

Inside States: The Making of Foreign Policy



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Key Terms

unitary actors

Assumption that states are monolithic, with no divisions or opinion differences within government or the larger society.

foreign policy

approach The approach to understanding international politics that focuses on how domestic actors seek to influence states' actions and the ways in which foreign policy is made.

In most discussions of global politics (including the previous chapters in this book), people speak of states as the actors in international politics. News agencies, for example, report that “Brazil agreed to trade terms today,” or “Indonesia refused to attend a meeting” or even “Moscow decided to send troops.” In such reports, states, or their capitals, are treated as if they are **unitary actors**—monolithic, speaking with one voice, and with no divisions or differences of opinions within the government or the larger society.

This assumption that states are unitary actors is consistent with most theoretical perspectives for understanding global politics. In particular, realism sees sovereign states as having control over the people in its territory and therefore able to quell any divisions. In addition, realism believes that since security is the primary issue facing states, reasonable people will put aside any differences they may have and act with one voice for the sake of national interests. While other theoretical perspectives, such as liberalism and world economic system analysis, do not assume states are unitary (liberalism sees multiple channels existing across states, and world system analysis sees economic classes existing across states), they generally do not examine what goes on inside states and how this affects states' foreign policy. Only liberalism's claim that democratic governments are more constrained than nondemocratic governments takes seriously how the politics within states affects the politics between states.

Many who study international relations, however, believe that in order to understand what goes on between states, it is necessary to understand what goes on within them. This is the **foreign policy approach**. “Foreign policy consists of those discrete official actions of the authoritative decisionmaker of a nation's government, or their agents, which are intended by the decisionmakers to influence the behavior of international actors external to their own policy.”¹ The foreign policy approach to understanding global politics argues that attention to what goes on inside states can give us a better explanation for why states might not be acting as expected in response to international conditions. France during the Cold War, for example, attempted to defy the constraints of the bipolar Cold War, even opting out of the military structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).² Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi does not take the limited power of his small state as a given but instead attempts to “exploit the seams” of the international system by crafting a maverick foreign policy.³ Britain today faces many of the same economic constraints as other European Union (EU) members, but instead has chosen not to join the single currency.⁴ Attention to domestic actors and politics, many argue, can help explain why some states at times do not adhere to international constraints. Part of the explanation may be that they are not in fact unitary. The disagreements that occur within states and how those are resolved are considered domestic sources of foreign policy. Domestic sources of foreign policy include what the public is like, what the political system is like, and how decisions get made—particularly the

rational actors The idea that individuals make decisions through a process that includes clarification of goals, weighing of alternatives and consequences, and selection of optimal course of action.

psychological approach Focuses on leaders' beliefs, personalities, and styles, and how individuals and groups process information and make decisions.

effects of bureaucracies and the characteristics of leaders on the process of making foreign policy.

The theoretical perspectives of realism and liberalism also often assume that states, or their leaders who represent states, are **rational actors**. "The rational model, as usually conceived, maintains that an individual decisionmaker reaches a decision via a clearly defined intellectual process: He or she clarifies and ranks values and goals; then weighs all (or at least the leading) alternative courses of action (policies); the likely consequences (costs/benefits) of each; and ultimately chooses the optimal course(s) of action with regard to the ends pursued."⁵ Because most of the theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter 1 focus on the constraints of the international system (realism focuses on the anarchical nature of the system and the distribution of power in the system, liberalism on the degree of interdependence, and world economic system analysis on the structure of wealth in the international capitalist system), states are assumed to respond rationally to these constraints. While domestic actors may rationally respond to internal constraints, they may also misperceive or ignore both internal and external constraints. The **psychological approach** to foreign policy focuses on leaders' beliefs and images of other countries, their personalities and policymaking styles, and how individuals and groups process information and make choices that may be less than perfect.

Public Opinion

public opinion The attitudes that people have regarding their state's goals and policies.

One source of foreign policy originating inside states is the people themselves. What a state does in international politics may be driven by what the people, rather than the leaders, think the state should do. **Public opinion** concerns the attitudes people of a state have on a particular foreign policy. The public may be divided over what the state should do, or there may be a consensus. In either event, the public may push state leaders to act in ways that are not necessarily in the optimal interests of the state. When there is a division in public opinion or when leaders' preferences are at odds with public opinion, the state is clearly not unitary. How these differences are negotiated, then, becomes important for understanding state behavior in global politics. For the public to be considered a source of a state's foreign policy, three conditions must be satisfied: (1) The public must have knowledge of foreign policy, (2) public opinion must be stable enough for leaders to judge what the people want, and (3) the public's views must be taken into account by policymakers. According to democratic theory, these conditions must be met for foreign policy to represent "the will of the people." Indeed, we would expect foreign policy to be more affected by public opinion in democracies, compared to authoritarian systems, since democracies have institutionalized means for citizens to influence policy. Even in authoritarian systems, however, the question of the impact of public opinion on foreign policy is not irrelevant.

Does the Public Know or Care About Foreign Policy?

Most people do not know or care very much about international politics. This is true even in democracies such as the United States, where people have access to information on foreign policy issues.⁶ Examples abound. "It has been easy to portray the American public as one knowing little about major political issues and not eager to learn more."⁷ Surveys show that in 1979, only about 34 percent of Americans knew which two countries were participants in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT).⁸ The war in Vietnam was one of the most intensely debated foreign policy issues in U.S. history; 58,000 American soldiers lost their lives, and the war generated more domestic unrest than the United States had seen since the Civil War. And yet in 1985, less than two-thirds of the American public knew that the United States had supported South Vietnam against North Vietnam in that war.⁹ A study by the National Geographic Society in 1988 reported that many Americans could not find the United States, much less England, Greece, Hungary, or Poland, on a world map and that fully half did not know that France, China, and India have nuclear weapons.¹⁰ Even on economic issues that presumably more directly touch people's lives, Americans are largely ignorant. During the debates of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), for example, only 50 percent of Americans had ever heard of the agreement.¹¹ Ignorance of foreign affairs is not limited to the American public. In France, Germany, and Japan as well as in the United States, only about "20–30 percent of the public indicate serious concern about foreign affairs."¹² In short, it is widely agreed that "the vast majority of citizens hold pictures of the world that are at best sketchy, blurred, and without detail, or at worst so impoverished as to beggar description."¹³

In any society, individuals are most likely to be concerned about problems that affect them directly and over which they feel they have some control. Problems on the scale of international politics often seem to fail on both counts. Wars, economic crises, and coups in one part of the world can have a dramatic impact on the lives of individuals in other parts of the world. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, for example, can lead to reductions in the defense budget and the closing of military bases all over the country. But the connection between events in certain countries and their impact on individuals in other countries is seldom so clear. And even if the effect of international events is great, individuals in the countries affected do not have enough knowledge to be able to see the link between such events and their local impact. Add to this the fact that even when the link is clear, most individuals feel they have no control over the event or its consequences, and it is not hard to see why most people, even in countries whose citizens are on average relatively wealthy and highly educated, do not know or care very much about international politics. The relatively small number of people who do pay attention to and are relatively knowledgeable about foreign policy issues

attentive public The people who attend to and are knowledgeable about foreign policy issues and international politics.

and international politics is sometimes referred to as the **attentive public** and typically consists of no more than 10 percent of the population.¹⁴

There are reasons to hope that public opinion in most countries of the world is becoming better informed in relation to foreign policies. "The expansion of analytic skills is . . . worldwide in scope. Not only for citizens in democratic and industrialized societies, but also for Afghan tribesmen and Argentine gauchos, for peasants in India and protesters in Chile, for guerrillas in Peru and students in the Philippines, for blacks in South Africa and Palestinians in Israel, the interdependence of global life and the consequences of collective actions are daily experiences."¹⁵ One reason for this change is that higher educational levels are increasing almost everywhere. "Enrollments in higher education have been increasing since 1970 in every part of the world. . . . The same has been true since 1960 in primary and secondary education as well, and for both males and females."¹⁶ Another reason has to do with the worldwide spread of television and the Internet. Even in such desperately poor countries as India, over half of the population now has access to television. "Access to television has become sufficiently global in scope that it must be regarded as a change of [fundamental] proportions."¹⁷

Is Public Opinion Moody or Wise?

Even if the public is interested and informed about foreign policy, they would have great difficulty influencing leaders if public opinion was so unstable that leaders could not confidently discern and predict what the public prefers. The conventional wisdom has been that public opinion on foreign policy is subject to wildly fluctuating moods and cannot be counted on for consistent support of foreign policy commitments.¹⁸ But the available evidence does not consistently support such a negative view of public opinion regarding foreign policy. There certainly are fluctuations in public opinion about foreign policy issues, but they are not unpredictable or irrational shifts.

Opinion shifts in the American public from 1935 to 1985 regarding issues such as isolationism, the Cold War, the Korean War, the United Nations, Vietnam, and détente, for example, were arguably "understandable in terms of changing circumstances and changing information. Moreover, . . . most of them [were] reasonable, or sensible, in that they reflect in a logical fashion the impact of new information."¹⁹ A recent study of Italian public opinion reached a similar conclusion: "The commonly held idea that Italian public opinion is unpredictable and capricious in foreign policy is not supported by the available evidence. Public opinion in Italy does not change more abruptly or more frequently than in the United States, Germany, and France."²⁰ In a similar vein, the public in the United States seems capable of differentiating between uses of force by the United States for different kinds of purposes in a discriminating way. In general, public opinion responds more favorably to force when

it is used to resist aggression than when it is applied to impose internal political change on another state. Improvements in the public approval ratings of presidents “following military action to impose foreign policy restraint [that is, to resist aggression] are nearly 4 percent greater . . . than when internal political change is the principal objective.”²¹

In order to respond to foreign policy events and make a judgment, the public may rely on underlying **core values**, which are

core values The underlying beliefs that the public holds and uses to judge foreign policy.

underlying beliefs—such as isolationism, anticommunism, non-appeasement, neutrality, and anti-imperialism—that the public holds and uses to judge foreign policy. In Germany and Japan, for example, the public has come to value multilateralism and antimilitarism. In post Cold War Russia and in contemporary India, core values support the maintenance of a “great power” identity.²²

Core values provide a structure to the public’s attitudes on foreign policy and help make sense of information concerning events in global politics.²³

Does Public Opinion Influence Foreign Policy?

