

# Why Washington Doesn't Debate Grand Strategy

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## Abstract

Debate over grand strategy is nearly absent in US politics. Relative military power, over time, generated bipartisan support for primacy, a grand strategy that sees global US military dominance as the basis for US security. The elite consensus in favor of primacy saps political demand for critical analysis of it or consideration of alternative grand strategies. Because Washington think tank analysts and public intellectuals mostly answer to political masters, they have no incentive to buck the conventional line and question primacy. They focus on operational questions about how to implement primacy, unlike academic analysts, who debate the merits of alternative grand strategies. In this article we demonstrate the limits of debate about grand strategy in US politics and explain this absence of debate. We also explain why think tank analysts, more than academics, conform to this consensus and conclude by considering implications for analysts in both academia and Washington.

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The vast majority of US foreign policy makers are devotees of *primacy*, a grand strategy that sees global US military exertions—alliances, foreign bases, patrols, military training, regular wars, and continual airstrikes—as the only guarantee of national security, global stability, and free trade. Foreign policy debate in Washington, when it exists, mostly concerns how to implement primacy rather than alternative grand strategies. This article explains why the foreign policy establishment tends to

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avoid debating strategic ends and focuses instead on means. We call that tendency the *operational mind-set*.<sup>1</sup>

Because primacy serves the interests of US political leaders, there is little demand for arguments questioning it. Ambitious analysts avoid evaluating strategy and focus instead on operational analysis. The stream of books, papers, reports, panel discussions, testimony, televised arguments, and the like from government agencies, Congress, bipartisan commissions, and think tanks gives the impression that US foreign policy is the result of rigorous argumentation occurring in a true marketplace of ideas. However, policy makers use social science, including the shallow sort Washington produces, more to legitimize policy than to form beliefs about which policy to pursue. The sheen of independent expertise heightens the appeal of a particular policy and protects it from dissent. Left unevaluated, primacy has gained adherents and become more like an article of faith one invokes rather than an idea one evaluates.

It is naïve to expect think tanks to evaluate grand strategy absent demand from political patrons. True strategic debate in Washington would require a change in consensus politics. Because that is currently unlikely, if academics do not interrogate the assumptions underlying US foreign policy, no one will. Doing so will not produce immediate results. Policy makers tend to ignore academia, not because it is considered a “cult of irrelevance,” meaning esoteric subject matter and complex methods, but because of academics’ disinclination to tell policy makers only what they want to hear.<sup>2</sup> Academia should reward policy relevance but understand that “relevance” often means being a naysayer.

In this article, we first show the dearth of debate in Washington about grand strategy. Then, we explain this absence of debate and how primacy achieved dominance. Next, we discuss the politics that encourage think tank analysts, more than academics, to conform to the prevailing consensus. In conclusion, we explore what the argument suggests for analysts in both academia and Washington.

## **The Missing Debate**

The US foreign policy establishment—the group of people typically appointed to security posts in the federal government, writing for the major opinion pages, and hired by most prominent think tanks—barely debates grand strategy.<sup>3</sup> This claim may be surprising given the vast attention Washington pays to foreign policy and the many people there

who analyze it for a living. Certainly foreign policy analysts produce many arguments, and the think tank industry is healthy and growing. Several large US think tanks dealing with foreign policy opened in the last decade, while the previously existing ones grew substantially.<sup>4</sup> (In 2011, think tanks that included foreign policy departments spent over \$1.2 billion, an increase of approximately 40 percent over the decade, adjusting for inflation.<sup>5</sup>) In theory, think tanks function as universities without students, places where intellectuals freely research public policy and propose ways to improve it. In what might be termed the *marketplace of ideas view*, political leaders and the interested public evaluate and choose among such proposals.<sup>6</sup> In this view, debate exposes poor ideas and selects the best, as markets do with products.

The usual complaint about the Washington foreign policy debate is that it is excessive and overly partisan, not that it is insufficient. Pundits and politicians frequently call for a more bipartisan foreign policy, an end to politics beyond the water's edge. They bemoan the loss of the Cold War strategic consensus around containment. Even political scientists who understand that the Cold War actually included plenty of partisan division about foreign policy and the meaning of containment still tend to lament the increased partisanship in US foreign policy since the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> Anyone watching cable news or reading major opinion pages knows that each source features considerable, often bitter, debate about foreign policy decisions.

Why worry about the limits of a debate that is so heated and widely lamented? The answer is that the rancor of arguments tells us little about their stakes. Despite the partisanship infusing Washington's foreign policy debate and the expansion of think tanks participating in it, shared assumptions narrow the disputed terrain. Debate focuses on how to enact the goals of the grand strategy of primacy, not their wisdom. The debate is more about operational analysis than grand strategy.

*Operational analysis* considers how to best implement goals without evaluating the goals themselves—taking objectives as given.<sup>8</sup> An operational mind-set means doing that all the time. It is the approach of a passenger riding shotgun who studies the map to find the ideal route, adjusts the engine if need be, and always accepts the destination without protest. There is nothing inherently wrong with that approach. Even opponents of government programs should want them to run more efficiently.<sup>9</sup> The problem occurs when operational thinking becomes a

widespread habit that occurs at the expense of—or masquerades as—an evaluative mind-set, where analysts ask whether the ideas animating policies, even sacred ones, are sound.<sup>10</sup> Unexamined strategic goals can become a kind of operational code or guiding ideology, their wisdom taken for granted.<sup>11</sup>

Strategy is logic for a choice among options; it prioritizes. Strategy is “grand” when it aims to guide other foreign policy goals and decisions. Those subsidiary goals, in theory, steer diplomatic goals and military strategy, which in turn drive agency choices, down to the smallest decisions. Grand strategies are general theories of how states create security for themselves. Grand strategy is unavoidable and occurs whenever states have security policies informed by causal ideas, which is virtually always. The permanence of competing parties and goals, however, ensures that grand strategy is never fully realized. It is particularly difficult to achieve without pressing dangers to unify people, and the degree of realization varies across and within states.

Academics—generally within the security or international relations fields of political science—weigh competing grand strategies, like selective engagement, restraint, and primacy, both explicitly and by evaluating their underlying theoretical claims.<sup>12</sup> Political scientists also occasionally study operational issues. Analysts within the foreign policy establishment, by contrast, focus on operational questions. They do produce occasional writing and conferences on grand strategy but rarely evaluate primacy. They tend instead to reify it, often in the guise of new buzzwords and murky geopolitical analysis.

### **Primacy Ascends**

In current US foreign policy, primacy, also known as “liberal hegemony,” consists of an interlocking set of beliefs.<sup>13</sup> One is that US leadership is crucial to the maintenance of “the global order,” which refers generally to peace among great powers, international commerce, and state cooperation through international organizations.<sup>14</sup> A second belief is that US leadership largely comprises military commitments—allies, overseas bases, naval patrols, and threats or acts of war.<sup>15</sup> The reasoning is generally that US military power deters aggression, limiting the need for states to defend themselves, preventing security dilemmas: self-reinforcing dynamics of mutual alarm.<sup>16</sup> US military power therefore functions like a global police force, averting the need for states to secure

themselves. Because of these beliefs, primacy places a high value on allies, and its adherents support the permanence of US defense alliances like NATO, often support their expansion, and generally push for new alliances when they perceive new threats.<sup>17</sup>

Primacy's advocates see many threats to the United States. They worry about the credibility of the many promises the United States makes to defend allies. They fear proliferation of weapons technology, especially nuclear weapons.<sup>18</sup> Primacists tend to argue that internal conditions abroad (foreign civil wars, failed states, or illiberal governments) can easily undermine US global leadership, creating danger. These fears translate into heavy work for the US national security establishment. So, primacists tend to favor high military spending and regular uses of force—patrols, military-to-military training, deployments of forces, commitments to defend nations, or acts of war.

Primacy, in other words, is conducive to war.<sup>19</sup> Its expansive view of threats creates a grab bag of reasons to support proposed wars or military strikes and few arguments for peace. Liberal internationalists, the Democratic primacists, and the neoconservatives and hawkish nationalists comprising the Republican cohort typically offer overlapping but differing rationales for wars. For example, in advocating the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Republican primacists emphasized the need to demonstrate US credibility, pro-democracy arguments, and preventive-war logic of stopping terrorists from getting nuclear weapons, while liberal internationalists emphasized nonproliferation concerns and the Saddam Hussein regime's violation of international law and humanitarian abuses.<sup>20</sup> Most recent US wars produced a similar pattern of complementary rationales.

Primacists do not agree on everything. The Republican variety mostly sees international institutions, especially the United Nations, as worse than useless in that they can impede US activism.<sup>21</sup> Liberal internationalists believe in at least the appearance of cooperation with international institutions, mainly because the seal of multilateral approval makes the exercise of US power more palatable abroad.<sup>22</sup> Right-leaning primacists are more skeptical of humanitarian rationales for wars but usually support the same wars for other reasons.

