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Are there broad principles underlying the foreign policy preferences of the American people? If so, are they shaped by ideology?

This chapter explores how American liberals and conservatives differ on internationalism, realism/idealism, and nationalism. First, “internationalism” is often used synonymously with the three distinct concepts of (1) international activism/engagement, (2) multilateralism, and (3) diplomacy, and is thus juxtaposed against (1) isolationism, (2) unilateralism, and (3) the use of military force. We unpack these different “internationalisms,” exploring the influence of both broad liberal-conservative ideology and our specific cultural, social, economic, and political dimensions of ideology on them. Second, American foreign policy idealisms, often juxtaposed against realism, come in humanitarian, religious, and political forms. Ideology, it turns out, has the largest influence on humanitarianism; liberals favor humanitarian interventions and foreign aid more than conservatives, who tend to oppose both. Third, nationalism moves beyond the love of country that is patriotism to a belief in American superiority over other countries. Conservatives, our data reveals, are both more patriotic and more nationalistic than liberals. The fourth and final section of this chapter explores the interrelationships among these many foreign policy orientations, identifying distinct Democratic and Republican foreign policy profiles.

THE MANY ENEMIES OF INTERNATIONALISM:
ISOLATIONISM, UNILATERALISM, AND MILITARISM

“The point is a simple one: when our government meddles around the world, it can stir up hornet’s nests and thereby jeopardize the safety of the American people. That’s just common sense.”

—Congressman Ron Paul (Republican–Texas), 2008
“I know that now some say that times are so tough here at home that we can no longer afford to worry about what happens abroad. That maybe America needs to mind its own business. Well, whether we like it or not, there is virtually no aspect of our daily lives that is not directly impacted by what happens in the world around us. We can choose to ignore global problems, but global problems will not ignore us.”

—Senator Marco Rubio (Republican–Florida), 2011

Internationalism wears many hats. It can refer to international engagement/activism (opposed to isolationism), to multilateralism (opposed to unilaterlism), or to diplomacy (opposed to militarism/force). It thus addresses a series of distinct questions. First, should the United States be actively involved in world affairs? Unlike Europe, America’s relative isolation (thanks to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans) has given it the luxury of asking a normative question about the desirability of active involvement in international affairs. Second, if America chooses to engage the world, how should it do so? Can it trust other countries enough to work multilaterally, whether through alliances, treaties, or international organizations? Or is it better to act alone? Third and finally, whether unilaterally or multilaterally, what is the best means to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals—diplomacy or the application of military force?

Our 2011 survey included six items tapping these three “internationalisms.” International engagement/activism versus isolationism was captured by averaging together respondents’ agreement with two items:

- Our government should avoid international dealings.
- America should be actively involved in global affairs. (reverse coded)

Multilateralism combined ratings of the importance of two items:

- Strengthening international organizations.
- Supporting the United Nations.

Finally, militarism/force combined ratings of the importance of two items:

- Projecting our military power worldwide.
- Sustaining our military superiority.

Item sequence was randomized, and all ratings were on seven-point scales. Although short, each scale was internally reliable. A series of multiple regressions controlling for the standard demographics revealed that in each case liberals were more internationalist than conservatives. The smallest effect was on isolationism/activism, with ideology accounting for 3 percent ($\beta = .18$) of the variance in attitudes towards international engagement. The influence of ideology on militarism and multilateralism was much larger. Ideology accounted for a substantial 13 percent ($\beta = .38$) of unique
variance in support for militarism, confirming popular generalizations about liberal doves and conservative hawks. But ideology accounted for a remarkable 29 percent ($\beta = -.56$) of the variance in support for multilateralism. As we will see in Chapter 10, liberals support multilateral institutions like the United Nations, while conservatives do not trust them. These consistent and substantial ideological differences on internationalism demand explanation.

*International engagement vs. isolationism.* Writing during the George W. Bush administration, international relations theorist Michael Desch suggested that “Liberalism vacillates between isolationism when it cannot change the world and messianism when it can.” Such skepticism certainly appeared warranted during the Iraq War and the neoconservative ascendance.

The broader sweep of American diplomatic history, however, suggests that American ambivalence about the world leads the United States to pursue an activist foreign policy not when it is able to, but when it must. Prior to the twentieth century, Americans largely avoided international adventures, relying upon England to keep sea lanes open for American trade. In the twentieth century, with England’s decline, Americans were ambivalent about the greater international role that many felt was forced upon them. As noted in the Introduction (see Figure 0.6), many Americans resisted entry into World War I, clinging to isolationism. Once the U.S. had joined the Great War, however, most Americans embraced international engagement. “No longer can any man live to himself alone, nor any nation,” John D. Rockefeller declared in a wartime speech given in Denver. “The world has become a unit.”

After World War I, however, the U.S. Senate rejected President Woodrow Wilson’s League of Nations, and America retreated into a comfortable isolationism. Republican senator Robert Taft argued that U.S. intervention in Continental troubles would be “more likely to destroy American democracy than to destroy German dictatorship.” Similarly, Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg supported the isolationist Neutrality Acts of the 1930s.

Many believe that American isolationism ended for good with Pearl Harbor. “There can be no peace for any part of the world,” Vandenberg declared, “unless the foundations of peace are made secure throughout all parts of the world.” At the onset of the Cold War, Vandenberg, as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, worked across party lines with the Democratic Truman administration to construct a bipartisan American foreign policy. Indeed, it was Vandenberg who famously declared that “politics stops at the water’s edge.”

Isolationist sentiments nonetheless persisted after the war. As early as the Korean War, Senator Taft warned in his 1951 *A Foreign Policy for Americans* that the new policy of containing communism would mean entanglement in global
affairs.\(^8\) And as seen in the epigraph, Republican congressman Ron Paul has continued to preach anti-interventionism to this day.

