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Core Values of American Democracy

As citizens with a common political culture, Americans share certain core values including freedom, equality, justice, private property, and individual achievement. At the same time, many Americans disagree over the substance and extent of these values when they are applied to real situations. Such disagreements often inform our common political debates over policy at the national, state, and local levels.

Freedom. The value of freedom (or liberty) is central to our nation's fundamental charters including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Freedom can be broken down into two dimensions. **Negative freedom** means freedom from the interference of others including government and other citizens. Advocates of classic free-market liberalism emphasize this dimension of freedom. As John Stuart Mill contended, you should be free to pursue your own interests and pleasures as long as they don't harm others. **Positive freedom** is the freedom to reach your full potential, and to "be all you can be," to borrow a phrase from an old army advertisement. Advocates of strong community values (e.g., communitarians) emphasize this dimension of freedom. In a republican form of government that is based on law and order neither dimension of freedom can be given full scope. Instead, citizens give up their claims to absolute freedom in order to gain other values such as security and rule of law. But the dividing lines between freedom and order are constantly being reconsidered and redrawn.

Equality. Like freedom, the value of equality is ranked very high among Americans. The Declaration of Independence declares that "all men are created equal" in that they possess certain inalienable rights that governments or their fellow citizens cannot take away. At the same time, the concept of equality doesn't appear in the U.S. Constitution until the Fourteenth Amendment, which asserts that all citizens, including former slaves, enjoy "equal protection of the laws." While most Americans profess their allegiance to the principle of equality, the application of this principle to real disputes over public policy has been, and remains, controversial. Equality has several dimensions: **Political equality** refers to the equal right of all citizens to vote, to run for elected office, and to participate in other ways. While Americans have an equal right to participate, some would argue that existing inequalities in wealth, status, and educational attainment undercut the value of political equality in practice. A related value to political equality is **equality of opportunity**, which refers to the equal access all citizens have to the public goods provided by government, and to the potential avenues of social and economic advancement. Some people liken equality of opportunity to the opportunity all citizens have to participate in the race toward achievement. However, others argue that social inequalities in society undercut the fairness of the race, and thus undermine the concept of equal opportunity. Many advocates of **equality of outcome** contend that government policies should seek to redistribute wealth and status in society to ensure real equality. Some people who emphasize equality of outcome have advocated affirmative action in school admissions or in awarding public sector projects.

Justice. Like freedom and equality, the principle of justice has several dimensions. Some people consider justice a **system of law dedicated to moral ends**. But the question remains: Whose moral ends? For example, do we support capital punishment because we believe that a person who takes a life should always lose his own (i.e., "an eye for an eye")? Or do we reject this notion because certain inequalities in society based on wealth might skew the application of the death penalty toward those who can't afford good legal representation? Other people emphasize **procedural justice**, which emphasizes set trial procedures and controlled legal battles that are fought by trained lawyers who represent their

Core Values of American Democracy, cont'd.

clients. This notion of justice utilizes an adversarial system of legal inquiry that is not designed to determine ultimate truth, but only a “winner” in a legal fight guided by legal procedures and precedents. Finally, many people apply their own sense of **gut level fairness** that often disregards basic moral systems or procedures. Although they can’t provide a formal rationale for their position on an issue, they know when something seems fair or unfair to them.

Private Property. The principle of private property has always enjoyed protected status in American history. The right to be secure in one’s own property is asserted in several places in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. At the same time, private property has not ever been absolutely protected in American history. The practice of taxation in effect represents a taking of some personal property for public purposes. So is the practice of seizing someone’s private property when it is even remotely connected to their illegal activities (the so-called “zero tolerance” policy). The value of private property often conflicts with other values, such as equality and freedom. For example, someone who grows up in poverty may have less opportunity to attend elite educational institutions than someone who grew up rich, while those who do attend elite educational institutions may have more opportunities to gain wealth throughout their lifetime.

Individual Achievement. In his famous book, *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: “The first thing that strikes a traveler to the U.S. is the innumerable multitude of those who seek to emerge from their original condition.... No Americans are devoid of a yearning desire to rise. All are constantly seeking to acquire property, power, and reputation.” Even as far back as the 1830s, when Tocqueville briefly visited the U.S., Americans were driven by a strong sense of personal achievement that still prevails today. Despite the advantages that may accrue to those born into families of wealth and influence, most Americans believe that through hard work and perhaps a little luck they can achieve success, however they choose to define it. America is one of the few countries where someone who grew up poor can aspire to become president of the United States, chairman of a large corporation, or a high-ranking officer in the armed forces, among many possible positions of prominence. Yet some people argue that if achievement is stressed too much in our public policies, it might undermine other values such as equality of opportunity. Others, however, caution that if equality is pursued too much, the freedom to achieve one’s own potential would be undercut.

Can You Pass the U.S. Citizenship Exam?

Immigrants who want to become U.S. citizens must pass an exam to show that they understand the basic principles of U.S. history and government. Can you pass the exam?

1. What do the stripes on the flag mean?
2. What country did we fight during the Revolutionary War?
3. What is the basic belief of the Declaration of Independence?
4. Who elects the president of the United States?
5. How many terms can a president serve?
6. What is the highest court in the United States?
7. Who signs bills into law?
8. Who was the president during the Civil War?
9. How many Supreme Court Justices are there?
10. What is the Supreme Law of the United States?
11. What is the Bill of Rights?
12. How many senators are there in Congress?
13. How many representatives are there in Congress?
14. How many times may a congressman be re-elected?
15. Who has the power to declare war?
16. How many changes, or amendments, are there to the Constitution?
17. Which countries were our enemies during World War II?
18. Why did the Pilgrims come to America?
19. Who wrote the Star Spangled Banner?
20. What is the minimum voting age in the United States?

Can You Pass the U.S. Citizenship Exam?—Answer Key

1. What do the stripes on the flag mean?
The first 13 states
2. What country did we fight during the Revolutionary War?
England
3. What is the basic belief of the Declaration of Independence?
All men are created equal
4. Who elects the president of the United States?
The Electoral College
5. How many terms can a president serve?
2 terms
6. What is the highest court in the United States?
The Supreme Court
7. Who signs bills into law?
The President
8. Who was the president during the Civil War?
Abraham Lincoln
9. How many Supreme Court Justices are there?
12
10. What is the Supreme Law of the United States?
The Constitution
11. What is the Bill of Rights?
The first 10 amendments to the Constitution
12. How many senators are there in Congress?
100
13. How many representatives are there in Congress?
435
14. How many times may a congressman be re-elected?
There is no limit
15. Who has the power to declare war?
Congress
16. How many changes, or amendments, are there to the Constitution?
27
17. Which countries were our enemies during World War II?
Germany, Italy, and Japan
18. Why did the Pilgrims come to America?
For religious freedom
19. Who wrote the Star Spangled Banner?
Francis Scott Key
20. What is the minimum voting age in the United States?
18 years old

Ongoing Disputes Over the Meaning and Application of Constitutional Principles

The Constitution of the United States establishes a set of fundamental principles and procedures that govern our laws and public policy. Our country's founders purposely created a document that is written in general and often sparse language. As a consequence, the document must regularly be reinterpreted in relation to real problems and disputes over specific exercises of government power. The following provisions from the body of the Constitution represent a few of the many conflicts over constitutional interpretation and application that have occurred over our nation's history, and continue to this day. Can you think of other conflicts over the body of the Constitution? How should they be resolved? Discuss.

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3: How Far-Reaching Are Congress's Powers To Regulate Under the Commerce Clause? Congress is granted the power to "regulate commerce" with foreign nations, among the several states, and with the Indian tribes. While no one questions that this power exists, courts have struggled to define its reach. To what extent does the national government's power to regulate commerce limit or prohibit state laws that affect commerce? The struggle over this question intensified after the Civil War with the vast changes in the country, including industrialization and the creation of a national system of railroads. Through actions like the creation of the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1887, which was the first federal regulatory agency created by Congress, the national government has clearly expanded its reach over the workplace including specifying rules for workplace safety and setting uniform workweek standards. Building on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Congress also barred racial discrimination in private businesses (e.g., restaurants and motels) serving interstate travelers. In recent years, some federal judges have suggested that, under the right circumstances, Congress's exercise of its commerce powers could be reversed in favor of state powers to maintain their own rules.

Article I, Section 8, Clause 11: Congress Is the War-Making Branch? The Constitution grants Congress the power to declare war, which it has officially done five times in our nation's history. The War Powers Resolution, which passed over President Nixon's veto in 1973, was supposed to ensure that both Congress and the President play a role in determining when and where U.S. forces are sent to hostile areas. It requires the president to obtain congressional approval after introducing troops into hostile areas after 60 days. Presidential compliance with the act has been inconsistent and in some cases nonexistent. The courts have generally stayed out of the dispute, believing that the issue of war-making powers in the national government is a "political question" that is best settled by Congress and the president.

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18: How Elastic Is the Elastic Clause? The "necessary and proper clause," also known as the "elastic clause," is an important source of Congress's implied powers, or powers that are assumed to exist based on the enumerated powers outlined in the Constitution. But how far-reaching are Congress's implied powers? The answer to this question was provided by Chief Justice Marshall in the 1819 case, *McCulloch v. Maryland*. This case involved the Second Bank of the United States, which Congress created using its implied powers. However, nowhere does the Constitution grant Congress the specific power to create a national bank, as critics of the bank pointed out. In his opinion, Marshall outlined the legitimate use of implied powers by Congress: "Let the end be legitimate, let it be within the scope of the constitution, and all means which are appropriate, which are plainly adapted to that end, which are not prohibited, but consistent with the letter and spirit of the constitution, are constitutional." Since then, courts have affirmed Congress's implied powers, although some judges have ruled that the Constitution's Tenth Amendment reserves certain powers for the states that cannot be overturned by an expansive reading of the elastic clause.