Since only a rather small proportion of the public knows or cares very much about most foreign policy issues, it would be logical to conclude that most people rarely do very much to let their opinions be known or attempt to persuade others to accept their point of view. That logical conclusion is supported by concrete evidence. In the United States, for example, the Vietnam War provoked an unusual amount of interest for a foreign policy issue. Yet a survey of a representative sample of Americans in 1967 found that although most people expressed a concern about the war, most had done nothing to reflect their concern. Only 13 percent reported that they had made any attempt at all to persuade others to change their views on the war. Only 3 percent had bothered to write letters to newspapers or political officials, and only 1 percent had taken part in marches or demonstrations.²⁴

Recent issues, however, may have sparked a renewed activism in global politics. Protesters have gathered in large numbers to voice their concerns about globalization in Seattle in 1999 and at subsequent meetings of the World Trade Organization. In 2003, world opinion across the globe was against a military intervention in Iraq, and millions of protesters gathered on February 15, particularly in Europe and the United States, to denounce U.S. policy toward Iraq. Despite the numbers, the protesters constituted a very small proportion of the public, and the intervention against Iraq proceeded even with the participation of some European countries in which a large majority opposed the war.²⁵

The next logical conclusion would be that public opinion does not have much impact on foreign policy. Logic and some evidence seem to support

each other in this regard, but the difficulty in assessing the impact of public opinion should be stressed. Elites that deal with foreign policy issues usually do not feel very constrained by public opinion. Some analysts go so far as to claim that “no major foreign policy decision in the United States has ever been made in response to spontaneous public demand.”²⁶ In many countries, even democratic ones, there are numerous cases in which crucial foreign policy decisions have been taken in the absence of mass public consensus. West Germany’s decision to rearm and join NATO in the early 1950s and French decisions to build an independent nuclear force in the 1950s and leave NATO’s military institutions in the mid-1960s were made by a small circle of elites without input by the public.²⁷

This claim might seem to contradict the experience of many readers who have noticed how closely politicians watch public opinion polls. Even U.S. presidents seem to have reacted to public opinion concerning foreign policy issues rather dramatically in recent times. President Johnson was apparently persuaded not to seek reelection in 1968 by public opposition to his Vietnam War policy. President Carter, faced with rapidly declining popularity as the 1980 election drew near, approved an attempt to rescue the U.S. hostages in Iran, which failed miserably. In 1993, in an apparent response to public concern about increasing immigration, President Clinton continued energetic steps to prevent Haitian refugees from escaping from their homeland into the United States, even though he had condemned his predecessor, George H. W. Bush, for adopting such a policy.²⁸

But one can get an exaggerated impression of the impact of public opinion on foreign policy by concentrating on such events. For example, President Franklin Roosevelt, in the years before World War II, was faced with overwhelmingly isolationist attitudes among the general public. Even so, he worked quietly behind the scenes to prepare the United States for war and never swayed from his conviction that the United States would have to resist actively the aggressive policies of Germany and Japan at some point. President Johnson made a concession to public opinion by campaigning as a dove in favor of peace in the election of 1964, but we now know that he planned to escalate the Vietnam War as soon as the election was over. Johnson might have decided not to run for reelection in 1968 because of public opinion against his war policy, but it is less clear that public opinion changed that policy: U.S. involvement in the war continued for five more years. President Carter knew that public opinion polls showed that turning over the Panama Canal to Panama was a tremendously unpopular idea. He negotiated the treaty anyway, apparently figuring that an educational campaign would persuade most of the public (and the U.S. Senate) to support its ratification. He was right. In France, “mass public opinion affects policy only if it reaches top decisionmakers, notably the president. It is often he who decides whether to respond to the public’s demands.”²⁹

Even if the government’s policy is in line with public opinion, it is difficult to know who influences whom. Diplomats and other foreign policy

officials are fond of saying that “public opinion demanded” a concession or a hardline stand with respect to a foreign policy issue. But does the public influence decisions, or do government officials manipulate public opinion to support their point of view and then announce decisions they had settled on in advance? Probably a majority of scholars believe that elites (people in leadership positions within political, economic, or military organizations) influence the public more than the public influences elites, especially with regard to foreign policy issues. This impression that decision makers tend to treat public opinion as a problem to be dealt with rather than as a guide to policy has been confirmed in recent research based on interviews with officials in the National Security Council and the U.S. State Department. The results of the interviews showed quite clearly that “when public opposition does emerge, the reaction of most officials is . . . not to change the policy in question, but to try to ‘educate’ the public, thereby bringing public opinion in line with the policy.”³⁰ Most scholars agree that the George W. Bush administration undertook such an effort to influence the public to support the war in Iraq. As the president and his advisers turned their attention toward Iraq after September 11 and the Afghanistan intervention, “the administration sought to lead the public using a combination of persuasion and priming—especially in relation to WMD [weapons of mass destruction]. . . . So successful were its efforts that before the war the majority of the public believed Iraq possessed WMD; after the war, roughly a third incorrectly believed that the USA had actually discovered WMD . . . [T]he administration chose a public relations strategy that appears to be a prime example of policy ‘oversell’ . . . : the exaggeration of threats in order to generate public support and overcome domestic opposition.”³¹

rally-round-the-flag effect An increase in a leader’s popularity following the use of force.

The public seems to be particularly vulnerable to follow elites on military issues, at least initially. One of the best-known relationships between public opinion and foreign policy in the United States involves the **rally-round-the-flag effect**, which increases the popularity of leaders whenever they elect to use force with respect to some foreign policy issue.³² The rally-round-the-flag effect is, however, “far from automatic. . . . One can easily identify international crises . . . in which no significant positive rally took place.”³³ One analysis of 102 cases in the United States when the public might have been expected to rally around the president reveals that in fact, the average change in the president’s approval rating after those cases was 0 percent.³⁴ Indeed, President George H. W. Bush could not translate the public’s approval of the war against Iraq in 1991 into a victory for him in the presidential election of 1992. And in the United Kingdom, in which only a minority supported their country’s participation in the Iraq war, a “rally effect” quickly turned that support into a majority at the onset of the war, but just as quickly melted away, only two months into the conflict.³⁵

Indeed, the support for leaders in times of conflict may be short-lived, particularly when there are high troop casualties. According to the

Tens of thousands of people marched across U.S. Cities in January 2007 to protest the continuing war in Iraq. This protest, in Los Angeles, was led by anti-war activists Cindy Sheehan and Ron Kovic. (Reed Saxon/AP Photo/AP Images)



body-bag syndrome

The negative relationship between high levels of troop casualties and public support for a war.

“body-bag syndrome,” “the public, at least in Western democratic countries, has lost the willingness and endurance to fight and carry the consequences. . . . Especially in the case of humanitarian crises, the public would first of all put pressure on their governments ‘to do something’ . . . but when the risks of military actions in the form of casualties become evident it would recoil at the prospect.”³⁶ The body-bag syndrome did seem to be operating in the U.S. public’s support for missions in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq. Indeed, “American public opinion became a key factor in all three wars, and in each one there has been a simple association: as casualties mount, support decreases . . . The only thing remarkable about the current war in Iraq is how precipitously American public support has dropped off. Casualty for casualty, support has declined far more quickly than it did during either the Korea or the Vietnam War.”³⁷ Despite these particular cases, systematic evidence of the body-bag syndrome has not been found.³⁸ Furthermore, a decline in public support that comes with an increase in casualties does not necessarily mean the casualties caused the decline. Instead, some argue the causality flows in the reverse direction: that as public support of the military mission in general declines, tolerance for casualties decline. If the public continues to see the value of the mission, this argument goes, public approval can sustain a large number of casualties.³⁹ Political scientist John Mueller has argued that the precipitous decline in support for the war in Iraq came when one of the main justifications for the war—the threat from weapons of mass destruction—was largely discredited.⁴⁰

The most important way that public opinion does influence foreign policy may be through the core values or underlying beliefs that the public holds and uses to judge foreign policy. While these general beliefs do not necessarily guide leaders to choose particular policies, they do set parameters beyond which leaders cannot stray or risk retaliation.⁴¹ Core values may be less vulnerable to elite manipulation as well. In Germany, for example, core values such as multilateralism and antimilitarism and other “collective attitudes and perceptions of average citizens may shape the elite discourse by ruling certain initiatives ‘in’ or ‘out’ of political bounds.”⁴² And core values in Britain that stress an “English identity” that is quite separate and stands above a “European identity” are arguably an important factor behind Britain’s reluctance to participate fully in the EU and particularly the common Euro currency.⁴³

And manipulation of public opinion by leaders may not be successful in all cases. In the war with Iraq, for example, despite the U.S. government’s success at influencing public beliefs regarding the threat of weapons of mass destruction and Iraqi-terrorist connections, public support for the war stayed at a fairly stable 60 percent level. If the administration led the public into war, it was partly “because after September 11, the public was inclined to support a war. This would appear to be consistent with previous research that suggests that the effect of elite leadership on foreign policy is more limited than commonly supposed.”⁴⁴

Should the Public Influence Foreign Policy?

“Open covenants openly arrived at with input from the populace” was one of President Woodrow Wilson’s principles, adopted in the belief that secret deals between professional diplomats and makers of foreign policy were a part of traditional international politics that led to disasters such as World War I. The developers of democratic theory, such as Thomas Jefferson, certainly believed that foreign policy was not a special area to be controlled by an elite. Wary of a monarchical style of government that dominated the power politics in Europe, the writers of the U.S. Constitution divided foreign policy powers between the legislative and executive branches, partly in hopes that this would make policy more representative of the people’s preferences.

The trouble with that idea, according to anti-Wilsonians and elite theorists, is that an ignorant public opinion creates more problems. The famous diplomat George F. Kennan wrote,

I sometimes wonder whether . . . a democracy is . . . similar to one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as this room and the brain the size of a pin: he lies there in his comfortable primeval mud and pays little attention to his environment: he is slow to wrath—in fact, you practically have to whack his tail off to make him aware that his interests are being disturbed;

but once he grasps this . . . he not only destroys his adversary but largely wrecks his native habitat.⁴⁵

The international debate over intervention in Iraq in the winter of 2003 once again focused attention on the role of public opinion—both world opinion and domestic opinion—in foreign policy choices. The overwhelming antiwar opinion around the globe, seen in numerous and sizable protests, led one writer in the *New York Times* to argue that “there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion. In his campaign to disarm Iraq, by war if necessary, President Bush appears to be eyeball to eyeball with a tenacious new adversary: millions of people who flooded the streets of New York and dozens of other world cities to say they are against war based on the evidence at hand.”⁴⁶ British Prime Minister Tony Blair faced even stronger public criticism at home for his choice to support U.S. plans for going to war against Iraq without a United Nations mandate. Despite the public’s opposition, both Blair and Bush proceeded to execute the invasion in March 2003, and both were subsequently reelected. In response to the protests, Bush replied that basing foreign policy on the size of demonstrations would be similar to basing policy on a focus group and that “the role of a leader is to decide policy based upon the security, in this case, the security of the people.”⁴⁷ The Policy Choices box summarizes some of the general arguments for and against public influence on foreign policy.

