

# The Academy of Political Science

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The book's approach is innovative and important. It represents an improvement over the globalization literature, which overstates the uniformity of a globalized world—something belied by the institutional, political, and cultural differences between regions and states, even those most closely tied to the global economy. It also improves upon realist, unipolar approaches that assume that the global hegemon shapes the international system but, by virtue of its superior power, is largely immune from influence from the rest of the world. Instead, Katzenstein indicates that “porous regions” can also shape both the policy environment and even the very identity of the United States in the contemporary era. In addition, the empirical chapters, in and of themselves, represent an important contribution, inasmuch as Katzenstein displays an unparalleled depth of knowledge about the two regions and about the politics, history, and culture of Germany and Japan.

The book, though, has a few stylistic and organizational weaknesses. In particular, the organization of the individual chapters and the book as a whole is often difficult to follow and leaves central concepts insufficiently explained until the end. For example, the central term *American imperium* is not adequately explained until the concluding chapter (pp. 209–217). *Porous regions* is similarly not defined clearly up front, creating some confusion about whether all regions have been made porous by globalization and internationalization or, as suggested in chapter 1, porous regions remain “relatively rare” (p. 3). Readers might also wish for a more systematic approach that would spell the argument out clearly up front, address its leading competitors, and present a clear plan for demonstrating the value-added of Katzenstein's theoretical framework.

Nonetheless, the book is a monumental work that will help shape the scholarly debate about the contemporary international system. It will be of considerable interest to specialists in international relations and historians—as well as amateurs—of American foreign policy.

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**How Congress Evolves: Social Bases of Institutional Change** by Nelson W. Polsby. New York, Oxford University Press, 2004. 272 pp. \$29.95.

Many different types of research methodologies must be accessed if one is to fully understand the U.S. Congress, partly because Congress is what Nelson Polsby refers to as a “transformative legislature” (Nelson W. Polsby, “Legislatures” in Philip Norton, ed., *Legislatures*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 129–148), and partly because it is a legislature in which power is relatively decentralized. The leading experts on Congress engage not only in macro-level studies involving, for example, statistical analyses of aggregative data, but also in detailed, micro-level studies of how members of Congress

behave and interact. The very small number of political scientists who can be regarded as experts on Congress have in common an encyclopedic knowledge of hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals who have served in Congress. Polsby is one of those experts, and his recent work provides an exemplary model of how the wealth of detail that supports the central arguments of a book need not get in the way of clear exposition, so that the arguments can be understood by expert and layperson alike. In *How Congress Evolves*, 155 pages of text are supported by 80 pages of footnotes, some of which will interest the experts as much as the text itself. Yet the main body of the book will engage anyone interested in how American politics works. It is an outstanding monograph, and its publication will be widely acclaimed.

Polsby's subject is how this legislature has changed, and his interest in long-term congressional transformation will come as no surprise to the many generations of students, scholars, and observers of Congress who continue to read his classic 1967 article on congressional institutionalization ["The Institutionalization of the US House of Representatives," *American Political Science Review* 62 (March 1968): 144–168]. In some sense, *How Congress Evolves* can be regarded as a (more important) sequel to the *APSR* article—in much the same way as the *Lord of the Rings* was to *The Hobbit*.

In his earlier work, Polsby explained how the contemporary, professionalized House of Representatives evolved from a body in which membership turnover had been high and the exercise of power within the chamber had depended largely on resources derived from outside of it. That professionalized chamber had become established between the end of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. Polsby's more recent concern is to explain how the working of an institutionalized Congress changed gradually during the second half of the twentieth century. In turn, his interest in that specific evolutionary path is used to develop a framework for understanding more generally the patterns of institutional evolution in Congress.

His central argument is that ultimately, the stable set of relations within Congress that had become established by the end of the New Deal were undermined by changes in the social bases of politics. In particular, Congress changed because Southern politicians changed, and the latter changed because the entire socioeconomic structure of the South changed. One of the main factors underlying this transformation was technological—the invention and general availability of air conditioning for domestic use. Until that occurred, the South remained a frontier (my word, and not his), into which there was little incentive for capital and populations to flow. With the advent of air conditioning, the South became a region that could attract skilled workers. This development undermined the long-standing basis for the conduct of politics in the South and, in turn, had a major impact on congressional behavior.

Yet my brief account of Polsby's main argument necessarily fails to do justice to the subtlety and complexity of his book, in which particular examples

are used so effectively to illustrate general themes. Undoubtedly, *How Congress Evolves* is destined to become a classic.

ALAN WARE  
Oxford University

**Off Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy** by Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2005. 272 pp. \$25.00.

Since the Bush administration took power in 2001, it has made a concerted effort with the Republican congressional leadership to push through policy that disproportionately benefits the most wealthy Americans and to reduce funding for and make sweeping changes to social welfare programs that are broadly supported by Americans. These policies have been achieved without an electoral backlash from the moderate middle of the electorate—the segment that should, theoretically, impose restraint on radical policies of both the left and the right. How is this possible when so many constitutional and structural facets of the American political system concentrate power in the hands of centrist voters and legislators?

*Off Center* delivers a forceful explanation of how the Republicans have achieved these policies. Contrary to the conventional wisdom and despite Republican electoral victories, the electorate is not becoming more conservative on the issues. Activists from both parties, however, have become more distant from the center of the American ideological spectrum, with Republican activists moving more than twice as far from the middle as Democratic activists (p. 27). So how have the Republicans been successful?

The answer is through the coordinated efforts of the Republican political machine, led by the “new power brokers” (p. 135). According to Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, the Republican machine is led by the most reactionary (conservative is a misnomer for this group) members of the party: Tom DeLay, Grover Norquist, and Karl Rove. The authors detail a number of ways in which moderate Republican legislators are kept in check by the power brokers, the least of which is the threat to fund conservative primary challengers to their reelection bids. The most important means of influence that the machine has is “backlash insurance ... strategies to keep moderates in line and shield party loyalists against political retaliation by moderate voters” (p. 12). Backlash insurance involves controlling the agenda, designing policy so that the long-term effects are not immediately noticeable, and crafting rhetoric that simultaneously highlights broadly desired policy outcomes while obfuscating their less popular effects (pp. 149–161). Hacker and Pierson acknowledge V.O. Key’s admonition that “voters are not fools,” but they argue instead that “on certain issues, many of them can be fooled” (p. 67). Their case study of the 2001 tax cut phase-ins for the wealthy is illustrative of the strategies associated with backlash insurance.