Double Standards in Modern Politics

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**Introduction**

One of the Noam Chomsky’s books is opened with a well-known story told by St. Augustine about a pirate captured by Alexander the Great who asked him: “How dare you molest the sea?” The pirate in return, relied: “How dare y o u molest the whole world? Because I do it with a little ship only, I am called a thief; you doing the same thing with the great navy are called an Emperor”.

Since the time this story took place a lot of time has passed. Yet the double standards are still applied to the same actions taken by different people. The term double standard, coined in 1912, refers to any set of principles containing different provisions for one group of people than for another, typically without a good reason for having said difference. A double standard may take the form of an instance in which certain applications (often of a word or phrase) are perceived as acceptable to be used by one group of people, but are considered unacceptable—taboo—when used by another group.

A double standard, thus, can be described as a sort of biased, morally unfair suspension (toward a certain group) of the principle that all are equal in their freedoms. Such double standards are seen as unjustified because they violate a basic maxim of modern legal jurisprudence: that all parties should stand equal before the law. Double standards also violate the principle of justice known as impartiality, which is based on the assumption that the same standards should be applied to all people, without regard to subjective bias or favoritism based on social class, rank, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation or other distinction. A double standard violates this principle by holding different people accountable according to different standards. The proverb "life is not fair" is often invoked in order to mollify concerns over double standards.

The term can be applied to politics as well. The Emperors and the Pirates still exist, they still “molest the sea” and as well as many years ago their actions are treated in different ways.

**1. Double standards in the European Union: Big Sharks bullies Fish**

Sometimes in the press there spring up the statements that Brussels bullies smaller member states but is often feeble towards the big ones

EU bossiness from far away Belgium will be easy to endure by comparison. But "corruption" is a complaint which dogs the new EU Bulgaria (Romania too), so it is no surprise to hear today that Brussels is threatening to suspend financial aid and retain travel restrictions on work-seekers unless Sofia does more to crack down on organised crime and other forms of corruption. The promised reforms of the judiciary are also bogged down.

Bulgaria is the EU's poorest member which is counting on 7bn worth of euros ( £5bn-plus) to aid structural reform over the next five years, though a major road project linking the Black Sea coast to Serbia collapsed last month, according to the FT. The socialist-led government faces a no-confidence motion today.

So it's not hard to feel a bit sorry for the poor Bulgarians as they grapple with modernisation, evidently less well placed than several other recent EU entrants from the ex-Soviet bloc.

Doubly so, I think, because the EU admonition reflects a recurring habit whereby the European commission bullies smaller member states - but rarely the big ones.

Do you remember the fuss made when [Jörg Haider'](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B6rg_Haider)s far right Freedom party - always dubbed neo-nazi in media-speak - made serious gains in the Austrian elections and nearly joined the coalition in Vienna in 2000?

Fourteen member states, admittedly not the EU formally, piled in to condemn Austrians, as if Haider had burned down the Reichstag.

The Portuguese and the Irish have been hammered over breaches of the eurozone's debt rules. The Danes and Irish were bullied over the "wrong" referendum results - and President Sarko was in Dublin the other day arm-twisting over the latest "No" to the Lisbon treaty.

Yet I'm stuck to remember the last time the French or German governments got threatened from Brussels - a city occupied many times by French and German armies - or the Italians got seriously hammered over its own corruption.

That has certainly eaten up a lot of EU aid south of Rome: you can see it in those half-finished motorways which come to an abrupt end (no more cash) in the middle of some Sicilian field.

Yes, I know, realpolitik requires a realistic approach to French breaches of European law or takeover rules - when did you last trying buying a French utility company? - over which there is a long list of charges dating back many years.

In Britain we not only take these rules rather literally, we gold-plate them in their domestic enactment. Health n' Safety is not something you will spot too much of in a French country market this summer.

Come to think of it, when Jean-Marie Le Pen got into the French presidential run-off against Chirac - a pretty disgraceful development - there was an embarrassed official silence.

In short, if Brussels is often feeble towards the EU big boys, wagging its stern, bureaucratic and pompous finger at the little boys looks like double standards.

**1.2 UN vs Israel**

The relationship between Europe and Israel is complex, tense, and historically loaded. A growing gap has developed between their political outlooks. European political actions can continue to cause Israel so many problems and harms that these in the longer run may increasingly dominate all other aspects of the relationship.