Partisanship highlights these narrow areas of disagreement among primacists, drawing attention away from their large realm of agreement. While foreign policy elites debated primacy's tenets early in the Cold War, it has increasingly become a bipartisan ethos. Primacy reigns at the

major US think tanks, both right- and left-leaning.<sup>23</sup> Today it is hard to imagine how a president could fill the national security bureaucracy with non-primacist appointees, unless he or she was willing to rely on inexperienced academics.

Because primacy is a hawkish grand strategy, its dominance in Washington limits analysis of US war goals. In the last two decades at least, wars have commenced without much debate in the foreign policy establishment. Even the decision to invade Iraq, easily the most controversial war in recent decades, generated only limited debate. Though a majority of House Democrats and 21 of 50 Democratic senators voted against the resolution to use force in October 2002, their objections focused more on timing and tactics—the imminence of the threat, the strength of war plans, and the danger of taking attention from the war in Afghanistan—than on the broader wisdom of occupying Iraq and overthrowing its government.<sup>24</sup>

The George W. Bush administration debated how to market the war but not whether to have it.<sup>25</sup> Few of the principals can even say when that decision occurred.<sup>26</sup> According to Bob Woodward, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell hoped to dissuade the president from war but never actually opposed it.<sup>27</sup> The intelligence community raised doubts about the quality of intelligence on Iraq's arsenal and the difficulties of achieving postwar stability. President Bush and his top advisors seem to have taken these warnings mostly as a threat to their effort to win support for war.<sup>28</sup> The same goes for the cautiously antiwar statements offered by officials from the George H.W. Bush administration, most notably Brent Scowcroft, the former national security advisor. There is no evidence that George W. Bush administration officials debated the merits of these claims.<sup>29</sup>

Think tank analysts and pundits were not much better. Prior to the invasion, their focus was mostly how to make war and the postwar plan. One study showed that only 4 percent of the guests appearing on the nightly news to discuss the potential war during the early weeks of February 2003 expressed any skepticism about its prudence.<sup>30</sup> The *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page editor, Paul Gigot, dismissed the relevance of the antiwar views expressed by Cato Institute scholars, suggesting they represent “four or five people in a phone booth.”<sup>31</sup> That is a reasonable description of how primacy's critics feel in Washington.

Over the last decade, the wars, along with economic slowdown and debt, made the foreign policy establishment more dovish, especially

about occupational wars.<sup>32</sup> But that shift came without much strategic reevaluation. Only when the public and major Democratic politicians turned against the wars did left-leaning think tanks begin openly to support their end. Even then, there were precious few efforts to revisit the rationales that had sustained the wars. The establishment now pursues the same broad set of goals with less tolerance for risk in their pursuit. Recent debates about Syria, Yemen, and Ukraine concern degrees of activism, whether to go from sanctions to lethal aid to bombing. No one in or near power publicly suggests that US interests in these places are insufficient to warrant much effort.

For example, Washington's debate about the 2011 US bombing campaign in Libya was quiet and narrow, despite the rather incredible claims that the administration and other war backers made: that war would produce liberal democracy in Libya and enhance its prospects in the region by convincing other tyrants to tolerate protest or revolutionary movements.<sup>33</sup> The administration also made dubious claims about the vast humanitarian value of the intervention.<sup>34</sup> Congress paid virtually no attention to the war's rationale. Think tanks focused more on the conduct of the war and the organization of Libya in its aftermath than on its wisdom. Hardly anyone outside academia suggested that Muammar Qaddafi's fall was likely to bring long-term instability.<sup>35</sup> Libya's descent toward chaos since the war has not stopped its advocates from celebrating their wisdom and urging similar tactics in Syria.<sup>36</sup>

### **Current Trends: More of the Same**

Two recent developments show the strength of the establishment consensus. First, Republican leaders, especially those who ran for president, vociferously criticized the Obama administration's foreign policy for being weak yet proposed no clear alternative. An example is the recent book by former Vice President Dick Cheney and his daughter Liz.<sup>37</sup> After three lengthy chapters attacking the Obama administration for "retreating" or "appeasing" on defense policy, the Cheneys' conclusion suggests no new wars, no new theaters for existing wars, and no new military alliances. They excoriate the Iran nuclear weapons deal but argue for a better one. They portray ISIS (the Islamic State) as a cataclysmic threat in rapid advance, but they do not call for regular US ground forces to directly fight it. Their great concern about Russia's uncontained aggression leads them to propose doing more of what is being done: more NATO

exercises, sanctions, and aid to Ukraine. Former presidential candidates like Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, and Ted Cruz took similar lines.

The problem for Republicans is that the Obama administration subscribes to primacy, albeit with a partial dissent on the importance of credibility.<sup>38</sup> The administration seems to support most current alliances, has increased efforts to counter Russia and China, and is making war, with special operations forces, conventional airpower, or drone strikes, in seven countries. Republicans have little room to show their relative hawkishness beyond proposing larger deployments of US ground forces, which is electorally dangerous, and spending more on defense. So for all their rhetorical assaults on the Obama's administration's foreign policies, conventional Republicans propose doing more of the same, with more tough talk.

The second example is the reaction to Donald Trump's presidential campaign. Trump deviated to a limited extent from the primacy consensus by questioning the value of NATO and suggesting that South Korea and Japan acquiring nuclear weapons might reduce the US defense burden. That seemed to have helped him with the Republican electorate, which, as noted, does not share the establishment's belief in primacy. But Trump's statements caused apoplexy among both the liberal internationalist and neoconservative bands of primacists.<sup>39</sup> Their unified opposition to Trump's foreign policy views reflects their unified belief in primacy.

## **How Primacy Achieved Dominance**

US relative power explains why primacy rules in Washington. Relative power comes from military capability, wealth, and geographic advantage. These factors give the United States the ability to adopt ambitious objectives abroad. They also keep the US public remote from the consequences of US security policy and thus generally disinterested. This circumstance permits political leaders to pursue primacy without much fear of electoral consequence.<sup>40</sup> US power also encourages American political leaders to embrace the global military role that primacy justifies. Washington's foreign policy analysts accept these goals because of professional incentives and the socialization they produce over time. Before elaborating on that explanation, we reject two others. One is that primacy became the nation's grand strategy by winning intellectual battles. The second is that primacy reflects democratic will.



One argument for primacy's dominance in Washington is that it won out in a reasoned debate. Peter Feaver remarks, "Radical critiques of American foreign policy are known and given lots of air time proportional to their influence. You can't swing a dead cat without hearing a serious critique of American foreign policy at an academic conference, for example. These views are known, considered, and rejected."<sup>41</sup>

That view, where Washington rejects alternatives to primacy after giving them a fair shake, predicts that its advocates rely on a solid intellectual case. If that is so, they might build on well-established international relations scholarship and history. Or finding hostile theory and scholarship, primacy's backers would explain the flaws that cause them to reject it, essentially building up a theoretical alternative. Neither occurs.

International relations scholarship rarely produces clear conclusions. One can find support for competing grand strategies by picking on one set of articles or another. Still, on balance, primacy's core arguments rest on poor theoretical footing. The emphasis on alliances, for example, hinges on several doubtful assumptions. One is that states lacking a US alliance will generally kowtow to more powerful ones—*bandwagoning*, in international relations jargon—allowing aggressors to gather strength and ambition, as occurred with Nazi Germany. A second assumption is that if states do not "bandwagon" and instead work to defend themselves by balancing stronger power, danger will result, either because the balancing among rivals creates mutual fear conducive to war or because other states' independence undermines US leadership. International relations scholarship, however, suggests that states, especially strong ones, often balance power; that most balances are stable, particularly where geography makes borders more defensible; and that few foreign wars greatly impact the United States.<sup>42</sup>

Primacy's insistence that US military alliances impede nuclear weapons proliferation casts aside well-established arguments: that US military presence and power encourage proliferation among threatened states and that nuclear weapons can create mutual deterrence conducive to peace.<sup>43</sup> The same goes for primacists' claim that US military presence enables global trade. The argument implies without basis that trade is brittle or easily disrupted and that other states are unlikely to police their own trade if the US Navy does not.<sup>44</sup> Primacists also argue that a global US military presence caused the decline of war among states in recent decades.<sup>45</sup> Prominent academic studies attribute the current

era of relative peace to other causes.<sup>46</sup> Even the theories of liberal and capitalist peace, which might seem to better accommodate primacists' claims, do not argue that US military exertions abroad generally spread liberal or capitalist systems.<sup>47</sup> Scholarship suggests, rather, that US military actions are often counterproductive to those ends.<sup>48</sup>