Differences in Political Systems

It is probably safe to say that in general, public opinion has a greater impact in democratic states than in autocracies. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that public opinion can be ignored entirely in autocratic, or nondemocratic, states. Public opinion on the war in Afghanistan, for example, apparently affected Soviet foreign policy with respect to that war (and may ultimately have played a role in bringing down the whole regime). Nevertheless, many propositions about the effects of public opinion on foreign policy concern differences in political systems and what these differences imply for how foreign policy is made. In particular, the proposition that democracies are more peaceful than authoritarian political systems has been the focus of much thought and study.

Are Democracies More Peaceful?

The proposition that democracies should be less war prone than nondemocracies is part of the liberal perspective. According to liberal thought, in democracies, where opposition is legal and allowed and citizens can hold their leaders accountable for their actions through competitive elections, the multiple channels across societies are more likely to constrain leaders from conflict. Furthermore, based on the values of political tolerance, democracies supposedly reinforce preferences for nonviolent resolution of conflict.



ISSUE: Leaders often face political opposition, at home or abroad, among the public when making foreign policy. They have a choice as to whether they listen to that opposition, and even change directions in foreign policy, or remain true to their own preferences and perhaps the advice they are receiving from other government officials.

Option #1: Foreign policy should reflect public opinion.

Arguments: (a) Leaders should be held accountable for their actions. Because foreign policy is taken in the name of the state and directly affects the lives and well-being of the people who live in it, it should reflect the interests and the will of the people, not just the leaders. (b) Successful military operations and political objectives depend on public support; without it, the morale of the military is compromised, and the public will not sustain a long and costly policy. Thus, leaders who ignore public opposition are dooming a policy to failure. (c) Global politics today is about soft power and winning hearts and minds. Maintaining favorable world opinion is in a leader's long-term interests. If a state is viewed by the world as acting unilaterally or aggressively, others are less likely to cooperate with it, and there may be more resistance in the form of political opposition or even terrorism against it and its objectives.

Counterarguments: (a) People elect officials for their skills, leadership, and values and should trust their officials to carry out their mandates in specific cases without interference. (b) The public is fickle and does not have the "stomach" for policies that may be costly and lengthy, although useful and in the national interest. (c) Global politics remains anarchic, and states must look out for their own interests, even if that means "going it alone" and in opposition to world opinion.

Option #2: Foreign policy should be made by leaders.

Arguments: (a) Most citizens seem to know little about particular foreign policy issues. Listening to the "ignorant masses" would lead leaders into poor choices. (b) Public opinion only complicates international negotiations. Diplomats are unable to exercise their talents for compromise if the public is a participant in the negotiating process. When the public looks on, diplomats are subject to political pressures that require them to take extreme positions from which it becomes virtually impossible to retreat as negotiations continue. If the uninformed and moody public is kept out of the process, the wisdom and talents of professional diplomats can be given full play, and the result will be a better foreign policy and decreased probability of violent conflict. (c) Open processes that allow public input compromise the secrecy that is often necessary for the successful execution of policies. Letting the public in on what is happening means letting potential adversaries know as well, which can compromise strategy and credibility.

Counterarguments: (a) While citizens may know little about the specifics of a policy, they do hold fairly strong and stable core values, such as protection of human rights and a commitment to multilateralism, that should serve as a guide to leaders in making foreign policy choices. (b) Experts who have had a largely free hand in making foreign policy as long as the modern state system has been in existence have made their share of mistakes. Public input holds negotiations and agreements to reflect the national interest, not just the narrow interests of the leader or those groups that are closest to the leadership. (c) Secrecy often pits policy effectiveness against democratic principles. A democracy can be effective only if individuals have knowledge regarding their government's actions. Moreover, often such secrecy arguments have later turned out to have been camouflage for politicians as much as for the protection of the good of the people.

The idea that democratic republics are peace loving has, in fact, a very long history, going back at least to the philosopher Immanuel Kant in 1795. The proposition that democracies are more peaceful has significant implications for global politics. Democratic states were among the most important and powerful nations in the world in the twentieth century, and the number of democratic states in the world has grown significantly in recent years.

The consensus from scholarly research on the question of whether democratic states are less likely than autocratic states to become involved in international wars is that this is not the case: Democracies are not more peaceful than nondemocracies.⁴⁸ “Democratic constraints, for example, did not prevent British involvement in the Falklands War, French military interventions in Africa, India’s conflicts with China and Pakistan, and Israel’s participation in numerous Middle East conflicts.”⁴⁹ The United States, one of the world’s long-standing democracies, was involved in many military conflicts during the Cold War. This may be due to the lack of influence by the public, as discussed previously. Table 5.1

TABLE 5.1**Democratic Participation in Interstate Wars,* 1946–2000**

Conflict	Democratic Belligerent(s)
Palestine (1948–49)	Israel
Kashmir (1948–49)	India
Korea (1950–53)	Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Netherlands, U.K., U.S.
Sinai (1956)	France, Israel, U.K.
Sino-Indian Border (1962)	India
Kashmir (1965)	India
Vietnam (1965–73)	Australia, U.S.
Six-Day War (1967)	Israel
Israel-Egypt Conflict (1969–70)	Israel
Bangladesh (1971)	India
Yom Kippur (1973)	Israel
Falklands (1982)	U.K.
Israel-Syrian Conflict (1982)	Israel
Gulf War (1991)	Canada, France, Italy, U.K., U.S.
Kargil (1999)	India
Kosovo (1999)	France, Italy, U.S., U.K.

*Note: Interstate wars are defined as those having at least 1,000 combat deaths. This excludes other “minor” interventions by democracies such as U.S. actions in Grenada and Panama in the 1980s.

Source: Adapted from David Leblang and Steve Chan, “Explaining Wars Fought by Established Democracies: Do Institutional Constraints Matter?” *Political Research Quarterly* 56(4) (December 2003): 385–400, p. 392; four Indian conflicts added by authors.

shows the significance of democracies' involvement in major wars from 1946 to 2000. Recent participation by democratic states in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon further questions the notion that democracies are inherently peaceful.

Moreover, it may be that there is something about democracies that pushes them toward conflict. U.S. presidents, for example, are more likely to be assertive or forceful in their foreign policies in the wake of a loss of support from their own political party.⁵⁰ And there is evidence that states that are in the process of democratization may be more conflict prone than either democracies or authoritarian governments.⁵¹ Yet democracies are not as likely to enter wars just prior to an election, compared to earlier in their election cycle, which may mean that leaders are constrained at times by the electoral process from going to war.⁵² Most scholars now agree that democracies are in general just as war prone, or conflict prone, as other states, although they tend not to go to war against each other (as will be discussed in Chapter 6).⁵³

How Do Differences in Political Institutions Affect Foreign Policy?

Although democratic institutions do not necessarily constrain states from going to war, differences in political systems and their institutions do affect foreign policy. Some of the starkest differences can be seen within the family of democracies. The United States, France, Japan, and Germany, for example, differ in terms of the degree to which political institutions are centralized and the degree to which the state dominates public opinion.⁵⁴ The United States appears to have the least centralized political institutions; the impact of public opinion there is correspondingly more important. In France, the highly centralized domestic political structure seems to have the greatest dampening impact on the influence of public opinion on foreign policies. In Germany and Japan, the influence of public opinion on foreign policies falls somewhere in between the extremes of the United States and France and is more mediated by political parties.⁵⁵

Part of the differences in these institutions stem from how leaders are elected. In the United States, a presidential system of democracy, both the president and members of Congress are elected by the people and are thus, in theory at least, accountable to the public. Within the executive branch, however, presidents are constitutionally supreme (as President Truman said, "The buck stops here"), and because presidents enjoy a separate electoral mandate from the people, they do not necessarily have to listen to others in their political party or in the legislature. In parliamentary systems, the people do not vote for the leader, the prime minister; rather, they vote for a party or party representatives to the legislature. The leader of the party with the most seats in parliament usually then becomes the

prime minister and in many countries holds no special constitutional authority above other cabinet members. Thus, leaders of parliamentary democracies are not directly accountable to the public, but they do share power with the rest of the cabinet and are accountable to their party, which can replace them even without a national election. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, for example, was not voted out of office by the British public in 1990, but she was replaced (by John Major) when she did not get enough votes from her own political party, partly because of her party's disapproval of her policy toward the European Community. Most of the time, however, prime ministers whose party controls a majority of seats in the legislature do not worry about opposition from parliament since party members tend to vote strictly along party lines and thus all legislation is almost guaranteed approval.

Contrast this to the U.S. presidential system, in which legislators often vote against presidents even if they are from the same party. The division of powers between the legislative and executive branches means that Congress can be quite an influential player in foreign policy. With the requirement that the U.S. Senate must ratify all foreign treaties by a two-thirds majority, Congress has the potential to severely constrain U.S. participation in international agreements. Indeed, the failure of the U.S. Senate to ratify U.S. membership in the League of Nations is seen as a key development on the road to World War II. More recently, the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (to be discussed in Chapter 8) over the president's objections. Congress does not always exercise its power, however. In security policy particularly, Congress often defers to presidential wishes. Congress is more likely to exert influence over trade, aid, and other budget-related issues, which are often seen as more relevant to congressional district interests. Indeed, "when it comes to trade policy, no other legislative body has as much influence and authority relative to the executive branch as does the U.S. Congress."⁵⁶ But even in trade policy, Congress has acceded power to the executive branch. For example, by giving the president **fast-track authority** on key trade legislation,

fast-track authority

An important power that can be used by the U.S. president to speed up the process and decrease Congressional influence on key trade legislation.

Congress gives itself sixty days, from the time a trade agreement is presented to it, to vote the measure cleanly up or down; no amendments are permitted under fast track. . . . Fast track's achievement was to make clear Congress's determination to overcome the morass of conflicting parochial interests and vote directly and expeditiously on major trade matters.⁵⁷

Without fast-track authority in 1993, NAFTA would not have been ratified in anything like the form that it was negotiated by U.S. Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

ratification The final step necessary for a state to approve international agreements.

