. In what was dubbed “the K Street strategy” by Republican leaders, they worked hard to change the way Washington does business. The lobbying firms and trade associations, many of which are located on K Street, had generally been bipartisan in the past so that they could attempt to influence legislators from both parties and be well-positioned regardless of who was in power. However, Republican congressional leaders now made it clear that they wanted to see all significant positions on K Street filled exclusively by Republican loyalists. Their reasoning and motivation was simple. By controlling the lobbyists and trade associations, they could control the flow of corporate contributions to Congress. By controlling the flow of the largest source of funds to candidates, they believed they could determine who was elected and who was not.38

The strategy worked remarkably well. In the mid-1990s, the political donations of 19 key industrial sectors were split about evenly between the two parties. Ten years later, Republicans were collecting twice as much in corporate cash as the Democrats were. The competition for campaign contributions has made it imperative that politicians respond not only to those who can deliver votes, but
also to those who can deliver money. And the corporate interests and their lobbyists have made sure that money is not in short supply for those politicians who do. With the Democrats in control of both houses of Congress as a result of the 2006 elections, the flow of corporate contributions will undoubtedly become more bipartisan.

Money is not the only weapon being utilized in the partisan warfare in Washington. It has been a time-honored tradition that the party in control of each state’s legislature would redraw congressional districts to its advantage. California did it in 1980 and turned an evenly divided congressional delegation into one with a 28 to 17 Democratic majority.

These exercises in gerrymandering used to happen only once a decade as new census data became available. Experts could not cite a single case in the last century in which mid-decade redistricting took place in the absence of a court order. Now whenever a party gets on top, it seizes the chance to redistrict to its advantage. And no one bothers to hide the fact that it is done solely for partisan political advantage. In Colorado, which redrew its boundaries only two years after the last redistricting, the state senate president wrote in a newspaper column that “nonpartisanship is not an option.” Grover Norquist, an influential Republican who heads a group called Americans for Tax Reform, attempted to make partisanship and gerrymandering a virtue. According to Norquist, “bipartisanship is where both parties gang up against the people. I want to take the partisanship in Washington and drive it into the 50 states.” Norquist achieved fame as an advocate of conservative causes in Washington and also for receiving millions of dollars from clients of former lobbyist and convicted felon Jack Abramoff.

Better data and lap-top computers have made Norquist’s dream easier to achieve, and the gerrymandering more sophisticated. Districts are designed to create as many safe seats as possible and to pack the supporters of the opposing party into the others. Much of this is based on race, given that African Americans and Hispanics vote overwhelming for Democrats. One Texas Republican made no secret of the purpose of the effort in his state. He described the Republican redistricting plan as being designed to ensure that “virtually every Anglo Democrat is going to have a rough time.”

One might think that federal courts would strike down such redistricting plans, especially since race is often the key factor used to draw the boundaries. A three-judge federal panel in Texas found no constitutional grounds on which to intervene in that state’s manipulation
What’s Changed and Why It’s Failing

of the voting districts, however. The Supreme Court is not going to provide relief either, as it has also rejected challenges to gerrymandering. The Court seems almost evenly split between those justices who think that they should set no limitations on what politicians do in gerrymandering and those who think there might be standards that could be set, but they have yet to see any they would be willing to approve.

The result of these political maneuvers is that there is virtually no competition between the two parties for seats in the House in at least 90 percent of the congressional districts. Or put another way, even with widespread disgust with Congress, the potential for change is vastly reduced. A September 2006 poll found that only a quarter of the Americans surveyed had a positive view of Congress, a level unmatched since 1994 when the Republican Party won 52 seats and brought 40 years of Democratic control of the House of Representatives to an end. However, most analysts thought that because of redistricting, only 40 House seats were in play, as opposed to over 100 at the same point 12 years earlier. In the end, the Democrats picked up 30 seats, and the Republicans none.

In a normal election, therefore, the candidate of the party that controls the district wins, and that person is determined by the predominant party’s primary. Generally, this makes the votes of independents meaningless and puts a premium on a candidate appealing to the most committed of the party’s core constituencies, since they tend to turn out for the primary elections far more than less ideological voters do. In attempting to appeal to their party’s activists, the politicians have become more partisan and more polarized, and so has the policy. It does not matter, in the wake of our victory in the Cold War, whether the policy in question is about a domestic or a foreign issue. The key to success for either party is to motivate and reward its core constituencies that comprise its most loyal base of support.

The result is that an already poisonously partisan atmosphere has become even more so. So when the same party controls the White House and the Congress, anything the party wants is approved and vetoes are unnecessary. When they are controlled by different parties, gridlock is the most likely result. Congressional oversight is reduced to being an instrument with which to constantly harass a president from the other party, or it is nonexistent when the president is from the same party. In other words, Congress has ceased to be a check or a balance on the power of the executive branch. It has become either a lapdog or an immovable obstacle.
If that sounds exaggerated, one example might make the point. House Republicans took more than 140 hours of testimony investigating whether President Clinton had misused his Christmas card list. The same body spent less than five hours listening to testimony on whether the Bush administration had abused Iraqi prisoners.48

One columnist in the Washington Post described the polarization in another way in an article about moderate Republicans like Senator Lincoln Chafee. He said the moderates “are an ever weaker force in a party whose very essence is extreme, whose electoral strategy is solely to mobilize its base, whose legislative strategy is never to seek votes across party lines.”49 Where does that kind of atmosphere get represented in academic theories of international relations or in the calculations of national interests done by the grand strategists in Washington think tanks?

The partisan bipolarity in Washington has grown to the point that it is beginning to generate concern, but mostly among former officials who remember the way it was. The politicians currently in office usually defend the system that brought them to power. In August 2005 a new group appeared, calling itself the Partnership for a Secure America.50 Made up of prominent former congressmen, senators, secretaries of state, national security advisors, and others, it called for “the re-establishment of the bipartisan center in American foreign and national security policy based on our shared American values.”

The group’s website indicates how hard it is to promote that idea, even though most reasonable people would agree with it. The site lists the articles in which the Partnership has been mentioned in the press, and records only 15 instances in the last half of 2005 following its founding, and only one in the first eight months of 2006.

The Partnership for a Secure America is not the only organization concerned with the partisanship in Washington and its effects on foreign policy. The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is one of the oldest and most prestigious foreign policy groups. Established in 1921, it is a membership organization, a think tank, and the publisher of Foreign Affairs. The CFR put out a report in September 2005 entitled “Both Sides of the Aisle.” The report lamented the lack of a bipartisan foreign policy and blamed the polarization in Congress on redistricting, a hectic congressional lifestyle, the narrowness of Republican control, and the constant need to raise campaign funds.

In a telephone conference on the day the report was released, the author was asked what steps would be taken to pressure Congress to recognize the problem and adopt the recommendations made in the report. The response was, in essence, that the obvious virtue of the report’s argument and recommendations would be sufficient to
produce the result required without much more effort than publishing the report. Since the report was published, if there has been any effort to correct the problems it identified, it has not received any significant press coverage.

Ironically, at almost the very hour that the teleconference on the report was taking place, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay was being arraigned in a court in Austin, Texas. The charges against DeLay involved extracting money from corporate contributors, laundering it through the Republican National Committee, and sending it to be used in campaigns in Texas. All of that was part of DeLay’s efforts to redistrict Texas along strictly partisan lines in order to increase the number of Republicans elected. DeLay’s nickname was “The Hammer” not because he hammered out compromises with Democrats. Clearly, he was not going to let a report from a prestigious think tank, which merely pointed out that something was in the national interest, stymie his plans for political dominance. Absent any political costs that are greater than the gain from gerrymandering, political partisanship will triumph over the common good.

There was no political cost in ignoring the report’s recommendations, because the media barely mentioned it and the public has yet to show any concern about the problem. Public opinion, when it is aroused, evinces itself as generalized disgust with Washington rather than as an understanding of specific problems.

Another reason there has been no public reaction to the problems of partisanship is that it reflects a deep political divide not just in Washington but in the country as a whole. In 2004, one public opinion poll by the Gallup organization found that 45.5 percent of American voters identified with or leaned toward the Republican Party, while 45.2 percent felt that way about the Democratic Party. The near-even split has made the struggle for control all the more heated.

The gridlock created by partisanship and the narrow interests of perennial self-promoting politicians have combined to create a situation in which what’s best for the country is often not the outcome in Washington. In other words, it is like our foreign policy today. Our victory in the Cold War eliminated the unifying theme to our foreign policy on which both parties agreed. The lack of a dire and immediate threat to our existence has meant that politicians can pursue their personal interests, no matter how irresponsible or prejudicial they are to the interests of the nation as a whole. As the partisan divide in Congress has deepened, a coherent foreign policy has become increasingly difficult to achieve. Both parties seem to see the process as a zero-sum game—any gain that might accrue to the Republicans from a foreign policy initiative is viewed as a loss by Democrats, and vice versa.
Did the elections of 2006, which brought Democratic majorities to both houses of Congress, mean that a new spirit would take over? Democratic congressional leaders pledged to avoid gridlock by working with their Republican colleagues as well as with President Bush. They promised partnership instead of partisanship. Such talk at the start of a historic shift in congressional power is to be expected. Democrats could hardly look magnanimous in victory by saying they were going to do to the Republicans what the Republicans had been doing to them since 1994.

Such promises are never kept for long. The differences between the two parties are fundamental, not merely differences over the Iraq war. They extend to tax and social policy and the role of the government. They also have economic roots. As New York Times columnist Paul Krugman put it, “Income equality has returned to levels not seen since the pre–New Deal era, and so have political divisions in Congress as the Republicans have moved right, once again becoming the party of the economic elite.” Since the parties appeal to different constituencies and economic groups, a desire for bipartisanship may make a good sound bite, but it is not likely to be put into practice.

Krugman is not the only journalist who sees partisanship becoming more extreme and more entrenched. E. J. Dionne, writing in the Washington Post, observed:

Hand-wringing over extreme partisanship has become a popular cause among learned analysts. They operate from Olympian heights and strain for evenhandedness by issuing tut-tuts to all sides, Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives. But the evidence of recent days should settle the case: This administration has operated on the basis of a hyperpartisanship not seen in decades. Worse, the destroy-the-opposition, our-team-vs.-their-team approach has infected large parts of the conservative movement and the Republican Party.

Not only so-called liberal newspapers like the Times and the Post observed the trend. The Washington Times, which could not be more favorable to the administration, also commented on the degree of partisanship and provided an explanation of why it is such a successful political tactic:

President Bush may be unpopular inside the Beltway, but to Republicans nationwide, he remains the fundraiser extraordinaire and he is expected to pull in more than $200 million for Republican candidates by Election Day 2008. Even though the next elections are 20 months away, the growing partisanship and polarization makes the president
What’s Changed and Why It’s Failing

an even bigger draw for campaign cash. “The higher level of partisanship, particularly on foreign affairs, has helped inspire and energize Republicans in terms of being more supportive of Bush,” Republican fundraiser Wayne Berman said. “It has strengthened his appeal among partisan Republicans.”

Being partisan is not a uniquely Republican problem. Before they gained the majority in the House and the Senate in the 2006 elections, the Democrats did not have the power with which to punish the other party. That has changed, and there is no reason to think that the same motivation and incentives to resort to partisan politics is any different for the Democrats than it is for the Republicans. The irony, therefore, is that with a high degree of partisanship likely to be a permanent feature of the political landscape, the growing problems associated with globalization are ones that require an effective foreign policy that can be achieved only with a degree of domestic political harmony. And when that fails to happen, the public’s already low opinion of Congress will sink only further.

What’s Globalization Got To Do with It?

While the end of the Cold War ended the threat of a war with the Soviet Union, globalization has made an effective foreign policy essential for dealing with a host of new problems. They are not as immediate and as dire as nuclear annihilation, yet they collectively pose a threat that is nonetheless grave.

Globalization affects many people in many different ways, but discussions of it tend to focus on only some of its aspects. Looking at specific winners and losers may demonstrate the cost of globalization, but it also makes a broader understanding of it more difficult. Defining the phenomenon in a single sentence is a challenge, but the following might suffice: Globalization is the process, often driven by technological change, whereby people, things, and ideas cross national borders with greater frequency, speed, reach, and impact than in the past.

One effect of all the people, things, and ideas crossing national borders has been to change the foreign policy environment and the number of actors involved. When international issues affected people in less immediate and less direct ways, foreign policy was largely the province of those who inhabited Washington and Manhattan. The average person felt threatened by the potential for a nuclear war, but that was an abstract possibility. Combating communism was accepted
as an absolute necessity, but working out how to do that was left to the foreign policy elites in Washington and New York.

Now when someone loses a job because the factory has closed and moved to a low-wage country because of globalization, the cause and the effect seem obvious, and people pressure their political leaders to do something about it. The fact that cheaper products imported from abroad lower prices nationwide is no consolation. The intensely felt loss of the jobs of a few can trump the interests of many, but only if the few have more effective lobbyists in Washington.

As a result, new groups affected by globalization, and assisted by the spread of information and the speed of communications, have been brought into Washington’s policy marketplace. The number of lobbyists has grown accordingly as more groups have sought to influence the policymakers in ways that respond to their particular interests. The growing numbers of special interests have been able to obtain a growing number of special favors, such as loopholes in the tax laws.

A few statistics demonstrate the growth of the international part of the American economy. In 2005, the dollar amount of U.S. exports was nearly 50 times higher than it was in 1960. Imports in 2005 were nearly 90 times what they were in 1960. After having a trade surplus as recently as 1970, the United States has experienced a trade deficit that has grown steadily, reaching a record $805 billion in 2005, equal to 6.4 percent of economic output. A constantly growing part of those imports was oil. Imported oil made up 17 percent of consumption in 1960; by 2004, imports reached 62 percent of the total.

Put another way, the ratio of imports plus exports to U.S. gross domestic output has nearly tripled since 1960. As the U.S. economy has become more international, the jobs of more Americans have become dependent upon and affected by events abroad. The growing stake, in terms of jobs and dollars, has led to a growing number of people who are interested in influencing the economic decisions affecting our relations with other countries.

Another “foreign” influence that is having an increasing impact on Americans is immigration. The number of immigrants coming to the United States over the last five years has reached historic highs, and about half of them were illegal. In percentage terms, immigrants account for 12.1 percent of the population. As a result, the question of whether and how to slow down the influx of immigrants has become an increasingly heated topic of debate, and a wide range of reform proposals, including building a wall along the border with Mexico, have been thrown into the discussion.
What’s Changed and Why It’s Failing

Washington has struggled to come to grips with this problem and has failed to come up with a solution that addresses all aspects of it. As will be covered more fully in chapter 4, when the interests of two core constituencies clash, the result is an attempt to give the impression that action is being taken without actually doing anything that will upset the other side.

In the immigration debate, the Republican Party has to cater to two core constituencies with opposing interests—the business sector and cultural conservatives. The immigration problem could be solved by jailing those who employ illegal immigrants. Without jobs to attract them, the flow of illegal immigrants to this country would largely dry up. But the Republican Party is known for being friendly to corporate and other business interests, and business wants and needs cheap labor even if it is illegal.

On the other hand, cultural conservatives are up in arms about the threat posed to “American culture” by so many foreigners who come with different languages and values, not to mention appearances. Just as the Ku Klux Klan did in the 1920s, some Republicans are promising to protect our culture by making the foreigners feel unwelcome.

Faced with these conflicting goals and with the 2006 elections then approaching, the Republican-controlled Congress and White House tried to give the appearance of initiative and action without running the risk of actually accomplishing anything. The House of Representatives passed a draconian bill that put a heavy emphasis on criminal penalties, while the Senate took a much more moderate approach and tried to devise a guest workers’ program.

The president urged Congress to pass a comprehensive plan, but both houses failed to agree on a comprehensive approach prior to the elections. Perhaps they never intended to. Because of the importance of the illegal immigration issue to two core constituencies, the Republicans may have felt better off making up in theatrics what they lacked in action. Consider this portion of a *New York Times* story about how the issue was used in one bellwether congressional race in Colorado:

Here in the Seventh District, the Republican push brought a Senate subcommittee hearing the other day to explore the costs of illegal immigration. The taxpayer-financed, ostensibly nonpartisan meeting took on the air of political theater. “They are here in this district with this topic attempting to drum up support in a closely contested Congressional race,” fumed Lisa Duran, director of an immigrant rights group.

If that was the tactic, it may have worked. The angry confrontation thrust the session into the headlines, reminding residents that the issue
remained a leading one in the House race between Rick O’Donnell, the Republican nominee, and Ed Perlmutter, the Democrat, who are running to fill a seat being vacated by Representative Bob Beauprez, a Republican seeking the governorship.

The issue remains on voters’ minds “because people are trying to keep it on their minds,” said Mr. Perlmutter, who accused Republicans of staging the hearing for political gain.60

The economic impact of foreign trade, the growing number of immigrants, and the reactions to those immigrants have all become topics of debate. These debates are no longer confined to politicians and international experts in Washington and Manhattan. Increasingly, they cover a range of issues that have broad impact not just on relations with other countries, but on the daily lives of many Americans as well. The issues vary from ones having a profound effect on the economy and security of the country to the most mundane. Because the immigration issue has a direct impact on people’s daily lives, especially in districts like the one in Colorado where a considerable amount of tax dollars go to providing public services to illegal immigrants, the issue is ripe for exploitation and will not be decided merely on its merits.

Immigration and trade are just two aspects of globalization that have helped to make foreign policy an extension of domestic politics. Due to those and other aspects of globalization, the process of making foreign policy has become indistinguishable from the one used for domestic policy. It covers a wide range of issues, is subject to a variety of interests, and is generated by a process that is inherently messy and that is not guided by a single philosophy. But it is not just globalization that has caused foreign policy to become less foreign and less a policy than a process. The end of the Cold War and the degree of partisanship that characterizes politics in Washington are also to blame.

When the Soviet Union fell apart, the United States emerged from the Cold War as the most powerful nation on earth and faced little risk to its survival. The threat of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union was gone, but so too was the consensus about the most fundamental principle of foreign policy. During the Cold War, the need to survive and to win in the struggle with Communism was something upon which all American political leaders had been able to agree.

The end of the Cold War not only removed the main theme of American foreign policy. In the minds of some Washington policymakers, the emergence of the United States as the world’s only superpower also removed any need to consider the views of foreigners when
making foreign policy. For some officials it no longer appears necessary to even pretend that the views of foreigners matter. The “transformational diplomacy” that Secretary Rice has inaugurated at the State Department has included instructions to American diplomats to lecture, not listen to, foreign audiences, since their views are apparently unimportant when it comes to formulating foreign policy.

So much so, that Sidney Blumenthal, writing in Salon.com, described how the secretary of state does not even want to read what those abroad think:

This May [2006], as the situation in Iraq drastically worsened, Rice directed the senior staff that she wants no more reporting from U.S. embassies. She announced in the meeting, according to one participant, that people write memos only for each other and that no one else reads them. She said she didn’t and wouldn’t read them. Instead of writing reports, the diplomats should “sell America,” she insisted. “We are salesmen for America!”

While our diplomats have become salesmen of a product that does not work, they will no doubt get the blame when foreigners remain unconvinced. The secretary of state does not care what foreigners think or want. She wants American diplomats to tell them what to think and what they need, and she expects that to succeed.

That might work for those who think the world’s only superpower is all-powerful and should not care what the rest of the world wants. While today there is no immediate threat to the survival of the United States, there are, nonetheless, grave threats that even a superpower cannot ignore. However, they are much more diverse and more difficult to identify because they do not arise from a geographical entity. Instead, they come mainly from the negative effects of globalization.

Making foreign policy used to be simpler when the threats from abroad were clear and most policy decisions were perceived as having little direct effect on the average American. The terrorists who hijacked the airliners and flew them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, demonstrated to Americans that anyone could become a victim of terrorism.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union could be confronted by creating military coalitions like NATO. NATO provided the military might necessary to deter an attack by the Warsaw Pact countries. Confronting the threats posed by globalization will require new coalitions and cooperation with other countries in ways that unilateralists will find unnecessary and too confining. They believe our superpower
status is enough, and they see cooperation as a compromise of our self-interest. But the most fundamental feature of globalization is that it favors anything international at the expense of those things that are strictly national. To use the terminology of *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, it flattens the world. As a result, the movement of people, things, or ideas across borders has become a lot easier than ever before.

To deal with problems created by a flat world, where national borders mean less and less, requires cooperation between nations. No one nation can deal with all the problems that are created and exacerbated by the flat world. Not even the United States, which may be the world’s only superpower, but is not all-powerful. That kind of cooperation is made difficult when public opinion surveys show that our standing in the world is reaching new depths.

The irony of globalization is that while international cooperation is essential to effectively confront the problems that face the world, American foreign policy is increasingly seen abroad as unilateral and suspect. So much so that countries that would normally cooperate with American efforts are now somewhere between cautious and reluctant to do so. They are reluctant because they see that the actions taken by the United States to deal with international issues represent neither a policy nor an appropriate response to real problems abroad.

Foreign policy decisions are being made in the marketplace of Washington where a large number of players, factors, and influences affect the outcome of the process. It is not a random process in which anything can happen. But it is also not a process in which past decisions can be explained and future ones predicted by use of a single, overarching theory of international relations.

That is not to say that every foreign policy decision is driven by domestic political considerations—but the ones that count to the core constituencies are. That can be true even when the decision works against our overall national interest. The following paragraph from *The One Percent Doctrine*, written by Ron Suskind, illustrates the point:

> White House aides carefully crafted speeches to carry codes that would speak to the devout. Division—us versus them, with supporting images—works. If this elevated bin Laden in some way, so be it. He’d be dead soon anyway, administration hawks figured in 2002, as they overlooked a crucial issue: that a message that created political advantage here was creating growing opportunities for our enemies. Internally,
the President dismissed concerns about how his message was playing to the nonvoting overseas “constituencies.” The world’s response was not a first concern. On the most pressing priorities—firing up a citizenry, nearly half of whom now identify themselves as evangelicals, and allies for the “war on terror” from kindred Western nations or newly fearful Arab ones—the righteous battle cry was tailor-made.62

Not all constituencies are created equal, however. Globalization has vastly increased the impact of foreign policy on domestic groups, and these groups have increasingly sought to influence that policy. Their success at doing that, however, is dictated by the degree to which they are organized and by whether there are other groups pushing alternative policies. It also depends on whether one of the political parties sees them as an important constituency. And that depends on whether they can be relied upon to deliver money or votes and whether they have effective lobbyists to point that out to the politicians.

Even with the spreading impact of globalization, there are still many international issues that lack significant domestic political interest. The policy is therefore not simply a function of domestic politics, but depends on the policymaker and on what his or her motivation is. The policymakers range from the purely political to the bureaucratic. At the political end of the spectrum is the president, followed closely by the Congress. In the middle of the range are the appointed officials—cabinet members and the top tiers of the State and Defense departments and other agencies. At the bureaucratic end of the spectrum are the career civil servants.

The motivation of each group varies with the degree to which their careers are affected by politics. Elected politicians care about campaign contributions and votes. Appointed officials care about their status, the status of their agency or department, and their relationship with the elected politicians. Career civil servants care about their relationship with those toward the political end of the spectrum, but they also make their own calculation of what the national interest is, and try to push the policy to reflect those interests.

The process is therefore not simply the sum of domestic political interests. The president, given his role as head of the executive branch and his powers regarding foreign relations granted him by the Constitution, can be the key actor on any foreign policy issue in which he takes an interest. But his time is limited as are his interests. The same is true for Congress. It has considerable influence over foreign policy, if it chooses to exercise it, given its ability to make laws and determine the government’s budget.
Since elected politicians want to be reelected, they must cater to their core constituencies. But having set the broad guidelines, they leave the details of implementing the policy to the bureaucrats. Whether appointed or career, in the process of implementing the policy, those officials can have a significant impact on how it comes out.

So not all foreign policy decisions are driven by domestic politics, and it depends on which policymaker chooses to concern him- or herself with a particular policy. The policy is pushed toward the political end of the range by the interests of the core constituencies, and often by the media. The media do not make the policy, but they can set the agenda and determine what receives attention and what does not.

What eventually comes out of the sausage factory is a result of all these influences and actors. If the process were less complex, it could be reduced to resemble an experiment in physics, and the definitive explanation of how that policy is made would have emerged already. But it isn’t, and no one today would argue that the State Department is a “policy machine” that dominates how the United States relates to the rest of the world.

The result is a more chaotic and inconsistent foreign policy driven increasingly by domestic concerns but, at the same time, influenced by a variety of other factors. How all those factors come together can vary from one day to the next depending on the attention span of the media and the policymakers and the demands placed on both of them by other events.

These changes in how foreign policy is made are less apparent than they should be because of the way that process is perceived and portrayed. The following chapter will talk about why these changes, as important as they are to the country’s future, are not better perceived and why their impact and implications are not more generally appreciated.
Chapter 3

Why It Isn’t More Apparent

How a country decides to relate to the rest of the world is an inherently complex and messy process. That is especially true in a democracy, where there are multiple actors with varying degrees of influence. Yet, even dictators are not entirely free to do what they want. They have constituencies they must answer to, or at least placate, most notably those with the power and arms to overthrow them. As long as dictators do not antagonize the wrong people and bring about their own demise, they can, within limits, lurch from one policy to another. Their policies will be driven largely by their perceptions, prejudices, and judgment as to what it will take to keep themselves in power.

In a democracy, foreign policy may not be all that much different. It is made by politicians, and survival is still the top priority. The main difference is that in a democracy there are many more influences, and the politicians have to deal with them, or at least give the appearance of responding to them. The president, the chief architect of foreign policy, is still a politician at heart and has ample opportunity to be influenced as he or she formulates policy.

As the policy moves through the process from formulation to implementation, many groups will try to shape those parts of foreign policy that they care about. Besides special interests, there are other actors, including the media, public opinion writ large, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Forces outside the country, such as international organizations, other governments, and multinational corporations, can also have an effect.

Every country has a policymaking process that includes these elements, but they are combined differently in each nation. The
United States may be unique, however, in the degree to which it ignores the external factors as it makes decisions about how to relate to the world. America’s standing as the only superpower makes that attitude possible, and America’s history and geography make it all the easier to adopt. With a single, benign, and relatively weak neighbor to our north and another to our south, and with oceans to our east and west, the United States could be more insulated from direct foreign contact only if it were an island. Americans, therefore, have historically little exposure to, or consideration of, things foreign. Periodic bouts of isolationism and the sense of American exceptionalism have provided further incentives for Americans to disregard what happens abroad.

In addition, the development of the use of “wedge issues” as a successful political strategy has exacerbated the problem. Wedge issues are designed to divide the electorate into two clear camps and to force politicians to identify with one of them. They are often thinly disguised appeals to bigotry and fear. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich urged his Republican colleagues in 2004 to focus on just such issues in the 2004 election campaign. It was, he explained, a way to paint the Democratic candidate for president as out of the mainstream.

Talk of constitutional amendments to protect against such dangers as flag burning and gay marriage always seems to reach a fever pitch in the middle of even-numbered years. No matter that the burning of a flag occurs about as frequently as snow in Miami, such issues are used to stir up the faithful and provide them the incentive to go to the polls and vote.

Foreign policy has been increasingly used as a wedge issue, again demonstrating that politics no longer stops at the water’s edge. The so-called war on terror has provided many such opportunities. Instead of attempting to form a new consensus about the fundamental purpose of U.S. foreign policy, the post–9/11 paranoia of many Americans has been thoroughly exploited by Republicans in their attempts to convince voters that they are the more capable party when it comes to national security. Vice President Cheney has repeatedly assailed the Democrats for being “defeatist,” and he even claimed in the 2004 election campaign that a vote for the Democratic candidate, John, Kerry, would risk another terrorist attack. There is no prospect that the politics of fear will end with the Bush administration in 2009. For instance, in his efforts to secure the Republican nomination for president, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani has asserted that the war on terrorism would take longer and would have more casualties with the Democrats in charge.
Using foreign policy as a wedge has gone beyond insults and is part of today’s political process, even when it violates long-standing international obligations and puts American servicemen and women at risk. In the months before the 2006 elections, the White House made a concerted effort to get Congress to approve changes in the rules for treatment of terrorism suspects and, in essence, rewrite the Geneva convention. After having held these people for years, the question became urgent two months before the election for obvious political reasons.

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell publicly opposed the move, saying it could endanger U.S. troops taken prisoner in the future and would cause the world to question the moral basis of the American war against terrorism. The objections of Powell and others were ignored as Republicans saw an opportunity to define anyone opposed to the president’s tactics as being soft on terrorism.

The legislation on the treatment of prisoners and the proposals to build a fence along the border with Mexico and to authorize the president to continue the warrantless wiretaps were all rushed through in the final hours of the congressional session in early October 2006. The wall, which would cover only a third of the 2,100-mile border with Mexico, had an estimated cost of $7 billion. The wiretap bill was unnecessary for any administration willing to comply with existing law. And the prisoner treatment bill ended any pretense about the United States holding the moral high ground in the fight against terrorism. But no matter, they were all designed to put Democrats on the defensive and reduce all the arguments about all three issues to a single, simplistic sound bite: Legislators are either for the President’s position or soft on terrorism.

Turning foreign policy into a wedge issue is not limited to destructive legislation. The institutions that are involved in dealing with international problems can be undermined for domestic political benefit as well. A Republican pollster and strategist, Frank Luntz, told a gathering of conservatives in September 2006 that the United Nations (UN), and the way Americans relate to it, has become a “wedge issue” that could soon decide a presidential election. So in an era when globalization makes international cooperation essential for combating the most serious problems America faces, politicians are readying themselves to debilitate the most important international organization that exists. The UN is far from a perfect organization and is riddled with corruption and cronyism, but those are features of the Washington power structure as well. In addition, there are 192 member states, and the United States pays less than a quarter of the organization’s costs. But many of the demands for
reform are not intended to improve the organization’s efficiency. They are designed to play on the anti-UN bias of xenophobic voters who fear there is a secret plot to eliminate America’s sovereignty and impose world government.

If the choice was between domestic political advantage and the effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy, there is little doubt which would take precedence in Washington today. The policy is, after all, made by politicians. And that is where the end of the Cold War, partisanship, and globalization have brought America—to a foreign policy that neither responds to things foreign nor is consistent enough to merit being called a policy.

Because of this, America’s real national interests are not being served, and its security is being placed at greater risk. That aspect of Washington politics has not received enough attention either in the press or in books about foreign policy, and this chapter will consider why that is the case. The next chapter will deal with how policy is really made, and the following chapter will discuss some specific cases. The book’s final chapter will talk about why things might not change regardless of which party occupies the White House or controls the Congress.

Foreign policy is formulated by politicians, implemented by bureaucrats, and theorized about by academics. Books on foreign affairs are written mainly by the politicians and academics, with only a rare contribution by a career civil servant. These three groups can best be thought of as three distinct cultures with different values and different languages. Those who are or were inside the process have little interest in making it transparent or comprehensible to those on the outside. Those on the outside, academics and others, have different limitations. To understand why requires looking at each of the three cultures and their motivations for writing about foreign policy.

Politicians and the Books They Write

Politicians have been described by one political scientist as adhering to three cardinal rules. First, they want a place in the sun, to be out front, and to make decisions. Second, they would rather be live politicians than dead statesmen. Third, in practicing politics they will get what they can and tolerate what they must.7 In other words, they want power, know they have to be elected to get it, and aren’t particular about how they make that happen. Those who don’t follow these rules are known as former politicians.

Political appointees are one step removed from the politicians, but largely respond to the same rules. Even though cabinet secretaries,
undersecretaries, and assistant secretaries are selected rather than elected, they share the elected politicians’ desire for power.

