



## Colin Dueck

*Hard Line: The Republican Party and U.S. Foreign Policy Since World War II.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-0-691-14182-4, 386 pp., £18.00)

Colin Dueck's superbly written history of Republican American presidents since the end of World War II is a fine introduction to American conservatism and American presidential politics alike. Most historians and political scientists focus their attention on a single administration and try to describe changes within a single or between two or three consecutive administrations. That is quite fine of course, but what is often missing is the evolution in a particular brand of a political party's approach to a specific area over a prolonged period of time, a *longue durée* so to speak. This lack of attention to changes in the long run has contributed to the misperception that there is one Republican or Democratic angle to foreign affairs. Dueck therefore tries to complement the history by focusing on the evolution of Republican foreign policy over the past six decades and though the book's title suggests a consistent Republican approach to foreign affairs, he excels in describing the different angles by which American Republican presidents have perceived international relations and formulated their policies. The author does not hide his general sympathy for a conservative stance on foreign policy but manages a critical evaluation where it is being called for. The book's narrative does not necessarily add anything new to the existing body of research, but it is, nonetheless, a rather apt description of American conservative thought and Republican politics alike. Dueck brilliantly conflates the recent history of political thought, the emergence of new and powerful lobbies, party and domestic politics, and public diplomacy with the performance of Republican presidents. And wherever convenient Dueck pays sufficient attention to developments on the side of the Democratic party as well.

The major shortcoming of this volume is its apparent focus on the White House. All told that is excusable when writing a book on such a broad and rich topic, but what remains missing is the particular dialectic in formulating foreign policy when dealing with different Congresses. Dueck is keenly aware of that and has added a chapter on Barry Goldwater, which allows him to focus on a lawmaker who has indeed been key to the development of Republican foreign policy in the second half of the twentieth century. But the chapter confuses the structure of the book, particularly when taking into account that he subsumes the development of Republican foreign policy in the Clinton-years under a chapter on George H. W. Bush. On the upside, Dueck manages to set the record straight on some conservative administrations. When describing the Nixon administration's foreign policy he gives it generally good marks and argues convincingly that the public impression of the Nixon-years is unduly overshadowed by the Watergate scandal, even though his foreign policy legacy is one of overwhelming success. He is correct in pointing to Nixon's successes but then again historians have been assessing Nixon's legacy more favourably in recent years anyway. When discussing the legacy of George W. Bush he is also following a path that more political scientists have taken in recent years. He rightly criticises Bush's handling of the Iraq occupation, but he also gives him credit for improving relations with all of Asia's powers and finally turning around the situation in Iraq. It is in the description of



George W. Bush's legacy that, according to Dueck, the cycle of realignment in American foreign policy is complete. The promotion of democracy abroad by military means has become what others have termed Wilsonianism in Boots. In itself a deeply liberal project it is now naturally identified with a hawkish Republican president. Dueck has managed to write a thorough account of Republican foreign policy as it was exercised from Republican White Houses. It is not, however, a major breakthrough in political science. A fascinating read it is nonetheless.

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