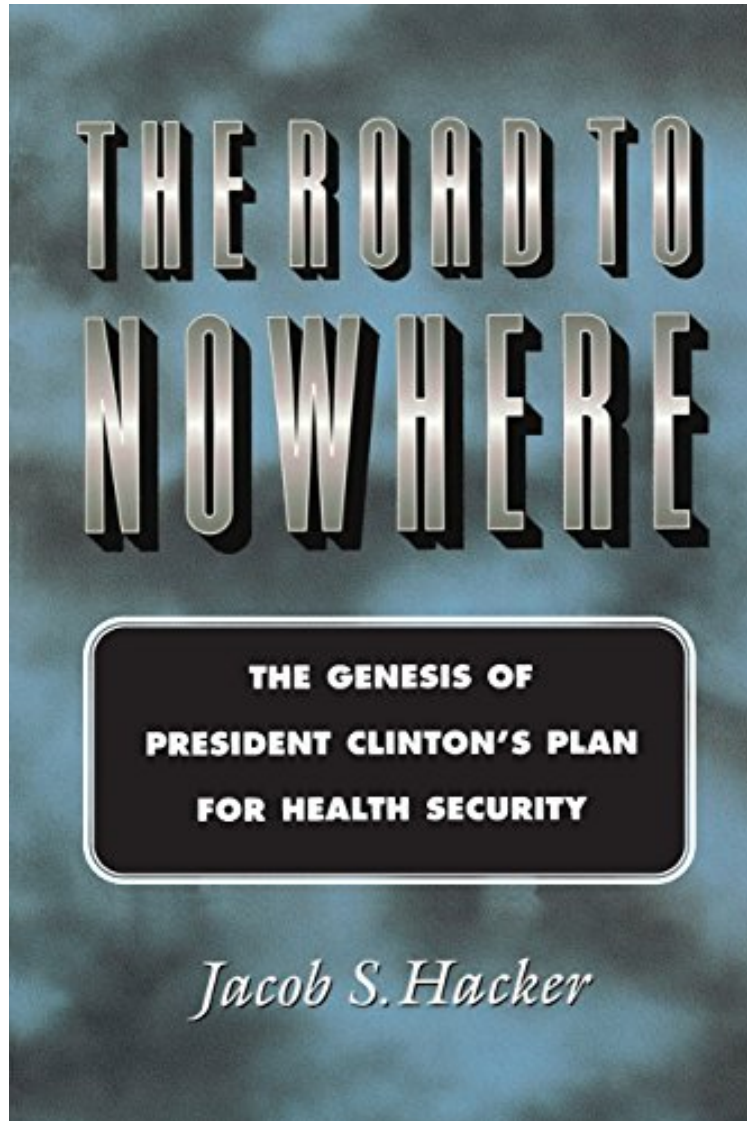


(Download) The Road to Nowhere

The Road to Nowhere

Jacob S. Hacker

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Jacob S. Hacker : The Road to Nowhere before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Road to Nowhere:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Excellent, and not just about the Clinton Health PlanBy Bruce_in_LA This is a terrific and very well-written history of the Clinton health plan debacle. It includes a good precis' of major features of American health policy over a decade or more leading to the Clinton election. One of the key features - and the author is quite explicit - the Clinton plan is used as a case study of how American healthcare politics and the American political agenda in general work. Therefore, it is not just "history" of 1993 - it remains

highly insightful and relevant for all of us watching healthcare debates and agendas in 2006, 2007, 2008. If you've read this book, you'll have a lot of "aha" moments that would have escaped you otherwise. And having a perspective so rich through the 1990's gives you a frame of reference for a lot of articles and authors and issues writing right now - most of them lived through the past decade's issues and the decade before. Hacker's most recent book is "The Great Risk Shift" which has gotten good reviews. But "Road to Nowhere" should be better-known and more widely read than it is. The only weakness for me is that he tries to build to a careful analysis of diverse political reasons why the proposal failed - my own non-historian hunch is that a sudden 500-page mysterious bill labeled as developed in secret by "hillary clinton" upending the status quo, was enough to sink it without a dozen subtle collateral reasons....

