

Allen, David. *Every Citizen a Statesman: The Dream of a Democratic Foreign Policy in the American Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2023. 333 pages. Hardcover, \$45.00.

This book grapples with the question of how to conduct foreign policy in a democracy. It describes the post-World War I mass effort to secure approval of American entry into the League of Nations and the ensuing movement for citizen education in world affairs. The book highlights the Foreign Policy Association (FPA)'s founding, development, and decline.

Author David Allen earned his Ph.D. in history from Columbia in 2021. He has held fellowships and teaching appointments at Yale University, Gettysburg College, and Harvard University. His academic articles have appeared in *International History Review*, *Historical Journal*, and *Journal of Cold War Studies* among other publications.

Organizationally, the book contains seven chapters bordered by an Introduction and an Epilogue. Allen warns the reader at the outset that the “story of the Foreign Policy Association is a study of failure...” (p. 6).

Chapter 1 notes that the goal of having the United States become a member of the League of Nations following World War I was promoted by groups previously associated with women's suffrage. Despite America's refusal to join the League, the pursuit of an educated, active citizenry ready to contribute to foreign affairs blossomed with the establishment of the Foreign Policy Association in 1919 and other adult education organizations later. Chapter 2 traces the Foreign Policy Association's activities through the late 1930s. Among the group's achievements were domestic and international alliances, funding from groups like the Rockefeller Foundation, publication of anti-Nazi pamphlets, and effective utilization of radio.

Several circumstances significantly altered the FPA's trajectory after that, as discussed by the author in Chapters 3 and 5. One was Germany's 1939 invasion of Poland, setting off World

War II. Another was the national security state which the post-World War II ushered in. Further, the U.S. State Department—which previously relied on outside groups to assess public opinion—created its own office to do so. During the Cold War period, FPA members were investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In this atmosphere of conservative ascendancy, the FPA's basic mission was attacked as subversive. The consequences crippled the FPA, according to the author.

The text includes examples of innovations in adult education by the FPA. In Chapter 4, the Cleveland Council, Cleveland Committee on Foreign Relations, and World Council Community Education Program are examined. Another FPA innovation, the Great Decisions Foreign Policy Series, is the topic of Chapter 6. Finally, Chapter 7 identifies the Community Leaders Program as another attempt by the FPA to engage the public.

Clearly, the FPA's activities were aided by its leaders. From James McDonald to Raymond Buell, from Brooks Emeny to John Nason, these FPA presidents and other noteworthy personnel are given credit for the FPA's accomplishments and condemnation for its shortcomings.

In the book's final chapter, the author traverses the span from 1967—the FPA's fiftieth anniversary year—until the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Not only did the FPA see its funding cut to the bone, but it had to compete with other adult education groups for membership. Among the reasons for the FPA's post-Vietnam War decline were conditions which precipitated growing partisanship in foreign policy along with distrust of government. Similarly, the Epilogue also contains other points proffered as contemporary challenges of the movement to achieve an educated foreign policy citizenry: less civic engagement, more pessimism about the future, multiple sources furnishing information, and stale methods of

incentivizing the public to participate.

Over the last three decades, a handful of books have covered similar subject matter as the present text. In their co-edited book, Daniel Yankelovich and I. M. Destler (1994) present essays which probe problems dealing with stimulating public support for foreign policy in the post-superpower era. Bernard Cohen (1995) compares patterns of public participation in foreign policy in two nations, the United States and the Netherlands. Richard Sobel's (2001) book probes the impact of public opinion on foreign policy since the Vietnam War. Daniele Archibugi (2008) envisions a world in which democratic participation by citizens is not limited by national borders. Daniel Houghton (2013) analyzes foreign policy decisions made by U.S. government leaders from a citizen perspective.

The alignment of the text could have been improved. The material, while mostly presented in linear fashion, nonetheless overlaps in some cases, whereas related information is found in separate places elsewhere.

Allen's unique case study of the FPA is muted by his initial announcement of its ultimate fate and a narrow conception of its early members: independent, progressive, white women. With that framework, it is easy to set up the FPA for failure by accusing its male leaders of chauvinism, paternalism, racism, elitism, and even support for communist causes. Allen's declaration of FPA demise is accompanied by the seeds of its renewal: alliances, funding, and humility, all of which he contends helped the FPA to make a difference in the first place.

What is missing in the mix here is any recognition that when there is a lack of public input in foreign policy, the professional diplomatic establishment tends to follow policies inconsistent with both America's history and current global interests. Too, the author neglects to cover the influence which individual American citizens like Albert Gore have had in

pushing a democratic movement from the national to international milieu.

Based on his own evidence, Allen would be well-advised to admit the FPA's success in creating networks of citizens savvy on world issues for more than a century.

References

Archibugi, Daniele. 2008. *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cohen, Benard C. 1995. *Democracies and Foreign Policy: Public Participation in the United States and the Netherlands*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Houghton, David Patrick. 2013. *A Citizen's Guide to American Foreign Policy: Tragic Choices and the Limits of Rationality*. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge/Taylor and Francis.

Sobel, Richard. 2001. *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam: Constraining the Colossus*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Yankelovich, Daniel, and I. M. Destler. 1994. *Beyond the Beltway: Engaging the Public in U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Samuel B. Hoff, Ph.D.

George Washington Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History and Political Science
Delaware State University
Dover, DE