By contrast, Republican senator Marco Rubio, also quoted above, argues that with the September 11 terrorist attacks of 2001, isolationism is no longer an option. Rubio thus agrees with Democrat Barack Obama, who argued in 2006 that “We cannot afford to be a country of isolationists right now. 9-11 showed us that, try as we might to ignore the rest of the world, our enemies will no longer ignore us.”\(^9\) Pearl Harbor and 9/11 were arguably external shocks that helped galvanize bipartisan—but far from unanimous or permanent—support for international engagement.

Despite such persistent elite contention, public opinion scholars have largely argued that there has been a postwar Main Street consensus in favor of international engagement. In *Misreading the Public*, Steven Kull and I. M. Destler lament that elites have reduced America’s international engagement out of a mistaken belief in “public neoisolationism.”\(^10\) The American public itself, the authoritative *Public Opinion Quarterly* tells us, does not even realize just how committed to international engagement it really is.\(^11\)

But the poor wording of poll questions may have inflated the impression of popular support for international engagement. For instance, polls have repeatedly forced respondents to choose between (1) the U.S. doing “its fair share” and (2) “withdrawing” from global affairs. Because all Americans are motivated to see the United States in a positive light—“We’re not freeloaders!”—the question’s wording likely introduced a systematic measurement bias, inflating the percentages of respondents choosing the normatively preferable “fair share” option. Yet scholars have repeatedly pointed to responses to this question to claim popular support for international engagement.\(^12\)

In our spring 2011 survey, the mean score for all Americans on our two counterbalanced isolationism items was 3.42 on a 1 to 7 scale, where 4 is the scale midpoint, suggesting only slight overall support for international engagement. Liberals (\(M = 2.87\)) supported international engagement moderately more than conservatives did (\(M = 3.68\)), however.\(^13\) What best accounts for this ideological difference?

A pair of multiple mediation models provides some answers. In one model, of the five moral foundations, only compassion/care was a statistically significant mediator of the relationship between ideology and isolationism.\(^14\) Because they value compassion more, liberals appear to be more willing to approach a world seen as needing American help.\(^15\)

In a second model, of the four dimensions of American ideology that we measured, social and political ideologies were statistically significant mediators of the relationship between ideology and isolationism, reducing the direct
effect tenfold. First, conservatives prefer greater isolationism than liberals do, in part because of their greater social dominance orientation. This is consistent with our finding at the outset of Chapter 2 that social dominance is associated with greater negativity towards free trade among nations. In both cases, the desire that “inferior groups stay in their place” is associated with a desire to avoid international contacts (recall Figure 2.3).

Second, conservatives are more isolationist than liberals, in part because of their greater average support for libertarianism. This is consistent with the noninterventionism promoted by libertarian elites like Ron and Rand Paul. It is certainly possible that the Pauls’ German heritage has contributed to their isolationism. A 1941 wartime survey revealed that ethnicity shaped American attitudes towards the war: those of Allied parents (e.g., English descent) were much more likely to support intervention in the European war than those of Axis parents (e.g., German or Italian descent). But it seems more likely that the Pauls’ anti-interventionism today is a natural extension of their libertarian philosophy. As discussed in Chapter 2, libertarians believe that sovereign individuals should be free to do whatever they please—as long as they do not harm others. Non-interventionism abroad is a logical international extension of the nonaggression principle central to libertarian thought. Like Howard Roark in Ayn Rand’s The Fountainhead, libertarians shun contact with society—domestically and internationally.

Multilateralism vs. unilateralism. When Americans do choose to engage the world, how should they do so? Should they follow the libertarian “Lone Ranger” ideal and go it alone? Or should they work together with other nations to better achieve American foreign policy goals?

Americans have long debated the relative merits of unilateralism and multilateralism. Perhaps the best-known debate was over the League of Nations. As we will discuss in Chapter 10, President Woodrow Wilson failed to win Republican backing for the league in the U.S. Senate, although he himself had been its champion during the Treaty of Versailles negotiations that followed World War I. Figure 4.1, from London’s Punch Magazine, displays a British view of American ambivalence about multilateralism. Entitled “The Gap in the Bridge,” it depicts a disdainful Uncle Sam resting against a keystone labeled “USA.” He sits next to an unfinished “League of Nations Bridge” that looks ready to collapse without its keystone. A sign notes that the bridge “was designed by the President of the U.S.A.,” suggesting that Americans are irresponsible for starting the multilateral project but failing to complete it.

Do Americans support multilateralism today? We saw in the Introduction (see Figure 0.3) that on average Americans feel cool to lukewarm towards the
World Bank (36°), the United Nations (45°), and the European Union (46°). Average feelings towards these three international organizations ($\alpha = .80$) account for 49 percent of the variance ($\beta = .70$) in support for multilateralism, which is lukewarm ($M = 4.33$) for the American population as a whole. Our gut feelings, the affect heuristic suggests, often drive our specific policy preferences.

Tepid overall American feelings towards the United Nations, which are replicated in Pew survey data, led pollster Andrew Kohut to conclude in 2006 that Americans suffer from “two-mindedness” when it comes to multilateralism. Americans, he lamented, maintain “quixotic and contradictory opinions” towards the United Nations.¹⁸

Americans are not schizophrenic about multilateralism. Instead, liberal and conservative Americans maintain consistently different views of international organizations. As we saw in the Introduction (see Figure 0.4), on average liberals (66°) felt an astounding 49° warmer towards the United Nations than conservatives (17°) did in 2011. By failing to acknowledge that ideology powerfully and consistently divides Americans in their views of multilateral institutions, Kohut misrepresents the American public as fickle and erratic.

As we will explore in greater detail in Chapter 10, liberal and conservative differences over multilateralism are natural extensions of their domestic ideologies. For instance, unilateralism flows from conservative individualism. “Modern-day conservatives laud the possibilities of individual action by persons and,
internationally, by nations acting alone,” political scientist Bruce Russett noted over twenty years ago. By contrast, “political liberals decry unfettered individualism as destroying natural bonds of community and mutual aid.”19 This contributes to a liberal embrace of multilateralism. As we will see in Chapter 10, the different dimensions of American ideology powerfully synergize when it comes to the United Nations and other international organizations, contributing to a massive overall difference between liberal and conservative attitudes towards multilateralism.

