INTEREST GROUP POLITICS

Sixth Edition

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Cracks in the Armor?
Interest Groups and Foreign Policy

Eric M. Uslaner

Since the Vietnam War and the controversies in the 1980s over El Salvador, American policies abroad have caused many political conflicts at home. As a result, ethnic groups in the United States have begun to participate vigorously in domestic politics. Although the American Jewish community has long been a powerful force in both legislative and electoral politics, other groups—from Cuban-Americans to Chinese-Americans—have entered the fray.

In this chapter Eric Uslaner addresses the evolution of activity among foreign policy groups and ethnic interest groups. Sometimes, as with the American-Israeli Political Affairs Council, these two groups overlap. Indeed, Uslaner asserts that "Foreign policy interest groups began to look more and more like domestic groups. . . . And in some cases, especially where constituency groups were weak politically, foreign countries took a direct role in U.S. domestic politics." The openness of the American political process has offered great opportunities for ethnic groups, and no one would challenge the right of Arab-Americans or Greek-Americans or any other such group to lobby or fund favored candidates. But such groups must always appear more loyal to the United States than to other nations to be effective in American politics.

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When we think of interest group politics we generally focus on domestic policy. On foreign policy the entire country is supposed to speak with a single voice. Policy is supposed to reflect a national interest that has its roots in moral principles.

Because the stakes of foreign policy are higher than those of domestic policy—the wrong decision could lead to a nuclear confrontation—we expect foreign policy decisions to be less subject to group pressure. Instead, we make decisions based on a common interest. Foreign policy should be based on broad national principles that put American interests first when looking beyond our borders.

But foreign policy decisions increasingly reflect ethnic interests rather than some overarching sense of national interest. At least five ethnic groups saw the 2000 election as a chance to shape their foreign policy goals, even though neither major candidate nor voters showed much concern for foreign policy.[1] Two groups seeking to sway the election seem to have failed; the other three may have succeeded, at least in part.

Groups representing the Middle East conflict were at odds. American Jews welcomed and Arab-Americans worried about the nomination of the first Jewish candidate for vice president, Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn. Lieberman's loss pleased the Muslims, who had little else to cheer about in the 2000 elections.

Other ethnic groups had more to celebrate. Cuban-Americans, upset over the Clinton administration's handling of six-year-old refugee Elian Gonzalez, may have been responsible for the narrow Republican victory in Florida that gave the presidency to Republican George W. Bush. Other Latinos, especially Mexican-Americans, were angry at restrictive immigration legislation enacted by Republicans in Congress and in California. Latinos established themselves as a power base in California, contributing heavily to Al Gore's victory there and helping the Democrats capture several formerly Republican House seats. And Armenian-Americans claimed credit for toppling a California Republican incumbent.

American Jews have long lobbied successfully on Israel's behalf, and many groups have tried to copy the Jewish model. Irish-Americans, Greek-Americans, Cuban-Americans, Latinos, Armenian-Americans, and even Arab-Americans followed the lead of the pro-Israel lobby to gain support for their interests. Yet in the past few years we have seen cracks in the armor of powerful ethnic interests. The pro-Israel and anti-Castro lobbies still generally get their way, but their tasks are not quite as easy as they used to be, and once in a while the lobbies lose a battle.

The pro-Israel groups initially focused on the moral claims that Jews made for Israel. As the Palestinian resistance (the Intifada) developed in the 1980s, some leaders criticized Israel's military response to rock throwing by Palestinian youths. Once the pro-Israel forces lost their moral monopoly, they began to act like any other interest group—rewarding their friends and punishing their enemies. They took an increasingly active role in raising money to back candidates for office.

Foreign policy interest groups began to look more and more like domestic groups, with one key difference. It had become unclear whether some groups were more loyal to their "mother country" than to the United States. And in some cases, especially where constituency groups were weak politically, foreign countries took a direct role in U.S. domestic politics. In the 1996 presidential election, foreign interests allegedly made direct contributions to the reelection campaign of President Bill Clinton. Some of these funds may have even come from the Chinese government, which sought to protect its favored trading status with the United States.

Many people worried that decisions that ought to be made on the basis of moral concerns—what the United States's role should be in the world, especially when it is the only superpower—were being made through group conflict and campaign contributions. When does it become illegitimate for Jewish-Americans to lobby on behalf of Israel, for Cuban-Americans to lobby against the Castro regime, or for Chinese-Americans to take sides between the "two Chinas" (the People's Republic and Taiwan)? If it is acceptable for Chinese-Americans to lobby for China, why is it not acceptable for the Chinese to lobby for themselves? If the Chinese (or others) can appropriately exert pressure in Washington, should they be prohibited from influencing who gets sent to Washington?

And here is the dilemma underlying group conflict in U.S. foreign policy. When an ethnic group is united, it can take the high ground. When American Jews were single-minded in their support for Israel and when Cuban-Americans were united in their opposition to Castro, both groups could make moral arguments. As divisions grew within both communities, gaining outside support became more difficult. When a group cannot be sure of universal support, it may feel compelled to use confrontational strategies to win support. But how do others view these tactics, and how successful can they be? In an April 1997 *New York Times*/CBS News survey, 45 percent of Americans said they were bothered more by foreign government contributions to "buy influence" than by similar efforts from special interest groups (25 percent) or "wealthy people" (21 percent).[2]

Ethnic Groups in Foreign Policy

Mohammed E. Ahrari has suggested four conditions for ethnic group success in foreign policy. First, the group must press for a policy in line with U.S. strategic interests. Second, the group must be assimilated into U.S. society, yet retain enough identification with the "old country" so that this foreign policy issue motivates people to take some political action. Third,

the group and its members must be politically active. Fourth, groups should be politically unified.[3] Other criteria include advocating policies backed by the larger public, having enough members to wield political influence, and being perceived as pursuing a legitimate interest.

