

PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL SCIENCE SERIES

US FOREIGN POLICY IN ACTION

AN INNOVATIVE TEACHING TEXT



JEFFREY S. LANTIS

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

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Praise for *US Foreign Policy in Action*

“Jeffrey Lantis has written a first rate study of US Foreign Policy in an age of uncertainty, complexity and transition. This comprehensive book, covering both theory and practice, looks at economic, security, environmental, and human rights issues, as well as the US’s relationships with other great powers. In particular, it provides an excellent pedagogical approach for students with a range of active learning frameworks designed to promote engagement with critical issues of international relations and help students experience the real world of policy making.”

John Baylis, Swansea University

“Topical. Innovative. Engaging. This textbook will draw students in with a crisp discussion of United States foreign policy history and process and enhances the learning experience with well-designed classroom exercises. If you’ve been looking for a textbook to help you foster a more active learning classroom environment, this is it!”

Douglas Foyle, Wesleyan University

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US Foreign Policy in Action

*An Innovative
Teaching Text*

Jeffrey S. Lantis

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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Editorial Offices

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The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19
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Cover image: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and members of the national security team receive an update on the mission against Osama bin Laden, in the Situation Room of the White House in Washington, May 1, 2011. AP Photo Pete Souza/AP/Press Association Images

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Preface and Acknowledgments

The United States faces many challenges in the world. It is engaged in wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, negotiating a deepening of trade relations with countries in Latin America, promoting a “reset” of US relations with Russia, and standing firm against China’s expanding influence in world politics. US diplomats have traveled to Kazakhstan to discuss nuclear energy cooperation, Chile to address monetary policy, Indonesia to promote women’s rights, and Germany to explore potential solutions to climate change. The Obama administration is also encouraging democratic revolutions across the Middle East and North Africa.

The outcome of any one of these foreign policy matters is far from preordained. Indeed, there are multiple variables of international policy coordination to consider, such as garnering the support of allies and building coalitions in international organizations. In addition, key actors in the US policy-making process, including the president, Congress, bureaucracies, the media, interest groups, and the public, are engaged in lively debates about foreign policy initiatives.

The case of US engagement in Libya in 2011 illustrates the complexity of the US foreign policy process. In March 2011, President Obama committed US troops to participate in NATO-led airstrikes against Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, who was attacking rebels in his country. Soon, some members of Congress were arguing that President Obama had violated his statutory authority by committing US soldiers to a coalition war in Libya without Congressional approval. The White House resisted Congressional challenges, in part because it knew that public support for the president had been buoyed by the killing of terrorist

leader Osama bin Laden on May 1, 2011. The president also enjoyed support for the Libya operation from human rights groups who feared that Gaddafi might slaughter rebels and civilians, and from Arab Americans who believed in support for democratic revolutions in the Arab world. Meanwhile, some Republican leaders believed that the United States was projecting an important message to other countries that might defy its will (namely, Iran and North Korea) that regimes could be toppled and leaders punished.

This text is designed to provide a fresh perspective on critical themes in foreign policy analysis. It blends the attributes of traditional textbook coverage – of major theories, historical surveys, illustrations, and data – with interactive learning components that will promote a deeper sense of engagement with the politics of United States foreign policy. Material presented throughout the text is designed to stir interest with provocative questions, competing answers, and debates that pervade the real-world policy process.

I have many people to thank for assistance in the production of this volume. The project began with an invitation from the Wiley-Blackwell series editor, John Ishiyama, to contribute to this innovative new series focused on effective pedagogy. This was an intriguing opportunity given my commitment to active teaching and learning and personal fascination with the politics of US foreign policy development.

I am grateful to my own teachers who helped me understand the history of US foreign policy and the tools of foreign policy analysis, including Professors Charles Hermann, Albert J. Ossman, Gary Kappel, Williamson Murray, and Shibley Telhami. I have also learned a great deal from friends and colleagues about teaching, including Matthew Krain, Kent Kille, Ralph Carter, Jeff Roche, Mark Boyer, Lynn Kuzma, Carolyn Shaw, Patrick Haney, Ryan Beasley, Juliet

Kaarbo, and Michael Snarr. In addition, I simply could not have developed and taught my first class on US foreign policy more than twenty years ago without the help of Thomas Preston, now a distinguished teacher-scholar at Washington State University.

