

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 fascist 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.

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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.

All presidents completed more unilateral agreements than treaties in the second half of the twentieth century. But as Peake demonstrates, during the Obama administration, a significant transformation occurred. Because of partisan polarization, not only did Obama submit fewer treaties to the Senate for approval but also his success rate in getting treaties ratified was the lowest of any modern president, resulting in “the worst treaty record in modern history” (p. 16). That a polarized political environment would make ratifying treaties more difficult intuitively makes sense, especially considering that a treaty requires a supermajority of two-thirds of the Senate to pass. Indeed, bipartisan majorities become more difficult as polarization increases. Yet, as Peake explains, the issue is more complex than that. As noted, presidents completed most of their international agreements through executive agreements in the second half of the twentieth century. However, on the most significant issues, they still routinely used treaties. The Obama era marked a departure from that norm. He and his successors have essentially ceased to use treaties, even for the most substantial agreements, and have instead relied almost exclusively on their unilateral authority.

Peake has written extensively on the treaty process and the politics involved, including in his previous book, coauthored with Glen Krutz, *Treaty Politics and the Rise of Executive Agreements* (2009). That book took a more positive view of executive agreements than does *Dysfunctional Diplomacy*. It argued that the expansion of executive agreements was mainly about efficiency and a way for presidents to deal with the new demands of global leadership. The twentieth century saw plenty of partisan conflicts, but established norms made the treaty process work. Peake argues that is no longer the case: “The domestic politics of international agreements are fundamentally broken, and demonstrate the cost of partisan polarization and presidential unilateralism” (p. 124).

Presidents are still pursuing their foreign policy agenda in this new reality, but the “implications for treaty dysfunction are severe” (p. 2). Domestically, Congress’s failure to challenge presidential unilateralism in this area has helped erode the nation’s system of checks and balances. Internationally, the almost exclusive use of executive agreements has made the United States less reliable. Many international partners prefer treaties to executive agreements, believing that they signal a stronger commitment because they require broad domestic support. So, the recent trend of forgoing treaties almost entirely makes the United States a less credible partner. The dysfunctional treaty process also deprives the United States of influence in shaping international law. At the negotiation stage, US officials’ ability to influence multilateral agreements is limited because other nations are hesitant to make concessions, given the low odds that the Senate will ratify the treaty. Moreover, when the United States remains a

nonparty to multilateral treaties, it then lacks the ability to affect the rules on major global issues.

The book begins by providing a brief history of international agreements and distinguishes among various types: Article II treaties that need Senate approval, executive agreements that do not, and political commitments in which a president commits to undertake a particular action but it is nonbinding. The rest of the book is a mixed-methods study that provides detailed case studies with original data on one thousand treaties and more than three thousand executive agreements. Chapter 2 looks at recent trends in international agreements. It focuses on the vastly different politics faced by George W. Bush with the Moscow Treaty in 2002 and later by Obama with the New START treaty in 2010. Historical trends in presidential treaties and executive agreements are also discussed. The main takeaway is that the number of treaties submitted by Obama and his success rate in getting treaties approved by the Senate were both far lower than his predecessors. For example, the treaty approval rate for presidents from 1949–2016 during their administrations was 76.6%; for Obama it was 35.9% (p. 26).

Chapter 3 provides an empirical analysis that evaluates the effects of polarization on the domestic politics of treaties over a 70-year period. It demonstrates that as partisan polarization increases in the Senate, presidents rely less on treaties to conclude international agreements. It also shows that an increase in partisan polarization results in increased delays in the treaty approval process and highlights the importance of the committee stage in explaining treaty gridlock.

Chapter 4 is a collection of fascinating case studies that look at significant multilateral treaties that the United States has not ratified in the areas of human rights, the environment, and arms control. They illustrate the severe domestic political challenges presidents face in the treaty process. Peake explains that one of the central arguments made by opponents of multilateral treaties is that they threaten US sovereignty, a claim he finds “particularly weak” (p. 57). Chapter 5 focuses on executive agreements using a dataset of more than three thousand publicly reported executive agreements from 2005–20. In the period under consideration, security agreements made up the largest percentage of executive agreements (44.7%), followed by economic agreements (30.1%), and cultural, educational, and scientific agreements (15.9%; p. 85). Peake also finds that the United States has completed executive agreements with a range of nations, including almost all members of the United Nations, and most agreements have been bilateral (p. 87). Chapter 6 is about political commitments and their central role in US diplomacy. However, despite their importance, they have limits, which are illustrated through case studies on the Iran nuclear agreement and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, two deals often

described as executive agreements but that are really political commitments.

