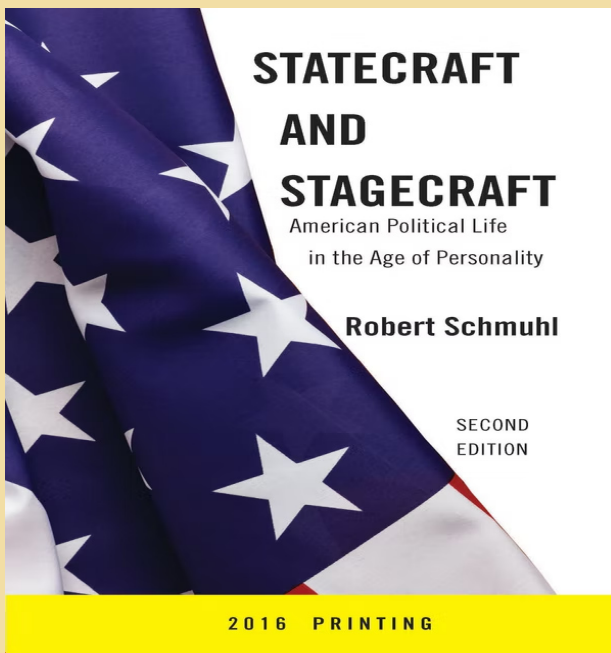


## Book Review



**Book: Statecraft and Stagecraft - Notre Dame Press**

**Written by : Dr Ritu (prof NDIM)**

This book provides an in-depth and detailed overview of America's political life. This book is a well-documented book that captures the role of media in full detail and leaves no chapter of this story untouched. This book is a good read for the students and public.

The United States of America is one of the world's greatest economic and military powers. It is also the oldest democracy with the oldest written constitution. Colourful elections, a powerful judiciary, an independent national legislature, meaningful federalism, racial diversity and conflict, frequent periods of heavy immigration, and a host of other hallmarks of American political life have fascinated authors since the 18th century. American politics is traditionally divided into institutions and behaviours. The study of institutions includes: the presidency, Congress, the bureaucracy, and the courts. State and local political institutions are also covered, as is the study of public law. Behaviourism includes public opinion, voting, and empirical democratic theory, which is broadly defined to include the study of representation, protest, religion and politics, racial and other forms of prejudice, and gender equality.

This current and pioneering book examines media events and the progress of political communication by examining: (1) how media events are conceived and staged, (2) the role of progress in the overall communication strategy, (3) how media events work holistically to create rhetorical impact and (4) consequences of political communication through

a media event. This book provides readers with the tools and background necessary to analyze and understand media events and to create their own. Statecraft is defined as the skill associated with leading a state or country, and Stagecraft is the technical aspect of theatre, film and video production. Media events are a central communication tactic used by political communicators in political campaigns and government affairs. Every president has an advance staff that creates mediagenic events that influence the news media, generate coverage and excitement, create favourable political images, and persuade voters. Advance men and women are visual speakers who focus not only on what the politician says, but also on what the candidate looks like and the visual message the event conveys.

Celebrities, with the help of the media, tend to trivialize politics by turning it into entertainment. As depicted in the book, their presence further subordinates the essence of the performance and encourages the media to examine how something is "played" rather than analyzing what is being said. Most famous people have nothing original to contribute to politics. But sometimes, as Ronald Reagan showed, the performing arts can be used to advance serious political ideas. If Warren Beatty can figure out how to keep the power of money up front as an issue, he can help clarify some critical decisions. If other celebrities want to trade their fame to enter the debate, they also need to figure out how to touch not only our fantasy lives, but our real ones as well. Robert Schmuhl's Statecraft and Stagecraft places him in a new generation of professional journalists and journalism scholars who want to rethink the paradoxes of politics in an era of high technology. The book focuses on the ways in which the thinking of the American public is shaped by the communication breakthroughs of our time.

Preface to the 2016 press A quarter of a century ago, the "age of personality"—the expression in this book's subtitle—was the relatively youthful offspring of the marriage between the statesmanship and the stagecraft of the day. The book depicts the American politics in a true way. As highlighted in 2016, Donald J. Trump dismantled the Republican Party and American politics by embodying the dominance of personality as presented and projected by the media. His celebrity and charisma — as well as his ability to command broadcast television and various forms of social media — carried far more weight than multi-pronged policy proposals, long-term party allegiances, or definitive political ideology as he vied for the presidency. His request turned out to be primarily visceral and emotional rather than intellectual. Just as Trump's rise to power symbolized the rise of the forces—populist anger, nationalist fervor, anti-establishment or elite bias, and all—that he came to embody, Trump exemplified a public figure who could use the various tools of stagecraft to become a political player of considerable influence. The reality TV star's previous career, coupled with his own