Doubtful hypotheses also inform the establishment take on the threats energizing primacy. Credibility fears follow from the idea that coercive threats are difficult to uphold and that reputations for acting on them travel easily across time and space. Scholarship on the matter suggests instead that the credibility of threats is more contextual: credibility depends on the interests and military power of the state making threats.<sup>49</sup> Primacy's fear of disordered states turns on the belief that they produce international terrorism and other ills. But few failed states produce these troubles.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, primacy's enthusiasm for trying to repair such states often means downplaying a threat with a substantial historical pedigree: that of nationalism and other identity politics conducive to violent resistance against occupiers.<sup>51</sup>

We cannot exhaustively catalog all of primacy's flaws or debate the rare academics who defend it using international relations literature.<sup>52</sup> The point here is to exemplify weakness in the case for primacy. That helps explain the academic crowd in range of Feaver's swinging dead cat. Primacy's flaws are the big reason why international relations scholars, especially those who study security, tend to critique it.<sup>53</sup>

Academics' dovish take on war and defense spending suggests their skepticism about primacy. In 2007, roughly 80 percent of academics in the international relations field reported having opposed the war in Iraq at its outset.<sup>54</sup> Even if the war's course generated some false reporting, the true number is surely far higher than in the establishment, where initial opposition was rare. The 2009 Afghanistan surge was probably equally unpopular in academia. Columbia University professor Jack Snyder remarked then that "pretty much everyone [in the academy] thinks that the conditions in Afghanistan are terrible, that the political situation is terrible, and thus that the conditions for successful counterinsurgency and state-building are inauspicious."<sup>55</sup> A 2004–2005 survey of international relations scholars asked, "Do you think that the United States should increase its spending on national defense, keep it about the same, or cut it back?" Just short of half—49 percent—answered, "Cut," while 41 percent chose, "Keep same." Only 10 percent answered, "Increase."<sup>56</sup> When

the researchers asked the question again in 2008–2009, 64 percent said, “Cut” and 30 percent chose, “Keep the same”; this time, only 6 percent called for an increase.<sup>57</sup> On taking office in 2009, Barack Obama, the most liberal American president in at least 30 years, proceeded to increase military spending that had nearly doubled in the previous decade.<sup>58</sup> Little objection came from the foreign policy establishment.

Some will object that liberal politics, not knowledge, turns academics against primacy. There is likely some truth in this, but liberalism, at least in the sense of supporting Democrats, does not preclude supporting primacy. Democratic foreign policy elites, after all, typically embrace primacy’s liberal internationalist variant. The same is true of many academics. Also, in the American international relations field, the dominant academic critique of primacy comes from realism. Realism grew in opposition to legalist or missionary approaches to foreign policy promoted by Wilsonian progressives. It travelled historically with the political right. That link has weakened, but still many prominent realists lean right politically, albeit idiosyncratically. Despite some variation, primacy is unpopular with academics mostly because it is a set of bad ideas.

Had primacy succeeded on its intellectual merits in spite of scholarly criticism, its establishment advocates would make its theoretical case themselves, or at least cite those that do. Instead, they ignore the problem. If leading politicians are aware of primacy’s theoretical failing, they do a good job pretending otherwise. Even think tank analysts, many of whom hold advanced international relations degrees, mostly avoid engaging academic criticism of primacy. If they mention alternative grand strategies, it is to dismiss straw man versions in a few sentences, often by labeling them politically irrelevant.<sup>59</sup> Few cite even the academic works taking their side.<sup>60</sup> Many policy makers and think tank scholars appear to be unaware that they employ theories about international politics; some even deny having a theory.<sup>61</sup> Primacy’s theoretical weakness does not concern its advocates in Washington.

### **General Public versus Elites**

The democratic explanation for primacy’s dominance also lacks support. According to a 2014 Chicago Council on Global Affairs study, the public is far less enthusiastic about taking an “active” role in global affairs and global leadership than elites.<sup>62</sup> That divide holds across partisan lines. There is a substantial gap between elites identifying as Democrat,

Republican, or Independent and the public for each group. Similarly, elites are more supportive of using force to defend allies and long-term US military bases and more likely to agree that those garrisons produce stability.<sup>63</sup> Various studies show that the public is historically less hawkish on issues of war and defense spending than elites.<sup>64</sup>

Recent wars also reflect the divide. A November 2009 Pew poll, taken just before the president announced the surge of US troops in Afghanistan, found that 32 percent of the American public wanted more US troops in Afghanistan, and 40 percent wanted to decrease the troop presence.<sup>65</sup> In a companion poll, Pew found that 50 percent of Council on Foreign Relations members wanted a troop increase and 24 percent wanted a decrease.<sup>66</sup> In 2014, the Chicago Council found even wider gaps between foreign policy elites and the public on the question of keeping troops in Afghanistan.<sup>67</sup> Similar dynamics—a foreign policy elite pushing a reluctant public to support military escalation—occurred in recent years with Libya and Syria.<sup>68</sup>

These results suggest that the foreign policy establishment pushes the public toward primacy, not the other way.<sup>69</sup> A more accurate explanation for primacy's success is that it rationalizes policies that leaders already support. Relative power, especially the military capability to act abroad, allows those policies and creates constituencies that support them—a set of beneficiaries who support primacy. Power and geography also keep the costs of the policies low and distributed enough so that the public is disinterested, giving leaders a relatively free hand.

Taking the cost side first, geography and the wealth to generate military power insulate the United States from the consequences of security policy, including war. The public lacks incentive to closely monitor foreign policy. It remains rationally ignorant.<sup>70</sup> Unlike pocketbook issues, foreign policy questions are rarely salient: they generally rank low among voters' concerns and contribute little to their voting decisions. So politicians seldom have strong electoral reasons to cater to voters' foreign policy views.<sup>71</sup> Voters are more dovish than foreign policy elites for the same reasons. They are mostly too disinterested to listen to the establishment's hawkish tenets. For most Americans, the only direct cost of foreign policy fiascoes is marginally higher tax rates and unsettling newscasts. Since the draft ended, war kills "only" the volunteer military and foreigners.<sup>72</sup> By contrast, for Europeans living 100 years ago, losing wars potentially meant conquest and its depredations. Even successful

wars could kill off large swaths of young men and consume considerable portions of national wealth.

Wealth creation has reduced the economic burden of US security policy without curtailment of its ambitions. Americans now spend around what they did on defense at the height of the Cold War, in real terms, but the percentage of wealth devoted to that purpose is far lower. It takes less than 4 percent of gross domestic product, which keeps down the tax burden and leaves plenty of funds for other programs. The interest groups associated with low taxes and those programs have less reason to oppose primacy's policies.

### **Primacy Unopposed**

The absence of rivals leaves the United States free to roam.<sup>73</sup> Few states combine the desire and ability to resist US military deployments. True, the military would run into trouble if it invaded China or approached various other hostile coasts.<sup>74</sup> And the price of occupying restive lands has also proved restrictive. Still, opportunities for US military aid outnumber obstacles. Many countries invite US forces in to subsidize their defense. The world never lacks for civil unrest whose victims US forces might protect, and outraged editorialists reliably take up the cause.

These conditions produce a support base for primacy.<sup>75</sup> As is the case with other public policy areas (like farm subsidies) that create diffuse costs and concentrated benefits, a minority of special interests rules a majority of the apathetic.<sup>76</sup> This set of minority interests (that is, the foreign policy establishment) functions as a kind of oligarchy in its domain, but only insofar as its prescribed policies do not concentrate costs that awaken organized opposition. That occurs if defense spending threatens other spending and programs dear to other powerful special interests. Likewise, when wars impose high costs without clear benefit, the public gets engaged and pressures elected leaders to limit or end the war, as occurred eventually with the Vietnam and Iraq wars.<sup>77</sup>

It is a simplification to speak of the foreign policy establishment as a singular entity. There is certainly conflict among its elements. But US power limits that conflict. A lot of interests get their wishes, and the nation, as a result, pursues security objectives so broad that in sum they approach global management.<sup>78</sup> The key actors here can be called the military-industrial-congressional complex: those interests, organizations, and elected officials that share an interest in high military spending.<sup>79</sup>

That includes the military services, whose budgets fund bases and production contracts important in many electoral districts, the companies and unions drawing on those budgets, and the elected officials representing those districts, who usually seek seats on defense committees.<sup>80</sup> Other interests conducive to primacy are lobby groups favoring particular countries, civic groups supporting particular military services, and various research entities, including arms of universities and think tanks that receive military or foreign-government research grants.

