



NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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(Received: 01st March 2021; Accepted: 13th December 2021; Published: 04th January 2022)

Abstract: The American foreign policy is once again in the process of transformation from nationalism to liberal internationalism after the 2020 election. Unless we appreciate the value of liberal internationalism, it will be challenging to comprehend the American contributions to international relations and contemporary political life. Compared to the Trump administration, the Biden administration seeks to “build America back” again both domestically and internationally. However, American institutionalism comes in different forms and flavors. Nonetheless, internationalists of all stripes usually are quite comfortable engaging peacefully with allies, coalition partners, or other “friendly” parties in official state-to-state contacts or in international organizations as well as in the full range of private-sector commercial and other contacts that link non-state actors within and across societies. However, what concerns the Americans is how different internationalist policy elites prefer to deal with present or potential adversaries—a multiple choice of overlapping options that varies in application from country to country. However, while internationalists will stay as a cornerstone of the American foreign policy, the Trump nationalists within the Republican Party will remain as a factor in the coming years. As a result, liberal internationalism has its firm rooting as well as challenges with the Democratic and Republican parties.

Keywords: *Nationalism, Internationalism, American Foreign Policy*

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THE AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, NATIONALISM, AND LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM

American President Joseph R. Biden is reversing the nationalist course set by his predecessor, Donald Trump and his administration (2017-21). The liberal internationalism of the Obama-Biden administration (2009-2017) is back. No longer is the White House committed to “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) and “America First” slogans of Trump nationalism. Cultivating ties with allies, coalition partners, and other “friendly” countries is underway even as efforts are

made to manage relations with China, Russia, and other competitors are the new order of the day.

Throughout the post-World War II period there was a sustained consensus among both the Republican and Democratic parties that internationalism and multilateralism were key ingredients in a foreign policy that also served domestic issues. When the Trump administration took the reign of power on January 20, 2017, American foreign policy took a radical turn to the nationalist right that no longer assured allies while, at the same time, embracing authoritarian leaders and régimes in other countries.

Trump's campaign and presidential "America First" and "MAGA" rhetoric was an echo of the non-entanglement, if not isolationist, thinking deeply rooted in the American historical experience. When Trump assumed office, such rhetoric quickly took concrete form that continued throughout his administration:

- (a) Unilaterally imposing tariffs on trading partners in search of a better "deal" for the United States;
- (b) Questioning whether the United States should remain in costly alliances like NATO and threatening withdrawal if allies did not increase their own defense- spending contributions;
- (c) Withdrawing from the 2016 Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement that his predecessor's diplomats had negotiated with East Asian and Latin American countries;
- (d) Withdrawing from the Paris Agreement on climate change;
- (e) Demanding replacement of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that had been negotiated by the Bush and Clinton administrations with a new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)-a set of trade arrangements seen as more favorable to the United States than those of NAFTA;
- (f) Terminating US participation in the 15-year Iran nuclear deal (the JCPOA)¹ made by the Obama administration along with the other permanent Security Council members and Germany;
- (g) Pursuing an immigration policy intended to deter or dissuade those seeking asylum (or for other purposes) crossing the US- Mexican border-

¹ *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action negotiated with Iran.*

a policy that included separation of families at the border, caging individuals in US custody;

- (h) Imposing a discriminatory travel ban on selected Muslim-majority countries to include refugees from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen;
- (i) Ending US participation in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its allegedly anti-Israel bias;
- (j) Withdrawal from the 1988 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Russia;
- (k) Moving the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and legitimating Israeli settlements in territories on the west bank of the Jordan River-a move that completely disregarded Palestinian interests; and
- (l) Withdrawing from the World Health Organization (WHO) in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic, alleging that China had undue influence within the WHO.

THE RETURN TO LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM

By contrast, the Biden administration seeks to “build America back” again both domestically and internationally. After four years of often being personally snubbed by Trump, European leaders heard new assurances from Biden on February 19, 2021 at the 57th annual Munich Security Conference. In the opening of his speech he referred to a three-way meeting that day with the German chancellor and French president, calling them by their first names-a calculated friendly gesture that put all three on a coequal footing-a status he also applied “to everyone” of the governmental leaders present.

