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Foreign and Military Policy



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TO WHAT ENDS?

1. Why do we go to war against some dictatorships and not others?
2. Should our foreign policy be based on American interests or some conception of human rights?

When you heard about the 9/11 attacks by hijacked aircraft against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, you were witnessing the most lethal destruction of American lives and property since the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. But 9/11 was different from Pearl Harbor: the attack on Pearl Harbor had, so to speak, a return address: we knew who did it and where they lived. But 9/11 had no return address: it was a terrorist attack waged by small groups that could be located anywhere.

The public response was impressive, as was evident in an outburst of patriotism and a heightened sense of confidence in the national government. Valuable as these reactions were, they left unanswered some fundamental questions:

- How can America wage war in remote nations that harbor terrorists?
- If terrorists are sheltered or supported by nations that are otherwise friendly to the United States, what do we do about these countries?
- Should the United States allow other nations (for example, Israel) to wage war against terrorists (for example, those in neighboring Palestine), or should we try to be mediators?
- How can the military, designed to fight big, conventional land wars in Europe, be redesigned to make it effective in small, long-lasting struggles against terrorists?

And terrorism is not our only foreign or military problem. It is a new and very important one added to a long list of other issues. Among them are two questions:

- Do we support any nation that goes along with us, or only those that are reasonably free and democratic?
- Are we the world's policeman? We did not intervene to prevent China from occupying Tibet, to end the massacre of thousands of Tutsis in Rwanda, or to help Bosnia when it was being attacked by Serbs. But we did intervene to try to end a dictatorship in Haiti, to help starving people in Somalia, to turn back an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and to punish Serbs who were attacking Kosovo.

These choices must be made in a democracy, and some observers think that democratic politics makes managing foreign and military policy harder. Tocqueville said that the conduct of foreign affairs requires precisely those qualities most lacking in a democratic nation: "A democracy can only with great difficulty regulate the details of an important undertaking, persevere in a fixed design, and work out its execution in spite of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy or await their consequences with patience."¹ In plain language a democracy is forced to play foreign policy poker with its cards turned up. As a result aggressors, from Hitler to Saddam Hussein, can bluff or misjudge us.

But other writers disagree. To them, the strength of democracy is that, though it rarely if ever wages an unjustified war on another country, its people, when mobilized by the president, will support our overseas engagements even when many deaths occur.²

Others find fault not with the system but with what they view as the reckless policies of American presidents. If Congress had been more involved, they say, we would not have gotten bogged down in Vietnam, tried to trade arms for hostages in Iran, or supported the rebels in Nicaragua.

Happily, most foreign policy issues are not matters of war or peace. But the same issues can be found in them all: How great are the powers of the president? What role should Congress play? How important is public opinion? When do interest groups make a difference? To answer those questions we must first distinguish among foreign policy issues that involve majoritarian, interest group, and client politics.

★ Kinds of Foreign Policy

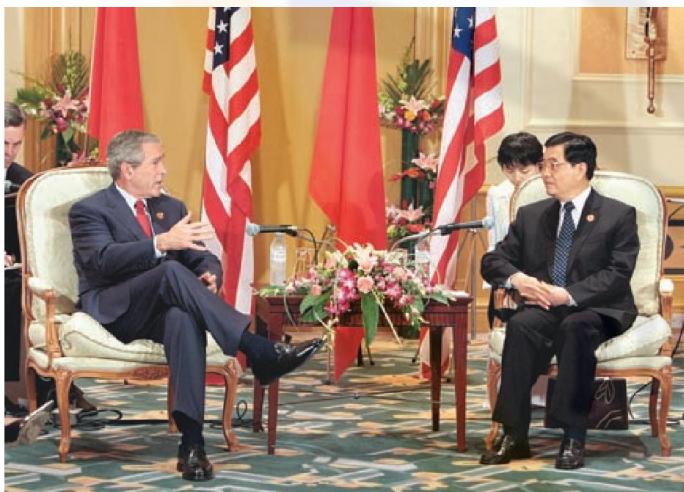
The majoritarian component of foreign policy includes those decisions (and nondecisions) that are perceived to confer widely distributed benefits and impose widely distributed costs. The decision to go to war is an obvious example of this. So, too, are the establishment of military alliances with Western Europe, the negotiation of a nuclear test ban treaty or a strategic arms limitation agreement, the response to the

crisis posed by the Soviet blockade of West Berlin or the placement of Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba, the decision to aid the contras in Nicaragua, and the opening up of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. These may be good or bad policies, but such benefits and such costs as they have accrue to the nation generally. Some argue that the costs of many of these policies are in fact highly concentrated—for example, soldiers bear the burden of a military operation—but that turns out, on closer inspection, not to shape the positions that people take on issues of war and peace. Though soldiers and their immediate families may feel the costs of a war to an especially high degree, public opinion surveys taken during the Vietnam War showed that having a family member in the armed forces did not significantly affect how people evaluated the war.³ There is a sense that, during wartime, we are all in this together.

Foreign policy decisions may also reflect interest group politics. Tariff decisions confer benefits on certain business firms and labor unions and impose costs on other firms and unions. If the price of Japanese steel imported into this country is increased by tariffs, quotas, or other devices, this helps the American steel industry and the United Steel Workers of America. On the other hand, it hurts those firms (and associated unions) that had been purchasing the once-cheap Japanese steel.

Examples of client politics also occur in foreign affairs. Washington often provides aid to American corporations doing business abroad because the aid helps those firms directly without imposing any apparent costs on an equally distinct group in society. Our policy toward Israel has in part reflected the fact that Jews in this country feel strongly about the need to support a Jewish state abroad and are well organized to make those concerns felt. (Other factors also help explain our support of Israel; it is by no means a pure case of client politics.) Arab Americans have begun to organize and to press on the government concerns very different from the pro-Israel arguments. We may in fact be witnessing a change of our policy toward Israel from one chiefly influenced by client politics to one more subject to interest group politics.

Who has power in foreign policy depends very much on what kind of foreign policy we have in mind. Where it is of a majoritarian nature, the president is clearly the dominant figure, and much, if not everything, depends on his beliefs and skills and on those



President Bush meets with Hu Jintao, president of the People's Republic of China, in Hanoi, Vietnam.

of his chief advisers. Public opinion will ordinarily support this presidential leadership, but it will not guide it. As we shall see, public opinion on majoritarian foreign policy issues usually reflects a disposition to trust the president. But woe to the president who by his actions forfeits that trust.

When interest group or client politics is involved, Congress plays a much larger role. Although Congress has a subsidiary role in the conduct of foreign diplomacy, the decision to send troops overseas, or the direction of intelligence operations, it has a large one in decisions involving foreign economic aid, the structure of the tariff system, the shipment of weapons to foreign allies, the creation of new weapons systems, and the support of Israel.

And Congress is the central political arena on those occasions when entrepreneurial politics shapes foreign policy. If a multinational corporation is caught in a scandal, congressional investigations shake the usual indifference of politicians to the foreign conduct of such corporations. If presidential policies abroad lead to reversals, as when in 1986 presidential aides sought to trade arms for U.S. hostages in Iran and then use some profits from the arms sales to support the anti-Marxist contras fighting in Nicaragua, Congress becomes the forum for investigations and criticism. At such moments Congress often seeks to expand its power over foreign affairs.

In this chapter we will be chiefly concerned with foreign policy insofar as it displays the characteristics of majoritarian politics. Limiting the discussion in this way permits us to focus on the grand issues of foreign affairs—war, peace, and global diplomacy. It allows us to see how choices are made in a situation in which public majorities support but do not direct policy, in which opinion tends to react to events, and in which interest groups are relatively unimportant.

★ The Constitutional and Legal Context

The Constitution defines the authority of the president and of Congress in foreign affairs in a way that, as Edward Corwin put it, is an “invitation to struggle.”⁴ The president is commander in chief of the armed forces, but Congress must authorize and appropriate money for those forces. The president appoints ambassadors, but they must be confirmed by the Senate.

The president may negotiate treaties, but the Senate must ratify these by a two-thirds vote. Only Congress may regulate commerce with other nations and “declare” war. (In an early draft of the Constitution the Framers gave Congress the power to “make” war but changed this to “declare” so that the president, acting without Congress, could take military measures to repel a sudden attack.) Because power over foreign affairs is shared by the president and Congress, conflict between them is to be expected.

Yet almost every American thinks instinctively that the president is in charge of foreign affairs, and what popular opinion supposes, the historical record confirms. Presidents have asserted the right to send troops abroad on their own authority in more than 125 instances. Only six of the thirteen major wars that this country has fought have followed a formal declaration of war by Congress.⁵ The State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency are almost entirely “presidential” agencies, with only modest congressional control. The Defense Department, though keenly sensitive to congressional views on weapons procurement and the location of military bases, is very much under the control of the president on matters of military strategy. While the Senate has since 1789 ratified well over a thousand treaties signed by the president, the president during this period has also signed around seven thousand executive agreements with other countries that did not require Senate ratification and yet have the force of law.⁶

Presidential Box Score

When the president seeks congressional approval for foreign policy matters, he tends to win more often than when he asks for support on domestic matters. One student of the presidency, Aaron Wildavsky, concluded that the American political system has “two presidencies”—one in domestic affairs that is relatively weak and closely checked, and another in foreign affairs that is quite powerful.⁷ As we shall see, this view considerably overstates presidential power in certain areas.

When it comes to international diplomacy and the use of American troops, the president is indeed strong, much stronger than the Framers may have intended and certainly stronger than many members of Congress would prefer. Examples abound:

Shifting Patterns of Leadership in Foreign Policy

Depending on the personalities, skills, and interests of those involved, leadership in making American foreign policy may be found centered in the White House (the president and his national security adviser) or in the State Department (the secretary of state).

