

Russett, Bruce. *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

In *Controlling the Sword*, Russett examines factors that he considers important in influencing American presidential national security policy decision-making. In essence, the monograph

suggests how different leader's successes and failures in comprehending the constraints imposed by democratic political systems have contributed to those leaders' ability to achieve foreign policy goals, and in turn how the success and failure of foreign policy have enhanced or sabotaged leaders' ability to achieve their domestic goals. (p. 1)

He also challenges various misconceptions about the political sophistication of the public which are utilized to keep elite control of national security policy-making and free from democratic scrutiny. (p. 2)

In the first chapter "Opportunities, Constraints, and Temptations," Russett examines the differences between Jimmy Carter's and Ronald Reagan's National Security Policy. According to Russett, "Policies of arms control and disarmament, negotiation or threat, conciliation or the use of military force" are chosen based on the extent to which they please friends and pacify adversaries, rather than the degree to which they protect the national interest per se. Moreover, short rather than long-term considerations frame these foreign policy decisions. (p. 7)

He places presidential decision-making in this policy area into what he calls the "Triangle on Foreign Policy," which consists of the US public, Washington Bureaucracy/Congress, and the international context. Then, reminiscent of Moe Fiorina's work on congressmen, he examines the stages of a typical presidential career, and compares this research with evidence from other democratic political systems such as France and Britain. (p. 15) Russett suggests that American liberal advocates of arms control and nuclear reductions do not appreciate how public opinion in America works. (p. 17) He begins by looking at the role of the economy in the decision-making calculus of the president, then marshals public opinion data to determine the range of appropriate political reactions, how it has changed since the Second World War, and the public preference for presidents who are capable of implementing unexpected "mixed" and "centrist" policies. Then he turns to the consistency and stability of public opinion, and causality between the actions and statements of the governing elite and public opinion. (p. 19)

In chapter two, "Bashing the Foreigners," he examines the habit of presidents to "position-take," promote economic sanctions, and occasionally engage in military exercises against real or suspected enemies when their domestic support has declined, particularly as a result of difficult economic times. Drawing on economic theories of international conflict, voting, public opinion, and Social Psychological theories, Russett tries to decipher presidential decision-making with respect to war

and posturing thereof. The balance of the chapter concentrates on the "Rallying around the Flag" phenomenon, citing cases from recent American history where this practice was invoked by presidents to mobilize popular support.

Chapter three, "Realism and Idealism" is an outline of the classical debate in International Relations Theory. He specifically focuses on nuclear weapons and the various rationales (eg, deterrence, mutual agreement, unilateral disarmament) developed to explain and predict use or defence using these weapons of destruction. Most of the scenarios use the US-Soviet conflict and the marshalling of public opinion data to buttress the discussion.

Chapter four, "Who controls Whom" is an examination of the relationship between public opinion and national security policy. The author begins by analyzing four possibilities in this exchange. Each interpretation is supported by "data and analyses about conflict and war, foreign policy, and public opinion." In general, he suggests that "public opinion on national security is very stable." Then an analysis of "the structure and stability of belief systems" (p. 88) leads Russett to conclude that the last quarter century of US national security policy was, contrary to most expectations, incredibly "unpredictable" and "volatile." (p. 116) He believes that elites, whom he holds responsible for this state of affairs, are "more likely to change their opinions than are members of the general public." (p. 117)

Chapter five, "If All the World were Democratic," is an analysis of "the causes, limitations and implications" of why some countries are not hostile. (p. 119) He attributes the relative peace of the post-World War II period in the democratic states in the Northern Hemisphere partly to "international institutions, economic conditions, or external factors." The historical antecedents against violence, he argues, are embedded in "illiberal democratic theory" and "shifts to democracy of previously authoritarian states." Moreover, he examines human rights issues and analyzes the unique relationship that the US and USSR had with each other as adversaries. The rest of the chapter examines the nexus between the public opinion of the elite and masses.

In chapter six, the conclusion, "Sustaining Sensible Policy," Russett begins by articulating the perception that most democratic theory is divided between advocates who trust the masses and those who fear or believe that the masses are a reactionary force and that cooler heads prevail among the elite. He briefly relates these arguments to presidential decision-making, then dedicates the majority of the chapter to a summary of the book and takes a stand against conventional myths about the common man, national security policy making, and improving command and control. He argues that most national security policy is shrouded in secrecy and that elite opinion is more important than public opinion.

Russett should be commended for reviewing a complex and often contradictory literature in a rational and logical fashion with a great deal of accessible interpretation. He analyzes a considerable amount of important research on the relationship between presidents and decision-making in the policy making sphere, which is rarely found elsewhere.

However, the reviewer does have a few minor criticisms. First, periodically Russett drops the names of authors and their work (eg, Lowi's work on the presidency) but does not adequately integrate them into his argument. (p. 30) Second, and by extension, some of the citations embedded in the text are tangential. Does it help us to know, for example, that Tocqueville was "first published in 1835." Third, the book also lacks historical depth; most of the chapters deal with events and processes that occurred only during the past quarter century and hence its connection to deeper causes of events may be overlooked. In particular, he focuses too much on the Carter and Reagan presidencies and the age of nuclear weapons, and does not consider other time periods. A longer time frame would have better placed the problems in a more comprehensive context, and helped us to identify the genesis of these actions and to understand the success or failure, if any, of solutions implemented. Fourth, the book is out of date. The Soviet Union no longer exists and the remaining republics are considerably different kinds of threats than they used to be. Unfortunately, at the end, in keeping with the hypotheses-generating nature of his book, we are no more certain which constituencies he believes are more important causes or factors affecting presidential national security policy making than when we started the book.

Jeffrey Ian Ross
University of Lethbridge

Child, Jack. *The Central American Peace Process, 1983-1991*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992.

This is an era of peace processes but there can have been few of these often comforting developments as complicated as the recent one in Central America. The levels of this complexity were at times mind-boggling as the United Nations discovered as it became increasingly involved in the process from the early 1980s on.

In the first place, there were five regional states deeply involved in three separate conflicts going on concurrently. Moreover, the conflicts were internal, at least formally, and three major guerrilla movements, themselves made up of disparate groups brought together for often merely tactical reasons, were pitted against their respective national governments and armed forces.

As if such regional and internal considerations were not complicated enough, the conflicts were perceived by the regional superpower as part of the East-West struggle for preeminence on the world stage. This meant that Soviet and Cuban roles were both partial cause and partial product of a massive United States involvement in the wars in order to "roll back" communism in the Americas, to use the language of the Reagan presidency.