Southern Political Science Association

The Roots of Isolationism: Congressional Voting and Presidential Leadership in Foreign Policy.
by Leroy N. Rieselbach

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The Journal of Politics, Vol. 30, No. 2 (May, 1968), pp. 541-542

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of the [Southern Political Science Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2128453>

Accessed: 04/02/2014 13:17

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The Roots of Isolationism; Congressional Voting and Presidential Leadership in Foreign Policy. by LEROY N. RIESELBACH. (Indianapolis, Ind.: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966. Pp. xvi, 240. \$2.95.)

Historians and political scientists have long been intrigued by the nature of isolationism in twentieth-century American politics. In this quantitative study, Professor Rieselbach asserts that isolationism is a complex and changing phenomenon which cannot be identified with any single political, social, or economic factor, or even with any small group of such variables, over any span of time. The author's most significant finding is the shift he discerns between 1939 and the mid-1950s from political affiliations to demographic factors as the main determinants of isolationist voting in the House of Representatives. Rieselbach attributes this shift to a loosening of party discipline in Congress after the passing of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In the postwar years, as political ties gave way to an ideological split in Congress over the extent of domestic government activity and spending, Rieselbach finds that such variables as region, religion, and ethnic, economic and educational levels in constituencies, become much more important in distinguishing between isolationist and internationalist Congressmen. Thus, he finds that by the 1950s the isolationist is likely to be either a Midwestern Republican or a Southern Democrat who is a Protestant and votes consistently against expanded federal activity on domestic issues. His district is likely to be predominantly rural, low in both educational and socio-economic status, and relatively safe for his party in elections. From this analysis, Rieselbach concludes that the split between Democratic-Internationalists and Republican-Isolationists of the 1930s gave way to a division between Liberal-Internationalists and Conservative-Isolationists by the Eisenhower years.

The author proceeds carefully in his presentation, drawing on the extensive existing literature to frame tentative hypotheses to test against his statistical data, which are taken from the House voting records of the 76th, 80th, 83rd, and 85th Congresses, relevant biographical information on each Representative, and a variety of demographic, socio-economic, and political characteristics for each congressional district. When the result is negative or inconclusive, Rieselbach withdraws the hypothesis; when the statistical evidence is favorable, he elevates it to the status of a "proposition." This

technique does lead to a clear exposition of the sources of isolationism, but the author is much less successful in his avowed goal of providing the President with specific guidelines that will help him become a more effective foreign-policy leader. Presumably, the Chief Executive should keep the assorted propositions before him when deciding how to get his foreign-policy proposals through Congress. But the complex and shifting nature of isolationist behavior forces the author to conclude that "there is no fixed formula for effective foreign policy leadership." His advice to the President is thus not very comforting. "The president," he writes, "must be ever alert to situational changes which have outmoded earlier methods for winning congressional backing for his proposals and which require new lines of approach to the Congress."

The contemporary foreign-policy debate over American involvement in Vietnam raises a question about Rieselbach's definition of an isolationist as anyone who opposes existing or expanded American commitments to foreign nations. By this standard, Senators Fulbright, Morse, and other "doves" in Congress are isolationists, and Senators Dirksen, Tower and other "hawks" are now the internationalists. Perhaps this surprising result indicates that the labels isolationist and internationalist, used so widely by scholars as well as journalists, no longer describe a meaningful pattern of foreign-policy behavior. Rieselbach's admirable and exhaustive study thus leads to the conclusion that it is time for students of American foreign policy to consider abandoning the old categories and begin the search for new ones that will more accurately reflect the shifting lines of debate over America's role in the world.

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Last Chance in Europe: Bases for a New American Policy. By CHARLES O. LERCHE, JR. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967. Pp. 221. \$5.95.)

This essay is a cogent plea for a thorough-going revision of American policy toward Western Europe—stressing the notion of an "interdependent partnership" instead of an outmoded emphasis on unilateral American "leadership." The book (the author's eighth) dramatizes the loss to America in Dean Lerche's untimely death late in 1966.