

Introduction: Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy

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BEING IN THE MIDDLE OF A PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN reminds us that elections and foreign policy make an interesting mix—interesting in the sense of the perhaps apocryphal Chinese curse, “may you live in interesting times.”¹ This has been an unusual campaign, but many of the issues and questions are enduring ones. Candidates, voters, interest groups, professional diplomats, foreign countries, and nongovernmental actors have to calculate and recalculate their interests in light of uncertain alternatives and changing circumstances. Foreign policy has entered this campaign in a form that resonates with, and indeed may largely originate from, the general uncertainty and fear for the future that seem to pervade American politics. At the time of this writing, the electorate is moved by considerations of physical and economic insecurity, and much depends on a candidate’s ability (or lack thereof) to project an image of being able to provide protection through being tough and assertive.

As the new president will learn, however, style and attitude are insufficient once he or she takes office. Even in an era dominated by domestic concerns, foreign policy issues matter for the national welfare. The United States continues to pay an enormous price for the error of the war in Iraq, and although this misstep is not likely to be repeated, lots of foreign involvements (or refusals to engage) can have major consequences.

¹For an excellent discussion, see Michael H. Armacost, *Ballots, Bullets, and Bargains: American Foreign Policy and Presidential Elections* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

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As the world's only superpower, the United States both influences and is influenced by events across the globe. Although American prosperity is less dependent on trade than is true for most countries, with almost 14 percent of the American economy consisting of exports, prosperity at home is in part the product of what is happening abroad.

I will proceed in four sections. I will first look at the world that the candidates now face and that the new president will have to cope with. Of course, this is the subject of countless books, articles, and blogs, and instead of a full treatment, I will provide a sketch, and a somewhat dogmatic one at that. Second, I will discuss the general problems of the intersection between foreign policy and presidential elections. Third, I will analyze the role that foreign policy has played in the campaign up to the point of writing this essay (March 2016). Finally, I will note how the articles that constitute the rest of this issue shed light on current foreign policy issues and choices.

THE WORLD THE UNITED STATES FACES AND HAS CREATED

Marshal Ferdinand Foch said that the crucial question in any conflict or issue is, “De quoi s’agit-il?”—“What is it all about?”² To simplify greatly, in the eighteenth century, international relations was all about monarchs and dynasties jockeying for power, wealth, and glory; in the nineteenth century, it was about coping with social upheavals and the resulting clashes of classes and nationalisms; the twentieth century started out in this vein, but after the Bolshevik revolution and the rise of Adolf Hitler, it became about the clash of ideologies. Some observers have tried to make parallel summaries of the current era. Perhaps most famously, Samuel Huntington called it the “clash of civilizations.”³ Others see new forms of global democracy, and related is the claim that international relations now revolves less around states than around congeries of private actors, albeit ones often concerned with public issues. There is something to these claims, but I think what is most striking is the very fact that we have trouble answering the question. That is, although we can locate, or at least argue about, what particular conflicts are all about, it is hard to provide an overall characterization of our era. Of course, it simply may be that we are still living through it and lack the wisdom that hindsight will provide, but I think the reason goes deeper than that—there is no longer a straightforward answer to Foch’s question. The central explanation is that, as I will

²I owe this quotation and its significance to the first chapter of Bernard Brodie’s *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

³Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

discuss later, the leading powers no longer pose security threats to each other. This allows for a wider range of choice and requires the United States to maintain a sense of proportion about the dangers that remain and to balance important but less than vital interests.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris, San Bernardino, and Brussels, fear is on the rise. A December 2015 poll showed 40 percent of the American people saying that national security and terrorism was their top concern, with job creation and economic growth coming in second at 23 percent.⁴ But even before these dramatic events, political elites in the United States were worried. In 2009, two-thirds of the members of Council on Foreign Relations reported believing that the world the United States faced was more dangerous than it had been during the Cold War.⁵ Three years later, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, claimed, “We are living in the most dangerous time in my lifetime.”⁶ Director of National Intelligence James Clapper similarly said, “Looking back over my more than a half century in intelligence I have not experienced a time when we’ve been beset by more crises and threats around the globe.”⁷ Taking these concerns to heart, on 22 December 2015, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra cancelled its European tour “due to the recent and tragic events in Europe and the United States, and based on extensive conversations with national and international security professionals.”⁸

These fears are exaggerated.⁹ The most dangerous thing most of us do every day is to cross the street; deaths from traffic accidents dwarf those from terrorism. The comparison to the Cold War is also telling. It is not clear whether the probability of terrorists obtaining and using a nuclear weapon is greater or less than the chance of nuclear war in the earlier

⁴Janet Hook, “New Poll Finds National Security Now the Top Concern,” *Wall Street Journal*, 15 December 2015.

⁵Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, *America’s Place in the World, 2009: An Investigation of Public Leadership Opinion about International Affairs*, December 2009, accessed at <http://www.people-press.org/file/legacy-pdf/569.pdf>, 3 March 2016; see also Benjamin Valentino, “At Home Abroad: Public Attitudes towards America’s Overseas Commitments,” in Jeremi Suri and Benjamin Valentino, eds., *Sustainable Security: Rethinking American National Security Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), chap. 7.

