

Reviews

Moral Movements and Foreign Policy by Joshua W. Busby. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 327 pp., paperback, 978 0521125666

Most political science and international relations theory presumes that valid causal explanations emerge from the analysis of the self-interest, usually fairly crude material self-interest, of relevant actors and institutions. The ambitious reductionism of Bruce Bueno de Mesquita (briefly addressed in the conclusion of this book), which purports to explain all foreign policy outcomes by politicians' desires to remain in office and to enrich themselves, can be taken as emblematic. Busby argues that such materialistic rationalism can take us only so far. First, it is clear that people involved in various 'advocacy movements' – for example, to ban landmines or save the whale – are primarily motivated by moral value considerations. Second, such movements sometimes succeed in having their goals adopted, in whole or in part, by various states. Busby's concern is to investigate the conditions for their success or failure. Eschewing any simple, direct causal line between advocacy and achievement, he develops a subtle and nuanced explanatory model that accommodates value motivations (as well as other motives, such as prestige and reputation) that operate in addition to the omnipresent and complex interplay of interests. This model he tests by process tracing particular outcomes for several causes pursued by advocacy groups – Third World debt relief, climate change, combating AIDS, and founding the International Criminal Court.

Busby's model deploys, in effect, the elements that Aristotle identified as determining the success of any rhetoric: the inherent persuasiveness of the argument (for Busby the content or message, which must be successfully 'framed'); the authority and trustworthiness of the speaker (for Busby the identity and perceived character of the 'messenger'); and the speaker's capacity to appeal emotionally to the relevant audience (for Busby a matter of 'cultural fit' with the values of a society, but particularly of 'gatekeepers' among political elites). Relatively weak advocacy groups must win 'frame contests' with opponents if they are to succeed, first, in gaining attention for a cause and, second, in mobilising support behind it. Their chances are enhanced or diminished depending on the number of gatekeepers they must persuade, which in turn depends on the centralisation or pluralism of particular political systems. (The concept of gatekeepers is a refinement of veto player analysis, which recognises that many players lacking veto power nevertheless have the capacity to obstruct.) Their chances are also affected by the perceived costs (material and other) of adopting a cause, whether high or low, as well as its perceived importance. For Busby, seeking

to carve out a space for value motives and 'specify the conditions under which values based appeals, in combination with other factors, influence state behaviour' (p. 42), the most salient cases are those which have a high fit with gatekeeper values but also high perceived costs of implementation.

In each of the detailed case studies that occupy the bulk of the book, Busby begins by demonstrating the, at best, partial success of conventional material interest explanations, then proceeds to offer a more complete explanation using his 'framing meets gatekeepers' model. The results are by and large persuasive. A concluding chapter considers the future of principled advocacy under the straitened circumstances of financial crisis as well as various lessons that advocacy groups might take away from the work. Indeed, there is much to learn here about the histories of particular causes and of the conditions for success or failure of principled advocacy in general. The book is also a valuable theoretical corrective to so called 'realist' orientations (and even constructivist ones), that succeeds in showing how value commitments can and do play influentially in the real world (or at least the liberal democratic part of it). It is accessibly written, subtly and sensitively argued, and recommended to students of politics and international relations.

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The Future History of the Arctic by Charles Emmerson. London: Bodley Head, 2010. 432 pp., £20.00 hardcover, 978 1847920256.

The Arctic Ocean, which separates North America from Russia, was smack in the middle of the Cold War. Nuclear submarines prowled the depths while long range bombers circled overhead. Now, climate change and peak oil create a risk of new struggles for territory and resources. In August 2007, Artur Chilingarov, the flamboyant deputy speaker of the Russian Duma, caused a global media frenzy by planting a titanium flag on the seabed at the North Pole and declaring 'the Arctic is Russian'.

Yet there is also a strong cooperative dimension to Arctic politics. In 1990, Moscow and Washington negotiated a maritime boundary in the Bering Strait. In 1996, the eight Arctic countries – Russia, the US, Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland – created the Arctic Council to provide an intergovernmental forum for the discussion of nonmilitary issues.