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INTEREST GROUPS AND FOREIGN POLICY

Lester W. Milbrath

THIS paper addresses itself to the following questions: How can one conceptualize the process by which interest groups influence foreign policy? On which kinds of foreign policy issues are which kinds of groups likely to have influence? How should one classify groups vis-a-vis their posture toward foreign policy? Do groups act differently when trying to influence foreign policy decisions than they do when trying to influence domestic policy decisions?[1]

Since these questions make it plain that the concept of influence is central to my analysis, it is useful to start with a comment on how I

1. Foreign and domestic policies are distinguished in this way: the former are those whose direct consequences involve other countries, whereas the direct consequences of the latter do not extend beyond a country's borders. The direct consequences of an income tax, for example, are mostly limited to the country in which it is adopted. The direct consequences of a tariff cut, on the other hand, are immediately felt in other countries. Indirectly, of course, almost every policy has some impact abroad, so it is important to stress here that the foreign-domestic distinction is largely one of emphasis and holds only for direct consequences.

shall be using the concept. In order to assess fully the unique influence of interest groups on foreign policy, it would be necessary to trace all the influences at work and then to parcel out that influence which is unique to interest groups. Such a task is clearly beyond the capabilities of modern social science and will not be attempted here. Yet when discussing the relation of interest groups to foreign policy, it is difficult, indeed impossible, to avoid the influence problem. Interest groups, by definition, desire to influence the policies of government. In order to cope with this definitional reality, therefore, I shall pursue a middle course and attempt to specify some conditions under which influence could occur and others under which it is unlikely to occur. This exercise provides at least some perspective, if not a complete answer, to the influence problem.

I like to think of the influence process as a subcategory of the communication process. Not all communications transmit influence, some transmit only information; but all transmissions of influence constitute some form of a message. The basic principles of message transmission and reception, then, are useful in thinking about how influence occurs. Before any influence can occur, the influencee must receive *and consider* a message from the influencer. When I speak of influence in this chapter I mean only the process by which a decision-maker considers the content of a message as he makes his decision; I do not imply that the message must be the decisive factor as he makes his final selection among the alternatives.

INTEREST GROUPS AS INTERMEDIARIES

Concerned citizens, hoping to influence foreign policy decisions, must make some tactical choices about how they will try to communicate their policy desires to official decision-makers. They can take the simple and obvious tactic of dispatching a direct message to the official they hope to influence. In some instances that tactic may be effective, in others, not. However, citizens have many alternative methods for communicating policy desires to officials: they can ask a group to speak for them, they can work through a political party, they can use the mass media, they can cast a vote, and they can choose to do nothing that is overtly political (thereby communicating inertia). All of these actions constitute a message of some sort to the officials charged with making foreign policy. In most instances the citizen's choice of tactics is based on poor information about their effectiveness.

This chapter treats groups as intermediaries in communication between citizens and governments as those governments make foreign policy decisions. The interrelationships of the actors constituting the communications network through which policy decisions are made are outlined in Figure 1.[2] In this figure, the heavy dark arrows represent the formal power relationships that tie together the actors in the system and that are usually specified in a constitution. The outputs from such a system are authoritative governmental decisions (laws, executive orders, judicial decisions, and so forth). These decisions are produced by elected and appointed officials who are placed in their jobs (directly or indirectly) by the votes of the body politic.

Formal constitutional relationships do not make a government, however; all such systems develop sets of auxiliary actors who are tied into the formal system by an elaborate communications network. Figure 1 suggests six types of auxiliary actors, their institutional bases, and the major channels of communication tying them into the system. These auxiliary actors are intermediaries in the sense that they transmit and interpret messages coming from public officials and directed to the body politic, and they also transmit and interpret messages flowing in the other direction, from the body politic to the officials. In another sense, of course, these auxiliary actors are more than intermediaries; very often they initiate communications directed elsewhere in the system.

This chapter focuses most directly on those boxes labeled "domestic" and "foreign interest groups." The mass media are covered by another chapter in this volume and political parties are dealt with in several others. When parties serve as channels of message transmission between the public and officials, with the messages intended to influence policy, rather than as institutions for getting officials elected, they are functioning very much like interest groups and can be subsumed under our discussion. When opinion leaders form themselves into groups or act as spokesmen for groups, they too can be subsumed into our discussion of groups; when they act individually, they may be thought of as part of the body politic. The latter were singled out for attention in the diagram mainly to allow for the so-called two-step flow of communications.[3]

Foreign governments and groups of citizens of foreign countries become part of the relevant communications network when decisions are to be made about foreign policy. This does not mean simply that information about the characteristics and probable reactions of these people are fed to officials by actors within the domestic system; it means also that many messages come directly from these foreign governments

2. Adapted from Lester W. Milbrath, *The Washington Lobbyists* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), p. 181.

3. Cf. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), and Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (New York: The Free Press, 1955).

and groups, are aimed directly or indirectly at officials and are designed to influence their decisions. A message from a foreign government may be a formal diplomatic exchange, but it also may be informal or come via some intermediary such as the mass media. For example, in *The New York Times* of June 2, 1965, there appeared a letter to the editor from Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia that was clearly designed to influence the foreign policy of the United States. Messages from foreign interest groups are transmitted in much the same fashion as messages from domestic interest groups. Many foreign interest groups have registered lobbyists in Washington.

