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## Ethnic Interest Groups in American Foreign Policy\*

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In March 2010, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs narrowly passed H. Res. 252 by a vote of 23–22 and sent the resolution to the full House for its consideration. The non-binding resolution called upon the president to acknowledge the Armenian genocide of 1915 by Turkey. Three years earlier, the same resolution passed the committee by a larger margin (27–21), but failed to reach a vote on the House floor. The Armenian Assembly and the Armenian National Committee of America, the key interest groups of the Armenian community in the United States, supported and lobbied for the 2007 and 2010 resolutions. Both resolutions elicited a large number of cosponsors from members of the House of Representatives, 143 for the 2010 resolution and 212 for the 2007 one. These two resolutions also sparked intense lobbying by Turkish interests, both within the United States and from abroad. The 2007 resolution “pitted Turkey’s money and high-placed connections against a persistent and emotional campaign by Armenian-American citizens’ groups,” and the 2010 resolution stimulated “a full-page ad in the *Washington Post*” by Turkish groups and a visit of eight Turkish parliamentarians to Capitol Hill over the impending committee vote. Yet these resolutions caused more than just a clash between domestic interest groups and foreign lobbies on both sides of the issue; they also caused foreign policy difficulties between United States and Turkey. Just prior to the 2010 committee vote, for instance, Turkish President Abdullah Gul called President Obama apparently to seek his help in stopping this resolution, and Turkey subsequently recalled its ambassador to the United States in protest when the resolution passed in the Foreign Affairs Com-

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\*All endnotes have been deleted.

mittee. Turkish interests also made veiled threats about further disruption in U.S.-Turkish relations as a result of the passage of this resolution. In all, these nonbinding resolutions, advocated and opposed by competing ethnic interest groups, had the potential of disrupting foreign relations between the United States and Turkey.

To be sure, the Armenian and Turkish lobbies are relatively small in comparison to the size of other ethnic lobbies, and the nonbinding resolution may have more symbolic than substantive effect on foreign policy. Yet this episode exemplifies how organized and mobilized ethnic interest groups can affect foreign policy debate at home and may disrupt relations abroad. Is this the case for other ethnic groups as well, or is this an isolated instance of ethnic and foreign lobbies involved in U.S. foreign policymaking? Indeed, are other ethnic and foreign lobbies more consequential for the foreign policy process?

In this chapter, we address these and related questions. . . . [O]ur point of departure is to identify the number and type of foreign policy interest groups at the present time. Next, we evaluate several ethnic interest groups that have operated for some time and have had an impact on American foreign policy over the years. Then we turn to identify and assess the potential role of several new and emerging ethnic groups that have become active more recently. With all of these groups, we utilize several criteria for evaluating their effectiveness and judging their relative impact on U.S. foreign policy. We conclude by considering the overall influence of these kinds of interest groups on the conduct of American foreign policy.

## NUMBER AND TYPES OF FOREIGN POLICY INTEREST GROUPS

The number and types of interest groups active on foreign policy today are indeed numerous, but identifying the precise number is difficult to do for several interrelated reasons. As the foreign policy agenda of the United States has expanded from its traditional emphasis on security concerns to one that now encompasses economic, environmental, and social issues, foreign policy interest groups have grown exponentially. As this agenda has expanded, the decision-making arena on foreign policy has as well. Now more policymaking involves Congress and the executive branch—and more foreign policy interest group involvement as well. Because such groups often form, lobby, and then disband, it is difficult to track their exact number at any particular time. Finally, and importantly, we have no single accounting mechanism or reporting requirement to identify the number or types of these foreign policy interest groups; instead, we necessarily must rely upon estimates from a variety of sources.

Yet the estimates of interest groups vary widely. One estimate judged that there were about 11,000 firms or groups lobbying in Washington, DC, and these firms employed about seventeen thousand individuals to seek to influence the policy process. Another estimate, based upon the growth of nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, worldwide, placed the number anywhere from 5,600 to 25,000 and even to 100,000 such groups. These interest groups or NGOs are surely not all concerned with foreign policy (although the line is blurring between domestic and foreign policy concerns for many lobbying groups). In all, whatever the exact number, these estimates do illustrate how numerous and pervasive such groups have become today and thus have the potential to affect foreign policy.

As the number of foreign policy interest groups has increased in recent decades, the types of such groups have as well. Foreign policy interest groups include some traditional lobbying groups, such as business groups, labor unions and agricultural interests, with their principal focus on international trade issues (although increasingly these groups take stances on a broad array of other foreign policy concerns as well), and they now also include several newer groups that are active on foreign policy. These groups include religious communities, veteran organizations, academic think-tanks, ideological organizations (such as the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), and single-issue interest groups (e.g., United Nations Association of the United States, Union of Concerned Scientists, and Americans against Escalation in Iraq).

Yet this listing does not include arguably the oldest foreign policy lobby, ethnic interest groups. Ethnic groups, or those groups of Americans who hold a particular concern for U.S. policy toward the particular country or region of their own or their ancestors' origin, are not only the oldest foreign policy lobby, but, in many ways, they also frequently turn out to be the most influential. In important ways, too, these ethnic groups are often tied to foreign country lobbies, or those groups that directly lobby the American government on behalf of another nation. (As a result of these international linkages, American ethnic groups may sometimes get extra scrutiny by the U.S. government to make certain that they are in compliance with the strictures in the Foreign Agents Registration Act and are not acting as foreign agents of another government.) These foreign lobbies, moreover, are increasingly numerous and consequential, and they often complement the work of ethnic groups. Foreign country lobbies can appeal to American ethnic groups that share their views on a particular issue to broaden their level of support, and ethnic groups can gain support from foreign lobbies (and particularly their domestic representatives) to aid in making their case to Congress or the executive branch on a particular issue.

