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Steven E. Schier (ed.), *Ambition and Division: Legacies of the George W. Bush Presidency* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2009, \$27.95). Pp. 342. ISBN 978 0 8229 6049 2.

This book, a follow-up to an earlier volume on George W. Bush's first term, is divided into four sections: "History, Legitimacy and Leadership" contains chapters placing Bush in historical context, examining the partisan basis of his presidency and contrasting his approach to leadership with that of Bill Clinton. The three chapters on "Popular Politics" chart Bush's rise and fall in the American public's esteem and Bush's relationship, both personal and political, with religion. "Washington Governance" contains chapters on executive–legislative relations, executive unilateralism, the role of Dick Cheney and Bush's judicial appointments strategy. "Economic and Foreign Policy" contains one chapter on the former and two on the latter.

As with most edited collections, the contents are rather a mixed bag. One problem is the absence of any overarching focus holding the collection together. Steven E. Schier introduces a number of themes in the first chapter, including Bush's ambition to entrench a conservative regime in the United States, the audacity and riskiness of pursuing such a goal in a country so finely balanced along partisan lines, and the stark contrast between the success of his first term and the failure of the second. Few of the other authors choose to follow his lead, however, with the contrast between the two terms a focus in some chapters but barely mentioned in others and the ambition/risk dichotomy similarly arbitrarily observed or ignored.

A lack of overall coherence would be a small price to pay for a collection of tenuously linked but outstanding individual chapters, of course, but in practice the quality of these chapters is rather too variable. Above all, far too many of them are overly narrative, simply recounting the events and policies of the Bush administration in a particular area with little or no critical engagement or analysis. There is also, somewhat surprisingly in a book written exclusively by American academics, little or no real "political science" in this volume, with a tendency toward the anecdotal and the speculative in place of hard, systematic analysis.

That said, a few of the chapters do stand out. John Harris's chapter on the contrasting leadership styles of Bush and Clinton and their comparative utility in an era of polarized politics suggests an interesting area for further study, and Nancy Maveety presents a persuasive analysis of the generally skilful and effective nature of Bush's judicial appointments strategy. Best of all is Stanley Renshon's attempt to defend the Bush Doctrine as a plausible and coherent basis for American foreign policy. Whilst much of what he has to say is arguable at best and some of it downright tendentious, he is at least trying to say something interesting and counterintuitive, and to challenge conventional wisdom and make the reader think. I was more engaged by his chapter than by anything in the rest of the book.

Manchester Metropolitan University

STEVEN HURST