Chapter One

Foreign Policy Begins at Home: Cultural Influences on U.S. Behavior Abroad

A nation's response to international conflicts is influenced by the interaction of many internal and external factors, some of them more dominant than others in different crises. These include the country's historical experiences, its self-perception, its perception of other countries, its perception of the threat, the quality of its leadership, its economic and military capabilities, bureaucratic politics, the interests and values of the policy-relevant elites, the dynamics of the policy-making process, the personalities of prominent decision makers, regional and international responses to the problem, and the views of major allies.

At a more fundamental, but often overlooked, level, a nation's choice of one course of action over another and its selection of instruments to implement it are often determined by complex, and largely subconscious, aspects of culture. Michael Vlahos, director of the center for the Study of Foreign Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, contends that "the way people

think and behave at very sophisticated levels is driven by culture."[1] Similarly, Eugene W. Rostow, a former Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs and Director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, observes that "the web of traditions, beliefs, and habits which constitute a culture defines the goals it aspires to reach through political action, and sets limits on its capacity to achieve change."[2] This is particularly true of U.S. foreign policy, primarily because various historical myths and perceptions provide an essential part of the bedrock upon which a national sense of belonging, patriotism, purpose, and rationality rests. American presidents constantly refer to these myths to gain support for their policies, including the use of force.

To a much greater extent than most other countries, the United States is not just a geographic entity; it is an ideology or set of beliefs. The dominant culture, which embodies that creed, profoundly affects the content of foreign policy, and directly and significantly shapes responses to international problems. Public discourse, policy debates, all the abstract analytical models, and various methods of solving problems are ultimately anchored in the "American Way." The relative newness of the United States as a nation, its isolation from European quarrels, its endemic provincialism, its unmatched racial and ethnic diversity, and the fact that the country was founded on a set of beliefs have elevated historical experiences and ideology to a prominent role in foreign policymaking. In many cases, culture, the means by which such a vast and often rootless society has managed to retain its identity and global leadership, has been one of the most important determinants of foreign activities, or the lack of them.[3]

The emphasis on the centrality of culture in foreign policy is clearly at odds with "realism," the dominant approach to the study of international relations. Since World War II, the importance of domestic cultural factors in the shaping of a country's external behavior has been downplayed by scholars. Anthropology as a tool of foreign policy, with its focus on culture, has been superceded by political science, which largely avoids the nebulous and mushy concept of culture. Vlahos notes that political scientists were more comfortable with the concept of an international system because it could be quantitatively defined and precisely understood and managed. Human

behavior, according to political scientists, could be analyzed and predicted by mathematical models.[4] This depreciation in the relevance of the domestic sources of foreign policy helps to explain why the vast majority of scholars, academic think tanks, and government agencies—despite their sophisticated methods of analysis—failed to predict the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the escalation of ethnonationalism in the 1990s. Realists assume that the international environment determines a country's foreign policy. From their perspective, factors such as a state's position in the international system, its participation in alliances, and the balance of power "are vastly more important than national variations in domestic political institutions and values" in determining that country's foreign relations.[5]

Functioning in a hostile environment, governments are perceived by realists as being primarily concerned with defining and protecting their countries' interests. The dominant view among foreign policy analysts, which is the essence of realism, is that national interests are closely identified with national security. Given the anarchic nature of the international system, military might is regarded as the principal means of achieving foreign policy objectives.[6] From most realists' viewpoint, the moral values or impulses of a particular country's citizens are largely irrelevant. Foreign policy decisions are viewed as neither moral nor immoral. As George F. Kennan puts it, "the interests of the national society for which government has to concern itself...have no moral quality."[7] But the absence of morality does not necessarily mean the absence of culture. Hans J. Morgenthau, a leading proponent of realism, emphasizes that how the national interest is defined "depends on the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated."[8] Generally, however, realists stress military and economic factors in international relations to the virtual exclusion of ideational considerations.

