

THE
POLITICS
OF
UNITED STATES
FOREIGN POLICY



JEREL A. ROSATI

T H E
P O L I T I C S
O F
U N I T E D S T A T E S
F O R E I G N P O L I C Y

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T H E
P O L I T I C S
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*to my daughter, Kristen,
and to all students who strive to learn*

PREFACE

THE POLITICS of United States foreign policy is complex. Within the past thirty years numerous developments have occurred throughout the world and within American society that have made the politics of U.S. foreign policy even more complicated. The Vietnam War, the collapse of the gold standard, Watergate, détente, the oil embargo, the Iran hostage crisis, Iran-Contra, large federal deficits, the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism in Eastern Europe, and the Persian Gulf conflict are just some of the developments that suggest the need for a new look at how U.S. foreign policy is made. This book provides fresh insight into the complex politics of U.S. foreign policy in light of recent history. In this respect, *The Politics of United States Foreign Policy* has been written with four general goals in mind: to be comprehensive in topical coverage, to address central themes in U.S. foreign policy, to provide a strong sense for the actual workings of politics, and to be accessible and interesting to the reader.

The first goal of the book is **to be comprehensive in topical coverage** from three perspectives. This book provides a broad discussion of the government, the society, and the global environment, explaining how they interact and affect the foreign policy process of the United States. Following a brief introduction in part I, part II focuses on governmental institutions and the policymaking process, part III concentrates on societal forces and domestic politics, and part IV discusses how changes in the global environment and American power impact the foreign policy process. Beyond some familiarity with the president and Congress, many undergraduate (and graduate) students know little about the basic institutions within the foreign policy bureaucracy, such as the National Security Council, the State Department, and the intelligence community. Hence, these institutions are fully discussed. *The Politics of United States Foreign Policy* also discusses other important institutions often ignored, such as the military establishment, the foreign economic and cultural bureaucracy, the courts, state and local government, and the political culture of the Washington, D.C., community. Because students similarly lack extensive knowledge of American society and America's role within the global environment, these two perspectives merit extended coverage as well. Most textbooks downplay the significance of public opinion, political culture and ideology, electoral and group politics, the exercise of civil liberties, and the media in the foreign policy process. They also ignore ways in which the global environment, and changes in America's role within it, affects domestic and governmental politics. Only by integrating all three perspectives—the government, society, and the environment—does one have the basis for developing a comprehensive understanding of the politics of U.S. foreign policy.

The second goal of the book is **to address three themes that are central** to the politics of U.S. foreign policy. Many textbooks provide detailed information yet do not address large questions that allow the student to make sense of the material. This book synthesizes what has been learned about how U.S. foreign policy is made in order to maximize knowledge and understanding. It does this by posing

three questions that have been particularly significant in attracting the interest of scholars:

1. What have been the dominant patterns of **continuity and change** in the foreign policy process over time?
2. To what extent has the **president been able to govern** foreign policy?
3. How has the constant **tension between democracy and national security** evolved?

While a historical perspective is provided, the emphasis is on the key patterns that have prevailed since World War II. Students should learn that while continuity has been the norm in the short term, the foreign policy process has undergone considerable change over time, as experienced during the late 1940s and early 1950s with World War II and the rise of the cold war and then again during the late 1960s and early 1970s following the Vietnam War and Watergate. Compared to the cold war years, for instance, the president currently finds it much more difficult to govern foreign policy as the tension between national security and democracy has increased since Vietnam. Such patterns may be open to further change with the end of the cold war as the United States approaches the twenty-first century.

The third goal of the book is to **provide a strong sense of the politics involved** in the making of U.S. foreign policy. Most textbooks rarely capture the “real world” and dynamic nature of politics. In this respect, it is important to acquire not only a basic knowledge of important institutions and the policymaking process, but an appreciation of the ways in which they actually operate within the foreign policy environment. To understand the practice of U.S. foreign policy, students need to have a feeling for and a comprehension of the politics involved—both within government and throughout society. They need to learn who the players are and how they operate, interact, conflict, win, compromise, and lose. Students must come to understand the beliefs and the personalities that prevail in American politics as well as the language of politics. In this way one can better understand the use of power and symbols which, in a country like the United States with over 250 million people, is a very political, complex, and messy process.

The final goal of *The Politics of United States Foreign Policy* is to **provide information and knowledge that is both accessible and interesting** to students. Many introductory textbooks are plagued by an encyclopedic nature that provides too much information for a student to absorb. From a learning perspective, this is counterproductive because students easily become confused when information lacks an appropriate context and is poorly linked throughout the book. This book addresses the problem by emphasizing the most pertinent information and significant patterns in the politics of U.S. foreign policy as opposed to giving “equal time” to all potentially relevant information. Such information and knowledge, furthermore, are consistently linked to the three central themes of the book so as to maximize understanding. Student interest and learning are also furthered by the book’s broad topical coverage and description of the actual dynamics of American politics in accessible prose.