One strong gauge of Europe's negative political attitude toward Israel is its voting record in the United Nations. Another is the frequent condemnations of Israel from Brussels. A third is the financing the EU has provided for a variety of activities directed against Israel. France has been in the forefront of many European anti-Israeli initiatives.

The mood created by the political leaders of European countries toward Israeli government officials often permeates their societies. Their discriminatory attitudes are enhanced by many media, NGOs, and some churches. These factors together help build an anti-Israeli atmosphere in large parts of European society, which is expressed in opinion polls. This is often accompanied by anti-Semitic positions.

The relationship between Europe and Israel is complex, tense, and historically loaded. An increasing gap has developed between their political outlooks. At the same time, relations in areas such as trade, science, culture, and sport have continued to expand over the decades and have only been affected by the political divergences to some extent.

It is frequently claimed that when assessing European-Israeli relations, one has to attempt to establish an average of the interactions in the various fields. To consider this a balanced approach is mistaken. European political actions can continue to cause Israel so many problems and harms that these in the longer run may increasingly dominate all other aspects of the relationship.

The European Union (EU) consists of twenty-five states with a population of 460 million covering a territory of about 3.9 million square kilometers. Israel is a small country - covering a territory far less than one-hundredth of the EU's size - with a population of six million, partly surrounded by mortal enemies. Europe and Israel are not comparable entities. In view of the imbalance in power, populations, and geographic size of the two areas, an analysis must focus primarily on the much larger European side.

When looking for telling pointers in such a complex relationship, often a useful shortcut is to identify extreme attitudes. In turbulent times these become indicators of how Europe's attitude toward Israel may evolve if the world political situation deteriorates.

Analyzing extreme European attitudes is meaningful for another reason as well. It was against the Jews that Europe reached its absolute low of barbarian behavior in the twentieth century. Although Europe's current worldview is very remote from that of the 1930s, still there are several disquieting similarities with the demonizing of the Jews - mainly by Germans but also by others - before the Second World War. The focus of the defamation has shifted from the individual Jew to Israel, the Jewish state.

In the 1930s there were many Jews who closed their eyes, not wanting to see the signs of the times. In a large universe of events one can always find some positive pointers. Looking for those, while the power of Germany's Hitler regime was increasing, one could have cited the fact that in 1936 for the first time a Jew, the socialist Leon Blum, became prime minister of France. In 1939, Lodewijk Visser was appointed the first Jewish president of the Dutch Supreme Court.

These events could have been interpreted as signals of a greater acceptance of Jews even in the highest positions in various European countries. These, however, were irrelevant in the broad framework of the overall deterioration of the Jews' status in Europe.

Bayefsky stresses the relationship between anti-Israeli bias and the European desire to avoid condemning world anti-Semitism, which mainly means its high Muslim and Arab component.

One example of this occurred at the 2003 General Assembly. The issue arose of including the word "anti-Semitism" in a resolution on religious intolerance in a preamble. Ireland, which had been the lead state on the subject of religious intolerance for many years, was determined to keep mention of anti-Semitism out.

So Israel decided that it would move an amendment to add it from the floor. The Irish were unnerved. Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen and Israel's Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom made a deal that Israel would withdraw its threatened amendment to the resolution on religious intolerance. In exchange Ireland would introduce for the first time in UN history a resolution on anti-Semitism.

Israel was delighted by the prospect. The Irish delegation sat on the third committee, waited for the resolution on religious intolerance to pass through the committee without the mention of anti-Semitism. Then they withdrew their promised resolution on anti-Semitism. Their excuse was the lack of consensus. Among others, Ireland went to the Iranians for their support. They afterwards claimed that they were surprised at the opposition. To sum it up: there was no resolution on anti-Semitism.

The mood created by the political leaders of European countries toward Israeli government officials often permeates their societies. The EU's mindset and discriminatory attitude toward Israel is also manifested by various European ambassadors. It is unlikely that some of their statements would be tolerated concerning any other democratic country.

One of the most publicized scandals involved the former French ambassador to the UK, the late Daniel Bernard. At the dinner table in the home of then Daily Telegraph owner Lord Black, he said Israel was a "shitty little country" that had triggered the international security crisis. Bernard's remark was typical of the new anti-Semitism, in which Israel has taken the place of the Jews as the scapegoat for the world's evil.

