A New Foreign Policy Era

When President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met in Washington in May 2011, one of the principal issues dividing them was the question of Israeli settlements on the occupied West Bank depicted in this photograph.
**PREVIEW**

American foreign policy is changing in multiple ways that collectively constitute a new era for understanding and thinking about the subject. The international setting in which foreign policy is played out with other countries and entities has been subject to multiple alterations that have broadened the context and range of new actors in an increasingly public foreign policy environment. Domestic American politics has been increasingly partisan and contentious, and these domestic and international environments collide at the “intermestic intersection” between international and domestic concerns. This nature of contemporary foreign policy affects how one analyzes and views foreign policy and one’s individual orientation toward foreign policy generally and on particular issues. Tensions in relations between the United States and Israel illustrate these principles.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

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During the third week and a half of May 2011, a foreign policy disagreement between Israel and the United States flared into public view and dominated media venues for several days. The public brouhaha surrounded the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington on a state visit for consultation with the Obama administration and to give speeches to the U.S. Congress meeting in joint session and the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), a powerful pro-Israeli lobby. On the surface, very little of this itinerary was unusual, but the visit was controversial because of the underlying disagreement about U.S.-Israeli policies manifested in contrasting views about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process between Obama and Netanyahu, which became very public as the visit proceeded.

The heart of the disagreement between the two closely associated states has centered on the best way to create a durable peace between Israel and its neighboring Arab states. The major focus in that process has been the creation of a separate state of Palestine carved from part or all of the territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 Six-Day War with its neighboring states—Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, an initiative known as the two-state solution. The major stumbling block in defining a Palestinian state has been the existence and, more important, the continued construction of Israeli settlements (housing areas) in parts of the occupied territories, mostly on the West Bank of the Jordan River that presumably would form the new Palestinian state and the suburbs of East Jerusalem.

Since entering office in 2009, the Obama administration has been a vocal champion of the “two states for two peoples” outcome and has sought to
reinvigorate talks between the major antagonists suspended in 2010. The initiatives have not been fruitful, as the Israelis and the Palestinians blame each other for subverting the process through their insincerity and obstacle-raising actions. The result has been an impasse in which continuing Israeli building in the occupied territories leads many to believe that a two-state solution is decreasingly possible, due to increased Israeli habitation of areas generally thought of as forming parts of the Palestinian state.

As in all real situations of foreign policy disagreement, there are two sides to the argument, and in this instance, both sides have adherents in both countries. The position of the Obama administration, generally considered to be “liberal” in both countries, is that stability is the ultimate goal in the region, stability can only be achieved by a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the best basis for such a settlement is one which creates two independent states (Israel and Palestine), and such an outcome will require considerable concessions on both sides. The clearest outcome is a new Palestinian state encompassing Gaza and nearly all of the occupied West Bank. This approach and outcome is favored by the opposition to the Netanyahu government in Israel’s parliament (the Knesset) headed by Kadima Party leader and former foreign minister Tzipi Livni. Within the United States, this approach is also favored by generally liberal American Jews and their supporting organizations, such as the so-called “J Street” lobby described later in this book.

The opposing view, generally considered “conservative,” is associated with the government of Prime Minister Netanyahu. It does not reject the two-state solution out of hand (although its critics, including Obama, believe its policies are making that outcome increasingly impossible to achieve), but rather attaches greater stipulations on such an outcome that make it far more difficult to negotiate. Specifically, Netanyahu rejects the idea that talks should begin with the pre-1967 borders of Israel (before Israel gained the occupied territories as part of the war in that year) as a starting point for negotiations, because an agreement based on such a presumption would leave Israel unacceptably militarily vulnerable. Moreover, he and his supporters believe that Israel is only acceptably secure if an eventual settlement leaves Palestine essentially unarmed and possibly with a permanent Israeli military presence on its soil. This position is supported by conservative Jewish elements in the United States (as represented by AIPAC) and conservative American admirers of Israel generally prominent in the Republican Party.

The positions were thus drawn before Netanyahu’s arrival in Washington: the Obama administration focusing on the necessity of a revived peace process, Netanyahu more clearly focused on Israeli security. Such a disagreement is not unusual among states and is the traditional “stuff” of foreign policy. What is notable, and the reason for raising the incident here, is the way it has been handled, evidence of a new foreign policy era.

This diplomatic episode illustrates important characteristics of the new foreign policy era that is the major theme of this book. The entire incident was played out in full public view, and it is not clear that influencing U.S. public opinion as a way to pressure the Obama administration was not Netanyahu’s major objective. The use of the U.S. Congress essentially as a background prop
for delivering Netanyahu’s message was clearly distinctive, and the interplay of domestic and international concerns is also symptomatic of the new foreign policy environment.

Three notable points thus emerge about the way the situation unfolded. The first and most striking aspect of the interchange was its extraordinarily public nature. Public diplomacy, the idea that foreign policy interactions should be open and transparent rather than conducted behind closed doors and reaching secret agreements, is not a new idea; indeed, its most public advocate goes back, in the sense of the term being used here, to the American President Woodrow Wilson in the early twentieth century. (Another meaning of the term, elaborated on elsewhere in the book, uses the term to connote direct public involvement in the foreign policy process.) In this case, however, the whole process was a very public event, where the intent seemed as much to influence public opinion in the United States as it was to conduct serious diplomacy.

Apparently intent on preempting what he saw as an impending Israeli initiative to dampen the prospects of a revived set of peace negotiations based on its preferred formula, the Obama administration struck first. On May 19, 2011, the President addressed employees of the U.S. Department of State on national television, laying out publicly his position that the current impasse was “unsustainable” and calling for talks to resume, using the pre-1967 Israeli boundaries adjusted by mutually agreed “land swaps” as the basis for physically forming the new Palestinian state. Before leaving Israel, Netanyahu responded that the 1967 boundary idea was “indefensible” from an Israeli viewpoint, a notion he reiterated, also on national television, in his speeches to AIPAC on May 23 and before the U.S. Congress on May 24, emphasizing the dictates of Israeli security. These very public, opposite views became the reference points for inconclusive private talks between the two leaders later.

The second major point was the clearly partisan content of the messages on both sides. The traditional view of foreign policy is that diplomacy proceeds when both sides take initial positions from which they can retreat because the public does not know the initial (and usually inflated) demands and thus is not disappointed when they are not achieved in whole. By making their positions public before discussions, both sides removed this ability to retreat and compromise, leaving the conclusion that the positions were not negotiating stances at all, but rather partisan policy preferences intended to rally the support of adherents rather than either to convert opponents or to create positions from which compromise would be possible.

This leads to the third and related point: the visit as a domestic political event for the United States. In particular, the GOP and other members of the political right seized on the Netanyahu visit as a partisan political matter, evidence of the shortcomings of the Democratic Party leadership of Obama. Congressional Republicans (who had been instrumental in issuing the invitation to Netanyahu to speak to them) cheered repeatedly as Netanyahu took positions in direct contravention to those of the sitting American administration (a spectacle that would have been inconceivable a half century ago), and GOP
presidential contender Mitt Romney went so far as to accuse the president of “throwing Israel under the bus” by suggesting the pre-1967 borders as the basis of negotiations. The traditional convention that the United States should rally behind the commander-in-chief and show a united front toward the world was clearly not in evidence in Washington during the week of May 23, 2011.

This incident also demonstrates the dynamics of four relatively new influences on the foreign policy process, all of which are highlighted in the pages that follow. The first is the high visibility of foreign policy in the national political debate. Beyond the purely ceremonial aspects of foreign visits, foreign policy has traditionally occupied a much less prominent, visible, and thus controversial place on the public agenda than it does now. There are numerous reasons for this increasing visibility, including the impact of electronic mediation of events, and these influences will be explored in subsequent chapters. What they mean, however, is that foreign policy is no longer an exotic, abstract policy area, but one to which citizens have regular access and about which they increasingly have formed opinions. Indeed, one way to view the Netanyahu visit was as a media event the purpose of which was to influence American foreign policy opinion and thus to put pressure on the U.S. government to support those views.