## PRINCIPAL ETHNIC LOBBIES

Although ethnic lobbies are increasingly numerous today, the level of activism and effectiveness of individual lobbies varies. Traditionally, Americans of Jewish, Irish, and Eastern European heritage have been the most active ethnic lobbies on foreign policy. Over the past several decades, however, Americans of African, Arab, Armenian, Cuban, Greek, Hispanic, Mexican, and Turkish descent have been increasingly active on foreign policy issues as well. Recently, yet another group, Indian Americans, has become increasingly involved in the foreign policy process. For these interest groups, their principal foreign policy concern is American policy toward the country or region of their origin. Hence, Jewish Americans are most often concerned with U.S. policy toward Israel, Irish Americans toward Ireland, Cuban Americans toward Cuba, and so on. Because of their singular focus on policy toward a particular country or region, these individual ethnic groups tend to be highly motivated in their lobbying effort, and that level of motivation often proves crucial in their effort to obtain their preferred policy from the American government. To be sure, some ethnic groups are more successful than others, and we discuss those first. With all of the ethnic groups that we discuss, we will identify several factors that account for their relative success as compared to others.

### The Jewish Lobby

By virtually all assessments, the Jewish lobby, or the Israel lobby, is perhaps the most influential ethnic lobby today with the preponderance of its attention on issues related to the state of Israel and to the Middle East more generally. The Jewish lobby has been described as a "loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively work to shape U.S. policy in a pro-Israel direction." This lobby has two umbrella organizations that coordinate its activities, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), but AIPAC is usually the organization most often identified with the Jewish lobbying efforts. AIPAC has a relatively large membership at about one hundred thousand activists, has "a network of 10 regional offices and nine satellite offices," and has a large and effective staff in its Washington office. AIPAC also provides a variety of services to its members in an effort to stimulate grassroots support for key issues. The organization's website, for example, provides a wealth of information that allow its members to participate in the foreign policy process: a summary of key issues under consideration by Congress; a congressional directory to facilitate those who want to contact their representatives; numerous policy statements on issues important to the organization; and a list of AIPAC policy achievements.

Furthermore, the website contains direct links, or buttons, for Capitol Hill staffers and for the press as additional ways to get its message out. Finally, and interestingly, AIPAC proudly proclaims its policy effectiveness: "The most important organization affecting America's relationship with Israel"—a descriptor provided by the *New York Times* some years ago.

The Jewish lobby, and AIPAC in particular, have indeed been successful in affecting the direction of American foreign policy toward Israel and the Middle East more generally over the years. AIPAC has largely been able to garner widespread support to promote legislation that it favors or to stop legislation that it opposes. In the 1970s, for example, it was able to obtain seventy-six Senate cosponsors for the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act of 1974 that prohibited most-favored-nation (MFN) status to any state without a free emigration policy—a bill focused on the Soviet Union's restriction on Jewish emigration at the time. In the same decade, it also obtained seventy-six senators to sign a letter urging President Ford to support Israel in any peace effort in the Middle East. In the 1980s, AIPAC was instrumental in forcing the Reagan administration to alter the composition of an arms sale to Saudi Arabia, and, in 1988, Saudi Arabia purchased \$30 billion in arms from Britain rather than deal with congressional opposition from supporters of Israel. Currently, AIPAC points to several specific legislative actions to demonstrate the effectiveness of its lobbying: "passing more than a dozen bills and resolutions condemning and imposing tough sanctions on Iran," supporting numerous resolutions passed in Congress that "affirm congressional support for Israel's right to self-defense," and promoting legislation "requiring the administration to evaluate all future military sales to Arab states in the context of the need to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge over potential adversaries." . . . Undoubtedly the best single indicator of congressional support, and a measure of AIPAC's policy success in that body, has been the fact that Israel has continuously received the highest amount of U.S. foreign assistance of any country over the past three decades—at \$3 billion annually.

What accounts for the success of this ethnic lobby—or indeed any ethnic lobby? After all, the number of Jewish Americans at 6.2 million constitutes less than 3 percent of America's population. How can this interest group seemingly be so influential? Political scientist Tony Smith in his *Foreign Attachments* begins to provide an answer for this group and others. Smith points to two general factors: (1) the structure of the American political system, and (2) the characteristics of ethnic groups themselves. The former factor refers to the plural nature of the American political system that allows interest groups access to the governmental process, while the latter refers to specific resources that ethnic groups can use to affect the process. The access that these groups have, Smith argues, is "at the local, grassroots level of party selection of officeholders during primaries," "in the divisions that

naturally open between the executive and the legislature," and in "the divisions within the legislature itself in Washington." Although these points of access are obviously important, the ability of ethnic groups to take advantage of them is arguably even more crucial. To do that and thus to gain influence, ethnic groups, Smith argues, potentially possess three important resources: (1) their ability to provide votes in key areas, (2) their ability to make campaign contributions to office seekers, and (3) their ability to organize and lobby on key issues.

