

American Foreign Policy in a New Era

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PREFACE

On May 2, 2011, American Navy SEAL Team 6, an elite unit of the Sea, Air and Land Special Operations Group, attacked a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where the United States public enemy number one, terrorist and founder of Al Qaeda Usama bin Laden, was hiding in virtually “plain sight” in the Pakistani town that houses the Pakistani military academy and is the residence of many retired Pakistani military officers. In the process of the raid, bin Laden was killed, and his body was whisked upon a waiting U.S. military helicopter and transported to an American carrier sitting offshore in the Arabian Sea. After full preparation of the body according to Islamic standards, bin Laden’s remains were interred in deep waters.

The killing of bin Laden was an important accomplishment for the United States and event for American foreign policy. It occurred nine years and eight months after bin Laden masterminded the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against targets in New York and Washington that had traumatized the country and dominated its foreign policy for a decade. Whether the removal of the Saudi leader from the scene will provide the beginning of closure from the terrorism theme that has overshadowed American foreign policy since 2001 remains to be seen, but it certainly provides a milepost in the evolution of America’s contemporary dealings with the world.

The title of this book suggests that we are in the midst of a “new era” of foreign policy. That statement represents both a description of how the authors see the contemporary environment and a justification for a new text premised on and reflecting the differences in the contemporary environment that are highlighted in the pages that follow. It is our view that the world of American foreign policy has experienced sufficient change to constitute a new era that justifies both a fresh look and way of looking at the field. At a more or less mundane level, the fact that an American assassination of a foreign leader would be so transfixing and nationally important certainly represents a change in how Americans view international interactions: The United States has certainly tried to “rub out” foreign leaders in the past, failing in some cases (Fidel Castro, for instance) and succeeding in others (Chile’s Salvador Allende), but the event has rarely been so widely applauded or seen as so consequential in the past (news of the death of Adolf Hitler is an exception). The operation was not undertaken against the head of a constituted sovereign government, but against a “nonstate actor,” the head of a worldwide terrorist organization that has or claims no exclusive national territorial base or identity. Such nonstate-based actors are an increasing part of the web of foreign policy.

The bin Laden incident illustrates other dynamics that are part of the central core of the text and form the basis for asserting this is a new and different period in American foreign policy. One difference is the higher visibility of foreign events in American life than was previously the case. The killing of bin

Laden, of course, was a major event that would have received wide publicity at any time, but its announcement, telling, and retelling was a major political event in itself, and one that engaged the political spectrum both at home and abroad. The “good news” of bin Laden’s demise (accompanied by the vivid images of the Obama team watching the operation unfold from the White House Situation Room) provided a welcome oasis in a desert of economic bad news and provided Obama with a welcome boost in opinion polls about his presidency. Internationally, it was acclaimed almost everywhere except in Pakistan where it occurred and where the incursion was more widely greeted as an unauthorized violation of Pakistani sovereignty, since it was carried out on Pakistani soil without a prior notification of the government of Pakistan.

Two of the most central themes of the book are also illustrated by the example. One of these themes is the idea of the *intermestic nature* of contemporary foreign policy—the idea that events are rarely ever entirely *international* or *domestic* but contain interactive elements of both and are thus, as the hybrid word suggests, intermestic. In a world of intermestic politics, most decisions are effectively two-level games where decision makers must weigh both the domestic and international consequences of what they do. In the bin Laden case, the Obama administration had to weigh with particular care the possibility that the raid would fail and might have disastrous consequences for the president’s reelection bid, as the failed mission to rescue the kidnapped inhabitants of the American embassy in Tehran (Desert One) did to President Carter in 1980. Internationally, the United States knew its action would raise the wrath of ally Pakistan, but felt the risk worth the possible benefit. Clearly, these were not the only considerations that the Obama decision team had to confront, but they do illustrate the intermestic content of those concerns.