Political appointees don’t have to worry about the demands of retail politics. They don’t slog through the snows of New Hampshire at the start of the quadrennial cycle of primary elections or respond to a constituent whose social security check didn’t arrive. They need worry only about the vote of only one person—the person who appointed them to their position: the president. They too, want power, and they know that the person who is going to appoint them has to be elected for them to get it. Once in power they know that person has to get reelected for them to maintain their power and they are not particular about how they use their positions to ensure that happens.

When elected politicians write books about their time in office, foreign policy probably won’t be a significant feature unless there is an accomplishment to point to or an event that can’t be ignored. The main objective of the book is to burnish the author’s place in history. They, therefore, have no interest in explaining how the process really works or what their motivations really were, as candor does not serve that interest.

When politicians are still aspiring to be elected, they worry about catering to their core constituencies and their main financial backers. Every serious candidate has to demonstrate that he or she is a deep thinker and has a vision for the nation’s future, but that has little impact on what they do once they get into office.

Political appointees write their books on leaving office to justify what they did when they held their positions of power. The memoraanda of conversation, which record the discussions of high-ranking U.S. officials with their foreign counterparts, are classified and receive very limited distribution within the bureaucracy. They are drafted by trusted aides, and there has probably never been one written yet in which the boss comes off looking second-best. A few months after the official leaves office, these reports become the grist for his or her version of history, and any problem with revealing secret material seems to have evaporated.

Personal gain is another motivation for politicians to write. In today’s publishing business, anyone with significant name recognition can churn out almost anything and receive a hefty advance for their efforts. While no one seems to know what makes a best seller, celebrity will often guarantee the sales and royalties required to cover the advance. Since these books are often written with the assistance of a professional writer, the burden is substantially lessened and the result is always readable, but rarely noteworthy and almost never candid.
But monetary reward is not the primary motivation. Given that the fees that a former high-ranking official can earn for making a single speech range from a minimum of $50,000 to several hundred thousand dollars, the time invested in writing a book could generate more income on the lecture circuit. Public speaking is so lucrative not because those who command five- and six-figure speaking fees have anything important to say. It is because it is part entertainment, where celebrity is everything and people are willing to pay to see the star in person.

It is also a subtle form of corruption, since some of the groups pay the fee knowing the speaker is going to return their phone calls in the future. Even though the official may be out of office, his or her rolodex and influence can still be put to good use.

Despite monetary considerations, the main reason for writing is to attempt to ensure that history reflects well on the author. In pursuing this goal there are several typical conventions. The era being written about is usually described as “tumultuous” and “challenging.” Assurances that this will not be just another memoir or a kiss-and-tell hatchet job are also par for the course. For a secretary of state, mention is always made of the assistance of the career professionals in the Foreign Service, even though few of its officers ever penetrate the small circle of trusted staff aides that surrounds the secretary.

In these books, the obstacles and individuals that prevented a more enlightened policy are often listed, but there is always one person who invariably escapes criticism. It would be too ungracious to describe any of the shortcomings of the person who gave them the job—the president. At worst, it is intimated that had the president paid more attention to the author’s advice, things would have come out better. Since appointees are selected for their loyalty to the president, they repay it by making it seem that the president never bore any responsibility for anything that may have gone wrong.

The book that may become a classic example of this literary genre is *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* by George Tenet, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The book was condemned by many commentators and several former CIA officers as a shameless attempt at self-exculpation. Administration officials politely rejected the book’s criticism, including Tenet’s assertion that there was never any serious debate about the consequences of invading Iraq before the attack was launched. Tenet’s description of his patron, President Bush, is generally very positive, with only a few very obliquely negative comments. As for all the criticism of the book, Tenet’s response was that history will prove him right.

When Tenet left the CIA in 2004, Bush awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom even though he presided over the two biggest
intelligence failures since Pearl Harbor—the failure to anticipate the attacks of 9/11 and the failure to understand that Iraq had no WMD. While writing his book, he made speeches for $40,000, but to what must have been very limited audiences. He had very little to say in his speeches, as he saved anything newsworthy for the book and the publicity blitz that surrounded its publication in April 2007. Tenet gave interviews about the book on every high-profile television show he could find, starting with 60 Minutes. He refused to give any newspaper interviews, however, knowing perhaps that print journalists ask tougher questions than television interviewers do. The publicity blitz was undoubtedly designed to boost sales and justify the huge advance Tenet received for writing the book. While several news reports put the amount of the advance at $4 million, an article in the New Republic by Patrick Tyler claimed Tenet delayed publication of his book until 2007 in order to avoid any embarrassment to the Bush administration before the 2006 elections. Tyler wrote that because of the delay, the amount Tenet received was reduced to $2 million, but that this was simply Tenet’s way of repaying Bush for the Medal of Freedom he received from the president. Without addressing how many millions he may have received subsequently, Tenet denied there was any such connection, but never publicly admitted how many millions he actually did receive.

Among the critics of Tenet’s book was Douglas Feith, the former third-ranking official at the Pentagon. Feith is one of the people cited most frequently in discussions of the manipulation of intelligence reporting to support going to war against Iraq and the mistakes made in conducting it. Tommie Franks, the general who led the invasion, is quoted in Bob Woodward’s book Plan of Attack as “the (expletive deleted) stupidest guy on the face of the earth.” In reacting to Tenet’s book, Feith told the Washington Post that he was writing his own memoir to provide his version of events. Comparing his forthcoming work to Tenet’s, he said, “We are writing books that are of a very different species.” While the government careers of the two authors may be different, the books are essentially the same exercise in attempting to justify and excuse their actions and to shift the blame for any errors to someone else. That hardly makes them unique.

The Books Secretaries of State Write

Since World War II, nearly all secretaries of state have written about their time in office, and usually the purpose has been the same as Tenet and Feith had in mind. A review of some of these books demonstrates why secretaries of state, like the other major players in the
policymaking process, have no particular interest in explaining how foreign policy is made.

Dean Acheson wrote that he wanted to describe the beginning of the Cold War and “to tell a tale of large concepts, great achievements, and some failures, the product of enormous will and effort.” He made clear he had respect, but little affection, for President Franklin D. Roosevelt and thought that President Harry S. Truman would be remembered as one of America’s greatest presidents. These assessments may represent more than an objective judgment of their accomplishments. Acheson was only an assistant secretary of state under Roosevelt, but rose to undersecretary and then secretary under Truman.

Dean Rusk did not write a memoir. He explained his reason for this by quoting one of his predecessors, George Marshall, who said, “If I were to write memoirs I would owe it to myself as a matter of integrity to tell the full truth. But were I to tell the full truth, I would injure a great many people including myself.” Marshall’s reluctance to write a self-aggrandizing memoir is far more remarkable than Rusk’s. Marshall has a stellar record of accomplishment and is the only military officer to have received the Nobel Peace Prize. Rusk’s time in office, on the other hand, was defined by the war in Vietnam and the failed Bay of Pigs invasion.

Rusk’s son, Richard, was not content to leave Rusk’s legacy at that. He interviewed his father at great length, and their recorded conversations became the basis of a book. In part, it was a son’s attempt to get to know his aging father better. It was also intended to explain his father’s role as “an architect of a war that killed fifty-eight thousand Americans and nearly a million Vietnamese.”

Reflecting on his father’s experience as secretary, Richard asked, “In view of Pop’s chaotic schedule—fourteen-hour days, seven-day weeks with no vacations—where was there time for long-range planning, for quiet reflection, for reconsidering the directions of foreign policy as well as operational details?” He quotes one of his father’s key aides who also commented on the work environment of the secretary and his staff: “We were always struggling, always dealing with kaleidoscopic situations that we saw imperfectly and incompletely, particularly at times of crises. We were terribly concerned with the limitations of our vision and understanding of the events transpiring before us.” That combination of an exhausting schedule, incomplete information, and uncertainty add up to the diplomatic equivalent of the fog of war, but the effects of that fog are never described when a secretary of state writes about himself.
Alexander Haig lasted as President Reagan’s secretary of state only 18 months, so his book was not about the accomplishments of his brief time in office as much as it was about what would have been accomplished if he had not been fired. While the book was full of advice to Reagan for his second term, it’s not clear Reagan ever read it. Those who did read it learned that Haig thought Reagan had accepted flawed recommendations because U.S. foreign policy had failed to recognize “the prime reality of our time: nations cannot live at the expense of other nations and will no longer live on the sufferance of greater powers.”

He went on to observe, “The world, as I have said, is not as it was; the United States alone cannot control history by overwhelming international problems with its wealth, its military power, and its diplomatic influence.” With such a modest view of American power, it is no wonder Haig did not fit in. His observations were undoubtedly lost on the neoconservatives, who got their start in the Reagan administration and reappeared under President George W. Bush.

Haig used his book to explain that he did not intend to seize power over all foreign policy, but only wanted to establish a framework to coordinate it. This reflects his failure to get the president in his first days in power to sign a decision memorandum that would have made Haig the foreign policy vicar. Haig warned that “in the absence of such a charter, there can be no other result than confusion.”

That confusion may have helped lead to the Iran-Contra affair, but the lines of authority are never as clear as Haig would have liked and have become steadily less clear since the days of Acheson. As more government agencies acquired international interests thanks to globalization, the secretary of state’s ability to dictate the content of foreign policy has been steadily diluted. Haig’s problems also demonstrate both the potential for personalities to affect policy and the competition among the senior staff to influence the president. As the book’s reviewer in *Foreign Affairs* noted, it can be “studied profitably as another chapter in the long history of personal incompatibility between secretaries of state and the White House staffs.”

George Shultz, Haig’s successor, had his own headaches to deal with in the remaining six and a half years of the Reagan administration, including the Iran-Contra scandal. Perhaps that is why he described his tenure as “crucial years, a period of extraordinary importance” and why his book weighs in at nearly 1,200 pages. To buttress his argument for the uniqueness of his era, Shultz quotes the *Christian Science Monitor*, which observed that rarely has a secretary of state had to cope with so many upheavals in so many places.
One of the upheavals happened late in Reagan’s term in office, when the political maneuvering to succeed him was in full swing. There was a heated debate within the administration about how to oust Manuel Noriega, the dictator running Panama. The split, which became open and acrimonious, was between those who wanted to accept a negotiated exit and those who insisted on going to war.

Colin Powell, who was the national security advisor at the time, informed Shultz that Vice President George H. W. Bush was vehemently against the effort to get Noriega out without resorting to military force. Bush was making no secret of his view, despite the fact that Reagan supported the peaceful alternative that had been arranged. Shultz writes that he replied to Powell: “The vice president is conducting an election campaign; let the president conduct the presidency.”

So Bush, according to Shultz, was insisting on an invasion in order to improve his chances of being elected president. Like father, like son.

In James Baker’s book, he confesses that it is neither a memoir nor an exercise in kiss and tell. Instead, he claims to being motivated by a special obligation to share his experiences with a broader audience. He describes himself as a man of action during years that were truly historic, and asserts that he wants to convey a sense of how policies were formulated. Baker worked through a small circle of close aides and had little use for the rest of the State Department. It is, therefore, unsurprising, and not entirely inaccurate, when he characterizes Foreign Service officers as usually talented and loyal, but neither flexible nor creative.

Warren Christopher, President Clinton’s first secretary of state, wrote two books. The first one, which appeared a year after he left office in 1997, was a collection of 37 of his speeches, with short introductions describing the speech and the context in which it was given.

His second book, which appeared in 2001, was a memoir that covered the full range of his career. It was a long one, given that he had worked in a diplomatic capacity for every Democratic administration between 1960 and 1996—including a role as chief negotiator during the Iranian hostage crisis during the Carter administration. The book runs only a little over 300 pages, and he does not get to his time as secretary until page 177. Even then he dwells at length on what life with bodyguards is like, and deals with only a few selected events. In the end, the memoir is like the man—judicious, cautious, and modest. He even notes his “habitual discomfort in the face of excessively nice words” about himself—a feeling that does not seem to plague many others who have held this office.

Madeleine Albright, the first woman secretary of state, gives a more personal and autobiographical account in her book. To support
her claim for the uniqueness of her book, she points out that being an immigrant and a woman sets her apart from any of her predecessors. She is also more direct and can’t resist taking a shot at her successor, Colin Powell, for opposing the use of military force in Bosnia:

When we asked what it would take to free Sarajevo airport from the surrounding Serb artillery, he replied consistent with his commitment to the doctrine of overwhelming force, saying it would take tens of thousands of troops, cost billions of dollars, probably result in numerous casualties, and require a long and open-ended commitment of U.S. forces.27

Albright’s second book, *The Mighty and the Almighty—Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs*,28 reads more like a book written by someone who wants to be secretary of state rather than someone who was one. The title describes much of the book’s content. She also manages to reflect on George W. Bush’s administration policy, and notes that in invading Iraq, President Bush “knowingly sacrificed international support to pursue a goal he thought right.” She adds that he also “had the power and the will to press his agenda, for better or worse; part of the worse was the alienation of world opinion.”29

She seems content to accept the idea that Bush just got everything about Iraq wrong, without considering that Bush may have achieved his main goal—to be reelected. She notes that how Americans define their country’s international role is a vital question, but she doesn’t supply an answer beyond suggesting that the United States should persuade other countries to do what America wants.30

Albright observes that that would be made more possible if Americans displayed political consensus, religious tolerance, and consideration of the opinion of others. Describing the ideal world in which to create foreign policy and leaving it at that is about as effective as Rodney King posing the question, “Can we all just get along?” And it underestimates the difficulty of achieving the kind of policy she recommends. She dismisses, for instance, the power of televangelist Pat Robertson by saying that few, even among Christian evangelicals, would agree with his contention that confronting Al Qaeda is, at bottom, a religious struggle.31 But Robertson did not become a billionaire only by doing business deals with some of Africa’s biggest kleptocrats. He reaches a wide audience. And his views on foreign policy, like any other religiously inspired foreign policy, tend to be nonnegotiable. It’s hard to assert that a point of view has a moral basis and then be willing to compromise. The essence of diplomacy is to understand other points of view and to realize that the other side has to emerge from any negotiation with something they can defend;
otherwise, any agreement reached will not last. It is not simply a question of imposing what one knows to be morally right.

While Albright describes an ideal world, Bush administration officials, when they write their books, will have the challenge of describing their accomplishments in their faith-based world. Books like Tenet’s, if they don’t find a niche in the basement of Barnes & Noble set aside for books describing the failure of Iraq, may wind up with the novels and other works of fiction.

If Iraq had been the quick and easy victory the war’s proponents envisioned, they could have written what the English historian Herbert Butterfield called the Whig interpretation of history—one written by the winning side of a dispute. Iraq would have to become Switzerland for them to be able to credibly claim “victory” and land on the right side of history.

While that won’t stop them from trying, Colin Powell may not be among them. He wrote his autobiography, with the help of Joe Persico, before becoming secretary of state. Therefore, if he writes another book, he will have little choice but to deal mainly with his time as secretary rather than recounting his rise from humble beginnings. Like Tenet, Powell’s defining characteristic is his loyalty to those who boosted his career to the highest levels of government. He won’t engage in a tell-all memoir, even though the book would command an enormous advance and give him a shot at improving his place in history.

He will have to explain, however, his February 5, 2003, speech at the United Nations. At various points in that address, he forcefully asserted to the world:

What you will see is an accumulation of facts and disturbing patterns of behavior.

The facts and Iraq’s behavior show that Saddam Hussein and his regime are concealing their efforts to produce more weapons of mass destruction.

Every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we’re giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are not assertions. These are facts, corroborated by many sources, some of them sources of the intelligence services of other countries.

What we know comes largely from intercepted communications and human sources who are in a position to know the facts. 32

Powell’s assignment that day was to make the case for invading Iraq, which Bush did the following month. Flanked by Tenet and the U.S. ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, Powell did just that.
Why It Isn’t More Apparent

Unfortunately for Powell’s place in history, nearly everything he said was false and was based on some of the weakest intelligence sources imaginable.33 This after he journeyed to the CIA and spent three days and nights working on the speech and checking its sources. Powell’s has let it be known that he believes he was misled by Tenet, who emphatically endorsed all the intelligence reports used in the UN speech. Powell was supposedly stunned when Tenet later admitted publicly that the intelligence was not well sourced.

In considering whether Powell was deceived by Tenet or whether both of them are trying to deceive everyone else about their responsibility for the war in Iraq, it is important to bear in mind the limitations of intelligence reports. Those limitations are well illustrated by the following quote: “Intelligence doesn’t necessarily mean something is true. It’s just—it’s just intelligence. You know, it’s your best estimate of the situation. It doesn’t mean it’s a fact.”34 That insight is from a June 24, 2003, press conference in which the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, was explaining why a village in Iraq was attacked and a number of innocent civilians killed. The assault was launched on the basis of intelligence reports, which turned out to be wrong, that “high-value targets” were in the area.

Whether Powell had been duped or was duplicitous, his UN speech had the desired effect. The day after he delivered it, “opinion polls indicated that national opinion had shifted literally overnight; most Americans surveyed said they believed an invasion was justified to protect the nation.”35 It was not until December 18, 2005, that President Bush admitted that Iraq had no WMD and that “much of the intelligence turned out to be wrong.”36 But by then, Bush had had his war and had been reelected—mission accomplished.

Besides his role and his understanding of the intelligence, Powell would also need to explain why he was so resistant to using force in Bosnia, where no American servicemen died and the evil dictator was still removed from power. Yet he could find no reason for not invading Iraq—at least none he would express publicly. The world won’t have to wait for Powell’s next book for his version of history, however. He has used others to do it for him, which saves him having to address the tough questions himself.

Washington Post reporter Karen DeYoung wrote a biography of Powell that came out in late 2006. He assisted by giving her six lengthy, on-the-record interviews. DeYoung repaid the favor by what one reviewer of the book described as playing “the role of Mr. Powell’s sock puppet, channeling his views of the Bush administration.”37

DeYoung tells her readers that Powell “never advised against the Iraq invasion, but warned Bush of the difficulties and counseled
This “warning” achieved its own footnote in history by earning its own title—the “Pottery Barn” rule—which states that if you break it, you own it. While that may indeed apply to countries as well as crockery, the Pottery Barn has no such rule, and Powell never said those words to the president. His reservations, to the extent they were expressed, were too weak and too late and consisted, at best, of reminding the President that he would own Iraq and its problems if he invaded. It was a suggestion the president immediately brushed off.

Condoleezza Rice will have much the same problem as Powell, as she was another advocate of invading Iraq who summoned up visions of mushroom-shaped clouds to make her argument. When Tenet’s book was published, she quickly made the rounds of the television talk shows to refute his criticism. In one interview, when pressed on his observation that she had failed as national security advisor, Rice said, “And you know what, we’ll have a chance to look at that in history. And I will have a chance to reflect on that when I have a chance to write my book.” The outcome in Iraq will affect the verdict of history, and that may make it a challenge when she finally writes her version of it.

Regardless of what she writes once she leaves office, Rice will undoubtedly be in great demand on the lecture circuit, with six-figure speaking fees and a multimillion-dollar advance for her memoir. If Iraq continues to descend into civil war and never becomes anything more than a Shiite-dominated theocracy, the story line will be that the war was lost because the faint-hearted ended it too early. Whether that will be enough to save her book from the remainder bin, only history will tell.

In their books, secretaries of state and other high-level participants, whatever their records, talk about the nobleness and consistency of their purpose and the unprecedented challenges they faced. They never say that they were exhausted, jet-lagged, and operating on faulty and incomplete information and that they arrived at a conclusion that was just plain wrong. If there is a mistake to be explained, it is always the fault of others. And domestic politics never rears its head. There may be something to learn from these books, but it won’t be how policy is made.

**Bureaucrats and the Books They Don’t Write**

Those who lie lower down on the bureaucratic food chain than the secretary of state don’t often write books. Lower-level appointees don’t have the name recognition to guarantee sales. And career civil servants have little incentive for putting their experiences on paper.
They also rarely reach the level of fame needed to attract a publisher in today’s celebrity-driven book world. They don’t have a place in history to protect, as history will probably not note their passing. Their political superiors don’t welcome any competition in retelling events either.

Some diplomats do write a memoir stringing together anecdotes about their travels to various parts of the world. These are rarely published by commercial publishers unless, because of personal circumstances or the time and country of their appointment, their story is an extraordinary one. One such example is Edward Perkins, the first African American named ambassador to South Africa. Since he was appointed when apartheid was still the existing order, his experiences with the institutionalized racism of the day were ones that few ambassadors could match.42

Generally however, experiences in the Foreign Service are so foreign to most people’s existence that it takes more than just an interesting tale of adventures in exotic locales to generate interest. Being ambassador to an important country can furnish material, but being appointed to a minor one takes a real crisis to provide enough material for a book. Career ambassadors who illustrate two such cases are Jeffrey Davidow, who wrote about his time in Mexico, and Robert Gribbin, who described his postings in Rwanda before and after the genocide.

These two books also illustrate the differences in the role of an ambassador in a major versus a minor country. In addition to Mexico’s capacity for shoot-yourself-in-your-foot nationalism, which has been cultivated over a couple of centuries of grievances against its northern neighbor, Davidow had to deal with the many U.S. government agencies that were represented in his embassy. The conflicting agendas of these bureaucratic entities prompted him to observe that “while the Secretary of State is charged with the conduct of our international relations, dozens of other government entities operate overseas, often with little or no coordination with the Department of State.”43

While that is the case in Mexico, in obscure and distant countries, dozens of rogue bureaucrats are not the problem. Gribbin described this different environment as it applied to the Central African Republic: “I and my team in Bangui essentially made and implemented policy. We knew what the general parameters were, but we got few instructions and little attention. Most in Washington did not know the Central African Republic was a country, rather than a direction.”44
Because no attention was paid to the Central African Republic by any of the core constituencies of either political party, and with no more general American interests at stake, Gribbin was left to make it up as he went along. Davidow was not so fortunate. He describes the debate in Washington on immigration reform in 2001 as follows:

The big player in the debates turned out to be the Domestic Policy Council (DPC) of the White House, which took its cues from the president’s chief political advisor, Karl Rove. The DPC’s job was to filter policy recommendations from government agencies and screen out those that were likely to damage the president politically. It was here that the Republican Party’s plans to court Hispanic voters ran into harsh, vote-counting reality. Karl Rove, who had done much to increase expectation about Republican efforts to attract Hispanic voters, nevertheless calculated that any move that could be portrayed, correctly or not, as a legalization of undocumented aliens would alienate the president’s political base. And immigration reform looked like a vote loser to Rove.45

At least in 2001, nothing wasteful was done when using immigration as a tool for motivating the base. In the October 2006 rush to put Democrats on the defensive prior to the elections, President Bush approved providing $1.2 billion of the $7 billion cost to build the 700 miles of fencing along the 2,100-mile border with Mexico. The measure was justified as necessary to prevent terrorists from sneaking across the border, even though there was no evidence that had ever happened.46

Davidow’s and Gribbin’s books provide at least a glimpse of how the policy process plays out because they are both retired career ambassadors. Their ambassadorial status depended more on decades of working their way upward through the ranks rather than a quid pro quo in exchange for campaign contributions. Because political appointees rarely matter and owe their jobs to the president they write even fewer books than career officers do.

One who did was James Blanchard, a former Michigan politician who was ambassador to Canada under President Clinton at the time the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was passed. As was the case with Davidow’s book, trade relations and other issues with a neighbor were of sufficient interest to a general audience to get the book published.

Political appointees, rather than career civil servants, have made up between a quarter and a third of the total number of ambassadors since the time of President Kennedy. There are no minimum qualifications for political appointees, other than, in most cases, providing a significant
amount of money in campaign contributions. The countries to which they are appointed are, with few exceptions, the industrialized countries of the first world and the island nations of the Caribbean.

There are two good reasons for that. If someone is going to contribute a couple of hundred thousand dollars to buy an ambassadorship, they want to be assigned to a country whose name their friends will recognize. In addition, relations with other first world countries are so varied and deep that the ambassador is largely irrelevant. Given the ease of direct communications and air travel, together with large embassies with multiple agencies represented, the ambassador can easily be worked around if he or she is an obstacle.

In the Caribbean, the countries are as unimportant as they are beautiful. If the ambassador sinks his island paradise by accident, it won’t affect anyone else or really matter in Washington. As a result, books by appointed ambassadors are rare. Apparently no market exists for one entitled *How I Had Almost No Effect on Our Relations with France* or *How I Golfed my Way through an Ambassadorship in the Bahamas*.

A few political appointees below cabinet rank who hold positions in Washington or at the UN in New York do write about their experiences. They generally fall into two groups. The first consists of those who celebrate their own success and, in the process, suggest that they are available for appointment as secretary of state. With ambition still alive, they focus on their accomplishments. Richard Holbrooke had much to report in his book on negotiating the 1995 Dayton peace accords that brought an end to the fighting in Bosnia. As a result of this success, Holbrooke’s name will make most everyone’s short list of candidates for secretary of state in the next Democratic administration.

Those, like George Ball, fall into the second group—those who lament that their advice was not followed. Ball served as undersecretary of state in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and as ambassador to the UN in 1968, and his observations on America’s experience with Vietnam include the following:

> What malign phasing of the moon drove intelligent men to bog us down in the longest war in our history, not because our country or its major interests were in danger, but out of a misconceived concern for “our reputation”? Were our leaders really thinking about the reputation of our nation or primarily of their own place in history?

The Vietnam War, from the Gulf of Tonkin resolution to the withdrawal of the last combat soldier, lasted nearly nine years. By its
fifth year, the war in Iraq had lost the support of a solid majority of Americans. It is, therefore, unlikely that it will continue until March 2012 and break the record. The American exit from Vietnam was an unambiguous defeat. Whatever the outcome in Iraq, it will not end with helicopters landing on the roof of the embassy to evacuate the last Americans. Tenet’s book is an early entry in the contest to see who shoulders the blame for Iraq. Future books will debate whether it was worth the fight and whether we lost. One element that probably won’t be part of the plot in the more self-serving ones is why the decision was really made.

**Books by Academics**

The books written by those who have been involved in the foreign policy process are driven by the need to defend the decisions taken and to improve their place in history. Such books are usually insight-free because, when it comes to saying why the decisions were taken, only the noblest of intentions will be listed. Academics write books for other reasons. But their description of how the policy process operates is usually no more illuminating than that of the politicians.

Academics write because publication is the yardstick by which their professional accomplishment is measured. Their goal is to influence their peers, since their chances for tenure and promotion are determined by the opinion of others in their field.

They, therefore, like to wrap even the most pedestrian observations in convoluted language in order to impress their colleagues. While that may make their thoughts impenetrable, or at least uninteresting, to the average reader, the average reader is not the intended market. Take for instance the following observation: “The noncompensatory principle of political decision making states that politicians rarely will choose an alternative that will hurt them politically. Complicated foreign policy situations are often simplified by the use of the non-compensatory principle of decision making.” If the writer had put that thought in a more colloquial form, it would have come out as follows: A politician who cuts his own throat will bleed to death, and politicians see everything, including foreign policy, in those simple and stark terms.

In addition to writing for their peers, academics can also aim at the student market. This doesn’t enhance one’s professional reputation as much, but it can be financially rewarding if the book is widely adopted as a text for courses taught on the subject. Writing for that audience requires covering the topic broadly and in a manner
that offends no one. It also requires constantly putting out new editions—not because there is so much new and improved material for the updated volume, but because revision is required to keep the used-book market at bay. The publisher does not profit and the author does not receive royalties when a book is resold and used again by a different student.

The usual audience for academics, however, is their like-minded peers who share the same school of thought when it comes to international relations (IR) theory. And there is no shortage of schools to choose from. Looking at the books that examine these theories, one can find terms like realism and neorealism, rationalism, Marxism, hegemonism, isolationism, liberalism and neoliberalism, liberal internationalism, radical anti-imperialism, constructivism, feminism, and postmodernism.

There are a couple of reasons why there are so many theories. One would think the purpose of a general theory of international relations would be to make international events more intelligible by providing a framework for understanding them and revealing patterns that are common to them. If it did, the theory would help explain the past and give some indications of what the future might hold.

The problem is that when it comes to something as complex as the way one country relates to another, there are multiple explanations, and none of them can be definitively refuted. As one IR theory book put it:

Intellectual progress is not possible with the study of international relations because the matter under investigation cannot be subject to proof or strict confirmation. New ideas will certainly add to the knowledge about an issue, but their superiority to previous accounts can never be conclusively demonstrated. In International Relations, there is rarely a consensus about when theoretical progress is made and the central questions of the discipline are never finally settled: they will always be open to new interpretations and further refinement.50

The inability to show that one IR theory is better than another, or even to disprove those that might be wrong, might seem a serious problem except to those who would argue that every worm hole has a view of the sky. Another book on IR theory asserted just such a view that all the theories can be at least a little right: “All IR theoretical perspectives capture a reality of sorts, there are multiple realities to and readings of IR, and all them are ‘true’ in the sense that they give us some purchase on and understanding of IR events and topics.”51
Multiple readings can be misleading, however. In his book *Essence of Decision*, Graham Allison looked at the Cuban missile crisis from three different IR perspectives and made a plausible case for each of them. But he noted that each approach “attempts to emphasize what is relevant and important, and different conceptual lenses lead analysts to different judgments about what is relevant and important.”

So IR theories suffer from the fact that the bad ones can’t be discarded because they can’t be disproved. Yet, at the same time, supposedly all of them hold a certain element of truth. The result is they can mislead in terms of what is important and what is not. It is a bit like looking at a gum-ball machine, focusing only on the red ones and declaring gums balls are red. At the same time, the blue gum-ball theorist and the orange one and the green one all make the same argument. And none of them would say they capture only a small percentage of reality.

Academics, nonetheless, define and defend their theories because they know their success will be determined by the opinion of their peers. They must publish to succeed in the profession, but the only kinds of publications that really count are books and articles that have been evaluated by their peers. An article in an obscure peer-reviewed journal is worth more than an opinion piece in the *New York Times*.

In addition, IR theories don’t respond well to changing conditions or purely extraneous influences. Did Monica Lewinsky affect Clinton’s foreign policy? To hear Republican critics at the time, much of what Clinton did abroad was driven by the need to distract people from his scandal at home.

Another external factor is the growing number of lobbyists in Washington. There are over 60 of them for every member of Congress. They spend $200 million a month trying to influence those legislators. Their numbers and the amounts they charge new clients doubled between 2000 and 2005. Would lobbying be a multibillion-dollar industry if it produced no effect on policy? And if politics no longer stops at the water’s edge, why should lobbying?

The growth in the lobbying industry, like the three major changes described earlier—the end of the Cold War, globalization, and the bitter partisan divide in Washington—have resulted in little change in IR theory. IR realists believe the most basic characteristic of world politics is anarchy and that states are destined to compete for power and resources. How they account for the growth of the European Union (EU) and NATO is unclear.

IR theorists also don’t have much to say about the media. The media may not make the policy, but they certainly set the agenda of
the policymakers. On a slow news day, or one with fresh footage of a foreign disaster, the lead story can be from abroad. If the international news is pushed off the front pages by domestic issues, how does the IR theory compensate?

Some writers take a more historical perspective when writing about America’s foreign policy, but it can be as unaffected by current events as IR theorists seem to be. When sifting through history, some writers discern grand currents in American foreign policy, such as peace and prosperity, stability and security, democracy and defense. Walter Russell Mead names his four grand currents after presidents and lists them as Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian, Jacksonian, and Wilsonian.

Pure politics would seem to have little place in such descriptions. Is it likely that George Bush rises each morning and decides whether he feels Jacksonian or Hamiltonian that day? Or is it more likely that he arises and says what his political advisors tell him is in his best political interests?

And when there is a shift in policy, does it reflect the triumph of the Wilsonians in government over those advocating the others schools of thought? Or did the hard-nosed realists of yesterday suddenly wake up as idealistic internationalists? Isn’t it more likely that the guiding principle is the politics of the moment and not the grand currents of the past? And what is often described as a change in philosophy is really little more than a change in tactics.

