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appeasement emerged as a rational alternative to other strategies" (p. 45). To develop this argument, the text evaluates George Washington's foreign policy leadership in the 1790s, Abraham Lincoln's efforts to suppress British support for the Confederate states during the Civil War, and Franklin D. Roosevelt's response to World War II before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The original approach to understanding national security strategy that this text offers makes a significant contribution to American politics and international relations. Without negating the importance of individual leadership, the analysis shows how political leaders may face heavy domestic constraints to pursuing an ambitious grand strategy abroad, and consequently are likely to pursue a deferential, if not isolationist, approach in foreign affairs. The concluding chapter also explores the applicability of the classification to nondemocracies, thereby illustrating its broader relevance in explaining how the international system functions.

The perceptive analysis raises several questions for further research, most importantly, how states may adjust their grand strategies with a greater understanding of how ambition and cost constrain their opportunities. How might political leaders make use of patterns in grand strategy over time to develop long-term goals and build public support for their plans? Scholars of American politics and international relations alike will find a strong theoretical foundation along with extensive empirical material in this work for exploring such topics.

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Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions *by Elizabeth N. Saunders. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2011. 320 pp. $35.00.*

In The Federalist, No. 70, Alexander Hamilton argues in favor of an executive office comprising one person, principally because that unitary structure will provide "energy in the executive," which for Hamilton is a "leading character in the definition of good government." Qualities directly associated with this unity–energy relationship include "decision, activity, secrecy, and dispatch." This structural feature of the second branch of government would seem to make the identity of the president rather important. After all, the loss of one member of Congress leaves 534 legislators to soldier on. Change the president, however, and you end up with a completely different administration, even if subordinate personnel do not change.

This is a controversial assertion in some circles that see structural features or domestic actors and pressure groups as the dominant influences in presidential decision making. In *Leaders at War*, however, Elizabeth Saunders reverses the long-standing bias against personal agency, arguing for the significance of the individual leader when it comes to decisions to intervene militarily in other countries. In short, she joins Hamilton in arguing that it matters who is president.

Saunders's main task is to explain when and why presidents choose military intervention. She argues that all presidents are motivated by perceptions and beliefs about the nature of national security threats. They are either internally focused, perceiving a connection between the internal, domestic organization of a state and the threat it poses to the United States, or they are externally focused, seeing the international dimensions of a threat as more relevant to American concerns than domestic dynamics. These causal beliefs about the origin of threats lead naturally to divergent intervention strategies. The internally focused president tends to pursue transformative intervention, in which he seeks to interfere in or actively determine the target state's domestic order. This comes in the form of nation-building, with a focus on "root causes" and reform of domestic institutions. The externally focused president, by contrast, tends to pursue nontransformative intervention, in which he seeks to resolve threats without altering the domestic institutions of the target state. This is a "fire department" model that seeks a minimal footprint, with a quick fix that resolves the threat and preserves American credibility. Finally, Saunders argues that these causal beliefs are formed long before a president takes office.

The real test of Saunders's model is in her cases studies. She spends a chapter each on Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson, three presidents at the height of the Cold War and, not coincidentally, all involved in Vietnam. For each president, she sketches out their pre-presidential beliefs about threats and intervention, then walks us through their strategic decisions on personnel, general policy, and budget concerns. She covers examples of nonintervention for each, then focuses significant attention on decisions to intervene. Lebanon, Iraq, the Dominican Republic, Laos, Vietnam—Saunders makes use of archival data, staffing decisions, speeches, and a host of other data to demonstrate that Eisenhower and Johnson were externally focused presidents who sought nontransformative intervention, while Kennedy was an internally focused president who sought transformative intervention. In each case, she considers alternative hypotheses and finds them wanting.

There are several places where the author seems to betray a subtle bias in favor of the transformative model, without making an argument for why that should be the preferred strategy, but Saunders is generally dispassionate and even-handed, and she is explicit in cautioning that presidents who pursue transformative interventions often fall short. Acknowledging the potential weakness of relying on only three presidents to make her case, Saunders briefly looks back to Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson to see early exemplars of this choice, and then looks forward to George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton and their decisions concerning Somalia to argue for the relevance of this theory in the post-Cold War world. Most interesting is her application of her theory to George W. Bush and the war in Iraq. She sees Bush as essentially externally focused, with regime change in Iraq as not effectively transformational. However, the mismatch of strategy to the facts on the ground led to optimistic assumptions and a lack of postwar planning that created problems as circumstances changed.

Saunders's work is readable and accessible, and should be of great interest to anyone who cares about presidential leadership and the use of military force. Her focus is on ideal types, which means that there is some inevitable messiness in the details, but she makes a convincing case for the importance of the individual in these critical decisions, especially the need to calibrate ends and means. Her observation that presidents appear to be slow learners should be a sobering assessment for the concerned citizen.

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Changing Inequality *by Rebecca M. Blank. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2011. 240 pp. $24.95.*

In recent years, a growing chorus has sounded the alarm about rising income inequality in the United States. Concerned citizens, ranging from academics to political pundits to those participating in the "Occupy Wall Street" protests, contend that decisive action is necessary to reverse this trend. Amidst this backdrop, a crucial question often goes neglected: Why, exactly, has income inequality increased so markedly? In her highly accessible book, Rebecca Blank sets out to empirically answer this question.

Blank first reveals that income inequality has risen not only because of changes in the distribution of wages, but also due to changes in work patterns and the composition of American households. Using Current Population Survey data to compare earnings and work effort in 1979 and 2007, Blank shows that while inequality in wages has increased (primarily due to rapid increases for top income earners), this trend has been partially offset by more people (primarily women) joining the workforce and working more hours. Simultaneously then, the United States has experienced increasing inequality alongside real growth in earnings for most Americans. As Blank puts it: "Overall incomes are growing at the same time that their distribution is becoming more spread out" (p. 8). Using data simulations that are explained in detail in the book's appendices, Blank also estimates that 14 percent of the rise in inequality is due to shifts in family demographics, specifically, a decline in married-couple families and a corresponding increase in single-person households and families with a single parent. This is an important insight because, to date, changes in family structure have received little attention in analyses of rising income inequality.

Blank then moves from the empirical to the theoretical to consider how major economic shocks might affect income distribution over time. Drawing on historical evidence, she provides a succinct and insightful discussion of the effects of both "short-term" (deep recession, war, a major health crisis) and "long-term" shocks (new technologies and resources, the development of skills and human capital) on both overall economic productivity, and inequality, in particular. Returning to the data, Blank considers how hypothetical changes