Periods of White House Dominance

<i>President</i>	<i>Secretary of State</i>
Franklin D. Roosevelt	Cordell Hull (1933–1944)
John F. Kennedy (and National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy)	Dean Rusk (1961–1969)
Richard M. Nixon (and National Security Adviser Henry A. Kissinger)	William P. Rogers (1969–1973)

Periods of Leadership by the Secretary of State

<i>Secretary of State</i>	<i>President</i>
George C. Marshall (1947–1949) and Dean Acheson (1949–1953)	Harry S Truman
John Foster Dulles (1953–1959)	Dwight D. Eisenhower
Henry A. Kissinger (1973–1977)	Gerald R. Ford
Warren Christopher (1993–1996)	Bill Clinton

Periods of Tension Between the White House and Secretary of State

<i>President</i>	<i>Secretary of State</i>
Jimmy Carter	Cyrus Vance (1977–1980)
Ronald Reagan	George Shultz (1982–1989)

- 1801: Thomas Jefferson sent the navy to deal with the Barbary pirates.
- 1845: James K. Polk sent troops into Mexico to defend newly acquired Texas.
- 1861: Abraham Lincoln blockaded southern ports and declared martial law.
- 1940: Franklin D. Roosevelt sent fifty destroyers to England to be used against Germany, with which we were then technically at peace.
- 1950: Harry Truman sent American troops into South Korea to help repulse a North Korean attack on that country.
- 1960s: John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson sent American forces into South Vietnam without a declaration of war.
- 1983: Ronald Reagan sent troops to overthrow a pro-Castro regime in Grenada.
- 1987: Reagan sent the navy to protect oil tankers in the Persian Gulf.

- 1989: George H.W. Bush ordered the U.S. invasion of Panama to depose dictator Manuel Noriega.
- 1990: Bush ordered troops to Saudi Arabia in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.
- 1999: Bill Clinton ordered the military to attack, with bombs and cruise missiles, Serbian forces that were trying to control Kosovo.
- 2001: George W. Bush sent U.S. troops to liberate Afghanistan from the Taliban, a regime supportive of Osama bin Laden, the architect of the September 11 terrorist attacks.
- 2003: Bush, with some allies, invaded Iraq.

However, by the standards of other nations, even other democratic ones, the ability of an American president to act decisively often appears rather modest. England was dismayed at the inability of Woodrow Wilson in 1914–1915 and Franklin Roosevelt in 1939–1940 to enter into an alliance when England was en-

gaged in a major war with Germany. Wilson was unable to bring this country into the League of Nations. Gerald Ford could not intervene covertly in Angola in support of an anti-Marxist faction. Ronald Reagan was heavily criticized in Congress for sending fifty-five military advisers to El Salvador and a few hundred Marines to Lebanon. After George H.W. Bush sent U.S. troops to the Persian Gulf in 1990, he began a long debate with Congress over whether he would need a formal declaration of war before the troops were sent into combat. George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq in 2003 became bitterly controversial in the 2004 and 2006 elections.

Furthermore, a treaty signed by the president is little more than his promise to try to get the Senate to go along. He can sign executive agreements without Senate consent, but most of these are authorized in advance by Congress.⁸

By contrast, the leaders of other democratic nations (to say nothing of totalitarian ones) are often able to act with much greater freedom. While Reagan was arguing with Congress over whether we should assign any military advisers to El Salvador, the president of France, François Mitterrand, ordered twenty-five hundred combat troops to Chad with scarcely a ripple of opposition. A predecessor of Mitterrand, Charles de Gaulle, brought France into the European Common Market over the explicit opposition of the French Assembly and granted independence to Algeria, then a French colony, without seriously consulting the Assembly.⁹ The British prime minister brought his country into the Common Market despite popular opposition and can declare war without the consent of Parliament.¹⁰

Evaluating the Power of the President

Whether one thinks the president is too strong or too weak in foreign affairs depends not only on whether one holds a domestic or international point of view but also on whether one agrees or disagrees with his policies. Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., thought that President Kennedy exercised commendable presidential vigor when he made a unilateral decision to impose a naval blockade on Cuba to induce the Soviets to remove missiles installed there. However, he viewed President Nixon's decision to extend U.S. military action in Vietnam into neighboring Cambodia as a deplorable example of the "imperial presidency."¹¹ To be sure, there were important differences between



In 1962 President Kennedy forced the Soviet Union to withdraw the missiles it had placed in Cuba after their presence was revealed by aerial photography.

these two actions, but that is precisely the point: a president strong enough to do something that one thinks proper is also strong enough to do something that one finds wrong.

The Supreme Court has fairly consistently supported the view that the federal government has powers in the conduct of foreign and military policy beyond those specifically mentioned in the Constitution. The leading decision, rendered in 1936, holds that the right to carry out foreign policy is an inherent attribute of any sovereign nation:

The power to declare and wage war, to conclude peace, to make treaties, to maintain diplomatic relations with other sovereignties, if they had never been mentioned in the Constitution, would have vested in the Federal Government as necessary concomitants of nationality.¹²

The individual states have few rights in foreign affairs.

Moreover, the Supreme Court has been reluctant to intervene in disputes over the conduct of foreign affairs. When various members of Congress brought suit challenging the right of President Nixon to enlarge the war in Vietnam without congressional approval, the court of appeals handled the issue, as one scholar was later to describe it, with all the care of porcupines making love. The Court said that it was a

matter for the president and Congress to decide and that if Congress was unwilling to cut off the money to pay for the war, it should not expect the courts to do the job for it.¹³

The Supreme Court upheld the extraordinary measures taken by President Lincoln during the Civil War and refused to interfere with the conduct of the Vietnam War by Presidents Johnson and Nixon.¹⁴ After Iran seized American hostages in 1979, President Carter froze Iranian assets in this country. To win the hostages' freedom the president later agreed to return some of these assets and to nullify claims on them by American companies. The Court upheld the nullification because it was necessary for the resolution of a foreign policy dispute.¹⁵

How great the deference to presidential power may be is vividly illustrated by the actions of President Franklin Roosevelt in ordering the army to move over one hundred thousand Japanese Ameri-

cans—the great majority of them born in this country and citizens of the United States—from their homes on the West Coast to inland “relocation centers” for the duration of World War II. Though this action was a wholesale violation of the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens and was unprecedented in American history, the Supreme Court decided that with the West Coast vulnerable to attack by Japan, the president was within his rights to declare that people of Japanese ancestry might pose a threat to internal security; thus the relocation order was upheld.¹⁶ (No Japanese American was ever found guilty of espionage or sabotage.) One of the few cases in which the Court denied the president broad wartime powers occurred in 1952, when by a five-to-four vote it reversed President Truman's seizure of the steel mills—a move that he had made in order to avert a strike that, in his view, would have imperiled the war effort in Korea.¹⁷



Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, in 1942 President Roosevelt ordered that all Japanese Americans living on the West Coast be interned in prison camps.

Rivalry Versus Cooperation: The President and the Senate

Because the Senate must ratify treaties and consent to the appointment of ambassadors and other high foreign policy officials, it has the opportunity to play a large role in the conduct of foreign affairs. The key figure in the Senate is usually the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Depending on personalities and circumstances, the president and the chairman have sometimes been able to work together closely but at other times have been bitter, outspoken rivals. In general cooperation occurs when there is a widely shared foreign policy worldview; rivalry erupts when worldviews diverge.

Periods of Shared Worldviews and Political Cooperation

<i>President</i>	<i>Chairman of Foreign Relations Committee</i>
Franklin D. Roosevelt	Tom Connally (1941–1947, 1949–1953)
Harry S Truman	Arthur H. Vandenberg (1947–1949)

Periods of Competing Worldviews and Political Rivalry

<i>President</i>	<i>Chairman of Foreign Relations Committee</i>
Woodrow Wilson	Henry Cabot Lodge (1919–1924)
Lyndon B. Johnson	J. William Fulbright (1959–1975)
Richard M. Nixon	J. William Fulbright (1959–1975)
Bill Clinton	Jesse Helms (1995–1999)

Checks on Presidential Power

If there is a check on the powers of the federal government or the president in foreign affairs, it is chiefly political rather than constitutional. The most important check is Congress's control of the purse strings. In addition, Congress has imposed three important kinds of restrictions on the president's freedom of action, all since Vietnam:

Limitations on the President's Ability to Give Military or Economic Aid to Other Countries For example, between 1974 and 1978 the president could not sell arms to Turkey because of a dispute between Turkey and Greece over control of the island of Cyprus. The pressure on Congress from groups supporting Greece was much stronger than that from groups supporting Turkey. In 1976 Congress prevented President Ford from giving aid to the pro-Western faction in the An-

golan civil war. Until the method was declared unconstitutional, Congress for many years could use a legislative veto, a resolution disapproving of an executive decision (see Chapter 15), to block the sale by the president of arms worth more than \$25 million to another country.

The War Powers Act Passed in 1973 over a presidential veto, this law placed the following restrictions on the president's ability to use military force:

- He must report in writing to Congress within forty-eight hours after he introduces U.S. troops into areas where hostilities have occurred or are imminent.
- Within sixty days after troops are sent into hostile situations, Congress must, by declaration of war or other specific statutory authorization, provide for the continuation of hostile action by U.S. troops.

- If Congress fails to provide such authorization, the president must withdraw the troops (unless Congress has been prevented from meeting as a result of an armed attack).
- If Congress passes a concurrent resolution (which the president may not veto) directing the removal of U.S. troops, the president must comply.

