Several of the most prominent historians responsible for compiling and editing the U.S. State Department publication *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* have combined to produce this fascinating inside history of the series. Most historians and at least some of the American public are aware that there have been major quarrels over the series as the volumes covering such issues as the Yalta Conference accords in 1945, the U.S. intervention into Guatemala in 1954, and the American role in supporting the Shah of Iran burst into the headlines. But now we get to see just how the sausage was made in those and other controversial cases.

The historians in the State Department have generally sided with the scholarly community on the side of openness against those who worried that unpleasant revelations in the series would harm national security, and this volume reflects that outlook. Many on the security side of these arguments will no doubt feel aggrieved by the tone of this book, but none will question the punctiliousness of the research and documentation. As one might expect of *FRUS* historians, almost every other sentence is documented by a footnote, often with multiple citations to support a single statement of fact. Somewhat less agreeably, again as one might expect of historians who study government operations, the text is replete with acronyms that keep a memory-handicapped reader flipping back to the pages listing nearly eighty abbreviations (although I am proud to say that I was able to decipher the abbreviations “FDR” and “JFK” without resorting to their place in the abbreviations list). Thus, one sentence reads, “When it came into operation in early 1998, the HO, the HAC, and the CIA all hoped that the HLP would resolve increasingly alarming delays in declassifying and publishing *FRUS*.” (315) That statement is followed by a tiny-font footnote taking up 2/3 of a page and citing 21 different documents.

But the significant content and the clarity of the prose in these essays blaze through such minor irritants. William McAllister and Aaron Marrs write of the period before 1860 and the official beginning of the *FRUS* series when the publication of foreign policy documents came about as the President submitted records to Congress, either at Congress’s request or voluntarily. Many of these records were then
published in an ad hoc manner, some by Congress itself, others by private individuals supported by public funds. The President, however, would withhold some documents he believed might harm important national interests and the criteria for doing so have remained much the same from the 1790s to the present. For instance, Secretary of State Edmund Randolph withheld certain information he turned over to Congress concerning the Citizen Genet affair of 1793-94, including gossip about Edmund Genet, harsh expressions about France from the U.S. representative in Paris, Gouvernor Morris, that might endanger him, and information from confidential sources whose exposure would eliminate their usefulness. To this day the criteria for withholding foreign policy information include documents that might compromise national security, intelligence sources and methods, information from foreign governments provided in confidence, assessments that might damage ongoing negotiations or relations with other nations, and personal information. Congress had no power to compel the President to offer more information, although it could request it. Congress had its own rules about keeping information from the executive confidential, but it could turn about and publish such information by majority vote.

The information Congress received consisted entirely of official papers and correspondence, including instructions to America’s ministers abroad. The Cabinet meetings or other deliberations that resulted in decisions were off limits. So were the personal papers of the decision-makers that contained information about those deliberations. This remained the case until 1914, when FRUS began not only to include but to emphasize decision-making rather than mere implementation.

The State Department began the official publication of contemporary foreign policy records in the Foreign Relations of the United States series during the Civil War. Some U.S. diplomats, including Charles Francis Adams in London, worried that such publications would make diplomacy more difficult, but Secretary of State William Seward countered that public knowledge of American foreign policy actions was essential to a democracy. Adams was probably gratified to know that at least some of his harsh judgments of British Prime Minister William Gladstone and his acknowledgements of the hostility of British public opinion toward the Union were excised, as determined by a comparison of the documents published in FRUS and the originals by Aaron Marrs, the author of this chapter.

The FRUS series was interrupted briefly after the Civil War as Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, in a feud with Senator Charles Sumner and others over U.S. policy toward Cuba and Spain, stopped publishing contemporary documents and then manipulated information when he resumed publication. By 1870, however, the State Department resumed regular publication of contemporary documents and, according to authors Peter Cozzens and William McAllister, actually erred more on the side of inclusiveness rather than exclusion. Despite some manipulation of document publication by Secretary of State James G. Blaine to cover up his disastrous diplomacy during the War of the Pacific in the early 1880s, the period of FRUS’s contemporaneous publication from 1870 to 1905 was characterized by accuracy and comprehensiveness. The authors especially praise the publications surrounding the war with Spain in 1898 as remarkably transparent and timely.