**Diplomacy vs. military force.** Whether unilaterally or multilaterally, if America is to act in the world, how should it do so? Can nations be persuaded through patient diplomacy to do America’s bidding? Or is military force the best means to its foreign policy ends?

We have already seen that liberals are much more likely than conservatives to oppose spanking as a tool of child rearing. Liberals are also more likely to question both the efficacy and desirability of the use of force in international affairs. When President Barack Obama claimed in 2006 that Americans “instinctively understand that we cannot simply impose our will militarily on the entire globe,” he was really speaking for liberal Americans, not all Americans.20 In the liberal view, force is not just limited in its utility; it can also be questionable ethically. As we saw in the Bill Mauldin and Herblock cartoons in the previous chapter (see Figures 3.9 and 3.10), liberals do not generally glorify war. As Mauldin, who experienced the horrors of warfare firsthand in Europe, wrote in 1945:

Some say the American soldier is the same clean-cut young man who left his home; others say morale is sky-high at the front because everybody’s face is shining for the great Cause. They are wrong. The combat man isn’t quite the same clean-cut lad because you don’t fight a Kraut by Marquis of Queensberry rules. You shoot him in the back. . . . He does the same to you.21

Liberals tend to question both the efficacy and desirability of the use of force. They therefore tend to champion persuasion in the home and diplomacy abroad.

Conservatives, by contrast, are much more likely to embrace spanking as both an efficacious and an appropriate way to raise children. The same attitudes carry over to international affairs. The first sentence of the foreign policy section of the “2012 Republican Platform” begins boldly, “We are the party of peace through strength.” It then advocates the maintenance of American “military superiority” to “deter aggression or defeat those who threaten our national security interests.”22

The conservative view that force is both efficacious and normatively justified
has a very long history. English Puritan Alexander Leighton declared in 1624 that “God is an excellent Man of War,” and Puritans carried that view with them across the Atlantic. Puritans should “take, kill, burn, sink, destroy all sin and Corruption which are professed enemies to Christ Jesus,” declared the Reverend Joshua Moodey in a 1674 sermon on the Indian Wars. They should not “pity or spare” the natives. “Following the Crusader’s example, Puritan divines resurrected the idea of holy war against the unfaithful,” writes historian Andrew Preston. “A nation could—indeed should—initiate war in pursuit of its mission.”

Over three centuries later, the first George W. Bush administration made military force the centerpiece of its foreign policy. “America has, and intends to keep, military strength beyond challenge,” Bush stated in his commencement address at West Point in June 2002. U.S. military capabilities would deter rival states. “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States,” states the September 2002 National Security Strategy, written at Condoleezza Rice’s National Security Council. But force could also be used effectively against terrorists through the new doctrine of preemption. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld put it, “The best and in some cases the only defense is a good offense.”

Of course, not all American Christians embrace the belligerent spirit of the Old Testament. The progressive Christianity of the New Testament has long been a mainstay of American pacifism. In the Introduction we saw that Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan was an anti-imperialist, opposing the U.S. colonization of the Philippines following the Spanish-American War of 1898. The Bible’s command to “preach the gospel to every creature,” Bryan famously declared, “has no Gatling-gun attachment.”

Thomas Nast captured the appeal of both diplomacy and military might in a series of engravings published in Harper’s Weekly in the winter of 1874–75. The first, entitled “International Law—The Better Way,” depicts a longboat named “The Arbitrator” flying a “Truce” flag landing in Geneva (Figure 4.2). Two female emissaries (the first as Columbia?) disembark, cordially received by various European dignitaries (including John Bull?) under a banner declaring, “Welcome to Peace Through Arbitration.” Harper’s includes a quotation from President Ulysses S. Grant: “The Nations are fast becoming so civilized as to feel that there is a better way to settle their difficulties than by fighting.” War weary following the Civil War, Grant and his secretary of state, Hamilton Fish, relied on vigorous diplomacy to avoid wars with both Britain and Spain. They settled the Alabama Claims with Britain, which expressed its regrets and agreed to pay the U.S. government $15.5 million for damages done by warships built in Britain and sold to the Confederacy. With the 1871 signing of the Treaty of
Washington, the United States and Britain became close allies. Grant and Fish also negotiated a peaceful solution to the *Virginius* Affair, postponing a conflict with Spain over Cuba for a quarter century.

Military strength also has its appeal. A set of Nast engravings from February 1875 depict Columbia in a pair of contrasting poses (Figure 4.3). The print on the left, entitled “Peace Insecure—Afraid for Her Life,” depicts a crouched Columbia with an anxious look in her eyes as she peers out from behind mock fortifications. A log pretends to be a cannon, and a scarecrow is propped up like a soldier. A U.S. flag hangs upside down, a sign of distress. American coastal defenses are clearly vulnerable. Nast may have been reacting to the military demobilization following the Civil War. Or he may have been fretting about how the many corruption scandals of the Grant administration might hollow out the U.S. Treasury and military.

By contrast, “Peace Secure—Safe and Protected,” on the right of Figure 4.3, depicts Columbia standing resolutely beside a massive cannon, looking confidently out to sea. The U.S. flag flies briskly and upright over an armed sentry. Including an olive branch in her hand and doves flying near the fort’s ramparts,
Nast’s drawing could be a visual representation of the declaration of “peace through strength” in the “2012 Republican Platform.”

Given the large influence of ideology ($\beta = .38$) on support for “Projecting military power” and “Sustaining military superiority,” it is not surprising that all four of the dimensions of American ideology contribute to this difference. The largest, however, were cultural traditionalism and social dominance, both of which are associated with aggression. And of the five moral foundations, authority/discipline was by far the strongest mediator of the relationship. Conservatives, in other words, favor military power more than liberals do, in part because of the greater value they place on authority and their greater willingness to assert group dominance.