Article II, Section 1, Clause 3: Should the Electoral College Be Abolished in Favor of Presidential Elections Determined by Direct Popular Vote? The framers of the Constitution rejected the idea of direct popular vote to elect the president and vice president, and instead devised an indirect method of election using a group of "electors" who would choose the president and vice president. The states chose their own electors, whose number equals a state's total number of senators and representatives. In the nineteenth century, electors were supposed to remain loyal to their candidate, but they also could change their minds. Electors today are chosen by popular vote in each state, with 48 states using the "winner-take-all" system that allots all the state's electors to the candidate who gets the most votes. Only Maine and Nebraska apportion their electors based on the strength of each candidate's voting support. Most electors today are subject to state laws that require that they vote for their candidate if he or she wins that state. Many people still support the Electoral College because it reflects the relative size of each state in determining the next president. However, many others are disturbed by the fact that a candidate who gets the most votes nationwide may still fail to get the required 270 electoral votes to be elected president, which happened several times in U.S. history. This problem surfaced most recently in 2000 when Al Gore lost the election to George W. Bush even

Ongoing Disputes Over the Meaning and Application of Constitutional Principles, cont'd.

though Gore received approximately 500,000 more votes nationwide than Bush. While there have been numerous attempts to abolish the Electoral College through constitutional amendment, none have gained the necessary two-thirds vote in both houses to initiate state action toward ratification.

Article II, Section 2, Clause 2: What Does Senate ‘Advice and Consent’ Mean? The president has the power to make treaties and nominate individuals to various executive and judicial positions in the national government. Such nominations are subject to the “advice and consent” of the Senate. However, there is not an agreed-upon understanding of exactly what the Senate’s role is. In recent years this problem has reemerged around the attempts by some senators to delay or block confirmation of the president’s judicial appointments. For example, Republican senators delayed and ultimately blocked several of President Clinton’s nominees for federal judge-ships, and Democratic senators have followed suit by delaying or rejecting several of President Bush’s judicial nominees. Moreover, some senators believe they can compel detailed answers from appointees during confirmation hearings, even after the nominees protest that answering the questions might prejudice their future judicial decisions. So far the courts have refrained from trying to settle these disputes, and are not likely to jump into the fray. The political battle over the proper use of the Senate’s advice and consent authority rages on.

Article II, Section 4: What Are Impeachable Offenses? This section specifies that all civil officers of the federal government, including the president, vice president, and federal judges, can be impeached and convicted for offenses including treason, bribes, or other “high crimes and misdemeanors.” Removal from office requires a majority vote for impeachment in the House of Representatives and a two-thirds vote for conviction in the Senate. Since 1797, 16 federal officials have been impeached by the House of Representatives, including two presidents, a cabinet member, a senator, a Supreme Court justice, and 11 federal judges. Of those 16, the Senate convicted only seven, all federal judges. But the question remains: what constitutes high crimes and misdemeanors? This issue recently arose in the impeachment and Senate trial of President William Jefferson Clinton. Supporters of conviction argued that Clinton lied before a grand jury while under oath, which they felt constituted high crimes and misdemeanors. Supporters of Clinton, however, argued that presidential “indiscretions” while in office and evasive answers before a grand jury do not. Since the House of Representatives has almost unlimited power to initiate impeachment proceedings against any federal civil official, it remains up to that legislative body, and the Senate, which can vote to convict or acquit, to determine what constitutes high crimes and misdemeanors.

Article III, Section 2, Clause 1: What Is the Proper Scope of Judicial Review? Article III creates a Supreme Court and instructs Congress to add lower federal courts as needed. But Article III doesn’t explicitly grant the Supreme Court the power of judicial review, which is the ability to strike down acts of the other branches of the national and state governments as unconstitutional. Instead, the Supreme Court took the power of judicial review for itself in the 1802 case, *Marbury v. Madison*. Since then federal courts, and ultimately the Supreme Court, have exercised the power to say what the Constitution means in specific cases. While few people today question the Court’s power to determine what the Constitution means, great disagreement remains over how frequently the power should be used, and how far-reaching the Court’s constitutional rulings should be. Advocates of judicial “restraint” argue that because judges are not elected they should generally let the decisions and actions of elected officials stand, or when they have to act they should narrow their ruling as much as possible. Judicial “activists,” in contrast, believe that judges are an essential bulwark against the excesses of popular majorities and misguided governmental officials, and therefore should use their powers of judicial review broadly to correct injustices stemming from unconstitutional acts.

Article VI, Clause 2: How Far Does the Supremacy Clause Grant Federal Over State Powers? The supremacy clause establishes that when federal laws conflict with state laws, federal law prevails. This process is called preemption, as in the national government “preempting” state law. Since the 1940s, the courts have generally favored national government expansion into policy areas traditionally under the states’ control, including local environmental and business regulations. However, critics of this expanded role for the national government argue that the Tenth Amendment protects state powers in areas where they are not prohibited to use those powers, and where no “explicit” grant of national power exists in the Constitution.

Are Additional Constitutional Amendments Needed?

After researching the current amendments, develop and present a proposal for a new amendment. Possible changes might include:

- new rights (e.g., a right to education or health care),
- altered governmental powers (e.g., presidential declaration of war), or
- changes in procedures (e.g., term limits for Congress or the Supreme Court, direct popular election for presidents).

Discuss why the amendment is needed and develop strategies for gaining ratification.

Determining What Is “Necessary and Proper” in Practice

According to Chief Justice John Marshall, Congress is not constricted to simply the enumerated powers. Instead it may justify legislative action if it is “necessary and proper” to the carrying out of any enumerated power. List some examples of congressional use of the “necessary and proper” justification. Discuss whether or not the laws are in fact “necessary and proper” to carrying out the enumerated power to which they are linked. Try crafting your own law [e.g., the reinstatement of the selective service (military draft)]. Write a preamble to your proposed law that develops an argument to support your position that the proposed law is necessary and proper to carry out a power enumerated to the national government.

Imagining a Unitary Government

Assume that the framers of the Constitution had decided to establish a unitary form of government instead of a federal system. What would have been the advantages or disadvantages of such a change? Would we have had a Civil War? What would have happened to individual freedoms? Would public services be better or worse? Write an essay on what the nation would look like under a unitary system.

What Other Constitutional Rights Do You (Or Should You) Have?

The Ninth Amendment states: "The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." What other rights or liberties that are not articulated in the Constitution should we enjoy? For example, should the right to privacy, which the Supreme Court affirmed in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), be guaranteed through constitutional amendment? Other possible rights might include a right to education, a right to health care, or even a right to have fun as an extension of the unalienable right to the "pursuit of happiness" that is asserted in the Declaration of Independence. Discuss what other rights might be covered by the Ninth Amendment.

Why Worry About Civil Liberties If You Don't Have Anything To Hide?

Some people express the attitude that says: "I don't mind drug searches in school, or sobriety checkpoints, because I don't have anything to hide." Do you agree with this statement? Using the *Federalist Papers* and accounts of the debates during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, consider where various political thinkers might have stood on this issue. Also consider what might be the value to society if more people held that view. What might be the value to society if more people questioned that view? Do the terms of this debate change when the U.S. is in a wartime situation against a foreign power, or in a domestic situation such as the "war on drugs?" Why or why not?

Americans Have Come a Long Way, But There's Still Work To Be Done

Discuss what remains to be done in the struggle for equal rights for all citizens. Are there groups of citizens who still don't enjoy their full rights? Who are they? Where might new claims for guarantees of equality come from in the future? For instance, should the Fourteenth Amendment be read to prohibit discrimination against the poor?

What Is To Be Done?

What efforts must society make to redress discrimination? Discuss the options and costs of redressing past practices of discrimination.

Are Our Legislators Like Us, and Does It Matter?

While in theory legislatures are primary mechanisms of popular sovereignty that help to carry out the consent of the governed, in demographic terms America's legislators are more white, male, and older than the American population as a whole. Some Americans think that this undermines representation, while others believe that legislators can effectively represent people who are different from them.

The following statistics compare the demographic characteristics of the 107th Congress with the entire population of the United States. Examine the following statistics. Note how certain categories in society are underrepresented in Congress while other categories are overrepresented. Then consider whether "good representation" requires that Congress "mirror" the country as a whole, or whether an "atypical" Congress can represent all interests in society. Try to think of examples of this, such as men who champion women's rights, or wealthy legislators who fight for the interests of the poor. Do these examples undermine the view that Congress members and senators should be more diverse? Why or why not? Consider the issue as what "good representation" really means, and what it requires in practical terms.

White Men in Congress

House: 336 (77%)
Senate: 87 (87%)
Congress as a whole: 426 (79%)
U.S. as a whole: 39%

Gays (openly) in Congress

House: 3 (0.7%)
Senate: 0
Congress as a whole: 3 (0.6%)
U.S. as a whole: 12%

Baptists in Congress

House: 60 (14%)
Senate: 8 (8%)
Congress as a whole: 68 (13%)
U.S. as a whole: 11.7%

Women in Congress

House: 61 (14%)
Senate: 13 (13%)
Congress as a whole: 74 (14%)
U.S. as a whole: 51%

Members Over 70 Years Old

House: 34 (8%)
Senate: 9 (9%)
Congress as a whole: 43 (8%)
U.S. as a whole: 8%

Methodists in Congress

House: 51 (12%)
Senate: 14 (14%)
Congress as a whole: 65 (12%)
U.S. as a whole: 5%

African Americans in Congress

House: 39 (9%)
Senate: 0
Congress as a whole: 39 (7%)
U.S. as a whole: 12%

Members Under 40 Years Old

House: 42 (9%)
Senate: 1 (1%)
Congress as a whole: 43 (8%)
U.S. as a whole: 46%

Mormons in Congress

House: 12 (3%)
Senate: 5 (5%)
Congress: 17 (3%)
U.S. as a whole: 2%

Hispanics in Congress

House: 18 (4%)
Senate: 0
Congress as a whole: 18 (3%)
U.S. as a whole: 8%

Jews in Congress

House: 27 (6%)
Senate: 10 (10%)
Congress as a whole: 37 (7%)
U.S. as a whole: 2%

Presbyterians in Congress

House: 38 (9%)
Senate: 10 (10%)
Congress as a whole: 48 (9%)
U.S. as a whole: 3%

Asians in Congress

House: 5 (1%)
Senate: 2 (2%)
Congress as a whole: 7 (1%)
U.S. as a whole: 3%

Catholics in Congress

House: 120 (27%)
Senate: 24 (24%)
Congress as a whole: 144 (27%)
U.S. as a whole: 23%

Bringing Home the Bacon and Representing the Constituents

Members of Congress, state legislatures, and even local government legislators are generally expected to provide financial benefits for their communities. In Congress, this expectation is called *bringing home the bacon* and the bills whereby special projects or lucrative grants are earmarked for particular districts are referred to as *pork*.

