

American Foreign Policy & The Muslim World

Edited by

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Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

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السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية والعالم الإسلامي

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Chapter One

American Foreign Policy: Dynamics of Domestic Sources

Dr. Ishtiaq Hossain



American Foreign Policy: Dynamics of Domestic Sources

Introduction

Systematic analysis of American foreign policy requires answers to the following basic questions: What are the most important sources of American foreign policy? Does the US always respond to the international context while making its foreign policy? Or are the main sources of American foreign policy to be found within the domestic context of America? If that is the case, then who plays the key role in making America's foreign policy? Is it the president of the United States? What kind of role does the US Congress play in the country's foreign policy making? Or is Washington's foreign policy a product of the "tussle" between the White House and the Congress? What about the role of special interest groups? Do these mostly Washington, D.C., based lobbyists influence the foreign policy-making elites of the country? What about the role of public opinion? As a democratic country, shouldn't this play a key role in Washington's foreign policy? Does American business community influence Washington's foreign policy-makers? Answers to these questions are considered vital in understanding and explaining US foreign policy.

This chapter addresses the above-mentioned questions while analysing the main domestic sources of US foreign policy. It is argued here that in order to comprehend and explain the foreign policy of the US - the world's lone super power - we need to pay special attention to its domestic sources. This is because as Walter Lafeber points out, domestic interests and security remain the only constant in US foreign policy-making especially since 9/11.¹ Therefore, while any explanation of US foreign policy cannot afford to ignore the external context of America's foreign policy, especially when a threat to its national security is located beyond its borders, neither can the domestic political context be ignored in such analysis. For American foreign policy, decisions are the products of the country's domestic political process and considerations even when the US tries to respond to any sets of events beyond its borders. The main aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the domestic sources of American foreign policy with a special emphasis on the governmental structures.

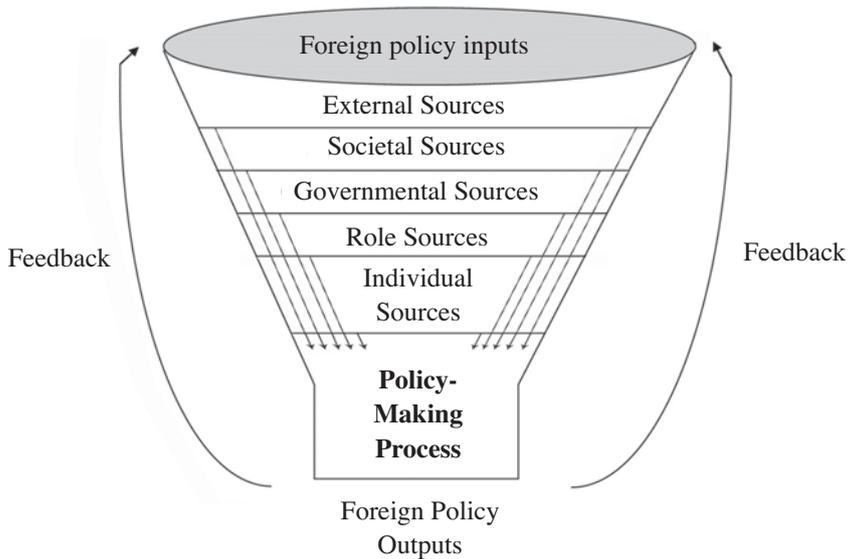
Sources of American Foreign Policy: "The Funnel of Causality"

James Rosenau identifies the following five main types of independent variables in foreign policy formulation of a country: individual, role, governmental, societal and systemic.² Eugene R. Wittkopf, Charles W. Kegley,



Jr., and James M. Scott also acknowledge the importance of those sources in the making of US foreign policy. Based on Rosenau's classification scheme of sources of foreign policy, Wittkopf et al. developed a "funnel of causality" to explain American foreign policy.³ This is presented in Figure (1). As the "funnel of causality" depicts, there are five main sources of American foreign policy: the external environment, the societal environment of the nation, the governmental setting in which policy making occurs, the roles occupied by policy makers and the individual characteristics of foreign policy-making elites. Factors located in these categories are considered inputs into the foreign policy-making of the US which shape and direct actions of the United States abroad.

Figure (1)



Source: Eugene R. Wittkopf, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and James M. Scott, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process*, 7th edition (Singapore: Thomson, 2008): 18.

External Environment

No country's foreign policy can be considered without reference to its external environment. The United States is no exception. According to Rosenau, for America, the external source category refers to all aspects of its external environment or any actions occurring abroad that condition or otherwise influence the choices made by its decision-makers.⁴ In other words, it refers to the attributes of the international system and to the characteristics and behaviour of the states and non-state actors comprising it. The idea that the foreign policy of the US is conditioned by the world around it has a very long tradition. As

pointed out by Wittkopf et al., the following factors in the international system affect American foreign policy: changing distribution of power, deepening interdependence, rapidly expanding globalisation etc. But it needs to be pointed out that all these external factors can become determinants only as they affect the mind, the heart, and the will of the American decision-makers.⁵ And they act according to the domestic political process and priorities. Therefore, there is no escape from the fact that an understanding of the domestic factors is of absolute necessity to explain American foreign policy.

Domestic Sources

The domestic sources of US foreign policy are divided into the following: societal, governmental, role and individual. The first broad category of domestic sources is the societal one.

Societal Sources

The societal source category comprises those characteristics of the domestic social and political system of the United States that shape its orientation toward the world. In this section, the role of Americans' values and beliefs, public opinion, and interest groups are discussed.⁶ The role of the mass media in the making of US foreign policy is analysed in chapter four of this book by Alison Weir.

The possession of immense power and the belief in a universal mission by a nation have the potential to produce great good and great harm.⁷ One such value deeply revered in the US is the notion of "exceptionalism." This notion is founded on the following argument: the extension of American freedom required death and destruction, and that the idea of liberty should be brought to the darkened areas of the world. Therefore, exceptionalism is not considered a burden by the Americans, but a jet-powered thrust that helped them throughout the world to do both well and good for everyone who was not evil in the eyes of those Americans.⁸ As a result, US foreign policy frequently tries to have it both ways, to assume that America's national interest and the greater good of mankind are one and the same.⁹ Therefore, when states do not agree with the US on issues considered vital to Washington, President George W. Bush's warning: "you are either with us or with the terrorists" sounds ominous. Unfortunately, exceptionalism as practiced by the Bush administration is regarded as arrogance by many countries.¹⁰

One major piece of document that directs American foreign policy since 9/11 is the National Security Strategy (NSS) statement of September 2002, which focuses on pre-emption, unilateralism, and military hegemony. It, however, also



affirms the following traditional objectives: “Political and economic freedom; peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity.” The United States, according to the 2002 NSS, “must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people.”¹¹

The 2002 NSS indicates a clear tension between idealism and realism in the conduct of the nation’s foreign policy, which has always been present in the history of the United States. The document reflects the most enlightened and constructive impulses of the land of Jefferson, Lincoln and the Marshall Plan. The 2002 NSS dedicates the American nation to extending the benefits of freedom, democracy, prosperity and the rule of law to struggling countries around the globe. At other parts, however, this document sounds more like a pronouncement, that only the Roman Emperor or Napoleon might have produced. For reasons unique to the American political experience, US nationalism - that is, the factors that define and differentiate the United States as a self-contained political community - has historically been defined in terms of both adherence to a set of liberal, universal political ideals and a perceived obligation to spread these norms internationally.¹² The 2002 NSS document embodies the belief that if American values - democracy, human rights, liberty and free speech - have worked very well for the US, there is no reason why these should not work well for the rest of the world. Therefore, in the post-9/11 era, the rest of the world has no choice but to accept these American values. Those who do not accept these values, as Seymour Martin Lipset points out, are to be considered “un-American.”¹³ In essence, the 2002 NSS is an attempt to put altruism on top of basic, self-interested power-seeking behaviour while allowing Americans to believe that their intentions lack a selfish dimension and are truly good for others.

