



Loch K. Johnson

AS A
**AMERICA
WORLD
POWER**

Foreign
Policy
in a
Constitutional
Framework

Second Edition

AMERICA AS A WORLD POWER

Foreign Policy in a Constitutional Framework

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Loch K. Johnson

University of Georgia

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Foreign Policy in a Constitutional Framework

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Since joining the faculty at the University of Georgia in 1979, he has received numerous awards for outstanding teaching and research, including the 1988 Josiah Meigs Award (the university's highest teaching honor) and the 1990 Creative Research Medal. In 1993 he was co-recipient of the V. O. Key Award, bestowed by the Southern Political Science Association.

Confidence is everywhere the parent of despotism—free government is founded in jealousy; . . . it is jealousy and not confidence which prescribes limited constitutions to bind down those we are obliged to trust with power. . . . In questions of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.

—Thomas Jefferson; *Draft of the Kentucky Resolutions*, October 1798

PREFACE

Books traditionally begin with a preface and an introductory chapter. The purpose of the preface is to state the broad objectives of the book; it should provide the reader with a brief road map of the route the author intends to travel. The opening chapter then offers a more substantive and detailed guide to the author's main subject, in this case, American foreign policy in the aftermath of World War II. This sensible tradition is followed here.

OBJECTIVES

This book's objectives can be stated succinctly. In Part One, the author introduces:

- The ends, or goals, of American foreign policy, as well as a discussion of the means by which they are pursued (Chapter 1); and,
- New to this edition, an explicit framework for the analysis of foreign policy decisions (Chapter Two).

In Part Two, the book examines:

- How U.S. foreign policy has been shaped by American and world history, focusing initially on the broad sweep of events from the nation's founding to the Second World War (Chapter 3), followed by the cold war (Chapter 4), and then—another new feature of this edition—the turbulence and uncertainty of the contemporary setting (Chapter 5).

Part Three turns toward the question of policy analysis, with an exploration of:

- Why the nation's constitutional framework continues to exert a strong and, from the author's point of view, laudable influence over foreign policy-making in the modern era (Chapter 6);
- The institutional frictions that arise from this constitutional framework (Chapter 7); and
- The often neglected human dimension of foreign policy, from the lofty decision making of presidents and legislators to the important

role that you, the reader, and other individual citizens can play in guiding foreign policy (Chapter 8).

In Part Four, the book takes up the actual instruments of foreign policy:

- From gathering information about global threats and opportunities (Chapter 9) to the application of power and principle in defense of the nation's interests and ideals around the world (Chapters 10 through 14). This "nuts and bolts" portion of the book explains how the United States *learns* about events beyond its borders and then *acts* on this information.

Finally, in a new epilogue, the author offers a normative perspective on several promising new directions for America as a world power on the eve of the twenty-first century.

Stated another way, the first half of this volume (Chapters 1 through 8) provides a primer on the fundamentals of American foreign policy: why this country must concern itself with the rest of the world and how America's external relations are forged. The second half (Chapters 9 through 14) moves from this backdrop to front stage. The focus shifts toward U.S. foreign policy in action: the challenge of gathering and analyzing information gathered secretly and openly from around the world (strategic intelligence), in an effort to guard against dangers to America's security like the surprise attack that shook Pearl Harbor in 1941; the overt deployment of force—"sending in the Marines"—to achieve America's foreign objectives; the shadowy use of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and its hidden hand to manipulate events overseas (covert action); the pursuit of diplomatic approaches to the peaceful settlement of international disputes through negotiations—jawing instead of waring; the application of economic inducements (trade and aid); and, last but not least, the evocation of moral principle to guide America's relations with other lands.

This second half of the book addresses the "who gets what, when, and how" of global affairs (to draw upon political scientist Harold D. Lasswell's spare yet venerable definition of politics). Lastly, the epilogue explores ways in which America's citizens might choose to refashion and improve this nation's position in the world as we approach the third millenium.

