

the last decade, statistical methodology has made considerable progress in precisely the areas in which Lebow finds it lacking: counterfactual comparison (matching), contingency and overdetermination (also known as causal complexity), accounting for the many ways in which cases might be nonindependent, regularly reporting substantive as well as statistical significance, and so on.

Nevertheless, the larger point—that the contribution, in particular cases, of idiosyncratic factors that would typically be relegated to the positivist “error term” is not only nontrivial but occasionally crucial—both sustains attention and compels serious thought about how to incorporate such factors into other forms of research. For that reason alone, *Forbidden Fruit* should be read, and discussed widely, by students of international relations who are interested in pushing the methodology of their subfield forward.

The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free. By Christopher A. Preble. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009. 232p. \$26.95 cloth.

American Foreign Policy and the Politics of Fear: Threat Inflation Since 9/11. Edited by Trevor A. Thrall and Jane K. Cramer. New York: Routledge, 2009. 238p. \$160.00 cloth, \$39.95 paper.
doi:10.1017/S1537592711001356

— Sarah E. Kreps, *Cornell University*

The Iraq war has produced a number of postmortem accounts, both among policymakers and scholars. And rightly so. Combat operations in Iraq endured longer than any American war other than Afghanistan and Vietnam. The costs, according to the Congressional Research Service, were higher than any American war other than World War II—all in a country that we now know may have been a security menace but not the existential threat trumpeted on the way to war. The combination of high costs and an unnecessary war raises a number of important questions: Why did the United States overestimate the threat? Did it intentionally inflate the threat to generate support from the domestic audience? What was the role of domestic institutions, including the military services, Congress, and the media, in contributing to the overestimated or inflated threat? What have the consequences been, and what can we learn in order to avoid making those same mistakes again?

Those questions are at the center of two recent books on American foreign policy after Iraq. The first is an edited volume, *American Foreign Policy and the Politics of Fear*. The polemical title belies a set of contributions far more diverse than one might guess. Indeed, there are contributors such as Chaim Kaufmann who argue that Bush Administration officials “knew what policy they intended to pursue and selected intelligence assessments to promote that policy based

on their political usefulness, not their credibility” (p. 100). Similarly, Jane K. Cramer asserts that “it is now well known that the Bush Administration intentionally inflated the Iraqi threat as it worked to mobilize public and congressional support for an invasion of Iraq” (p. 135).

In contrast, Robert Jervis argues that threat inflation was not a sin of commission but, rather, omission. Beliefs that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and might use them were plausible because of his history of using chemical weapons against the Iranians and Kurds, decades-long efforts to develop nuclear weapons, and repeated attempts to foil United Nations sanctions and inspections. Thus, “almost everyone interpreted the scattered and ambiguous evidence as showing that Saddam Hussein had vigorous WMD programs” (p. 25). Daniel Kahneman and Jonathan Renshon’s emphasis on cognitive biases that favor hawkish views would also favor the conclusion that threat inflation resulted not as an attempt to manipulate but from a failure to examine alternative scenarios.

These divergent accounts are representative of the edited volume as a whole. Indeed, one of its strengths is that while the contributors cohere around a central question, not to be taken for granted for an edited volume, they sometimes use the other authors as their theoretical foils. For Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer Lobasz, for example, Kaufmann and Jon Western’s assumption of an executive with information advantages on issues of foreign affairs exaggerates the leader’s bully pulpit and underplays the independent role of the media. For John E. Mueller and Benjamin H. Friedman, the assumption that the United States underreacted to the threat of terrorism before 9/11 is dubious. In fact, the law-enforcement approach of the 1990s was perfectly consistent with the threat of terrorism, which, without an ability to acquire and deploy nuclear weapons, they argue, cannot inflict much damage (p. 195). Such conflicting views, far from detracting from the volume, amount to one of its great virtues. Taken together, they raise important and theoretically unanswered questions about threat perception and puzzle through this historically significant episode of conflict.

For all the volume’s strengths, its tendency to focus on the Iraq war may limit the strength of its more general conclusions. For example, drawing inferences from the Iraq case alone may lead us to overpredict instances of threat inflation, exaggeration, or overestimation. Nonetheless, there are natural trade-offs between depth and breadth, and this volume is an excellent first step toward assembling cross-case evidence that might allow us to make more robust generalizations concerning when leaders are more likely to under- or overestimate threats and the conditions under which the marketplace of ideas functions properly or improperly.