The other major theme raised in these pages is the impact of domestic political *hyperpartisanship* as an influence on all policy, including foreign policy. For most of the history of the Republic, the guiding political principle surrounding the disposition of foreign policy was captured in the saying, “politics ends at the water’s edge.” The gist, of course, was that while political disagreement is a normal part of the conduct of domestic politics, the United States suspends such disagreements in dealing with the outside world, so as to provide a united front toward foreigners (the “water’s edge” is a symbol of the boundary of the United States). The consensus around that principle has been eroding since the early post–World War II period and especially since the end of the Cold War, when the United States lost a commonly agreed momentous opponent against whom a unified front was necessary.

At the same time, American internal politics have become increasingly partisan and polarized. The genesis of this trend is not important for this purpose, but its consequences are. Gradually, the American political process has become dominated by ideologically distinct groups within the two major parties, so that by 2011, it is not unfair to say that the moderate middle of the spectrum that used to be dominant in both parties has eroded to the point of ineffectiveness. Instead, the political “left” and “right” dominate political dialogue and decision-making positions, and the art of compromise has been replaced by the politics of confrontation and bitter disagreement along partisan

lines. The outcomes of this trend include the gridlock (the inability to achieve consensus) so evident in current economic interactions and the tendency toward a virtual “knee-jerk” opposition to the views of others on all matters of concern.

These two trends have combined to define the gradual extension of hyperpartisanship to the foreign policy realm. Some of that extension reflects the dynamics of the world discussed here. One reason, for instance, that the water’s edge analogy could be sustained in the past was because the substance and consequences of foreign policy were largely discrete. In an intermestic world, virtually every domestic event or dynamic has some foreign policy implications, and most foreign policy actions have some kind of impact on domestic issues on which partisans disagree. If nothing else, a foreign policy triumph (or defeat) for the president has likely consequences for the next election cycle, a prospect that brings out the partisan instinct on both sides. When the political parties and their spokespeople disagree fundamentally on virtually everything, that disagreement overrides any previously existing barriers between domestic and foreign policy.

Hyperpartisanship was not so evident in the bin Laden case, because his demise was widely viewed as a national triumph, but it was not entirely absent either. One of the controversies that immediately surrounded the event was whether the administration should have provided more concrete proof that bin Laden was indeed dead. Because he was interred quickly at sea, no one who was not an immediate part of the operation ever saw the corpse, and the Obama administration’s decision not to release photographs of his remains (fearing an adverse reaction in the Islamic world) further provided a wedge for the obsessively partisan. Clearly, the intent was to diminish the aura of resolute and correct decision making by Obama; it largely failed, but it does demonstrate that even the most positive foreign policy event cannot elude the partisan web altogether.

Understanding, interpreting, and applying these kinds of trends are what help define the new era and lend a unique value to this text. It contains traditional elements and organization: sections on American political institutions and decision making within them and the broad contours of the major substantive areas of foreign policy that are covered in most texts. It views some of these elements in more and some in less detail than other texts, but it has the additional element of weaving contemporary trends into the discussion as well. What it offers is, as much as anything else, a *fresh* look at American foreign policy that the reader will hopefully find valuable and enjoyable.

FEATURES

There are numerous survey textbooks available in the area of American foreign policy that provide a broad and comprehensive compendium of foreign policy processes and policy areas. Most of these books are longer than the present text, having grown from design or happenstance into broad, encyclopedic sources of information and interpretation in the field. While the resulting products have value, the authors believe that there is a place in the literature

for a more compact, interpretive approach to the subject that covers the fundamental subject matter that a course in foreign policy must cover, but does so in a different and more appealing manner. The differences between what this book does and what others accomplish is the basic answer to the question, “Why this book?”