Discuss these expectations as a problem of representation. Should legislators do this? Is this good public policy? If it isn't good public policy, who is to blame: the legislators or their constituents?

The Many Roles of Our Modern Presidents

Modern presidents fulfill many responsibilities in their day-to-day activities. Six identifiable roles (listed below) of the modern presidency can help explain why presidents appear to be so powerful. Sometimes two or more presidential roles complement each other. For example, a president might use his role as chief of state to enhance his role as chief diplomat. Sometimes, however, a president's roles may conflict, such as when his activities as party leader or chief legislator detract from his roles as commander-in-chief or chief of state.

The simple recitation of the various roles makes the president appear to be single-handedly running the government and shaping policy. Nevertheless, presidents routinely complain about a lack of power. Why do presidents so often feel frustrated by their lack of power? Discuss each of the roles listed and explore the limitations imposed by reality.

Roles of the President

Chief of State: As the only nationally elected leader in the United States, the president is the most prominent U.S. citizen who is the country's leader and spokesperson. This role involves the president in a host of symbolic functions including attending funerals of important foreign leaders, and consoling the nation in times of national tragedy. An example is President Reagan attending the 40th anniversary ceremony of D-Day in Normandy.

Chief Executive: Article II of the U.S. Constitution vests the executive power of national government in the president, and mandates that "he shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed." This brief language is the source of the president's role as chief executive. The president appoints the top positions within the executive branch, and can issue executive orders directing executive branch officials to do something that he wants. An example is President Kennedy's executive order declaring segregated housing off-limits to military personnel.

Commander-in-Chief: Article II of the Constitution designates the president as commander-in-chief who has full command of the U.S. armed forces. This role reflects the wishes of those who framed the Constitution that U.S. military forces would be subject to civilian control. An example is President George Bush ordering military deployment of troops and equipment to the Persian Gulf following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Bush later sought and received congressional authorization to use force to reverse the Iraqi invasion.

Chief Diplomat: The Constitution also grants the president the power to make treaties (subject to two-thirds ratification in the Senate), and to recognize ambassadors from other countries. These powers, along with the president's executive control over the Department of State, are the source of the president's role as chief diplomat. As chief diplomat, the president acts on behalf of the United States when negotiating with other world leaders and in dealing with international organizations such as the United Nations. An example is President Nixon's trip to China that ultimately led to normalized relations between the U.S. and China.

Chief Legislator: As outlined in the Constitution, the president can choose to either sign or veto legislation passed by Congress. That power, along with others granted the president in the Constitution, such as the power to convene an emergency session of Congress and the requirement that the President provide a yearly "state of the union" address to Congress, places the president squarely in the legislative process. An example is President Clinton's budget negotiations with Republican leaders of the House and Senate in 1995. These talks ultimately broke down and resulted in a temporary shutdown of the federal government.

The Many Roles of Our Modern Presidents, cont'd.

Party Leader: While political parties are not addressed in the Constitution, party organizations emerged in the early to middle 1800s and have played an important role in American politics ever since. One function of political parties is to nominate their candidates for president. By tradition, when a president is elected he becomes the leader of his party who is influential in shaping the party's platform, in mobilizing the support of party members in government, and hopefully in helping to elect other party candidates to governmental positions. An example is President George W. Bush's campaign activities on behalf of Republican House and Senate candidates before the 2002 mid-term elections. Election analysts credit his efforts with helping Republicans gain seats in the House and Senate. This is one of the few times in American history that a president's party actually gained seats in Congress during a midterm election.

The Ideal President

Take a few minutes to think about and then list all the qualities that you expect in a president. Compare your list of desirable traits to that of others. Discuss your lists with others and evaluate the likelihood that any one person can ever match the expectations. What does this tell us about our expectations of presidential leadership?

Why Can't the DMV Be More Like McDonalds?

A popular myth is that bureaucracies are only found in governments. But in reality most, if not all, private organizations have bureaucracies too. This is because they also employ people with specific job titles and responsibilities, who work in a hierarchy of authority and within established procedures for operations and governance. In an influential article entitled, "What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It," social scientist James Q. Wilson compares McDonalds to a city Department of Motor Vehicles office to help us understand the differences between public and private sector bureaucracies. After examining the synopsis of Wilson's argument, discuss how government bureaucracies resemble private bureaucracies. Discuss whether you think public bureaucracies should look and operate even more like private bureaucracies or that there are valid and important reasons for the differences.

A typical **Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)** office has long lines that are slow-moving. Customers are often unsure about what line they are supposed to be in, and may get to the front only to find out they must wait in another line. Often, the clerks at the DMV must work with outdated equipment, and they frequently seem harried and dissatisfied with their jobs. Overall, the atmosphere is tense and unpleasant.

In contrast, the typical **McDonalds** fast-food restaurant has several short lines that are fast-moving. Customers can quickly scan the choices before them on a menu that is clear and attractive. The workers are polite and efficient, and the restaurant is immaculate. Overall, the atmosphere is friendly and good-natured.

What is the difference between these two organizations? Again, it is not that the DMV is a bureaucracy and McDonalds is not. On the contrary, both are bureaucracies with extensive rules and clear lines of authority. In fact, McDonalds regulates every aspect of its operation through its 600-page operations manual. Nor is it because the average line workers at McDonalds make more in salary than the average workers at the DMV. Instead, the opposite is true.

As Wilson explains, the crucial difference between the two organizations is that the DMV is a government bureaucracy (in this case state government), while McDonalds is a private-sector bureaucracy. Unlike private bureaucracies, **government bureaucracies** must operate under three important constraints:

- Government bureaucracies cannot lawfully retain for their members' private benefit the earnings of the organization. In other words, the workers don't share in any profits generated by the organization. When private firms make a yearly profit, part of that profit will often return to the workers, or at least the managers, in the form of bonuses or stock options.
- Government bureaucracies cannot allocate the factors of production in accordance with the preferences of the organization's administrators. For example, government agencies don't have total freedom and authority to take some of their profits or remaining budget resources and independently arrange to buy new equipment, or to hire or fire existing contractors. Moreover, government bureaucracies must hire, promote, and fire workers in accordance with strict and detailed rules that are created externally to the organization. These rules are usually the result of political decisions, not bureaucratic ones.

Why Can't the DMV Be More Like McDonalds?, cont'd.

- Government bureaucracies must promote goals that are not of the organization's own choosing. Control over agency goals, revenues, and factors of production is vested in entities external to the organization including legislatures, courts, executives, and interest groups.

Do all government bureaucracies have to resemble the DMV described above? Not necessarily. Government bureaucracies at the national, state, and local level have experimented with incentives to deliver services more efficiently. These experiments include awarding employees bonuses for good work records, empowering line and lower management employees to make innovations in their local operations, and creating customer feedback forms to hear suggestions from those who rely on their services. Evidence suggests that many of these reforms, such as those developed under the Government Performance and Results Act, have had some positive results, such as streamlining procedures, cutting costs, and increasing "customer" satisfaction.

In other cases, politicians have decided to "privatize" some traditional government functions such as trash collection and prison administration in order to promote efficiencies that are typically associated with private bureaucracies. These programs, however, have had mixed results. In most cases, privatized trash collection has worked. But there have been serious problems with private firms that try to earn a profit by running prisons. In some cases, prisoners were crowded into facilities that were designed to hold fewer people, and some prison officials cut back on daily food rations to cut costs. In a few cases, prisoners rioted to protest the inhumane conditions and, as a consequence, some governments have concluded that privatized prisons don't work.

Is the Public Bureaucracy Incompetent and If Yes, Can It Be Fixed?

Think about a bad experience that you have had with a public bureaucracy (national, state, or local). Was the experience the product of incompetent or unresponsive employees, or was it a reflection of public employees caught between contradictory but mandatory policies? Discuss how you would design the system to work more effectively.

At the Storm's Center: Your Supreme Court at Work

The U.S. Supreme Court finally moved to its present location on Capitol Hill in the mid-1930s. Prior to that, the Court worked in various locations, including the basement of the U.S. Capitol. Elevated by grand marble stairs, supported by 16 grand columns on its west front, and adorned with a portico and architrave that is inscribed, "Equal Justice Under the Law," the Supreme Court building reinforces the Court's status as a coequal branch of government. Further symbols employed by the Court, including an elevated court platform and the Justices' black robes, suggest that the Court deliberates issues free from politics and personal concerns. However, the actual processes of the Court including the selection of cases, the shaping of majority opinions, and the use of precedent, do not occur in isolation from the social, legal, and political conflicts of the day. The following discussion outlines the Court's procedures to help demystify the process of rendering decisions. Use this summary of the Court's process to reflect on the nature of the judicial process. Does this process demonstrate that judges are removed from politics?

Choosing Cases for Full Hearing

In its 200-plus years of existence, the Supreme Court has gained greater discretion to pick and choose cases it will hear in a given term. Today the Court receives approximately 4,000 requests per year from litigants to hear their cases on appeal, but typically chooses to accept about 150 cases with full opinion. The so-called "rule of four" governs case selection; if four or more justices agree to hear a case, the case is accepted. A case may be accepted for various reasons, including:

- If the case involves a major issue, such as civil rights.
- If two or more lower courts differ in their interpretation of federal law.
- If a majority of the Supreme Court disagrees with a lower court's decision.

