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THE WORLD AT OUR DOORSTEP: ENGAGING THE U.S. PUBLIC IN FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

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Americans need to understand the degree to which international developments can affect their lives. To carry out an effective foreign policy during crises, a democracy relies on public support. A U.S. public that fails to understand how closely linked it is to other countries is likely to lose opportunities to capitalize on these linkages, jeopardizing the prosperity it derives from them. This paper suggests a number of methods for improving public understanding of the daily conduct of diplomacy and the issues arising on the horizons of security policy – through the conventional news media, new communications technology, local activism and government and private educational programs.

INTRODUCTION

The real environment is altogether too big, too complex and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it. To traverse the world, men must have maps of the world. Their persistent difficulty is to secure maps on which their own need, or someone else's need, has not sketched in the coast of Bohemia.

Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*

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Professionals in international affairs are dismayed at the average American's apparent detachment from national security and foreign policy matters. Although vocal groups of citizens make it clear that they care deeply about certain issues, and the public tells pollsters that it supports disseminating democratic and free-market values abroad, widespread interest is said to be hard to sustain in the absence of an imminent threat.

This phenomenon is rooted in human nature. As Walter Lippmann pointed out, we form our views of the world according to "the pictures in our heads" and are disinclined to invest the time and attention needed to change those pictures, particularly if doing so seems only remotely connected to our personal well-being (Lippmann 1922). It is also characteristic of the United States in particular. Half a century ago, Gabriel A. Almond noted in a classic analysis that "the American has a powerful cultural incentive to develop policies and strategies relating to his business and professional career, and little incentive, if any, to develop strategies for foreign policy" (Almond 1950).

But this trait is progressively more out of step with the reality of the rest of today's world, as international relations scholar Richard Rosecrance observed:

Among the world's major economies and polities, only the United States remains, despite its potent economic sector, essentially introverted politically and culturally. Compared with their counterparts in other nations, citizens born in the United States know fewer foreign languages, understand less about foreign cultures, and live abroad reluctantly, if at all (Rosecrance 1996).

Study after study shows that the United States has become especially introspective in the wake of the Cold War.¹ Experts assert that this tendency could exact a high price:

- James M. Lindsay, a former National Security Council staff member² who is now a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, wrote in late 2000 that "at the very moment that the United States has more influence than ever in international affairs, Americans have lost much of their interest in the world around them." As a result, he said, foreign affairs are neglected and policy choices distorted "to favor the noisy few over the quiet many." Left unchecked, Lindsay predicted, "these impulses will prevent the United States from capitalizing on its great power" (Lindsay 2000).

- Peter Baker, previously a White House correspondent for *The Washington Post* and now its Moscow bureau chief, said that “as long as the threat of world destruction hung over [Americans], we remained intently interested in what was happening abroad. Now that a relative stability has taken over, we have chosen to focus inward again.... As a byproduct, of course, our paper [is] less interested in some of the routine White House meetings on foreign affairs – meetings that might have seemed more consequential, and thus newsworthy, in the past” (Baker 2000).
- A senior staff member on Capitol Hill recently lamented, “it used to be that being on a Congressional committee dealing with foreign affairs or the armed services was a matter of prestige and high profile. These days, they have trouble filling those committee seats, and the voters don’t seem to notice or care.”³

Denizens of think tanks, members of the media and leaders in public service should not merely resign themselves to this state of affairs. Several innovative approaches to the problem of public passivity in foreign and security policy are worth further exploration, and thought ought to be given to additional solutions.

This paper will examine the implications of Americans’ disengagement from foreign and security policy, and provide some suggestions for addressing the situation. Policy professionals *can* overcome the public’s selective perception, but only if they come to terms with the factors that reinforce it.

OPINION, KNOWLEDGE AND INFLUENCE

Americans need to understand the degree to which international developments can affect their lives, and the ways in which this country’s actions affect others. The United States is the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world. As such, it bears a special responsibility for leadership in NATO, the United Nations, the World Bank, and other institutions meant to safeguard global stability. In order to ensure that the country’s international affairs are conducted in a democratic fashion, public understanding of world issues must be maintained. Furthermore, to carry out an effective foreign policy during crises, a democracy relies on its citizens’ support; an uninformed U.S. public, paralyzed by a lack of consensus in a crisis, would provide opportunities for exploitation by demagogues in other lands. And in a world that is increasingly interdependent in economics, the environment, and health matters, a U.S. public that fails

to understand how closely linked it is to other countries is likely to lose opportunities to capitalize on these linkages, placing the prosperity it derives from them in jeopardy.

