In the Web of Politics
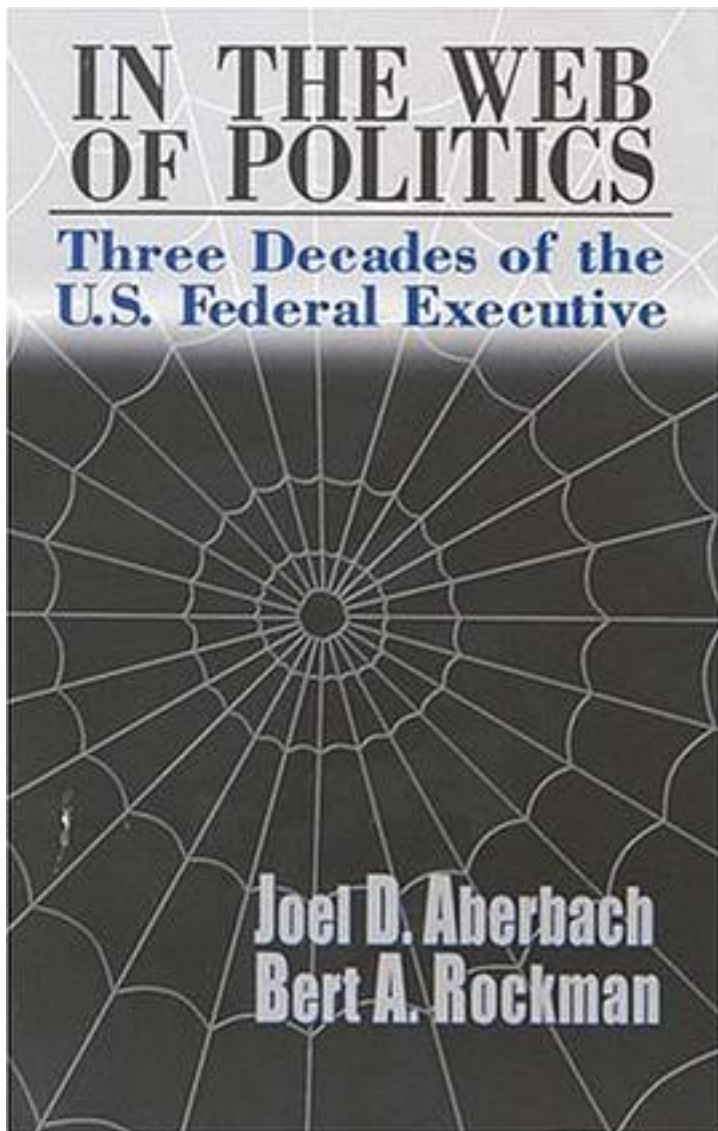
In the Web of Politics_下载链接1_

著者:Joel D. Aberbach

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Most people think of governmental bureaucracy as a dull subject. Yet for thirty years the American federal executive has been awash in political controversy. From George Wallace's attacks on "pointy headed bureaucrats," to Richard Nixon's "responsiveness program," to the efforts of Al Gore and Bill Clinton to "reinvent government," the people who administer the American state have stood uncomfortably in the spotlight, caught in a web of politics. This book covers the turmoil and controversy swirling around the bureaucracy since 1970, when the Nixon administration tried to tighten its control over the executive branch. Drawing on interviews conducted over the past three decades, Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman cast light on the complex relationship between top civil servants and political leaders and debunk much of the received wisdom about the deterioration and unresponsiveness of the federal civil service. The authors focus on three major themes:the "quiet crisis" of American administration, a hypothesized decline in the quality and morale of federal executives; the "noisy crisis," which refers to the large question of bureaucrats' responsiveness to political authority; and the movement to "reinvent" American government. Aberbach and Rockman examine the sources and validity of these themes and consider changes that might make the federal government's administration work better. They find that the quality and morale of federal executives have held up remarkably well in the face of intense criticism, and that the bureaucracy has responded to changes in presidential administrations. Pointing out that bureaucrats are convenient targets in contemporary political battles, the authors contend that complexity, contradiction, and bloated or inefficient programs are primarily the product of elected politicians, not bureaucrats.The evidence suggests that American federal executives will carry out the political will if they are given adequate support and realistic policies. However, In the Web of Politics argues that the federal executive will continue to be caught in a web of political controversy unless elected leaders reach agreement on what they want done and how they want policy carried out.

作者介绍:

目录:

In the Web of Politics_下载链接1_

标签

社会学

政治学

评论

[In the Web of Politics_下载链接1_](#)

书评

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评论

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