Comments on Paul Kennedy’s The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers
The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500-
2000 by Paul Kennedy
Review by: Anthony Giddens, Michael Mann and Immanuel Wallerstein
Published by: Wiley on behalf of The London School of Economics and Political Science
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/590276
Accessed: 24/04/2013 19:03

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Wiley and The London School of Economics and Political Science are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The British Journal of Sociology.
This book is a tour de force which well merits the many plaudits it has received. It is exceedingly ambitious, not only in terms of the long period of history which it covers, but because it projects forward to the future — the sub-title of the volume states that it is concerned with economic change and military conflict ‘from 1500–2000’. It is no doubt the slightly apocalyptic element, plus the discussion of relative American decline, with which the book closes, which have turned this essentially academic work into a best-seller.

Since the work has already been extensively discussed in reviews, I shall sketch out the main arguments only very briefly. Kennedy is concerned, he says, with the ‘interaction between economics and strategy’ as states in the international system squabble and war with one another. There is a direct relation, which the author is concerned to document in detail, between the mobilizing of economic resources and the prominence of a given state within the international arena. However, the position of states in relation to one another does not remain stable for long, because of their differential growth patterns and because of the impact of innovations in technology and organization which at any one time make certain states pre-eminent over others. Thus, for instance, the emergence of industrial production in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries gave an enormous impetus to the military strength of some countries, and was associated with the relative decline of others. As Kennedy puts it in a pithy statement right at the beginning of the book, ‘wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth’. (p. xvi). There is something of a delicate balance between economic productivity and military expenditure. A state which channels too much of its wealth into military spending, or overreaches itself in terms of territorial acquisition or costly involvement in war, may
become progressively enfeebled. If such a country has already entered a phase of economic decline, it might find itself in a fundamental predicament. The state has to struggle both against the rising relative prosperity of other nations and against the exhaustion induced by its over-stretched commitments. A succession of great powers in the international system have experienced this pattern of rise and fall including, successively, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Britain — and, in the present day, the USA.

Kennedy hedges his discussion with various qualifications. He is not concerned to develop a general account of the causes of war, or to relate warfare to economic theories such as that of Kondratieff waves. The book does not offer a general interpretation of the types of state organization which are most effective in generating economic growth or co-ordinating production in times of war. Although he stresses the essential role of economic prosperity in generating political and military power, Kennedy takes pains to avoid any charge of economic determinism. While the connection between wealth and geo-political prominence is an abiding one, many other factors are also involved, such as the effectiveness of governmental leaders, efficiency of military organization, national morale and so forth.

Like states, books have their strengths and weaknesses. This is a ‘super-power’ effort, encyclopaedic in coverage and dauntingly referenced. What are its main strong points? One is that it does not just tell a story. It certainly provides an engrossing account of shifts in power relations over several centuries. As the author says, he originally intended to write a brief work setting out his interpretation of the correlations between relative economic position and prominence in world affairs. He was led to produce this very much larger study precisely because of the absence of a detailed narrative work on the issue. Yet the appeal of the book surely lies mainly in the boldness and sweep of the general claims that Kennedy seeks to sustain. This is a work in comparative sociology as much as a descriptive analysis of trends of historical development.

Another important feature of the study, it seems to me, is that it avoids the ‘either/or’ of historical uniqueness versus universal generalization. There is a ‘universal’ upon which the claims of the author rest — the relation between uneven development, economic strength and military power — but this is understood to operate only within a framework of political contingencies. Kennedy does not hold that his thesis applies to the whole of human history; its context of application is the international arena following the emergence of the European, and subsequently the global nation-state system. Those schooled in orthodox traditions of sociology can learn a great deal from Kennedy’s work. It provides a new perspective upon uneven development, which is ordinarily discussed mainly in terms
of economic variations, rather than in relation to military strength and warfare. Finally, the book contains numerous illuminating analyses of specific conjunctures of historical transition — such as the shifting balance of global power in the period prior to the First World War.