Although the international environment is clearly an important determinant of how nations behave, most policymakers are attentive to the domestic ramifications of international relations. In many cases, domestic politics drives national security policies and frequently brings Congress into conflict with the Executive branch. Whereas the former tends to be more concerned with domestic implications of foreign policies, the latter

has to be sensitive to external as well as domestic factors. Presidents sometimes initiate external activities to obtain domestic support. President Jimmy Carter's grain embargo against the Soviet Union following its invasion of Afghanistan, and President Ronald Reagan's decision to lift it, had more to do with domestic considerations than with attempting to alter Soviet behavior. Contrary to the realists' assumption that the international environment is the most important restraint on U.S. foreign policy, domestic constraints are often stronger than external constraints. To a much greater degree than is the case in other democratic societies, American policymakers are sensitive to domestic pressures, partly because they operate in a more open and accessible political system.[9] Americans expect the government to be responsive to their concerns. Pressure groups, citing the latest public opinion polls on issues that interest them, are a visible and powerful component of political life. Consequently, the national interest, which is essentially subjective, is ultimately rooted in the people's fundamental values and beliefs. American policies toward South Africa during the 1980s, and U.S. humanitarian intervention in Somalia in late 1992, emanated from domestic pressures and moral impulses.

Culture and Foreign Policy

It may be argued that nations are primarily cultural entities and secondarily geographic areas. This is manifested by numerous late-twentieth century developments in Europe, the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and elsewhere. Nations have traditionally been defined in terms of their common identity, values, languages, and customs. Even as technology and science are instrumental in forging greater interdependence among nations and spreading cultural habits and thought around the world, the rise of nationalism, fueled mainly by cultural claims, is simultaneously fostering disintegration of some countries and exclusivity in others. The United States itself faces tensions caused by the unraveling of the dominant culture and the rising influence of rival subcultures. Although Americans have held differing opinions on what defined them as a nation, there has always been general agreement on core values and symbols. The emergence of a more pronounced eth-

nic consciousness and a greater emphasis on multiculturalism are widely perceived as challenging the view that the United States possesses a consensual political culture.[10]

Furthermore, demographic changes in the United States have helped to reinforce the perception that the dominant culture and the nation itself are disintegrating. Even though roughly 75 percent of Americans still trace their roots to Europe, those origins are becoming distant in the country's memory. Recent immigrants from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East are demanding that America refocus its priorities and move away from Europe and what many racial and ethnic minorities regard as a Eurocentric culture.[11] As the population center of the United States shifts from the East Coast to the West and the Southwest, areas in which the newer immigrants are most numerous, foreign policy is directly affected. Europe becomes relatively less important, while Latin America and Asia are elevated. Clearly, trade and other factors are helping to change the country's international relations.

Michael Lind, for example, discusses the foreign policy implications of the unraveling of the cultural fabric, and what he perceives to be cultural decline. From Lind's perspective, internal tensions divert energies, destroy America's ability to compete in world markets, and drain the country's financial resources. "As the decay spreads at home, the country's power and prestige decline abroad."[12] Domestic cultural clashes, in his view, are inextricably linked to foreign policy. The angst generated by cultural upheaval is evidence of the power of culture and its centrality in the lives of individuals, groups, and nations. In addition to weakening the realists' assumption that developments in the external environment rather than domestic factors determine a country's foreign policy, post-Cold War conflicts underscore the importance of cultural reservoirs in international relations.

A cultural reservoir may be defined as an accumulation of goodwill and understanding that stems from a set of values, beliefs, attitudes, historical experiences, and racial and ethnic links that two or more countries have in common. Similarities are strengthened by international exchanges, military alliances, and economic interdependence. However, as John A. Kroll argues, the link between interdependence and increased cooperation is not automatic.[13] When disputes between countries occur, cultur-

al reservoirs, or the lack of them, play a pivotal role in how differences are resolved. Leaders can draw upon their cultural similarities to diminish international tensions. Conversely, as developments in Bosnia, Rwanda, and elsewhere have demonstrated, leaders can draw on accumulated cultural differences and hatreds to promote conflict. Cultural reservoirs strengthen the perception that friendly relations between culturally similar countries are the norm, and that a particular disagreement is a deviation from an otherwise peaceful relationship. America's policy toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict demonstrates the importance of cultural reservoirs in foreign affairs. Cultural similarities between the United States and Israel, as Chapter Five shows, influenced Washington to patiently negotiate an end to the conflict. On the other hand, the absence of strong cultural links and significant economic interaction between states may facilitate indifference (as the case study of Bosnia clearly indicates) or hostility.

