

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.

—Charles Dickens

A decent respect to the opinions of mankind.

—Declaration of Independence

Oh wad some power the giftie gie us,

To see oursels as others see us!

It wad frae monie a blunder free us,

An' foolish notion.

—Robert Burns

The opening sentence of Charles Dickens's classic novel of the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities*, could serve as an apt description of contemporary American foreign policy. In fact, each of these familiar quotations frames some central themes in this book, which studies the ways publics abroad have assessed the United States, its institutions, and its policies in recent years.

By conventional measures of power and status, the United States unquestionably sits at the apex of the international pecking order. Its military capabilities outstrip those of any potential challenger or, indeed, those of any potential coalition of challengers. Because the Pentagon's annual budget is higher than that of the next sixteen countries combined, accounting for 48 percent of global military spending in 2005, the American position at the top of the world's military hierarchy seems certain to persist into the foreseeable future. The next four countries—Great Britain, France, China, and Japan—each contributed 4 to 5 percent of the world total.¹

1. For extensive data on military capabilities and defense spending, see the annual reports of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* (London: Routledge); and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Military Expenditure Database*, <http://www.sipri.org/GlobalSecurity.org>.

When our attention turns to the economic realm, the picture is much the same. In 2000 the United States accounted for 29.3 percent of the world gross domestic product, a figure that is estimated to have risen to 29.5 percent in 2005 and to decline only slightly to 28.8 percent in 2025, while the countries that two decades ago were sometimes identified as challengers to American economic superiority—the Soviet Union, Japan, and Germany—have either disintegrated (the Soviet Union) or have suffered serious economic difficulties (Japan and Germany) that have all but eliminated their chances of approaching, much less surpassing, the United States. To be sure, reckless American tax policies since 2001 have resulted in unprecedented budget and trade deficits that will almost surely have serious consequences at some point in the future. It is also possible, though by no means inevitable, that China's economy will surpass the U.S. economy in several decades, but for the time being the American position as the world's top economy is beyond serious debate.² Given the disparity in the present sizes of the American and Chinese economies, even should China maintain its spectacular GDP growth rate of 9.3 percent annually while the United States continues growing at a pedestrian 3.3 percent, the gap between the two countries will grow rather than contract.³ Analysts have even come to rethink their views of two decades ago that as a result of "imperial overreach" the United States would follow the declining path of previous hegemonic powers—Spain, the Netherlands, France, and Great Britain among them.⁴

These figures clearly point to "the best of times" for the material bases of American foreign policy. How, then, can the phrase "the worst of times" possibly be used in any sentence or paragraph that deals with American foreign policy? By another measure of power—the ability to get others to do one's bidding—the situation is somewhat less clear. Recent years have witnessed an increasing number of episodes in which the United States found itself unable to achieve its foreign policy goals as other countries have balked at following America's lead. That the United States has been unable to gain much cooperation from China on such issues as the future of Taiwan or Iran's nuclear pro-

2. According to Department of Energy projections, China's share of the world gross domestic product will rise from 3.5 percent in 2000 to 7.6 percent in 2025. Data on American and Chinese contributions to the world gross domestic product are drawn from Energy Information Administration, *Annual Energy Outlook, 2004* (Washington, DC, 2004), table 4. These figures are based on U.S. dollars and would be somewhat different if based on the Chinese yuan.

3. The economic growth rate data are from the Economist, *Pocket World in Figures* (London: Profile Books, 2007).

4. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987). Kennedy's views were almost immediately challenged, most notably by Joseph Nye, "Understating U.S. Strength," *Foreign Policy* 72 (fall 1988): 105–29; and Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

gram is not especially surprising, given the history of Sino-American relations and China's own status as a nuclear-armed major power and, perhaps, as an emerging superpower. Moreover, China's leading role in financing America's budget deficit provides Beijing with considerable potential leverage in its relations with Washington. But in many cases the foreign policy setbacks have come at the hands of much less powerful countries, some of which have long been among America's allies in such organizations as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization of American States (OAS). A few examples illustrate Washington's recent difficulties in translating its exceptional reservoir of "hard power" into effective influence on some important foreign policy issues.

