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# Grand Strategy in Theory and Practice

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of advocacy for a British rearmament policy, and ideological opposition to Nazism serves as a powerful contrast to Chamberlain's flawed use of *Realpolitik*.

Bew breaks less original ground in the post-1945 period, as *Realpolitik* in the postwar United States is decidedly intertwined with the much-discussed "realist" school of foreign policy exemplified by academics such as Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. The term's Germanic origins and use by discredited proponents of the Second and Third Reichs undoubtedly contributed to a period of limited use, even by self-proclaimed realists. Bew's narrative, post-1945, begins to merge into the broader discussion of the different schools of American foreign policy that emerged during the Cold War—an area of much previous research without room for the compelling scholarship offered in this book's early chapters. Like all who study "realism," Bew is drawn to an extended meditation on Henry Kissinger and his influence on U.S. foreign policy. Refreshingly, Bew is cognizant of the subtlety and nuance of Kissinger's worldview and refuses to paint that enigmatic figure with an overly broad brush.

*Realpolitik: A History* is an important contribution to international relations scholarship, not least for resurrecting Ludwig von Rochau and the origins of *Realpolitik*. Bew is to be credited with tracing the term's evolution in multiple countries with different political cultures with relative ease and skill, showing time and again the slow metamorphosis of the term into something far different from what its creator intended. Particularly in the interwar appeasement debate, *Realpolitik* found itself misused toward ends that were anything but realist. More

broadly, the term has been twisted to mean any policy that is believed to lack a moral foundation or, from the contrary viewpoint, is seen as grounded in realistic levelheadedness. As Bew's narrative ends and the term is gradually subsumed into the broader tradition of American realism, the reader is reminded of the inherent flimsiness of the structure of so many of the terms endemic to the debate over American foreign policy. Professor Bew's new book is a helpful antidote to such rhetorical laziness.

ALEXANDER B. GRAY



*Grand Strategy in Theory and Practice*, by William C. Martel. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015. 548 pages. \$115.

"The main goal of this book," Martel writes, "is to provide contemporary policy makers and scholars with a rigorous historic and analytic framework for evaluating and conducting grand strategy" (p. ix). Acknowledging that the term itself is "relatively new," although its concepts certainly can be found throughout history, Martel credits academics during World War II (particularly "the founder of modern grand strategy, Edward Mead Earle") with being the first to focus on a nation's "highest political ends," employing all elements of national power—"diplomatic, informational, military, economic"—to achieve global, long-term security goals (pp. 23, 25, 30). He thus elevates grand strategy above "strategy," "operations," "tactics," and "technology" while acknowledging that for most of history "strategy"—how to achieve overall military victory—was

largely identical with “grand strategy” when the other components of national power were inconsequential. Thus, until the twentieth century, the Royal Navy—not English ambassadors nor the East India Company nor the inventors of steam power—dominated Britannia’s grand strategy because it determined Great Britain’s strategy, i.e., its means of winning important wars.

Martel’s theoretical presentation explains strategic thinkers from Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke through Jomini, Clausewitz, Smith, Hamilton, and List. From the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, Martel reviews Philip II, Frederick II, Napoleon, Bismarck, and Metternich, then examines the apogees and declines of the British and Ottoman Empires.

“Revolutionary” thinkers—Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Hitler, and Ho—are also covered because of their impact on the contemporary world. However, “[w]ith the advent of thermonuclear weapons, classic approaches to strategy [for military victory] became largely irrelevant, having lost any practical meaning in the face of intolerable urban destruction, if not the annihilation of societies and humanity itself. This development effectively shifted strategy from its historical foundations of how to win wars to how to avoid wars” (p. 121).

Turning in the second half of this book to American history, Martel asserts that the nation’s grand strategy fundamentally has been that of neither a “status-quo” state nor a “revolutionary” one; it consistently has been that of a “gradualist” state, always seeking change but never rapid and radical change.