Even where there are strong economic links between countries, as is the case between the United States and Japan and the United States and the Arab states, cultural factors appear to be dominant, and economic dependence may engender hostility. Cultural differences, as well as ignorance of other cultures, tend to exacerbate difficulties that arise in interstate relations and diminish the chances of such problems being resolved peacefully. Whereas cultural distance is conducive to using coercive methods to terminate conflicts, cultural proximity is likely to encourage the negotiated settlement of disputes.[14] Even if actions taken by countries that are culturally similar to the United States are essentially the same as those of states that are culturally distant, the American response is likely to be different. Samuel P. Huntington believes that "a world of clashing civilizations is inevitably a world of double standards: people apply one standard to their kin-countries and a different standard to others."[15] While most nations tend to find ways to justify kin-countries' behavior and avoid imposing punitive measures against them, they often condemn and attempt to punish culturally distant "others."

Although many political scientists attribute the fact that democracies rarely fight each other to structural constraints that encourage leaders to resolve disputes peacefully and to democratic norms that emphasize compromise, persuasion, peace-

ful competition, protection of minority rights, and so on, it could be argued that democracies do not fight each other because their cultures are very similar.[16] Yet culturally similar countries have clashed militarily and culturally distant countries have been allies when significant interests were perceived to be at stake. For example, Russia cooperated with the United States during the Napoleonic Wars in an effort to keep the rising new American power from formally joining France, and again during both World Wars. On the other hand, Britain and the United States fought each other in the American Revolution and in the War of 1812, with Russia acting as a mediator in the latter.[17] Despite the two Anglo-American wars, however, Rostow contends that strong kinship ties and a pervasive sense of a shared civilization militated against the likelihood of America's becoming Britain's potential enemy.[18]

The concept of culture is nebulous, complex, and divergent in its various applications. Anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, and others define culture in different ways. The distinction can be made between material culture--the tangible products of human society, and nonmaterial culture--the intangible products of society, such as values and rules of right and wrong behavior. Nonmaterial culture is the learned ideational aspects of human society.[19] The two are intertwined, however. In most of Western Europe, the United States, and Canada, culture is generally equated with civilization and refers to political, economic, religious, technical, moral, or social facts. In the German intellectual tradition, by contrast, the concept of *Kultur* is almost exclusively concerned with levels of excellence in the fine arts, literature, music, and individual personal perfection. Reference to human behavior, to the value which a person possesses by virtue of his or her mere existence and conduct, without any meaningful accomplishment, is very minor.[20]

In this book, culture is understood to be a set of shared learned values, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, modes of living, customs, and symbols. Culture is usually defined as a way of life. According to Clifford Geertz, "the concept of culture denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conception expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."[21] Although there exist discrete and often contradictory aspects of

culture, they function together to form an interrelated and integrated whole. The connections among different components of culture give the culture meaning.[22] They also contribute to the ambiguity, dynamism, and complexity that are essential characteristics of culture. Certain aspects of a culture are so divergent that they appear unbridgeable; not everything is connected to everything else with equal directness. Geertz notes that cultural discontinuity is as real as cultural integration.[23] In his view, "culture moves like an octopus—not all at once in smoothly coordinated synergy of parts, a massive coaction of the whole, but disjointed movements by this part, then that, and now the other which somehow cumulate to directional change."[24]

While the analysis of the role of culture in foreign affairs focuses on the dominant culture, it does not overlook the variations within American culture. Indeed, the concept of culture is understood in a pluralist sense, as differentiation within a collectivity. Subcultures are the bedrock of a pluralist view of culture. According to Chris Jenks, "a subculture is the way of defining and honoring the particular specification and demarcation of different interests of a group of people within a larger collectivity."[25] To some extent, culture varies from one group to another, from region to region, and so on. Emile Durkheim, in *Division of Labor*, articulated the view that as societies become more complex cultural consensus is weakened. Divergent attitudes and values develop, and beliefs and attitudes are modified, in ways that are significantly different from those prescribed or proscribed by the conscience collective or strongly defined moral consensus.[26] By promoting skepticism and innovation, pluralism challenges established traditions, values, and beliefs.

But pluralism does not eliminate a shared core culture that is largely assumed. Pluralism and tradition coexist in what Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman call "a state of mutual accommodation."[27] Despite America's ethnic, religious, and racial diversity, and its plethora of subcultures, there is widespread agreement that an American culture exists, and there is consensus on its fundamental attributes. Often, many of the cultural differences associated with various subcultures are downplayed or temporarily overlooked when our society confronts distant cultures. But international conflict may also highlight these differences, many of which are often expressed in antiwar protests.