While most other countries do not face **ratification** constraints as significant as those in the U.S. political system, some other democratic systems must go directly to the public to ratify foreign treaties. In these

direct referenda, the public votes to accept or reject a proposed foreign policy. In 1992, for example, the French public and the Danish public voted on the controversial Maastricht Treaty (to be discussed in Chapter 12), which included plans for a common currency for the EU. The French public followed the lead of their president and passed the treaty, but the Danish rejected it. Similarly, in 1994, the people of Sweden, Austria, Finland, and Norway voted on whether to join the EU. The Swedes and the Austrians voted yes, and the Norwegians voted no (as they had previously in 1972), and Norway remains one of the only Western European countries outside the EU. Thus, in political systems with institutions that require or allow for a referendum on a foreign policy, leaders must face the public directly for approval of their foreign policy initiatives.

Parliamentary systems also differ according to how majoritarian or proportional they are. In majoritarian systems, two parties dominate the political system, and one party usually can gain a majority on its own in the parliament, thus controlling the entire cabinet. In Great Britain, for example, either the Conservative Party or the Labour Party dominates the parliament and the cabinet, depending on the election results. In contrast, in systems with electoral laws that favor more proportional representation, many parties are represented in parliament, and no single party controls a majority of the seats. The result is the formation of a coalition cabinet in which the various ministries (such as prime minister, defense minister, and foreign minister) are divided among two or more parties. Cabinets in Germany, Israel, and the Netherlands, for example, have more than one party, and if the parties disagree over a foreign policy decision, they must negotiate their differences. At times, multiparty cabinets fail to overcome their internal differences and are unable to respond to international decisions. At other times, small “junior” parties can have a significant influence on the direction of a country’s foreign policy.⁵⁸

The main effect of political institutions on foreign policy, then, concerns what type of potential constraint a leader faces. In presidential systems, the constraint primarily comes from the public or an opposing legislature. In majoritarian parliamentary systems, constraints are most likely to be felt within the leaders’ own party. In proportional parliamentary systems, the prime ministers face potential opposition within their own party and within the cabinet from other political parties. To be sure, leaders can sometimes ignore these various pressures. Sometimes they are held accountable for this and sometimes they are not, but the effect of political institutions is to filter pressure from the public and other organized groups that may oppose the leader’s policies.

This difference in the locus of constraint also occurs in nondemocracies. In these states,

there are often decisionmaking and political constraints, and these are as pervasive as those found in the more established political systems of the advanced industrial [democratic] states. Not only must the . . . leader pay close attention to domestic

political opposition . . . , but in many regions there may be a considerable diffusion of power across intensely competitive actors in a highly fragmented setting. Indeed . . . political constraints occur as frequently . . . as they do in modern polities. And if there is anything distinctive about Third World politics, it is the intensity and fluidity of those pressures compared to those of more established political systems.⁵⁹

Indeed, because these states often have authoritarian systems, the leaders lack the legitimacy to rule and often need to take into account opinions of the military (as discussed in the next section), other societal groups, and rival leaders within their own party. The leadership may even be a collective group, such as the Communist Party Politburo was at times during the former Soviet Union, with no single individual who dominates foreign policymaking.

Finally, it is often assumed that since they are not elected, leaders in nondemocracies are not constrained by public opinion. Yet authoritarian leaders, particularly ones with a weak hold on their power, must also take into account societal opinion or risk retribution. "Although citizens in authoritarian systems cannot vote their leaders out of office, they do have other means of holding leaders accountable, including forming or pledging allegiance to nongovernmental groups who oppose the authoritarian leader, backing a coup and change of government, assassinating a leader, and starting a revolution. Indeed, simply being voted out of office may pale in comparison."⁶⁰ Thus, as in democracies, institutional differences in authoritarian systems—how centralized they are, how much support and legitimacy is behind them, and appointment and accountability patterns—will affect the way that public opinion and domestic opposition in general impact foreign policy.

Interest Groups and Domestic Opposition

Perhaps more important than the influence of public opinion in general is that wielded everywhere by interest groups, in particular as they exert a concentrated effort to have an impact on foreign policy. Interest groups, also known as pressure groups and lobbies, are organized parts of a society that articulate a particular sector's interests and mobilize to pressure and persuade the government. Are their efforts successful? What are generally the most powerful interest groups in a society? How can one tell?

Do Interest Groups Influence Foreign Policy in Democracies?

Certainly there are interest groups in every society that attempt to influence foreign policy, and many of their efforts are visible. Interest groups pay for advertisements in the media, support their lobbying personnel,

and contribute to the campaigns of friendly politicians. Other activities of interest groups are less visible. In U.S. politics, lobbyists talk to members of Congress at private lunches, secretly threaten to withdraw financial support from uncooperative senators, offer financial support for subversive CIA activities against unfriendly foreign governments, and so on. The impact they have is difficult to determine.⁶¹ But it is almost as difficult to determine the effectiveness of the more open and visible activities of interest groups. If *influence* means the ability to affect behavior, how does one tell if an interest group is influential? The fact that a group favors a policy that is later adopted is insufficient evidence of the impact of its efforts. The policy might have been adopted anyway. Or the political decision makers may have persuaded the lobbying groups to favor the adopted policy, not vice-versa. Finally, some powerful third group, like the media, may have influenced both the lobbying group in question and the political decision makers to favor a given policy. Influence is difficult to trace.

Nevertheless, a variety of interest groups seek to influence foreign policy in a democracy, such as the United States. These groups include religious organizations, which often seek to influence U.S. foreign policy regarding other states' human rights; foreign lobbies, such as the Japan lobby, that represent another country's views and seek to influence foreign policy regarding that country; and single-issue groups such as nuclear freeze groups or proenvironmental groups that seek to influence policy on a particular issue. There are also many ethnic-based interests groups in the United States, such as the Greek lobby, Transafrica, the Cuban lobby, and the American Israel Political Action Committee (arguably the most successful ethnic interest group). These groups represent U.S. citizens who have ethnic ties with other countries or parts of the world and seek to influence foreign policy toward those countries or regions. It is clear that all types of interest groups are very active and spend many resources trying to influence foreign policy. But it is difficult to detect when they are successful. If, for example, American foreign policy toward Israel is consistent with the American Israel Political Action Committee's position, we do not always know if this is *because* of the interest group's pressure on the government or because U.S. leaders see the policy in the interest of U.S. security or other interests in the region.

Another type of interest group is economic in nature, such as businesses, labor unions, and agricultural groups. These interest groups can have great influence on foreign policy "because they help to generate wealth, and economic welfare has become one of the primary functions of the modern state. Economic groups often have an interest in foreign relations as they seek to promote their foreign business adventures abroad or to protect markets from competitors at home."⁶² While these interest groups are certainly influential at times, it is perhaps surprising how often they lose. In the United States, such losses can be attributed partly to the fact that "Congress [gave] up the authority to set individual tariff rates in 1934 when it delegated to the executive the authority to negotiate

reciprocal tariff reduction."⁶³ And historically, the U.S. president is the prime advocate of free trade in the U.S. political process. The group with the greatest interest in opposing increased trade protection consists of all consumers.⁶⁴ So in effect, the president represents that group and discourages Congress from engaging in rampant logrolling, in which each member of Congress would trade his or her vote in support of a tariff protecting industries in other congressional districts in return for votes from other members of Congress in favor of interests in his or her district.

Reflecting the growing complexity of global politics, many debates over foreign policies involve several types of interest groups, sometimes working at cross-purposes and sometimes forming coalitions. In the debate within the United States over NAFTA, for example, many "powerful interest groups lobbied hard . . . to make ratification of NAFTA extremely unlikely. The AFL-CIO argued that free trade with Mexico would come at the price of lost American jobs; environmental groups such as Friends of the Earth argued that Mexico's lax pollution standards would generate pressure to relax U.S. air quality standards in order to keep manufacturers from relocating to Mexico. Both groups made defeat of . . . [NAFTA] a top lobbying priority for 1991."⁶⁵ On the other side of the issue, "business supporters formed an umbrella organization called the Coalition for Trade Expansion that included more than 500 corporations and lobbyists. Five key business trade associations were represented in this coalition: the Business Roundtable, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Emergency Committee for American Trade, National Association of Manufacturers, and National Foreign Trade Council."⁶⁶ In the end, the economic agreement, negotiated and supported by two successive presidential administrations, was ratified by Congress (under the fast-track procedure discussed previously).

Even in a comparatively open political system like that of the United States, economic and other interest groups often have a difficult time influencing foreign policy if the leaders are opposed to the interest group's position. In other democracies, such as Great Britain and Germany, interest groups have similar difficulties since most foreign policy is made in the cabinet, which is much less accessible than is the parliament.

Does the Military-Industrial Complex Influence Defense Policy?

One pressure group in a position to exert a significant influence on foreign policy in many countries is the group involved in producing and using a nation's military hardware. The **military-industrial complex** achieved particular notoriety in the United States during the Vietnam War, although the term itself was introduced into the U.S. political lexicon several years earlier by President Eisenhower. The idea that munitions makers successfully plot to bring about large wars so that they can make a huge profit selling arms to the war makers goes back much further in the United States and elsewhere. In 1934, some sixteen years after the

military-industrial complex Network of defense contractors, the military, and government agencies that may work together to promote military spending and other policies from which they benefit.

First World War ended, there was a flurry of interest in the United States in the substantial profits made by weapons manufacturers and banks through sales to the Allies in that war. For months, a Senate committee, headed by Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, held widely publicized hearings marked by revelations of spectacular profits, and many Americans were convinced by the revelations that they had been maneuvered into the war for the sake of corporate profits.