Opinion polls suggest that a majority of Americans share certain foreign policy goals. Most favor U.S. engagement in international peacekeeping and the promotion of human rights abroad. Maintaining a strong defensive force continues to be a priority. But when pressed concerning the cost of achieving these goals, many poll respondents apparently are underinformed. For example, the University of Maryland Center for International Security Studies (1997) found that an overwhelming majority of Americans supports foreign aid, but most people overestimate current spending on aid.

The same survey uncovered a tendency among policy leaders (*e.g.* members of Congress and their staffs, scholars and journalists) to misinterpret public preferences on foreign policy, perceiving Americans as more isolationist than they really are. When the survey's main authors, Steven Kull and I.M. Destler, conducted follow-up interviews for a related study, they found that the leaders viewed the public's tenuous grasp on the details of policy-making as proof of ineptitude in comprehending international affairs:

When policy practitioners characterized the public, they did so very frequently with a disparaging, if not exasperated, tone. In a content analysis of the interviews, negative characterizations of the public (for example, uneducated, self-contradictory) outweighed the positive ones (for example, sensible, responsive to argument) by more than 4 to 1. Implicitly, and in many cases explicitly, policy practitioners were suggesting that the public was inadequate to the task of addressing significant foreign policy issues. (Kull and Destler 1999).

Kull and Destler theorized that policy practitioners choose to regard the public as isolationist because they "sustain a belief that [they are] more farsighted, broadly humanitarian, and [have] a more sophisticated sense of American national interests than the average American" (Kull and Destler 1999).

In trying to gauge public opinion independent of the polls, policymakers tend to extrapolate from the feedback they receive from interest groups or activists who are engaged on a single issue. The White House, the State Department, and Congressional offices all have staff members who log the volume of letters, telephone calls and e-mail messages regarding specific

subjects and relay this information to decision-makers. The messages of an outspoken minority are thus subject to being viewed as representative of constituents in general, giving squeaky wheels an exaggerated ability to steer policy.

The proliferation of interest groups on China policy provides one example. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) notes that in the last eight years, Congress has considered hundreds of legislative proposals concerning China, ranging from prison labor to missile production to religious freedom in Tibet. Each issue, CRS noted, “was accompanied by an assortment of [new] groups arguing for or against,” often formed by members of other groups acting on the same issue and seeking to magnify the impression of public involvement. In addition, the Internet’s growth in recent years “has expanded the reach and potential influence of even the smallest of groups. Organized interests with a skeletal staff and a web site can now command greater attention than before” (Dumbaugh 2000).

What happens when leaders, acting on unproven assumptions of public ignorance or exaggerated extrapolations of public preferences, make choices concerning security and foreign policy? Their decisions may be based more on political expediency than the demands of the situation. They may seek either to avoid involvement in an issue or to make political capital out of it without considering the consequences.

A senior staff member on a Congressional committee overseeing foreign affairs told the author that members of both the House and the Senate “tend to vote the party line on foreign policy issues, because they don’t want to take a maverick stance on something outside of their own immediate constituencies. There is no gain in it, and tremendous potential for trouble.”

Of course, this does not hold true for all of Capitol Hill. James Lindsay pointed out that “Congress is a ‘they,’ not an ‘it,’” and that there are members sincerely interested in the armed services, diplomacy, and trade who become leaders in these areas regardless of the potential political drawbacks. However, he added, members of Congress generally “fear that most Americans aren’t paying attention to what they say about foreign affairs, and that they will be punished once the people suddenly start paying attention. The sense that the public will not reward you becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Lindsay 2000b).

At the other end of the behavioral spectrum are legislators who act as “political snipers, taking pot shots at issues, ducking responsibility for real-world foreign policy results,” according to I.M. Destler, Leslie H. Gelb and Anthony Lake (1984). They noted that this is a recent phenomenon:

Before the Vietnam War, they wrote, Congress and the President cultivated harmony on foreign and military affairs, but

Vietnam shattered the consensus on which executive leadership had been founded. Presidents, beginning with Lyndon Johnson, tried to maintain their power not by changing the policy but by scaring Congress into submission. ... The message was that the game was political hardball and [adversaries] would get hurt, by fair means or foul, if they didn't back off" (Destler, Gelb and Lake 1984).