Oral Arguments

From October to the end of April, the justices hear oral arguments on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays of two consecutive weeks (from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., with an hour at noon reserved for lunch). The following two weeks are set aside for writing opinions. The Court's process of hearing cases and rendering judgment is unique. Lawyers on both sides of a case have only 30 minutes each to argue their case. During that time the justices can ask questions or otherwise interrupt a lawyer's argument. There are no witnesses called during oral arguments, and there is no introduction of evidence. Lawyers for the plaintiff and defendant submit written briefs prior to the court date. Outside interests may submit *amicus curiae*, or "friend of the Court" briefs outlining their group's position on the issues central to the case.

Judicial Conference

Judicial conference takes place in closed session on Wednesdays and Fridays, with only the justices present. Beginning with the Chief Justice and proceeding from the most senior on to the most junior Associate Justice, each justice provides his or her analysis of the case and the relevant law, and announces a proposed decision. After reaching a decision that is supported by at least five justices, the decision is assigned to a justice who then writes the majority opinion. If the Chief Justice is in the majority, he or she assigns the case to a justice (or to him- or herself) who will write the majority opinion. If the Chief Justice is in the minority, the most senior justice in the majority assigns the **majority opinion**. Who actually writes the opinion is not a trivial matter, as the opinion's content and style may affect the ultimate size of the majority, and the number and nature of any concurring opinions or dissenting opinions. **Concurring opinions** may be written by justices who accept the majority decision but don't agree with the majority's entire reasoning. **Dissenting opinions** are written by the justices to explain their differences with the majority.

Should We Have Elections and Term Limits for Supreme Court Justices?

Alexander Hamilton characterized the courts as the “least dangerous branch” of government, having neither the power of the sword or purse. Yet ever since the Supreme Court took for itself the power of judicial review, the Court has periodically come under intense criticism for certain rulings. Federal judges are appointed for life, and can only be removed through impeachment in the House of Representatives, and conviction in the Senate. Only a handful of federal judges have ever been impeached, and no justice of the Supreme Court has ever been impeached.

Discuss the possible pros and cons of a reform which subjects Supreme Court justices, and all federal judges, to retention elections after a certain term expires after their initial appointment. Voters nationwide could review a justice’s record and decide whether or not to retain her or him for another term. What might be some positive effects of such a reform? What might be some negative consequences? In weighing the potential pros and cons, consider the experiences of retention elections for judges in states that have them.

Another reform to consider is judicial term limits. Rather than appointing federal and Supreme Court justices for life, under term limits judges would be appointed for a fixed term, say, six, 10, or 12 years, and then would be ineligible for another term. What might be the pros and cons of such a change? In considering the possible merits of this reform, keep in mind the original intentions of the Constitution’s framers that the judiciary be insulated from electoral politics. Also consider whether judges are insulated under the current system where judicial appointments have become another partisan conflict between Republicans and Democrats.

Teachers: *You may want to show your students segment 3 of Unit 9’s video: The Crocodile in the Bathtub: Judicial Recalls in California, and discuss whether this experience supports or undermines the case for retention elections at the national level.*

Suggested Best Practices for Newspaper Journalists

Throughout American history, newspaper readers have complained when they perceived that news coverage in print was biased, incomplete, or misleading. Newspaper publishers and their reporters, writers, and editors struggle to provide fair and accurate coverage of the news. Recently, the Freedom Forum initiated a series of conversations with the public in communities across the country and asked people what bothered them about the press. Participants affirmed that they were strong believers in a free press as an important institution of democracy. But they also raised concerns about basic journalistic practices that they consider unfair and misleading. The following section highlights some of their major concerns, and summarizes some of their recommendations, or “best practices,” to remedy those concerns. As you read through these complaints and possible remedies, think about other possible additions that could be made to this list. Hopefully, by becoming more familiar with these common problems and proposed solutions, we can all become more discerning readers of print media.

According to people who participated in the recent Freedom Forum study on journalistic practices, newspapers are unfair when:

- **They get the facts wrong.** While journalists may think that errors in spelling, grammar, and facts like names, titles, and dates are minor and of little consequence, the public thinks otherwise. Among the study’s participants, the frequency of factual errors was cited as a major factor in the public’s skepticism of what it reads. Comments about such errors included: “I couldn’t believe they got that wrong”; “He’s lived here for 40 years and they can’t even spell his name right?”; and “Don’t they have people to check that stuff?” One way to address the problem is to make the elimination of these seemingly simple mistakes a top priority. The *Chicago Tribune*, for example, has developed a system to track down and reduce such errors, including employing an outside proofing agency that reads the newspaper line by line every day to find mistakes that elude the regular staff. The result has been a marked decrease in such errors from 4.5 errors on average per page in 1992 to 2.5 errors per page in 1997. Undoubtedly, many people would still consider an average of 2.5 errors a page too many.
- **They refuse to admit errors.** Many newspaper readers feel that newspapers not only make too many mistakes, but when they do make mistakes they seem unwilling to correct them fully and promptly. This problem may be partly due to how journalists view their role in a free society. Many see themselves as writing the “first draft” of history, usually under strict deadlines, and that the public should expect some initial errors and misunderstandings. Only the most egregious errors should be corrected in the newspaper, while historians should sort out the rest. The reading public, in contrast, expects newspapers to clean up their errors promptly and fully when they realize that mistakes are made. Study participants also preferred that newspapers publish corrections on the front page, or in another prominent place within the newspaper, and not near the back.
- **They won’t name names.** Evidence suggests that newspaper readers are uncomfortable with the common practice of reporting information from “anonymous sources.” For example, 70 percent of the Freedom Forum study participants disagreed that “using anonymous sources was an appropriate way for the media to report” on what was happening inside a grand jury room. When asked what they thought the press should do when it was impossible to get anyone to confirm the facts of a story, 45 percent said the story shouldn’t run at all, 28 percent said the story should run with quotes from unidentified sources, and 23 percent said they were not concerned with the problem of unidentified sources. Journalists defend the practice saying that major stories such as Watergate and the

Suggested Best Practices for Newspaper Journalists, cont'd.

Pentagon Papers episode would not have run without journalists' reliance on unnamed sources. Rules for using anonymous sources vary greatly among major newspapers. The Associated Press (AP), which provides news reports to every daily paper in the United States, has a reputation for fairness and lack of bias. The AP guidelines on using unnamed sources allow such sources to be used when: (1) the material involves information that is essential to the story, not opinion or speculation; (2) the information is only available under conditions of anonymity imposed by the source; and (3) it is determined that the source is in a position to have accurate and reliable information.

- **They concentrate on bad news.** A long-running complaint is that the press focuses too much "on what is wrong, violent, or bizarre, and that it never prints 'good news.'" Study participants offered several examples of the dearth of positive news, including several involving the performance of public institutions such as local governments and schools. Some journalists respond that the news is not the story of all the airplanes that landed safely yesterday, but of the one that did not. Newspaper editors also defend their paper's content by saying that there is a lot of good news reported, but that the public tends to recall reading only about bad news. In response to the ongoing complaints about too much bad news, several newspapers designate "doing good" reporters whose beats include positive stories such as profiles on a group dedicated to saving old trees or feral cats, and a regular "local heroes" column.
- **They insert editorial bias into news stories.** Several study respondents complained about editorial or political bias in news stories, and said they sometimes have difficulty separating what they read on the editorial pages from what they read on the news pages. In particular, they were concerned that when newspapers ran a major investigative series they often supported that series with items in the editorial page, and this gave the impression that the newspaper was engaging in an intensive "campaign" or "crusade." Commenting on the perceived problem of editorializing in the news media, respected TV journalist Jim Lehrer has written that the news media's credibility problem arises from the blurring of three types of journalism: straight reporting, analysis, and opinion. Other journalists who were questioned about this problem during the study said that newspapers would never completely rid themselves of complaints about bias. However, journalists should be ever on guard against letting their personal bias interfere with accurate and fair reporting. One way to do that is for reporters to take periodic "temperature checks" to question themselves that all sides are being treated fairly.

Media Bias: Do You Know It When You See It?

Pick a national story such as a war, a Supreme Court ruling, an election, or a scandal and build an exercise on media coverage around that story. Pick a news source to analyze and examine the content and style of reporting, including any noteworthy facts that were omitted, any bias they detected, and the overall tone of the stories. Is the coverage biased? If so, explain why. Is the news coverage biased, incomplete, or inaccurate? Are there more reliable sources?

What Every Citizen Should Know About Polling But Is Afraid To Ask

Scientific methods of public opinion polling were first developed in the 1930s. Before that, researchers and politicians attempted to gauge public opinion through things like chance encounters with citizens, straw polls (simply polling as many people as you can), and exit polls (questioning people as they leave the polling place). These methods were unscientific because no attempt was made to gather a representative sample of the whole polling population.

Today, professional pollsters have high confidence in their polls because they understand the science of polling and the art of interpreting poll results. However, not all polls are created equal. As the example of Ross Perot's poll in *TV Guide* illustrates, some polls are haphazardly created and administered and can actually distort public opinion. The aim of this learning resource is to provide basic information about polling that can help all citizens become more knowledgeable consumers of polls. Can you think of other criteria that should be added to the list?

There are several things to look for in evaluating a given poll and its results:

- **Is the poll based on a random sample of the entire population?** A truly random sample requires that everyone in the entire target population (usually all adults) have an equal chance of being interviewed. Typically, a "good" random sample size is somewhere between 1,000 and 1,500 persons who are selected in a "stratified" or multi-stage process where progressively smaller geographical units are randomly selected as sample areas. Most polls will describe their sample methodology in the fine print of their results. Those where the pollsters seek out respondents are likely to be scientific, while those that allow respondents to select themselves are usually not. Examples of unscientific polls include call-in polls, Internet polls, and mall surveys.
- **Are the questions understandable?** The questions must be framed in basic language that people can understand. This means that pollsters avoid terms and jargon that require further explanation. If some explanation is needed, the pollsters should present it in a basic and balanced way. In addition, questions about obscure details of policy or politics must be avoided since respondents tend to give answers to questions on issues they know little or nothing about.
- **Are the questions asked fairly?** Professional pollsters are always on the lookout to avoid question wording that can bias respondents' answers. For example, good pollsters always eliminate leading adjectives, such as *unpatriotic* anti-war demonstrators, *ungodly* pro-choice activists, or the *staunch* Republican candidate.
- **Are the response categories offered sufficiently broad to capture people's range of opinions?** As the example of the Perot poll shows, if you offer respondents a simple either/or choice, you will get different (and usually much less accurate) results than if you offer several choice options.

