

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Abraham F. Lowenthal, Mariano E. Bertucci, eds. *Scholars, Policymakers, and International Affairs: Finding Common Cause*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. 320 pp. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4214-1507-9; \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4214-1508-6.

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The book *Scholars, Policymakers, and International Affairs: Finding a Common Cause* is an examination of how to change the interaction of scholars within the world of policymaking to improve policies. The book effectively advocates that academics and practitioners have much to gain when scholars become involved in the policymaking world, providing relevant and actionable information to practitioners.

Scholars who are seeking methods to inject their expertise and research into the policymaking sector will find the individual lessons helpful. Each chapter of the book is written by a scholar who has left the world of academia and spent time in the policymaking world. The diversity of the experiences of the scholars from different fields of expertise as well as in different forms of policymaking organizations effectively reinforces the variable opportunities for scholars to influence policy.

The book begins with a discussion of the traditional role of scholars in academia, quasi-academic institutions, and government. It does a good job laying the context of the traditional role of scholars in academia. The explanation of expectations to publish in peer-reviewed journals in order to earn tenure is essential to the reader's understanding of why many scholars do not become involved in the world of policymaking. Academics in university settings may relate to this discussion on tenure requirements as well as the conclusion that better information flows between academia, the quasi-academic world, and government are necessary for scholars to influence policymaking. Chapter 2 builds on the ideas of the first chapter with a discussion on the importance of knowing the best venue to influence policy. In some cases this may be

through a nongovernmental organization.

Scholars who have attempted to work in policymaking may relate to the second part of the book, which focuses on how scholars can overcome political will and work to make their voices heard. Examples include Jane Jaquette's experience within USAID and Peter Andreas's challenges in getting policymakers to listen in the war on drugs. Part 3 highlights the insights that scholars can provide policymakers through research. Blanca Heredia's experience in Mexico reveals that scholars' research must be accessible to policymakers, and Nora Lustig espouses the value of scholars' data-gathering and evaluation skills in Mexico's Progreso/Oportunidades programs. Part 3 concludes with Kevin Casas-Zamora's experience with Central American security policies and the need to match university research with practitioner needs. Scholars who have been critical of policymakers may find part 4's focus on scholarly influence in shaping and evaluating policy interesting. Thomas Biersteker's presentation on the value of independent scholarly reports within transnational policy networks, and Mitchell Seligson's discussion on how scholars improved USAID's democracy evaluation programs provide good examples of instances where scholarly input added scientific rigor to the measurement of program effectiveness.

The discussions in part 5 on how scholars can overcome obstacles and advocate for a role to influence policymaking provide good advice for scholars who wish to have their ideas heard in policymaking spheres. Part 6 includes reviews of the differences between scholar and policymaking roles in Asia versus the West, and how to bridge the scholar/policymaker gap in the United States.

The book concludes with Bertucci and Lowenthal focusing on what benefits scholars can provide to policymakers.

Those unfamiliar with the subject will find that throughout the book the challenges facing scholars who desire to influence policymaking are easily identified and a solution is provided for that challenge. Each chapter includes a unique perspective from a scholar who had bridged the scholar/policymaker gap and what the benefits were as a result. The array of venues in which different scholars provide insight include governments from several nations, and NGOs. This breadth of experiences further reinforces the value and opportunities for scholarly input into policymaking. Overall the book builds upon itself well, with the commonalities among the examples in each part identifiable. However, Bertucci's example of scholarly influence in Argentina's shift in US

relations does not seem to fit well with the previous two chapters in part 4 that focus more on the value of scholarly evaluations than Bertucci's example of direct work in government to influence policy.

Including viewpoints from career policymakers, including examples of how they benefited from scholarly input and how scholars were effective in inserting their ideas into the world of policymaking, would be a compelling addition to the book. Overall, the book provides good examples and lessons for those scholars who wish to have a voice in the world of policymaking. Additionally, it provides policymakers with insights into areas where scholars may be able to assist in policy development. Both scholars and policymakers who are looking for ideas on how to bridge the gap between their two worlds will find this book a valuable resource.

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