Both tactics, political sniping and running for cover, create a lack of consensus that could have serious implications for foreign and security policy implementation.

EFFECTS OF A LACK OF CONSENSUS

To conduct foreign and security policy based on conjecture about the public's preferences and in a climate where political responsibility has been abdicated, is to court disaster. Without adequate consensus among leaders, and between leaders and the American people, any significant commitment of resources – whether for national defense or humanitarian intervention – is bound to collapse under the weight of the sacrifice.

A 1996 RAND study showed that public support for U.S. military operations and public tolerance for casualties were based on an assessment of the costs and benefits that was influenced heavily by the presence or lack of consensus among political leaders (Larson 1996). The report concluded that when the U.S. public understands the principles and interests at stake, and is reassured of political consensus, it exhibits a high tolerance for sacrifice, even casualties. But when political leaders disagree on the value of a given military endeavor, even low costs can quickly erode support for it. When leaders are divided along partisan or ideological lines, members of the public tend to divide the same way.

"The potential consequences of ... recurring disagreements are quite sobering," the study's author wrote. "They can lead to enduring divisions in the public and to support that is brittle and easily exploited by adversaries, thereby leading both to failed interventions and incorrect lessons for the future." Such divisions could erode the credibility of threats of force to protect important U.S. interests, he concluded (Larson 1996).

The threat to the country's credibility as a contributor to peacekeeping became even more pronounced with the failed 1993 U.N. intervention in

Somalia, and has been reinforced by a perennial debate over the merits of U.S. participation in such missions.

As historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote, "Without bipartisan consensus on the role of military force in the post-Cold War world, we can expect disagreements among leaders whenever the country deploys forces." Under those circumstances, "popular demand for withdrawal becomes almost irresistible" whenever troop casualties occur, and "terrorists recognize this vulnerability of democracies" (Schlesinger 1995).

INFORMATION DEFICIT

Part of what makes it difficult for the public to form a coherent idea of its foreign and security policy preferences is a shortage of consistent information via the mainstream media about international affairs. The number of foreign correspondents working for the major U.S. newspapers, magazines and broadcasters has declined dramatically in the last three decades, particularly since the Cold War's end.⁴

Veteran foreign correspondent Garrick Utley wrote, "more than the other news media, television is caught between the declining interest in international affairs and rising costs and competition. It is the most expensive medium for news, and production costs for international reporting are particularly high" (Utley 1997).

"What is being lost, or at least weakened," Utley said, "has long been forecast: the role of a few television network news organizations as a unifying central nervous system of information for the nation, and the communal benefits associated with that" (Utley 1997).

Former *TIME* magazine, *New York Times*, and *Washington Post* correspondent Jonathan Randal, who has covered the developing world for four decades, wrote recently in a study of the U.S. media that network television's diminishing commitment to foreign news has grave results:

Conflicts uncovered by television rarely achieve that critical mass that forces reluctant governments to act. Put another way, absent television coverage, incumbent powers are virtually assured of impunity. Repressive regimes have learned they can ignore the most eloquent print correspondents (Randal 1998).

U.S. newspapers, meanwhile, have formed what Edward Seaton, former president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), calls a "two-tier press":

The elite newspapers, like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*, offer wonderful coverage of the world to an elite readership highly interested in foreign policy. Perhaps 50 other daily newspapers do a reasonably good job, at least covering the part of the world most connected to their regions. . . . Then there are the rest of us, 1,550 dailies – many of whose editors seem to believe readers aren't interested in international news and, apparently, don't have need for it. (Seaton 1998).

Seaton said many editors of U.S. newspapers have “the comfortable illusion” that Americans do not care about what happens overseas. “My belief,” he added, “is that if they don't care, at least in part, it's because they've been lulled into believing that what happens overseas will have no real impact on their own lives” (Seaton 1998).

The next section of this paper will address the means by which members of the mainstream media and the policy-making establishment can enhance the public's understanding of international affairs – and perhaps, in the process, learn that the public cares more than it is assumed to do.

REDEFINING FOREIGN NEWS COVERAGE

Seaton said the current situation of U.S. media coverage of foreign news “cries out for better ideas, information and explanations that help readers figure out how international forces are affecting and changing their local communities and their lives” (Seaton 1998).