American Jews are distinctive in their ability to affect foreign policy. They have established the most prominent and best-endowed lobby in Washington by fulfilling each of the conditions for an influential group. In recent years, however, some conditions have not been met and the pro-Israel lobby is no longer the same dominant force. Still, its rival in Washington, the pro-Arab lobby, has remained weak by failing to meet any of the conditions.

The Israel and Arab Lobbies

The most important ethnic lobby on foreign policy is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). *Fortune* magazine rates AIPAC as the fourth most powerful lobbying group in Washington on any issue.[4] Jews, who dominate the pro-Israel lobby, make up 2.7 percent of the U.S. population. Yet they are strongly motivated and highly organized in support of Israel. Since the lobby's inception in 1951 it has rarely lost an important battle. In recent years Israel's policies have become more controversial in the United States—and within Israel. The splits within Israel are mirrored in the American Jewish community.

Israel receives by far the largest share of U.S. foreign aid, more than $3 billion a year. In 1985 Israel and the United States signed a free-trade pact. And Israel benefits from large tax-exempt contributions from the American Jewish community.[5] No other foreign nation is so favored.

AIPAC has a staff of 150, an annual budget of $15 million, and 55,000 members. It operates out of offices one block from Capitol Hill,[6] with considerable political acumen: "In a moment of perceived crisis, it can put a carefully researched, well-documented statement of its views on the desk of every Senator and Congressman and appropriate committee staff within four hours of a decision to do so."[7]

AIPAC's lobbying connections are so thorough that one observer said, "A mystique has grown up around the lobby to the point where it is viewed with admiration, envy, and sometimes, anger."[8] Activists can readily mobilize the network of Jewish organizations across the country to put pro-Israel pressure on members of Congress, even in areas with small Jewish populations. In 1991 the lobby organized 1,500 "citizen lobbyists" armed with computer printouts of their legislators' backgrounds. AIPAC claims to enact more than 100 pieces of pro-Israel legislation a year through some 2,000 meetings with members of Congress.[9]

The Arab lobbying effort has been far less successful. There were no major Arab organizations before 1972, and a Washington presence did not begin until 1978. The Arab lobby for many years consisted of several

small organizations with differing objectives. Early Arab lobbying comprised efforts sponsored by Arab governments and oil companies and groups representing different Lebanese factions.[10] One analysis concluded, "Most Arab embassies throw impressive parties, but have little day-to-day contact with Congress, according to lawmakers and aides."[11]

The Arab uprising in the West Bank and Gaza that began in 1987 energized and united the Arab-American community. The National Association of Arab Americans now maintains a grassroots network organized by congressional district, patterned directly after AIPAC.[12] The 1990 Gulf War split Arabs once more, as supporters of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein battled with more moderate factions. In 1988 Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis rejected the endorsement of Arab-American leaders. As the Arab-American population grew—it is now estimated at 6 million, about the same size as the Jewish community—politicians began to pay more attention. All four major contenders for the Democratic and Republican nominations in 2000 addressed (either live or by satellite) the Arab American Institute national convention. Arab-Americans joined forces with the NAACP and La Raza in pressing for an end to discrimination, especially profiling at airports.

Yet Arab-Americans still find their influence limited. Jewish organizations were able to stop House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt's nomination of Salam Al-Marayati in 1999 to a counterterrorism commission. The pro-Israeli groups charged that Al-Marayati had blamed the Israeli government for inciting Palestinian violence. And Hillary Rodham Clinton returned $50,000 in contributions to her Senate campaign from the American Muslim Alliance; the leader of the alliance had also justified Palestinian violence against Israel.[13]

The Israel Advantage

Inter-Arab divisiveness thus accounts for some, but not all, of the difficulties that these Arab-American groups confront. Public opinion plays a much larger role. For a long time Americans have sympathized more with Israel than with the Arabs. Most polls show that Americans favor the Israeli position by between a three to one margin and a five to one margin. In the past few years 40–50 percent of Americans sided with Israel, about 10–15 percent with the Palestinians, 10 percent with both, and 20 percent with neither. As violence has increased in Israel, twice as many Americans blame the Palestinians as blame Israel—and public support for Israel increased to more than 60 percent.[14]

The roots of the friendship between the United States and Israel include factors such as:

- A common biblical heritage (most Arabs are Muslim, an unfamiliar religion to most Americans).

- A shared European value system (Islam is often sharply critical of the West's perceived lack of morality).
- The democratic nature of Israel's political system (most Arab nations are monarchies or dictatorships).
- Israel's role as an ally of the United States (most Arab countries have been seen as either unreliable friends or as hostile to U.S. interests).
- The sympathy Americans extend toward Jews as victims (Arabs are portrayed as terrorists or exploiters of the U.S. economy through their oil weapon).[15]

Jews benefit from a high rate of participation in politics, and Arab-Americans are not as great a political force. Jews are among the most generous campaign contributors in U.S. politics: 60 percent of individual contributions to former president Clinton's 1992 campaign came from Jewish donors. Jewish contributors, including the National Jewish Democratic Council, were among the top twenty contributors to Gore's 2000 Presidential campaign. And Jews are far more active politically than are other Americans: They are substantially more likely to vote, to try to influence others' voting choices, to attend political meetings, to work for a party or a candidate, to write letters to public officials, and to follow the campaign through television, radio, magazines, and newspapers. And they are twice as likely as other Americans to donate money to candidates for office.[16] Arab-Americans have not been very active in politics. Only 100,000 belong to any Arab-American organization, compared with 2 million Jews active in Jewish causes.

