

Routledge Handbook of American Foreign Policy by **Steven W. Hook and Christopher M. Jones (eds)**. Abingdon: Routledge, 2013. 464pp., £32.99, ISBN 978 0 415 80095-2

This volume edited by Steven Hook and Christopher Jones gathers together 31 studies, judiciously organised into six parts. It is an authoritative collection addressed to both students and practitioners of American foreign policy, providing an all-inclusive analysis, yet in an easily understandable language to deepen one's knowledge in the area. The editors successfully bring together the essential elements for understanding American foreign policy in a functional way, moving through major theories from the birth of the nation in the seventeenth century to today's threats and paradigms.

Each chapter presents in a meta-analytical way the past, present and future of the problem debated. By doing so, the critical analysis opens the reader to further exploration of the issues analysed. A strong feature of the book is represented by the extensive bibliographical references presented at the end of each chapter, providing the possibility of extending the research.

Overall, the articles assembled come from authors with various backgrounds, giving the volume an all-inclusive perspective, though we have to notice the near absence of contributions outside the US. The consistent background sections of the chapters bring an exhaustive and valuable amount of information and analysis. Perhaps this could have 'detached' the volume from the American way of thinking and presented American foreign policy as it is seen in the Anglo-phone world, or, even better, from a completely different perspective. It is clear that the volume would have benefited from an analytical perspective outside that of US academia, particularly from European and Asian perspectives. I believe that the fifth part on 'Policy Instruments' should have received more consideration in order to truly understand the mechanisms that are generating the policy trends in the American government.

The great theoretical background and extensive approach to the problems make this book an excellent read for undergraduate students and for non-trained readers, and its all-encompassing bibliography provides a good starting point in the study of American foreign policy. Readers will most likely appreciate the

book's writing style, layout and ease of navigation through the content presented, as well as the effort shown in terms of the topic selection, and the quality of the printed edition itself. To sum up, the handbook is an excellent read both for neophytes and for those already familiar with the instruments of foreign policy analysis.

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Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, from Eisenhower to the Tea Party by **Geoffrey Kabaservice**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 482pp., £18.99, ISBN 978 0 19 976840 0

The Tea Party: A Brief History by **Ronald P. Formisano**. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012. 143pp., £10.50, ISBN 978 1 4214 0596 4

Geoffrey Kabaservice opens the last chapter of *Rule and Ruin* with a memorable metaphor as he likens the fate of moderates in Republican politics to a chart which tracked the diminishment of Napoleon's army in 1812. The graph illustrates 'the dreadful toll of diversionary splits, battles, cold, hunger, disease, defections, and desertions' and shows how, in the end, a once powerful arrow is 'reduced to a thin, shaky line' (p. 363). Thus, Kabaservice argues, one could represent the downfall of moderate Republicans since the 1960s, which he chronicles meticulously. He takes the Republican Party Convention of 1960 as the starting point, introducing the reader to the lesser-known moderate faction that constituted the Ripon Society, and to the minds behind the short-lived, but intellectually enriching magazine *Advance*. The reader is then taken behind the scenes of the campaigns in favour and opposed to Barry Goldwater's bid for the Presidency in 1964 and again learns why moderates not only disagreed with the right wing's ideological positions, but also with its 'antidemocratic, take-no-prisoners, ends-justify-the-means approach to grassroots politics' (p. 51). With Richard Nixon's ascent to the Presidency one hoped to witness a recovery of moderate politics since his administration included many Ripon Society members and the President himself was ideologically elusive – or best fitted, as Kabaservice put it aptly, the 'one-word description' Republican (p. 252). While his

attempts at realigning the party also harmed moderates, the press suspected the moderates to be on the rise again with Vice President Nelson Rockefeller. However, Rockefeller hardly invested resources in building a moderate movement and President Ford felt forced to move to the right due to Ronald Reagan's rising influence. The latter's nomination marked one of the lowest points in the history of moderate Republicanism, whose last attempts to recuperate between 1980 and 2010 close the book.

The title of Sam Tanenhaus' review in the *New York Review of Books* of 24 May 2012 puts Kabaservice's message in a nutshell: 'How the Republicans Got That Way.' *Rule and Ruin* makes the reader understand why it has become harder for the GOP's moderates to make themselves heard and succeed within the party. Simultaneously, Kabaservice explains why the moderates' defeat means such a loss to the party, and how intellectually enriching they would be. Moreover, he argues that denying the GOP's past successes with moderate policies and style equals 'historical amnesia and symbolic parricide, which seeks to undo key aspects of the Republican legacy such as Reagan's elimination of corporate tax loopholes, Nixon's environmental and labor safety programs, and a variety of GOP achievements in civil rights, civil liberties, and good-government reforms' (p. 391). Some may not agree with Kabaservice's unsympathetic portrayal of the GOP's right-wing legends like Phyllis Schlafly and might prefer an even more neutral approach, but, in the end, there will be no way around this book for those who want to have a complete picture of the American right wing.

Kabaservice's account ends where Formisano's *The Tea Party* begins – namely with the rise of the eclectic Tea Party Movement. The Tea Party had many an observer puzzled, as its rallies started in 2009 and brought members of rather disparate political convictions together, uniting religious conservatives, libertarians and elderly Republicans alike. They all felt 'Taxed Enough Already' (p. 1), thus the acronym 'TEA', and sought to make themselves heard not only by the Obama administration, but also by the 'RINOs', those 'Republicans in Name Only' (p. 10) who allegedly failed to represent their voters' interests. In his slender book, Formisano brings structure into the perceived chaos of the Tea Party, and first explains the nature of the movement, also by pointing out earlier examples of popular defiance. He retraces the movement's rise to

national importance up to the midterm elections in 2010, and untangles its relationships with the religious right and 'big business'. Finally, he shows what imprint the Tea Party will likely leave on American political culture and closes with an exploration of the movement's links to the original Boston Tea Party of 1773.

While much of the Tea Party's story – including the constant debate about whether it is just 'astroturf' (p. 7) – is known to observers, Formisano offers more than a mere primer to the Tea Party's history. In addition to looking behind the movement's founding myths, he establishes interesting links between Christian conservatives' biblical fundamentalism and the constitutional originalism espoused by many Tea Partiers (p. 52). Moreover, he points out some central themes that are rarely discussed – e.g. the Tea Party's focus on 'producerism' (p. 20), which divides 'the producing many in opposition to the nonproductive but powerful and wealthy few' (p. 20). This quote may remind some readers of Tea Party icon Ayn Rand, who would have judged this division differently – another contradictory aspect of the movement that calls for further reading and research.

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In Defence of Politicians: The Expectations Trap and Its Threat to Democracy by **Stephen K. Medvic**. Abingdon: Routledge, 2013. 202pp., £95.00, ISBN 978 0415880442

The aim of *In Defence of Politicians* is to shift the responsibility for Americans' frustrations with politics from the country's elected officials to the structural constraints of their government. After outlining why he believes that political cynicism threatens American democracy, Stephen Medvic explores the historical context and constant electoral pressures American politicians face in an attempt to explain the origins of this sentiment. He highlights the institutional pressures on elected officials (Chapters 3 and 4) before specifically looking at how these impacted on the 2011 debt ceiling debate (Chapter 5). He then focuses on the personal attributes of politicians, examining the role of ambition and hypocrisy (Chapter 6) and dishonesty (Chapter 7) among political elites. The book concludes with Medvic's proposals for rebuilding trust in American politicians. It culminates in a plea for more active citizen