business success in real estate, made him a household name before he announced his candidacy on June 16, 2015 — to near universal derision. Some commentators and political pundits have suggested comparisons between Trump and Ronald Reagan, which are given considerable attention in the following pages. Superficial parallels exist between them. As they both embarked on careers in politics, they understood how important the media had become in American civic life. However, Reagan spent several decades in Hollywood, working from scripts for movies and television programs, before deciding to run for governor of California in 1966 and again in 1970. Much of what he said to the public was prepared in advance (script, if you will), and often wrote his own statements before delivering them. Trump, on the other hand, is a product of a reality TV show with an emphasis on the lively personality of the main character and on dialogue that is overwhelmingly improvisational. These are situational, immediate communications rather than deliberately planned, even crafted expressions like those made by Reagan. Additionally, eight years as governor of a large, diverse state provides experience with the day-to-day hustle and bustle that a president could — and does — face. To paraphrase the former vice presidential candidate, Donald Trump is no Ronald Reagan. Since *Statecraft* and *Stagecraft* first appeared, the power and implications of personality augmentation have grown. Moreover, the proliferation of media platforms—or ways of obtaining political information—has radically changed the relationship between the citizen and American civic life. Millennials and many Baby Boomers now take for granted an endless amount of news, shortened or expanded, on their laptops, tablets or smartphones, as well as more traditional means of communication such as television, radio or print. From the 1990s to the present, the media landscape has changed from a field with a solid stand of a few deep-rooted trees—the three major commercial television networks, a few key newspapers and magazines, and the like—to a dense forest, the eye can see tree specimens that differ type, scope, audience, presentation and perspective in providing political ‘content’. A brief timeline in book shows how the media landscape has evolved over the past 25 years, dramatically changing the ways Americans receive information about politics and government: 1996 Fox News Channel and MSNBC hit the airwaves 1997 The conservative-leaning Drudge Report website begins 1998 Google founded 2004 Facebook launched (and grows to 156.5 million US users by 2015) 2005 Liberal-leaning Huffington Post launched (and in 2011 AOL bought the site for \$315 million) x *Statecraft* and *Stagecraft* 2005 YouTube is created 2006 Twitter goes online 2010 Instagram joins other social media platforms 2011 Snapchat enters the world of multimedia messaging 2015 Periscope enables live video streaming using smartphones.

Each of these technological inventions or innovations expanded the possibility of presenting political communication.

However, many more sources have challenged the traditional ways of gaining audience and attention. It’s important to remember: One has a limited amount of time to spend with media in a given day. If new forms of media and their messages appeal to someone, the sources that were created earlier will lose some of their followers.

### **This book has chapters:**

**1 Smoke-free politics**

**2 Image creation and anti-image journalism**

**3 Pulpit of tyrants in the center of the stage**

**4 Momentary majority**

**5 Cyclops or big bird?**

**6 Temptations of Technology : Postscript: The Theater of War, The War as Theatre, and Other Matters**

It is highlighted in book that how in the 1980s, campaigns learned that tight control of candidate information generated more favorable media coverage. In the 1984 presidential election, candidates Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush began using a current issue strategy, providing quotes and material on only one topic each day. This strategy limited what journalists could cover, as they only had limited quotes and sound bites in their reporting. In 1992, both the Bush and Bill Clinton campaigns maintained their carefully painted images of the candidates by also restricting photographers and television reporters from taking pictures at rallies and campaign sites. The constant scrutiny of the media became known as the “bubble” and journalists were less effective when they were in the campaign bubble. Reporters complained that this coverage was campaign advertising rather than journalism, and with the 1996 election a new model emerged.

The complexities of the media system are reflected in the diversity of available content. It describes image making and anti-image journalism. A para in the book shows that while Lyndon Johnson and a CBS producer were casually chatting about the former president’s experiences when the producer asked about the changes in political life over the past thirty years. flight. The question struck a nerve and suddenly changed his mood. They used other means of connecting with the general public. The expanding media environment allowed these political figures to base much of their relationship with citizens on the mediated messages delivered by popular forms of communication. Post-1960s politicians quickly learned that emphasizing image and personality helped define itself in the public mind. It is no coincidence that the book *Age of Personality* coincides with the growth of television as the primary source of news for most Americans. In major political races, television—essentially a medium that projects personality—is the largest recipient of candidate