Applying these three criteria to the Jewish lobby, we begin to see how that lobby can be so effective. First of all, America's Jewish population tends to be concentrated in several key states. States along the east coast (New York, New Jersey, Florida, and to a lesser extent Maryland and Massachusetts) tend to have large concentrations of Jewish voters as do the states of California, Illinois, and Ohio. Further, and importantly, Jews tend to participate in the political process at a much higher rate than other groups in American society. As a result, presidential candidates will likely be sensitive to the interests of Jewish voters in these states, especially since these states have a large number of electoral votes and especially in years with closely-contested national elections. Second, the Jewish community and pro-Israel lobbying groups provide a large amount of campaign funding for congressional and presidential elections. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, pro-Israel groups provided some \$13.8 million in campaign contributions in 2008 with 63 percent of those funds supporting Democratic candidates for office and 37 percent for Republican candidates. (AIPAC does not directly make campaign contributions, but it has close ties with political action committees [PACs] that can be used to make such contributions.) Moreover, the support or opposition of pro-Israel groups can be—and has been—crucial in the electoral fortunes of political candidates. . . . Third . . . AIPAC has an effective and efficient organizational structure operating within Washington, DC. With its large contingent of activists nationwide, AIPAC is well positioned to elicit a grassroots response to Congress and the executive branch at any particular time. Furthermore, AIPAC has effectively tied itself into the political decision-making network in Washington. One tangible, and important, indicator of its close linkage to the political leadership is the list of regular attendees and speakers at the annual AIPAC Policy conferences. . . . At the 2010 conference, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave a plenary address summarizing the Obama administration's continued support for Israel, but the delegates also heard presentations by public officials from across the political spectrum: Senators Charles Schumer (D-NY), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), and Evan Bayh (D-IN); Governors Martin O'Malley (D-MD) and Tim Pawlenty (R-MN); and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and House Republican Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA).

Beyond Smith's three criteria, another crucial factor also contributes to the effectiveness of any ethnic group. The late Senator Charles McC. Mathias identified that factor about three decades ago, albeit in an inverse way. "Foreign lobbies," he wrote, "that lack significant domestic support exert only limited influence on American foreign policy." A lack of domestic support is hardly the case for the Jewish lobby. Among the American public, the level of support for Israel remains very high. In February 2010, 63 percent of the American public expressed more sympathy with the Israelis than with the Palestinians, and such high levels of support have generally been the case for the past twenty years of Gallup polling data. Moral, ethical, and political considerations are the important reasons for this substantial support among the American public for Israel. . . .

A final important factor that impacts the effectiveness of any ethnic group is the extent to which a countervailing ethnic group is active on similar foreign policy issues. Three pro-Arab lobbies, the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) founded in 1972, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) founded in 1980, and the Arab American Institute (AAI) founded in 1985, have tended not to be nearly as effective as the Jewish lobby over the years and thus have not served as effective counterweights. Indeed, the NAAA and ADC joined together in 2001, undoubtedly in an effort to increase their effectiveness. . . . Nonetheless, these groups cannot be judged as effective as the pro-Israel lobby. Part of the difficulty for these groups, based upon our earlier criteria for an interest group's success in gaining influence, is the lack of an effective voting bloc among the American public that they can directly appeal to for support, the limited campaign contributions that these groups (or their PACs) provide in election campaigns, and the relatively low public support for Arab states and the Palestinian Authority among the American people. . . . Perhaps the founder of ADC and former U.S. senator James Abourezk best summarized the challenge facing his group, and the Arab lobbies more generally: "To have influence in Congress you have to have money for candidates or control lots of votes. We're trying to build a grass-roots network; it's difficult for us to raise money."

Despite the Jewish lobby's success, it is not without controversy over its influence. In a recent controversial article, and later book, two political scientists John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt raised questions about this lobby's undue influence on American foreign policy (see chapter 5). In particular, they contend that the strength of the Israel Lobby more fully accounts for American policy toward Israel than moral or strategic explanations by the public or its leaders, and they call for a more open discussion of the power of this particular ethnic lobby on American foreign policy. More recently, another book, *Transforming America's Israel Lobby*, appeared and it also assessed an array of Jewish lobbies, including AIPAC. Importantly, it

argued that AIPAC did not wholly reflect the views of the American Jewish community.

Indeed, AIPAC policy positions—which are often seen as too hard-line and often wholly supportive of the Israeli government in power—has created a division within the Jewish community, and that division has now stimulated the emergence of an opposition group. In 2008, J Street was established. . . . Its goals are to give a “political voice to mainstream American Jews and other supporters of Israel who . . . believe that a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential to Israel’s survival.” The organization not only hopes to promote this policy position but also seeks “to ensure a broad debate on Israel and the Middle East in national politics and the American Jewish community.” Moreover, J Street has sought to broaden its base by joining with the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace in January 2010, and it now claims to have 150,000 supporters that it can call on to contact members of Congress. Still, one recent analysis raises questions about its staying power and its ability to maintain support among the Jewish community. . . .

### The Cuban Lobby

A second influential ethnic group in recent years has been a Hispanic group, the Cuban Lobby. The Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), founded in 1981 by Jorge Mas Canosa, is the principal Cuban lobby. It originated with those Cuban émigrés who fled the Fidel Castro regime in Cuba after the 1959 revolution and also included some who had participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April 1961. From the outset, its principal foreign policy aim was to affect U.S. policy toward Cuba. Over the years, this general aim has largely meant the maintenance of the American embargo against Cuba and the promotion of the return of democracy to that island nation as soon as possible. At present, CANF identifies its mission as directed toward producing “nonviolent and meaningful” change in Cuba, providing support to those seeking to effect change within Cuba, and “working to counteract the Castro regime’s propaganda machine.”