Black's wife, journalist Barbara Amiel who is Jewish, quoted her guest without giving his name or the country he represented in a Daily Telegraph column. It did not take long until other papers revealed who Israel's undiplomatic detractor was.

Bernard's subsequent reaction gave even clearer insight into his mindset. Initially the press secretary at the French embassy said that the ambassador did not remember if he had used those words. Thereafter Bernard insisted that what he had said had been thoroughly distorted. It was reported that he - rather than addressing his own anti-Semitism - was outraged "that a private discussion found its way into the media." Zvi Shtauber, former Israeli ambassador to the UK, relates that Bernard came to the Israeli embassy afterward to apologize though publicly he had denied that he would do so.

The foregoing describes Europe's double standards toward Israel and what they have caused. One has to assess as well what should have separated Israel and Europe objectively. Only a few indicative remarks can be made.

To do so one has to define Europe's characteristics, policies, and worldviews. For Israeli strategy expert Yehezkel Dror, Europe is characterized by its focus on citizens' welfare and neglect of security risks. It is busy with current issues but does not devote adequate attention to the long-term future.

For Trigano, the EU's ambitions mainly create associations with the Napoleonic Empire because of its bureaucratic political character. He points out that every empire needs an enemy, and Europe defines itself in opposition to the policies of the nationalist American state.

Andrei Markovits, a political scientist at the University of Michigan, says: "Nobody knows what it means to be a European. It is unclear what Greeks and Swedes have in common. But one important characteristic they share is their not being American." He also observes that anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism are the only major icons shared by the European extreme Left and Right, including neo- Nazis.

The rejection of its proposed constitution by the populations of France and The Netherlands in spring 2005 has created some uncertainty about the direction the European Union may take. It is telling mainly in regard to the EU's worldview that many observers consider that a crisis in a democratic entity such as the EU may be advantageous for another democracy, Israel. This author summed it up by saying: "While past EU policies have been heavily biased against Israel, as it enters a period of disarray, EU policies may become less threatening to Israel."

### 1.3 International Law

### The International Court of Justice

The United Nations plays an important role in the establishment of international law. Israel is confronted with many new issues where international law falls dramatically short in meeting reality. In this area as well, Israel has become an indicator of the failures of Western society.

Yehuda Blum, a former Israeli ambassador to the UN, says that some fields of international law have greatly assisted society at large. He mentions as examples the law of diplomatic relations, the Law of the Sea, and the Law of Treaties. Blum adds:

One field where international law has failed in recent years is where it relates to the use of force. Its main weakness concerns the law of war, belligerent occupation, and so forth. Since these are usually acute problems, they highlight contemporary international law's weakness.

Another major failure of international law is to cope with the recent international terrorism. International law is premised on the existence of states, which are bound by its norms. In this particular case, we are confronted with a different phenomenon: armed groups perpetrating many crimes without any state taking responsibility for their actions.

There is often no possibility to hold any particular state accountable for these actions. Al-Qaeda is like an octopus, which has spread its tentacles all over the world. It was headquartered in Afghanistan where it has been disposed of. International law has been unable to develop the necessary adjustments to this novel situation.

Blum adds that for many decades the Europeans have been unwilling to confront the new reality of terrorism. "It started with hijacking of planes and the kidnapping of their passengers in 1969. At that time because it was an El Al airliner, there was little concern among the Europeans about the outcome." He adds that Israel has been at odds with Europe on matters concerning international law for several decades. "I think that the major sticking point in our relationship with the Europeans is their lack of ability or willingness to understand the perils of the current situation."

### Two Types of International Law

International lawyer Meir Rosenne, former Israeli ambassador to the United States and France, expresses an even stronger opinion: "There are two types of international law. One is applied to Israel, the other to all other states. This comes to the fore when one looks at the way Israel is treated in international institutions."

He observes:

One finds this attitude also in many aspects of customary practice. In 2004 at the Athens Olympics the International Olympic Committee did not commemorate the murder of the eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. A private ceremony of the Israeli ambassador to Greece in Athens was all there was. The president of the Olympic Committee attended, but not the Olympic Committee as such. And this was their attitude despite what happened on September 11, 2001.

Rosenne mentions as a typical example of international law's double standards the 2004 International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the Israeli security fence. "In its judgment the Hague court decided that the inherent right of self-defense is enforced only if one is confronted by a state. If this were true, that would mean that whatever the United States undertakes against Al-Qaeda is illegal. This cannot be considered self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter because Al-Qaeda is not a state."

