

and reshape the identities and interests of actors, typically in similar ways, and those of the revival and refinement of more traditional cultural approaches, which stress the distinct and often enduring cultural attributes of states and substate actors.

More substantively, the volume suffers from four weaknesses that limit its ability to contribute to the debate. The first is its very conceptualization of culture. On the one hand, it may be too broad and undifferentiated, lumping together as it does a number of distinct ideational phenomena—culture, religion, ethnicity, history, civilization, and ideology—that might arguably benefit from separate treatment. After all, these features of a society do not always offer identical prescriptions, and one might reasonably ask about the circumstances in which one or another might be expected to influence foreign policy.

On the other hand, the volume's conceptual scope is arguably too narrow, neglecting other clearly cultural phenomena. It contains little or no mention of political culture, national security culture, and organizational culture, all of which have figured prominently in the new culturalist literature. And the editor explicitly excludes the concept of strategic culture because "it is neither a form of culture nor is it a source of a collective's identity" (p. 2, n. 3), a view that is unlikely to command a wide following.

In practice, moreover, much of the focus of the volume is on officially articulated state culture. This may be a legitimate and interesting topic of inquiry, but it cannot do justice to the subject of culture as a whole. These forms of culture are likely to be the least deeply rooted and most subject to opportunistic manipulation. Thus, one should not be surprised to find that they exert little influence over foreign policy.

A second weakness is the volume's generally simplistic view of the potential relationship between culture and foreign policy. Although more nuanced treatments can be found here and there, especially in the theoretical chapters by Markus Fischer and Douglas Blum, the hypothesized impact of culture is largely limited to providing goals and interests. But culture can influence foreign policy in other ways. For example, it can shape the worldviews of decision makers. It can determine which options they see as available and appropriate. And it can color their assessments of the likely consequences of different actions.

One consequence of this limited theoretical understanding is the volume's tendency to draw a sharp distinction between a state's cultural and material interests. This practice ascribes an objective quality to material interests that is rarely, if ever, present. To the contrary, it is much more common now to think of culture and ideas more generally as shaping leaders' interpretations of the material world, often with major implications for policy. Even when a state's survival is clearly at stake, culture can determine what alternative strategies are imagined and influence the choices made among them.

The paucity of detailed culturalist hypotheses is paralleled by a third weakness: the absence of any controlling methodological framework for evaluating the influence of culture. As a result, the findings from the individual chapters do not readily cumulate. As the editor notes, "the contributing authors presented different approaches to the question of the impact of culture on foreign policy" (p. 325). In principle, the use of disparate methods can increase the plausibility of a consistent set of findings. Unless carefully supervised, however, it is more likely to prevent a systematic, in-depth examination.

Finally, the choice of cases, because of their temporal and spatial limitations, is not optimal for drawing broad conclusions about the influence of culture, and even of Islam more narrowly, on foreign policy. The cases are not broadly representative in at least three respects. First, they exclude many regions of the Muslim world, including Arabia, North Africa, and Southeast Asia, which are characterized by very different histories, ethnicities, and cultures. Second, while it is important to develop a better understanding of the states of the Caspian and Central Asia, many of these are small, new, and weak states that have been preoccupied to an unusual extent with their own survival. Third, the restrictive time frame precludes the detailed examination of cases in which, at least the conventional wisdom suggests, countries acted against their material interests, such as Iran immediately after the revolution.

In sum, *The Limits of Culture* should be of interest to those who wish to gain a deeper understanding of the foreign policies of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other countries of the greater Caspian region. Despite its title, however, it contributes little to our understanding of the broader issue of whether, how, when, and how much culture shapes the external behavior of states.

**In the Space of Theory: Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-State.** By Matthew Sparke.

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. 395p. \$78.00 cloth, \$26.00, paper.

DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707072155

— Iver B. Neumann, *Oslo University*

The historic intertwining of things political, military, and geographical are tight and many. To take but one example, the term "region" comes from the Latin *regere*—to rule. Historically, geographers have been among the key knowledge producers for and analysts of politics. When geographers largely dropped out of political sight during the Cold War, it was an historical anomaly. With the upsurge in critical geopolitics, they are back with a vengeance.

This book, which concentrates on the power differentials of globalization and on the continued importance of space to politics, is a valuable contribution to the literature on critical geopolitics. Its closest predecessor seems

to be Simon Dalby's work on the geographical aspects of American neoconservative foreign policy thinking. Although it hardly betters Dalby's criticism of neoconservative thought, it updates his critique. The main contribution of the book, however, seems to lie in its argument about how globalization does not annihilate space, but rather reconfigures its meaning.