Although Arab groups are divided internally and have no common frame of reference, American Jews have traditionally been united in support of Israel. In a 1998 survey of American Jews, 58 percent considered themselves close to Israel, 41 percent had visited Israel, 42 percent had close friends or relatives living there, and 86 percent considered the fate of the Jewish community in Israel to be important to them. A 1982 poll found that three-quarters of American Jews believe they should not vote for a candidate who is unfriendly to Israel, and one-third would be willing to contribute money to political candidates who support Israel.[17]

The pro-Israel lobby before the late 1980s met all of the conditions for a group to be successful. Jews were well assimilated, had a high level of political activity, were united in their support of Israel, and had the support of public opinion. Israel was seen as a strategic asset by the American public and particularly by decisionmakers. Backers of Israel did not stand to gain from their lobbying; these backers had to contribute their own money to participate. Although not numerous compared with many other groups, American Jews and other supporters of Israel were concentrated in key states important to presidential candidates (New York, California, Pennsylvania).

The Arab-American lobby was on the other end of the spectrum. Americans have generally not seen Arab nations as strategic allies. Many Arab-Americans are not well assimilated into U.S. society and politics. The community is neither homogenous with respect to Middle East politics nor politically active. U.S. public opinion has never been favorable to the Arab (or Palestinian) cause. The financing of Arab-American organizations by Middle Eastern interests and the active pursuit of changes in U.S. policy by economic interests have weakened the legitimacy of the Arab-American cause.

In 1987 pro-Israel groups began to lose some of their clout. The Palestinian uprising against Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza (the Intifada) raised international consciousness about the Palestinian cause and lessened U.S. public support for the Jewish state. The Jewish community began to argue about what Israel ought to do. When Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed their peace accord at the White House in September 1993, a deeper schism arose among American (and Israeli) Jews. Dealing with former enemies is always difficult. Moreover, the conflict over the peace process reflected tensions within Israel over religious issues.

American Judaism is divided into three major blocs—Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. These divisions reflect disagreements over which religious laws Jews should follow. Seven percent of American Jews call themselves Orthodox, 38 percent Conservative, and 42 percent Reform.[18] In Israel, Orthodox Jews have been prominent actors in right-wing coalition governments in Israel and largely oppose the peace process. They have pressured these governments to deny recognition to Conservative and Reform conversions conducted in the United States.

American Jews have been split in recent years over both religious issues and peace. Seventy-five percent of Reform and Conservative Jews support the peace process, with just 12 percent opposed. Almost 60 percent of Orthodox Jews oppose the peace process. A majority of Reform and Conservative Jews support the decision of most Jewish organizations (and the Israeli government) to back U.S. foreign aid to Israel, and almost two-thirds of the Orthodox oppose such assistance. Most Reform Jews say that Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews have little in common.[19] The conflicts within American Jewry reflect similar disputes in Israel.

The power of the pro-Israel lobby rested on unity within the Jewish community and on widespread support beyond this small group. Yet conflicts over religion and peace led to fractionalization. AIPAC became increasingly linked to the more hawkish right-wing government in Israel in the 1980s. An internal power struggle within AIPAC ousted the conservative leadership and restored a liberal tilt to the organization. In turn, the (then) opposition Likud Party stepped up its efforts to discredit the peace process. The Likud supported the hawkish Zionist Organization of America, which directly competed with AIPAC for legislative

support and which covertly sent its own former cabinet members to lobby on Capitol Hill.[20]

On religious issues, one group of Orthodox rabbis declared that the Reform and Conservative movements are "not Judaism." In turn, the chancellor of the largest Conservative seminary demanded the dismantling of the office of Chief Rabbi in Israel, because it was perpetuating the Orthodox monopoly on religious practice. American Reform rabbis issued a statement in January 2000 endorsing a compromise with the Palestinians over control of Jerusalem; Conservative and Orthodox rabbis took strong issue with this proposal.[21]

Jewish-American politicians have long been a bulwark of Israel's support on Capitol Hill. Most Jews are Democrats and so are most Jewish elected officials. Although Jews constitute less than 3 percent of the population, about 10 percent of the members in both the House and Senate are Jewish. They have long been a united bloc in favor of any Israeli government, but especially supportive of Labor administrations that pursue peace. And these legislators have sought positions where they could help Israel. Almost 20 percent of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House International Relations Committee are Jewish and half of the members of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East, including both the chair and the ranking minority member, are Jewish. One of two Arab-Americans serving in Congress is on the House committee (and subcommittee). Despite internal divisions within the American Jewish community, Jewish members of Congress generally speak with one voice.

Pro-Israel forces in Washington were thrilled in 2000 when the Democratic Party nominated Joseph Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew and strong supporter of Israel, as its candidate for vice president. American Jews hoped that the election of the first Jewish vice president would cement American support for Israel at a time when tensions flared in the Middle East. The Democratic ticket barely lost the election. Jewish mobilization didn't make the difference in states with the largest Jewish populations: Gore carried California, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York by overwhelming margins—and he barely lost Florida (and the election) to Bush.

