

# Many Constituencies Influence US Foreign Policy-Making

by LM Destler

"FOREIGN relations begin at home." America's leading political scientist, Richard Neustadt, made this observation more than a quarter century ago, discussing events under Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-61) and John F. Kennedy (1961-63). Even during the long Cold War with the Soviet Union, even before the virulent protests over US involvement in Vietnam, American leaders knew that foreign policy required domestic support. For example, US dealings with the People's Republic of China were minimal throughout the 1950s and 1960s because executive and congressional leaders feared a fierce political backlash to the United States "recognizing Red China." And the United States Congress, exercising its "power of the purse," regularly cut back presidential proposals for economic and military assistance to foreign nations.

To understand why power over foreign policy is divided, the place to begin is our governing charter, the US Constitution. Authorities sometimes state that it gives the President the predominant power over international issues. But it doesn't. He can draw from its direct language just a handful of powers of direct relevance: negotiating treaties, appointing and receiving ambassadors, commanding the armed forces, Congress has a longer specific list: ratifying treaties, confirming ambassadors, declaring war, maintaining armed forces, regulating foreign commerce. And if one moves to more general authorities, the legislative branch again appears to have the upper hand: the chief executive's

right to sign or veto bills pales before its authority to control their content, particularly those bills which provide (or withhold) money. Had the Congress, skeptical about sending US forces to Bosnia, employed all its powers in opposition, President Bill Clinton would not have been able to do so.

Democratic Senator J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas, the most prominent legislative leader on foreign policy in the early Cold War years, called it conducting foreign policy "in the 20th century under an 18th century Constitution." He saw US international relations as hostage to "parochial minded" legislators driven by narrow interests and local constituencies. Yet this very fact — that senators and representatives are driven by diverse concerns — gives the President the opportunity to lead on most international issues, most of the time. With congressional energies directed mainly elsewhere, he and his key officials — the Secretary of State, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs — can use their control over the day-to-day conduct of policy to maintain the initiative. The President is particularly strong if he is pursuing causes for which there is broad public support, for Americans expect the President to be active in representing Americans' international concerns.

This was more often than not the case on major strategic issues in the half-century from the US entry into World War II in 1941 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Today, however, the President cannot count on broad support so readily. The American public continues to favor US engagement in the world: de-

spite the fears of many foreign policy specialists, Americans have not turned isolationist. But the public gives lower priority to foreign concerns than it used to; there is less attention to matters international, and more to problems within the United States. So it is less likely that the President himself will give priority to expanding or even maintaining international programmes like foreign assistance. And it is more likely that Congress will act to cut funds for this programmes. With both branches of government under pressure to reduce the federal budget deficit, all programmes of "discretionary spending" — funded by year-to-year congressional appropriations — are particularly vulnerable to reductions.

With no single, central conflict to shape US foreign policy, there is also a higher probability that the President and/or Congress will give priority to issues of particular concern to ethnic or special-interest groups. Clinton has, for example, concentrated personally on bringing democracy and law to Haiti (an

emphasis pressed by the Congressional Black Caucus) and bringing peace to Northern Ireland (fervently desired by Irish-Americans), as well as continuing his predecessors' priority to the Middle East. And the President has been constrained in his approach to Cuba by the vocal (and overwhelmingly anti-Castro) Cuban-American community concentrated in the important electoral state of Florida.

In none of these cases is attention given solely for reasons of ethnic politics; for his actions to redound to his benefit over the longer term, the President must be pursuing goals which have support beyond narrow constituencies. Otherwise, he is vulnerable to the charge of "Pandering" to special interests. But these groups can have disproportionate influence over the details of policy, because they care, their representatives take the time to "lobby" the responsible government officials. If they find the executive branch insufficiently responsive, they can work to get Congress to pass laws on their behalf. Indeed, the most effective lobbying groups, like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), work continuously with both branches.