campaign funds. The so-called “free the media” of journalistic reporting and the ‘paid media’ of advertising come together at you forming a mediated bond between a public figure and the public. Of course, the tendency to cultivate a favourable impression is nothing new. In his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin confesses to a study of self-dramatization: To secure his credit and character as a merchant, in the political realm, the 1840 presidential campaign between Martin Van Buren and William Henry Harrison is a case study in image-oriented artifice. By explaining the phenomenon of celebrity, pseudo-events, continuous media, intractable forms, and extravagant expectations, he exposed twentieth-century America’s obsession with grand illusions. As he repeatedly points out in his book, popular modes of mass communication like Statecraft and Stagecraft are fundamentally responsible for shaping this environment of shadows over forms, superficial over material. Boorstin describes the extent to which Americans are captivated by superficial expressions, especially those transmitted through the mass media. His analysis even influenced the nation’s vocabulary. A celebrity is a “human pseudo-event”, someone “who is known by reputation”. His very word “image” has become ubiquitous, if not downright illuminating, in discussions of various aspects of American life in recent years.

A next phase in the writing of the book is marked as Theater of War, War as Theater and Other Matters “Did you watch the war last night? A big newspaper headline asked a surprising but, given the circumstances, predictable question. The realms of government and communications intertwined during the 1991 Gulf War to create what has repeatedly been called “real war in real time”—a veritable “living room war.” Thanks to new, sophisticated media technology, the most serious political action a government can take—deciding that human life is worth risking to achieve certain goals—has turned into an ongoing drama played out on television screens across America and around the world. In this age of personality, stars were born quickly—General Norman Schwarzkopf, Lt. Gen. Thomas Kelly of the Pentagon, Peter Arnett of CNN, Arthur Kent of NBC, nicknamed “Scud Stud.” Cable News Network transformed into Cable War News Network. And people at home became the ultimate spectators, interrupting work or social life or sleep to tune in to the war. Reality had a surreal, almost surreal quality. Shells exploded before our eyes and we munched on popcorn on the couch. The Gulf War provides valuable lessons in statecraft and stagecraft for today and tomorrow. Before, during and after the war, the media were much more than messengers of conflict news. They were players — actors, if you will — of considerable importance. In fact, as the war itself went on, other battles raged. Journalists fought with military officials in the Persian Gulf and in Washington to ensure more detail and greater access to information and news, with people jostling between them for stories.

Such is the reach of fame in American life. Most celebrities have less direct influence on campaigns, but the accelerated mixing of entertainment and politics has given them a new cultural soundstage. and worry about your hour. The question for characters like Ventura or Warren Beatty is how they use it.

This book further depicts that how the first American celebrity George Washington, who cleverly used his position to stabilize and moderate the young republic. But apart from a handful of other generals and newspaper publishers, the rich and famous did not run for the highest office. Beginning in the mid-20th century, celebrities began to play an important supporting role, offering leaders clues as to how to fill the presidency. Franklin Roosevelt, who once tried to sell an idea for a screenplay about the Navy, was fascinated by Hollywood. John F. Kennedy hung out with Frank Sinatra’s Rat Pack and intuitively understood how to project magic. Richard Nixon preferred Elvis Presley and Bob Hope. Celebrities in politics have become taste badges. Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall couldn’t vote for Adlai Stevenson, but they helped make him a classy guy. The rise of Ronald Reagan changed the game. Reagan’s success didn’t start a big rush of celebrities into electoral politics; most will not make the personal sacrifices necessary for public service. But Gipper’s fusion of stagecraft and statesmanship began to blur professional lines more broadly. Ship worker Lech Walesa and playwright Václav Havel showed in Europe that non-professional politicians can be effective and inspiring heads of state. In the United States, millionaire businessmen with no political experience are increasingly elected governors or senators. Some make the transition and serve well; most don’t. The experience has become almost negative — as if to suggest an outdated mindset. In politics or business, the pitch trumps the resume almost every time. Especially when the subtext of the playground is the most basic of American values - freedom.

In one of the chapters it is shown how sometimes celebrities can help lift real content into tower of gibberish. Warren Beatty is too old-fashioned, too predictably liberal, and has never had a conflict with public service. That means he can talk about the “moneyed, honeyed voices of derision and reaction” and how we’ve become a “plutocracy” where “the rich class rules”. In a sign of how lame the political dialogue has become, his harshest attacks against the “money power” in America were actually quotations from a speech by Abraham Lincoln.

How celebrities tend to downplay politics with the help of the media, The book depicts in the chapters. The author has based most of my comments on reading, watching, and listening to media coverage of American political life. One can be critical (and sometimes even enraged) of the messages delivered through the various tools of popular communication, but what has been called “daily intelligence” deserves constant scrutiny and praise.