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### Review

Reviewed Work(s): Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft by Terry L. Deibel

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**Foreign affairs strategy: logic for American statecraft.** By Terry L. Deibel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007. 433pp. Index. Pb.: £29.99. ISBN 0 521 69277 9.

The September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States and the subsequent US-led invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq have spawned a cottage industry of books scrutinizing contemporary American foreign policy. What distinguishes Terry Deibel's book from this increasingly crowded field is that it does not primarily address the content of American foreign policy, but rather looks at the process by which that policy is shaped in the minds of its chief architects. Deibel, a former White House and State Department official and current faculty member at the National Defense University, argues that the quality of foreign policy decisions would be significantly improved if policy-makers approached their task in a more self-consciously strategic manner, through the methodical assessment of 'the relationship between thought and action between means and ends, resources and objectives, power and purpose, capabilities and intentions' (pp. 3–4).

Specifically, Deibel presents an intellectual template for the construction of what he refers to as 'foreign affairs strategy', defined as 'an evolving written or mental plan for the coordinated use of all the instruments of state power to pursue objectives that protect and promote the national interest' (p. 10). This template imparts that the foreign affairs strategist must begin by developing a clear conception of the national interest based on US values, and proceed to survey the international system for threats to those interests as well as opportunities for advancing them, even as he/she scrupulously compares the reality of the international context to his/her assumptions about how the world works. The strategist must then gauge the degree to which foreign threats and opportunities can be addressed in light of the national resources and domestic political support available to the White House. In turn, the strategist must then estimate the prospects of successfully influencing the target state(s) or foreign actor(s) in question, as well as third parties, select desirable and feasible objectives, choose the most promising policy instruments to secure those objectives, and identify the way(s) in which those instruments can be most cost-effectively employed. Much of the book is dedicated to discussing each of these steps at length, and supplementing their explication with relevant insights from the latest international relations (IR) scholarship and wide-ranging historical anecdotes and cases drawn from US diplomatic history.

The book's most important contribution to the field of foreign policy analysis is its painstaking conceptual clarification of key terms that are rarely employed carefully by scholars and public figures. In the book's introductory chapter, the author usefully differentiates his newly coined term 'foreign affairs strategy' from the related terms of national strategy, national security strategy, grand strategy and military strategy. These and other conceptual distinctions made elsewhere in the book, such as those between strategy and policy, interests and objectives, power and influence, and risk and cost, are all helpful and should be widely disseminated throughout the IR discipline.

Unfortunately, whereas these crucial conceptual distinctions would have formed the basis of a cogent journal article, they simply cannot single-handedly support a full-length monograph, let alone a staggering tome that clocks in at over 400 pages. The intellectual template that comprises the book's centrepiece is eminently practical and reasonable, and Deibel adequately reviews the theoretical debates that pertain to each of its components. However, Deibel is content to summarize those debates rather than meaningfully add to any of them. To the extent he attempts to do so, his assertions and prescriptions tend to be banal. Neither policy-makers nor scholars can be expected to disagree with, or benefit considerably from, such nebulous claims as: '[o]ther things being equal, strategists should choose instruments that cost less because choosing unnecessarily expensive instruments to pursue an objective may well mean that some objectives of near-equal desirability cannot be pursued as effectively' (p. 335), or '[g]ood strategies will set objectives that have a reasonable chance of accomplishment and will keep costs and risks proportional to the interests at stake, as well as to the seriousness of the threats being countered or the importance of opportunities being grasped' (p. 353). To compound matters, the book's prose style is plodding and repetitive.

Ultimately, although *Foreign affairs strategy* makes some important conceptual contributions to the practice and study of US statecraft, it is not likely to satisfy either of its intended audiences of foreign policy practitioners and scholars. For most practitioners, the book is far too lengthy and unfocused to

have much appeal. Scholars will find little in this volume that is new, counterintuitive, or conducive to further investigation.

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**The terror presidency: law and judgment inside the Bush administration.** By Jack Goldsmith. New York: W. W. Norton. 2007. 256pp. Index. \$25.95. ISBN 0 393 06550 3.

Among the plethora of critical books about the Bush presidency and the war on terror, this one stands out for its clarity, detail and balance. Goldsmith served as head of the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC), at the heart of the response to the attacks of 9/11. The OLC was charged with advising on the legality of any and all proposed administration actions. Although a conservative lawyer, Goldsmith makes a genuinely dispassionate, balanced and important contribution to our understanding of the administration's approach that leaves both admirers and critics of Bush with sources of support and opposition.

In terms of those seeking to defend Bush, the Goldsmith case vividly reveals the political pressures that confronted key players. Central here were the two countervailing pressures facing the executive branch. 'These twin pressures—fear of not doing enough to stop the next attack, and an equally present fear of doing too much and ending up behind a court or grand jury—lie behind the Bush administration's controversial legal policy decisions about the Terrorist Surveillance Program, the Geneva Conventions, military commissions, interrogation techniques, Guantanamo Bay, and more' (p. 12).

The book's central, and compelling, message is that far from ignoring law to prosecute the war on terror, both political appointees and permanent bureaucrats were consumed by the law. Thus, while in the immediate aftermath of a crisis the nation turned to the President as the actor responsible for safeguarding American security, the President was 'ensnared' (p. 43) by a raft of laws that limited his latitude to act to ensure US safety. As Goldsmith notes, by comparison to Bush, the presidency of landmark figures such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt was far less encumbered. The law governing presidential authority during his era was largely a *political* rather than a *judicial* constraint on presidential power (pp. 48–9), and FDR could exercise his disdain for 'legalisms' to the full. In the views of figures such as Rumsfeld and Cheney, many of those who oppose American power increasingly result to 'lawfare'—the 'judicialization of international politics' (p. 63) to constrain decisive US responses to national security threats. Such a deep and abiding concern added to what, even prior to 9/11, drove many of the administration's approaches, namely, a commitment to reasserting the appropriate constitutional authority of the presidency after decades of erosion. But everywhere it confronted lawyers making terrorism policy which, in turn, accounted for the pressure to act 'to the edges of the law' (p. 131).

But this is far from an uncritical account. While conceding the imperative of precluding another terrorist attack on the US mainland, Goldsmith also maintains that many elements of the administration's response were cavalier and ultimately counterproductive. In particular, Goldsmith criticizes the lack of political nous of the Bush years—a failure, in his view, to court, cajole, explain and elicit trust and cooperation from other branches of the government. By comparing Bush's response with those of Lincoln and Roosevelt to parallel legal crises, he argues that the latter presidents, while willing to act extra-legally and to invoke emergency powers in defence of the US constitution and nation alike, proved more mindful than Bush of the need to calibrate carefully the extent and manner of such actions, and to seek the widest possible support. While one can quibble with some of his case-studies, and while the Supreme Court has intervened on war powers issues in a way it has previously eschewed—suggesting that in fact the government's checks and balances are hardly a fiction—Goldsmith makes a forceful case.

The excellence of this book stems not only from its insider status, which conveys the richest views of key players within the administration, but also from its scholarly and judicious tone. Few of the mountain of books about the Bush era will match its lucid and detailed discussion, one that challenges much of the conventional wisdom about the origins and implementation of the war on terror.

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