

claimed that the oldest statute limiting the size of detachable magazines dated to 1990; in fact, about half the states either regulated or barred multi-shot, ammunition-feeding devices when they became publicly available after World War I.

Although Spitzer does not engage in systematic narrative analysis, his book offers a complement to recent scholarship examining the framing of gun policy. For instance, in *Firepower: How the NRA Turned Gun Owners into a Political Force*, Matthew LaCombe (2021) attributes the NRA's power to its ability to cultivate (through its program and publications) a shared social identity among gun owners—as “law-abiding citizens.” This strong social identity helps contextualize gun rights activists' claim that public carrying serves to destigmatize gun ownership and “keep the peace” (p. 74), even though the presence of guns in public is well known to cause fear and intimidation. Likewise, in *On Target: Gun Culture, Storytelling, and the NRA*, Noah Schwartz (2022) examines how the NRA uses grand historical narratives to influence perceptions about guns and gun owners. Drawing from multiple sources—including magazines, television programs, and museum exhibits—Schwartz shows that the NRA romanticizes America's gun past to reinforce gun owners' cultural identity and the association of guns with freedom, innovation, and other values. Considered together, these works underscore the importance of the imagined past in shaping modern perceptions of gun policy.

As in his other work on gun policy (see, especially, *The Politics of Gun Control*, 2020), Spitzer writes in a way that is engaging and accessible to academics and non-experts alike. This book will surely serve as an indispensable resource for scholars seeking to better understand gun policy history. If there is any fault to be found in this work, it is simply its brevity. Although the cases are fascinating, one cannot help but wonder how Spitzer would approach other gun controversies, such as the debate over red flag laws. Likewise, although Spitzer turns to the most recent consequential Supreme Court decision, *NYSRPA v. Bruen* (2022), in the concluding chapter (pp. 119–20), a lengthier discussion of the majority opinion and its implications for lower court decisions and for gun policy, more broadly, would have been welcome.

In the end, there is no easy solution to the gun dilemma; if anything, Spitzer's analysis suggests that future court decisions may increase the divergence between public preferences and actual gun policies. However, by debunking the claims of gun rights activists and uncovering their political strategies, Spitzer's book can help inform future gun policy advocacy. Further, his method of combining historical analysis and contemporary social science serves as a useful model for future research on other gun policy questions.

**Celebrities in American Elections: Case Studies in American Politics.** By Richard T. Longoria. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022. 256p. \$105.00 cloth.  
doi:10.1017/S1537592723003067

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Would Oprah run for President? Could she win? In contemporary American culture, no one would doubt either of these possibilities because the line between celebrity and politician has grown tenuously thin. A long list of stars have involved themselves in politics. Their activities range from appearances at protests and rallies to campaigns for political office. Meanwhile, political figures, including the Obamas, are increasingly occupying media frameworks previously reserved for actors and pop stars. The presidency of Donald Trump was unprecedented in that it ushered an explosion of celebrity and tabloid frameworks into the highest political office in the country. But while these developments are gaining prominence, they are hardly novel inventions, as Richard T. Longoria's new book, *Celebrities in American Elections: Case Studies in Celebrity Politics*, clearly demonstrates.

The heart of Longoria's book are eight case studies, organized chronologically, that consider the experience and influence of celebrities who successfully pursued careers in politics: Ronald Reagan, Clint Eastwood, Fred Grandy, Sonny Bono, Jesse Ventura, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Al Franken, and Donald Trump. Through each profile, the author traces the ways in which the individual draws on what he calls the “power trifecta” (p. 45) of talent, fame, and resources (namely cash) that provide a specific set of advantages to stars seeking a political foothold. Each case study also situates the figure of interest in his (all are men) political and cultural climate.

The introductory chapters provide a review of key literature in the field of celebrity studies and political celebrity analysis, drawing on the work of John Street, Graeme Turner, and Mark Wheeler, among others. Particularly useful is Street's typology of celebrity politics, in which he makes a distinction between *celebritized politicians*—traditional politicians who use popular culture to enhance their status and goals—and *politicized celebrities*, entertainers who promote a political cause or belief but who are not elected (pp. 23–24). Longoria's book necessarily raises the role of these figures but focuses almost entirely on a third category, defined by Turner as the *polebrity*—the celebrity who runs for office or becomes a politician (p. 31). The first two chapters offer an overview that situates these figures within the media and entertainment industries, with a particular focus on early Hollywood and the early twentieth century. This provides a useful framing for the case studies to follow. Here, Longoria also makes the case for the attributes of celebrity that he argues propel political success: good looks, dressing for

the part, an ability to attract media attention, and a willingness to self-brand.

