

Wetzel and Jan Orbie's edited volume attempts to offer such an explanation.

In a remarkably clear introduction, Wetzel provides a conceptual framework drawing on work by Wolfgang Merkel. A distinction is made between external 'context conditions', such as socio-economic conditions, and five 'partial regimes': the electoral regime, political liberties, civil rights, the division of power, and the effective power to govern. To her credit, Wetzel notes that 'a sole focus on the context conditions can ... be to the detriment of democratization' (p. 7), an insight which, although repeated in the conclusion, remains mostly absent in the country chapters.

A total of 11 chapters, each covering two countries, form the backbone of the book. In these, 15 collaborators examine the substance of EU democracy promotion. They look at what the EU does, that is, what projects are supported and how much money is allocated. Importantly, though, they also look at democratic indicators drawn from the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), potential power asymmetries and the institutional and inter-organisational context.

Wetzel and Orbie conclude that EU democracy promotion tends towards promoting external context conditions rather than partial regimes. This they label an 'outward-oriented' bias – following the now infamous distinction of input- and output-based legitimacy popularised by Fritz Scharpf. They argue that it is in the 'nature of the [EU] beast' to be oriented towards regulatory, technocratic outputs, but they also give credit to feasibility concerns, particularly the presence of resistance in target countries to partial regime promotion.

With the exception of four theoretical chapters, which are less well integrated into the book, the project is tied together remarkably well. The country chapters generally report indicators that allow general empirical conclusions to be drawn, and they invariably incorporate the sophisticated analytic scheme that opens the volume. Unavoidably, not all the country chapters are equally good. Several, for example, do not refer to the BTI, complicating a comparative analysis. Furthermore, some chapters, like that on Croatia and Turkey by Balkir and Aknur, show little critical distance

from EU rhetoric, barely going beyond an analysis of the documents to look at the actual substance. On the whole, however, Wetzel and Orbie have pulled off a remarkable editorial and scholarly feat.

Tom Theuns
(Sciences Po, Paris; University of Amsterdam)

© The Author(s) 2016
Reprints and permissions: sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1478929916677893
journals.sagepub.com/home/psrev

The Americas

The Politics of Information: Problem Definition and the Course of Public Policy in America by **Frank R Baumgartner and Bryan D Jones**. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 231 pp., £19.50 (p/b), ISBN 9780226198125

How do governments prioritise problems and search for their solutions? What are the best organisational forms for political institutions to detect problems and prioritise them for action? *Politics of Information* is the latest collaborative book that Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones have launched to answer these important questions in a thought-provoking manner. The scholars base their arguments on what they call the *paradox of search*: the number of problems that government detects increases as the scope of search mechanism broadens, which in turn creates more policy action on the problems detected by the system. Especially germane to this paradox is the tension between hierarchies and diversity in governmental organisations. 'One can have order and control, or one can have diversity and open search processes and "participatory democracy"'. In theory these could occur in continual balance. This does not, however, work out so well in practice' (p. 5).

Governments are 'complex adaptive systems' that process and respond to the available information within the system. These complex adaptive systems face increasing tensions 'if the problem space is evolving more quickly than the organizational structure can possibly adapt to' (p. 20). Here, Baumgartner and Jones go further and suggest two types of informa-

tion: *entropic information* and *expert information*. Entropic information, which can be described as incorporating ‘diverse viewpoints into a decision-making process’ (p. 78), is a good fit for problem discovery, while expert information is useful for problem solution.

Broad theories require valid and reliable measures. Baumgartner and Jones not only open new horizons in the theories of policy processes but also develop an important indicator of agenda expansion to examine the effect of issue diversity on government activities. As their earlier seminal works *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (1993) and *The Politics of Attention* (2005) have attempted – and succeeded in – *The Politics of Information* is just another attempt to set a new agenda in public policy. Moreover, although they study the dynamics in American politics, their theory is clearly applicable to other countries. There is no doubt that scholars who follow this new agenda will soon raise many important questions about the implication of this research outside the United States: What would be the relationship between entropic information and the scope of government activities in the absence of sound political institutions? Although *The Politics of Information* does not answer this question, it does encourage the reader to go beyond this and ask such important questions about the nature of decision-making in various political environments. Scholars of American politics and comparative public policy will all find this work filled with valuable insight.

Tevfik Murat Yildirim
(University of Missouri, Columbia)

© The Author(s) 2016

Reprints and permissions: sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1478929916676934
journals.sagepub.com/home/psrev

Clinton’s Grand Strategy: US Foreign Policy in a Post-Cold War World by James D Boys.

London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 321 pp., £18.99 (p/b), ISBN 9781472524270

The Clinton Administration was frequently accused of lacking vision in its Grand Strategy. This book challenges this assertion and reveals a ‘hitherto unexplored continuity of core policies from October 1991 to January 2001’ (p. 5).

The main argument of this book is that the Clinton Administration devised a Grand Strategy for the United States which moved beyond a preponderance of power, embraced the idea that ethics should count in foreign policy, offered respect for how other nations ruled their own, considered the free movement of people, capital and ideas as the core of its foreign policy, and promoted multilateralism.

This book serves as a ‘political history of the effort to devise and implement [the] US Grand strategy in the post-Cold War world and of the individuals responsible for this’ (p. 2). As such, the book uses mostly primary material such as speeches, National Security Strategy Reports, documents from the National Security Council, Presidential Decision Directives, Presidential Review Documents, declassified material from the Presidential Library and interviews with senior members of the Administration, and it focuses on ‘declaratory’ strategy. Due to its straightforward approach, the book is suitable for students of both politics and history but also readers interested in Clinton’s foreign policy.

The goal of the author is to analyse the origins and evolution of the Clinton Administration Grand Strategy through addressing a number of key areas:

the administration’s commitment to a series of key principles that were extolled on the campaign trail and implemented in office; secondly, the importance of personality and bureaucratic sensibilities; finally, [how] regardless of well-intended ideas, global events have a habit of making a mockery of well-laid plans (p. 2).

Through extensive empirical work, the author succeeds in this goal. Although the book has little to offer in terms of innovative approaches in theory or methods, the high-calibre empirical work makes this book a noteworthy addition to the literature. There are no noticeable gaps in the coverage, which makes the reading of the book much more straightforward.

The argument of the author regarding the United States Grand Strategy during the Clinton Administration is quite plausible. The analysis explicitly shows the coherence of the Clinton Doctrine and the impact it had on the policies of the Administration. The style of writing is purely academic, but the infrequent use of