

to be very sophisticated or consistent in comparison to the elite public; furthermore, most Americans correctly sense that they tend to be very pragmatic, reflecting more moderate and centrist ideological orientations. In other words, the mass public acts as a pragmatic majority while the elite public often operates as the moral minority.²⁸

Second, the ideological and foreign policy views of Americans tend to be quite stable compared to their expressions of public opinion. Ideological beliefs do not readily fluctuate; they tend to resist change. This is especially true among members of the elite public. Their ideological beliefs and foreign policy views are formed early in life through the process of political socialization and are based on considerable attention to national and international affairs. Therefore, opinion leaders and members of the attentive public tend to have more knowledge and greater emotional commitment to their views. The pragmatic majority, on the other hand, tends to occupy more centrist positions, while remaining more open and responsive to the ideological and foreign policy appeals of the elite public.

Third, ideology and foreign policy views are consequential in influencing the complex politics of U.S. foreign policy. The ideological and foreign policy views in American society influence the foreign policy process in four ways: they affect public opinion, influence the electoral process and voters' choices, affect the activity of groups and social movements in domestic politics, and are passed on to newer generations of Americans through the socialization process. In other words, the ideological and foreign policy views of Americans set the broad boundaries within which the complex politics of U.S. foreign policy operate.

A focus on ideology and foreign policy views enables one to understand how the national interest is defined throughout American society and government. Government leaders in power always argue that their policies promote the national interests of the United States. However, the national interest is clearly a subjective concept, for different people define the national interest differently. Therefore, the national interest varies over time and its character at any one point depends on which ideological beliefs and foreign policy views are prevalent within society and government. The national interest and the making of U.S. foreign policy, in other words, are influenced heavily by the power of ideas—that is, the power of the ideological and foreign policy views held by the elite and mass publics. This has been a major theme running throughout part II of this book in explaining continuity and change, presidential governance, and the tension between national security and democracy within the government and the policymaking process; and it sets the stage from which domestic politics impacts the making of U.S. foreign policy as well. Thus, understanding the evolution of the ideological and foreign policy views of Americans throughout history is crucial for understanding how U.S. foreign policy is made.

The ideological and foreign policy views of Americans have gone through two major phases since the end of World War II. As Ole Holsti and James Rosenau make clear in *American Leadership in World Affairs*, the cold war years represented a time period of foreign policy consensus throughout America, which was replaced by diverse and competing foreign policy views in the post-Vietnam War years. Likewise, according to Godfrey Hodgson in *America in Our Time*, the cold

war years were also a time of ideological consensus throughout America, which was replaced by ideological fragmentation in the post-Vietnam War years.²⁹ In short, two stages have characterized the post-World War II era:

1. An ideological and foreign policy consensus prevailed during the cold war years;
2. An increase in ideological and foreign policy diversity has occurred during the post-Vietnam War years.

The Cold War Years of Consensus

The cold war years led to the development of an ideological and foreign policy consensus throughout American society and government, an extraordinary time in American history. This consensual view fostered the rise of presidential power, the expansion of the foreign policy bureaucracy, the development of an acquiescent Congress, and the rise of a national security ethos and free market ethos throughout government and society. It also set the context for understanding the reinforcing role that public opinion and domestic politics played throughout the cold war years in the making of U.S. foreign policy.

The Rise of Foreign Policy Anticommunism. Holsti and Rosenau argue that most Americans in government and society shared a similar foreign policy view during the cold war years, which they call **cold war internationalism**. Cold war internationalists saw a conflict-ridden, bipolar world that pitted the Soviet Union and communism against America and democracy. The Soviet Union was seen as an ambitious, aggressive, expansionist empire, leading a strong and patient group of communist allies toward a revolutionary goal: imposing a Moscow-dominated imperial system throughout the world. The United States, in contrast, was seen as the civilized and benevolent leader of democracy and prosperity throughout the so-called "free world." In a world where victory for one side was seen as defeat for the other, the assumed threat to American national security posed by the Soviet Union and communism became the predominant concern of American policy-makers. It was this view of the world that laid the basis for the national security ethos to thrive during the cold war years. Therefore, U.S. foreign policy revolved around a strategy of containment of Soviet expansionism through the development, threat, and use of force around the world.

This anticommunist consensus did not develop overnight, but evolved over time. The cold war beliefs evolved over three phases. First, a great debate took place over the future of U.S. foreign policy during the late 1940s in which the cold war internationalist perspective prevailed. Second, cold war internationalism and the policy of containment were challenged by the rise of McCarthyism and the political right during the early 1950s. Finally, an anticommunist consensus in U.S. foreign policy coalesced by the mid-1950s and reigned until the mid-1960s.³⁰ These domestic patterns discussed below demonstrate the lead role of the elite public as well as the importance of mass public support, for it is the dynamic interaction between the two publics that determines which beliefs prevail in the making of U.S. foreign policy.