- In the summer of 2002, as the George W. Bush administration was gearing up a full-scale effort to gain congressional and international support for military action to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder faced a very difficult reelection campaign. Schroeder publicly declared that Germany, which in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks had sent troops to assist in the U.S.-led campaign against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan, would not in any circumstances join in military action against Iraq. That promise was probably sufficient to ensure his reelection.
- During the run-up to the Iraq war the United States put intense pressure on the recently elected Turkish government to permit deployment of the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division there to open a northern front against Iraq. Despite American use of both carrots (offers of aid and loans) and sticks (possible withdrawal of support for Turkey's bid for European Union membership), in a close vote the recently elected Turkish Grand National Assembly rejected the U.S. demands, thereby faithfully reflecting overwhelming public opposition to the U.S. plan.
- Apparently at the insistence of Secretary of State Colin Powell and against the advice of other key foreign policy officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, and Defense Department officials Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, the Bush administration reluctantly took its case for the use of force against Iraq to the UN Security Council. Washington realized that France or Russia might well veto an American resolution authorizing the invasion of Iraq, and it was all but certain that Germany would not support it, but the United States expected to obtain support from at least nine of the fifteen Security Council members, thereby gaining a measure of legitimacy

for its Iraq policy while simultaneously isolating naysayers in Paris, Moscow, and Berlin. The issue never came to a vote because preliminary canvassing revealed that the resolution would result in an embarrassing American defeat. The three African members of the Security Council—Angola, Cameroon, Guinea—let it be known that they agreed with French opposition to the use of force in Iraq. The United States was unable to gain the support of even Mexico or Chile, hemispheric neighbors with which it has special trade relationships. Only seven of thirty-three Latin American and Caribbean countries supported military action against Iraq.⁵

- After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, President George H. W. Bush was able to gain Security Council authorization to use force against Iraq should it fail to withdraw from Kuwait, and he put together a coalition of twenty-six countries to contribute to the war effort against Iraq. That coalition notably included two important Islamic regional powers—Egypt and Turkey. In contrast, President George W. Bush not only failed to gain Security Council support for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, but his “coalition of the willing” included significant contributions of armed forces only from Great Britain, with much smaller, mostly symbolic military units from Poland and Australia and, later, from Italy, Spain, and several other countries. Notably missing were any Arab or Muslim countries.
- Even after the war successfully toppled the brutal Saddam Hussein regime that had previously committed aggression against two neighbors—Iran and Kuwait—predictions by administration officials and their cheerleaders that an awesome display of American military power would lead to at least grudging support from Islamic countries and their publics (the so-called Arab street) proved to be wildly off the mark.
- After President Bush announced the end of hostilities in Iraq on May 1, 2003—“Mission Accomplished,” as a banner at an aircraft carrier photo opportunity famously proclaimed—many countries, including those that opposed the war, were informed that they were expected to make significant financial contributions, including debt forgiveness, toward rebuilding post-Saddam Iraq and arranging for the transition to a stable democratic government. Such contributions were not forthcoming, perhaps in part because the administration also made it clear that contracts for rebuilding Iraq would be issued only to firms from countries that joined the U.S.-led

5. Christopher Marquis, “Latin American Allies of the U.S.: Docile and Reliable No Longer,” *New York Times*, January 9, 2004.

invasion of Iraq, thereby excluding France, Germany, Russia, and Canada, among others.⁶