Culture, as defined by Geertz and others, is a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols. The social functions of symbols depend to a great extent on their cognitive meaning. Meaning is understood in two different ways. It may be utilized in a cognitive sense, as when one asks for the explanation of a natural occurrence, a historical development, or a sociological fact. But meaning is also used in a semantic-affective sense, as when one inquires about the meaning of unequal life-fates, frustration, or death.[28] Symbol means any object, word, gesture, or sound to which cultural traditions have given meaning as representing something. The omnipresence of the American flag and the frequent recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance underscore the centrality of symbols and the meanings attached to them in American life.

These meanings are socially constructed. Individuals attach subjective meanings to their actions, which become objectified in the artifacts of culture—ideologies, belief systems, moral codes, and institutions. According to Berger and Luckman, "these meanings are reabsorbed into consciousness as subjectively plausible definitions of reality. Culture, then, is at base an all-embracing socially constructed world of subjectively experienced meanings."[29] Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall emphasize that all cultures have hidden codes of behavior which are largely unintelligible to outsiders, inasmuch as approximately 80 to 90 percent of the significant features of a culture are reflected in its nonverbal messages.[30]

Values, a component of culture, are widely shared abstract assumptions about what is right and wrong, desirable and undesirable, good and bad, or just and unjust. Values help shape attitudes toward particular situations and provide both justifications for, and guides to, the policies designed to cope with them.[31] Attitudes may be defined as "general evaluative propositions about some object, fact or condition: more or less friendly, desirable, dangerous, trustworthy, or hostile."[32] Values and attitudes directly influence our perception of others. Erroneous judgments about another country and its leaders often distort reality and engender conflict. As Jack S. Levy observes, "in the external case, perceptions of unmitigated hostility generate belief in the inevitability of war, possibly triggering a preemptive strike in a crisis situation in order to gain benefits of the initiative."[33]

Beliefs are largely unexamined assumptions upon which national policies are constructed. Beliefs help organize perceptions into a meaningful guide for behavior. The belief system has the function of establishing goals and ordering preferences. "It tells us what ought to be."[34] In other words, beliefs set broad parameters and guidelines for action. Douglas W. Blum maintains that "whereas the actual implementation of policy depends on situational factors, core beliefs set tentative limits on the kinds of policies that can be pursued. Policy outcomes then feed back into the system. Desired outcomes reaffirm the validity of the beliefs that produced them, whereas problematic outcomes have the opposite effect."[35] For example, America's failures in Vietnam undermined the validity of some of its beliefs, which, in turn, weakened national consensus on foreign policy matters. The Gulf War was perceived by President Bush and others as "kicking the Vietnam syndrome," an obvious effort to restore the validity of the beliefs that undergird national consensus. Beliefs help determine how nations interact and how they perceive themselves, their allies, and their adversaries or potential enemies. While belief systems are extremely stable, external shocks or the emergence of new leaders and generational change help to facilitate changes in the prevailing belief system.[36] This explains, in part, some of the differences between Bush and Clinton in the area of foreign policy.

Although clashes between perceived reality and objective reality result in modification and reinterpretation of some beliefs, values, perceptions, and behavior, cultures tend to be relatively stable. Most Americans' preoccupation with change and newness, and our general predisposition to ignore the past, obscure obvious continuities in the dominant culture. The tenacity of American values is due principally to their workability and the enormous and unprecedented economic, political, and social success the nation has experienced, based on its fundamental beliefs and attitudes. In other words, most of us believe that America's political-economic creed is the cause of its material wealth and political stability. Consequently, fundamental values and beliefs remain essentially unaltered.

Michael Vlahos contends that throughout history the American reaction to change has not been to tear down existing structures, but rather to reinterpret the national pantheon.[37] As the country developed, adjustments were implemented within

the framework of accepted customs and beliefs. Examples of these major changes are the inauguration of Jacksonian democracy, the New Deal, the civil rights movement, and the equality for women movement. Many of these changes occurred because the majority of Americans benefited from the resulting economic progress and political stability. Cultural stability is reinforced by the very process by which dominant values, attitudes, customs, and beliefs are transmitted from one generation to another. Agents of cultural transmission include parents, schools, religious institutions, the media, political and social organizations, friends, and peer groups.

