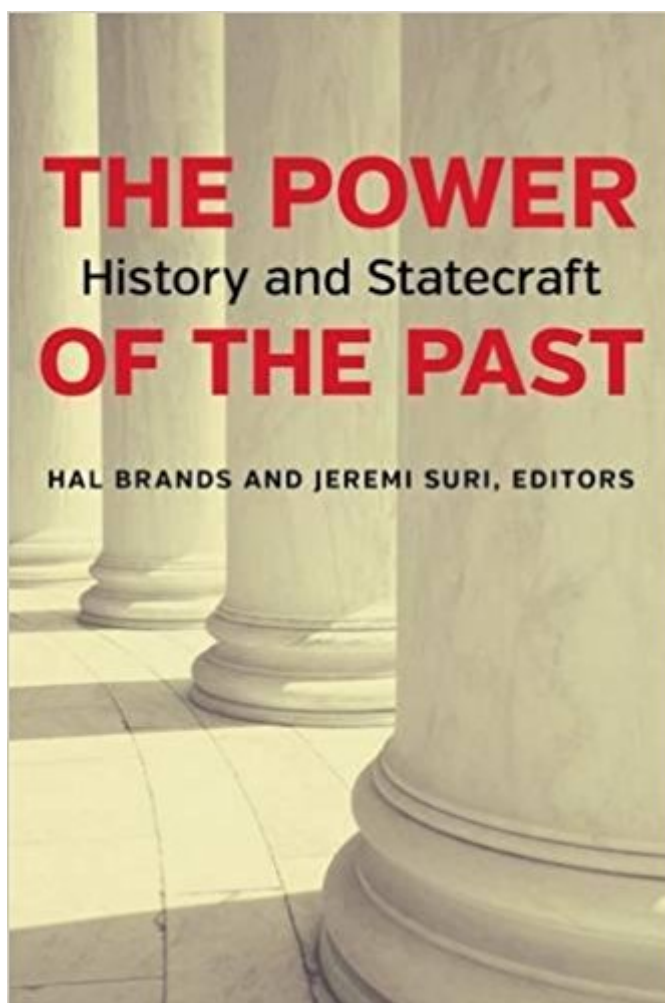


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The Power Of The Past: History And Statecraft



Synopsis

Leading scholars and policymakers explore how history influences foreign policy and offer insights on how the study of the past can more usefully serve the present. History, with its insights, analogies, and narratives, is central to the ways that the United States interacts with the world. Historians and policymakers, however, rarely engage one another as effectively or fruitfully as they might. This book bridges that divide, bringing together leading scholars and policymakers to address the essential questions surrounding the history-policy relationship including Mark Lawrence on the numerous, and often contradictory, historical lessons that American observers have drawn from the Vietnam War; H. W. Brands on the role of analogies in U.S. policy during the Persian Gulf crisis and war of 1990–91; and Jeremi Suri on Henry Kissinger's powerful use of history.

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Customer Reviews

'Admittedly, there is no way for even the most accessible historian to prevent a politician from using history expediently. But, over time, policymakers' history will only get better if historians provide more useful inspiration. This exceptional volume is a sober wake-up call.' - Russell Crandall and Wade Leach

Hal Brands is a Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Jeremi Suri is the Mack Brown Distinguished Chair for Leadership in Global Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is

a professor in the Department of History and the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs.

Fans of Neustadt and May's classic *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* will be particularly interested in this new collection of essays on how leaders' understanding of the past shapes their policy decisions. Brand and Suri set the tone with their useful introductory essay, noting history is most useful to policymakers who study trends and tipping points, rather than attempt to draw specific analogies. Failure to account for context and specific situations can easily lead to policy failure. Later essays apply similar analysis to a broad range of topics. Thomas Mahnken assesses post-Cold War attempts to apply containment to new targets, including Iraq, Iran, and China. Michael Cotey Morgan assesses the lessons from the nineteenth century British anti-slavery campaign to today's humanitarian interventions, arguing successful intervention requires operating with an eye to political realities. Jennifer D. Miller outlines the role of historical memory in shaping Japanese political constraints on military expansion and acknowledging imperial-era abuses. Instructors will find three essays particularly useful for broadening students' understanding of policymaking realities. Mark Atwood Lawrence's superb essay, "Policymaking and the Uses of the Vietnam War" catalogs the wide range of lessons different political groups have drawn from America's involvement in Vietnam, detailing how policymakers have built diametrically opposed policies on their interpretations of the same events. William Inboden's "Grand Strategy and Petty Squabbles: The Paradox and Lessons of the Reagan NSC" explores how a dysfunctional NSC was nevertheless able to produce successful policy (for a time). Finally, Philip Zelikow's "The Nature of History's Lessons" explores the role of leaders' own personal experiences in shaping their expectations and outlook. Zelikow's account is informed by his own experiences as a historian on the NSC staff in the wake of the September 11 attacks. In short, Brand and Suri's anthology provides a fascinating set of insights into the relationship of the past and today's policy makers' decisions. Strongly recommended.

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