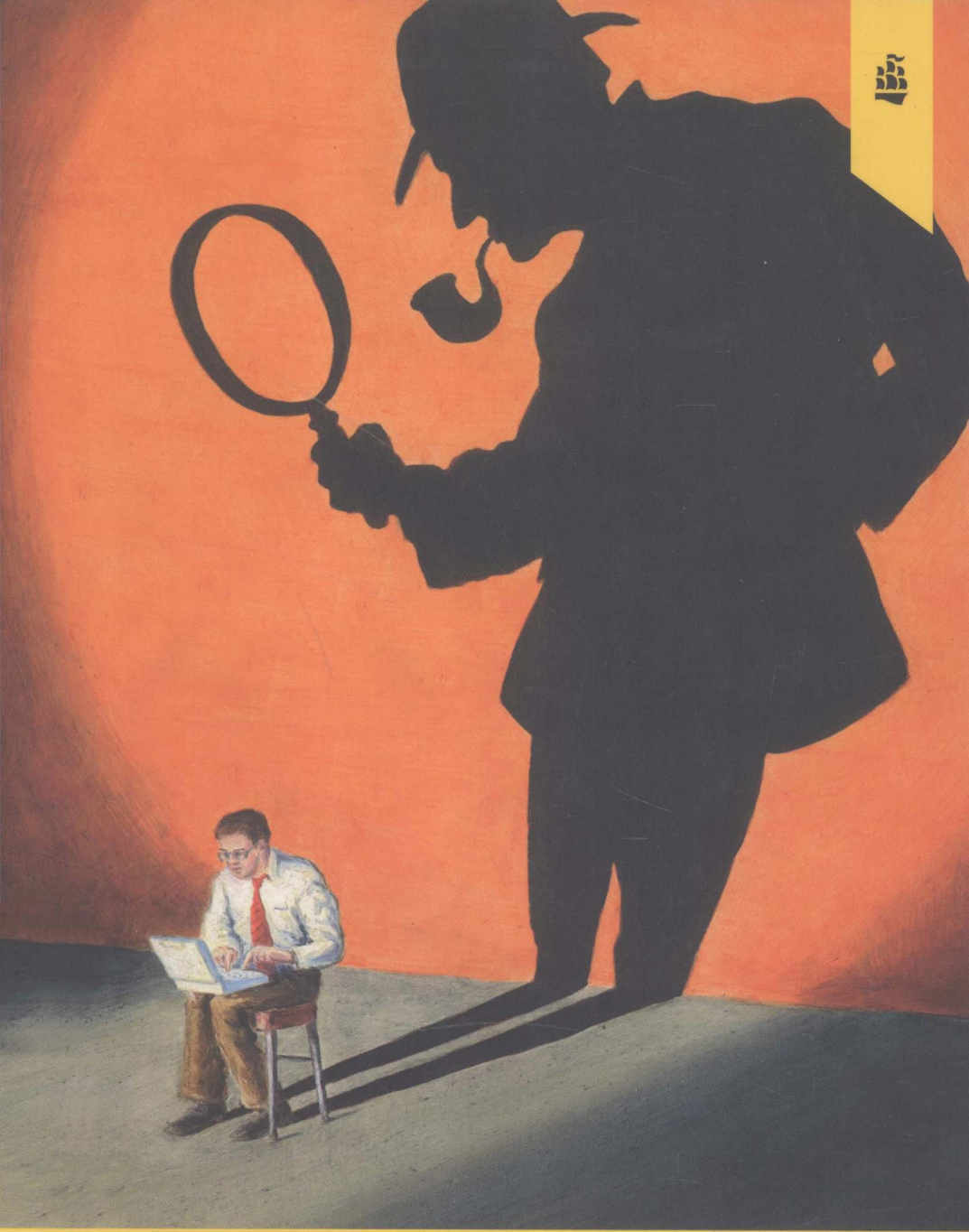

Cases in Public Policy and Administration

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JAY M. SHAFRITZ | CHRISTOPHER P. BORICK

Cases in Public Policy and Administration

By

Jay M. Shafritz

and

Christopher P. Borick

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Cases in Public Policy and Administration

Preface

This collection of instructive stories on public policy and its administration follows an ancient tradition. Ever since prehistory, stories have been used by tribal elders to illustrate, indoctrinate, and educate. With the advent of writing, the stories, once memorized, were recorded for greater permanency. Thus Homer's two great works, *The Iliad,* on the Trojan War, and *The Odyssey,* on Ulysses' circuitous route home from that war, were first narrative poems, part of the rich oral tradition of ancient Greece. These were not just "fun" tales to listen to around the fireplace on a long winter's night. They offered serious instruction on how to conduct oneself as a warrior, on the nature of honor, on military strategy and tactics, and on how to deal with the gods that abounded in that world. Such stories were not mere entertainments, although they were certainly entertaining; they presented the crucial lessons of life as the ancient Greeks knew it.

THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

So it is not surprising that Greece was the society that produced the Western world's earliest histories, what we now call case studies, on the ebb and flow of war, on the nature of battles, and on political and institutional leadership. Ever since then, the study of political decision making and its subsequent administrative implementation has been undertaken by means of a case study, usually in the form of an in-depth analysis of a single subject such as a war or battle. Wars tend to make excellent case studies because, at least after they are over, they come with the three key ingredients all cases must have: a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (404 BCE) is the progenitor of these military and political case studies. His *History* provides a full account of the war between the ancient Greek cities of Athens and Sparta. Thucydides made one of the most famous observations on what causes war: "What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta." It is possible to discern in this one sentence recognition of what has subsequently been termed the security dilemma, a situation in which one state takes action to enhance its security, only to have this action seen as threatening by other states. The result is that the other states engage in countermeasures, which intensify the first state's insecurity. The dilemma arises from the fact that because of this process, actions taken to enhance security can actually end up diminishing it. There is also a dilemma for the second state in that if it regards the action as defensive and takes no countermeasures, it leaves itself vulnerable; whereas if it responds vigorously, it will exacerbate the first state's insecurity.

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Although he was writing 2,500 years ago, Thucydides distilled the essence of the Cold War conflict between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the current security dilemma facing both Iran and Israel, and countless other international squabbles during the past two millennia. What makes a case useful is not just the information it supplies about itself, but the utility of its wider applicability. So, although Thucydides had no knowledge of the United States/Soviet Union conflict, the lessons of his case concerning ancient Athens and Sparta held universal truths.

This wider applicability of truths, ancient or not, is the essence of a good case. Thus a case is worth reading not just because it is a good story; but because it teaches something beyond itself. Mere entertainment does not suffice for a good case. For example, the story of David, a boy working as a shepherd in ancient Israel, may be interesting, but it is not a case that offers larger truths. However, the story of David versus Goliath is a classic case that has within it lessons of strategy, tactics, honor, fear, and asymmetrical warfare—all issues that are still relevant today.

Military colleges and general staffs have long used the case study method to review battles and study generalship. Generalship is not an occupation that gives its practitioners much of an opportunity to ply their trade. Thus most generals fight pitifully few battles. One of the prime reasons that Napoleon Bonaparte was so successful as a general and for so long was that he kept France almost continuously at war. Consequently, he was literally the most experienced general of his age by far—he fought almost sixty major engagements. Even though he lost the last one, Waterloo in 1815, you cannot take all those other victories away from him. Experience counts! And that is why case studies are so useful: They are the only way we know to duplicate cheaply some very expensive—in money and/or lives—experiences.

Wait, you say! What about simulations, whether as board games, interpersonal exercises, or computer games? All these are valid training techniques, but they are also just variants of the traditional case study that goes back to Thucydides, who, by the way, was also a general. Unfortunately, he lost the battle for a colony that the Athenians charged him with protecting from the Spartans. As punishment, he was exiled from Athens for twenty years. Fortunately, this gave him the time to write his classic book.

This same military case study technique is now widely used in a civilian context to examine how policy proposals become law, how programs are implemented, and how special interests affect policy development. College courses in business and public administration often use a case study approach. An entire course may consist of case studies (frequently combined into a casebook) of management situations to be reviewed. The goal is to inculcate experience artificially. Any manager rich with years of service will have had the opportunity to live through a lifetime of "cases." If life is, as it is often said, "one damn thing after another," then a career in business or public administration is, in a parallel sense, "one damn case after another." By having students study many cases, each of which may have occurred over many years, the case study course compresses both time and experience.

Case studies, in effect, allow students to live many lives, to replicate the cases that made up the lives of others. Thus relatively young students can gain much of the insight and wisdom of a manager who has had the equivalent of hundreds of years of

experience. In theory, this makes them so wise beyond their years that employers will eagerly seek them out. In allowing students to borrow the experiences of others, case studies seek to solve the problem of creating on-the-job experiences in those who have no actual experience.

IN THE TRADITION OF THUCYDIDES

The modern case study as a specific vehicle for conveying social science research became fashionable in the period between the world wars. These case studies were inspired by the case history approach used in medical research. Now the term *case study* is used for a bewildering variety of presentations, some so methodologically rich that they sag with statistical analyses, others straight historical narratives that tell a story from beginning to end. Sometimes such cases are written specifically for teaching purposes and have only a beginning and a middle. The end, known to the instructor, is kept from the students until after a presumably lively class discussion allows students to come to their own conclusions that are then compared to the reality. Then, of course, there are legal cases, the precedent-setting opinions of judges used to teach law; these are not our concern here.