More to the point was his assurances to NATO allies and also the other members of the Group of Seven (G-7)² with whom he also met:

The trans-Atlantic alliance is a strong foundation-*the* strong foundation- on which our collective security and our shared prosperity are built. The partnership between Europe and the United States, in my view, is and must remain the cornerstone of all that we hope to accomplish in the

² *Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.*

21st century, just as we did in the 20th century.... I know the past few years have strained and tested our trans-Atlantic relationship, but the United States is determined ... to reengage with Europe, to consult with you, to earn back our position of trusted leadership....

The United States must renew America's enduring advantages so that we can meet today's challenges from a position of strength. That means *building back* [emphasis added] better our economic foundations; reclaiming our place in international institutions; lifting up our values at home and speaking out to defend them around the world; modernizing our military capabilities while leading with diplomacy; revitalizing America's network of alliances and partnerships that have made the world safer for all people....

Rejecting the unilateralism of his predecessor, Biden halted troop withdrawals from Germany, underscoring at the Munich conference that “the United States is undergoing a thorough review of our own [US] force posture around the world,” but at the same time, “I've ordered the halting of withdrawal of American troops from Germany” and “also lifting the cap imposed by the previous administration on the number of U.S. forces able to be based in Germany.”

As for Russia, Biden departed from Trump's see-no-evil policy of cozying up to Vladimir Putin. Calling the Russian president only by his last name, Biden asserted how “Putin seeks to weaken European-the European project and our NATO alliance.” In this regard: “He wants to undermine the trans-Atlantic unity and our resolve, because it's so much easier for the Kremlin to bully and threaten individual states than it is to negotiate with a strong and closely united trans-Atlantic community.”

In a direct reversal of Trump's lack of assurance to European allies on the American commitment under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty to come to the aid of any state invaded by Russia (or any other aggressor), Biden explicitly underscored that “an attack on one is an attack on all.” As he put it: “The United States will work closely with our European Union partners and the capitals across the continent—from Rome to Riga—to meet the range of shared challenges we face.” Singling out Riga, Latvia's capital, was also a signal to Putin lest he act on an irredentist claim to the Baltic states. It was a loud assurance of American commitment to NATO heard not only in Latvia, but also in Estonia, Lithuania and elsewhere in central Europe.

Biden addressed China and its policies as a challenge not just to the United States, but also allies and other states. He characterized it as “a long-term strategic competition with China.” In this regard, he observed how “we have to push back against the Chinese government's economic abuses and coercion that undercut the foundations of the international economic system that “Europe and the United

States, together with our allies in the Indo-Pacific, worked so hard to build over the last 70 years.”

Although Biden spoke of the need “to protect space for innovation, for intellectual property, and the creative genius that thrives with the free exchange of ideas in open, democratic societies,” he did not detail trade disputes and concerns about intellectual property theft and human rights violations—much less the growth of the Chinese navy and other military deployments in the South China Sea area that challenge the US 7th Fleet and, more broadly, US allies (Japan and South Korea) or its partner on Taiwan, which likely will be the subject of future speeches and bilateral assurances.

As Vice-President in the Obama administration, Biden advocated an anti-terrorism mission in Afghanistan—not a counter-insurgency that would require a much larger commitment of personnel and other resources. In the Munich speech he implied that meeting the May 1st, 2021 deadline for withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan imposed by President Trump after negotiations with the Taliban depended on ongoing diplomatic negotiations. Key to the Biden is “ensuring that Afghanistan never again provides a base for terrorist attacks against the United States and our partners and our interests.”

On Iraq, Biden noted how “NATO defense ministers [have] endorsed a significantly expanded training and advisory mission in Iraq, which will be vital to the ongoing fight against ISIS.”³ For his part, he asserted: “We cannot allow ISIS to reopen and regroup and threaten people in the Middle East, in Europe, in the United States and elsewhere.” Whether this will be a blueprint for US and allied presence in Afghanistan was left unstated.

In his Munich speech, Biden underscored that “we need transparency and communication to minimize the risk of strategic misunderstanding or mistakes” which is “why the United States and Russia, notwithstanding other competition, extended the New START treaty for an additional [five] years.” The president also declared his openness “to reengage in negotiations with the P5+1 on Iran’s nuclear program,”⁴ (thus reversing the Trump administration’s policy) and rejoining the Paris Agreement on climate which the US under the Obama administration “helped put together.” In addition to these measures, Biden asserted that “we must shape the rules that will govern the advance of technology and the norms of behavior in cyberspace, artificial intelligence, biotechnology” as well as collaboration on the covid-19 pandemic and other global challenges. Put another way, arms control, peaceful engagement, and multilateralism are back.