Adam Quinn is of the opinion that the 2002 NSS, even as it calls for a balance of power that favours freedom, in truth rejects a balance of power approach to international order.¹⁴ Such rejection of a genuine balance of power approach represents a coherent evolution from America’s long tradition of foreign policy thought. Quinn goes on to argue, that emerging from its founding tradition of separation, US strategic thought was influenced by both Theodore Roosevelt’s advocacy of military strength in the service of good and Woodrow Wilson’s ideological conviction that American engagement in the world could be made conditional on the pursuit of global reform in line with an idealised conception of American values and practices.¹⁵

Those principles were invoked by the Bush administration in 2003 to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq. However, as Bruce Russett argues, most democratic peace theorists do not endorse democratic change by great power external military intervention.¹⁶ According to him in such scenarios, success is



difficult to achieve and it usually at a high cost. Moreover, the conditions in Iraq were not promising, even had the occupation been carried out more competently. He points out that greater success in democratisation has been achieved by UN peacekeeping operations, and by various regional organisations using a variety of peaceful measures to ensure free elections, constrain authoritarian leaders, and empower democratic forces. International organisations, notably those whose membership is largely composed of democracies, are especially likely to succeed in promoting democracy, and not unilateral military action like that carried out by the Americans in Iraq.¹⁷

Bruce Russett's arguments are supported by an empirical study carried out by Steven F. Finkel, Anibal Perez-Linan and Mitchell A. Seligson.¹⁸ In an extensive study looking at the impact of US Agency for International Development (USAID)'s financial assistance promoting democracy, they found that those expenditures "exerted a significant, albeit modest, impact on democratic outcomes as measured by both Freedom House and Polity IV scores."¹⁹ Their study produced four major results. First, contrary to the generally negative conclusions from previous research, there are clear and consistent impacts of USAID democracy assistance on democratisation in recipient countries. Second, significant lagged effects were found, suggesting that democracy programmes may take several years to mature. Third, the results were found to hold under a variety of specifications, capturing the possibility of endogenous funding, diminishing returns, and alternative standardisation of the aid variables. Fourth, the pattern of effects suggests that with one notable exception - USAID expenditures targeted for specific sub-sectors such as elections, civil society, and free media tend to have the largest impact on the respective dimensions of democratic performance.²⁰

Public Opinion

Researches carried out by the scholars of American foreign policy provide split judgment on the question of how much influence public opinion has on American foreign policy. On the one hand, they have found that Americans let the executive branch conduct the country's foreign business generally unconstrained, allowing the White House far more latitude on foreign policy as an area of special expertise. Gabriel Almond and Hans J. Morgenthau represent this dominant "realist" view that American public opinion on foreign policy is unstable, incoherent and consequently largely influential.²¹ On the other hand, it has also been argued by some political scientists that it is not possible to conduct successful foreign policy without the support of American foreign policy. For example, Alan D. Monroe, Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, Bruce Russett and Eugene Wittkopf argue that public opinion on foreign policy either should or in fact do affect US foreign policy.²²



In an empirical study, Lawrence R. Jacobs and Benjamin I. Page²³ find that the American business groups with international linkages try the most to influence the US foreign policy-makers in the executive and legislative branches of American government. The most surprising finding of their research is the apparent weakness of public opinion's influence on American foreign policy-makers. According to their research, the public does not appear to exert substantial, consistent influence on the makers of foreign policy.²⁴ One would expect that in a country that prides itself on being democratic, its people's wishes would be taken seriously by foreign policy decision-makers. But the Jacobs and Page findings suggest otherwise.

Daniel Yankelovich also argues that most of the time, the public views do not count, either as a boost or as a constraint and policy-makers can and do ignore them with impunity.²⁵ At other times, however, as during the Vietnam War, public opinion gathers enough momentum to start exerting a decisive influence on policy-makers. Matthew A. Baum's research on "Operation Restore Hope" shows that public opinion constrains the use of force.²⁶ He argues that unless a president is highly confident of success, an attentive public can, when the strategic stakes are relatively modest, inhibit him from undertaking risky foreign policy initiatives, including using military force.²⁷ Daniel Yankelovich identifies the following three factors that that can help determine whether matters are likely to head:

1. The size of the public majority in favour of or opposed to a particular policy.
2. The intensity and urgency of its opinions.
3. Whether it believes that the government is responsible for addressing them.²⁸

Unless all three conditions have been met, the tipping point has not been reached and public opinion will not have much impact on policy.

The American public felt secure, prosperous, and confident as the last century came to a close. They saw the US as the world's most powerful country. Americans viewed economic rather than military power as the most significant measure of global strength. Apprehension about economic competition from Japan or Europe had dissipated, as had concerns about immigration. They supported measures to thwart terrorists, prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and keep defence strong. Significantly however, they also shied away from deploying US troops to foreign soil.²⁹

The confidence shown by the American public in the country's foreign policy, however, would undergo a sea-saw change within the first few years of the new century. The 9/11 attacks and the two wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq, that



followed not only raised the stakes for voters as they considered their choices for president in 2004, but also created deep divisions and conflicting sentiments over US foreign policy. In fact, for the first time since the end of Vietnam War in 1975, foreign affairs and national security issues loomed larger than economic concerns in the 2004 presidential election. The threat of terrorism influenced public attitudes toward the use of force in the post-9/11 period. According to an opinion poll released in August 2004, 88% of Americans rated “taking measures to protect the US from terrorist attacks” as a top foreign policy priority.³⁰ The public had deep reservations about the war in Iraq but there was sustained support for the doctrine of pre-emption. A 60% majority believed that the use of force could sometimes be justified against countries that might seriously threaten the US. This showed a slight decline from the 67% that expressed that view in May 2003, when most Americans judged the war in Iraq a success.

Public discontent with the Bush administration’s Iraq policy is not a recent phenomenon. In a survey of foreign policy attitudes, conducted during 8-18 July 2004, among 2,009 adults nationwide, a solid 59% majority faulted the Bush administration for being too quick to use force rather than trying hard enough to reach diplomatic solutions. A growing minority (37%) believed that the administration had paid too little attention to the interests and views of US allies in conducting foreign policy.³¹ Evaluations of President Bush’s handling of Iraq itself remained critical in 2004. According to a public opinion poll on Iraq, conducted 5-10 August among 1,512 adults, more than a month after the transfer to the new Iraqi government, 52% disapproved of the way Bush was managing that situation.³²

Following the adoption of the policy of “surge” - deployment of nearly 30,000 American troops in Iraq - public opinion polls suggest that there has been a modest rise in optimism about conditions in Iraq. Four-in-ten Americans say that the US military effort in Iraq is going very or fairly well, up 10 points from February 2007, when positive perceptions reached an all-time low.³³ However, opinions about the impact of Bush’s troop surge in Iraq, like every other issue relating to the war, are deeply divided along partisan lines.

Most Republicans (53%) believe that the troop increase put in place by George W. Bush is already making things better in Iraq, and 68% say that the surge will make things better in the long run. Democrats are dubious that the troop increase is either currently improving the situation in Iraq, or will have a positive effect in the future.³⁴ Independents are generally sceptical the troop increase is making things better now, but 38% believe that the surge will make things better in the long run.



Public opinion polls conducted in the US demonstrate the public's disillusionment with American foreign policy. The American public seems to be questioning not just whether current policies are working, but if the US can have an effective foreign policy at all. The American public shows an increasing loss of faith in Washington's many policy options, while public approval in almost every policy area has declined.

For example, since 2005 there have been declines in those who think any of the following strategies could do a "great deal" to strengthen US security:³⁵

- Supporting women's rights in Muslim countries, down 14 points from 41% in the summer of 2005 to 27% in the fall of 2007.
- Showing more respect for the views and needs of other countries, down 11 points from 49% in the summer of 2005 to 38% in the fall of 2007.
- Improved effectiveness of intelligence operations, down 9 points from 65% in the summer of 2005 to 56% in the fall of 2007.
- Helping Muslim countries develop economically, down 8 points from 27% in the summer of 2005 to 19% in the fall of 2007.
- Tighter controls on immigration, down 6 points from 58% in the summer of 2005 to 52% in the fall of 2007.
- Maintaining American military edge by exploring new technologies or placing weapons in space, down 6 points from 40% in the summer of 2005 to 34% in the fall of 2007.
- Tighter control over foreign students in the US, down 5 points from 58% in the summer of 2005 to 52% in the fall of 2007.

Iraq continues to be the central foreign policy issue for the American public. Given the ferocious debate of the past six months - the much anticipated Petraeus report, Democrats' repeated attempts to set a withdrawal deadline or cut off funds and President Bush's announcement of a troop drawdown in 2008 - its remarkable how little public attitudes on the war have changed.³⁶ In spite of the debate on these issues, the fundamental public attitudes on Iraq have not changed in the last six months. More than two-thirds of Americans believe that US troops should be withdrawn from Iraq within a year. Nearly 60% of them believe America's safety from terrorism does not depend on the country's success in Iraq. Half do not believe the US can do much to control the violence or create a stable democracy.

The pessimism about Iraq, and flagging confidence in solutions offered by the government, is troubling because it suggests that the American public has not heard anything to make them think America's global position is likely to improve - either from Congress, the White House or the presidential candidates.



If anyone has presented a credible way out from the troubles facing the American nation, the public has not yet acknowledged it. If the public's concerns on foreign affairs have a place on the American foreign policy making, then the fact that none of the trends have been positive should be a matter of grave concern.

Interest Groups

President Dwight Eisenhower, just before leaving his office, had warned the American public of the influence of special interest groups on American foreign policy. In particular, he warned of the influence of defence-related industries on American foreign policy. True to Eisenhower's warnings, as many as 34,000 lobbying firms are located along Washington's now-famous K Street. They lobby members of Congress, officials of the executive branch and other officials of the federal government in Washington on behalf of labour unions, private companies, ethnic and religious groups, foreign countries and every imaginable group. Over the years, these lobbying groups have contributed to the creation of such a complex labyrinth in policy making in Washington that charges have been laid that these special interest groups have unusual influence on Washington's policy making. More specifically, questions have been asked as to what extent ethnic identity groups are able to influence US foreign policy. Trevor Rubenzer employs Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to examine six of the most widely used criteria found in the literature.³⁷ Results indicate that, of the six criteria, only organisational strength and level of political activity are necessary conditions for successful influence. No individual factors are sufficient causes of influence.

