

Rundquist, Barry S. and Thomas M. Carsey. *Congress and Defense Spending: The Distributive Politics of Military Procurement*. (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2002) pp.200. \$24.95 ISBN 0-8061-3402-X (pb)

It is important to define what this monograph (volume three in the Congressional Studies Series edited by Ronald M. Peters, Jr.) is not. It is not a behind-the-scenes look at how Congressional committees operate, it does not explore the complex paths of policy making in the Pentagon, and it won't put a face on those who decide how our defense dollars are expended. One will search the index in vain for names of important Congressmen, prominent military personalities, a description of specific weapons systems, or even a reference to the "Pentagon."

Now to define what it is: This book is a policy analysis of distributive politics theory as it pertains to military procurement. The study is based on a 35-year empirical investigation that focuses on the results of Congressional action on one aspect of the defense budget. "Distributive Politics" as contained in the book's title refers to distributive politics theory which (p. 3) "purports to account for the geographic distribution of the benefits of any policy that is paid for from general tax revenues and can be subdivided easily and allocated piece by piece to different claimants."

The authors address the fact that past studies have demonstrated few if any indications of distributive politics functioning in military procurement. As they state (p. 5) "This book reports on a new study designed to test distributive theories of military procurement spending." However, by the end of the book they decide (p. 155) "that earlier studies of the distributive politics of military procurement spending (including some of our own) were limited in conceptualization and design and that a new empirical investigation was justified. Our study suggests

that there is a distributive politics of military procurement spending, although it takes a form more complicated than previously considered.” Their summation of nineteen figures, ten chapters, nine pages of references, eight tables, seven pages of notes, and two appendixes, is (p. 164): “By constructing a new study of the distributive politics of military procurement spending, we have been able to both dismiss an important anomaly in the distributive politics literature and to refine the understanding of distributive politics.”

If one is keenly interested in empirical investigations, policy analysis, or distributive politics theory, this paperback presents an important contribution: how policy analysis, especially distributive politics, can be further refined, re-examined, and reinterpreted. If, however, one is a disciple of Robert A. Caro and believes that roads were built not as the result of anonymous though measurable factors which can be tracked by charts and graphs, but because Robert Moses wanted to build them (as Caro describes in *The Power Broker*) this study may not invite your attention. Or if one believes that Congressional politics can best be understood by analyzing the history and personality of a Congressional leader such Lyndon B. Johnson (as Caro has done in *The Path to Power*, *Means of Ascent*, and *Master of the Senate*) rather than emphasizing the tools of policy analysis, studying distributive politics theory, or performing an empirical investigation, then this book may not be for you.

As a teacher of political science you want your students to understand both approaches. Would I recommend this volume as a text book for a college class? It would depend on the class. If I wanted to demonstrate to beginning students the bureaucratic workings of our governmental infrastructure, shed light on the day-to-day operations of our legislative system, and stress the importance of individual members and their values, the answer would be “no.” But if the goal was to expose the advanced student to the methodology of policy analysis, especially distributive politics theory, or empirically explore the hidden economic implications behind the news headlines, the answer would have to be an emphatic “Yes.”

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