



The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict.

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in the confluence of politics and history extends state-centered analyses of political systems and their policy outputs. Launched by new institutionalism approaches a decade or more ago, the focus on how the presence or absence of state structures influences the policy articulation and accomplishments of societal actors not only "brought the state back in" but often resulted in significant cross-national comparisons between the United States and (usually) Western European nations. While often only implicit, these analyses had, as their subtext, historical premises about American political development that the current concentration on politics and history helps to explicate.

In this context, both of these books make important contributions. Martin Sklar highlights the relationship between the economic foundations of society and its political development, even as he all but excludes such basic legacies as the constitutional arrangement of political institutions. Yet it is this omission that informs Peter Nardulli's provocative collection. Those teaching graduate proseminars, therefore, would do well to consider both works. They feature contrasting themes, which, when taken together, broaden our understanding of American political development and the diverse intellectual landscape defining its terms of debate.

Northeastern University

EILEEN L. McDONAGH

The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict. By Susan Olzak. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992. 271p. \$32.50

Olzak offers an ambitious and insightful view into the workings of group conflict. Her contributions in this volume are both theoretical and empirical. She focuses her attention on the historical period from 1877 to 1914 in the United States. During this period, there were massive waves of immigration into this country, as well as internal migration. There were also periods of economic turbulence, accelerated industrialization, evolving and strained relations between races, and labor difficulties. There was violence as well, both white-on-black as well as against Asian and European immigrants. In short, this period contained a rich brew of conflict situations that makes it a perfect setting for the current study.

Olzak employs data from daily editions of the *New York Times*. She has collected a valuable body of data from a close reading of the actual newspaper articles rather than using the more limited information found in the *New York Times Index*. She identifies conflict situations from the largest 77 cities in the United States, and collects both qualitative (i.e., the type of conflict) and quantitative (i.e., how many people were involved) data for all observations. Olzak combines this information with additional social information relevant to the time period and pertinent to particular geographical regions. Her dominant empirical strategy is to use (wisely, in my view) event history analysis to unravel the major puzzles of the period.

The scope of Olzak's analyses is quite striking. She analyzes the influences of immigration and economic contraction on ethnically related events. She focuses particularly on labor unrest as it relates to violence against African-Americans. This later expands in the book to an analysis of lynchings and general urban

violence. The competition for jobs is an area that adds to her economic analyses. Finally, in a chapter co-authored by Elizabeth West, Olzak analyzes the birth and mortality of ethnic newspapers in relation to incidents of violent ethnic conflicts. Her results throughout, and particularly in the chapter on ethnic newspapers, are not always intuitive. Indeed, it is precisely because she comes up with so many logical but nonobvious conclusions that her work is so valuable.

Olzak's basic argument is that competition is the driving mechanism behind most ethnic conflict. She challenges previous theories that suggest that ethnic conflict arises from things like relative deprivation, modernization and development, and assimilation difficulties that result in threats to an existing ethnically defined balance of power. One of her primary hypotheses is that ethnic conflict arises not from the separation and relative deprivation of groups, but rather from the breakdown of the former social order that kept the groups apart. It is when groups mix that they begin to compete. Essentially, they compete for the same limited resources, and Olzak's perspective is not unlike that of a typical population biologist who sees much of the world in terms of competing species.

Olzak's arguments lead to some highly interesting observations. For example, she claims that violence against African-Americans can result when another group (i.e., not African-Americans) migrates into an area, thereby increasing the competition for jobs among white Americans. Thus, it is not necessary for the in-migrating group to experience the conflict (although that may happen initially), even though that group's activities may be the ultimate cause of the struggle. Conflict with the initial immigrants can subside while whites escalate their attacks on African-Americans. All of this is connected to the idea of competition for resources (e.g., jobs) between members of differing ethnic groups.

From an empirical perspective, Olzak makes her points using both tables and some useful plots. I find her empirical analyses to be both competently executed and creatively designed. However, one of her primary contributions is in the realm of theory. Her view is one that is rooted in time-dependent dynamics, not static social conditions, and I am certain that all scholars will find something either to praise or to contest among her many findings and conclusions. Ultimately, she is not saying that humans fight because there are injustices in the world, but rather because the injustices are in evolutionary processes of decay that cause groups to interact in new ways. To use a meteorological comparison, wind (read "conflict") occurs not because there is a high pressure area next to a low pressure area. Rather, wind begins when the ridge that separates the two pressure systems begins to break down and the air masses from the two systems begin to mix.

Some may even find that Olzak's views challenge their basic notion of human rationality in situations of collective conflict, since her perspective could be interpreted as more oriented along the lines of stimulus-response than in action based on decision-making and the availability of information. In short, Olzak has written an extremely interesting book, filled both with the intelligent analysis of data as well as theoretical conclusions that are both provocative and compelling.

The publication of *The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict* serves a useful secondary purpose. Many

(but by no means all) of the results in this book have appeared in article form in a variety of settings. Olzak's prolific writings needed to be organized into a coherent thesis, and this book does this nicely. She has an interesting theory about group conflict, she argues her points effectively, and she leaves the reader with much to ponder. It is a book to be recommended to all those interested in the social structural mechanisms of volatile group interactions.