Among the various ethnic groups in the United States, it is thought that Jewish groups like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Christians United for Israel (CUFI), Israel Policy Forum are resourceful and possess the necessary organisational strength to protect and advance the interests of Israel. Lobbyists representing various other ethnic groups are also slowly becoming vocal. According to a study done by Jason A. Kirk, an increasingly professional and well-funded "Indian lobby" among the Indian-Americans, was critical in pressing the members of Congress to support the US-India Nuclear Agreement.³⁸ It must also be noted here that think tanks like the Heritage Foundation, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Endowment, American Enterprise Institute (AEI) etc., are increasingly playing an influential role in American foreign policy making. In a notable study, Howard J. Wiarda tests the hypothesis that the think tanks play an important role in American foreign policy-making. He concludes that they may well become further instruments of divisiveness, fragmentation, and disarray that now characterise American foreign policy



making.³⁹ Muslims in America are now beginning to understand the American political system well. And since 9/11, they too have been organising to influence the America's Middle East policy. Though Ahrar Ahmad's chapter in this book details their attempts, it is to be pointed out here that they have a long way to go before making themselves as significant as groups like AIPAC.

In recent years, a number of well-known scholars such as William Martin, Stephen Zunes, Jeremy Mayer and Walter Russell Mead have analysed the role of the Christian Right groups on American foreign policy.⁴⁰ They agree that the Christian Right have become an enduring and important part of the social and political landscape of the United States. This is so, particularly, since the election of a Republican majority in Congress in 1994. However, it must be pointed out that the success of the Christian Right was neither a sudden occurrence nor an accident of the takeover of Congress by the Republican Party in 1994. This was as a result of a calculated, sophisticated strategy to build a disorganised social movement into a formidable party faction with a grassroots oriented network of activists.⁴¹

For a long time, members of the Christian Right have been actively involved in efforts to influence a wide range of American policies, i.e., support for Israel, arms control and defence, and funding for international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations. On most international issues, the motivation of the Christian Right is the same as that driving its domestic agenda: distrust of secular government, opposition to any perceived threat to traditional family values, determination to preach and practice their beliefs without hindrance or restriction; and less obvious to most secular observers, a conviction that increasing globalisation is a fulfilment of dire Biblical prophecies foreshadowing the return of Christ and the onset of Armageddon.⁴²

The following are some of the key organisations which play an important role in the Religious Right: Moral Majority (closed down in 1986) led by late Jerry Falwell, Christian Coalition (started by Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed), Focus on the Family (led by radio broadcaster James Dobson), Family Research Council (led by Gary Bauer), Concerned Women for America, and the American Family Association. According to William Martin, the ability to mobilise the electorate rapidly, coupled with an effective lobbying apparatus, has endowed the Christian Right with a level of influence that is unique in American politics.⁴³ This has been particularly so during the presidency of President George W. Bush.



The Christian Right groups, also known as “Christian Zionists,” have been staunch supporters of Israel and its continued illegal occupation of the Arab lands captured in the 1967 War.⁴⁴ However, it is to be noted that in spite of the pressure brought to bear on various American administrations by pro-Israeli groups like AIPAC, in the past, Republican administrations had shown the ability to overcome pressures from various Zionist organisations on matters considered vital to America’s interests in the Middle East. For example, the Eisenhower administration put pressure on Israel to withdraw from Sinai captured during the Suez crisis in 1956; the Reagan administration sold AWAC surveillance aircraft to Saudi Arabia in 1981 despite strong lobbying from Jewish interest groups; and the administration of George H. Bush froze the \$10 billion loan guarantee to build Jewish settlements on the West Bank until after the crucial 1992 Israeli elections.

In an interesting article, Stephen Zunes points out that various Republican administrations in the past could follow such policies because a sizeable majority of Jewish Americans tended to vote Democratic. Therefore, the Republicans had little to lose, for occasionally challenging Israel.⁴⁵ However, this is no longer the case. In recent years, in particular during the presidency of George W. Bush, it has been shown that the Republican Party has a significant pro-Israel constituency that it cannot ignore.

Stephen Zunes provides a number of examples to make the point that the Christian Right is more significant than Jewish Zionists in the formulation of US policy toward Israel.⁴⁶ One of the examples cited by Zunes is that of the change in Washington’s insistence that Israel stop its April 2002 military offensive in the West Bank. Following its announcement, the White House received more than 100,000 e-mails from Christian conservatives protesting its criticism of Israel. The Republican-led Congress ignored the objections of the State Department and adopted resolutions supporting Israel’s actions and blaming the violence exclusively on the Palestinians.

The support of the Christian Right for Israel is based on a theological doctrine known as “Dispensationalist Pre-millennialism.” As William Martin explains, in this view, a complete restoration of the nation of Israel, including the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, is “a prerequisite to the end of the present age (or dispensation), which will usher in the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of his millennial reign. Therefore, unless they wish to be complicit in trying to thwart God’s grand plan, Christians must support Israel.”⁴⁷

Another set of special interest groups whose influence on America’s Middle East policy has been intensely examined recently by American scholars is the pro-Israel interest groups. This intense debate was sparked off by the publication



of an article written by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt in the *London Review of Books*.⁴⁸ Mearsheimer and Walt were engaged by the *Atlantic Monthly* to write this article for the magazine. However, when the article was submitted to the editors for publication, they declined to publish the article. Undaunted by this turn of events, the authors put their entire manuscript on Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government website.⁴⁹ Also, they sent their piece to the editors of the *London Review of Books*, where their article was finally published.⁵⁰ Mearsheimer and Walt took the points of view of their critics and published an expanded version of their original article in the *Middle East Policy*.⁵¹ Finally, a book entitled *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, based on previous articles, was published on this subject.⁵²

The Israel Lobby deals with the complex relationship between American domestic politics and US policy in the Middle East. In this book, Mearsheimer and Walt, among other issues, define the Israel lobby; discuss its operations; describe the lobby's efforts to stifle the public criticism of Israel; question the continued US military and economic assistance to Israel because it is the dominant military power in the region; describe America's partnership with Israel as "strategic burden" rather than "strategic alliance," and claim that the Israel lobby was the principal force behind the decision to invade Iraq. All these arguments go against the conventional wisdom about Israel in the US.

The publication of their articles and the book, therefore, created a fire storm in the American academic world. Among other things, they have been criticised for showing "a stunning display of intellectual arrogance,"⁵³ being "confused,"⁵⁴ "grossly over-blowing" the Israel lobby's influence on Washington's Middle East Policy,⁵⁵ blamed for "delaying" rather than "hastening" new American policies in the Middle East,⁵⁶ and have been accused of misreading recent history to tell a story about the source of America's problems in the Middle East.⁵⁷ It needs to be pointed out here that Mearsheimer and Walt are not alone in pointing out the excessive influence of AIPAC and other pro-Israel groups on Washington's Middle East policy. George Soros, in an article published in the *New York Review of Books*, points out that "AIPAC's mission is to ensure American support for Israel but in recent years it has overreached itself. It became closely allied with the neo-cons and was an enthusiastic supporter of the invasion of Iraq."⁵⁸ It is too early to draw a curtain on discussion on contributions made by Mearsheimer and Walt to such an important issue in American foreign policy. But one thing is clear: they have broken a taboo on any public discussion on Israel lobby's influence on America's Middle East Policy.



Governmental Sources

Governmental sources are those features of a nation's domestic governmental system that shape its foreign policy. Here, therefore, first, the roles of some key governmental institutions like those of the President, Congress, and the National Security Council (NSC) are analysed here first. Any examination of American foreign policy requires an in-depth analysis of other factors located in the society which play significant roles in shaping the country's foreign policy. Therefore, analysis here also pays attention to the roles of public opinion, and interest groups in influencing American foreign policy-making process. Before we undertake a full analysis of the role of governmental institutions in foreign policy-making, it is logical that the constitutional provisions, which assign specific powers to these institutions are analysed first.

American Foreign Policy and Constitutional Provisions

It goes without saying that the way a government is structured has enormous influence on the foreign policy-making of a nation. But the influence of each structure of a government in foreign policy-making varies from country to country. It is often maintained that the American system of government is based on the principle of "check and balance." This was made so by the American founding fathers because they did not wish to see any branch of the American government behave as the "imperial" power and be the dominant one within the decision making process. However, as Bruce Jentleson points out, rather than separation of power as far as foreign policy is concerned, it really is much more a case of "separate institutions sharing powers."⁵⁹ Therefore, it is not surprising that under the Constitution, the power of American foreign policy making is shared by different branches of the government. Constitutionally, both the executive and legislative branches of the US government share power on foreign policy. These powers are to be treated as "living organisms" which have been continuously developed by the executive and legislative branches of the government since America's independence. Under the executive branch's active guidance, in addition to the Department of State and the Department of Defence, the NSC (created by an executive order of Harry S. Truman in 1947) has emerged as a key institution in America's foreign policy-making.



Table (1): The Presidential and Congressional Powers

	Power Granted To	
	President	Congress
War Power	Commander in chief of armed forces	Provide for the common defence; declare war
Treaties	Negotiate Treaties	Ratification of treaties by two-thirds majority (Senate)
Appointments	Nominate high-level government officials	Confirm president's appointments (Senate)
Foreign Commerce	No explicit powers, but treaty negotiation and appointment powers pertain	Explicit power "to regulate foreign commerce"
General Powers	Executive power; veto	Legislative power; power of the purse; oversight and investigation

Source: Adapted from Bruce W. Jentleson, *American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century*, 2nd edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004): 34.