³ *The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as the Islamic States of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In Arabic it is referred to by the acronym Da’esh.*

⁴ *The UN permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US) plus Germany.*

Other reversals of Trump policies include ending the discriminatory Muslim travel ban, allowing undocumented persons brought to the US in childhood by their parents to remain in the United States under the “dreamers” (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA) policy; ending discrimination against asylum seekers; and pursuing an immigration policy that provides a legal pathway to US citizenship for those who have entered the US with or without documentation.

Matters still to be addressed by the Biden administration include whether the US will rejoin UNESCO and the TPP that has continued even after Trump withdrew the United States from the trade agreement. Given the political and economic complexity of trade issues and the anger generated by the Trump administration’s tariff policy, decisions on trade policy are likely to be made incrementally. The Biden administration’s “Buy America” campaign designed to accommodate working class and corporate demands constrains efforts to liberalize US trade policy.

Finally, US relations with both Israel and Saudi Arabia—countries warmly embraced by the Trump administration—were not mentioned in the speech. On Israel, it is unlikely that the Biden administration will reverse the decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem, although in the first month in office the president was slow to connect with Prime Minister Netanyahu—a signal to the Israeli government that the US should not be taken for granted as giving a green light to all Israeli policies. Concern with the murder and dismemberment of Saudi Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul which, given the importance of US-Saudi relations, was downplayed by the Trump administration has resulted in a delayed outreach by the Biden administration to Saudi leaders. Speculation is that President Biden may meet with the king, but not the crown prince who is accused of responsibility for the murder.

TRUMP’S NATIONALISM AND AMERICAN POPULISM

The nationalist perspective is deeply rooted in the American experience.⁵ It was by no means an invention of the Trump administration. George Washington’s address, drafted for him with substantial inputs by James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, made clear that the new republic should avoid foreign—mainly European—entanglements. Although in the nineteenth century the United States became fully engaged in Latin America (advancing its commercial interests and political values to some 20 republics carved out of the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires), Washington’s advisory defined foreign policy vis-à-vis the rest of Europe until entry into World War I (1917). The post-war years were marked by a nationalist withdrawal from European affairs until entry into World War II (1941).

⁵ *For more of this history and commentary here and below, please see my American Foreign Policy and National Security (Amherst, MA: Cambria Press, 2020), ch. 1.*

The US also promoted its commercial interests in Japan and China during the late-nineteenth century, victory in its war with Spain (1898) giving American territorial control over not just Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, but also extended to the Philippines-the Hawaiian and other islands added to enhance US naval power projection across the Pacific. An “America First” policy for advancing commercial interests while avoiding foreign entanglements in Europe was the order of the day.

Nationalist policies then and now have rested on a populist foundation- the view from the countryside consistently less prone to engage the world “out there” than those in urban, more cosmopolitan settings. The success of Washington in the revolution against Britain depended upon a rural support base for the insurgency, particularly since Britain controlled the cities. Although a majority in the colonies at the time favored the status quo and opposed the campaign against British authority, the insurgents led by Washington depended upon a populist support base in the countryside for the success he and his followers finally achieved.

Populism in the late-nineteenth century took the form of a left-oriented movement advanced famously by such leaders as Nebraska populist William Jennings Bryan. To Bryan, maintaining the gold standard-tight money-served the interests of the owners and managers of capital (what I call the OMC) but was adverse to agricultural interests in the rural areas Bryan represented.

Rural discontent stemmed economically from government-imposed tariffs on non-agricultural goods that kept prices artificially high while their agricultural commodities traded in a free-market competition particularly subject to downward pressures on price. Moreover, railroad, telephone and telegraph, oil, and other industrial monopolies were by Supreme Court ruling legal persons with due process protections of the 14th amendment to the US Constitution.

Notwithstanding this claim that inhibited their regulation by government, post-Civil War agricultural groups challenged the dominant positions held by monopolies. The Granger movement in the 1870s (later the “Alliance,” another farmer organization) and other labor groups lobbied against monopolies that kept prices of their goods and services artificially high-a steep challenge particularly to cash-poor farmers. One outcome of this populist movement was the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890) that outlawed conspiracies in restraint of trade in interstate commerce. It would not be until the progressive, “trust-busting” Republican administration of Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09), however, that the Act was used to break up monopolies.