⁶Quoted in Christopher A. Preble, “The Most Dangerous World Ever?,” *Cato Policy Report*, September/October 2014, accessed at <http://www.cato.org/policy-report/septemberoctober-2014/most-dangerous-world-ever> (6 April 2016).

⁷“Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Committee,” statement before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 29 January 2014.

⁸“Orchestra Cancels Tour, Citing Terror Concerns,” *New York Times*, 23 December 2015.

⁹For similar arguments, see John J. Mearsheimer, “America Unhinged,” *The National Interest* 129 (January/February 2014): 9–30; and John Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

period, but although the consequences of terrorist use would, of course, be dreadful, it would be nothing like the civilization-ending impact of a Soviet-American war. And without use of nuclear weapons (or infectious biological agents), terrorists cannot do enormous damage. Indeed, if they had sources of effective power, they would use them to overthrow the governments they despise, alter the societies they find loathsome, and establish their values as supreme. They cannot do this, and instead the goal of terrorism is to terrorize—to induce fear and expectation that much greater harm will follow.

So why are people saying such foolish things? In part—but only, I believe, in small part—people are consciously exaggerating for bureaucratic, political, or personal reasons. It would hardly behoove the head of the intelligence establishment to say something like, “Although there are no grave dangers to American national security, there are a lot of smaller problems we need to be aware of and multiple interests that, while less than vital, still require attention.” Not only budgets but also people’s sense of mission are entangled with believing that what they do is vital. During political campaigns, advantage often goes to the candidate or the party that can claim that opponents are dangerously neglecting American security. The media also has an interest in playing up dangers. Bad news is good for circulation, and reporters and editors believe that it is their responsibility to keep a sharp eye out for threats to the country.

But this does not explain why so many members of the general public are fearful. In part, of course, they are picking up on the cues provided by the elites. This is not all there is to it, however. Although most of the dangers to our lives come in the form of everyday activities like driving, people both overestimate the degree of control they have over their lives and are more fearful of risks they feel they cannot control. We incorrectly think that we are above average drivers and that if we are careful, we can take care of ourselves. By contrast, it is next to impossible for any of us to influence the chance of dying in a terrorist attack. Furthermore, terrorist attacks get deeply embedded in our memories because they are vivid and widely covered in the media; the irony is that the extensive coverage is attributable to their being so rare. Related, the high level of fear is linked to the unusual nature of the threat. Terrorism can appear at any time, and it is both internal and external. We usually rely on the army for protection against foreign enemies, and the American military is by far the most powerful in the world. It cannot provide full protection against terrorism, however, and this is deeply unsettling and partly explains not only why terrorism is the focus of considerable discussion in the presidential race but why so much of it is vague and disconnected from serious analysis.

The fact that it is hard to answer Foch's question is good news. It means that we can no longer detect a dominant divide in world politics or a motive for large-scale war, at least not among the states of North America, Western and Central Europe, and Japan, which have the greatest hard and soft power and form an unprecedented security community.¹⁰ According to Karl Deutsch, a security community is a group of countries that not only are at peace with each other but among whom war is unthinkable.¹¹ This is a very restricted category. Even countries that remain at peace for prolonged periods often think about and plan for war with one another. It is exceedingly rare for major states to fail to do so, and when they do put the thought of war between them out of their minds, the reason is often the pressing threat from a common enemy. Indeed, it was the perception of a common threat from the Soviet Union that was partly responsible for the rise of the security community, but the Soviet demise has not led to the community's. This break with the past hardly can be exaggerated: it is not too much to say that the history of world politics has been dominated by war and the shadow of war among the most powerful states. It is the blessed turning off of this engine of world politics that makes Foch's question so hard to answer.

Russia and the People's Republic of China are outside the community, and war with them (and between them) remains possible. Nevertheless, one reason these possibilities receive as much attention as they do is the lack of greater dangers. Furthermore, when we look at the possible causes of war between NATO and Russia or between the United States (and/or Japan) and China, we see that despite some rhetoric growing out of the conflict over Ukraine and Syria, the issues are not direct and vital. Russia definitely is flexing its muscles, and there is little doubt that Vladimir Putin would like to reestablish Russia's place in the world and its dominance of as much of the former Soviet Union as possible. He has pursued a substantial military modernization, as shown by the significant, if limited, deployment of forces to Syria. That county remains Russia's only friend in the world, however. It is the Ukraine example that worries Poland and the Baltic republics the most, but it is worth noting that those who argue that Putin would have been deterred from this adventure had Ukraine been admitted

¹⁰Robert Jervis, "Theories of War in an Era of Leading-Power Peace," *American Political Science Review* 96 (March 2002): 1-14; and Jervis, "Force in Our Times," *International Relations* 25 (December 2011): 403-425. The European Union is, of course, a subset of the security community, and its development is both a cause and an effect of war among them being unthinkable. For all its cost and problems, the European Union is one of our era's crowning achievements.

¹¹Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

to NATO lack confidence that the membership of the other Central and Eastern European countries in the alliance is sufficient to protect them.