Economic interests are another important influence, particularly on international trade and financial policies. When our government seeks to expand trade through negotiated reductions in import barriers, it needs the support of US manufacturers whose sales will benefit from better access to foreign markets, in order to counter the predictable opposition of companies who compete with imports in the domestic market. If an industry seeking trade protection is large enough, and effective in building influence with Congress and the executive, it may win exceptions to the general US policy of open trade. The textile-apparel industry is a case in point. Its persistent lobbying got members of Congress to threaten special legislation, and got successive Presidents to authorize negotiation of the Multi-Fiber Arrangement restricting textile and apparel imports. In the Uruguay

Round negotiation concluded in 1993, the world's trading nations agreed to end this arrangement, but the industry was still powerful enough to win a slow, ten-year phased-out period.

Economic interests do not always win. Organized labour has had limited impact on US trade policy, despite its campaigns against rising imports and movement of US-owned factories to foreign nations. The major labour unions were important supporters of Clinton's election, but he overrode their passionate opposition in winning congressional approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993. He also went against the wishes of a number of important environmental organizations whose support he had received before and would want again in the future.

But while the President did not accede to these groups' strongest wishes, he did not ignore them either. Before presenting NAFTA (negotiated and signed by his predecessor, George Bush) to Congress for approval, Clinton negotiated

"side agreements" with Mexico and Canada on labour and environmental issues. In seeking congressional authorization to negotiate future agreements reducing trade barriers, his administration asked specifically in 1994 that this include trade-related environmental issues and matters of international labour standards. When organized business and influential members of Congress resisted these labour and environmental provisions, the President accepted stalemate in US trade policy rather than agreeing to proceed without them. This meant a delay in specific negotiations for free trade with other Western Hemisphere nations like Chile, as pledged in December 1994 at the Western Hemisphere summit in Miami. It has also limited US steps to implement the November 1994 agreement by the nations of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) to achieve free trade among themselves by the year 2010.

As these examples suggest, foreign policy-making is when

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### International Community Must Investigate Human Rights Abuses

by John Shattuck

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THREE years ago, the nations of the world reaffirmed their solemn commitment to fulfil all their human rights obligations under the UN Charter and international law. In addition, they explicitly acknowledged that "the universal nature" of these human rights and fundamental freedoms was "beyond question."

That the international

community has the right — indeed the responsibility — to investigate human rights

abuses wherever they occur is fully consistent with the Vienna Declaration. Furthermore, it is central to the work of this commission, for it is precisely the universality of human rights which defines our mission.

Yet some countries continue to act as if human rights are merely minor inconveniences, and claim that their records should be exempt from this commission's scrutiny. No country should deny the reasonable and non-intrusive mandate of this commission by blocking an appropriate resolution. Any effort to do so should be rejected by members of this commission as an attack on the very existence and integrity of this body.

One of the fundamental rights of every man and woman is freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right is enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration, along with the right of everyone to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The right of religious freedom was also reaffirmed by the nations of the world in the Vienna Declaration and programme of action.

And yet, this too is under challenge in many countries of the world. While religion speaks to our highest human aspirations, cynical leaders often play on religious identity

for their own insidious purposes, at times mixing religious and ethnic hatred in a deadly mixture of intolerance.

The conflict in Bosnia, for example, vividly demonstrates the perils of mixing ethnic and religious intolerance. Some of Europe's worst atrocities in the past half century — ethnic cleansing, mass rape, acts of genocide — have been the unfortunate and tragic result.

But it is not just in Bosnia that religious intolerance has sown its destructive seeds. Adherents of virtually every religious group and system of belief — Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Bahai, Sikhs, Animists and others — have been subjected to persecution in recent times. We cannot accept this. Freedom of religion, and the tolerance which derives from it, are far too central to the people and institutions of the United States.

We believe that religious ideas and institutions have a major role to play in promoting human rights. Every major religious tradition in the world speaks to the theory and practice of peace and justice, and many courageous men and women risk their lives to put such teaching to work.

Promoting religious tolerance is a critical component of US human rights policy. Earlier this year, for example, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton launched US initiatives, in conjunction with the international orthodoxy

Christian charities and the Catholic Relief Services, to promote religious and ethnic reconciliation in Bosnia. The project focuses on the most vulnerable victims of the conflict — women, children and the elderly — and provides assistance to families coping with post-traumatic stress.

The religious and ethnic intolerance which threatens international stability in Bosnia, Kashmir, Sudan and elsewhere, only reinforces our belief in the important role which religions must continue to play in the world of human rights.