Arab-Americans are becoming a more unified and energized bloc. Arab-Americans took a much more active role in the 2000 Presidential elections, endorsing Republican candidate George W. Bush. Yet their lobbies still rank far behind the pro-Israel groups in influence, because Arab-American positions don't gather public support and Arab-Americans have not been as politically active as Jewish-Americans. Arab-American lobbies always seem to be *against* something—Israel—rather than *for* something, as the pro-Israel groups are.[22]

Sometimes Arab-American efforts appear clumsy at best. In 1999 Burger King had established a restaurant in a Jewish settlement on the West Bank, while the new Israeli exhibit at Disney's Epcot park in Orlando

referred to Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Arab-American groups and Arab governments briefly boycotted Burger King and Disney until the restaurant was closed and all references to Jerusalem were excised from the Israeli exhibit. In 2001 Islamic authorities in several Arab countries issued a religious edict to all Muslims (including those in the United States) to boycott Pokemon trading cards. They charged that Pokemon translates into "I am a Jew" in Japanese (where the cards originated) and that the symbol of Pokemon characters' power was a six-pointed star, evidence that the fictional heroes are Zionist agents.[23] In the Burger King and EPCOT cases, the Arab-American groups got what they wanted, but paid a price in negative publicity. Muslim groups failed to block Pokemon sales, even in countries with overwhelming majorities of Muslims. In each case Western observers saw these activities as attacks on Western influence more generally—and this might limit the effectiveness of other lobbying activities.

Arab-Americans are becoming more active and politically sophisticated. Although American Jews are predominantly Democratic, Arab-Americans divide their loyalties almost evenly between the two parties. In principle, then, they could constitute an important swing vote in states with large Arab-American populations, such as California, Illinois, New Jersey, and especially Michigan. The Council on American-Islamic Relations in California sought unsuccessfully to tilt the 2000 Senate race to Republican challenger Tom Campbell and away from Jewish Democratic incumbent Dianne Feinstein.

A large number of Muslim groups banded together to endorse Bush over Gore, fearing that the election of Lieberman as vice president would solidify U.S. support for Israel. They focused on Michigan, a state that was expected to be close and that has the largest concentration of Arab-Americans. Many Arab-Americans stood behind Green Party nominee Ralph Nader, a Lebanese-American. Positions on the Middle East were the main motivating factor among Arab-American voters. Arab-Americans gave Bush a 46–38 percent margin over Gore, with 14 percent going to Nader, far more than his 2 percent of the national vote.[24]

Even though Bush won, Arab-Americans could hardly claim credit: Bush did not carry any of the target states. Gore not only won Michigan, but the only Arab-American senator, Spencer Abraham, R-Mich., lost his reelection bid. In California, Feinstein and the entire Democratic ticket won handily.

Neither Arab-Americans nor Jewish Americans could claim the 2000 elections as a major success. Lieberman did not become vice president. The Clinton-Gore administration was arguably the most favorable to Jews in U.S. history. Several cabinet members and many more lower level and informal advisers to Clinton and Gore were Jewish, as is Gore's son-in-law and both of Clinton's Supreme Court nominees. The Bush cabinet has no Jewish members. Yet Arab-Americans were hardly in a position to rejoice. Shortly after taking office, President Bush issued a stern warning

to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to stop the violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The balance of Middle Eastern interest groups shifted dramatically after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by radical Muslims. Many Americans came to identify with Israelis as victims of terror. Public support for Israel rose sharply in one month, from 41 percent to 55 percent, the highest level in a decade. A third of all Americans thought the United States should become closer to Israel, compared with 16 percent who wanted more distance. Even though more than half of Americans thought the attacks were a direct result of American policy in the Middle East, support for aid to Israel jumped while support for the Palestinians fell by nearly half.

Despite President Bush's insistence that the attacks were the work of a small group of militants, 39 percent of Americans said that they had an unfavorable view of Islam. Saudi prince Alwaleed bin Talal offered to donate $10 million to aid victims of the tragedies but linked the attacks to American foreign policy in the Middle East. New York Mayor Rudolph Guiliani quickly rejected the offer—more Jews live in New York than in any other city in the United States. African-American representative Cynthia A. McKinney, D-Ga., strongly attacked Israel's policies and praised the prince, but no other American leader joined her. Many joined the president, however, in condemning attacks on Muslims. At least one politician, Rep. John Cooksey, R-La., saw his political fortunes sink when he called for racial profiling of Arab-Americans by looking for the "diapers on their heads."[25]

Other Ethnic Interest Groups

No foreign policy interest group, and certainly no ethnic group, has the reputation for influence that the pro-Israel forces have. Even a weakened AIPAC still sets the pace—for two reasons. First, AIPAC is the model for most other successful groups. Second, like the Jewish community, other ethnic groups have been divided over the best course of action for their countries. The ethnic lobby that was poised to capture the role of "king of the Hill" from AIPAC, the Cuban American National Foundation, has been wrought with its own conflicts.