**THE MANY ENEMIES OF REALISM:**

**HUMANITARIAN, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS IDEALISMS**

“Our foreign policy should promote traditional American ideals: democracy and human rights. . . Human aspirations are universal—for dignity, for freedom, for the opportunity to improve the lives of our families.”

—Barack Obama, July 12, 2004
“I believe the desire for freedom is universal. History shows that, when given the chance, people of every race and religion take extraordinary risks for liberty.”
—George W. Bush, 2010

Unilateralism versus multilateralism and diplomacy versus military force address questions of means: How should the United States conduct its foreign policy? Realism versus idealism, by contrast, addresses the issue of ends: What foreign policy goals should the United States pursue? Should America seek to combat global hunger and disease? Should it promote democracy, human rights, and religious freedoms around the world? Or should its goals be limited to a national interest more narrowly defined in terms of U.S. economic and military security?

Our 2011 survey measured three distinct types of foreign policy idealisms—humanitarian, political, and religious—with three respective pairs of items. Participants were asked to rate the importance of the following on a seven-point scale:

- Fighting diseases like AIDS and malaria in poor countries.
- Combating hunger in developing countries.
- Promoting and defending human rights in other countries.
- Helping to bring democracy to other nations.
- Defending religious freedom worldwide.
- Ending religious persecution around the world.

Item sequence was randomized, and each pair was averaged together to create robust scales measuring humanitarian, political, and religious idealisms. The average score on each scale was substantially above the scale midpoint of 4, suggesting overall support for idealism in American foreign policy.

There were significant differences between liberals and conservatives on two of the three idealisms. Ideology had a very large impact on humanitarian idealism and a small effect on political ideology, with liberals higher on both. It had no influence, however, on religious idealism. We shall see that liberals and conservatives share a similar level of support for religious freedoms abroad—but for distinct reasons.

**Humanitarian idealism.** What best explains the very large influence of ideology on support for humanitarian idealism? Why would fighting disease and hunger around the world be a partisan issue? Anticipating this question, our survey included two items measuring endorsement of the “Protestant ethic” of self-help:

- People are responsible for their own situation in life.
- People should not count on others to solve their problems.
Conservatives ($m = 5.79$) scored much higher than liberals ($m = 4.50$) on the resulting two-item “Protestant ethic” scale. This is consistent with the U.S. data from the 2006 World Values Survey (WVS), implemented online by Knowledge Networks, in which Republicans ($m = 5.83$) scored much higher than Democrats ($m = 3.58$) on a ten-point scale from “The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for” to “People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves.”

A pair of multiple mediation models revealed that the ideological dimensions of social dominance and economic inequality, the Protestant ethic, and the moral value of compassion/care all mediated the impact of ideology on support for humanitarian idealism. Figure 4.4 combines these variables into a single path model that fit the data best. It reveals that opposing views of compassion and the Protestant ethic play a major role in dividing liberal and conservative attitudes towards humanitarian idealism. Liberal compassion for the suffering of others ($\beta = -0.22$) both directly promotes support for humanitarian idealism ($\beta = 0.31$) and indirectly contributes to it via opposition to ideologies of social dominance ($\beta = -0.20$) and economic inequality ($\beta = -0.12$). By contrast, conservatives tend to be less concerned about the suffering of (foreign?) others ($\beta = -0.22$) and much more concerned about upholding the Protestant ethic of self-help ($\beta = 0.43$). And belief in the Protestant ethic contributes to support for
the maintenance of social ($\beta = .15$) and economic ($\beta = .18$) hierarchies, both at home and abroad.

Bill Mauldin captured the compassionate liberal view of humanitarian idealism in a haunting 1981 cartoon depicting starving children, likely from the famine then occurring in Uganda (Figure 4.5). He provocatively entitled it “Right to Life,” a jab at the Reagan administration’s cutoff of U.S. funding to all humanitarian NGOs that provide family planning—the “Global Gag Rule.” “A cartoonist . . . [is a] lowly gadfly: circle and stab, circle and stab. Roughly put, our credo should be, If it’s big, hit it,” Mauldin had written twenty years earlier. “Having used the cartoon as a device to get the reader’s attention on a subject, it doesn’t really matter whether we needle him, amuse him, or infuriate him . . . if enough people get interested in an issue, the majority will come up with the right answer most of the time.”

By targeting compassion in his 1981 cartoon, however, Mauldin likely appealed more to fellow liberals than to the Christian conservatives who sup-
ported Reagan’s “Global Gag Rule.” Our 2011 survey respondents also rated the importance of the foreign policy goal of “Promoting sexual education, family planning, and contraceptive use worldwide” on a 1 to 7 scale. Not surprisingly, liberals ($m = 5.56$) strongly supported it, while conservatives ($m = 2.97$) opposed it, a massive difference statistically.\(^3^4\) A mediation analysis revealed that this single item accounted for 90 percent of the relationship between ideology and humanitarian idealism.\(^3^5\) In other words, vastly different views about sexual education, family planning, and contraceptive use accounted for most of the huge difference between liberals and conservatives on humanitarian idealism. The global sick and starving, in short, are hostage to the domestic American debate over whether sex for purposes other than procreation is sin.

Libertarians, by contrast, have long appealed to the Protestant ethic to oppose humanitarian aid. In his 1960 *The Conscience of a Conservative*, Barry Goldwater asserts that “Foreign aid has created a vast reservoir of anti-Americanism among peoples who . . . resent dependence.”\(^3^6\) As we shall see in the Chapter 6 discussion of aid to Haiti, Ron Paul objects to foreign aid on the grounds that income redistribution is immoral. For libertarians like Goldwater and Paul, the poor have the right to help themselves.