**2. US double standards at home and abroad**

**2.1 Double standards at home and abroad**

The Bush administration is attempting to soothe the Turkish government’s apoplectic reaction to the House Foreign Affairs Committee’s label of “genocide” on Turkey’s slaughter of 1.5 million Armenians, which occurred almost a century ago. The administration fears that an enraged Turkish ally, already threatening to invade northern Iraq in order to suppress armed Turkish Kurd rebels seeking refuge there, will also cut off U.S. access to Turkish air bases and roads used to re-supply U.S. forces in Iraq. The administration essentially wants to allow the Turks to continue to deny a historical fact that preceded even the existence of the current Turkish system of government.

Similarly, the United States has never been too enthusiastic about criticizing Japan’s denial of having used Chinese and South Korean women as sex slaves (so-called “comfort women”) during World War II. More generally, the United States never really says too much when the current Japanese government regularly tries to whitewash in school textbooks the atrocious conduct of the Imperial Japanese regime before and during World War II. Again, a principal ally who does not face up to important historical facts is not reproved.

Yet the administration is still repeatedly bringing up Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s December, 2005 denial of the historical fact of the Jewish holocaust at the hands of the Nazis. That’s because the U.S. government chooses to get along a lot less with the Iranian government (than it does with the governments of Turkey and Japan); because Israel, Iran’s nemesis, is a U.S. ally; and because the administration can win points with its domestic Israeli lobby.

In the same vein, the administration is supposed to be supporting the expansion of democracy overseas—that’s why the United States invaded Iraq, right?—but does so only in less friendly countries, not close allies. The United States has pressured weaker Arab countries near Israel to hold elections and make democratic reforms, for example, among the Palestinians and Lebanese, but it has not pressured Israel to remove the second-class citizenship of the Arab population living within its borders. The administration has aided opposition forces in Iran, even though the groups don’t want the support, while making only half-hearted attempts to democratize its autocratic allies in Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Of course, the United States doesn’t really need to coddle despotic regimes just to win their lukewarm support for the “war on terror,” their promise not to attack Israel, or their agreement to pump oil which their own economic interest would cause them to sell on the world market anyway. But neither does it need to meddle in the internal affairs of adversaries, such as Syria and Iran.

But if the United States were to have the same standard for all countries—both friend and foe—and join the international community in identifying and strongly condemning all documented cases of genocide, other war crimes, and repressive behavior by all countries, then perhaps there would be a chance that history might not be repeated.

First though, the United States needs to clean up its own act. Other countries may have acted terribly in the past, but U.S. citizens should not be blinded to the sins of their own government. Since World War II, in terms of numbers of military adventures, the United States has been the most aggressive country in the world. And many such interventions cannot be blamed on the need to combat international communism. Even after the United States’ major foe—the Soviet Union—collapsed, the U.S. expanded its informal empire and stepped up military activities across the globe. The United States bombed Serbia and Kosovo; invaded Panama, Afghanistan, and Iraq (twice); and intervened in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia. Furthermore, the United States has kidnapped people and illegally rendered them to secret prisons in countries where torture is perpetrated, or simply had the CIA or U.S. military do the honors. These prisoners have been denied both the rights of prisoners of war and the rights of the accused that the U.S. Constitution guarantees—for example, their right to challenge detention using a writ of Habeas Corpus. It’s likely that a substantial portion of these inmates are innocent.

If the United States is going to criticize other countries’ behavior, both historical and current, it should eliminate the double standard at home and abroad, and clean up its own act first.

**2.2 American exceptionalism and common criticism**

American exceptionalism is the theory that the United States occupies a special niche among the nations of the worldin terms of its national credo, historical evolution, political and religious institutions and unique origins. The roots of the belief are attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville, who claimed that the then-50-year-old United States held a special place among nations, because it was a country of immigrants and the first modern democracy.

The theory of American exceptionalism has a number of opponents, especially from the Left, who argue that the belief is "self-serving and jingoistic" (see slavery, civil rights and social welfare issues, "Western betrayal", and the failure to aid Jews fleeing the Nazis), that it is based on a myth, and that "[t]here is a growing refusal to accept" the idea of exceptionalism both nationally and internationally.

Criticism of United States foreign policy encompasses a wide range of sentiments about its actions and policies over time.