Enculturation, no matter how thorough, does not create complete uniformity of behavior. This is due to several reasons. First, human beings are strongly influenced by biological as well as cultural factors. Biological factors will invariably promote innate variations in mental, physical, and behavioral capabilities. Consequently, individuals are likely to respond differently to enculturation. Second, information transmitted through enculturation varies from family to family and from institution to institution. Third, enculturation is an ongoing process, some of which occurs outside one's culture. For example, to what extent did Clinton's experiences at Oxford shape his crime and health care policies? Finally, individuals tend to maneuver within their cultures, choosing actions to meet their personal interests as well as the demands of their society.[38]

Personal qualities such as empathy, which is the ability to put oneself in another person's shoes, as it were, are likely to militate against simple stereotypes, which are transmitted through enculturation. The empathetic person is apt to perceive motivational complexity and decisional differentiation when dealing with conflicts with distant cultures.[39] This tendency will probably be reinforced by a cosmopolitan socialization, international travel, friendships with individuals from foreign countries, membership in international organizations, and so on.

Because schools are products of culture, and because their principal function is to teach society's values, they reinforce culture, even as they educate students to challenge it. If education is inseparable from culture, then religion is at the heart of it. Max Weber argued in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that even in the most secular Western countries religion and culture are intertwined.[40] Religion and religious be-

liefs may also reinforce nationalism. By elucidating a broader worldview, religion infuses the symbols of public and private cultures with universal significance.[41] Religion is clearly the fountainhead of many cultural values, perceptions, and concepts of justice, morality, and humanitarianism. This is particularly true of the United States, a country founded upon religious freedom and one in which religious issues continue to dominate political and social life. America is the most insistent of all industrial countries on separating church and state, and, as will be discussed, is simultaneously the most religious Western nation. In politics or education, war or peace, foreign or domestic policies, religion predominates. Will Herberg concludes that "America seems to be at once the most religious and the most secular of nations."[42]

The media's importance as a transmitter of cultural values is obvious. In a society in which dreams are so often transformed into reality, where one can achieve extraordinary success relatively quickly, television's and Hollywood's fictional happy endings and actual life are often blurred. Television also reinforces stereotypes of those considered as different, and glorifies violence. For many Americans, television programs are reflections of reality. As Chapter Four shows, negative stereotypes of Arabs facilitated the use of force by the American-led coalition in the Gulf. Does television manufacture the predominant values of success, winning, fame, and the use of force to resolve conflicts? Successful television shows are products of the general culture and, in turn, play a pivotal role in shaping and highlighting certain aspects of that culture. Television portrays other cultures in favorable or unfavorable ways for American audiences, thereby influencing our perceptions of them. Haynes Johnson, for example, maintains that in this context television's impact on American foreign policy is significant.[43]

Domestic factors in general, and cultural values in particular, interact with external stimuli to shape a country's foreign policies. When America faces challenges from abroad, its culture often influences how it responds to them and is, in turn, modified by those developments. This connection contributes to the culture's dynamism and its ability to deal with inevitable changes in the international system. But the effects of external stimuli on culture are neither uniform nor consistent. For ex-

ample, America fought for democracy and freedom in Europe during World War II, but in the war's aftermath, it found itself facing the reality that democracy at home was not enjoyed by many citizens, particularly those of African descent. Greater international involvement subsequent to the war underscored the need for significant changes in many of the country's racial attitudes and practices. Widespread racial discrimination undermined America's credibility as the world's champion of democracy. Recognition of discrepancies between ideals and practice, underscored by foreign policy issues, had a major impact on the success of the civil rights movement in the United States.

The Cold War's advent fostered an anti-communist consensus, a widespread and exaggerated fear of military conflict with the Soviet Union, suppression of domestic dissent, and visceral patriotism. Superpower competition for global dominance influenced Americans to interpret their history in a way that was consistent with the perceived threat. American exceptionalism, the belief that the United States is unique and morally superior to other nations, was rejuvenated, and a stark simplicity of confrontation between good and evil was accepted by most Americans.