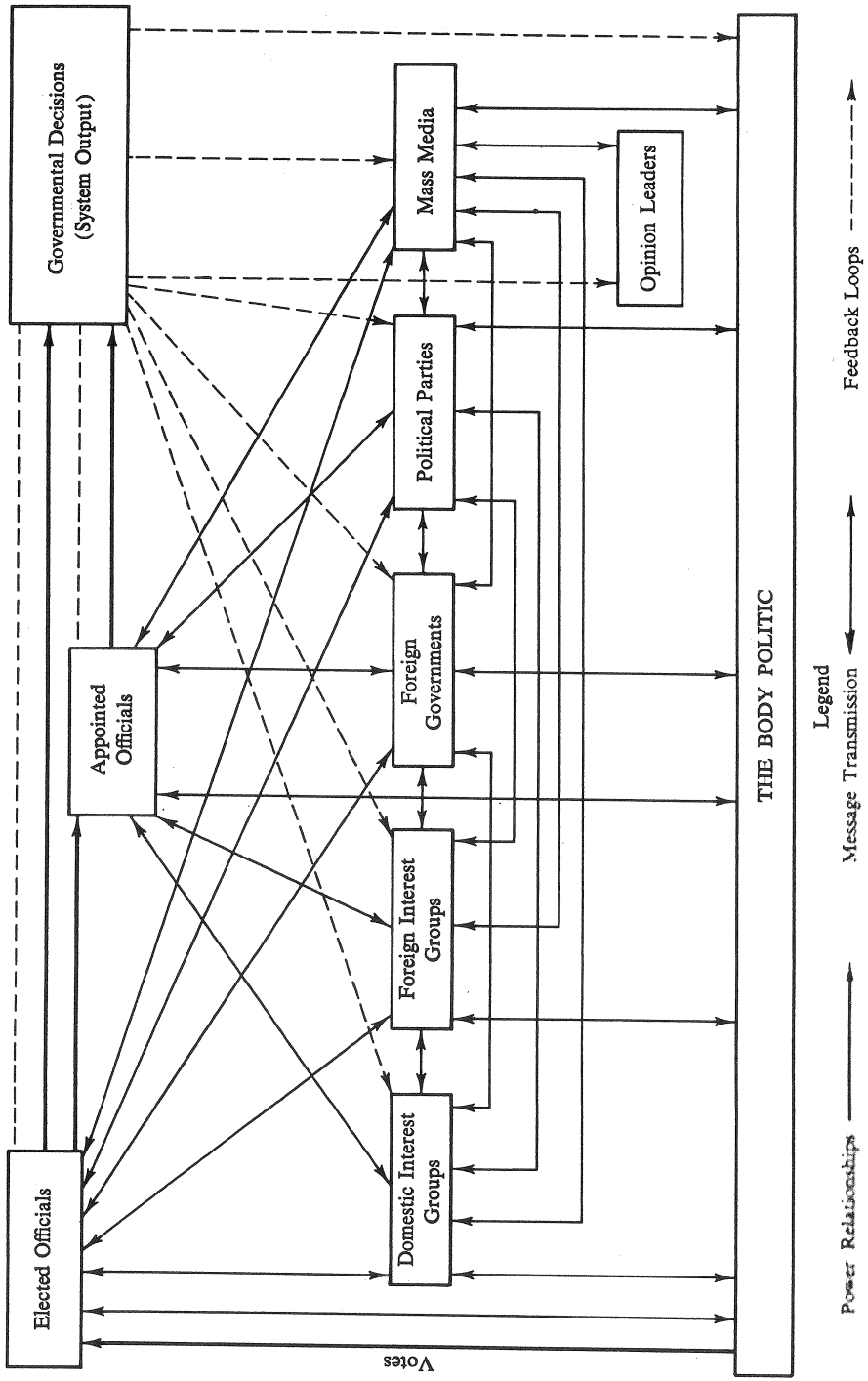
LOCI FOR FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS

Before the role of groups in determining foreign policy decisions can be examined, it is necessary to locate where such decisions are made. It is wise to begin with those who are officially responsible for the making of foreign policy decisions and to define a decision-maker as one who is legally charged to make a final choice from among two or more alternatives on a policy question. Usually this power of final choice carries with it the power to commit the resources of the nation. In the United States, the President is preeminently charged with making these final choices in foreign policy matters. The import of this fact for understanding strategies of influence, although self-evident, is often inadequately appreciated. In contrast to domestic policy, where the President shares the authoritative selection of alternatives with many other officials (especially in Congress), in foreign affairs the President often is the sole authoritative decision-maker. To be sure, the President delegates quite a number of decisions, but he stands finally responsible for his delegation. The point here is that in seeking the loci of foreign policy decisions we look first to the President and then, if necessary, to the persons to whom he has delegated decisional power.

Certain kinds of foreign policy decisions require the concurrence of additional officials. Congress must concur in decisions requiring expenditure of money, declaration of war, treaty ratification, and the appointment of foreign affairs officials. Even in many of these cases, however, the requirement of concurrence often has the consequence of imposing a boundary on the decision latitude of the President rather than permitting actual participation in the selection of the alternatives.