- As the June 30, 2004, deadline for a partial handover of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government approached, the administration once again demanded that NATO members contribute more troops to help quell an increasingly serious Iraqi insurgency and to maintain security during the transition period leading up to full sovereignty for Iraq. At the June 2004 Group of Eight meeting at Sea Island, Georgia, it became clear that such additional assistance would not be forthcoming; President Bush conceded that it was an “unrealistic expectation” to count on additional NATO troops.⁷ France, Germany, and other hesitant NATO members apparently saw no advantage in becoming involved in Iraq, probably in part because of the growing toll inflicted by insurgents. Both Germany and France later offered to help train Iraqi military personnel, but not in Iraq.
- South Korea has been a longtime American ally, and U.S. troops have been stationed there since the July 1953 armistice that brought the Korean War to an end. For various reasons, including misbehavior by U.S. troops stationed in Korea, anti-American sentiments have risen, especially among the younger generation who did not experience the international effort, led by the United States, to repel the North Korean aggression during the bloody 1950–53 war. North Korea has openly boasted of violating agreements to terminate its nuclear weapons program, but how to deal with the issue has divided rather than united Washington and Seoul. In his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush included North Korea in the “axis of evil,” whereas South Korea has generally followed a softer line—the “sunshine” policy—perhaps fearing a flood of refugees across the 38th parallel should the totalitarian North Korean regime collapse.⁸ In presidential elections on December 19, 2002, liberal candidate Roh Moo-hyun won by taking a very critical stance toward the United States, even in the face of nuclear threats from North Korea. According to one analyst: “In the past, security threats

6. Erin E. Arvedlund and Clifford Krauss, “A Region Inflamed: Reconstruction; Allies Angered at Exclusion from Bidding,” *New York Times*, December 11, 2003.

7. Richard W. Stevenson and David E. Sanger, “Bush Doesn’t Expect NATO to Provide Troops for Iraq,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2004.

8. For an overview of differences between U.S. and South Korean approaches to North Korea, see James Brooke, “South Korea Sidesteps U.S. to Forge Political and Pragmatic Links,” *New York Times*, August 26, 2004. A. C. Kenneth Quinones, a U.S. expert on Korea, is quoted: “South Koreans have gone the full circle. Ten years ago anyone who went north was painted pink. Today, anyone who does not go north is not a real Korean.” See also the case study in chapter 4.

from the North would have made Koreans favor a conservative candidate and seek solidarity with the United States. In 2002, however, a pro-U.S. image was a burden in the election.”⁹

- Although Canada has not always followed Washington’s lead in foreign affairs—for example, it maintains diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba—it has generally been a faithful ally of the United States and Britain on major international issues. Canada fought alongside the United States and Great Britain as an ally in every war through the end of the twentieth century, but it declined to join them in the “coalition of the willing” for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.¹⁰ Canada also served as an integral part of NORAD and the DEW Line, the air defense systems erected during the Cold War, but in 2005 the government in Ottawa pulled out of the missile defense system, one of the centerpieces of Bush administration defense planning. Perhaps the long record of test failures of the missile defense system contributed to the withdrawal, but like the decision not to participate in the invasion of Iraq, it may also have been rooted in the opposition of the Canadian public. “Polls have shown the system to be unpopular with the public, particularly in Quebec.”¹¹ However, the 2006 elections brought to power a minority conservative government, headed by Stephen Harper, that appears more willing to participate in the missile defense system as a part of an effort to improve relations with Washington.
- In June 2005 the United States proposed a resolution that would authorize the Organization of American States to appraise the state of democracy among member countries as a way of putting some teeth in the “Democratic Charter” adopted four years earlier. The American effort met strong resistance among other members, in part because they feared that the resolution might be used by the United States against Venezuela, whose populist president, Hugo Chávez, has used vitriolic anti-American rhetoric to bolster his popularity at home. OAS members had earlier broken precedent by declining to support an American-backed candidate for secretary general of the organization, electing José Miguel Insulza instead.¹²

9. Lee Sook-jung, “Anti-Americanism in Korean Society: A Survey Based Analysis,” in *The United States and South Korea: Reinvigorating the Partnership*, U.S.-Korea Academic Symposium (2003), proceedings available in *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies* 14 (2004): 184 (available at www.keia.org).