While the East-West struggle suited U.S. cultural approaches to problems, it also profoundly affected virtually all aspects of the culture. Morton H. Halperin and Jeanne M. Woods point out that political authority became more centralized in the Executive branch, government secrecy mushroomed, the national tendency toward paranoia was heightened, and dissent was equated with disloyalty.[44] American business achievements were perceived as a vindication of the cultural values and beliefs. However, Stephen J. Whitfield argues that because materialism was viewed as "the special philosophical province of the enemy, respect for religion also became pervasive."[45] In other words, to differentiate itself from the communist countries that adhered to the doctrine of economic determinism and rejected religious beliefs, the United States stressed its own religious foundations and belief in God. America's response to the Cold War did not radically alter underlying cultural values; it brought into sharper focus contradictions that are inherent in the society.

At a deeper and more important level, however, paradoxes in America's culture and its domestic and foreign policies emanate from the myths upon which the country was founded. Americans, regardless of their group identity, multicultural concerns, or social status, embrace many myths that are the foundations of contemporary culture and which help to define us as a nation. But some of these myths, as is commonly the case, are inconsistent. For instance, viewing itself as an example for all nations, the United States attempts to change the world even as it attempts to avoid being contaminated by it. Louis Hartz observes that "embodying an absolute moral ethos, Americanism, once it is driven on the world stage by events, is inspired willy-nilly to reconstruct the very alien things it tries to avoid."[46] In other words, instead of tolerating differences, the United States tries to transform other countries into its own image when it becomes involved, often reluctantly, in world affairs.

Public Opinion and Foreign Policy

In a democratic society, especially one that is as decentralized, as open, and as politically accessible as the United States, public opinion often, but not always, plays a prominent role in influencing foreign relations. Public opinion's ability to affect foreign policymakers' choices varies from one conflict to another. To obtain support for their policies, political leaders in general, and the President specifically, must appeal to public opinion. Given the ideological nature of the country's underlying values, public opinion has remained a remarkably stable component of foreign policy. This stability is reinforced by cultural habits. John Spanier maintains that Americans' apprehension of external danger has repeatedly led them to insist on an almost dogmatic reaffirmation of loyalty to the "American way of life."[47] This tendency led to the extremism that characterized McCarthyism, which dominated American life during the early 1950s.

Accentuated during the Cold War, pressure to conform to the American creed may have its origins in the very insecurity of the experiment that became the American civilization. While the commitment to freedom of expression in the United States is unmatched anywhere in the world, public opinion tends to be

politically uniform, especially when compared to Western Europe. Differences are often variations of the same myths. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote more than 150 years ago that: "I know no country in which, speaking generally, there is less independence of mind and true freedom of discussion than in America.... In America the majority has enclosed thought within a formidable fence."[48] This observation has clearly been modified by numerous changes in the United States and the growing influence of various subcultures.

Policymakers usually pay close attention to public opinion, especially when considering policies that would lead to the use of American troops abroad. Consequently, both immediate public sentiment and the deeper cultural values sometimes constrain policymakers' choices. While the United States Constitution establishes the powers and responsibilities of the various branches of government, and imposes checks and balances so that they will function to safeguard the people's freedom, the authority essential for the realization of constitutional guarantees comes from the political culture in particular and the broader culture in general. Ultimately, the government's legitimacy resides in the people and their political culture.[49] Consequently, foreign policy decisions, whatever their objectives, must be communicated to the public as being consistent with shared values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Too great an emphasis on elite influences on foreign policies leads to the erroneous assumption that those in positions of power are basically free from the culture that binds the rest of society. On the contrary, those who aspire to political office and those who manage to realize their aspirations are, in general, immersed in many of society's fundamental values. They are thus perpetuators of culture, even as they manipulate society's values to achieve their own goals. Even if their own personal beliefs are significantly different from those of most voters, they realize that to be elected they have to operate within the boundaries established by culture.

In a country that often seems to be obsessed with newness, the past provides a constant reference point for the public and policymakers alike. Feelings, images, beliefs, and attitudes can be mobilized for particular purposes, and ordinarily facilitate the achievement of decision-makers' objectives. Presidents constantly refer to the foundations of culture to justify current poli-

cies and mobilize public support. A cursory review of political speeches readily reveals the heavy reliance on potent symbols of history. In other words, cultural values are arguably more influential upon America's foreign policies than they are upon those of countries that appear to be less obsessed with newness and are more concerned with preserving the past. In both domestic and foreign policies, public rhetoric is replete with widely understood codewords that are summaries of deeply held values. Because of their explanatory power and popular appeal, codewords are employed by policymakers to simplify complicated problems and to mobilize public support for foreign policies.[50] As will be discussed, Bush, for example, probed the culture to find the right codewords to gain public approval for his military solution to the Gulf crisis.