* Support of dictatorships. The US has been criticized for supporting dictatorships with economic assistance and military hardware. Particular dictatorships have included Musharraf of Pakistan, the Shah of Iran, Museveni of Uganda, the Saudi Royal family, Maoist regimes in China,warlords in Somalia, President Museveni of Uganda.
* Opposition to independent nationalism. The US has been criticized by Noam Chomsky for opposing nationalist movements in foreign countries, including social reform.
* Interference in internal affairs. The United States was criticized for manipulating the internal affairs of foreign nations, including Guatemala, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, various countries in Africa including Uganda.
* Support of Israel. The US has been accused of condoning actions by Israel against Palestinians.
* Democracy promotion. Some critics argue that America's policy of advocating democracy may be ineffective and even counterproductive. In World On Fire, Yale professor Amy Chua suggested that promotion of democracy in developing countries is not always a good idea since it may result in breeding ethnic hatred and global instability. Zbigniew Brzezinski declared that "[t]he coming to power of Hamas is a very good example of excessive pressure for democratization" and argued that George W. Bush's attempts to use democracy as an instrument against terrorism were risky and dangerous. Analyst Jessica Tuchman Mathews of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace agreed that imposing democracy "from scratch" was unwise, and didn't work. Realist critics such as George F. Kennan argued U.S. responsibility is only to protect its own citizens and that Washington should deal with other governments on that basis alone; they criticize president Woodrow Wilson's emphasis on democratization and nation-building although it wasn't mentioned in Wilson's Fourteen Points, and the failure of the League of Nations to enforce international will regarding Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan in the 1930s. Realist critics attacked the idealism of Wilson as being ill-suited for weak states created at the Paris Peace Conference. Others, however, criticize the U.S. Senate's decision not to join the League of Nations which was based on isolationist public sentiment as being one cause for the organization's ineffectiveness.
* Imperialism. According to Newsweek reporter Fareed Zakaria, the Washington establishment has "gotten comfortable with the exercise of American hegemony and treats compromise as treason and negotiations as appeasement" and added "This is not foreign policy; it's imperial policy." Allies were critical of a unilateral sensibility to US foreign policy, and showed displeasure by voting against the US in the United Nations in 2001.
* Hypocrisy. The US has been criticized for making statements supporting peace and respecting national sovereignty, but military actions such as in Grenada, fomenting a civil war in Colombia to break off Panama, and Iraq run counter to its assertions. The US has advocated free trade but protects local industries with import tariffs on foreign goods such as lumber and agricultural products. The US has advocated concern for human rights but refused to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The US has publicly stated that it is opposed to torture, but has been criticized for condoning it in the School of the Americas. The US has advocated a respect for national sovereignty but supports internal guerrilla movements and paramilitary organizations, such as the Contras in Nicaragua.The US has been criticized for voicing concern about narcotics production in countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela but doesn't follow through on cutting certain bilateral aid programs. The US has been criticized for not maintaining a consistent policy; it has been accused of denouncing human rights abuses in China while supporting rights violations by Israel. However, some defenders argue that a policy of rhetoric while doing things counter to the rhetoric was necessary in the sense of realpolitik and helped secure victory against the dangers of tyranny and totalitarianism. Another agrees.
* Undermining of human rights. President Bush has been criticized for neglecting democracy and human rights by focusing exclusively on an effort to fight terrorism. The US was criticized for alleged prisoner abuse at Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib in Iraq, secret CIA prisons in eastern Europe, according to Amnesty International. In response, the US government claimed incidents of abuse were isolated incidents which did not reflect U.S. policy.
