

historical events. Steven Gillon has effectively used primary source material to create a thorough and up-to-date survey of the latter half of the twentieth century that will be an excellent text for instructors to add to their reading lists. *The American Paradox* is a book that will inform, provoke, and instruct. Students will have the opportunity to explore conflicting views on the difficult issues of the period and to develop their own historical judgments. I recommend this text to instructors of courses on recent U.S. history at the college level, as well as to teachers of U.S. history in the secondary schools. *The American Paradox* is an excellent addition to the available texts for the period.

Indiana Area School District, Indiana, PA

William E. Doody

Richard Sobel. *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam.* New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. xii, 276. Paper, \$24.95; ISBN 0-19-510528-1.

What influence does public opinion have on policymakers in the area of foreign policy? In *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam*, Richard Sobel studies this question. Sobel is a highly respected author of many articles and books on such diverse issues as civil liberties, immigration policy, public opinion, and foreign policy. He has contributed to numerous publications, including *Public Opinion Quarterly*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and the *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology*.

This recent book is a study of the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy. While the twentieth century produced presidents inclined to take an active role in world affairs, the American people have displayed less willingness to involve American forces or money in these foreign events. Four modern foreign crises are considered—Vietnam during the Johnson and Nixon administrations, the Nicaraguan Contra funding controversy during the Reagan years, the first Gulf War, and the Bosnian crisis during both the Bush and Clinton presidencies. The primary thesis of the text is that policymakers might be constrained by public opinion when contemplating foreign interventions. For each of the four crises, the author identifies relevant events, policies, and public attitudes. Public opinion changes over the life of the controversy are also noted. Then, to discern the influence of this public opinion on governmental action, Sobel traces various policymakers' statements on the public's attitude towards the government's response. When relevant, changes in public sentiment over time are noted along with changes in the positions taken by public officials.

For each crisis, attention is given to the top three foreign policymakers: the president, the secretary of state, and the secretary of defense. To determine the effect public opinion had on these government officers, the author has compiled the decision-

makers' own comments from public statements, meeting records, and memoirs, as well as interviews with the officials. In addition, the impact of the public's attitude on members of Congress and resulting congressional action on foreign policy are also noted. Using the government officials' own words, the book attempts to determine for each crisis the decision-maker's awareness of public opinion and whether the decision-maker was influenced by the public's attitude and to what extent the official felt constrained in his actions by this opinion. Sobel concludes that the policymakers in his study showed constant awareness of public opinion and felt constrained by that opinion. Of the top three decision-makers, presidents showed the most awareness of public opinion and the need to take the public's attitude into account when making policy. While statements made by secretaries of state and defense showed some knowledge of public opinion, these policymakers displayed less awareness and concern regarding changing levels of public support. Some decision-makers actively worked to influence public opinion, for example President George Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker. In certain cases, control of and influence over public opinion moved back and forth between the president and Congress, for example during the Nicaraguan Contra funding crisis. Increasingly, since the protests against the war in Vietnam, presidents have shown a desire to take into account the position of the American people when making foreign policy.

This book would be appropriate reading for senior- or graduate-level courses on foreign policy, American history, public opinion, or perhaps an upper-level class on the presidency. It would also be appropriate reading in a course on presidential power or presidential warmaking. Although Sobel briefly describes relevant events, the reader needs prior additional knowledge of these events in order to place the policymakers' statements in the appropriate context. The student also might find the format a little difficult and confusing. The author has used numerous quotes that, while interesting and imperative to the author's methodology, at times make the text's message difficult to understand and follow. This book might be well-utilized as a companion text, with the instructor assigning specific sections as the class studies each foreign policy event. Instructors might also use the text simply as a resource for lecture material, spicing up class discussions on American intervention abroad with the very words and thoughts of the policymakers.

Sobel concludes his work with words of caution for future foreign policymakers as they encounter volatile situations in world affairs and contemplate America's response to these crises. Warning future leaders who would act (or fail to act) solely on public opinion, he reminds them of the serious consequences that have resulted from delayed action by America because of public opposition, particularly U.S. reluctance to enter both world wars: "There are times when leaders should heed opinion, times when they should lead opinion, and times when they should proceed despite opinion."