



2015-059

William G. Howell, Saul P. Jackman, and Jon C. Rogowski, *The Wartime President: Executive Influence and the Nationalizing Politics of Threat*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp. xxi, 344. ISBN 978-0-226-04839-0.

Review by Samuel B. Hoff, Delaware State University (shoff@desu.edu).

In *The Wartime President*, William Howell (Univ. of Chicago), Saul Jackman (Brookings Institution), and Jon Rogowski (Washington Univ. in St. Louis) investigate “how presidents manage to enact domestic and foreign policy during war that would be unattainable during peace” (xiii). They tackle two deficiencies in similar studies to date<sup>1</sup>—lack of theoretical rigor and of empirical evidence. Their book is an outgrowth of workshops, a one-day conference, and previous publications. It relies on original formal modeling, analysis of other research, and philosophical and scientific interpretations of war’s impact on presidential powers. The authors state in their preface that

[T]his is not a book about the president’s ability to wage war.... Instead, [it] critically examines the proposition that during wars presidents can exercise a measure of influence over goings-on at home that eludes them during peace—that is, that presidents can leverage wars to advance policies that have more to do with the lives of everyday citizens than the mobilization of troops on the battlefield.... Though our basic conclusions are unlikely to surprise, the breadth of our evidence of wartime influence may. (xv)

The volume contains five parts: I, “Background” (chap. 1); II, “Theorizing about Interbranch Bargaining during War” (chaps. 2–3); III, “Empirical Investigations” (chaps. 4–7); IV, “Conclusion” (chap. 8); and V, “Appendixes.” In the first chapter, “War and the American Presidency,” the authors discuss the views of the Constitution’s framers, political philosophers, and political scientists on the link between war and increased presidential power. They identify differences over how and why a president’s prerogatives increase in wartime and why they sometimes become more constrained domestically. They note that there has been little investigation of how presidential authority changes during a given single war of some specific magnitude. The authors believe, after surveying six quantitative studies, that they would be improved by a more precise definition of war and by treating war as an independent rather than a control variable.

In chapter 2, “The Policy Priority Model,” the authors construct a theory of interbranch relations that refines existing models in two significant ways: by arguing that a single policy can generate two outcomes—one at the national level, another at the local—and by recognizing that a president and members of Congress may assign different weights to each outcome. The policy priority model supposes that presidential influence increases as Congress members favor national over local outcomes.

Chapter 3, “The Model’s Predictions about Modern U.S. Wars,” dissects several modern wars, including World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The authors contend that World War II and the Afghanistan conflict have been the most significant in terms of the salience of national outcomes and so amplified presidential power more than did other wars.

The authors next test their model using available data. Their analysis of federal budgets in chapter 4, “Spending in War and in Peace,” shows that that congressional budgets most closely reflected presidential preferences during World War II and the post-9/11 period.

In chapter 5, “Voting in War and in Peace,” the authors assess roll call votes and various ideological indicators to demonstrate that “frequently the beginning of war yields a Congress more inclined to vote in

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1. E.g., Edward Corwin, *Total War and the Constitution* (NY: Knopf, 1947), Clinton Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship: Crisis Governance in Modern Democracies* (NY: Transaction Pub., 1948), Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *War and the American Presidency* (NY: Norton, 2004), and Peter Irons, *War Powers: How the Imperial Presidency Hijacked the Constitution* (NY: Metropolitan Books, 2005).

ways that reflect the ideological orientation of the president then in office. Upon the end of the war, however, the voting records of members of Congress take a turn in the opposite direction” (179).

Chapter 6, “Case Studies I: Illustrations,” reveals that three major conflicts permitted presidents to pursue otherwise unpopular domestic policies. American participation in World War I made it possible for President Woodrow Wilson to effectively control most segments of the domestic economy. After Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt was better able to steer national labor policy. After the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush succeeded in getting the Patriot Act through Congress.

In chapter 7, “Case Studies II: Challenges,” the authors consider exceptions to and limitations of their model. President Dwight Eisenhower, for example, was able to take advantage of the Soviet Union’s peacetime Sputnik launch to advance a federal education policy. President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society legislation passed despite of the Vietnam War, not because of it. Finally, George W. Bush failed in his efforts to privatize Social Security at the beginning of his second term,<sup>2</sup> even as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq continued.

In the final chapter, “Summaries, Speculations, and Extensions,” the authors observe that “it is because wars change *how* members of Congress think about policies generally that wars alter *what* members think about specific policy alternatives” (262). As for future research, they suggest evaluating factors besides war that may elevate national priorities and outcomes. They conclude that “Presidential power is now and always shall be contested. But as long as war looms large in the American conscience, presidents will have an important advantage in their dealings with Congress” (271).

Recently, another strand of political science research has highlighted how other elements of the American political system impact war policies and presidential power. For instance, Adam Berinsky<sup>3</sup> has investigated the influence of American public opinion during war. Amanda DiPaolo<sup>4</sup> has analyzed links between wartime presidential powers and federal court decision making. Finally, Rebecca Thorpe<sup>5</sup> has studied the politics of US military spending, finding that expenditures have remained high even in periods of international calm. Though her results ostensibly contradict the premises of the policy priority model, a common assumption is that war is becoming more commonplace, even normalized. Given this trend, it is difficult to agree with Howell et al. that their model underestimates the president’s role in wartime.

The authors’ analysis goes far to explain why the commander in chief can so successfully pursue domestic policy during wartime. Their intelligent use of statistical tests is compelling, even if results vary by wars and by legislative chambers. The case-study exceptions to their model do not diminish its utility. However, the authors’ almost exclusive focus on Afghanistan obscures the distinct relevance of the Iraq war. Unfortunately, the authors’ observation about US hegemony in the international arena is undercut by recent data showing that America has lost its title as the world’s largest economy and by the conscious effort by the Barack Obama administration to lessen US military footprints abroad.

*The Wartime President* may be intended for a general audience, but its academic orientation and empirical rigor make it best suited to graduate courses on the presidency, public policy, or American military history.

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2. See his *Decision Points* (NY: Crown, 2010) 305–6, and Simmi Aujla, “George W. Bush Regrets Not Reforming Social Security,” *Politico* (22 Oct 2010).

3. *In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq* (Chicago: U Chicago Pr, 2009).

4. *Zones of Twilight: Wartime Presidential Powers and Federal Court Decision Making* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

5. *The American Warfare State: The Domestic Politics of Military Spending* (Chicago: U Chicago Pr, 2014).