Yet after having studied and reflected upon the content of the book, I have to say that I am sceptical both about the overall thesis Kennedy advances and how this is applied to the late twentieth-century world. The underlying orientation of the book depends upon a combination of a ‘realist’ position and a form of ‘economic-military materialism’. This orientation seems to me distinctly limited, and the discussion begs questions which need to be answered. Kennedy makes no attempt to analyse the motive forces behind economic development over the historical period he covers. Like many other relevant factors, this is put into a ‘black box’ and left as the province of other scholars. Obviously in such an encompassing work many factors and influences have to be excluded. But I think Kennedy leaves far too much in the ‘black box’, especially as some of these other influences potentially compromise the main thesis of the work. There is, for instance, no discussion either of the nature of industrial capitalism, as a dynamic influence upon modern history, or of the organizational character of the nation-state; there is virtually no mention of clashes between competing cultures and ideologies.

In short, this is global history written as a knock-about between state ‘actors’ of varying economic and military strength. The picture presented is a determinedly one-sided one. According to Kennedy ‘there exists a dynamic for change, driven chiefly by economic and technological developments, which then impact upon social structures, political systems, military power, and the position of individual states and empires’ (p. 439). One would have expected more of an attempt to analyse this ‘dynamic’. The book nowhere actually demonstrates that ‘economic and technological developments’ ‘impact upon social structures’, rather than the other way round. As a general theorem, this seems to me in fact specious. Social structures and political systems surely ‘impact’ upon economic and technological change just as much as the reverse. There are many instances of this, affecting the fate of nations large and small.

The ‘independent’ influence of the political over the economic and military is indicated, for example, by variations in how far a state can effectively monopolize control over ‘it’s’ resources. In terms of the mobilizing of resources, the position of Britain at the turn of the twentieth century, having a far-flung territorial empire, was quite different from that of Germany. The building of alliances is another mode of politically influencing or containing differential economic/military strength. I find it odd that, as the author of well-known works on diplomacy, Kennedy says little in a systematic way about
the consequences of alliances between states for the phenomena he analyses. A state which becomes especially powerful at a given point (and is perhaps perceived as ideologically threatening) is likely to be confronted by an alliance between other nations which may give them superior military strength. Kennedy discusses episodes of this sort, but does not seem to acknowledge the general implications of the point.

Even if Kennedy’s interpretation of the twentieth-century history were acceptable, could one effectively apply it, as he tries to do, to the late twentieth-century world? I do not think so. Influence in world affairs is still plainly strongly affected by relative economic and military strength. Yet a world in which the nation-state has become a general political form, rather than confined to the West, which is marked by an accelerating globalization of communications and culture, and by the development of nuclear weaponry, is in some respects quite different from pre-existing arenas of international relations. The USA may be declining relative to other nations economically, but has forged a system of global alliances on a military level unparalleled in previous history. It is unlikely that its relative economic decline will fit snugly into earlier patterns of the rise and fall of nations.

All states are losing certain of the economic prerogatives they once had, or some of them had, as the globalizing of economic relations proceeds apace. Kennedy’s assertion that today ‘there is no greater authority than the sovereign, egoistical nation state’ (p. 440) is surely far too simplistic. The nation state is the main effective political authority in the world today, and no doubt one should resist the idea that it is becoming dissolved. But the character of states, and their interrelations, are being quite dramatically influenced by factors operating both below and above the level of the nation state itself. The fact that Kennedy provides no analysis of these in the ‘futurological’ ruminations with which his book closes seems to me to reflect limitations of the broad framework within which it is couched.

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II

This is a formidable book. It comprehensively charts the rise and fall of Great Powers over the last 500 years, paying especial and exhaustive attention to their economic resource base. It is full of data, tables, footnotes and references. It is held together, first, by
clear organization and straightforward prose style, and second by an overall argument. Yet as there is so much rich material in the book, and so many excellent sub-arguments, insights and digressions, the book is immensely stimulating at a number of levels. Kennedy has made me think further about a great many issues. This richness is a particular strength, as in my opinion there are problems with the overall argument.

Paul Kennedy is a fine historian, the author of several books on war, military strength and diplomacy. Let me pick out two recent ones. In The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860–1914 (1980), he demonstrated that the mutual hostility of Britain and Germany centred not on colonies or economic rivalry, but on the geopolitical consequences of their navy building programmes. Germany made an enemy of Britain in 1914 primarily because its battleship-building programme, followed by the actual invasion of Belgium and France threatened the Channel and the British Isles themselves. All sociologists who insist on emphasizing economic imperialism as a cause of modern war would do well to read this book. In The Realities Behind Diplomacy (1983) he explored Power rivalries over the last 100 years, paying close attention to the assumptions made by diplomats, and the way alliances developed in response to both geopolitical and domestic developments. In both books there is an acute sense of the complexities of, and the relationship between, ‘interests of state’ and the societies behind the states. So it is curious and disappointing that the present book lacks some of this sensitivity.