A second and related dynamic is the changing audience and context within which foreign policy is conducted. Despite constitutional imperatives that empower the executive branch (with some limits) to conduct foreign affairs, it is clear that multiple new actors and influences exist within the system. The media is clearly one of these, and it is, for instance, not at all coincidental that Netanyahu concluded his visit by granting person-to-person interviews with reporters from essentially all the leading television networks and cable outlets. The Congress got to play an unconventional role by hosting a foreign dignitary whose views were in direct contradiction, even defiance, of a sitting American chief executive and applauding his basic disagreements with their own government. At the same time, the power and influence of interest groups, in this case AIPAC, was on full display, as first Netanyahu presented his views to a sympathetic gathering of AIPAC members and Obama followed in an effort to clarify his May 19 remarks to the same group.

Third, the interplay between domestic and international aspects (what some have called “intermestic” politics) is the third theme illustrated by this incident. The term itself is a hybrid formed from the international and domestic content of modern political situations. Part of the historic consensus on foreign policy derived from the separation of the two realms: Foreign policy did not affect domestic politics, and vice versa. That is no longer true in most instances, and the Netanyahu visit is an example—not so much of the direct consequences of those relations but how those relations can be used for domestic political purposes. It is probably not unfair to say that the purpose of the Netanyahu visit was as much to influence the outcome of the 2012 U.S. presidential election as it was about U.S.-Israeli relations.

The fourth major theme is hyperpartisanship, one of the major and continuing influences on contemporary American politics. There are basic
divisions in the United States about the role and proper policies of government that have arguably produced a dysfunctional, polarized political system in which political advantage is more important than political outcomes and in which political compromise is virtually a forgotten, discredited idea. As it unfolded, the Netanyahu-Obama interchange in Washington had some of that flavor: The purpose on both sides was not so much to convert or find common ground on which to resolve differences as it was to publicize and to gather further support for established positions.

FOREIGN POLICY SETTINGS

During most of the history of the American republic—and certainly in the early days when the American Constitution was formulated as the basic context within which politics would take place—foreign policy was not considered either particularly important or controversial. The Constitution’s provisions, discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters, are fairly sparse in dealing with foreign relations, mostly because the founding fathers did not expect these to be either very extensive or very important most of the time. The first century and a half or so of American history reinforced this judgment: The United States was a developing country outside the heart of a European-dominated international system, and the international system did not need to involve the United States intimately in its affairs, an attitude that was compatible with American primary concern with internal development and the settlement of internal difficulties (namely, the Civil War). It was not truly until the twentieth century, and especially World War II, that the United States was drawn into the vortex of heavy involvement in international affairs, a condition that broadened and intensified and has continued to today.

In these earlier days (see Chapter Two), there was an unwritten principle that guided the conduct of foreign policy: “Politics ends at the water’s edge.” It is a simple but elegant description about the parameters of political activity in the foreign policy realm. The underlying idea is that there is a fundamental difference between domestic and international politics in the American political system: While domestic politics may be filled with conflict and the subject of considerable public (including partisan) disagreement, this disagreement should end when the United States faces—at the “water’s edge” that is the boundary between the United States and the rest of the world save Canada and Mexico—the outside world. In foreign affairs, the country should unite against foreign powers and present a common front that cannot be misunderstood or exploited by America’s opponents. The underlying, and critical, assumption was that the domestic and foreign policy political environments were mutually exclusive and separate, thus allowing conflict and animosity in one and allowing cooperation and unity in the other.

This principle had both strong domestic and international ramifications. Domestically, it meant that whenever the United States faced foreign powers, especially in times of crisis or confrontation, Americans of all political stripes were expected to rally behind U.S. policy. Disagreement with policy
was tolerated, even encouraged, before policy decisions were made, but once
determinations were reached, even those who disagreed with the outcomes were
expected to suppress their reservations in the name of national unity. Foreign
policy, in other words, was bipartisan and above the common political fray.

Internationally, the water’s edge also symbolized the American attitude
toward the intrusion of the outside world on the United States. A major part
of the American political culture from the beginning of the foundation of the
republic (discussed in Snow, National Security for a New Era) had been a neg-
itive reaction to European power politics, which Americans viewed as cynical
and tainted, and the United States had largely been populated by immigrants
fleeing the political horrors of other places, first in Europe, later in Asia, and
more recently Latin America.

The concept of the water’s edge seems oddly quaint in a world where
virtually everything appears to be politicized, where partisanship is rampant
and extends to almost all aspects of publicly affected life, and where there is
little distinction between domestic and foreign affairs. There are some good,
and some not-so-good, reasons for this transformation of the foreign policy
environment, some of which can be explored by examining each of the two
environments, foreign and domestic, and their conjunction separately.

Each of the four influences introduced in the opening case is highlighted
within the threefold distinction. The high visibility of foreign policy events is
largely the result of greater awareness because of media coverage than used to
be the case. It is difficult to imagine, for instance, a major “flap” over Pakistan
arresting and interrogating Pakistanis who cooperated with the U.S. effort to
take down Osama bin Laden in June 2011 a decade or so earlier, because
Americans would simply not have been aware of the action. New actors and
influences are a characteristic of both the international and domestic environ-
ments and help create and define the intermestic phenomenon. Hyperpartisan-
ship is primarily a domestic phenomenon, and its extension to the international
and intermestic arenas is one of the telling characteristics of contemporary
foreign policy.

The International (Foreign) Environment

There are two basic characteristics of the international system that make it
fundamentally different from domestic politics. The first is that the underly-
bedrock principle of international relations is sovereignty, which is defined as
“supreme authority.” Within any political entity, the possessor of sovereignty
is supreme, meaning there is and can be no superior authority above whatever
individual or institution possesses sovereignty. The other characteristic is that
sovereignty in international relations is possessed by states. State is a legal
and political term referring to recognized jurisdiction over a piece of territory
and recognition of that jurisdiction by other similar entities (other states).

Put together, these two principles define the international environment
as a state-centric political system, in which the member units possess sover-
eignty over their realms and in which no other states can legitimately claim
influence or sway. The result is to create the legitimate authority of states to regulate relations within their boundaries, but it also means that the relationship between them is one between legal equals in which none can simply dictate the outcomes of their interactions. The international system is, in more precise terms, a system of anarchy (the absence of government).

The stark application of these principles can easily be overstated and distorted. An entirely state-centric international system based on sovereignty suggests that states do not and should not interfere in the internal workings of the other countries with which they deal, and that has never been the case. Through methods as diverse as lobbying, influence peddling, espionage, and other forms of interference, governments and their representatives have always interfered with one another to try to influence the outcomes of their foreign policy interactions in their favor. The Netanyahu visit to Washington is vivid evidence of how the principles are relaxed in application.

In practice, foreign policy interactions between states are regulated by a set of rules, but state sovereignty limits the ability to monitor and enforce those rules. Occasionally, states break the rules: An embassy official from one country tries to bribe a counterpart in the country to which he or she is accredited, or a government may mount a propaganda drive to influence an election outcome in favor of a candidate who supports a position they favor, for instance. Both of these kinds of acts constitute interference in the domestic politics of another country and are impermissible under the concept of sovereignty. That such practices occur anyway is simply evidence that the rules are not sacrosanct.

Organizing and playing in a pickup game of basketball or football offers an analogy. If one plays in such a game, you know there are rules to be followed and penalties for breaking them. In a basketball game, for instance, hacking an opponent is a foul and means the fouled team either gets the ball out of bounds or gets a free throw, depending on conditions. In a regular game, there is a referee, who effectively acts as the sovereign regarding rule enforcement, to call fouls. What distinguishes a pickup game, however, is that there is no referee. The players, in effect, are all sovereign, and if there is an alleged infraction on which the two sides disagree, there is no clear, definitive way to resolve the resulting disagreement. There are still rules, and in principle they are enforceable, but only the players themselves can enforce them. For many purposes, international relations are much the same.

