
FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

Peter Trubowitz: *Politics and Strategy: Partisan Ambition and American Statecraft*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. Pp. 200. \$70.00. \$24.95, paper.)

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Peter Trubowitz's *Politics and Strategy* aims to integrate what were long the polar opposite approaches to explaining grand strategy—the *Realpolitik* school that stresses how external constraints determine foreign policy and the *Innenpolitik* approach that focuses instead on how domestic political influences crucially affect choices in this arena. He develops a parsimonious typology of grand strategy and its causes based on two important variables—what he calls “geopolitical slack” and party preferences. Depending on whether a state, in this case the United States, faces an obvious international challenger to its security, status, and influence, security might be scarce or abundant. The party that the executive belongs to might have a stake in more butter or guns.

Crossing these two dimensions yields four different scenarios. When security is scarce but a domestic coalition prefers guns, the result is the classic balancing strategy so familiar to international relations scholars. Where, however, the domestic coalition prefers a less costly strategy, state leaders will satiate through cheaper methods such as appeasement, recruiting allies, or buck-passing to others. Here Trubowitz criticizes the realist school that explains these outcomes merely by reference to the distribution of power, but whose arguments are underdetermined. When security is abundant and the governing coalition gains from a more aggressive internationalist approach, we are to expect an expansionist strategy including the pursuit of imperial possessions and even wars of conquest. However, merely having the opportunity to expand does not guarantee such a strategy if the governing party coalition does not gain from it. Trubowitz calls this “underextension.” He tests his theory by reference to nine main cases of American grand strategy dating back to the founding of the American republic.

Trubowitz's attempt is noble and correct; any proper account of grand strategy will include external and internal causes, even, as the author notes, in the most constraining of geopolitical environments. However, he situates his argument in a microfoundation gaining favor in the international relations literature, that of the self-interest of domestic political leaders. Trubowitz argues that for their own personal benefit, chief executives, in this case US presidents, attempt both to reap economic gains for their base and to ensure foreign policy success, since any failure might result in his (not yet her) ouster. As a result, Trubowitz inherits all of the weaknesses of that approach. Self-interested domestic political considerations undoubtedly play a role in foreign policy decision making, but it is a stretch for them to bear the weight of an entire theory of grand strategy.

First, what exactly qualifies as the self-interest of the executives? This is a very elastic concept in the book. Trubowitz makes reference to remaining in power, preserving domestic and international reputation, and even implicitly at times securing one's own foreign policy preferences. The very framework risks tautology, since if the president acts against his own domestic coalition's preferences, under this framework one can resort to the need for him to ensure foreign policy success even if that comes at the expense of his base. This is an easy escape route.

Second, the implication of the model is that domestic coalitions determine executive preferences. However, time and again, we see empirically in Trubowitz's own cases a president fashioning a coalition of material interest around his preferred policy, such as when Washington pursues his policy of rapprochement with the British in the wake of the French Revolution. But this is the case even when there is significant geopolitical slack. For instance, even though James Monroe heads a dominant Republican Party after the War of 1812, he finds them raucous and unruly so courts Federalist interests in the Northeast to gain backing for his "expansionist" policy and relies on them to see it through. This seems to directly contradict the logic of the argument. The dog is wagging its own tail more often than not in this book. Sometimes the president must bide his time and wait for a propitious time to form such a coalition, as Franklin Roosevelt did in the 1930s. However, this policy of gradually putting the American toe in the water is classified by Trubowitz as "buck-passing," a strange characterization.

Related to that question is the general lack of process-tracing in the book to demonstrate the key role played by domestic political considerations. The literature is almost solely secondhand sources, with conclusions lifted from historians, rather than a careful consideration of the primary evidence, which is abundantly available. Part of this is understandable given the book's wide scope. However, the result is more argument by assertion than a demonstration of the primacy (and it must be primacy) of the self-interested motives of politicians, of which I found very few. Washington's baser motives, for instance, are left for Jefferson to assess, even though Jefferson was an opponent of the president's policies. Hardly a reliable source.

Third, what about the obvious other role of political parties, as vehicles of ideological worldviews on foreign affairs? We see overwhelming evidence of the role of ideas in notable books by John Owen (*Liberal Peace, Liberal War* [Cornell University Press, 2000]), Colin Dueck (*Reluctant Crusaders* [Princeton University Press, 2007]), Mark Haas (*The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* [Cornell University Press, 2005]), and Jeffrey Legro (*Rethinking the World* [Cornell University Press, 2005]). Many of these directly concern American foreign policy and parties. Trubowitz notes the intense role played by partisanship in American foreign policy but reduces this crudely to differences in the economic base of parties. Surely one must recognize the role played by isolationist, imperialist, and idealist ideology in the history of American foreign relations. At the very least, these are *the*

counterargument to a materialist account. We are left to believe that the Bush administration's war on terror and invasion of Iraq were merely the result of the dumb luck created by 9/11 to pursue a preexisting policy of expansion that materially benefitted the Republican base. Against the "office-seeking" assumptions on which Trubowitz builds, we can juxtapose (and others have) an equally probable "policy-seeking" account.

Finally, we must question the very dichotomy that Trubowitz begins with. The author takes as evidence for his theory and against a pure realist account the crafty domestic politicking of presidents to ensure adequate domestic support for their foreign policies. Lincoln engages in rapprochement with the British to ensure his ability to prosecute the Civil War, which must be regarded as a foreign policy outcome to some degree. However, if anything, this is vintage realism. Foreign policy is nothing without power, and a base of domestic support *is* power. The neoclassical realists have shown us that there is no real distinction to be made here between an *Innenpolitik* and a *Realpolitik* approach.

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AN EXAGGERATED REPORT

David Farber: *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. Pp. 296. \$29.95.)

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David Farber's well-written book is, as he puts it, "a short history of political conservatives' evolving and contingent disciplinary order and the constituencies who embraced it, from the time of Robert Taft through the presidency of George W. Bush" (1). Farber argues that this is an order "generated by hostility to market restraints and fueled by religious faith, devotion to social order, and an individualized conception of political liberty" (1). He notes that conservatives have not always been in complete agreement on all these points. They have, however, been very effective in creating a counterestablishment of idea factories and activists and arousing a voter base to support them. Mainly, the Right, he contends, has been successful in reaching out to Americans' never-ending search for "order and stability" (4). Where Farber claims to have broken new ground, he contends, is in his linking of "economic conservatives and social conservatives into the larger disciplinary order" that he claims has been a constant in American history (4).

Thus in each successive chapter, Farber examines an important individual in this growing conservative movement since World War II. His story,