In order to further these goals and provide a strong understanding of the politics of U.S. foreign policy, this book relies on five additional features. First, **examples and historical context are used** throughout the book. Concrete examples help students to understand the nature of the institutions involved, the dynamics of the process, and the larger themes addressed. Discussions about the Vietnam War and the Iran-Contra affair, for instance, help to illuminate the central themes of continuity and change, the president's ability to govern, and the tension between national security and democracy. Historical background also is provided to supply perspective over time, something many students lack. To cite but one illustration, a brief history of legislative-executive relations makes clear that the role of Congress in foreign policy has not been static and that the president's ability to govern in foreign policy has ebbed and flowed. Furthermore, an effort is made to return to the same illustrations throughout the book, such as cold war policies, the Vietnam War, and the Iran-Contra affair, in order to build both a knowledge base and an understanding of the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. To keep the book timely and allow for an understanding of contemporary and future developments in U.S. foreign policy, treatment of the Bush administration, the end of the cold war, and the Persian Gulf conflict is woven throughout the chapters.

Second, **concepts and analytical approaches are introduced** at various points in the book to help integrate and make sense of the material covered (as well as to emphasize the importance of conceptual thinking for furthering understanding). This is crucial to avoid the problem of presenting an excess of information without providing the necessary analytical tools that allow the student to absorb and comprehend the material. The concept of bureaucracy, for example, is initially introduced to clarify the workings of the State Department, and it is used subsequently to explain the general operations of other foreign policy bureaucracies within the government. Likewise, the final chapters in both part II and part III highlight analytical approaches useful in synthesizing the dominant patterns found in the policymaking process within the executive branch and throughout the domestic political process. Thus, description, history, and theory are woven together throughout the book in order to provide a strong understanding of the politics of U.S. foreign policy.

The third useful device to promote interest and learning is the **use of essays**—short narratives, separate from the text, that shed additional light on the topic. This is a unique feature of the book that allows for more in-depth discussion of pertinent information referred to in the text, thus provoking greater interest without detracting from the flow of the narrative. For example, in the chapter on the intelligence community, one essay provides a biographical portrait of J. Edgar Hoover in order to better explain the activities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation throughout the twentieth century. This method not only highlights valuable information, but adds a practical, real-life perspective to American politics derived from the work of journalists, historians, and social scientists.

The fourth feature is the **inclusion of brief bibliographic essays** at the end of each chapter. More comprehensive than a listing of recommended readings, each bibliographic essay highlights and comments on the best sources for additional information on the topic. The bibliographic essays serve as a valuable tool that

assists students in sorting through the hundreds of relevant books and articles that are available on a given topic. The works cited in the bibliographic essays (and in the chapter notes) draw on a variety of different sources that I relied upon in writing the book: scholarly and policy-oriented books and articles, newspapers and journalistic accounts, and government documents.

Finally, the **sequence of topics** is organized in a way that maximizes understanding of the foreign policy process. Beginning with the presidency—the center of the foreign policymaking process and a topic with which students have greatest familiarity—the book moves outward, through the foreign policy bureaucracy, on to Congress and the rest of government, then to the larger society and domestic politics, and finally to the global environment. Although each chapter stands on its own (and, thus, an instructor can use the chapters in any order he or she wishes), the book is organized so that the topics discussed in each chapter build on those covered in previous chapters.

To produce a book that fulfills the goals discussed above is a demanding task. If successful, students—undergraduates, graduates, scholars, and other interested individuals—will acquire knowledge and arrive at an understanding of the complex politics of U.S. foreign policy. In this respect, I hope that this book not only serves as a worthwhile pedagogical tool, but that it also contributes to a scholarly synthesis and understanding of the politics of U.S. foreign policy.

I have given considerable thought to the structure and content of this book over the years and there are a great number of people who have been instrumental in providing the basis for such an endeavor. I have regularly taught courses on American politics and U.S. foreign policy to undergraduates and graduates for over a decade and would like to thank these students for their valuable feedback. They have made clear that it is possible to communicate information and knowledge about the complex politics of U.S. foreign policy in an interesting and meaningful fashion. I also have been learning and writing about U.S. foreign policy for a longer period, and would like to thank all those individuals who inspired me, from whom I have learned, and who have assisted me in my professional development and scholarship.