If state sovereignty has always been a partial myth in practice, the modern dynamics of international politics are further eroding the purity of state centrum that is at the heart of the environment in which foreign policy is made. Both the idea of an inviolable and absolute state sovereignty and the exclusivity of the state as the sole actor in the international realm have been affected by change. While it is possible to overstate the degree to which change has occurred, alterations in the way international politics are conducted have contributed to changes in the way the system operates and to the blurring of distinctions between foreign and domestic politics. Two examples, the phenomenon of economic globalization and the rise of nonstate actors (discussed
in more detail in Chapters Two, Nine, and Ten), will help illustrate both the impact and limitations of change on foreign policy.

The most dramatic contemporary instances of the internationalization of world affairs come through the process of economic globalization, the spreading of economic activity across national borders by private companies and corporations resulting in a high level of economic interdependence among and between countries. The effect is to create, in the economic sector, a great deal of activity such as movement of capital, products, ideas, and people across state boundaries beyond the effective control of governments. A primary example is the pressure of governments to reduce or eliminate trade barriers (namely, tariffs, quotas) toward other countries, a practice by which countries historically have controlled the penetration of their border economically and by which they have protected indigenous industries from outside competition.

States have lost much of their ability to control economic activity as a result. To some, this is philosophically desirable, since it has meant the effective transfer of economic power from the public to the private sector, a movement they find advantageous. Since one of the dictates of successful globalization is the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital across international boundaries; one of the other consequences has been to make it more difficult to control the boundaries between states, since effective control slows the pace of economic intercourse across boundaries.

One can, of course, make too much of these effects. One of the arguments champions of globalization sometimes make is that the global economy is becoming so intertwined and interdependent that truly independent national economies are disappearing, replaced by the international composition of goods and services. At its extreme, proponents argue that the result of globalization is to make it extremely difficult, even impossible, for countries to go to war with one another, because they are too dependent on one another for the wherewithal to mount independent war efforts. Unfortunately, the same arguments were made about the effects of an earlier spate of globalization on the eve of World War I.

There has also been a dramatic rise in the frequency and impact of so-called nonstate actors: politically active groups operating across state borders that are not the formal representatives of governments. There are, and always have been, multiple examples of this kind of actor. The most obvious group are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), groups with international memberships that perform different kinds of services but are not affiliated with nor are representatives of governments. The International Red Cross and Amnesty International (AI) are examples. NGOs number in the tens of thousands in the international system and, in some cases, seek to influence the foreign policies of states. AI, for instance, has sought to influence American foreign policy by publicizing alleged American violations of the human rights of Americans and foreign citizens at places such as the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The more problematical examples of nonstate actors are informal groups that act outside the normal channels of international interaction, often for nefarious and destructive purposes. The most obvious examples of this kind
of group are international terrorist organizations, with Al Qaeda as the most notorious case in point. These organizations operate across (usually ignoring) state boundaries and engage in illegal, often violent activities against states and their citizens. Since a prime (some would argue the prime) purpose of the state is the physical protection of its citizens from harm, terrorist and other criminal groups (for example, foreign drug cartels) pose a particular threat to countries outside the normal channels of international discourse.

Foreign policy is the process and tool by which the state tries to accommodate and shape influences from outside its borders to maximize the country’s interests and to minimize danger and damage to those interests. Every state has a foreign policy mechanism to deal with this problem, and the interaction between the foreign policy mechanisms of states is the major, and historically most prominent, means by which foreign policy is conducted. State-to-state interaction via diplomacy and the other instruments available to states is the natural way in which foreign policy occurs in a state-centric system guided conceptually by the principle of sovereignty, and the emphasis of people who analyze foreign policy from an international viewpoint has historically been on the outcomes of these interactions. Modern foreign policy is not as simple as the interaction of diplomats, as the examples just cited have suggested, making contemporary foreign policy more complicated and often contentious and thus more of a problem for domestic politics, where the processes by which decisions are reached are more of a central concern of analysts.

The Domestic Environment
In historical terms, domestic politics are not supposed to play a major part in the making or execution of American foreign policy. The U.S. Constitution provides the framework within which foreign policy is considered and delineates who has the authority to oversee and limit foreign policy actions via the separation of powers that is at the heart of the U.S. constitutional system. The Constitution itself is fairly spare in its description of the foreign policy roles of the branches of government it created. As in all matters, the branches are generally considered coequal, although in the foreign policy realm the judicial branch has generally adopted a lesser role, mainly confined to adjudicating jurisdictional disputes between the executive and legislative branches. The executive and legislature are given roughly equal and counter-vailing powers, creating what has been called an “invitation to struggle” both on jurisdictional and substantive lines.

Within that framework, the executive branch is given the more public and initiating role, largely because of the nature of international relations. The diplomatic system that evolved in the European-dominated international system of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was based on the notion that the relations among countries were to be conducted by the heads of government and their representatives (known as plenipotentiaries) to provide order within those relations—so that the government of one state could know what entities in other states could conduct business on behalf of their states.
Since the president is a single individual, whereas the Congress is two aggregations of diverse and independent officials, it logically followed that it made more sense to designate the president, who is the head of government, to be the representative with whom other states would interact. Because the president is the designated “contact point” between the United States and other governments, the presidency has often been elevated in the general mind to a position of superiority in the foreign policy realm, although that reputation is not constitutionally based.

The Congress has constitutional prerogatives and powers that countervail the powers of the president. For one thing, the president’s chief foreign policy advisors, from the Secretary of State and his or her principal assistants to ambassadors to foreign countries, must be confirmed by the Senate, providing a limit on the kinds of people (and views) that represent U.S. foreign policy with other countries. The Constitution anticipated that significant U.S. business with other countries would be concluded as internationally recognized treaties, and it gave the Senate the power to “advise and consent” or to reject treaties, thereby accepting or rejecting them as binding on the country. There are, of course, other examples, some of which will be raised in Chapters Four and Six.

This formal balance of powers has been altered in the contemporary pattern of foreign policy in two basic and interrelated ways. One of these has been the emergence of a much greater concern with American national security than has been the case historically, and the other, which derives at least in part from the higher and more visible foreign policy stakes created by the national security state, has been the rise in partisanship and acrimony in the general political process. Each is sufficiently important to warrant at least some concern in these introductory remarks.

The Rise of the National Security State  The elevation of a concern with the physical security of the American state as a primary foreign policy problem is largely an artifact of the post–World War II international environment (a concern raised more systematically in Chapter Two). The protection of the citizens and territory of the state from physical harm is, of course, the most basic purpose of government in a world organized around sovereign states, but before World War II, it was largely an abstract concern for most Americans most of the time. The United States had no basic, longtime enemy bent on its enslavement or destruction, and even if it had, the country could only be attacked by enemies who would have had to sail across the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean to launch an invasion, a feat beyond the military capabilities of virtually all states. The land borders of the United States, at the same time, were shared with comparatively weak and benign neighbors (Canada and Mexico). In this atmosphere, the concept of national security was far less of a national concern than it has subsequently become.

The end of World War II and the subsequent emergence of the Cold War changed that situation dramatically. The Soviet Union and the United States emerged during the 1940s as the world’s two most powerful and opposed
powers. The basis of their antagonism was ideological—the confrontation between Soviet communism and American capitalist democracy—and it had a significant, even overriding, military content. The Soviets and the Americans came to view themselves as deadly enemies, and with the invention and perfection of missile-delivered thermonuclear arsenals against which neither could possibly defend itself, the question of national security and survival became inextricably intertwined. Foreign policy was no longer simply about diplomacy; it was about national life and death.