Let me outline his overall model. As a Realist he assumes the existence of states and their inherent tendencies to struggle with each other for regional and sometimes global domination. It is in the nature of the consequent geopolitical system that a few will become Great, and a select few become Hegemonic. But it is also inevitable that they will soon decline again, to be replaced by others having their turn. What determines this rise and decline is fundamentally the uneven geographical distribution and economic and technological development. At points of change in the geopolitical order, economic and technological dynamism will have passed from the dominant Powers to some other area of the globe and to the Powers who inherit it. Provided those newcomers can convert that rising resource base into military power, they will become Great Powers.

Sociologists will recognise this as a technologically-tinged materialism, borrowing especially from theories of uneven development, and extending them into the military and geopolitical spheres. Kennedy does not much concern himself with theories, stating his own position simply and clearly, and then getting down to the evidence. He uses this model to analyse the rise and fall of the Habsburg Empire, France, the British Empire, the German Reichs, and the present Superpower conflict. Finally, he speculates about
possible rises and declines in the near future.

His particular empirical concern is to quantify the relative strengths of the resource bases of the main rivals in every period. In this task he has combed the historical literature, assembling a large data base, yet usually showing necessary skepticism towards its deceptively precise statistics. When we get into the twentieth century, the statistics improve and the argument becomes a little tighter. For the First and Second World War, and for the current position of Superpowers, Middle Powers and regions (like Western Europe or East Asia) we obtain a very clear sense of their resources. The outcomes of past wars, and speculative predictions about future outcomes are explained by relative resource bases. The grand conclusion is expressed on page 439

all of the major shifts in the world’s military-power balances have followed alterations in the productive balances; and . . . the rising and falling of the various empires and states . . . has been confirmed by the outcomes of the major Great Power wars, where victory has always gone to the side with the greatest material resources.

There is much to this very commonsensical conclusion. However, I have two criticisms. I find it amazing that I, a sociologist, should be making the first one of Kennedy, a diplomatic historian. For his model ignores the fact that all the wars he covers are wars between alliances. It is all very well to demonstrate, for example, that in World War I the Entente mobilized 40.7 million men to the Central Powers’ 25.1 million, and outspent them by more than two to one, and even without Russia had about three times the industrial and energy base. Obviously, given such disproportions, the Germans and their allies would be likely to lose; just as they would in World War II, just as Napoleon and others taking on more powerful alliances than their own had earlier. But that is to take the alliance structure as a given. If Germany and the other losers had acquired more or bigger allies, or fewer or lesser enemies, then the outcome — and this is what Kennedy’s own model would predict — would have been different.

Thus to explain the rise and fall of Powers involves more than analyzing their individual resource bases. It requires explaining the structure of alliances, which in turn lets in more than data like GNP. It requires analysis of geopolitics proper — e.g. the capacity of Powers located in central European to nearly achieve hegemony over the whole continent, but to eventually go down fighting against the two flanks simultaneously. It also requires discussion of ideological solidarities (Catholic v Protestant, the Anglo-Saxon alliance, Fascism v Communism and Liberalism etc.). Kennedy has switched between
two units of analysis, the individual Power and the Alliance of Powers, without theorizing that switch.

In fact, if we theorize the switch, then patterns emerge. As well as those particular geopolitical and ideological ones just mentioned, we can see a broader one. It is normally true that if a Power’s resource base increases then its military power and geopolitical pretensions will also. But if these appear nakedly, frontally against other Powers, a superior alliance system is likely to emerge to counter and destroy it, as with Napoleon and twice with Germany. The most dominant Powers, nineteenth-century Britain, the USA and Soviet Union today, possibly the Habsburgs, emerged differently, surreptitiously, with the attention of other Powers diverted elsewhere, usually in their own wars.