Rural groups from different parts of the country came together in 1891 in the first people’s or Populist Party national convention. Their nationalist focus was on domestic prosperity that appealed to their rural, agricultural base. Among other things, they complained about the “money changers of Wall Street” (the OMC-the owners and managers of capital) and sought to replace gold as monetary standard with free coinage of the more abundant silver valued in a 16:1 ratio with gold.

Populists favored bimetallism (both silver and gold) as monetary standard-silver in greater supply, thus allowing for a more expansive money supply beneficial to labor interests. Not surprisingly, the OMC of the day saw growing the money supply in this way as inflationary and thus contrary to their capital-owning interests. Populism remained essentially a rural, nationalist movement notwithstanding efforts to accommodate urban worker interests in a party agenda that called for an eight-hour workday, limits on immigration that otherwise would drive wages down, and an end to strikebreaking tactics used by the OMC against labor interests.

For the rural constituency were proposals to ease borrowing by farmers, restricting use of public lands to settlers and away from urban and other speculators, “fair and liberal pensions” for military veterans, a graduated income tax and, on a more socialist turn, government ownership- confiscation “in the interest of the people” of railroad, telegraph, and telephone interests. Direct election of US senators rather than their selection by state legislatures populists thought would bring power to the people. ⁶

On the urban-rural (OMC-agricultural) divide, Bryan put it this way: “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.” Bryan delivered this historically famous “Cross of Gold” speech in Chicago to the Democratic Party’s national convention on July 9, 1896-symbolically a high point for the left-oriented populism of his time. Bryan, the Democratic nominee, lost the election to Republican William McKinley who kept the country on the gold standard.

The populist agenda continued to be a substantial influence in twentieth-century American politics, particularly in the Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt and Truman administrations that saw substantial gains for both agricultural and labor interests. Trust busting, farm subsidies, the right of labor to bargain collectively for wages and other benefits, progressive income taxes intended to reduce inequality, social security, and conservation-the protection of national parks and other public lands from unregulated development-were among their progressive, essentially populist achievements. As president (1963-69), Lyndon Johnson-a Franklin Roosevelt “New Deal” southern Democrat-carried the progressive legacy forward through Medicare and Medicaid legislation.

On the nationalist side, however, the Smoot-Hawley tariff legislation (1930) in the Republican Herbert Hoover administration, coupled with Democratic Franklin Roosevelt’s 69.3 percent devaluation of the dollar in 1934 (changing the exchange rate from \$20.67 to \$35 per ounce of gold) were intended to serve agricultural, labor, and OMC interests in the Great Depression-a decidedly nationalist, “America First” position. In fact, tariffs and competitive devaluation designed to dampen

⁶ *A good historical account of earlier populism is Robert E. Riegel and David F. Long, The American Story (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955), vol. 2, pp. 101-02 et passim.*

imports and promote exports vis-à-vis other countries resulted in an extraordinary reduction of world trade that did not benefit OMC, labor, or agricultural interests.

It was also a nationalist period of relative isolation from world affairs. Woodrow Wilson's liberal internationalism was repudiated. Citing the Washington advisory to avoid foreign entanglements, isolation was the order of the day-particularly toward European countries. This continued through the Republican Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover presidencies (1921-31) and into the Democratic Roosevelt administration.

Although Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill forged the liberal-internationalist vision in the bilateral Atlantic Charter and the conservative-internationalist, military-assistance Lend-Lease agreement in 1940, it would take the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 to bring the country into its World War II great power alliance with the UK, Soviet Union, France, and China. Preparations for a post-war order made during the war, the United Nations and its system of international organizations was the landmark achievement of what had become a decidedly internationalist Roosevelt administration. From Roosevelt to Obama, internationalism had become the new constant in American foreign policy-whether in its liberal, conservative, or neoconservative, more militant variants.

Both in his campaign and in office, President Trump embraced a nationalist position even as his national security advisers and secretaries of state and defense tended to remain wedded to internationalism, whether of conservative or militant orientation. The president's rise to power was facilitated by a recurrence of populist sentiment, a right-oriented political movement. As in the nineteenth century, this populism has a decidedly southern, mid-western, and predominantly rural base. Workers in so-called "rust-belt" states that have lost industries and the jobs that went with them have also been receptive to populist appeals led by Donald Trump. Feeling left behind by an increasingly technological society in which traditional, labor-intensive agricultural, industrial, and mining jobs are increasingly scarce (and underpaid), they have gravitated politically to the right-responsive to "America First" and "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) appeals.