The War Powers Act has had very little influence on American military actions. Since its passage every president—Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, and Bush the younger—has sent American forces abroad without any explicit congressional authorization. (Bush the elder asked for that support when he attacked Iraq and, by a narrow margin, received it.) No president has acknowledged that the War Powers Act is constitutional. In its 1983 decision in the *Chadha* case the Supreme Court struck down the legislative veto, which means that this section of the act is already in constitutional trouble.¹⁸

Even if the act is constitutional, politically it is all but impossible to use. Few members of Congress would challenge a president who carried out a successful military operation (for example, those in Grenada, Panama, and Afghanistan). More might challenge the president if, after a while, the military action were in trouble, but the easiest way to do that would be to cut off funding for the operation. But even during the Vietnam War, a conflict that preceded the War Powers Act, Congress, though it contained many critics of U.S. policy, never stopped military appropriations.

Intelligence Oversight Owing to the low political stock of President Nixon during the Watergate scandal and the revelations of illegal operations by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) within the United States, Congress required that the CIA notify appropriate congressional committees about any proposed covert action (between 1974 and 1980 it had to notify *eight* different committees). Today it must keep two groups, the House and the Senate Intelligence Committees, “fully and currently informed” of all intelligence activities, including covert actions. The committees do not have the authority to disapprove such actions.

However, from time to time Congress will pass a bill blocking particular covert actions. This happened when the Boland Amendment (named after its sponsor, Representative Edward Boland) was passed on several occasions between 1982 and 1985. Each version

of the amendment prevented, for specifically stated periods, intelligence agencies from supplying military aid to the Nicaraguan contras. After the surprise terrorist attack on September 11, there was an investigation to find out why the CIA had not warned the country of this risk.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks left everyone wondering why our intelligence agencies had not foreseen them. In an effort to improve matters, Congress passed and President Bush signed a law creating the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI). It was designed to coordinate the work of the CIA, the FBI, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the intelligence units of several other government agencies. The DNI replaced the director of the CIA as the president's chief adviser. It is too early to tell how much real coordination will occur; the DNI's office is another large bureaucracy placed on top of other big ones.

★ The Machinery of Foreign Policy

From the time that Thomas Jefferson took the job in Washington's first administration until well into the twentieth century, foreign policy was often made and almost always carried out by the secretary of state. No more. When America became a major world power during and after World War II, our commitments overseas expanded dramatically. With that expansion two things happened. First, the president began to put foreign policy at the top of his agenda and to play a larger role in directing it. Second, that policy was shaped by the scores of agencies (some brand-new) that had acquired overseas activities.

Today Washington, D.C., has not one State Department but many. The Defense Department has military bases and military advisers abroad. The Central Intelligence Agency has intelligence officers abroad, most of them assigned to “stations” that are part of the American embassy but not under the full control of the American ambassador there. The Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor have missions abroad. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration have agents abroad. The Agency for International Development has offices to dispense foreign aid in host countries. The United States Information Agency runs libraries, radio stations, and educational programs abroad.

Every new secretary of state bravely announces that he or she is going to “coordinate” and “direct” this enormous foreign policy establishment. He or she never does. The reason is partly that the job is too big for any one person and partly that most of these agencies owe no political or bureaucratic loyalty to the secretary of state. If anyone is to coordinate them, it will have to be the president. But the president cannot keep track of what all these organizations are doing in the more than 190 nations and 50 international organizations where we have representatives, or in the more than 800 international conferences that we attend each year.

So he has hired a staff to do the coordinating for him. That staff is part of the National Security Council (NSC), a committee created by statute and chaired by the president, whose members include by law the vice president and the secretaries of state and defense, by custom the director of national intelligence (DNI), the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and often the attorney general. Depending on the president, the NSC can be an important body in which to hammer out foreign policy. Attached to it is a staff headed by the national security adviser. That staff, which usually numbers a few dozen men and women, can be (again, depending on the president) an enormously powerful instrument for formulating and directing foreign policy.

Presidents Truman and Eisenhower made only limited use of the NSC staff, but beginning with President Kennedy it has grown greatly in influence. Its head, the national security adviser, has come to rival the secretary of state for foreign policy leadership, especially when the adviser is a powerful personality such as Henry Kissinger. President Reagan attempted to downgrade the importance of the national security adviser, but ironically it was one of his relatively low-visibility appointees, Admiral John Poindexter, and his subordinate, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, who precipitated the worst crisis of the Reagan presidency when, allegedly without informing the president, they tried to use cash realized from the secret sale of arms to Iran to finance guerrillas fighting against the Marxist government of Nicaragua. The sale and the diversion became known, North was fired, a congressional investigation ensued, criminal charges were filed against Poindexter and North, and the president's political position was weakened.

But even in ordinary times the NSC staff has been the rival of the secretary of state, except during that

Landmark Cases



Foreign Affairs

- **Curtiss-Wright Export Corp. v. United States** (1936): American foreign policy is vested entirely in the federal government where the president has plenary power.
- **Korematsu v. United States** (1944): Sending Japanese Americans to relocation centers during World War II was based on an acceptable military justification.
- **Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer** (1952): The president may not seize factories during wartime without explicit congressional authority even when they are threatened by a strike.
- **Hamdi v. Rumsfeld** (2004): An American citizen in jail because he allegedly joined the Taliban extremist group should have access to a “neutral decision maker.”
- **Rasul v. Bush** (2004): Foreign nationals held at Guantanamo Bay because they are believed to be terrorists have a right to bring their cases before an American court.

To explore these landmark cases further, visit the *American Government* web site at college.hmco.com/pic/wilsonAGIle.

period in the Ford administration when Henry Kissinger held *both* jobs.

The way in which the machinery of foreign policy making operates has two major consequences for the substance of that policy. First, as former secretary of state George Shultz asserted, “It’s never over.” Foreign policy issues are endlessly agitated, rarely settled. The reason is that the rivalries *within* the executive branch intensify the rivalries *between* that branch and Congress. In ways already described, Congress has steadily increased its influence over the conduct of foreign policy. Anybody in the executive branch who loses out in a struggle over foreign policy can take his or her case (usually by means of a well-timed leak) to a sympathetic member of Congress, who then can make a speech, hold a hearing, or introduce a bill.

Second, the interests of the various organizations making up the foreign policy establishment profoundly affect the positions that they take. Because the State Department has a stake in diplomacy, it tends to resist bold or controversial new policies that might upset established relationships with other countries. Part of the CIA has a stake in gathering and analyzing information; that part tends to be skeptical of the claims of other agencies that their overseas operations are succeeding. Another part of the CIA conducts covert operations abroad; it tends to resent or ignore the skepticism of the intelligence analysts. The air force flies airplanes and so tends to be optimistic about what can be accomplished through the use of air power in particular and military power in general; the army, on the other hand, which must fight in the trenches, is often dubious about the prospects for military success. During the American war in Iraq, the conflict between the CIA and the Defense Department was great, with each side leaking information to the press.

Americans often worry that their government is keeping secrets from them. In fact there are no secrets in Washington—at least not for long.

★ Foreign Policy and Public Opinion

These organizational conflicts shape the details of foreign policy, but its broad outlines are shaped by public and elite opinion.



Candlelight vigil supporting American troops serving overseas.

World War II was the great watershed event in American foreign policy. Before that time a clear majority of the American public opposed active involvement in world affairs. The public saw the costs of such involvement as being substantially in excess of the benefits, and only determined, skillful leaders were able, as was President Roosevelt during 1939–1940, to affect in even a limited fashion the diplomatic and military struggles then convulsing Europe and Asia.

Our participation in the war produced a dramatic shift in popular opinion that endured for three decades, supplying broad (though often ambiguous) public support for an internationalist foreign policy. World War II had this effect, alone among all wars that we have fought, for several reasons. First, it was almost the only universally popular war in which we have been engaged, one that produced few, if any, recriminations afterward. Second, the war seemed successful: an unmitigated evil (the Nazi regime) was utterly destroyed; an attack on our own land (by Japan at Pearl Harbor) was thoroughly avenged. Third, that war ended with the United States recognized as the dominant power on earth, owing to its sole possession of the atomic bomb and its enormous military and economic productivity.

In 1937, 94 percent of the American public preferred the policy of doing “everything possible to keep out of foreign wars” to the policy of doing “everything possible to prevent war, even if it means threatening to fight countries that fight wars.” In 1939, after World War II had begun in Europe but before Pearl Harbor was attacked, only 13 percent of Americans polled thought that we should enter the war against Germany. Just a month before Pearl Harbor only 19 percent felt that the United States should take steps, at the risk of war, to prevent Japan from becoming too powerful.¹⁹ Congress reflected the noninterventionist mood of the country: in the summer of 1941, with war breaking out almost everywhere, the proposal to continue the draft passed the House of Representatives by only one vote.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7 changed all that. Not only was the American war effort supported almost unanimously, not only did Congress approve the declaration of war with only one dissenting vote, but World War II—unlike World War I—produced popular support for an active assumption of international responsibilities that continued after the war had ended.²⁰ Whereas after World

War I a majority opposed U.S. entry into the League of Nations, after World War II a clear majority favored our entry into the United Nations.²¹

This willingness to see the United States remain a world force persisted. Even during the Vietnam War the number of people thinking that we should “keep independent” in world affairs as opposed to “working closely with other nations” rose from 10 percent in 1963 to only 22 percent in 1969.²² In 1967, after more than two years of war in Vietnam, 44 percent of Americans believed that this country had an obligation to “defend other Vietnams if they are threatened by communism.”²³

Before 9/11, hardly any American thought we should fight a war in Afghanistan, but after that attack we fought exactly that war in order to get rid of the Taliban regime. The Taliban, a group of radical young Muslims, had taken control of that country and allowed Osama bin Laden, the head of al Qaeda, to use the nation as a place to train and direct terrorists. Though al Qaeda designed and carried out the 9/11 attacks on America, it is not a single organization located in one place and thus easily defeated. It is instead a network of terrorist cells found all over the world that is allied with other terrorist groups.