Table (1) provides a summary of power shared by the President and the Congress in the conduct of foreign affairs of the country. Article II.2 of the American Constitution describes the President as the Commander-in-chief of the United States. The President is also empowered under the same article to "to make treaties" but only if "two-thirds of the Senators present concur." Clearly, under this article of the Constitution, the President is to be regarded as the chief diplomat making foreign policy initiatives albeit under a watchful eye of Congress. The history of the US foreign policy in the twentieth and 21st centuries is full of instances such as the Vietnam War, the secret bombing of Cambodia in 1973, the Iran-Contra scandals and the search for an exit strategy out of Iraq, when the President and Congress locked horns over the nation's policies. The President enjoys the power of appointment of ambassadors to foreign countries but these appointments are to be confirmed by Congress. The Constitution does not provide any explicit powers to the president to conduct the nation's commerce but he/she enjoys the power to negotiate treaties be these commercial or otherwise.



Congress shares with the president a number of responsibilities in the conduct of the country's foreign policy. Under Article I of the Constitution, Congress enjoys the general legislative power ("all legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States"). This empowers Congress to make laws and appropriate funds. Together, the general legislative power and "power of the purse" grant Congress unlimited authority to affect the flow and form of foreign relations. While the president is declared the Commander-in-Chief by the Constitution, the Congress has been empowered to provide for the common defence, to declare war, to raise and support armies, to provide and maintain a Navy, to make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces, and to organise, arm, discipline, and call forth the militia.

The Role of the President

In the US, as far as the conduct of foreign affairs is concerned, the executive authority is more formally centralised in the president and more sharply separated from the legislature. In fact, the presidential authority has rarely been challenged except for rare occasions such as the Versailles Treaty or the conduct of the Vietnam War. In both cases, as Charles Yost points out, the president seems to have grossly ignored or overrode the opinions of both Congress and the public.⁶⁰ The central role of the president in the conduct of the country's foreign policy is justifiable because of the fact that in its conduct steadfastness, efficiency, patience and secrecy are required. But if foreign policy becomes the prerogative of the president, then what happens to its democratic control? This question gained importance during the Vietnam War and the Iraq War.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in recent years, important issues have been raised with regard to presidential powers as enshrined in the American Constitution. One of the fundamental issues in this regard is the following: Is the presidential power preserved in the American Constitution "inherent" or is it "implied"? This question was considered so important to scholars that recently one entire issue of the *Presidential Studies Quarterly* was devoted to debating various aspects of this profound question.⁶¹ An answer to this question has deep impact in analysing the role of any US president in the conduct of the nation's foreign policy. For example, if the presidential powers are "inherent" then some policies of the Bush administration like ordering the monitoring of telephone calls of some American citizens are not subject to legal limitations. If, however, the answer to the question posed is that presidential powers are "implied" then those actions are subject to legal limitations.

Louis Fisher defines inherent powers as "powers over and above those explicitly granted in the Constitution or reasonably to be implied from express



powers.”⁶² Implied powers are those grounded in one of the expressly granted presidential authorities, such as the Commander-in-Chief Clause.⁶³ Neil Kinkopf asserts that the president does not possess inherent power, but he/she does clearly have implied powers.⁶⁴ To Kinkopf, however, this conclusion is uninteresting because it is not clear what follows from this conclusion. Therefore, in order to make the issue more interesting, he reformulates the question to the following: whether the president holds power that is broadly or commonly beyond the authority of Congress to limit.⁶⁵ After a thorough analysis Kinkopf finds three arguments to advocates of unrestrained presidential power: “(1) the President does not hold inherent power in the strong sense, (2) constitutionally implied powers are not categorically impervious to statutory limitations, and (3) the President’s constitutionally based powers overwhelmingly overlap with congressional power, meaning that in all but the rarest of settings the president is subject to congressional constraints.”⁶⁶ He rightfully also points out that even if it is accepted that Congress holds a check over presidential power, if that check is ineffectual, then the President’s power is effectively unrestrained.⁶⁷

In light of Kinkopf’s conclusion, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.’s description of the American presidency as an “imperial one” as far as its foreign policy making power is concerned was not only apt but prophetic, too. Eugene R. Wittkopf et al. provide two reasons for holding such an opinion. First, the Constitution’s provisions have combined with practice to expand, over time, the central role of the President in the formulation as well as execution of American foreign policy. Second, the American role in a fast changing international environment further expanded the role of the President. The argument that in the conduct of foreign affairs of the US, a strong presidential leadership was needed gradually gained ground during the Cold War. As a result, presidential decisions on foreign policy went virtually unchallenged.

This trend continued well into the post-Cold War era as exemplified by President George H. Bush, President William Jefferson Clinton and President George W. Bush. President George H. Bush is well-known for his vision of a “new world order” in the post-Cold War era. Under this slogan, military action against Iraq under the aegis of the UN was justified in 1991. President Clinton’s policy of world-wide expansion of democracy by trade and other peaceful means led to the adoption of such policies as “strategic partnership” with China. His anti-terrorism policy reflected his firm belief that mere military response to terrorism was not the solution to deal with that problem. The NATO-led military action against the Serb forces in 1990 reflected his determination to act outside a deadlocked-UN to deal with a murderous regime bent on following a policy of ethnic-cleansing in former Yugoslavia. Clinton’s reluctance to commit American



ground troops to a conflict zone in the post-Somalia era partially explains his administration's inaction to stop the genocide in Rwanda. In the post-9/11 era, it is widely held that President George W. Bush tried to leave his own stamp on American foreign policy as embodied in the Bush Doctrine. Essentially, it is an embodiment of American security needs as interpreted by President Bush and his administration.

Robert Jervis identifies the following four main elements of the Bush Doctrine:

A strong belief in the importance of a state's domestic regime in determining its foreign policy and the related judgement that this is an opportune time to transform international politics; the perception of great threats that can be defeated only by new and vigorous policies, most notably preventive war; a willingness to act unilaterally when necessary; and as both a cause and a summary of these beliefs, an overriding sense that peace and stability require the United States to assert its primacy in world politics.⁶⁸

The main features of the Bush Doctrine are contained in the NSS of the United States published in 2002. This document consists of a series of speeches by President George W. Bush in the US, Germany and Mexico touching on, the various aspects of American national security in the wake of 9/11. The most important of those speeches was the one delivered at West Point, New York, America's prestigious military college, on 1 June 2002.⁶⁹ In this speech, President Bush unveiled the features of the new US national security strategy and laid down the path America was planning to take to achieve its national security goals in the post-9/11 period. Conscious of the fact that the United States possessed "unprecedented and unequalled strength and influence" in the world, President Bush vowed to use this "great strength... to promote a balance of power that favours freedom."⁷⁰ In this speech he left no doubt that American search for security in the post-9/11 period would be "based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects our values and our national interests."⁷¹ President Bush promised that in order to "forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively."⁷²

The Bush administration came to power convinced that American foreign policy should be based on "unilateralism" thus "reversing the American internationalist commitment that came out of the World War II and that lasted throughout the 45 years of the Cold War."⁷³ According to top officials of the Bush administration, the policy of unilateralism was a natural option for Washington since the international system was now unipolar, with the United States being the only super power. For example, Condoleezza Rice, foreign affairs adviser to candidate George W. Bush, in a *Foreign Affairs*⁷⁴ article outlined the contours



of a Republican administration's foreign policy. In a free and candid fashion, she emphasised that the administration of George W. Bush must begin outlining a new foreign policy, with the understanding that the United States was in a remarkable position in terms of its economic and military powers. With this realisation the new Washington government was "to ensure that America's military could deter war, project power and fight in defence of its interests if deterrence fails." What does it mean to deter, fight, and win wars and defend the US national interest? Condoleezza Rice provides the answer. The American military must be able to meet decisively the emergence of any hostile military power in the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East. Even though Rice does not specifically argue for the adoption of the policy of pre-emptive strike in her article, she very vigorously made a case for the use of military power to protect America's national interest.⁷⁵

In pursuant of the policy of unilateralism, as soon as the Bush administration assumed power, it had begun to dismantle or reject treaties that would bind the US to a larger international community. Washington rejected the Kyoto Protocol to curb the emission of noxious gases in the atmosphere, withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, scuttled the Land Mine Treaty, and refused to back the International Criminal Court. The Bush administration had shown also very little interest in cooperating internationally in resolving world issues where its leadership was required. Instead of cooperation, the Bush administration top officials viewed the world scene from a narrow interpretation of power. Walter Lafeber describes the international scene as viewed by these officials in the following way:

The measurements they took indicated that China had to be targeted for special attention, Russia could be ignored, Pakistan subordinated to India, and such places as Afghanistan and east Africa forgotten about. Finding gas and oil was more important than cleaning up messes left in Afghanistan from the 1980s, or working cooperatively to ensure that globalization was made to be more equitable in the distribution of its wealth and technology and more benign in its effect on the global environment. The market place could take care of these lesser areas.⁷⁶