While books by academics are, therefore, interesting historical and intellectual exercises, do they really tell us anything about what motivates the decision makers? Or is it not simply one variation or another of focusing on the gum balls of a specific color, ignoring the rest, and losing the overall context and any appreciation of the pressures of the moment?

In addition to IR theorists and historians, there are two other groups among those who are not practitioners and who contribute books on foreign policy—those employed at think tanks and the occasion journalist covering international affairs. They are often a bit like romance novelists. In romance novels there are two basic elements—a central love story and an optimistic ending. The love story is fraught with conflict, and the resolution of that conflict is the climax of the book. The novel ends in a way that makes the reader feel good, because it is based on the notion that good people in the world are rewarded and evil people are punished.

And so it is with journalists and think tankers. They depict a world in which the United States faces new and grave foreign policy challenges and is failing to respond to them. They then describe the
policy they would implement if a president were wise enough to name them secretary of state. The adoption of their approach results in the government rising to the occasion, resolving the problem, and advancing the national interests. The world they describe is generally free of politicians, lobbyists, pressure groups, and anyone else with other ideas about whose interests should be served first.

Among those who believe their interests are the national interests and should come first are the financial supporters of the think tanks. As noted earlier, think tanks have proliferated and have become one more tool in the partisan political struggle. Wealthy conservatives, unhappy with objective analysis, have funded organizations like the Heritage Foundation and the AEI. The influence of money on the way think tanks think is summed up in the following sentence: “Michael Franc, a top official at the Heritage Foundation, said his organization hosted 600 of its top conservative donors last week and heard more widespread complaining about Republicans than at any other point in the past 12 years.”

If the Heritage Foundation has 600 “top conservative donors,” it is not going to take a position that alienates them; thus, its analysis will dutifully toe the party line. Progressives have responded in kind with their own think tanks. They will tailor their research to cater to the political orientation of their benefactors just as the conservative think tanks do.

There are older, more established think tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) that strive to be nonpartisan. The CFR was established in 1921 and has been called “the most powerful agent of foreign policy outside the State Department.”

The CFR’s President, Richard Haass, has written the archetypical if-only-I-were-secretary-of-state book. The CFR’s website says the book “describes an unprecedented moment in which the United States has a chance to bring about a world where most people are safe, free, and can enjoy a decent standard of living.” It goes on to say that “Haas provides a much-needed foreign policy compass, one with the potential to do for this post–Cold War, post–9/11, post–Iraq world what George Kennan’s containment doctrine did for the previous era.”

The book talks about turning America’s unprecedented power into a consensus that would integrate the efforts of the major countries in an era of unprecedented cooperation. It says nothing about the obstacles to agreeing on and achieving such a course, and domestic politics or special interests seem to disappear in response to Haass’s vision of a better world. But then Haass has also been quoted as saying
he would go to his grave not knowing why the Bush administration went to war in Iraq.\textsuperscript{59}

Another would-be secretary of state is Dennis Ross, and he also does not answer the question, “Why did Bush go to war in Iraq?” Ross spent a dozen years as the chief Middle East negotiator under the first President Bush and President Clinton without much success. In his book \textit{Statecraft: And How to Restore America’s Standing in the World}, Ross criticizes President Bush not for invading Iraq, but for mishandling the aftermath and for opting out of a leadership role in trying to help the Israelis and Palestinians reach a lasting peace.\textsuperscript{60} Ross offers no explanation for these failures. He just suggests that statecraft, his term for using the soft power of diplomacy as well as the hard power of military force, would prevent similar mistakes in the future.

Books by aspiring secretaries of state have to show the author’s suitability for the job, but they must also avoid being critical of anyone who might help them get it. Alienating the wrong people can put future employment prospects at risk. While Ross served in the Clinton administration and, according to one review, is a self-described lifelong Democrat,\textsuperscript{61} he contributed to the defense fund for Scooter Libby, Vice President Cheney’s chief of staff. When Libby was convicted on four felony counts of perjury and obstruction of justice, Ross wrote to the judge, urging a lenient sentence. Having friends, even among felons, is important in Washington.

These consummate insiders and foreign policy mavens either don’t know or won’t say why Bush invaded Iraq or why he ignored the Middle East peace process for so long. It could be because there are groups from which Bush draws his political strength that don’t view such policies as mistakes.

\textbf{WHY THE MEDIA DOESN’T HELP}

While books by insiders, academics, and think tank specialists provide little understanding of the foreign policy process, the media also usually offer little help. The failure of the press with regard to the reporting on the administration’s case for invading Iraq has been well documented.\textsuperscript{62} The media’s inability to explain foreign policy is not limited to Iraq, but is systemic and due to many reasons that have to do with more than just journalists. Readers, editors, and owners all contribute to the problem.

Those who want news have more ways to get it and many different possible sources. That does not mean they are better informed or that
they even want to be. People increasingly get their news from cable television and the Internet, but that has made little improvement in what they know about national and international affairs. Many are most interested in local stories, as they care about what they believe affects them most directly each day. In newspapers outside the largest urban areas, international news is four paragraphs on page 3.

The Internet and cable TV provide a wide variety of news sources, but most people don’t have the time or experience necessary to filter out the reliable information from pure hearsay and opinion. Internet blogs, which have proliferated and have no barriers to entry and no formal means of quality control, have added greatly to the problem.

In addition, many people seek not information, but validation and reinforcement of their beliefs—and that is when they are not simply looking to be entertained. In 2004, over half those who watched Fox News described themselves as conservative, up from 40 percent four years earlier. At the same time, the audience for CNN had become more Democratic-leaning. During this period, Republicans also became more distrustful of virtually all major media outlets.

Those who watched the “fair and balanced” Fox News were also demonstrably more ignorant about the Iraq war than were those who relied on other sources. A survey in late 2003 found that 80 percent of Fox viewers had major misperceptions about the war, while 55 percent of CNN’s viewers had such misperceptions, and only 23 percent of those who got their news from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) did.

That Fox consciously caters to conservatives is something acknowledged and applauded by conservative commentators. It reflects the philosophy of Rupert Murdoch, the Australian-born billionaire who owns Fox and other media outlets, that there is no useful distinction between news and editorial comment. A veteran Fox producer revealed in 2003 that Fox News executives, in order to ensure its reporting conformed to management’s political views, issued a daily memorandum to staff on what news would be covered and how. Vice President Cheney has repaid the favor by making it known that when he travels, the television in his hotel room has to be tuned to Fox, and he has repeatedly praised the network in gatherings of Republicans, calling it more accurate than other outlets.

Some media owners tilt the orientation of their publications for ideological reasons. Korean cult leader Sun Myung Moon has subsidized the reliably right-wing Washington Times to the tune of $100 million a year and, according to one former reporter, the total to keep
the paper afloat exceeds $3 billion. The orientation and motivation of Moon, who has been convicted of tax fraud and accused of money laundering, is rarely noted when conservatives cite articles from the Times to support their arguments.

Other owners, instead of pouring money into their publications to buy influence, demand they return profits that only an investor in the most unstable third world country would expect. The Los Angeles Times has been subjected to continuing turmoil and budget cuts because its owners are unsatisfied with a 20 percent annual profit margin. At that rate of return, an investment doubles in value in less than four years. But it is apparently not enough, and cutting overseas bureaus and the number of reporters has been a popular way to squeeze more profit out of the Times and many other papers. The result has been less and less ability to cover the news well, particularly international news.

Another problem has been the government itself, which apparently has no real interest in people understanding more than it wants them to. Government agencies have spent millions of dollars on video news releases that run on local television stations as legitimate news stories, with no indication they are produced by the government with the intention of conveying the government’s position. After investigating this practice, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), an investigative arm of Congress, labeled it “covert propaganda” and said it was illegal. Other government practices have included putting media commentators like Armstrong Williams on the payroll without the government or the journalist revealing the arrangement. And then there was the male prostitute who was regularly admitted to the White House pressroom so he could serve up softball questions in press conferences and report the results on a couple of Republican websites.

The White House does not have a monopoly on government manipulation of the media. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld disbanded the Office of Strategic Influence in the Pentagon once it became know the office was considering plans to provide false news items to foreign journalists in order to influence policymakers and public opinion abroad. A few months later, the Pentagon quietly awarded a $300,000 contract to a private firm to do just that. While putting out propaganda to influence American public opinion is not permitted, Pentagon officials are not unaware that in today’s global media anything reported abroad can quickly be picked up and repeated at home.
Military officials are also not above simply lying to put the best spin on a story. When Private Jessica Lynch was captured in Iraq, unnamed U.S. officials told reporters that she had fought fiercely and emptied her weapon into attacking Iraqis. She, in fact, was rendered unconscious when the vehicle she was in crashed, and she woke up in the hospital. Another example was Patrick Tillman, a former professional football player, who was killed in Afghanistan by members of his own unit. Military officials fabricated an account in which Tillman, exhibiting extreme bravery, was cut down by enemy fire. In the words of one New York Times columnist, “a government that will lie about the tragic fates of honorable young Americans like Pat Tillman and Jessica Lynch will lie to the public about anything.”

That includes foreign policy and why it is made.

The reporters themselves are another potential problem, even those with national reputations. The New York Times reporter Judith Miller, in repeating administration claims to justify invading Iraq, clearly demonstrated that she was more interested in access than in accuracy. Having high-level sources is essential to a reporter, who needs quotes, even if anonymous, in order to fill out a story. A journalist who writes a story that contains criticism of government policy is less likely to have his or her phone calls returned by a government official.

In a supposed “time of war,” response to criticism can be more than unanswered phone calls. Those who question the government’s story can be accused of treason even by their colleagues. An editorial in the Wall Street Journal claimed that the New York Times had as “a major goal not winning the war on terror but obstructing it.” The Journal’s own political editor was quick to assert that he knew no one on the paper’s news staff who believed that, but that hardly lessened the impact that such a crude effort at intimidation has.

The United States is tied with six other nations for 16th place in the latest annual rating of press freedom by Freedom House. Were it up to the editorial page of the Wall Street Journal, this country would rate considerably worse. While it is beyond the scope of this book to try to compare how much people in other countries know about how their governments make decisions, it is clear that the media in the United States often fail to provide much insight into what the U.S. government does and why it does it. The next chapter will pose that question and will try to respond to it, but it won’t provide an answer that will be embraced by all.
CHAPTER 4

HOW IT REALLY WORKS

The end of the Cold War, globalization, and partisanship have all contributed to changing the way foreign policy is made. When the Cold War ended, the basic consensus about the purpose of foreign policy was eliminated, and any number of definitions of the national interest became possible. Since the survival of the United States is no longer at stake, those definitions now have more to do with the interests of the people making them than with the interests of the nation as a whole.

Globalization has brought a whole new host of problems and actors into the picture that in the past had little interest in, or affect on, foreign policy. Since international problems have affected more Americans more profoundly, new groups have sought to influence foreign policy as a way of protecting themselves from the changes wrought by globalization. Far from being largely the preserve of specialists inside the Beltway and on the island of Manhattan as it used to be, foreign policy formulation has become a game any number can play.

At the same time that globalization has increased the complexity of making foreign policy, political partisanship in Washington has made it more difficult to respond to the challenges posed by globalization. As one senior staff member of the Council on Foreign Relations put it:

People naturally disagree about who is responsible for the partisan tone and tactics in Washington these days. But most agree that it’s worse than it used to be. More important, this partisanship threatens a dumbing down of policy. That said, a call for bipartisanship in foreign policy gets nowhere. For some, it sounds like a request to listen to the
out-of-power party even though it never listened to those in power. To others, bipartisan implies something along the lines of “bland,” “homogenous,” “stripped of passion,” or “watered down.”¹

Partisanship is, of course, not new to Washington. It has always been a part of the political process, and it would be difficult to demonstrate that it is at an all-time historic high, since it is hard to quantify. On the other hand, it would be hard to argue that it is not bad enough to negatively affect the way policy is made. Pundits of all descriptions have noted the fact that bipartisanship is rare and that when it does happen, it generates little coverage in the media.

Some writers have linked political polarization to income inequality and immigration. They argue that as the latter two have grown since the 1970s, politics has become more polarized.² Others see the standing of Congress and its ability to accomplish anything to be in decline because of the poisonsly partisan division in both houses and in the country at large. They believe this partisan warfare has led to catering to “the base,” which for Republicans is their most conservative supporters, and for Democrats, their most liberal ones.³

Even those who argue that the American public itself has not become significantly more polarized recognize that politicians, party activists, and special-interest groups have used hot topics like abortion to magnify the relatively small differences among the vast majority of Americans. It may be true that the supposed “culture war” is really a struggle between increasingly ideologically polarized political activists from both parties. But even though most Americans are caught in the middle, they are often forced to choose between the extremes.⁴

So the question of whether partisanship is worse than it has ever been in American history is not the issue. The issue is whether it seriously affects the way decisions—including foreign policy decisions—are made, and that would seem to be undeniable.

It is undeniable, in part, because some of the significant players in Washington don’t hide their contempt for bipartisanship and characterize it as a sign of weakness. Grover Norquist, the influential Republican strategist, even described bipartisanship as “another form of date rape.”⁵ Such extreme partisanship is not just ideological one-upmanship. It is also useful for generating enthusiasm and contributions from the core constituencies of both political parties. Because money and votes are to be found in partisan positions, the fact that politics no longer stops at the water’s edge may be something politicians lament, but rarely fail to take advantage of.
President Bush, for instance, accepted his party’s nomination in 2000 with a promise to be “a uniter, not a divider.” He described himself as an outsider who would change the tone of Washington to one of civility and respect. And yet he went on to become “the most polarizing president in the more than 50 years that public opinion polls have regularly measured citizens’ assessments of presidents.”6 This did not happen by accident. Clearly, polarization is good political strategy, even if it means disagreement about what should matter most in foreign policy.

It is not just the president who thinks polarization makes good politics. It works at the local level too. Ann Coulter, a conservative writer whose idea of insight is to refer to Muslims as rag heads, visited north central Florida in October 2005. Her speech at a dinner for local Republicans brought in $60,000. Half that amount went to her as a speaking fee, $10,000 covered the expenses of the event, and the remaining $20,000 went to the party. Local Republican officials could not have been more pleased with the event, not just because of the money raised, but because of Coulter’s “ability to reach out and energize current or potential party members.”7

The high level of partisanship, the lack of consensus on how to define the national interest abroad, and the increasing number of challenges to deal with because of globalization have all contributed to the complexity and difficulty of making foreign policy. Instead of starting with a description of how it is made under such conditions, it would be easier to start by saying how it is not made. It is not driven by the grand theories of political scientists or by the broad currents described by historians. Nor is it simply the result of domestic politics.

The grand theories do not apply, because the way academics think is not the way politicians act. Given the changes previously described, the historical currents of the past also don’t predict the policy decisions of today or tomorrow. And the system has too many moving parts to say that it responds to any one stimulus, even something as fundamental to government as domestic politics. But because the system has so many moving parts, the elements of grand theories and historical trends can be discovered if one sets out to find them. If you stare at a gum-ball machine and point only to the red gum balls, an argument can be made that all gum balls are red.

There are three general principles that apply to policymaking, but they are not the ones that are normally listed in books on foreign policy. First, politicians say what they want people to believe and act
in ways designed to ensure their reelection. Second, self-interest is often the primary motivation, not just of politicians, but of others who implement or seek to influence foreign policy. Third, self-interest leads to the pursuit of power, and Lord Acton was right—power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The implication of the first principle is that one should never confuse what politicians say foreign policy is with the foreign policy that results from their actions. In other words, there is a difference between articulated foreign policy and actual foreign policy.

Articulated foreign policy is the one politicians describe when they give speeches espousing certain values that they hope will attract voters. Articulated foreign policy helps create the impression that there are grand currents in foreign policy. Some see the interests and foundations of American foreign policy as peace and prosperity, stability and security, democracy and defense. And those are certainly reflected when the politicians talk.

In mid-2004, in articles in Foreign Affairs, Nebraska senator Chuck Hagel described a Republican foreign policy and former national security advisor Samuel Berger described a Democratic one. In similar articles in mid-2007, two leading contenders for their respective party’s nomination for president, Illinois senator Barack Obama and former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney outlined the foreign policy that they would have if they were elected.

There are many common points in the four articles and few differences, with the exception of the historical examples they cite. Expanding foreign trade, creating greater energy independence, strengthening international alliances and organizations, fighting terrorism and the spread of nuclear weapons, paying attention to the Middle East and the Western Hemisphere, rebuilding and expanding the military, combating disease and poverty, and exercising American leadership appear in the four articles over and over again.

The main distinction between the articles is that the Republicans refer to Reagan, Eisenhower, and Vandenberg in discussing the past. They also blame either Clinton or unnamed bureaucrats for any current failures, without giving any hint that the current president may have had something to do with such failures. The Democrats talk about Kennedy, Truman, and Roosevelt and, without naming him directly, infer that the problems America faces today are in no small part due to the failings of the George W. Bush administration.

The differences, beyond historical references, are slight. In past elections, and especially since 9/11, a major theme of Republicans has been that they can protect the country far better than the Democrats
can. Now everyone wants to be tough on defense. Obama proposed expanding the ground forces of the military by 92,000, while Romney said it should be 100,000.

While Democratic and Republican leaders seem close together in the kind of foreign policy they say they want, there is also not much difference among the rank and file. The difference between Democrats and Republicans that is most stark is when it comes to how assertive or muscular foreign policy should be. One study by the Pew Research Center concluded that “for the most part, opinions about the use of force are what divide Democratic-oriented groups from Republican groups. On other foreign policy issues, even contentious questions about working with allies, the partisan pattern is not as clear.”

This difference is reflected most strongly in views on the Iraq war where the partisan divide is without precedent. The difference between the Republican and Democratic views on the war in Vietnam never exceeded 18 percentage points, but in a 2006 poll the difference between them on Iraq was 50 percent.

The views on Iraq are in a way self-reinforcing because of the sources the partisans chose to believe. Nearly three-quarters of Republicans trusted the military for news on the war, while less than 30 percent felt confident in the accuracy of media reports. Less than a third of Democrats, on the other hand, put much stock in what the military said, while a little over half believed the media.

Political leaders from both parties, taking note of this divide, expressed the fear that it could further exacerbate the degree of partisan polarization on foreign policy in general. The right-wing magazine the *Weekly Standard* seemed happy to report that it already had, stating,

> The polarization that has characterized American politics since the presidency of Ronald Reagan has extended its reach to foreign affairs. Never have the differences between the parties on the issues of war and peace been so distinct. At no time since World War II has the divergence of partisan support for an ongoing war been as great. Nor have attitudes toward power—its origins, nature and application—reflected ideological and partisan identification to the extent they do today.

The *Weekly Standard* then went on to describe the Democrats as the party of peace and the Republicans as the party of power. Apparently, it hopes that in these troubled times, power will trump peace in the minds of insecure and fearful voters.
The fears of political leaders and the fantasies of the Far Right notwithstanding, the political activists, and not the general public, are the inhabitants of the extreme ends of the political spectrum. For the majority in the middle, there is still substantial agreement on a broad spectrum of foreign policy issues. In January 2005, the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland published the results of an opinion poll on what it found to be the points of consensus regarding major foreign policy issues. In nearly all cases, the positions were supported by a clear majority of those who responded to the poll, regardless of whether they were Republicans or Democrats. In a small number of cases, one or the other party was divided, but in no case was the majority of one party clearly opposed.

While these points represent a consensus view of the public, regardless of political party, they bear almost no resemblance to the foreign policy of the Bush administration. With the possible exception of those points in italics, and even those are debatable, the current foreign policy has been one of neglect and often opposition to what the public consensus supposedly supports. The consensus positions were as follows:

**The U.S. Role in the World**
- Do not pursue a general policy that emphasizes disengagement or U.S. dominance, but rather multilateral cooperation.
- *Make preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and combating international terrorism the top priorities in U.S. foreign policy.*

**Multilateral Institutions**
- Strengthen the UN.
- Take part in UN peacekeeping.
- Comply with adverse World Trade Organization (WTO) decisions.
- Participate in the International Criminal Court.
- Give the World Health Organization (WHO) the power to intervene.

**U.S. Military Capacity**
- Do not make further increases in the number of U.S. military bases.
- Do not make further increases in defense spending.
- Do not develop new types of nuclear weapons.
- Continue research on missile defense, but do not deploy until proven effective.
• Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
• Participate in the land mines treaty.

THE USE OF U.S. MILITARY FORCE: PRINCIPLES
• Go to war only with a government that is developing WMD or supporting terrorists if it poses an imminent threat to the United States, or the UN Security Council approves.
• Use U.S. military force to deal with a humanitarian crisis, especially to stop genocide.
• Do not use U.S. military force to replace dictators with democratic governments.
• Do not use nuclear weapons except in response to a nuclear attack.

THE WAR ON TERROR
• In the effort to fight terrorism, strengthen international law through multilateral institutions, use military force, promote economic development of poor countries, and be even-handed in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.
• Do not use torture to gain information.

IRAQ
• Keep U.S. troops in Iraq for now, but do not increase the number.
• Withdraw U.S. forces if a new Iraqi government requests it.
• Do not establish permanent bases in Iraq.

DARFUR
• Do contribute troops to a UN intervention to stop genocide in Darfur.

IRAN
• Deal with Iran by trying to build better relations rather than by making implied military threats.
• Have the European Union and the UN, not the United States, take the lead in dealing with Iran.

NORTH KOREA
• In the effort to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program, be willing to sign a nonaggression pact and provide North Korea with more aid.
• Do not use military force against North Korea unless the United States has approval from the UN, U.S. allies, and South Korea.
Why American Foreign Policy Fails

**ISRAELI–PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**
- Be evenhanded when dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.
- Do not invest greater political effort or additional resources to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

**AFGHANISTAN**
- *Contribute troops to peacekeeping in Afghanistan.*

**TAIWAN**
- Do not use U.S. troops in the event China invades Taiwan.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**
- Limit greenhouse gasses through legislation, including the McCain Lieberman Climate Stewardship Act, even if this would incur significant costs.
- Require car manufacturers to meet higher fuel-efficiency standards, even if this would increase the cost of buying or leasing a car, and give tax credits for more energy-efficient cars and appliances.
- Participate in the Kyoto treaty.
- Try to get developing countries to limit greenhouse gas emissions, but do not expect them to actually reduce them.

**TRADE**
- Work toward lowering trade barriers while also pursuing more trade-adjustment assistance to help American workers adapt.
- Include requirements for minimum labor standards and environmental standards in trade agreements.
- *Pursue a Free Trade Area of the Americas.*
- Do not provide subsidies for large farming businesses, but do provide them for small farmers.

Clearly, there is a wide divergence between what the public supposedly wants in foreign policy and what the actual policy is. Some academics have examined this disconnect between public opinion and government policy. One book argued that such “gaps between leaders and the public are harmful and that by using public opinion as a guideline policymakers could craft a more effective, sustainable, and democratic foreign policy.” Another paper entitled “Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy over Time?” reached the following conclusion: “The results of cross-sectional and time series analyses suggest that U.S. foreign policy is most heavily and consistently influenced by business, followed by experts (who, however, may
themselves be influenced by business). Labor appears to have significant but smaller impacts, and the general public practically no effect at all except on issues of very high salience in cross-sectional analysis.” [Emphasis added]

So why does foreign policy not reflect the general opinion of both Democrats and Republicans if the resulting policy would be more effective and more sustainable as well as more democratic? And why are there differences between what Democratic and Republican leaders articulate and what the actual policy is? In both cases, it is because of the way the policy is made. That process is neither transparent nor simple. To understand it requires considering the motivations, actions, and interactions of those who make and implement foreign policy (the politicians and bureaucrats), those who influence it (core constituencies and other interest groups), those who write about it (academics and the media), and those who occasionally read about it (the general public).

**The President and the Core Constituencies**

When it comes to foreign policy, the president is the proverbial 800-pound gorilla. He can be the dominant force and can set the tone and make the decisions on any issue in which he chooses to become involved. He has many demands on his time, and the number of international issues to which he pays attention and the time he devotes to them are limited. He is not only the head of the executive branch and the leader of the free world, however. He is first and foremost a politician and the leader of his political party.

In his first term, a president cares about nothing more than reelection. Once reelected, his thoughts turn to ensuring his place in history. To achieve either goal requires keeping the core constituencies of his party enthusiastic and energized. If his party’s most loyal voters don’t turn out, he will have no hope of reelection. If they do not remember him favorably after he leaves office, his status in history will be greatly diminished. When a woman does become president, this will continue to hold true as political ambition knows no gender.

A party’s core constituencies, its “base,” consist of those groups of which a significant majority consistently votes in favor of that party. These change only slightly, and only a few groups are contested constituencies among which both parties seriously compete for a majority. In the case of the Republican Party, a good bit of its base is composed of what can be called the five Rs—the rich, the religious, the rural, the rabid right, and the racists. For the Democrats, the base includes the
poor, urban dwellers, labor union members, African Americans, Hispanics, pro-choice groups, environmentalists, educated women, trial lawyers, teachers, and government workers. In general, Republican groups believe in less government and lower taxes, while Democratic groups are usually comfortable with more government and are less opposed to higher taxes. While disliking “big” government, Republicans make an exception when it comes to protecting certain “values.” On issues like abortion, they believe in a strong government role that imposes the views of one group on society as a whole.

This breakdown of core constituencies is largely borne out by one analysis of the outcome of the 2004 election. Voters in the following groups favored Democrats over Republicans by the percentages in parenthesis: Living in a city of over 500,000 (21), Hispanic (15), unmarried women (25), African American (77), income under $15,000 (27), and gay/lesbian (54). Voters in the following groups favored Republicans over Democrats by the percentages in parenthesis: southern whites (41), white Protestants (35), income over $100,000 (17), regular church attendees (22) and those from rural areas (19).

The rich vote Republican because it is in their interest to do so. Among the 400 richest Americans listed by Forbes magazine, of those who contributed to the 2004 presidential campaign, 72 percent gave to Bush. They have been repaid handsomely. Over half the benefits of Bush’s tax cuts go to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, whose average annual income is nearly $1.5 million. The rest of America gets chump change. The 2003 tax cut gave only $217 to each middle-income person. And it is estimated that by 2010 the bottom 20 percent of Americans will get only 1 percent of the benefit.

The rich include corporate executives, and they also gave overwhelmingly to the Republicans. Of the 268 corporate political action committees (PACs) that gave more than $100,000 in the months before the 2004 election, 245 of them gave more to Republicans than to Democrats. According to one survey in 2004, the number of chief executive officers (CEOs) donating to the Bush campaign was five times the number donating to his Democratic opponent.

With a Republican president and a Republican Congress ensuring that the government was doing its utmost for big business, it should be no surprise that corporate profits from 2001 to 2004 grew at an annual rate after inflation of 14.5 percent, the fastest growth since World War II. One could argue that higher profits are good for the economy and create jobs. A rising tide lifts all yachts; however, it doesn’t help those who don’t have boats and can’t even swim.
During the same period, the number of people in poverty rose from 31.6 million in 2000 to 37.0 million in 2004.21

On the other hand, lawyers in 2006 gave 70 percent of their contributions to Democrats and 29 percent to the GOP.22 That pattern of political contributions puts talk about eliminating frivolous lawsuits in a different light. Republican proposals for tort reform are really about protecting one of their core constituencies (big business), while at the same time sticking it to a Democratic one (trial lawyers.)

One core constituency that used to be solidly Democratic is now solidly Republican. To say that the Republican Party is the party of racists is not to say that all Republicans are racist or even that all racists are Republicans. Instead, it is to acknowledge what has been true for nearly half a century—that the Republicans replaced the Democrats as the party of choice of most racists.

In the presidential elections of 1952 and 1958, Adlai Stevenson won nearly all the southern states and no states outside the South. Stevenson, a liberal, lost both elections to Republican conservative and war hero Dwight Eisenhower, but carried the South because of the tradition of white southerners voting for anyone up to and including a yellow dog if he or she were a Democratic. That started with the Civil War and Reconstruction, since the party of Mr. Lincoln was on the wrong side of the slavery issue from the southern point of view. It began to change in the late 1940s with the rise of the Dixiecrats, but the break was complete with the civil rights legislation enacted under Lyndon Johnson and a Democratic congress in the 1960s.

As one New York Times columnist put it, “When Democrats revolted against racism, the GOP rallied to its banner.”23 To make sure no one missed the point, Ronald Reagan began his campaign for the presidency in 1980 by going to Philadelphia, Mississippi—the same town where three civil rights workers had been murdered 16 years earlier. The focus of Reagan’s speech was states’ rights, and the message was clear—a Reagan presidency would not interfere in the right of each state to discriminate. Southern whites have been a consistent core constituency for Republicans ever since, and in 2004, 70 percent of them voted for Bush.24

African Americans have repaid the favor by voting nine to one in favor of Democratic presidential candidates opposing Bush. In the wake of the administration’s ineffective response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, President Bush’s approval rating among African Americans fell to 2 percent.25 Should Katrina be forgotten, there will be other reminders. As Bob Herbert, a New York Times columnist put it in 2007, “George W. Bush, in a little more than six years, has tilted
the (supreme) court so radically that it is now, like the administration itself, relentlessly hostile to the interests of black people.\textsuperscript{26}

A group with which Bush does find favor is religious Americans. His reelection, according to the Pew Research Center, “owed much to the support he received from highly religious voters, especially white evangelical Protestants.\textsuperscript{27} In 2004 that group’s support of Bush rose to 78 percent, a gain of 10 percentage points since 2000, no doubt because Bush, according to noted historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., is “the most aggressively religious president in American history.”\textsuperscript{28} That aggressiveness does not appeal to all religions, however. Three-quarters of those who identified themselves as Jewish voted for Bush’s Democratic opponents in 2000 and 2004.

What do core constituencies have to do with foreign policy? Everything and nothing, which is also another reason why the grand theories don’t work. On most international issues, there is no strongly held view on the part of any core constituency and therefore no effect on policy. When there is a strongly held view, or when one is created by media attention or grassroots organizing efforts, then the potential impact is very significant.

The next chapter will discuss several specific cases of how foreign policy is affected by the “base” and by other interest groups. One example is worth describing now, since it involves a number of core constituencies from both parties.

In mid-2007, when the Senate made another attempt to pass a major reform of immigration, the bill failed. It was a bill that few people—other than the small handful of senators that drafted it and brought it to the floor without hearings—liked. It posed a dilemma for both parties because their core constituencies were divided over the legislation.

For Democrats, some labor unions feared the bill would depress wages, while other unions wanted to see a path to citizenship for their members who were immigrants.\textsuperscript{29} Others feared that immigration would not only depress wages but also lead to greater inequality and a permanently disenfranchised underclass.\textsuperscript{30} While some pro-immigrant groups welcomed the legislation, others opposed it because it shifted the priorities for citizenship away from immigrants with family ties to those with education and skills.

The Republicans were even more divided. The business lobby wanted the workers, especially the ones willing to work for less. On the other hand, talk-radio hosts, about 90 percent of whom are conservative, used their programs and the Internet to whip up grassroots opposition, and the bill was doomed.\textsuperscript{31} Republican
senator Trent Lott was upset by this reaction, even though radio talk-show hosts should be his ideological bedfellows. He complained that “talk radio is running America. We have to deal with that problem.”

One of the bill’s most aggressive opponents, Republican senator David Vitter of Louisiana, said, “To suggest this was about racism is the height of ugliness and arrogance.” But another Republican senator, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, did just that saying, “We’ve been down this road before—no Catholics, no Jews, Irish need not apply.” Just as the Ku Klux Klan gathered tens of thousands of adherents in the 1920s and promised to protect American society and culture from the onslaught of immigrants—in those days from Ireland and Italy—radio talk-show hosts energized their listeners in 2007 with the same message.

The bill failed despite strong backing from the president. According to one article, Bush’s proimmigration views were formed by his growing up in west Texas, where Mexican workers were common and included the maid in the Bush household. Perhaps the president simply saw his place in history better served by siding with the business lobby than with the xenophobes in his party.