Britain and the USA were the most economically advanced Powers of their time, and Russia was big (the Habsburgs only became big as a result of their surreptitious marriage strategies). But the British fought only one Power at a time over its Empire, and the crucial acquisitions occurred while the other Powers were fighting desperately on the European continent. I might add that the British lead was narrower and less than figures like those of Bairoch indicate (nineteenth-century GNP figures exaggerate extreme cases for they privilege states where most goods go to market and which have the best figures — notably Britain). Most of the American lead actually resulted from World War II (as Kennedy acknowledges). And while the other Powers knew that Stalin was creating a Soviet Empire in the last days of World War II, they were trapped into defeating Germany and Japan first, and then demobilizing (as Stalin was while perceiving American aggrandizement). The greatest Powers emerge interstitially within the Great Power system.

There are patterns in the relations between power and resource base, but a genuine theory of the rise and fall of Great Powers must also include patterns of diplomacy and alliances.

Second, even taking the individual Power as a unit of analysis is not unproblematic. Take Germany, for example. As a Power it originated as Prussia. Kennedy indicates that resource-poor yet militarily-effective Prussia does not fit simply into his general argument (he argues conventionally that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the efficiency of the military-fiscal extraction system could make up for poor resources). But it is the conversion of Prussia into Imperial Germany that is the problem. Obviously, if we calculate the resources of Germany around 1900, we conclude that here was a Great Power and potential hegemon. But such a ‘Germany’ had only existed for 30–40 years. It might have remained a weaker Confederation of many small but rich states, or been an even greater Germany including the Austrian Empire (as a condominium between Prussia and Austria, under Habsburg
domination etc. etc.). From the resource base of territories to the
demarcation of state boundaries and powers there is also a jump. We
have to theorize the nature of 'the Power' itself.

Kennedy sometimes raises these two issues in dealing with the
contemporary world. He discusses whether the EEC is actually or
potentially a single Great Power or a loose confederation of Middle
and Minor Powers, and he analyzes the degree of military
integration possessed by NATO and the Warsaw Pact. These
sections are typical of the very high level of empirical treatment in
the book.

But both issues should also enter the key discussion of whether
America is declining — the reason why the book has become a
blockbuster in the States. In economic terms, as Kennedy shows, the
USA has been declining relatively to Europe, Japan, and even the
Third World. But the US military belongs, not just to the USA, but
to 'the Free World' as a whole. In fact Europe, Japan and the Third
World effectively rent it. They invest in the USA, so funding the US
budget deficit which pays for it, and the USA depreciates the dollar
so that it pays back a rate of return less than market rates. All the
major states involved in this know what is happening, and within
limits tolerate it. The West is a kind of confederate Power with an
American military core. Its confederate arrangements are fairly
amicable, its institutions stable.

There is no historical parallel to this, because of two vital mid-
twentieth-century developments: an alliance of states with a
qualitatively different economy and polity to its main enemy; and an
immensely destructive weapons system which is virtually mono-
polized by the core state. These developments mean that 'American
decline' is not like British or Habsburg decline. It necessarily involves
broader issues questions of 'Western decline'. Identifying and
explaining the 'Powers' themselves, and the alliances they enter into
must be a major part of theories of rise and fall.

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III: ECONOMIC DETERMINISM WITHOUT ECONOMIC DYNAMICS

This is a book whose thesis, both its strengths and its weaknesses, is
in its title. I propose to analyze it in terms of four segments of the
title.

I shall start with the beginning of the subtitle: 'Economic Change
and Military Conflict.' The conjunction 'and' between two nouns is
a mode of avoiding spelling out the relationship between the two
nouns. In fact, of course, the relationship between these two nouns constitutes the heart of the book, and the author does spell out his views in some detail, and repeatedly. Not, however, unambiguously—hence, I suppose, the 'and' in the subtitle.

One place to find the essential thesis is on pp. xxii-xxiv of the Introduction. Here we are given three propositions: (1) that shifts in economic and productive balances are linked to shifts in the position of individual powers in the international system; (2) that the rise and fall of an individual Great Power is connected clearly to its growth and decline as an important military power, but that this is only true 'in the long run' and with a time lag; (3) that the outcome of a coalition war is strongly correlated with the amount of productive resources each side can mobilize.

Still, Kennedy immediately adds, this is not a position that should be described as 'crude economic determinism.' Perhaps not, but aside from offering us the array of all other possible factors that could explain 'rise and fall,' we return time and time again to the case for the economic underpinnings of military power. On p. 17, we are told to 'focus attention upon the material and long-term elements. . . .' On p. 413, Richard Nixon is quoted approvingly as saying that 'economic power will be the key to other kinds of power. . . .' And on pp. 436–7, Lenin is paraphrased approvingly (with the proviso that the analysis applies to Communist states as well) as saying that 'uneven rates of economic growth would, sooner or later, lead to shifts in the world's political and military balances.'