The authors believe that this text differs from other texts in three ways. First, it is shorter than most. Its length was purposeful and has two basic rationales: It allows a less costly product, and it facilitates the assignment of a supplementary text or texts to augment its coverage and thus “customize” the course to the individual instructor’s needs. Second, it covers conventional topics for a text in the field, but in ways and with emphases that are different from those found in other texts. The section of the book that examines policy institutions and decision making, for instance, has extensive coverage of the various executive branch agencies that contribute to the foreign policy process (the “interagency process”) at a level and depth not provided in most other texts, and it has a more extensive coverage of more informal parts of the process such as think tanks than is found in other texts. Third, the book is organized and infused with those dynamics of the foreign policy environment that constitute the new era of policy that is a central emphasis of the book. The result, it is hoped, is a text that both covers the important topics and also tells the story of a dynamic foreign policy in an engaging and readable manner.

The table of contents reflects these concerns. The first two of the thirteen chapters provide the setting for the contemporary examination of American foreign policy. Chapter One, “A New Foreign Policy Era,” lays out the case that the context for making policy is changing and the major trends that constitute the changed environment (for example, intermestic and hyperpartisan politics), and allow the reader an opportunity to assess his or her own values about foreign policy. Chapter Two, “Paradigm Lost: The Cold War to the Present,” provides an interpretive historical overview of the post–World War II period, emphasizing the comparative orderliness of the Cold War and the paradigm of containment in contrast to the greater conceptual uncertainty that has surrounded organizing foreign policy since the Cold War imploded in 1991, rendering the Cold War analogy inappropriate but providing no obvious replacement worldview.

The remainder of the text is organized into two major parts that reflect the major concerns of scholarship in the field: an emphasis on the political processes by which policy is made, and a survey of the major substantive areas of that policy. Part One, “Foreign Policy Processes” consists of six chapters. It begins with an overview of different approaches to understanding the dynamics of foreign policy decision making from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. As such Chapter Three, “Decision Making and U.S. Foreign Policy,” is intended to provide useful analytical tools for organizing an understanding of the other chapters in Part One.

The rest of Part One is devoted to individual chapters discussing different formal and informal institutions in the foreign policy process. Chapters Four through Six concentrate on the major constitutionally prescribed political

institutions. Chapter Four, “The President,” looks at the formal and informal powers and constraints on the chief executive and provides a framework for looking at the performance of different presidents and their administrations based on personal attributes of the incumbent. Chapter Five, “The Role of Executive Agencies,” examines the variety of executive branch agencies that assist the president in the making and implementing of policy, including core actors such as the State and Defense departments, the intelligence community, and new additions such as the Department of Homeland Security and the various economic agencies with foreign policy responsibility. Chapter Six, “Congress and Foreign Policy,” mirrors the discussion of formal and informal powers of the federal legislature, and adds sections on the sources and manifestations of Congressional activism in the foreign policy area, including an examination of the War Powers Act. The remaining two chapters in Part One move to informal influences on the process from institutions and individuals outside the formal structure of government. Chapter Seven, “Interest Groups and Think Tanks,” analyzes sequentially the major organized institutional players seeking to influence government, with an emphasis on those with major foreign policy interests and expertise. Chapter Eight, “The Public and the Media,” looks at how the public’s view of foreign policy matters is articulated, including major sources of limitation on its effectiveness and the sometimes controversial role of increasingly ubiquitous media coverage (especially by the burgeoning and multifaceted electronic media) on the process.

Part Two, “Foreign Policy Outcomes,” looks at the three most prominent functional areas of substantive foreign policy, including two chapters each on national security and economic issues and a single chapter on trans-state (sometimes called transnational) issues. Chapter Nine, “Traditional Issues in National Security,” looks at the two major areas of defense concern that are legacies of the Cold War, so-called “conventional” and strategic nuclear forces, and suggests how these may be changing as issue areas and national priorities in a world where major threats are not expressed in traditional military ways. Chapter Ten, “Contemporary National Security Problems in an Asymmetrical World,” follows on to this discussion, applying it to the conditions in the current national security environment where most of the threats are nontraditional (that is, asymmetrical), where traditional solutions may not be appropriate, and where additional dynamics such as nation building come into play.