Even if these states are under some degree of threat, the danger to American core interests and values in Western Europe is nothing like the magnitude of the previous Soviet threat. The menace to the United States arising from China's rise is indirect only, stemming as it does from the maintenance of America's Cold War alliances in East Asia. The frictions and risks here are not trivial, especially because the chance that even the most limited armed conflict could lead to nuclear exchange is deeply frightening (which, of course, makes it less likely). But, partly because the ideological division that was central to many of the conflicts in the twentieth century is largely, if not completely, absent, the stakes are much lower than they were during the Cold War. In other words, the United States and its major allies now have an unprecedented degree of security, or at least security against threats from other countries (I am leaving aside the dangers of climate change). The result is to bring to the surface a range of issues that tap into different fears and hopes.

The Cold War preoccupation with security left us with two harmful intellectual legacies. First, scholars and leaders suffered an atrophy of their skills in dealing with nonvital interests and with conflicts that are significant but do not endanger the state. Second, the Cold War fear of the Soviet Union compounded the inherently difficult problem of maintaining a sense of proportion in the problems we now face. Putin's Russia certainly is now a problem for the West. Indeed, it may be one of the greatest foreign policy challenges for the West. But saying this does not tell us how great this problem is; it receives as much attention as it does in part because there are so few other dangers. Similarly, cyberconflict, especially but not only with the People's Republic of China, certainly is a danger worth taking seriously. But how large the stakes are and how important the menace is remain difficult to determine. The same is true for the proliferation of nuclear weapons, another foreign policy issue that has been of continuing concern to American leaders. Even those who reject the argument that proliferation will be stabilizing have difficulty estimating the magnitude of the danger and therefore the level of effort and resources that should be arrayed against it. Although rank ordering these and other threats is difficult, more difficult still is putting them on some absolute scale. The result is that the American leadership, and probably the mass public, has lost its sense of proportion concerning the international dangers being faced and, concomitantly, has failed to see how much safer we are now thanks to the existence of the security community. So we live in an unprecedentedly better world, but a difficult one for voters, candidates, and election campaigns.

CAMPAIGNS AND FOREIGN POLICY

The range of uncertainties, if not instabilities, is greater now than during the Cold War, for the ironic reason that foreign policy is both of diminished importance and more complicated. During the Cold War, even voters who had no inherent interest in the subject knew that a feckless president could lead to consequential foreign policy defeats and a reckless one could destroy the world. Foreign policy stewardship, if not always the single most important issue in presidential elections, was always highly important. Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected in part because of Harry Truman's inability to end the Korean War. In his campaign, John F. Kennedy stressed that he would rebuild American military strength and be tough on Fidel Castro. Hubert H. Humphrey faced an uphill battle because of Vietnam and might have eked out a victory had he been quicker to disassociate himself from Lyndon B. Johnson's policy. Jimmy Carter's moralistic campaign in 1976 resonated with the public mostly because of Watergate and related ills (themselves not entirely unrelated to Richard Nixon's twisted perceptions of what he had to do to make the United States safe against foreign enemies), but also partly because of the opposition to a foreign policy that seemed to have neglected basic American values; Carter was defeated four years later in part because of the perception that the Soviet Union had taken advantage of his weaknesses, and he might have overcome this handicap had he been able to free the hostages in Iran.

With the end of the Cold War, this changed. Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and their opponents paid little attention to foreign affairs during their campaigns, and it is hard to disagree with their judgment and argue that voters were strongly influenced by the world's situation. This changed, of course, in 2004 and 2008. A long and apparently indecisive war attracts significant public attention, although less than it would have had it been fought with a conscript army. Lacking that, however, attention wanders.

Even when voters turn abroad, they see a situation of more dimensions than was true during the Cold War. Of course, we should not oversimplify the earlier period. Not only were there great disagreements about how to cope with the Soviet Union, there were other salient issues as well, including economic policy, human rights, and the attempt to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the very reduced danger that the United States faces today means that the foreign policy agenda is more crowded and complicated, and the range of uncertainty for voters and candidates is correspondingly increased. How should a rational voter weight the relative importance of terrorism, nonproliferation, human rights, climate change, other forms of world environmental degradation, refugee flows, financial instability, the need to maintain NATO solidarity, and conflicts with

Russia and China? How should a voter go about estimating which candidate is most likely to conform to his or her preferences on any of these issues?

The other side of this coin is that vote-seeking candidates are also somewhat at a loss. What sorts of appeals should they make, outside of the obvious claim to be the one who can do the best job of “keeping American safe”? If opportunism does not provide clear guidelines, perhaps candidates must fall back on their own preferences. But given the reduced salience of foreign affairs, few of them are likely to have well-developed views, let alone a track record. The dismal performances of Lindsey Graham, the only Republican candidate to run on a foreign policy platform, and Rand Paul, the only candidate to raise fundamental issues about how assertive a role the United States should play in the world, provide cautionary tales. Even Hillary Clinton, who served as secretary of state, has an ill-defined foreign policy profile and has not built her campaign around this experience. During the Cold War, presidential candidates often not only had well-developed views but also were drawn to seeking the highest office in part because they wanted to direct foreign policy. This was clearly true for Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nixon. (I think that a good part of the explanation for Nixon’s surprising liberalism on many domestic issues lay in his desire to conciliate domestic opponents to gain a freer hand abroad.) By contrast, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush had been governors and had little foreign policy interest or even curiosity when they entered the White House, and they only became deeply involved in foreign policy as events bore in on them.