To them, internationalist promotion of increasing globalization advances capital but not labor interests. Although twenty-first century circumstances are different, the conflict between capital and labor is a common populist thread. As rural areas fall behind the cities in this newly globalized world, their discontent is palpable. Populists in the nineteenth century, then as now, whether politically left or right, have contended that the US should be concerned primarily with jobs and other domestic matters-not the world "out there." The convergence of populism and nationalism is nothing new, deeply rooted as it is in the American experience.

THE VARIETIES OF AMERICAN INTERNATIONALISM

Internationalists of all stripes usually are quite comfortable engaging peacefully with allies, coalition partners, or other “friendly” parties in official state-to-state contacts or in international organizations as well as in the full range of private-sector commercial and other contacts that link non-state actors within and across societies. What concerns us here, however, is how different internationalist policy elites prefer to deal with present or potential adversaries—a multiple choice of overlapping options that varies in application from country to country. Combining the three broad options for dealing with adversaries (peacefully engaging them, containing them, or employing the use of force in armed interventions against them) with internationalist policy-elite orientations, table 1 provides us with a way to anticipate in general terms the course policy elites in positions of power or influence may take toward present or potential adversaries.

Changing circumstances in the world around them force policymakers to grapple with their understandings of threats, opportunities, and interests as they make choices or modify their decisions. These choices are moderated by the understandings of contending elites even within the same administration. In the first rounds of a bureaucratic battle on the Potomac during the lead-up to the Iraq War (2003), the conservative internationalism of Secretary of State Colin Powell and his supporters lost out to a neoconservative, more militant coalition led by Vice President Richard Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice navigated between the two camps.

Even with battles won, the bureaucratic “war” was not over as contending elites continued to vie for the president’s ear. In the first two years following the 2004 election, neoconservatives who had been dominant in the first years of the Bush administration gradually were supplanted in and around power positions by those of a more conservative-internationalist persuasion, including Condoleezza Rice who became the new Secretary of State. Although the vice president still had the president’s ear, his personal influence appeared more muted in the last years of the administration. Given these shifts, the skepticism concerning negotiations with adversaries early in the administration yielded over time to attempts to engage, particularly in the Middle East, whether dealing with Iran or other trouble spots in the region.

Decision-making contexts, then, are often very dynamic. Not only do understandings of circumstances change but also the players and the policy elites of which they are a part may shift within the same administration. Nevertheless, we still have a degree of predictability, assuming we can gauge accurately both what policymaker and policy-elite orientations are (or the courses of action they generally prefer) that are captured in our nationalist and liberal-, conservative-, and neoconservative- or militant-internationalist categorizations. Knowing the positions of power or influence members of policy elites have or likely will hold gives us a predictive handle we can use to anticipate how they likely will relate to

adversaries in particular contingencies or, more generally, as part of the broader foreign policy they formulate.

Table 1: Varieties of American Internationalism

BROAD, OVERLAPPING OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH ADVERSARIES			
POLICY ORIENTATION	PEACEFUL ENGAGEMENT	CONTAINMENT	ARMED INTERVENTION
LIBERAL INTERNATIONALIST	center of gravity: preferred option	will seek to contain adversaries while also engaging them	willing to invade or intervene militarily as a last resort
CONSERVATIVE INTERNATIONALIST	will engage with adversaries when expectations of net gains from doing so are clear or seem particularly likely and thus warrant doing so	center of gravity: preferred option	willing to invade or intervene militarily, but likely to revert to containment sooner rather than later
NEOCONSERVATIVE OR MORE MILITANT INTERNATIONALISM	highly skeptical of any net gains to be realized through engagement diplomacy, much less arms control		center of gravity: straddles containment and armed intervention options—will contain, but most willing to intervene militarily when expectations of net gains are clear and thus warrant doing so

Most dramatic in this regard were the shifts in policy-elite orientations that occurred beginning in 2001 between liberal internationalists in the Clinton-Gore administration and neoconservatives coming to power in the first Bush-Cheney administration (2001-2005) and the shift to conservative internationalists in the second (2005-2009). The Obama-Biden administration reverted to liberal internationalism when it came into office (2009). Following that in 2017 the Trump administration moved to a nationalist, “America-First” position that clearly marked a significant departure from the internationalism of all of his post-World War II predecessors. When policy elites in or near power positions shift as sharply as they did in this period, we also observe substantial changes in policy that follow, which are documented above in the first section of this article.