Emory University

COURTNEY BROWN

Out of Order. By Thomas E. Patterson. New York: Knopf, 1993. 301p. \$23.00.

This well-written book explores the mass media's influence in presidential elections. No previous study better documents the difference that media-dominated campaigns have made to American politics. Full of epigrammatic insights, this study combines exhaustive empirical research with trenchant normative observation. *Out of Order* argues that the media and especially television have replaced political parties as the chief screening agencies for presidential candidates. The results are baleful. The year 1960 was the turning point. Television news began drawing large audiences, and the parties started relying heavily upon primaries to select convention delegates. The parties abdicated much of their king-making function, the media generated more authority in the winnowing process. Simultaneously, they have increasingly portrayed presidential candidates as irredeemable liars and hypocrites.

Patterson argues convincingly that journalists fail to distinguish between trivial, politically necessary, or correctable dissembling (exaggerating opponents' liabilities, denying adultery) and lying that undermines the basis of elections. The latter occurs when candidates deliberately deceive voters as to their policy intentions. Patterson's research systematically reveals that contrary to the media's suspicions, elected candidates normally do keep their word: they pursue and often deliver the policies they promise.

According to Patterson, media coverage nonetheless assumes and conveys that essentially everything candidates say is motivated by politics. As such, journalists hold, it can safely be categorized as manipulative sloganeering. This assumption bolsters the well-documented tendency for campaign journalism to focus on the horse race—who's ahead, who's behind, what strategies are working, what new strategies are planned. Even when reporters discuss issues, the view that candidates' positions are just part of the game plan permeates coverage. All this not only reduces the public's ability to learn about the candidates' public character, record, and policy plans, but it trains Americans in cynicism.

Among the book's most useful features is a series of tables tracing aspects of coverage from 1960 through 1992. One documents the growing analytical orientation of campaign news. No longer is a detached voice the norm. Reporters habitually air opinionated evaluations of candidates. The assessments focus not on substance but on the quality of campaign gamesmanship. The data suggest that descriptive material comprised over 90% of front-page coverage in the *New York Times* in 1960; by 1992, description accounted for under 20% and interpretation over 80%.

The historical-trend data also show that the proportion of stories framed in terms of policy has plunged from over 50% in 1960 to less than 20%, while game or horse-race coverage has risen from 45% to about 80%. During the same period, the balance of good versus bad news about candidates has shifted from 75% good in the earlier campaign to about 60% bad in 1988 and 1992.

There is always room for criticism of coding decisions: What exactly comprises good or bad news? Might the nature of good and bad news vary with candidates and campaigns? Is horse-race news not sometimes intertwined with issue coverage? But Patterson marshals much evidence supporting the basic validity of his argument. For example, in the same 1960–92 period, the proportion of the public responding unfavorably to both major party nominees has gone from about 20% to over 50%. The length of sound bites on television has shrunk markedly; and, Patterson shows, so has the length of candidate quotes in the *New York Times*. In all media, the derisive, prognosticating voice of the reporter is subsuming the policy voice of the candidates.

One specific example that Patterson cites is a report on candidate Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign speech to a labor group. A network report featured a sound bite of Clinton saying, of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), "I'm reviewing it carefully, and when I have a definitive opinion, I will say so. It's a very long and complex document." The reporter then says: "Time out! Clinton has a reputation as a committed policy wonk who soaks up details like a sponge, but on an issue which will likely cost him votes no matter what side he takes, the onetime Rhodes scholar is a conveniently slow learner" (p. 6).

Patterson points out that the NAFTA document was 1,078 pages long and argues: "To suggest . . . that the 'policy wonk' Clinton should know every part of it and flatly accept or reject it in its entirety is disingenuous. Worse than that, it is fatuous. It assumes that having a fixed opinion on every aspect of every issue . . . displays true leadership, and that any hesitation or objection on a candidate's part is a practiced deception" (p. 16). This passage exemplifies the straightforward and lucid normative analysis that the book weaves through its empirical narrative.

The author believes that because the press filters innovative policy proposals through the cynical horse-race schema, the news often punishes candidates for talking in earnest about policy. The coverage tends to portray debate about substantive proposals as campaign-threatening controversies. A classic example was McGovern's proposed negative income tax: originated by Milton Friedman, the media treated this proposal as a gaffe, helping to stigmatize McGovern as a leftist radical. At the same time, notes Patterson, the media frequently chastize candidates for avoiding honest, original, detailed issue stands. Damned if they do and damned if they don't, candidates begin resembling the cautious beasts that the media construct.

No book is perfect. While Patterson's own content-analytical material is enlightening, he sometimes buttresses his claims with others' questionable data. For example, he cites research claiming that only 2% of the Fall campaign coverage in 1992 focused on the "character" issue for Bill Clinton (p. 195). Others might have coded the many mentions of "family values," "trust," Jennifer Flowers, "Slick Willy," and similar phrases as oblique or direct comments on Clinton's character. The