* American exceptionalism. There is a sense in which America sometimes sees itself as qualitatively different from other countries and therefore cannot be judged by the same standard as other countries; this sense is sometimes termed American exceptionalism. A writer in Time Magazine in 1971 described American exceptionalism as "an almost mystical sense that America had a mission to spread freedom and democracy everywhere." American exceptionalism is sometimes linked with hypocrisy; for example, the US keeps a huge stockpile of nuclear weapons while urging other nations not to get them, and justifies that it can make an exception to a policy of non-proliferation. When the United States didn't support an environmental treaty made by many nations in Kyoto or treaties made concerning the Geneva Convention, then critics saw American exceptionalism as counterproductive.
* Arrogance. Some critics have thought the United States became arrogant, particularly after its victory in World War II. Critics such as Andrew Bacevich call on America to have a foreign policy "rooted in humility and realism." Foreign policy experts such as Zbigniew Brzezinski counsel a policy of self-restraint and not pressing every advantage, and listening to other nations. A government official called the US policy in Iraq "arrogant and stupid," according to one report.
* Excessive militarism. In the 1960s, Martin Luther King Jr. criticized excessive U.S. spending on military projects. and suggested a linkage between its foreign policy abroad and racism at home. Even in 1971, a Time Magazine essayist wondered why there were 375 major foreign military bases around the world with 3,000 lesser military facilities and concluded "there is no question that the U.S. today has too many troops scattered about in too many places." In a 2010 defense report, Cordesman criticized out-of-control military spending. Expenditures to fight the War on Terror are vast and seem limitless. The Iraq war was expensive and continues to be a severe drain on U.S. finances. Bacevich thinks the U.S. has a tendency to resort to military means to try to solve diplomatic problems. The Vietnam War was a costly, decade-long military engagement which ended in defeat, and the mainstream view today is that the entire war was a mistake. The dollar cost was $111 billion, or $698 billion in 2009 dollars. Similarly, the second Iraq war is viewed by many as being a mistake, since there were no weapons of mass destruction found, and the war continues today.
* International law violations. Some critics assert the US doesn't always follow international law. For example, some critics assert the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was not a proper response to an imminent threat, but an act of aggression which violated international law. For example, Benjamin Ferencz, a chief prosecutor of Nazi war crimes at Nuremberg said George W. Bush should be tried for war crimes along with Saddam Hussein for starting aggressive wars—Saddam for his 1990 attack on Kuwait and Bush for his 2003 invasion of Iraq. Critics point out that the United Nations Charter, ratified by the U.S., prohibits members from using force against fellow members except against imminent attack or pursuant to an explicit Security Council authorization. A professor of international law asserted there was no authorization from the UN Security Council which made the invasion "a crime against the peace." However, US defenders argue there was such an authorization according to UN Security Council Resolution 1441.
* Commitment to foreign aid. Some critics charge that U.S. government aid should be higher given the high levels of Gross domestic product. They claim other countries give more money on a per capita basis, including both government and charitable contributions. By one index which ranked charitable giving as a percentage of GDP, the U.S. ranked 21 of 22 OECD countries by giving 0.17% of GDP to overseas aid, and compared the U.S. to Sweden which gave 1.03% of its GDP, according to different estimates. The U.S. pledged 0.7% of GDP at a global conference in Mexico. According to one estimate, U.S. overseas aid fell 16% from 2005 to 2006. However, since the US grants tax breaks to nonprofits, it subsidizes relief efforts abroad, although other nations also subsidize charitable activity abroad. Most foreign aid (79%) came not from government sources but from private foundations, corporations, voluntary organizations, universities, religious organizations and individuals. According to the Index of Global Philanthropy, the United States is the top donor in absolute amounts.
* Environmental policy. The Kyoto Protocol treaty was an effort by many nations to tackle environmental problems, but the U.S. was criticized for failing to support this effort in 1997.The U.S. has been criticized for failure to support the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Critics charge that savvy dictators such as Uganda's president Yoweri Museveni have manipulated U.S. foreign policy by appealing to its need to fight terrorism. Others suggest U.S. should adopt a policy of realpolitik and work with any type of government who can be helpful.