10. Clifford Krauss, “Chrétien Leaves at Ease, Even If Bush Is Displeased,” *New York Times*, November 14, 2003.

11. Clifford Krauss, “Canada May Be a Close Neighbor, but It Proudly Keeps Its Distance,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2005; and Krauss, “Canada Says It Won’t Join Missile Shield with the U.S.” *New York Times*, February 24, 2005.

12. Larry Rohter, “O.A.S. to Pick Chile Socialist U.S. Opposed as Its Leader,” *New York Times*, April 30, 2005; and Joel Brinkley, “Latin States Shun U.S. Plan to Watch Over Democracy,” *New York Times*, June 9, 2005.

- In September 2006, the newly elected leader of Britain's Conservative Party, David Cameron, made his first major foreign policy address. With a view toward possible elections in 2009, and in recognition that Labor prime minister Tony Blair would shortly leave office under a dark cloud owing to his close ties to President Bush on the Iraq war, Cameron took special pains to distinguish his policies from those of Blair. Speaking on the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, he went on to criticize a core tenet of the Bush administration's post-September 11 policies: "The danger is that by positing a single source of terrorism—a global jihad—and opposing it with a single global response—American-backed force—we will simply fulfill our own prophecy." After assuring his audience, the British American Project, that "I and my party are instinctive friends of America, and passionate supporters of the Atlantic Alliance," Cameron went on to assert, "Britain does not need to establish her identity by recklessly poking the United States in the eye, as some like to do." Although he had earlier acknowledged that since the Churchill-Roosevelt era during World War II, Britain has been America's junior partner, he then issued something of a declaration of quasi-independence. "But we will serve neither our own, nor America's, nor the world's interests if we are seen as America's unconditional associate in every endeavor. Our duty is to our own citizens, and to our own conception of what is right for the world. We should be solid but not slavish in our friendship with America. . . . I fear that if we continue as at present we may combine the maximum of exposure with the minimum of real influence over decisions." He also pointed to the problems with unilateralism in world affairs. "But as we have found out in recent years, a country may act alone—but it cannot always succeed alone. The United States has learnt this lesson painfully." In closing, he quoted a warning from nineteenth-century prime minister William Gladstone against imperial hubris and international arrogance: "even when you do a good thing, you may do it in so bad a way that you entirely spoil the beneficial effect."¹³ It is unlikely that anyone in the audience failed to grasp the target of Cameron's polite but devastating critique. Whether or not Cameron's diagnosis of terrorism or the American response is valid, it reflected the belief that his electoral prospects can be improved by avoiding the label—"Bush's poodle"—that was often applied to Tony Blair. An ICM

13. "David Cameron's Speech," *Guardian Unlimited*, September 11, 2006, <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/speeches/story/0,,1869970,00.html>.

poll in 2006 revealed that 63 percent of British voters felt that Britain is “too close to the United States,” 30 percent stated that the relationship is “about right,” and only 3 percent responded that Britain is “not close enough to the USA.”

- Nicholas Sarkozy, the center-right Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) party candidate in the 2007 election for the French presidency, has a pro-American image. He was photographed with President Bush in September 2006 and has been branded by his Socialist opponent as an “American neo-conservative with a French passport.” Locked in a close race that he ultimately won, Sarkozy gave a 90-minute interview, conducted in French and translated into English, with Charlie Rose on American public television in which he sought to distance himself from American foreign policy. “I want to say this to my American friends. The world does not come to a halt at the borders of your country. . . . Beyond the Pacific and beyond the Atlantic, there are men and women like you. Get interested in the world and the world will learn to love you. . . . The world is not just the American empire. There’s more to it than that.” Since winning the presidency, Sarkozy has taken several significant steps toward improving relations with the United States, including considering whether France should rejoin NATO as a full-fledged member, but he has shown no inclination to send French forces into Iraq. Although no friend of President Jacques Chirac, Sarkozy paid him homage: “Jacques Chirac’s international policy, particularly on Iraq, was the right one. He made the right choice at the right time.”¹⁴