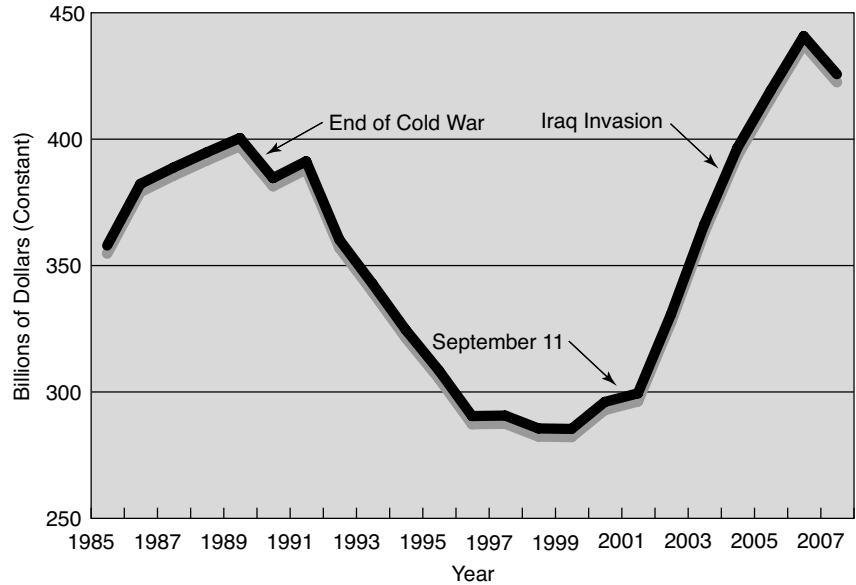
The accusations made against the U.S. military-industrial complex during the Vietnam War were not restricted to assertions that it had plotted to bring about the war. Rather, the organization and structure of the U.S. military and its relationship to industries that supply weapons were probed for inherent biases in favor of larger defense budgets. Purchases by the military, for example, are often arranged by generals and retired generals working for weapons manufacturers. Such arrangements are especially cozy from the viewpoint of the military-industrial complex, because the cost of any deals that are made, as well as cost overruns that may occur if the weapons turn out to be more expensive than originally estimated, are passed on to U.S. taxpayers. Taxpayers are unlikely to complain, though, because many of them benefit from a large defense budget, as when large defense contracts are awarded to industries in their districts or when military bases are established near their places of business. Members of Congress in districts blessed with such defense budget largesse are naturally reluctant to trim the budget. In addition, universities that receive large research contracts out of the budget are another part of the complex that pushes for increasingly large defense budgets.⁶⁷

But to say that military-industrial interests play an important role in foreign policy formation is different from saying that they dominate the process.⁶⁸ By 1979, the defense budget in the United States was ten times larger than it had been in 1949; but welfare spending in 1979 was twenty-five times that for the year 1949.⁶⁹ A significantly larger portion of the budget was spent on social programs even after the Reagan administration made a determined effort to increase the proportion assigned to the Defense Department. And although Reagan's efforts to increase defense budgets were successful, on average the Pentagon's share of the budget was lower as a percentage of the GNP during his years in office than it was during the Kennedy and Johnson years or during the Nixon and Ford years.⁷⁰

The end of the Cold War provided an interesting challenge to the military-industrial complex in the United States, as well as an intriguing opportunity to evaluate its strength and influence. The demise of the Soviet Union denied the U.S. military-industrial complex its primary rationale for large defense budgets. The strongest version of the theory stressing the impact of the military-industrial complex would suggest that the Soviet Union's disappearance should make no substantial difference in the ability of those interests to generate continuing large increases in defense budgets. But the data on defense budgets shown in Figure 5.1 provide a mixed picture. Initially at least, the end of the Cold War (roughly

Figure 5.1 U.S. Defense Budget, 1985–2007

Source: *Historical Tables: Budget of the United States Government* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Management and Budget, 2006). Figures do not include supplementary defense appropriations which, for expenses related to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, have been substantial, totaling more than \$230 billion from 2003 to 2005. Figures for 2006 and 2007 are estimates.



peace dividend A freeing up of government revenue to be spent on other programs or returned to taxpayers rather than spending it on the military.

around 1989) appears to have had a definite impact on military expenditures in the United States (this is true whether we focus on American defense budgets in terms of constant dollars as in Figure 5.1 or as a proportion of the federal budget). This decline in defense spending produced a temporary **peace dividend**—a freeing up of money to be spent on other government programs or returned to taxpayers—and is consistent with a systematic analysis of military spending in the United States during the Cold War, which reported that “the greatest influence on change in U.S. military spending was change in Soviet military spending.”⁷¹ Yet after almost a decade of declining defense budgets, U.S. defense spending increased, even before the attacks of September 11, 2001. Whether this was in response to new threats, such as nuclear proliferation and failing states, that warrant defense comparable to defense required for facing the Soviet Union, or whether this is a sign that the military-industrial complex has been able to influence military spending for its own advantage is unclear. It is certainly true that even quite liberal members of the U.S. Congress, who were traditionally more skeptical of defense expenditures during the Cold War, objected to the shutting down of military bases in *their* districts. In addition, debates over military base closings have revealed that many in Congress are interested in preserving defense expenditures to preserve jobs, even if the expenditures are not necessary for national security.

The record high levels of U.S. defense spending since the attacks of September 11, 2001, are certainly related to the “global war on terror” and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. While these security threats seem to be the primary rationale behind defense budgets, the purchase of some

high-cost items have been linked to the influence of defense contractors.⁷² Particularly controversial has been the awarding of defense contracts by the military in Iraq to certain firms. "Halliburton, a construction and oil company once led by Vice President Dick Cheney, for example, received roughly six billion dollars in new contracts, most of which were provided on a noncompetitive basis. . . . [In addition] Halliburton admitted numerous overcharges in connection with its reconstruction work in Iraq. This has prompted criticism about the dysfunctional relationships between the DoD [Department of Defense] and contractors."⁷³

What Is the Role of Military and Political Opposition Groups in Nondemocracies?

Authoritarian systems, particularly those in larger countries that play the role of regional powers, also have military-industrial establishments that exert influence on the foreign policies of their respective countries. The military in Russia has been humiliated by many developments in recent years, including its inability to quell the rebellion in Chechnya. There is some danger that elements in the military, and their supporters, will produce a leader in the coming years bent on restoring the glory of Russia's Cold War years (not to mention some of the budget it shared with the industrial establishment). The military in China also seems intent on increasing its strength and, consequently, Chinese influence in the world. In developing countries, the military-industrial complex loses most of its industrial flavor because these nations are less industrialized and because their armies, navies, and air forces are not supplied by domestic firms. Rather, they get most of their weapons and equipment from one or more of the major powers (Brazil, though, and recently South Africa are two of the world's more important exporters of military weaponry). This dependency on imports weakens the symbiotic ties between the military and industrial elements in most developing countries.

It obviously does not, however, weaken the influence of the military on the foreign policies of less developed or newly industrializing countries. States that fit into these categories differ greatly, and making generalizations about them is dangerous. But the prevalence of military influence and military governments in much of the developing world, at least until the recent global wave of democratization, has been clear. Even in the newly democratic governments in some developing countries, the military has often seemed to be in charge, exerting a controlling influence behind the government (in Guatemala and the Philippines, for example). And the military actively has resisted or subverted democratizing impulses in places like Peru and Nigeria. The military establishments of a great number of developing countries have a crucial impact not only on foreign policy but on all policy.

Developing countries are often vulnerable to military and political opposition groups because of the weak domestic structures that are

characteristic of many of these states, as discussed earlier. The divisions that typically exist, such as economic class divisions and ethnic divisions, are the bases for political opposition to the government and, often, its foreign policy.

What Effects Does Political Opposition Have on Foreign Policy?

Authoritarian governments are often able to resist the influence attempts by political opposition groups, just as democratic governments are often able to resist interest groups. Even if these groups do not influence a particular policy, however, political opposition can still potentially affect foreign policy.

For example, one hypothesis that has a long history among theorists of international relations points to a possible relationship between the amount of internal unrest in a country and the amount of foreign conflict in which it becomes involved. The idea is that societies with a lot of internal opposition, such as riots, strikes, and coups, are those in which the tenure of the ruling elite is likely to be insecure. Leaders in democratic systems facing falling approval ratings are in a similar situation. This insecurity may tempt the elite to distract the attention of restless and dissatisfied citizens by initiating quarrels, perhaps even wars, with other countries. The elite hopes this ploy will take the minds of the people off their domestic grievances and focus their antagonism against foreign enemies. It is also a way to build internal cohesion and national legitimacy for the leader. This is often referred to as the **diversionary theory** of war because leaders attempt to divert the attention away from internal conflict by initiating foreign conflict. It is also called the “scapegoat hypothesis” because leaders may be seeking to find an external actor to blame for their problems at home. Recently, this idea has been termed the “wag-the-dog effect,” after the title of a Hollywood film in which the U.S. president created a fictitious war to divert attention away from a sex scandal.

diversionary theory

The idea that political leaders attempt to divert attention away from internal conflict by initiating foreign conflict. Also referred to as the scapegoat hypothesis and the wag-the-dog effect.

A real-world example comes from the Persian Gulf War and Saddam Hussein’s reasons for invading Kuwait in 1990. There are indications that this decision was a product of economic desperation. Iraq’s long war with Iran had left it \$70 billion in debt,⁷⁴ with a half-million Iraqi soldiers dead in a war that had lasted from 1980 to 1988.⁷⁵ In retrospect, some analysts are convinced that “the invasion [was] a desperate attempt to shore up [Hussein’s] regime in the face of the dire economic straits created by the Iran-Iraq war.”⁷⁶

Researchers who have looked for a general relationship between domestic problems and the use of force have failed to provide convincing evidence for the diversionary theory.⁷⁷ It seems that the use of force as a diversionary tactic depends on the type of political system, the strength of the potential target, the nature of the domestic unrest, and the popularity of the regime among core supporters.⁷⁸

Additional evidence suggests that democracies too might try to divert public attention away from internal weakness. Researchers have found that democracies are likely to use force abroad during election years, especially those that occur at times of economic stagnation.⁷⁹ Other evidence indicates that U.S. presidents are aware of the rally-round-the-flag effect (the increase in the president's popularity whenever he elects to use force) and initiate forceful policies in order to reap domestic political benefits. U.S. presidents may be particularly likely to use force in response to foreign policy crises if, for example, the economy or their own popularity is declining.⁸⁰

In general, political opposition—in the form of public opinion or organized interests—means that foreign policy may be shaped by factors internal to states as well as external constraints. Indeed, leaders who negotiate international agreements must often simultaneously bargain with opposition back home and with other leaders from other countries or international organizations. This dual pressure on leaders, known as **two-level games**, can mean that foreign policy is forged only when it meets the concerns of both the domestic and the international audiences.⁸¹ In the negotiations over NAFTA, for example, Presidents George H. W. Bush and then Clinton had to consider demands from their international counterparts from Canada and Mexico, as well as demands from the myriad domestic interests that supported and opposed the treaty. “Would the North American Free Trade Agreement have been possible without the successful manipulation of the two-level bargaining game by Bush and Clinton? Probably not. Had the Level I [international] negotiators failed to look over their shoulders and consider how commitments made in the trade talks would be received at Level II, it is unlikely they could have fashioned an agreement with enough domestic support for ratification. . . . It is not an overstatement to say, therefore, that when states engage in negotiations, the hardest bargaining is not between states, but within them.”⁸²

two-level games Dual pressure on leaders whereby international agreements can be forged only when they meet the concerns of both domestic and international audiences.