President Reagan's popularity was due in part to his embodiment of those attributes that represent cornerstones of American culture. These include individualism, optimism, willingness to take risks, physical strength, a clear sense of personal identity, self-assurance, and a reputation as a winner. He constantly referred to history and culture not only to marshal support but also to reassure Americans of their role in the world. In a speech at the annual convention of the American Legion in Salt Lake City in 1984, Reagan pledged to "keep America a beacon of hope to the rest of the world and to return her to her rightful place as a champion of peace and freedom among the nations of the earth." Adding that he was not preaching manifest destiny, he declared that "we Americans cannot turn our backs on what history has asked of us. Keeping alive the hope of human freedom is America's mission, and we cannot shrink from the task or falter in the call of duty."[51] In his final radio address to the nation, Reagan reiterated many of the codewords that resonate in the society: "Whether we seek it or not, whether we like it or not, we Americans are keepers of the miracles. We are asked to be guardians of a place to come to, a place to start again, a place to live in the dignity God meant for his children. May it ever be so."[52] These references to history and specific myths were designed to buttress America's self-image, reinvigorate its culture, and strengthen culture's role in the formulation and implementation of foreign policies.

While it is generally agreed that bureaucratic structures play an important part in shaping the content of foreign policy,

the connection between organizational structures and a country's self-perception and beliefs is often overlooked. The values, attitudes, and beliefs of a particular society ultimately help to shape that society's institutions. And institutions lead people to hold certain values, attitudes, and beliefs.[53] In other words, structures and culture are inseparable and are part of a circular process. As national leaders attempt to secure what they regard as their country's interests, their beliefs inevitably enter into the decision-making process. Emphasizing differences between systems in nature and the international system, Robert Jervis concludes that leaders' beliefs influence them to behave in certain ways, and that it is not possible to infer outcomes from the objective situation without considering the decision-makers' analyses and expectations.[54] Furthermore, because policymaking is rarely as rational as is frequently assumed by many political scientists and international-relations specialists, cultural differences matter. Apart from the biases inherent in human judgment, decision-making processes in the real world, as opposed to computer-generated models, tend to be ad hoc and chaotic. In this fluid and ill-defined process, cultural factors have a direct bearing on the outcome.[55]

Culture inevitably influences decision-making because it defines us and distinguishes us from others. Indeed, to define oneself, one must define others. All societies, directly and indirectly, promote their values as positive and desirable while, simultaneously, devaluing those of other societies. This behavior is referred to as ethnocentrism. Positive images of one's society are developed and augmented by rewards for conformity. Ken Booth, Marshall H. Segall, and others contend that each society views itself as the center of the world, perceives and interprets other societies within its peculiar frame of reference, and invariably judges them inferior.[56] The more culturally distinct the other society, the more inferior it is often deemed to be, and thus suitable to be treated differently. This ethnocentrism has serious ramifications for foreign relations, affecting how conflicts are resolved, what military strategies are employed when force is used, and whether Americans are able to empathize with citizens of other nations. U.S. policies toward Iraq following its occupation of Kuwait, and toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, demonstrate the centrality of culture, theirs and ours, in determining how disputes are settled.

National self-images, like perceptions of others, are direct-
ly shaped by culture and transmitted through the agents of so-
cialization, especially the mass media and schools. A nation's
self-image is intertwined with how it perceives its international
role, as well as with how it should accomplish its objectives.[57]
Bush's decision to demonstrate American resolve in relation to
Iraq virtually foreclosed the use of negotiations to end the Gulf
crisis. Images, the conscious and unconscious products of cul-
ture, serve as organizing devices that enable decisionmakers to
simplify complex problems and to filter information to make it
consistent with their beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. Informa-
tion that contradicts the images held by policymakers may be
deliberately ignored or inadvertently misconstrued. Leaders'
policy preferences are therefore influenced by their cultural
backgrounds.[58] With constant repetition, the stereotypes that
accompany imaging may be accepted as objective reality.

