

A Little Bit of Background

—*“When prevention succeeds, nothing happens.”*

—*“International cooperation is just not sexy.”*

These are just two of the more telling lines we have heard during our years of work on foreign policy and defense issues in the US Congress. Such statements reveal the challenge put before those who would like to see Congress—largely stuck in Cold War thinking—broaden its international outlook and change its priorities to better reflect our post-September 11th world. There should be no doubt that sustained interest in international issues has always been a tough sell on Capitol Hill. It is our belief, however, that we now have an opportunity to change this reality, because both Americans and their elected leaders are paying more attention to issues outside US borders. But if Congress is reactive, how does the interested public generate congressional support for prevention? Can those who are committed formulate a strategy that makes conflict prevention and international cooperation more compelling?

Although it may not seem attentive (much less responsive), Congress functions as a two-way street between citizens and their elected representatives. While most Americans never interact with Congress on any issue, all of us are affected, indirectly or directly, by its policies. At the same time, Congress responds to the demands of constituents. Thus, it stands to reason that those who are most visible and best organized in their demands get more of what they want.

In this context, the question remains: How do those Americans who care about international cooperation and non-hardware defense issues ensure that their desires are reflected in the policy decisions and voting behaviors of their elected leaders?

We make some fundamental assumptions in this text. First and foremost, we assume that a domestic constituency for foreign policy exists. We also assume this constituency believes that the

United States has not adequately adapted either its institutions or thinking about today's peace and security concerns. Further, we argue that our elected leaders have not yet forged a consensus on what measures are appropriate to address today's challenges in a comprehensive, long-term, and cost-effective manner. Lastly, we assume that individuals share our assessment broadly across the political spectrum, although we recognize that everyone will not embrace these views.

Our assumption about a domestic constituency for active and cooperative US engagement is borne out by recent opinion polls. In poll after poll, the public supports active US engagement in the world. This was true before September 11th and remains so today. Research shows that Americans are not as isolationist, anti-United Nations (UN), or anti-foreign aid as is commonly thought. Polling data demonstrate that Americans do not approach foreign policy from a narrow what's-in-it-for-us self-interest, but from a deeply moral commitment to our national responsibility for maintaining world peace and well-being.¹ Polls also show significant support for the UN, especially when it is seen having a direct beneficial effect on American security. For instance, an overwhelming majority favors having the UN play a stronger role in the fight against terrorism, including in the strengthening of international laws on terrorism and the means to enforce them.²

It is also important to recognize the impact that public perceptions have on US engagement with the international community. In 2003, researchers concluded that Americans share a strong preference for cooperative international policies; however, Americans were also shown to underestimate public support for such policies and overestimate support for going it alone.³ Yet polling and research about American attitudes on international

¹ Steven Kull and I.M. Destler, *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999). Or, more recently, Steven Kull's article "Voice of a Superpower," *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2004, p. 38.

² See, for instance, "Americans and the World: United Nations," *Program on International Policy Attitudes*; available online at www.americans-world.org/digest/global_issues/un/un_summary.cfm

³ Alexander Todorov, "Public Opinion on Foreign Policy: The Multilateral Public that Perceives Itself as Unilateral," *Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs Policy Brief* (September 2003); available online at www.wss.princeton.edu/~policybriefs/todorov_opinion.pdf.

engagement highlight a significant challenge as well. As I.M. Destler points out, “The bad news is that general public support is not enough. On international engagement, Americans are permissive, not demanding.”⁴ In today’s world, the public must begin making demands, if its majority views are to be heard frequently and forcefully enough to influence elected leaders.

As with many big-picture, long-term “common good” goals,⁵ policy objectives like conflict prevention and cooperative security⁶ do not mesh well with the short-term horizons of Capitol Hill, where two-, four-, and six-year election cycles take precedence. Most Members of the House and Senate, will, of course, claim to be in favor of international cooperation and will even agree about the need to view US security in its broadest sense. Their sentiments reflect a consistent majority of Americans who favor active US engagement and international cooperation.⁷ With such a lofty goal in common, one would think that we would see farsighted and consistent actions on cooperative foreign policy programs more often. Yes, all too often, this is not the case.

