

Main topic: to examine the role interest groups play in the making of U.S. foreign policy.

1 Key terms

- interest group
- Olson's logic of collective action
- policy substitution
- distributive politics
- lobbying

2 Key readings

- Milner and Tingley, *Sailing the Water's Edge* (Princeton UP, 2015)
- LeoGrande, "Pushing on an Open Door? Ethnic Foreign Policy Lobbies and the Cuban American Case," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 16:3 (July 2020), pp. 438-456

3 Key ideas

Question: What is an interest group?

Answer: Any organized group apart from government or the public as a whole.

Question: Why are interest groups effective?

Answer: Unlike the general public, interest groups usually have solved the collective action problem associated with political organization. The advantage is two-pronged: (1) high motivation over their specific interests and (2) pursuit of policies with excludable benefits. Thus the benefit any individual in an interest group receives from the policy outweighs the cost of lobbying for that policy (i.e., $V_i > c$).

Question: How do domestic political constraints affect which foreign policy tools presidents will use?

Answer: (1) Distributional politics: policy instruments with greater concentrated gains/losses incentivize contestation by impacted interest groups, thus creating constraints on the president; (2) ideological divisions: policy instruments that are highly polarizing are difficult to wield given opposition's resistance.

Question: When do interest groups lobby?

Answer: When distributional consequences are high and information asymmetries are low (e.g., trade).

4 Additional review questions

- Presidents frequently rely upon the use of military power to respond to international problems. How would the perspective of distributional politics explain this phenomenon?
- What predictions about foreign policy preferences can we make by the liberal-conservative spectrum alone? How do these predictions compare to other sources of foreign policy attitudes (e.g., MI/CI)?
- What are the challenges associated with examining the role and influence of (ethnic) lobby groups?
- According to LeoGrande, what allows for ethnic lobby groups to secure policy concessions?

Instrument	Distributional politics	Ideological divisions	Presidential power
Military force			
Defense spending			
Geopolitical aid			
Economic aid			
Immigration			
Trade			
Sanctions			