In the internationalist post-World War II period, echoes of earlier nationalist sentiments were heard from time to time, particularly during presidential elections. Some questioned why the United States should be the world’s “policeman”—a role

that often meant committing US troops to foreign wars. Nationalists (often referred to as “nativists”) also tended to be anti-immigrant. On trade and capital flows, they often were more protectionist. The advent of the Trump administration built on these themes-questioning alliances, withdrawing from diplomatic agreements, imposing tariffs, seeking to close borders and limit immigration.

In earlier decades policy changed, if not to the same degree, when the liberal internationalism of President Jimmy Carter gave way to the conservative-international presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. Even then, the more strident rhetoric and confrontational policy toward adversaries of the early Reagan years gave way over time to engagement with the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries on arms control and other initiatives.

During the George H. W. Bush presidency (1989-93), these efforts finally culminated in the end of the Cold War, breakup of the Warsaw Pact, and dissolution of the Soviet Union! After the liberal-internationalist Clinton years (1993-2001), neoconservatives in the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009) identified themselves with and sought to revive what they saw as the essence of a “Reaganite” foreign policy premised on the supremacy of US national power-a successful challenge in their view to the Soviet “evil empire”-buttressed by a strong national economy and accompanied by commitment to robust strategic defenses to complement nuclear and conventional military forces.

Winning the November 2008 election and bent on restoring public perceptions abroad-engaging not just with friendly countries but also with adversaries-President Barack Obama and other members of his administration quickly repudiated torture and other “harsh interrogation” techniques at the Guantánamo base in Cuba, Abu Ghraib in Iraq, Bagram in Afghanistan, and other secret prisons on the “dark side” (Vice President Cheney’s reference). In breaking sharply with the previous administration and adopting constructive or peaceful engagement combined with containment as its first-line approach toward present or potential adversaries, the new administration underscored its renewed commitment to multilateralism.

The pursuit of arms control and other cooperative-security agendas that, for the most part, had been set aside by the Bush administration now had a new lease on life. At the same time, of course, the new Obama foreign-policy team, which included Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, still had to balance their understandings of intelligence and other national-security requirements with moral and legal constraints they felt had not been accorded proper emphasis by their predecessors.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH DOMESTIC PUBLICS ON FOREIGN POLICY

Mass communications-both print and electronic media-connect policy elites with their respective attentive publics and with the general public. The Internet, on-line social networks, e-mail, text messaging, Skype and Zoom live audio and video

transmissions personalize, expand, and facilitate efforts by policy elites that also rely on television and radio, newspapers, published articles and books, and special mailings.

Selective-membership groups such as the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, the Chicago Council on International Affairs, the Atlantic Council, and the Pacific Council on International Policy in Los Angeles recruit from among both policy elites and attentive publics, providing both actual and virtual meeting places for their members. American Committees on Foreign Relations (ACFR) and World Affairs Councils in cities across the United States also recruit from attentive publics, providing them with limited access to members of policy elites and others whom they invite as speakers or participants in panels and workshops or connect by Skype or teleconference links.

Academics who participate as part of attentive publics on foreign-policy matters may be drawn into any of these organizations, but they also participate in meetings of such professional organizations as the International Studies and American Political Science associations or their organized sections dealing with international politics, foreign policy, or national and international security. On the latter, organizations like the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) operate both globally and nationally, bringing policymakers and policy-oriented scholars together in meetings and through widely distributed print and electronic publications.

By contrast, the general public lacks even this limited degree of connectivity to foreign-policy-making elites that members of attentive publics enjoy. In part this is due to a generalized preference to leave foreign policy to the experts—a tendency one also finds in other countries. Terrorism, foreign wars, or economic challenges that stem from abroad may capture the public's interest for a while, but for the most part public attention, if on foreign policy at all, tends to be short-lived.

Given elimination in 1987 of the Federal Communications Commission's fairness doctrine, the television and radio networks are not legally required to present balanced treatment on the issues of the day. Public Broadcasting (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) explicitly do seek to present multiple sides of the issues they cover. Although major commercial networks (ABC, NBC, and CBS) also seek balanced, more centrist treatment of the news of the day, cable networks like Fox position themselves on the right, MSNBC on the left, CNN somewhere in between. Emerging in the Trump era, NewsMatch and the "One America News (OAN) networks are even further to the right of Fox, explicitly trafficking in disinformation and conspiracy theories that serve their right-wing followers.