Primacy is useful less as a rationale for particular policy goals than as justification for limiting choices among them. US policy makers strain for compromise because they divide power in a system that is open to the influence of diverse interest groups.<sup>81</sup> Senators and representatives fight across party and committee lines to direct policy. The presidency, despite the more dominant role it assumed over the direction of foreign policy during the Cold War, still shares those powers with Congress.<sup>82</sup> The State Department, the intelligence agencies, and the Pentagon compete for power. The Pentagon spreads authority among four military services, unified combatant commands, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

This division of power militates against strategic coherence, especially when threats are limited.<sup>83</sup> By voting for budgets, as they generally must, politicians essentially endorse the whole package, including items of no direct importance to them. In explaining their votes, it is insufficient to simply admit the need for compromise among parochial and bureaucratic agendas. Those arguments may be honest, but they offend the notion that leaders elected by states or districts should serve the national interest, especially in the security realm. That is true especially of presidents, who are elected nationally, of course, but forced by the limits of time and influence to compromise with the various parochial or narrow interests.<sup>84</sup>

Grand strategies, or the simpler versions of them politicians express, can serve that rationalization function. They try to align the various goals within defense budgets into an expression of national interest. In the United States, primacy is especially useful in this regard because it discriminates so little. By justifying activist US military policies virtually anywhere, primacy accommodates a host of agendas. These interests would compete more if the United States had less power. Primacy results from the luxury to avoid choices among programs, dangers, and

regions.<sup>85</sup> It is a pretense of strategy, helping avoid the choices that true strategy entails.

Primacy's popularized story has been the dominant rationale, under various names, with various tweaks, at least since the Cold War's end. Arguably, its reign began when the Truman administration imagined the Soviet Union's containment as a global struggle with communism.<sup>86</sup> Its popularity has risen along with US relative power. As with other successful ideologies, the story's repetition by influential people convinces others, some of whom are or become leaders.

Intellectual dominance also gives primacy social cachet. People in Washington's foreign policy circles adopt it outwardly even if they are not fully convinced, which in turn convinces others or encourages them to act convinced.<sup>87</sup> So primacy's promoters are both those that benefit from power's exercise and those convinced by their story. The groups overlap considerably, especially in the foreign policy establishment. Most of primacy's supporters do not choose to believe in it so much as they absorb it through a combination of ambition, compromise, and socialization.

### **Why Think Tanks Conform to Consensus**

Washington's think tank analysts broadly embrace primacy because they are not independent of the politics they study. The marketplace of ideas view misconstrues power's relationship with social science, especially the sort think tanks produce. Most think tanks exist more to serve power than to guide it.

With relatively weak parties and power divided among branches, agencies and congressional committees, the US government has many points where political leaders—elected and appointed government officials—might seek the advice of outside experts.<sup>88</sup> Leaders seek three major sorts of help from experts: guidance as to what policy goals to pursue, evaluation of alternative means to reach those goals, and validation that helps with marketing policy goals.<sup>89</sup> Think tanks serve in all three roles but tend to emphasize the first, as befits the marketplace of ideas story. But what leaders most often want from outside experts is help with marketing—the imprimatur of scholarly credibility—affirmation in the guise of consultation.<sup>90</sup> Leaders, in other words, rarely want the policy equivalent of architects so much as real-estate brokers.

Some exceptional politicians and officials defy this generalization. And there are times where an election, crisis, or new assignment sends leaders

looking for broad intellectual guidance from independent analysts.<sup>91</sup> There are, however, several reasons why those are the exceptions. First, other leaders, staff, interest groups, and parties compete for the policy guidance role, limiting outsiders' roles. Second, leaders' circumstances generally push them to focus on implementing existing goals rather than identifying new ones. Those in government are often short on time to make the kind of study needed to formulate new directions. And political leaders mostly got where they are by acting on strong beliefs, which are hard to modify.<sup>92</sup>

### **The Lure of Validation**

The nature of the US political system is the third and most important reason why leaders use experts especially for validation. The diffusion of power makes it difficult to form and maintain coalitions of support for policies, especially new ones. Leaders struggle to sell their preferred policies to each other, interest groups, and the public.<sup>93</sup> They can heighten support for a policy by convincing others that it serves not only its sponsors and some narrow set of economic or geographic interests but also the general good. Experts armed with advanced degrees and impressive résumés can credibly claim to speak for the national interest. Their endorsement is especially valuable when they seemingly have no incentive to give it—when their institutional affiliation indicates independence from political authority.

Think tanks have a competitive advantage in performing this function: their balance of independent expertise and subordination to a political agenda.<sup>94</sup> Lobbyists have expertise, but the fact that it is expressly for hire limits the value of their endorsement. Academics may be more impressive scholars, but their profession makes them less attuned to what political leaders want. To be clear, it is not our argument that think tanks will say anything or lack scholarly standards. If their support is obviously for sale, rather than a result of study, they destroy the value they provide to funders. On the other hand, if think tanks were really universities without students, with no obvious policy agenda, few would attract funding.

One senator described this legitimization function this way: “You can find a think tank to buttress any view or position, and then you can give it the aura of legitimacy and credibility by referring to their report.”<sup>95</sup> Rory Stewart, an expert on Afghanistan who opposed the 2009 surge,



describes how this dynamic played out in his consultation with Obama administration officials planning the surge: “It’s like they’re coming in and saying to you, ‘I’m going to drive my car off a cliff. Should I or should I not wear a seatbelt?’ And you say, ‘I don’t think you should drive your car off the cliff.’ And they say, ‘No, no, that bit’s already been decided—the question is whether to wear a seatbelt.’ And you say, ‘Well, you might as well wear a seatbelt.’ And then they say, ‘We’ve consulted with policy expert Rory Stewart and he says . . . .’”<sup>96</sup>

### **Motivations for Operational Mind-Sets**

So far we have described why policy makers seek think tanks’ approval, but not why think tanks play this role. Why are they subordinate to politics? Why not follow academics in evaluating grand strategy? Think tanks’ diversity makes it difficult to generalize about their internal politics. Each has different sources of support. Some seek influence primarily among policy makers, while others court broader audiences. Some follow the direction of a few funders, often foundations or a government agency. Some support a political party; others, an ideology. In recent years, several think tanks, most prominently, the Center for American Progress and Heritage Foundation, organized separate branches for lobbying and supporting candidates. Federally funded research and development corporations (FFRDCs) exist to help elements of the government manage particularly technical issues.<sup>97</sup> The most famous of these, the RAND Corporation, originally served as a home for Air Force scientific advisors and later branched out into other disciplines and government funding sources.

Still, we can identify four factors, active to varying extents in different think tanks, that encourage analysts to adopt the operational mind-set. The first is money. Some analysts profit directly from their views by serving as consultants to defense contractors or lobbyists.<sup>98</sup> They have good reason to go along with policy arguments that benefit their funders. More important are think tanks’ operational funds. Some rely almost entirely on US government funds and require analysts to finance their own projects and pay by winning research contracts. Some think tanks receive considerable funding from major defense contractors.<sup>99</sup>

These funding sources encourage an operational mind-set. One reason is that the funder often asks the research questions. Because of the funder’s function and interests, these are usually operational questions. Because analysts cannot know with certainty who their next funder will

be, they may refrain from criticizing the beliefs, like primacy, held by other potential funders. The result is circumstanced speech, not necessarily dishonesty. Also, think tanks dependent on these funds will be unlikely to hire or reward analysts that question primacy and risk alienating funders.<sup>100</sup> Anyone seeking to be hired as an analyst by a think tank will likely consider several options, meaning that they should consider how their views fit with various think tanks. That uncertainty induces caution.

Foundation grants also create pressures to avoid certain arguments. An example is the mass of foundation support for nonproliferation studies, which probably keeps some from noting the deterrent benefit of nuclear weapons or emphasizing the dangers of militarized effort to slow their spread. And while prominent foundations are less tied to primacy than government agencies, their employees, like those of think tanks, have professional reasons to avoid straying too far from Washington's intellectual conventions. That affects what they will fund.

Some think tanks receive funds from foreign governments or entities tied to them.<sup>101</sup> This might seem to induce disloyalty or at least views that deviate from those of the US foreign policy establishment, but it is more likely another reason to support primacy. Most of the funding nations want the aid and protection that primacy justifies.

Professional ambition is a second reason analysts adopt an operational mind-set. Because most think tank scholars aspire to government appointments, they avoid offending the dominant foreign policy views in the party they hope to serve. Because both parties embrace primacy, ambitious analysts on both sides steer clear of attacking it. Ambition also recommends caution even when it comes to trumpeting some goals of potential patrons. Political winds may shift, and other patrons with different views may beckon. In the case of the recent Iraq War, Democratic leaders mostly supported it initially and mostly regretted that later. Hillary Clinton's loss to Barack Obama in the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries demonstrates this risk. Cagney analysts avoided clear stances on the war, keeping their focus on issues like how to coordinate the interagency process to manage the state-building campaign.<sup>102</sup>

The third driver of the operational mind-set is relevance. Donors typically fund think tanks not just because of what they say but also for their seeming ability to convince policy makers. That requires relevance, meaning the attention of administration officials, congressional staff, and the like. Relevance generates media attention and boosts egos. Analysts

that tell policy makers things they do not want to hear, like criticism of primacy's goals, are liable to lose relevance.

