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Inderjeet Parmar, Linda B. Miller, and Mark Ledwidge (eds.), *New Directions in US Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2009, \$41.95). Pp. xiii + 277. ISBN 978 041577749 0.

The editors call this “a textbook with a difference” that features scholars with “their own particular standpoints that they are willing openly to debate” (1). As such, the book does not posit an overall “new direction” but lets theoretical and thematic chapters mingle with the last years of US foreign policy to tease out new azimuths.

The organization itself suggests a step away from state-centered concerns. Six of the thirteen topical chapters deal with non-state actors, and they come immediately after the theoretical Part I, suggesting their newfound importance. The seven “new policy directions” chapters that follow are somewhat more traditional and include national security, the United Nations, public diplomacy and labor standards; interestingly, only two chapters have a regional focus, on Europe and the Middle East.

The most interesting contribution is Part I, “Theorizing Contemporary US Foreign Policy,” which delivers on the promise of the editors by defining realism, constructivism, neoconservatism, liberalism and neoliberalism, and Marxism. The contributors do not debate each other but all make vigorous cases for why their own concept best explains current foreign policy. Thomas Kane’s discussion of realism is at once the most original, since he argues that Machiavelli is the thinker who has been the most “accurate,” and also the least helpful, since Kane largely neglects a standard explanation of realism, which all undergraduates need.

One weakness of the book is its almost singular focus on the George W. Bush administration. Almost all contributors place the Bush administration’s actions largely outside the pale of traditional modes of action for US foreign policy. It is jarring, then, that such actions should signal “new directions” if they were apparently aberrations at the time and are soon to be discarded by the Obama administration (press time overlapped with the 2008 election). Most obvious are the chapters about think tanks, intellectuals, and evangelicals, who had unprecedented influence on policy under Bush. Many names of individuals within these movements repeat – William Kristol, Robert Kagan, and so on – and many were narrowly tied to the Bush administration rather than influential in the policymaking establishment writ large. Already we have seen that none has had much impact on President Barack Obama’s foreign policy, nor did they much on the administrations of Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush. Chapters on tense relations with Europe and the UN similarly seem a bit dated. Therefore the descriptor “new directions” may be misleading.

Other authors do make the case successfully that their “new direction” preceded and will survive the Bush administration. Steven Hurst explains how Republicans and Democrats have become more homogenized and polarized over the last decades and how Congress has, as a result, instituted procedural changes that made it easier for it to oppose foreign policies. And in perhaps the freshest chapter, Giles Scott-Smith and Martijn Mos are able to separate the evolution of public diplomacy in the last few decades from any particular administration,

showing indeed a new direction for less propagandistic, more dialogue-focussed public diplomacy.

*New Directions* would be most useful to undergraduates or graduates needing to go beyond a primer on US foreign policy, those who would like to engage major theoretical concerns and apply them to recent history. All the essays are highly informative and concisely written and should prompt debate among readers.

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