What do these episodes have in common? With only a few exceptions (the “Arab street”) they involve actions by allies and countries with which the United States has long had good relations. They are also at least electoral democracies in which leaders must periodically face electorates. Moreover, in each case there was evidence that in defying Washington, the leaders in question were acting in ways that reflected the policy preferences of their publics. It is of course important to point out that there is no direct evidence that they were consciously guided by polls or other expressions of public opinion; evidence on that score would be hard to find as virtually all leaders insist that they are guided by “the national interest” rather than by surveys or focus groups. Nevertheless, the ubiquity of polling in virtually all democratic countries, including surveys that are commissioned by governments, makes it likely that

14. Martin Arnold, “Sarkozy Tells Americans to Broaden Horizon,” *Financial Times*, February 1, 2007.

there was at least an awareness of the domestic political costs and benefits of refusing to go along with the United States. Is it conceivable, for example, that British Conservative leader David Cameron and his advisers were unaware of the ICM survey that revealed the breadth and depth of British opinions that the Blair government had been “too close to the U.S.”?

These and many similar examples suggest that there are limits on the goals that even a hegemonic superpower can achieve with threats and inducements, backed by the kinds of “hard power” that the United States possesses in plentitude. “Soft power” constitutes a less direct means by which a country can achieve its foreign policy goals: “A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its examples, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness.”¹⁵

“A DECENT RESPECT TO THE OPINIONS OF MANKIND”

Although Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues, in writing the Declaration of Independence, were not aware of the concept “soft power,” the phrase “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind” in that historic document reflected a belief that the manner in which others viewed the legitimacy of claims to independence by the upstart colonies might in fact influence the prospects for a successful divorce from the mother country. To be sure, much of the subsequent assistance from abroad—for example from the French government of Louis XVI—had more to do with strategic support for a revolution that would weaken archrival Great Britain than any sympathy for such subversive ideas as “all men are created equal.” Nevertheless, the document that emerged from the July 1776 meeting of the founding fathers reflected the hope that a compelling statement of the reasons for the assertion of independence would gain support not only at home but also abroad. Because the rebelling colonies hardly enjoyed a surfeit of military and economic resources (hard power), sympathy from abroad (soft power) took on greater significance.

In contrast to hard power, the base of soft power resides in the “hearts and minds” of other countries, especially among the leaders of their political, economic, military, cultural, and other major institutions. There are also reasons to believe that, especially in countries with regular competitive elections, the opinions and preferences of the general public may be of some consequence

15. Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8. A fuller development of the concept appears in Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

because in at least some instances its leaders may harbor concerns that they will be held accountable for their foreign policy decisions. Although it is not always possible to establish a causal link between public opinion and government policy, in the episodes cited earlier in the chapter, leaders in Germany, South Korea, Mexico, Turkey, Canada, France, and elsewhere who chose to defy Washington acted in ways that were consistent with the preferences of their publics. The extent to which publics abroad want to follow the United States, admire its values and institutions, and agree with its foreign policy goals may have an impact on the willingness of their governments to cooperate with the United States. But because governments do not conduct their foreign affairs by plebiscite, the impact of public views of the United States is a question to be explored rather than a relationship to be assumed.

Many of the episodes in which Washington failed to get its way were also linked directly or indirectly to the American-led war in Iraq. The September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington gave rise to an almost unanimous outpouring of sympathy and support from leaders and publics abroad. For the first time in its history, NATO invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty: "The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack on all of them." The subsequent American invasion of Afghanistan to capture the al Qaeda leaders who openly claimed responsibility for the 9/11 attacks and to oust the Taliban regime that had given sanctuary to al Qaeda received widespread support. Numerous countries, including but not limited to NATO allies, provided troops, equipment, intelligence, basing rights, overflight rights, and the like. The American military action was generally regarded as a legitimate response to a barbaric terrorist attack in which there was no ambiguity about the identity or purposes of the perpetrators.