* Other criticisms. The U.S. has been criticized for its historical treatment of native Americans. For example, the treatment of Cherokee Indians in the Trail of Tears in which hundreds of Indians died in a forced evacuation from their homes in the southeastern area, along with massacres, displacement of lands, swindles, and breaking treaties. It has been criticized for the war with Mexico in the 1840s which some see as a theft of land. It was the first and only nation to use a nuclear bomb in wartime. It failed to admit Jews fleeing persecution from Europe at the beginning of World War II, as well as immoral policy for the Vietnam War.
* Lack of vision. Brzezinski criticized the Clinton presidency as having a foreign policy which lacked "discipline and passion" and subjected the U.S. to "eight years of drift." The short-term election cycle coupled with the inability to stick with long term decisions motivates presidents to focus on acts which will appease the citizenry and avoid difficult long-term choices.
* Presidency is over-burdened. Presidents have not only foreign policy responsibilities, but sizeable domestic duties too. In addition, the presidency is the head of a political party. As a result, it is tough for one person to manage disparate tasks, in one view. Critics suggest Reagan was overburdened, which prevented him from doing a good job of oversight regarding the Iran–Contra affair. Brzezinski suggested in Foreign Affairs that President Obama is similarly overburdened. Some suggest a need for permanent non-partisan advisers.
* Dollars drive foreign policy. There are indications that decisions to go to war in Iraq were motivated by oil interests; for example, a British newspaper The Independent reported that the "Bush administration is heavily involved in writing Iraq's oil law" which would "allow Western oil companies contracts of up to 30 years to pump oil out of Iraq, and the profits would be tax-free." Whether motivated by oil or not, U.S. policy appears to much of the Arab world to have been motivated by oil. Some critics assert the U.S. decision to build the Panama Canal was motivated largely by business interests despite claims that it's motivated to "spread democracy" and "end oppression." Andrew Bacevich suggests policy is directed by "wealthy individuals and institutions." Some critics say U.S. foreign policy does reflect the will of the people, but blames the people for having a "consumerist mentality" which causes problems. In 1893, a decision to back a plot to overthrow the rulership of Hawaii by president Harrison was motivated by business interests in an effort to prevent a proposed tariff increase on sugar; Hawaii became a state afterwards. There was speculation that the Spanish-American War in 1898 between the U.S. and Spain was motivated by business interests in Cuba.
* Presidents may lack experience. Since the constitution requires no prior experience in diplomacy, government, or military service, it is possible to elect presidents with scant foreign policy experience. Clearly the record of past presidents confirms this, and that presidents who have had extensive diplomatic, military, and foreign policy experience have been the exception, not the rule. In recent years, presidents had relatively more experience in such tasks as peanut farming, acting and governing governorships than in international affairs. It has been debated whether voters are sufficiently skillful to assess the foreign policy potential of presidential candidates, since foreign policy experience is only one of a long list of attributes in which voters tend to select candidates. The second Bush was criticized for inexperience in the Washington Post for being "not versed in international relations and not too much interested."
* Presidency has too much authority. In contrast to criticisms that presidential attention is divided into competing tasks, some critics charge that presidents have too much power, and that there is the potential for tyranny or fascism. Some presidents circumvented the national security decision-making process. Critics such as Dana D. Nelson of Vanderbilt in her book Bad for Democracy and columnist David Sirotaand Texas law professor Sanford Levinsonsee a danger in too much executive authority.
* Difficulty removing an incompetent president. Since the only way to remove an incompetent president is with the rather difficult policy of impeachment, it is possible for a marginally competent or incompetent president to stay in office for four to eight years and cause great mischief. In recent years, there has been great attention to this issue given the presidency of George W. Bush, but there have been questions raised about the competency of Jimmy Carter in his handling of the Iran hostage crisis. Ironically, a president who was arguably the most skillful in foreign policy, Richard M. Nixon, was impeached, but for offenses linked with domestic politics.
* President may be incompetent. The presidency of George W. Bush has been attacked by numerous critics from both parties as being particularly incompetent, short-sighted, unthinking, and partisan. Bush's decision to launch the second Iraq War was criticized extensively; writer John Le Carre criticized it as a "hare-brained adventure." He was also criticized for advocating a policy of exporting democracy. Brzezinski described Bush's foreign policy as "a historical failure." Bush was criticized for being too secret regarding foreign policy and having a cabal subvert the proper foreign policy bureaucracy. Other presidents, too, were criticized. The foreign policy of George H. W. Bush was lackluster, and while he was a "superb crisis manager," he "missed the opportunity to leave a lasting imprint on U.S. foreign policy because he was not a strategic visionary," according to Brzezinski. He stopped the first Iraq War too soon without finishing the task of capturing Saddam Hussein. Foreign policy expert Henry Kissinger criticized Jimmy Carter for numerous foreign policy mistakes including a decision to admit the ailing Shah of Iran into the United States for medical treatment, as well as a bungled military mission to try to rescue the hostages in Teheran. Carter waffled from being "both too tough and too soft at the same time."