This transformation had two basic effects on the domestic political environment. The first was to raise the visibility and importance of foreign policy in a much more prominent and inevitably contentious area, and one on which virtually every political actor or entity would have an opinion and want to play a part. The “Communist threat” to the United States became a ubiquitous part of national existence and dialogue, and maintaining the integrity of the United States against the “red menace” became the highest order of national business. Politicians and other leaders clamored to establish that they were not “soft on communism” and that they were more vigilant in the face of the threat than their political opponents. The result was a level of enthusiasm that sometimes raised serious questions about the levels of personal sacrifice people should endure in areas as diverse as civil liberties and levels of taxation to support the Cold War effort. Inevitably, questions of patriotism entered the mix as well, further dividing an increasingly acrimonious and partisan debate. While the substance of the Cold War division dissipated with the end of operational communism in the Soviet Union over twenty years ago, much of the same tone and even arguments extended to debates about international religious terrorism.

The other effect was structural. An increasing obsession with national security subtly brought with it the rise of something that became known as the national security state. The idea underlying this construct was that the problem of national security was so overwhelming that the political system had to adapt itself to this reality in the process. This transformation became evident as early as 1947, when the United States enacted the National Security Act, which created basic structures such as the National Security Council (discussed more fully in Chapter Five), made foreign and national security policy synonymous for some purposes, and created the Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency as independent executive agencies.

U.S.-Soviet competition gave rise to the creation of a national security state in the United States, but the structures and mind-sets that were adopted for the specific Cold War problem did not disappear with the end of that confrontation. After an essentially awkward decade of the 1990s when the structure of the threat facing the United States became increasingly opaque and debatable, the terrorist attacks of September 11 facilitated the identification of a new object of concern, international religious terrorism, which has become the focus of a new level and quality of operation of the national security state. This transformation is discussed in Chapter Two.
Partisanship and Hyperpartisanship  The appropriate level of concern, exertion, and importance of national security became an important element in the partisan political debate within the United States as well. Over the past two decades, American domestic politics has descended into one of its periodic cycles of extreme partisanship, in this case largely defined along party lines that reinforce and are reinforced by political ideology. While the degree of partisanship—which some have labeled “hyperpartisanship” to emphasize what they view as its extreme quality—currently being displayed in American politics certainly has historical precedents, the degree to which it has spread to foreign policy is abnormal and is the legitimate source of concern in understanding American foreign policy.

Unraveling the detailed nature and dynamics of the current spate of partisanship goes beyond present purposes. The rise of the contemporary partisanship that threatens to stalemate current governance has its most obvious origins in the post–Cold War 1990s. This period witnessed two important and parallel dynamics that helped define the current partisan morass. One influence was an ideological divide among Americans that increasingly defined the Democratic and Republican parties. The other influence was the end of the Cold War and the consequent need to develop a new foreign and national security paradigm to replace the Cold War framework.

The current case of ideological purification of American domestic politics goes back to the 1970s and even before with the emergence and rise of the modern conservative movement. Associated most clearly with the presidency of Ronald Reagan and the so-called “Reagan revolution,” conservatism sought to draw sharp philosophical differences between its adherents and so-called liberals (who now mostly refer to themselves as progressives) and even moderates. Increasingly, the conservatives concentrated their efforts on transforming a Republican Party in which they had shared control and influence with moderates into a conservative-dominated party. In at least partial reaction, the Democratic Party increasingly defined itself in terms of its liberal base, although moderates maintained some influence in Democratic politics. The redefinition around distinctly liberal and conservative political parties helped set in motion the dynamics of contemporary partisan gridlock.

The conservative-liberal division is as old as the United States itself. Conservatives have generally begun from a philosophical preference for limited government and a consequent minimal role for government, expressed as opposition to government “intrusion” on private life. Contemporary conservatives share this position, largely couched in opposition to current or expanded levels of taxation. In current politics, these fiscal conservatives are joined by so-called social conservatives, who favor traditional social and family values such as opposition to abortion. Liberals/progressives, on the other hand, have a much more positive view of the role of government in promoting social values, and especially questions of social equity. These philosophical positions are sometimes reversed when moving from domestic to foreign policy areas, as will be discussed in building profiles of foreign policy beliefs.
The hyperpartisan effects of this process have been especially obvious in the early twenty-first century. It is not an unfair caricature of contemporary politics to typify it as consisting of a liberal Democratic party and a conservative Republican party in which moderates are not revered by either party and in which philosophical oddballs in either party are not tolerated and are subject to purging. In this situation, political action is determined by ideological loyalty manifested along party lines, and the result is extreme, rigid partisanship across the spectrum of political issues. One can argue whether such sharp distinctions are meritorious on domestic issues; applied to foreign policy, the result has clearly been to undermine the consensus and unity of outlook and appearance toward the outside world that previously distinguished American policy, as the May 2011 Netanyahu example demonstrates.

Much of this political change has occurred during a period when the basic American way of organizing its view of the international environment was also undergoing fundamental change. The Cold War period from the latter 1940s until the early 1990s had produced a well-defined and durable consensus on foreign policy that had great support across the political spectrum and thus was not, except at the margins and details of policy, a matter of partisan political disagreement. The foundation of this consensus was agreement on a concrete adversary in the form of Soviet communism, opposition to which galvanized a broad foreign policy consensus.

The end of the Cold War shattered that consensus. The consensual formula lost a recognized opponent around which opinion and action could congeal. The Soviet threat was not replaced by a menacing alternative during the 1990s, and thus there was decreased common ground around which to shape a new policy. This void allowed a debate to emerge over the nature and extent of the threat in the environment. This debate became political and ideological, with conservatives generally arguing that a more ominous and threatening environment required a more robust posture to oppose than liberals, who tended to believe a less threatening environment permitted greater attention to domestic priorities. The absence of any major crises during the 1990s suppressed the rhetorical heat of this emerging ideological division, but it did create the bases for the extension of political disagreement to the foreign policy realm.

The threat, of course, returned with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and with it a consensual, concrete enemy to be opposed and a general agreement on the need to oppose that threat. Development of a coherent, consensual policy, however, had to be attempted in the context of a growing ideologically based partisanship and questionable and potentially divisive foreign policy acts such as the Iraq War. While a general consensus emerged and has been sustained that international religious terrorism remains a durable opponent, there has been a growing, and largely partisan, disagreement about both grand strategy and specific policies for dealing with that enemy. Disagreement about the ongoing prosecution of the War in Afghanistan is an example of this disagreement.
The Intermestic Intersection

The historical barrier between foreign and domestic policies as fair game for public partisan disagreement has clearly been breached: politics clearly no longer ends at the water’s edge. The roots of that breakdown are partially based in changing domestic and international political environments that have eroded earlier inhibitions about publically admitting differences to the world. But that is not all.

Part of the water’s edge analogy was also based in the assumption and perception that foreign policy actions did not have direct domestic effects on individuals or groups of Americans. If different foreign policies do not have varying impacts on different Americans, there is less reason to debate and disagree about them than if these decisions do affect different American differently. However, if a foreign policy decision produces advantages for some Americans and disadvantages for others, then it bridges the gap between foreign and domestic policy and arguably becomes a legitimate part of the partisan political debate.

This is the essence of what makes an issue part international and part domestic—and hence intermestic. When foreign policy decisions by the United States have domestic consequences for some or all Americans, or when domestic decisions have foreign policy consequences, the line between the two environments is blurred, as are the distinctions and boundaries about how they are treated politically. Increasingly, many, if not most, foreign policy decisions have a domestic impact, and many domestic decisions have foreign policy consequences as well. This phenomenon has implications for the content of foreign policy and its impact on people and for how foreign policy is studied.

The Impact of Intermestic Politics  The dynamics of the intersection of domestic and international politics work in both directions: Foreign policy actions can have domestic political consequences, and domestically motivated actions can have foreign policy implications. An example of each direction may clarify the dynamics of intermestic politics.