Shortly after expulsion of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, President Bush identified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union address. Later that summer he initiated a campaign to gain congressional and international support for a military campaign to oust Saddam Hussein, alleging that Iraq had accumulated an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and, moreover, that Iraq was implicated in the 9/11 terrorist attacks by virtue of close links to al Qaeda. The United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441 on November 8, 2002, requiring that Iraq readmit UN inspectors to determine whether it had violated agreements not to acquire WMDs. In the absence of compelling evidence of Iraqi violations

or of ties between Baghdad and al Qaeda, Washington's proposal to use force against Iraq generated widespread opposition abroad. The debates on Iraq coincided with an unprecedented amount of international polling that yielded a mountain of evidence during the run-up to and conduct of the Iraq war.

“TO SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US”

Even before Robert Burns wrote “To a Louse” in 1786, from which this line is drawn, the American experiment had attracted the attention of visitors from abroad—for example, St. Jean de Crevecoeur who had written “What Is an American?” four years earlier. Many other observers of American society followed, including Charles Dickens, Frances Trollope, James Bryce, D. H. Lawrence, and Alexis de Tocqueville. The last wrote the classic study *Democracy in America*, which, more than a century and a half after its initial publication, remains in print and continues to be cited and debated.

In order to gain a sense of how the United States is viewed abroad today, we are no longer dependent solely on the observations of a few travelers and intellectuals. The dramatic events of the past two decades, including disintegration of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, two wars against Iraq, and the terrorist attacks against New York and Washington, have provided both incentives and opportunities for unprecedented efforts to gauge “as others see us” by means of public opinion surveys in scores of countries. The U.S. Information Agency undertook extensive polling throughout much of the Cold War period, and private firms such as Gallup International, the Eurobarometer, and their counterparts in many countries have been involved in similar undertakings for several decades. Nevertheless, the polling efforts of the past few years have dwarfed those of previous periods. Policymakers have long been interested in gauging public sentiments, but efforts to do so, once viewed as somewhat questionable activities that they tried to shield from public view, now constitute a growth industry in many countries. The end of the Cold War and the expansion of democratic governments have opened up areas that were previously inaccessible to pollsters, and new technologies, including computer-assisted telephone surveys, have opened up opportunities for almost instantaneous measures of public sentiments at a lower cost. Global turbulence and often controversial events, combined with the growth in the number of democracies, have enhanced interest in how publics react to these events. For example, John Mueller described the first Persian Gulf War as the “mother of all polling

events.”¹⁶ The September 11 terrorist attacks and the 2003 war against Iraq have relegated the first war against Iraq to a distant runner-up position as a stimulant to surveys.

The many recent international surveys by Gallup International, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, the German Marshall Fund, the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), and the British Broadcasting Corporation have provided relevant data about how the United States and its policies are viewed from about five dozen countries. Many of the tables in this study focus on twenty-seven countries, including ten NATO allies and seventeen other key countries. Not only do these include many of America’s allies but they are also countries for which results of multiple surveys are available. The vast majority of these countries are also at least electoral democracies in which leaders must face electorates periodically and, thus, cannot be wholly indifferent to public sentiments. It is, of course, an open question whether elites in these countries feel as constrained by public views on foreign affairs as they do on domestic issues.

Before turning to data, two caveats are worth mentioning. One of the “iron laws” of public opinion research is that responses are often highly sensitive to wording of the questions. The data presented here are drawn from a broad array of survey organizations, few of which used identical wording even when they sought to measure opinions on the same issue. Because even minor variations in phrasing questions may yield significantly different responses, comparison of responses across surveys should be undertaken with caution. A corollary to this “iron law” is that when differently worded questions on a given issue give rise to essentially similar responses, our confidence in the results is materially enhanced. The plethora of tables in this study arises from a deliberate decision to use multiple surveys, when available, in order to unearth findings that do not rely excessively on responses that might merely be an artifact of any single question format or the sampling designs of a single polling organization.