**Political idealism.** As revealed in the epigraphs, Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama share a common belief that promoting freedom and democracy are legitimate U.S. foreign policy interests. That belief likely contributed to their decisions to become militarily involved in Iraq and Libya, respectively.

Indeed, political idealism has long been used to justify American military interventions abroad. F. Victor Gillam’s lithograph “A Plea for Cuba,” published in an 1895 *Judge*, is an early example of political idealism (Figure 4.6). Columbia sleeps in an armchair. On an island just offshore a man labeled “Spain” in Spanish dress attacks a defenseless black woman labeled “Cuba” with the butt of a rifle. She is prone on the ground but holds up a banner reading, “Liberty or Death.” Columbia holds a document in her hand that she was apparently reading before dozing off. “The Spanish rule in Cuba is a history of Tyranny and Brutality.” The ghosts of French general Lafayette and German general von Steuben, who both served in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War, float behind Columbia. “What! Asleep with a cry for aid at your door! What would have been your fate if we had acted similarly in your hour of tribulation?” A *History of the Revolution* lies on the floor, opened to pages reading, “American revolutionists were recognized and aided by France and Germany. French sympathy, Lafayette’s aid, and the aid of Germans were powerful factors in our struggle for Independence.” Gillam even adds a bust
of President Washington to further appeal to Columbia’s conscience: America must help liberate Cuba!

A similar case would be made for U.S. intervention in World War I just twenty years later. “The world must be made safe for democracy,” President Woodrow Wilson declared to a joint session of Congress in 1917. “Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty.”

As noted above, liberals scored slightly higher than conservatives on support for political idealism. Mediation analysis revealed that this difference was accounted for by the greater value that liberals place on compassion. Liberals are slightly more willing to promote human rights and democracy abroad because they care more about the suffering of foreigners. American conservatives, by contrast, appear more conflicted about political idealism. Cultural traditionalism has a small but statistically significant positive effect ($\beta = .11, p = .007$) on support for political idealism, while political ideology (libertarianism) has a small negative influence ($\beta = -.10, p = .002$); in effect, they cancel each other out.

Why would cultural conservatism be associated with political idealism? “I be-
lieve that God wants everyone to be free,” President George W. Bush stated in a 2004 presidential debate with John Kerry. “And that’s been part of my foreign policy. . . Freedom . . . is a gift from the Almighty.” Religious and political idealisms share about twice as much variation among conservatives (37%) as they do among liberals (19%). This suggests that the defense of religious liberty is a bigger reason for democracy promotion among conservatives than among liberals.39

Why would libertarianism be associated with less support for political idealism? One might think that defenders of individual liberty at home would support democracy promotion abroad. Instead, a mediation analysis revealed that their greater isolationism, discussed above, accounted for well over two-thirds of libertarian opposition to political idealism.40

Religious idealism. Religion has long played a major role in American foreign policy. The anti-imperialism of William Jennings Bryan, discussed in the Introduction, was motivated by his Christian beliefs. But President William McKinley defended the Philippine-American War on religious grounds as well. Believing Filipinos unfit for self-governance, McKinley argued that “there was nothing left for us to do but to . . . educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died.” McKinley was not alone in espousing a Christian imperialism at the turn of the century. “Providence has given the United States the duty of extending Christian civilization,” argued Senator Knute Nelson of Minnesota, an abolitionist and Civil War veteran. “And we propose to execute it.”41

Even during the height of the Cold War in the 1970s, when Realpolitik was ascendant, religious idealism survived and prospered. As we will see in Chapter 8, Senator Scoop Jackson was able to mobilize bipartisan opposition to Kissinger’s détente with the Soviet Union on the basis of popular American unease about Soviet persecution of Jews. That attitude did not change in the 1980s. “Our people feel it keenly when religious freedom is denied to anyone anywhere,” President Ronald Reagan declared in Moscow in 1988. All Russians, he argued, should “be able to practice their religion freely and openly.”42

And religious idealism remains a foreign policy issue today. The section on “Protecting Human Rights” in the “2012 Republican Platform” actually focuses solely on religious liberty. “A Republican administration,” it promises, “will return the advocacy of religious liberty to a central place in our diplomacy.”43

Religious liberty thus appears to be a bigger issue for Republicans. Why then did our survey reveal no association between liberal-conservative ideology and support for religious idealism in our full sample? A series of regression analyses revealed that this statistical non-finding was hiding an interesting pattern. When
controlling for warmth towards Christians, a negative association emerges, so that liberals appear to care more about religious freedom worldwide. But when controlling instead for humanitarian idealism, a positive association emerges, suggesting that conservatives care more about religious persecution.

How should this puzzling series of statistical findings be interpreted? Liberals and conservatives may have understood the same statements differently. When asked to rate the importance of “Defending religious freedom worldwide” and “Ending religious persecution around the world” as American foreign policy goals, the average conservative may think more about protecting fellow Christians from persecution. Thus, controlling for warmth towards fellow Christians pulls such conservative sentiments out of the relationship, allowing a liberal association to appear. When asked to rate the same two statements, the average liberal, lower on biblical literalism and religiosity, is likely less focused on the persecution of Christians in particular. Instead, they likely think about religious persecution more in terms of protecting persecuted peoples around the world. Thus, when controlling for the importance of more liberal humanitarian concerns like “Combating hunger in developing countries” and “Fighting diseases like AIDS,” a conservative association between ideology and religious idealism appears.

In short, both liberals and conservatives care about protecting religious freedom around the world—but for different reasons. “Religious liberty touched a nerve deep in the American worldview and was not bound by partisanship or ideology,” writes historian Andrew Preston. “In the American tradition, religious liberty is perhaps the oldest and most sacrosanct of all human rights.”

Our survey data suggests that Preston is right that liberal and conservative Americans share a desire to promote religious liberties abroad. But their motivations diverge: conservatives appear to be concerned primarily about the persecution of fellow Christians, while liberals view religious liberty through a broader humanitarian lens.