If *The Politics of Fear* is a response to the Iraq war, *The Power Problem* is a response not just to that war but also to

the so-called good war in Afghanistan. The overarching message of the book is a policy prescription: Come Home, America. As the subtitle of the book suggests, America's strength is its Achilles heel. To support this claim, Christopher A. Preble peppers the book with eye-opening numbers and threads it with a convincing logic: The United States spends two times as much on its military than its NATO allies combined, 74 times what Iran spends, and 24 times India's military spending. These exorbitant Pentagon expenditures—which represent 93% of all American spending on foreign affairs—go toward high personnel costs, obsolete technologies in the F-22 fighter plane, and the maintenance of an oversized nuclear arsenal. The problem is not simply the costs, although it is that, too, especially in tight economic times. The problem is one of technological determinism. Once the United States has a large, well-equipped military, it feels compelled to use it. In other words, having equipped itself with a fancy hammer, everything is bound to look like a nail. The result is that the United States becomes overextended and its needless interventions provoke counterbalancing efforts that threaten American interests.

Who is the villain in this story? Preble cites Congress as a primary one. The defense industry has strategically placed its facilities in every congressional district, making the preservation of major weapon systems a bipartisan affair. Killing the V-22 Osprey aircraft, for example, was structurally impossible, since doing so would effectively kill jobs in representatives' home districts, which would amount to political suicide.

What are the answers to this conundrum of how power becomes a predicament? First and paradoxically, Congress is not just the problem but one of the solutions. While it has helped finance the large, unwieldy military, it is also, in principle, the institution that can constrain its use. The problem is that in practice, the motivation for Congress to appear hawkish typically mirrors that of the executive. According to a number of accounts, including Cramer's in the previous volume, norms of militarized patriotism in the United States caused Democratic members of Congress to vote in favor of the Iraq war in order to appear strong on national security after 9/11. If indeed these militarized norms are present, then Congress is unlikely to play the moderating role that Preble hopes.

A second answer to the problem of a large and overreaching military is public scrutiny. As Preble notes, the current strategy—and by “current” he means the Bush Doctrine—of preventive and expansive war “doesn't align with the wishes of the American people” (p. 167). That the public's support should be a sine qua non for the use of force seems consistent with democratic principles but is potentially unwise in practice. It assumes that the public is enlightened and informed. It assumes that the public is more restrained in its preferences on force than the executive, when public opinion data often tell a different story.

After all, the public actually supported the Iraq war (albeit generally favoring a multilateral approach) before the administration began making the case for war and has continued to support operations in Afghanistan despite a number of qualified observers who now refer to those operations as a war of choice. According to public opinion polls taken in 2009–10, a strong majority of the American public has indicated a willingness to use force to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Such enthusiasm suggests that attending to public opinion could actually encourage intervention when the executive might otherwise be more restrained.

A third answer is to exhaust diplomatic and economic instruments before using force, and to use only force to defend the American way of life, as Preble puts it. As the edited volume cautions us, however, elite framing can have a strong influence on whether the public, Congress, and the media ultimately come to support a particular use of force. As Trevor A. Thrall points out with the case of the Iraq war, support tended not to be contingent solely on the facts but on framing. Elites can probably frame almost any use of force as a mission to defend American values. Thus, the criterion that an intervention only be undertaken on this principle is indeterminate at best, easily manipulated at worst.

Although some of these criteria for the use of force might be difficult to adhere to in practice, they certainly appear persuasive in a world of vast American budget deficits and open-ended wars. Indeed, the message of retrenchment finds support from an unlikely advocate: Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. That Gates would go against all theories of bureaucratic politics to support reduced defense spending suggests that Preble is very much onto something.

How Wars End. By Dan Reiter. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. 320p. \$65.00 cloth, \$26.95 paper.

Paths to Peace: Domestic Coalition Shifts, War Termination and the Korean War. By Elizabeth A. Stanley. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. 408p. \$60.00 cloth. doi:10.1017/S1537592711001368

— Branislav L. Slantchev, *University of California, San Diego*

What causes wars to end? Many years ago, Geoffrey Blainey (see *The Causes of War*, 1973) argued that if wars begin because states disagree about relative power and their inflated war expectations prevent them from finding a mutually acceptable deal that would preserve the peace, then wars end because combat provides the “stinging ice of reality” that corrects their estimates and opens up the road to agreement. Since this pioneering work, studies of crisis bargaining have proliferated, while the question of war termination has been relatively neglected. The two books under review are among the very few attempts to fill that glaring hole. What is especially intriguing is that whereas both studies