Following the 9/11 attacks, the Bush national security team "set down an entirely new set of ideas and principles. They were deliberately choosing to create a new conception of American foreign policy, just as the Truman administration had constructed a new framework of ideas and institutions at the beginning of the cold war."⁷⁷ The policy of unilateralism gained full speed following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America. The Taliban government was given a deadline to hand over Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda and his close associates to the US. When Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, refused to do so, military force



was used to remove the Taliban from power in November 2001, leading to the assumption to power by President Hamid Karzai.⁷⁸ Within two years, in March 2003, the principles of unilateralism and pre-emptive strike were used to launch a military attack on Iraq. Coalition forces led mostly by American troops occupied Iraq, President Saddam Hussein was removed from power, and the country was occupied by American and British troops. In spite of the formation of a government, and the adoption of a constitution in 2005, Iraq remains in turmoil. So far, more than 250,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed. Violence based on sectarianism and the sense of insecurity has created an unprecedented refugee crisis in the region. Nearly two million Iraqis have sought temporary refuge in neighbouring Jordan and Syria. Additionally, another two million Iraqis remain internally displaced. Rather than destroying al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, American military action there simply helped scatter the organisation's forces all over the world bringing into question the success of the policy of pre-emption and unilateralism.⁷⁹ In essence, Bush Doctrine is an attempt to put altruism on top of basic, self-interested power-seeking behaviour while allowing Americans to believe that their intentions lack a selfish dimension and are truly good for others.

The Role of Congress

Most scholars of American foreign policy view Congress as taking only a supporting role in the formulation and implementation of US foreign policy. While it is historically true to state that members of Congress have remained mostly transfixed with domestic issues, in reality Congress has significant constitutional duties in foreign affairs. Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann point out through the power of oversight that Congress means to make sure that the laws it writes are faithfully executed and vet the military and diplomatic activities of the executive.⁸⁰ Congressional oversight is meant to keep mistakes from happening by the executive branch or from spiralling out of control; it helps draw out lessons from catastrophes in order to prevent them or others like them from recurring. Good oversight cuts waste, punishes fraud or scandal, and keeps policymakers on their toes. In addition, as Robert David Johnson points out, there are three other facets of legislative powers in the conduct of foreign affairs: the use of spending powers; the internal workings of a Congress increasingly dominated by sub-committees; and the ability of individual legislators to affect foreign affairs by changing the way that policymakers and the public think about international questions.⁸¹ Congress gets involved in foreign affairs when the issues become contentious or political.

Public opinion, lobbying and partisanship explain why Congress at times seems to not be paying attention. There is no doubt that members of Congress want to do what is best, but not if voting a certain way risks their political



fortunes. They don't simply try to appeal to country-specific or ethnic groups; they more often try to avoid offending them because offending special interest groups that are perceived as powerful hinders a member's ability to pursue legislative priorities.⁸² If the Middle East or Cuba - two areas heavily influenced by domestic lobbying groups - are not important either for re-election or policy goals, most are unwilling to accept the consequences, real or imagined, of ruffling feathers by opposing a powerful lobbying organisation such as AIPAC.

Since the end of World War II Congress has been active in utilising its oversight power to balance the overbearing role of the executive in the conduct of American foreign policy. Guangqiu Xu in *Congress and the US-China Relationship 1949-1979*,⁸³ discusses America's dismay at China going communist and the Korean War, as well as analyses how Congress acted. He also analyses various periods in US-China relations during which there were defining issues: Taiwan, the US establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, and trade. Xu presents a case for the importance of Congress supporting Nixon's openings to China. As Xu points out, Senator Mike Mansfield and others played a crucial role in supporting President Nixon and his National Security Adviser, Dr. Henry Kissinger in establishing contacts with China.

During the Cold War period Congress did not hesitate to criticise or even challenge presidents' conduct of foreign policy. William G. Howell and Jon C. Pevehouse cite the following examples of Congress' successful intervention in American foreign policy:⁸⁴

1. Although the Democratic Party controlled both houses of Congress, it harassed President Truman's conduct of the Korean War (1950-1955) and his firing of General Douglas MacArthur. Congress' strong criticism of the president's policy led to a drop in the president's popularity at home and contributed to the Republican electoral victory in 1954.
2. President Dwight Eisenhower's decision in January 1954 to reject a French request to commit American troops in Indochina was in part based on anticipated Congressional opposition to such a request.
3. President Eisenhower's agreement to meet French requests for help in the form of providing technical assistance by sending B-26 bombers and air force technicians was vehemently opposed by the Congressional leaders. As a result, President Eisenhower promised to withdraw the air force personnel, replacing them with civilian contractors.
4. As the Vietnam War dragged on and Americans started to become impatient with the war, Congress stepped in to wrest control of the conduct of war from the president. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964 was repealed in 1970.



5. In the subsequent years, legislators enacted a series of appropriations bills aimed at restricting the nature and scope of Vietnam War. In June 1973, after the Paris Peace accords had been signed, Congress enacted a supplemental appropriations act that cut off funding for all additional military involvement in Southeast Asia, including Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam, and South Vietnam. Finally, when South Vietnam fell in 1975, Congress took the extraordinary step of formally forbidding US troops from enforcing Paris peace accords, despite the opposition of President Gerald Ford and secretary of State Henry Kissinger.
6. In 1978, a Democratic Party-controlled Congress forbade the use of funds for the supply of covert aid to anti-communist forces in Angola. President Ford suspended military assistance to Angola, unhappily noting that Congress had “lost its guts” with regard to foreign policy.
7. In 1984, a Democratic Congress enacted an appropriations bill that forbade President Ronald Reagan from supporting the right-wing contras in Nicaragua. The Reagan administration diverted funds from Iranian arms sales to support the contras.
8. When in the early 1990s, a UN humanitarian operation in Somalia devolved into urban warfare, Congress swung into action. Despite previous declarations of public support for the president’s actions, congressional Republicans and some Democrats passed a Department of Defence appropriations act in November 1993 that simultaneously authorised the use of force to protect UN units and required that US forces be withdrawn by 31 March 1994.
9. One month after the March 1999 NATO air strikes against Serbia, the House passed a bill forbidding the use of Defence Department funds to introduce US ground troops into the conflict without congressional authorisation. When President Clinton requested funding for operations in the Balkans, Republicans (and some hawkish Democrats) seized on the opportunity to attach additional monies for unrelated defence programmes, military personnel policies, aid to farmers, and hurricane relief and passed a supplemental appropriations bill that was considerably larger than the amount requested by the president.

Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann believe that vigorous oversight was the norm until the end of the 20th century. Since George W. Bush became president however, oversight by Congress has all but disappeared.⁸⁵ Congress has mostly ignored its responsibilities in dealing with such questions as torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, surveillance of domestic telephone calls by the National Security Agency (NSA). Ornstein and Mann blame Congress’ lack of



a strong institutional identity for its lacklustre role in carrying out its oversight role during the presidency of George W. Bush.

However, according to William G. Howell and Jon C. Pevehouse, it is not Congress' lack of identity but "good old-fashioned partisan politics" inside the legislative branch that explains its weak performance between 2000 and 2006.⁸⁶ Partisan unity, not institutional laziness, explains why the Bush administration's Iraq policy received such a favourable hearing in Congress from 2000 to 2006.⁸⁷ When the opposition party holds a number of seats or controls one or both chambers of Congress, members routinely challenge the president and step up oversight of foreign conflicts. But, when the legislative branch is dominated by the president's party, it generally goes along with the White House.⁸⁸

In November 2006, the Democrats wrestled back control of both houses of Congress from the Republicans. Immediately, oversight hearings proceeded at a furious pace. House Democrats passed a resolution condemning a proposed "surge" of American troops in Iraq and the Senate Democrats debated a series of resolutions expressing varying degrees of outrage against the war in Iraq. The Spring 2007 supplemental appropriations debate resulted in a House bill calling for a phased withdrawal. However, the president vetoed the bill, and the Senate then passed a bill accepting more war funding without withdrawal provisions. Democratic heads of committees in both chambers continue to launch hearings and investigations into the various mishaps, scandals, and tactical errors that have plagued the Iraq war. So far, the Democrats have not succeeded in getting a date of withdrawal from Iraq, due mainly to their inability to secure enough Senate Republican votes. In spite of the fact that Congress has failed so far, to force the president's hand on Iraq by setting a deadline on the withdrawal of American troops, it is clear that the political costs of pursuing a possible war against Iran has increased significantly with the Democrats back in control of Congress.

The National Security Council (NSC)

The NSC represents an attempt to fill a long-recognised need for a single, top-ranking body to formulate and correlate national policy in the United States. Since its creation by the National Security Act of 1947, and subsequently modified and expanded by Congress and the President, the NSC has emerged as a key factor in the making of American foreign and security policy. Decisions taken there now have such wide-ranging impact that David J. Rothkopf refers to it as the "committee that runs the world."⁸⁹ But it was intended neither to prescribe nor to control foreign policy-making mechanisms of US foreign policy. And most certainly, it can be said emphatically that the NSC was not created to "run" the world.