Knowing where and when decisions are made is the central consideration for strategies designed to influence those decisions. It is a simple and significant fact that the President cannot attend to more than a minute fraction of the messages that people might wish to direct to

Figure 1



him. This means that the President has a relatively open choice in deciding to whom he will listen. Listen, in this context, does not mean simply that his ear picks up the sound; it means, rather, that he gives the message serious and thoughtful consideration. Perhaps more than any other actor in the system, the President has the power to decide to whom he will listen. The major limitation on this power is his desire to maintain political support. Since his constituency is the entire country, however, and since he has great potential for influencing public opinion, even this boundary imposes very few limits on his decisions as to whose messages he shall heed. There are two parts to the decision to listen: First, a message must pass through the organizational and perceptual screen that the President's staff erects around him. Second, he must sufficiently respect the sender to give the message serious consideration.

The scope and location of those in addition to the President involved in a foreign policy decision varies with the type of problem under consideration and, accordingly, so does the task of interest groups hoping to exert influence within the decision-making process. A decision about a bombing sortie in North Vietnam, for example, includes advisers in the Defense Department, the State Department, and the National Security Council; officials from other departments and from Congress are only peripherally involved and interest group messages are almost totally excluded. A decision to recognize a new country primarily involves advisers in the Department of State; those in other departments, other branches, and interest groups are, except in rare instances such as the recognition of Israel or China, outside the system. A decision pertaining to a tariff requires a much wider decisional system and the number of people the President must heed is extended to include advisers in the Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture, and Labor Departments, as well as State and Defense. In addition, the Congress has some authority in the tariff area. Thus the points of possible access which interest groups have to tariff decisions can be hundreds of times greater than is the case with diplomatic or military decisions, and since the legitimacy of their concern about such matters is also more obvious, interest groups are likely to be part of the decisional system that deals with tariff questions.

Serious attention from the President does not automatically follow from the mere fact that the agency or group has a right to be concerned with the problem under consideration. The President cannot listen to every would-be adviser, and he fully trusts advice from only a small circle of intimates. If he stops trusting information from an adviser, the latter and all of the people who work under him are out of the decisional system. If an interest group representative had close liaison with some person in that group, he too is cut out of the system. A new President restructures much of the foreign policy decisional system, even though most of the agencies and the personnel who staff them remain the same. By the simple and necessary decision about whom to listen to, the President largely and effectively defines the actors involved in the foreign policy decisional process.

THE PROCESS OF DECISION AND ACCESS FOR INFLUENCE

The manner in which a decision is made is an important determinant of the likelihood that interest groups will have opportunities to influence it. Here a distinction can usefully be made between an intellective process in which the deliberations of the decision-making group are highly task-oriented and a social process in which the personal relations among the decision-makers are the dominant factor in the decision. Both processes are at work in nearly all decisions, but in some the intellective process predominates while in others the social emphasis prevails. In discussing intellective decision-making. Lasswell postulates the following seven functional steps: intelligence, recommendation, prescription, invocation, application, appraisal, and termination.[4] Not all steps are taken for every decision but, presumably, most of them are taken in approximately the order given. Bauer, Pool, and Dexter, on the other hand, challenge the notion that policy-making in Washington follows the highly intellective process postulated by decision-making theorists. They suggest instead that most policy decisions are "a social process and imbedded in a stream of social processes."[5]

Whether a decision tends in an intellective or social direction would seem to depend on the size of the decision-making group and on their perception of the weightiness of the task. If the decision involves many decision-makers who, in turn, are listening to many advisers (as in the case of tariff questions), it is likely to be made mainly through the social process, no matter how much importance is attached to the decision. On the other hand, if the circle of decision-makers is small and if they perceive that matters of life and death are at stake, the intellective process is likely to prevail. The U.S. decision to respond to the presence of Russian medium-range missiles in Cuba in October, 1962, is an example of what I mean here. If the stakes of the decision are not perceived

4. Harold D. Lasswell, *The Decision Process: Seven Categories of Functional Analysis* (College Park, Md.: Bureau of Government Research, University of Maryland, 1956).

5. Raymond A. Bauer, Ithiel de Sola Pool, and Lewis Anthony Dexter, *American Business and Public Policy: The Politics of Foreign Trade* (New York: Atherton Press, 1963), p. 479.

as high, the participants are more likely to allow, perhaps unconsciously, social considerations to enter their deliberations. The interaction of size and stake considerations can be sketched out as shown in Fig. 2.

Figure 2

NUMBER OF DECISION MAKERS	STAKES: high	STAKES: low
one or few	intellective	leans social
many	social	social

It follows that interest groups are likely to find it easier to gain access to social process decisions than to those involving the intellective process. The latter do not foreclose group access, but I would hypothesize that they present many more difficulties in this respect than do social process decisions.

THE TASK OF GROUPS DESIRING TO INFLUENCE FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS

With the above considerations in mind, it is now possible to specify some of the conditions that groups must meet if they wish to influence foreign policy decisions directly. First, it is essential that group leaders know the identity of the actors involved in a decision and the stages through which their deliberations must pass. The former point is obvious: messages can be influential only if they reach the persons who are making the decision. But timing a message so that it reaches decision-makers when it is most likely to be influential is also important. It is not easy for an interest group representative to know the most opportune time to send a message. Generally it can be said that a message that arrives before the problem is taken up by an official may become lost before he comes to consider alternative courses of action. At the opposite extreme, a message that arrives after an alternative has been selected will meet a reluctance from the decision-maker to reopen the question. Other, more subtle, considerations of timing are also relevant, but they are too specific to each situation to permit generalization.