And yet Kennedy would also have us believe that, if we wish to explain the 'European miracle' — that is, why Europe came to dominate the world after 1500 rather than Ming China, the Ottoman Empire, the Mogul Empire, Muscovy, or Tokugawa Japan — it was that Europe had fewer 'disadvantages,' which is to say that, in some 'rudimentary' form, it already in 1500 combined 'economic laissez-faire, political and military pluralism, and intellectual liberty' (p. 30). Kennedy does at least acknowledge that 'it is impossible to prove' this assertion.

What we have then is an extraordinary harnessing of economic materialism in the advocacy of a Whig interpretation of history. This is less original than one might think. It was done in the eighteenth century, and this has been the message purveyed by Reagan and Thatcher. The problem, when done in a scholarly tome, is that it requires tying together three variables: world military dominance as the dependent variable, national military power as the intervening variable, and economic strength as the independent variable.

This is a synthetic work, based on a very wide reading of the literature. The outcome is an excellent presentation of the intervening variable (relative military strengths of the various Great Powers over 500 years), a not always clear picture of the dependent variable
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(see below for discussion of how military dominance is treated), and no real discussion of the independent variable.

To be sure, we do get various economic statistics for particular countries, but there is no discussion anywhere of the dynamics of those economic processes, except to suggest a linear curve of technological advances. In short we might be said to get some of the worst vices of a crude Marxism without the benefits of the rich texture a sophisticated Marxism has to offer. We get no picture, even fleeting, of the evolving social organization of production, of the modes of accumulating capital, of changes in the class structure, or indeed anything which might explain why and how England turned out to be more economically efficient than say Austria in the nineteenth century, only in some sense that it was more efficient. That is to say, despite the economic materialism, this is not a synthetic work in economic history but one in military history.

The second problem is with the term 'Great Powers.' I have no quarrel with the list he makes, although we are never quite clear how exactly we know if a given power is a Great Power. The problem is more in the very unclear periodization. The book is divided into three parts: the 'preindustrial world' going from 1519–1815, the 'industrial era' going from 1815–1942, and 'today and tomorrow' (a strangely contentless descriptive term to put side by side with the preindustrial world and the industrial era) going from 1943 to the twenty-first century.

It is in many ways a rather conventional periodization, mirroring what many departments of history would call early modern times, modern times, and the contemporary era. But the titles of the periods are economic in character (at least the first two) and one wonders what happened to industrialism precisely in 1943. In fact, the choice of 1943 is justified on a quite different basis, the (re)creation of a bipolar world. Incidentally, even for this I am unclear why 1943. There is no explanation. The only other referents for 1943 in the book are the Battle of Stalingrad and the mass surrender of German-Italian forces in North Africa (pp. 348–9). I take it these two events mark the moment when the tide turned in the Second World War.

One could presumably have divided up the history of the modern world in terms of cyclical fluctuations between a bipolar and a multipolar world. This would have been more coherent in terms of the military history so central to the analysis. But Kennedy is not consistent. We are told that 1950–1970 is a bipolar period by contrast with the post-1970 multipolar world. But in the description of the nineteenth century when Britain was at its 'zenith,' we are only told there were no lengthy coalition wars by contrast with 1660–1815 when there were five Great Powers and many coalition wars. I have in any case trouble with the bipolar-multipolar
distinction, since multipolar situations seem to result always in bipolar coalitions fighting bipolar wars. I take it myself that Kennedy really means unipolar (or hegemonic) situations, such as the world dominance of the USA between 1945 and 1970, versus situations in which there are many competing Great Powers, no one of which could be described as hegemonic. Kennedy does use the word ‘hegemon’ (at least with a question mark) to describe post-1815 Great Britain, but then seems to drop the term, and we are left unclear as to whether he finds it very useful.

This is not a mere definitional quarrel. Let us return to the issue of periodization. Kennedy’s first segment on the preindustrial era has as its chief protagonist the Habsburg empire; the second segment has Great Britain; the third segment the USA. This makes for a very uneven story. For, although Kennedy refers at some point to the concept of a ‘world empire’ and cites the Habsburgs as ‘one of the greatest examples of strategical overstretch in history’ (p. 48), he nowhere makes clear that the parallel to the Habsburgs at later moments in time was not Britain but France (from Louis XIV to Napoleon), and not the USA but Germany (from the Hohenzollerns to Hitler) — all land-based powers who sought to absorb by conquest. And the earlier parallel to the nineteenth-century UK and twentieth-century USA is the seventeenth-century United Provinces. Indeed the Dutch get quite short shrift in this book.