I am specifically indebted to a number of people who took the time and effort to directly assist and support me in writing this book. Paul Kattenberg, Peter Schraeder, and Frank Sloan were most generous in reading and commenting on the entire manuscript and in sharing their vast knowledge. Many people read part of the manuscript and provided valuable feedback: Tony Bell, Jane Berthusen, Hal Birch, Earl Black, Ken Clements, Roger Coate, John Creed, Betty Glad, Joe Hagan, Steve Hook, Pamela Howard, Bobby Phillips, Dan Sabia, Art Vandenhouten, Steve Walker, Brian Whitmore, and Laura Woliver. I would also like to thank the many reviewers provided by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich for their constructive comments and recommendations: Steve Chan, University of Colorado; Larry Elowitz, Georgia College; John Gilbert, North Carolina State University; George Kieh, Illinois Wesleyan University; Martin Kyre, Texas Tech University; Dean Minix, University of Houston; B. David Myers, University of North Carolina; Martin Sampson, University of Minnesota; David Skidmore, Drake Uni-

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Jerel A. Rosati
1992

CONTENTS

P A R T

I

INTRODUCTION 1

1 THE POLITICS OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY 2

Foreign Policy, Complexity, and Politics	2
The Study of U.S. Foreign Policy	4
The Organizing Framework	5
<i>The Three Perspectives</i>	5
<i>The Three Themes</i>	6
Major Patterns in the History of U.S. Foreign Policy	9
<i>The Continental Era</i>	9
<i>The Regional Era</i>	11
<i>The Global Era</i>	12
Beyond the Cold War?	18

P A R T

II

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS 25

2 THE PARADOX OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER 26

The Elements of Presidential Power	26
<i>Constitutional Roles and Strengths</i>	26
<i>Limits and Constraints</i>	30
<i>Uncertain Elements</i>	37
Implications for Presidential Power	39
The Problem of Presidential Governance	42
<i>The Presidential Life Cycle</i>	42
<i>American Politics and the Crisis of Governance</i>	45
Presidential Power and the Conduct of Foreign Policy	46
<i>Contemporary Presidential Performance</i>	48
Presidential Leadership	56
<i>Patterns in Presidential Leadership and Governance</i>	59
Summary	67

3	PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT AND THE NSC PROCESS	72
	The Foreign Policy Bureaucracy	72
	Presidential Management	75
	The National Security Council	81
	Presidential Management Styles and the Role of the NSC	84
	<i>The Early NSC as Advisory Body</i>	85
	<i>The Rise of the NSC Adviser and Staff</i>	86
	<i>The NSC Adviser and Staff Ascendant</i>	90
	The Contemporary Policymaking Process in Operation	90
	<i>The Nixon-Kissinger System</i>	91
	<i>The Carter Administration's Policy Process</i>	96
	<i>The Policy Process Under President Reagan</i>	98
	<i>President Bush and the Foreign Policy Process</i>	102
	The NSC Process in Perspective	102
4	THE STATE DEPARTMENT AT HOME AND ABROAD	107
	The Context Behind the Decline of State's Historic Role	107
	State's Functions Over Time	109
	Bureaucratic Organization and Structure	111
	<i>At Home</i>	112
	<i>Abroad</i>	114
	<i>Bureaucratic Patterns</i>	117
	The Foreign Service Subculture	121
	Consequences for Presidential Reliance on State	130
5	THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT	134
	Historical Trends	134
	<i>The Old U.S. Military</i>	134
	<i>The Modern Military Establishment</i>	135
	DOD's Bureaucratic Structure and Process	138
	<i>The Formal Ideal</i>	138
	<i>The Political Reality</i>	143
	The Military Subculture	147
	Patterns in DOD's Military Behavior	150
	Military Strategy and Performance	169
	Reform and the Future of the Military	176
6	THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY	183
	Purpose and Activities of Intelligence	183
	The Major Intelligence Organizations	184

Patterns in the Intelligence Process	188
<i>Coordination Problems</i>	193
<i>Producer-Consumer Problems</i>	193
<i>Variation in Intelligence Success</i>	194
The Central Intelligence Agency	197
Evolution of the CIA and Covert Operations	198
<i>The "Good Ole" Days</i>	199
<i>The "Fall" and Reform</i>	205
<i>The Resurgence</i>	208
The Tensions Between National Security and Democracy	215

7 THE FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BUREAUCRACY 229

The Foreign Economic Bureaucracy	229
<i>U.S. Foreign Economic Policy in Historical Context</i>	224
<i>Contemporary U.S. Global Economic Involvement and Interdependence</i>	230
<i>Relevant Governmental Institutions</i>	232
<i>Coordination Problems and the Free Market Ethos</i>	236
The Cultural and Communications Bureaucracy	239
Other Elements of the Foreign Policy Bureaucracy	241
Major Foreign Policy Patterns Revisited	245

8 EXECUTIVE BRANCH POLICYMAKING 249

Policymaking Stages	249
Policymaking Models	250
<i>The Rational Actor Ideal</i>	250
<i>Groupthink</i>	252
<i>Governmental Politics</i>	254
<i>Organizational Process</i>	256
Policymaking Patterns	260
<i>Presidential and Bureaucratic Politics</i>	261
<i>Policymaking Tendencies</i>	262
The Complex Reality of Policymaking	272

