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# Trends. A Stain on the Red, White, and Blue: Sex and United States (U.S.) Foreign Policy

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One aphorism of politics is that perception is reality. Whether an Issue or perceptions of that Issue should be important or should even be political in nature is not germane. Perceptually, what is, is.

As Monica Lewinsky begins her grand jury testimony, then, the question is not whether sex--denotations and connotations, sexual affairs, sex-related perjury, and sex-related obstruction of justice--should be important and considered political. Instead--via perception is reality--there is no question. Sex is and has been important to governance.

Let's look at foreign policy as an example. (1) President Clinton is spending time preparing for his own videotaped testimony to the grand jury as well as politically and personally managing other aspects related to the sex Issue. Although one might make a case that an individual high on the personality trait of sensation-seeking could function ever more competently in foreign policy, one might better conclude that time away from foreign policy is not to foreign policy's benefit. The same is the case for attempting to posit that--assuming President Clinton and his staff are not adept at foreign policy--time away from foreign policy is to the benefit of the nation. (2) Recognizing that President Clinton is weakened politically, other foreign leaders are less likely to respect and adhere to U.S. positions and more likely to challenge the US through seeking to advance their own instrumental interests. Or these leaders may be more likely to provide short-term foreign policy succor to the President--all the while banking on long-term Presidential payback. (3) Because President Clinton is in a weakened domestic political position, he is less likely to effectively respond to the challenges described in (2). For example, there appears to be a lessened probability that he can employ military assets if necessary--e.g., now that Iraq is again taken a radically overt mode of noncompliance and noncooperation with investigators of the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. As well, the President has less leverage--through the bully pulpit, let alone moral suasion--to garner Congressional and popular support for unappealing but vital legislation such as the \$18 billion transfer to the International Monetary Fund.

Intimations of a stain on a blue dress is already staining President Clinton's red, white, and blue foreign policy mantle. (See Bell, D.M. (1997). Innuendo. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 27, 35-59; Leventhal, G., & Gray, S.J. (1991). Can innuendos in headlines affect perceptions? *Psychological Reports*, 69, 801-802; Silverman-Watkins, L.T., & Sprafkin, J.N. (1983). Adolescents' comprehension of televised sexual innuendos. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 4, 359-369; Wegner, D.M., Wenzlaff, R., Kerker, R.M., & Beattie, A.E. (1981). Incrimination through innuendo: Can Media questions become public answers? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40, 822-832.) (Keywords: Bill Clinton, Foreign Policy, Monica Lewinsky, Sex, United States.)