Second, with a target audience in mind and the right time chosen, the group needs an open channel through to the target. This is generally more difficult to achieve than it may seem at first glance. The group leader can, of course, simply dispatch a letter or place a phone call, but

there is no assurance that the message will get through. The chances are, in fact, that it will be intercepted by some staff assistant who may or may not pass it on. If he does pass it on, it likely will be placed with many similar messages or aggregated in some way. At this point the message is surrounded by a good deal of noise and probably has undergone some distortion. The leader could seek an appointment in an effort to deliver the message in person, but such an appointment often is difficult to obtain. The closer the adviser is to the official or top decision-maker (usually the President), the greater the difficulty in obtaining the appointment with the adviser and the shorter the appointment's duration. The scarcity of opportunities to see officials means that groups store up their good will and try to get personal appointments only for the issues they consider to be most important. This importance is defined in terms of group goals and by the expenditure of scarce resources possessed by the group; it has little relation to what might be considered important for the nation or to a difference between foreign and domestic policy. Difficulties in obtaining a clear and open channel to an official stimulate many groups to try to send their messages through intermediaries who are presumed to have better access. A phone call from a friend, for example, will be put through to the official, and he likely will listen attentively. But friends who allow themselves to be used in this fashion are extremely hard to find. Furthermore, if they value their friendship, they will not be inclined to put much pressure on the official. If the decision-maker is a member of Congress, the group might find a constituent to transmit the message. The power connection, via the vote, between constituent and representative probably insures an open channel for the message. For those questions on which constituents can be stirred to take action, this is a viable means of message transmission.

The need for an open and clear channel for sending messages is the major reason why interest group representatives try to develop contacts. Contacts do not automatically insure favorable reception of messages, but they make it much easier to get messages through in undistorted fashion. The purpose of a call does not have to be extensively justified; the credentials of the sender do not have to be meticulously examined. Shared experiences in the past facilitate understanding between sender and receiver. The lobbyist with an excellent contact in every spot in which he might need one (an impossible situation to attain and maintain) would certainly have his work load lightened. A major difficulty with contacts is that they are so fragile and transitory. If they are overused, they wear out. If they are abused, the connection is broken. Connections naturally are between persons and not between roles; if a person moves, the connection to the role he played is likely to be broken even if the role continues. (In a few instances there is a natural

connection between roles, e.g., that between the President of the AFL-CIO and the Secretary of Labor.) The value of the contact (for influence) derives from the fact that the decision-maker is listening to, or is likely to listen to, the person one has contact with; if the decision-maker stops listening to the contact, any potential for influence that may have existed ceases.

Third, assuming for a moment that an open channel has been found for sending a message to the right place at the right time, how does the group achieve favorable reception of the import of the message by the decision-maker? This is the final step that must be consummated if the influence chain is to be completed, and most group leaders operate with very poor information and very little success in this realm. The perceptual screen that every human being possesses operates in a highly individualistic fashion. Many messages will be stopped and many others, distorted as they pass through that screen, and it is virtually impossible for any sender to know for certain how his message will fare. Busy public officials bombarded by a myriad of messages tend to select those that they wish to hear or to distort them so that they fit preconceptions. Being bombarded by so many messages, and therefore having an excuse for not listening to some or all of them, the public official can more readily stop listening and follow his personal predispositions than he could if he were the target of only a few messages. To a very great extent, officials determine the nature and amount of messages they will allow through their perceptual screen.

Despite the highly individualistic characteristic of message reception by officials, some generalizations can be stated about ways of making messages more acceptable. Nearly all messages are screened for legitimacy and credibility. A message will be considered legitimate if the official believes the sending group has a "right" to implore him on the matter. A demonstration of possible injury from a proposed action is one way of conveying a legitimate right to petition the government for redress of grievances. A firm that might be hurt if a tariff were lowered will be presumed to have a right to try to influence the decision. The legitimacy of the message might be questioned, however, if the firm approached a representative from another state rather than its own representative. A message that falls within the stated purposes of the group also will generally be considered legitimate. A message asking for negotiations to settle the Vietnam struggle would probably be considered legitimate if it came from SANE but illegitimate if it came from the American Margarine Manufacturers Association. The official receiving the message would probably say to himself: "Why should the margarine manufacturers wish to speak with a united voice that carries no direct consequence for them as margarine manufacturers?"

Officials receive many spurious and misleading messages and, therefore, they must seek to establish the veracity and credibility of all messages. The surest way to obtain credibility for an interest group message is for the group to establish a reputation for honesty and accuracy. In Washington lobbying, such a reputation is not easily gained and not lightly thrown away. Only repeated instances of honesty and accuracy of information in messages can build such a reputation.

Messages may also attain credibility because they contain unique facts that the sender's peculiar position enables him to know well. This tends to be true of facts ascertained by recognized experts. A group may also have unique facts about the consequences of a certain policy upon its membership, and credibility is likely to attach to messages containing these facts. Unique facts about the impact of a proposed policy upon group membership are more easily developed in the case of domestic policy issues than foreign policy issues. Domestic policies often have direct economic consequences for citizens; these consequences are fairly easily demonstrable in a message. Foreign issues, on the other hand, usually have more indirect consequences (tariff questions excepted) and it is difficult to demonstrate in a message how a certain group might be hurt.