Interest groups and moneyed individuals are at least as important as individual voters. Generalizing about them is impossible, but three points should be noted. First, they obviously have a keener sense of their own interests than do ordinary individuals, and they devote much more effort to predicting how candidates would behave if elected and to affecting that behavior. Second, they are “interested” actors in both senses of the term, and this gives them sufficient influence that candidates must court them. But the range and number of such groups and individuals are wide enough to give the skillful candidate a decent margin of choice. Candidates need money and support, but these can be found in many (although not all) places. Third, this is not a one-sided game. Candidates need backing and money, but groups and individuals need to be seen as influential players. They gain standing and status by being associated with candidates; they court as they are being courted. Furthermore, the balance between the two changes after the election: candidates are more beholden to interest groups and donors than are presidents. Once in office, the latter have more

leverage over their backers and can turn to alternative sources of support. Of course, presidents cannot entirely call the tune, but they have much more say over what music is played than they did when they were dancing for dollars during the campaign.

The relatively low salience of most foreign policy issues in the campaign presents foreign countries as well as voters with a problem, although perhaps also with an opportunity. The problem is that foreign leaders find it hard to predict how a candidate will behave if elected and, therefore, how to exert what little influence they have on the election. This is not to say that events abroad will not influence the election's outcome. The state and trajectory of the economy clearly matter a great deal, and although the United States is more insulated from the world economy than most other countries, it still is not immune. A clash in Ukraine or the South China Sea would heighten public fear and thereby presumably aid the candidate who seems most steady and experienced. It is not likely that Russia and China will seek to influence the election, however, and while most countries are deeply affected by a range of American policies and so have a major stake in who becomes president, they just have to live with their uncertainty.

Of course, even in a campaign in which foreign policy is not the most salient issue, it rarely is completely absent. In 2008, Barack Obama secured the nomination in part because he had been an early opponent of the Iraq War, a position he stressed during the presidential campaign. But he also realized that there was a danger of seeming soft on foreign enemies in the face of a much more hawkish John McCain. This, I believe, largely explains why he called the conflict in Afghanistan a necessary war. Little in his background predisposed him to take this position, and little in the world compelled it. But it was good domestic politics, at least in the short run. Perhaps even without this campaign pledge, he would have greatly increased the number of troops in Afghanistan, but the pledge did reduce his freedom of action.

If incoming presidents are sometimes trapped by their campaign rhetoric and promises, they are almost always bedeviled by the problems of establishing a new administration. I do not believe there is an exception to the generalization that no president does well in the first year. Eisenhower, perhaps the best prepared of our postwar presidents, remained passive in the wake of Joseph Stalin's death, a totally predictable event, and spent months hashing over possible options. Kennedy's embarrassment at the Bay of Pigs and the Vienna Summit meeting are still painful to recall, and even if the lack of reaction to the erection of the Berlin Wall proved wise in retrospect, it was handled badly. The successes that Nixon achieved in opening relations with China and establishing a *détente* with the

Soviet Union should not obscure the complete failure in the first year, exemplified by the almost farcical attempt to quickly end the war in Vietnam by foolish threats and the feckless attempt to induce the Soviet Union to put pressure on North Vietnam by establishing “linkages” to other policy areas. To skip ahead to Obama, even those who would claim that sending more troops to Afghanistan was necessary cannot be proud of the process involved.

The reasons for the difficulties are different in their particulars but share several factors. No leader can be adequately prepared for the burdens of the office and the range of problems that come with it; selecting skilled and compatible subordinates would be difficult enough without the added complications of the need to please multiple constituencies and the increasingly onerous requirements of Senate confirmation. Even when the “team” is in place, its members have to learn to function as one or, more modestly, to learn who among their colleagues is competent or not, excessively personally ambitious or reasonable, independent or merely a mouthpiece for the bureaucracy, and like-minded or a member of one of the competing camps that inevitably form. The president has to learn how and to whom to delegate, how to utilize the bureaucracy, and how to balance openness with the need for confidentiality. World politics is no place for rookies, and this is what all incoming presidents are. It is amazing that they do not make even more of a mess of it at the start.

The impact of the campaign year on foreign relations is mixed and depends in part on whether the president is running for reelection. If so, controversial issues are likely to be avoided or delayed, although incumbents who believe that they are behind might be inclined to gamble and pursue risky policies in the belief that this is the only path to maintaining power.¹² A possible example is Carter’s decision to try to use force to free the American hostages in Iran, although I am inclined to believe that the lack of viable alternatives would have led him to try this irrespective of domestic calculations. Nixon, despite being in a much stronger position, set the pace of the Vietnam negotiations in the summer and fall of 1972 with an eye toward the upcoming election, telling Henry Kissinger, who wanted to move more quickly, “Henry, winning the election is terribly important.”¹³ When the incumbent is not running, he has more freedom of

¹²For a general discussion of “gambling for resurrection,” see the article of this name by George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (May 1994): 362–380.

