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Book Review: The Logic of Political Survival, by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow

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The Tragic Vision of Politics is an impressive and humanistic work characterized by wide reading in history, philosophy and the classics. It represents a powerful revival and reinterpretation of the classical realist tradition. Indeed, the very design of the book draws upon the methods of Lebow's classical sources, illustrating nuanced practical and moral lessons through vivid historical example. One of the interesting features of the book is Lebow's own recognition that each classical author is open to multiple readings. Many contemporary realists will no doubt point to elements in the work of Thucydides, Clausewitz and Morgenthau that are not emphasized by Lebow. For example, Clausewitz was concerned by the specter of modern warfare—but he also stressed that war is a legitimate tool of state policy. Morgenthau applauded traditional ethical constraints on the use of force—but he also insisted on what he called the moral dignity of the national interest, while asserting that moral pronouncements in foreign policy are generally self-interested rationalizations on the part of each political actor. Lebow's work is subtle and candid enough to admit these tensions and contradictions. But if classical realists such as Clausewitz and Morgenthau have been misinterpreted as straightforward proponents of *realpolitik*, it is because they often sound that way in their own work.

One tension that is harder to contain lies in Lebow's critique of modern realism for its supposed impact on American foreign policy. On the one hand, Lebow criticizes contemporary realists for sheltering themselves from current policy debates within the arcane world of systems theory. On the other hand, he criticizes them for having a major, negative impact on American diplomacy, in that narrow self-interest has been elevated above considerations of justice or even prudence. But surely these two criticisms cannot both be true. It seems more likely, to this reviewer at least, that contemporary forms of academic realism have had very little influence on the actual conduct of American diplomacy. Indeed, modern realists such as Kenneth Waltz have openly and consistently warned against the dangers of aggressive idealism and over-ambition in America's post-Cold War foreign policy—to little avail. Contemporary academic realists come to their policy recommendations by a different route than Lebow, but most of them would probably not disagree with his ultimate conclusion: that Americans better avoid the dangers of hubris and over-expansion, if they do not want to go the way of ancient Athens.

Colin Dueck, *University of Colorado*

The Logic of Political Survival. By Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. Pp. 536. \$40.00.)

This sprawling and impressive book is the product of a project that reaches back over a decade. Exemplifying the growing trend to cross-over and blur the lines between international and comparative politics, this book crosses levels of

analysis by dealing with two-level games as well as investigating the interactions among politics, economics, and the foreign policy making process (all within a context of democratic theory). Not a quick or easy read, this volume is rich in theory, data, and the empirical analysis of key questions in international and comparative politics. Its multiple methods approach includes formal models, quantitative data analysis, an extensive use of historical cases (the Magna Carta, the evolution of governance in Sparta, eunuchs in the Tang dynasty, the Caliphate following the death of Muhammad, Mamluk Egypt, terms limits in the Roman Republic and Athens, Leopold II's rule in Belgium and the Congo, kleptocracy in Mobutu's Zaire, etc.), and draws upon a number of political philosophers (including Toqueville, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Madison, and especially Hobbes). As such, this review can only provide some feel for what the reader will find in its pages.

This research is an exemplar of a coherent, theoretically driven, developed, and productive research program, which was "begun a decade ago, start[ing] as a narrow investigation of the consequences of war for the political survival of regimes and leaders" (xi). This project also illustrates the set of feedback loops among theory, logic, and inductive and deductive strategies, eventuating in an elegant formal model that explains the broader question of how political leaders allocate resources and how institutions for selecting leaders affect a whole range of domestic and foreign policy choices. The authors have created a basic theory that, in Lakatosian terms, accounts for much in the extant comparative and international politics literatures but with excess empirical and theoretical content. Their comparative theory of political-system change is "motivated by the notion that leaders want to keep their positions of power and privilege" (24). In sum, they have provided "an explanation of when bad policy is good politics, and when good policy is bad politics" (xii).

The "essence of the argument"—a theory of political incentives developed into a model of the selectorate—is introduced in Chapter 1 and fully developed in Chapters 2 and 3. The authors argue: "Political leaders need to hold office in order to accomplish any goal . . . We take it as axiomatic that everyone in a position of authority wants to keep that authority and that it is the maneuvering to do so that is central to politics in any type of regime . . . We treat political survival as a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for leaders to achieve other personal objectives" (7, 9, 23). The model is based on the reality that every leader is kept in power by some group of sufficient size (the "winning coalition") to prevail over the rest of the "selectorate" in addition to the disenfranchised. The building blocks of the model include the *leadership*, *winning coalition*, and *selectorate*, plus the *residents* of the polity and any *challenger* to the leadership. Thus:

Leaders, all of whom face *challengers* who wish to depose them, maintain their coalitions of supporters by *taxing* and *spending* in ways that allocate mixes of *public* and *private* goods. The nature of the mix depends on the size of the winning coalition, while the total amount spent depends both on the size of the selectorate and on the winning coalition (37).

The logic of the model leads to what I think is its central dynamic—that “the size of the winning coalition determines whether policies have a public or private focus” (104). The chapters in Part II, “Policy Choice and Political Survival,” and Part III, “Choosing Institutions,” present empirical tests of a wide range of implications generated by the theory. For example, Chapter 4 shows how institutions may provide incentives for either kleptocracy or economic growth. As almost all of these analyses do, the results presented in this chapter touch on the impact of democracy, those states with the largest selectorates and winning coalitions. Results here indicate that dependence on a large coalition does promote economically productive activities, whereas the small coalitions of authoritarian governments promote kleptocracy. In Chapter 6, “War, Peace, and Coalition Size,” a dyadic selectorate model is developed, which expands on earlier work of Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman and complements much of the extant democratic peace literature by demonstrating the effects of the size of the winning coalition on policy choices. Chapter 7, “Political Survival,” returns to the initial question of governmental survival, concluding that, “for those who depend on a small coalition, good policy is bad politics and bad policy is good politics” (302). Chapter 8 deals with change from within: dealing with oppression, civil war, revolution, purges, and coups. Chapter 9 looks at the relationship between war and the survival of regimes, and especially how the selectorate model influences war aims. The final chapter looks at “Promoting Peace and Prosperity.” Creating an original and highly useful measure of social welfare—the Hobbes Index—the authors conclude: “The political transition from a society ruled by an exclusive group to one with a broad, inclusive coalition structure appears to be fundamental for sustained improvement in the quality of life for the world’s economically, socially, or politically oppressed peoples” (485).

The authors see their model as a basic template, and at several points express the hope that it will be elaborated upon. With results such as those briefly noted here, this is a worthwhile enterprise indeed. All students of international politics and foreign policy as well as comparative politics should be encouraged to read this book, and mine its riches in aid of their own research programs.

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Silent Voices: Public Opinion and Political Participation in America. By Adam Berinsky. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004. Pp. 224. \$35.00).

As the fields of political behavior and public opinion mature and a consensus builds about what counts as valid research, it becomes more difficult for scholars to make a lasting impact. While incremental increases in knowledge are likely to be made, very little research actually challenges the underlying methodological framework generating that knowledge. It is relatively rare to find scholars who