The book's readings of the lingering importance of space are highly convincing. Chapter 1 is a meticulously researched case study of clashes between the Canadian legal system and two of its First Nations over the meaning of maps, history, and, of course, space itself. Matthew Sparke addresses the issue in a way that will speak to both social anthropologists and political scientists. Chapter 2 is an equally meticulously executed, if perhaps more predictable, reading of a region-building project across the northwestern chunk of the U.S.-Canadian border called Cascadia. The key theme is how, while wanting to relativize the old state boundary and partly succeeding in doing so, this ecology-tainted neoliberal project "flattens the geography" of the area and creates new boundaries based on ethnicity, class, and, perhaps not equally immediately convincing, gender. An isomorphic discussion of the same processes at the level of NAFTA serves as an elegant extension. The analyses of Cascadia and NAFTA are well grasped and well placed, but it remains unclear to me why Sparke has decided to read and interpret them with theorists Arjun Appadurai and Timothy Mitchell, respectively. It is, of course, the well-proven and apposite thing to do to let one theoretical perspective lead the investigation, and then to round off with a critique of the limits of that perspective. The problem here is that the use made of the ostensibly highlighted perspectives is perhaps too scant and the critique exerted too obvious for them to dominate the chapters in the way that they do. This goes for all five chapters of the book, and is perhaps most conspicuous where the first chapter is concerned. Without the evocation of Homi Bhaba, which does not seem to add any value, it would have been flawless.

The main problem with Chapter 4, where Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe meet James Tully and David Hollinger, is yet another variant on this theme. The key idea is to read a theoretical treatment of hegemony up against two texts that Sparke finds to be interestingly infused with concerns specifically Canadian and American, respectively. This dialogue is a difficult one to navigate. The readings of Tully and Hollinger are informative (although it may be a bit rich for a book that is exclusively concerned with North America and that strikes a European reader as highly Canada-centered to attack Tully for being so preoccupied with the country he knows best). But if hegemony is everywhere, then why Tully and Hollinger, and why together? The main theme of the chapter is supposed to be how hegemony reconfigures the state/

nation nexus. One could rattle off a whole series of postfoundational theorists (beginning with Jean-Francois Lyotard) who would be closer to hand. The list of critical perspectives seems endless.

Sparke's critique of neoconservatives in the fifth and last chapter is lodged within a sustained theoretical attack on Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's key view that the "empire" that exists today is not one where the United States plays a key role. Post-9/11, this argument has a whiff of gratuitous violence about it, but is nonetheless appropriate. Sparke focuses on the imperial aspect of American foreign policy, and stresses two aspects. First, in terms of geoeconomics, by which he seems to mean the thinking about and practices making up global economic structures, he sees continuity over the last decades. In his parlance, the presidencies of "Bill the Benign" and "Bush the Bold" are of a piece where geoeconomics are concerned. Second, in terms of geopolitics, understood mainly as strategic thinking about things military, he also notes certain continuities, but highlights the shift in intensity toward more, and more massive and sustained, direct military interventions. He gives a key quote from Arundhati Roy to the effect that American capitalism and arrogance have been unmasked under the clumsy and dubious helmsmanship of Bush the Bold. There is a tension here between the traditional Marxist trope of how the fair-weather support for democracy exerted by colluding capitalists and statesmen falls away, on the one hand, and the alleged postfoundational and immanent critique of the present world order that Sparke seems to announce in the subtitle and throughout the book, on the other. Either production should be treated as a foundation, or it should not.

At the end of the read, however, this reader was left with the same question as before: Why would the world's leading power shoot, or rather bomb, down a world order of its own making that served them so very well? Impatience, post-9/11 rage, the neoconservative waiting for and use of that rage, Israeli influence, and a docile body politic may all be parts of the answer, but this book is not able to make them come together in an overarching reading that I find convincing. Furthermore, Sparke's choice of style seems to owe more to old Marxist types like Sartre, who took it upon themselves to be engaged in just about everything and to point fingers everywhere, than to later French postfoundationalists like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze who were programmatically parsimonious and local when it came to picking targets of critique. Epithets like Bill the Benign invite charges of frivolousness and may easily detract from the scholarly and political effectiveness of the text. As a result, it may mainly preach to the already converted (and please count me partially in here).

This book's geography-centered problematique is highly apposite, the empirical scholarship very interesting. It does, however, come across as being a bit disjointed.