⁴ I.M. Destler, “The Reasonable Public and the Polarized Policy Process,” in *The Real and the Ideal: Essays on International Relations in Honor of Richard H. Ullman*, eds. Anthony Lake and David Ochmanek (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), p. 87.

⁵ Examples of common goods might include “affordable and accessible healthcare, an effective system of public safety and security, peace among the nations of the world, a just legal and political system, an unpolluted natural environment and a flourishing economic system.” (See “The Common Good,” Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University; available online at www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/commongood.html).

⁶ For our purposes, “cooperative security” connotes two or more countries voluntarily coordinating to address mutually identified threats. Activities under the US-Russia Cooperative Threat Reduction program to safely dismantle nuclear weapons and secure fissile materials constitute one example. The Bush Administration’s Proliferation Security Initiative, under whose aegis states cooperate to enforce tighter export controls and interdict the transshipment of illicit goods, is another example.

⁷ For a relevant sampling of statistics over the past several years, see “Americans on Terrorism: Two Years After 9/11,” *Program on International Policy Attitudes and Knowledge Networks* (2003); “Worldviews 2002: American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy,” Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (2002); “Americans on the War on Terrorism,” *Program on International Policy Attitudes* (2001); and “American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy 1999,” Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (1999).

There is much work to be done by American citizens to promote US leadership in cooperative security if we are to successfully address today's many emerging security challenges. This work ranges from supporting Senate passage of international treaties beneficial to our long-term security interests, to encouraging representatives to look beyond their local pet projects. It will require an engaged public to find consensus on policy priorities and on the tools to address them. And it will demand a realistic strategy for conveying opinions about those priorities and tools to elected leaders and their staffs—the folks who make policy. The truth is that among policymakers and the public, when it comes to finding the right answers to modern security challenges, today's common denominator is uncertainty. What is therefore needed first is an acknowledgement of our shared uncertainty and a healthy discourse between the public and its elected leaders about the path forward.

Throughout our Capitol Hill experience working as staffers and directing a bipartisan educational study group on peace and security issues, we became aware of an acute need for more systematic knowledge-sharing between peace and security specialists and the policymakers in Congress. Staffers and Members have a huge appetite for credible, well-organized information on these issues. However, starting in the 1990s, and particularly following September 11th, the institution and its employees have experienced information overload, with no accompanying ability to interpret the available information and analysis. Due to time constraints and insufficient expertise, Congress now frequently lacks the internal capacity to process the information it receives. Our legislature has become a massive database in desperate need of a search engine.

Congress' need and appetite for knowledge, coupled with its constitutional role, makes it a good place to start with an educational strategy. Of the three branches of the federal government, Congress offers the most creative and diverse possibilities for individual citizens to effect change. At any one time, hundreds of bills are being crafted, introduced, negotiated, or debated. From the outside, Congress may seem at once omniscient and completely uncomprehending. After all, nearly every topic you can think of is considered at some point in the legislative process. Yet it often seems that important items are very hastily

considered or completely overlooked. The good news is that there are many possible entry points for a dialogue with Congress on the benefits of cooperative security. Keep in mind that a focused strategy is crucial in order to contend with the time constraints of a fast-paced environment, some firmly entrenched institutional barriers, and the ever-present dynamics of turf battles and ego clashes.

Prior to addressing the development of a strategy, we must agree on some underlying concepts. Foreign policy has traditionally been the domain of the State Department. But with an increased blurring of the lines between domestic and international issues, more and more departments in the federal government are playing a role in US “foreign policy,” understood in its broadest sense.⁸ That said, when this handbook talks about foreign policy, we are generally referring to diplomatic, political, or economic means (i.e., the application of “soft” power) to achieve an objective or change another state’s behavior.⁹ When we discuss military means, or “hard” security, we are speaking about the use of force or coercion. At the same time, we fully recognize that since the end of the Cold War, the US military has been called upon for numerous Military Operations Other Than War (“MOOTW” in the Pentagon’s own lexicon),¹⁰ from peacekeeping in the Balkans to disaster response in Central America to counterterrorism deployments in the Republic of Georgia and the Philippines.