For a relatively small lobby, CANF has seemingly been remarkably successful in influencing the conduct of American foreign policy toward Cuba. The trade embargo against Cuba, originally imposed in the early 1960s by executive order, has remained in effect to this day. Indeed, the embargo was actually strengthened in the 1990s by two legislative actions. With the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992, the embargo was codified into law, rather than being dependent upon an executive order, and with the passage of the Helms-Burton Act (or more formally the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act) of 1996, the embargo was again codified into law and two important additional restrictions were placed upon in-

teractions with Cuba. Title III of the Helm-Burton Act allowed Americans to sue foreign companies "trafficking in stolen property" in Cuba. That is, if a foreign company was operating on or doing business with property in Cuba that was previously owned by Americans before Castro's seizure of such property, that company could be sued. Title IV in the act would deny American visas to officials from such companies that were "trafficking" in stolen Cuban properties. . . .

The continuance of the embargo and the passage of these pieces of legislations represent important policy successes for CANF. Yet they are not the only ones reflecting its impact. CANF was instrumental in promoting the establishment of Radio Marti, a U.S. government-sponsored station to broadcast to Cuba during the Reagan administration. During the Clinton years, this lobby was important in stopping some administrative appointments to the State Department that it did not approve and in prodding the administration to respond to Cuba's shooting down of two unarmed planes of the "Brothers to the Rescue" organization in international waters off Cuba. In 2003, in fact, CANF called for the indictment of Fidel Castro over this episode. The George W. Bush administration did not change American policy during its tenure, and the Obama administration has not either. In this sense, there remains largely a status-quo approach to Cuba by the United States—and the CANF seems in part to be an important reason why.

If we apply our earlier criteria for ethnic group effectiveness to this group, we begin to see why this is the case. Although the Cuban American population (estimated at about 1.2 million) is relatively small within the United States, it is concentrated in some key electoral states (e.g., Florida and New Jersey), and CANF has been able to utilize that electoral clout to maintain influence. Furthermore, over the years, CANF was operating in a political environment in which there was public and leadership support to pressure the Cuban regime. During the Cold War years, relatively few political leaders were willing to propose the easing of the embargo against Cuba. Indeed, few leaders were willing to promote any policy that would be viewed as in any way accommodating Castro's communist regime in Cuba. In this sense, CANF's position was reinforced by Cold War politics. In addition, its leadership, especially under Jorge Mas Canosa, was well connected in official Washington and was able to provide some support to favored political candidates. Moreover, CANF was also regarded as an effective lobby in Congress when it needed to be. One member of Congress put it this way: "[CANF] uses difficult, difficult tactics whenever you disagree with them." Finally, and perhaps the most compelling factor for the Cuban lobby's success, there is the high degree of policy motivation and intensity among its members. Their antipathy toward the Castro regime and their determination to elicit change in Cuba have been critically important to the lobby's success.

In the last decade or so, CANF has in fact experienced some difficulty in maintaining this same level of intensity and unity—and influence. Several reasons account for this change: the death of CANF founder, Jorge Mas Canosa, in 1997; the generational divide between older Cuban Americans who experienced the Castro regime and younger Cuban Americans born in the United States without that direct experience; and the rise of other lobbying groups—some more inclined toward improving Cuban-American relations and others more inclined toward no accommodation with Castro's regime under any circumstance. Overall, though, and like the Jewish lobby, the Cuban lobby remains a formidable example of an ethnic group with an impact on foreign policy.

### Greek, Turkish, and Armenian Lobbies

The Greek, Turkish, and Armenian lobbies are three other ethnic lobbies that have operated for some time. Each has sought to affect American policy toward southeast Europe and the Middle East. The issues of concern to these three groups are often similar, but each lobby's positions (and especially the Greek and Turkish lobbies) are often at odds with one another. Hence, the actions of these differing ethnic groups have often complicated American foreign policymaking on several key issues toward the countries of origin for these lobbies.

The first of these three groups is the Greek lobby, or the American Hellenic Institute (AHI). This organization was established in 1974, immediately after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. A year later, the American Hellenic Institute Public Affairs Committee (AHIPAC) was created with the express goal to focus on lobbying on behalf of Greek Americans. The current foreign policy goals of this lobby focus primarily on American policy toward Greece, Cyprus, and the region surrounding these countries. Specifically, AHI seeks to strengthen American ties with Greece, remove the Turkish occupation from Cyprus, support sovereignty for Greece in the Aegean Sea, and oppose the use of "Macedonia" by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in its name.

This lobby points to several important successes in affecting American foreign policy over the past four decades. Undoubtedly AHI's principal success was persuading Congress to impose an arms embargo against Turkey in 1975 over that country's invasion of Cyprus a year earlier and to sustain that embargo for some three years until June 1978. This American action was seen as punishment for Turkey's use of U.S. arms during its intervention and occupation of Cyprus, an action that directly violated the Foreign Military Sales Act. AHI also claims as important achievements the maintenance of American military assistance to Greece at 70 percent of the level of such assistance to Turkey, Congress's elimination of economic grant aid

to Turkey in 1995, and the halting of direct trade by the United States with the Turkish-controlled northern sector of Cyprus. . . .