Between 1905 and 1920, FRUS lost its contemporaneous character. At first this was because the State Department had inadequate funding to edit and publish the documents, so that by 1914 FRUS was five years behind. After 1914, the delicacy of printing documents surrounding World War I compelled further delays. Foreign nations objected strenuously to FRUS printing sensitive communications from their governments. By the 1930s a fifteen-year delay became the norm. Consequently, the primary audience for FRUS became scholars rather than Congress. The State Department responded in the 1920s
by professionalizing the publication of *FRUS* with the appointment of academic historians both as executives and editors in the Division of Publications.

Joshua Botts takes over the authorship of the remaining chapters of this book, analyzing the conflicts in the modern era between the desire for transparency and comprehensiveness on the part of State Department historians and academia and the insistence on security from the State Department bureaucracy and its allies in the military and intelligence services. While the scholarly community valued timeliness in the publication of *FRUS*, it valued comprehensiveness even more and it especially wanted more emphasis on decision-making rather than just final decisions and their implementation. Many in the State Department and other government agencies worried about the sensitivity of such information.

Tyler Dennett, appointed in 1924 as the first professional historian to lead *FRUS*, helped formulate the principles that would guide the series until 1991. The Departmental Order issued by Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg on March 26, 1925, called for *FRUS* to document all major policies and decisions of the Department in the matter of foreign relations, excluding trivia, and declared that nothing “should be omitted with a view to concealing or glossing over what might be regarded by some as a defect of policy.” Moreover, “in major decisions it is desirable, where possible, to show the choices presented to the Department when the decisions was made.” The order prohibited, however, the publication of documents originating from a foreign government without that government’s permission, although *FRUS* could publish U.S. documents that contained foreign government information such as memoranda of conversations with foreign officials. (129)

This guidance for *FRUS* presumed that all information would come from State Department files. But Dennett found that already in the 1920s this was inadequate and he did his best to collect correspondence from retired diplomats in order to supplement the volumes. He also ran into problems trying to publish the documents surrounding the Japanese role in the Russian Revolution, and although he succeeded in getting State Department permission to publish, he resigned in 1931 in part because of the controversy.

During the crises in the 1930s that led to World War II, foreign governments were even more sensitive to publication of their correspondence regarding negotiations at the end of World War I. Moreover, President Franklin D. Roosevelt worried that the threat of future revelations might dampen the frankness of his conversations with Allied leaders during World War II. Thus, controversies continued to delay and swirl around *FRUS*. But, as Botts asserts, these tensions between transparency and security paled in comparison to those that emerged from the Cold War.

Before World War II, *FRUS* could count on its own files plus the private papers held in the Library of Congress to give a fairly complete account of U.S. foreign policy, even if it had to negotiate clearances from foreign governments for vital documents. But the proliferation of other bureaucracies in the post-war national security state meant that to give a complete picture of American diplomacy *FRUS* historians needed access to the records of the other players like the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Pentagon, and the National Security Council. These bureaucracies were not nearly as willing to be transparent as the State Department historians, and they had allies within the State Department who valued security far more than their own historians did. Thus began the conflict which pushed the publication lag to thirty years and which culminated in what Botts calls a civil war within the State Department in the 1980s.
Publication of the Yalta Conference papers in 1955 set the stage for the practices and controversies that would embroil FRUS in the Cold War years. First, Franklin Roosevelt’s reliance on military in preference to State Department advisers meant that the FRUS historians had to negotiate access to many files outside their jurisdiction which the Pentagon was reluctant to release. Second, the Republican Party’s insistence on acceleration of the Yalta papers in hopes of discrediting Roosevelt’s diplomacy politicized the issues of clearances and led to even greater reluctance in the bureaucracies to promote transparency in FRUS. The imbroglio over Yalta delayed publication of the volumes on China and the Potsdam Conference until the John F. Kennedy administration. On the other hand it also inspired the creation of the Historical Advisory Committee which is composed of outside historians and political scientists, thus bringing the academic community in to advocate for FRUS and insulate it against partisan pressures. The Yalta controversy also led to a decision strengthening the hand of the State Department by confirming that there was no need for consent from foreign governments to publish U.S.-generated papers or confidential memoranda of discussions that contained information from those governments.