Foreign Policy Bureaucracies

Another important domestic source of foreign policy is how the foreign affairs bureaucracy makes decisions. Almost every modern state has a large bureaucracy in charge of providing intelligence (gathering and interpreting information), developing proposals, offering advice, implementing policy, and, at times, making foreign policy. Individual leaders cannot possibly consider every alternative solution to a problem. There is an infinite number of such alternative solutions, and searching for information about them is costly. Also, estimating the probability of success and the costs of implementing each alternative solution of which the executive and the organization are already aware is an impossible task. Because of the complexities in dealing with the many issues of international politics, governments organize themselves bureaucratically.

This means that separate agencies or departments are typically assigned different areas or jurisdictions of policy for which they are responsible. Separate agencies, for example, are responsible for diplomatic relations with different countries, for trade ties, and for different parts of the military. Within these agencies, there is a hierarchical division of labor, with superiors at the top, close to the leaders; at the bottom are the lower-level bureaucrats, who typically gather information and oversee the day-to-day operations of implementing policy.

Although such jurisdictional and hierarchical organization is a necessary part of dealing with a complex world, it can create problems for foreign policy.⁸³ The different departments, for example, may come into conflict over interpretations of intelligence and what foreign policy should be adopted. Departments tend to develop their own sense of identity, or organizational mission. This stems from their **organizational role**—their job, after all, is to safeguard certain parts of the state's foreign policy—and from the different types of information and experiences that bureaucrats in separate agencies may have.

organizational role

The mission of each bureaucratic agency, which may influence how it views the world and the foreign policies it prefers.

An example of how organizational roles affect the policy-making process comes from the Soviet bureaucracy's response to events in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Czechoslovakia, under the leadership of Alexander Dubček, began reforming the Communist Party in 1968. Within the Soviet Union, there was considerable disagreement over what should be done, and the various departments' positions were consistent with their organization roles. For example, those responsible for domestic affairs worried about the effects on the power of reformists within the Soviet Union. Those in charge of ideological supervision feared the contamination of reform into the intellectual and scientific communities. The Soviet internal police and the Warsaw Pact military command saw reforms in Czechoslovakia as a threat to internal order. Agencies responsible for foreign affairs had a different reading. Those interested in improving relations with the West, especially those pursuing détente with the United States, or with other socialist states, worried about the negative effects of intervention. In the end, the agencies that saw a threat were able to build support for intervention, and the Soviet Union crushed the reform effort with an invasion in August 1968. But for a considerable amount of time, the disagreement within the Soviet Union (clearly not a unitary actor at this point) stemmed from bureaucratic jurisdictional roles.⁸⁴

The conflict in viewpoints may create inconsistent foreign policy if departments are acting on their own and are not coordinating policy. Lack of coordination across agencies was an important part of the failure of the U.S. government to anticipate the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. "It has been well documented that there was a lack of cooperation when it came to sharing intelligence prior to 9/11. The Joint Inquiry and the 9/11 Commission reports demonstrate that the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], and NSA [National Security Agency] hoarded intelligence and failed to share information or work collaboratively."⁸⁵

Another example of decentralized, bureaucratic policymaking comes from U.S. antiproliferation policy in the early 1990s. Concerned that the disintegration of the Soviet Union could mean the spread of nuclear technology and nuclear material, the U.S. Congress passed the Nunn-Lugar Soviet Nuclear Threat Reduction Act in 1991, which provided \$400 million to be used to ensure the safety and security of former Soviet weapons, to dismantle those weapons, and to prevent proliferation.

In a classic example of Washington bureaucratic politics, no senior official in the [George H. W.] Bush administration actively supported Nunn-Lugar, but every agency wanted to be in charge of it. While the bill specified that the Department of Defense [DOD] was to be the executive agent for the program, in a move that spelled disaster for rapid action, DOD ceded control to an inter-agency arms control policy working group with participants from the State Department, the Department of Energy, the National Security Council Staff, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the intelligence community. Within the State Department, at least three different offices vied for leadership responsibility for the program.⁸⁶

With so many agencies involved, each having somewhat different views, the anti-proliferation efforts were incoherent at best.

Bureaucratic conflict may also result in compromises that are not necessarily in the best interests of a state's foreign policy. In other words, bureaucratic agencies that meet to resolve their differences may engage in give and take, and in the end, the compromise is in the middle, reflecting the wishes of no one. Such a compromise is termed a **resultant**. In the proliferation example, "the bureaucracy developed a laundry list" of issues to discuss with Moscow, with each agency simply adding on its concerns, without any overarching sense of purpose or coordination.⁸⁷

In the lead-up to the Iraq war, policy officials were divided over how large a force was needed. In the end, "a compromise was worked out. The invasion would be heavier than [Defense Secretary Donald] Rumsfeld wanted but not as heavy as [Secretary of State Colin] Powell thought was necessary."⁸⁸

The hierarchical organization within agencies can create problems as well. Faced with severe limitations in information, time, and resources, bureaucracies display a tendency to rely on **standard operating procedures** (SOPs) developed in the past or on a repertoire of prearranged responses or standard routines. SOPs simplify the crucial problem of coordinating the different parts of the bureaucracy. If it becomes obvious that the SOPs are not appropriate to solving the problem at hand, bureaucracies do not usually search for all possible alternatives. If a situation is novel, lower-level bureaucrats may stick to inappropriate SOPs if new procedures have not been developed by their superiors. If bureaucrats do generate new policies to address new problems, they tend to give the most serious consideration to alternatives involving only incremental changes in SOPs.⁸⁹

resultant Compromises caused by bureaucratic conflict that are not necessarily in the best interests of a state's foreign policy.

standard operating procedures Prearranged responses or routines used frequently by bureaucracies.

SOPs in Action: The Cuban Missile Crisis and Responses to the September 11 Attacks

SOPs played an important role in the development of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. The Soviets sent the missiles to Cuba in utmost secrecy, using various deception devices to mislead any observer. Yet when the missiles arrived in Cuba, no attempt was made to camouflage the sites; even more incredible, the surface-to-air missile (SAM), medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM), and intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) sites constructed in Cuba were built to look exactly like the SAM, MRBM, and IRBM sites in the Soviet Union.⁹⁰ Also, the Soviet military personnel arrived in Cuba wearing slacks and sport shirts to hide their identity, but they left the Cuban docks formed in ranks of four and piled into truck convoys. Furthermore, they decorated their barracks with standard military insignia. All of these indications, but especially the construction of the missile sites in Soviet style, made it rather easy for the United States, by way of overhead spy flights, to figure out what was happening.

What accounts for this seemingly irrational behavior? Why the great secrecy and deception, on the one hand, and the blatant lack of secrecy, on the other? The most plausible answer involves the bureaucratic

Shown here is one of the sites where Soviets placed nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962. Because the missile sites were constructed according to the same standard operating procedures used to erect sites within the Soviet Union, the U.S. government soon realized that Soviet missiles had been delivered to Cuba. (Courtesy John F. Kennedy, Presidential Library and Museum, Boston)



tendency to adhere to SOPs. The delivery of the missiles to Cuba and their movement from the docks to the sites were the responsibilities of the GRU (Soviet military intelligence) and the KGB (the Communist Party intelligence organization). Security is their SOP, so the missiles were hidden successfully until they reached their sites. What happened then is one of the many questions analyzed at two conferences on the Cuban missile crisis that brought together many of those who participated in the decision-making processes during the crisis in both the U.S. and the Soviet governments. According to the organizers of these conferences, "It appears that the reason the Soviets failed to camouflage the missiles is that the Soviet standard operating procedures for constructing nuclear missile sites did not include the use of camouflage. All previous installations had been on Soviet territory; the installation crews in Cuba simply overlooked the importance of disguising their activities on foreign soil under the watchful eyes of the Americans."⁹¹ As for the shirt-and-slack-clad soldiers arriving at the Cuban docks, it is reasonable to guess that delivering them there was also the responsibility of organizations devoted to secrecy. But once they had arrived at their Cuban barracks, they adhered to procedures as if they were still in the Soviet Union.

The U.S. bureaucracies involved in the crisis were not immune to the tendency to adhere to SOPs. The list of options considered by President Kennedy and his advisers was affected greatly by the repertoire of prearranged responses that the military had developed in the event of a crisis calling for an attack on Cuba. For example, one option that the U.S. decision makers considered was a surgical air strike that would eliminate the Soviet missiles already in place. The U.S. Air Force insisted that this kind of strike would result in extensive collateral damage and probably fairly large numbers of Soviet casualties and would not necessarily knock out all the Soviet missiles, but this argument was based on previous plans. The air force was not caught off guard by this opportunity to attack Cuba. Action against Castro by the United States had been anticipated, and a prearranged response had been carefully worked out. The trouble was that given the context of the missile crisis and the desire for a surgical air strike, the response called for a strike of intolerable dimensions. "The 'air strike' option served up by the Air Force called for extensive bombardment of all storage depots, airports, and the artillery batteries opposite the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, as well as all missile sites."⁹² In short, when asked about the feasibility of a surgical air strike, the air force had modified its prearranged response, but only incrementally. It added the missile sites to the list of targets to be bombed and subtracted nothing. To do so, the U.S. joint chiefs of staff insisted, would pose an unacceptable risk.

SOPs also affected the imposition of a quarantine by the United States designed to prevent missile-bearing Soviet ships from getting to Cuba. President Kennedy and his advisers decided on the quarantine,

and the U.S. Navy set its SOPs into motion. The complexity of the task should not be underestimated. The quarantine was designed to monitor almost 1 million square miles of ocean. The navy assigned 180 ships to the task. Then, virtually at the last moment, the British ambassador suggested to Kennedy that precious time might be gained if the quarantine were modified. Originally, it was designed to intercept Soviet ships 800 miles from Cuba. If the quarantine procedures could be changed so that the Soviet ships would not be intercepted until they got to within, say, 500 miles of Cuba, this delay would give the Soviets a substantial amount of extra time in which, it was hoped, they could change their minds. Kennedy agreed that this was a good idea and immediately ordered the navy to move the line of interception closer to Cuba. Despite Kennedy's orders, the navy complained loudly: Procedures could not be modified at the last minute in such a major way without some colossal foul-up, which, under the circumstances of the missile crisis, would have repercussions of horrifying dimensions. But Kennedy and his secretary of defense, Robert McNamara, were insistent, and the navy finally gave in.