The strength of this lobby is partially tied to the number of Greek Americans (the estimates range from 1.38 million to 3 million). Despite their modest numbers within the American population, these Greek Americans tend to be concentrated in some urban areas, are active in politics, and well connected within their communities. Hence, they have the potential to exercise some electoral influence. Importantly, the American Hellenic Institute is also well organized and effective in its lobby activities, particularly on Capitol Hill. Its relative success as a lobbying organization has also been tied to a number of prominent Greek Americans who have held influential and leadership positions within Congress over the years. In addition, the House Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues provides yet another means for the Greek American community to influence the congressional process.

A countervailing group for the Greek . . . lobby is the Turkish lobby. The principal organization for promoting Turkish interests in the United States is the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA), although there is a broad array of other Turkish American groups in existence as well. The TCA is a relatively new organization, only established in 2007, and it has a number of social, cultural, and educational activities. It also engages in numerous political activities to advance issues important to Turkey and the Middle East region. Although Turkish interests have been heavily involved in seeking to stop the passage of the Armenian genocide resolution in the U.S. Congress, it has also been engaged over issues related to America's relationship with Greece, the issue of Cyprus, and sovereignty concerns in the Aegean Sea.

The impact of the Turkish lobby appears to come less from the size of the Turkish American population or its campaign contributions and more from its successful efforts to engage in lobbying on Capitol Hill. The Turkish American population is only about a tenth of the size of the Greek American population; hence, it is a substantially less significant voting bloc and source of campaign contributions than is the Greek American community. Instead, the Turkish lobbying must stress Turkey's strategic importance for the United States when seeking to advance its interests with Congress or the executive branch. . . . [T]he Turkish community can routinely work with the House Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkish Relations and Turkish Americans . . . but it also relies upon support from the Turkish government to lobby more directly with Congress or the executive branch. In this connection, the Turkish government itself has often been involved in defending its interests by employing prominent Americans as lobbyists on its behalf. At the time of the debate over the 2007 Armenian genocide resolution, for example, two prominent former members of Congress—Robert Livingston (R-LA), former Speaker of the House-designate, and Richard Gephardt

(D-MO), former majority leader of the House—were deeply involved in seeking to stop this resolution.

The third ethnic lobby seeking to affect American policy toward this region is the Armenian lobby. Its principal organizations are the Armenian Assembly and the Armenian National Committee of America. As we indicated earlier, this lobby has been extremely active and involved in seeking passage of the Armenian genocide resolution that targets Turkey. Yet it also works to advance a number of other aims regarding American foreign policy and Armenia. For instance, this lobby seeks to increase American assistance for Armenia and to obtain direct aid for Nagorno Karabakh. (Nagorno Karabakh is a territory wholly within Azerbaijan that is largely populated by Armenians. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union in particular, this territory has been contested between Azerbaijan and Armenia, including a war between the two countries that ended in 1994.) At the same time, it seeks to deny American aid to Azerbaijan, its regional rival, especially in light of the trade blockade by that nation toward Armenia. Finally, and importantly, this lobby promotes independence for Nagorno Karabakh. . . .

The Armenian lobby has had some success in obtaining these goals—or at least in making progress on them. American assistance to Armenia since its independence from the former Soviet Union has totaled nearly \$2 billion, and Armenia has also received funding through the Millennium Challenge Account, a program initiated by the George W. Bush administration to aid selected countries that meet several key performance indicators. The United States has also provided some direct assistance to Nagorno Karabakh, much as the lobby desired.

This success of this lobby is somewhat surprising in that there is a relatively small population (446,000) claiming Armenian ancestry within the United States. However, that population is politically active and involved. Much of the Armenian American population is concentrated in the American West, and importantly in some congressional districts in California, and that fact aids the lobby's impact. The main sponsor of the Armenian genocide resolutions in Congress in 2007 and 2010 was Congressman Adam Schiff from the 29th district in California. That congressional district has an Armenian American population that totals sixty-seven thousand, more than 10 percent of its total size. Such a concentration of Armenian Americans in this district undoubtedly contributed to Rep. Schiff's interest in promoting this resolution (as it had done for his predecessor in that seat, former congressman James Rogan).

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), however, remains politically active beyond this single district. It conducts national voter registration drives, endorses candidates for office, and issues "report cards" on members of Congress. In addition to its electoral efforts, the Armenian community has proved to be an effective lobbying organization

in Washington with good connections on Capitol Hill. . . . Further, the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, established in 1995, now has 150 members from the House of Representatives. This caucus thus provides yet another mechanism for keeping Armenian-related issues before political leaders and the public.

## EMERGING ETHNIC LOBBIES

Over the last several decades, a number of other ethnic lobbies have also sought to engage in America's foreign policy process. These groups have not been as continuously active, organized, or influential as some of the ones that we have just discussed, but they may become increasingly consequential in the future. We focus on four of these new and emerging ethnic lobbies.

### Mexican American Lobby

The Mexican American lobby is the first. The Mexican American community is a significantly larger Hispanic group than the Cuban American community, but it has generally been described as much less successful as an ethnic lobby. With at least 21 million and perhaps as many as 30 million Mexican Americans, this group potentially provides an enormous voting bloc, a significant source of campaign contributions, and a potent lobbying force. Part of the explanation for their lack of success is that this community is not as well organized to lobby or as committed on foreign policy issues as other ethnic groups—two important requirements for lobbying success as we pointed out earlier. . . . [Indeed, one analyst] was even more decisive about the effect of this ethnic lobby: "The Hispanic community exerts almost no systematic influence on U.S.-Latin American relations, or, for that matter, on U.S. foreign policy in general."

