Since the 2008 presidential election, much attention has been paid to the role of social media in campaigns and the political process. The dramatic success of the Barack Obama campaign in mobilizing voters and raising donations reignited interest in the Internet as a platform for campaigning, and by the time the contests of 2010 and 2012 were under way, campaigns on both sides of the aisle were embracing a new approach defined largely by the emerging area of social media strategy.

In their new book, *Tweeting to Power: The Social Media Revolution in American Politics*, Jason Gainous and Kevin M. Wagner explore these online tactics and their impact on recent elections, revealing a blueprint of modern campaigns that will appeal to both researchers and political strategists. Using social media data collected from the 2010 U.S. congressional races, as well as survey data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project, the authors describe how social media represent a “shift” in the political landscape that is comparable to the establishment of print and television journalism and that continues the trend of increased polarization observed since the rise of cable news.

Gainous and Wagner approach their study from two perspectives, which they refer to as the “demand” for and “supply” of information. The first considers how social media allow the general public and the political actor to bypass traditional, journalistic information sources, or “gatekeepers,” and finds a preference among social media users for one-sided information that supports existing political beliefs. Connecting their findings to earlier theories of information processing, Gainous and Wagner demonstrate how social networks facilitate the self-selection of information sources, contributing to both increased polarization and increased participation among social media users.

On the supply side, the authors examine how political actors seek to control the flow of information using social media. This is achieved through an analysis of a vast collection of Twitter data taken from each of the 2010 U.S. congressional races, and it is perhaps the most significant feature of the book. Classifying the more than 60,000 tweets as either policy related, negative or attack, campaign information, or personal, they are able to examine how campaigns have actually used social media in practice and compare these tactics with the outcomes of each contest to reveal a number of important findings.
Contrary to common wisdom that social media campaigns favor Democratic or liberal candidates, Gainous and Wagner find that Republicans and independents have seen greater benefit from Twitter in the post-Obama era, which they attribute to the more frequent use of Twitter by Republican challengers with minority party status in 2010. The authors further find that candidates who use social media to control the supply of information tend to win elections. This includes tweeting to reinforce existing views or to explain how voters should interpret new information, which Republicans were more likely to do in both cases.

While the scope and findings of this book are impressive, the authors have left a few areas open for further investigation. Their analysis, focusing only on Twitter, may reveal an incomplete picture of social media campaigns, as user demographics and behaviors differ significantly across social networks. Similarly, the use of software instead of human interpretation to categorize tweets, while not uncommon, overlooks the conversational aspects that differentiate social media from traditional information channels. However, Gainous and Wagner do attempt to account for some of these nuances by detecting personal replies and mentions, as well as the use of hashtags.

Even as social media continue to evolve, Tweeting to Power captures a current snapshot of campaign politics that demonstrates how the strategic use of social media can be a powerful advantage in winning elections. Gainous and Wagner make a clear case for the lasting impact of these media on the American democracy, extending well beyond the popularity of any particular social network. In the process, they provide a foundation for further research as well as a useful resource for campaign strategists.

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For those who suppose the Constitution smoothly and efficiently settles disputes among the branches—like the storied “machine that would go of itself”—the war power has always proven a vexing exception. The text is vague, the history inconclusive, and the practice contested. While this state of affairs has not kept scholars from advancing one claim or another on the “correct” allocation of power between the executive and legislative branches,