Under Seaton's leadership, the ASNE for two years held regular roundtables for its members on ways to improve foreign coverage, and has since produced a booklet for editors called “Bringing the World Home” that offers tips on how to demonstrate to readers the local relevance of international developments. For example, a story about the best disease-resistant wheat in Nebraska will trace its roots to a threatened source in Turkey. Or a news feature will explain how the increase in tobacco imports from Brazil will affect Virginia growers (ASNE 1999). Such a publication should be placed in the hands of not only foreign editors, but also those responsible for the metro, financial, science, arts and even sports sections of newspapers small and large nationwide.

Other tools are available for emulation. The daily *Spokesman-Review* of Spokane, Wash. has developed an in-house database whereby keywords such as country names are linked to information on crop exports and business contracts of significance to the state economy. Staff members are encouraged to pursue these links regularly and to include them in a special

“Connections” page. Readers have given this page numerous favorable reviews. The *Courier-Journal* of Louisville, Ky., has instituted a Sunday section supplementing foreign news with explanatory stories on the relationships between events overseas and local business and ethnic communities, and it has woven local references into daily foreign coverage.⁵

Tyler Marshall, who formerly covered the State Department for the *Los Angeles Times* and is now the paper’s bureau chief in Hong Kong, said reporters should bear their reader’s financial interests in mind, and try to find angles to their stories that will explain how events overseas relate to those interests. “Much of America’s unprecedented prosperity over the past decade is due to the growth in world trade and the more efficient distribution of labor it has brought,” Marshall said in a recent interview. “But few realize this because it’s a hard concept to grasp, let alone sell politically” (Marshall 2000).

Finally, as the neutral “gatekeepers” of information from overseas, editors also need to develop a more flexible view of what constitutes news, and to be more conscious of the balance between “bad news” and more edifying stories that they present. For example, exposés of the shortcomings of U.S. government efforts overseas normally receive prominent coverage, while stories of successful programs often are left to be told by government agencies’ public relations offices. This approach can have undesired effects: A recent study co-sponsored by the Overseas Development Council (ODC) and the Henry L. Stimson Center stated that public skepticism about foreign aid efforts arises in part from the widespread perception that foreign aid has not been a productive investment, a perception that “results from media coverage that has stressed foreign aid failures and largely ignored successes, such as dramatic improvements in infant and child health, and the effective control of major diseases like smallpox” (Blechman et al. 1997).

Without fear of compromising their neutrality or pandering to government needs for good press, editors can judiciously treat more foreign aid success stories as newsworthy and consider the role they play in affecting readers’ perceptions of the world.

ALTERING POLICY MAKERS’ OUTLOOK

International relations professionals likewise need to look at the foreign and security policy preferences of the U.S. public with fresh eyes, and to realize that they stem in large part from leaders’ ability to communicate national priorities to the public. The ODC-Stimson Center report concluded that “what is often thought of as the ‘public opinion problem’

in international affairs is much more a problem of leadership. It reflects a failure to engage the public concerning American purposes and interests in the world after the Cold War” (Blechman et al. 1997).

No office is better suited to concentrating the public’s attention than the presidency. But there is no forum for regular messages from the president to the American people focusing on foreign and security policy. A president who wishes to have the American people’s enduring support for initiatives in this area must communicate a clear agenda to the public and engage their interest in these issues.

Presidents have to make the case that engagement abroad matters. They must remind Americans that most of their prosperity comes from the ability to promote trade abroad in a stable world. And they must present the truth about the sacrifices that might be required in order to ensure that prosperity.

In an analysis of current and potential foreign policy issues, the Council for Emerging National Security Affairs recommended that the White House be more forthcoming in the future about the level of commitment and cost that might be expected from peace-keeping initiatives abroad:

Our experience clearly teaches us that successful peace operations ... require deep involvement, complex nation-building, and the resolve to stay the course. ... If the administration deems a peace operation worthy of U.S. participation, it should fully explain the costs and risks to the American public, be prepared to take the steps necessary to have a lasting impact, and facilitate and demand effective civil-military cooperation (Lettre *et al* 2000).

The president’s credibility as a leader under such circumstances has proven crucial to military operations in the past. In an overview of troop commitments abroad for his study of U.S. support for Nicaragua’s contra movement, Richard Sobel found that the president’s approval rating “may, in fact, be more important than support or opposition to specific policies in developing policy possibilities or constraints” (Sobel 1993).