While it pleased one core constituency, the bill’s defeat could be a significant defeat in the long run for the Republican Party. Hispanics vote solidly Democratic, but are considered social conservatives even if they are more liberal on economic policies. For that reason they had been considered a constituency among whom Republicans could make significant inroads. That goal has been made much more difficult by the immigration bill. In the words of a prominent Republican Hispanic, “The tone of the debate, and the way it was framed in sort of an ‘us against them’ way, has done great harm in wooing Hispanics to the (Republican) Party.”

Hispanic support for Republican candidates had already dropped from 40 percent in 2004 to about 30 percent in 2006, and some speculated the immigration bill would cause the Republicans to lose a number of western states in the next election. Democratic presidential contenders seem intent on making that happen, especially since the early primary elections are being held in a number of states with sizeable blocs of Hispanic voters. With Hispanics the largest ethnic minority and growing rapidly, both parties will be looking for ways to attract voters from this group, and foreign policy initiatives will likely be one of the tools used. The next chapter will talk about how Republicans keep one Hispanic subgroup, Cuban Americans, energized and faithful to the GOP.
While Hispanics are moving more toward the Democratic camp, one group remains the bedrock of the Republican Party. Christian conservatives have become an active and essential element of Republican strength. John Danforth, an Episcopal minister and former Republican senator from Missouri, has described how this happened by noting that since he left the Congress in 1995, “American politics has been characterized by two phenomena—the increased activism of the Christian right, especially in the Republican Party, and the collapse of bipartisan collegiality.” He went on to say, “I do not think it is a stretch to suggest a relationship between the two. To assert that I am on God’s side and you are not, that I know God’s will and you do not, and that I will use the power of government to advance my understanding of God’s kingdom is certain to produce hostility.” And that is just what some Republicans have done. For instance, on the floor of the House, John Hostettler, a Republican representative from Indiana, accused Democrats of “denigrating and demonizing Christians.” Conservative writer Ann Coulter wrote an entire book about how godless liberals are.

Danforth has concluded that “Republicans have transformed our party into the political arm of conservative Christians.” The relationship has worked out well for both sides. One conservative Christian leader was willing to admit that fact in an opinion piece in the New York Times in which he pointed out that “in the past several years, American evangelicals, and I am one of them, have amassed greater political power than at any time in our history.”

James Dobson, considered the nation’s most influential evangelical leader, is not shy about using that power. On one occasion, he sent a letter to more than one million of his supporters in which he both threatened Democratic senators if they blocked conservative appointments to the Supreme Court and demanded that President Bush appoint “strict constructionists” to the court.

The Republicans were also not shy about using the political power of Christian conservatives. According to a New York Times editorial in July 2004, “the Bush–Cheney campaign is buttonholing Christian churches nationwide to serve as virtual party precincts in the Republican drive to turn out voters in November.” The strategy worked. Bush’s conservative Christian base was essential to his reelection and, according to exit polls, he won 79 percent of the 26.5 million evangelical voters.

It is not just Protestants whom the Republicans court. According to the National Catholic Reporter, an independent newspaper, President Bush, on a trip to Rome five months before the 2004 elections, asked
a top Vatican official to push American bishops to speak out more about political issues. The bishops may have delivered, as 52 percent of the 31 million Catholics who voted supported Bush.

The politicians get votes from this relationship, and the preachers get power and payoffs. Part of the payoff has been in making the war on poverty profitable for religious organizations. Bush has pushed for increased funding for religion-based groups, while, at the same time, he has proposed deep cuts for many traditional antipoverty programs. Advocates for faith-based government-funded programs claim that religious organizations are more efficient, but they simultaneously push for them to be exempt from many regulations and taxes that apply to secular groups. As a result, the scope of faith-based favoritism has grown rapidly at the state and federal levels. Secular groups are subject to many requirements that don’t apply to religious organizations, even when they are providing exactly the same kind of services.

Some might ask if this is not a legitimate, even more effective way to implement government programs. It would be of some comfort to believe that, but according to John Dilulio, the man who initially headed the Bush administration’s faith-based initiatives office, the White House had no interest in the substance of policy and cared only about political payoffs. As a result, he said, “What you’ve got is everything—and I mean everything—being run by the political arm.” The initial reaction from the White House to these remarks was that “good politics is good policy.” White House press spokesman Ari Fleischer subsequently called the charges “groundless and baseless,” and those same words were used by Dilulio when he issued an apology shortly thereafter. The author of the article that quoted Dilulio, Ron Suskind, and the magazine that printed it stood by the story, however, and printed the nearly 2,800-word letter Dilulio wrote to Suskind from which the quote was taken.

With that kind of political power and that kind of policymaking process, evangelicals can influence any international issue in which they take an interest. Even the CFR has figured that out. In December 2005, the CFR invited an official of the Southern Baptist Convention to its New York headquarters to speak. The announcement of the meeting noted that: “religious organizations in America, and particularly evangelicals, play an important and evolving role in foreign policy—one that has not been fully explored or understood.” In the summer of 2007, the CFR organized its first Religion and Foreign Policy Summer Workshop in order “to serve as a resource for religious and congregational leaders, scholars, and thinkers whose voices are increasingly important to the national foreign policy debate.”
That influence can be felt on issues of importance to the religious right. In 2004, the *New York Times* published an article on Timothy Goeglein, the man Karl Rove, President Bush’s political advisor, used as a liaison with conservative groups. The article noted that “when opponents of abortion were holding a rally on Mr. Bush’s first day in office, Senator Sam Brownback called the White House for a statement of support. Within an hour, Mr. Brownback received a call with a vow that Mr. Bush would cancel federal support for international groups that provide or advise abortion, a break from the president’s delicate approach to the issue during his campaign.”

The article went on to make clear that this influence extended beyond such issues as abortion: “Mr. Rove has made courting conservatives and Christians a top political priority, in part to turn out voters. Mr. Goeglein often helps the White House deal with specific religious concerns about public policy, like the belief of some evangelical Protestants about the place of modern Israel in biblical prophecy. For example, when the Bush administration supported Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s plan for Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from parts of the Gaza Strip, some evangelical Christians questioned Mr. Bush’s move for biblical reasons.” Mr. Goeglein said he set up briefings with Elliott Abrams, who is in charge of Middle Eastern Affairs, and top national security officials to reassure prominent Christians.

Mr. Abrams, whose resume includes his having being charged with two felonies in the Iran–Contra scandal during the Reagan administration, must have been reassuring. Perhaps the concerned Christians were convinced an independent Palestinian state would not delay the Second Coming. Kevin Phillips, a political commentator and former Republican Party strategist, estimates that at least 55 percent of those who voted for Bush in 2004 believe in Armageddon. He also observed, “The last arena of theological influence, almost as important as sex, birth and morality, involves American foreign policy, bringing us to the connections among the ‘war on terror,’ the rapture, the end times, Armageddon and the thinly disguised US crusade against radical Islam.” Ironically for those who care about Israel, the end times scenario of some Christian conservatives includes a war that results in all the Jews being killed or converted.

In an attempt to assert that the policy is more balanced than it appears, President Bush’s supporters point out that he is the first president to call for a Palestinian state, even though that is not true. When Bush first made the pronouncement in 2001, administration spokesmen rushed to say he was simply following a policy articulated
by President Clinton in his last weeks in office, and Secretary of State Powell told reporters there was “nothing new” in Bush’s statement. Regardless of which president was first, the impression abroad is that Bush has said it, but then has done nothing to make it happen and is probably conspiring with Israel to prevent it.

One point that few would dispute, however, is that there has never been an American president so closely allied with an Israeli leader. In 2003 the Washington Post observed that President Bush and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had policies on the Middle East that were “nearly identical.” That closeness has not gone unnoticed by the Christian right, or by audiences abroad, but it is not motivated by a Republican desire to court the votes of Jewish Americans, 87 percent of whom voted Democratic in 2006.

The previous chapter noted that Dennis Ross, who spent more than 12 years trying to negotiate a peace in the Middle East during the administrations of Presidents George H.W. Bush and Clinton, lamented in his book that President George W. Bush had effectively abandoned the peace process. Like most questions of policy in Washington, there are many possible explanations for why, but here are two. First, Bush came into office determined to ignore anything on which Clinton had placed a priority (hence the inattention to the threat of terrorism prior to 9/11). Second, when his most important core constituency sees a black and white world where Israel must be protected at all costs for biblical reasons, dealing with a former terrorist like Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat could not be explained and was therefore avoided. The Middle East did not wait for a Palestinian leader acceptable to conservative American Christians, however, and groups like Hamas and Hezbollah have taken advantage of the lack of American leadership. With no elections to worry about and the clock running out on the chance to establish Bush’s place in history, the administration in late 2007 organized a conference in Annapolis supposedly to jumpstart the peace process. Bush did not even stay for the entire one-day event.

Israel is not the only foreign policy issue that interests the Christian right, as it is neither monolithic nor static and includes 60 million people and hundreds of churches and organizations. A younger generation of leaders is more willing to address such issues as Darfur, AIDS, poverty, and global warming. That has brought them into conflict with some prominent Christian conservative elders like James Dobson, head of Focus on the Family, and Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council. They accused those concerned by
global warming of shifting the emphasis away from “the great moral issues of our time,” which they defined as abortion, homosexuality, and sex education.66

Dobson and Perkins evidently see moral issues as the key to keeping their followers energized, and view globalization as a way to reinforce the idea that the modern world is a threatening and immoral place. They know their audience. According to a 2007 Pew Research Center poll, “white evangelical Protestants have similar concerns to other Americans, including the war in Iraq, education and the economy, but a far greater percentage continue to cite tackling the ‘moral breakdown’ in society as a key priority. They remain solidly Republican.”67

Not all moral issues are created equal, however. A declaration by 17 evangelical leaders against the use of torture in the war on terror drew immediate fire from other religious conservatives.68 Moral issues can also make for strange bedfellows. Christian conservative organizations have joined with the most repressive Islamic countries, including Sudan, Libya, Iran, and Iraq, to halt the expansion of sexual and political protections and rights for gays, women, and children at UN conferences. And the Bush administration has assisted this effort by appointing antiabortion activists to key positions on U.S. delegations to UN conferences on global economic and social policy.69

So while the core constituencies may control delegations to UN conferences, do they dictate all foreign policy? No, because much of foreign policy generates little intense feeling among these groups. They can certainly influence it when they want to and are aroused to action. Does this mean, as Dilulio first claimed, that the substance of policy is unimportant and that the political arm is running everything in the White House? No official in the White House would ever admit that. But there is little reason to doubt that politics plays a prominent role in everything a politician does, and the need to cater to core constituencies can be more important than the desire to avoid creating a potentially negative impact on others.

For instance, former surgeon general Richard Carmona described to a congressional committee how he was prevented from speaking on such health issues as stem-cell research, contraception, and sex education, which conservative constituencies might find controversial. Carmona was also instructed that when he did give a speech, he was required to praise the president at least three times on each page.70 If the nation’s top health official is turned into little more than a cheerleader for the White House and is told not to discuss issues affecting
the nation’s health because they might offend certain constituencies, why would foreign policy be spared? The answer is that it isn’t, and some specific cases will be discussed in the next chapter.

**What’s Congress Got To Do with It?**

The president is not the only politician who worries about the core constituencies. Those in Congress worry even more than the president since they are always running for reelection. The only real difference is that because each represents only a small part of the country, they need to worry about pleasing the “base” only to the degree that each of the core constituencies is represented in the district or state he or she represents.

There is no shortage of other influences on Congress, however. As noted earlier, partisanship in Washington has had its impact on foreign policy formulation. In his book on Congress and foreign policy, former congressman Lee Hamilton noted that “increased polarization and incivility in Congress have often made it all the more difficult for Congress to speak with one voice.”

But those aren’t the only changes that have made Congress a more important contributor to the incoherence of foreign policy. Changes in the institution itself have also contributed greatly, according to some accounts, by making individual members of Congress more independent and powerful. Hamilton observed that “the greater diversity and wide-ranging experience of today’s members of Congress have strengthened their independence.”

But it is more than just greater diversity among members that has affected the policymaking process. Organizational changes in Congress are an even more important factor. Hersman describes these changes as follows:

First, during the past several decades, institutional reforms have redistributed power and weakened the committees that used to dominate congressional involvement in foreign affairs. The days when the views of a few powerful committee chairs could dictate an institutional response are long gone. Second, partisan cleavages and ideological polarization seriously complicate efforts to build a majority in favor of a traditional internationalist foreign policy agenda and often render “party discipline” almost irrelevant to the foreign policy process, especially on those issues that remain largely below the surface and out of the public eye. As a result, members of Congress and their staffs face few constraints from institutional structures or partisan dictates as they pursue many of their foreign policy interests.
The result of this independence is that the institution has been weakened, power has been individualized, and “any member of Congress with the personal drive and interest to champion an issue can become an issue leader.”74 Because the distinction between foreign and domestic policy has largely evaporated, becoming an issue leader is also easier to do and may have greater appeal to the voters today than in the past. A member does not have to sit on the foreign relations committees in order to take up a cause. He or she can do it from a wide variety of other committees that can claim to have an interest in the topic.

While Hamilton and Hersman see individual members showing greater independence as a result of institutional and other changes, others see a trend in the opposite direction. Washington Post reporter Jim VandeHei wrote that the discarding of the seniority system and the limitations on the independence and prerogatives of committee chairpersons by Republicans in the House have created a chamber “effectively run by a handful of GOP leaders.” He describes the result:

When Republicans won control of the House in 1994, conservatives turned an institution run by Democrats and veteran chairmen into a top-down organization that looked in some ways like the flow chart of a Fortune 500 business. The idea was to put power in the hands of a few leaders and place conservative loyalists in the most important lower-level jobs to move legislation as quickly as possible through Congress, according to current and former lawmakers. Those who cross party leaders often pay a price, usually by losing positions of influence.75

Losing key committee assignments and chairmanships results not just in a loss of the political power that comes with sitting on key committees. The committees on which a member of Congress sits determines which corporate and other interest groups are likely to contribute to his or her campaign for reelection. They also determine the member’s economic prospects after leaving Congress. In 2005, over half of the Republicans and a third of the Democrats who retired from office went on to become lobbyists in Washington.76

Lobbying for the health-care industry is a particularly lucrative business. Between January 2005 and June 2006, the health-care industry spent $182 million lobbying Washington. Since 1998 the total has been at least $855 million.77 Another study put the number of health-care lobbyists at nearly a thousand.78 Health care attracts so many lobbyists because it consumes a record 16 percent of the economy.79
and that creates a lot of vested interests to protect. Foreign affairs attracts a smaller, but growing number of special pleaders.

The political corruption scandal and felony conviction of lobbyist Jack Abramoff began to put an end to some of the most shameless connections between legislators and lobbyists. In January 2006, Republican lawmakers ceased their long-standing practice of summoning lobbyists to the Capitol to tell them which of their aides and colleagues they should hire. When the 2006 elections resulted in a shift from a Republican to a Democratic majority in both houses, however, lobbying firms scrambled to hire well-connected Democrats, and business was booming across the board. The shifts in political power set the revolving door between Capitol Hill and K Street spinning, but with people moving in both directions. One article noted that “at least 19 senior aides for the House Democratic leadership and committee staffs left lucrative K Street jobs to return to work for the new House majority” in early 2007. As a result, some of these returned staffers had “direct jurisdiction over the industry or interest group they represented.”

The report also noted the former salaries of the eight of them for whom salary data could be found. The switch from lobbyist back to being a congressional staff member resulted in a loss, on average, of at least $100,000 a year in income. When asked, several said the loss was a sacrifice they were willing to make in the name of public service and in order to work on interesting policy issues. Others quoted in the article had a different take. One said, “Every swing through the revolving door leads to a fatter future paycheck in the private sector.” Another observed, “The reasons for coming to Washington to work have changed. It’s not just about public service anymore. Washington has become a place to come to make a lot of money.”

When a former member of Congress or a former congressional staffer passes through the revolving door on the way to K Street, a modest government salary of even $150,000 to $170,000 a year can double, triple, or even increase tenfold or more. The amount is a function of which committees the person served on and the friends and contacts made while on those committees.

Failure to do the bidding of the party leadership can also lead to a shorter career, as well as a less profitable second career as a lobbyist. As described earlier, redistricting at the state level by the political party in the majority has virtually eliminated competition between the two parties for seats in the House in at least 90 percent of the congressional districts. The party that controls the district nearly always wins, and the winning candidate is determined by the primary, not
the general, election. One way to avoid competition in the primary is to follow the dictates of the party leadership. To do otherwise is to invite the party leaders to look for a competitor whom they will encourage to run against the dissident in the primary. Nothing instills party discipline more quickly than the prospect of facing serious electoral competition.

So which is it? Are members of Congress asserting their independence and making their own foreign policy when they take an interest in an issue? Or are they taking their instructions from party leaders? Those leaders will receive their orders from the White House when the president is from the same party, and they will oppose anything a president tries to accomplish when they come from different parties.

The answer is, both. The party leadership has only so many high-priority items. Those things that the core constituencies really care about make the grade. Those that matter to a contested constituency, like Hispanics, can also count if taking a stand does not risk alienating the party’s political base. Issues that put the party in a good light and the opposition on the defensive can be good for the overall image and, therefore, also matter.

Issues that don’t become sufficiently large blips on the radar screen of the media or the core constituencies are essentially up for grabs, however. They are left to individual members of Congress to champion or ignore as they see fit. In other words, as Hersman notes, the “highly centralized approach ensures that power is highly concentrated for a few high-profile issues but even more fragmented and individualized for most others.”

The result is as Lee Hamilton concluded: “Congress is more assertive and intimately involved in foreign policy today, but its actions are inconsistent, haphazard and more obstructive than constructive.”

**In Whose Interest?**

Globalization, partisanship, and the lack of a post–Cold War consensus on our aims abroad have helped create the haphazard congressional impact described by Lee Hamilton. While these factors, especially globalization, have been making the borders between countries increasingly meaningless, they have had the same effect on the border between foreign and domestic policy. The internationalization of the American economy has caused the domestic impact of foreign policy to grow significantly. As that impact has spread and affected more people, the number of interest groups trying to have an effect on foreign policy has increased accordingly.
So what do interest groups stand for and who belongs to them? Anything and anyone. Any group can try to influence government, and they carry many names—lobbies, special interests, think tanks, nongovernmental organizations, public interest groups, and not-for-profit organizations, to name but a few. Anyone who chooses can join the influencers either by associating with a group of like-minded people to push for a particular policy or by hiring a lobbyist. Al Kamen of the Washington Post wrote in one of his columns about how easy it is to find a lobbyist in Washington: “If you’ve got a phone—and half a million or so bucks—you’ve got a lobbyist.”87

Any group that wants to influence foreign policy can therefore be part of the process, either by direct participation or through hired guns. Conversely, any group that is underrepresented or unrepresented earns that status by indifference or choice. The public is usually underrepresented because it lacks a clear or strong opinion on most foreign policy issues.

Any group affected negatively or positively by globalization can seek to influence Congress in order to offset or enhance those effects. Those whose jobs are outsourced to other countries care more about job loss than they do about the gain from the lower prices of imported goods that have replaced the ones they used to make. Multinational corporations argue, on the other hand, that both American competitiveness and American consumers need to have products that come from wherever they can be made most cheaply.

Ethnic interest groups will also push to make foreign policy respond to their concerns and views relative to their former countries. They will argue that their particular interest should be the national interest, and in the absence of any overriding alternative interest, that argument may prevail. The result will be a variation of the famous dictum that “all politics is local.” Instead, these groups will attempt to make foreign policy respond to the interests of the local ethnic group.

Lobbying efforts by one group can provoke a reaction from another. Armenian Americans, who number 1.4 million, have pressed their case in Washington for a resolution condemning the genocide committed against the Armenian people by Turkey in 1915. The Turkish government has responded by hiring lobbyists, including former Democratic congressman Richard Gephardt and former Republican Speaker of the House Bob Livingston, to help argue that genocide never happened. Turkey also threatened to cancel defense contracts and base rights if the resolution, which Gephardt had strongly supported when he was in Congress, was passed.88
In his study of ethnic groups and their impact on American foreign policy, Tony Smith of Tufts University reached three conclusions: ethnic groups play a larger role in the making of U.S. foreign policy than is widely recognized; the negative consequences of such involvement may well outweigh the benefits of this activism; and in a pluralistic democracy, balancing the rights and interests of an organized few against the rights and interests of the often inattentive many is an enduring problem.

Smith quoted and agreed with Samuel Huntington on the influence of ethnic interests and their impact. The observation by Huntington, published in 1997, is even more valid today than it was ten years ago:

Previous assumptions that foreign and domestic policymaking processes differ from each other for important reasons no longer hold. For an understanding of American foreign policy it is necessary to study not the interests of the American state in a world of competing states but rather the play of economic and ethnic interests in American domestic politics. At least in recent years, the latter has been a superb indicator of foreign policy stands. Foreign policy, in the sense of actions consciously designed to promote the interests of the United States as a collective entity in relation to similar collective entities, is slowly but steadily disappearing.

Smith reaches the conclusion that “while ethnic groups undoubt-edly have the right to seek to influence Washington, they also have the obligation to recognize that national interests may conflict with their ethnic preferences.” The problem is they have little reason to do so. With the Cold War won, the survival of the United States is not at stake, and anyone can bring their own definition of the national interest to the table.

That does not mean that all lobbies are created equal. Some are effective and feared, while others are not. What counts for the policymakers is who can deliver votes or money. Both are essential to getting the politician reelected.

To be effective, an ethnic or any other interest group has to have focus, intensity, and resources. Geographic proximity also helps, but is not essential. The resources are either the votes or the money of adherents to the cause of the interest group. If they can be mobilized to vote according to what the group interest is and encouraged to call, write, or contribute to a friendly politician, they can have an impact on policy.
Focus is required because the policy goals cannot be too broad and still maintain the intensity of the group and the attention of the policymaker. Once the interest group moves beyond a purely grassroots effort, it often acquires a professional staff to advance the interests of the group. Once that group is created, its livelihood depends on maintaining the number of members in the group and their intensity and commitment to the cause. To do that requires continual reminders of the threat to the interests of the group.

Find a cause, make a case for that cause, portray it as being under threat, and anyone can create a nonprofit organization that can collect funds and attempt to influence policy in Washington. Usually, the cause quickly evolves into the expansion of the organization and the enhancement of its power, membership, and resources.

The National Rifle Association (NRA), for instance, often claims to be protecting the constitutional right of individuals to bear arms. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the fact that there is no such right enshrined in the Constitution doesn’t matter to the NRA. Conservative Christian organizations often claim to have risen up in response to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v. Wade*. That is also a myth, but it has attracted thousands of adherents who are intent on protecting the unborn. In both cases, the organizations in question have capitalized on the concerns of different groups to attract members and accumulate power. The challenge is then to keep these members energized by making sure the threat never goes away.

The process of how a cottage industry can be created by manipulating the intensity of some groups is also illustrated by counterexamples as well. Without focus, it is hard to achieve the intensity required to get large groups of people to contribute to the cause and to vote as a bloc. Take the case of Arab Americans and Hispanics. There are some 3.5 million Americans of Arab descent. Hispanics have become the largest ethnic minority in the country, with a total of at least 43 million Hispanics making up 14 percent of the population. Does either group, despite their numbers, have significant impact on foreign policy? If they do, it has gone unreported. While both groups obviously take a strong stand against discrimination against members of their group, they agree on little else and therefore have neither the focus nor the intensity to affect policy. One exception is the Cuban American community, and that case will be discussed in the following chapter.

On the other hand, one of the most powerful lobbying groups in Washington is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.
(AIPAC). While everyone would agree that lobbies are an important and influential part of the Washington scene, it is hard to know exactly how they work, especially with regard to foreign policy. In the words of one long-time lobbyist, “a lobby is like a night flower. It thrives in the dark and dies in the sun.”94 The quote is by Steven J. Rosen, a 23-year employee of AIPAC and its former director of foreign policy issues who was charged in August 2005 with illegally conspiring to gather and disclose classified national security information to journalists and the Israeli government.95

One of his former AIPAC colleagues described Rosen as “spooky, strange and not driven by love for Israel,” and noted that he was “solely interested in power.”96 The same thing can be said about AIPAC. It has 200 employees and an annual budget of $47 million, according to one article,97 or a staff of 165 and a budget of $33.4 million, according to another.98 It also has 85,000 members, and over 6,000 of them show up at AIPAC’s annual meeting in Washington. That meeting is an essential stop for presidential candidates and most members of Congress.

This for an organization that even some Israeli politicians believe is too influential and too hawkish. According to Yossi Beilin, a cabinet member when Ehud Barak was prime minister, “They have the threat of voting out (congressional) representatives. I never liked this leverage they have. It’s counterproductive. Some see AIPAC as the long arm of Israel, even if it’s totally wrong. They had their own agenda. They contradicted our government. When there was a unity government, they would say, ‘But you only represent Labor,’ even if I was representing the prime minister.”99

AIPAC fired Rosen and another employee shortly before they were indicted, but it initially paid their legal fees.100 As the case dragged on into mid-2007 without coming to trial, AIPAC grew increasingly reluctant to cover these costs, however.101 An AIPAC spokesman categorically denied any wrongdoing by the organization, but the classified information gathered by Rosen and his colleague was always immediately shared with AIPAC’s executive director.102

In January 2006, the Pentagon analyst who passed classified military information to the two AIPAC lobbyists pled guilty to the charges against him and was given a 12-year prison sentence.103 The strategy of defense lawyers for the two says a lot about how Washington works. They argue that their clients committed no crime and that they were just doing business the way everyone else does in our nation’s capitol.104

When the two former AIPAC officials do come to trial, it will be closely watched by those inside the Beltway. Selectively leaking classified
information to people outside government who then use it to advance their own interests and those of the leakers is a common practice. The case of Scooter Libby, Vice President Cheney’s former chief of staff, is one notable example of how the system works. To attack an administration critic, Ambassador Joseph Wilson, Libby leaked classified information about Wilson’s wife, Valerie Plame, who was a CIA operative. Libby also demonstrated how some officials will commit perjury and obstruct justice to protect the system and its players. His four felony convictions will not result in a day in jail because President Bush commuted his sentence in recognition of his loyalty—to the system, not to the United States or to the oath he took to protect and defend the Constitution.

The system in Washington works that way because, next to money and votes, no other commodity is more important to accumulating power than information is. Once power is accumulated through trading in money, votes, or information, the power has to be enhanced and protected. That is done by emphasizing the importance of, and the threats to, the interests that the lobby is defending and by attacking those detractors who might suggest that the lobby puts its own interests ahead of the national interest.

In 2006, two prominent political scientists, Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, published a paper entitled “The Israel Lobby” in which they argued that AIPAC and other groups pushed American foreign policy toward an inflexibly pro-Israeli position to the detriment of U.S. interests in the Middle East.\(^{105}\) Walt and Mearsheimer belong to the “realist” school of international relations theorists and were perhaps dismayed by the fact that AIPAC’s influence does not have a role in their grand theory. Regardless of their motivation, some defenders of AIPAC lost no time in labeling their article anti-Semitic and accused them of describing the lobby as a Jewish conspiracy.\(^ {106}\)

Attacking critics is one way a lobby defends itself, even when there is little justification for the attack. Targeting and punishing politicians who don’t vote correctly is another, as is dramatizing the threat to the interests the lobby represents. When an amendment was added to the 2008 Defense Authorization Bill that would require the president to seek congressional approval before attacking Iran, AIPAC opposed it and lobbied hard to remove it. The AIPAC view prevailed.\(^ {107}\) And so at a point where Congress has been increasingly critical of the war in Iraq, it not only has done nothing effective to stop the war, but also has done nothing to constrain Mr. Bush’s power to attack another country with no more justification than that he deems it necessary. This congressional inaction came at a time when numerous reports
indicated that Vice President Cheney and others were pushing Bush to order a military strike on Iran before he leaves office.108

Such success on the part of a lobby can inspire not only imitators, but opposing groups as well, since anyone can create a lobby. Given that AIPAC is considerably more hawkish than either the American or the Israeli public, the support of popular opinion is not an essential ingredient for doing so. The trick is to attract enough financial support from at least a small but devoted band of the like minded. And it can be very small if you have the right patron, as one effort to create an alternative to AIPAC seems to have. It is reported to have the backing of billionaire financier George Soros, among others.109

Lobbyists, whether they get financial support from 85,000 people as AIPAC does or from just one billionaire, put the maintenance of that support above all else. They have to demonstrate their strength and keep the intensity of their supporters as high as the threat level to the interests they represent.

In his quote about money and a phone being all that is necessary to find a lobbyist, Al Kamen was referring to the case of Robert Cabelly, a former State Department official. Cabelly had received a contract from the government of Sudan to lobby on their behalf.110 The former official’s firm was paid $530,000 a year to represent a government President Bush, Secretary of State Powell, and others have said has committed genocide in Darfur.

Such considerations don’t matter much in Washington. There has never been a regime so murderous or a dictator so vile that there were not scores of Washington lobbyists willing to represent it for a lot less than half a million dollars a year. One former assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Herman Cohen, had Charles Taylor for a client. Taylor, a warlord who became president of Liberia, was eventually brought before an international court in The Hague for the war crimes he committed in neighboring Sierra Leone. The lobbying efforts on Taylor’s behalf stopped only when Taylor refused to pay his bill. As assistant secretary of state for Latin America, Peter Romero lobbied the Peruvian government on behalf of a gold mining company involved in a commercial dispute. Romero then went to work for the gold mining company when he retired.111

Such practices are neither illegal nor unethical, at least under the Washington definition of ethics. For career diplomats, a second career as a lobbyist can become a necessity as the revolving door turns whether they want it to or not. The State Department has an up-or-out promotional system not unlike the military’s. Successful Foreign Service officers can easily exhaust their potential for promotion in
their mid-50s and face the need to find a second career. The contacts made during government service can be turned into lobbying contracts, but often only if the lobbyist has no qualms about whom he or she represents. The number of people who pass through the revolving doors that separate Congress and K Street and the Pentagon and the defense industry dwarfs the number of retired diplomats who make the switch, but the number is growing as more lobbyists tap the foreign policy market.

To test the limits of lobbying in Washington, one journalist, Ken Silverstein, posed as a businessman who wanted to mount a public relations campaign for Turkmenistan, a Stalinist dictatorship rated as one of the most repressive countries in the world. He had no trouble finding lobbying firms eager to take up the cause, despite the fact that Silverstein was willing to tell them almost nothing about the fictitious company he supposedly represented. One firm, whose staff included a former career ambassador, a former congressional staffer, and a former CIA spokesperson offered to do it for $600,000 for the first year. The campaign designed by that firm included creating news items and opinion pieces by think-tank experts that would portray Turkmenistan in a positive light. Hosting conferences at think tanks like the Heritage Foundation was also suggested as part of the strategy.

Another firm Silverstein talked to was Cassidy & Associates, the most successful lobbying outfit in Washington, which raked in more than $235 million in fees between 1998 and 2006. Cassidy offered to mount a two-pronged campaign aimed at policymakers and the media. The projected price tag for the three-year effort was $1.2 to $1.5 million annually. The Cassidy official cautioned Silverstein that the bill could run higher if a do-gooder organization like a human rights group targeted the regime and made more intensive spin control necessary.

Silverstein found no shortage of lobbying firms willing to be paid by a fake company to shill for a tyrant. That’s because, as Michael Crowley wrote in an article in the New Republic, “Few niches of Washington lobbying are as lucrative as the foreign racket, which explains why more than 1,800 lobbyists are currently registered to represent more than 600 overseas clients.” Or as the reprehensible character called Duke in the comic strip Doonesbury said about his enormously successful new business as a lobbyist, “Even I’m a bit surprised how well I seem to represent dictators. Who knew I’d be so good at reframing evil.”