* Congress excluded from foreign policy. Critic Robert McMahon thinks Congress has been excluded from foreign policy decision making, and that this is detrimental. Other writers suggest a need for greater Congressional participation.
* Lack of control over foreign policy. During the early 1800s, general Andrew Jackson exceeded his authority on numerous times and attacked American Indian tribes as well as invaded the Spanish territory of Florida without official government permission. Jackson was not reprimanded or punished for exceeding his authority. Some accounts blame newspaper journalism called yellow journalism for whipping up virulent pro-war sentiment to help instigate the Spanish-American War. Some critics suggest foreign policy is manipulated by lobbies, such as the pro-Israel lobby, although there is disagreement about the influence of such lobbies. Nevertheless, Brzezinski wants stricter anti-lobbying laws.
* Alienating allies. There is evidence that many U.S. allies have been alienated by a unilateral approach. Allies signaled dissatisfaction with U.S. policy in a vote at the U.N. Brzezinski counsels listening to allies and exercising self-restraint.
* U.S. foreign policy manipulated by external forces. A Washington Post reporter wrote that "several less-than-democratic African leaders have skillfully played the anti-terrorism card to earn a relationship with the United States that has helped keep them in power" and suggested, in effect, that foreign dictators could manipulate U.S. policy for their own benefit. It is possible for foreign governments to channel money through PACs to buy influence in Congress.
* Ineffective public relations. One report suggests that news source Al-jazeera routinely paints the U.S. as evil throughout the Mideast. Other critics have faulted the U.S. public relations effort.As a result of faulty policy and lackluster public relations, the U.S. has a severe image problem in the Mideast, according to Anthony Cordesman. Analyst Mathews said that it appears to much of the Arab world that we went to war in Iraq for oil, whether we did or not. In a 2007 poll by BBC News asking which countries are seen as having a "negative influence in the world," the survey found that Israel, Iran, United States and North Korea had the most negative influence, while nations such as Canada, Japan and the European Union had the most positive influence.
* Ineffective prosecution of war. Amy Chua thinks the Iraq war has been managed inefficiently, with wasteful spending. One estimate is that the second Iraq War along with the so-called War on Terror cost $551 billion, or $597 billion in 2009 dollars. Boston University professor Andrew Bacevich has criticized American profligacy and squandering its wealth. There have been historical criticisms of U.S. warmaking capability; in the War of 1812, the U.S. was unable to conquer Canada despite several attempts and having superior resources; the U.S. Capitol was burned and the settlement ending the war did not bring any major concessions from the British.
* Problem areas festering. Critics point to a list of countries or regions where continuing foreign policy problems continue to present problems. These areas include South America, including Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Brazil. There are difficulties with Central American nations such as Honduras. Iraq has continuing troubles. Iran, as well, presents problems with nuclear proliferation. Pakistan is unstable, there is active conflict in Afghanistan. The Mideast in general continues to fester, although relations with India are improving. Policy towards Russia remains uncertain. China presents an economic challenge. There are difficulties in other regions too. In addition, there are problems not confined to particular regions, but regarding new technologies. Cyberspace is a constantly changing technological area with foreign policy repercussions. Climate change is an unresolved foreign policy issue, particularly depending on whether nations can agree to work together to limit possible future risks.
* Ineffective strategy to fight terrorism. Critic Cordesman criticized U.S. strategy to combat terrorism as not having enough emphasis on getting Islamic republics to fight terrorism themselves. Sometimes visitors have been misidentified as "terrorists." Mathews suggests the risk of nuclear terrorism remains unprevented.
* Historical instances of ineffective policies. Generally during the nineteenth century, and in early parts of the twentieth century, the U.S. pursued a policy of isolationism and generally avoided entanglements with European powers. After World War I, Time Magazine writer John L. Steele thought the U.S. tried to return to an isolationist stance, but that this was unproductive. He wrote: "The anti-internationalist movement reached a peak of influence in the years just before World War II." But Steele questioned whether this policy was effective; regardless, isolationism ended quickly after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Analysts have wondered whether the U.S. pursued the correct strategy with Japan before World War II; by denying Japan access to precious raw materials, it is possible that U.S. policy triggered the surprise attack and, as a result, the U.S. had to fight a two-front war in both the Far East as well as Europe during World War II. While it may be the case that the Mideast is a difficult region with no easy solutions to avoiding conflict, since this volatile region is at the junction of three continents; still, many analysts think U.S. policy could have been improved substantially. The U.S. waffled; there was no vision; presidents kept changing policy. Public opinion in different regions of the world thinks that, to some extent, the 9/11 attacks were an outgrowth of substandard U.S. policy towards the region. The Vietnam War was a decade-long mistake.

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