During the early Clinton administration, there was a concern about balance-of-payments imbalances between the United States and Japan (the value of American goods exported to Japan was far less than the value of Japanese goods imported into the United States). One of the most glaring areas where this disparity occurred was in automobiles: Americans bought a large number of Japanese cars, whereas the Japanese bought very few American automobiles. The issue was contentious. The Japanese argued that their people did not buy U.S.-made cars because they were unattractive: poorly made and producing low gas mileage. Americans countered that the reason for the imbalance was that the Japanese erected high economic barriers to the importation of American autos (for instance, very detailed inspection procedures that added considerable cost to American cars) that made U.S. vehicles artificially uncompetitive in Japan.
The Clinton administration suggested a solution with both foreign and domestic policy implications. To redress the trade balance, President Clinton suggested that the Japanese voluntarily agree to buy and install more American parts on their cars for export (tires, batteries, and the like), thereby increasing American exports to Japan. The Japanese balked at this suggestion, because it would have had an adverse impact on Japanese producers of the same components. When they did so, the President announced that the United States would impose an import tariff on selected Japanese cars. The domestic impact was purposely partisan: The administration announced it would tax Japanese luxury cars (which presumably would affect wealthier and thus more likely Republican consumers), but not the small, inexpensive imports presumably preferred by Democratic voters.

The announcement triggered a political firestorm in both countries. Republicans fumed at the domestic impact of the tariff, and the Japanese argued that it was a violation of antitarriff obligations the United States had agreed to as part of its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). When the Japanese threatened to sue the U.S. government in the WTO, the administration backed away from the tariff, and the crisis passed. While the issue had little long-term impact on U.S.-Japanese relations or the buying habits of American car buyers, it did illustrate how domestic and foreign policy matters can become intertwined.

The situation works in the other direction as well. At about the same time the Japanese automobile brouhaha was going on, the U.S. government, along with its counterparts in Mexico and Canada, was completing work on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The negotiation was complicated in many respects, and in order to gain enough domestic support to get the legislation through the U.S. Congress, a number of compromises were necessary. One such agreement largely overlooked at the time was a domestic issue with what has proven to have great foreign policy cogency: the question of corn subsidies to American agribusiness.

Agricultural subsidies (payments to farmers for growing or, in some cases, not growing crops or livestock) are a venerable domestic political issue. Originally enacted to try to protect small farmers from the vicissitudes of agricultural economics (changing prices for commodities, the effects of weather, and the like), the primary beneficiaries are now large corporate farming holdings known as agribusinesses, which have powerful lobbies to ensure they receive these taxpayer-financed incentives. In the United States, one of the crops that have historically been subsidized most heavily is corn, and the major corn producers were determined to maintain their advantageous subsidies when NAFTA was negotiated. These subsidies flew in the face of the more general intent of the trade agreement, a major part of which was to remove government protections and thus to allow the principle of comparative advantage to operate across the borders of the free trading area.

Corn subsidies became an exception to this rule. Within the NAFTA region, the principal competitors to American producers were small Mexican producers, largely peasant farmers working small pieces of land. The impact of U.S. farm subsidies within the NAFTA framework was to lower the cost of
American corn in Mexico below what Mexican producers could offer, which put many Mexican corn farmers out of business. Many of these farmers, in turn, were further buffeted by economic turmoil in the Mexican financial industry in the 1990s that resulted in the foreclosure of mortgages on many of these farms. As a consequence, many Mexican farmers were thrown off their land and became destitute and homeless. This plight turned into a foreign policy question for the United States because many of them became a core source of Mexican economic immigration to the United States that has fueled the controversy over illegal immigration both within American domestic politics and in relations between the United States and Mexico.

Intermestic Political Science The professional study of American foreign policy also reflects the intermestic distinction. That study has two primary focal points: the international environment that forms the context and set of circumstances in the world to which American foreign policy must react, and the American political system that provides the predispositions and processes by which the United States arrives at political decisions, including those with foreign elements. Within the discipline of political science as it is practiced in the United States, the international environment is the realm of a subdiscipline of international relations (IR), whereas domestic policy processes are within the domain of American politics. The study of American foreign policy falls at the boundary of these two distinct areas of study and concern, with an interest in both but not entirely grounded in either.

Most of the people who study American foreign policy have their primary grounding in one of these areas or the other, and their approaches to the subject reflect their subdisciplinary concentration. Thus, American foreign policy students whose interests are primarily grounded in IR generally emphasize the international dynamics of foreign policy: the nature and structure of international politics as the environment of foreign policy and specific international interactions and outcomes between the United States and foreign countries in particular situations, for instance. Students of foreign policy with grounding in American politics, however, are more likely to focus on American political processes, such as the impact, structure, and dynamics of the American political system on how the United States organizes to deal with the world.

The new era of foreign policy affects students of both American and international politics. Students of IR have historically viewed domestic politics as a sort of “black box” that did not greatly affect the affairs of state; as the Netanyahu-Obama introduction shows, that situation is no longer the case. The intrusion of foreign policy concerns into domestic contexts also provides a new avenue for American politics, since foreign policy concerns affect and activate elements of the American policy community previously not included (all Congressmen must at least pretend to understand world affairs, for instance), and because foreign policy concerns are different from traditional domestic policy areas and thus offer new avenues of inquiry.

The intermestic nature of foreign policy study is primarily interesting to those seeking to carve out a position among those who seek to investigate and
report on foreign policy. Both approaches are relevant, and it is difficult or impossible to understand American foreign policy without a grounding in and appreciation of each. Without an understanding of the international environment, the student or practitioner lacks the context within which to analyze and respond to stimuli that come from beyond the water’s edge, and without an understanding of the American domestic political system, it is equally impossible to know how and to what extent those domestic responses are likely to take.

THINKING ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY

The purpose of this volume is to help introduce students to an understanding of foreign policy and how that policy affects them. To help move in that direction, the rest of this chapter will deal sequentially with two further areas of concern: the specific way that Americans view foreign policy matters (the American political culture) and a framework within which the reader can organize his or her own particular views and those of others about foreign policy (personal inventory). Each contributes to the context for further analyzing and understanding this subject area.

Foreign Policy Culture

No two countries have had identical histories or have evolved in identical ways, and the differences among and between them have consequences regarding how they view and deal with the world. The result is that all countries have their own distinct worldviews that are the composite of influences that one can describe as a foreign policy culture, a set of influences that contributes both to the style and substance of different states’ views of foreign policy. Citizens of a country like Poland, for instance, which has a long history of invasion and counterinvasion, brutal wars, and even periodic dismemberment as an independent entity, have a far different view of the importance of national security and military force than a country like the United States, which has experienced essentially none of the misfortunes that have befallen the Polish people. Different experiences predispose different people in varying ways.

The American foreign policy culture has been conditioned by a number of factors, two of which can be highlighted here for exemplary purposes. The first is the accident of geography, a physical circumstance that has provided the United States with physical protection from foreign predators and, for most of its history, a level of resource abundance that has minimized its needs for exogenous sources of materials necessary for its prosperity. The second is the Anglo-Saxon heritage, the grounding in its beginnings as an outgrowth of the English experience that includes a measured level of suspicion toward military force and a high level of commitment to constitutional rule.

An entire historical approach to the study of international relations focusing on the impact of geography on states flourished in the early twentieth century. Known as geopolitics (a term that has since acquired a broader
meaning to be nearly synonymous with power politics), it examined how things such as size, geographical position, climate, and other factors influenced how countries developed and how they interacted with the rest of the world. Applying the geopolitical perspective to the American experience, two factors stand out as particularly important in how the country developed and how it views the world.