For example, when the Perot poll asked respondents whether or not they favored one deficit reduction proposal (*For every dollar in tax increases there should be two dollars of spending cuts, with the savings earmarked to pay down the debt*), 97 percent of respondents said yes. Yet when respondents were offered several debt-reduction options, support for the original Perot option dropped significantly.

What Every Citizen Should Know About Polling But Is Afraid To Ask, cont'd.

- **Is the sampling error reported clearly?** All polls have potential sampling errors, and the better ones will report their potential error rate up front. A 3 to 5 percent sampling error rate is considered reasonable, while polls with higher margins of error should be interpreted with caution. What does sampling error mean? Consider this: A poll with a 3 percent error rate means that it is 97 percent accurate. In other words, in a poll that registers high presidential public approval at 50 percent, we can be 97 percent sure that the actual rate of public approval is between 47 percent (50 minus 3 percent) and 53 percent (50 plus 3 percent). Obviously, if results of a poll are within 3 percentage points of each other, say one policy proposal being supported by 49 percent of those polled and opposed by 51 percent, then the results are considered “within the margin of error” and no reliable difference can be asserted.

What Are the Sources of Your Political Values?

While the processes of political socialization are complex, we know that an individual's political values and attitudes are shaped by a variety of factors including their parents, teachers, and peers, and their response to formative events such as war or political scandals. Think about your formative periods of political socialization, including the potential influence of parents, relatives, peers, teachers, and actual events on your political beliefs. To get things started, you might recall the context of your first "political awareness," such as when your parents were discussing (or arguing about!) who they intended to vote for in a presidential election, when they first tuned into a military conflict on television, or their feelings about a major political event (e.g., presidential speech or action). What had the greatest influence on your current beliefs and opinions?

Party Platforms: How Useful Are They for Voters and Politicians?

Most organized political parties develop extensive party platforms that explain the party's principles about governing and specific positions on key issues. The Democrats and Republicans, for example, as well as most third parties including the Green Party and the Libertarian Party, revise their national party platforms every four years at their party's presidential nominating conventions. While much time and effort is spent on formulating and revising the party platforms, just how influential the platforms are in attracting members of the party in the electorate and guiding party members in government is open to debate. Political scientist Gerald Pomper studied the parties' platforms from 1944 to 1976 and found that, on the whole, the parties maintained consistently different positions on key issues. For example, about 69 percent of the positions taken by one major party were not taken by the other. A more recent study by L. Sandy Maisel found that since the 1990s the parties' platforms have generally taken non-controversial stances on issues that are designed to appeal to broad coalitions of voters, not to provide specific policy direction for the party in the government. Can you see differences between the parties?

The following quotes, which are organized around specific issue areas known as "planks," are taken directly from the 2000 platforms of the two major parties (Republicans and Democrats), and from two of the many minor parties that are active today (Greens and Libertarians). Consider the similarities and differences between the parties on these issues. Are these position statements helpful guides for voters in selecting candidates, and for elected officials to follow through on their promises once they are elected?

Party Platforms				
	Democratic Party	Republican Party	Green Party	Libertarian Party
Overview	The Democratic Party generally favors national government involvement in regulating economic and business activity and addressing social problems like racial discrimination and poverty. Democrats support strong national defense, but think defense spending should be balanced with equally strong governmental support for social programs. In areas involving personal morality, such as abortion or recreational drug use, many Democrats favor fewer or no governmental controls.	On economic matters, the Republican Party generally favors individual liberty and free markets over national governmental regulation. Republicans support a strong national defense, but prefer local control over most other public-policy decisions. On social issues such as a woman's choice to have an abortion or regulation of the public airwaves, many Republicans favor governmental restrictions to promote fundamental moral standards.	The Greens are a reform-oriented party that is guided by several fundamental principles including "grassroots democracy," "social justice and equal opportunity," and "ecological wisdom." Generally placed on the ideological left of centrist Democrats, the Green Party promotes individual and collective social responsibility that is usually at odds with entrenched government and corporate interests.	The Libertarian Party believes that government activities should be limited to protecting national defense, individual security, and basic rights. Libertarians assert that people have the right to live as they choose as long as they don't interfere with the life choices or rights of others, including the rights to life, absolute free speech, and private property in a totally unregulated economic marketplace.

Party Platforms: How Useful Are They for Voters and Politicians?, cont'd.

Party Platforms, cont'd.				
	Democratic Party	Republican Party	Green Party	Libertarian Party
Taxes	"[We] want to give middle-class families tax cuts they can use ... tax cuts that are specifically targeted to help those who need them the most."	"When the average American family has to work more than four months out of every year to fund all levels of government, it's time to change the tax system, to make it simpler, flatter, and fairer for everyone."	"Subsidies, export incentives, tax loopholes, and tax shelters that benefit large corporations now amount to hundreds of billions of dollars each year and must be cut to the bone."	"We oppose all personal and corporate income taxation, including capital gains taxes."
Education	"By the end of the next presidential term, parents across the nation ought to be able to choose the best public school for their children."	"[We want to] expand parental choice and encourage competition by providing parents with information on their child's school, increasing the number of charter schools, and expanding education savings accounts for use from kindergarten through college."	"Education starts with choice and within public education we believe in broad choices. 'Magnet schools,' 'Site-Based Management,' 'Schools Within Schools,' alternative models, and parental involvement are ways in which elementary education can be changed to make a real difference in the lives of our children."	"Government ownership, operation, regulation, and subsidy of schools and colleges should be ended."
International Affairs	"We must also form partnerships to help solve global problems and take advantage of new global opportunities. That means we must deepen our key alliances, develop more constructive relationships with former enemies, and bring together diverse coalitions of nations to deal with new problems."	"International organizations can serve the cause of peace, but they can never serve as a substitute for, or exercise a veto over, principled American leadership."	"We must look to domestic and international regulation to protect the global ecology, utilizing the United Nations and related agencies as well as regional associations to advance our mutual interests."	"We support withdrawal of the United States government from, and an end to its financial support for, the United Nations.... We oppose U.S. government participation in any world or international government."
Social Security	"We owe it to America's children and their children to make the strength and solvency of Social Security a major national priority."	"Personal savings accounts must be the cornerstone of restructuring [Social Security]. Each of today's workers should be free to direct a portion of their payroll taxes to personal investments for their retirement future."	"[We oppose] the 'privatization' of Social Security. The Social Security trust fund, contrary to claims being made by [other] candidates, is not about to 'go broke' and does not need to be 'fixed' by Wall Street."	"We favor replacing the current fraudulent, virtually bankrupt, government-sponsored Social Security system with a private voluntary system. Pending that replacement, participation in Social Security should be made voluntary."

Party Platforms: How Useful Are They for Voters and Politicians?, cont'd.

Party Platforms, cont'd.				
	Democratic Party	Republican Party	Green Party	Libertarian Party
Environment	<p>"Environmental standards should be raised throughout the world in order to preserve the Earth and to prevent a destructive race to the bottom wherein countries compete for production and jobs based on who can do the least to protect the environment."</p>	<p>"We believe the government's main role should be to provide market-based incentives to innovate and develop the new technologies for Americans to meet — and exceed — environmental standards."</p>	<p>"Ultimately, environmentally destructive technologies, processes, and products should be replaced with alternatives that are environmentally benign.... Legislation that will assist this transition (including bans, taxation, recycled content standards and economic incentives/disincentives such as taxation, special fees, and/or deposits) will be required in a concerted move toward system-wide sustainability."</p>	<p>"Pollution of other people's property is a violation of individual rights. Present legal principles, particularly the unjust and false concept of 'public property,' block privatization of the use of the environment and hence block resolution of controversies over resource use."</p>
Immigration	<p>"[We] believe in an effective immigration system that balances a strong enforcement of our laws with fair and evenhanded treatment of immigrants and their families. We also recognize that the current system fails to effectively control illegal immigration, has serious adverse impacts on state and local services, and on many communities and workers, and has led to an alarming number of deaths of migrants on the border."</p>	<p>"As a nation of immigrants, we welcome all new Americans who have entered lawfully and are prepared to follow our laws and provide for themselves and their families. To ensure fairness for those wishing to reside in this country, and to meet the manpower needs of our expanding economy, a total overhaul of the immigration system is sorely needed."</p>	<p>"Preferential quotas based on race, class, and ideology should be abandoned for immigration policies that promote fairness, non-discrimination, and family reunification."</p>	<p>"We look forward to an era in which American citizens and foreigners can travel anywhere in the world without a passport. We aim to restore a world in which there are no passports, visas, or other papers required to cross borders."</p>

Founding Your Own Third Party

Using research materials found at Web sites such as the one below, create your own third party based on issues and positions that are most important to you. What is the name of the party? What are the party's main goals or purposes? What are the party's main positions? What kinds of voters would the party try to attract?

Web Site

www.politics1.com/parties.htm—Learn more about the current and past political parties through **Politics1.Com**. Web site materials include descriptions and links to the two major political parties, and to many third or minor parties.