Other new features of the second edition include a more explicit use of policy models for the analysis of decision making; more extensive discussions of the North-South axis in global affairs—that is, relations between the rich and the poor countries of the world; fresh case studies, including the Persian Gulf and the Somalian humanitarian interventions during the Bush administration; attention to the splintering of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, as well as other manifestations of neonationalism and tribalism that have swept the planet in

the wake of the cold war; and a more expansive treatment of various policy issues that have gained ascendancy since the decline of U.S.-Soviet rivalry—from the danger of global environmental degradation and rising world population pressures to the strains of widespread human migration and weapons proliferation. Further, this edition provides discussion questions at the end of each chapter, maps, and updated annotated references for additional study.

THEMES

As with the first edition, a dominant theme unites this volume: The drafters of the U.S. Constitution envisioned a sharing of authority for foreign policy across the institutions of government—the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches. They sought, above all else, to guard against the dangers of tyranny, and—the central normative argument undergirding this book—their prescriptions are as valid today as they were in 1787.

This sharing of authority across institutions has its frustrations. The power bestowed upon policymakers as a result of their positions of authority can become dispersed, balkanized; overlapping jurisdictions may lead to inefficiencies and delay. Other countries—even America's allies—may become confused and dismayed by this open, sometimes unpredictable, approach to international affairs.

The nation's founders believed, nonetheless, that a concentration of power represented a far greater danger to the republic than whatever inefficiencies might be incurred under a system of shared authority. They opted for an imperfect democracy over attempts at perfect order. As Justice Louis Brandeis once put it,

The doctrine of the separation of powers was adopted by the [Constitutional] Convention of 1787, not to promote efficiency but to preclude the exercise of arbitrary power. The purpose was, not to avoid friction, but, by means of the inevitable friction incident to the distribution of the governmental powers among three departments, to save the people from autocracy [*Myers v. United States*, 272 U.S. 52, 293 (1926)].

This constitutional blueprint for shared authority set loose powerful centrifugal forces within the government that continue to push the institutions of foreign policy-making away from centralized control. By early design, the government of the United States consists of fragments of power that must be pieced together with skillful leadership—and some luck—in order to make the parts move in harmony. Under such arrangements, Congress and the executive branch can find themselves in conflict over the proper direction of foreign policy.

This system of governing is starkly different from dictatorships like China, Iraq, or Libya, where foreign policy is carved out with little consideration for public or legislative opinion—or even from Western par-

liamentary governments with their fused executive and legislative powers under the strong control of a prime minister or chancellor. Yet, a vigorous internal debate between the branches of government over the proper pathways for the United States to follow is precisely what the founders intended. They hoped for wisdom that would emanate from many heads, not just from the president's; they sought open discourse, not regal command. Just as the nature of executive-legislative relations lay at the heart of foreign (and domestic) policy-making for the nation's founders, so, too, does it become the central focus of this book.

Embraced within the book's central theme, then, is the important idea extolled by the founders that the legislative branch has a vital, positive role to play in decisions of international affairs. Most volumes on American foreign policy are prone to exalt the presidency as the embodiment of those virtues often considered desirable for effective external relations: hierarchical organization, access to extensive information, quickness of decision, secrecy, and an intricate bureaucracy to carry out policy. This book, in contrast, maintains that no branch has a monopoly on wisdom for foreign policy. Rather, the government functions best when its various parts operate together, like an engine with all its cylinders at work. Comity between the executive and legislative branches, a spirit of good faith, a willingness to labor shoulder to shoulder—even as each branch remains cautious about possible abuses of power by the other: here, argues this book, is the key to an effective foreign policy in a system of dispersed authority.

Despite the brilliance of the insights advanced by the nation's founders, American citizens lost sight of these basic principles of governance during the first half of this century. The twin catastrophes of global war and economic depression spurred a trend toward the concentration of power within the executive branch. This dangerous aggrandizement, further fueled by the cold war and culminating in the "imperial presidency" of the Johnson and Nixon administrations, represented a radical departure from American traditions. It would take a souring war in Indochina, along with the Watergate and CIA scandals, to trim back burgeoning executive powers in the 1970s, awakening within the citizenry a renewed appreciation for the virtues in foreign policy of shared authority.

A primary purpose of this book is to explore the advantages (as well as the disadvantages) that America's constitutional framework holds for the conduct of foreign policy. Empirically, it attempts to shed light on the points of friction and cooperation in a system of shared authority; normatively, it tries to convey an appreciation for the safeguards put in place by the founders to protect the nation against autocracy—one-person rule.