This book has also been influenced by practitioners. They include Dennis Ross, an influential advisor to President Obama on the Middle East and former envoy for the Middle East peace process in the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations, who is as knowledgeable and kind a person as they come. Susan Rice's engagement in the foreign policy decision-making process of the Obama administration, as well as her service as US ambassador to the United Nations, are evidence of a deep personal and political dedication to values. Jared Cohen, a young State Department official and advocate of active teaching and learning through cross-cultural engagement, has inspired many to service. Finally, Joseph Kruzal was both a popular professor and a respected practitioner of foreign policy. He served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Clinton administration, but tragically lost his life in an accident during a diplomatic mission in the Balkans in 1995. This book is dedicated to Joe and to thousands of other foreign policy practitioners who toil in critical (yet often unheralded) service of the government.

In addition, I want to thank the outstanding editorial team that pulled this all together. I began my work with Nick Bellorini, an encouraging and astute editor at Wiley-Blackwell. Editors Ben Thatcher and Justin Vaughn took up the project and helped shepherd it to conclusion. Annie Rose, Development Editor at Wiley-Blackwell, has also provided critical direction and assistance. I am also grateful to anonymous reviewers of the manuscript who offered a number of helpful suggestions. The project is much stronger for this input, but of course, any errors remain my own.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family for their love and inspiration. My wife Holly provided me encouragement and the needed intellectual space to create this project. And my children, Joshua and Megan, inspire me to teach, and learn, every day.

Jeffrey S. Lantis is Professor of Political Science at The College of Wooster, USA. He teaches courses on U.S. foreign policy, international security, comparative foreign policy, and war and peace on film. A former Fulbright Senior Scholar at the Australian National University, Lantis is author of *The Life and Death of International Treaties* (2009), and co-editor of *Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective: Domestic and International Influences on State Behavior* (2012). He is past president of the Active Learning in International Affairs Section of the International Studies Association (ISA), and has directed numerous workshops on active learning approaches. In 2010, he was co-recipient of the Deborah J. Gerner Innovative Teaching Award in International Studies, the highest teaching award bestowed by the ISA.

1

Introduction

United States Foreign Policy in Action

You see, Washington has been telling us to wait for decades, even as the problems have grown worse. Meanwhile, China is not waiting to revamp its economy. Germany is not waiting. India is not waiting. ... These nations aren't playing for second place. Well, I do not accept second place for the United States of America. As hard as it may be, as uncomfortable and contentious as the debates may become, it's time to get serious about fixing the problems that are hampering our growth.

Barack Obama (2010)^{[1](#)}

The purpose of foreign policy is not to provide an outlet for our own sentiments of hope or indignation, it is to shape real events in a real world.

John F. Kennedy (1963)^{[2](#)}

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Chapter Summary

This is an exciting period of transition for United States foreign policy. Think about how the world has changed just in our lifetimes. When you were born, the United States was emerging from the Cold War and decades of competition with the Soviet Union. The “victory” of western ideals over communism coupled with rapid economic globalization positioned the United States as the single dominant power in the world. Many leaders in Washington, DC, saw the new era as a unique opportunity for the United States to influence global affairs, to mold the world in its image. This period of dominance lasted only a decade, however, before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the rise of China, and other developments changed the international order.

Today, the country faces many new foreign policy opportunities and challenges. Questions of how the United States will respond – and whether the country will be a major player in global politics in the future – are more open-ended than one might think. Foreign policy issues often involve differing interpretations of primary values and interests. Foreign policy can be surprisingly divisive, and these issues demand that key players engage in struggles over allocations of government resources and commitments. This seems to go against the advice of Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI), who once called for disagreements over foreign policy to stop “at the water’s edge.” Only unity could boost America’s image and power in global politics, he believed.

Debates over US foreign policy typically involve actors with vested interests in determining policy scope and direction. The framers of the Constitution debated which branch of government should have the most authority in foreign affairs, for example. After World War I, some leaders called for the United States to retreat from engagement in global affairs. Later, events like the Vietnam War and foreign

aid to developing countries divided the American people and their elected representatives in Washington. Questions about whether the United States should trade with Communist China or commit itself to international treaties that might yield more costs than benefits also have been divisive. Today, some constitutional lawyers question the legality of US surveillance programs in the war on terrorism, as well as the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, popularly called drones, to carry out military strikes in distant countries.