Tangled in with relevance is a fourth cause: socialization. Because primacy has become an operational code of the foreign policy establishment, analysts may avoid criticizing it to avoid the social discomfort of being at odds with their peers. This factor should be less important in think tanks housed outside Washington, DC, especially those that are linked to universities. Even Leslie Gelb, as president of the Council on Foreign Relations, was not immune to such pressures. He attributed his support for the Iraq War, which he'd come to regret, to "unfortunate tendencies within the [Washington] foreign policy community, namely the disposition and incentives to support wars to retain political and professional credibility."<sup>103</sup> The credibility Gelb speaks of is probably an amalgam of professional and social factors that induce intellectual conformity. Accepting or at least keeping quiet about a flawed strategic consensus is the price of membership in the foreign policy establishment.

Another example showing the confluence of these pressures is RAND's research on the Vietnam War. RAND never produced a broad assessment of US policy in Vietnam. Starting in 1961, its analysts worked on government-funded studies of narrower issues like enemy morale and the efficacy of the strategic hamlets program. RAND's historiography on its involvement in Southeast Asia during this period identifies "a general pattern that was to prevail throughout the Vietnam War: When RAND's research conclusions contradicted official thinking, they usually elicited strong objection and were ignored, or were dismissed outright."<sup>104</sup> In this circumstance, analysts eager to be relevant to the client, get a government appointment, or maintain funding are liable to emphasize findings that clients find useful and to avoid questioning the war's wisdom.<sup>105</sup> Honesty in what one writes is compatible with self-censorship.

If academics seek grants, appointments, and access at Washington's foreign policy institutions, they confront some of the same incentives think tank analysts do.<sup>106</sup> The result is academic writing friendlier to primacy and more prone to operational thinking than would otherwise be the case. Still, the academy's professional incentives leave its scholars overall far less susceptible than think tank analysts to the operational mindset. Tenure insulates against political pressures. And by rewarding novel theory and bold conclusions, political science creates incentive to find flaws in key theories underlying popular foreign policies and grand strategies.

## **Prospects for Grand Strategy Debate**

Washington lacks a grand strategy debate, despite a vibrant debate in the academic security studies community on the subject. Something is wrong either in Washington or in the security studies community. We blame Washington, where US national security politics discourages debate about strategy and drives analysts to adopt an operational mindset. The US foreign policy establishment will continue to avoid debating grand strategy until politics changes. Others blame analysis, especially the academic kind. Many Washington policy hands and academics worry that Washington ignores academia because of its irrelevance. More than 20 years after Alexander George advocated “bridging the gap” between policy and academia, a number of initiatives are attempting to do so.<sup>107</sup> Better questions and writing, in this view, would produce better policy. Stephen Walt, for example, refers to an academic “cult of irrelevance,” meaning esoteric research questions irrelevant to policy and quantitative and formal model research methods.<sup>108</sup>

Relevance and accessibility are worthy goals. But they are unlikely to bridge the gap that keeps policy makers from embracing international relations scholarship. That prescription follows from a misdiagnosis of the problem. Today, Washington ignores all sorts of relevant, well-written, qualitative political science scholarship—including Walt’s. The biggest reason policy makers fail to heed such work is that it does not say what they want to hear. The tendency to blame analysis for bad policy results from the belief that everyone would agree on policy with the right information and theories. But democratic politics is a competition for power, where disagreement results from conflicts of interest and ideas are weapons the combatants wield.

A standard reaction to this notion that politics often wants science to serve rather than guide it is to propose emancipation, schemes to liberate analysis from political influence. That means keeping campuses and think tanks free of political ambition and government funds or somehow protecting “the policy process” from “self-interested individuals and groups.”<sup>109</sup> But it is neither possible nor desirable to purge policy debates of self-interest. Washington’s marketplace of policy ideas is flawed—but democratic. Were it possible to purge it of self-interest, the market would be barren and silent but for the few failing merchants proudly disdainful of customers that never arrive. Think tanks totally divorced from political interests would wither or die, leaving their job

to entities that respond to political demand. The solution to bad policy is better politics, meaning more productive conflict that demands new ideas, not quixotic attempts to empower Platonic guardians by quieting interested parties.

### **Willingness to Challenge the Status Quo**

Given that the operational mind-set results from consensus, what may improve debate about grand strategy is conflict in the establishment, either between parties or some other set of important groups. If political leaders demanded strategic alternatives, think tanks would provide them. The operational mind-set would diminish. A precedent exists in the interservice fights of the late 1950s, which produced strategic debate about nuclear doctrine.<sup>110</sup> But that seems unlikely at present, primarily because the conditions that produced primacy's dominance appear durable.

Both critics and backers of primacy predicted that the Afghanistan and Iraq wars' unpopularity, recession, and deficits would restrain US grand strategy or at least shift debate that way.<sup>111</sup> Concern about the deficit produced the 2011 Budget Control Act's budget caps, which restrained Pentagon spending. Antiwar sentiment made it difficult for US leaders to propose the use of ground forces in new conflicts.<sup>112</sup> These shifts were not without effect, but the establishment consensus favoring primacy held. No other major defense policy changes have occurred, despite military spending cuts. Were a political constituency rejecting primacy likely to arise from these forces, it should have arrived already. If we are right, few think tanks will push for a reevaluation of US grand strategy. Only the academy can sustain a critique of primacy. That creates a special responsibility to do so. This need not entail a rush to the partisan barricades or prescriptive writing extending beyond what research supports. It means questioning the assumptions that underlie policy—pointing to the tradeoffs and faulty assumptions politics avoids acknowledging.<sup>113</sup> While immediate results are unlikely, policy ideas often matter a lot eventually, but they are not self-ratifying. They get adopted when a shock, like a lost war, or crisis provokes widespread demand for change.<sup>114</sup> Because it is nearly impossible to predict when this may happen, academics should continue producing ideas about strategy so they are on the bookshelf when politics goes in search of new ideas.

Efforts to move the political ground beneath leaders have greater promise. Academics can consider not just the wisdom of grand strategies but the basis of their support, which generates insight about how to alter them. Institutional reforms might fracture support for primacy.<sup>115</sup> For instance, more aggressive spending caps requiring more painful cuts from powerful constituencies might have produced a real push to reevaluate primacy, possibly creating lasting change in the establishment's ideological landscape. Similarly, a law requiring taxes to pay for wars would concentrate some of primacy's costs and, given sufficient expense, likely split primacy's support base. Another means to provoke strategic debate is increasing competition among military services for budgets and relevance. That might induce the services to promote strategic alternatives.

Beyond this, scholars who care about changing US grand strategy should continue their work but lower their expectations. Permissive international and domestic environments allowed Washington's variously warring tribes to agree on a remarkably ambitious grand strategy. The market for alternatives is small, at best, so most politically relevant analysts stay operationally focused. Those of us bothered by that situation can take solace in the national good fortune that produced it. Only the richest, safest nations can persist in a foolish grand strategy without bothering to debate it. ❧

## Notes

1. Other authors address this dynamic in different terms. Henry A. Kissinger, "The Policymaker and the Intellectual," *The Reporter*, 5 March 1959, 30–35; Aaron Wildavsky, "Rescuing Policy Analysis from PPBS," *Public Administration Review* 29, no. 2 (March/April 1969): 189–202, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/973700>; and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "The Science and Politics of Defense Analysis," in *The Social Sciences Go to Washington*, ed. Ham Cravens (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 67–78.

2. Stephen M. Walt, "Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice and Security Studies," *International Security* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539293>. Don K. Price long ago identified a similar academic tendency, which he calls "the retreat toward abstraction," and attributes it to professionalization and the prescriptive modesty it encourages. Don K. Price, *The Scientific Estate* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 112–19; and Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Purpose of Political Science," in James Clyde Charlesworth, *A Design for Political Science: Scope, Objectives, and Methods* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 1966), 63–79.

3. On this absence of debate, see John A. Gans Jr., "Can't We All Just Not Get Along? Why a Decade of War Hasn't Provoked a Real Debate about America's Role in the World," *Foreign Policy*, 24 October 2012, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/24/cant-we-all-just-not>

-get-along/; and Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 5–16.

4. Major examples are the Center for American Progress and the Center for New American Security.

5. The year 2011 was the latest year for which we could get sufficient data. Totals were calculated using public tax records and James McGann's list of major think tanks, excluding those without foreign policy components, those housed within universities, and those that are primarily grant-making organizations. Those lists are here: [http://repository.upenn.edu/think\\_tanks/](http://repository.upenn.edu/think_tanks/).

6. Modern exponents of this view, classically articulated by John Stuart Mill in his essay *On Liberty*, tend to see it as a normative goal that political forces disrupt. Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 5–48, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137546>; and Stephen M. Walt, "Where Do Bad Ideas Come From? And Why Won't They Go Away?," *foreignpolicy.com*, 3 January 2011, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/03/where-do-bad-ideas-come-from/>.

7. Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz, "Dead Center: The Demise of Liberal Internationalism in the United States," *International Security* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 7–44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30133874>.

8. We do not necessarily mean operational or operations research, the discipline of using advanced analytical methods to improve organizations' decision making and improve their efficiency. On the development of operational research in Great Britain and the United States during World War II, see Stephen Budiansky, *Blackett's War: The Men Who Defeated the Nazi U-Boats and Brought Science to the Art of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 2013). On operations research and the birth of systems analysis, see J. A. Stockfish, *The Intellectual Foundations of Systems Analysis*, RAND Publication no. P-7401 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp, 1987).

9. The Brookings Institution, for example, in 1948 helped the Truman State Department plan the administration of the Marshall Plan in a way that satisfied its key congressional sponsor, Sen. Arthur Vandenberg, and succeeded substantively. On this effort, see Hadley Arkes, *Bureaucracy, the Marshall Plan, and the National Interest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 84–114.

10. Stephen Van Evera, "Why States Believe Foolish Ideas," in *Perspectives on Structural Realism*, ed. Andrew K. Hanami (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 163–98.

11. The "operational code" terminology is from Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951).

12. For discussions of these grand strategies and their evolution, see Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/97): 5–53, doi:10.2307/2539272; and Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation*, 1–23.

13. This term is used to refer to an updated version of primacy in Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation*. A recent article making the case for primacy calls it "deep engagement." Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012/13): 7–51, [http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00107](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/ISEC_a_00107).

14. See for example G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 9, 31, 36, 82, 191, 193, 310–12, 332, 359.

15. *Ibid.*, 1–32, 159–220.

16. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America," 34. On the security dilemma, see Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167–214, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2009958>.

17. See for example James B. Steinberg and Philip H. Gordon, "NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward; Expanding the Alliance and Completing Europe's Integration," Brookings Institution Policy Brief 90 (November 2001), <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2001/11/globalgovernance-gordon>.

18. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America," 37. Theoretically, this follows from the fact the nuclear weapons make rivals less responsive to the hegemon's threats or allies less dependent on its protection. Primacists, however, typically offer other rationales for military efforts to stem proliferation.

19. Nuno Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security* 36, no. 3 (Winter 2011/12): 9–40, doi:10.1162/ISEC\_a\_00064.

20. Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation," 9–29; and John Prados and Christopher Ames, "The Iraq War—Part II: Was There Even a Decision? U.S. and British Documents Give No Indication Alternatives Were Seriously Considered," National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 328, 1 October 2010, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB328/index.htm>.

21. This is rare point of partial agreement between neoconservatives and realists, who are generally skeptical of international institutions' virtues. John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994/95): 5–49, <http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/A0021.pdf>.

22. Liberal internationalists are not sticklers for international law so much as for seeming compliance with it or replacing that compliance with multilateral support. See for example Lee Feinstein and Anne-Marie Slaughter, "A Duty to Prevent," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 1 (January/February 2004): 136–50, doi:10.2307/20033835.

23. With the exception of an odd scholar here and there, that includes the American Enterprise Institute, Atlantic Council, Brookings Institution, Center for American Progress, Center for New American Security, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Council on Foreign Relations, Heritage Foundation, Hoover Institution, Hudson Institute, Manhattan Institute, New America Foundation, RAND Corporation, and the Third Way. Cato, where one of the authors works and the other worked, is an exception because it is libertarian. Other small liberal and libertarian think tanks also defy the consensus to varying degrees.

24. For the House and Senate, respectively, see <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/107-2002/s237> and <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/107-2002/h455>. On the war debate, see Jane Kellert Cramer, "Militarized Patriotism: Why the US Marketplace of Ideas Failed before the Iraq War," *Security Studies* 16, no. 3 (July/September 2007): 489–524, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09636410701547949>.

25. Even CIA Director George Tenet's famous "It's a slam dunk!" exclamation was about marketing. Tenet's remark came in response to President George W. Bush's concern that his administration's public argument that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction was insufficiently convincing, as opposed to concern about the claim's substance. Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 249–50.

26. A good source on this is Prados and Ames, "The Iraq War — Part II."

27. Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 149–53.

28. Paul R. Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (March/April 2006): 15–27, doi:10.2307/20031908.



29. Russ Hoyle, *Going to War: How Misinformation, Disinformation and Arrogance Led America to War in Iraq* (New York: St. Martin's, 2008), 228–33. For Scowcroft's take at the time, see Brent Scowcroft, "Don't Attack Saddam," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2002, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1029371773228069195>.

30. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, "In Iraq Crisis, Networks Are Megaphones for Official Views," 18 March 2003, <http://fair.org/article/in-iraq-crisis-networks-are-megaphones-for-official-views/>.

31. Quoted in Danny Postel, "Realistpolitik," *American Prospect*, 16 April 2004, <http://prospect.org/article/realistpolitik>.

32. On the impact of the wars' unpopularity, see John Mueller, "The Iraq Syndrome Revisited: U.S. Intervention, from Kosovo to Libya," *Foreign Affairs* (website), 28 March 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67681/john-mueller/the-iraq-syndrome-revisited>. On how debt and resulting spending caps contribute to this tendency, see Benjamin H. Friedman and Justin Logan, "Why the U.S. Military Budget Is 'Foolish and Sustainable,'" *Orbis* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 177–91, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2012.01.003>.

33. A brief critical review of these arguments around when they were made is Benjamin H. Friedman, "Six Bad Arguments for Bombing Libya," *Cato-at-Liberty* (blog), 29 March 2011, <http://www.cato.org/blog/six-bad-arguments-bombing-libya>.

34. An argument against the humanitarian rationale for the bombing campaign written as it occurred is: Alan J. Kuperman, "False Pretense for War in Libya?," *Boston Globe*, 14 April 2011, [http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2011/04/14/false\\_pretense\\_for\\_war\\_in\\_libya/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2011/04/14/false_pretense_for_war_in_libya/). A subsequent academic take by the same author is Alan J. Kuperman, "A Model Humanitarian Intervention? Reassessing NATO's Libya Campaign," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 105–36, doi:10.1162/ISEC\_a\_00126.

35. A short discussion of some relevant political science is Stephen M. Walt, "Social Science and the Libyan Adventure," *foreignpolicy.com*, 24 March 2011, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/03/24/social-science-and-the-libyan-adventure/>. See also Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, "Forced to Be Free: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 90–131, doi:10.1162/ISEC\_a\_00117.

36. Ivo H. Daalder and James G. Stavridis, "NATO's Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (March/April 2012): 2–7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23217215>; Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Libya Skeptics Were Proved Badly Wrong," *Financial Times*, 24 August 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/18cb7f14-ce3c-11e0-99ec-00144feabdc0.html>; and Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Syrian Intervention Is Justifiable, and Just," *Washington Post*, 8 June 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/syrian-intervention-is-justifiable-and-just/2012/06/08/gJQARHGjOV\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.b78cef5cb099](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/syrian-intervention-is-justifiable-and-just/2012/06/08/gJQARHGjOV_story.html?utm_term=.b78cef5cb099).

37. Dick Cheney and Liz Cheney, *Exceptional: Why the World Needs a Powerful America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 231–55.

38. Obama criticized the foreign policy establishment focus on credibility in a recent interview. Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

39. On neoconservatives, see for example James Carden, "Donald Trump Is Alienating Neoconservatives—and Antiwar Democrats Should Worry," *The Nation*, 7 March 2016, <http://www.thenation.com/article/donald-trump-is-alienating-neoconservatives-and-anti-war-democrats-should-worry/>; and Brianna Gurciullo, "Graham Rips Trump's 'Nonsensical' Foreign Policy Speech," *Politico*, 27 April 2016, <http://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/04/lindsey-graham-donald-trump-foreign-policy-222549>.

An example of a liberal internationalist denunciation is Thomas Wright, "Trump's 19th Century Foreign Policy," *Politico Magazine*, 20 January 2016, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/donald-trump-foreign-policy-213546>. For an argument that Trump's views are less abnormal than Wright contends, see Joshua Shriffrinson, "Trump's Foreign Policy Views Are Actually Pretty Mainstream," *Washington Post*, 4 February 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/02/04/the-secret-behind-donald-trumps-antiquated-foreign-policy-views-theyre-pretty-mainstream/>.

40. Joshua W. Busby and Jonathan Monten, "Republican Elites and Foreign Policy Attitudes," *Political Science Quarterly* 127, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 105–42, doi:10.1002/j.1538-165X.2012.tb00722.x.

41. Quoted in Michael A. Cohen, "Can't We All Just Not Get Along? Why the Push for Bipartisan Consensus in Foreign Policy is a Dumb Idea" *Foreign Policy*, 22 June 2012, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/06/22/cant-we-all-just-not-get-along-2/>.