A more general caveat centers on the entire polling enterprise. Despite immense technical improvements since the disastrous *Literary Digest* presidential poll of 1936 that confidently predicted a landslide victory for Alf Landon over incumbent Franklin D. Roosevelt, there continues to be an active debate about whether surveys tap “real” opinions rather than merely casual answers by largely uninterested and uninformed respondents. That is not the place to re-

16. John Mueller, *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), xiv.

view the vast literature on that ongoing debate. For present purposes it is perhaps appropriate to paraphrase Winston Churchill's observation about democracy being the worst form of government—except for all the alternatives. In order to understand the opinions and preferences of general publics, a well-designed survey is the worst research instrument for doing so—except for all the alternatives.

There is little doubt that some respondents in mass surveys not only are poorly informed about world affairs but also may give “off the top of the head” responses rather than appear to be ignorant. There is, nevertheless, striking evidence that, in the aggregate, responses to well-designed surveys reveal considerable stability. Moreover, when aggregate responses on a given issue change significantly, they usually reflect important events.¹⁷ Thus, changes in opinions are not necessarily indications of ignorance and mindless volatility; they are more likely to indicate that respondents are paying at least some attention to new information rather than being permanently wedded to a particular point of view.

There are, of course, other methods that may be used to assess how countries are viewed abroad. Analyses of writings, speeches, novels, movies and other cultural products, and the media have often been used, and indeed, there were few alternatives prior to development of systematic mass surveys in the 1930s. But just as surveys cannot provide bulletproof assurances of validity, even if sophisticated content analyses designs are employed, the volume of materials is such that only samples can be studied. Because not all such studies have grappled with sampling problems, the results are heavily dependent on which materials are selected, and that choice may at least in some cases reflect the investigator's preconceptions. One admittedly extreme hypothetical example illustrates the problem. Suppose that a study designed to assess the nature and impact of religion on American politics focused on the extensive writings, sermons, and political commentaries of James Dobson, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell. To understate the case, the results would be a skewed representation of the rich diversity in American religious thought, and they would suggest

17. The extensive literature on this point, to which Bruce Russett, Benjamin Page, Richard Sobel, Eugene Wittkopf, Robert Shapiro, Richard Eichenburg, Laurence Jacobs, Steven Kull, John Zaller, John Mueller, and James Rosenau are among the many contributors, is reviewed in Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*, 2nd edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), chap. 3. While the evidence cited there is largely based on studies of the American public, there is reason to believe that this is equally true of most non-American publics, many of which have been shown to outstrip Americans in their knowledge of world affairs. Michael A. Dimock and Samuel L. Popkin, “Political Knowledge in Comparative Perspective,” in *Do the Media Govern?* ed. Shanto Iyengar and Richard Reeves (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage), 217–24.

that the study was designed to portray an especially somber view of an important aspect of U.S. society, with the goal of constructing a straw man that can easily be knocked down.

There are ways of avoiding such obvious traps, but not all have done so. In an especially impressive effort to gauge public opinion by means other than surveys, Marc Lynch translated and content analyzed 1,350 editorials and op-ed articles in twelve Arab newspapers.¹⁸ In contrast, some depictions of French thinking about the United States have emphasized the views of those on the fringes who have argued, for example, that the September 11 terrorist attacks were a justified response to American sins or, worse yet, were actually orchestrated by elements in Washington. At the same time they have given less attention to those, such as Jean François Revel, who have long been vocal and articulate admirers of the United States.¹⁹

But even the best polls—many of those cited here represent the “gold standard” in survey research—cannot fully address questions about the sources and consequences of public opinion. The brief country studies in chapter 4 attempt to deal with those limitations by exploring the extent to which, if any, public assessments of the United States may have had an impact on policy.

OVERVIEW

Chapters 2 and 3 present and discuss extensive survey findings about how the United States is viewed by publics abroad. Many of these surveys analyzed included questions assessing levels of approval of President George W. Bush and his conduct of foreign affairs, but they are not considered here because this book focuses on broader questions of how publics abroad view the United States and its policies. Suffice it to say that assessments of the president and his conduct of foreign affairs are almost universally very critical, and they have generally become more so in the light of developments in Iraq, including abuses of prisoners and the insurgency that has put the country on the brink of civil war. In any case, it is not altogether clear whether the responses to questions that mention President Bush are appraisals of the president, his policies, or both. For that reason, such questions are not central to the analyses that follow.