Even the comic-strip antics of Duke understate the reality in Washington. One lobbyist, Edward Von Kloberg III, was famous for
representing the most despicable dictators, including Saddam Hussein, Samuel Doe of Liberia, and Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania. Von Kloberg, whose health was failing, committed suicide in May 2005. His obituary in the *Washington Post* noted that he “embraced the slogan ‘shame is for sissies.’”

Such is the nature of the lobbying business in Washington. Reframing evil is illegal only when you don’t register with the Treasury Department as a foreign agent, but it is not considered improper or even out of the ordinary. It allows bureaucrats, as well politicians, to move easily from official positions into the multi-billion dollar business that lobbying has become. It would not be such a big business or such a popular second career for Washington insiders if it did not have a major impact on policy. And that, like the degree of partisan political behavior, is something that the grand theories on international relations also never address.

### What about the Bureaucrats?

The elected politicians, particularly the president, can determine foreign policy, but that does not mean all foreign policy decisions are made simply on the basis of domestic politics or in response to the entreaties of lobbyists. Despite the effects of globalization, there are still large parts of foreign policy that provoke only limited to no attention from core constituencies, lobbies, think tanks, and other influences in Washington. That can change quickly if sentiment is mobilized and channeled effectively. It can be the limited sentiment that is reflected by lobbyists, nongovernmental organizations, or other associations of like-minded people. Or it can be the more generalized sentiment that can be created, given sufficient media attention.

When an issue is far from the public spotlight and has not captured the attention of an effective interest group, the policymaking tends to move down the scale from the elected politicians to the appointed ones and, in many cases, on to the career bureaucrats. In an obscure country like the Central African Republic, the policy follows the general guidelines from Washington, but it is largely made by the career civil servants in the field, like Ambassador Gribbin.

A little publicity can change things dramatically, however. In the case of the Dubai ports deal, a routine bureaucratic decision was quickly elevated to a national issue. It received so much media attention that the Republican majority in Congress felt compelled to defy a Republican president. Given the partisanship in Washington, the majority would almost always defer to a president of the same party,
but the firestorm of criticism that was created over the idea of allowing major American ports to be managed by a company based in Dubai forced Congress to act otherwise.

Without the glare of publicity pushing the issue towards the political end of the spectrum, decision making on obscure matters is left to the appointed and career bureaucrats. That does not mean the result is any more consistent. As Halperin and Clapp note in their book *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, “Determining the national interest is often an elusive goal, and participants frequently find it difficult to develop a stand simply by focusing on national security directly. In such cases they often look to organizational and presidential interests and explore them in light of their personal interests.”

Whether the interests of the organization or the president take precedence depends on the bureaucrat’s proximity to the president. If appointed by and close to the president, loyalty to the president will be his or her highest priority. In the case of a career civil servant, loyalty to the organization will be more important. For this reason, presidents at least as far back as Kennedy have been said to distrust the Foreign Service, the career diplomats who staff the State Department. Anyone who has worked at the NSC quickly understands why. The NSC staff sees foreign policy through the prism of what is best for the president. Those who work four blocks away at the State Department see it in terms of their calculation of what is in the national interest.

In both cases, bureaucrats, in setting their priorities and making decisions, are not unaffected by personal interests. Some will see loyalty to the president as their overriding allegiance. Others, who owe their jobs to their connections to a cabinet secretary, will be more loyal to the head of their agency than to the agency itself. And those who have spent a career coming up through the ranks of a department will generally defend the priorities of that department as the most important element in their calculation of the national interest.

While there are no grand theories that explain how foreign policy is made, the question of personal interests comes as close as anything to being a general principle. Ambitious people do what is best for their own careers. They would rarely describe it that way and would prefer to say they always pursue the interests of the nation. But there are many ways to define the national interest, and a person’s definition rarely conflicts with that person’s own interest.

Returning to the case of Iraq for a moment illustrates the point. Colin Powell made the case for going to war in Iraq at the UN on February 5, 2003, with George Tenet sitting behind him. Both have
said they spent three days and nights working on the speech at the CIA. And yet the speech will long be remembered for being filled with falsehoods and inaccuracies. Was Powell duped by Tenet? Did Tenet simply get it wrong? Or did both know that the president wanted the strongest possible case to justify the decision to invade Iraq that he had made months before? The same president who named both men to their jobs, and thereby ensured their stature and future fortunes writing books, serving on corporate boards, and giving speeches after they left government, was well served by both. Unfortunately, the country was not.

Obviously, both men would vigorously deny that they put their loyalty to the president above the national interest. One definition of the national interest, however, would be helping to achieve greater national unity and international support for a war that was already inevitable. And if the war had been as quick and as easy as its proponents had asserted, no one would have noticed that making the case for it coincided with the personal interests of the war’s chief salesmen. They thought history was still written by the winners, but in today’s era of the Internet and instant communications, history is written not just by those who make it.

The war has not been quick or easy, and it has weakened the United States rather than made it safer. Nevertheless, Powell and Tenet will no doubt continue to assert that they were acting on the information they had at the time and that the effort was necessary and justified. As implausible as that argument is, it is easier to make than simply admitting they lacked the convictions and principles that would have required them to resign.

Those who sold the war profit. On the other hand, critics of the war can find they have to pay a price. Army General John Batiste retired because of his anger over mismanagement of the war and subsequently appeared in television ads voicing his criticism of the president. As a result, CBS terminated his contract as a consultant. The New York Times pointed out the limitations his actions placed on his other employment prospects: “His retirement meant turning his back on a third star and command of day-to-day combat missions in Iraq. Having cast aside his military career, General Batiste cast his eyes away from the defense industry to join Klein Steel Service, which cuts and processes steel for commercial, civilian enterprises — and does no military work.”

Lower-level bureaucrats aren’t called upon to make as dramatic or as historic presentations as Powell’s UN speech. And they don’t have the economic opportunities to cash in on when they leave government.
While still in government, if left to their own devices, they follow the general policy guidelines and make decisions and implement them as they interpret the policy. That usually means doing what’s best for their agency and avoiding conflict where possible.

When the focus of the media or the pressure of core constituencies or of other influences pushes the decision making toward the political end of the spectrum, the career civil servants step aside. They are always there, nonetheless, to take the blame if the policy fails. If it does, the politicians and appointed policymakers never take responsibility for being wrong. They, instead, invariably propose reorganizing the bureaucracy. The failure to anticipate 9/11 led to the creation of the intelligence czar and the Department of Homeland Security. The abysmal standing of the United States in the Middle East has prompted calls for reforming the public diplomacy function. Neither bureaucratic reorganization nor calls for reform have resulted in any improvement in government, since, to paraphrase a line from President Clinton’s first election campaign, “It’s the policies, stupid.”

One person who refuses to get that simple fact is former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich. He wrote in mid-2003 that “anti-American sentiment is rising unabated around the globe because the U.S. State Department has abdicated values and principles in favor of accommodation and passivity.”¹²¹ He went on to accuse the department of engaging in “a deliberate and systematic effort” to undermine President Bush’s foreign policy. He demonstrated this by contrasting the president’s remarks to a group of Arab Americans with a leaked intelligence assessment by the department. Bush told the group in Dearborn, Michigan, that the Iraqi people can flourish in a democracy. The intelligence report said a liberal democracy would be difficult to achieve and would not result in a fundamental democratic transformation of the Middle East.

So who had it right? Four years after Gingrich’s article, Iraq was in the midst of sectarian civil war, and the main argument for not withdrawing U.S. troops was that chaos would ensue and engulf the region. The Bush administration had given up any pretense of hoping to see a secular, representative democracy in Iraq anytime soon.

Given those facts, some would say that the State Department assessment was accurate and that in his speech the president demonstrated he was either painfully ignorant of the reality in Iraq or unwilling to give his audience anything other than the rosier scenario possible. Gingrich would argue that it was not the president’s policy or vision that had failed, but rather that the prophecy of the State Department was self-fulfilling because the bureaucrats did not try hard enough.
Gingrich’s solution to the failure of American foreign policy was, not surprisingly, to reform the bureaucracy and not the policy. Since his presidential ambitions appear to be alive and well, at least in his own mind if in no one else’s, criticizing the president would be politically costly. And criticizing bureaucrats in a party that always believes in less government always draws applause. In terms of creating a government that does not interfere in people’s lives, Iraq can be considered a Republican paradise.

Proposing bureaucratic reform remains a popular political tactic because it is a way to avoid taking responsibility while, at the same time, giving the appearance of initiative and innovation. The facts don’t matter much. Even four years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Gingrich continued to blame the bureaucracy for the situation there, but said victory was still possible if a retired four-star general was appointed to coordinate the bureaucratic response. In May 2007, he almost got his wish as a three-star general was named to the newly created position of deputy national security advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan after a number of retired generals turned the job down. According to one analyst, however, the general given the job was charged with coordinating implementation of the policy, not rethinking it, since the administration believes it has the right strategy and the right people in place.

Changing the personnel but not the policy is the bureaucratic equivalent of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. It will not lead to something that can be called victory in Iraq. When it doesn’t, Gingrich and others will, nonetheless, place the blame for the failure on the bureaucrats charged with implementing the strategy rather than on those who came up with the policy in the first place.

The Media and Public Opinion

In addition to bureaucrats, the media are also scapegoats for foreign policy failures. The media are often accused of not reporting the good news from Iraq, for instance, and of missing the bigger story. But news, whether it is local, state, national, or international, tends to focus on disasters and tragedies rather than on happy stories or the fact that 99 percent of the population had an uneventful day.

The media are also accused of driving foreign policy, and the “CNN effect” is often cited. CNN, together with other media outlets, does set the agenda, makes some policy options difficult, and forces policymakers to make decisions sooner than they would have otherwise. The attention span of the media is short, however, and
its scope, limited. The 24-hour news cycle constantly requires new news. If something doesn’t happen on a story that provides new material to report, the media move on. Policymakers count on that and know that if they can get through a few days with no new developments, the pressure will be off and the story will go away. Stalling and banal responses are therefore effective ways to exhaust and outlast the media’s attention.

Former secretary of defense Rumsfeld made good use of such tactics. When asked about an incident in Iraq in June 2003 in which innocent civilians were killed and in which war crimes may have been committed, Rumsfeld refused to discuss the rules of engagement. He did say that more information on the incident would be made available “when the dust settles.” That was the last time the media asked about it, and the last information on it that came from the Pentagon.

In addition to a limited attention span, the media also have a limited capacity for coverage. Only a few stories can make it onto the front page or the evening news, and fewer and fewer of them are international stories. There is always competition from other stories of more immediate interest, like weather disasters and celebrity news, and they can push international news off the air or to the back pages. So the CNN effect can be random and can be affected by Paris Hilton being arrested again or by issues of national importance. On the other hand, if television commentator Lou Dobbs seizes on an issue, as he did with the Dubai ports deal, he can help create enough public pressure to cause the government to change policies.

The media are also not a disinterested party in the policymaking process. Like think tanks, the media like to portray themselves as the conveyors of information, but often they are, instead, outlets for the opinions of those who own the respective stations or publications. Even when not used as vehicles for currying favor with politicians, the media remain a business driven more by market share than by a desire to inform the public.

Normally, public opinion is too weak and too unfocused to have much impact on policy. The media can arouse it and focus it, much in the way that Christian conservative organizations do on the issues they care about. Any group that wants to be successful at attracting a following does it by dramatizing and publicizing its issue. So the impact of the media, public opinion, and interest groups all depends on the issue, who is seized by it, and how effective they are at influencing the policy. None of these factors is particularly consistent or based on a rational calculation of the national interest.
Academics and Opting Out

There are some who believe they can make a rational calculation of the national interest, but they usually choose not to even try to influence the policymaking process. Academics see it in their interest to influence their peers rather than policymakers or the public, and they see little benefit in trying to make specific policy recommendations. Despite the protection offered by tenure, they see little reward in writing for a larger audience or in taking strong positions on controversial issues even when those on the other side have nothing more to add to the debate than the intensity of their opinions.

Some would assert that faculty members avoid taking conservative positions because it opens them up to being ostracized by their liberal colleagues. Professors who take liberal positions, on the other hand, run the risk of being targeted by the right-wing media machine and its support groups. As Walt and Mearsheimer, as well as Juan Cole at the University of Michigan, have found out, taking a stance on a controversial subject like the Middle East invites attack and charges of anti-Semitism.126

In addition to being attacked, another reason for an academic to avoid policy debates is the belief of some in academia that political science cannot be an objective and disinterested science if it attempts to serve the interests of government by making policy recommendations.127 Others argue that academics have an obligation to be involved, and some have written books about the need for foreign policy analysts to give their advice to policymakers. One 1993 book asserted that “a theory of foreign policy is precisely what policy makers need.”128 Another book published eight years later noted that scholars are inclined to tackle smaller, often trivial, research problems where technique triumphs over substance, because their professional standing depends on the opinion of their peers.129 It concluded that if scholars address important real-world issues, they will more often than not improve their work and have more to share with those who must act.130

The foreign policy world is not a vacuum waiting to be filled by an academic theory, however. Politics and policymaking in Washington are contact sports, and, as Professors Cole, Walt, and Mearsheimer all learned, the players don’t pull their punches because the intervention comes from an academic. Most of the academics who do try a stint in government often don’t stay long. Perhaps they find the bureaucratic politics too pervasive or perhaps they discover that their impact on policy is insignificant and impossible to perceive.
They may have mistakenly assumed that policymakers want to base their decisions on a solid theory that is grounded in a thorough assessment of the national interest. As described earlier, politicians care most about reelection and respond not to those who can deliver merely ideas, but to those who bring votes or campaign contributions.

Those academics who decide they want to influence policy usually find their way from campus to a think tank. There the purpose of publication is to influence policy rather than other academics, and to do that the goal is to publish on the opinion pages of the major newspapers rather than in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. For the ideologically inclined, there is also the advantage that objectivity is often optional. Like the lobbyists, and the politicians themselves, many of them are also for sale. There is also no shortage of “academic” opinion offered by the many think tanks in Washington, because there are so many different niche markets to cater to. When the politicians and special interests do want ideas, rather than objective analysis they want ideas that support those interests or that aid reelection.

The AEI, for instance, has offered scientists and economists $10,000 each to create doubt about global warming and ways to deal with it. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that ExxonMobil Corporation has contributed nearly $2 million to the AEI over the last decade.

The politicians will use academic arguments to support their policies rather than to determine them. When in mid-2007, President Bush wanted to increase the number of troops in Iraq in a desperate effort to salvage something he could call victory, as well as his place in history, one of those brought out to make the argument for the new strategy was Frederick Kagan, a resident scholar at the AEI. The fact that Kagan had no Middle-Eastern expertise or military experience did not diminish his utility for the administration. That there was no lack of experts with opposing views was also unimportant. The White House had cherry picked the expert it wanted to listen to, and the AEI delivered as it had for ExxonMobil.

**Conclusion**

The environment for making policy in Washington is a marketplace of interests, not of ideas. That is not readily apparent because the players have an interest in keeping what goes on from being more transparent. Money, votes, and information are vital for obtaining influence, which is one step removed from power itself. The revolving
door between government and the lobbying industry turns in both directions and with as much ease as the one between the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex. That is not to say there are no patriots or people with principle left in Washington. There are many. However, there are a lot fewer of them than there are those who proudly declare that their intentions are purely honorable and in the best interest of the country.

The policy that comes out is a bit like sausage. In the process, everything gets thrown into the machine, ground up, and forced out. Sometimes there is a logic to it, and sometimes not. Sometimes it serves the interests of the country, and sometimes not. A few examples of when it does not will be the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 5

A Few Case Studies

Constructing a theory of foreign relations is often justified on the grounds that the theory can provide a lens through which to analyze events. That lens can then supposedly be used to explain past behavior and make predictions about future events. As was mentioned previously, making foreign policy is sufficiently complicated and involved that multiple explanations are possible. All have some validity, since examples can be found to support almost any theory, and it would be difficult to “disprove” any of them.

The policymaking process described in the previous chapter does not lend itself to being reduced to a “theory,” but it does provide a way to look at events and explain them. Whether such explanations are convincing or whether they add anything to the understanding of what happens in Washington is left to the reader to judge.

Certainly those who are part of the policymaking process would deny they are motivated by anything but the highest ideals and the national interest. They have to be judged by what they do in addition to what they say, however. The following examples won’t include Iraq, as that has been discussed at various points thus far. Given the way that war was launched and the way it has been waged, it would not take a complete cynic to believe that 90 percent of politics is theater and that foreign policy has become just one more prop for the actors.

These examples will deal with international issues, but a similar argument could be made about any number of domestic policy problems as well. Take the proposed privatization of Social Security. Democrats were unanimously opposed to it, while Republicans were equally united in supporting major changes in the system. The argument was made that the Social Security trust fund was going to be exhausted by
sometime in the 2040s and that an immediate solution was essential. In Washington, long-range planning is Tuesday. When the government announces an initiative that is to bear fruit more than a decade in the future—for example, automobiles powered by fuel cells by 2025—it simply means that no serious action will be taken anytime soon and that addressing the problem will be left to future administrations.

Conversely, if a problem that is three or four decades away is said to demand an immediate solution, there must be immediate benefits to the politicians making the argument. In the case of Social Security, one need only know that the financial services industry has been one of the most generous contributors to President Bush and other Republicans. If allowed to take a percentage off the top of all the funds collected for Social Security for administrative fees, it would amount to a multibillion-dollar windfall. And a significant portion of that money would be recycled to the politicians who made it possible.

All the rhetoric about saving Social Security, according to the “theory” that politicians are mainly interested in their own political future, can be reduced to one simple fact: Privatization of the system will benefit those politicians who make that happen. Republicans, interested in granting such an enormous windfall to the financial services industry, therefore support the idea. Democrats, knowing at what a great disadvantage they would be placed with a portion of the profits filling the Republicans’ coffers, uniformly oppose it.

And what happens to those individuals who make the wrong investment decisions and years from now reach retirement age without sufficient funds to allow them to retire? According to the politics of personal responsibility, that is their problem. It’s not the government’s problem, nor is it something that society as a whole should care about. As the following examples will attempt to demonstrate, there are also foreign policy issues for which the short-term political benefit is more important to the policymakers than the long-term implications for the country.

**Public Diplomacy**

There are those in power in Washington, along with their supporters in the media, who would argue that American foreign policy alienates so many abroad because it is not understood or articulated properly. This variation on the “blame-the-bureaucracy excuse” holds that better public diplomacy will help other countries understand the policy and be less hostile to it. Rather than accept any responsibility for the failure of the policy, their suggested response is not to change the policy, but to hire a new salesman.
Supposedly to deal with the problem of America’s diminished standing in the eyes of the rest of the world, in March 2005 President Bush appointed Karen Hughes, one of his closest advisors, to be in charge of public diplomacy at the State Department.

Hughes was not in a hurry to accept this vital post, however, as she waited five months before taking up the job. During that time, she collected $450,000 giving speeches to oil-drilling companies and other groups for $50,000 a lecture.\(^1\) In the year before her nomination, she was paid $750,000 for writing *Ten Minutes from Normal.* In the book Hughes praised Bush’s “laser-like mind, humble spirit and moral courage” among other things.\(^2\)

But is placing someone who is not afraid to praise the president in charge of improving our image in the world going to ensure the success of that effort? Her most notable characteristics—her loyalty and closeness to the president—have allowed her to stay on message regardless of any inconvenient facts. She once insisted to Tucker Carlson, a conservative pundit, that she had never heard Bush use profanity, despite the fact they had both just listened to him use it.\(^3\) Her response was to simply deny the words had ever been uttered. Carlson, although a loyal conservative, found her insistence so surreal that he reported the exchange with Hughes. One might therefore ask, if she can’t con conservatives at home, how will she convince the skeptics abroad?

The answer is she can’t, and she won’t. Her first forays overseas demonstrated a remarkable degree of cultural insensitivity as well as her customary bending of the truth to serve her political views. Her statements were filled with factual errors, as she claimed for instance that Saddam Hussein had gassed hundreds of thousands of his own people. (The number used by Colin Powell in his famous February 5, 2003, speech to the UN justifying the coming invasion of Iraq was 5,000.)

Not only was her grasp of statistical details a little loose, but Hughes could not even get the most basic facts about America right. She claimed that the phrase “one nation under God” is part of the Constitution, when in fact those words made their first appearance when they were added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954.

As Al Kamen noted in the *Washington Post,\(^4\) press reviews of the trips were not kind:

*Preachy, culturally insensitive, superficial PR blitz — USA Today*

*Faux Pas Trifecta; saying too much, saying the wrong thing, saying anything at all — Washington Times op-ed page*
Non-answers, canned message, macabre — *Los Angeles Times*

Fiasco, lame attempt at bonding — Slate.com

Painfully clueless . . . pedestrian . . . vapid . . . gushy — *Arab News* (“the Middle East’s leading English language daily”)

The marquee clown [in] America’s circus diplomacy . . . total ineptitude . . . total disconnect — Al-Jazeera

The degree to which she was an embarrassment became obvious even to Washington, and her overseas travel and the number of reporters allowed to accompany her were both drastically cut back. After making four trips in the first four months after being sworn in, she made only four more in all of 2006. With the mid-term elections out of the way, she apparently felt better able to travel and made a trip a month in the first eight months of 2007. These junkets were limited largely to official tourism, without any significant American press along for the ride or any significant impact on the country visited.

In August 2007 for instance, the State Department announced she was going to Peru to watch a U.S. Navy hospital ship perform a humanitarian mission called “Operation Comfort.” The visit of the hospital ship was mentioned in the local press 14 times in largely one-paragraph stories in provincial newspapers. Hughes was newsworthy enough to be named in only four of them. In another four articles, none of which were in the major newspapers in Lima, she was quoted, but only because she said the free trade agreement that was pending before the U.S. Congress would improve the lives of average Peruvians.

Nonetheless, Hughes had a very successful visit, according to an embassy official who praised her preparation and her ability to move effortlessly among the patients, kissing babies and chatting with their parents and old people while observing the humanitarian mission in the provincial city of Trujillo. Back in Lima, the capital, she did a television interview (in English), visited a school, had a press conference on the extension of an agreement on protecting cultural property, visited English-language students, and attended a small reception for former participants in various exchange programs.

But a prominent Peruvian journalist, Mirko Lauer, had a different take on her visit than the Embassy did: “She barely made it into the papers, and then with a ‘social chronicle’ slant (she is sort of blonde and fetching). One notorious reason is that she arrived in the wake of (Congressman) Charles Rangel’s visit, which did have a lot of impact.
Rangel is evidently simpatico, not least because he looks like a *criollo* guitar player. The other thing that complicated Hughes’ visit was the incapacity of the embassy to explain to the Peruvian public what she was about.”

The embassy had difficulty explaining the visit because it seemed to have had little purpose other than to give Hughes something to do. The lack of both substance and press coverage reflected that and cannot be blamed on the embassy.

In addition to frequent-flyer miles, Hughes has something else to show for her tenure—some prestigious titles. She is the fourth person (and fourth woman) to be named undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs. The first two occupants of the office held only that title. The third, Margaret Tutwiler also had the title ambassador since she had served in that capacity in Morocco before taking the position. Apparently not to be outdone, Hughes also picked up the title of ambassador, but that has hardly added to her credibility.

There is a basic reason for that, and it is not unique to Hughes. The first undersecretary for public diplomacy in the Bush administration was Charlotte Beers. A former advertising executive, her nomination was not sent to the Senate until mid-2001, several months after the names of the others nominated to that level position at State had gone to the Hill. The nomination languished in the Senate until 9/11 and was then quickly rushed through. Beers finally took office on October 2, 2001, but quit a year and a half later. The resignation was attributed to “health reasons” by Secretary of State Powell. An unnamed official gave CNN another reason, however: “She was failing. She didn’t do anything that worked.” Powell, nonetheless, awarded Beers the State Department’s highest award, the Distinguished Honor Award, upon her departure.

During of her business career, Beers was said to be “the most powerful woman in advertising.” After leaving government, she joined the ranks of former officials who give speeches for large fees. Her bio on the website of her talent agency notes that she believes that “a fundamental rule of advertising is that a good brand has, at its heart, the key traits that make up its essence.”

Beers made Uncle Ben’s Rice a well-known brand, and she approached public diplomacy as just another advertising campaign. She failed to sell the product successfully, however, because she was powerless to alter its fundamental traits. All she could do was repackage the American brand of foreign policy and try to make it appear more appealing to customers abroad.
Hughes, on the other hand, given her access to, and influence on, the president, had the opportunity to fundamentally reshape the brand. Instead, all she did was approach the problem in the way she knew best—as a political campaign where fast reactions and glib responses matter most and integrity and accuracy don’t matter much at all. According to Sidney Blumenthal, writing in Salon.com:

The tiny band of opponents (of officials within the administration who opposed the use of torture) approached Karen Hughes, the newly named undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, hoping that the longtime confidante of President Bush, now assigned responsibility for the U.S. image in the world, might be willing to hear them out on the damage done by continuation of the torture policy. But she rebuffed them.

Two weeks ago (in June 2007), Hughes unveiled her major report, extolling “our commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being,” but making no mention of detainee policy. The action part consists of another of her campaign-oriented rapid-response schemes, this one a Counterterrorism Communications Center, staffed by military and intelligence officers, to rebut the false claims of terrorists. Asked whether the administration’s policies might be a factor contributing to the problem, Sean McCormack, the State Department spokesman, replied, “You’re always going to get people criticizing policy.”

So can the appointment of advertising executives and political operatives to be in charge of projecting America’s image to the world be explained by international relations theory or, in the case of Hughes, by the fact that she is close to the president? She did after all write his autobiography with little help. The nomination of Beers came before 9/11, at a time when little importance was placed on that undersecretary’s position, and it seems to have been used mainly for diversity purposes. (The positions of deputy secretary and the undersecretaries for political, economic, and arms control issues, which are the next ranking officials after the secretary of state, have never been held by a woman. The position of undersecretary for public relations has never been held by a man.)

With the terrorist attacks of 9/11, many Americans were stunned to find there were people willing to kill themselves in order to kill some Americans. Even more shocking was the realization that any American, not just those overseas, could be the victim of such an attack. While there is a continuing debate about “why they hate us,”
it would seem clear that a more effective presentation of American views to foreign audiences would be crucially important. How then can it be explained that public diplomacy is still not serious enough to rate putting someone in charge who understands it and has credibility, rather than someone who simply repeats her view that the president’s likeness belongs on Mount Rushmore?

When Karl Rove, Mr. Bush’s chief political strategist for many years, resigned as deputy chief of staff and left the White House in August 2007, there were many news stories and opinion pieces published about his impact and his legacy. James Carville, a longtime Democratic strategist and commentator on cable news programs, observed that “Mr. Rove’s famous electoral strategy—focusing on the Republican base first—is also largely responsible for a shift in international public opinion against the US.”

Carville put his finger on the reasons why American public diplomacy has failed and why naming people like Hughes to be in charge of it is just another indication that domestic politics has come to influence foreign policy to a greater extent than ever before. Such appointments are designed not to sway audiences abroad, but rather to give one more megaphone to broadcast the message to the audience at home. Those abroad who see the reality of American policy cannot easily be deceived, but Washington seems to think that whatever is repeated enough times will be believed at home. So if they, and their mouthpieces in the media, say a failure is a success, many will believe it rather than go to the trouble to become informed about what is actually happening. Can American public diplomacy really be more concerned about making Americans feel good about themselves than about making other countries feel good about America? To assume otherwise is to believe that the Bush administration is incompetent rather than more interested in the reaction of domestic audiences than of foreign ones.

And the administration is not incompetent when it comes to public diplomacy if that means staging media events. It spends hundreds of thousands of dollars to get the lighting just right when the president gives a speech. Having the message of the day repeated endlessly on the backdrop or having the right people sit behind the president is also standard showmanship.

No detail is overlooked when setting the scene. People at one event were asked to remove their neckties so they would look more like the ordinary folk to whom Bush’s speech was supposedly addressed. Men and women in uniform are another favorite backdrop. Using an aircraft carrier or a sanitized view of New Orleans after Hurricane
Katrina are just some of the other props employed. In other words, putting the emphasis on appearances and being indifferent to the substance is part of Washington politics today. What sells at home does not necessarily work abroad, however, where other images and the impact of American policies compete with Washington’s version of events.

Another public diplomacy initiative of the State Department that seems destined to have little effect has been the naming of Michelle Kwan and Cal Ripken as special sports envoys. Since there is not a lot of ice-skating or baseball played in the areas of the world where U.S. standing is the lowest, this probably won’t turn around the world’s view of American policy. Like the efforts of Beers and Hughes, the efforts of sports envoys are not going to persuade foreign audiences. But that matters little if public diplomacy is more about manipulating the opinions of Americans than it is about influencing people abroad.

Hughes returned to private life in December 2007. She explained the move by saying she wanted to again live in the same city as her husband and that improving the world’s view of the United States was a “long-term challenge.” Political appointees who fail or are fired invariably offer the explanation that they have rediscovered the fact that they have a family. They also claim whatever it is they didn’t accomplish will take decades. Hughes was praised effusively by Secretary of State Rice, but few others saw many reasons to lament her departure. Many observers noted that she reorganized the public diplomacy bureaucracy, but made no progress in improving America’s image abroad. The man named to replace her was known for his ability to turn journalism into another form of lobbying.

**Missile Defense**

The development of a missile defense system (MDS) provides another case of a foreign policy aimed at a domestic audience. Any discussion of the defense budget and military procurement would do well to start with the following quote by Robert Coram in his biography of John Boyd, a fighter pilot and iconoclastic defense analyst:

> Civilians unacquainted with the ways of the building have only vague ideas about what it is the Pentagon does. They think the real business of the Pentagon has something to do with defending America. But it does not. The real business of the Pentagon is buying weapons. And the military has a pathological aversion to rigorous testing procedures
because in almost every instance the performance of the weapon or weapons system is far below what it is advertised to be.¹³

The idea that there is a Pentagon philosophy of avoiding rigorous testing and of buying weapons that do not perform as promised may seem extreme, but that is exactly what is reflected in the official arguments in favor of the MDS. A fact sheet put out by the Bureau of Arms Control of the State Department entitled “Missile Defense Testing and Development” makes the following points:

We do not rely solely on intercept flight tests to make final assessments concerning system reliability and performance. Failures should not raise questions about whether the eventual system will work as designed. It may seem counter-intuitive, but the rate of failure during development testing is completely unrepresentative to the expected system performance at deployment.

So, on the one hand, test failures don’t matter that much, but on the other, the more failures there are, the better the end result is guaranteed to be. The “fact sheet” then goes on to make the argument that the Wright brothers were not successful in their first attempt at flight and that they provide a “timely example” of testing that eventually succeeds. Therefore, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the MDS will also be a success. However, the Wright brothers did not spend $100 billion dollars of the taxpayers’ money to get to Kitty Hawk and did not plan to spend $10 billion annually for years to come. Not to mention the fact that not every experiment in aviation history has inevitably led eventually to a successful outcome.

Even though test results don’t matter according to the fact sheet, the Pentagon obviously felt some pressure to have something positive to point to. The official claims regarding the success of the MDS tests are about as valid as comparing it to the success of the Wright brothers, however. In July 2007 the director of the Missile Defense Agency, which is part of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, claimed that 28 of 36 tests had been successful.¹⁴ He neglected to point out that those doing the intercepting had a bit more information than the enemy would provide in a real attack. Among the data that might be available during the tests are the location, date, and time of the launch of the single attacking missile; its flight trajectory; and, a description of the target reentry vehicle. No decoys or other countermeasures have been used in recent tests, but in the past there was enough information on them to be able to distinguish their radar image from that
of the reentry vehicle. Some tests included target missiles that had radar beacons or global positioning system (GPS) locators on them.\textsuperscript{15} Aside from that, they are a fair test and a true representation of the conditions that would be faced during a real attack.