Such a conclusion, however, may need to be altered somewhat, especially on the issue of immigration and especially in light of recent Mexican American activism on state and national legislation related to that issue. Indeed, one analyst argues that the Mexican American community has "two effective national organizations in the National Council of La Raza and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund," and contends that this community was active in affecting the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990. These measures "effectively blocked meaningful changes" over prevailing "migration patterns" and included "amnesty provisions" that "surely substantially accelerated" these patterns. More recently, as Congress was taking up immigration legislation in 2006 and beyond, several Mexican American organizations

conducted nationwide demonstrations to protest this legislation. In 2010, this same community also became active over an immigration law passed by the state of Arizona. In this sense, on the immigration issue, the growing Mexican American population may well play a role in shaping U.S. policy in the future. On other foreign policy issues—the promotion of NAFTA and Mexican democracy, for example—this community has been judged as having a decidedly limited impact. Yet given the overall size of this community (particularly in some western states), the potential for foreign policy influence in the years ahead remains a distinct possibility.

### The Rebirth of the Eastern European Lobby

Shortly after the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the gaining of independence of numerous states in the old Soviet empire, a new ethnic organization, the Central and Eastern European Coalition (CEEC), emerged in the United States to promote the interests of these new nations. This organization, established in 1994, was indeed a coalition—a collection of eighteen national organizations, representing Americans who traced their ancestry to Hungary, Latvia, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. In a sense, this lobby might be thought of as the successor to the “captive nations” lobby of the 1950s that sought freedom and independence for those nations behind the iron curtain, albeit now with goals that seek greater stability and security for this region of the world. Supporters of the CEEC argue that the economic and security interests of the United States “demand an unwavering commitment to and sustained engagement with the Central and East European countries.” In this sense, the well-being of these coalition nations and the United States should be wholly tied together.

To enhance this linkage, the coalition promotes and supports a number of ongoing American policies. CEEC, for example, has been a major proponent of NATO expansion and the incorporation of these new states in that organization to maintain their security and independence. It currently supports moving Georgia and Ukraine toward full NATO membership in accordance with the organization’s Membership Action Plan (MAP). CEEC also strongly supports the principal aid and reform initiatives taken by the United States over the past three administrations—the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) dating back to 1989, the Freedom Support Act (FSA) of 1992, and the more recent Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) program of 2004—and views them as important mechanisms to advance democratic and market reforms in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the coalition promotes more vigorous action on the part of the United States “to counter Russia’s neo-imperialism” both within Russia itself and within this region of the world.

American foreign policy generally comports with the principal goals of the coalition. In this sense, it is less clear how much effect the CEEC has had in shaping these policies as compared to the general political environment of the post-Cold War years. Still, CEEC has sought to keep its principal issues before America's political leaders through a variety of informational and educational activities. With its headquarters in Washington, DC, the CEEC and its affiliate organizations regularly hold events and discussion forums in Washington, on Capitol Hill, or even at the White House as important mechanisms for shaping the foreign policy debate about this region of the world. Furthermore, CEEC has developed a series of position papers that are routinely shared with members of the current American administration. Finally, supportive members of Congress have formed the Congressional Caucus on Central and Eastern Europe as yet another way to discuss these issues, although the impact of this caucus appears to be rather modest.

Through its member organizations, CEEC has the potential to reach the 22 million Americans who share an ancestry from this part of the world and serve as an important voting bloc. Since most Americans with central and eastern European heritage are concentrated in the Midwest, this region would seem especially ripe for electoral impact if these foreign policy issues were to dominate the campaign agenda. At the present time, however, the coalition does not appear to have a ready mechanism to mobilize them in the way that we have seen with some of the more successful ethnic lobbies. Overall, then, the CEEC cannot be judged as having the influential effect on foreign policy as either the Jewish, Cuban, Greek, or Armenian lobbies. . . . If issues pertaining to this region were to reemerge as central to American foreign policy, and with greater organizational development within CEEC, this lobby might be able to exert increased influence.

### **African American Lobby**

A third ethnic lobby that has emerged over the past several decades is the African American lobby. TransAfrica (or the TransAfrica Forum) is the principal organization that promotes the interests of those with African heritage in the United States, the Caribbean, and parts of Latin America. It was founded in 1977 and pursues a number of goals relating to creating greater economic justice globally, reducing American militarism, and promoting democracy in Africa and among the African diaspora. To achieve such goals, TransAfrica has taken a number of actions to try to affect American foreign policy over the past four decades.

Its lobbying efforts began in the late 1970s, and it has continued to try to influence American foreign policy in this way during each succeeding decade. One of its initial actions focused on seeking to maintain U.S.

economic sanctions on white-ruled Rhodesia in southern Africa. By 1980, this activity, and a series of actions by a number of others, resulted in the creation of the state of Zimbabwe from this former British colony. A few years later, this organization lobbied the Reagan administration to impose economic sanctions on South Africa over its apartheid policy. In 1986, TransAfrica supported efforts by Congress to override a presidential veto and pass the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, a measure that strengthened the administration's executive order of 1985. By the early 1990s, TransAfrica was influential in prodding the Clinton administration to take stronger measures against those who had overthrown the democratic government in Haiti. In 1994, moreover, the Clinton administration did order an American intervention in Haiti, and the military rulers fled the country.

In the twenty-first century, this organization continued its lobbying effort, albeit with decidedly more mixed results. For instance, TransAfrica opposed the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which was enacted into law, over concern of how much it would aid Africa, and it also opposed the creation of the "Africa Command" within the American military structure because the organization viewed it as leading to a greater militarization within Africa. TransAfrica also worked to oppose the increasingly repressive Robert Mugabe government in Zimbabwe, also with limited success. At the present time, TransAfrica focuses on seeking relief for the substantial debt owed by Africa and the Caribbean countries, continues to oppose the militarization of Africa, and seeks to promote "human rights, fair trade, and self-determination of African peoples" as "the cornerstone of U.S. policy towards Africa."