Latinos

Latinos now constitute about 12 percent of all Americans, up from 6.4 percent in 1980. The 2000 census showed that the Latino population in the United States jumped by 60 percent over ten years, so that Hispanics now have the same share of the population as African-Americans. The growth was particularly strong in California, where Latinos comprise about one-third of all residents—and among Mexican-Americans, by far

the biggest immigrant group. The Hispanic Caucus in the House of Representatives has grown from five members to seventeen in 1976–2000. And the Hispanic members have gained key leadership positions, notably Rep. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., as chief deputy whip for the Democratic minority.[26]

Yet Latinos have little unity. The largest groups are Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, who are relatively poor and likely to back liberal Democratic candidates in elections. Mexican-Americans make up 60 percent of all Latinos, but many are not U.S. citizens, and those who are have ambivalent feelings toward Mexico. Until recently Mexican leaders did not encourage intervention on behalf of Mexico by Mexican-Americans. Now they do, even campaigning in the United States.[27]

Puerto Ricans are divided over the status of Puerto Rico, with some favoring statehood, others the continuation of the commonwealth status, and still others independence. For countries such as El Salvador and Nicaragua, where U.S. policy is more controversial, religious organizations with few ties to the indigenous communities dominate foreign policy lobbies, such as the Washington Office on Latin America. These organizations focus largely on human rights. Some have influence on Capitol Hill, but their lobbying tends to concentrate more on legislators already committed to their cause.[28]

Cuban-Americans are much better off financially and vote heavily for Republican candidates. Cubans represent just 5.3 percent of Latinos in this country and have the second most potent ethnic lobby in the country, the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF). Cuban-Americans are generally strongly anti-Communist. They helped fund Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North's legal expenses during the investigations into the Iran-Contra affair and a lobbying effort to force Cuban troops from the African nation of Angola.[29]

The CANF's founder, Jorge Mas Canosa (who died in late 1997), was called "the most significant individual lobbyist in the country."[30] The foundation lobbied successfully in 1985 for Radio Marti and in 1990 for TV Marti, direct broadcast stations aimed at Cuba from the United States. In 1996 Mas Canosa and the CANF were the major movers in the Helms-Burton Act that tightened the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba. The CANF runs a resettlement program for Cuban refugees funded by the federal government. The CANF claims 50,000 donors and has one hundred directors, each of whom contribute $10,000 annually. Its Free Cuba political action committee has contributed more than $1 million to presidential candidates in 1992 and $102,000 in the 2000 congressional elections, mostly to members of the foreign policy committee.[31] Two of the three Cuban-American representatives—two Republicans from Florida and a New Jersey Democrat—serve on the House International Relations Committee, compared with just one other Latino member.[32]

Ironically, the CANF may have proven too partisan for its own good. It has had close ties to Republicans, and in early 1993 it blocked a black Cuban-American nominee of the Clinton administration for the post of chief policymaker on Latin America. That tilted the administration toward a more moderate line on Cuba. Clinton invited one hundred Cuban-Americans to the White House for Cuban Independence Day, slighting CANF officeholders. A new, more moderate Cuban-American group has emerged, Cambio Cubana (Cuban Change), and the administration appeared more sympathetic to it by doing little to stop Congress from slashing funding in half for Radio Marti and from abolishing TV Marti.[33]

Fearing a loss of influence, the CANF moved to establish closer relations with Clinton. In 1994 Mas Canosa helped persuade Clinton to take a harder line against Castro when the Cuban leader put refugees on boats headed toward the United States. At Mas Canosa's urging Clinton took a tough line against the refugees, putting them in detention and sending them back to Cuba. Clinton also tightened restrictions on the amount of funds that Cuban-Americans could send to relatives in Cuba.

A Boy and a Bloc. Yet the good relations with the Clinton administration faded as the Cuban-American community faced its biggest crisis in years. For several months in 1999 and 2000 the dominant issue in both U.S. foreign and domestic policy was what the United States would do with six-year-old Elian Gonzalez, who survived a harrowing 90-mile journey on a raft from Cuba to the Florida coast. Elian's mother drowned when the raft sank, but the boy was rescued and taken to U.S. shores. His father, who was divorced from his mother, had stayed behind in Cuba. He wanted his son back. The U.S. government agreed with the father.

So did the American public, which favored returing the boy to his father by 63 percent to 25 percent. But Latinos in Florida, especially Cuban-Americans, insisted that Elian remain in the United States. The political battle dragged on, with Republican politicians attacking the Department of Justice and the entire Clinton administration. The Democratic mayor of Miami said that he would hold the Clinton administration responsible for any unrest that occurred when the boy was finally returned to Cuba and many of the 40,000 Cuban-American Democrats changed their party registration to Republican—perhaps handing the White House to Republican George W. Bush, who carried Florida by barely 500 votes.[34]

The CANF may have won the battle and lost the war. Many in Congress were upset that the lobby "convert[ed] Elian, literally, into a poster child, distributing leaflets of him at the World Trade Organization in Seattle." And a movement emerged among farm-state legislators to weaken the trade embargo on Castro. The compromise breached the four-decades-old restriction on selling food to Cuba. Younger Cubans formed moderate groups like Brothers to the Rescue and the Bridge for Young Professional Cuban Americans, which worked with the Clinton administration to forge a democratic opposition to Castro.