Established mechanisms for maintaining public interest in, and support for, foreign and security policy initiatives comprise only part of the means by which the problem of Americans’ disengagement in these matters can be addressed. Let us now turn to some proposals for potential solutions using alternative ways to reach the public.

ALTERNATIVE #1: NEW MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

The Internet’s capacity to carry information doubles every 100 days. Much of that capacity is used for marketing and sales, entertainment and

personal communication. But there are also numerous sites featuring news and discussion of issues, and these show promise as instruments for involving people more deeply in foreign and security policy.

A study by the University of California Los Angeles Center for Communication Policy reported that information received over the Internet enjoys high credibility among habitual users, and there is untapped potential for putting that information to use (UCLA 2000). The authors found that respondents believed “the Internet can be an important resource for gathering information about political issues, but is still emerging as a tool that can create more political power, or influence political decisions and government officials” (UCLA 2000). The UCLA study estimated the number of Internet users in the United States at 100 million, and said the number is growing by roughly 55,000 people per day.

Meantime, the mainstream media’s influence in the United States is becoming more fragmented as they compete with the Internet for people’s time and attention. Political scientist Pippa Norris has observed that “the power of the news media to influence the public is ... limited and counterbalanced by the growing power of media users to select their preferred information sources” (Norris 2000).

Such selections are made according to users’ existing interests; the challenge lies in interesting new audiences in foreign and security policy matters, and attracting them to Web sites dedicated to these issues. Designers of sites wishing to tap into these new audiences will need to find ways to make evident the connections between users’ interests and world events.

Garrick Utley suggested that the Internet could breed

“a new type of foreign correspondent, or perhaps the old type with new means of communication. ... They will have to be able to communicate interactively with an audience whose members will be informed, engaged, and more demanding than the passive television viewers of today” (Utley 1997).

A site featuring foreign news, official reaction from the Pentagon and the State Department, and on-line discussions with observers and experts would surely appeal to Internet users, enlivening international affairs for them more than the comparatively static and conventional media can.

ALTERNATIVE #2: LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The traditional environmentalists’ motto, “think globally, act locally,” is gaining renewed currency as local city and county governments become

more involved in international affairs. In the 1980s, state and local governments took the lead in withholding investment in South Africa as long as it sustained its system of apartheid. Since 1990, more than 120 cities and counties have banned nuclear weapons production within their boundaries, and more than 200 local governments have passed resolutions supporting a comprehensive treaty banning nuclear weapons testing.

Such initiatives, when properly publicized, can help show average Americans the direct connections between their actions and what happens abroad. Through partnerships with activist groups, local and state governments can engage citizens in foreign affairs in a more immediate and accessible way than federal entities can.

A survey published by the Council on Foreign Relations noted that “there has been a huge increase in the number of [local] actors in the United States who are pursuing foreign affairs agendas.” It warned that “this reordering of the U.S. foreign affairs agenda could conceivably result in the ‘balkanization’ of the foreign policymaking process,” but said it could also engender “policies that more fairly represent the interests and aspirations of the average American citizen” (Fry 1998).

Research shows that major cities with particularly large ethnic minority populations are more likely to be active in foreign affairs because of the emotional and familial ties between those populations and other countries.⁶ The governments of these cities could institute outreach offices for their minority communities that monitor issues abroad and make the connections to local interests.

ALTERNATIVE #3: EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Even if Americans on average appear indifferent to national security and foreign policy matters, there is a growing trend toward individual interest in foreign affairs among younger people. From 1985 to 1995, the number of American students who studied abroad for credit rose from 48,483 to 89,242 (Knowlton 1998). The Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC reports that in the past decade, the number of U.S. public and private elementary schools offering foreign languages has risen by 9 percentage points in the past decade, to 31 percent of all schools (Center 2000). More people are applying for short-term exchange student programs than at any time on record, according to the Council for International Education and Exchange.

This burgeoning enthusiasm for foreign travel and languages can translate into greater engagement in policy matters in adulthood. For example, local councils on foreign relations should be conducting out-

reach programs to secure members among returning exchange students and foreign language scholars. They could sponsor speakers' programs that feature local people who have had unusual travel experiences abroad.