Foreign policy is defined as the actions and strategies that guide government relations with the rest of the world. Foreign policy includes actions taken by states, such as providing aid, making official statements of support for another democracy, or even deploying military troops. Foreign policy is also a function of strategies behind these actions, such as official doctrines or policies formulated to achieve key national security interests. These actions and strategies are typically developed by elected representatives, especially the president and members of Congress. They are also influenced by unelected actors ranging from civil servants in government agencies and lobbyists to bloggers and average citizens who share information or participate directly in the process. This broad definition underscores how foreign policy is the product of a complex mix of actors and actions. It also highlights the degree of surprise, drama, and unpredictability in the foreign policy process.

Foreign policy decisions are often the product of complex political processes. These processes can be noble, such as when government officials respectfully disagree over the best path for future policies and patiently exchange views in an effort to find reasonable compromise. They can be complicated, like when players consider both short- and long-term implications of their actions in relation to political

commitments. Or they can be tough political street fights in which powerful groups line up on both sides of a controversial issue in an attempt to shape the final outcome, creating clear winners and losers.

This book is designed to bring the politics of US foreign policy to life. It represents a synthesis of traditional content (theoretical frameworks and historical coverage) and interactive exercises. It encourages critical reflection on contending perspectives in political debates, promotes engagement with fundamental concepts and theories in the discipline, details relevant historical information, and provides innovative learning exercises that address a number of foreign policy dilemmas. It draws together the best trends in both politics and pedagogy – including increased access to information in the digital age, reactions to fast-changing circumstances, and imaginative critical dialogues – by interpreting the foreign policy decision-making process through the lens of political debate and exchange. Broadly speaking, this project is founded on republican ideals of knowledge and engagement: the belief that through participation in a community of learners students will develop interests and capacities that promote active citizenship.

Historical Foundations

The history of the United States of America offers a fascinating narrative, from the development of values that shaped the nation at its founding to modern-day struggles over interpretation of those values in a changing world. Actors with defined values and convictions formulate foreign policy. Those actors – women and men, philosophers and pundits, students and diplomats – are stewards of US foreign policy. They have personally vested themselves in the foreign policy process to achieve desired ends. They

frequently disagree over the proper conduct of foreign policy. These differences matter.³

United States history began well before the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the adoption of the Constitution in 1787. The first settlers arrived in the New World over a century earlier. And like the generations that followed, these stewards disagreed over the values and principles that would define our nation. Fast-forward from the founding of the country to other formative developments: President Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865) had to manage scores of foreign policy challenges during the Civil War, and endured significant dissent inside his cabinet on policy choices. Nearly a century later, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his advisors struggled over how to respond to a global economic depression before the United States plunged into yet another major war. Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson struggled with Congress over the limits of US containment policy. Each of these leaders looked at the world, and how to respond to global challenges and opportunities, through the lens of their own personal convictions and knowledge of domestic political constraints.

Map 1.1 World map.



Profound debates over US foreign policy did not end in the post-Cold War era. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush enjoyed high public approval ratings, and Congress acted in bipartisan ways to support major foreign policy initiatives. These included backing the war in Afghanistan, passing legislation that may have curtailed civil liberties, and even authorizing the invasion of Iraq. Yet, by the start of the Iraq War in March 2003, Americans had become deeply divided over the direction of US foreign policy. Nearly as quickly as the Bush administration gained support for an assertive foreign policy agenda, consensus faded and the American people entered into a bitter and partisan period. Those divisions played out in the 2008 presidential election in competition for votes in “red” and “blue” states – the outcome of which was considered a referendum on the eight years of the former Bush administration.

President Obama faced a number of foreign policy challenges in his first term in office. The year 2011 brought the “Arab Spring” of democratic revolutions in former authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa. Each new uprising presented both opportunities and dilemmas for the United States. For example, as the Egyptian dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak teetered on the brink of collapse, facing a popular revolution centered in Tahrir Square in Cairo, the president faced a tough choice: Egypt was a long-time ally of the United States, and Mubarak had served as a critical voice for moderation in the Middle East for decades. Egypt and Jordan were the only two countries in the region that had signed treaties for peace with Israel, and the governments also played a role in helping to control virulent Palestinian nationalism. Accordingly, President Obama seemed caught between idealism and pragmatism. Should the administration back a long-time ally of the United States against a popular

uprising, or should it pressure Mubarak to leave office by using both diplomatic carrots and sticks? Secretary of State Hillary Clinton favored the former option, but Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned that protesters were dying for their cause and US intransigence threatened to place Obama on the “wrong side of history.” In the end, Obama phoned Mubarak directly and made his case: “It is time to present to the people of Egypt its next government. The future of your country is at stake.”⁴ This and other events contributed to Mubarak’s resignation from office on February 11, 2011, and the start of a transition to democracy in that country.