42. On balancing, see Jack S. Levy, "What do Great Powers Balance against and When?," in *Balance of Power Theory in the 21st Century*. ed. T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 19–51; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 17–49; and Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *International Security* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 159–201, doi:10.1162/0162288042879913. On the stability of balances of power, see Dan Reiter, "Exploding the Power Keg Myth: Preemptive Wars Almost Never Happen," *International Security* 20, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 5–34, doi:10.2307/2539227; Randall Schweller, "Neorealism's Status-Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?" *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 90–121, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09636419608429277>; Robert S. Ross, "The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century," *International Security* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 81–118, doi:10.1162/isec.23.4.81; and Marc Trachtenberg, "The Question of Realism," *Security Studies* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 156–94, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09636410490493877>. On the limited danger most wars pose to the United States, see Eugene Gholz and Daryl G. Press, "The Effects of Wars on Neutral Countries: Why It Doesn't Pay to Preserve the Peace," *Security Studies* 10, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 1–57, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09636410108429444>.

43. Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *American Political Science Review* 84, no. 3 (September 1990): 731–45, doi:10.2307/1962764.

44. On the robustness of trade, see Gholz and Press, "Effects of Wars," 5–15.

45. See for example Donald Kagan, Gary James Schmitt, and Thomas Donnelly, *Rebuilding America's Defenses, Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century* (Washington, DC: Project for the New American Century, 2000), 1–14.

46. For competing explanations, see John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Carl Kaysen, "Is War Obsolete? A Review Essay," *International Security* 4, no. 14 (Spring 1990): 42–64, doi:10.2307/2538750; and Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 3 (Winter 1990/91): 7–57, doi:10.2307/2538906. A good survey of theories predicting peace is Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 267–94.

47. On the capitalist peace, see Erik Gartzke, "The Capitalist Peace," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 166–91, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122913>; and Patrick J. McDonald, *The Invisible Hand of Peace: Capitalism, The War Machine, and International Re-*

*lations Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009). One source of academic support for primacy, which its Washington supporters typically ignore, is hegemonic stability theory. See for example Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

48. Jeffrey Pickering and Mark Peceny, "Forging Democracy at Gunpoint," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 539–60, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4092792>; and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George W. Downs, "Intervention and Democracy," *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 627–49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877822>.

49. See for example Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, "What Makes Deterrence Work? Cases from 1900 to 1980," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 496–526, doi:10.2307/2010184; Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Evaluate Military Threats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); and Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

50. Justin Logan and Christopher Preble, "Fixing Failed States: A Dissenting View," in *The Handbook on the Political Economy of War*, ed. Christopher J. Coyne and Rachel L. Mathers (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2011), 379–96; Stewart Patrick, "'Failed' States and Global Security: Empirical Questions and Policy Dilemmas," *International Studies Review* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 644–62, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4621865>; and Jennifer Keister, "The Illusion of Chaos: Why Ungoverned Spaces Aren't Ungoverned, and Why That Matters," *Cato Policy Analysis* 766 (December 2014), [http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa766\\_1.pdf](http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa766_1.pdf).

51. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation*, 50–54.

52. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America." Our response is Campbell Craig, Benjamin H. Friedman, Brendan Rittenhouse Green, Justin Logan, Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Debating American Engagement: The Future of US Grand Strategy," *International Security* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 183–92, doi:10.1162/ISEC\_c\_00140.

53. According to a recent article by three academics that support primacy, "most scholars who write on the future of US grand strategy" oppose primacy. See Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America," 7.

54. Daniel Maliniak, Amy Oakes, Susan Peterson, and Michael J. Tierney, "The View from the Ivory Tower: TRIP Survey of International Relations Faculty in the United States and Canada" (Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary, February 2007), [https://www.wm.edu/offices/itpir/\\_documents/trip/ivory\\_tower\\_view\\_2007.pdf](https://www.wm.edu/offices/itpir/_documents/trip/ivory_tower_view_2007.pdf).

55. Quoted in Dylan Matthews, "Scholarly Critique," *CampusProgress.org*, 4 November 2009, <http://www.campusprogress.org/fieldreport/4769/scholarly-critique>.

56. Susan Peterson, Michael J. Tierney, and Daniel Maliniak, "Teaching and Research Practices, Views on the Discipline, and Policy Attitudes of International Relations Faculty at U.S. Colleges and Universities" (Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary, August 2005), [https://www.wm.edu/offices/itpir/\\_documents/trip/trip\\_summary2005.pdf](https://www.wm.edu/offices/itpir/_documents/trip/trip_summary2005.pdf).

57. Richard Jordan, Daniel Maliniak, Amy Oakes, Susan Peterson, and Michael J. Tierney, "One Discipline or Many? TRIP Survey of International Relations Faculty in Ten Countries" (Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary, February 2009), 88, [http://www.wm.edu/offices/itpir/\\_documents/trip/final\\_trip\\_report\\_2009.pdf](http://www.wm.edu/offices/itpir/_documents/trip/final_trip_report_2009.pdf).

58. Office of Management and Budget, *US Budget for Fiscal Year 2011*, Table 6.1, <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy11/sheets/hist06z1.xls>.

59. Prominent examples are Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (Winter 1990/91): 23–33, doi:10.2307/20044692; William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (July/August 1996):

18–32, doi:10.2307/20047656; and Kurt M. Campbell and Michelle A. Flournoy, *The Inheritance and the Way Forward* (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, 2007), 26–27.

60. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America”; Samuel P. Huntington, “Why International Primacy Matters,” *International Security* 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993): 68–83, doi:10.2307/2539022.

61. Christopher DeMuth, until recently the head of the American Enterprise Institute, now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, remarked that “at the think tank we are working without the simplifying assumptions and the explanatory parsimoniousness that are the hallmarks of academic research.” This comment is emblematic of views pundits and Washington analysts who claim to avoid theory. One can form opinions about foreign policy with good or bad theory, implicit or explicit theory, but not with none. See remarks of Christopher DeMuth at “Are Think Tanks Becoming Too Political?,” Hudson Institute Forum, 16 February 2012, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?304465-1/role-think-tanks-public-policy>, <http://www.hudson.org/events/922-are-think-tanks-becoming-too-political-22012>.

62. The elites are “leaders” the pollsters identified and polled in various fields. The authors describe these results as follows: “Large majorities of leaders and the public say that strong US leadership in the world is at least somewhat desirable. But there is a great difference between leaders and the public in degree or emphasis. At least six in ten leaders (57% of Independent leaders, 70% of Democratic leaders, and 90% of Republican leaders) say it is ‘very desirable’ for the United States to exert strong leadership in world affairs, compared to just over one-third of the public (37%). Similarly, a much larger portion of leaders (94% Republicans, 97% Democrats, and 92% Independents) than of the public (58%) thinks it will be best for the future of the country if the United States takes an active part in world affairs.” Dina Smeltz, Joshua Busby, Gregory Holyk, Craig Kafura, Jonathan Monten, and Jordan Tama, *United in Goals, Divided on Means: Opinion Leaders Survey Results and Partisan Breakdowns from the 2014 Chicago Survey of American Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2015), 6, [http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2014%20Chicago%20Council%20Opinion%20Leaders%20Survey%20Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2014%20Chicago%20Council%20Opinion%20Leaders%20Survey%20Report_FINAL.pdf).

63. *Ibid.*, 8, 22.

64. An example is Marshall M. Bouton and Benjamin J. Page, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect: What Americans Want from Our Leaders but Don't Get* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

65. Pew Survey of the General Public, 28 October–9 November 2009. Question: “Over the next year, do you think the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan should be—kept the same increased, decreased, or as it is now?,” <http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/569.pdf>.

66. Pew Survey of Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Members, 2 October–16 November 2009. Question: “Over the next year, do you think the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan should be—kept the same increased, decreased, or as it is now?,” <http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/569.pdf>. The poll does show, on the other hand, a public more willing than CFR members to bomb Iran should it acquire nuclear weapons.

67. Smeltz, Busby, Holyk, Kafura, Monten, and Tama, “United in Goals,” 12.

68. John Mueller, “Syria: It Wasn’t Isolationism,” *The National Interest*, 14 October 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/syria-it-wasnt-isolationism-9231>; and Smeltz, Busby, Holyk, Kafura, Monten, and Tama, “United in Goals,” 14.

69. Adam J. Berinsky, “Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict,” *Journal of Politics* 69, no. 4 (November 2007): 975–97, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00602.x; and Daniel W. Drezner, “The Realist Tradition

in US Public Opinion,” *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 1 (March 2008): 51–70, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00602.x.

70. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 244–6, 298.

71. Bouten and Page, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect*, 171–73, 243–4; and Thomas Knecht, *Paying Attention to Foreign Affairs: How Public Opinion Affects Presidential Decision Making* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2010), 9–36.