Cuban-Americans in the Miami area stand apart from the broader American public on more issues than the Elian Gonzalez case: Sixty percent of Miami-area Cuban-Americans support direct military action against the Castro regime, compared with just 18 percent of the American public. Almost two-thirds of Cuban Americans favored continuing the embargo, compared with 43 percent of Americans. Although three quarters of Cuban-Americans who came to the United States before 1985 favored military action, just 54 percent of those born in the United States did. Support for the embargo shows the same pattern—and Cuban-Americans born here were almost twice as likely to say that Elian Gonzalez should be returned to Cuba. Most critically, about 60 percent of Cuban-Americans who came to the United States before 1985 say that a candidate's position on Castro is very important to their vote; only 35 percent of Cuban-Americans born in the United States agree.[35]

The CANF was patterned after AIPAC, and it faces some of the same strains. The CANF has gone through an internal power struggle. In 1994 an employee at the Spanish-language network of Music Television (MTV) charged that the CANF pressured MTV to fire her. She had organized a private tour to Havana to see a Cuban singer in concert. The next year a federal investigation into Radio Marti charged that Mas Canosa improperly intervened in the daily operations of the station, trying to dismiss his critics. The radio station also was charged with deliberately distorting U.S. policy toward Cuba, undermining negotiations with the Castro regime. And in 1997 popular singer Gloria Estefan came under sharp attack by CANF supporters when she supported a Miami concert by Cuban musicians.[36] Today just a quarter of younger Cuban-Americans favor banning musical groups from Cuba from coming to the United States.

Like Jewish-Americans, Cuban-Americans are less united than they once were. Cuban government representatives can address audiences in Florida without being harassed, and a Spanish language radio station in Miami now airs a talk show that regularly attacks the CANF and other hard-liners. The head of Cambio Cubana even went so far as to meet with Castro in 1995.[37]

Splits in the Hispanic Community. The fragmentation of the Latino community traditionally has limited the unity and effectiveness (especially on foreign policy issues) of the Hispanic Caucus in the House of Representatives. But a new issue has brought more unity. The Republican congressional majority enacted restrictive immigration legislation in 1996. Latinos from every nationality and from both parties banded together to protest this legislation. The House Hispanic Caucus took a strong stand against the legislation.[38] California Republican Governor Pete Wilson endorsed a 1994 voter initiative that would take away the benefits of public

programs, such as education, from illegal immigrants, many of whom come from Mexico. In 1998 almost 80 percent of Latinos voted Democratic in the California governor's race.

The restrictive clauses in the legislation led to a surge in naturalization rates, especially among Latinos. Latino voter registration grew by almost 30 percent in 1996 because of naturalization and increased interest in politics. Every immigrant group reported a surge in turnout and in the share of the vote they gave to Democratic candidates. Clinton's margin among Latinos rose from 60 percent in 1992 to 72 percent in 1996. The surge in Latino votes for Democrats allowed Clinton to carry two states he lost in 1992 that have large Hispanic populations: Arizona and Florida.

Despite the substantial inroads George W. Bush tried to make into the Hispanic community—he speaks Spanish and has a Latina sister-in-law—Latinos organized heavily for the Democratic ticket in 2000, especially in California. More than 70 percent of Hispanics voted Democratic for president, and the Latino vote played a big role in putting California—and five new House seats—in the Democratic column.[39] Even though Gore was not elected, Latinos confirmed their position as a key element in the Democratic constituency in California and elsewhere.

Republicans hope to shift the partisan balance of power by actively courting Hispanics. President Bush has proposed an amnesty for illegal Mexican immigrants, hoping to reverse the perception among Latinos that the Republican Party maintains a hard line on immigration. Even though the Democratic ticket did not win in 2000, Latinos demonstrated their political clout as never before. As the fastest growing group in the country, Latinos will see their power expand in the future. President Bush invited newly elected Mexican President Vincente Fox to be the first foreign head of state to visit Bush in the White House. What happens in Latin America in the twenty-first century will be of great concern to U.S. politicians.

Greeks, Turks, and Armenians

Turkish-Americans have very determined enemies. For many years Turks had to worry primarily about Greek-Americans. Now their main concern is Armenian-Americans. No wonder each of these ethnic lobbies has tried to ally itself with AIPAC.

Greek-Americans were long considered second in power to the pro-Israel lobby. The American Hellenic Institute Public Affairs Committee (AHIPAC) is modeled after AIPAC, and the two groups have often worked together. AHIPAC lobbied successfully for an arms embargo on Turkey after its 1974 invasion of Cyprus and has pressed for a balance in foreign aid between the two states. The 2 million Greek-Americans are very politically active and loyal to the Democratic Party: In 1988 they raised more than 15 percent of Greek-American Michael Dukakis's early campaign

funds. In contrast, the Turkish-American community of 180,000 is not well organized. Recently it employed a Washington public relations firm to lobby the government, but it has no ethnic lobby and maintains a low profile. As one member of Congress stated, "I don't have any Turkish restaurants in my district."[40] Greek-American influence has waned as U.S. foreign policy has shifted emphasis from Greece and Turkey to other trouble spots, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union limited the strategic value of both Greece and Turkey to the United States.

Armenian-Americans are more recent entries into the ethnic group mix. For many years Armenian-Americans did not organize because there was no independent Armenia. When the Soviet Union broke up in 1989, Armenia regained its independence. Since then the Armenian-American community has become energized on two issues. One is the contested border with Azerbaijan, also formerly part of the Soviet Union. The two countries have fought over the province of Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave of ethnic Armenians within the boundaries of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has imposed an embargo on Armenia, and the United States in turn imposed restrictions on aid to oil-rich Azerbaijan. The Armenian-American lobby, the Armenian Assembly of America, with 7,000 members and a budget of $2.5 million, has fought for increased U.S. aid to Armenia and for blocking assistance to Azerbaijan.