A message may also attain credibility by the sheer force of the idea or argument it contains. Occasionally an idea comes along that is so cogent and important that it is immediately recognized as such by those who hear it. Such ideas usually are passed on by the staff to the decision-maker without delay. The probabilities are greater that such ideas will be generated by the executive bureaucracy than by interest groups. This is especially true of foreign policy issues, since planning and idea-generating groups for foreign policy questions are built into the bureaucracy. Still, it is certainly not inconceivable that new and cogent foreign policy ideas could come from an interest group.

Since style as well as content is important, interest groups are well-advised to present their message in an inviting fashion. If it is a personal presentation of the message, the sender should be pleasant and inoffensive; he should be well-prepared and well-informed. It is important that he personally be convinced that the message is "right." He should be succinct, well-organized, and direct; he should use the soft sell, and should leave a written summary of his message.[6] Since a message is always competing with many other messages for the attention of the decision-maker, the wise sender will try to find some way to convince the official that it is important for him to listen. The surest way to do this in the case of an elected official is to show him how he will protect himself or gain politically by listening. Demonstration that a given

6. For an elaboration of these points, see Milbrath, *op. cit.*, pp. 220–27.

measure is in the public interest or would serve the cause of justice also stimulates attention and concern. Unless this feeling of the importance of the message is created early in the presentation, there is a high probability that the entire message will be lost.

It should be apparent from the above discussion that it is no easy matter for interest groups and lobbyists to get messages through in such a fashion that they are likely to be influential. To help compensate for this difficulty, some interest groups have turned to "lobbying at the grass roots." They become propaganda agencies working on the opinion of their members or on public opinion in general. They may try to stir people at the grass roots to write letters, send telegrams, work for a candidate or party, or give money to a candidate or party. The implicit assumption of these tactics is that the number of messages directed to officials with the hope of influencing their decision can be enormously increased. Since each of these messages stands for potential votes, it is assumed that elected officials must listen and be affected by the messages. If the campaign to mold opinion at the grass roots is effective, and yet public officials do not make decisions in conformance with that opinion, it is presumed that the people will elect new officials who will follow public opinion.

Although the logic of this approach is unexceptionable, it is no easy task for interest groups to manipulate public opinion. In order for public relations campaigns to have a discernable effect, they have to be very large and very skillfully managed. A minimum of five million dollars has been expended in the few recent public relations campaigns conducted by interest groups that have had a clearly visible impact on public opinion (e.g., the campaign of the AMA to prevent adoption of compulsory national health insurance and the campaign of the margarine manufacturers to remove the ten cent a pound federal tax on their product.) Just as groups find it difficult to get officials to listen, they also find it difficult to get the attention of the public. Even on questions where some direct interest is apparent to anyone who cares to look (such as a job or a pension), many persons directly affected by the proposed policy will not be aroused by it. One would hypothesize, then, that it is especially difficult to engage the public on foreign policy questions, where its interests usually are much more indirect and general.

If an interest group tries to compete with the President to influence public opinion on any issue (foreign or domestic), most of the advantages are with the President. On foreign policy issues, where the President is considered to have privileged information, his advantages are even greater than for domestic issues. He commands the attention of all the news media; he is presumed to be better-informed and is presumed to have the interest of the whole country in mind. An interest group

acting alone would have no chance in such a contest. Only if it were able to attract the support of a substantial proportion of other public officials, could their combined campaign have a significant impact on policy outcomes. In such instances of collaboration between officials and interest groups, it is difficult to tell whether the officials are using the interest groups or vice versa. After examining the decisions over reciprocal trade renewal in 1955 and 1962, Bauer, Pool, and Dexter concluded that officials manipulated groups more than groups manipulated officials.[7]

If a group eschews an attempt to influence general public opinion (as most of them do) and concentrates on its own membership, it still has a formidable opinion formation task. Only a small portion of the membership reads the communications from the national organization; even a smaller proportion is willing to take action when requested. When the national leadership requests that messages of a given sort be sent to public officials, a certain proportion of the members will garble or distort the message. The leadership is on the horns of a dilemma here. If a standardized message is prepared so as to avoid distortion, it will be spotted as a "pressure campaign" and severely discounted; if the leadership tries to preserve a semblance of spontaneity in the origin and content of the messages, which facilitates a judgment by officials that the messages are credible, many fewer messages get composed and a higher proportion of them depart from the point of view the leadership is trying to promote. Frequently, public officials are tipped off that a letter or telegram campaign is in progress by some disgruntled member who sends the campaign instructions received from the group's national leadership to the official who is the target of the campaign. When this occurs, most of the campaign effort is wasted. These are the normal difficulties interest groups encounter when they are working on questions of domestic policy. On foreign policy questions, which tend to have a diffuse rather than a specific impact on individuals, it is even more difficult for them to mobilize their members and thus few interest groups attempt to mount large grass roots campaigns on foreign policy questions.