Between 1958 and 1979, as the State Department set about publishing the FRUS volumes documenting the beginnings of the Cold War, the conflicts between timeliness and comprehensiveness and between transparency and security continued to rile the State Department Historical Office just as the volume of documents it was supposed to research exploded. At first the academicians on the Historical Advisory Committee pushed for timeliness over comprehensiveness in publishing the FRUS volumes covering the origins of the Cold War, urging that the Historical Office confine itself primarily to State Department records in order to avoid the delays in securing clearances from other agencies. These scholars wanted the record available to counteract the rise of revisionism regarding World War II and the Cold War’s origins. But by 1962 the Advisory Committee and the Historical Office decided that they desperately needed the documents from the military and intelligence communities even if clearances from those agencies delayed publication. By 1971, when revisionist historian Walter LaFeber joined the Historical Advisory Committee, the urgency to publish quickly to counter revisionism also went away. Still publication of FRUS volumes fell behind schedule, not only because of the difficulty in getting clearances from the CIA for such matters as Office of Strategic Services (OSS) activities in North Africa during World War II, but also because of worries from multiple actors about the impact of revelations about Thai collaboration with Japan during World War II against Cambodia and Laos, Dutch harshness in Indonesia, and American dealings with Chinese revolutionary Chou Enlai in 1949 that might have proved embarrassing to him just as President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were pursuing the opening to China. Nixon, spurred in part by the release of the Pentagon Papers, ordered an acceleration of FRUS publication to reduce the gap from about twenty-seven to twenty years, but the plans of David Trask, the State Department Historical Office Director, to meet this demand by using microfiche editions for matters of lesser importance and publishing, even if some material had to be omitted when it failed to receive timely clearances, raised hackles both among the State Department historians and the academicians in the Historical Advisory Committee.

Obstacles to historical transparency in FRUS increased exponentially beginning in 1978 when the State Department instituted a new Classification/Declassification Center (CDC) to take responsibility from Historical Office historians and the major desk officers for declassifying State Department documents. This new Center was far more restrictive than the old ad hoc system. For one thing, it stiffened requirements for foreign government consent to publish documents involving them. Meanwhile, the CIA was adamant against publication of any documents mentioning its activities. Consequently, the Center ordered a re-review of all of the FRUS volumes concerning the early 1950s that were already prepared for
publication. Not only did this delay publication for several years, but the volumes that did emerge were bowdlerized. At the behest of the CIA and the European desk of the State Department, the material on Greece and Turkey joining NATO and U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia were sanitized and, most notoriously, the Guatemala volume omitted any references to the CIA role in overthrowing the Jacobo Arbenz regime. Despite all of this, the Reagan administration on taking office stiffened the rules for declassification and at the same time demanded an acceleration of publication to insure no more than a thirty-year gap.

