



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Births, Deaths and Taxes: The Demographic and Political Transitions by A. F. K. Organski
Mark Lichbach

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(symbolic) concerns of those interest groups involved in the foreign policy formation process and the relative weight to be assigned to external (situational) foreign policy concerns and internal interest group assets and liabilities.

Ogene then explores briefly the English-language literature on the subject of interest groups and foreign policy before moving on to the task of providing operational definitions for the concepts used in his inquiry. Both in the introductory and concluding chapter he comes to grips with the methodological problems concerning the study of influence and the utilization of case studies. Although he provides no arrestingly innovative solutions to these nagging methodological concerns, Ogene is well aware of the limitations of his study and recognizes that his is not the definitive work on Africa and the American foreign policy process.

Even though he confirms his first hypotheses "that interest groups exert significant influence on U.S. foreign policy on African issues" (p. 191), Ogene does not enable the reader to determine just what "significant" means either in nominal or ordinal terms. He does, however, provide a thoughtful taxonomy of influence derived from his four case studies. His second principal finding is that tangible and symbolic interests are not mutually exclusive categories in terms of group activity. He indicates that "groups with interest in symbols were influential where there were no groups with material interests opposing them or where they could supplement their case by arguments showing that tangible resources could be secured or fostered by their policy preferences" (p. 195).

Ogene's third conclusion is that group-related and situational factors must be considered together, and that the former does not weigh more heavily than the latter. He provides a useful manner of looking at the different types of interest groups operating in the foreign policy setting and suggests how they are linked to the mass public, to external actors and the foreign environment, and to the foreign policy decision makers and their decisions.

This book is a competent treatment of a significant topic in foreign policymaking. However, the revision of Ogene's dissertation did not entail much updating of his sources; only four entries in the bibliography were published after 1974. Moreover, the total number of his interviews in Washington is not given, nor are the reasons for his selection of interviewees made clear, even though he makes explicit the methodological pitfalls involved in using interviews for his study. Ogene's selection of American newspapers as data sources is exceptionally limited and excludes those that cater to black American audiences. Finally,

the care with which the selected bibliography was assembled leaves much to be desired.

RICHARD DALE

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Births, Deaths and Taxes: The Demographic and Political Transitions. By A. F. K. Organski et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. Pp. xii + 161. \$18.00.)

This book suggests that "the larger the scale of government, the lower the rate of childbearing and the lower the rate of mortality" (p. 2). One test of this hypothesis is a highly disaggregated study of *how*, in a particular spatial/temporal context, the many aspects of government influence the many aspects of demography. This single-case approach sacrifices breadth for depth. Organski et al choose to test the hypothesis with a highly aggregated multiple case approach: They regress, in a cross-national sample of nations, birth rates (Tables 3-6) and death rates (Tables 7-10) on a tax-based measure of political development. Their test supports their hypothesis. By boldly sacrificing depth for breadth, Organski et al have produced a most innovative and provocative work.

But how do the authors relate "taxes" to "political development"?

We establish a maximum possible level of taxation for developing and for developed countries. . . . We index the level of political capacity reached by taking the fraction of total taxes over GDP. After the maximum and taxes are adjusted on the side of expenditures for policy preferences and on the supply side for economic differences in the tax base, we subtract the adjusted taxes from the adjusted maximum. This is the estimate of political costs we shall use in our analysis as the measure of the independent variable, political development. (p. 79)

Organski et al are to be commended for raising a set of theoretical linkages that are at the heart of comparative analysis: These linkages run from the state's power in the international arena, to the political development or the expansion of the state, to the political performance or the political effectiveness of the state, to the state's capacity to extract resources, and finally to the (marginal) political costs the state faces in containing internal resistance to the whole development process.