Even if an interest group focuses on attentive elites rather than on the mass (a somewhat more manageable task), attempts to manipulate elite opinions are difficult and unpredictable. Bauer, Pool, and Dexter suggest some very cogent reasons why:

> First, there lies latent in individuals a great collection of traces of previous communications. Any new communication may serve to change this massive structure only perceptibly, but it may at the same time set it into action in directions determined by the structure itself more than by the trigger stimulus.

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 477.

Second, the event triggered within the system may itself have more effect on the system than does the original stimulus. Arguing for one's own views in reply to a challenge may have more effect on one than does the challenge.

Third, within an individual many latent attitudes may be simultaneously present. The social controls and social relations may make some of them easier to express than others. Thus, even stimuli which have a persuasive effect on a man's thought may trigger quite opposite expressions.

Fourth, where a stimulus is addressed to a population of individuals, structural determinants may result in its mobilizing different proportions of those who agree and those who disagree with it. If it mobilizes more of those who disagree, the stimulus may boomerang...the communication is one input into a complex socio-psychological system. The effect of the communication on that system is, to a greater degree than is usually acknowledged, a function of the structure of that system. The impact of a given communication is of itself essentially indeterminate.[8]

To recapitulate, we have said that groups desiring to influence foreign policy decisions must know the optimum stage of the decision for delivery of their message; they must know the officials or their advisers who are involved in the decision and who are most likely to be receptive to the messages; they must find an open and clear channel to such persons; they must attract the attention of officials so that they will be heard; they must compose messages that are credible and legitimate. They may want to supplement these methods by stirring up messages from the grass roots or they may wish to concentrate on elites who are more likely to send supplementary messages. It requires a great deal of knowledge and skill to perform these tasks well. Many interest groups try to hire persons skilled in these tasks and send them as full-time lobbyists to Washington. Most lobbyists only partially fulfill the demands outlined here; many are frustrated by their inability to produce detectable results. This is not surprising, for the cards are stacked against them. Lobbying to influence foreign policy is no easy matter.

TYPES OF GROUPS INTERESTED IN FOREIGN POLICY

Persons who might wish to influence a decision on foreign policy live in many places and play many roles. Some may choose to act individually, but most would think that to be relatively futile. Only a citizen who had a close personal relationship with an official decision-maker (or who has power over an official) could hope to exert much influence

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 469–70.

through his individual action. Most citizens desiring influence form or join groups in the hope that the strength of numbers will increase their impact. Relatively few groups are formed solely to attempt to influence foreign policy; usually groups are formed for some broader purpose which incorporates foreign policy. Since the variety of groups that might wish to influence foreign policy is rather great, it is helpful to have a taxonomy of types of such groups. The one that follows (Figure 3) is oriented to our purposes and is very simple; it is not intended as an adequate classification for a general interest group study.

Figure 3—A Simple Taxonomy of Groups Interested in the Foreign Policy of a Government

INTERNAL GROUPS				EXTERNAL GROUPS	
Governmental Groups		Nongovernmental Groups		Foreign Governments	Nongovernmental Groups
Special Foreign Policy	General Interest (e.g. Congress) or specialists in matters other than foreign policy	Special Foreign Policy	General Interest Groups or specialists in matters other than foreign policy		

The first distinction presented in Figure 3, between internal and external groups, would not be necessary for strictly domestic policy questions. For questions of foreign policy, however, foreign governments and groups in foreign countries become important aggregates of persons desiring to influence the decisions of American foreign policy-makers. The interest of foreign governments in the foreign policy of the United States is obvious; it is the major reason for diplomatic representation in each other's capitals. The interest of private groups from other countries in American foreign policy is almost equally as obvious but is often overlooked. Several hundred agents are registered with the Attorney General under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938. Foreign groups are not only interested in American policy, they also can have a significant influence upon it. Alger suggests that some "governments accept criticism and advice more willingly from foreign persons they perceive as private citizens than from the persons they perceive as governmental officials."[9]

9. Chadwick F. Alger, "The External Bureaucracy in United States Foreign Affairs," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. VII (June, 1962), p. 77.

A dramatic example from recent history of a foreign group influencing American foreign policy is the incident in which Buddhists committed suicide by fire in Vietnam and thus stimulated a change in the pattern of support from the United States government for the Diem regime. Both foreign governments and groups, then, are important factors in shaping and expressing world opinion which, in turn, has a significant impact on United States foreign policy.

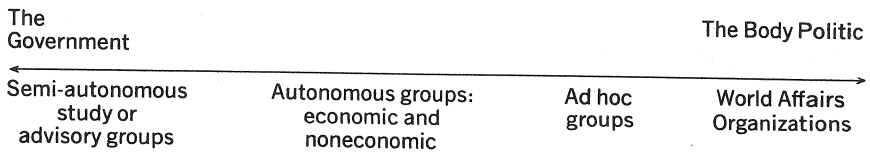
The second level of distinction in Figure 3, that between governmental and nongovernmental groups, is essential to a complete picture of the groupings of petitioners who send messages to official decision-makers. In a large governmental structure like the Federal Government, it is helpful to think of the various branches and agencies as groups with a life and purpose of their own. Very often the fulfillment of the agency's goals requires another agency to make a coordinate decision, and hence, the first agency will try to influence the decision of the second agency. When agencies act in this fashion, and they regularly do, they are very similar to nongovernmental interest groups that try to influence governmental decisions. The problems of transmitting messages that are likely to have influence on official decision-makers are conceptually the same for governmental and nongovernmental groups, albeit governmental groups normally have an advantage in obtaining open channels and in legitimating their concern for the problem.

