

Book Review: Of Privacy and Power: The Transatlantic Struggle over Freedom and Security by Henry Farrell & Abraham Newman

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Farrell, Henry and Newman, Abraham, L. *Of Privacy and Power: The Transatlantic Struggle over Freedom and Security*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. 223 pages. Hardcover. \$12.95.

Of Privacy and Power: The Transatlantic Struggle Over Freedom and Security by Henry Farrell and Abraham K. Newman is a fascinating international public policy discussion about security and privacy issues in the post-September 11, 2001 world. The book adds an important perspective to the scholarly literature as the authors note that security policies are another factor beyond globalization in the interchange of international relations. In doing so, Farrell and Newman argue that alliances are developed based on domestic security policies—highlighting that this is merely another dimension to better understand international relations and politics. For Farrell and Newman, “as public and private surveillance have blurred into each other, so has the national and the global,” (p.167). Security issues are an important piece in understanding another aspect of the relationships in the international political arena.

Farrell and Newman explore global politics through the lens of security policy issues as it intersects with globalization, international alliances, and policy initiatives to regulate various security problems. They explain that “[Europe and the United States] have the most developed state agencies tasked with overseeing information sharing, policing and counterterrorism. The transatlantic politics of domestic security then shape the policies, practices and lived experience of security forces, firms and citizens across the globe,” (p. 2). In this context, the authors look at these privacy and security issues as a means of developing relationships with countries in the international community as they create “institutional arrangements for the transatlantic exchange of security information,” (p. 3). In explaining these important facets, Farrell and Newman highlight the extent of American and European relationships particularly as security issues require cooperation and collaboration beyond the borders of a country, (p. 3-4). They also note

the power struggles associated with these policies and relationships highlighting the complexity that security issues add to the international political arena and the interdependence that exists because of these relationships (p. 4-6). They write, “As more and more political institutions transcend national borders, political actors use alternative channels to redefine the global rules, not only by lobbying their home state, but also by creating cross-national alliances with other actors in other jurisdictions,” (p. 7).

In explaining the aspects of these relationships, Farrell and Newman organized their book into several chapters explaining the nature of these relationships through discussions about how they handled specific public policy issues—how countries look at airline data, financial data and explore the controversies surrounding the Snowden revelations, (p. 12-14). Throughout the book, they touch on the notion that “privacy problems and policies have been transnationalized,” (p. 153)—an interesting point that puts security public policy issues into a system that goes beyond globalization, and into a system that re-examines whether public policies should be a local, state, or international issue. The authors conclude that this area of security concerns as it intersects with international politics will be an area where research will be needed in the future. They write, “Understanding these complex and crucially important dynamics of power will require new theories of international politics.” (p. 176).

Of Privacy and Power: The Transatlantic Struggle over Freedom and Security is an intriguing read. The book’s take on the international political arena in the post-September 11 world makes a significant contribution to further understanding the nature of security issues in the political arena. The authors recommend that individuals interested in academics or policy specialists “concerned with surveillance and privacy must learn how to map this shifting transnational environment if they hope to engage with its consequences for politics,” (p. 165).

Ultimately, the authors argue that the book will require new theories of international politics to better understand these international relationships, (p. 176), an intriguing yet important contribution to the social sciences. Additionally, the book would be wonderful for someone interested in learning more about international politics in the post-September 11, 2001 world—whether it’s an undergraduate or graduate student studying security studies or an individual with a thirst for knowledge in this important area of study.

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