Or did it? The navy did assure Kennedy that the line of interception had been pulled back, but an examination of the evidence on how the sighting and boarding of the ships was timed "confirms other suspicions. . . . Existing accounts to the contrary, the blockade was *not* moved as the President had ordered."⁹³ In short, even when confronted with the possibility that much of the world might be devastated by a nuclear holocaust, the navy, according to some evidence, refused to modify its SOPs substantially.

Obviously it is not necessary to go as far back in history as the Cuban missile crisis to find examples of the importance of SOPs, especially during times of crisis. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States cited many bureaucratic routines in its report on how the United States was less than prepared for the events of September 11, 2001. The report stressed that the problem was not that the government agencies followed SOPs, but that there were no SOPs developed for such an occasion. "Existing protocols on 9/11 were unsuited in every respect for an attack in which hijacked planes were used as weapons. What ensued was a hurried attempt to improvise a defense by civilians who had never handled a hijacked aircraft that attempted to disappear, and by a military unprepared for the transformation of commercial aircraft into weapons of mass destruction."⁹⁴ The report also cited failure of imagination: some agencies simply never considered the possibility that multiple airplanes could be simultaneously hijacked and that airplanes could be used in suicide attacks; other agencies assumed that any such attacks would come from planes originating outside the United States, which would give them more time to respond. These failures to question prevailing bureaucratic assumptions prevented what the Commission called an "institutionalization of imagination" in the form of new standard operating procedures that could deal with this type of threat.⁹⁵

Characteristics of Leaders and the Psychology of Decision Making

At the top of the bureaucracy sits the leader or leaders who are in charge of making decisions. Ultimately, what states do in global politics rests in the hands of these decision makers. They may be particularly constrained by the distribution of power and economics in the international system, as realism and liberalism argue, and thus have very little choice. What the leadership is like, under severe constraints, may not then have much impact on global politics. Many argue, however, that few decisions in international relations are obvious. Constraints can be misinterpreted by the leaders, leaders are not prisoners of constraints, and indeed sometimes leaders attempt to manipulate constraints to their advantage. In particular, when the situation is ambiguous, uncertain, and complex, the characteristics of leaders can have profound implications for the decisions they make.⁹⁶ In international relations, leaders often face such situations. Under these conditions, what leaders believe, how they process information, and their leadership style become important factors. When the authority to make government decisions rests with a group of leaders, the nature of group relations is also important.

Leaders' Beliefs

What leaders believe often serves as the basis on which they make their decisions. Leaders form beliefs about themselves, the world, and the nature of politics in a variety of ways. The **psychoanalytic approach** to beliefs, for example, traces individuals' beliefs back to early childhood experiences. Freud, for example, argued that U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's beliefs in the inherent morality of the League of Nations, which led him to resist compromise and the League of Nations to fail ratification by the U.S. Senate, was rooted in Wilson's troubled relations with his religious father.⁹⁷ Others focus on how beliefs develop from the time period individuals experience. Different generations, for example, live through different defining historical moments. It has been argued that the reforms of the Khrushchev period in the 1950s had a lasting effect on Mikhail Gorbachev and his generation, thus paving the way for more dramatic reform efforts in the 1980s. For a whole generation, world leaders were affected by the experiences of World War II. Their anti-fascist, anti-isolationist, and anti-appeasement beliefs reflected their shared understanding of this experience. In the United States, leaders of the Vietnam generation have a very different understanding of world politics based on this shared, formative experience.

More important than the origins of leaders' beliefs is the content of those beliefs. Leaders may differ in their beliefs about, for example, nationalism, conflict, or the role that their country should play in world politics. In

psychoanalytic approach An approach to leaders that traces individuals' beliefs back to early childhood experiences.

operational code The beliefs of political leaders about the nature of the political universe and the means for dealing with others in politics.

particular, leaders' **operational code** serves as a set of overarching beliefs that may guide leaders' understanding of world politics. A leader's operational code concerns his or her beliefs about the nature of the political universe (Is it conflictual or harmonious? Predictable or random?) and the means for dealing with others in politics (How should risks be managed? Are conflictual or cooperative methods more effective?). Operational codes are a general way of describing leaders' ideologies and orientations to politics.⁹⁸

British Prime Minister Tony Blair's beliefs, for example, illustrate the importance of operational codes. Blair had a choice as to whether Britain would participate in the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Blair was not pressured by the United States, nor was it clear that it was in British interests to participate.⁹⁹ Rather, "the dominant reason for Blair's commitment to U.S. policy was his intense and rather moral perspective on international politics."¹⁰⁰ Compared to other leaders, Blair believes that the international environment is susceptible to influence and that Great Britain is a very influential actor in the international system. Blair also sees the world in terms of absolutes, categorizes people and states into "good" versus "bad," and has a strong desire to control outcomes.¹⁰¹ Consistent with these core principles, "Blair's foreign policy, both during the Iraq case and in general, has indeed been based on activist, interventionist principles . . . Blair suggested that the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of states should not be regarded as an insurmountable constraint . . . [and] argued that dictatorial regimes forfeit their sovereign right of noninterference both on moral grounds of harming their people and practical grounds of threatening others."¹⁰²

image Set of beliefs or perceptions that leaders have about another country regarding its capabilities, motivations, political system, and culture.

Another important type of belief that a leader may hold is an **image** of another country. Images are the set of beliefs or perceptions that leaders have about another country regarding its capabilities, motivations,

British Prime Minister Tony Blair listens to U.S. President George W. Bush as both leaders offer their justifications for the war against Iraq in March 2003.

(Kevin Lamarque/© Reuters/Corbis)



enemy image Belief that another country is inherently threatening and immoral.

political system, and culture.¹⁰³ A particularly powerful image in global politics is the **enemy image**. If a leader holds an enemy image of another country, he or she sees that country as expansionist, militarily threatening and having an immoral culture and an individualistic political system. Ole Holsti described the enemy image that John Foster Dulles, U.S. secretary of state in the Eisenhower administration, held:

[Dulles] cited Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*, which he equated with Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a master plan of goals, strategy, and tactics, as the best contemporary guide to Soviet foreign policy. From a careful reading of that book, he concluded, one could understand both the character of Soviet leaders and the blueprint of Soviet policy. Characteristically, he placed special emphasis on the materialistic and atheistic aspects of the Communist creed, attributes he felt ensured the absolute ruthlessness of Soviet leaders in their quest for world domination.¹⁰⁴

When leaders of two countries hold enemy images of each other, we call this "mirror images." Just as Dulles held an enemy image of Stalin, no doubt Stalin held similar beliefs about the United States.

analogies Beliefs that a current situation, event, or leader is very similar to something or someone from the past.

A third type of belief that has proved to be important in the study of international politics is **analogies**. Analogies are beliefs that a current situation, event, or leader is very similar to a situation, event, or leader from the past. When leaders use analogies to guide their decisions, they use history, or at least their beliefs about what lessons we should learn from history. The Munich analogy became a popular analogy in international politics after World War II. When Hitler continued his aggressive policies after receiving concessions in the Munich agreement in 1938, many drew the lesson that any concession will only encourage any leaders who have committed previous hostile actions.

U.S. President George H. W. Bush, for example, relied heavily on this historical analogy in order to make his decision about what to do after Iraq had occupied Kuwait in 1990. He based his decision on lessons from the 1938 Munich debacle and on the assumption that Hussein and the attack he had launched on Kuwait were reminiscent of Hitler and his surprise attacks in the 1930s.¹⁰⁵ President Bush and his advisers also relied on analogies involving the Vietnam War in this strategic planning. President Bush demanded of the military that they avoid at all costs another Vietnam.¹⁰⁶ Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, as it turned out, also used analogies and his beliefs about Vietnam. Influenced by both American reactions to casualties in Vietnam and the U.S. retreat from Lebanon after the loss of fewer than three hundred Marines to a terrorist attack in 1983, Saddam told the U.S. ambassador to Iraq in April 1990 (less than four months before the attack on Kuwait), "Yours is a society which cannot accept 10,000 battle dead."¹⁰⁷ Hussein's confidence that he would be able to inflict something like 10,000 casualties on American forces was apparently based on analogical thinking relating the Iran-Iraq War to his upcoming battle with

the United States. After all, his troops had inflicted 750,000 deaths on Iranian soldiers during the 1980s.¹⁰⁸

The effects of analogies and other beliefs can be dramatic if they are misinformed. Beliefs necessarily simplify a complex world. There is no escaping such simplifying mechanisms; the world is so complicated and so full of information that everyone must be selective, choosing to concentrate on certain bits of information and ignoring others in their beliefs. Whether Saddam Hussein had expansionist motives comparable to Hitler's may never be known with certainty, but applying the Munich analogy to all leaders who commit an act of aggression will certainly mean that opportunities to avoid war through concessions will be missed at times. Analogies that exaggerate the similarities between the current situation and the past will likely produce poor decisions. "Saddam's failure to distinguish between the coalition forces confronting him and the poorly equipped and ill-trained Iranian army led him to the mistaken belief that Iraq's defensive posture would suffice to inflict unacceptable pain on the enemy when and if the coalition forces attacked his troops occupying Kuwait."¹⁰⁹ The Iraqi army found itself unable to mount anything like effective resistance to the devastating attack by coalition forces.

Information Processing

Beliefs that lead to misjudgment are partly caused by the inability of humans to process all available information. We selectively perceive information, ignoring what can be critical pieces. Franklin Roosevelt had at his disposal information that could have led him to anticipate the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Stalin was warned repeatedly before June 1941 that the Germans were about to attack the Soviet Union. Truman had lots of information from which he might have concluded that the Chinese *would* intervene in the Korean War if General MacArthur led his troops into North Korea. Blair had every indication that the United Nations would not adopt a resolution endorsing the Iraq war, but was apparently "mystified" and "baffled" when a resolution did not materialize.¹¹⁰ But all these leaders were the victims of perceptual screens that led them to discount or ignore the evidence concerning possible attack from an enemy.