Until cut off on disinformation grounds that made both Twitter and Facebook propaganda platforms, President Trump expressed his views routinely in feeds followed by millions. The proliferation of television, radio, and social networks has also allowed people a high degree of selectivity—many watching, listening, or engaging only with those sharing their own views. If not hermetically sealed, these

separate compartments or “silos” (“echo chambers”) contribute to the polarization of the general public on both domestic and foreign policy matters. Facts compete with “alternative facts” in this milieu that focuses on opinions that often lack either evidentiary support or analytical validity.

The “great lie” myth that the 2020 election was “stolen” from President Trump motivated insurrectionists who occupied the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. It was a message repeated again and again by President Trump and carried to his followers in mass communications and other social media. It was eerily reminiscent of right-wing ascendance in Germany in the 1930s (the alleged “stab in the back” by liberals that falsely blamed Germany’s loss in the Great War (1914-18) on liberals-the original “great lie” advanced in media of the day by National Socialists.

Because of their greater importance to the average citizen, the politics of domestic issues generally occupy a more prominent place in their lives, although for a variety of reasons many do not participate at all even in these political processes. Contacting representatives, joining groups, writing letters to the editor, sending email messages, tweeting, or posting blogs are activities left to others. They may doubt the efficacy of their involvement-the difference they can make-in domestic (much less foreign-policy) issues, the complexity of which can be bewildering. Besides, daily personal concerns may matter more than political participation to any meaningful degree. Even voting may be too much of a chore, hence the relatively low turnouts we observe in most elections. Relatively high voter turnouts (60% or more of the electorate) tend only to occur when the stakes people see themselves having in the outcome or commitments to particular candidates or causes as being especially strong as occurred in the 2020 election.

It is from the general public, of course, that attentive publics are drawn. Interest and formal or self-education in international affairs are the ingredients that produce attentive publics on foreign-policy matters. In turn, some of the people in these attentive publics may gravitate to policy-elite circles. Although foreign policy thus remains primarily the preserve of policy elites and those who follow them in attentive publics, the general public does matter as a source of support for presidents and their administrations-policy elites in power-that have the primary responsibility for making and implementing American foreign policy.

A NATIONALIST OR INTERNATIONALIST FUTURE?

In addition to those mentioned above, three iconic presidents represented liberal and conservative variants of internationalism: Theodor Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt. Henry Kissinger contrasts the conservative internationalism or what he calls the realism of Theodor Roosevelt with the liberal internationalism of Woodrow Wilson that he characterizes as idealism.⁷ The two

⁷ See Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1995), ch.2.

liberal internationalist presidents, Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, though committed to the liberal ideals to be gained through peaceful engagement and multilateralism, turned out to be wartime presidents, which underscores how liberal internationalists are quite capable of taking the country into wars they see fighting as being in the US interest when other peaceful options have failed or seem likely to fail.

The twenty-first century has seen Donald Trump emerging on a nationalist platform not seen since prior to World War I and the 1920s and 1930s-the interwar period between World Wars I and II. Given this American history, foreign observers rightly wonder whether President Joseph Biden's liberal internationalism is here to stay as the cornerstone of American foreign policy or whether he will be succeeded, if not by Donald Trump, by someone of similar nationalist, "America First" orientation supported by partisan members of Congress of like mind. Certainly, Trump's populist support base in the American south and in rural parts of states in other parts of the country remains in place. Whether civil and criminal litigation against him in coming months and years will weaken or strengthen his political position is not clear. His followers-though a minority in the country as a whole-are resolute in their support and are not likely to be swayed by alternative narratives.

It is when ideas are grounded in interests that they cease to be "out there" as abstractions, but instead become humanized "in here" by the identity that people have with them.⁸ Most Democrats tend to be liberal internationalists, Republicans not in the Trump orbit conservative internationalists. Unfortunately for internationalists of any stripe, Trump nationalists constitute the majority in the Republican Party and were they to come to power in the 2024 presidential election, both Democratic and Republican internationalists will have their work cut out for them.

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⁸ *I owe this insight to my mentor at Cal Berkeley, Ernst B. Haas (1924-2003).*

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