The second issue is condemnation of Turkey for its alleged genocide of 1.5 million Armenians during World War I. Armenian-Americans have pressed for a congressional resolution condemning Turkey and have mobilized considerable support in Congress. Particularly important is the Armenian-American community in southern California; Armenian-Americans make up about 20 percent of the population of the Twenty-Seventh Congressional District there. Although Armenian-Americans are often Republicans, they have been heavily courted by Democratic state senator Adam Schiff, who challenged incumbent Republican James Rogan in 2000. Rogan was facing a tough battle as a result of his role as a manager of the impeachment of Bill Clinton in the House.

The Rogan-Schiff election was the most expensive in the history of the House of Representatives, with each candidate spending about $5 million. Both candidates heavily courted the large Armenian-American bloc. But Schiff had two key advantages over Rogan: First, he had been more active in Armenian issues than Rogan had. Second, when Turkey threatened reprisals against the United States if the resolution passed—including refusing to let the United States use Turkish air space for flights over Iraq and canceling defense contracts with U.S. firms—Republican leaders in Congress refused to bring the Armenian resolution to the House floor. Rogan protested but Schiff used the issue in the campaign—with perhaps enough persuasion to tip this very close election to the Democrats.[41]

Turkish groups have been buffeted by the strong alliances between pro-Israeli forces and Turkey's historic antagonists, the Greeks and the

Armenians. But recently Turkey, even though its population is 99 percent Muslim, has forged its own links with American Jews. Turkey and Israel have military links, because both fear Syria (a common neighbor), Iraq, and Iran. In 1997 the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League presented Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz with its Distinguished Statesman Award. Yilmaz also met with leaders of AIPAC and the American Jewish Committee.[42] Recently the ties between Turkish-Americans and Jewish-Americans have frayed a bit, as Jewish groups have strengthened ties with Azerbaijan. An overwhelmingly Muslim nation, Azerbaijan has particularly warm relations with Israel.

African-Americans

African-Americans, like Latinos, traditionally have been more concerned with domestic economic issues than with foreign policy concerns. Most African-Americans cannot trace their roots to a specific African country. Until the 1960s African-American participation in politics was restricted, both by law and by socioeconomic status. There were few African-Americans in Congress, especially on the foreign policy committees, or in the Foreign Service. African-Americans contribute little money to campaigns and electorally they have been strongly tied to the Democratic Party, thus cutting off lobbying activities to Republican presidents and legislators. African-American activity on foreign policy heightened over the ending of the apartheid system of racial separation in South Africa.

The South Africa issue united African-Americans. President Ronald Reagan ultimately agreed in 1985 to accept sanctions against the South African government, pushed in that direction by public opinion, a mobilized African-American community, and a supportive Congress. The congressional Black Caucus has taken firm stands on sending U.S. troops to Somalia, lifting the ban on Haitian immigrants infected with the AIDS virus, and pushing the United States to restore ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to office.

Six of the forty-eight members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee are African-American, including the ranking minority members on three of the six subcommittees (International Operations and Human Rights, Europe, and Africa). African-Americans increasingly have held key positions on foreign policy in the executive branch, including current Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice.

Immigration from the Carribean, especially from Haiti, has changed the dynamic of black involvement in foreign policy. Haitian immigrants in southern Florida have mobilized politically, winning a majority of seats on the city council and the mayoralty in north Miami. Haitians took strong exception to Cuban-American demands that Elian Gonzalez be allowed to remain in the United States, charging that many refugees from Haiti were

turned away. The immigrants have sometimes felt that African-American politicians are not receptive to their needs, prompting an unsuccessful primary challenge in 2000 to Rep. Major R. Owens, D-N.Y., by a Jamaican-born city council member.[43]

Asian-Americans

Asian-Americans are the second fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, constituting 3.7 percent of the population.[44] Yet Asian-Americans have not been prominent in political life. Because most immigrants have not become citizens, their participation rate is substantially lower than that of other ethnic groups. There are just eight Asian-American members of Congress, six in the House and two in the Senate (both from Hawaii). The first Asian-American governor is Washington's Gary Locke.

Tensions between Japanese-Americans and Chinese-Americans stem from Japan's occupation of China during World War II. Vietnamese immigrants bear grudges against Cambodians, and Hindus and Muslims from South Asia have long-standing quarrels.[45]

Asian-Americans usually vote Republican, although Japanese-Americans are an exception. Many Asian-Americans share the GOP's priorities of family values and anti-Communism. But in 2000 Asian-Americans voted for Gore over Bush by a margin of 55 percent to 41 percent, perhaps upset over the Republicans' restrictive immigration policies.[46]

In 1994 Asian-Americans in Congress formed the Asian Pacific Caucus, admitting members without regard to race or ethnicity. Yet only one Asian-American member, the nonvoting delegate from American Samoa, serves on either the House or Senate foreign policy committee.

As with many ethnic groups, Asian-Americans are becoming more active. Asian-Americans raised a lot of money for the Clinton campaign in 1996 and are pushing for increased registration and turnout, especially in California. Yet Asian-American donations to congressional candidates have been small. The 80-20 political action committee raised $266,000 in 2000, but it donated only $500 to candidates for office, split between three Asian-American Democrats and two Anglo Republicans. Altogether three Asian-American political action committees (PACs) donated $4,131 to House candidates, most of it going to Mike Honda and David Wu, successful Democratic candidates. The Committee of 100, an antidiscrimination organization patterned after B'nai B'rith, commissioned a poll in 2001 and reported that about 70 percent of Americans hold some negative stereotypes about Chinese-Americans, limiting Chinese-Americans' political influence.[47]

The Indian-American population tripled from 1980 to 1997 and Indian-Americans have become increasingly involved in politics. Indian-Americans have the highest income of any ethnic group in the United States, yet they have not been active in politics until recently. There are no

Indian-American members of Congress—and only one Indian-American state legislator—but there is a congressional caucus on India and Indian-Americans with more than one hundred members, mostly Democrats. To combat the growing influence by Indian-Americans, Pakistani-Americans raised $50,000 for Hillary Rodham Clinton in her 2000 campaign.[48]

Are Ethnic Politics Dangerous?