Low Voter Turnout: Causes and Possible Remedies

Voter Turnout in the U.S.: How Bad Is It? Voter turnout is the rate by which people vote in elections. The simplest way to calculate a given election's turnout rate is to compare the actual number of voters with the voting-age population. Compared to other industrialized representative democracies, the United States ranks low in terms of voter turnout. For example, voter turnout in U.S. presidential elections remains around 50 percent of the total population of eligible voters. In off-year gubernatorial elections (i.e., election years without a presidential election), turnout can drop down into the 40 percent range and in off-year congressional elections, down to the middle 30 percent range. In primary elections, voter turnout can drop below 30 percent, while in local elections, turnout often drops below 25 percent of eligible voters. These voting rates place the United States near the bottom of industrialized nations, many of which experience much higher voting rates. For example, over 80 percent of eligible citizens typically vote in Australia, Belgium, Sweden, Netherlands, Austria, and Germany. Why is turnout so low in American elections? Do any of the explanations offered seem satisfactory? Using the explanations offered below, develop a plan to counter low voter turnout.

Who Votes in the U.S.? Voters in the U.S. come from all demographic groups, including the young and old, and the rich and poor. However, those who vote most often are older, have higher incomes, and are more educated. Wealthier citizens are more likely to believe they have a personal stake in the election and in the political process in general than less-wealthy voters. In addition, wealthier voters also tend to be more educated. Typically, the more educated you are, the more likely you are to understand how the election system works. Also, people with more education have a stronger sense of obligation to vote. Like voters with higher rates of education, older citizens are more likely to feel they have a stake in the election and a duty to vote. Many older citizens also feel they have more time to vote than younger citizens.

Why Is Turnout So Low? While scholars continue to debate the most important reasons for lagging turnout in U.S. elections, most agree on the following as contributing reasons:

- **Voter Registration Laws:** In most states, voters must register to vote well before the actual election. Registering to vote takes planning and initiative. Citizens who are less knowledgeable about the political process are less likely to register to vote. In the U.S., citizens tend to relocate more than many other countries. When you move to a new state or local area, you must re-register in that jurisdiction. Many new residents fail to register for several election cycles, or at all.
- **Frequency of Elections:** Probably no electorate in the world is called to vote more frequently than citizens in the U.S. For example, while British voters may go to the polls twice in a four-year election cycle (once for Parliamentary elections and once for local elections), Americans are called upon to vote in as many as 10 or more primary and general elections in the same period. Some scholars believe "election fatigue" may help explain why many voters fail to vote in every election opportunity.
- **Voter Attitudes:** Voting is not compulsory in the U.S. But it is in some other countries, including Australia. Some American voters may choose to not vote because they feel their vote does not count, because they don't see much difference between the choices offered, or because they are alienated from the political system due to voter apathy (just don't care) or alienation (e.g., lack of trust in politicians, sense of personal powerlessness).
- **Relatively Weak Political Parties:** Unlike parties in many other countries, political parties in the U.S. are relatively weak in terms of their ability to mobilize voters to register and ultimately vote on election day.

How Should We Increase Turnout? For those who feel we should try to increase voter turnout, there are several potential changes to consider. One change would be to adopt same-day registration procedures at voting places. This would allow those who decide to vote late in the campaign the option of voting. Such a move would build upon the 1993 Motor Voter Law that allows citizens to register to vote at their Department of Motor Vehicles and other public agencies. Another option would be to make it easier for voters to cast an absentee ballot. While the practice of absentee voting has risen significantly in the last decade, many states still require that voters apply in person and far in advance of the election. Streamlined absentee ballot procedures could bring more voters into the process. Still another change to increase turnout would be to keep the polls open longer, perhaps for 48 hours instead of the average 12 to 15 hours that are usually available for voting. This change could help particularly busy people get to the polls. A final change might be to make election day a holiday. People would have the day off from work, which would eliminate one common excuse for not voting. And following the tradition in some European countries where election day is a time of festivals, speeches, and feasts, an election holiday might help foster a sense of celebration about exercising our voting rights.

What Are the Effects of Low Voter Turnout?

People disagree over the effects of voter turnout rates in the U.S. Some people argue that because nonvoters tend to be poorer, less educated, and minorities, elected politicians can more easily disregard their interests when formulating public policy. Also, since the Democratic Party tends to attract more people who fit these profiles, higher voting rates might result in additional support for Democrats, or for candidates from other parties that appeal to voters with lower socioeconomic status characteristics. Other people dispute these assumptions. They argue that higher voting rates would not change the overall makeup of the electorate enough to cause significant change in election outcomes and public policy. A study of this question by Raymond Wolfinger and Benjamin Highton, for example, found that the overall group of nonvoters largely mirrors the diverse and ideologically divided population that already votes. What is your view of this? Should we be concerned about low voter turnout or simply assume that those who are not voting are generally satisfied or at least willing to accept the way things are?

Tocqueville Would Be Proud: Today's Interest Group Universe

On his short visit to the United States in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville marveled at Americans' propensity to form associations (i.e., interest groups) for any cause, interest, or public purpose. In his influential and still widely read book, *Democracy in America*, he writes:

Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations ... and I have often admired the extreme skill with which the inhabitants of the United States succeed in proposing a common object to the exertions of a great many men, and in inducing them voluntarily to pursue it.

The following list of organized interest groups illustrates Americans' tendency to organize themselves into groups for just about any foreseeable need or cause. Specific Web site information is available to help you investigate the goals and methods of these groups. Can you find other groups to add to these categories?

Gender

Men

American Men's Studies Association:
www.mensstudies.org
National Men's Resource Center: www.mensstuff.org
National Coalition of Free Men: www.ncfm.org
Fathers' Rights and Equality Exchange:
www.dadsrights.org

Women

American Association of University Women:
<http://www.aauw.org/>
Concerned Women for America:
www.cwfa.org/about.asp
National Organization for Women: www.now.org
National Foundation for Women Legislators:
www.womenlegislators.org
Tradeswomen: www.tradeswomen.org

Age

14- 25

Jobs for America's Graduates: www.jag.org
Students Against Destructive Decisions:
www.saddonline.com
Boys and Girls Club of America: www.bgca.org
National 4-H Council: www.fourhcouncil.edu/

26-49

Active 20-30 Association: www.active20-30.com
National Association of Baby Boomers:
www.babyboomers.org

50+

American Association on Aging: www.asaging.org
Alliance for the Aging Research:
www.agingresearch.org/aboutus.cfm
Amvets—American Veteran: www.amvets.org/
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform:
www.nccnhr.org/
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare: www.ncpssm.org/about/index.html

Regions

North East

Connecticut River Watershed Council: www.ctriver.org
Great Lakes United: www.glu.org

South East

Southern States Energy Board: www.sseb.org

North Central

Minnesota-Dakotas District of the Kiwanis:
www.mndak-kiwanis.org

South Central

CatFish Institute: www.catfishinstitute.com/

North West

Western U.S. Agricultural Trade Association:
www.wusata.org
Alaska Coalition: www.alaskacoalition.org

South West

Supima Association of America:
www.supimacotton.org

Race and Ethnicity

White

National Association for the Advancement of White People: www.naawp.com
Irish National Caucus: www.irishnationalcaucus.org
National Italian American Foundation: www.niaf.org

African American

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: www.naacp.org
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.:
<http://cbcfinc.org/index2.html>

Hispanic

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational: www.naleo.org/
MANA, A Latina Organization: www.hermana.org
League of United Latin American Citizens:
www.lulac.org
National Council of La Raza: www.nclr.org

Tocqueville Would Be Proud: Today's Interest Group Universe, cont'd.

Race and Ethnicity, cont'd.

Native Americans

American Indian Youth Running Strong:
www.indianyouth.org
Americans for Indian Opportunity: www.aio.org
Native American Educational Services: www.naes.edu
National Indian Health Board: www.nihb.org

Asian/Pacific Islander

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center:
www.searac.org/
Organization of Chinese Americans: www.ocanatl.org/
National Association of Korean Americans:
www.naka.org

Arab Americans

The Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee:
<http://www.adc.org/>
Middle East Policy Council: www.mepc.org

Religion

Christian

Christian Coalition of America: www.cc.org/
Christian Association of Primetimers:
christianprimetimers.org

Catholic

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby:
www.networklobby.org/
Catholic Campus Ministry Association:
www.ccmanet.org

Jewish

The American Jewish Committee: www.ajc.org/
American Jewish Congress: www.ajcongress.org/
American Jewish Society for Service: www.ajss.org

Islam

Association of Islamic Charitable Projects:
www.aicp.org
Federation of Islamic Association in the United States:
www.islamerica.com
Islamic Assembly of North America: www.iananet.org

Buddhist

American Buddhist Association: www.bcmw.org
American Buddhist Study Center:
www.americanbuddhist.org
Buddhist Vihara: www.vihara.org

Atheist

American Atheist: www.atheist.org
Atheist Alliance: www.atheistalliance.org
Atheists United: www.atheistsunited.org

What Exactly Is a “Special” Interest?

In “Federalist No. 10,” James Madison developed a theory of interest groups that he believed supported the cause of constitutional ratification. Responding to past political philosophers who contended that a democratic republic could only thrive on a small scale in societies with few competing interests, Madison advanced a new and radical conception of organized interests. According to Madison, the causes of faction are “sown in the nature of man.” Thus, to try to prevent factions from expressing themselves would be against human nature, and ultimately would undermine the basic liberty that we value as free people. Instead of removing the causes of factions, Madison proposed that we control their negative effects. One way to do this is to encourage the formation of many types of interests, so that by opposing each other they prevent one or more factions from violating the rights of all others, and ultimately the public interest. Madison wrote, “Extend the sphere [of interests], and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens.”

One frequently hears complaints about “special interests” that seek unfair influence in the democratic process to promote their particular agenda. Such complaints are not new, but instead can be found in all periods of American history. In many cases it is clear that one person’s special interest is another’s public interest. Try to develop a definition of a “special” versus “public” interest, and include real examples. What factors can we use to determine the difference between special and public interests?

A Timeline of Key Events in the History of U.S. Foreign Policy

George Santayana’s classic statement that “he who forgets the past is condemned to repeat it,” is a good lesson for those who must steer U.S. foreign policy in the twenty-first century. Today, the United States stands as the sole superpower among nations, and few people believe we can avoid playing a leading role on the world stage. But U.S. policy-makers must continually grapple with the complex issues of foreign policy in an increasingly interdependent and dangerous world. As citizens, we must also think about—and through voting and other forms of participation weigh in on—the question of America’s future role in world affairs.