Within the fields of public policy and administration, two kinds of cases have emerged. The first is historical, much like those of Thucydides. They recount events and seek to draw lessons. The best of them are also gripping stories, with much of the dramatic suspense and surprising outcome of a novel. However, the case study format is also used as a way of framing and presenting the results of formal empirical research. Here observational or survey techniques yield quantitative data that can be validated by statistical methodologies, similar to formal experiments in the natural sciences and medicine. These latter types of case, used increasingly as the basis for research designs in public policy and administration, and also in doctoral dissertations, are not our concern either.

This book is a collection of historical cases—informal history presented as good stories or explanations of policy-making and/or administrative phenomena. Our efforts are unabashedly in the tradition of Thucydides in that we hope all our efforts are useful enough to have wider applicability. Although the cases are clearly concerned with public policy and its administration, they are written, as far as practical given the nature of the subject matter, in an informal journalistic manner. Even though we do not offer news as such, our case study format tends to follow the journalistic credo that a news story should contain these essential elements: who, what, why, when, where, and how.

A MESSAGE TO GARCIA

Case studies are not just explorations into techniques of how to accomplish this or that critical task; they must also be, at heart, inspirational. That is certainly what the Greeks expected of their cases. Readers today are still inspired by the story of *The Iliad* and the exploits of Ulysses depicted in *The Odyssey*. Cases ultimately must be able to inspire readers toward new achievements.

A modern, compared to ancient Greek, case that illustrates this inspirational aspect is Elbert Hubbard's (1856–1915) *A Message to Garcia* (1899). Hubbard, who is generally credited with first observing that "life is one damn thing after another," was an American publisher and writer. During the Spanish-American War, he learned of the exploits of Andrew Rowan, an Army officer sent behind enemy lines to Cuba to coordinate military efforts with the Cuban revolutionaries fighting for independence from Spain.

This tale of initiative in the face of daunting challenges exhorts the reader to take a similar "don't ask questions, get the job done" attitude toward his or her job. Rowan's job was to get a message through to Calixto Garcia (1839–1898), who had long been leading the fight for Cuban independence. Rowan's inventive way of overcoming of every obstacle—harsh jungles, smelly bandits, poisonous snakes, the usual—that got in his way becomes an inspirational saga, as written by Hubbard, that sold over 40 million copies and was known by practically every literate American throughout most of the first half of the twentieth century. It was required reading for U.S. officers in World Wars I and II; and large businesses bought copies in bulk for their managers. The very title, *A Message to Garcia,* became a catchphrase for accomplishment, for a "can do" attitude, for doing a difficult task despite all, and for demonstrating your worthiness as a member of your team.

Inspirational case studies come in many forms. For example, consider the inspirational nature of Shepherd Mead's *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1952). This book, when made into a play, won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1967, despite the fact that it was really a Broadway musical comedy (made into a film in 1967). Nevertheless, it inspires. It inspires those who seek to rise in the corporate world to do so by sucking up to the big boss, to his ugly secretary, and to anyone else who needs sucking up to. Inspirational? Yes, to a limited number of suckers who don't realize that this case is a parody of the business world, but hardly widely applicable.

Real knights of the organizational realm earn their spurs by taking "a message to Garcia," by accomplishing something that is admirable. Widely known case studies such as *Garcia* illustrate, define, and project the character of a nation. The ancient Greeks might seek to emulate Ulysses' cunning, determination, and devotion to his family. Now the Americans, who always had famous heroes such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, suddenly had as a role model an ordinary man doing an extraordinary thing. This offering up of a role model—an exemplar to be admired and imitated—has always been one of the most important functions of a case study. Remember Ulysses.

ADVENTURE FOLLOWS

The cases in this book are in this tradition of narrative instruction, of narrative inspiration. Included are twenty-eight stories or explanations of public policy making and/or administrative phenomena. For the most part, these provide information that every student and practitioner should know. They were all (but one) written by the same team, so they have the same style and tone. If you liked reading the various

editions of *Introducing Public Administration* by Jay M. Shafritz, E. W. Russell, and Christopher P. Borick, then this collection should have comparable appeal to you. The organization of this work has the same chapter arrangement as *Introducing Public Administration,* but the cases are all independent; they can be easily mixed or matched with any other core text.

Before a case can be of instructional value, it must be interesting enough for students to begin to read it, and then hold their attention. That is why, we have sought to create cases that highlight the great drama of public policy and the ingenuity of its concomitant administrators. As much as possible we sought out adventure. We wanted to tell thrilling stories that emphasized the true-life adventures of public policy makers and administrators.