Thirdly, we can distinguish groups with special or exclusive foreign policy concerns from groups with more general concerns. In the U.S. government, the special foreign policy agencies would be the State Department, the National Security Council, CIA, USIS, and the Defense Department. Congress and the President have more general interests, as do such departments as Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, and HEW. Certain branches and agencies have almost no foreign policy concerns, such as the Judiciary, and the Departments of Justice and the Interior. In the nongovernmental sphere, several types of groups have interests that include, but are much broader than, foreign policy. To use a common classification, they might be labeled as business, labor, agriculture, veterans, military, civic, women's, patriotic, and ethnic. It is difficult to decide whether the so-called China Lobby belongs in this category or that of special foreign policy interest groups or, for that matter, whether it is a group at all. Of course, some groups have no interest in foreign policy whatsoever and do not concern us here.

Groups specializing in foreign policy might be arrayed along a continuum stretching between government and the body politic (Figure 4). This notion pursues that expressed earlier that groups are intermediaries in the communication network linking the people to their government.

Some foreign policy groups are so close to the government that it

Figure 4—Special Foreign Policy Interest Groups Arrayed along a Continuum Stretching between Government and the Body Politic



is impossible to draw a boundary between them and the government. The RAND Corporation, for example, receives most of its funds from the government and does studies at the request of the government. The Council on Foreign Relations, while not financed by government, works so closely with it that it is difficult to distinguish Council actions stimulated by government from autonomous actions. These groups are used by the government to float trial balloons, to help create public opinion, and to consult on policy. Alger calls them "external bureaucrats" and suggests that their role is very crucial indeed: "When governments are unable to make crucial decisions, external bureaucrats are sometimes called in to make them" and, equally important, "External bureaucrats serve governmental needs by stimulating private persons or groups to perform tasks that tradition or limited resources will not permit the government to undertake itself."[10]

A relatively small proportion of autonomous groups specializes in foreign policy issues. These groups could be further subdivided into economic and noneconomic foreign policy groups. The former include those interested in tariff questions (e.g., the Committee on a National Trade Policy and the American Tariff League), groups interested in international banking and investment, those concerned with international fishing rights, the shipping industry, and groups interested in the allocation of quotas to import sugar into the United States. Often these groups, representing economic interests that spill over into foreign policy, are opposed by competitive interests in other countries: protectionists are opposed by those desiring to export to America; American fishing interests are opposed by fishing interests from other countries (Japan, for example); American shipping lines are opposed by foreign shipping lines (Norwegian, for example); and foreign sugar producers compete with each other and with American producers for their share of the American sugar market.

Noneconomic foreign policy groups tend to concentrate on broad questions of war and peace. The groups are usually small, with a thin financial base. Included here are such groups as the Women's Inter-

10. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

national League for Peace and Freedom, Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, the Peace Union, and so forth. Such groups are usually concerned with decisions where the President is the dominant or sole decision-maker. They concentrate mainly on the opinions of elites whom the President might consult. Their chances for getting clear channels through to the President or his closest advisers are relatively poor. Their chances for influencing broad general public opinion are also relatively poor. One would have to conclude that their impact on foreign policy is slight at best.

Now and then *ad hoc* groups spring up around an issue, an idea, or a particularly able leader. Sometimes *ad hoc* groups attract continuing support and turn into semipermanent organizations (e.g., SANE) if the issue which drew people together continues to be significant. A certain degree of institutionalization must set in before the group can develop a budget, rent an office, hire a lobbyist, and sustain a general lobbying effort.

Near the public end of the continuum described in Figure 4 are groups that make little or no attempt to communicate directly with governmental decision-makers; they concentrate, instead, on trying to educate the public about foreign policy matters. Some of their messages may flow through the public back to decision-makers, but little effort is made to direct or manipulate that flow. A world affairs study group, such as can be found in most communities, would be included here, as well as such national groups as the Foreign Policy Association, the United World Federalists, Atlantic Community groups, the Committee on World Peace through World Law, and so forth. These groups probably do have some impact on the opinions of the people who listen to them, but most relevant polls show that the proportion of the entire population who listen is not very great. It would be virtually impossible to trace their impact on any given foreign policy decision. Such groups can only hope for long-range effects in the form of persons exposed to their ideas who enter official foreign policy decision-making positions.

OVERALL EVALUATION OF GROUP INFLUENCE ON FOREIGN POLICY

With the foregoing considerations in mind, it is now possible to summarize by suggesting several hypotheses relevant to the influence that interest groups exert in foreign policy. Needless to say, considerable research would have to be carried out in order to test them.

I. The possibility for group influence on foreign policy issues varies with the issue.

A. Decisions made by social processes are more open to group influence than decisions made by intellective processes. Social process decisions have many more points of access and are more subject to interpersonal influences.

B. Decisions on foreign policies that involve direct, visible (usually economic) rewards and/or punishments to different sectors of the society generally tend to be shared by Congress and the President, to be social rather than intellective in process, and to stimulate more lobbying activities by groups at many points of access. Consequently, such decisions tend to resemble domestic policy issues more than those foreign policy problems that do not involve direct and visible rewards or punishments.

