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Nuclear Politics in America: A History and Theory of Government Regulation (Studies in Government & Public Policy)

Robert J. Duffy

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The promise and peril of nuclear power have been a preoccupation of the modern age. Though the nuclear industry has witnessed periods of expansion and retrenchment, there are now more than one hundred nuclear reactors providing America with almost a quarter of its electrical power.

Robert Duffy now examines the politics of nuclear power over the last fifty years, relating broad trends in American politics to changes in the regulation of the nuclear industry to show how federal policies in this area have been made, implemented, and altered. He weaves a discussion of institutional change in all three branches of government into a study of agenda-setting, regulatory reform, and "subgovernment" politics, demonstrating how these forces combined to create policy change in this important area of public policy.

Duffy's work traces nuclear politics from the creation of a powerful subgovernment through the public lobby reforms of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the deregulatory backlash of the Reagan years. He demonstrates that while policies did change in the 1970s, they did not change as much as other accounts have suggested, and that the industry continued to receive considerable federal support. The book is particularly significant for extending the discussion of nuclear policy through the Bush and Clinton years, including the controversy over waste disposal, new licensing procedures enacted in the 1992 Amendments to the Atomic Energy Act, and the effects of deregulation of electric utilities.

By providing both a description of the transformation of this policy community and an analysis of how regulatory change occurs, Nuclear Politics in America offers a new and important view of policymaking in America.

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