But the support for an internationalist American foreign policy was, and is, highly general and heavily dependent on the phrasing of poll questions, the opinions expressed by popular leaders, and the impact of world events. Public opinion, while more in-

ternationalist than once was the case, is both mushy and volatile. Just prior to President Nixon’s decision to send troops into Cambodia, only 7 percent of the people said that they supported such a move. After the troops were sent and Nixon made a speech explaining his move, 50 percent of the public said that they supported it.²⁴ Similarly, only 49 percent of the people favored halting the American bombing of North Vietnam before President Johnson ordered such a halt in 1968; afterward 60 percent of the people said that they supported such a policy.²⁵

Backing the President

Much of this volatility in specific opinions (as opposed to general mood) reflects the already-mentioned deference to the “commander in chief” and a desire to support the United States when it confronts other nations. Table 20.1 shows the proportion of people who said that they approved of the way the president was doing his job before and after various major foreign policy events. Each foreign crisis increased the level of public approval of the president, often dramatically. The most vivid illustration of this was the Bay of Pigs fiasco: an American-supported, American-directed invasion of Cuba by anti-Castro Cuban émigrés was driven back into the sea. President Kennedy accepted responsibility for the aborted project. His popularity rose. (Comparable data for domestic crises tend to show no similar effect.)

Table 20.1 Popular Reactions to Foreign Policy Crises

Percentage of public saying that they approve of the way the president is handling his job

Foreign Policy Crisis	Before	After
1960 American U-2 spy plane shot down over Soviet Union	62%	68%
1961 Abortive landing at Bay of Pigs in Cuba	73	83
1962 Cuban missile crisis	61	74
1975 President Ford sends forces to rescue the American ship	40	51
1979 American embassy in Teheran seized by Iranians	32	61
1980 Failure of military effort to rescue hostages in Iran	39	43
1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada	43	53
1989 U.S. invasion of Panama	71	80
1990 U.S. troops to Persian Gulf	60	75
1995 U.S. troops to Bosnia	59	54
1999 U.S. troops to Kosovo	55	51
2001 U.S. combat in Afghanistan	51	86
2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq	58	71

Source: Updated from Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (New York: Norton, 1969), 184. Poll data are from Gallup poll. Time lapse between “before” and “after” samplings of opinion was in no case more than one month.

This tendency to “rally round the flag” operates for some but not all foreign military crises.²⁶ The rally not only helped Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs, but it also helped Ronald Reagan when he invaded Grenada and George Bush the elder when he sent troops to fight Iraq. But it did not help Bill Clinton when he sent forces to Bosnia or launched bombing attacks on Iraq. If there is an attack on America, the president will do very well. Just before September 11, 2001, George Bush’s favorability rating was 51 percent; just after the attack, it was 86 percent.

Sometimes people argue that whatever support a president gets during a military crisis will disappear once dead soldiers in body bags begin returning home. There are two things wrong with this statement. First, dead soldiers do not come home in body bags; they come home in coffins. Second, a close study of how casualty rates affect public opinion showed that although deaths tend to reduce how “favorable” people are toward a war, what they then support is not withdrawal but an *escalation* in the fighting so as to defeat the enemy more quickly. This was true during Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War.²⁷

In sum, people tend to be leery of overseas military expeditions by the United States—until they start. Then they support them and want to win, even if it means more intense fighting. When Americans began to dislike our involvement in Korea and Vietnam,²⁸ they did not conclude that we should pull out; they concluded instead that we should do whatever was necessary to win. The invasion of Iraq did not raise large questions for Americans until terrorist attacks on the American military continued after the Iraqi army had been defeated.

Despite the tendency for most Americans to rally round the flag, there has been for many decades some public opposition to almost any war in which the United States participates. About one-fifth of Americans opposed our invading Iraq, about the same level of opposition to our wars in Korea and Vietnam. Opposition has generally been highest among Democrats, African Americans, and people with a post-graduate degree.²⁹

Mass Versus Elite Opinion

The public is poorly informed about foreign affairs. It probably has only a vague idea where Kosovo is, how far it is from Baghdad to Kuwait, or why the Palestinians and the Jews disagree about the future of Israel.

But that is to be expected. Foreign affairs are, well, foreign. They do not have much to do with the daily lives of American citizens, except during wartime.

But the public, since World War II, has consistently felt that the United States should play an important international role.³⁰ And if our troops go abroad, it is a foolish politician who will try to talk the public out of supporting them.

Political elites, however, have a different perspective. They are better informed about foreign policy issues, but their opinions are more likely to change rapidly. Initially, college-educated people gave *more* support to the war in Vietnam than those without college training; by the end of the war, however, that support had decreased dramatically. Whereas the average citizen was upset when the United States seemed to be on the *defensive* in Vietnam, college-educated voters tended to be more upset when the United States was on the *offensive*.³¹

Though the average citizen did not want our military in Vietnam in the first place, he or she felt that we should support our troops once they were there. The average person also was deeply opposed to the anti-war protests taking place on college campuses. When the Chicago police roughed up antiwar demonstrators at the 1968 Democratic convention, public sentiment was overwhelmingly on the side of the police.³² Contrary to myths much accepted at the time, younger people were *not* more opposed to the war than older ones. There was no “generation gap.”

By contrast, college-educated citizens, thinking at first that troops should be involved, soon changed their minds, decided that the war was wrong, and grew increasingly upset when the United States seemed to be enlarging the war (by invading Cambodia, for example). College students protested against the war largely on moral grounds, and their protests received more support from college-educated adults than from other citizens.

Elite opinion changes more rapidly than public opinion. During the Vietnam War, upper-middle-class people who regularly read several magazines and newspapers underwent a dramatic change in opinion between 1964 (when they supported the war) and 1968 (when they opposed it). But the views of blue-collar workers scarcely changed at all.³³

The cleavage between mass and elite opinion is even wider if you restrict the definition of *elite* to only those involved in making foreign policy rather than including all college-educated people. In Table 20.2

Table 20.2 How the Public and the Elite see Foreign Policy 2004

	Percentage Agreeing	
	Public	Leaders
Combating international terrorism should be very important	71	84
Protect jobs of American workers	78	41
Reduce illegal immigration	59	21
Support U.S. troops in Afghanistan	60	92
Use U.S. troops to defend South Korea if attacked by North	43	82
Take Israel's side in conflicts with Palestinians	17	15
Expand economic aid to other countries	8	61

Source: *Global Views 2004* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004).

we see the differences in foreign policy views of a cross section of American citizens and a group of 450 leaders active in government, academia, the mass media, and various organizations concerned with foreign affairs.³⁴

In general the leaders have a more liberal and internationalist outlook than the public: they are more likely to favor giving economic aid to other countries and defending our allies. The public, on the other hand, wants the United States to be less active overseas and worries about protecting the jobs of American workers. Accordingly, it wants the United States to protect American jobs from foreign competition and give less economic aid to other nations.

★ Cleavages Among Foreign Policy Elites

As we have seen, public opinion on foreign policy is permissive and a bit mushy: it supports presidential action without giving it much direction. Elite opinion therefore acquires extraordinary importance. Of course events and world realities are also important, but since events have no meaning except as they are perceived and interpreted by people who must react to them, the attitudes and beliefs of those people in and out of government who are actively involved in

shaping foreign policy often assume decisive importance. Contrary to the views of people who think that some shadowy, conspiratorial group of insiders runs our foreign policy, the foreign policy elite in this country is deeply divided.

That elite consists not only of those people with administrative positions in the foreign policy field—the senior officials of the State Department and the staff of the National Security Council—but also the members and staffs of the key congressional committees concerned with foreign affairs (chiefly the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House International Relations Committee) and various private organizations that help shape elite opinion, such as the members of the Council on Foreign Relations and the editors of two important publications, *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*. To these must be added influential columnists and editorial writers whose work appears regularly in the national press. One could extend the list by adding ever-wider circles of people with some influence (lobbyists, professors, leaders of veterans' organizations); this would complicate without changing the central point: elite beliefs are probably more important in explaining foreign policy than in accounting for decisions in other policy areas.

How a Worldview Shapes Foreign Policy

These beliefs can be described in simplified terms as **worldviews** (or, as some social scientists put it, as paradigms)—more or less comprehensive mental pictures of the critical problems facing the United States in the world and of the appropriate and inappropriate ways of responding to these problems. The clearest, most concise, and perhaps most influential statement of one worldview that held sway for many years was in an article published in 1947 in *Foreign Affairs*, titled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.”³⁵ Written by a “Mr. X” (later revealed to be George F. Kennan, director of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department and thereafter ambassador to Moscow), the article argued that the Russians were pursuing a policy of expansion that could only be met by the United States’ applying “unalterable counterforce at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world.” This he called the strategy of “containment,” and it became the

worldviews A comprehensive opinion of how the United States should respond to world problems.

governing principle of American foreign policy for at least two decades.

There were critics of the containment policy at the time—Walter Lippmann, in his book *The Cold War*, argued against it in 1947³⁶—but the criticisms were less influential than the doctrine. A dominant worldview is important precisely because it prevails over alternative views. One reason why it prevails is that it is broadly consistent with the public's mood. In 1947, when Kennan wrote, popular attitudes toward the Soviet Union, favorable during World War II when Russia and America were allies, had turned quite hostile. In 1946 less than one-fourth of the American people believed that Russia could be trusted to cooperate with this country,³⁷ and by 1948 over three-fourths were convinced that the Soviet Union was trying not simply to defend itself but to become the dominant world power.³⁸

Such a worldview was also influential because it was consistent with events at the time: Russia had occupied most of the previously independent countries of Eastern Europe and was turning them into puppet regimes. When governments independent of both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to rule in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, they were overthrown by Soviet-backed coups. A worldview also becomes dominant when it is consistent with the prior experiences of the people holding it.