To thoughtfully consider our future, we must remain aware of our past. The following timeline presents many important events, actions, and turning points in America’s evolving foreign policy. While the timeline identifies some pivotal events and actions, it necessarily leaves out other equally important occurrences. As you review the timeline, think about the events that are not included, but should be. Also think about the possible lessons the past might teach us. What commitments from the past should we continue to honor? Which policies or commitments should we discontinue? What actions from our past should still guide us today?

1700s

1776: Thomas Paine publishes *Common Sense*, an incendiary tract written to convince British colonists in America that revolution against British rule was just. *Common Sense* articulates ideas that dominate debates over U.S. foreign policy for the next 200 years, including the idea that America’s destiny of freedom is the world’s destiny as well. **1776:** The Second Continental Congress passes **the Declaration of Independence**, written by Thomas Jefferson. The Declaration asserts that a “decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that [the colonists] should declare the causes that impel them to separation [from Great Britain],” and articulates “universal principles” of equality, basic individual rights, popular consent to governmental rule, and the right of people to revolt against tyrannical rule. The Declaration of Independence remains a profound source of inspiration for oppressed peoples around the globe. **1781:** French forces under Rochambeau and American forces under Washington compel the **surrender of British forces** under Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia. **1783: The Treaty of Paris** is signed by the United States and Great Britain. Congress ratifies the treaty on January 14, 1784. **1789: The U.S. Constitution gains ratification.** It provides for a strong central government with enhanced foreign policy-making powers, including a president who is “commander in chief” and can negotiate treaties with foreign nations (subject to two-thirds ratification in the Senate), and who can recognize and receive ambassadors from other nations. Under the Constitution, Congress is responsible for declaring war, for regulating commerce with foreign nations, and for funding executive branch departments and initiatives. **1789: Congress creates the Department of Foreign Affairs**, which later becomes the State Department, and the position of “Secretary of Foreign Affairs.” Thomas Jefferson reluctantly accepts President Washington’s appointment as our nation’s first Secretary of State. **1789:** The French Revolution begins. **By 1793, the revolution becomes an international struggle, with a French declaration of war against England, Holland, and Austria.** **1796:** President **George Washington presents his Farewell Address** in a newspaper article dated September 17, 1796. In it, he expresses frustration at French meddling in U.S. politics. Washington warns the nation against engaging in permanent alliances with foreign nations. Instead, alliances should only be used temporarily for emergencies.

1800s

1801: Newly elected President **Jefferson proclaims** in his inaugural address that American expansion should be considered unlimited, and declares, “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.” **1801:** President **Jefferson builds a flotilla** of gunboats to fight the Barbary States. **1803: The Louisiana Purchase** doubles the size of the United States, and later provides 13 of the United States’ eventual 50 states. **1812: U.S. Declares War on Great Britain.** In the previous years, the United States became ensnared in a European conflict that pitted Napoleonic France against Great Britain and her continental allies. President Madison asks Congress for a declaration of War on Great Britain on June 1. Many who supported war considered the British and Spanish territory in North America as potential prizes to be won by battle or

A Timeline of Key Events in the History of U.S. Foreign Policy, cont'd.

negotiations after an American victory. **1814: British troops land at Washington** and burn the city, forcing President Madison and his wife Dolley to flee the city. The British are later beaten at Baltimore, and peace terms were outlined in the Treaty of Ghent, signed in December, 1814. **1823:** In an address to Congress, President James Monroe articulates United States' policy on the new political order, later called the **Monroe Doctrine**, which became a major guidepost for U.S. foreign policy. The doctrine warns European powers against interfering in the affairs of the newly independent Latin American states or potential United States territories in the Western Hemisphere. Although credit (or blame) for the Monroe Doctrine is given to President Monroe, the doctrine was actually the work of Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, whom many historians credit as our nation's greatest secretary of state. **1845:** Democratic newspaper editor John L. O'Sullivan of New York coins the term "**manifest destiny**" in describing American's opposition to European attempts to prevent the U.S. from annexing Texas. O'Sullivan states that such European opposition was an act against God, and therefore against "the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." O'Sullivan later ties the fate of Mexicans in disputed territories with the fate of Native Americans. **1846:** President Polk sends a war message to Congress, and Congress approves it with an overwhelming majority. **U.S. war with Mexico** officially begins. **1848: U.S. war with Mexico ends.** As a result, the U.S. territories increased by nearly 50 percent, including the addition of California.

1861: The Civil War begins. The Confederate States fail to gain diplomatic recognition from a single European power. **1865: The Civil War ends.** **1867: The U.S. purchases Alaska from the Russians**, which marks the end of Russian efforts to expand trade and settlements to the Pacific coast of North America. The purchase is widely considered an important step toward the U.S. becoming a great power in the Asia-Pacific region. **1890: Sitting Bull**, who was among the great tribal leaders who resisted white American expansionism, and whose warriors defeated Custer and his forces at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, **is killed by U.S. Army forces.** **1898: The U.S. annexes Hawaii**, which extends U.S. territory into the Pacific and contributes to the rise of the United States as a Pacific power. **1898: The Spanish American war begins.** The war removed Spain from the Caribbean, and made the United States the leading power in the hemisphere. During the conflict, the U.S. gains control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. President McKinley then turns his attention to China.

1900s

1901: On September 1, President **McKinley is assassinated** in Buffalo, New York, and Vice President **Theodore Roosevelt becomes president.** Roosevelt embarks on a series of "interventions" in Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. **1903: The Panama Canal** is completed. **1904: The Roosevelt Corollary** to the Monroe Doctrine states that the United States would intervene as a last resort to ensure that other nations in the Western Hemisphere fulfill their obligations to international creditors. The corollary serves as justification for U.S. intervention in Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. **1909-1913:** President William Howard Taft and Secretary of State Philander C. Knox begin an era of foreign policy characterized as "**dollar diplomacy**," which describes efforts to create stability and order abroad that best promote American commercial interests. **1913: Woodrow Wilson becomes president.** Upon entering office, he declares that he wants an "orderly process" in Latin America and stability in U.S. markets. He eventually orders the U.S. Marines into Nicaragua and Haiti. **1914:** World War I begins, but Wilson and other policy-makers are initially reluctant to take sides. **1915:** A German submarine sinks the British liner, Lusitania, killing nearly 1,200 people. Anti-German sentiment in the U.S. heats up. 1917: After a long struggle to maintain U.S. neutrality in the conflict, Wilson asks Congress to declare war against Germany and its allies. In his War Message to Congress, he declares that America's purpose "is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world." **1917: The Russian Revolution** overthrows the Russian monarchy and creates the world's first communist state. **1918: Wilson presents his Fourteen Points speech** to a joint session of Congress on January 8. Five points assert general principles for a peaceful world. The fourteenth point proposes a "general association of nations" that would later become the League of Nations. **1919: The Treaty of Versailles is signed. The U.S. Senate refuses to ratify the treaty** in part because of opposition to the proposed League of Nations.

A Timeline of Key Events in the History of U.S. Foreign Policy, cont'd.

1930s and early 1940s: Polls showed that most Americans favor the U.S. staying out of European conflicts. **1930: The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act is passed.** The Act raises U.S. tariffs to historically high levels, and represents the high-water mark of U.S. protectionism in the twentieth century. **1933: Franklin Roosevelt becomes president** as America is reeling from economic crisis. In his inaugural address on March 4, he articulates his **Good Neighbor Policy** that emphasizes cooperation and expanded trade rather than military force to maintain stability in the Western Hemisphere. **1941:** On December 7, the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, jolting a reluctant American public into action. **Congress quickly approves a declaration of war** with only one dissenting vote. World War II ushers in a generation of increasing American involvement in world affairs. **1942:** Representatives of 26 nations at war with the Axis powers meet in Washington to sign **the Declaration of the United Nations** endorsing the Atlantic Charter. The nations pledge to use their full resources against the Axis, and agree not to make a separate peace. **1943:** In a November meeting in Egypt with Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill of Great Britain agree to a pre-eminent **role for China in postwar Asia.** **1944: Conferences at Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks** lay the foundation for international cooperation and economic trade in the postwar world. **1944: The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank** are created. **1945:** Leaders of the U.S., Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, also known as the “Big Three” meet at **Yalta.** Churchill and an ailing Roosevelt agree to a number of compromises with Stalin that allowed the Soviets to exercise hegemony over Poland and other Eastern European countries. The Soviet Union would declare war on Japan within six months. **1945:** On July 28, **the UN Charter is approved** by the U.S. Senate by a vote of 89 to 2. The United Nations officially comes into existence on October 24, after 29 nations ratify the Charter. **1945: Roosevelt dies** from a massive stroke. Vice President Truman, who concedes he knows little about foreign policy, becomes president. **1945:** President **Truman directs U.S. forces to drop two atomic bombs** on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Over 145,000 civilians die from the immediate blasts, and hundreds of thousands more die from the bombs’ after-effects. Truman later declares that he ordered the atomic bomb attacks to prevent the half-million American deaths it was estimated it would take in an invasion of Japan’s home islands. **1945-1946: The Department of State conducts loyalty investigations** of its employees, resulting in many dismissals, often on no more than rumors and innuendo of Communist leanings. **1947: The National Security Act** mandates a major reorganization of the U.S. foreign policy and military establishments. The act creates the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Department of Defense. **1947:** George F. Kennan, a career Foreign Service Officer, first articulates the **U.S. policy of “containment,”** in an anonymous article in the journal, *Foreign Affairs* (since known simply as the “X Article”). Containment is the strategy that will be used to fight the Cold War against the Soviet Union from 1947-1989. **1947:** In a June speech, Secretary of State George C. Marshall issues a call for a comprehensive program to rebuild Europe. This program, later called **the Marshall Plan,** eventually provides over \$12 billion for the rebuilding of Western Europe. The Marshall Plan also ushers in the use of a longer-term set of foreign aid programs, which become an integral part of U.S. foreign policy. **1948: The Soviet Union blockades Berlin** to protest Western efforts to integrate their zones of influence in Western Germany. The United States and its allies respond with a massive airlift of supplies to Berlin that generates overwhelming popular support. By the time the Soviets lift the blockade in 1949, the Allies had established both the **Federal Republic of Germany** and the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization.** **1949:** Prevailing in a prolonged civil war, the Communists establish **the People’s Republic of China** on the mainland. Chiang Kai-shek, America’s anti-Communist ally, retreats to the island of **Taiwan.**