18. Marc Lynch, “Beyond the Arab Street: Iraq and the Arab Public Sphere,” *Politics and Society* 31 (March 2003): 55–91.

19. Jean-François Revel, *Anti-Americanism* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003). For an excellent and balanced assessment of French opinions see Sophie Meunier, “The Distinctiveness of French Anti-Americanism,” in *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 129–56.

Chapter 2 begins with evidence on general appraisals of the United States, starting with surveys undertaken prior to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington and continuing through the end of 2007. Key events of the period include the invasion of Afghanistan, controversies before and during the war in Iraq, and the insurgencies that have brought Iraq to the brink of civil war. It then turns to survey data on specific American policies, including not only in Iraq but also regarding the “war on terrorism,” the extent to which Washington is sensitive to the interests of other countries, and the proper conditions for uses of force abroad.

Chapter 3 continues the presentation and analysis of survey data, starting with judgments of the American people and continuing with evidence on how publics abroad judge aspects of American society and its major institutions, among them American democracy and its appropriateness as a model for others to emulate; science and technology; such entertainment products as movies, television, and music; business and the practices of firms that operate outside the United States; the role of religion in American life; the quality of life for those who emigrate to America; and the role of values and policies in differences between their countries and the United States.

As noted, even meticulously generated public opinion responses cannot answer crucial questions about the sources of public views of the United States and the extent to which public opinion may have entered into foreign policy-making processes. Chapter 4 undertakes seven brief country studies that attempt to assess whether and how the views of publics abroad may have had any impact on their governments. In the absence of extensive interviews and archival research it is not possible to deal definitively with the issue of causality. If government policies fly in the face of strong public opinions to the contrary, that would raise significant doubts about the impact of public opinion on issues in question. Even if public preferences and policies are essentially identical, that concordance would not be sufficient to establish beyond doubt that the former caused the latter, but the country studies can at least serve as plausibility probes on the question of impact. These studies of Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Mexico, Morocco, South Korea, and Turkey include predominantly Muslim countries (Turkey, Indonesia, and Morocco) and non-Muslim ones (Australia, Canada, Mexico, and South Korea); those that sent troops to Iraq (Australia, South Korea) and the five that refused to do so (Canada, Mexico, and the three predominantly Muslim countries); and members of NATO (Turkey and Canada) as well as five countries that are not members of that alliance.

The data in chapters 2 and 3 reveal that, on balance, critical views of the United States have increased since the initial outpouring of support and sympathy following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and especially following the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Chapter 5 examines seven schools of thought that purport to explain anti-American sentiments abroad: the end of the Cold War; globalization; American virtues and values; irrational hatred and envy; strategic scapegoating by elites abroad who prefer to blame the United States for their own failings; ignorance about the United States and its policies, arising in part from ineffective public diplomacy by the State Department; and, finally, American policies. The discussion addresses some policy implications of these seven explanations for growing disaffection for the United States.

Chapter 6 picks up on the last of these explanations by undertaking a brief description and assessment of some recent American policies that appear to have contributed to anti-American views abroad. The discussion includes occasional comparisons with U.S. diplomacy during what was arguably the most productive and innovative period of American foreign policy—the decade following the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that, in the words of Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg, “ended isolationism for any realist.”²⁰

Before proceeding to the surveys and other evidence, it is worth emphasizing that this study does *not* attempt to analyze or describe the full range of appraisals of the United States over the course of its existence by foreign leaders, intellectuals, artists, and other elites who have made known their views. The literature on those subjects is already immense. Rather, the focus here is on how publics abroad have appraised the United States and its policies in recent years, whether and how and why those views have changed during recent years, and the policy implications of those opinions.

20. Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., ed., *The Public Papers of Senator Vandenberg* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1952), 1.