One of the most important aspects of the Vienna Conference was to orient the world community toward new directions in the world of human rights. Thus the conference played a critical role in advancing the rights of women within the UN system and preparing the international community for the important achievements of the Beijing conference.

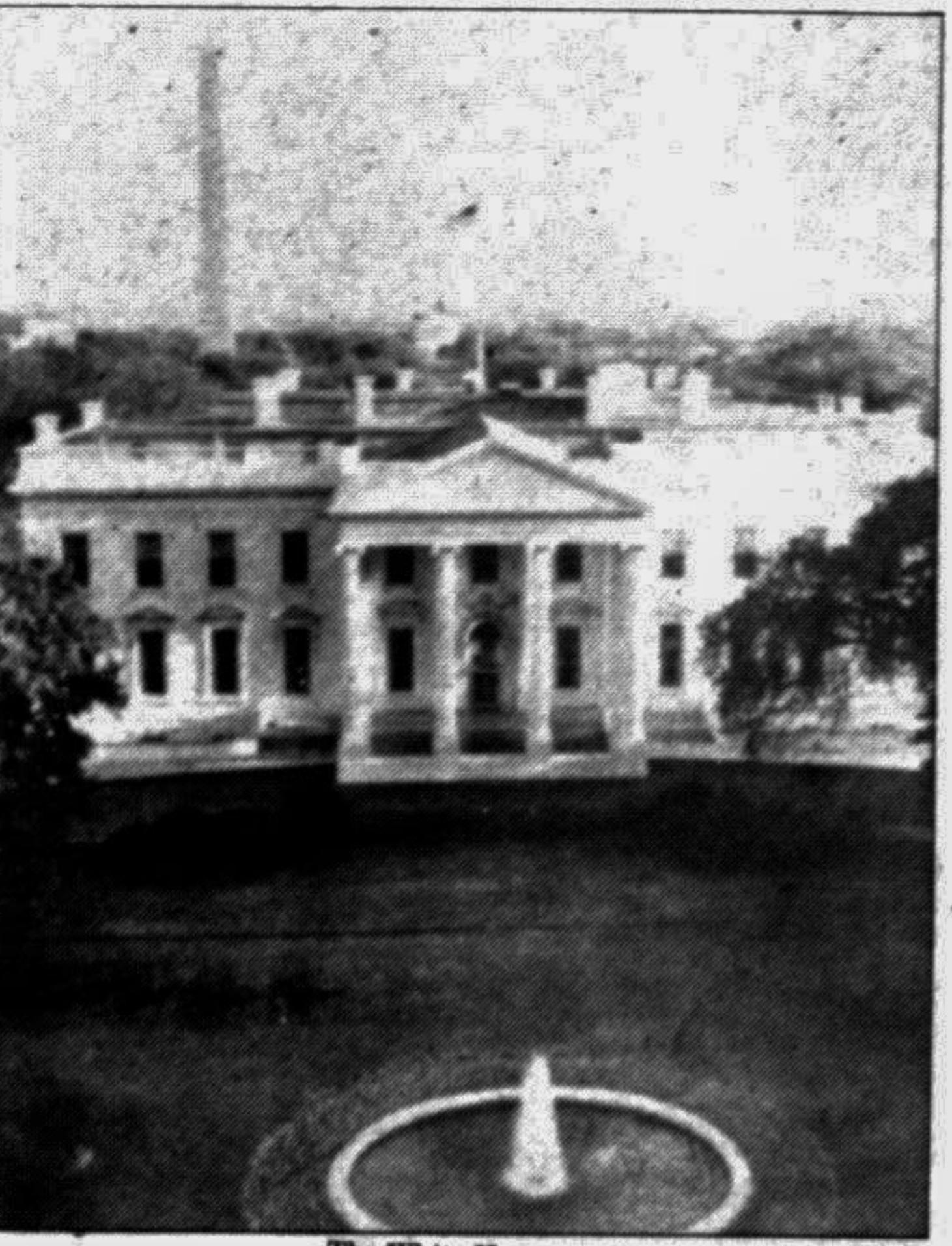
Similarly, Vienna also led to the appointment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the systematic effort to make human rights a central concern of all UN bodies. This can only have a positive effect on the implementation of our work within the human rights community, and we look forward to the

challenges the future will surely pose for us.