¹³Thomas Schwartz uses this as the title for his excellent article on the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy, “Henry, . . . Winning an Election Is Terribly Important”: Partisan Politics in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 33 (April 2009): 173–190.

action. Not complete, of course, because he almost always wants his party's candidate to win, but still considerable. Johnson, who was torn about whether he hoped that Humphrey or Nixon would be elected, pursued negotiations with North Vietnam relatively unencumbered by political calculations. In his last 18 months in office, Obama followed an ambitious foreign policy agenda, most obviously in opening relations with Cuba, reaching a nuclear agreement with Iran, and playing a very active role on climate change, climaxing with the Paris Agreement of December 2015. None of these was popular, and all were vigorously attacked by the Republicans. Obama felt very strongly about these issues, and perhaps he would have proceeded even if he had been running for another term, but this counterfactual is uncertain at best.

Opposition candidates will, of course, oppose policies that are unpopular, even if they will end up carrying them out when elected. At times, they may go further. It is almost certain that the Nixon campaign secretly urged the leaders of South Vietnam to be obstructionist in the fall of 1968 so that negotiations to end the war would not begin before Election Day, and it is possible that Ronald Reagan's aides urged the Iranians to similarly delay an agreement to free the hostages. More often, opposition candidates will openly declare that they will reverse the president's policy if elected, as the leading Republicans have done in 2016.

How other countries react is unclear. On occasion, they may move quickly to lock in the policy. On other occasions, they may calculate that they will get a better deal if the opposition wins (this presumably was the South Vietnamese calculation in 1968) or that they should curry favor with the opposition if it is likely to win. At times, no doubt, foreign observers are simply confused by the welter of claims and counterclaims. Candidates, and even incumbent presidents, rarely worry about this too much and assume that they will be able to straighten things out when in power. This is especially likely to be true in the post-Cold War era, when foreign policy issues press less hard on domestic politics.

FOREIGN POLICY AND THE 2016 CAMPAIGN

This is not to say that foreign policy is entirely absent from the campaign. But it enters in a form that resonates with, and indeed may largely originate from, the general uncertainty and fear for the future that seem to pervade American politics. Domestic issues and personal insults have taken up most of the time of the Republican candidates, and the foreign policy stances that emerged were defensive in the sense of being designed to prevent bad things from happening, if not reactionary in the sense of seeking to regain values and positions that were perceived as having

been lost. Even Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have made little attempt to do more than sketch out how the world may be made better, with the main task being seen as limiting the damage from global climate change. For the Republicans, two economic issues and two political issues have dominated. The former, illegal immigration from Mexico and South America and trade agreements, directly tapped into discontent with the economy, especially the stagnation of incomes for all but the most well-off. It is not surprising that the candidate who pushed these issues hardest, Donald Trump, received a disproportionate share of votes from people with lower incomes. The extent to which the economic gains of the past 40 years have been so unevenly distributed can actually be traced to migration and freer trade is hotly disputed among experts, but it is no surprise that many people in the general public should make such a connection. For them, the main foreign policy issue is to end the situation in which foreigners benefit at their expense.

The emergence of trade as a major issue in the campaign took most observers by surprise. Being linked to the creation and destruction of jobs, the variety of existing and proposed agreements to lower the (already low) barriers to trade have always been controversial, but their salience grew as the campaign progressed and put pressure on candidates from both parties. This was more surprising for the Republican contest than for the Democratic one, and it was not the least of the stunning developments to see so much of the GOP abandon its traditional commitment to free trade. Of course, we would expect these sentiments to be strongest in the Rust Belt states, yet it is still surprising that in Michigan, more than 20 percent more Republicans said that trade takes away jobs than said it creates them, a profile that is only slightly less antitrade than that found among Democrats in the state.¹⁴

The other two prominent issues also reflect defensive positions. The dominant fear is of terrorism. As I indicated at the start of this essay, I consider these fears greatly exaggerated. In some cases, they may be a rationalization for anti-Muslim or anti-immigrant feelings, and perhaps they are a sublimated responses to feelings of economic insecurity. In any event, while all the candidates sought to project an image of the person best able to make America safe, the leading Republican candidates lacked developed ideas at the start and improvised as the campaign went on. Trump reacted to the San Bernardino attack by calling for a ban on Muslim immigrants and visitors, and after the Brussels bombings, Ted Cruz

¹⁴Bob Davis, "Free Trade Loses Political Favor," *Wall Street Journal*, 10 March 2016.

called for more policing of Muslim neighborhoods in order to prevent radicalization.

The widespread criticism of these proposals, combined with the absence of more realistic ones, leads me to think that while public anxieties are real, the connection to possible remedies is not. Of course, everyone agrees that the Islamic State must be destroyed (with little attention paid to the possibility that the result would be to scatter terrorists across the globe), but most of the formulas offered are fantasies that would be embarrassing in the classroom, let alone as serious proposals. Even fewer ideas have surfaced for dealing with homegrown terrorists. Both problems, of course, are extraordinary difficult, and I would not claim that academic and other experts have many positive, as opposed to negative, things to say. Nevertheless, the disparity between the depth of the public's fear and the depth of the remedies proposed is striking. The public sought reassurance, and this came mostly in the form of gestures and postures.

