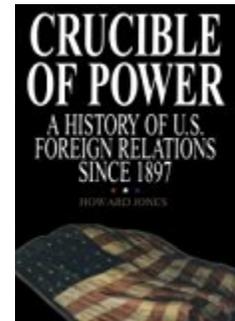


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Howard Jones. *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations from 1897*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2001. xii + 555. \$37.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8420-2918-6.

Reviewed by John R. Moore (Humanities Department, Tidewater Community College)  
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## American Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century

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*Crucible of Power*, according to its author, Howard Jones, “seeks to demonstrate the complexities involved in the decision-making process that led to the rise and decline of the United States (relative to the ascent of other nations) in world power status.” In accomplishing this Jones highlights “the personalities, security interests, and expansionist tendencies behind the formulation and implementation of U.S. foreign policy.” Jones describes the close relationship between foreign policy and domestic politics that governs U.S. foreign policy.

*Crucible of Power* is an updated, revised version of *Quest for Security* (1995). This new edition brings the reader into the edge of the twenty-first century with the election of George W. Bush to the presidency.

As it covers the foreign policy of the United States from 1897 to the beginning of the Bush Presidency in 2001, *Crucible of Power* describes the context and the political process of making American foreign policy. This is not another diplomatic history of the United States, but rather a work of synthesis that places the foreign policy of a unique nation in its unique context by bringing together the realities of national interests as interpreted by partisan political parties and as informed by the ideals of a republic espousing free trade and free seas and the rights of neutrals. For example, Jones draws these together in describing relations between the U.S. and Japan in the 1920s and detailing the Roosevelt administration’s foreign economic activities during the 1930s. A similar treatment can be seen in Jones’s treatment of the early

days of the Cold War. Jones’s approach to his history of foreign affairs is altogether mainstream in its outlook and critical in its analysis.

Jones’s account is organized chronologically rather than thematically. This organization, this reviewer believes, establishes its value for the survey course in United States History. Using a narrative approach, Jones brings the reader from the advent of the United States as major power onto the world stage in the late 1890s to the close of the twentieth century after a decade of uncertainty following the end of the Cold War. Each of the seventeen chapters contains sufficient maps to orient the reader as well as photographs of important personalities. A list of selected readings closes each chapter.

*Crucible of Power* follows the essential pattern of a survey course in U.S. History and could be used very easily in parallel with a survey text that covers the United States in the twentieth century. As a narrative history, *Crucible of Power* avoids the artificial organization and compartmentalization that a thematic approach often brings to its subject matter. Jones’s book brings together the domestic politics and the international pressures that influence the making of foreign policy. This aspect makes *Crucible of Power* a valuable adjunct to a standard survey text. This book can offer the survey student an example of a different approach to U.S. History from the mainly social orientation that is currently so popular in college survey texts. When paired with a text based on another aspect of American History such as economic or political history, this text can expose the survey student

to a wider variety of approaches to the study of history than is usually seen in a survey course.

Jones's chapter on "Theodore Roosevelt and the Search for World Order" could be aptly paired with a survey's chapters on the Progressive Era, while "Wartime Diplomacy and the Origins of the Cold War" could supplement chapters on World War II and the Early Cold War. In the same vein, his chapter, "Cold War II: Reagan and the Revival of Containment," could provide additional detail to the era of glasnost and perestroika.

*Crucible of Power* offers a closely focused view of a different aspect of American History that is seldom seen or discussed in today's media. As Jones notes in his Preface, foreign affairs is rarely mentioned by a mass media more intent on entertaining than informing. Perhaps in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 this book and its subject matter will be more in vogue as Americans increasingly turn their eyes outward in a worldwide War on Terror and inward as they search for the reasons behind the attacks of that September morning.

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