

Wise U.S. Foreign Policy Begins at Home

Wise U.S. Foreign Policy Begins at Home

It's no secret that the United States faces critical policy choices at home and abroad and that a disabled political process in Washington lacks the skill to find wise ways ahead in either area. In addition, a widespread lack of understanding exists among the American public about the place of domestic life in foreign policy.

Perhaps this is because of a perceived dualism between the two areas (excepting rare moments of truth for the nation sent from afar). Or perhaps it is because foreign policy decision making is not particularly democratic; it is superintended by the President, Congressional activism, and a relatively small community of elite analysts and advisors, none of whom submit their policies to a direct popular vote. Only afterward, do we the people get to decide.

Lack of public understanding about the importance of the domestic to the foreign, and vice-versa, diminishes the ability of an American citizenry from recognizing when US foreign policy is not furthering the good of the international commons. Historically, when scholars have looked critically at this, their views have been cast as controversial. I'm thinking, here, of when Charles Beard and, after him, William Appleman Williams evaluated the Open Door Policy.

It's unlikely that any serious controversy will arise with the new book by the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, even though Richard Haass argues for a new American foreign policy that is zealous about domestic policy. *Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order* recommends a Doctrine of Restoration, which rests on what Haass calls three pillars: it insists on a rebalancing of US foreign policy abroad, one that eschews a focus on the greater Middle East and pivots to Asia; it places less emphasis on military instruments and more on economic and diplomatic tools and capabilities for implementing US foreign policy; and it judges that the world for the foreseeable future is relatively unthreatening to the United States.

Read the review [here](#).

- Charles Strohmer is a Visiting Research Fellow with the Center for Public Justice and founding director of [The Wisdom Project](#).