Chapter Eleven, “Economics and Foreign Policy,” introduces the economic dimension of foreign policy, beginning with and concentrating on the reorganization of the post-1945 international system around the principle of free trade and the various critiques and variations of arguments about international economic interaction that have developed from and continue to influence economic discussions in the current stressed environment. Chapter Twelve, “Economic and Political Instruments of Foreign Policy,” looks more specifically at questions about how the so-called “economic instrument of power” can be invoked to achieve foreign policy goals and the opportunities and limitations that attach to different mechanisms and approaches. Chapter Thirteen, “Trans-State Issues and American Foreign Policy,” concludes the book with an examination of the concepts of trans-state problems (for example,

international problems insoluble by the actions of individual states acting alone) and applications of that concept to two major recurring substantive issues: human rights and the environment.

The goal of the authors is to take both a fresh look and a fresh way of looking at foreign policy; and to facilitate the transmission of this approach and material, the authors have invoked a number of pedagogical devices the purpose of which is to facilitate reader comprehension and the organization of the material within each chapter. To this end, each chapter has a common series of features:

- Each chapter begins with two “guideposts” to help explain to the reader what is to follow. The first of these is a short “Preview” that summarizes the principal organization and flow of the chapter. The second is a list of key terms and concepts in the pages that follow. The concepts are listed in the order they appear in the text, and each concept is highlighted in the text itself as a way to guide readers to the most critical ideas in the chapter.
- An illustrative case study of a contemporary or historical foreign policy event introduces each chapter. The purposes of this introduction are both to engage the reader with an interesting vignette and to provide an introduction to the kinds of concerns raised in the chapter, which the examples are intended to illustrate.
- Two *Intersections* boxes are found in each chapter. The purpose of these boxes is to provide additional information and perspective on materials in the chapter and to carry out a major recurring theme of the book: the intermestic nature of foreign policy, hyperpartisanship, or examples of a changing environment, for instance.
- The end of each chapter contains a series of elements designed to reinforce comprehension of the materials in the chapter through active internalization of materials, to promote review of those elements of the chapter of greatest importance, and to provide resources for further exploration. These are contained in the three parts of the “Where Do We Go from Here?” ending of each chapter. The “Applications” section provides ways in which the reader may apply the contents to personal experience or broadening of experience. The “Study/Discussion Questions” provide questions that guide the reader through the most important points in the chapter. Finally, the “Further Readings” section is divided into two parts: an annotated list of core resources in the area, and a suggested list of further materials that are either cited in the text or may provide useful resources for further inquiry.

SUPPLEMENTS

Pearson is pleased to offer several resources to qualified adopters of *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* and their students that will make teaching and learning from this book even more effective and enjoyable. Several of the

supplements for this book are available at the Instructor Resource Center (IRC), an online hub that allows instructors to quickly download book-specific supplements. Please visit the IRC welcome page at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc to register for access.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Some readers may recognize the outlines of some of the materials in the book, and in particular the organization and content of Chapters Four through Eight. Versions of these materials go back to the collaboration of the late Eugene Brown and one of the authors (Snow) at the U.S. Army War College from 1989 to 1991. That collaboration resulted in the earlier iterations of this material in books such as *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom* and *Beyond the Water's Edge*, among other places. Much of the inspiration for this work came from Gene Brown, which is why he is one of the people to whom this volume is dedicated. The other person in the dedication is the late Professor John Lovell of Indiana University, where both of the authors (separated in time) pursued doctoral degrees in which John was a mentor, colleague, and inspiration. Hopefully, he would also approve of this work.

We would also like to thank the reviewers, whose insightful and thoughtful comments helped shaped the book, including John Creed, College of Charleston; William DeMars, Wofford College; Al Eastham, Hendrix College; Ewan Harrison, Washington University–St Louis; David Rezvani, Harvard University; Catherine Scott, Agnes Scott College; Amy Skonieczny, San Francisco State University; and Min Ye, College of Coastal Georgia. American Foreign Policy in a New Era