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# The Presidency and Public Policy: The Four Arenas of Presidential Power, by R.J. Spitzer

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**The Presidency and Public Policy: The Four Arenas of Presidential Power.** By Robert J. Spitzer (University: University of Alabama Press, 1983. Pp. xii + 189. \$18.75.)

Challenging the view that presidential power derives from the president's personal political skill, Robert Spitzer calls upon scholars to abandon this Neustadtian (or "great-man") model in favor of a "situational," or policy approach to leadership and power.

There are, Spitzer maintains, "specific characteristics of policies proposed by presidents that shape what the president can do and how well he can do it . . . policies structure the interests involved and help to determine the political arenas in which decisions are contested or made" (p. xiv). In short, different policy arenas produce different political interactions and different success rates.

The policy model that Spitzer proposes is based upon Theodore J. Lowi's "arenas of power" scheme, which suggests that there are four policy areas: distributive, regulatory, redistributive, and constituent. Spitzer attempts to apply this policy model to the presidency.

Using only domestic issues from 1954 to 1974, Spitzer hypothesizes that each policy area produces a different involvement and success rate by presidents, that this holds true regardless of who is president, and that issue area is more important than personal skill in determining success or failure.

Spitzer projects that the level of presidential influence and involvement in policy areas "will be, in order from greatest to least, redistributive, constituent, distributive, and regulatory" (p. 36). Distributive and constituent policies tend to be more consensual, whereas regulatory and redistributive policies are more conflictual. Given these policy domains, Spitzer arrives at "a primary theme of this study: that presidential activities in the four policy areas differ sufficiently to suggest the existence of 'four presidencies'" (p. 38). There is the "special interest presidency" (distributive), the "presidential broker" (regulatory), the "public-interest presidency" (redistributive), and the "administrative presidency" (constituent).

Spitzer attempts to test this policy approach to the presidency by applying both illustrative case studies and congressional voting data to the model. In general, the approach stands the test of congressional voting. The president is able to achieve a higher success rate in the redistributive arena, and the lowest success rate in the regulatory arena.

Does this mean that such factors as the president's political skills, partisanship in Congress,

and public pressure do not affect legislation? Although Spitzer does not go this far, he does suggest that these forces are less influential than "conventional wisdom" would suggest. "Policy characteristics determine the shape of the president's political universe, at least as it relates to his dealings with Congress" (p. 154).

What lesson can presidents learn from this study? As Spitzer notes, if the main concern is legislative success, they should "concentrate their legislative attentions on constituent and redistributive policy efforts, with perhaps a sprinkling of distributive bills aimed at pacifying particular congressmen and constituents. The high political costs and absence of immediate rewards connected with regulatory policies would discourage any major efforts in this area" (p. 156). The implications of these "lessons" could have a significant impact upon legislation and problem-solving from a national perspective.

This fine study does indeed challenge (although I do not think it will replace) the Neustadtian model of presidential power. An effort to integrate this policy model with such factors as presidential skills, public mood, and partisanship to form a more comprehensive portrait of president-congress relations might give this policy model more credibility. On its own, however, I am not sure that the model—although innovative and important—is compelling enough to persuade scholars that it could stand on its own.

Spitzer's study would have benefited from a more explicit application of the policy model to such bursts of presidential legislative success as the early Lyndon Johnson years or the first two years of the Reagan presidency. In spite of these weaknesses, *The Presidency and Public Policy* merits attention and consideration.

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**Procedural Structure: Success and Influence in Congress.** By Terry Sullivan. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984. Pp. xiv + 284. \$29.95.)

In *Procedural Structure*, Terry Sullivan seeks to examine and specify the conditions behind the often-repeated maxim that "procedure makes policy" within the U.S. Congress. This is an important, if arcane, subject, and Sullivan is an expert guide through the familiar, yet extremely complex, terrain of legislative procedure. In the end he gives the reader a valuable atlas for tracking the various paths that a bill may follow, although we remain at some distance from determining how process affects policy.