

we should not overlook the fact that within this context, there is still extensive corporate and political competition between China and others.

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**Politics and Strategy: Partisan Ambition and American Statecraft**  
*by Peter Trubowitz. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2011.*  
200 pp. \$24.95.

In the twenty-first century, the numerous and diverse challenges—security, economic, political—that the United States faces in a highly interdependent international system point to the need for an overarching grand strategy to guide foreign policy making. But the obstacles to developing such a strategy can be daunting, both substantively, in identifying long-term interests and the resources to achieve them, and politically, in building support for a doctrine to reshape policy priorities and choices. Peter Trubowitz’s ambitious undertaking to examine the development of grand strategy from the origins of the American Republic to the present significantly advances prospects for achieving such far-reaching goals.

To understand how grand strategies are created, this book identifies two contextual considerations that have consistently shaped their development over time: the risks in the international system, particularly the presence of a potential aggressor; and the domestic political environment, specifically political costs and benefits from investing in defense over social-welfare policies. Given these considerations, two variables serve to establish a fourfold classification for grand strategies, namely, ambition and cost. Highly ambitious states that are willing to expend resources on military capabilities tend to pursue imperialist strategies. States with lesser ambitions but extensive military resources typically pursue status quo strategies, though they may at times engage in preemptive war to maintain their place in the international system. Highly ambitious states that are not willing to sustain high military expenditures may pursue subversive strategies, such as blackmail, to achieve their ends. And less-ambitious states that keep defense spending low are likely to pursue such strategies as appeasement, isolationism, or neutrality.

After presenting this classification, the book examines a series of case studies from the nation’s founding into the twenty-first century, thereby illustrating how the model endures through the evolution of the American political system and the rise of the United States as a great power. In so doing, it skillfully presents new perspectives on traditional interpretations of grand strategies. Appeasement, for example, is commonly viewed as a failure of leadership by the head of state. This book makes the case that appeasement is better understood as competing challenges of threats from a foreign aggressor as well as domestic pressure to limit defense spending. Consequently, “In the context of the tug of war between foreign and domestic priorities,

appeasement emerged as a rational alternative to other strategies” (p. 45). To develop this argument, the text evaluates George Washington’s foreign policy leadership in the 1790s, Abraham Lincoln’s efforts to suppress British support for the Confederate states during the Civil War, and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s response to World War II before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The original approach to understanding national security strategy that this text offers makes a significant contribution to American politics and international relations. Without negating the importance of individual leadership, the analysis shows how political leaders may face heavy domestic constraints to pursuing an ambitious grand strategy abroad, and consequently are likely to pursue a deferential, if not isolationist, approach in foreign affairs. The concluding chapter also explores the applicability of the classification to non-democracies, thereby illustrating its broader relevance in explaining how the international system functions.

The perceptive analysis raises several questions for further research, most importantly, how states may adjust their grand strategies with a greater understanding of how ambition and cost constrain their opportunities. How might political leaders make use of patterns in grand strategy over time to develop long-term goals and build public support for their plans? Scholars of American politics and international relations alike will find a strong theoretical foundation along with extensive empirical material in this work for exploring such topics.

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**Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions** by Elizabeth N. Saunders. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2011. 320 pp. \$35.00.

In *The Federalist*, No. 70, Alexander Hamilton argues in favor of an executive office comprising one person, principally because that unitary structure will provide “energy in the executive,” which for Hamilton is a “leading character in the definition of good government.” Qualities directly associated with this unity–energy relationship include “decision, activity, secrecy, and dispatch.” This structural feature of the second branch of government would seem to make the identity of the president rather important. After all, the loss of one member of Congress leaves 534 legislators to soldier on. Change the president, however, and you end up with a completely different administration, even if subordinate personnel do not change.

This is a controversial assertion in some circles that see structural features or domestic actors and pressure groups as the dominant influences in presidential decision making. In *Leaders at War*, however, Elizabeth Saunders reverses the long-standing bias against personal agency, arguing for the significance of the individual leader when it comes to decisions to intervene militarily in other countries. In short, she joins Hamilton in arguing that it matters who is president.