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A Public Opinion, the President , and Foreign Policy

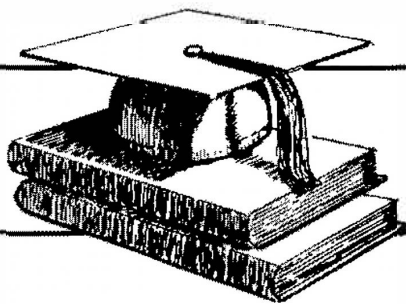
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PROFESSIONAL READING

Gallup, Grace V. and Hardy, Ann A. "Chronological Bibliography of the Naval War College." Unpublished Bibliography of Articles. U.S. Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: 1969.

This bibliography of articles dealing with the Naval War College was prepared to assist students doing research on the history of the War College. The reference material consists almost entirely of periodical articles with *The New York Times* and the *Naval Institute Proceedings* providing the bulk of the material. The chronological arrangement is intended to provide an historical view of the development and growth of the War College. Any study of the history of the War College should begin with this bibliography which will spare the student many hours of index work. It is available at the Mahan Library Reference Branch, Naval War College, Newport, R.I., on a loan basis.

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Graber, Doris A. *Public Opinion, the President, and Foreign Policy*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968. 374p.

The American political ideal that a democratic government should keep the people well informed and then respond to public opinion is largely a myth as it applies to the problems of foreign relations. The author draws this significant conclusion from an analysis of four major foreign policy problems early in

American history. The cases she considers are Adams' determination to seek an accommodation with France in 1800, Jefferson's purchase of the Louisiana Territory, Madison's decision to fight Britain in 1812, and Monroe's enunciation of his doctrine on foreign intervention in Latin America. The case studies lead to four broad conclusions, all of which seem to hold true today. The first is noted above. Second, the early Presidents did try to gauge public opinion, but for its advisory value and not for its veto or for support of their policies. The author's third and fourth broad conclusions are that the Presidents accepted, without questioning, largely symbolic methods of information exchange between the public and themselves and that the Presidents were certain of their ability to identify public opinion and identify themselves with it. Public opinion, in each of the cases studied, was a very important factor, but it was by no means as important as the given factors of the problem in question. It was critical only when necessary to the success of implementing the President's policy. The author projects her scholarly study to the present to draw several noteworthy inferences. First, the fiction prevails that a single public opinion exists which must be heeded because it reflects the public good. "It thus turns opinions that have somehow captured the public opinion crown into tyrants that must be appeased by wooing or subduing them." Also, the cases show the need for strong

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public opinion leadership by the President. Gauging public opinion remains a shaky science at best, however, and the President still must depend upon intuition and faith in himself in formulating foreign policy. Perhaps most important is the conclusion that it is difficult to generate active support for either subtle or pedestrian policies, such as long-range economic assistance programs; but, at the same time, vocal dissenters find it much easier today to create the impression of a public opposed to such policies. The author suggests that the President must develop more effective means of communication to maintain the support of a population that is becoming better educated and more sophisticated, or he risks being forced into a policy of crisis publicity which exaggerates crises or potential benefits in order to mold public opinion and maintain public support.

While the bibliography is not all-inclusive, the book is extensively footnoted. It is a well-presented and thoroughgoing analysis of the Presidential role in early American foreign policy, and it merits the attention of any researcher in that field. The volume must be regarded as an essential reference by anyone studying the impact of public opinion on foreign policy formulation.

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Kennedy, Robert F. *Thirteen Days: a Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Norton, 1969. 224p.

During the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the world was probably in more immediate danger of a major nuclear war than ever before or since. *Thirteen Days* is Robert F. Kennedy's personal account of what went on in the high councils of government during that crisis. It is a book that should be read by all those concerned with the effective and judicious use of force, and that includes—or should include—everybody.

The United States had two overriding objectives during the Cuban missile crisis: to avoid a major war with the Soviet Union and to get the Soviet offensive missiles out of Cuba. Despite the fact that withdrawal of the missiles by the Soviet Union involved a virtually unprecedented reversal of policy and loss of face by a major power, both U.S. objectives were achieved in full—and at the cost of but one American life. Most observers count this as one of the most significant successes of U.S. foreign policy—and as such it is a case worthy of careful study.

Disturbing to this reviewer, as a professional military officer, is that, as recounted by Kennedy, at every decision point the military advisers recommended more violent and potentially hazardous courses of action than those finally adopted. He states that President Kennedy

... was distressed that the representatives with whom he met, with the notable exception of General Taylor, seemed to give so little consideration to the implications of steps they suggested. They seemed always to assume that the Russians and the Cubans would not respond or, if they did, that a war was in our national interest. . . . President Kennedy was disturbed by this inability to look beyond the limited military field.

As a case study, *Thirteen Days* sometimes suffers from Kennedy's personal and perhaps somewhat biased point of view, but the immediacy and authority of the account more than compensate. Of added value is a documentary annex of photographs and communications.

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Liska, George. *War and Order*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968. 115p.