The final issue is relations with actual and potential adversaries among the great powers, Russia and China. Of course, during the Cold War, these were central to American policy as well as to presidential campaigns. Now they are less salient, often lumped together with claims about the need for a stronger military—although it could be argued that these issues deserve something close to their previously central place because, after all is said and done, a war with Russia or China remains the only way the United States could be destroyed. In the absence of crises, however, the attention of the public and the candidates is elsewhere. What remains is a feeling of unease with American dominance slipping away, of challenges that have not been adequately met.

In all these areas, as well as in discussions of domestic policies, the Republican contest has been characterized by a rhetoric of decline. America is under assault from multiple directions and is on a sharply downward trajectory. Of course, it is not unusual for the party out of power to make claims of this sort. Kennedy's campaign slogan was "Get the Country Moving Again," and while Eisenhower did not need slogans other than "I Like Ike," his campaign was similarly based on arresting America's deteriorating position. Viewing both cases with hindsight, these alarmist claims seem greatly exaggerated. But the gap between rhetoric and reality seems even greater now. Now, as then, the cause is partly partisanship, with the party out of power having incentives not only during the campaign but also in the preceding years to claim that the administration's foreign policy is leading the country to doom. In 2016 especially, I believe, what is driving opinion is a generalized sense of unease, if not fear, rooted much more in domestic developments than ones abroad. Although we do not yet have

data that are sufficiently fine-grained to estimate the relative impact of a variety of factors, the most obvious candidates are the economic stagnation of the middle class, the loss of well-paying blue-collar jobs, and, for some, especially in the South, resentment over having an African American president.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the prescriptions of the Republican candidates, and, to a lesser extent, Hillary Clinton, are both lacking in specifics and clear in the driving principle: be tough. Trump has articulated this message particularly loudly with his claim that he can solve most of America's foreign policy problems because he is a skilled negotiator. But tone and body language may be as important as the words here, and by their manner, both Trump and Cruz exude toughness.

Interestingly enough, it is the candidate whose style best embodies toughness who has espoused the most moderate foreign policy, and his supporters seem to notice the former more than the latter. Despite interludes of trying to seem presidential, Trump's performance at rallies and debates takes us back to the early years of the Republic, which were characterized by physical as well as verbal brawls and epithets that make today's seem mild. On numerous occasions, he has condoned, if not urged, violence against protestors, and his supporters, at least those in the audience, cheer him on. But his foreign policy positions, although often sketchy, place him in the realist camp by stressing the need for restraint, moderation, and consideration of the interests of others. He condemned the Iraq War (granted, the motivation here may have been to attack Jeb Bush's candidacy, and he did not return to the issue once Bush dropped out), noted the need to accommodate Russia, and pointed to the importance of being a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians. It is only in the area of trade that he promised to be unyielding, and, regardless of the merits of such a policy, it could not lead to the use of armed force. In parallel, while he excoriates China for its trade policies, he says nothing about the dangers to the United States from China's claims in the East and South China seas.

All this reinforces the twin conclusions that although the substance of foreign policy issues is not highly salient in the campaign, the electorate is moved by considerations of physical and economic insecurity, and much depends on a candidate's ability (or lack thereof) to project an image of being able to provide protection through being tough and assertive. As the new president will learn, however, style and attitude are insufficient once he or she takes office. Even in an era dominated by domestic concerns, foreign policy issues matter for the national welfare, and many of them are discussed in the articles that follow. Written earlier, they show that while

foreign policy problems often can be managed, they are rarely solved and instead bedevil us for prolonged periods.

WHAT OUR AUTHORS ARGUE

Democracy, in the form of representative government, is more than the bedrock of American politics; it is built into foreign policy not only through elections but also through American ideology. From the first years of the Republic, American leaders and public opinion have generally favored the spread of representative governments abroad and believed that they are more likely to share our interests than unrepresentative and repressive regimes. Woodrow Wilson wanted to teach our southern neighbors to elect good men, and the two world wars drove home the lesson that dictatorships are dangerous.¹⁵ After World War II, the United States devoted significant resources to seeing that Germany and Japan became democracies, and the American perception of the danger that these countries would return to revisionism declined as democracy took root. This is not to say, of course, that the United States did not maintain good relations with dictatorships, especially because of the felt need to combat communism. The classic statement is Kennedy's in the wake of the assassination of Rafael Trujillo, the brutal dictator of the Dominican Republic, in 1961: "There are three possibilities in descending order of preference: a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime, or a Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first, but we really cannot renounce the second until we are sure that we can avoid the third."¹⁶ The dilemma is a bit weaker today, but Obama could have paraphrased this when considering whether to try to overthrow the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, and his successor is sure to face similar conundrums.

Democracies were favored for reasons both instrumental and intrinsic. One thing almost everyone across the political spectrum could agree on was that for most countries, democracy was the best form of government, at least when certain prerequisites in terms of education and economic development had been reached. There was also a widespread belief that the interests of the general populations in most, if not all foreign countries, were compatible with those of the United States. During the Cold War, it was believed that if the Soviet leadership loosened its hold on the people,

¹⁵This view has been confirmed—or at least supported—by a generation of political science research arguing that democracies rarely, if ever, fight each other and are more prone to keep their commitments. It is interesting both that these findings, unlike many others in the field, have found widespread acceptance in the wider public and that this school of thought has few proponents outside of the United States.