Besides hyping the results of tests, the official “fact sheets” on missile defense like to exaggerate the threat by describing it as “real and growing.” It is characterized as “a direct menace to the U.S. posed by a group of countries possessing ballistic missiles that includes some of the world’s most threatening and least responsible regimes, such as North Korea and Iran.” A quick glance at the list of some 35 countries that have such weapons shows that, aside from North Korea and Iran, there are not any other real threats.\textsuperscript{16} Russia and China are on the list, but they could easily overwhelm any defensive system. The programs of India and Pakistan are not aimed at the United States but at each other. Unless the defense planners are worried about an attack from Argentina, Armenia, or similar countries, the United States is deploying a system that does not work against a threat that does not exist.

This “threat” by 35 or more countries also ignores the question of why an adversary would choose to attack the United States in this way. There is nothing ambiguous about the origin of an intercontinental missile. Any attacking power could expect a swift and devastating response. Dictators may be evil, but they are not crazy and not suicidal. If they want to detonate a WMD in the United States, they would send it in a shipping container, not at the end of a missile whose origin is obvious.

But even if such a threat did come into existence, could the MDS, assuming it could be made to work, provide protection? A number of scientists have pointed out that there is no really effective way for the MDS to discriminate between real warheads and decoys. So any country that could put together the technological ability to launch an intercontinental ballistic missile could also easily add enough countermeasures to defeat the defense system. And even if the counter-countermeasures were somehow effective, it takes only 11 missiles to defeat a 10-missile defensive system.

Nonetheless, the system is being deployed in Alaska and California. In addition, the Bush administration has aggressively pushed to place ten interceptor missiles in Poland and a supporting radar installation in the Czech Republic. That plan has managed to anger just about everyone. The residents of the areas where the U.S. facilities would be located have voiced overwhelming objections in local referendums.\textsuperscript{17}
If Polish and Czech officials do give their approval over such opposition, they will no doubt extract a considerable price from the United States.

The European Union was furious that NATO was being ignored and circumvented. The EU feared the system would divide the continent and make joint defense planning and cooperation much more difficult. Another European concern may arise from the fact that while American officials try to make it sound as if the system is intended to defend Europe from an attack by Iran, that may be largely false. Fred Kaplan writing in Slate.com noted:

Nor, despite the rhetoric, are these interceptors really meant to protect Europe. In a phone interview today, Thomas Christie, the Pentagon’s former chief of weapons testing, recalled the initial discussions of the European missile defense plan in 2003–04. The focus, he says, was to shoot down missiles launched by Iran as they passed over Europe on their way to the United States. The interceptors—again, assuming they worked (a doubtful proposition)—could provide protection for some parts of Europe, but that wasn’t the intent.\(^{18}\)

Little wonder then that the Austrian defense minister called it a “provocation that unnecessarily rekindles Cold War debates.”\(^{19}\) While America’s allies don’t like the proposed system, an even harsher reaction has come from its former adversaries. Relations with Russia plunged to a post–Cold War low as President Putin responded to the plan by suspending his country’s obligations under the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), a pact that limits the deployment of heavy conventional weapons systems on both sides of the old Iron Curtain.\(^{20}\) He added that Russia would have new targets in Europe for its weapons if the system were installed.

Secretary of State Rice called the Russian concerns “purely ludicrous,” but the Russians believed they had legitimate reasons to worry. They thought they had a commitment, when Poland and the Czech Republic joined NATO, that there would be no expansion of bases into countries that had belonged to the Warsaw Pact or the Soviet Union. That happened, and the Russians therefore believe that once a missile defense system was deployed, it could be expanded and become a real strategic threat.\(^{21}\)

Putin summed up his skepticism by saying, “We are being told the anti-missile system is targeted against something that doesn’t exist. Doesn’t it seem funny to you? It would be funny if it was not so sad.”\(^{22}\)
Putin gets the joke because he understands Washington politics better than do some who live there and sell their insights for a living. Michael O’Hanlon, a defense policy expert at the Brookings Institution, in a 1999 article in *Foreign Affairs* concluded:

In the end, missile defense is not a good ideological issue—not something to passionately champion or to fight steadfastly against. Zealots should spare us their tired polemics. The right solution to the missile defense question is moderate and nuanced—less dramatic than the Star Wars scenarios envisioned by Ronald Reagan or George Lucas. That may not be very exciting, but life often isn’t. That’s one of the differences between Washington and Hollywood, after all.23

Missile defense is actually the perfect ideological issue. Since 90 percent of politics is theater, the differences between Washington and Hollywood are not all that great. The MDS is a system that does not work and is designed to protect against a threat that does not exist. This is not just a reflection of the Pentagon’s typical fascination with weapons systems that are complex, expensive, underperforming, and poorly tested. It also reflects the exploitation of the issue by political strategists.

As has been done repeatedly in the so-called Global War on Terror, people’s fears and their inability to calculate the real risks or costs involved can be used to good political advantage. If it were not the perfect ideological issue, it would not have been so successfully employed by so many ideologues. According to a biography of Donald Rumsfeld, before he became secretary of defense under Bush, he engaged in a “. . . quest to remain politically relevant by inflating threats to the United States. In July 1998, a Congressional commission on missile defense that he led issued a report foreshadowing the Iraq intelligence debacle: Rumsfeld hectored and dismissed witnesses ‘whose information he found unpalatable,’ insisting on worst-case scenarios.”24

Favorable witnesses are never hard to find in Washington regardless of the cause, and Rumsfeld is not the only one to use the missile defense issue for career advancement. Supposed think tanks like the Center for Security Policy (CSP) and the National Institute for Public Policy, as well as groups like the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance (MDAA), use donations from right-wing foundations, defense contractors, and members to provide a stream of talking heads, reports, and press releases in favor of missile defense. They also provide another revolving door through which people can pass
from these organizations into government and back again. Their staffs and advisory boards often read like a who’s who of Republican administrations.\textsuperscript{25}

The CSP, for instance, has received contribution from defense contractors, including Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and TRW.\textsuperscript{26} It was founded by Frank Gaffney, an assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration. His goal was to have the CSP become “the Domino’s Pizza of the policy business.”\textsuperscript{27}

In other words, the CSP and similar groups specialize in rapid delivery of information designed to feed the needs of the media, and you can have your toppings to order. By generating so much information so quickly, they can answer any critics, try to dominate the media, and give the impression that the vast majority of patriotic Americans support their positions. The media, especially the electronic media, fearful of charges of bias and often too lazy to analyze the issue in depth, are often willing partners in such efforts and provide Gaffney a platform from which to deliver his policy pizzas.

Since they make little attempt to be objective when selling their points of view, these organizations are at least consistent. They have never met a defense expenditure that they did not like, and since missile defense is one of the largest programs, they like it a lot.

They also go to great lengths to give the impression that popular opinion agrees with them. The MDAA, a group founded by a former professional football player, issued a press release on July 26, 2007, on the PRNewswire about the results of a survey done by a professional polling company. The release headlined the fact that the poll found that 84 percent of Americans supported the development of an MDS to protect the United States and that 70 percent favored deployment of such a system in Poland and the Czech Republic. The news release did not say that the MDAA had paid the commercial company nearly $9,000 to conduct the poll and that it had supplied the questions asked.

The polling company reviewed the 15 questions given to it by the MDAA to avoid any bias, but the questions were hardly formulated in a neutral way. The 84 percent response was in reaction to the following question: “Do you think the United States should or should not have a missile defense system with the ability to protect the United States from an attack by missiles that might contain WMD?” That is like asking, “Would you prefer to be safer or less safe?” The question was not, “Do you think it makes sense to deploy an MDS that has never undergone realistic testing?” Nor was it, “Do you think billions more should be spent deploying a system in Europe that European
leaders do not want, that antagonizes Russia, and that raises tensions throughout the continent?"

Organizations like the CSP, the AEI, and the Heritage Foundation have been made possible by the willingness of right-wing foundations to pour hundreds of millions of dollars into them as a way to affect policy. This is largely a phenomenon of the last 20 years, and it has been very successful. These groups have been able to use political pressure and campaign contributions to encourage the elected politicians to vote the right way. It has also created alternative employment for the appointed politicians as they pass from think tanks, lobbying firms, and defense contractors to high-level government positions and back again.

They have also been very effective at framing the argument. A candidate is either in favor of spending billions on programs like missile defense or else is weak on national security. Since the mid-1980s, $110 billion has been spent on ballistic missile defense systems, and Congress appropriated $9.3 billion more in fiscal year 2006. Even the loss of control of Congress by the Republicans slowed the rate of expenditure only slightly. Since 9/11 no politician from either party can afford to leave himself or herself open to the charge of being soft on defense.

In August 2007 the House approved a record Pentagon budget. The Democratic majority allocated $8.5 billion for missile defense, which was a mere 4 percent less than the level requested by the administration billion and still $1 billion more than current spending. With even conservative estimates of the total cost of the Iraq war in excess of $1 trillion, one might think spending could be cut significantly on a weapons system that is not operational and that may never be—but apparently not if the cost is political advantage.

The Clinton administration also felt political pressure to fund missile defense, but, with its ability to triangulate any issue, it found a way to go ahead with testing but not deployment of the MDS. In 1993, after a thorough Defense Department review of military plans and programs, the Clinton administration decided to emphasize deployment of the MDS designed to counter short-range missile threats and to focus ballistic missile defense efforts on research. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin justified this approach basing it on the assessment that the regional ballistic missile threat already existed, while a ballistic missile threat to the United States had yet to emerge and might not for some years to come.

That wasn’t good enough for the Republican-controlled Congress, which wanted to demonstrate that they could not be surpassed when it
came to spending money on weapons programs. The Missile Defense Act of 1995 was approved, declaring it national policy to develop for deployment an affordable and operationally effective MDS. The Clinton administration countered by adopting a policy that was a bit more forward leaning. Under this new administration strategy, MDS technologies would be developed for three more years; then, in 2000, a decision would be made regarding deployment during the next three years. Both development and deployment were to be conducted within the limits of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM).

Not to be denied an opportunity to exploit the fear of a missile attack no matter how remote, the Republicans answered with the National Missile Defense Act of 1999, which made it national policy “to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system.” President Clinton signed the act, but then in 2000 he announced he was leaving any decision on deployment to his successor.31

When the Bush administration came into office, it substantially increased spending on the MDS, withdrew from the ABM treaty, and announced that limited deployment of the MDS would begin in fall 2004, just in time for the elections. A Congressional Research Service report in July 2007 concluded a history of the MDS with the bland but clear observation that “although this goal was met with the deployment of five ground-based interceptors in silos in Alaska, ongoing technology problems have not yet demonstrated the operational capability of that deployed system. Current administration plans are to continue testing and deployment of those interceptors in Alaska, California, and eventually a third site in Europe.”32

The Bush administration’s much more aggressive approach to missile defense, without any apparent interest in the reaction of other nations, was explained by Time magazine in June 2007 as follows:

In his search for a long-term foreign policy achievement that can offset Iraq in the history books, George W. Bush has returned to a central national security tenet of his early days as President: the need for missile defense. Beyond fighting terrorism, no issue is more important to the President’s strategic vision, and he and his closest advisors have pursued anti-missile programs from the earliest days of the Administration. But as he presses his efforts to get a regional missile defense system in place for Europe before he leaves office, Bush faces more resistance than he bargained for, resistance that now threatens to overshadow his other foreign policy legacy efforts.33
In their first term, presidents care most about reelection. In their second, their top priority is to ensure their place in history. Elected politicians, as well as appointed ones, are most concerned about keeping their jobs. That, plus the business interests of military contractors and the fund-raising needs of think tanks and advocacy groups, ensures that there will always be a strong lobby for massive projects like missile defense no matter how wasteful or infeasible they are.

Those who push for such projects portray themselves as modern-day Paul Reveres awaking the country to a grave threat. Another view is that they are nothing more than self-serving Chicken Littles who raise fears about a threat that is highly improbable and claim falsely that they have a way to protect against it.

Whether the MDS ever works effectively or whether the funds spent on it are wasted is important but not as important as its effects on U.S. relations with other nations and on the image of America abroad. Unilaterally deploying a system like the MDS forces countries to react in ways Washington doesn’t like, and often doesn’t even anticipate. After Russia withdrew from the CFE treaty, the Senate passed a resolution noting that it was “a regrettable step that will unnecessarily heighten tensions in Europe.” The missile defense advocates will probably add that to their justifications for the system. But other countries will consider it just one more reason the United States is as dangerous and as unpredictable as it is unreliable.

Arms Control

According to the history presented on the NRA’s website, the NRA was founded in 1871 by two former Union army officers who had been dismayed by the poor shooting ability of their troops. The group’s primary aim was to “promote and encourage rifle shooting on a scientific basis.”

Beginning with that limited goal, the group grew and expanded its scope. Over the years, programs for sports shooting for young people and training for hunters, law enforcement personnel, and firearms safety instructors were added. And at some point, the NRA discovered political power.

While it played out over a much longer period than for most groups, the political path of the NRA is still a familiar Washington story. Some individuals identify a cause and discover that it can inflame passions and attract adherents. A group is formed and starts to raise funds. To attract more followers and more funds, the intensity of interest in the cause has to be constantly refreshed and amplified.
The group grows, and an opportunity to accumulate political power is sensed. It starts to lobby more intensively and targets not only politicians, but the public and the media as well. Funds and votes are gathered and channeled to friendly politicians. Efforts to periodically arouse public opinion mean that the media have to be provided with a constant stream of information with which to fill up airtime and newspaper pages. Another Domino’s outlet is born.

This works so well in Washington because it is a marketplace of interests and, given the advanced state of the American economy, there are always people with money to contribute if the cause is right, especially if it is far right.

The NRA’s history of itself describes the process:

In response to repeated attacks on the Second Amendment rights, NRA formed the Legislative Affairs Division in 1934. While NRA did not lobby directly at this time, it did mail out legislative facts and analyses to members, whereby they could take action on their own. In 1975, recognizing the critical need for political defense of the Second Amendment, NRA formed the Institute for Legislative Action (ILA). Establishing the NRA Foundation, a tax-exempt organization, provided a means to raise millions of dollars to fund gun safety and educational projects of benefit to the general public.

While widely recognized today as a major political force and as America’s foremost defender of Second Amendment rights, the NRA has, since its inception, been the premier firearms education organization in the world. But our successes would not be possible without the tireless efforts and countless hours of service our nearly three million members have given to champion Second Amendment rights and support NRA programs. As former Clinton spokesman George Stephanopoulos said, “Let me make one small vote for the NRA. They’re good citizens. They call their Congressmen. They write. They vote. They contribute. And they get what they want over time.”

One reason the NRA may have founded the ILA in 1975 was that it was feeling some heat on its right flank. That year the Gun Owners of America (GOA), another nonprofit lobbying organization, was formed. While it has only 300,000 members, it takes an even more aggressive approach to defending Second Amendment rights. In the wake of the killing of 32 students and faculty members by a mentally unstable student at Virginia Tech, the NRA supported legislation to tighten efforts to prevent individuals like the student who carried out the massacre from obtaining guns. Not the GOA. It alerted its members that the proposed law was just a new form of “gun control” that
could “block millions of additional, honest gun owners from buying firearms.”

There is just one problem with the NRA’s narrative of its own history and the signature issue of both the NRA and the GOA. “Second Amendment rights” is their term for the constitutional right of an individual to own a gun. The problem is there is no such right—at least not one that has been generally recognized by the courts.

The Second Amendment states, “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.” While the legal arguments are complex, one would have to think that the Founding Fathers were sloppy drafters to interpret that to mean that every individual has a constitutional right to a gun. Either that or by “militia” they meant every man and woman in the country.

To say the least, it is a subject of debate. In a 1991 interview, Warren Burger, who was appointed by President Nixon to be chief justice of the Supreme Court, said the individual rights view was “one of the greatest pieces of fraud—I repeat the word ‘fraud’—on the American public by special interest groups that I have ever seen in my lifetime.”

There are judges today who don’t accept Burger’s opinion, however. In March 2007, for the first time in the nation’s history, a federal appeals court struck down a gun-control law, ruling that the law violated the individual’s right to own guns. The case was appealed and in late 2007 the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case and was expected to reach a verdict in mid-2008. The last time it ruled on such a case was in 1939, when it ruled that possession of a sawed-off shotgun in the hands of a civilian individual had no relationship to the maintenance of a militia. The decision was no model of clarity, however, and stilled none of the arguments on either side of the issue.

An honest representation of the debate is not in the interests of either the NRA or the GOA, however. It is much easier to mobilize millions of members and attract hundreds of millions of dollars through outrage than it is through reasoned debate.

What does the NRA have to do with foreign policy? Just about anything it wants to. When the Bush administration first took office, Attorney General John Ashcroft said in his confirmation hearings that he would uphold the nation’s gun laws. Within a few months he wrote to the NRA to inform them that he had overturned long-standing Justice Department policy and that for the first time its attorneys were being sent into court to argue that the Second Amendment guaranteed an individual’s right to bear arms.
Vice President Cheney, six months before his boss’s reelection in 2004, spoke at the NRA’s annual meeting and asserted that Senator John Kerry, at the time the likely Democratic nominee, would sharply restrict gun ownership and undermine the war on terrorism. That Cheney’s charges were somewhere between ridiculous and scurrilous did not matter. The NRA began a vigorous campaign to whip up support for the president’s reelection among its members and used its mailings, the Internet, television advertising, and a network of gun clubs to ensure the message got across.40

The NRA is nonpartisan to the extent that they will attack any politician they view as insufficiently devoted to their cause. Republican New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg has rated a cover story in the NRA magazine that alerted its 600,000 recipients (the other 3.4 million NRA members apparently don’t subscribe) to Bloomberg’s “illegal anti-gun tactics across America” and his “war on legal gun ownership.”41 Usually, however, the NRA and Republicans are comfortable in bed together. A 2007 Pew Research Center poll found that

Republicans, who held the most favorable view of the NRA in 1995, not only continue to hold the most favorable view in 2007 (72% favorable), but also registered the largest gain in the number holding favorable views of the group—a 20-percentage point increase. Among Democrats, the increase in positive opinions was very modest. As a result, the gap between the attitudes of Republicans and Democrats toward the NRA grew much wider. In 1995, the gap measured 16-percentage points; by 2007 it had doubled to 32 points.42

Democrats were not about to alienate gun owners, however, and have increasingly paid less attention to gun-control measures. As one writer observed after the killings at Virginia Tech:

Once a popular talking point for Democratic officials and candidates, gun control has been shoved to the background over the past six years, as the party—trying not to alienate gun-owning voters in swing states—has cooled its rhetoric on the issue and tamped down its action. Gun control advocates haven’t won a major victory since Bill Clinton was president, and since then the main anti-gun legislation of the Clinton era has either died or been stripped of its teeth.”43

One piece of legislation that was allowed to die was a ten-year-old federal ban on assault rifles enacted in 1994. It was allowed to lapse despite the fact that 71 percent of the people in households without
guns and 64 percent of those that had them supported an extension of the ban. Even President Bush endorsed it, but then did nothing to see it extended.44

Clearly, the power of the gun lobby is considerable, but what foreign policy issues does the NRA care about? Since the threats to the nonexistent rights it so passionately defends have to be constantly refreshed to keep its members mobilized and paying their dues, the NRA has gone international in order to invent additional ones. It is credited with defeating a gun-control referendum in Brazil, where 38,000 people are killed each year by firearms. It has also helped local gun-rights groups fight legislation in Australia, Britain, and Canada.45

The NRA has also had great success at the UN. In 2001, delegates from 120 nations gathered in New York for a two-week conference. The purpose of the meeting was to find ways to reduce illicit trafficking in such weapons without interfering with the legal trade, manufacture, or ownership of arms.

Shortly after participants took their seats, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control John Bolton presented the American position. Bolton, who would later become U.S. ambassador to the UN despite having never been confirmed by the Senate, began by claiming that handguns and hunting rifles don’t contribute to violence around the world, despite the fact that small arms are involved in more than 1,000 deaths every day. He then made it clear that the U.S. government defined small arms and light weapons as strictly military weapons—automatic rifles, machine guns, shoulder-fired missile and rocket systems, and light mortars—and he demanded that the conference deal only with those.

He went on to quote Attorney General Ashcroft, saying that “the Second Amendment of the US Constitution protects an individual’s right to keep and bear arms,” and he asserted that the United States would oppose any measure that sought to limit that constitutional right no matter where it happened in the world. Bolton also insisted that the conference concentrate its efforts solely on illegal arms trafficking, while ignoring the fact that half the illegal arms are initially sold in legal transactions and then diverted.

Finally, Bolton demanded that there be no mandatory meeting in the future to review the progress made since this conference. No matter that the final document of the conference was to be determined by consensus, would not be a legally binding treaty, and would not intervene in matters that are within any particular country’s jurisdiction.46

A follow-up conference was held, nonetheless, in 2006. There were three public delegates in the group sent by Washington to
represent the United States at the conference. They were supposed to be drawn from a broad political spectrum so that they would, in fact, be representative of the different points of view on such issues as limiting the illegal trade in weapons that has fueled so many civil wars in Africa and elsewhere. All three public members appointed were NRA members, and two of them were on its board. When asked by the press why all three citizen delegates from the United States were prominent members of the NRA, Bolton’s snide reply was that he did not comment on the activities of nongovernmental organizations.47

The connection between public policy and this private lobby has been made clear in small ways as well as large. An official reception for conference participants that was hosted by the U.S. Mission to the UN included only people from NGOs associated with the NRA. The speech laying out the U.S. position was given in draft form to the NRA and was largely denied to anyone else.

The U.S. position was presented less stridently than Bolton had presented it in 2001, but it contained essentially the same elements. It insisted on gun rights for all and said that while it opposed terrorist groups acquiring arms, it would not accept a blanket ban on “nonstate actors,” because they had a right to “defend themselves against tyrannical and genocidal regimes.”48

“Nonstate actors” is a diplomatic term for rebel groups. Whether Washington had in mind funding the Contras again now that Daniel Ortega is president of Nicaragua is not clear, but it insisted on the right to arm any group of its choice whether or not they are trying to overthrow the government of a particular country.

Of course one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter. There has been intense criticism of Iran from the Bush administration, for instance, as it has charged Iran with providing weapons to various factions in Iraq. In August 2007, the State Department held a press conference to denounce Eritrea for providing weapons to groups in Somalia. But Washington reserves the right to arm whomever it pleases.

It was not enough for the NRA to run the U.S. delegation. It needed to whip up its members and felt no obligation to tell the truth while doing so. On its website, it asserted that the conference was going “to finalize a UN treaty that would strip all citizens of all nations of their right to self-protection.”49 The lunatic fringe of the press was even more extreme. An editorial in the New York Sun, a tabloid founded by Conrad Black, who was convicted in July 2007 of mail fraud and obstruction of justice, claimed the conference
was nothing less than an attack on the Founding Fathers and the American way of life.\textsuperscript{50}

The fearmongering and disinformation worked well. The UN received over 100,000 letters of protest from NRA members regarding the conference. Many of them were threatening, and the UN felt it necessary to take special security precautions in response. One can only guess as to the impression left in the minds of the hundreds of delegates to the conference. The NRA could not have been happier, however. Its president boasted that the “global war on guns” would double his organization’s membership and decrease the chances of Senator Hillary Clinton becoming president in 2008.\textsuperscript{51}

UN officials responded to these assaults by explaining that the conference had nothing to do with a global gun ban or with any limitation on the rights of citizens to own small arms. The truth matters little, however, when the self-interest of a powerful NGO is involved—especially when that NGO believes it can lie to its members in order to ensure it can dictate the position of its government at an international meeting.

The conference collapsed without agreement, thanks mainly to the opposition of the United States, which was joined by Cuba, India, Iran, Israel, and Pakistan in blocking any meaningful result. In October 2006, however, a UN General Assembly committee voted to begin work on a treaty to strengthen arms embargoes and prevent human rights abuses by setting uniform global standards for arms deals. One hundred and thirty-nine countries supported the measure, while 26 abstained. The only country to vote no was the world’s biggest arms exporter—the United States.\textsuperscript{52}

All the public diplomacy efforts of Karen Hughes and others won’t amount to much of anything if such efforts consist only of extolling American virtues while ignoring the impact of American policies elsewhere. When the United States goes into an international meeting and is the only country to oppose efforts to reduce the flow of illegal weapons in the world, its actions speak much louder than even Karen Hughes’s words. The NRA is not interested in America’s standing in the world, only its own. It relishes its political power, and the biography of its chief lobbyist boasts of the fact that 95 percent of the politicians it endorsed won in the 2004 elections at the federal level.\textsuperscript{53}

To maintain that power, it has to maintain its membership. And to do that, it uses all the means of modern communication and political strategy, including propaganda and disinformation, available.

The NRA is not the only NGO that engages in exaggeration to make its case. Those trying to encourage the world to end the killing
in Darfur by the Sudanese government were not above using in their advertisements the highest estimate of the number of victims they could find, even though other figures with lower estimates had far more credibility. The movement to ban land mines succeeded in getting an international treaty adopted and won the Nobel Peace Prize. It also grossly overestimated the number of land mines in the world. In Kuwait, for instance, figures of between 5 and 8 million were used. When the de-mining operation was completed, only 1.7 million had been found.

NGOs will always argue that they are the right people, addressing the right causes, for the right reasons, at the right times and places, with the right results. NGOs have grown in number from hundreds 20 years ago and thousands a decade ago to tens of thousands today. Many NGOs accomplish great things, such as bringing humanitarian relief to those who need it or bringing the world’s attention to a problem like land mines. They can also be very effective at implementing programs to deal with those problems. There are no barriers to forming an NGO, however. Anyone can create one, for any reason and with any result.

The NRA uses some of its huge resources to invent new NGOs just so it will have more representatives in the room as observers at UN conferences. From the standpoint of an NGO, the main measure of success is whether it gains enough funds and followers to be able to continue in existence. As in the case of the NRA, that may have nothing to do with what is in the interests of the United States. The United States has nine guns for every ten citizens, making it the most heavily armed society in the world, and probably in history as well. (Yemen comes in second, with a mere six guns for every ten people.) With still one person out of ten not packing, clearly the NRA has more work to do before everyone is safe.

Like politicians, those who run NGOs know that intensity matters. If an interest group is to be held together, its energies must be focused and its passion periodically renewed. The NRA, in making an enemy out of the UN, knows this and takes advantage of it. Sometimes enemies don’t have to be invented.

**Cuba Si, Castro No**

In terms of long-term intensity and knowing who the enemy is, there is perhaps no group that is a match for the Cuban exile community. Much of Cuba’s middle and upper classes fled their homeland after Fidel Castro took over, and they have not forgotten or forgiven him.
for ending life as they knew it. According to periodic polls done by Florida International University in Miami (FIU), over 51 percent of Cuban Americans still support the idea of an American invasion of Cuba, and over 60 percent would support such action by the exile community.\(^57\)

In the early 1980s, the Republican Party saw an opportunity to tap into the passionate hatred of Castro even though Cuban Americans tend to be moderate on social issues. All it took was a few anti-Castro lines in speeches by Ronald Reagan, and Cuban Americans were lining up to register and vote Republican. So much so that one prominent Democrat said in 1984 that it was a waste of time and money to compete for their votes because “Reagan’s anti-Communist rhetoric is so strong that the Cubans are simply in love with him. There is no question that the Republicans have got a good thing going for them.”\(^58\) Nearly two dozen years later, the Cuban Americans are still in the pocket of the Republican Party. The fact that Castro is still in power doesn’t seem to matter as much as the intensity of the anti-Castro oratory.

The remarkable success of this effort is demonstrated by the fact that in 1979, Democrats made up 49 percent of Cuban Americans registered to vote, exceeding the percentage of Republicans by ten points. By 1988, 68 percent were Republicans and only 24 percent counted themselves as Democrats.\(^59\) That has changed little over the last two decades. In the 2007 FIU poll, 66 percent of Cuban Americans were Republicans and 18 percent were Democrats.

The Republican presidential candidates are not the only ones to benefit from Cuban-American votes. A little gerrymandering along ethnic lines has carved out safe congressional seats for several Cuban-American congressmen from Florida. Even with the sweeping Democratic victory in the 2006 congressional elections, all three Republicans from south Florida were reelected with about 60 percent of the vote.

What is true for Cuban Americans does not apply to other Hispanics. In the 2000 elections, President Bush received only 35 percent of the vote of Hispanics nationally; at the same time, he won more than 80 percent of the Cuban-American vote in Florida.\(^60\) The Republicans were able to develop such a high degree of loyalty with a few speeches by Reagan, but they have maintained it by fashioning government policies and programs to remind this constituency which party hates Castro more. No matter that neither the policies nor the programs have any positive foreign policy impact. The goal is to satisfy the domestic political objective regardless of the impact abroad.
Early in his presidency, President Reagan announced that he was going to establish Radio Marti to provide an alternative to the Cuban media. Radio Marti would supposedly give its listeners an uncensored view of current events. It went on the air in 1985 and was joined five years later by TV Marti. Both have been subjected to jamming attempts by the Cuban government, and the size of the audience they attract is as imperceptible as their effect on public opinion in Cuba.

Both media outlets provide a reliable means to spend money allocated by Washington and employ members of the exile community in Miami, however. The budget for the Office of Cuban Broadcasting, which runs the stations, rose from $27 million in fiscal year 2005 to $38 million the next year. A substantial portion of the increase went to starting to broadcast the TV signal from a Gulfstream jet in an effort to defeat the jamming by the Cuban government. In mid-2007, the Associated Press interviewed more than two dozen Cuban immigrants who had recently arrived in Florida, and they all said the programming could rarely be seen.61

But being seen or heard is not the main purpose of the broadcasts. According to a *New York Times* article, “several Cubans interviewed said they saw Radio and TV Marti primarily as a source of income for well-connected exiles in Miami, a view shared by Jose Basulto, founder of Brothers to the Rescue, a strongly anti-Castro group. ‘The joke goes on,’ Mr. Basulto said, ‘they pay individuals who are instrumental in making the lives of United States politicians easier come election time.’”62

New initiatives on Cuba, like amendments to the Constitution that would ban flag burning or same-sex marriages, always seem to be proposed in the middle of even-numbered years. In other words, they appear a few months before each congressional election. In May 2004, a presidential commission headed by Secretary of State Powell announced recommendations for new sanctions and additional funding aimed at toppling the Communist dictatorship. The measures came a month after Karl Rove assured Cuban Americans that President Bush was not going to allow the Democrats to exploit the exiles’ complaints of administration inaction.63

The demands for action included pleas from Cuban-American political activists in Florida, and the administration responded as promised by Rove. The intent of these steps was as clear as Rove’s message to the party faithful in south Florida. State representative David Rivera even admitted as much, saying it was a matter of “telling the White House we need some help down here. We need something to motivate people.”64
Before the 2006 election, Rivera did some motivating of his own. He introduced a bill in the state legislature that was designed to prevent public and private universities in Florida from using state funds in any way related to travel to countries designated by the State Department as having governments that support terrorist groups. While the measure would apply to Sudan, Syria, Iran, and North Korea, as well as Cuba, Rivera justified it on the grounds that a professor at Florida International University had recently been charged with spying for the Castro regime. It did not matter that the professor had not yet gone to trial or that the charges against him were for failing to register as a foreign agent, and not for spying. His activities had nothing to do with government secrets and consisted only of reporting to Havana on the exile community in Miami. The proposed bill also ignored the fact that state law already forbade using state funds for travel to Cuba. The bill passed both houses in Tallahassee without a negative vote. Mission accomplished.