The NSC was originally designed to be an advisory forum of senior officials reviewing foreign policy issues for the president usually in his presence⁹⁰ and play a “neutral” role. Members of this body were to provide their views to the president on national security affairs. But over the years, the influence of the NSC, especially that of the NSC adviser on the foreign and security policy making, have grown tremendously. Instead of playing the role of a neutral/honest broker, most NSC advisers ended up playing the role of policy advocates, or even policy initiators. Moreover, fears have often been expressed that the NSC remains unaccountable for its activities, and influences foreign policy in a way not bargained for at the time of its creation. Rothkopf aptly points out those apprehensions in the following way:

As part of the executive office of the President, the NSC operates with unusual freedom compared to most cabinet agencies. Neither the national security adviser nor any other member of the NSC staff is confirmed by the Senate. As such, the NSC as an entity is not subject to congressional oversight, even though it now performs many of the policymaking functions once reserved for the State Department. Indeed, it has become a preserve for those activities that an administration wishes to conduct beyond congressional scrutiny, as the country learned to its collective discomfort with the revelations of the ‘operational’ NSC under Adm. Poindexter and Col. Oliver North during the Reagan years.

True to Rothkopf’s analysis, claiming executive immunity, Condoleezza Rice, National Security Adviser to President George W. Bush initially refused to provide testimony before the bipartisan 9/11 Congressional Commission and the media. President Bush relented after much criticism by the 9/11 Commission members and ultimately she testified both in closed door and public hearings of the Commission. In this section, the role, power, and functions of the NSC and those of the NSC adviser will be discussed.⁹¹

The need for creating a body, like NSC, was strongly felt among the policy-makers in Washington in the immediate aftermath of World War II, while they were facing problems of policy formulation and direction. Ferdinand Eberstadt, in a study prepared for Navy Secretary James Forrestal, called for the setting up of a NSC. Under his proposal, the NSC was to work as a “policy-forming and advisory” body of top government officials to assist the President in making and coordinating “over-all policies in the political and military fields.”

The National Security Act of 1947 accepted the Eberstadt’s proposal and established a NSC. The Council was to be composed of the following: the President; the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defence, and the three Services; the Chairman, National Security Resources Board; and certain other



officials, who would be invited to attend meetings, according to the President's wishes. It was to be led by an Executive Secretary.

Nowadays, the NSC is composed of the following: 1. the President, 2. the Vice President, 3. The Secretary of State, 4. The Secretary of Defence, 5. The Secretaries and Under Secretaries of other executive departments and of the military departments, when appointed by the President and with the advice of the Senate, to serve at his pleasure. It should also be pointed out that the NSC advisers and staff members of the NSC are mostly foreign policy and national security academic experts. Over the last sixty years or so, there has developed a semi-articulated consensus among practitioners, scholars, and public observers as to what the national security adviser should, and should not be doing. This consensus, originating in the sixties, was further developed and reinforced by reaction to the early Kissinger years (1969-1973) and the Watergate scandals.

Destler suggests that the NSC adviser should concentrate on certain types of activities and avoid others. Table (2) summarises his suggestions. According to Destler, a NSC adviser should be a facilitator rather than a foreign policy decision-maker. He/she is to provide all possible information and analysis so that the President can make decisions. Above everything else, the NSC adviser is not to conduct particular diplomatic negotiations, and carry out fixed operational assignments. The NSC adviser may also, under certain circumstances, provide discreet advice and provide background information to the media, Congress and foreign officials. But the record of the past sixty years shows that the job has not been performed the way suggested by Destler. He describes the shortfalls in the NSC adviser's role in the following way:

Time and again, national security advisers have become highly visible policy advocates, identified with particular viewpoints and involved in specific negotiations. They have jeopardized their own ability to manage the decision-making process and have intruded on the job of secretary of state. The evidence suggests that this recurring tendency results not from a coincidence of personalities but something deeper: the location, rank, expectations, and temptations of the office.⁹²



Table (2): The National Security Adviser: The Professionals' Job Description

YES (Inside Management)	OK (In Moderation)	NO (Outside Leadership)
Briefing the president, handling his foreign policy inbox	Discreet advice/ advocacy	Conducting particular Diplomatic negotiations
Analysing issues and choices: a) Ordering information/ intelligence b) Managing interagency studies	Encouraging advocacy by NSC Staff subordinates Information and "background" communicating with press, Congress, foreign officials	Fixed operational assignments\ Public Spokesman Strong, visible internal advocacy (except of already established presidential priorities) Making policy decisions
Managing presidential decision processes		
Communicating presidential decisions and monitoring their implementation		
General interagency brokering, circuit-connecting, crisis management		

Source: I.M. Destler, "National Security Management: What Presidents Have Wrought," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 95, No. 4 (Winter, 1980-1981): 577.



According to Robert Komer, a senior aide to the NSC during the Kennedy administration, the NSC staff performed four functions:

1. The staff acted as the “eyes and ears” of the President providing him a complete flow of raw information.
2. It was a shadow network which clued the President on what bidding was before a formal recommendation got to him.
3. It was a source of independent judgement and recommendation on each issue.
4. It provided “follow-through,” working to keep tabs on things and see that the cables went out and the responses were satisfactory, and that when the policy wasn’t being executed, the President knew about it and he could give another prod.⁹³

In other words, the role of a NSC adviser is to be that of an “honest broker” who would present views on the various sides of issues. But as discussion here will show, later various NSC advisers would acquire the reputation of a policy advocate and even acquired an intimidating style. Under President Harry S. Truman, the NSC played its “neutral competence” tradition. In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower created the post of a special assistant to the President on national security affairs, later to be known as NSC adviser. He wanted him to superintend the formal, inter-agency policy-planning system conducted under the NSC. By the end of President Eisenhower’s term in 1960, the NSC had lost its shine and was largely regarded as irrelevant to President Eisenhower’s actual decisions.

Once John F. Kennedy was elected President, his transition team advised the president-elect to postpone his decision on the post of NSC adviser until president-elect Kennedy had “sized up his needs and got a feel for new secretaries of state and defence.”⁹⁴ President Kennedy, instead of abandoning the NSC adviser post, appointed McGeorge Bundy in that position. Bundy’s responsibility centred on managing president’s personal, day-to-day foreign and defence business. With Kennedy being an activist president, the NSC adviser now had an enormous potential for engagement and influence. However, Bundy basically remained a facilitator and rather than monopolising the system, he was interested to make the system work. This was because in his own words “it is wrong for the national security assistant to the president to be a separate, competing source of visible public advocacy from within the executive branch.”⁹⁵

Bundy’s successor Walt Whitman Rostow, appointed by President Lyndon Johnson as his special assistant, lacked Bundy’s strong orientation toward process and was more interested in personally generating new policy formulations. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Johnson administration did



not institutionalise the office of the special assistant to the president. It was to be done by the Nixon administration. I. M. Destler describes the impact of Nixon administration on foreign policy making decision system in the following way:

Nixon clearly intended, from the start, to establish a truly White House centred system of foreign-policy making, and Kissinger was both his personal and institutional instrument to this end. Much of the early emphasis, however, was on buttressing still further the assistant's procedural role, above all by casting him as the initiator and screener of a large number of interagency policy studies designed to generate options for presidential decision.⁹⁶

The White House-centred system of foreign policy making worked very well with the style of "secret diplomacy" of the Nixon-Kissinger team. Henry Kissinger became the prime negotiator on Vietnam, China and nuclear arms limitation talks with the Soviets. Sometimes the State Department officials were excluded from key communications as Kissinger himself made some of the decisions. The system put in place by Kissinger would transform once he took over as the Secretary of State in 1971. His strong role as a policymaker continued for about a year. Following the resignation of President Richard Nixon as a result of Watergate scandals, and the ascension of Gerald Ford as the president, Brent Scowcroft took over as the assistant to the president for national security affairs. He played the role of a consensus builder rather than a personality dominant role preferred by Kissinger.

President Jimmy Carter chose Zbigniew Brzezinski as his national security assistant. An ambitious, highly visible policy thinker, Brzezinski preferred "idea people" and as a result the foreign policy making process never developed a clear, coherent pattern during the presidency of Jimmy Carter. But, Brzezinski did not conduct major negotiations, with few exceptions. But his attempts to deal with the fast-moving events leading to Islamic revolution in Iran came under intense criticism.⁹⁷

The honest broker/neutral role of the NSC adviser was re-emphasised by the Tower Commission, investigating the fiasco of the Iran-Contra scandal during the Reagan administration. The Tower Commission in its recommendations for reforms clearly stated that the responsibility of the NSC adviser was "to monitor policy implementation and to ensure that policies are executed in conformity with the intent of the president's decisions."⁹⁸

By the time George W. Bush completed his first term as the president of the United States in 2004, the NSC had transformed itself. The chemistry between the personalities involved in security policy making and events helped bring about this transformation. National security policy during the first term of the Bush administration by four intense and important personal and professional



relationships - between the president and vice-president, the president and his national security adviser, the vice president and the secretary of defence, and the secretary of defence and the secretary of state - and by one pivotal moment, the morning of 11 September 2001.