IDEOLOGIES OF AMERICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY:
PATRIOTISM, NATIONALISM, AND NATIONAL NARCISSISM

“People of Berlin, people of the world, this is our moment. This is our time. [I come to you] as a citizen, a proud citizen of the United States and a fellow citizen of the world.”

—Senator Barack Obama (Democrat–Illinois), 2008

“We must strengthen our unique American civilization. . . . Let me be clear: I am not a citizen of the world. . . . I am a citizen of the United States of America.”

—Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (Republican–Georgia), 2009

What does it mean to be an American? And how does being American shape one’s attitudes towards the rest of the world?
Liberals like Barack Obama often identify with both America and humanity as a whole, acknowledging a degree of equality among nations. When asked in 2009 about his views on American exceptionalism, Obama replied, “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.”

Conservatives, by contrast, tend to express how different they are as Americans from the rest of the world. “If everyone is exceptional, no one is,” conservative pundit Charles Krauthammer countered Obama.47 “American Exceptionalism,” notably, is the title of the foreign policy section of the “2012 Republican Platform.” And as the second epigraph reveals, Newt Gingrich prefers to identify solely with America, rejecting Obama’s notion of being a citizen of the world.

These ideological differences are manifest in day-to-day life; they are not just hot air. “We don’t like the World Cup. We don’t like soccer,” exclaimed Glenn Beck on his radio show in 2010. “Probably because the rest of the world likes it so much.” If Beck’s “we” was referring to his fellow conservatives, he was right. Our spring 2011 survey included a question asking respondents how much they agreed with the statement, “I like international soccer and the World Cup.” Even controlling for the standard demographics (including ethnicity: Hispanics are more liberal and like soccer more than non-Hispanics), liberals still scored substantially higher than conservatives on liking soccer.48

To explore liberal and conservative attitudes about being American, and the implications of those attitudes for foreign policy preferences, we measured American identities and national ideologies in three different ways. Following previous scholarship in political psychology, we distinguish between “patriotism” as love of country and “nationalism” as a belief in the superiority of one’s own country over other countries.49 This approach differs from lay usage of “patriotism” and “nationalism,” generally used interchangeably to mean a strong identification with one’s nation. Lay usage does distinguish, however, between patriotism as normatively good, and thus what “we” possess, and nationalism as normatively bad, and thus what “they” practice. We make no such normative distinction. Our survey measured patriotism with two items that cohered extremely well ($\alpha = .92$):

- I love my country.
- I am proud to be American.

Nationalism ($\alpha = .84$) was also measured with two items:

- America is the best country in the world.
- The American system is superior to that of other countries.

Patriotism and nationalism shared a remarkable 52 percent of their variance ($r = .72$) in our sample, suggesting that while conceptually distinct, among Americans they tend to go together.50
Why would patriotism and nationalism as an American tend to cohere? Social psychologists have demonstrated that the love of one’s own social group does not necessitate competition with other groups. One possibility may have to do with the demographics of American society. We are a nation of immigrants. First the colonies and then the United States were settled by wave upon wave of immigrants from different countries. American citizens frequently interacted with “foreign” immigrants of different races and languages, who confronted prejudice and the challenge of assimilation. This may have created a situation where a central way to express one’s love of country was to assert its superiority over foreigners—both inside and outside the body politic.

F. Victor Gillam suggested as much in a brilliant editorial cartoon and farcical song published in an 1888 *Judge* magazine (Figure 4.7). New York City mayor Abraham Hewitt had issued a decree that “No flag will be hoisted on this City Hall but the American flag.” Of English and French descent, Hewitt was well known for his nativist beliefs. Although he was a Democrat, he famously refused...
to review the city’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade honoring the Irish. Gillam draws Hewitt holding and wearing the red, white, and blue Stars and Stripes as a “chorus of naturalized citizens” serenades him. They include labeled English, German, Irish, and French men and an unlabeled Chinese man, easily recognizable from his national attire. The song they sing is Gillam’s play on Gilbert and Sullivan’s “For He Is an Englishman.” Their 1878 comic opera *H.M.S. Pinafore* had become an international sensation in the 1880s. Gillam’s lyrical alterations and engraving suggest that Hewitt’s patriotism depends upon a nationalist ideology of superiority over other nations. “He might have been a Rooshan, / A French-man, Turk or Prooshan, / Or perhaps an Irishman; / But in spite of all Temptations, / To belong to other Nations, / He remains an American!” Part of Gillam’s joke may also be that the previous year, during Queen Victoria’s 1887 Golden Jubilee celebrations in New York, Mayor Hewitt had referred to her as “our Queen.”

Hewitt’s American nationalism is clearly that of the WASP variety. We will explore American attitudes towards “Mother England” further in Chapter 7.

Gillam depicts Mayor Hewitt with a peacock feather in his top hat, insinuating that excessive nationalism can degenerate into vanity. My colleague Huajian Cai and I call this phenomenon “national narcissism,” an inflated view of one’s own nation’s importance and deservedness. It was measured with two items (α = .84):

- If America had a bigger say in the world, the world would be a much better place.
- I wish other countries would more quickly recognize American authority.

Drawing on recent work in personality and social psychology on both individual level narcissism and “collective narcissism,” we argue that national narcissism has two internal dimensions: national grandiosity and national entitlement, which differ in terms of their intra-national and inter-national orientations, respectively. To take the American case, national grandiosity shifts the subject from the individual level, “I am great,” to the collective level, “We Americans are great”; and national entitlement, from “You owe me” to “The world owes us Americans.”