The authors' approach to the fiscal politics of tax revenues is not, however, completely satisfying because they provide only vague labels rather than conceptual definitions. It is the *conceptual* as much as the *operational* significance of the key

terms, however, that are in dispute. Thus, as one reads Organski et al's careful reasoning about how "political development" is assessed via "taxes," one cannot help but recall the equally well-reasoned counterarguments to the whole political development tradition: capabilities are not activities; more activities are not necessarily better activities; and better is inherently a normative and not a positive issue. Thus the nagging feeling remains that the political development concepts themselves are too illusive, intangible, and imprecise to guide theoretical and empirical thinking.

And how do the authors relate "taxes" to "births and deaths"? The authors' approach to the demography of taxes is, unfortunately, not completely satisfying either. The theory of the state offered to account for the impact of politics on demography is unspecified. The effects of the expansion of central government on fertility and mortality are purported to be mostly "indirect" (p. 4), "unintended" (p. 118), "unmanipulable" (p. 15), "unconscious" (p. 13), and manifested in so many different ways (pp. 27-34) that "the list of such connections can be made long indeed" (p. 4). The theory of the state offered is also eclectic. It is partly functionalist: "It is generally agreed that any state must perform three principal functions . . ." (p. 45). The theory is also partly crisis-oriented: The performance of a government is best evaluated during the crisis of total war (pp. 67-70). And the theory is partly rational choice/predatory: "All governments need or at least want all the resources they can get" (p. 110).

Hence, the key problem with this work: Although the authors' evidence establishes the breadth of their central proposition, the theoretical linkages between births, deaths, and taxes are so amorphous and complex that the finding itself needs an in-depth explanation.

What went wrong with this study of how taxes stand between political development, on the one hand, and demographic change on the other? In sacrificing depth for breadth, the authors have formulated but not dissected the problem. Consider their index. The procedure used to measure political development assumes that (1) each nation's political performance can be reduced to a single number because (2) a single unidimensional index of political performance, which is constructed out of the "indicators" (p. 63) of the key concepts, can represent the concepts themselves. But the really interesting issues turn out to be *how* the index was constructed from its components. And consider their equations. Two (essentially) bivariate regressions, linking taxes to births and deaths while controlling for region and GDP, are estimated. But the really interesting issues turn out to be *how* politics affects

demography. Rather than proposing complicated and ad hoc justifications for estimating a very small number of key parameters, what is needed is an overall model, consisting of a series of inter-related equations, to get at the political and demographic development process.

In summary, Organski et al have raised the issue of a linkage between political and demographic change, but they have not really opened the black box and offered us a convincing and precisely defined causal mechanism of how the development process operates. Their work takes the first crucial step by examining the hypothesis in all its breadth. Organski et al do raise all the right questions. However, as analysts become concerned with the hypothesis in all its depth, new answers that build on Organski et al's approach will have to be offered.

MARK LICHBACH

University of Illinois at Chicago

Politics and Change in East Germany: An Evaluation of Socialist Democracy. By C. Bradley Scharf. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984. Pp. xii + 220. \$27.00, cloth; \$11.95, paper.)

While the German Democratic Republic (GDR) has been the object of growing attention from scholars in recent years, locating it in an appropriate framework for analysis continues to be problematic. Is the GDR to be viewed as little more than an obedient instrument of Soviet foreign policy, as one of several East European nations wrestling simultaneously with the problems of economic development and national legitimacy, or as a poorer and smaller communist brother of the German Federal Republic? Or is it, in spite of its communist political system, more usefully regarded as an advanced industrial society comparable in many ways to the capitalist welfare states of Northern Europe?

In this survey and interpretation of politics and society in the GDR, C. Bradley Scharf tries to view it especially in terms of the last perspective. There is much to be said for such an approach. The GDR is the most prosperous and technologically the most advanced of the communist states. It now has the largest relative volume of trade with the West of any of the Soviet Union's East European allies, which helps to make it in turn the leading supplier of advanced technology to the USSR and the rest of the bloc. Its program of social benefits, given special emphasis under Erich Honecker, offers a range of economic protections to its citizens that in some ways invites comparison to those provided by the Scandinavian