Four Worldviews Every generation of political leaders comes to power with a foreign policy worldview shaped, in large measure, by the real or apparent mistakes of the previous generation.³⁹ This pattern can be traced back, some have argued, to the very beginnings of the nation. Frank L. Klingberg traces the alteration since 1776 between two national “moods” that favored first “extroversion” (or an active, internationalist policy) and then “introversion” (a less active, even isolationist posture).⁴⁰

isolationism *The opinion that the United States should withdraw from world affairs.*

containment *The belief that the United States should resist the expansion of aggressive nations, especially the former Soviet Union.*

that had seemed to accomplish little and certainly had not made the world, in Woodrow Wilson's words, “safe for democracy.” As a result in the 1920s and 1930s elite opinion (and popular opinion) opposed getting involved in European wars.

The **containment** (or antiappeasement) paradigm was the result of World War II. Pearl Harbor was the death knell for isolationism. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan, a staunch isolationist before the attack, became an ardent internationalist not only during but after the war. He later wrote of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, “that day ended isolationism for any realist.”⁴¹ At a conference in Munich, efforts of British and French leaders to satisfy Hitler’s territorial demands in Europe had led not to “peace in our time,” as Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of Britain had claimed, but to ever-greater territorial demands and ultimately to world war. This crisis brought to power men determined not to repeat their predecessors’ mistakes: “Munich” became a



A meeting that named an era: In Munich in 1938 British prime minister Neville Chamberlain attempted to appease the territorial ambitions of Hitler. Chamberlain’s failure brought World War II closer.

synonym for weakness, and leaders such as Winston Churchill made antiappeasement the basis of their post-war policy of resisting Soviet expansionism. Churchill summed up the worldview that he had acquired from the Munich era in a famous speech delivered in 1946 in Fulton, Missouri, in which he coined the term *iron curtain* to describe Soviet policy in Eastern Europe.

The events leading up to World War II were the formative experiences of those leaders who came to power in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. What they took to be the lessons of Pearl Harbor and Munich were applied repeatedly—in building a network of defensive alliances in Europe and Asia during the late 1940s and 1950s, in operating an airlift to aid West Berlin when road access to it was cut off by the Russians, in coming to the aid of South Korea, and finally in intervening in Vietnam. Most of these applications of the containment worldview were successful in the sense that they did not harm American interests, they proved welcome to allies, or they prevented a military conquest.

The **disengagement** (or “Vietnam”) view resulted from the experience of the younger foreign policy elite that came to power in the 1970s. Unlike previous applications of the antiappeasement view, our entry into Vietnam had led to a military defeat and a domestic political disaster. There were three ways of interpreting that crisis: (1) we applied the correct worldview in the right place but did not try hard enough; (2) we had the correct worldview but tried to apply it in the wrong place under the wrong circumstances; (3) the worldview itself was wrong. By and large the critics of our Vietnam policy tended toward the third conclusion, and thus when they supplanted in office the architects of our Vietnam policy, they inclined toward a worldview based on the slogan “no more Vietnams.” Critics of this view called it the “new isolationism,” arguing that it would encourage Soviet expansion.

The language of Vietnam colored many discussions of foreign policy. Almost every military initiative since then has been debated in terms of whether it would lead us into “another Vietnam”: sending the Marines to Lebanon, invading Grenada, dispatching military advisers to El Salvador, supporting the contras in Nicaragua, helping South American countries fight drug producers, and sending troops to invade Iraq.

How elites thought about Vietnam affected their foreign policy views for many years. If they thought the war was “immoral,” they were reluctant to see American military involvement elsewhere. They played a



The battleship *West Virginia* burns after being hit by Japanese warplanes at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

large role in the Carter administration but were replaced by rival elites—those more inclined to a containment view—during the Reagan presidency.⁴² When George H.W. Bush sought to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait, the congressional debate pitted those committed to containment against those who believed in disengagement. The Senate vote on Bush’s request for permission to use troops was narrowly carried by containment advocates.

When Clinton became president in 1992, he brought to office a lack of interest in foreign policy coupled with advisers who were drawn from the ranks of those who believed in disengagement. His strongest congressional supporters were those who had argued against the Gulf War. But then a remarkable change occurred. When Slobodan Milošević, the Serbian leader, sent troops into neighboring Kosovo to suppress the ethnic Albanians living there, the strongest voices for American military intervention came from those who once advocated disengagement. During the Gulf War 47 Senate Democrats voted to oppose U.S. participation. A few years later 42 Senate Democrats voted to support our role in Kosovo.

disengagement *The belief that the United States was harmed by its war in Vietnam and so should avoid supposedly similar events.*

What had happened? The change was inspired by the view that helping the Albanians was required by the doctrine of **human rights**. Liberal supporters of U.S. air attacks on Serbian forces believed that we were helping Albanians escape mass killing. By contrast, many conservative members of Congress who had followed a containment policy in the Gulf War now felt that disengagement ought to be followed in Kosovo. Of course politics also mattered. Clinton was a Democratic president; Bush had been a Republican one.

But politics was not the whole story. American liberal elites had persuaded themselves that the attack in Kosovo resembled the genocide—that is, the mass murder of people because of their race or ethnicity—that the Jews had suffered in Nazi Germany. They held that we must “never again” permit a whole people to be killed.

There are some problems with this view. Hardly any human rights advocates had called for U.S. intervention in Rwanda, China, or Iraq—all countries that massacred millions of their own citizens. In addition, the historical record suggests that the Serbs and the Albanians have been killing each other for centuries. Now that the Serbian army has withdrawn from Kosovo, Serbian civilians who stayed behind are being killed by the Albanians whom they once killed. The response that some human rights advocates would give to these criticisms is that America owes a special obligation to Europe and that even if Albanians kill Serbs, a Western military presence there will at least prevent organized military killing.

human rights *The view that we should try to improve the lives of people in other countries*

polarization *A deep and wide conflict over some government policy.*

support in invading Afghanistan and later Iraq, though he received crucial support from Great Britain, Australia, and Poland.

Political Polarization

For as long as we have records, public opinion has been slow to favor our military actions overseas in the

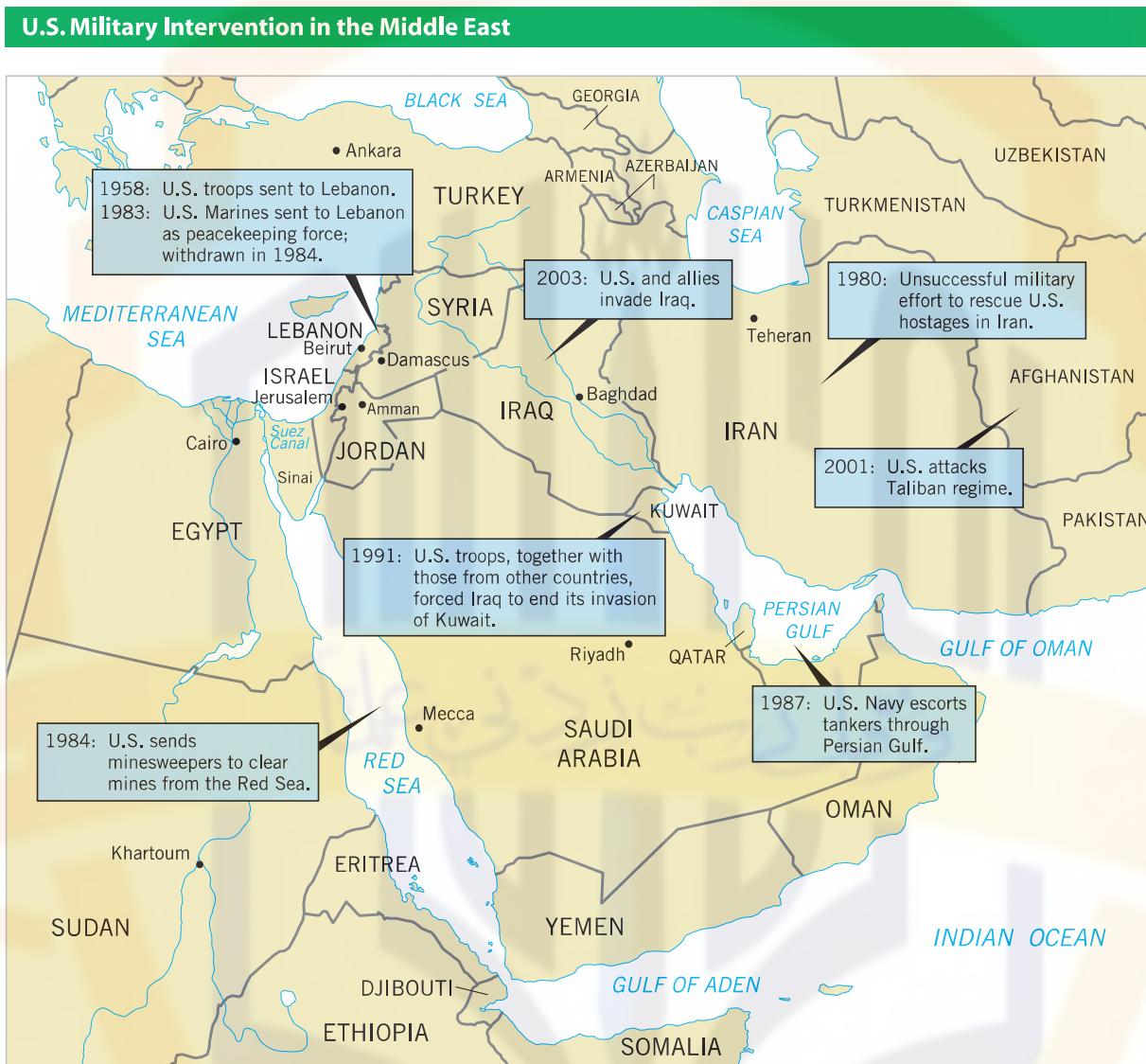
abstract but quick to support them once they occur. However, that pattern ended with our invasion of Iraq in 2003. Public opinion is now deeply divided about that war, with most Democrats strongly opposing it and most Republicans favoring it.