Samuel Ehrhart’s cover illustration for a 1901 *Puck* magazine captures beautifully the grandiosity central to national narcissism (Figure 4.8). Entitled “Columbia’s Easter Bonnet,” it depicts Columbia gazing at herself in a mirror adoringly, a bayonet hanging from her waist. Like Mayor Hewitt in the Gillam illustration, she wears the red, white, and blue of the Stars and Stripes. Columbia is adjusting her hat, which is actually a small battleship labeled “World Power.” Two of its four cannons are labeled “Army” and “Navy,” and it belches smoke labeled “Expansion.” The cartoon is likely a jab at President McKinley’s imperialist foreign policy, from Cuba to Hawaii to the Philippines. “By the turn of the century . . . Americans had succumbed to the temptations of an assertively
nationalist foreign policy,” historian Michael Hunt writes. “Greatness abroad would glorify liberty at home . . . [and] liberty sanctified greatness.” The pursuit of national greatness, Ehrhart suggests, is little more than vanity.

But do patriotism, nationalism, and national narcissism really matter for the foreign policy preferences of the American people? Pew pollster Andrew Kohut claims that “Little hard data support the idea that . . . nationalism plays a significant role in Americans’ actual opinions about . . . specific international issues.”

The survey data suggests otherwise. Patriotism, nationalism, and national narcissism all correlate positively and strongly with our measures of support for the use of military force ($r = .49, .58, .55$, respectively) and overall desires for tougher foreign policies ($r = .21, .26, .27$). Indeed, of the fifteen countries we measured foreign policy preferences towards, patriotism correlated significantly with all except South Korea, Japan, and Germany, nationalism with all except Japan and Germany, and national narcissism with all except England. In other words, these three different measures of Americanness correlated positively with desires for tougher policies towards specific foreign countries the vast ma-
ajority of the time. In general, the correlations were the highest for countries seen as posing the greatest threats to the United States, such as Iran ($r = .34, .38, .28$, respectively) and North Korea ($r = .29, .29, .17$). As we will see in Chapter 8, the one exception was Israel: greater patriotism ($r = -.22$), nationalism ($r = -.30$), and national narcissism ($r = -.21$) as an American were associated with desires for friendlier policies towards Israel.

Do American liberals and conservatives differ in these national ideologies? Yes. Conservatives score moderately, massively, and much higher than liberals on patriotism, nationalism, and national narcissism, respectively. This is consistent with the U.S. data from the 2006 World Values Survey, which revealed Republicans to be moderately more patriotic than Democrats.

Because patriotism and nationalism correlate so highly with each other, controlling for either allows us to examine a more “pure” form of each. For instance, if we add nationalism to the demographic covariates in the first statistical analysis in the paragraph above on whether ideology shapes patriotism, the outcome actually reverses: liberals score slightly higher than conservatives on “pure patriotism.” What is “pure patriotism”? It is a love of or pride in America—after taking out the belief that America is better than or superior to other countries. In other words, while conservatives score higher than liberals on patriotism, liberals score higher than conservatives on a “pure patriotism,” in which the sense of nationalist superiority has been removed.

What are the consequences of these ideological differences in patriotism and nationalism for the foreign policy preferences of the American people? Figure 4.9 displays a mediation model in which only one of the two indirect paths was statistically significant. Although conservatives are both more patriotic ($\beta = .31$) and more nationalistic ($\beta = .47$) than liberals, only their greater nationalism (the bottom path) accounts for the greater conservative than liberal desire for tougher foreign policies. It is the externally oriented nationalist sense of superiority, and not the internally directed love of country, that appears to drive foreign policy preferences.

So what explains the very strong link between ideology and nationalism ($\beta = .47$) at the bottom left of Figure 4.9? Remarkably, all four dimensions of American ideology were statistically significant mediators, together accounting for over 90 percent of the relationship. Different kinds of conservatives across the board are more nationalistic than liberals. Of the five moral values, however, only authority and purity were statistically significant mediators of the relationship between liberal-conservative ideology and nationalism. Not surprisingly, they are the more traditional “binding” values. Presumably, conservatives endorse American superiority over other nations (nationalism) more than liberals do, in part because they value authority over foreigners more and in part
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Because they prefer separation from them to maintain American purity and distinctiveness.

American foreign policy profiles

“Within America, there has long been a tension between those who describe themselves as realists or idealists—a tension that suggests a stark choice between the narrow pursuit of interests or an endless campaign to impose our values around the world. I reject these choices."

—Democratic President Barack Obama, 2009

“I’ve never understood the division between so-called realists and so-called idealists. I don’t know how you get up in the world every day, doing what I do, if you don’t have some sense of idealism, because you have to believe that as hard as it is, you’re going to prevent the dictator from oppressing his people, you’re going to help to stop the war, you’re going to figure out a way to get clean water to thirsty people and cure kids of disease. And at the same time, I don’t know how you go through the day and expect to be successful without being very hardheaded and realistic. So for me, it’s not an either/or.”

—Democratic Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, 2011

In Special Providence, diplomatic historian Walter Russell Mead lays out four distinct American schools or ways of thinking about foreign policy that express distinct “moral and political values as well as socioeconomic and political interests.” Hamiltonians are commercial realists who advocate a strong alliance between the national government and big business to promote free trade and American commercial interests. Wilsonians are crusading moralists who, coming out of the American missionary tradition, oppose colonialism and support
democracy. Jeffersonians, distrustful of large government and a standing army, and jealous of our fragile liberties at home, are democratic isolationists wary of international entanglements. Jacksonian populists value honor and military pride, and are willing to fight for both family and flag. These four schools, Mead argues, are not “blood types” but “ideal types”: most Americans combine elements of each view in the ways that they think about foreign policy.65

Do different groups of Americans possess distinct foreign policy profiles? Cluster analysis, the statistical technique used in Chapter 2 to explore the ideological profiles of Democrats and Republicans, can be used to inductively address this question. We ran seven of our foreign policy orientations— isolationism, multilateralism, military force, humanitarian idealism, political idealism, religious idealism, and nationalism—in a series of two-step cluster analyses on our full U.S. sample and found that a three-cluster solution fit the data best.66 As the bar chart in Figure 4.10 reveals, the largest group, representing about 40 percent of the American population, and labeled “idealistic doves,” is relatively supportive of idealism in American foreign policy but is the lowest of all three groups of Americans on both nationalism and support for the use of military force. The second largest group, representing about a third of the U.S. population, is “idealistic hawks.” They are the strongest supporters of all three types of idealism and are the most nationalistic, the most willing to use military force, and the least isolationist. Finally, the third group, representing about a quarter of the U.S. population, is “unilateralist hawks,” the least idealist, most realist of all three groups. They are also by far the most unilateralist of all three groups, and the most isolationist.