Unlike many of the other ethnic lobbies that we have discussed, the African American lobby appears to do a great deal of its work with civil society groups abroad (in various countries in Africa and elsewhere) and with Americans of African ancestry at home. In this sense, there is potentially a substantial grassroots component to TransAfrica, but the extent of its following at home as a whole is not clear. Furthermore, it has a limited domestic electoral base and has not been a major campaign contributor to candidates for elective office. In this sense, TransAfrica does not possess some of the important characteristics that we identified as important for a successful ethnic lobby. . . . TransAfrica . . . has a natural ally in the Congressional Black Caucus (since its founding is linked to this caucus), and that tie helps it to gain access and influence in official Washington. Overall, though, this organization appears less well organized and influential than some of the other ethnic lobbies that we have discussed. Nevertheless, TransAfrica has the potential to appeal to the African American community within the United States, especially on issues related to Africa and on issues related to global social justice.

## The Indian Lobby

The newest ethnic lobby, and the most influential of this group, is the Indian lobby. This lobby consists of those Americans whose ancestry is tied to the country of India. The number of Americans with Asian Indian ancestry totals between 1.7 and 1.9 million in the 2000 U.S. Census and was estimated at "over 2.5 million" in 2007. The total is probably somewhat larger today, but still, even with a modest increase, the percentage of Indian Americans represents less than 1 percent of the total U.S. population. Yet in one recent assessment, this lobby has been described as "the only lobby in Washington likely to acquire the strength of the Israel lobby."

How can this descriptor be possible for such a relatively small group? As was the case with other groups of relatively small size (e.g., the Cuban lobby, the Armenian lobby), an important part of the explanation rests with the substantial motivation of members of this community, the electoral clout—both through voting blocs and campaign contributions—that the lobby possesses in particular states and districts around the country, and the improved organizational structure that it has put into place in recent years. Finally—and hardly inconsequential—the changed international political environment over the past two decades has also aided the emergence of the Indian lobby.

Over the years, numerous disparate Indian American organizations have existed, but these organizations were often organized "along professional-occupational lines" (e.g., the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin and the Asian American Hotel Owners Association). In 2002, however, the U.S. India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) was formed, established itself in the "K-Street neighborhood" in Washington, DC, hired a staff of professionals committed to advancing a series of important foreign and domestic policy goals, and put into place a comprehensive organizational structure for lobbying. Thus, this organization today is the principal lobbying organization for the Indian American community. . . .

USINPAC has a number of goals, both in foreign and domestic policy. In the foreign policy arena, USINPAC is primarily interested in strengthening U.S.-Indian bilateral relations across the spectrum—defense, trade, and business. It is also interested in promoting "a fair and balanced policy on immigration" and addressing the issue of international terrorism. In the domestic arena, its concerns focus on protecting the civil rights of Indian Americans, promoting equal opportunity for members of this community, and advocating for small businesses as well. To achieve these goals, USINPAC has a broad array of activities including holding fundraisers for political candidates that it supports, hosting receptions and briefings on Capitol Hill, sponsoring trips to India for its supporters, and providing a listing of its key issues and events on its website. Furthermore, this organization and

its associated groups work with two congressional caucuses dealing with India: the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans in the House, and the Friends of India Caucus in the Senate. Finally, USINPAC also has a "National Outreach Program" that seeks to coordinate issue positions among affiliated groups, and it has been active in promoting Indian Americans who are competing for elective offices nationwide. In all, USINPAC in a relatively short period of time has established itself as a comprehensive and effective organization.

Other important characteristics of the Indian American community also facilitate its activism and impact. Indian Americans tend to be highly educated (with 64 percent over twenty-five with a college degree), economically successful (with a median income almost twice that of most Americans), and well connected. By one estimate, Indian Americans own "20 percent of all the companies in Silicon Valley" in California; and "the U.S.-India Business Council, which has a core committee of 200 companies that make up part of the United States' corporate elite, is closely allied with the India lobby." In this sense, the Indian lobby can reach out to a number of supporters beyond its core constituents to enhance its influence in the political process. Furthermore, and importantly, the Indian American community tends to be concentrated in particularly important electoral states (e.g., California, Washington, New York, Illinois, Texas, and Pennsylvania), and it has been increasingly a generous campaign contributor to its supporters in government. . . .

Although these organizational and individual characteristics account for a great deal of the rise of the Indian lobby, the political and economic environment surrounding U.S.-Indian relations over the past two decades also provided the occasion for this lobby to promote its foreign policy goals. First of all, with the end of the Cold War and the implosion of the Soviet Union, an opportunity developed for restarting U.S.-Indian relations, a relationship that had been decidedly cool with India's ties to the Soviet Union for so many years. Second, India is the world's largest democracy, and it is also one of the world's most dynamic economies. In this sense, India may well be America's new "ally" as Fareed Zakaria described it in *The Post-American World*. Third, in the post-9/11 era, India is also located in an important but volatile part of the world for the United States. Strong and productive relations with India are increasingly crucial for American foreign policy. For all of these reasons, then, the India lobby has had an opportunity to affect American foreign policy.