More generally, the energy and initiative which came out of the Vienna conference helped lead to the establishment of the International War Crimes Tribunals on Rwanda and Bosnia. These two tribunals, which few thought stood any chance of ever coming to existence, have in a few short years become important new instruments of accountability for those accused of war crimes and gross human rights violations. With the cooperation of the international community, the tribunals can expect to fight strongly against the culture of impunity which has permitted those responsible for massive human rights abuses to remain at liberty.

The Vienna conference and programme of action marked an important milestone in the effort to reform the United Nations system and orient it toward the realities of the future. While we welcome the appointment of the High Commissioner and major strides have been made in advancing the cause of women's rights, much remains to be done in the realm of financial reform and in the elaboration of new instruments to deal with continuing and widespread human rights abuses.

The creation of the International War Crimes Tribunals offers the hope that even old ideas can be put to new and innovative uses. This kind of thinking is essential if the human rights commission is to evolve in keeping with the dynamic and unsettling times we live in. The United States stands ready to work with the Commission to see that it does. We could not be true to the spirit of Vienna if we did not.



The White House

**Happy Birthday United States Of America**

**The experience of the American Revolution has been the beacon to the Freedom Loving people of the World.**

*to you lick it you'll love it*

**dolce vita gelato**  
gelateria ice cream parlour  
Banani Dhanmondi

# CITYCELL

Travel light, the world is in your hand ...



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vor a wintry excuse for a three-day weekend.

Bonfires, perhaps, more than fireworks, capture the basic flavor of the Fourth. The initial event had the acrid taste of political defiance, the crackling of the violent cleansing that a revolution intends. The men whose prim and flossy signatures are aligned on the Declaration of Independence were risking their necks, and for eight years men of many nationalities died so that one more nation could be born. Our Revolution seems, in the attic of our shared imagery, a kind of popgun war, with chorus lines of redcoats and Minutemen, even the tatters of Washington's troops at Valley Forge and his icy crossing of the Delaware feel stylized and mock-heroic. Bonfires, which in some towns are still heaped up building-high in the main square, remind us, as Bastille Day and Guy Fawkes Day remind the citizens of other sovereignties, that conflagrations and constitutions keep close company, and that established statehood rests upon triumphant violence. It is grimly appropriate that every year, as fireworks misfire and canoes overturn, the Fourth of July is marked with a few more American deaths. Independence is risky. Strangely, high summer's only other significant national anniversary is V-J Day, celebrating Japan's surrender to our atomic bombs.

One's own memories of the Fourth tend to blend, much as summer days blend one into the next. My father, in the firefly-rife backyard of my first home, lights a bundle of little firecrackers and darts dramatically back, and we all stand around in an awed circle, at what we hope is a safe dis-

tance, as the device twists and jumps and shouts its furious, frustrated noise. It wants to kill us, and can't. I hold a sparkler at arm's length, marveling that its sparks do not burn. Then there is something we children call a "snake," which combustively turns itself into a coil of gray ash. How one acquires such things is at least as fascinating as their ignition: They are illegal in Pennsylvania and have been smuggled in from other, more permissive states; the illicit traffic in fireworks is as signal a feature of our national life as the different-colored license plates, the jinking ages that go up and down as state borders are crossed, and, for real grownups, the patchwork of statutes controlling divorce and abortion. These discrepancies help make the United States a more interesting place to live in, and hint at what the original unites were contending with.

Later, myself a father, I drove station wagons full of sleepheads to towns and beaches and country clubs where firework displays, ever threatened by local regulations and limited budgets, were still put on. Once, off Edgartown dock, we watched fireworks in a dense fog — subtle tints appeared in the mist above us, and explosive noises tardily descended. At the Essex County Club, in Manchester-by-the-Sea, a golf course was the site, and members, in summer tuxedos and full-length dresses, watched from within a roped-off enclave while we nonmembers huddled in the sand traps. In 1976, on the 200th anniversary of our independence — a beautiful, day all across the country — my wife and I flew from Indiana to Massachusetts, fireworks silently expanded and vanished like small soft