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Pertinent
By R. Albin
An interesting and surprisingly pertinent description and analysis of the failed Clinton presidency effort to enact universal health care. Hacker is a prominent political scientist and this book is partly an effort to understand how issues come before the public and our political system and how they get translated into policies. This aspect of the book is certainly interesting and well done but the most interesting aspect for general readers is Hacker's concise and very clear history of efforts to develop health care reforms within the constraints of the American political system. Hacker presents the relatively sudden prominence of health care as a major issue as the convergent result of several semi-independent trends. Rising health care access problems provoked distress among middle-class voters with general economic anxieties. At the same time, costs were an increasingly concern for many corporations. A number of policy analysts had developed potential approaches to address these problems. Managed competition, to a large extent the brainchild of economist Alain Enthoven, emerged as the proposed solution of an influential group supported by major health insurers. Hacker lays out a series of contingent events, such as the unexpected election of the liberal Democrat Harris Wofford to a Pennsylvania Senate seat and the persistent interest of the New York Times editorial board that advanced health care to a front row concern and managed competition as a likely solution. A variety of similar contingent factor led to the adoption of the managed care approach as the preferred option for the Clinton campaign and administration. As Hacker shows, this approach had broad appeal but rather shallow support and the Clinton administration's efforts to implement it essentially ignored the political bargaining needed to implement a health care reform. The most interesting parts of the book are Hacker's careful descriptions and thoughtful analyses of the different potential solutions advanced to address the dual problem of diminishing health care access and rising costs. This seems to me to be a fairhanded survey of the different options across the political spectrum. It will strike many readers that almost all these proposals were kludges trying to reconcile universal health care with the limits of the American political system. The lineage of the present Affordable Care Act system is clearly visible in Hacker's descriptions. This is true both for many of the specific features of the ACA and its basic position as an incremental reform falling considerably short of offering universal care. Hacker is a clear writer and this book is largely free of the jargon that often characterizes political science work.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant
Work
By A Customer
What Noam Chomsky is to politics, Jacob Hacker is to American Health Reform in the 1990s. In a concise and readable fashion, Hacker explains why universal health reforms started to spring up - almost from nowhere - to achieve major attention in the early 90s, only to recede into the periphery of political issues today. Surprise, surprise, it has little to do with principles and everything to do with being a potential winning election issue. Hacker details in depth how Jim Carville and co. used the health issue to give Democratic Senate hopeful Harris Wofford a come-from-behind win, only to gravitate to then Governor Clinton's Presidential bid the following year with a similar strategy. The critical role of the New York Times editorial board in "agenda setting" the issue of "managed competition" (while simultaneously squelching more liberal options like a single payer system), is outlined in detail. What's most striking is Clinton's almost naive belief that, if he proffered a sufficiently "centrist" bill, Republicans would have to negotiate with him. The book clearly details the various actors and how they affected not only Clinton's thinking, but the range of "practical" health reform options. If you read one book on US health policy, make it this one.

During the 1992 presidential campaign, health care reform became a hot issue, paving the way for one of the most important yet ill-fated social policy initiatives in American history: Bill Clinton's 1993 proposal for comprehensive coverage under "managed competition." Here Jacob Hacker not only investigates for the first time how managed competition became the president's reform framework, but also illuminates how issues and policies emerge. He follows Clinton's policy ideas from their initial formulation by policy experts through their endorsement by medical industry leaders and politicians to their inclusion--in a new and unexpected form--in the proposal itself. Throughout he explores key questions: Why did health reform become a national issue in the 1990s? Why did Clinton choose managed competition over more familiar options during the 1992 presidential campaign? What effect did this have on the fate of his proposal? Drawing on records of the President's task force, interviews with a wide range of key policy players, and many other sources, Hacker locates his analysis within the context of current political theories on agenda setting. He concludes that Clinton chose managed competition partly because advocates inside and outside the campaign convinced him that it represented a unique middle road to health care reform. This conviction, Hacker maintains, blinded the president and his allies to the political risks of the approach and hindered the development of an

effective strategy for enacting it.

From Booklist Hacker, a former Health Policy Fellow at Harvard, scrutinizes the 1990s health-care reform debate in terms of current theories on agenda setting, the political and institutional constraints on change, and the elements of political leadership. He explores stages in increasing public concerns about health care; examines the neoclassical critique of U.S. health care and the institutions (from HMOs to the Jackson Hole Group) it produced and the growth of an alternative, "liberal synthesis"; traces the evolution, within the Clinton campaign, transition, and task force, of a form of "managed competition," which its advocates confidently viewed as a perfect compromise, a true "New Democrat" road to both universal coverage and cost control; and analyzes the bitter debate that proposal stimulated. Defeat was not inevitable, Hacker insists, but one important lesson is that "policy analysis is a flawed mechanism for achieving political compromise." Not essential but will circulate where readers are actively involved in the health-care debate. Mary Carroll Co-Winner of the 1997 Louis Brownlow Book Award, National Academy of Public Administration "Mr. Hacker brings commendable clarity to a subject that has usually encouraged jargon and convolution."--David Greenberg, The New York Times Book "Hacker's assessment is measured and balanced.... This book will be read by two audiences: those who are interested in health policy per se and those who are interested in the policymaking process. It is equally instructive for both."--Mary E. Guy, American Political Science "As an intellectual history, his narrative is unrivaled.... Hacker's book raises many provocative questions ... and it is for that reason that it is immensely valuable."--Flint J. Wainess, Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law "[Hacker] is particularly adept at showing how top policymakers used the media to sell ideas, not just to the public, but to each other.... A fascinating portrait."--Julian E. Zelizer, s in American History From the Publisher During the 1992 presidential campaign, health care reform became a hot issue, paving the way for one of the most important yet illfated social policy initiatives in American history: Bill Clinton's 1993 proposal for comprehensive coverage under "managed competition." Here Jacob Hacker not only investigates for the first time how managed competition became the president's reform framework, but also illuminates how issues and policies emerge. He follows Clinton's policy ideas from their initial formulation by policy experts through their endorsement by medical industry leaders and politicians to their inclusion in a new and unexpected form in the proposal itself. Throughout he explores key questions: Why did health reform become a national issue in the 1990s? Why did Clinton choose managed competition over more familiar options during the 1992 presidential campaign? What effect did this have on the fate of his proposal? Drawing on records of the President's task force, interviews with a wide range of key policy players, and many other sources, Hacker locates his analysis within the context of current political theories on agenda setting. He concludes that Clinton chose managed competition partly because advocates inside and outside the campaign convinced him that it represented a unique middle road to health care reform. This conviction, Hacker maintains, blinded the president and his allies to the political risks of the approach and hindered the development of an effective strategy for enacting it.