¹⁶Quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 769.

the conflict would end, as a representative and responsive government would stop seeking to spread communism abroad and would see great common interests with the United States. It was Mikhail Gorbachev's domestic policies at least as much as his foreign policies that led many in the United States to believe that a fundamental change was taking place. When Reagan was asked on his trip to Moscow in 1988 how he could square the friendship that he was now expressing with his earlier statement that the Soviet Union was an evil empire, he replied, "I was talking about another time, another era."

After the Cold War, the American prodemocracy impulses were strengthened because the danger of domestic turmoil leading to a communist regime receded. So the article by Samuel Huntington, written in 1984, retains its relevance. What is particularly important is his argument that there are important economic, political, and social preconditions that strongly influence the likelihood that a country can become democratic and that, while American support does play a role, "the ability of the United States to affect the development of democracy elsewhere is limited." Most, although certainly not all, political scientists and many political leaders agreed at the time. The end of the Cold War, the establishment of democracy in the states of Central and Eastern Europe (and for 10 years or so in the Soviet Union), coupled with the amazing peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa, produced a wave of optimism. Preconditions may have been helpful but did not appear to have been necessary. If the end of communism and the Cold War reinforced the perceived links between regime type and foreign policy, the successful transitions led people to believe there were no inherent barriers to democracy. Once dictators were overthrown, representative government could emerge.

The academic debate over whether this optimistic view is correct continues to rage, but this is not merely an academic concern, as the new president will have to base his or her policies in part on estimates of how easy or difficult it will be to establish democracies where they have not flourished before and the likely consequences of intervening in order to do so. It was optimistic beliefs that interacted with the great fear generated by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, to produce the American invasion of Iraq and the Bush Doctrine that it represented. As I discuss in my article, one major assumption underlying Bush's policy was that countries that oppress their own people are very likely to attack their neighbors and ally with terrorists. This very American view that foreign policy comes more from the nature of the regime than from the external environment led to the conclusion that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was a grave menace. By itself, this might not have been sufficient to generate a policy of

overthrow, even in the environment of heightened fear in the wake of September 11. Another pillar of the Bush doctrine was that once Saddam was removed from power, democracy would emerge without a prolonged American military occupation. Obviously, the results did not conform to these hopes or confirm the underlying theory. The three fundamental questions of the extent to which foreign policy is a product of the nature of the domestic regime, how difficult it is to establish a democratic regimes, and how much the United States can do to help in this regard remain fundamental to the political campaign and the choices the new president will make.

Thanks to the unfortunate results of the invasion of Iraq, none of the candidates defends or endorses the Bush doctrine. It taps into a deeply rooted American outlook that is not likely to disappear, however, and this partly explains why none has articulated an alternative view. During the campaign, they are not likely to be pressed to do so. But once in office, the new president will have to decide how to deal with “rogue” regimes and whether it is wiser to try to change the behavior of recalcitrant governments like that of North Korea, a policy that is likely to require rewards as well as punishments, or to revert to a policy of regime change.

Central to American foreign policy are questions of how to maintain American power. All candidates and presidents pledge to do so, albeit often without acknowledgment that this may not be possible. The nature of American power, however, receives less attention during campaigns, although it is a crucial and complex question. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., analyzes it in his contribution. Going beyond the distinction he initially drew between hard and soft power, he stresses that “how others react to American power is equally important to the question of stability and governance in this global information age.” Power is never in the possession of one state but rather grows out of the continuing relationships among states.¹⁷ This is true for Chinese as well as American power. Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell show that under Mao Zedong, ideology combined with external hostility led China to seek autarky, but this was ultimately unsustainable politically or economically. China is now deeply entangled in the world political and economic system, and it faces Western fears that it will throw its weight around or shirk its global responsibilities. Deep involvement not only increases China’s power, however, it also gives others new leverage over it. While China’s importance to the rest of the world

¹⁷For a magisterial treatment of power, see David A. Baldwin, *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

means that it is hard to imagine it ever being isolated again, or even being the target of strong sanctions, its “global engagement also made China more vulnerable to pressure from other countries’ soft power.” Its economy, furthermore, while strongly influencing other countries is now vulnerable to economic downturns elsewhere. China has gained much influence, but it has also lost autonomy.

For those who seek or hold the American presidency, China presents puzzles, challenges, and opportunities. In previous elections, the opposition candidate invariably attacked the incumbent for being “soft” on China on issues ranging from economic practices to human rights to policies toward its neighbors, and vowed to be much tougher. Once in office, however, and sometimes after a few false starts, the new president pretty much picked up where the old one left off. Although other issues have pushed China further down the current campaign agenda, the new president will have to face difficult choices about how to deal with China, especially in the East and South China seas. Judging Chinese intentions and motives, charting a course that keeps American alliances together, and discerning the nature and extent of American vital interests in the region are extremely troublesome questions that are sure to preoccupy the new administration.