Ideology, Myth, and American Foreign Policy

The concepts of ideology and myth are closely related.
Both function within the broader cultural framework to perpet-
uate as well as to alter culture. As will be discussed, myth is
much broader in scope than ideology. There are dominant ide-
ologies and subordinate ideologies within the same culture, and
they are often in competition. Ideology is a system of values, be-
liefs, and ideas within the larger cultural system. It is defined
as a reasonably coherent body of ideas, a framework of political
consciousness, by which a people, or at least its dominant, gov-
erning element, organizes itself for political action.[59] Stated an-
other way, ideology is concerned with practical questions of how
to maintain, change, or reform a sociopolitical or economic
order.[60] In a broad sense, ideology is meaning in the service of
power.[61] The function of ideology, from Geertz's viewpoint, is "to
make an autonomous politics possible by providing authorita-
tive concepts that render it meaningful, the suasive images by
means of which it can be sensibly grasped."[62] Ideologies tend to
emerge in periods of significant socioeconomic and political
strain. For example, the French Revolution generated extreme
ideologies. The American Revolution and the integration of peo-
ple from many different countries into American society were

conducive to the emergence of ideologies. Ideologies become crucial as sources of sociopolitical meanings and attitudes.[63]

Ideology often profoundly affects how we perceive ourselves and others; it places some limitations on our ability to comprehend different cultures and political systems, which are also influenced by their own particular ideologies. But ideology does not always play a deterministic role. Some individuals are less restrained than others by ideology. Whatever the drawbacks of a coherent set of values might be, ideology is used by most individuals in virtually all societies, in varying degrees of intensity, to navigate a complex and often confusing world, to facilitate functioning in the international environment, and to take actions to safeguard long-term interests. The concept of ideology is closely related to the symbolic forms through which we express ourselves, understand others, and determine what is real. In this sense, ideology is connected to the concept of a worldview. A worldview is composed of various beliefs about the nature of reality and the world. Thus, a people's ideology usually cannot be separated from its nation's purpose, goals, and its expectations of itself and others.

Ideology affects the formulation and implementation of foreign policy in several ways. Geertz believes that "whatever else ideologies may be, they are, most distinctively, maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience."[64] In other words, ideologies help to establish the intellectual framework through which those responsible for making foreign policy observe reality. Information about international developments is given meaning within the categories, predictions, and definitions provided by ideology.[65] This does not mean that ideology usually plays a dominant, direct role in determining solutions to specific, concrete problems. Ideology operates on a more general level. Ideology helps to establish a people's perceptions of their role in the world and their nation's choice of strategies for accomplishing foreign policy objectives. Ideology may exert influence on whether a country decides to emphasize the use of force, as opposed to diplomacy, to achieve its foreign policy goals. Finally, ideology may serve to rationalize and justify the choice of specific foreign policy decisions.[66]

National myths, which are often intertwined with ideology, are stories taken from a country's history that give meaning to a wide range of experiences. According to H. Mark Roelof,

"myth denotes the nationally shared framework of political consciousness by which a people becomes aware of itself, as having an identity in history, and by which it is also prepared to recognize some governing regime as legitimate."[67] Richard Slotkin maintains that myth can be viewed as an intellectual or artistic construct that bridges the gap between the world of the mind and the world of affairs, between dream and reality, between impulse and action. It draws on the content of individual and collective memory, structures it, and develops from it imperatives for belief and action.[68]

Because myths and ideologies are as durable as the culture that nurtures them, many beliefs and values that were developed by the early Americans retain remarkable power in contemporary society, despite revolutionary changes in science and technology. The myths of the frontier and America as a "City on a Hill" continue to provide the foundation upon which many U.S. foreign policies are based as well as the justification of them. According to the myth of the frontier, the conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation or displacement of Native Americans have been the means to the achievement of a national identity, a democratic polity, an ever-expanding economy, and a dynamic and progressive civilization. Conflict and individualism were central to this process.[69] America as a "City on a Hill" underscored the United States' separation from the rest of the world as well as its role as a unique model for other countries to emulate.

Several factors have combined to perpetuate certain myths in America's internal affairs as well as its relations with other countries. These myths include the belief that everyone is equal, that hard work automatically leads to success, and that America is inherently an exceptional country. The extraordinary success achieved by the United States in virtually all areas of human endeavor reconfirms the validity of the myths for most people. Unlike Europe, with its feudal aristocracies and difficult economic conditions, the United States did not develop a rigid class system. The country expanded rapidly enough to allow Americans, especially those of European descent, to amass large fortunes relatively quickly, and to perpetuate the myth that anyone with ambition and the determination to work hard could become wealthy.