72. On how conscription decreases war support, see Michael C. Horowitz and Matthew C. Levendusky, “Drafting Support for War: Conscription and Mass Support for Warfare,” *Journal of Politics* 73, no. 2 (April 2011): 524–34, doi:10.1017/s0022381611000119; and Robert S. Erikson and Laura Stoker, “Caught in the Draft: The Effects of Vietnam Draft Lottery Status on Political Attitudes,” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 2 (May 2011): 221–37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41495063>.

73. This argument is consistent with realism. Realism sees rival power, or appreciation of its possibility, as the source of restraint in both domestic and international politics. For a classic and modern example, see Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 219; and Robert Jervis, “Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 188–213, [muse.jhu.edu/article/260516/pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/article/260516/pdf).

74. Barry Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundations of US Hegemony,” *International Security* 28, no. 1 (Summer 2003): 5–46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137574>.

75. Richard K. Betts, “The Political Support System for American Primacy,” *International Affairs* 81, no. 1 (January 2005): 1–14, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3569185>.

76. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 132–67; and Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 124–51.

77. John Mueller, “The Iraq Syndrome,” *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (November/December 2005): 44–54, doi:10.2307/20031775. A discussion of these dynamics is in Benjamin H. Friedman, “Alarums and Excursions: Explaining Threat Inflation in US Foreign Policy,” in *A Dangerous World? Threat Perception in US National Security*, ed. Christopher A. Preble and John Mueller (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2014), 281–303. On how liberal democracy’s checks and balances improve foreign policies, see Kenneth Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 267–311.

78. This alignment of interests is like the log-rolling described in Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 17–19, 43–54.

79. Steven P. Rosen, “Testing the Theory of the Military-Industrial Complex,” in *Testing the Theory of the Military Industrial Complex*, ed. Steven P. Rosen (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1973), 23–24.

80. Gordon Adams, *The Politics of Defense Contracting: The Iron Triangle* (New York: Council on Economic Priorities, 1981), 17–45. On sectional economic interests in US foreign policy making, see Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1–30.

81. Warner Schilling, “The Defense Budget of 1950,” in *Strategy, Politics, and Defense: Budgets*, ed. Warner Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond, and Glenn H. Snyder, (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1962), 19–27.

82. Louis Fisher, “Presidential Power in National Security,” in *Understanding the Presidency*, 6th ed., ed. James P. Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson (Boston: Pearson, 2011), 379–93.

83. Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), 13–15; Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, 59–80; and Robert Jervis, “US Grand Strategy: Mission Impossible,” *Naval War College Review* 51, No. 3 (Summer 1998): 22–34, <http://search.proquest.com/openview/ca96e436d2a1d7b7ecc8113780f5ed24/1?pq-origsite=gscholar>.

84. Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*, Revised Edition (New York: New York Free Press, 1991), 29–49.

85. Benjamin H. Friedman, “Austerity and US Grand Strategy Reform: Not Enough of a Bad Thing” (paper presented at the International Studies Association Conference, New Orleans, February 2015).

86. Christopher Layne, *Peace of Illusions, American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 51–70.

87. On this dynamic in another context see Cass Sunstein, *Risk and Reason: Safety, Law, and the Environment* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 78–99.

88. Donald E. Abelson, *Do Think Tanks Matter? Assessing the Impact of Public Policy Institutes* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002), 60.

89. These functions might be further divided to include help with agenda setting, evaluation of options, enactment, implementation, and monitoring of policies. Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 107–8.

90. Jeremy Shapiro, “Who Influences Whom? Reflections on US Government Outreach to Think Tanks,” Brookings Institution, 4 June 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/06/04-us-government-outreach-think-tanks-shapiro>.

91. John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1995), 145–64; and Jeffrey W. Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 13–38.

92. It is cognitively easier to respond to disconfirming evidence by rejecting the evidence than updating one’s belief. Robert Jervis, “Bridges, Barriers, and Gaps: Research and Policy,” *Political Psychology* 29, no. 4 (August 2008): 587, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20447145>.

93. Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*, 40th Anniversary Ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 127–63.

94. Thomas Medvetz, *Think Tanks in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 130–80.

95. Senator Olympia Snowe, quoted in Ezra Klein, “Unpopular Mandate: Why Do Politicians Reverse Their Positions?” *New Yorker*, 25 June 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/06/25/unpopular-mandate>.

96. Emily Stokes, “Lunch with the Financial Times: Rory Stewart,” *Financial Times*, 1 August 2009, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c7414148-7d60-11de-b8ee-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2RBy5pMdZ>. Bernard Brodie had something similar in mind when he wrote: “If there is one practically unvarying principle about the use within the government of outside experts as consultants, it is that they must be known to be friendly to that policy on which they are being consulted. They may be critical of details or of the current execution of that policy, but not of the fundamentals.” Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973), 214. Likewise, Aaron Wildavsky writes, “The first requirement of effective policy analysis is that top management wants it.” Wildavsky, “Rescuing Policy Analysis from PPBS.” 197.

97. On the formation of FFRDCs, see Harvey M. Sapolsky, “Inventing Systems Integration,” in *The Business of Systems Management*, ed. Andrea Prencipe and Andrew Davies, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15–34.

98. Ken Silverstein, "The Bipartisan Lobbying Center: How a Washington Think Tank Advocates for Political Unity—and its Top Donors," Edmund J. Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard University, <http://ethics.harvard.edu/blog/bipartisan-lobbying-center>; and Ken Silverstein, "The Secret Donors behind the Center for American Progress and Other Think Tanks," *The Nation*, 21 May 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/article/secret-donors-behind-center-american-progress-and-other-think-tanks-updated-524>.

99. A recent article on the topic is Eric Lipton and Brooke Williams, "How Think Tanks Amplify Corporate America's Influence," *New York Times*, 7 August 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/08/us/politics/think-tanks-research-and-corporate-lobbying.html>. See also Lee Fang, "Emails Show Close Ties between Heritage Foundation and Lockheed Martin," *The Intercept*, 15 September 2015, <https://theintercept.com/2015/09/15/heritage-foundation/>.

100. Aaron Wildavsky, "The Self-Evaluating Organization," *Public Administration Review* 32, no. 5 (September/October 1972): 509–20, doi:10.2307/975158.

101. Eric Lipton, Brooke Williams, and Nicholas Confessore, "Foreign Powers Buy Influence at Think Tanks," *New York Times*, 6 September 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/07/us/politics/foreign-powers-buy-influence-at-think-tanks.html>.

102. A critique of such focus is in Benjamin H. Friedman, Harvey M. Sapolsky, and Christopher Preble, "Learning the Right Lessons from Iraq," Cato Institute Policy Analysis 610, (February 2008), <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa-610.pdf>.

103. Leslie H. Gelb with Jeanne-Paloma Zelmatti, "Mission Not Accomplished," *Democracy*, no. 13 (Summer 2009): 24, <http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/13/mission-not-accomplished/>.

104. Mai Elliott, *RAND in Southeast Asia: A History of the Vietnam War Era* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 28, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate\\_pubs/CP564.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CP564.html).

105. Two prominent exceptions who were associated with RAND, Daniel Ellsberg and Bernard Brodie, turned against the war as their ambitions of serving in high government office ebbed (a formulation deliberately free of causality). Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), 337–42.

106. Morgenthau, "The Purpose of Political Science," 73–79.

107. Programs with this aim include the "Bridging the Gap" program cosponsored by American University, UC-Berkeley, and Duke University, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Tobin Project.

108. Walt, "Rigor or Rigor Mortis?," 46; Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Scholars on the Sidelines," *Washington Post*, 13 April 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/12/AR2009041202260.html>; Paul Avey and Michael Desch, "What Do Policy-makers Want From Us? Results of a Survey of Current and Former Senior National Security Decision-makers," *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December 2014): 227–46, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12111>; and Michael Desch, "Technique Trumps Relevance: the Professionalization of Political Science and the Marginalization of Security Studies," *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 2 (June 2015): 377–93, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1537592714004022>.

109. Walt, "Where do Bad Ideas Come From?"

110. Owen R. Cote Jr., "The Politics of Innovative Military Doctrine: The US Navy and Fleet Ballistic Missiles" (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996), 166–243, <http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/11217>.

111. Michael Desch, "Is a Grand Strategy of Restraint Politically Viable?" (lecture, Institute of World Politics, Notre Dame University, 27 May 2015), [http://www.iwp.edu/news\\_publications/detail/transcript-is-a-grand-strategy-of-restraint-politically-viable-with-michael](http://www.iwp.edu/news_publications/detail/transcript-is-a-grand-strategy-of-restraint-politically-viable-with-michael)

-desch; and Lawrence F. Kaplan, "Springtime for Realism," *The New Republic*, 21 June 2004, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/springtime-realism>.

112. Friedman and Logan, "Why the U.S. Military Budget Is 'Foolish and Sustainable,'" 89.

113. This is consistent with Weber's idea that science's responsibility is to help frame political choices but not to direct them. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 129–56.

114. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives*; Legro, *Rethinking the World*.

115. Friedman, "Alarums and Excursions," 302–3.

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