Although the problems of power sharing between the branches occupy center stage in this book, a drama as large as American foreign

policy has many subplots. An important secondary theme is the ambivalence portrayed by Americans toward their status as a world power—a persistent uncertainty over the years about how to relate to the rest of the world. Citizens of this country have oscillated between attitudes of isolationism, on the one hand, and interventionism, on the other hand.

Emphasized in these pages, too, is the significance of the human factor in foreign affairs. Some experts view foreign policy as essentially a product of broad historical or institutional forces. Certainly these influences must be taken into account; but the will—or sometimes the whim—of government officials and private citizens make a difference as well and is given attention throughout this volume.

A further theme contends that the United States has been overly pre-occupied with military threats, becoming transfixed during the cold war by the unlikely event that Soviet tanks might come rumbling through the Fulda gap in Europe, quickly overrunning Western military defenses. As a result of this fixation, this nation has been insufficiently attentive to greater long-term dangers to its future—from global pollution and runaway world population growth to declining economic competitiveness and societal decay at home. As the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded in 1992 (in its influential report *Changing Our Ways: America and the New World*): “Efforts to halt nuclear proliferation, promote democracy, and improve the competitive position of American industries and workers were all sacrificed or compromised at times in the overriding goal of containing Communism” (p. 3).

Other themes are woven through the book, among them the following: that U.S. external relations over the years have been a blend of realism and idealism; that the United States is only one of many nations on the globe, all of which exist in something of an anarchical state with no higher authority over them to adjudicate disputes or maintain order; and that the study of foreign policy is devoid of any single dominant theory or methodology.

A NEW PARADIGM

Despite the importance of these various themes, the essence of U.S. foreign policy lies in how and why decisions are made. Consequently, this book concentrates on decision processes and institutions, on the people who hold positions of authority, and on the foreign policy views of citizens as they affect deliberations in high office. Its further central intention is to provide the reader with an understanding of the objectives of American foreign policy and how they are carried out. Following a review of fundamentals, this volume in its second half illustrates the importance—and the difficulty—of acquiring good information about the world in order to make informed foreign policy decisions. It examines how U.S. officials go about choosing which

approaches to employ in the pursuit of America's goals from among the several means available, from secret and open intervention abroad to diplomacy, trade, aid, and moral suasion.

Although most of this book is devoted to the scholarly marshaling of findings about how the United States makes its foreign policy decisions, normative undercurrents flow beneath the empirical analysis. This book calls for a new approach (or "paradigm," in social science jargon) to American foreign policy. The excessive deference paid to the president as an unerring architect of foreign affairs has failed (as the founders would have predicted); and so has the fixation of American officials on purely military threats abroad, as if the world were merely a chessboard upon which leaders moved about battleships, tanks, airplanes, and infantry divisions.

The new paradigm envisions a foreign policy based, institutionally, on an executive-legislative partnership and, ideologically, on a global perspective that extends beyond the shibboleths of purely military strategems. Whether this "fresh" approach (if a return to constitutional principles and a greater concern for such enduring matters as international trade can be construed as fresh) is preferable to the militaristic formulas of the cold war era is for the reader to decide. The author hopes only that this work will contribute to the debate about how best to prepare the United States for its leadership responsibilities in the next century.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have had an opportunity to observe American foreign policy from several vantage points within the government and, more recently, from the ivory tower of academe. Within the government, I have served as assistant to the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; staff director of the Subcommittee on Oversight, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; aide to the ranking majority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; and senior aide on the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade, House Committee on Foreign Affairs. I have also served as a consultant to the National Security Council and to the Department of State. Following these opportunities for close observation of how foreign policy is made, I have studied, taught, and written about foreign policy for the past fifteen years as a professor of political science, traveling back to Washington, D.C., periodically to interview officials, present testimony before Congress, or conduct archival research. This book is a blend of impressions gained from these various experiences.

Along the way, I have had the benefit of many wise tutors, beginning with scholars Arthur C. Campbell, David S. McLellan, Vernon Puryear, and L. N. Wenner, and continuing, within the government,

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Athens, Georgia

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