Photo 1.1 US President Barack Obama and Turkish President Abdullah Gül, September 23, 2011.

Source: White House Photo/Pete Souza, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehouse/5062813261/> (accessed March 29, 2012).



The United States faces many other contemporary foreign policy challenges, including:

- *Economic policy:* How should the US government manage the fallout from the latest global economic crisis? Should the United States liberalize or restrict its trade policies to promote economic growth?
- *Security policy:* How should the United States deal with challenges presented by “rogue states,” such as Iran and North Korea? How might relations between these countries change with the death of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il in 2011 or presidential elections in Iran in 2013?
- *Great power relations:* Could the Obama administration truly “reset” relations with Russia for the twenty-first century? How do democracies balance concerns for human rights in China with the need to strengthen economic ties in Asia?
- *Border security:* What should the United States do about drug trafficking and immigration problems along the border with Mexico? How can the US government respond to the violent drug war escalating just over the border in Mexico?
- *Environmental policy:* How cooperative should the US government be in international negotiations on the environment? Should the United States accept dramatic limits in greenhouse gas emissions in order to become a leader on climate change solutions?
- *Human rights:* How do concerned citizens respond to human rights violations and ethnic conflicts around the world? Should the United States send ground troops to intervene when governments crack down on civilians in Libya or Syria, or to stop the devastating civil war in the Congo? Should the Obama administration close the Guantánamo Bay prison for detainees in the war on terrorism?
- *Economic development:* How can the administration improve US relations with developing countries? Would a

rapid influx of foreign assistance funds help some countries to escape the poverty trap?

Once again, answers to these contemporary questions must be seen as a function of both international challenges and domestic political struggle, involving a fascinating mix of players.

Major Actors in the Foreign Policy Process

This text will explore the roles of key actors involved in formulating United States foreign policy. The first major force shaping US foreign policy is external: Global political developments impact the policy process every day. Had Communist North Korean forces not invaded South Korea in June 1950, for example, President Harry Truman would not have deployed hundreds of thousands of US soldiers to fight there. Had Latin American countries asserted greater control on farming and organized crime, illegal narcotics trafficking might not be as great a threat to US security as it is today. Indeed, there are countless ways in which world politics can impact US foreign policy - from debates in the United States about immigration policy to nuclear disarmament to support for Israel. Events in the international system force the United States to grapple with very difficult issues every day.

In the domestic arena, this book begins with an examination of the role of the president and the executive branch of government in foreign policy development. At this writing, the United States has had only forty-four presidents. Directly elected by the people, many presidents profoundly impact policy during their terms of office. Indeed, these leaders often make their mark on history through major foreign policy statements and decisions - such as President Jefferson's leadership in expanding the nation's territory at

the turn of the nineteenth century to President Kennedy's management of the Cuban Missile Crisis in the 1960s (see Chapters 2 and 3). The US Constitution vests the president with significant foreign policy authority. The president serves as commander-in-chief of the armed services; presidential envoys negotiate treaties with foreign countries on issues ranging from free trade to international criminal investigations. And the president must sign and implement legislation that passes through Congress related to US foreign policy.

The US Congress has a significant impact on foreign policy. The Constitution vests Congress with considerable power over domestic and foreign policy. Indeed, many experts believe the framers intended Congress to have stronger policy authority than the president. Congress has the power to declare war – the ultimate foreign policy commitment – and the power to legislate, to make laws that govern the behavior of our citizens and foreign relations. While the president negotiates international treaties, the US Senate is given the power to ratify them with a two-thirds majority vote. Congress has other significant “checks” over presidential authority including the right to approve the president's nominees to top political offices and control over government spending. Perhaps most importantly, Congress has exercised these powers in relation to US dealings with the world. Given that Congress is powerful in foreign affairs, and has been directly elected by voters to whom its members are beholden, this provides a channel for you to influence the foreign policy process.

The judicial branch of government is represented most visibly by the Supreme Court and a large network of federal and state-level courts throughout the United States. The judicial branch has the authority to interpret the constitutionality of laws of the nation. From time to time, the courts address issues of significance in foreign affairs. The