The first geographical impact is \textit{location}. The contiguous forty-eight states of the United States are effectively an island protected from the rest of the world by broad oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, that make it virtually impossible for foreign enemies to contemplate menacing or, in the extreme, invading the American homeland. Combined with benign, less powerful geographically contiguous neighbors, the result has been that the United States has had to expend very little of its history overly concerned about its physical survival, a luxury not available to most European and Asian powers. The last time American soil was meaningfully attacked was during the War of 1812, and until the then–Soviet Union made operational nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of reaching and devastating American territory in the late 1950s, the United States was effectively an impregnable fortress. In that circumstance, the United States never developed the same sense of urgency about matters of self-defense and survival as most other states.

\begin{intersections}

\textbf{Is America Still an Island?}

If taken literally, the question raised in this title is nonsensical, since the only major parts of the United States that are not parts of the North American land mass are Hawaii and the Florida Keys. The idea of the analogy, of course, is figurative, suggesting that, like a large island, the United States is effectively protected from hostile outside intrusion by its geographical location.

Has that comfortable position changed? In recent years, there has been growing pressure on the southern border of the United States in the form of illegal immigration and narcotics trafficking northward. In one sense, this phenomenon is a part of the global trend of population movement from the less to the more developed countries, but it has become an acute intermestic issue in the United States, with a strong domestic element as well as implications for Mexican-American relations.

There is no easy solution to this assault on the impregnability of the American borders. Domestic American politics militates toward tighter border control possibly to the point of sealing the boundary. Such an action would, however, have negative foreign policy effects, including interrupting the legal flow of authorized people and goods and services between the two countries that is part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that includes Mexico and the United States.

\end{intersections}
The second geographic effect is **natural resources**. The North American continent is blessed with natural resources that have made it essentially resource independent for most of American history. That abundance has included mineral and energy resources that were easily and economically available and abundant, as well as rich soils and climate to support agriculture capable of feeding the population without outside sources. The result was that the United States never had to plumb world availability of the things it needed to survive and prosper in the way that such relatively resource-poor countries as Japan and England did. That independence has, of course, partially evaporated. Indigenous, easily (cheaply) available energy resources such as petroleum have largely been exhausted, the need for exotic minerals like titanium that are not found here must be sought elsewhere, and the American appetite for exotic foodstuffs requires importation. Resource abundance has sometimes been a curse as well as a blessing in some places (the Nile River delta has been not only a coveted granary but also a magnet for foreign invaders), but in the U.S. case, its secure location has guarded the country from such disadvantages.

The other conditioning factor arises from the United States’ beginning as an essentially Anglo-Saxon country. Although the United States has become an ethnic and national melting pot wherein Caucasians of European lineage are projected to lose majority status in the next half-century, the country began as an offshoot of Great Britain, with most of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlers sharing a British background. That influence was certainly evident at least through the revolutionary period, with two major impacts worth noting.

One of these influences is an aversion to the military, at least to the possession and retention of military forces during peacetime. In large measure, this aversion is a reflection of the English experience during the Cromwellian period during the seventeenth century, when Oliver Cromwell used British forces to suppress English subjects, a practice ended after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 restored the monarchy and restricted the permanent stationing of British forces on English soil. When the British in effect rescinded this policy in the American colonies after the French and Indian Wars in 1763 (to protect the Americans from the Indians and the French, protections the colonists believed they did not need), this intrusion helped set in motion forces that would lead to the American Revolution a decade later. In the wake of American independence, the United States began a long tradition of maintaining a very minimal standing Army during peacetime, a tradition that was not interrupted until the wake of the Korean War in the 1950s.

The other prominent Anglo-Saxon legacy is a tradition of limited, constitutional government, including a strict adherence to individual political rights. Much of this sentiment was originally directed at the creation of a political system for the new republic in which it would be impossible for an autocratic leader to arise and seize power in a way similar to the perceived tyranny of the English crown that had been the object of the revolution in the first place. This thread is occasionally tested in times of national security crisis, and can be seen in the current debate over dealing with terrorists and
rights they may or may not possess under the law (a problem considered in Chapter Ten).

The elements of foreign policy culture generally have an indirect and implicit impact. While enthusiasts of gun ownership may be able to trace their advocacy back to the influence of views toward limited government and suspicion of governmental authority, specific attitudes are more closely related to individual political belief systems. To help the reader more closely define how he or she feels about foreign policy, it is thus useful to examine the individual bases for such attitudes.

Individual Inventory
There is no immutably correct or “American” view of foreign policy. The foreign policy culture creates parameters within which the debate over proper foreign policy proceeds, but those boundaries are sufficiently spacious to accommodate a variety of contrasting views. Thus, a lively debate and level of disagreement are normal, healthy elements of the discussion of foreign policy. This ongoing debate varies depending on the issues and events to which policy must react, but there are an identifiable series of concerns around which one can organize the debate over any particular issue and which differentiate the general views of different individuals about foreign policy. For present purposes, four admittedly condensed dimensions will be identified, including the basic categories of positions on each dimension. (The categories are adapted from the discussion in Snow, National Security in a New Era.)

Basic Worldview  In the most general terms, worldview asks how people look at the dynamics of the world around them and how they assess that environment. Basic points of differentiation include the acceptability of the world the way it is, the immutability of ongoing conditions, and how or whether changing those conditions is possible or worth the effort. It really consists of two basic judgments about the world: How acceptable is it? What, if anything, can be done to change things about the world that one does not like?

Two basic positions have dominated American debates about worldview. The first, and at least historically more dominant, has been realism. The heart of the realist position is that world politics is a geopolitical (in the broad sense of that term) struggle between sovereign states in an international system of anarchy (the absence of government). The central dynamic of the system is the interplay of states seeking to maximize their individual national interests. Realists accept this situation as normal, and believe that the role of policy makers is to manipulate the system to their state’s maximum advantage. For many adherents and critics alike, the realist position includes a pessimistic view of the human condition and a suspicion of the prospects of change. The term “realism” itself arises from the assertion that its adherents are indeed realistic, seeking to describe and manipulate the world the way it is, rather than how they might like it to be.
The other basic position is idealism. Idealists see the world differently than do realists. Although most idealists accept the realist description of the world as accurate, they contest whether it is either natural or immutable. Idealists accept the world as imperfect, but believe change is both possible and can be effective in improving the human condition. In terms of the operation of the international system, idealists tend to see the condition of international anarchy as a prime structural imperfection that results in the violence (war) that they see as a particular fault in need of reforming.

Both ideas are present in the American foreign policy culture. Partly because it purports to be based in “reality” (as opposed to unreality), realism has generally been the dominant philosophy among policy makers. At the same time, elements in the American tradition suggest an imperfect world in need of change and even an American mandate as part of the U.S. self-image as a world role model. In some cases, the two instincts even intermingle. The George W. Bush administration, for instance, believed that its response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, was a realist reaction to a provocative world, but that response contained the decidedly idealistic assumption that the promotion of political democracy (the American ideal) would be the best way to promote that change.

Political Orientation This dimension refers largely to the role that one believes that government should play in public life, which effectively translates into the question of governmental activism and the degree to which government as opposed to private solutions to problems is preferred. As such, it is a distinction most often applied to domestic politics and the hyperpartisanship of contemporary politics, but it applies to foreign policy questions as well.

Political orientation has become iconic and highly controversial in modern political discourse and is the real basis of the sharp bipartisan clash that has nearly paralyzed the American political system. The basic division is generally made between liberalism and conservatism, but these terms have become little more than pejorative labels without much substantive meaning. By slightly expanding the continuum beyond its liberal-conservative core to five categories across the spectrum, one can at least begin to make some sense about what it means to be of one political orientation or another.

It is arbitrary but necessary to start at one end of the spectrum or the other. The extremities are generally grouped as “left” or “right,” terms which originally described seating in the French Assembly during the revolutionary period, when what are now called liberals (or leftists) sat to the left looking out from the speaker’s rostrum and conservatives (or rightists) sat to the right.