John P. Burke describes George W. Bush's choice of Condoleezza Rice as his NSC adviser as "consequential." Bush and Rice first met in 1998 and during Bush's presidential campaign in 2000, Rice served as the Republican presidential candidate's top foreign policy adviser. Rice was also a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a Professor of Political Science at Stanford University. She also had the distinction of becoming the Provost of Stanford. Rice served the George H. W. Bush Administration as a Soviet expert on the NSC. Various accounts place Condoleezza very close to the Bush family. Rothkopf describes her as "an unofficial member of the Bush family with her own cabin at Camp David, coming as a regular guest to Sunday dinners, and relaxing with the president and his family on vacations."⁹⁹ She is considered one of the very few in Washington having direct access to President Bush. He showed his full confidence in her by inviting her to attend cabinet meetings and allowing her to chair the meetings of foreign policy principals, instead of the Vice President or the Secretary of State. Rice, who mentored Bush on foreign policy, was the person whose advice the president relied on most when it came to national security issues, starting during the presidential campaign.¹⁰⁰

There is no doubt that President Bush's confidence in Rice enhanced her ability to carry out her job as the NSC adviser. But as Burke points out, Bush's reliance on Rice also raises some issues about her honest brokerage role. Rice views the role of the president's national security adviser as a "gatekeeper." As such, she not only advised the president, but more importantly, as the president's NSC adviser, she was in a unique position to monitor the flow of information to and from the president.

Given this context, perhaps it would be proper to look at some of her views on American foreign and security policies just before she had joined the Bush administration as the president's national security adviser. Some of her views on this subject are to be found in a 2000 article published in *Foreign Affairs*.¹⁰¹ In it, in a frank and candid fashion, she emphasised that a future Republican administration must begin outlining a new foreign policy with the understanding that the United States was in a remarkable position. With this realisation the new Washington administration was "to ensure that America's military could deter war, project power, and fight in defence of its interests if deterrence fails."¹⁰²

What does it mean to deter, fight, and win wars and defend American national interests? Condoleezza Rice provides the answer. The American military must be able to meet decisively the emergence of any hostile military power in the



Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and Europe.¹⁰³ Although, in her article Rice does not argue for the adoption of a policy of pre-emptive military strike, she very vigorously made a case for the use of military power to protect America's vital national interest.

Condoleezza Rice, in her own words, wanted the NSC to be "low-key, very much more of a coordinating function, much less operational, smaller."¹⁰⁴ Media accounts, especially during Bush administration's first year, often portrayed her as an honest broker, and not seen as undercutting Secretary of State Powell or engaging, at least in public view, in the kind of bureaucratic battles that some of her predecessors waged against the Secretary of State.¹⁰⁵

Condoleezza Rice's performance as the president's national security adviser did not escape criticisms. Evan Thomas, writing for *Newsweek*, quoted a former government official as saying, "Rice is a 'yes man'. She thinks her job is just to figure out what the president is trying to say and say it more articulately."¹⁰⁶ She has also been criticised from within by some who believe she transformed the NSC into an organisation that serves the individual requirements of the president at the expense of better serving the national interest.¹⁰⁷

The State Department

Theoretically, the State Department is at the centre of management of foreign affairs of the United States. But in practice, it is not. In fact, other departments of the government, e.g., the White House, and the Defence Department have outshined the State Department in playing the leadership role in the management of foreign affairs of the United States. The State Department has been on the receiving end for its role. It is little wonder that an exasperated former Foreign Service Officer (FSO) wrote, "Few public servants get so much abuse and so little respect - whether from the American public, the Congress, other executive branch bureaucrats, or even the president."¹⁰⁸ Wittkopf et al. provide the following three reasons for this sorry state of affairs in the State Department: the tension between the careerists and the political appointees; the lack of bureaucratic muscle, and the role and orientation of secretaries of state.

The State Department, like other executive departments, is a victim of a system that is peculiar to the American system of government - the lateral immersion of political appointees into the system. It has been observed by both politicians and practitioners, that this has not served the State Department very well because such appointments create tension among the officers serving the service and help develop a sub-culture of what Wittkopf et al., call "in-and-outers." Laurence H. Silberman, a former ambassador explained that career FSOs tend to consider the president's political appointees as rivals for senior department positions, thus



creating a strong sense of resistance against following appointed leaders. There is also a feeling of “us and others,” directed at other departments of the executive branch. To a certain extent, this feeling is imparted to the FSOs at the time of their training. Crosby reminisces of his training when his instructors and lecturers gave the trainees a heavy dose of the “us versus them” that often turns foreign policy into an inter-agency sandbox squabbles.¹⁰⁹ The FSO trainees were given the impression that the Defence, Commerce, and Treasury departments were not the friends of the State Department.

Newt Gingrich, a strong critic of the way the State Department operates, quotes the February 2001 report of the US Commission on National Security/21st Century, “The Department of State, in particular, is a crippled institution, starved for resources by Congress because of its inadequacies, and thereby weakened further.”¹¹⁰ The report also concluded, “Only if the State Department’s internal weaknesses are cured will it become an effective leader in the making and implementation of the nation’s foreign policy. Only then can it credibly seek significant funding increase from Congress.”¹¹¹

The inadequate funding and the State Department’s lack of bureaucratic muscle in Washington is the second reason for its inability to carry out its functions effectively. The resources allocated to the State Department are “peanuts” compared to the resources allocated to other departments. For example, in 2006, the State Department’s budget was \$9 billion compared with \$419 billion for the Defence Department. Centralisation of foreign policy making under the White House also left the department without political clout among the Washington elites. Part of the reason for the State Department’s lack of clout is due to the common perception that it is sensitive to the president’s political needs.

From a White House perspective, efforts to accommodate the legitimate concerns of other countries are often viewed as coming at the expense of American interests, and the accommodations are viewed as not being tough enough. Presidents usually do not have much patience with this kind of advice, find they cannot change State’s penchant for it, and soon stop listening to it.¹¹²

A third reason for the State Department’s relative weakness is the traditional, less influential role of the secretary of state in foreign policy making, despite his/her assumed role as the president’s leading foreign policy adviser. In this regard, Wittkopf points out that since the 1950s, most secretaries of state have had to choose between two basic role orientations - to maximise their relationship with the president and distance themselves from the department itself, or to maximise their leadership and use of the department, only to see their influence with the president wane. Few secretaries of state have succeeded in combining these two roles.



John Foster Dulles served as President Dwight Eisenhower's Secretary of State during a crucial period of time (1953-1959). The Cold War with the Soviet Union was at its peak and the Soviet elites were going through changes in their capabilities and tactics. Dulles was not a man destined to be an administrator but in fact, was "a decision-maker of first rate importance."¹¹³ Dulles, a deeply Christian man, viewed the Soviet Union as a state built "on the trinity of atheism, totalitarianism, and communism, capped by a deep belief that no enduring social order could be erected upon such foundations."¹¹⁴ Ole R. Holsti's quantitative study of Dulles' belief system bear out the validity of those characterisations of the Soviet Union. Holsti's study also concluded that there was considerable evidence that Dulles was the primary, if not the sole architect of American policy vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc in the Eisenhower administration.¹¹⁵

None of the secretaries of state since Dulles was successful in ending the State Department's schism with other departments of the executive branch involved in foreign policy making of the nation.¹¹⁶ In fact, most of them were working hard, making sure of their mark on American foreign policy. Kissinger (1973-1977) largely ignored the department and worked with his own NSC staff that he brought with him to the State Department. Cyrus Vance (1977-1980) was popular with the State Department largely because of memories of Kissinger's mistreatment of FSOs. But ultimately, Vance got into a feud with the White House, which he lost. President Reagan's first Secretary of State General Alexander Haig (1981-1982) resigned when he found himself outside the close circle of White House advisers to the president. Haig was succeeded by George Schultz (1982-1989). The fact that Schultz succeeded in serving through the end of the Reagan presidency suggests that he was able to satisfy the competing demands of various departments. James Baker (1989-1992) reopened the chasm separating the secretary of state from the department's professional diplomats as Baker tried to keep himself inside President George H. W. Bush's inner circle.

President Bill Clinton's secretaries of state did not fare better than their predecessors. Warren Christopher (1993-1997) and his top aides were regarded as "nice guys" by FSOs but they were regarded as largely ineffective. Madeleine Albright (1997-2001) became the America's first woman secretary of the state in the Clinton administration. Respected by the President, she was able to add prestige to the department. Her previous experience as America's UN ambassador added extra high profile to her, when she took over as secretary of state. Although she was credited for US Balkans policy and the Kosovo conflict of 1999, Albright did not wield significant influence as an adviser. Many regarded her as an implementer of president's policy. Department officials allegedly viewed her as an insecure, indifferent leader obsessed by her public image.