That was not how things worked out during our wars in Korea and Vietnam. The war in Korea produced angry divisions in Congress, especially after General Douglas MacArthur, the allied commander in Korea, was fired in 1951 for having disobeyed the president. He received a hero’s welcome when he returned to this country and gave an emotional speech to a joint session of Congress. Many Republicans demanded that President Truman be impeached. Despite this public support for MacArthur and these angry congressional words, the country was not split along partisan lines. Slightly more Republicans than Democrats said the war was a mistake (roughly half of each party), but the differences between these voters was not great.

The war in Vietnam split American political elites even more deeply. Journalists and members of Congress took sharply opposing sides, and some Americans traveled to North Vietnam to express their support for the Communist cause. When the North Vietnamese launched a major offensive to destroy American and South Vietnamese troops during the Tet holidays in 1968, it failed, but the American press reported it as a Communist victory, and demands to bring our troops home were heard during the presidential campaign that year. But public opinion did not divide along party lines; in 1968, Democratic and Republican voters had just about the same views (a little over half thought the war was a mistake, about a third thought it wasn’t).

Our invasion of Iraq was a different story. From the very first, Democratic voters strongly opposed it and Republican ones favored it. By 2006, 76 percent of Democrats said we should have stayed out of Iraq, while 71 percent of Republicans said that the invasion was the right thing to do.⁴³

American public opinion has become more polarized by our foreign policy. **Polarization** means a deep and wide conflict, usually along party lines, over some government policy. It has replaced the bipartisan foreign policy of the Second World War and the modest differences in public opinion during Korea and Vietnam.⁴⁴



★ The Use of Military Force

Foreign policy takes many forms—discussions are held, treaties are signed, organizations are joined—but in many cases it depends on the ability to use military force. Troops, ships, and aircraft are not the only ways of influencing other countries; international trade and foreign aid are also useful. But in modern times, as in the past, the nations of the world know the difference between a “great power” (that is, a heavily armed one) and a weak nation.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, one might think that military power has become less important. But in fact it remains as

important as ever. Since the Soviet Union was dissolved and the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, the United States has used military force to attack Iraq, maintain order in Bosnia, defend Kosovo, and go to war in Afghanistan. Various rogue nations, such as Iran and North Korea, have acquired or are about to acquire long-range rockets and weapons of mass destruction (that is, nuclear, chemical, and biological arms). Many nations that feel threatened by their neighbors, such as China, India, Pakistan, and Israel, have nuclear bombs. And Russia still has many of the nuclear weapons that the old Soviet Union built. It would be foolish to assume that the end of the cold war means the end of war.

POLITICALLY SPEAKING

Third World

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Originally a French term (*tiers monde*) referring to nations neutral in the cold war between the United Nations and the Soviet Union, the **Third World** now means almost any underdeveloped nation in Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East.

When the oil-producing nations, such as Saudi Arabia, became wealthy after having succeeded in raising oil prices in the early 1970s, some observers began to use a new phrase, the **Fourth World**, to refer to underdeveloped nations that had no oil reserves and thus had to pay heavily for imported oil.

And some nations, such as Taiwan and the Republic of Korea, once thought to be part of the Third World because they were underdeveloped have made such startling economic progress that they are now referred to as the “newly industrialized nations” (NINs).

Source: Adapted from *Safire's Political Dictionary* by William Safire. Copyright © 1968, 1972, 1978 by William Safire. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc. and the author.

There are two views about the role of the military in American life. One is majoritarian: the military exists to defend the country or to help other nations defend themselves.

When troops are used, almost all Americans benefit and almost all pay the bill. (Some Americans, such as those who lose a loved one in war, pay much more than the rest

military-industrial complex An alleged alliance between military leaders and corporate leaders.

of us.) The president is the commander in chief, and Congress plays a largely supportive role.

Although the other view does not deny that the armed forces are useful, it focuses on the extent to which the military is a large and powerful client. The real beneficiaries of military spending are the generals and admirals, as well as the big corporations and members of Congress whose districts get fat defense contracts. Everyone pays, but these clients get most of the benefits. What we spend on defense is shaped by the **military-industrial complex**, a supposedly unified bloc of Defense Department leaders and military manufacturers.

War in Iraq

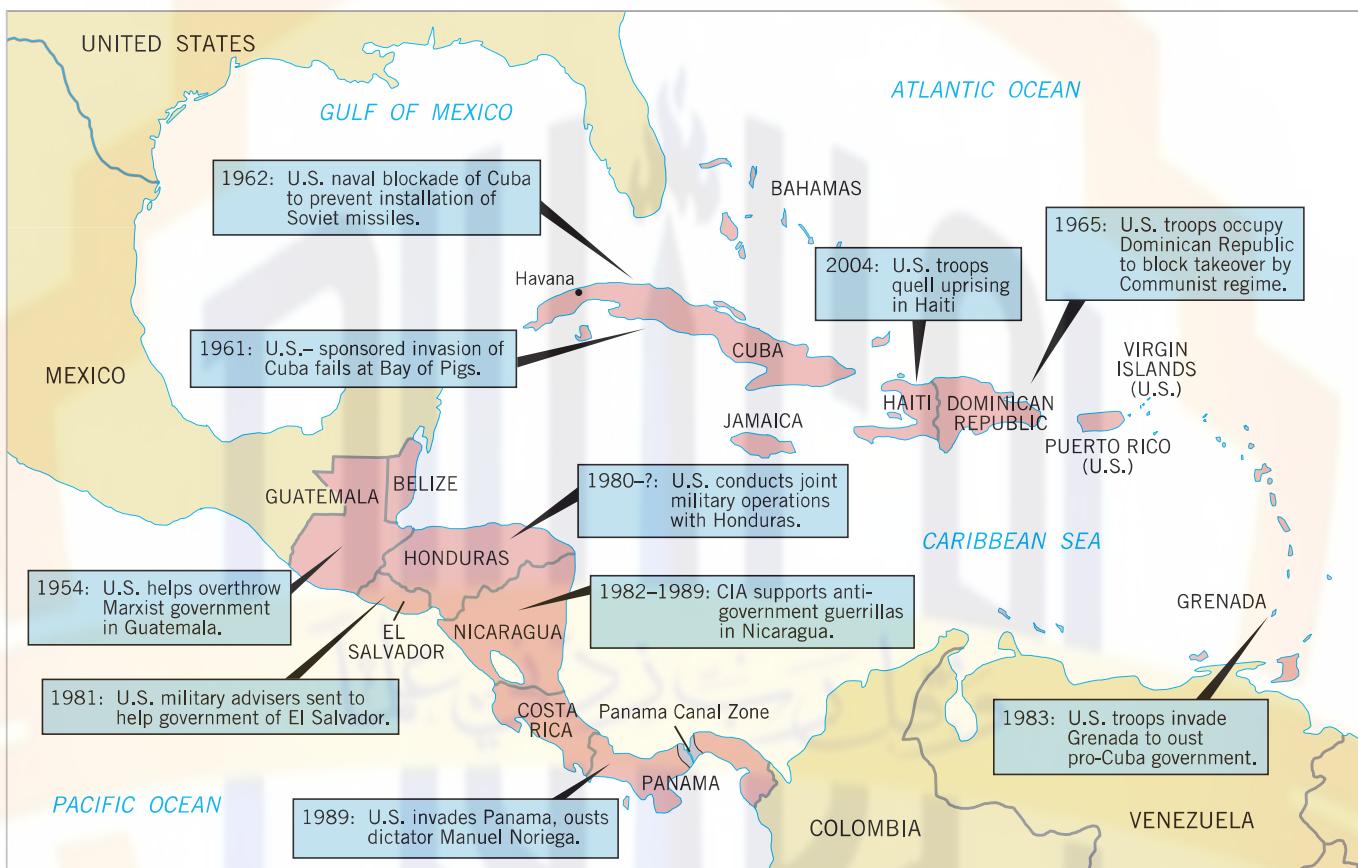
After the Iraqi army under Saddam Hussein had invaded neighboring Kuwait in 1990, the United Nations passed a resolution demanding that Iraq withdraw and authorizing force to expel it. In January 1991 the United States led a coalition of forces from several nations that attacked Iraq; within one hundred days, the Iraqi army had retreated from Kuwait and fled home. The U.S.-led military ended its attack, allowing Saddam to remain in power in Baghdad, the Iraqi capital.

After the war, a no-fly zone was established under which Iraqi flights in certain areas were prohibited. This ban was enforced for twelve years by U.S., British, and French planes that shot down Iraq aircraft violating the rule.

Throughout this time, UN inspectors were sent to Iraq to look for weapons of mass destruction (WMDs): chemical, biological, and nuclear materials that could be used to attack others. There was no doubt such weapons existed, as Saddam had dropped chemical weapons on people living in his own country. The UN inspectors found evidence of such a program, but in 1997 Saddam expelled them from his country, only to allow them to return a few years later. Saddam's misleading statements led American and British leaders to conclude that his regime was a threat to peace.

Unable to convince the United Nations to support a war, America, Great Britain, and other countries decided to act alone. On March 30, 2003, they invaded Iraq in a campaign called Operation Iraqi Freedom; within about six weeks, the Iraqi army was defeated and the American-led coalition occupied all of the country. After the war, a large group of inspectors toured Iraq looking for WMDs, but they found virtu-

U.S. Military Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean Since 1950



ally none. Later a bipartisan commission concluded that Saddam had apparently cancelled his WMD program, but had told hardly any of his own military leaders about this.⁴⁵

The newly freed Iraqi people voted first for an interim parliament, then for a new constitution, and finally for a regular government. But this process was offset by the terrorist activities of various insurgents, first aimed at American troops and later at Iraqi civilians, killing several tens of thousands of them. The situation in Iraq became a major American political issue, contributing to the loss of the Republican congressional majority in the 2006 elections.