1950: North Korea attacks South Korea, almost conquering the entire peninsula. The U.S. leads a United Nations-authorized force to push the North’s army back above the 38th parallel and beyond. The People’s Republic of **China enters the war** in late 1950. **1953: The two sides in the Korean conflict reach an uneasy truce** that remains tense for the next 40 years. The U.S. and South Korea sign a mutual security treaty of defense against the North. **1961:** Under Soviet domination, **the East German government seals the border** between East and West Berlin by erecting a wall. **1961:** The Kennedy administration authorizes a clandestine invasion of Cuba by a brigade of Cuban exiles, at the **Bay of Pigs.** The operation collapses and Kennedy fails to support the exiles. Kennedy takes public responsibility for the fiasco, but remains determined to oppose the Castro regime. **1961:** U.S. intelligence gains evidence that the Soviets recently introduced medium-range **nuclear missiles into Cuba.** Kennedy issued a public warning against the introduction of offensive weapons into Cuba. After 13 tense days that caused the Soviets and Americans to confront the possibility of nuclear war, the Soviets agree to remove the missiles from Cuba. The U.S. secretly agrees to remove its Jupiter missiles from Turkey. **1961: The Alliance for Progress is created** to counter Soviet efforts to increase its influence in the Western Hemisphere. In essence, the program is a Marshall Plan for Latin America. The United States pledges \$20 billion in assistance and calls upon

A Timeline of Key Events in the History of U.S. Foreign Policy, cont'd.

Latin American governments to provide an additional \$80 billion in investment funds. It is the biggest U.S. aid program toward the developing world to date. The Alliance ultimately falls short of its goals amid charges that most of the funds never reached the poor. This contributes to a deterioration of relations between the U.S. and Latin America. **1961: The U.S. Peace Corps is started.** It sends talented young people to other countries to work on social and economic programs. Since then, more than 165,000 men and women have served in 135 countries through the Peace Corps. **1963:** In November, President **Kennedy is assassinated.** By this time, he had dispatched more than **16,000 U.S. troops to South Vietnam.** **1964:** Congress passes the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**, which gives President Johnson the authorization to take “all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States in Vietnam and to prevent further aggression.”

1970: President **Nixon sends U.S. and South Vietnamese troops into Cambodia** to destroy communist camps. His actions trigger major protests as students at 450 colleges and universities go on strike. In May, Ohio National Guard troops fire on anti-war protesters at **Kent State**, killing four students. Thousands of construction workers in New York parade in support of Nixon’s policies, while others, including leaders of Wall Street, fly to New York to warn Nixon that a wider war threatens the stability of the stock market. **1972: Nixon travels to China** and meets with Mao Tse-tung, becoming the first U.S. president to step on Chinese soil. **1972:** Nixon travels to the Soviet Union to meet with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. The summit produces several **agreements involving nuclear arms reduction and control.** **1973:** Through secret efforts involving the CIA, **the U.S. helps overthrow** the elected government of Salvador **Allende in Chile.** **1973: OPEC nations enforce an oil embargo** to force higher prices for crude oil. The U.S. is surprised and badly shaken by the realization that it is vulnerable to the policies of small oil-producing countries of the Middle East. **1973: The U.S. and the North and South Vietnamese sign a peace agreement in Paris.** Ultimately, only America honors the cease-fire. A little over two years later, **30 North Vietnamese divisions conquer the South.** **1977-1978:** President **Carter negotiates the Panama Canal Treaty**, which is meant to rectify a long-term, contentious issue in United States-Latin American relations, and the Senate ratifies. **1979:** Prime Minister Begin of Israel, President Sadat of Egypt, and President Carter sign the **Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty**, which formalizes arrangements agreed to the previous year at Camp David, Maryland. The Camp David Accords and the subsequent treaty don’t include a comprehensive peace framework among Israel, its other Arab neighbors, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. **1979: Followers of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran take over the American Embassy in Tehran and kidnap 53 Americans.** Carter spends his last year in office trying to manage the crisis, including launching a botched rescue mission and negotiating for their release. **The hostages are finally released** on the day Ronald Reagan is inaugurated President. **1979: Soviet troops invade Afghanistan** and soon find themselves in a costly war they cannot win.

1980: In his State of the Union speech, President **Carter articulates the Carter Doctrine**, which states that any attempt by outside forces to control the Persian Gulf would be repelled by any means necessary, including force. **1981: President Reagan takes office, articulates the Reagan Doctrine**, his policy of supporting anti-Communist insurgents wherever they might be. He states, “we must stand by all our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth.” This is a break with the Truman Doctrine’s policy of containment. Over the eight years of his presidency, Reagan will commit U.S. troops or resources to support insurgent anti-Communist movements in Latin America, including conservative right-wing groups in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and in Afghanistan. **1983:** President Reagan announces the **Strategic Defense Initiative** to build a ballistic missile defense, also known as “Star Wars.” **1985:** The Reagan Administration secretly sends anti-tank missiles to Khomeini’s regime in Iran in an effort to win release of American hostages held in Lebanon. The funds from missile sales were then secretly diverted to the Contras in Nicaragua, despite Congress’s ban on sending of lethal aid to that group. Later termed the **“Iran-Contra affair,”** this episode highlights the dangers of making and conducting foreign policy solely within the White House, outside of the normal constitutional checks of power. **1987:** At their third summit, held in Washington, President Reagan and Soviet Leader Gorbachev sign an **agreement that for the first time reduces the number of nuclear weapons** and eliminates a whole class of nuclear arms. **1985:** In his State of the Union address, President Ronald Reagan calls upon Congress and the American people to stand up to the Soviet Union, which he characterizes as the **“Evil Empire.”** **1989: The Berlin Wall is brought down**, capping the revolutionary changes sweeping East Central Europe in 1989. By fall, **Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland have overthrown their Communist rulers.** **1989:** President Bush sends **U.S. troops to overthrow Panamanian dictator General Manuel Noriega.**

A Timeline of Key Events in the History of U.S. Foreign Policy, cont'd.

1990: Iraq seizes Kuwait in a quick invasion. President Bush vows to defend Saudi Arabia and liberate Kuwait. **1991: Bush gains congressional authorization to use force to remove Iraq's forces from Kuwait.** He assembles an extensive alliance of nations to support the military effort. After an extensive bombing campaign of several weeks, the ground campaign is concluded in 100 hours. Hussein is left in power. **1991:** Bush contends that with the end of the Cold War, a **"new world order"** is emerging, although the term remains largely undefined. **1991: Boris Yeltsin** becomes the Russian Republic's first elected president in its history. On December 25, he decrees that the **Soviet Union ceased to exist.** **1992: Bush and Yeltsin sign the Start II** treaty that cut their countries' nuclear weapons by two-thirds. **1992:** President Bush, with President-elect Clinton's support, sends 21,000 troops to **Somalia** to provide security for UN relief efforts. Later, a new mandate to disarm the Somali military factions passed by the UN goes beyond simply providing humanitarian relief, calling for the UN to facilitate "nation building" to get Somalia back on its feet. Later, during President Clinton's term in office, 18 U.S. soldiers are killed and 84 are wounded in a 17-hour firefight. Clinton moves quickly to remove all U.S. forces from the country. **1993: Bill Clinton is inaugurated.** Clinton states in his inaugural speech that "there is no longer division between what is foreign and what is domestic." **1993:** Prime Minister Yitzhak **Rabin** of Israel and Yasir **Arafat**, chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) **negotiate a treaty** in which Israel will pull its troops out of Gaza and the city of Jericho, and later from other areas of the West Bank, and the PLO will renounce its pledge to destroy Israel. **1994:** Former President Carter, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell and Georgia Senator Sam Nunn fly to **Haiti** at President Clinton's request. They negotiate terms of departure for Haiti's *de facto* leaders and successfully **avert a U.S.-led multinational invasion.** **1995: NATO deploys nearly 60,000 troops** in a multinational force to implement military provisions of the peace settlement. President Clinton pledges to contribute 8,500 U.S. troops to the Stabilization Force. **1998:** President Clinton works with Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland to negotiate the **Good Friday Peace Accords.**

2000s

2001: George W. Bush is inaugurated. He vows to resist "nation building" and other inappropriate uses of U.S. forces. **2001:** On **September 11**, terrorist attacks destroy the World Trade Center in New York, killing over 2,000 people, and kill 187 people at the Pentagon in Washington. President Bush declares a **"war on terrorism"** that he says will last years. Bush equates "those who harbor terrorists" with terrorists themselves. **2002:** The U.S. Congress passes a resolution authorizing President Bush to use force against Iraq. **2003:** After months of UN weapon inspections and unsuccessful diplomacy, **President Bush orders American forces to invade Iraq.** British forces join the effort, and other countries, including Australia, commit small numbers of troops. Bush declares that the purpose of war is to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein, destroy any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and to open the way for democratization in Iraq and the Middle East. Most Arab states condemn the invasion as an act of U.S. imperialism.

Who Should Be in Charge of Foreign Policy?

The making of foreign policy in the United States has always involved the weighing of appropriate influence between the president and Congress. Although the president has historically been accorded the responsibility of representing the interests of our nation to other countries, Congress has nevertheless played an important role in foreign policy decisions. What are the appropriate roles for the president and Congress? Where should the locus of power reside? Does globalization and its concurrent shifts across national borders of capital and enterprises suggest that Congress should play a larger role?