The far left of the spectrum is radicalism. Radicals normally support major (radical), even fundamental political change. The change they prefer is normally associated with an increase in the role of government, and they are distinguished by a willingness to employ drastic, even violent (once again, radical) means to bring about change. True, operational communists can be thought of as radicals, as can contemporary religious jihadists (whose view of government involvement is decidedly theocratic). Almost all violent revolutions have a radical component.

Next to the radicals are the liberals. Classic liberalism starts from two basic premises. First, it emphasizes tolerance of the views and opinions of
others; one synonym for the adjectival use of the term liberal is tolerant, and
the opposite of liberal is illiberal or intolerant, generally pejorative terms. The
other sense of liberal is change-orientation. Liberals generally have a positive
view of social and political change—especially toward a more egalitarian, or
in their view democratic, end, and they share a positive image of the role of
government in promoting these ends. This sense of the term liberal is associ-
ated with both idealism and progressivism. In foreign policy, liberals generally
support cooperative efforts in multilateral settings to global problems.

In the middle of the spectrum is pragmatism. Pragmatists begin from a gen-
erally neutral position on the role of government and social change, but believe
that each case should stand on its own individual merits and should be assessed
outside the bounds of any previous predilections. Historically, the synonyms for
pragmatist have been moderate or centrist and have been considered virtuous.
As the American political system has become more polarized, moderation has
become equated with political blandness, indecisiveness, and even weakness. As
indicated, it has been the so-called “moderate” wings of both political parties
(but especially the GOP) that have suffered the most; many people who consider
themselves moderate also classify themselves politically as independent.

To the immediate right of center are the conservatives. In its literal sense,
the heart of conservatism is the preservation of the status quo: conservatives
seek to “conserve” existing relationships among people and between people
and the government. In operational terms, this translates into a preference for
limited government and a lesser intrusion of government on the lives of indi-

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vidual Americans. This latter distinction varies in practice between the so-called
“fiscal” and “social” conservatives. Fiscal conservatives more consistently
oppose governmental activism because it intrudes on private commerce, whereas
social conservatives are often quite active in the role they seek for government
in matters about which they have particular concerns. Most conservatives do
not extend their opposition to governmental intrusion to matters of national
security and quite readily embrace the idea that governmental power should be
used to intrude on the lives of those accused of opposition to the United States
(for example, accused terrorists). While this position is certainly defensible, it is
hardly conservative. While most conservatives favor limited government, they
tend to support a strong national security stance.

Finally, reactionism stands at the far right end of the spectrum. Reaction-
aries not only want to hold onto the status quo, but also want to work actively
to revert the existing order to some earlier set of relationships between govern-
ment and citizens. They are “reactionary” in the sense that they react nega-
tively to change and desire to effectively “roll back” ongoing governmental
efforts. Like the radicals at the other end of the spectrum, some reactionaries
favor violence (namely, anarchists) as a way to achieve their ends, but that
is not universally true. Within the contemporary political debate, the clearest
example of reactionism is libertarianism.

Two comments should be made about these distinctions. First, the boundar-
ies are broad categories and are not rigid, nor is it always possible to adequately
brand all individuals or groups into one or another category. By the definitions
provided, for instance, the core constituency of the modern Republican Party is
conservative and/or reactionary in philosophy, but which individuals or groups are one or the other? For the most part, it has become a positive attribute to be referred to as a conservative, but is it accurate to describe all Republicans as conservatives (for example, Kentucky’s Rand Paul)? Similarly, one can make an argument that radical *jihadists* are either radicals (they favor change) or reactionaries (the change they favor is toward a past status quo). Second, people are not necessarily politically consistent across the range of political issues. George W. Bush, for instance, consistently thought of himself as a conservative on domestic issues, but elements of his foreign policy were decidedly liberal and activist (for instance, the promotion of democracy in Iraq).

**Approaches to World Involvement**  The third distinction centers on the question of how active Americans should be in the world. Historically, there have been two major positions on American level of involvement in world affairs: internationalism and isolationism. Internationalists, as the name may suggest, view American involvement more positively, believing it is an inevitable and necessary duty of the United States to participate actively in world affairs. The reasons for this belief vary from a sense of obligation arising from America’s unique position and moral place in the world to a simple observation that a country as large, powerful, and influential in the world as the United States, and thus possessing important interests globally, has little alternative to activism in the world. Isolationists, however, start from the same premise of exceptionalism as do the internationalists but reach the opposite conclusion. They believe that American uniqueness and prosperity are best served by concentrating on domestic issues and avoiding, to the greatest extent possible, interaction and involvement with outside influences.

These two positions have been more or less dominant at different times in American history, with the prominence of the United States in the world system a prime indicator of which approach predominates. The isolationist approach, minimizing foreign contacts and especially obligations, clearly dominated at the birth of the republic and is reflected in George Washington’s *Farewell Address*, where he called for friendly relations with all states but “permanent alliances with none,” and in Thomas Jefferson’s first inaugural address, in which he warned against “entangling alliances.” Some degree of isolationism remained throughout the nineteenth century, as the United States spread across the continent and confronted its great internal contradictions (the Civil War) and benefited from a minimal foreign policy. After being drawn reluctantly into World War I, the country returned to its last serious embrace of the isolationist philosophy during the interwar years.

Pearl Harbor and the subsequent German declaration of war on the United States effectively discredited isolationism, and when the United States and the Soviet Union emerged from the war as the two major standing powers in the world, internationalism replaced it as the dominant American approach. The successor to the isolationist preference, so-called “neoisolationism,” preaches a much more diluted form of avoidance of international commitment, seeking to minimize but not to avoid U.S. involvement with the world altogether. Within the internationalist consensus, however, disagreement still
Paul D. Wolfowitz, seen with U.S. troops in this photograph, was deputy secretary of defense from 2001 to 2005 and is widely described as the principal architect of the U.S. War in Iraq. Wolfowitz was a leading neoconservative advocate and advisor to President George W. Bush.

A group of foreign policy advocates began to emerge in the 1980s and come to the fore during the Bush administration who have added to the partisan contentiousness of the foreign policy environment. The core of this group were disaffected Democrats who banded together as “Reagan Democrats” during the 1980s and are known as the neoconservatives (or “neocons”). Their position is distinctive and can be understood in terms of distinctions drawn in the text.

If one combines the concepts of approaches to involvement and participation preference in matrix form, the result is a rough approximation of the foreign orientations of different prominent groups in the United States. The matrix is represented in Figure 1.1.

The traditionally dominant schools of thought are located on the diagonals in Cells 1 and 4. During the Cold War, for instance, the dominant belief was that American involvement in and leadership of the Cold War was both necessary and correct (internationalism) and that the task could only be accomplished through cooperation with friends and allies (multilateralism), the positions represented by Cell 1. By contrast, the early period of American history was dominated by a strong (Continued)
belief in American aloofness from the world (isolationism, now neoisolationism) and that the United States should involve commitments to other countries (unilateralism), represented by Cell 4.

Neoconservatism is represented by Cell 2 of the matrix. The neoconservatives are specifically and explicitly internationalist in their orientation; during the Cold War, for instance, their lineal predecessors were highly militant anticommunists who believed in aggressively confronting communist expansionism. Since the end of the Cold War, they have switched their emphasis to the Middle East, where they are pro-Israeli and antiterrorist, with a particular emphasis on the promotion of the democratization of the Islamic Middle East as a way to achieve stability in the region by undercutting the terrorist appeal and thus reinforcing the security of Israel (their pro-democracy advocacy makes them idealists in realist-idealist terms, a categorization most of them reject). They are, however, also openly unilateralist in orientation, quick to assert that the United States should relegate to secondary importance multilateral considerations when those conflict with what they perceive to be American interests. This unilateralist penchant, it might be added, contributed to the international unease with Bush foreign policy, and the professed intention of the Obama administration to move the United States back toward a Cell 1 orientation was a large factor in international enthusiasm for the Obama candidacy.

exists on how that interaction should occur and using which instruments of policy, which form the last two dimensions of the personal inventory.