Each of the case studies that follow shows how these qualities have benefited polebrities in the past and, in the case of Donald Trump, continue to prove beneficial today. In particular, a celebrity's ability to generate earned media and to avoid having to pay for expensive advertising reaches a well-documented crescendo when discussing Trump's 2016 campaign. Many other themes, particularly those pertaining to the role of the news media and, more recently, social media platforms, are introduced but are largely left for the reader to consider. For example, the impact of new media technologies in shaping the political careers of certain stars—cable in the case of Ronald Reagan and Twitter in the case of Trump—is mentioned but not explored in great detail. Additional analysis of the political economy of media industries during the moments in question would have helped draw out broader institutional and economic factors affecting the figures studied here, but that is elided in favor of an analysis of what Longoria frames as the stars' individual qualities. Although this approach showcases the power of celebrity, its intense focus on these factors, at times, comes at the expense of broader institutional and structural considerations.

Still, the author successfully makes a case for why celebrities are often able to gain political traction. The public's existing engagement with media figures fosters feelings of connection and intimacy, and stars often come to serve as symbolic representations of social ideas and values (p. 23). In addition, those who are already famous enjoy what Longoria calls *celebrity slack*, the notion that stars are afforded greater leeway when it comes to rule-breaking behavior or challenging existing norms (p. 43). This term also helps explain why polebrities benefit from being able to cast themselves as political outsiders. Here, too, we see how the role of the villainous persona, often a boon to those seeking fame in outlets such as reality television, professional wrestling, and action movies, provides an avenue for those hoping to cast themselves as antiestablishment, including Ventura, Schwarzenegger, and Trump. Although most traditional politicians have historically shied away from this "bad boy" approach, at least in an American context, Longoria's analysis suggests that Trump's successful use of this trope may usher in a new wave of political figures willing to adopt such a persona.

The book also considers celebrities who have not succeeded in winning political office. Shirley Temple, Roseanne Barr, Gary Coleman, Stacey Dash, and Cynthia Nixon are mentioned here; although a range of factors seem to have contributed to their losses, from the cultural climate of the day to a feeling that their campaigns were mere publicity stunts, no single clear explanation is offered to distinguish these individuals from their elected celebrity counterparts. Gender, race, and sexuality would seem to be

notable factors but are not mentioned. Yet recent scholarship suggests that these are, indeed, influential when determining the nature and outcome of political campaigns, and such work may help deepen our understanding of the role of race (Sarah J. Jackson, *Black Celebrity, Racial Politics and the Press*, 2017), gender (Nichole M., Bauer, "The Effects of Counterstereotypic Gender Strategies on Candidate Evaluations," *Political Psychology* 38 [2]), and sexuality (Mireill Lalancette and Manon Tremblay, "Media Framing of Lesbian and Gay Politicians: Is Sexual Mediation at Work?" in *Queering Representation*, edited by Tremblay, 2020) in the public's assessment of candidates. Attention to these issues seems critical because deep representative disparities persist, and an attentive reader will notice that the successfully elected polebrities featured in Longoria's book are all white men. Female-celebs-turned politicians are especially noteworthy here, because women take center stage in the entertainment industries but often face discrimination in the political realm.

Longoria concludes with a discussion of the potential perils and promises of a political landscape in which celebrities take center stage. Existing fame can help bring attention to certain political causes, raise public awareness and enthusiasm, and usher in new ideas, but it may also foster an atmosphere of civic superficiality, one in which appearances, wealth, and entertainment value supersede the needs of the citizenry. Taken to its most dangerous extreme, celebrity-driven politics may open a door to elected officials who use their position not in service of others but to foster a cult of personality, to advance their own aims, and to bolster their ego while seeking fascistic power. *Celebrities in American Elections* provides an important account of the blurring of celebrity and politics throughout modern history, offering a vantage point from which we may more clearly see the future impact of these mergers.

#### **Dysfunctional Diplomacy: The Politics of International Agreements in an Era of Partisan Polarization.** By

Jeffrey S. Peake. New York: Routledge, 2023. 162p. \$160.00 cloth, \$44.95 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1537592723003109

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The increasing polarization of American politics is not a new topic, but the effects of this development on the treaty process have been overlooked by scholars. Jeffrey S. Peake corrects this oversight. In *Dysfunctional Diplomacy: The Politics of International Agreements in an Era of Partisan Polarization*, he deftly examines how deep partisan divisions have broken the treaty process and led presidents to rely even more on their unilateral executive authority to complete international agreements.