Also in 2006, with the election just four months away, Washington again played the Cuba card. Secretary Rice held a press conference to announce the second report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba and the Compact with the Cuban People. It contained a new two-year program costing $80 million to support civil society on the island and other measures supposedly designed to help the transition to democracy.65

Since under Cuban law, it is a crime to receive money directly from the U.S. government, this program and a previously existing one are implemented by Cuban-American groups in Miami. A GAO audit of the existing program, which had paid out $76 million between 1996 and 2005, uncovered major problems. Ninety-five percent of the grants were issued without competitive tenders. Funds in some cases were used to buy crab meat, cashmere sweaters, computer games, and chocolates, as well as to cover questionable travel expenses and payments to the family of one grant recipient.66

Less than a month before the 2006 election, Washington announced the formation of a new task force to aggressively pursue violations of the trade and travel sanctions against Cuba.67 The primary responsibility for enforcement of the sanctions is with the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the Treasury Department, which employs 120 people to monitor 19 different sanctions programs. While only four are assigned to track the finances of Osama bin Laden and other terrorists, 21 are dedicated to enforcing the embargo on Cuba and to keeping America safe from Cuban cigars.68
President Clinton made the words “I feel your pain” into a catchphrase used by comedians as well as politicians. While it is good for political leaders to empathize with the voters, is it appropriate to exploit those feelings through government policies and programs that pander to those emotions and that have no positive effect other than giving employment to certain constituencies? The efforts directed against Cuba have been not only costly and ineffective but also counterproductive. The U.S. embargo has served largely to strengthen Castro rather than weaken him. The embargo has also been a consistent irritant in U.S. relations throughout Latin American and with a number of European countries as well. Worst of all, while Castro’s health has grown worse, so has America’s ability to influence the transition to the post-Castro era. The diminished contacts with, and information on, Cuba cannot help but leave the United States less prepared to deal with what all agree is an unpredictable situation once Castro dies.

Despite 45 years of failure, almost all politicians would still rather cling to the embargo and take advantage of the exile community than run the risk of suggesting a policy that would be more effective. A few members of Congress from south Florida express support for Castro’s demise, even by assassination, although it is likely they are also concerned by the prospect that they won’t have him around some day. Then they will be judged by voters on something other than the degree of their professed hatred for the Cuban dictator.

The 2008 presidential race won’t result in much change in policy with respect to Cuba. In an article in the Miami Herald, Barack Obama wrote that the Bush administration had made “grand gestures while strategically blundering when it comes to actually advancing the cause of freedom and democracy in Cuba.” As president, he said that he would grant Cuban Americans unrestricted rights to visit family and to send remittances to the island.69 The much tighter restrictions on visits and remittances that were imposed before the 2004 election demonstrate that the Bush administration would rather please the old guard than the more recent arrivals from Cuba. Many of them came to the United States more for economic than for political reasons, and they have more relatives on the island than do those who arrived 40 years ago.

Obama at least addressed the issue squarely and was willing to propose some modest changes that would be popular with many Cuban Americans. The Herald noted that the other leading candidates (Hillary Clinton and John Edwards among the Democrats and Rudy
Giuliani, John McCain, and Mitt Romney among the Republicans) all essentially endorsed the idea of continuing the embargo unchanged.\textsuperscript{70} Even though polls in Miami show a growing willingness to engage Cuba, all six Cuban-American members of Congress still support the embargo, and no major party candidate has won Florida without the backing of the anti-Castro hardliners.\textsuperscript{71}

The political calculation of nearly all the presidential candidates seems to indicate little hope for an early change in Cuba policy. Their position is largely that if Cuba starts to become democratic after Castro’s death, then the United States would start to consider easing the embargo. The fact that democracy might not be the first thing to break out after Castro’s demise does not seem to have entered into their calculations. One would think that if anything should be learned from Iraq, it is that a political vacuum created by the departure of a dictator is not always filled by Jeffersonian democrats. But if the purpose of the policy is to pander to special interests rather than to serve the national interest, then they are all on the mark.

**AID AND AIDS**

As the policy and programs with respect to Cuba indicate, pork and patronage are part of foreign policy. This has always been true of politics in general, but the degree to which it is now true and the way in which it has intruded in areas that were typically less politicized, like international issues, is different from the way it was in the past.

This would not be news to any close observer of today’s Washington. It probably surprised few when a front-page story in the *Washington Post* reported that Karl Rove formed an “asset deployment” team 13 months before the 2004 election to ensure that even routine government actions were used for maximum political gain.\textsuperscript{72} The team worked to employ the staging of official announcements, high-visibility trips by cabinet officers, and the awarding of federal grants as part of an effort to achieve maximum political effect for the president and other Republican candidates in close races. Perhaps the only news was the degree to which these actions were coordinated and directed by the White House. As the *Post* reported:

Many administrations have sought to maximize their control of the machinery of government for political gain, dispatching Cabinet secretaries bearing government largess to battleground states in the days before elections. But Rove pursued the goal far more systematically than his predecessors enlisting political appointees at every level of
government in a permanent campaign that was an integral part of his strategy to establish Republican electoral dominance.\textsuperscript{73}

 Whereas in the past some parts of government were viewed as off-limits—, for example, the Justice Department and the State Department—Rove reached out to nearly all cabinet departments and even to a number of smaller agencies like the Agency for International Development (USAID), the White House Office of Drug Policy, and the Peace Corps.

 Among the political briefings given by Rove and his deputies were half a dozen to top diplomats. In one meeting in his White House office, Rove hosted the ambassadors to Spain, Denmark, Portugal, Italy, and France, as well as the consul general to Bermuda. Included in the PowerPoint presentation he gave them was a list of Democratic incumbents targeted for defeat in 2008.\textsuperscript{74}

 The meeting demonstrated three things: where political appointees go as ambassadors, what they pay to get there, and how, with today’s degree of partisanship, holding a high diplomatic post does not put one above party politics. As is typical for political appointee ambassadors, they were named to positions in countries in Western Europe and the tropical vacation spots of the Caribbean. The man who went to Bermuda had to settle for the title of consul general because Bermuda is a British overseas territory and, therefore, does not have an ambassador. The six collectively donated more than $1.6 million to Republican causes, which is about the going rate.\textsuperscript{75} Anyone thinking about buying the title had better plan on a six-figure contribution.

 The degree to which this has all become politics as usual was summed up by White House spokesman Scott Stanzel in response to Democratic senator Joseph Biden’s suggestion that such meetings were inappropriate and that ambassadors and other political appointees from foreign affairs agencies like the Peace Corps should keep out of partisan politics. “Why shouldn’t the president’s appointees have our understanding of the political landscape?” Stanzel asked rhetorically.

 The reactions of Republican congressman Thomas Davis and Democratic congressman Henry Waxman also demonstrated the partisan divide on the issue. According to Davis, Rove “didn’t do these things half-baked. It was total commitment. He helped coordinate all the accoutrements of the executive branch to help with the campaign, within the legal limits.” Waxman said the revelations showed just “the tip of a whole effort to make the federal government a subsidiary of the Republican Party. It was all politics, all the time.”\textsuperscript{76}
But if it had been a Democratic administration employing ambassadors as political operatives, would the positions of the two congressmen be the same, or reversed? And has it become all politics all time when it comes to foreign policy, regardless of party?

No politician of either party would ever admit that, but even in the most supposedly altruistic policies, it is not hard to find a political purpose. Secretary Rice and others point to the fact that President Bush has doubled foreign aid and tripled it for Africa as proof of his concern for the world’s poor. She suggested that history should take note of the fact that it represented “the biggest health investment of any government program ever.” Aid is generally not popular and is even less so with Republicans. There had not been the kind of media attention that would have aroused the public enough to force the administration to respond with major increases in assistance programs. So did such a dramatic initiative result from the president’s compassionate conservatism or were other motivations involved?

While some reporters accepted the government’s fact sheets on the size of the aid increase without question, others who delved into the details questioned whether it was as large as portrayed. Even the low-end estimates put the increase at 67 percent, however. While the increase was clearly significant, the amount requested for the Development Assistance (DA) program was less in FY 2006 than in FY 2002. That is because much of the increase went to two new programs—the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) and a new fund to combat AIDS.

The MCA was announced at a summit meeting on development in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002 as a response to growing international criticism of the failure of the United States to live up to previous commitments to increase development assistance. In September 2000, leaders of 189 countries committed at the Millennium Summit to eradicating extreme poverty, hunger, and disease by the year 2015. A key part of the effort to achieve these ambitious goals was for wealthy nations to increase their development aid to a level equal to 0.7 percent of their national income. Statistics released at the end of 2001 showed the United States had fallen behind Japan in total dollars contributed and was at only 0.1 percent of national income, reflecting the fact that under President Clinton aid had fallen to post–World War II lows.

Since it was clear the meeting in Monterrey was going to be an occasion used by many to criticize the United States for its stinginess, the Bush administration decided to preempt the critics. The plan for the MCA was pulled together in the days before the conference
by a couple of top officials, thus ensuring that it was as much a surprise to most of the U.S. government as it was to the rest of the world. To call the plan half-baked is to assume it spent even a little time in the oven. One of the most fundamental debates about the economics of development is what works. The experts don’t agree, and more than a few books have been written recently about what the most effective way to raise the standard of living in the poorest countries of the world is.\(^8^0\)

But the MCA did not need any extensive policy discussion about how it could be most effective. As was the case in the decision to invade Iraq and apparently in the case of most every other major policy issue, there was no significant debate within the administration about what the best course would be. President Bush needed to do something dramatic, so he simply announced the establishment of the MCA with the promise that it would provide billions in aid to those countries that performed better than their peers on a number of key indicators.

As details of the MCA were fleshed out, one of the first things that became clear was that the funds were not going to be turned over to existing development organizations like USAID or the World Bank to administer. Instead, a special new “government corporation,” the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), was created. The MCC was supposed to be a lean and effective bureaucracy that would dispense its funds far more effectively. The Washington Post editorialized: The MCC “operates outside the government’s traditional aid program” and promised to be able to distribute money in “the efficient manner pioneered by the World Bank.”\(^8^1\) Those NGOs and others involved in the business of development aid did not complain, perhaps hoping that with billions supposedly being added to the pie, their slice would grow.

The real advantage of the MCC, however, was that it could largely ignore civil service rules and therefore be a source of patronage for the politically connected. It didn’t need to be staffed by career government employees (who tend to vote Democratic), even though they might know something about development. Like the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, the MCC attracted conservative ideologues who were unqualified for the positions they were given.\(^8^2\) Much the same results were obtained.

The MCC struggled to find countries it could give money to and was able to sign the compacts it required with only 11 countries in its first three and a half years. And only five of those were in Africa.\(^8^3\) The projects chosen for MCA funding also had a decidedly pro-business slant.
At the same time that this money was finding its way to the private sector, funding for children’s health programs in some of the world’s poorest countries was being cut.\footnote{84}

The announcement of the new fund for AIDS was rolled out in the 2003 State of the Union address less than two months before the invasion of Iraq. It provided a small head fake in the direction of humanitarian concern as the administration marched inexorably to war. It was called the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and it was a five-year, $15-billion initiative that virtually tripled the U.S. funds being allocated to fight AIDS internationally. In way 2007, President Bush proposed doubling PEPFAR to $30 billion.

One early requirement of the program was that the AIDS-fighting drugs purchased with PEPFAR funds could not be the cheaper generic variety. Although this was eventually changed, to make sure the pharmaceutical companies did not fail to benefit from PEPFAR, Randal Tobias was made the AIDS czar. Tobias had been CEO of the Eli Lilly drug company, and he had no experience in either the developing world or public health. He had been a major contributor to the Republican Party, however.

Given the title of ambassador, Tobias was some months later promoted to be the head of all of USAID, with the rank of deputy secretary of state. Tobias abruptly resigned in April 2007 for “personal reasons” when it was revealed that he was a frequent customer of an escort service that prosecutors alleged was a prostitution ring. Tobias told reporters he had obtained only massages and not sex from the women from the service whom he had over to his condo.\footnote{85}

Perhaps he also gave them a talk about the virtues of abstinence, since that is a major part of the services provided by PEPFAR. No matter that abstinence-only sex education programs are ineffective. When a major national study reached that conclusion and it was announced, a top official in the Department of Health and Human Services responded by saying that the administration had no intention of changing the funding priorities in light of the results or of cutting the $176 million spent on such programs each year. He claimed that the study was not rigorous enough to prove that such programs are ineffective.\footnote{86} He could have also referred the reporter to the website of the Heritage Foundation, which continues to post its 2002 study that claims such programs have been proven effective.\footnote{87}

In domestic as well as in international programs, however, efficacy is not the only measure of effectiveness or apparently even the most important one if there is a core constituency to be served. Initially
the Bush administration did not seem particularly interested in the AIDS problem. Bush’s first top advisor on AIDS, Paul Scott Evertz, was a Republican political appointee who was given responsibility for both domestic and international AIDS policy. Evertz was openly gay, as even his White House biography highlighted by mentioning that he had been legislative director of the Log Cabin Republicans in Wisconsin.88

Perhaps the White House believed in a philosophy of “no constituency left behind” and thought that appointing a gay official to the AIDS job would win points with the gay community. It was not, after all, until 2004 that President Bush, in the months before the election, endorsed a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage. As with immigration, however, pleasing different constituencies simultaneously is hard to do.

Evertz immediately drew fire from religious conservatives and lasted little more than a year. One of the reasons cited by administration sources for his removal in July 2002 was that he “had angered other presidential advisers by questioning the administration’s policy of doubling the financing for sex education programs that advocate only abstinence.”89 Evertz eventually left government, but continued his criticism of administration policy as executive director of a Washington-based AIDS advocacy group. In late 2006, he described PEPFAR as a program that was “failing to stop the spread of AIDS and failing to help lead the world to stop this deadly disease” because of its “flawed framework and flawed policies.”90

Evertz was replaced by another openly gay official, but one who was apparently not so openly opposed to the administration’s policies of funding ineffective programs run by the religious right. The change in leadership did not change the Bush administration’s priorities, however. In 2001, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan announced the creation of a global fund to fight AIDS and other diseases and urged wealthy nations to contribute $7 to $10 billion a year to the effort. The Bush administration responded with a pledge of only $200 million.

The lack of emphasis on the AIDS problem changed dramatically, however, once it became a cause for Christian conservatives. The level of both interest and resources soared when one of Mr. Bush’s most important core constituencies became involved. According to Holly Burkhalter, writing in Foreign Affairs, “the real turning point in American AIDS policy came when conservative Christians made the cause their own. In February 2002, Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, convened the first ‘international Christian conference
on HIV/AIDS.’ More than 800 evangelical Protestant and Catholic leaders and overseas missionaries from AIDS-stricken countries gathered in Washington, D.C. for the meeting and demanded treatment for the sick and dying.”

Perhaps those attending the conference saw the need to help improve the health of the world’s poor. At least some also saw it as a way to proselytize and to obtain government funding to do it. And the Bush administration, which up until that point had shown no particular interest in AIDS, responded.

The Boston Globe reviewed 52,000 contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements awarded by USAID and published a four-article series on the subject in October 2006. The Globe found that the percentage of the awards going to Christian organizations doubled from 10 percent to 20 percent in the first five years of the Bush administration, for a total of $1.72 billion over those years.

The last head of USAID under President Clinton was Brady Anderson, an evangelical Christian. Anderson told the Globe that relations between the agency and faith-based organizations were strong. Nevertheless, when Bush took office, he declared that Christian organizations had been systematically discriminated against and faced too many restrictions. Bush’s solution was to abolish by executive order government regulations against discrimination in hiring on the basis of religion that had been in effect since the Johnson administration. To make sure the right religion got the money, the Bush administration channeled 98.3 percent of the funds going to faith-based organizations to Christian groups. The Globe could find only two Jewish and two Muslim organizations that received any government support during the five-year period they studied.

Not all religious leaders welcomed the opening of the federal funding floodgates or believed there was a problem to begin with. As the Globe reported:

While Bush has portrayed many restrictions intended to enforce the separation of church and state as hostile to religion, many religious leaders disagree: They say the separation of church and state has allowed religions to flourish. Many large Protestant denominations say the administration is catering to the religious right—particularly evangelical groups seeking funding for missions whose ultimate aim is recruiting new members.

Bishop Frank Griswold, the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, the faith in which Bush was raised, said he strongly opposed allowing faith-based contractors to discriminate in hiring. But the bishop said he was unable to express his concerns to Bush. He said he
has been “shunted to one side” by the White House, which has been more interested in rewarding the religious right. “I think it has to do with politics and power,” Griswold said. “It has a great deal to do with what Mr. Bush perceives to be his base.”

Criticism also comes from representatives of the faith that Bush now observes—the United Methodist Church. James Winkler, general secretary of the church’s General Board of Church and Society, compared Bush’s claim of discrimination against faith-based organizations to his assertion that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. “We heard all the time that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and we heard all the time that there has been all this discrimination against faith-based groups,” Winkler said. “We kept on saying we haven’t noticed any discrimination. The grants are there. This really came from the religious right as political payback for their support for the president.”

The Southern Baptist Convention, which is the largest of several Baptist organizations, also has strong reservations about Bush’s faith-based initiative, preferring to maintain a separation of church and state.\(^96\)

Those groups who benefitted from the new government funding had no problem with erasing the separation between church and state, and PEPFAR was one of the main ways to do that. Not only did the religious right take the money, but it also dictated how it could be used. Legislation was adopted that set aside money for abstinence programs and required that no money could go to any group that does not have a policy explicitly opposing prostitution. Supporters of the measure said they hoped it would “eradicate” prostitution and therefore help reduce the spread of AIDS, an argument that might be lost on Ambassador Tobias.\(^97\)

The religious right also attacked more secular, competing organizations. After CARE, one of the oldest and most respected aid NGOs, received a $50 million contract, then Senator Rick Santorum said the group was “anti-American” and “promoted a pro-prostitution agenda.” James Dobson of Focus on the Family said USAID, the agency that awarded the contract, was a “liberal cancer.” After the complaints, CARE’s contract was phased out and replaced with a $200-million program of grants for faith-based organizations.

Not only do the faith-based organizations prefer the abstinence programs and antiprositution pledges over more effective methods, but they also often take the opportunity to proselytize even in predominantly Muslim areas. One brochure for a hospital in Pakistan run by a Christian group said *The Jesus Film* was shown to all patients because “through Christ terrorism will be eliminated in this part of the world.”\(^98\) Needless to say, local religious leaders were not amused.
USAID spent $57 million (out of a total of $390 million) from 2001 to 2005, to fund projects by faith-based organizations in Pakistan, Indonesia, and Afghanistan. In Mombassa, Kenya, where several terrorist attacks have occurred, less than 40 percent of the people are Christian. But a faith-based group, using USAID funds, started a microfinance program for Christian businessmen that created resentment among the Muslim population toward the United States and Christians.

Despite the increases in the aid budget, arising mainly from the creation of the MCA and PEPFAR and the money going to Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States is still a cheapskate nation. While the United States gives more official development assistance than any other country in dollar terms, measured as a percentage of America’s national income, the assistance amounted to only 0.22 percent. Only Greece at 0.16 percent and Portugal at 0.21 percent came in lower among the 22 industrialized nations that belong to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).99

Given that America is nowhere near the 0.7 percent level that all OECD countries agreed to strive for, it is important that the aid provided by the United States be used as effectively as possible. Instead, American programs are viewed abroad as unilateral, ideologically driven, and willing to ignore effectiveness in order to cater to key domestic political groups. Commenting on the MCA, one aid expert observed, “Maybe this is all bread and circuses, just a political game to make people think the U.S. Government is committed to reality when, in reality, the U.S. Government doesn’t care.”100 The reality is that the U.S. government does care about the impact of its foreign policy. Just not about the impact on foreigners.
Chapter 6

Why It Won’t Change and How It Might

The making of American foreign policy thus far in the twenty-first century has been a colossal failure. It has failed for a reason, but that reason is not because the world changed on 9/11 as a result of the terrorist attacks on that day. Terrorism has been used by extremists for centuries, and it will continue to be employed in the future as long as there is someone willing to murder innocent people to make a political point.

The failure arises from the use of foreign policy to cater to special interests and core constituencies rather than to serve the national interest. Because of that failure, America’s foreign policy has not made its citizens confident that their government can conduct international affairs with competence, nor has it made the country safer.

A survey to determine Americans’ confidence in U.S. foreign policy done in the spring of 2007 demonstrated that public anxiety about America’s place in the world had reached troubling levels and was edging toward what those conducting the poll called a crisis of confidence in public policy. This dissatisfaction was not just in response to the handling of the war in Iraq; it also spilled over “into the entire range of challenges facing the United States in a dangerous world, leading the public to question fundamental premises and to give the government poor grades on multiple fronts.”¹ Eight in ten of those surveyed said the world was becoming a more dangerous place for Americans, and six in ten said they didn’t think the government was telling them the truth about foreign relations.
This lack of confidence is found not only among the public at large, but among the experts as well. Some of the most notable authorities on international issues feel much the same way as the general public does. The journal *Foreign Policy* periodically surveys a very select group of more than 100 foreign policy experts of all political persuasions. Nearly all of those who took part in the most recent poll believe that

- the world is becoming more dangerous for Americans (91 percent);
- the United States is not winning the war on terror (84 percent); and
- the war in Iraq is having a negative impact on U.S. security (92 percent).²

At the same time that both average Americans and the experts are losing confidence in the government’s ability to deal with the world, foreigners are increasingly likely to have a negative view of America and its role in the world. A survey of public opinion abroad done by the University of Maryland in March 2007 found the following:

Worldviews of the United States continue to worsen. Among the 26 countries polled, in 20 the most common view of the United States’ influence is negative, while in just four it is mainly positive and two are evenly divided. Negative views are particularly widespread in Europe and predominantly Muslim countries. The only countries with positive majorities are Nigeria-72%, Kenya-70% and the Philippines-72%.

Some of the sharpest drops in positive ratings over the last year have occurred in four countries that tended to be quite positive about the United States. Poland dropped 24 points to 38 percent and the Philippines 13 points. India fell from 44 percent to 30 percent and Indonesia plunged 19 points to 21 percent.³

A few days after 9/11, President Bush explained the attack by saying that the terrorists hated America’s freedoms.⁴ That remark is as inaccurate as it is insufficient, but it was designed to provide an excuse, not a real explanation. If Americans are hated only because of their freedoms, they have no need to consider making any changes. A better question would be why so many people abroad don’t like the United States. A better answer would acknowledge that the general public in other countries has a negative image of the United States, but not because of its freedoms. It is because they hate the policies of the U.S. government. As a recent study of public perceptions abroad found, people remain remarkably friendly to individual Americans,
but in many parts of the world “large majorities are appalled by American policy.”

If American foreign policy is simultaneously inspiring a lack of confidence at home and a distrust in American government abroad, it is clearly not serving the best interests of the nation. As has been described in earlier chapters, the argument of this book is that this is happening now not just because of the ineptitude of the Bush administration and the quagmire it has created in Iraq, but also because of how the world has changed and how policy is made in Washington today.

Many people believe that the end of the Bush administration will result in better policies. Some think electing a Democrat will be sufficient, while others think a president as conservative as Bush, but better at implementation, will fix the problem. The passage of time or the arrival of new political leaders will not guarantee improvement, however. A solution will not be found simply because there is a new president in the White House on January 20, 2009, and it won’t matter which party is in control of Congress.

The problem is systemic and is unlikely to improve much, if at all, in the years ahead regardless of who holds power. Most books on Washington, at least the ones that are not designed solely to improve the author’s place in history, end on a note of unwarranted optimism. They describe the problems in Washington and then conclude with the writers’ recommendations for making the world a better place. The unspoken implication is that the only element missing is for everyone to recognize the wisdom of the solutions described.

While the policy prescriptions are often listed, potential obstacles to their implementation are rarely mentioned—not even inertia, which is no small challenge given that governments are hard to motivate and move. There is a more important reason why the recommendations have little chance of being put into effect, however. That is because the status quo in Washington, or in any other nation’s capital, exists not because of a lack of good ideas. It is not a vacuum waiting to be filled with suggestions for improvement from an academic, a journalist, or a would-be secretary of state who lays out a path to an idealized world. The status quo exists because it serves the interests of those who profit from the way things are, and those people will defend their interests and strongly resist change. The politicians, bureaucrats, lobbyists, think tank experts, and single-issue advocates and ideologues are not going to embrace reforms that could drastically affect the way they make their living.
Government policies that serve special interests rather than the national interest have always been part of the normal pork and patronage of the Washington political process. With the end of the Cold War and the end of even a minimal consensus about the main objectives of foreign policy, such costly practices are a growing part of American foreign policy. Now, while there is agreement on the need for better national security, there is less agreement about what the most pressing threats facing the nation are and very little agreement about how to confront them.

The Bush administration effectively sold the notion that terrorists with WMD posed an immediate threat that could result in damage far greater than that wrought by the attacks on 9/11. It then invaded a country that had no WMD, that had no significant links to terrorists groups that threatened the United States, and that had no involvement in the events of 9/11. Assuming that nothing that could credibly be called a victory is achieved, the question of how to extricate the country from Iraq and whom to blame for the loss of the war will be topics of contentious debate for years to come.

A lengthy debate will be guaranteed because Mr. Bush’s place in history will be decided by the outcome. Since that will also affect the Republicans’ claim to be better at protecting the nation’s security than the Democrats are, the debate will be not only long but bitter and partisan as well. The argument will be made more partisan by the way Congress has been redistricted. Since the people who vote in the primaries are more partisan than those who vote in the general election, they will pick a more extreme candidate in the primary, and that candidate will go on to win the general election if he or she is from the dominant party in that district. Redistricting therefore guarantees a greater degree of partisanship. The results of elections in such districts will have a serious effect on the way Washington operates, and will make any debate about policy all the more difficult.

That is even more unfortunate given that globalization will ensure that the world remains an unsettled and unsettling place. Globalization will present a variety of threats and challenges that no nation can face alone. The most fundamental aspect of globalization is that it makes national borders less and less meaningful. As a result, not even the world’s only superpower can impose its will on a global phenomenon. That is assuming that with the monetary and human costs of Iraq still mounting, there will still be a superpower that is willing to play a leadership role in the world. Such a leadership role will be impossible for the United States to assume, however, if other countries don’t respect the United States, but simply fear it.
In an ever more globalized world, there is an even greater need for U.S. leadership than before. That leadership is necessary not in order to form a coalition of the co-opted and coerced to carry out U.S. policy, as in Iraq; rather, it is necessary in order to form effective partnerships with other nations so that problems that they cannot deal with alone can be addressed. Any international effort, agreement, or treaty implies a certain loss of sovereignty. Just as any individual who enters a relationship or lives in a neighborhood has to surrender a certain amount of freedom, countries belong to a community of nations and enter into relationships when there is the prospect of mutual benefit, and in the process they assume mutual obligations.

Forming such partnerships is harder to do and leadership is more difficult to maintain when the United States has no credibility. It cannot proclaim to be a champion of human rights that does not use torture when, at the same time, government lawyers are busy drafting memos that say that any practice that does not kill the prisoner is not torture.

It is also not possible to abandon or ignore institutions simply because they fail to meet American standards. The UN is far from perfect, but the U.S. Congress is also not free of corruption. Both institutions are vital to America’s interests and security. Having squandered its military might in Iraq and its moral might through its duplicity in the so-called war on terror, the United States is on the way to creating a world with no superpowers. That course is not irreversible, but reversing it will take some honest discussion of what the national interests really are, and it will require not falling for the arguments of the single-issue ideologues and advocates.

Such a discussion of what is really in the national interest is never easy, however, because partisan differences do not stop with politicians. Politicians exploit and exacerbate those differences, and they are not above using fear to manipulate the voters. But many people look to the politicians not for leadership and to the media not for information; instead, they look to both for validation of their beliefs and worldviews. People don’t tune in to Rush Limbaugh because they want to learn about the world, but because they want information that buttresses their biases about it.

It is therefore futile to try to describe the ideal policy, because there will never be agreement on what that is. Either the Right or the Left will weigh in with a contrarian point of view. But more important than the resistance of the single-issue ideologues and advocates is the fear factor. A discussion of what is in the national interest is made even more difficult when people are afraid for their lives and are constantly
reminded of their mortality. Politicians have taken advantage of that reaction and have relentlessly exploited the events of 9/11 for political purposes. And in the process, they have questioned the patriotism of anyone who questions their fundamentally flawed policies.

Is the world such a dangerous place that there should be no limits on what is done in the name of national security? The former second-ranking official in the State Department’s Middle Eastern Bureau wrote in the Washington Post, “We are at war. America faces an existential threat.”6 Before assuming her position, that official, whose responsibilities included promoting democracy in the Middle East, had had no significant experience in the region or in promoting democracy. Her primary credential was that she had her father’s last name. Liz Cheney also had her father’s belief that terrorists with WMD pose the gravest threat imaginable and that anything done to defend against that threat is justified.

One could argue whether a handful of suicidal fanatics, even with WMD, could really threaten the very existence of the United States. It seems to imply that today’s threat is equal to or greater than the threat once posed by the possibility of a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union or the threat posed by the original axis of evil during World War II.

Or perhaps such dire images are more a useful political device than they are a realistic assessment of the risks posed by today’s world. According to research in political psychology, “the mere thought of one’s mortality can trigger a range of emotions—from distain for other races, religions, and nations, to a preference for charismatic over pragmatic leaders, to a heightened attraction to traditional mores.”7 Therefore, instead of being open to other races, religions, and nations that are increasingly present thanks to globalization, Americans tend to react against them when fears of mortality kick in. Fear of Muslims, regardless of their politics, and the debate on immigration would seem to be good examples of such a reaction, and both have been used by politicians willing to exploit such fears.

This makes discussions about how to deal with the rest of the world all the more difficult. In addition, there is the tendency of partisans, regardless of their position on the political spectrum, to seek information that supports their beliefs and that does not conflict with them.8 A number of studies on political thinking show that it is predominantly emotional for partisans, who see the world as black and white.9 Partisans also reject information that challenges their preexisting beliefs, and they are quick to spot inconsistency and hypocrisy, but only in candidates they oppose.10 They also find bias in the media,
but ironically they are more likely to find it in the media that try to be neutral. They have fewer objections when the bias is evident, seemingly because when it is obvious it is somehow less objectionable even when it conflicts with their own views. Some studies even argue that genetics influences political orientation.

Having a serious discussion about foreign policy is also made difficult by the fact that it threatens the vested interests of so many powerful groups. Lobbying in Washington is a multibillion-dollar industry. Election campaigns are also a multibillion-dollar industry, and a presidential candidate needs to raise $100 million in order to be taken seriously. Nonprofit associations and think tanks are also huge industries. The NRA, AIPAC, the missile defense lobby, the AEI, and the Heritage Foundation all have to keep their contributors motivated and intensely interested in supporting their causes. Of course, all these groups—liberal or conservative—would say that the interests of their members represent the interests of the nation.

Another problem is the cultural changes in Washington and in the county in general. One change is that greed has become a virtue. In 1982, the average CEO of a large U.S. company made only 42 times the salary of an average American worker. By 1990, it had risen to 107 times, and a 2007 study found it had reached 364 times. There is no real economic rationale for a CEO to make in a day what it takes an average worker a year to earn. In Europe the 20 highest-paid corporate executives made only one-third what their American counterparts did.

What has changed is the culture of corporate executives. CEOs now think they are worth whatever they can convince their corporate boards to pay them. This attitude is increasingly spilling over into academia. The annual pay of university presidents, even at public institutions, has broken through the million-dollar mark and shows no sign of slowing down. Workers and professors are not the only ones whose compensation has not kept pace with the man or woman at the top. The 20 highest-paid individuals at publicly traded corporations made 38 times more than the 20 highest-paid leaders in the nonprofit sector, and about 200 times more than the 20 highest-paid military officers, members of Congress, or federal executives.