And the Indian lobby has done so. Perhaps the most important foreign policy achievement of this lobby was the passage of legislation in 2006 that lifted restrictions on nuclear fuels trade by the United States with India. Such restrictions had been in place for several decades as part of U.S. obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and domes-

tic laws, dating back to India's "peaceful" nuclear explosion in 1974 and exacerbated by India's nuclear test in the late 1990s. Despite a skeptical Congress heading into an election in the fall of 2006 and a weakened Bush presidency from the Iraq War, both Houses of Congress gave approval to this legislation. One recent analysis argues that "Indian-American mobilization was *the* critical factor behind overwhelming congressional support" for this legislation approval.

### ETHNIC LOBBIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE: SOME CONCLUSIONS

This survey of America's ethnic lobbies leads to several important conclusions about their impact on American foreign policy. First of all, ethnic groups matter. The Jewish lobby, the Cuban lobby, the Greek lobby, and, more recently, the Indian lobby have impacted American foreign policy in important ways, although their impact has primarily been tied to issues related to U.S. policy toward the country of each lobby's focus. In this sense, the lobbies may not appear to have a general effect on the overall conduct of American foreign policy. Yet, in fact, they do. . . . The more vexing question is how much the ethnic lobby shapes American policy toward a country or region compared to a variety of other factors.

Second, some lobbies have more influence on American foreign policy than others. This effectiveness is primarily due to a number of important group and organizational characteristics that we discussed throughout the chapter. The size of the ethnic community, the distribution of the group's population in particular congressional districts or states, and the group's political activism and involvement are important factors shaping an ethnic group's policy impact. Recall, for example, the size and involvement of the Jewish American and the Greek American communities compared to the Arab American or Turkish American communities. A large degree of motivation and commitment to a particular policy position, however, can often overcome an ethnic group's relative lack of size (e.g., the Armenian lobby). The ethnic group's organizational capacity and its skill in getting its message upward to policymakers and downward to its supporters are also important factors affecting its degree of policy effect. Note the organizational strength of the Jewish and the Indian lobbies as compared to that of the African American, Mexican, and Eastern European lobbies.

Third, the type of policy sought by an ethnic lobby affects its success. Lobbies that are seeking to change American foreign policy in some important way (e.g., the Armenian lobby, the Greek lobby, or the Indian lobby) often have a bigger challenge than those lobbies that are seeking to

reinforce current policy or the status quo (e.g., the Cuban lobby, the Jewish lobby, or even the Central and Eastern European lobbies).

Fourth, an ethnic lobby that forms a coalition with other ethnic lobbies will likely have more effect on policy. The Armenian lobby, for example, has been able to work with the Greek lobby to oppose Turkish interests, while the Turkish lobby for a time gained support from the Jewish lobby. In this sense, the limited capacity of one group is leveraged with the assistance of another. In the future, in fact, we are likely to see more and more of this ethnic group cooperation as a mechanism to accomplish their goals.

In large measure, the conclusions discussed so far could reasonably be made about any type of interest group—ethnic or otherwise—but these ethnic groups also possess a quality that distinguishes them from other interest groups in one important way. That quality is the close personal identity that members of these ethnic groups feel toward the policy issues at hand. That is, the strong “identity politics” of ethnic group members, or, put differently, “the strong emotional bonds of large numbers of Americans to their cultural or ancestral homes,” has been characterized as the “secret weapon” of these ethnic groups. Although these bonds can be beneficial to ethnic group members, they have also been criticized as having the potential of being carried to excess and thus proving “harmful to the national interest.” . . .

Several years ago, noted political scientist Samuel Huntington certainly advanced that argument. He contended that “ethnic interests are generally transnational or nonnational,” they “promote the interests of people and entities outside the United States,” and they thus erode the pursuance of the national interest. The usual response is to argue that the national interest is not self-evident and that it is, in fact, the result of the competition among competing interests, including ethnic interests. Such a view, of course, fails to recognize the relative weight of some groups over others in this competition—and the resulting “national interest.” In this connection, there is no doubt about the need to make certain that the ethnic lobbies continue to place their interests within the context of the collective interest of American foreign policy. Yet policymakers are aware of this dilemma, and much as they learned to manage the impact of the media on foreign policy (the so-called CNN effect), they are increasingly aware of, and seek to manage, the effects of ethnic lobbying. Yet the management of these lobbies is far from complete by policymakers. That is, these ethnic lobbies, often “experts” on a particular foreign policy issue, may combine with highly reputable reporters and media outlets to create what Bonardi and Keim describe as a “reputation cascade” for a “widely salient issue.” By this process, both the public and policymakers have lost their decision latitude on an issue—and in this way, ethnic lobbies may continue to influence the direction of American foreign policy. . . .

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How large are foreign policy interest groups in the United States, and how varied are such groups?
2. What are ethnic interest groups, and do they differ from foreign lobbies?
3. What are the principal ethnic lobbies in the conduct of American foreign policy today?
4. What are the key characteristics that make ethnic interest groups effective in affecting foreign policy?
5. How well do the Jewish lobby and the Cuban lobby fit with the characteristics of successful ethnic lobbies?
6. How successful have the Greek, Turkish, and Armenian lobbies been in affecting U.S. foreign policy? What issues are of most interest and importance to these groups?
7. Among the emerging ethnic lobbies, which one appears to be the most effective? Why is that so, and on what issues is that group most influential?
8. What is the one quality that makes ethnic groups distinctive from other interest groups?
9. Are ethnic interest groups helpful or harmful to the conduct of American foreign policy?