Who are these people? The pie charts in Figure 4.10 display each group’s composition by political party and religious identification. In terms of party identification, a majority (54%) of the idealistic doves are Democrats; only 11 percent are Republicans. By contrast, almost three times as many of the unilateralist hawks are Republicans (45%) as Democrats (16%). Idealist hawks, however, are a bipartisan mix: 36 percent are Democrats while 40 percent are Republicans. Substantial groups of both Democrats and Republicans have long supported the forceful promotion of democracy and religious freedom around the world.

In composition by religion, Evangelical Protestants make up the plurality of both groups of hawks. By contrast, those who self-identify as atheist, agnostic, or having “no religion” are most strongly represented among the idealistic doves. Mainline Protestants and Catholics stand between these two extremes, representing about the same portion of each foreign policy group.

Realist international relations theorists have recently argued that the American public is much more realist and much less idealist than are American political elites. “The overwhelming majority of Americans possess a Hobbesian world view,” claims Tufts’s Daniel Drezner. But this “realist mass public,” he
the Foreign Policy Orientations of Liberals and Conservatives

Laments, is “governed by a liberal internationalist elite.” Colin Dueck concurs, suggesting that “Foreign policy ‘idealism’ is to some extent a special preoccupation of party elites and party activists. . . . The general public is actually more realistic about foreign policy than is commonly believed.”

The data suggests otherwise. Three-quarters of Americans support idealism in American foreign policy, disagreeing only over how forcefully it should be pursued (Figure 4.10, two bar clusters to the left). Only one quarter of Ameri-
cans, the unilateralist hawks, express ambivalence about idealism in American foreign policy in favor of realist caution.

Republican foreign policy profiles. To better understand intraparty debates over U.S. foreign policy, we ran separate two-step cluster analyses for our Republican and Democratic subsamples. A two-cluster solution, displayed in Figure 4.11, fit the Republican subsample best. About a third of the Republicans were "isolationist skeptics," ambivalent about idealisms in American foreign policy, hostile to multilateral institutions like the United Nations, and unwilling to embrace an active role for the United States internationally. The other two-thirds of the Republicans were "cautious idealists," more willing to engage the world and support multilateral institutions, and accepting of idealist goals in U.S. foreign policy. Both groups were equally nationalistic.

This quantitative finding of uniform Republican nationalism is consistent...
with Colin Dueck’s qualitative historical analysis in *Hard Line: The Republican Party and U.S. Foreign Policy Since World War II*. “Whether the GOP pursues foreign policies characterized as isolationist or internationalist,” Dueck concludes, “there is always a strong impulse of American nationalism that never waivers.” That is exactly what Figure 4.11 shows: while isolationist skeptics and cautious idealists differ on idealism versus realism and the various internationalisms, both groups of Republicans agree on American nationalism.

**Democratic foreign policy profiles.** A three-cluster solution fit the Democratic subsample best (Figure 4.12). Close to three-quarters of all Democrats were either “global citizens” or “forceful idealists,” sharing a commitment to international activism, multilateralism, and humanitarian idealism. Forceful idealists, who might also be thought of as “humanitarian hawks,” were somewhat

![Diagram](image_url)
more supportive of political and religious idealism than were global citizens, however, and were much more willing to embrace American nationalism and the use of military force. The remaining quarter of Democrats were “skeptics,” more ambivalent about global engagement, multilateralism, and all three forms of idealism than other Democrats were.

The antiwar activism of George McGovern and Vietnam era liberals has created the impression that all Democrats are doves and all Republicans, hawks. Our 2011 data suggests some truth to the stereotype: on average, Republicans score substantially higher than Democrats on nationalism and support for military force. However, this is another case where group means hide important differences within groups: our cluster analysis reveals that the largest group of Democrats was actually forceful idealists willing to embrace American nationalism and to deploy military force as a tool to achieve idealistic foreign policy goals.

In the 1990s, President William Clinton described America as the “indispensable nation,” arguing that “When our national security interests are threatened, we will act with others when we can, but alone if we must. We will use diplomacy when we can, but force if we must.” His record, of course, was mixed: deploying the U.S. military to prevent further genocide in Bosnia, where his Republican predecessor George H.W. Bush had not, but failing to intervene in Rwanda.

![Image](whitehouse.gov)
Like Clinton, President Barack Obama and his secretary of state Hillary Clinton fit the “forceful idealist/humanitarian hawk” profile. As the epigraphs reveal, both Obama and Hillary Clinton reject the common juxtaposition of realism against idealism in American foreign policy. James Mann argues that Obama sought to blend the realism of Kissinger and Scowcroft with the idealism of Woodrow Wilson. This is consistent with James Kloppenberg’s argument that Obama is a philosophical pragmatist, open to different approaches to find what works. We have already seen that in March 2011 Obama ordered a U.S. military attack on the Libyan army that prevented a massacre in Benghazi. Less than two months later, Obama overrode the objections of Defense Secretary Robert Gates to authorize Operation Neptune Spear, in which U.S. Navy SEALs raided a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, killing Osama bin Laden (Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.12 suggests that Obama and the Clintons are not out of step with their party base. While about a third of Democrats are “global citizens,” highly ambivalent about both American nationalism and the use of military force, another third are “forceful idealists,” willing to use force in the pursuit of idealist goals.