Participation Preference

This dimension refers to preferences about the quality and nature of American interaction with the world, and it is a distinction that applies regardless of the approach to involvement one espouses. The two basic preferences are multilateralism and unilateralism, and both titles are descriptive. On the one hand, multilateralists prefer a cooperative approach wherein American policy and actions should, generally and wherever possible, be developed and coordinated with the policies of others, especially American friends and allies. The underlying assumptions of this approach are that American interests include keeping friends (which cooperation nurtures) and that the wisest and most durable policy solutions result from obtaining as broad an international consensus as possible. Unilateralists, on the other hand, believe
that the United States should place its primary emphasis on its own national interests and should act on that basis, quite apart from what other countries may feel on a subject. Unilateralists are thus more willing to defy international opinion when that opinion is at cross-purposes with what are perceived as American interests, and it denies that cooperation is, in and of itself, an interest.

During the George W. Bush presidency, when the unilateralists had significant influence on foreign policy decisions, these two positions were portrayed as being more fundamentally at odds than they in fact are. Multilateralists, for instance, prefer solutions with maximum international support, but they will support unilateral decisions when international consensus is impossible. They will, however, ask if the fact that everyone else opposes a policy might be a warning sign about the virtue of that policy. Unilateralists prefer broadly agreed-upon solutions, but they are more willing to accept individual national responses to policy. The difference thus boils down to a more subtle distinction about preferences than it does to a basic division.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter was introduced with a foreign policy event—the reaction of the Obama administration to a visit to Washington by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2011—that was intended to highlight emphases in the chapter. The thrust of the example was on the interchange as both a domestic and an international event. The domestic reaction centered on the way the administration dealt with the unofficial visit of a foreign leader with a very close relationship to the United States who was in the country soliciting support among supporters of Israel for particular policies opposed by the American government. The international dimension centered on the Israeli policy and disagreements between and among Americans and Israelis on how best to deal with the problem. The policy dispute crossed the intermestic intersection because of the domestic importance of support for Israel in the United States and partisan attempts to portray the Obama administration favorably or unfavorably for domestic political advantage by both the Israeli and American opponents of Obama.

The disagreement between the two countries also reflects the way the United States approaches foreign policy, the idea of a foreign policy culture. While the United States has been critical of the Israeli settlement policy, its opposition has been tempered by a level of sympathy for the Israelis that is not present in all countries, notably not in Europe, who have close relations with the Middle East. In turn, how individual Americans view this issue is a reflection on the individual collection of values that individuals have about foreign policy—the personal inventory.

Within the themes such as intermestic politics and hyperpartisanship introduced in this chapter, two major points of emphasis emerge that are reflected in the way that analysts approach and analyze American foreign policy, and each is a major vantage point from which the rest of the text...
proceeds. These two major vantage points are foreign policy processes and foreign policy issues. Following Chapter Two, which sets the historical context within which each of the vantage points must be viewed, the text is divided into two parts, one devoted to each vantage point and reflecting the themes already introduced.

Part One (Chapters Three through Eight) deals with foreign policy processes, as its title advertises. Chapter Three introduces the idea of policy process as an analytical tool for studying foreign policy and offers a sample of ways analysts have devised to conduct those studies. This chapter helps create a framework for studying the various formal institutional (the President and executive agencies assisting him and the Congress) and informal (interest groups and think tanks, the public and the media) actors in the other chapters of the process part. In Part Two, the emphasis shifts to different foreign policy issue areas. Two chapters each are devoted to the most prominent substantive aspects of policy: national security and economic issues. The final chapter addresses a number of important nontraditional policy matters, sometimes called trans-state issues.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
This chapter represents the beginning of the path of examination of study of American foreign policy. As will be the case in subsequent chapters, this final section consists of three elements: an application of the principles discussed in the chapter, some study questions to help organize an understanding of the chapter, and some selected bibliographical references.

APPLICATION: YOUR PERSONAL INVENTORY AND THE OBAMA-NETANYAHU EXAMPLE
Using the following questions as a guide, rate yourself on the four dimensions of the personal inventory on foreign policy attitudes:

1. Basic worldview: Should the basic orientation of policy makers be to adapt to and make the best of the world situation as it is (realism), or should they primarily try to change world conditions (idealism)?
2. Political orientation: Should government seek to change policy greatly through any method (radicalism); promote change toward social justice through moderate, tolerant reform action (liberalism); view situations and the desirability of change solely on the individual merits in situations (pragmatism); seek to preserve existing relationships within a limited role for government (conservatism); or seek to remove or roll back existing conditions (reactionism)?
3. Approaches to World Involvement: Should the United States play a basically activist leadership role in the world (internationalism), or should it seek to avoid international involvement wherever possible (neoisolationism)?
4. Participation Preference: Should the United States generally try to build international consensus before acting (multilateralism), or should it look at its own interests first with less regard for international preferences (unilateralism)?
After assembling your own personal inventory, apply the inventory to the principals in the Israeli-U.S. example, Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu, on the question of the two-state solution. The Obama position is essentially that resistance to creating a Palestinian state is “unsustainable,” a deal breaker, in trying to achieve an internationally acceptable Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. The Netanyahu position is that a settlement based on the pre-1967 borders is “indefensible,” because it would jeopardize Israeli national security. Build your inventory as best you can given the limited amount of information you have about the actors. Compare the two profiles. Compare the profiles to your own. Whose comes closer to yours? How do you feel about the issue? Does this analysis help clarify your thought processes?

**STUDY/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the dispute between Israel and the United States that came to the fore in March 2010. On what issue does the dispute rest? Given the nature of the dispute and the reasons for Netanyahu’s visit to Washington, what was the U.S. government response, and was it appropriate?

2. What are the various environments in which American foreign policy is made? How have they changed over time? Include in your answer the changing concept of the “water’s edge”?

3. Discuss the changing nature of the international environment for foreign policy, including sovereignty, state centrism, and the rise of nonstate actors.

4. How has the domestic environment changed since the end of the Cold War? Specifically, what have been the causes and consequences of the rise in extreme partisanship?

5. Discuss how changes in the domestic and international environments have affected the “intermestic intersection” where much foreign policy is made?

6. How are the environmental distinctions important in understanding how foreign policy is studied? Elaborate.

7. Describe and discuss the dimensions of the personal inventory for determining orientations toward foreign policy.

**CORE SUGGESTED READINGS**

Carr, E. H. *The Twenty-Years Crisis: 1919–1939*. London: Macmillan, 1939. This is the classic critique of the idealism that predominated during the period between the world wars on international relations, emphasizing how the world drifted toward World War II. Its critique and its advocacy of what became realism still have considerable relevance to understanding contemporary politics.

Fromkin, David. *The Independence of Nations*. New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1981. This slender volume written by a leading international lawyer is one of the clearest expositions about the nature of a state-centered international system grounded in the principle of sovereignty.

Kagan, Robert, and William Kristol (eds.). *Present Dangers: Crises and Opportunities in American Foreign and Defense Policy*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000. At the time of its publication, this book was considered the “bible” of neoconservatism. While its authors’ analyses of particular problems are somewhat dated, its underlying themes remain central to the neoconservative value system.

Singer, Max, and the Estate of the Late Aaron Wildavsky. *The Real World Order: Zones of Peace, Zones of Turmoil* (Rev. ed.). Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1996. This is one of the most original yet compelling analyses of the contemporary world environment. The categories and discussions remain relevant and intriguing a decade-and-a-half after they were originally published.

**ADDITIONAL READINGS AND REFERENCES**


Walt, Stephen M. “Taming American Power.” *Foreign Affairs* 84, 5 (September/October 2005), 105–120.