Overall, *Dysfunctional Diplomacy* explains a development that has major implications for America's engagement with the world and the health of its democracy. Peake clearly illuminates the challenges and where the greatest fault lines lie: he concludes his book by offering sensible suggestions about how the dysfunction in the treaty process might be ameliorated by once again giving Congress a voice in international agreements and enhancing its ability to check presidential unilateralism. Congress is unlikely to act, but Peake's rich analysis shows why they should and exposes the consequences of continued inaction.

Accountability Reconsidered: Voters, Interests, and Information in US Policymaking.

Edited by Charles M. Cameron, Brandice Canes-Wrone, Sanford C. Gordon, and Gregory A. Huber. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 300p. \$99.99 cloth.
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The nature of government accountability in the twenty-first-century United States often seems murky. Canonical works on representation and accountability have often painted a picture of the US government as at least reasonably functional and of voters as vaguely attentive enough to hold elected officials accountable for their policy-making activities. *Accountability Reconsidered*, edited by Charles M. Cameron, Brandice Canes-Wrone, Sanford C. Gordon, and Gregory A. Huber, pushes us to rethink government accountability in light of the many changes to the informational environment surrounding voters. In this remarkably comprehensive set of essays, these scholars and their stellar team of chapter authors push researchers to think about how accountability might work in the United States across different policy-making venues given a fractured media ecosystem, ideologically polarized and homogeneous parties, hyper-concentrated wealth, and electoral instability (3). These essays taken together provide an important collection of insights for any student of representation and accountability in the United States.

The editors are uniquely focused on how information winds its way into public hands and how the modern US information environment might condition the accountability of political actors. I was quite pleased to see this as a work bridging the mass–elite gap. Too often, research on institutions, representation, or accountability focuses on political elites or on voters, but representation is a two-way street; any work that wishes to discuss how information might affect *elites*, for example, should also take the time to consider how that information changes the way *voters*

evaluate elites. The collection is centered around four broad themes: (1) candidate evaluation and selection, (2) the evolving media landscape and its role in informing the public, (3) information availability and policy making, and (4) private interests and their role in facilitating or hampering accountability.

The central contribution of this book is that our attempts to evaluate the accountability of any government actor require careful attention to the specific environment (informational and institutional) in which they are embedded and to how that environment has changed both the actors' incentives and the incentives of the actors' principals. That is, any general notion about the broad quality of accountability in the United States is probably beyond our reach as scholars. Instead, we can think about specific circumstances, such as accountability in the notice and comments period (chap. 14) or accountability under changing media landscapes (chaps. 6–8). Of course, such nuance is not always the headline-grabbing, eye-catching clickbait that the press and publishers often want us to produce, but it is the best way for us to assess any tendency of growing or diminishing accountability. As a scholar who often tries to think about broad, general patterns across many political venues, I found that the text serves as a useful reminder of the real complexity underlying almost any evaluation of representation and accountability.

The book also does an excellent job of thinking about the informational environment from many points of view. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking about the information environment and the media landscape as interchangeable, but this book wrestles with how information affects candidate entry, the success or failure of lobbying efforts, and the criteria used to evaluate the success of public policies. Importantly, these bits of information can come from a wide array of sources including but not limited to the media.

I came away particularly impressed by several essays in the book. For example, chapter 6 by Canes-Wrone and Michael R. Kistner on local newspapers does a nice job demonstrating that ideological accountability in elections is conditional on the scope of the local media market. When media markets have limited incentives to cover local congressional elections, the relationship between candidate ideology and electoral outcomes disappears. This is an intuitive result, but to my knowledge, it has never been so straightforwardly demonstrated. I also enjoyed Daniel Carpenter and Brian Libgober's chapter 14 on administrative politics. In a book so heavily focused on Congress, it was nice to see some attention to the administrative state. Taking advantage of the Durbin Rule's requirement that the Federal Reserve regulate debit card transaction fees, Carpenter and Libgober are able to examine how firm lobbying affects administrative policy. When paired with the other chapters on lobbying and its influence on policy making—Eleanor Neff Powell, Devin Judge-Lord, and