Parallel questions arise about Russia. Putin’s annexation of Crimea and occupation of parts of eastern Ukraine, coupled with his bellicose rhetoric and domestic authoritarianism, have resurrected an unpleasant history that many analysts and leaders had thought was buried. The new president’s choice of policy will depend in part on his or her analysis of why things have come to such a pass. To simplify, many analysts see Putin’s policy as stemming largely from his own personality, preferences, and domestic political calculations. To the extent that the United States triggered what he did, it was by being insufficiently strong and failing to adopt a credible policy of deterrence. Others argue that the United States is responsible at least in part for the undesired Russian behavior, more specifically, by supporting the “color revolutions” in former Soviet republics, sponsoring the independence of Kosovo and, especially, expanding NATO to the East, including pledges that Ukraine and Georgia would eventually be admitted—all actions that have deeply threatened Russian security interests. Robert Art argues against the twin possibilities of further encircling Russia or admitting it to NATO. The deterioration of relations since he wrote in 1998 rules out the latter course of action, but the former, although also unwise, continues to receive attention. The new president will have to try to understand the causes of undesired Russian behavior as part of charting the way forward.

Although during the primaries and the general election campaign, the candidates have sparred over China and Russia, Iran has been even more controversial, with Democrats supporting the 2015 nuclear agreement with some reservations and Republicans vying to be the most vehement in their rejection. I have explained my own support for the agreement elsewhere,¹⁸ and here Paul Pillar explores the extraordinary attention this issue has received. His perspective is that of both a scholar and a former national intelligence officer for Iran and its region, and so he combines a knowledge of the relevant scholarship with having witnessed many of the government debates. He argues that leaders and public opinion tend to exaggerate the threats to American security: “one has to ask—and future historians are sure to ask—how the sole superpower of the early twenty-first century could come to see this state along the Persian Gulf as posing such a supposedly immense threat.” Part of the reason, he suggests, is the dysfunctional history of Iranian-American relations. Other factors are at work as well: foolish Iranian policies, the influence of Israel, and the domestic advantages of demonizing the other side.

He also argues that a compounding reason is the perception of Iranian leaders as irrational religious fanatics. In their contribution, Quintan Wiktorowicz and Karl Kaltenthaler join Pillar in disputing this image. Examining one radical Islamist group, they show how spiritual incentives are deployed to inspire costly and risky activism. Although these group members were not terrorists, their demonstrations did lead to public shunning, arrests, and loss of employment. Considered from the outside, this seems irrational because little came of these activities, but spiritual desires and support from fellow believers are powerful: “if we accept that religion does matter, seemingly irrational behavior becomes understandable as a rational choice.”

Rational or not from the standpoint of the perpetrator, terrorism can have a great impact on the major powers. Although the campaign discussions of how to combat it reveal only the candidates’ general orientations toward the problem rather than the specific policies that they will follow in office, some decisions will have to be made soon after the inauguration. An important one will concern the scope and pace of drone attacks. Started by Bush, under Obama, they became a central instrument of American policy for several years until growing opposition, and perhaps a decline in the number of appropriate targets, led to a marked reduction.

¹⁸Robert Jervis, “Turn Down for What: The Iran Deal and What Will Follow,” *Foreign Affairs*, 15 July 2015, accessed at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2015-07-15/turn-down-what>, 19 January 2015.

Used in several countries, Pakistan was the one that was hit most often and in which the attacks have generated most domestic opposition. The complexities of the situation in that country and in its relations with the United States are well known and epitomized by the dual facts that the United States could not have conducted its operations in Afghanistan without Pakistan's assistance and that Pakistan has supported branches of the Taliban. Public opinion in Pakistan is very unfavorable toward the United States, and as a cause and an effect of this, opposition to drone strikes is widespread among those who express an opinion. But, as C. Christine Fair, Karl Kaltenthaler, and William J. Miller show, "only about one third of the public is aware that drones are being used to kill militants on Pakistan's soil."

Furthermore, there does not appear to be a relationship between Pakistani attitudes toward al Qaeda or support for Islamism, on the one hand, and opposition to drone strikes, on the other. Instead, what matters most is level of education, with those who are less educated being most opposed. The reason appears to be that those with less education get their information from the Urdu media, which is uniformly hostile to drones, and those with more education read or hear English-language outlets, which present a more balanced picture. Drone strikes are likely to remain controversial. Abroad, they represent the enormous disparity between American technology and the resources available to poor countries. For Americans, they embody new ways of warfare that seem simultaneously humane in minimizing (although not eliminating) civilian casualties and inhumane by literally removing the soldier from the battlefield. Drones enable the United States to undertake military missions that were previously unthinkable, but they also raise new questions and call up new sources of opposition.

As Richard Betts explains in a fitting final chapter in this issue, many of the factors that make the United States so powerful are to little avail against terrorism and indeed, by making it an obvious target, increase its vulnerability. Of course, being a rich and powerful state allows the United States to deploy massive resources against terrorism both for offense and defense. Unfortunately, however, the latter can never be perfect, and the former may provoke and create terrorists as much as it destroys and deters them. All the presidential candidates see defeating terrorism as a crucial part of maintaining American primacy. This may be true, but few seem to understand the more complex relationship that Betts lays out.