Initiatives that encourage the study of foreign affairs should be widely publicized and better funded. The Department of Education offers a week-long Seminars Abroad Program intended to help language teachers of all levels, from elementary school to college, to "internationalize" the curriculum. Such incentives also could be extended to teachers of civics classes, who might spend a week in Washington, DC to familiarize themselves with cutting-edge security and foreign policy issues in order to enliven their lesson plans.

Federal government efforts to interest Americans in these issues need not be limited to the school system. Continuing education outreach projects should be instituted to ensure more active citizen involvement among adults. President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched one such project, the People to People Ambassador Programs, and it continues to thrive as a private foundation.

Fellowship programs offer another way to stimulate private-sector interest in policy. The American Association for the Advancement of Science, in cooperation with the Department of Defense, each year selects three fellows from science and engineering in the private sector to work in defense policy for one year. The fellowships are designed "to supply current technical knowledge to defense programs, and to introduce outstanding scientists and engineers to government service." Projects such as this one could be broadened to include other parts of the private sector, such as business, the media and academia, in order to promote more widespread understanding of national security issues.

Defense scholar Eliot A. Cohen has recommended that the federal government institute military familiarization programs. He wrote that "these programs would be intended for legislators, journalists and other 'opinion leaders' (to include civic leaders and people in business), to help them develop sound criteria for evaluating contemporary defense matters" (Cohen 1997). Several aspects of these programs would be relatively inexpensive and uncomplicated to arrange: lectures on the organization and function of the Department of Defense, observation of simulations and exercises, and visits to variety of facilities, including training installations. Cohen's model also could be applied to other federal government entities, such as the Department of State, to give the public a better idea of their workings and their relevance to daily life far from Washington, DC.

REDRAWING THE MAPS

To many Americans, Washington may seem as remote as Walter Lippmann's "coast of Bohemia." Their maps of the world are centered on the back yard; their perspectives normally do not include the doings of a distant national capital, much less events in a foreign country. Therefore, the problem of the average citizen's detachment from foreign affairs and security matters must be addressed by raising awareness of the activities of the federal government. Educators, the news media and elected officials all have an interest in ensuring that the populace is well informed about the daily conduct of diplomacy and the issues arising on the horizons of security policy. Citizens must be made to see how that information applies to them and to their communities. This sort of cultural shift requires creativity, commitment and the courage to insist on change.

Innovation and persistence are as characteristic of American behavior as the incentives to attend to business and profession that Gabriel A. Almond described. "The intellectual demands of business life are in some respects as complicated as those of foreign policy," he noted, and forming views based on careful examination of the issues "is hardly a task that is beyond the intellectual competence of a large proportion of the population" (Almond 1950). Similarly, the task of guiding the U.S. public toward greater involvement in foreign and security policy is within the capabilities of political and opinion leaders, once they recognize that they can and must help develop a more cosmopolitan citizenry.

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NOTES

- 1 For example, the Pew Research Center for The People and The Press in its 1997 survey, "America's Place in the World II," found that the public's "knowledge of international policy and events is minimal," that it "does not think the United States today plays a greater global role than it did a decade ago," and that a majority of Americans are convinced that events in Asia, Europe and even Mexico and Canada "have little or no impact on their lives."
- 2 Lindsay was Director for Global Issues and Multilateral Affairs from 1996 to 1997.
- 3 Two interviews for this paper were conducted on condition of anonymity on 19 December 2000.
- 4 According to the Tyndall Report television monitoring service, total foreign coverage on network nightly TV news programs has dropped from 4,032 minutes in 1989, the year communism in Central Europe collapsed, to 2,763 minutes in 1994. In the 1970s, the three main networks devoted 35 percent of their stories to international news, whereas foreign news comprises 20 percent of their coverage today. The American Society of Newspaper Editors reports that U.S papers allocate less than two percent of their non-advertising space to foreign news, whereas in 1971, they devoted more than 10 percent of their space to foreign news.
- 5 *News From Abroad*, a book by former foreign correspondent and Columbia Journalism School professor Donald R. Shanor to be published by the Columbia University Press in early 2002, will offer further examples of ways in which local newspapers are expanding their foreign coverage by making connections between business and ethnic minority communities and events overseas. The examples of *The Spokesman-Review* and *The Courier-Journal* are among those outlined in the proposal for Mr. Shanor's book.
- 6 For a comprehensive look at the dynamics of city involvement in international affairs, see Heidi H. Hobbs' *City Hall Goes Abroad: The Foreign Policy of Local Politics*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).