Colin Powell (2001-2005) served as the first secretary of state of President George W. Bush. According to an analyst, Colin Powell's personality - large, affable, calm and yes, originally Caribbean - landed him the post.¹¹⁷ In addition, he has a distinguished military service record, a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a National Security Adviser, and a hero of the first Gulf War; Colin Powell had all the qualities of becoming a star player in Bush's foreign policy team. Instead, he was marginalised within the Bush foreign policy team, losing out to Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice.¹¹⁸ Though marginalised, Powell remained loyal to President Bush arguing that "it is not true" that "the president has no vision for the world, that he has no strategy."¹¹⁹

Vice-President and Secretary of Defence

Historically, vice presidents of the United States have not played a significant role in foreign policy making. For example, President Roosevelt did not consult Vice President Harry S. Truman on national security issues. It was not until Truman had become the president that he was told about the existence of the secret Manhattan project - the American nuclear programme. The office of vice president was so neglected that it was not until 1975 that the office received the attention it deserved. In that year, President Jimmy Carter moved the office of Vice President to the White House, thereby elevating the office of vice president. However, this was done to facilitate consultation with Vice President Walter Mondale more on domestic than foreign policy issues.¹²⁰

In the history of the United States, there has never been as powerful a vice president as Dick Cheney, who had vast past experience in the government before he joined the Bush administration. Bob Woodward describes that experience in the following way:

He [Dick Cheney] was the resume vice president: White House chief of staff to President Ford at 34; then 10 years as the only congressman from Wyoming, his home state; briefly the No. 2 House republican leader before being selected by Bush's father to be secretary of defence in 1989... He was named CEO of Halliburton, the large Texas-based energy and oil service firm, in 1995. He served until Bush picked him to be his running mate in the summer of 2000...¹²¹

Described as the "Moby Dick" of the Bush administration, according to Woodward two roles emerged for him under the Bush presidency.¹²² His first role was to sell President Bush's massive \$1.35 trillion tax relief bill to Congress. The second task that President Bush wanted Cheney to do was intelligence. With the president's full knowledge and encouragement, Cheney became the



self-appointed examiner of worst-case scenarios.¹²³ It was the second assigned role that was utilised by Cheney to set up his own chain of command and leave his lasting mark on the decision to take military action against Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The interest on Iraq of senior Bush administration officials including Vice President Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, and Richard Perle predated the administration. They were among eighteen people who had signed a public letter from “The Project for the New American Century” calling on President Clinton to oust President Saddam Hussein from power. George Tenet in his memoirs *At the Center of the Storm: My Days at the CIA*, recounts how in early 2001, the CIA officials chafed at the constant drumbeat of repetitive queries on Iraq and al-Qaeda by key Bush administration officials like Cheney’s chief of staff “Scooter” Libby and Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz.¹²⁴ “They never seemed satisfied with our answers regarding allegations of Iraqi complicity with al-Qaeda,” recounts Tenet.¹²⁵ The focus on Iraq faded away as the Bush administration had to deal with the downing of a US Navy EP-3 Surveillance aircraft by the Chinese.

The focus on Iraq re-appeared in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld did not hide their suspicions of Iraq’s hands behind the attacks on New York and Washington. As George Tenet points out, if it could be shown that Iraq was an active participant in the planning for 9/11 attacks, there would be no question regarding an immediate effort to oust Saddam.¹²⁶ In mid October 2001, in an answer to a question, Bush said we were watching Saddam. Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Saddam’s support for terrorism were fed into the system by Ahmad Chalabi and the INC. Reportedly he gave the documentary evidence but it was never revealed. The CIA distrusted Chalabi personally and did not believe in him. CIA Director George Tenet ordered a search for any evidence supporting linking Saddam with terrorism. In their search, the CIA officials went back ten years and went through 750,000 pages of documents and found no evidence in supporting the claim. It was al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Once the decision was taken to attack al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan, President Bush ordered the military to go on the offensive. But it was caught flat-footed. Its operational plans were outdated and soon it became clear that the military needed help from others. This was only forthcoming from the CIA, which had its plan ready for an offensive in Afghanistan. President Bush wanted the CIA first in Afghanistan. This was a body blow to the Pentagon.

The military undertook an unconventional course of action. A team of Special Forces would link up with anti-Taliban forces. Once the team landed in the



northern part of Afghanistan, millions of dollars were used to buy up members of the Northern Alliance.¹²⁷

As part of the plan, the CIA wanted Rumsfeld's military. They waited for the military for a month. But it didn't come. Rumsfeld didn't like the idea of taking orders from the CIA. Finally, President Bush made the Pentagon responsible for the operations in Afghanistan. Now Rumsfeld was in charge. Special Forces entered the field calling in US air strikes. Local commanders were paid millions of dollars to gather the prisoners. Once they were handed over to the Americans, the gloves were off. They were roughed up.

However, the idea of ousting President Saddam from power was never further away from Vice President Dick Cheney's mind. President Bush himself described Cheney as a "rock" on Saddam, meaning that Cheney was steadfast and steady in his views that Saddam was a threat to America and therefore, Saddam had to be dealt with.¹²⁸ It was clear to Cheney that the way Saddam's ouster could be justified was to find a link between al-Qaeda and the Saddam regime. Cheney could not rely on the CIA to make such a case. He had nothing but disdain and distrust for the CIA. As a Congressman, he knew that the CIA was wrong about the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Iraqi nuclear programme in 1991. Cheney was sceptical about CIA's intelligence on Iraq's connection with terrorists. He was looking for information to link Saddam with al-Qaeda. According to *Bush's Wars*, a PBS documentary, civilians under the leadership of Douglas Feith, were deployed gathering information about the linkage between al-Qaeda and the government of Saddam Hussein. They had the necessary top intelligence clearance. Working from a vault in the Pentagon, this group operated to gather information about linkages between Baghdad and Ibni Sheikh al-Libi, a senior military trainer for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan who was captured in Pakistan in late 2001 and transferred into American military custody in Afghanistan in early January of 2002.

Libi was then transferred to a third country for "debriefing." It has been alleged that while there, Libi was tortured for intelligence - a charge denied by CIA Director George Tenet.¹²⁹ While under American custody in Afghanistan, Libi made initial references to possible al-Qaeda training in Iraq. According to Tenet, Libi offered up information that a militant known as Abu Abdullah had told him that another al-Qaeda leader, Mohammad Atef had sent Abu Abdullah to Iraq three times between 1997 and 2000 to seek training in poisons and mustard gas.¹³⁰ This information was supported by leaders of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) leaders in Washington. But once military action had started against Iraq, Libi recanted his earlier statement leading to a sharp division within the Bush administration on his change of mind.



Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the domestic sources of US foreign policy although it has to be acknowledged that external factors like the nature of the international system, and events therein can act as stimulus to America's foreign policy. Discussion in this chapter has revealed that not all factors are equally important for the formulation of American foreign policy. The president and the White House bureaucracy like the NSC play the key role in shaping America's foreign policy. The NSC and the National Security Adviser also are key contributors to the American policy-making system. While Congress can use its power of oversight to influence foreign policy, in reality it has mixed results.

It is also to be pointed out that the secretary of state's role in influencing America's foreign policy depends on his/her relationship with the president of the United States. If he/she is part of the "inner circle" of presidential advisers then the secretary of state stands a good chance of effectively influencing the policy-making system. Usually, a vice president concentrates on domestic affairs and does not play any significant role in foreign policy-making process. But Vice President Dick Cheney has proved that wrong. The same can be said of Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld. He played a key role in America's decision to go to war against Iraq and subsequently influenced Washington's Iraq policy.

Among societal sources, the chapter has assessed the role of American values and beliefs, public opinion and interest groups in US foreign policy-making. Rightly or wrongly, the Americans believe that their fundamental values have worked well for the country. Therefore, Washington does not see anything wrong in trying to universalise such values as freedom of speech, democracy etc., if need be by force. Because of such a stance America appears arrogant to the rest of the world. Public opinion does not play much of a role in US foreign policy. Interest groups of different types - business, ethnic or otherwise - try to influence the foreign policy-making system. It has long been recognised that the Jewish groups have a lot of influence on foreign policy of the United States, especially its Middle East policy. This is being debated now very vigorously. At long last the Muslims of America have wakened up to the reality of American political system and recently been trying to organise themselves to try to influence the foreign policy-making system in the US.



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- ¹¹⁹ Colin Powell, "A Strategy of Partnerships," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (January/February 2004): 23.
- ¹²⁰ In an interview with George C. Edwards III, President Jimmy Carter says: "I deliberately chose Walter Mondale because he and I were compatible personally but also because I wanted somebody younger and progressive and was familiar with the congressional scene." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (March 2008): 2.
- ¹²¹ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004): 27.
- ¹²² *Ibid.*: 28-30.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*: 29.
- ¹²⁴ George Tenet, *At the Center of Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007): 302.
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*: 355.
- ¹²⁷ For a detailed analysis of this operation see: Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*: 140-170.
- ¹²⁸ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*: 420.
- ¹²⁹ George Tenet, *op. cit.*: 352.
- ¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

This book takes an academic, well-documented and comprehensive approach in its analysis. With contributions from scholars based in Lebanon, Malaysia, the UAE, the UK, and the US, the primary objective of this book is to explain the domestic setting of American foreign policy-making and analyse its impact on issues that are considered vital to the Muslim world. The first part of this book explains the complex foreign-policy making system in the United States and assesses the role of Christian evangelicalism, neo-conservatism, the media, the pro-Israel lobby and the role of Muslim groups. The second part is devoted to a detailed analysis of the major characteristics of American foreign policy. The third part of the book provides an in-depth analysis of Americas' policy toward Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Palestine. Barack H. Obama's foreign policy is also discussed. It is a must read book for those interested in understanding American foreign policy toward the Muslim world, and specialists, and students of Political Science, and International Relations.

American Foreign Policy & The Muslim World

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