Even though we start out with a story of the world's most famous fictional detective, the story is true because it deals with a fictional character's influence on real events. The only other major use of fiction is our use of Shakespeare's plays to understand organization theory (Chapter 12); snippets of fiction are used here and there to illustrate aspects of organization development (Chapter 14), government surveillance (Chapter 15), and policy analysis (Chapter 28).

Not all of the cases that follow are strictly historical. Certainly all the biographical cases are; but others are procedural in whole or in part because they do not so much provide a case as make the case for a process or way of thinking about public policy and its implementation. For example, Chapter 3 makes the case that doctrine is pivotal to understanding public policy, and Chapter 12 makes the case that Shakespeare's prose and poetry anticipated many of the findings of twentieth-century social scientists and organization theorists.

For the most part, we offer histories in the form of adventure stories that every student of public policy and administration should know. Readers will learn:

- How Lincoln Steffens and the muckrakers paved the way for the development of modern public administration (Chapter 2)
- How the decision was made by President Harry S Truman to drop the first atomic bomb on Japan in order to end World War II (Chapter 4)
- How the ideas of an academic economist and a famous novelist led to the recession that started in 2008 (Chapter 5)
- How the current U.S. welfare state was inspired by a German chancellor (Chapter 6)
- How a Nazi war criminal inadvertently provided the world with a lesson in bureaucratic ethics (Chapter 9)
- How Sun Tzu, in ancient China, understood the essentials of modern systems theory (Chapter 11)
- How Napoleon Bonaparte encouraged the job of chief of staff to escape from the military and live in contemporary civilian offices (Chapter 13)
- How Al Gore really deserves just a little bit of credit for inventing the Internet (Chapter 16)

- How an obscure state department bureaucrat wrote the policy of containment that allowed the United States to win the Cold War with the Soviet Union (Chapter 17)
- How the RAND Corporation was invented and, in turn, invented strategy for the nuclear age (Chapter 18)
- How gaining high office is so often an essay contest won by those who can write well, such as Woodrow Wilson, as well as by those who can cheat at writing well, such as John F. Kennedy (Chapter 21)
- How Dwight D. Eisenhower was started on the road to the presidency by a mentor he found in the Panamanian rainforest (Chapter 22)
- How Thurgood Marshall led the legal fight for civil rights and made it possible for Barack Obama to become president (Chapter 23)
- And how Florence Nightingale gathered statistics during the Crimean War that helped lead to contemporary program evaluation (Chapter 27)

The case topics were selected because we found them interesting. Sometimes we took a paragraph or two from our introductory text and developed it into a case. Sometimes we took a case that had been retired from the text (and now exists only in earlier editions) and expanded and updated it into a new case. More often we started from scratch with just the germ of an idea that we nurtured into a case.

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This book has been a collaboration of two friends. Although we are separated by both generations and geography, we have a common interest in good stories that illustrate the subjects we have spent our academic lives teaching. We hope that our work provides readers with an interesting and insightful perspective on a field that touches so many aspects of our daily lives. Naturally, all omissions, mistakes, or other flaws that may be found herein are solely our responsibility. We are hopeful that this will find sufficient acceptance that subsequent editions will be warranted. Thus, suggestions for improvements and enhancements will always be welcome.

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CHAPTER ONE

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of Scientific Management

HOW THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS DETECTIVE WAS A PIVOTAL INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF U.S. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

PREVIEW

Mickey Mouse and Santa Claus are his only rivals to having the world's most instantly recognizable silhouette. Almost everyone in the literate world knows that a deerstalker cap on the head, a drooping pipe in the mouth, a short-caped overcoat on the shoulders, and a magnifying glass in the hand mean that Sherlock Holmes is afoot. The demand for Sherlock Holmes stories, both original and derivative, has been unrelenting ever since this intellectual action hero first appeared in London's *Strand Magazine* in 1891. Untold numbers of novels, stage plays, films, radio dramas, and television programs have used the Holmes character both seriously and in parody. However, the following case offers something that has never been seen before: Sherlock Holmes coming to life and taking his place on history's stage.

FROM FICTION TO HISTORY

This is a true story about something that is fundamentally untrue, the career of Sherlock Holmes. How can there be a true story about a fictional character invented by an amiable country doctor and alive only in the imaginations of his fans? "Elementary, my dear reader," as Holmes himself might say.

The truth of this story lies not in the existence of the character but in the influence the character has had on real events and real people. This is a case of a fictional detective being so influential that he has moved beyond the realm of literature and into the reality

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