One might have thought that the way to periodize a history of the interstate system dealing with the Great Powers would be to see it as three successive struggles between land-based aspirants for the creation of world-empires and their sea-based opponents (the ultimate victors), who became hegemonic powers and who did in fact follow Kennedy’s prescription of concentrating on the ‘material and long-term’ bases of power, including military power (but with a lag). At that point, we might periodize the three parts differently, either from the rise to fall of each successive hegemonic power, or from the beginning of one hegemonic era to the beginning of another.

This brings us to the part of the title that reads ‘Rise and Fall.’ He says rise and fall of the Great Powers, but he doesn’t really mean it. He seems to mean more nearly rise and fall of hegemonic powers. To be sure we get many sections on particular lesser powers, but this is not really a comparative study of the rise and fall of Spain, Austria, Prussia, France, and Russia. If it were, it would have to be taxed as insufficiently systematic in its presentation of the data. But since this isn’t really Kennedy’s project, this would be manifestly unfair. Instead, it is one of the real strengths of the book that it allows us to look at what is going on in these ‘lesser’ Great Powers in relation to the overall pattern of successive hegemonies.

There is a further problem with ‘rise and fall.’ The terminology is
cyclical, and much of the description seems to suggest a cyclical phenomenon. But other parts of the description seem rather to indicate evolving trends. The problem is that Kennedy does not explicate a position on this question. We are therefore left on our own to make our own decisions. Perhaps he intended this deliberately. But it seems to me that distinguishing which processes are cyclical and which are not is in fact one of the key intellectual questions we have before us today in the study of the world-system, and it is not quite cricket to evade it.

Finally I come to 'From 1500 to 2000'. There is a problem here on each end of the time boundaries. Chapter 1 is entitled 'The Rise of the Western World' and makes the case for the 'European miracle.' In the context of the whole book, this chapter is essentially 'background' rather than 'subject matter'. Still, there is not a sliver of suggestion why the 'European miracle' began in 1500 and not say 1400 or 1200 or 1000. This is not mere quibbling. It has to do with economic determinism without economic dynamics, or economic materialism without rich texture. What in fact changed in Europe in 1500, and why?

The same problem exists at the other end of the time boundary. The title of the book goes to 2000. The title of the third part goes to the 'twenty-first century'. We do as a result get a little futuristics, but in a very prudent form. I do not believe in forcing reluctant authors into this uncertain quagmire. The reluctance is understandable. But minimally we might want to know if Kennedy thinks that the rises and falls he is describing will go on forever, or at least for a very long time, in one form or another, or whether the system as such might change. There is, I should say, no hint of the latter. Indeed, given his clear admiration for Henry Kissinger (pp. 407–8, 534), one might doubt there would be.

The last problem with the book is what it leaves out. For a book about military conflict between Great Powers, there is strangely virtually no politics. This is in a way realism pushed to its extremes. Are there really no ideological currents that matter? That he writes over 600 pages without mentioning capitalism is bad enough; but not ever mentioning a labor movement? Yes, we do get some reference to Communism, to nonalignment, to the Third World, but mostly as 'having produced a salutary shock to American global hubris. . . .' (p. 406). He lumps Carter and Reagan together as naive ideologues in comparison with Kissinger's recognition of 'the limitations upon American power. . . .' (p. 408). I myself would have linked Nixon, Ford, and Carter as three US presidents who tried to maneuver within the recognition of the 'limitations upon American power' as against Reagan who sought in vain to eliminate these 'limitations.'

This book has had a public reception beyond the academy. Since
it is an intelligent book, and is indeed a marvellous synthesis of the literature, this is clearly a good thing insofar as it provides some historical depth to current reflections upon geopolitics. But insofar as it merely provides us with the homespun wisdom of a sage observer, it offers us in the end what a good newspaper analyst would offer us. In the Epilogue, Kennedy says he will not give us sections either on theory or methodology, because ‘this is not a work of political science . . .’ (p. 536). What then is it?

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