Former senator Charles McC. Mathias Jr., R-Md., worried that ethnic politics might make it difficult for the nation to speak with one voice on foreign policy:

> Factions among us lead the nation toward excessive foreign attachments or animosities. Even if the groups were balanced—if Turkish-Americans equaled Greek-Americans or Arab-Americans equaled Jewish-Americans—the result would not necessarily be a sound, cohesive foreign policy because the national interest is not simply the sum of our special interest and attachments . . . ethnic politics, carried as they often have been to excess, have proven harmful to the national interest.[49]

Pro-Israel groups usually place intense constituency pressure on legislators who make either anti-Israel or pro-Arab statements. Pro-Israel political action committee contributions rose from $2,450 in 1976 to $8.7 million in 1990—a higher figure than that for the largest domestic PAC, the realtors. In the 2000 election pro-Israel PAC contributions fell back to $1,907,000, still more than 10 times as much as Arab-American or Muslim-American PACs gave ($160,000). Virtually every senator and most members of the House have received support from pro-Israel PACs.[50]

Even though ethnic lobbies do not stand to benefit financially from a foreign policy that suits their preferences, many Americans are simply so skeptical of the role of money in politics that they will worry that something is not right. Legislators' support for foreign policy initiatives might be seen as open to influence from campaign contributions.

Although 61 percent of Americans believe it is acceptable for American Jews to contribute money to Israel, almost 40 percent of Americans believe that Israel has too much power in America. Yet Americans don't believe that *American Jews* have too much power: Most Americans believe that Jews have the "right amount" of power, with just 10 percent saying that Jews have "too much power." In 1984 (the last time the question was asked), 29 percent of Americans said that American Jews were more loyal to Israel than to the United States, while in 1998, 60 percent said that Arab-Americans are more loyal to Arab countries.[51]

Campaign contributions by Asian-Americans became a source of contention in the 1996 elections. Where did the money come from—Asian-Americans or Asians? What did campaign contributors want? Were the funds donated to promote good government or to buy influence for foreign interests? Asian-Americans reportedly gave $10 million or more in 1996, mostly to Democrats and especially to President Clinton. Asian-American contributions came under scrutiny when the public learned after the 1996 elections that at least $1.2 million of the donations to the Democratic National Committee (DNC) were improper. The DNC's chief fund-raiser among Asian-Americans, John Huang, appeared to have promised face-to-face meetings with the president for large contributors.[52]

James Riady, of the Indonesian conglomerate Lippo Group, made substantial contributions to the DNC and met with the president in the Oval Office six times. DNC official Huang was previously U.S. chief of the Lippo Group. Other contributors included Buddhist nuns from a Taiwan-based order who wrote checks for $140,000 at a luncheon with Vice President Al Gore. And it was alleged, though not documented, that the Chinese government tried to funnel contributions to the DNC in 1996.[53]

Conclusion

Americans worry about foreign influence in domestic politics. We have distinguished between campaign contributions and lobbying by foreign agents and governments and donations and pressures from U.S. companies with interests abroad. Our laws reflect this distinction. Yet could we have drawn the line too sharply?

One test of what constitutes an American interest, though hardly an ethical one, is what works. Perhaps there is no moral resolution to the problem of money in politics, but only a recognition that tactics that prove too heavy-handed may backfire. Pro-Israel groups were buffeted by charges that they had inappropriately mixed lobbying with fund-raising.

Charges of undue influence seem to have limited the money ethnic interests give to candidates. Now the key question seems to be how to distribute funds. Pro-Israel groups have long been associated with the Democratic Party, because Jews are among the most loyal parts of the Democratic constituency. In 2000 pro-Israel groups gave 59 percent of their contributions to the Democratic Party. Although pro-Arab groups endorsed Bush in 2000, their PACs are even more tilted toward Democrats—especially African-American Democrats (who have often been critical of Israel) but even to Jewish legislators in key positions on Capitol Hill. Even Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman, R-N.Y., former chair of the House International Relations Committee and a supporter of Israel's right wing, received $1,000 from one pro-Arab PAC (see note 49). Most other ethnic groups also favor the Democrats; Cuban-Americans are the exception.

Pro-Israel and anti-Castro groups depend on the support of public opinion and the moral force of their arguments to prod policymakers to back their causes. But as Cuban-American groups have discovered, antipathy

toward the Cuban regime seems to have peaked—and the Elian Gonzalez case may have permanently damaged their cause. The pro-Israel lobby benefits from the unpopularity of its opposition. Americans now expect the Castro regime to fade away, but they are less sanguine about peace in the Middle East. Even so, there is little reason to believe that the interests in foreign policy will be restricted to moral pleadings and ethnic groups as we enter the twenty-first century. Foreign policy resembles domestic policy now more than ever. The consensus on what U.S. policy should be has evaporated and with it the argument that our international relations have a distinctive moral foundation.

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