President Bush announced a changed Iraqi strategy that would involve more troops, a new commitment of these troops and the Iraqi Army to protect certain neighborhoods in and around Baghdad, and a new American military leader. There was an effort in Congress to oppose these changes but not in a way that would cut off funding for the troops.

★ The Defense Budget

To sort out these competing claims, one has to understand how America raises and spends its defense dollars. There are two important things to know: how much money we spend and how it is divided up. The first reflects majoritarian politics, the second, interest group bargaining.

Total Spending

Throughout most of our history the United States has not maintained large military forces during peacetime. For instance, the percentage of the gross national product (GNP) spent on defense in 1935, on the eve of World War II, was about the same as it was in 1870, when we were on the eve of nothing in particular. We armed when a war broke out, then we disarmed when the war ended. But all of that changed after World War II, when defense spending declined sharply but

did not return to its prewar levels. And in 1950 our defense expenditures soared again.

In that year we rearmed to fight a war in Korea, but when it was over, we did not completely disarm. The reason was our containment policy toward the Soviet Union. For about forty years—from the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991—American military spending was driven by our desire to contain the Soviet Union and its allies. The Soviet Union had brought under its control most of Eastern Europe; would it also invade Western Europe? Russia had always wanted access to the oil and warm-water ports of the Middle East; would the Soviets someday invade or subvert Iran or Turkey? The Soviet Union was willing to help North Korea invade South Korea and North Vietnam to invade South Vietnam; would it next use an ally to threaten the United States? Soviet leaders supported “wars of national liberation” in Africa and Latin America; would they succeed in turning more and more nations against the United States?

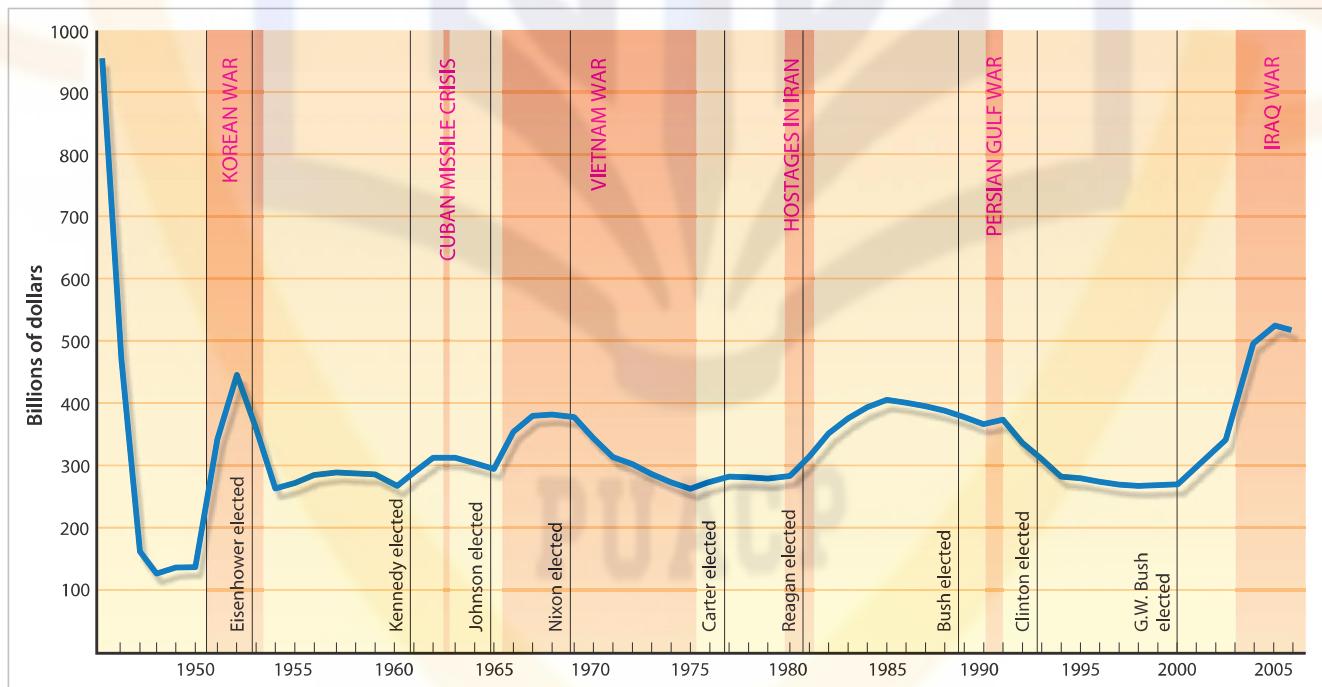
To meet these threats the United States built up a military system that was designed to repel a Soviet in-

vasion of Western Europe and at the same time help allies resist smaller-scale invasions or domestic uprisings. Figure 20.1 depicts the dramatic increase in military spending in 1950. It also shows that even after we decided to have a large military force, there were many ups and downs in the actual level of spending. After the Korean War was over, we spent less; when we became involved in Vietnam, we spent more; when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and we invaded Iraq, we spent more again. These changes in spending tended to reflect changes in public opinion about the defense budget.

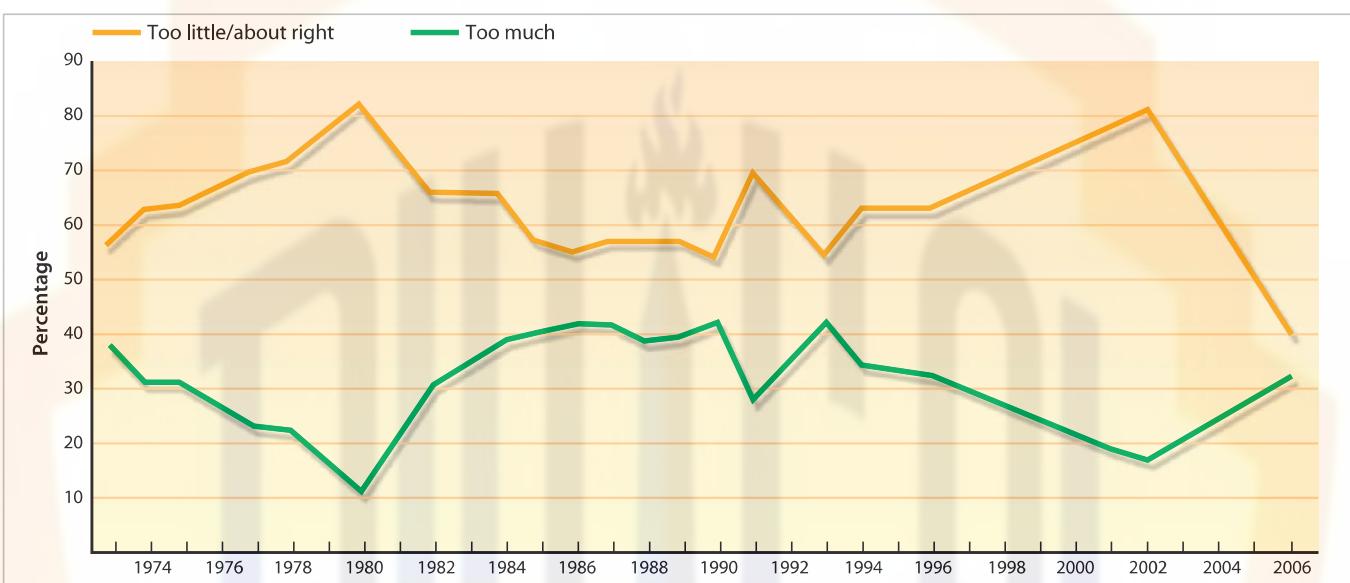
As Figure 20.2 shows, a majority of Americans have said that we are spending the right amount or even too little on defense, and that percentage rose to very high levels in 1980 (when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan), in 1991 (when Iraq invaded Kuwait), and in 2001 after the terrorist attack on America.

Then, suddenly, the Soviet Union ceased to exist. The troops that once occupied Eastern Europe and Afghanistan withdrew to Russia; there were huge cuts in Russian military spending; and military and economic aid to the Soviets’ longtime ally, Cuba, was sus-

Figure 20.1 Trends in Military Spending (in constant dollars)



Source: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), "National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2007."

Figure 20.2 Public Sentiment on Defense Spending, 1960–2002

Source: Updated from *The Public Perspective* (August/September 1997), 19, and Gallup Poll.

pended. For the first time since 1950 American leaders were faced with defining the principles of our military policy (and thus the size of our defense budget) in the absence of a Soviet threat.

The debate that occurred, and is still continuing, largely reflected personal beliefs and political ideologies (that is, *majoritarian* politics). Liberals demanded sharp cuts in defense spending, weapons procurement, and military personnel, arguing that with the Soviet threat ended, it was time to collect our “peace dividend” and divert funds from the military to domestic social programs. Conservatives agreed that some military cuts were in order, but they argued that the world was still a dangerous place and therefore that a strong (and well-funded) military remained essential to the nation’s defense. This disagreement reflected different predictions about what the future would be like. Many liberals (and some conservatives, such as Pat Buchanan, who believed that America should “stay at home”) argued that we could not afford to be the “world’s policeman.” Many conservatives (and some liberals) responded by saying that Russia was still a military powerhouse that might once again fall under the control of ruthless leaders and that many other nations hostile to the United States (such as North

Korea, Iran, and Iraq) were becoming potential adversaries as they tried to build or acquire nuclear weapons and missile systems.

American campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq made clear that whether or not the United States was the “world’s police officer,” there was no escaping its need to use military force. They also made clear that the United States had reduced its armed forces so sharply since Desert Storm (there were half a million fewer people in the military in 1996 than in 1991) that it was hard-pressed to carry out any sustained military campaign (see Table 20.3). When the national budget deficit was eliminated in 1999, both President Clinton and the Republican Congress called for more military spending.

But that increase did not pay for what the military had been authorized to buy, and did little to get us ready for the war in Afghanistan against Osama bin Laden. But once the battle began, the federal purse strings loosened and the defense budget grew.

What Do We Get with Our Money?

We get people, of course—soldiers, sailors, airmen, and airwomen. They are the most expensive part of

Table 20.3 U.S. Military Forces Before and After the Breakup of the Soviet Union

Service	Before 1991	End FY 1998
Army		
Active divisions	18	10
National Guard divisions	10	8
Navy		
Aircraft carriers	15	11
Training carriers	1	2
Ships	546	346
Air Force		
Active fighter wings	24	13
Reserve fighter wings	12	7
Marine Corps		
Active divisions	3	3
Reserve divisions	1	1
Strategic Nuclear Forces		
Ballistic missile submarines	31	18
Strategic bombers	324	182
ICBMs	1,000	550

Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1998, 363.

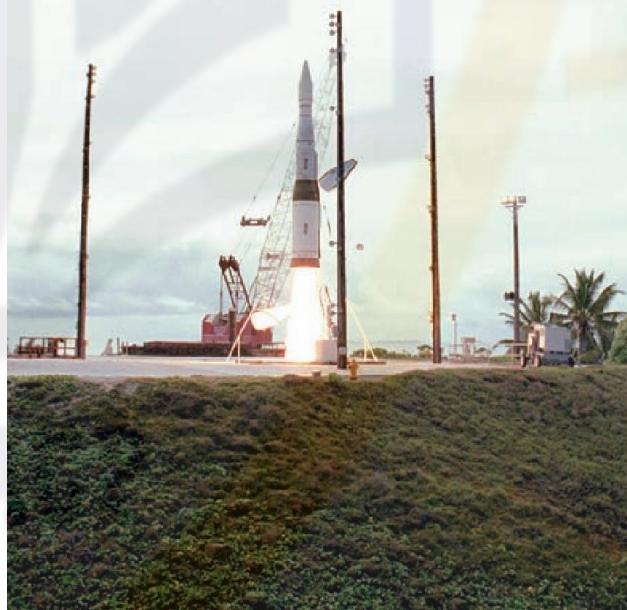
the defense budget. Then we get hardware of roughly two kinds—big-ticket items, like aircraft carriers and bombers, and small-ticket items, like hammers and screwdrivers. Each of these kinds of hardware has its own politics. Finally, we get “readiness”—training, supplies, munitions, fuel, and food.

Personnel Efforts to develop our military forces before World War II reflected the considerable American discomfort with a strong central government. The United States did not institute a peacetime draft until 1940, when the rest of the world was already at war, and the draft was renewed the following year (only a few months before Pearl Harbor) by only a one-vote margin in the House. Until 1973 the United States relied on the draft to obtain military personnel. Then, at the end of the Vietnam War, it replaced the draft with the all-volunteer force (AVF). After getting off to a rocky start, the AVF began to improve thanks to increases in military pay and rising civilian unemployment. Abolishing the draft had been politically popular: nobody likes being drafted, and even in congressional districts that otherwise are staunch sup-

porters of a strong defense, the voters tell their representatives that they do not want to return to the draft.

There has been a steady increase in the percentage of women in the military (in 2005 they constituted 20 percent of the total). For a long time, however, women were barred by law from serving in combat roles. (What constitutes a “combat role” is a bit difficult to say, since even personnel far from the main fighting can be hit by an enemy bomb or artillery shell.) In 1993 Congress ended the legal ban on assigning women to navy combat ships and air force fighter jets, and soon women were serving on three aircraft carriers. Congress must still be consulted in advance if women are to serve in ground combat forces (such as in front-line infantry or tank units).

The presence of homosexuals in the military has proved much harder to resolve. Until 1993 it was the long-standing policy of the U.S. armed forces to bar homosexuals from entering the military and to discharge them if they were discovered serving. Gay and lesbian rights organizations had long protested this exclusion. In 1993 a gay soldier won a lawsuit against the army for having discharged him; he settled for back pay and retirement benefits in exchange for a



The United States has tried to decide whether to build interceptors like this one to shoot down incoming missiles from enemies.

promise not to reenlist. In 1993 a judge ordered the navy to reinstate a discharged sailor who had revealed on national television that he was a homosexual. In response to the growing controversy, presidential candidate Bill Clinton promised to lift the official ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military if he were elected to office.

Once in office he discovered that it was not that easy. Many members of the armed forces believed that knowingly serving alongside and living in close quarters with gays and lesbians would create unnecessary tension and harm military morale and troop solidarity. The Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed lifting the ban, and several key members of Congress said they would try to pass a law reaffirming it. President Clinton was forced to settle for a compromise: “don’t ask, don’t tell.” Under this policy persons entering or serving in the military will not be asked to reveal their sexual orientation and will be allowed to serve, provided they do not engage in homosexual conduct. If a person says he or she is a homosexual, it will not be automatic grounds for discharge, but it may be grounds for launching an investigation to see whether rules against homosexual conduct have been violated.

In 1994 the new Pentagon rules designed to implement “don’t ask, don’t tell” went into effect, but they created their own problems. What if heterosexuals harass gays without asking if they are gay? What if a gay or lesbian doesn’t tell but his or her commanding officer finds out anyway?

Big-Ticket Items Whenever the Pentagon buys a new submarine, airplane, or missile, we hear about **cost overruns**. In the 1950s actual costs were three times greater than estimated costs; by the 1960s things were only slightly better—actual costs were twice estimated costs.

There are five main reasons for these overruns. First, it is hard to know in advance what something that has never existed before will cost once you build it. People who have remodeled their homes know this all too well. So do government officials who build new subways or congressional office buildings. It is no different with a B-2 bomber.

Second, people who want to persuade Congress to appropriate money for a new airplane or submarine have an incentive to underestimate the cost. To get the weapon approved, its sponsors tell Congress how little it will cost; once the weapon is under construc-



Women in training for the armed forces.

tion, the sponsors go back to Congress for additional money to cover “unexpected” cost increases.

Third, the Pentagon officials who decide what kind of new aircraft they want are drawn from the ranks of those who will fly it. These officers naturally want the best airplane (or ship or tank) that money can buy. As air force general Carl “Tooey” Spaatz once put it, “A second-best aircraft is like a second-best poker hand. No damn good.”⁴⁶ But what exactly is the “best” airplane? Is it the fastest one? Or the most maneuverable one? Or the most reliable one? Or the one with the longest range? Pentagon officials have a tendency

cost overruns

When the money actually paid to military suppliers exceeds the estimated costs.



Gays campaign for greater acceptance in the armed forces.

to answer, “All of the above.” Of course, trying to produce all of the above is incredibly expensive (and sometimes impossible). But asking for the expensive (or the impossible) is understandable, given that the air force officers who buy it will also fly it. This tendency to ask for everything at once is called **gold plating**.

Fourth, many new weapons are purchased from a single contractor. This is called sole-sourcing. A contractor is hired to design, develop, and build an airplane. As a result there is no competition, and so the manufacturer has no strong incentive to control costs. And if the sole manufacturer gets into financial trouble, the government, seeking to avoid a shutdown of all production, has an incentive to bail the company out.

Fifth, when Congress wants to cut the military budget, it often does so not by canceling a new weapons system but by stretching out the number of years during which it is purchased. Say that Congress wants to buy one hundred F-22s, twenty-five a year for four years. To give the appearance of cutting the budget, it will decide to buy only fifteen the first year and take five years to buy the rest. Or it will authorize the construction of twenty now and then ask again next year for the authority to build more. But start-and-stop production decisions and stretching out production over more years drives up the cost of building each unit. If Ford built cars this way, it would go broke.

There are ways to cope with four of these five problems. You cannot do much about the first, ignorance, but you can do something about low estimates, gold plating, sole-sourcing, and stretch-outs. If the Pentagon would give realistic cost estimates initially (per-

haps verified by another agency); if it would ask for weapons that meet a few critical performance requirements instead of every requirement that can be thought of; if two or more manufacturers were to compete in designing, developing, and manufacturing new weapons; and

if Congress were to stop trying to “cut” the budget using the smoke-and-mirrors technique of stretch-outs, then we would hear a lot less about cost overruns.

Some of these things are being done. There is more competition and less sole-sourcing in weapons procurement today than once was the case. But the political incentives to avoid other changes are very powerful. Pentagon officers will always want “the best.” They will always have an incentive to underestimate costs. Congress will always be tempted to use stretch-outs as a way of avoiding hard budget choices.

Readiness Presumably we have a peacetime military so that we will be ready for wartime. Presumably, therefore, the peacetime forces will devote a lot of their time and money to improving their readiness.

Not necessarily. The politics of defense spending is such that readiness often is given a very low priority. Here is why.

Client politics influences the decision. In 1990 Congress was willing to cut almost anything, provided it wasn’t built or stationed in some member’s district. That doesn’t leave much. Plans to stop producing F-14 fighters for the navy were opposed by members from Long Island, where the Grumman manufacturing plant was located. Plans to kill the Osprey aircraft for the Marines were opposed by members from the places where it was to be built. Plans to close bases were opposed by every member with a base in his or her district.

That leaves training and readiness. These things, essential to military effectiveness, have no constituencies and hence few congressional defenders. When forced to choose, the services themselves often prefer to allocate scarce dollars to developing and buying