“Restraining Sources of Disorder” is the chapter title for American foreign policy

from Theodore Roosevelt through Franklin D. Roosevelt. Since 1945, the United States has opposed revolutionaries but supported democratic-leaning reform. (Critics certainly would argue specifics, pointing to instances of American to-the-hilt backing of undemocratic rule when specific economic, political, or military priorities submerged sensitivity to social justice.)

The heart of Martel’s descriptive review of American grand strategy and his prescriptive conclusion on the future of that strategy rest on three principles that Martel argues always must be balanced. The first is that the domestic foundations of American economic, military, diplomatic, and social power have to be strong. (It is illuminating to view two centuries of American foreign policy from the internal perspective of the influence of slavery, territorial expansion, isolationism, and economic development rather than the usual wars, crises, and treaties. On the other hand, when Martel’s “domestic foundations” of national strength extend to “education, health care, and retirement systems,” questions about prioritization naturally arise [p. 355].)

The second principle, of leading efforts to restrain “sources of disorder that present direct threats to U.S. vital interests,” is complicated by Martel’s assertion that “America needs to stand for and defend principles that promote human rights and dignity, equality for all peoples—men and women—freedom of expression, free enterprise, and fair elections” (pp. 357–58). Thus, realist attempts to distinguish American “vital interests” from Wilsonian idealism are rejected. But how then are extensive economic relations with China or Saudi Arabia to be weighed in light of

blatant human rights violations if all are “American vital interests”? Yes, it can be done—but the argument is less clear.

Martel’s final principle is that the nation must strengthen alliances and partnerships to promote shared responsibilities effectively to solve global problems. Recognizing that American power is limited, Martel counsels against temptations toward either American overreach or American withdrawal on key global and regional problems.

Martel applies these principles to “current” foreign policy issues to illustrate their utility; the inevitable drawback to such relevance is the danger of “shelf life” interest, i.e., how long will readers care about or even recall foreign policy specifics from 2014? Conversely, some topics that seem important at the time of this writing (e.g., violent Wahhabism, Russian aggressiveness) receive little attention.

A weakness of generalized, historically centered summaries of policy decisions is the tendency to see, in retrospect, clear choices and definite paths, but to underestimate the uncertainty and angst that decision makers suffered. By contrast, specific case studies (e.g., the Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam, the 2003 Iraq war, the 2008 economic crisis) always show the confusion and fear. Martel’s sweeping review gives surprisingly little attention to the fact that nearly all grand strategy decisions are made while under risk or amid uncertainty by those who are fraught with anxiety and apprehension, and constitute gambles on guesses rather than calm choices about how best to balance good principles and achieve optimal outcomes. Martel—who certainly understood the policy-making process—might have replied that the

purpose of his final book was to advise policy makers and scholars on how such decisions should be made, rather than to describe how they will feel while doing so. But readers might have benefited from at least an acknowledgment of this apprehension, the way Bill Martel used to offer a cheerful but sympathetic smile to friends and students struggling with problems he had posed to us.

The date of this book’s release—12 January 2015—was the day its author died at the age of fifty-nine after a yearlong battle with leukemia. Bill Martel was for ten years a professor of international security studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University (where he received the James L. Paddock award for teaching excellence) and an adjunct electives professor at the Naval War College. Previously, he had taught in the College’s National Security Decision Making Department for half a dozen years, following a similar period as founding director of the Air Force’s Center for Strategy and Technology at the Air War College. He also had served as an adviser to the National Security Council and the Romney 2012 presidential campaign. This reviewer was one of his many colleagues and students who counted themselves blessed by his friendship.

THOMAS GRASSEY



*The Struggle for Sea Power: A Naval History of the American Revolution*, by Sam Willis. New York: W. W. Norton, 2016. 608 pages. \$35 (Kindle \$16.05).

Sam Willis describes (p. 5) the war for American independence as “the most