⁸ A byproduct of globalization, the growing linkage of domestic and foreign affairs has led to formidable challenges in the management of US foreign policy. For a detailed discussion of these challenges and their implications, see Princeton N. Lyman, “Growing Influence of Domestic Factors,” in *Multilateralism and US Foreign Policy*, eds. Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), pp. 75-97.

⁹ Soft power is the ability to get what we want by attracting others, rather than by threatening or paying them. Soft power is based on our culture, our political ideals, and our policies. Joseph S. Nye is the originator of the terms “hard” and “soft” power. See, for example, Joseph S. Nye, “A Dollop of Deeper American Values: Why Soft Power Matters in Fighting Terrorism,” *Washington Post*, Tuesday, March 30, 2004, Page A19.

¹⁰ See “Overview of MOOTW” on the Defense Department’s Joint Electronic Library www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jrm/mootw.doc. Military educational facilities offer a vast array of resources online. See, for example: www.ndu.edu or www.carlisle.army.mil.

We must also carefully distinguish between “national security,” “foreign policy,” and “defense.” Defense and foreign policy are both subsets of national security. While our Department of Defense (i.e., the military) is the most visible symbol, US military means is only one element of our defense and foreign policy.¹¹ In its traditional role, the military’s mission is to fight and win our nation’s wars when all other measures to avert war have failed. The military’s warfighting capacity also represents a psychological lever within our foreign policy “toolkit”; the threat of force provides necessary backing for other foreign policy measures (diplomatic, economic, etc.) utilized to bring about a desired outcome. Just as more federal agencies than in the past now play a role in US “foreign policy,” multiple agencies (intelligence, homeland security, commerce, agriculture, health and human services, etc.) and actors (international and regional organizations, non-government organizations, and the private sector) will have to be involved in developing and implementing viable long-term solutions to today’s challenges. Tremendous array of military and civilian tools are needed to achieve sustainable, long-term national security objectives. This array of tools—from hard to soft instruments of power—constitutes our nation’s toolkit for addressing national security challenges and should be structured to function as an integrated whole.

In order for US national security policy to be informed, well reasoned, and effective, policymakers must both understand the possible components of a well-stocked toolkit and appreciate their uses. The purpose of this handbook is to lay out some new ways of thinking about today’s security needs, and to suggest organizing strategies for local constituents so that, in the end, our elected leaders will better represent a full spectrum of policy options to achieve long-term peace and security.

This handbook focuses solely on the formulation of short-term, tactical strategies for citizens to engage with Members of Congress about their vision of the appropriate tools needed to address current security challenges. Two interrelated themes are threaded throughout the discussion of formulating a tactical strategy: one

¹¹ Even within the category of “defense,” the means of the Pentagon can be broken down between the weapons and technology (commonly referred to as “hardware”) for war-fighting on the one hand and the human capacities of our military services (referred to here as “non-hardware defense”) on the other.

regarding process and the other regarding content. While the former requires, for example, navigating committee structures that do not match up well with post-Cold War threats, the latter addresses framing the content so that the link to US security interests is explicit.

Without question, addressing the “process problem” will require significant procedural and organizational changes in both Congress and within the national security apparatus of the executive branch.¹² We welcome the energy and commitment of those who share our concerns in shaping and implementing a long-term strategy for change. In the meantime, however, national and international challenges abound. Concerned citizens must navigate the institutions in their current form and help bridge the gap for policymakers regarding the relevance of non-military means in addressing today’s security needs.

¹² For example, a re-write of the 1947 National Security Act may be appropriate to address a radically changed international environment. Such a re-write could address the need for an interagency military and civilian “surge” capacity to address post-conflict or peacekeeping needs, more coherence among agencies to achieve US nonproliferation objectives, greater institutional capacities to prevent state failure, or more effective means to conduct US public diplomacy.