There are particular patterns to human information processing that help us predict what information leaders will selectively perceive and what information they will ignore or distort. In general, humans seek out and attend to information that is consistent with the beliefs that they already hold, especially beliefs that are very important to them. Various **cognitive consistency theories** in psychology offer explanations for why this happens when humans process information. When information is inconsistent with existing beliefs, for example, humans might feel cognitive dissonance and are uncomfortable until the dissonance is reduced. They are then motivated to resolve the inconsistency by denying or discrediting the source of the inconsistent information, searching for other information that supports the

cognitive consistency theories Psychology theories that suggest humans seek out and attend to information that is consistent with the beliefs that they already hold.

preexisting belief, or reinterpreting the inconsistent information so that it is consistent. Only rarely will individuals actually change their preexisting beliefs to fit the new information. Part of John Foster Dulles's enemy image of the Soviet Union in the 1950s was his belief that the Soviet economy was inherently weak, on the verge of collapse. Despite numerous indicators to the contrary, Dulles maintained his consistent belief system. Hitler, too, believing in the inherent inferiority of the American military, eventually refused to hear any reports that included statistics on American industrial and military production.

The way we explain cause and effect also has a way of maintaining our beliefs. Attribution theory suggests that humans tend to explain negative outcomes (such as failing a test) through situational attributions (the light was poor) when they occur to ourselves or people we like. When bad things (such as failing a test) happen to people we do not like, humans tend to offer explanations using dispositional attributions (they are not very smart). Alternatively, when good things (getting an A on the test) happen to "good people" (ourselves or people we like), we use dispositional attributions (I am smart), and when good things (getting an A on a test) happen to "bad" people (people we do not like), we use situational attributions (they must have gotten lucky). These attributions reinforce our beliefs about who is good and who is bad. In international politics, where it is rare to know exactly what caused an event, leaders use attributions to reinforce these group images. The end of the Cold War (a good thing) was attributed by Western leaders to something about them, their political systems, and their values ("we stood firm," "democracy won"), and little credit was given to the other side. In international economics, failing economies in the developing states are often explained in terms of "corrupt leaders" (a dispositional attribution) rather than the international system (a situational attribution).

Processing information in the world of international politics is difficult enough in routine situations. Under crisis conditions, when there is little time to respond and high stakes, leaders—because they are human with limited information-processing abilities that become more strained under stress—are likely to make errors in judgment and decisions.¹¹¹

Leadership Styles

In addition to what leaders believe and how this affects information processing, how leaders approach policymaking can have an effect on a state's foreign policy. **Leadership style**—the leaders' work habits, how they relate to those around them, how they like to receive information, and how they make up their minds—varies across leaders in particular patterns.¹¹² Some leaders like to be very much involved in the decision-making process; others delegate authority. Some leaders pick a side of an issue and advocate for that side; others act as a consensus builder. Some leaders solicit advice from many information sources; others rely on a

leadership style

Leaders' work habits, how they relate to those around them, how they like to receive information, and how they make up their minds.

trusted adviser or themselves. Some leaders focus on the policy under consideration; others are more attuned to the politics around them.

Perhaps the most important distinction for assessing a leader's decision-making style is how open or closed the leader is. Leaders with more open styles

want to tailor their behavior to fit the demands of the situation, to ascertain where others stand with regard to a problem and consider how other governments are likely to act before making a decision. To become acceptable to the leader, ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and motives must receive external validation from others. Because situational cues are so important to deciphering appropriate behavior, these more responsive leaders seek to create and maintain extensive information-gathering networks to keep on top of what is happening. They want people around them who represent their various constituencies so that they can keep abreast of the needs and interests of those on whom their support depends.¹¹³

Leaders who have been classified as having open decision-making styles include former U.S. presidents Carter, Bush, and Clinton; former Syrian President Hafez al-Assad; former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani; former British Prime Minister John Major; former Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato; and former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Leaders with more closed styles are crusaders for a cause. They are confident of their own positions and policy preferences and have little use for others' advice. What determines their decisions is how they view the situation through their preexisting belief system, regardless of any opposition or warning from others. "In effect, the leader selectively uses incoming information to support his predispositions. Such leaders tend to choose advisers who define problems as they do and are generally enthusiastic about the leader's ideas. Libya's Qaddafi and Cuba's Castro are examples of predominant leaders whose orientations appear to predispose them to be relatively insensitive to the variety of information in their external environments."¹¹⁴ Other leaders who have been classified as having closed decision-making styles are former U.S. President Reagan, former German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, former British Prime Minister Thatcher, and former Venezuelan President Rómulo Betancourt. British Prime Minister Blair also dominates the decision-making process. "Indeed, accounts of Blair's policy-making style invariably stress his focus upon fundamental principles over detail, his limited information search, and his lack of receptivity to information which does not accord with his existing beliefs."¹¹⁵ In the lead-up to the Iraq war, Blair preferred to meet with small groups of advisers who agreed with him and stifled full debate on the issue of British support for the U.S.-led war.¹¹⁶

The effect that leaders with closed styles have on foreign policy is direct: What the leader perceives, values, and believes is most likely going

to be the decision that is made, despite any domestic or international constraints. The effect that leaders with open styles have on foreign policy is indirect. Since these leaders test the waters and often forge compromises between alternative constituencies, just knowing what the leader is like does not tell us what decision will emerge. Knowing that this water testing and compromise forging is going on, however, tells us to look at the positions of those with whom the leader is consulting.

Group Decision Making

Rarely do individuals make decisions on their own. Usually they are part of a group of other people. Even powerful presidents and dictators who have the authority to make foreign policy usually rely on a small group of advisers. Thus, the interactions of humans at the top levels of government are also important to understand. Research on group decision making suggests that groups are often more than the sum of their parts. In other words, when you put people in a social environment, they act differently and the choices they make as a group are not simply the “average” of what each group member might have chosen individually. Groups, for example, may discourage objections to policies for the sake of group cohesion. Groups are also highly susceptible to a forceful leader who steers the others to accept their position. In this way, groups may be particularly prone to engage in risky behavior or foreign policy that ends in failure.¹¹⁷

groupthink Excessive concurrence seeking that can occur in small, highly cohesive groups.

In particular, small, highly cohesive groups may have a tendency to engage in **groupthink**, defined by psychologist Irving Janis as excessive concurrence seeking. Janis examined the history of several key U.S. foreign policy decisions, including cases of “success” such as the Marshall Plan and the Cuban missile crisis, and cases that ended in “fiasco” such as the Bay of Pigs invasion and the escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam during the Johnson administration:

In each of the cases, key decisions were made by a cohesive small group composed of a leader . . . and his closest advisers. And in each case [that ended in a fiasco], . . . group members were keen to preserve the mood of optimism and presumed agreement that prevailed. This desire to minimize controversy compromised the quality of the discussion; crucial information was ignored or misinterpreted, alternatives to the group’s preferred course of action were not considered or not taken seriously, and the groups tended to persist in their original policies even when confronted with feedback that the policies were not working out well or that they were fraught with risk.¹¹⁸

More recently, the cohesive group of advisers around George W. Bush has been accused of engaging in groupthink. According to *Washington Post* writer Bob Woodward, during the administration’s discussions following the September 11 attacks, Bush’s style did not foster discussion,

as he “directed his energy at forging on, rarely looking back, scoffing at—even ridiculing—doubt and anything less than 100 percent commitment.”¹¹⁹ And a report by the U.S. Senate Committee on Intelligence concluded that groupthink led senior policymakers not to question their assumption that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.¹²⁰ According to one scholar, “it became more difficult for people in the State Department’s Intelligence branch to argue caution about intelligence analyses. This took the critical edge off the debate, creating an atmosphere in which Bush and his advisers began to bolster their arguments about what Saddam Hussein allegedly possessed and what he was building. It may also have created a mild climate of ‘groupthink’ in which critical thinking is suppressed for fear of upsetting the predominant view.”¹²¹ Current research suggests that Janis’s conception of groupthink was in some ways limited.¹²² Still, the idea that the social and political relationships and influence attempts that exist in small groups is another factor to be added in an understanding of policymaking has become widely accepted, especially given the number of foreign policy decisions made in a small group setting.

SUMMARY

- The foreign policy approach to understanding global politics challenges the unitary actor and rational actor assumptions. Disagreements within states and how those disagreements are managed can help explain why states at times do not act optimally, given international constraints. The domestic sources of foreign policy include what the public is like, what the political system is like, and how decisions are made—particularly the effects of bureaucracies and the characteristics of leaders on the foreign policymaking process.
- The general public probably has a limited impact on the foreign policies of most states because individuals do not typically know or care very much about international politics and because they are vulnerable to manipulation by leaders. Yet there is some indication that citizens are becoming more informed, that changes in public opinion are often in reaction to changing circumstances, and that core values serve as a basis from which citizens derive opinions.
- Despite good arguments for why democracies might be more peaceful than nondemocracies, this simply is not the case. Political institutions, however, do have important effects on foreign policymaking. Leaders in presidential systems, for example, face different types of constraints than do leaders in parliamentary and nondemocratic systems.
- Interest groups seek influence on particular policies but are often ineffective or their influence is difficult to detect as the main source of the policy. The military-industrial complex in the United States has obviously been successful in attempts to capture large portions of the

federal budget in the United States. Although the end of the Cold War deprived the military-industrial complex of its primary rationale for ever-larger defense budgets, recent defense budgets have increased to Cold War levels.

- Militaries and other political opposition groups can be influential in nondemocracies, especially when the government is not legitimate or is otherwise weak. This internal opposition may push leaders to engage in risky behavior externally, in the hopes of diverting attention away from troubles at home. This diversionary tactic may also occur in democracies when the leader's approval ratings are in danger.
- Foreign policies are often the product to some extent of political infighting among different parts of the bureaucratic apparatus. Bureaucratic organizations tend to disagree based on their organizational roles, pursue inconsistent and incoherent policies due to lack of organization, and adhere to SOPs that do not fit the situation.
- What leaders believe, the images they hold, and the analogies they use can have a profound effect on the decisions they take in the name of the state. Psychological perceptions are especially important because they tend to resist change. Leaders, as humans, often selectively perceive information and make particular attributions to keep their beliefs cognitively consistent.
- A leader's decision-making style may be open or closed and determine whether alternative viewpoints are considered. Alternative viewpoints may be ignored in group settings as well due to the desire to preserve good relations among group members.

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