The Historical Advisory Committee and the scholars it represented clashed increasingly with the CDC over the omissions in the FRUS series. The Committee, chaired sequentially by historians Warren Kuehl, Bradford Perkins, and Warren Cohen, argued that it should have access to the files that were refused clearance for publication in order to insure that FRUS was objective and comprehensive. Despite attempts by the State Department historians to mediate between the CDC and the outside scholars, the CDC contemplated eliminating the Committee entirely and accused the Historical Office of mismanagement. The issue came to a head in 1989 when FRUS published the volume on Iran 1951-54 without any acknowledgement of the role the CIA played in the overthrow of Mohammed Mossadeq and Cohen publicly resigned as chair of the Advisory Committee. Cohen’s op-eds about his reasons for resigning, along with the scathing academic reviews of the Iran volume, roused both the media and Congress to assess the situation and alerted them to the ‘civil war’ within the State Department between the CDC and the Historical Office.

After unsatisfactory interchanges between Congress and the State Department over reforms to FRUS, in May 1990 Senator Claiborne Pell introduced legislation to govern the FRUS series that mandated a “thorough, accurate, and reliable” record of U.S. diplomatic activity to be guided by the Kellogg Order’s principles of “objectivity and accuracy” at a thirty-year publication line. (278) Initially, the Pell Amendment exempted from automatic protection only details about weapons, cryptographic systems, and intelligence sources. All other exemptions had to be approved by the Historical Advisory Committee. The Historical Office used the leverage of the proposed amendment to lobby within the State Department for increasing access of its historians to classified material and authority to declassify it for publication. But the CIA and others in the State Department resisted both the Pell Amendment and the proposed Historical Office compromise. Their intransigence prevented any comprehensive plan from emerging to counter the Pell Amendment, which Pell strengthened even further with a provision to automatically declassify State Department records after 30 years. The Senate passed this legislation in September 1990 and the opponents within the State Department immediately began lobbying to thwart or at least modify it in the House of Representatives. Ultimately the Senate and House passed legislation that required automatic declassification of most documents at the 30-year line. It also gave the Historical Advisory Committee authority to review any record from which deletions had been made before publication in FRUS and to sample randomly the documents that were not declassified after thirty years. President George H. W. Bush appended a signing statement reserving his right to protect the national security of the United States, but the Historical Office, the media, and the academic world saw the legislation as a major step toward transparency. Thomas Schwartz praised the FRUS volume on the Berlin Crisis of the 1960s as significantly more complete than the volume on the Berlin Crisis of the Eisenhower years and Lloyd Gardner said that the volumes covering Vietnam in 1965 set the “highest standards” for a government publication. (307)
Implementation of the *FRUS* statute since 1991 has still required considerable wrestling with the CIA over the conflict between transparency and security. Particularly vexing was coverage of past covert operations, which required Presidential approval and therefore National Security Council permission to acknowledge and publish. By 1997 Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet, and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger agreed to a High Level Panel to review and acknowledge historical covert operations and other sensitive intelligence issues. The CIA was still resistant to much transparency, however, and relations between the *FRUS* historians and the CIA plummeted to new depths in 2001 when the Government Printing Office accidentally leaked the unreleased *FRUS* volume on Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, 1964-1968. These volumes documented the U.S. role in identifying members of the Indonesian Communist Party to their pursuers after the Suharto take-over. Moreover, a former State Department historian revealed that the CIA had prohibited publication in those volumes of covert operations to influence Greek politicians. The CIA abrogated the Memorandum Of Understanding that had governed its relations with *FRUS* since 1992, and it took major efforts to forge a new relationship between the CIA and the State Department that retained the High Level Panel. The conflict was further assuaged by the appointment of a Joint Historian with full CIA security clearances to search CIA files for document relevant to *FRUS*.

The authors of this volume conclude that resource constraints, the advent of the internet, and the growth of government documentary records along with the demands for transparency and timeliness, continue to confront *FRUS* with issues similar to those that have faced the series since its beginning. They express optimism, however, that the series will continue to be “thorough, accurate, and reliable,” an optimism validated by the very positive reviews of recent volumes in academic journals. 

The authors warn that the major failures of *FRUS* have stemmed not from excessive transparency but from failures to document or acknowledge past American actions.

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