

## Introduction

If you think the United States has not adequately adapted its post-Cold War and post-September 11<sup>th</sup> strategy and institutions for effective engagement with the world, this handbook can serve as a tool to help you in your efforts to communicate with Members of Congress. If you believe, as we do, that Congress needs to focus more effort on preventive peace-building, provide more money for diplomatic solutions and less for Cold War-era weapons systems, ensure that capabilities for “winning the peace” match the US wherewithal to prevail in combat—if you believe, in general, that Congress frequently fails to pursue innovative, long-term solutions to today’s peace and security challenges—then we hope that these pages will help you better understand the ins, outs, and peculiarities of Congress. We hope ultimately to assist you in formulating an effective strategy for getting your voice heard.

The audience we hope to reach is diverse and broadly distributed across a range of peace and security issues. This book might, for instance, be helpful to: an immigrant rights organization with creative ideas to help address the problem of human trafficking; a computer scientist who wants to make available her expertise on issues of networked threats; a student of conflict resolution who seeks to share knowledge about the art and science of peacemaking; a doctor who hopes to promote preventive measures to transnational health threats; a church group that would like to expand its efforts in poverty reduction; or teachers who seek to create a library program for secular education in South Asia. The possibilities for involvement in peace and security activities are not only abundant; they also change and evolve constantly.

We believe that with some thoughtful planning, the argument that cooperative engagement—from military alliances, to sister-cities programs, to faith-based humanitarian initiatives—is an important component in addressing today’s challenges that can be propelled to the “radar screen” of Congress. But the people with the means of translating this argument into an explicit policy action, especially those with practical, “on-the-ground” experience, will need a solid strategy for bringing their proposals to the attention of policymakers. The collective objective of such

individual strategies should be to promote an appropriate set of policies—and the corresponding tools—to address global challenges. In order to accomplish our goals, we must offer our knowledge to a Capitol Hill audience, organize to ensure sufficient attention is paid to long-term goals, and help to translate the American public’s values into priorities for elected leaders. Above all, we view this as an exchange—a long-term dialogue between the public and its elected leaders. Listening and learning must happen on both sides.

We write this from a common premise: In today’s post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world, our nation must move beyond the notion that military dominance is sufficient to prevail against threats to peace and security. We hope to inform and support Americans who would like their elected leadership to use all instruments of power at our nation’s disposal so that force is truly only used as an instrument of last resort. Our objective is to achieve that by providing a user-friendly “how-to” manual that sheds light on the institutional tendencies and limitations of the US Congress, and offers tips on how to navigate them.

Chapter 1 offers a brief background on US global engagement and American attitudes on the US role in the world. If a majority of Americans believe that cooperative international engagement is important, then why doesn’t Congress devote more time and resources to promote it? Chapter 1 briefly discusses our assumptions, the gap between polls and policymakers’ beliefs about public opinion, and why Congress is a good place to start promoting change.

Chapter 2 looks at congressional institutions in the context of a post-Cold War and post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world. Why is Congress so rigidly attached to old-fashioned ways of doing business and setting priorities? Why do “hard” power solutions (e.g., weapons and technology) appear to have an overwhelming advantage over “soft” power solutions like preventive strategies for weak states or US efforts to secure nuclear weapons materials at the source? What drives the congressional agenda, and what can an engaged constituency do to influence it? What has or has not changed in Congress to ensure the institution’s capability to adequately understand and address today’s peace and security issues? This chapter is a primer on how to think about Congress in context.

In Chapter 3, we explain the institutional and procedural parameters within which Members of Congress operate. How does the House differ from the Senate with respect to a Member's ability to champion an issue? How should a Member's party affiliation, committee assignments, seniority, and personal experience factor into an assessment of her potential wherewithal to provide leadership on your issue? Could you or your organization become the primary constituent advisor on a key peace and security issue? What role can the media play in getting the Member's attention and building your coalition? Using two case studies, Chapter 3 walks you through the different factors that constrain or enhance a Member's potential leadership and the various roles Members play, as well as, the symbiotic relationship between Members and the media. Our objective is to train you to think like a Member and formulate a strategy that helps the Member help you.

In Chapter 4, we discuss how information on an issue can be turned into useful knowledge for a Member of Congress and his staff. What recommendations or "action items" are most relevant for Congress? Who is your audience and which committees (or Members) should you approach? What are successful tactics for getting access to your targeted Members? How can you frame an issue to avoid opposition, or provide as much common ground for support as possible? Again using two case studies, we escort you through the relevant committees and other potential audiences. We discuss strategies for getting access to Members' offices, and the value of online research tools to facilitate your search for potential allies. Finally, Chapter 4 outlines how to "package" your issues by paying attention to framing, partisan divisions, and terminology.

Chapter 5 is a primer on the "nuts and bolts" of Congress, including a brief summary of the legislative and budget process, tips on meetings with Members (or staffers), organizing public meetings on and off the Hill, methods for outreach, and logistics for obtaining a meeting room on Capitol Hill. What should you know about the legislative and budget process? What are important research and preparation tasks to ensure your event is topical, relevant, and framed in a way acceptable to a Member? How do you arrange a meeting in your district or on the Hill? What materials should you take along with you to the meeting? How might you set up an educational briefing on the Hill and appeal to a broad audience? We make recommendations for your

planned office meetings and other, more advocacy-oriented peace and security events; in both cases, we discuss how to encourage your Member to participate. We then offer tips on controlling the agenda, on selecting your venue, and on the pros and cons of building a large coalition and co-hosting events.

Chapter 6 tells the story of *Security for a New Century (SNC)*, an existing educational program on Capitol Hill and a major impetus for this publication. *SNC* is a bipartisan study group for congressional staffers. It meets regularly to discuss today's security challenges with US and international policy professionals. With its origins in conflict resolution theory developed at the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation, this study group is an example of putting theory into practice. The creators of *SNC* posed and tried to address the following questions: How might we broaden the international outlook on Capitol Hill in the interest of the public good? How can we control for potential bias? What can be done to exclude power dynamics and partisan antagonism? We conclude this chapter with an analysis of why the program is successful and how it offers a model that others may wish to replicate.