C. In general, it is easier for interest groups to compose and submit credible and legitimate messages to officials on domestic issues than on foreign policy issues. The direct impact of a proposed policy upon a group is usually more visible for domestic issues and thus the group's concern has greater legitimacy. Furthermore, on domestic issues groups often have unique and credible information about the impact of a proposed policy upon their memberships; comparable information is often lacking for foreign policy issues.

D. Assuming that the locus of decision is accessible to group influence, those issues that attract the attention of special publics, but that attract little general public attention, are more open to group influence than issues that attract wide and/or intense public scrutiny. The decision that foreign aid materials should, if possible, be shipped in American bottoms is an example of the former; the decision to send American troops into Vietnam is an example of the latter.

E. While the public pays relatively little attention to foreign policy issues, even to such a well-publicized issue as ratification of the test-ban treaty it does not follow that the public generally pays more attention to domestic than foreign policy issues. The over-all attention level to both kinds of issues is low and both kinds may receive increased attention if the press chooses to give them a play. Attention level does not seem to be a function of the domestic or foreign character of issues.

F. Robinson suggests a curvilinear relationship between group involvement in decisions and the crisis level of the decision.[11] At a very low crisis level only a few special groups are likely to be interested in the decision. As the importance, or crisis level, of the decision increases, the interests of more groups are likely to be at stake (as well as to stimulate more intense interest), and thus more groups will be inclined to try to exert influence. As the crisis level increases further, and especially as decision time shortens, there is relatively little opportunity for group interests to be taken into account (e.g., the Cuban crisis of October, 1962). In the latter instance, the President has enormous power to shape public opinion and receives little effective challenge from interest groups. This does not mean that groups are of no consequence for crisis

11. James A. Robinson, "Public Opinion in Lasswell's *Future of Political Science*," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII (Fall, 1964), p. 399.

decisions, as their anticipated reactions may play some role and their subsequent positions may help set the stage for the next decision; but it does mean that groups are not likely to be consulted in the short decision time.

G. The less the importance of the issue, the greater the likelihood of group influence on its outcome; the greater the importance of the issue, the less the likelihood of group influence. This is a derivation from D and F above. Unimportant issues (in the total scheme of things) are less likely to attract public attention and are less likely to attract opposition groups. Public attention and conflicting positions by groups, which tend to accompany more important issues, serve as systemic checks on group influence.[12]

H. Decisions allowed to gestate over a period of several months are more open to group influence than decisions that must be made in a few days. If an issue is new, a group may not have a declared position, thus requiring the Washington staff to contact its policy-makers who, in turn, must confer and decide on a policy position. Furthermore, a few days is a relatively short time for a group to compose and transmit messages that are likely to be effective.

II. It is more likely that officials use lobbies as tools than that officials follow the bidding of such groups. This especially characterizes foreign policy decisions centering in the President, but it is also true of social process decisions involving a large number of decision-makers. As Bauer, Pool, and Dexter state.

> None of the lobbies we observed were the powerful monsters they are reputed to be. Underfinanced, they had to spend much of their time recruiting members and raising funds. Poorly staffed and overworked, they generally became effective, not as lobbies persuading public office-holders, but as service bureaus auxiliary to the efforts of those public servants.... The lobby became the congressman's publicity bureau. Indeed, without a congressman working with it, a lobby found it difficult to do anything the press would consider newsworthy.... The people who most actively form the issues to be discussed and debated are the symbolic leaders in Congress and the Executive. They generate the public concerns which come back as pressures on them.[13]

III. The ability of interest groups specializing in foreign policy to affect broad public opinion on foreign policy is severely limited. Compared to the power of the President in this respect, their direct impact on opinion is miniscule (although it should be noted that opinion-forming efforts of these groups may have second-order effects that social science cannot now measure). The basic difficulty is that few people listen to group propaganda. Only as part of a concerted campaign, in close collaboration with public officials, are group propaganda efforts likely to attract sufficient attention to have even a slight effect.

IV. The process by which groups respond to issues they may wish to try to influence is fundamentally the same whether the issue lies in domestic or foreign policy. In both cases they must find the locus of the decision and compose and transmit effective messages. The process within the group of arriving at a group position and of deciding on a strategy of action is also the same for foreign and domestic issues. Group leaders do not make a foreign-domestic distinction as they think about the way the policy will be handled within the group. The type of issue, foreign or domestic, probably affects their influence strategy to the extent that the locus and timing of decision is more confined for most foreign, as compared to most domestic, issues. Lobbyists, however, are accustomed to planning special strategies (with respect to locus and timing) for all issues and do not sort them into foreign and domestic boxes. In my research no lobbyist has ever indicated that he used a generally different strategy for foreign issues than for domestic issues.

In summary, I conclude that interest group influence on foreign policy is slight. In my earlier work I conclude that in general the direct "first order" effects of group influence on the policies of the federal government was slight.[14] Confining my gaze now to foreign policy, I would estimate that group influence is even weaker in that arena.

12. Cf. Milbrath, *op. cit.*, Part IV.
13. Bauer, Pool, and Dexter, *op cit.*, pp. 477–79.
14. Milbrath, *op. cit.*, Chap. 17.