9 CONGRESS AND LEGISLATIVE-EXECUTIVE RELATIONS 278

The History of Legislative-Executive Relations	278
<i>The Constitution and Foreign Policy</i>	279
<i>An Overview of Legislative-Executive Relations</i>	281
World War II and the Post-War Years	282

Presidential Preeminence in the Cold War Era	283
Congressional Reassertion in the Post-Vietnam War Era	296
Contemporary Institutional Changes	298
Contemporary Legislative-Executive Relations	303
<i>The War Power</i>	305
<i>Advice and Consent</i>	311
<i>The Power of the Purse and to Make Laws</i>	314
<i>The Power of Oversight and Investigations</i>	320
Prospects	326

10 THE REST OF GOVERNMENT 335

The Judiciary	335
<i>Historical Overview</i>	335
<i>The Contemporary Era</i>	336
State and Local Governments	340
The Washington Political Community	346
Governmental Politics in Perspective	352

P A R T



THE SOCIETY AND DOMESTIC POLITICS 357

11 THE PUBLIC AND ITS BELIEFS 358

The Traditional Wisdom	358
A More Complex and Consequential Public	359
Public Opinion	360
<i>Elite and Mass Publics</i>	361
<i>Major Patterns in Public Opinion</i>	362
<i>Consequences for Domestic Politics and Policymaking</i>	366
Political Ideology	369
<i>The Cold War Years of Consensus</i>	375
<i>The Post-Vietnam War Years and Lack of Consensus</i>	380
<i>Political Implications</i>	389
Political Culture	391
<i>American Culture and National Style</i>	391
<i>Implications for Foreign Policy</i>	393
<i>Continuity, Change, and the Vietnam War</i>	396
Patterns in Beliefs and Making Foreign Policy	399

12 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND ELECTORAL POLITICS 407

Political Participation	407
The Electoral Process	408
Electoral Patterns Over Time	410
<i>The New Deal Realignment</i>	410
<i>The Period of Bipartisanship</i>	412
<i>The Post-Vietnam Dealignment Era</i>	416
Contemporary Electoral Politics	420

13 GROUP POLITICS 428

Group Origins and Development	428
Group Politics During the Cold War Era	431
<i>Foreign Policy and Cold War-Oriented Groups</i>	432
<i>The Military-Industrial-Scientific Infrastructure</i>	438
<i>The Foreign Policymaking Establishment</i>	441
The Post-Vietnam War Era	446
<i>The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements</i>	446
<i>The Resurgence of Conservative Movements and the Right</i>	448
<i>Consequences for Group Politics</i>	452
Into the Post-Cold War Era	463

14 NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE EXERCISE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES 471

Historical Developments	471
The Preoccupation with National Security versus Democratic Liberties	473
<i>World War I</i>	474
<i>World War II</i>	475
<i>The Cold War</i>	478
The Post-Vietnam War Resurgence of Civil Liberties	482
The Future	484

15 THE MEDIA AND THE COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS 489

The Influence of the Mass Media and the News	489
Contemporary News Media Coverage	490
Influences on the News Media	492
<i>The Complexity and Ambiguity of the World</i>	492
<i>Characteristics of the News Business</i>	493
<i>The Political Environment and the Communications Process</i>	499

Implications for the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy 509
 The Media and U.S. Foreign Policy Since World War II 510
 Public Knowledge and Democratic Citizenship 520
 The Prevalence of Symbolic Politics 524
The Entertainment Media 527
The Alternative Media 532
The Foreign Policy Specialized Media 536
Information, Ideas, Symbols, and Politics 536

16 THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROCESS 546

Competing Models 546
 Pluralism 547
 Elitism 548
 The Great Debate 549
 Hyperpluralism 550
The Making of Foreign Policy Since World War II 551
 Pluralism and the Cold War Years 551
 The Post-Vietnam War Era, From Elitism to Pluralism 553
 Continuity in Hyperpluralist Politics and an Apolitical Mass Public 558
Complexity and Change in the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy 560

P A R T



**THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT AND FUTURE POLITICS
OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY 567**

17 THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT AND AMERICAN POWER 568

Influence of the Environment on American Politics 568
The Cold War Era in World Politics 470
 The Rise of the East-West Conflict 570
 The Rise of American Power 572
The Rise of Global Complexity 574
 The Rise of Global Pluralism and Interdependence 575
 The Relative Decline of American Power 577
The Post-Cold War Era in World Politics 580

<i>The Collapse of Communism and the End of the Cold War</i>	586
<i>The Persian Gulf War and Other Global Conflicts</i>	588
The Future Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy	590