What does CEO pay have to do with foreign policy? Government policy is made in Washington, not in a laboratory. The culture of Washington affects the way that policy is made and how the policy comes out. And the corporate culture of greed has affected Washington. As was mentioned in chapter four, one Washington observer noted that the reasons people come to Washington have changed and that now they come to Washington to make money.
That is not to say there are not still many who believe in public service. But there are more people today than in the past who see Washington as a place to get rich rather than as a place to serve the nation. Members of Congress and congressional staffers often see a second career as a lobbyist as their just reward for public service. A proposal to double to two years the time that ex-lawmakers and their top aides would have to wait before they could lobby Congress was quickly defeated in May 2007. One article reporting this noted:

No one hid why (the measure was rejected). Lawmakers did not want to place any roadblocks in what has become the career path of choice: from public servant to private pleader. The lure of lobbying downtown turned out to be stronger than the lawmakers’ stated goal of improving Congress’s reputation. Thirty years ago lawmakers and many of their staffers accepted that their Washington careers were over when they left Congress. Not anymore. Now they look to lucrative second acts on K Street working for the same interests they were asked to judge impartially when they were on the government payroll.15

In third world countries corruption begins at the top. If the president is blatantly on the take, everyone below him or her won’t be shy about using a government position for personal gain. In the United States, corruption is more subtle and is called campaign contributions while in power and speaking fees and book advances after the politician leaves office. The tone is still affected by the person at the top, however. A year and a half before leaving office, President Bush admitted to one writer that he was going to hit the lecture circuit after his term ended so he could “replenish the ol’ coffers.”16 It is apparently not enough for a former president to get by on an annual pension of $186,000, along with travel funds, mailing privileges, Secret Service protection, office space, staff stationery, and other benefits. Those and six-figure speaking fees and seven-figure book advances are now all expected postpresidential perks. With the president setting the example for greed after they leave office it is little wonder that members of Congress, congressional staffers, and high-level bureaucrats increasingly see government service as a springboard to their second careers.

Those who want to continue with their political careers must constantly cater to the lobbyists and special interests. A campaign for a seat in Congress that is even a slightly competitive contest costs at least a million dollars. Those costs have skyrocketed in recent years, in part because of the enormous and growing expense of television advertising.17 Former senator Ernest Hollings, in an opinion piece
proposing a constitutional amendment that would authorize Congress to control spending in federal elections, noted that he and his colleagues spent one-third of their time raising money for the next election.\(^{18}\)

That means that money matters and that those who bring it—or votes—in, like lobbies and lobbyists, have far more influence than anyone else who does not. In a 2007 book, Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter’s national security advisor, gave his description of the foreign policy failures of the last three presidents. One foreign policy expert who reviewed the book noted that Brzezinski had only a few recommendations about how to devise a sensible geopolitical strategy, even though he had little good to say about the strategies of either President Bush or President Clinton. Brzezinski did suggest “tighter lobbying laws,” but the reviewer dismissed that idea, claiming that lobbies had seldom proved decisive on major issues. He added that “when they do—as in the case of the Israel lobby, which Brzezinski believes distorts U.S. policy in the Middle East—it is not because they mobilize narrow interests but because they can mobilize a broad swath of public opinion. That, for better or worse, is what democracy is all about.”\(^{19}\)

Unfortunately, it is not democracy in action, but Washington at work. AIPAC, even with 85,000 members, does not represent the broad swath of public opinion—not among the American public in general, not among American Jews, and not among Israelis. AIPAC represents AIPAC, and to keep those 85,000 members loyal, contributing, and growing in number, it has to do whatever is necessary to be a player in Washington and to keep its members energized—even if that means engaging in espionage.

Although AIPAC is a powerful lobby, Walt and Mearsheimer had it wrong. The Israel lobby did not distort U.S. policy in the Middle East in the way they claim, unless one considers that policy to have been distorted for the last 60 years. Every president since Truman has tried to do two things in the Middle East—ensure Israel’s security and survival and be an honest broker in a peace process that would move Israel closer to a lasting agreement with all its neighbors. In that regard, Jimmy Carter was the most successful president and did more for Israel’s security than any other president, since he was able to achieve a peace agreement between Israel and its most powerful neighbor—Egypt.

What is different about the current administration in Washington, and what helps explain why American policy in the Middle East is viewed with so much hatred and suspicion around the world, is that
President Bush has made not the slightest pretense of being an honest broker or of putting any effort into the peace process in the first three quarters of his presidency. Bush’s inaction has been driven not by the influence of the Israel lobby, but by the need to please Christian conservatives and to cater to their view of a black and white world.

Energizing the Christian conservative base was an essential part of the reelection strategy of President Bush’s chief political advisor, Karl Rove. When Rove left government in August 2007, there was a great deal of media speculation about what his departure would mean and what legacy he was leaving behind. David Frum, who served briefly as a speechwriter for President Bush and who now resides at the AEI, wrote that Rove courted carefully selected constituencies with poll-tested promises. According to the extremely conservative Frum, “Instead of seeking solutions to national problems, ‘compassionate conservatism’ started with slogans and went searching for problems to justify them.”

Under Rove’s guidance, government programs were designed to serve those constituencies rather than to solve problems, and Rove did not stop with domestic ones. When seen in this light, the MCA and the PEPFAR programs, even with their imperfections, make perfect political sense.

In an article on Rove’s legacy, Adam Nagourney, a New York Times political reporter, said that Rove was a master at ensuring that political campaigns were disciplined in driving simple, often negative, messages. Marketing research and other data were used to methodically identify potential supporters and to get them to the polls with an efficiency that had never been seen before.

He also pointed out that the advisors of every Republican presidential candidate for the 2008 election included people who had worked with Rove and that they were using his tactics, as was the front-runner among the Democrats—Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. According to one Democratic strategist, it was Rove’s ability to “slice and dice the electorate” that made Bush’s reelection victory possible. So even though Rove has left Washington, his tactics will live on as long as they produce political advantage.

Using the policymaking process for political purposes was not invented by Rove, but the extent to which it is used will be part of his legacy. Even if the party in power changes, it will just mean swapping one set of core constituencies for another. The lobbyists will still ply their trade, and the special interests will still flex their political muscle, if for no other reason than to demonstrate their strength.
Political campaigning will continue to be a 24/7/365 endeavor, and the term *swift boat* will permanently enter the Washington vocabulary as a verb and as a tactic. Front groups will pop up to spearhead campaigns based on attack ads, and will then disappear. The quest for money and votes will be nonstop, and foreign policy will be just another tool with which to attract both.

How could a foreign policy that serves the national interest, and not special interests, be constructed? As noted earlier, it is not enough to describe a policy for an idealized world and then to assume the path to it will be chosen. No grand geopolitical strategy will overcome the political realities that stand in its way. Real change will require fundamental reform, and that is never easy.

Here are a number of things that would help to change the system of government, not just with regard to foreign policy but across the board. None of them is likely to happen, however, given the resistance to change they would encounter.

- Public financing of campaigns and restrictions on contributions could limit the influence of money. There has been limited reform in the past, but ways around the restrictions are quickly found—for example, the use of soft money and of various organizations that advertise about issues rather than about individual candidates. As Senator Hollings suggested, a constitutional amendment would help by giving Congress the power to regulate campaign spending, something the courts have previously denied it. The downside of that is that the politicians who spend the money would be the same people who would be responsible for imposing the limitations, and incumbents always have a great advantage over challengers when it comes to fundraising. The incumbents would not be enthusiastic about leveling the playing field for their opponents, even though they often lament the time they have to devote to chasing after campaign contributions.

- Regardless of any spending limits imposed, complete transparency should be required so the donors behind every candidate and organization are known. Deep Throat, the famous anonymous source in the Watergate scandal, said “Follow the money” for a reason, and that reason is as true today as it was during the Nixon administration. Those buying influence with their contributions or creating front groups for swift-boat-type attacks will not want to be openly identified, but they should be if the public is to understand the agenda behind their ads.
Congressional districts should be drawn up on a geographical basis and not gerrymandered on the basis of race and ethnicity. Obviously, most incumbents will oppose any changes, but Iowa was able to set up a nonpartisan organization to make recommendations on redistricting, and their recommendations have generally been followed. With the composition of the current Supreme Court, however, there is no chance that it will be sufficiently activist to protect democracy and end the practice of redrawing districts on the basis of race and ethnicity.

Eliminate touch-screen voting or any other voting method that does not produce a verifiable paper trail. Nothing is more important to a democracy than the confidence of the voter that his or her ballot will be accurately counted. That is simply not possible when the vote disappears into an electronic black box that can never be fully protected from tampering. Touch-screen voting was eliminated in Florida when Governor Crist made it a priority to do so, so it can be done state by state if the federal government does not set sufficiently high standards.

Restore the separation of church and state. Religious organizations could still implement government programs, but only if they did so in a nondiscriminatory way, meeting all the oversight, transparency, and other regulations that other organizations must meet. And they would not be allowed to use the program as an opportunity to proselytize.

Some have suggested that restoring the fairness doctrine might provide balance in talk radio, which by one estimate is 91 percent conservative. A more effective way would be to require strict enforcement of antitrust legislation so media markets are not dominated by a single corporation.

None of these measures is directly related to foreign policy, but if they were put into effect, they would have an impact on all government policymaking, and the process would be more transparent and a little less likely to reflect the priorities of special interests.

As for suggestions directly related to international issues, adopting all the positions listed by the PIPA poll described in chapter 4 would be a good place to start, especially since they are endorsed by a majority of Americans. However, they are as unlikely to be adopted as the more general ones unless the intensity of public opinion rises enough to overcome the resistance of the special interests. These suggestions would not improve the process of making foreign policy as much as they would serve to demonstrate that the United States has recovered
somewhat from its post-9/11 paranoia and that it is ready to play a more responsible role in the world. Here are a few more suggestions that would help:

- Increase the size of the aid budget until the OECD target of 0.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) is reached. That would require tripling existing aid levels, but it would reflect the generosity Americans believe they have, and it would go a long way toward proving to the rest of the world that Americans are indeed generous. Expectations from the results of this aid should not be high, however, as there are no easy solutions to the problem of underdevelopment. This assistance should be distributed by a revitalized USAID with a clear, but flexible, mandate. The MCA and its accompanying bureaucracy should be abolished.

- All pending treaties before the Senate ought to be reviewed and as many ratified as possible. A 1998 study by the Heritage Foundation pointed out that there were 50 treaties that were languishing before the Senate, with another 30 that had been signed but not yet submitted for consideration. The Heritage Foundation feared that the executive branch was following the letter of these agreements without benefit of their being approved by Congress. Approving any of the treaties will require recognizing that these instruments are not just ways to impose American policy on the rest of the world. They are obligations that require some sacrifice of sovereignty on the part of all signatory nations, but these agreements can result in a better world. Obtaining the required two-thirds majority in the Senate would be difficult, however, and a senator with even minor objections could prevent their approval.

- Financial obligations to international organizations like the UN should also be paid. Efforts to reform these bodies should continue, but expectations for perfection are no more realistic than is thinking that any political entity at the federal, state, or local level could be entirely free of waste and corruption. Acting collectively through these organizations is never fast or particularly efficient, but it does confer a degree of legitimacy that is not possible when a nation acts alone.

- The United States should be a much more active participant in UN peacekeeping endeavors. This would not require committing large numbers of troops. Even a few hundred would help. In July 2007, the UN had 74,151 troops and military observers deployed in peacekeeping missions around the world. A grand total of 26 of them were Americans.
Many of these recommendations are unrealistic because they require politicians to act in ways that many of them will view as against their own interests. It is easier for politicians to bash the UN than it is for them to explain to the voters the importance of being an active participant in the organization despite its failures and limitations.

Real leadership from political leaders is rare. They would prefer to toss out applause lines like “I would double the size of the prison at Guantanamo if elected,” demonstrating that they have either no interest in or knowledge of how that would affect America’s already tarnished image abroad. It would also not help America’s security, but those applauding have not yet figured that out.

Another sound bite that provokes applause is the line used to justify the war in Iraq: “We have to fight them over there so we don’t have to fight them over here.” No matter that “they” in this case refers to Al Qaeda in Iraq. Al Qaeda is an organization that did not exist in Iraq before the American invasion. More important is the point that if anything is to be learned from 9/11, it is that there is no longer an “over there.” Thanks to globalization, anyone or anything can find its way over here, and there is no absolute means of security to prevent that from happening.

If policymakers are to be encouraged to act more responsibly, American citizens will need to learn more about the world and America’s role in it. That requires making an effort to gather information and to be careful about the sources.

There is no particular reason to think that this will happen. Six years after 9/11, one in three Americans still believes that “Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.” If that many people can remain that ignorant for that long about one of the most fundamental facts about the war that America is engaged in, then there is no room for much optimism.

But assuming for the moment that there is room for optimism, the following suggestions for self-education might help. With the notable exception of PBS and NPR, the electronic media provide more entertainment than real information. For the serious gatherer of information, there is little that can substitute for reading. Not just sources that confirm one’s prejudices but major national newspapers like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*, which are all available online. All three of them still attempt to cover the world in a way that other newspapers do not. The *Los Angeles Times* would also be in their league were it not for its cost-cutting, profit-maximizing management.
The *Wall Street Journal* has offered superb reporting, but it has had the worst editorial page this side of a tabloid. With its takeover by Rupert Murdoch, both its news and editorial pages could sink to the level of being nothing more than outlets for whomever he is trying to curry favor with. The editorials, columnists, and opinion pieces in the *New York Times*, on the other hand, ought to be essential reading even for those who can find little to agree with in them. There are of course exceptional sources that sometimes outshine even the biggest and the best. For example, the McClatchy newspapers offered some of the best reporting on the fabrication of the case for the war in Iraq. In general, any reporter who is excluded from flying on Vice President Cheney’s plane is probably worth reading.

Whatever the newspaper, it needs to be read with a sense of history and a degree of skepticism. Journalists gushed in 2005 when President Bush said he was going to push for democracy around the world. They heralded this announcement as a radical new departure when it was little more than the rollout of a new default rationale for invading Iraq when it had become obvious to all that there were no WMD.

When the president gives a speech, the tape-recorder journalists rush breathlessly to report it. When the hollowness of those remarks becomes evident months later, it almost doesn’t rate a story. Two and a half years after Bush’s “freedom agenda” was proclaimed, *Washington Post* reporter Jackson Diehl noted its demise:

> With less than 18 months remaining in her tenure and that of President Bush, (Secretary of State) Rice has turned her famously disciplined focus toward delivering legacy achievements. But her aims are utterly different from those with which Bush began his second term—such as the “freedom agenda.” Democracy promotion in the Middle East is out, replaced by a belated but intense effort to broker a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians. Even more strikingly, the “regime change” strategy that once marked Bush administration policy toward North Korea has been dropped in favor of an all-out effort to negotiate a rapprochement with dictator Kim Jong Il. If all this happens, Rice will look brilliant, and the legacy of an administration weighted down by Iraq and Afghanistan will get a substantial boost.

In their first term, presidents care for nothing more than reelection. In their second term, it is their place in history that becomes most important. In the case of President Bush, hundreds of Americans died in Iraq to secure the first, and thousands will die there in a futile attempt to salvage the second.
Government has always operated as a source of pork and patronage for the well connected and well privileged. It is a tradition as old as government. What’s new is the degree to which it does little else even when it makes foreign policy. National policy, foreign or domestic, has always been influenced by the efforts of lobbyists, special interests, and core constituencies. Broad public opinion does occasionally intrude, but not always constructively when it reacts to media hype and appeals to fear. A foreign policy that serves the interests of the nation instead of the interests of a few will require the informed participation of enough people to make it a truly national policy for truly international purposes. That is neither easy nor automatic, since people have plenty to do besides educate themselves about topics they find abstract and remote.

One can lament that fact and become depressed. Or one can join the process and participate more actively in his or her democracy. To do otherwise is to leave both domestic and foreign policy decisions to the sausage makers. If Americans would like the Jack Abramoffs and Karl Roves of the world to do that for them, they don’t have to do a thing.
Notes

Chapter 1

8. According to an article in the Gainesville Sun, September 2, 2006, entitled “Davis-Smith Race Turns More Bitter Over Sugar Money,” two sugar companies gave close to $4 million to their preferred candidate in the Democratic primary for governor. Their candidate, Rod Smith, lost to Jim Davis, who made the sugar money a major issue.
attracted broad attention in Western Europe and Japan—more attention, in fact, than in the United States. Roughly three-quarters of Americans (76%) say they have heard of the prison abuses, compared with about 90% or more in the four Western European countries and Japan. Among predominantly Muslim countries, large majorities in Egypt (80%), Jordan (79%), and Turkey (68%) say they have heard of the reports of prison abuse. But in Indonesia, Pakistan, and among Muslims in Nigeria, most people have not heard of this issue. Moreover, just 38% of Chinese and 23% of Indians say they are aware of the prison abuse story.”


16. Ibid.

17. The importance of these core constituencies is described by the “Annual Report to the Grassroots” of the Democratic Party: “Last summer, Chairman Dean created the American Majority Partnership (AMP) to change how the DNC reaches out to our core constituencies, replacing a series of isolated operations with a proactive, constituency-focused, issues-based program. Housed in the Chairman’s office to elevate the visibility and profile of this critical work, AMP coordinates constituency-related activities across all Democratic National Committee (DNC) departments” (http://www.democrats.org/a/2006/02/annual_report_t.php). Many believe the success of the Republican Party has been their ability to motivate their faithful while the Democrats are still struggling to do that.

18. The influence of money on the way think tanks think is summed up in the following sentence: “Michael Franc, a top official at the Heritage Foundation, said his organization hosted 600 of its top conservative donors last week and heard more widespread complaining about Republicans than at any other point in the past 12 years.” Jim VandeHei and Peter Baker, “Bush, GOP Congress Losing Core Supporters,” Washington Post, May 11, 2006. If the Heritage Foundation has 600 top conservative donors, it is unlikely to take any position that would alienate their benefactors.


21. For one that attempts to do that with regard to the transformational diplomacy initiative, see my article entitled “Style Over Substance—Lifting Off Rice’s Competent Mask,” Chicago Tribune, February 6, 2006.


Chapter 2


3. Ibid. The quote is by Leslie Gelb, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations.


17. Phillips is not alone. A survey of Iraqis done by the University of Michigan found that 76 percent of them put control of Iraqi oil first when asked to give the three main reasons for the U.S. invasion (U of M News Service release of June 14, 2000).


27. Ibid.
31. As the only person assigned to deal with Africa at the NSC in those first few months, I remember briefing a group of my colleagues who were or were about to become ambassadors to the countries in sub-Saharan Africa. I handed each of them a picture of Clinton that he had signed (or rather the machine called an “auto-pen” that writes his signature had signed) and told each of them that that was probably about as close to the president that any of them would get.

   President Reagan had the custom of calling each person he named as ambassador. He did not just call the big contributors who were political appointees headed to countries in Western Europe and elsewhere in the industrialized world, but also the other 70 percent of those given the title and sent off to all those obscure backwaters of the third world. Clinton, I informed them, was going to dispense with that courtesy as President George H. W. Bush had before him. I also told them the new administration was not interested in ceremonial occasions such as black-tie state dinners or in having the president pick up the phone and call an African leader on an urgent issue as Clinton’s predecessor had frequently done.
40. Ibid.
50. www.PSAonline.org.
55. See http://www.pollingreport.com/CongJob1.htm for a summary of polls on Congress’s approval rating.
56. U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Division.

Chapter 3

9. The book was written with Bill Harlow, a former CIA spokesman who, in that capacity, was one of those who leaked Valerie Plame’s name to columnist Robert Novak. Plame was a CIA covert officer who was married to Joseph Wilson. When Wilson wrote an article in the New York Times questioning the administration’s case for going to war in Iraq, officials at the White House, State Department, and CIA joined in an attack on Wilson’s credibility by asserting that his wife had used her position to have him sent to Niger to investigate the report that Iraq was trying to purchase uranium from that country.
11. In the ceremony he was in good company. Also presented the medal, the highest civilian award given, were L. Paul Bremer, whose time as head of the Coalition Provisional Authority was a disastrous failure, and General Tommy Franks, who went into Iraq with no plan for what to do after the initial military victory. Why a civilian medal was given to Franks was never explained, but after he retired he did campaign for President Bush’s reelection.
17. Ibid., p. 15.
18. Ibid., p. 512.
20. Ibid., p. 355.
23. Ibid., p. 1066.
29. Ibid., p. 270.
30. Ibid., p. 288.
31. Ibid., p. 268.
38. DeYoung’s “Falling on His Sword” provides excerpts from her October 2006 book *Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell*. Apparently an autobiography by Powell, written with Joseph Persico, is not enough
of an exposition on his life, since it was written before he became secretary of state.


57. In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted the author of this book is a member of the group.


64. While that may be hard to prove, it certainly has been the opinion of those who study the media. See for instance David Shaw, “News as Entertainment Is Sadly Becoming the Norm,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 2004.


**Chapter 4**


35. Weisman and Murray, “Republicans Hearing.”
58. Ibid.
59. He pled guilty in return for reducing the crimes to misdemeanors. He served no jail time and was eventually pardoned by the first President Bush.
61. Ibid.
72. Ibid., p. 29.
74. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
86. Hamilton, Creative Tension.
90. Ibid., pp. 2–3.
96. Birnbaum, “Power Player.”
97. Ibid.
99. Ibid.


105. http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP06-011. The abstract of the paper reads: “In this paper, John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago’s Department of Political Science and Stephen M. Walt of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government contend that the centerpiece of U.S. Middle East policy is its intimate relationship with Israel. The authors argue that although often justified as reflecting shared strategic interests or compelling moral imperatives, the U.S. commitment to Israel is due primarily to the activities of the ‘Israel Lobby.’ This paper goes on to describe the various activities that pro-Israel groups have undertaken in order to shift U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction.”


111. In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that the author also intervened with Peruvian officials on behalf of the company. My request was that they work to ensure that the judicial system decide the case on its merits, as there were credible accounts that the opposing side in the case was resorting to bribing the supreme court judges who were hearing it.


114. Ibid.

115. Crowley, “Final Resolution.”


124. Steven Livingston, “Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention,” research paper R-18 (Joan Shorenstein Center, Harvard University, June 1997).
126. See for instance the experience of Juan Cole, a tenured professor at the University of Michigan, who, according to some accounts, was denied a job at Yale because he was too critical of Bush administration policy in the Middle East. Other versions of the story have attributed his denial of a job to more traditional academic motivations. http://www.thejewishweek.com/news/newscontent.php3?artid=12578.
130. Ibid., p. 185.

**Chapter 5**

5. Email exchange with the author, August 13, 2007.
21. Ibid.
23. Michael O’Hanlon, “Star Wars Strikes Back,” Foreign Policy, November/December 1999, p. 82. As the debate over missile defense waned in the face of a president determined to deploy a system and a compliant Congress, O’Hanlon morphed into a Middle-East expert and was no more perceptive about Iraq than he was in the 1999 article on missile defense. At the end of July 2007, he wrote an op-ed piece in which he endorsed the Bush administration’s military strategy in Iraq and urged that it be sustained at least until 2008 (Michael O’Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack, “A War We Just Might Win,” New York Times, July 30, 2007). He and his co-author, Kenneth Pollack, disingenuously described themselves as administration critics, cited selective military successes, and buried late in the article the fact that no progress is being made by the Iraqi government at being either effective or representative (Frank Rich, “Patriots Who Love the Troops to Death,” New York Times, August 5, 2007).
32. Hildreth, “Ballistic Missile.”
38. Ibid.
44. Ibid.

48. Ibid.


51. Murray, “Analysis.”


63. Wallsten, “White House.”

64. Peter Slevin, “Policy Met Politics in Cuba Rules,” *Washington Post*, August 23, 2004. The legislation passed by Rivera would result in it being more difficult for Florida colleges and universities to do any number of things, including participating in a humanitarian mission to Darfur or engaging in academic exchanges with Iran. Among those who have endorsed people-to-people educational exchanges with Iran are President Bush and Secretary Rice.


73. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
79. http://www.oecd.org/document/4/0,3343,en_2649_34447_2698628_1_1_1_1_1,00.html.
80. See for instance The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time by Jeffrey Sachs; The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It by Paul Collier; or The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good by William Easterly.
84. Kurlantzick, “Bush’s Fake Aid.”
94. See the report entitled “Unlevel Playing Field” on the White House website.
95. Stockman, “Bush Brings Faith.”
96. Ibid.
100. Kurlantzick, “Bush’s Fake Aid.”

Chapter 6


Menendez, Albert J. *Evangelicals at the Ballot Box*. Amherst, MA: Prometheus Books, 1996.


Bibliography


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian Science Monitor</td>
<td>51, 156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christie, Thomas</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher, Warren</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clapp, Priscilla</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton, Bill</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton, Hillary</td>
<td>128, 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen, Herman</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colbert, Steven</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole, Juan</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Research Service (CRS)</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coram, Robert</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulter, Ann</td>
<td>71, 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)</td>
<td>32, 64, 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crist, Charlie</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowley, Michael</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba, 128–134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic, 116–117, 119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danforth, John</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darfur, 75, 85, 96, 129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davidow, Jeffrey</td>
<td>57, 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, Thomas</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Lay, Tom</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Young, Karen</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diehl, Jackson</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilulio, John</td>
<td>83, 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dionne, E.J.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dobson, James</td>
<td>82, 85–86, 141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doe, Samuel</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Policy Council</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doonesbury, 97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai, 8, 15, 98, 99, 103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duran, Lisa</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards, John</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower, Dwight</td>
<td>72, 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea, 127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union, 62, 75, 117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evertz, Paul Scott</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExxonMobil Corporation</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feith, Douglas</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleischer, Ari</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida International</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University, 130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes, 78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs, 5, 11, 27, 32, 35, 46, 51, 72–73, 87, 89, 118, 135, 139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Policy, 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox News, 66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franc, Michael</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franks, Tommie</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom House, 68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedman, Thomas</td>
<td>21, 23, 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frist, Bill</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frum, David</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaffney, Frank</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva Convention, 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gephardt, Richard</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gingrich, Newt</td>
<td>27, 44, 101, 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuliani, Rudy</td>
<td>44, 134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goeglein, Timothy</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Accountability Office (GAO)</td>
<td>67, 132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, Lindsey</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gribbin, Robert</td>
<td>57–58, 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griswold, Frank</td>
<td>140–141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guantanamno, 10, 25, 156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Owners of America (GOA)</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haass, Richard</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagel, Chuck</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haig, Alexander</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halperin, Morton</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamas, 85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton, Lee</td>
<td>87–88, 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatch, Orrin</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Foundation, 12, 64, 97, 120, 138, 149, 155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hersman, Rebecca</td>
<td>87–88, 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezbollah, 85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilton, Paris</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics, 30, 78, 81–82, 90, 93, 130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Holbrooke, Richard, 59
Hollings, Senator Ernest, 150, 153
Hostettler, John, 82
Hughes, Karen, 109, 112, 128
Huntington, Samuel, 92, 113–114
Hurricane Katrina, 79
Hussein, Saddam, 20–21, 33, 54, 98, 109, 156

Israel, 84–85, 94, 128, 151

Johnson Administration, 59, 140
Johnson, Lyndon, 79

Kagan, Frederick, 105
Kamen, Al, 91, 96, 109
Kaplan, Fred, 117
Kennedy Administration, 59
Kerry, John, 44, 125
King, Rodney, 53
Krugman, Paul, 34
Ku Klux Klan, 37, 81
Kuwait, 129
Kwan, Michelle, 114
Kyoto Treaty, 76

Lauer, Mirko, 110
Lewinsky, Monica, 62
Libby, Scooter, 65, 95
Liberia, 96, 98
Libya, 86
Livingston, Bob, 91
Log Cabin Republicans, 139
Los Angeles Times, 67, 110, 156
Luntz, Frank, 45
Lynch, Jessica, 68

Marshall, George, 50
McCain, John, 76, 134
McCormack, Sean, 112
Mead, Walter Russell, 63
Mearsheimer, John, 95, 104, 151
Mexico, 24, 36, 45, 57–58, 136
Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), 136–137, 142, 152, 155
Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), 137

Millennium Summit, 136
Miller, Judith, 68
Milosevic, Slobodan, 21
Moon, Sun Myung, 66–67
Murdock, Rupert, 66, 157
Myers, Richard, 55

Nagourney, Adam, 152
National Catholic Reporter, 82
National Rifle Association (NRA), 93, 122–129, 149
National Security Council (NSC), 1, 27, 99
NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), 26, 27, 39, 62, 117
New Republic, 49, 97
New York Sun, 127
New York Times, 12, 21, 23, 34, 37, 40, 62, 68, 79, 82, 84, 100, 131, 152, 156, 157
Nicaragua, 127
Nixon, Richard, 124, 153
Noriega, Manuel, 52
Norquist, Grover, 30, 70
North Korea, 20, 75, 116, 132, 157
NPR (National Public Radio), 66, 156

O’Donnell, Rick, 38
O’Hanlon, Michael, 118
O’Neill, Tip, 6
Obama, Barack, 72, 133
Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 142
Ortega, Daniel, 127

PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), 66, 156
Pentagon, 39, 49, 67, 94, 97, 103, 106, 114, 115, 117, 118, 120, 156
Perkins, Edward, 57
Perkins, Tony, 85
Perlmutter, Ed, 38
Persico, Joe, 54
Phillips, Kevin, 23, 84
Plame, Valerie, 95
Poland, 116, 117, 119, 144
Polk, James, 24
Powell, Colin, 45, 52, 53, 54, 99, 109
President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), 138
Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), 74, 154
Putin, Vladimir, 117, 118

Radio Martí, 131
Rangel, Charles, 110, 111
Reagan, Nancy, 7
Reagan, Ronald, 17, 22, 51, 52, 72, 73, 79, 118
Rice, Condoleezza, 13, 39, 56, 117, 132, 136, 157
Ricks, Tom, 22
Ripken, Cal, 114
Rivera, David, 131
Robertson, Pat, 53
Roe v. Wade, 93
Romero, Peter, 96
Romney, Mitt, 72, 73, 134
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 50, 72
Rosen, Steven J., 94
Ross, Dennis, 65, 85
Rove, Karl, 58, 84, 113, 131, 134, 152

Rumsfeld, Donald, 67, 103, 118
Rusk, Dean, 50
Rusk, Richard, 50
Rwanda, 57

Santorum, Rick, 141
Schlesinger, Arthur Jr., 80
Security Council, United Nations, 20, 23, 75
Sharon, Ariel, 84, 85
Shultz, George, 51
Silverstein, Ken, 97
Smith, Tony, 92
Somalia, 127
Sorensen, Theodore, 27
Soros, George, 96
Southern Baptist Convention, 83, 141
Stanzel, Scott, 135
Stephanopoulos, George, 123
Stevenson, Adlai, 79
Sudan, 86, 96, 129, 132
Suskind, Ron, 40, 83
Taiwan, 76
Taylor, Charles, 96
Tenen, George, 48, 54, 99
Tillman, Pat, 68
Tobias, Randal, 138, 141
Treasury Department, 98, 132
Truman, Harry S., 26, 50, 72, 151
Turkmenian, 97
Turkmenistan, 97
Tutwiler, Margaret, 111
Tyler, Patrick, 49

VandeHei, Jim, 88
Vandenberg, Senator Arthur, 26, 72
Vietnam, 24, 50, 59, 60, 73
Vitter, David, 81
Von Kloberg, Edward, III, 97–98
| Walt, Stephen, 95, 104, 151 | Williams, Armstrong, 67 |
| **Washington Post**, 8, 22, 28, 32, 34, 49, 55, 85, 88, 91, 98, 109, 134, 137, 148, 156, 157 | Winkler, James, 141 |
| **Washington Times**, 34, 66, 109 | Wolfowitz, Paul, 22 |
| Waxman, Henry, 135 | Woodward, Bob, 49 |
|  | World Bank, 137 |
|  | Yemen, 129 |