

ments as the purest examples of this kind of ideological party in the history of American politics.

However, the major American parties are also becoming more ideological today. Policy activists are now much more prominent even in the grunt work of the Democratic and Republican party organizations. As Pomper puts it, “the passionate advocates of religious orthodoxy or nuclear disarmament are more likely to be knocking on doors than the fabled but absent party precinct captains” (p. 66).

Easily the most interesting aspect of the book is this analysis of the way in which American political parties have simultaneously become more bureaucratic and increasingly ideological, while still serving as an instrument through which ordinary people can participate in shaping the course of their country’s political life. One wishes at the end that Pomper had spent more time with this topic, where he excels, and less with such well-plowed fields as party reform.

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Morality and American Foreign Policy: The Role of Ethics in International Affairs by Robert W. McElroy. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1992. 194 pp. Cloth \$27.50; paper, \$12.95.

In this pathbreaking book, Robert McElroy establishes that U.S. foreign policy is sometimes motivated by universal moral norms. The argument can be summarized in three propositions: moral norms are universally recognized prescriptions governing state behavior, impartially applied to all parties; moral norms can influence policy through individual conscience, domestic public opinion, and international public opinion; moral norms sometimes triumph over considerations of national security or economic interest. In defense of the latter proposition, McElroy presents three case studies drawn from twentieth-century American foreign policy: famine relief to Soviet Russia in 1921, the renunciation of chemical and biological weapons in 1969, and the Panama Canal treaties of 1977. A fourth case study—the bombing of Dresden in 1945—illustrates limits to the influence of moral norms.

McElroy’s claim for morality is striking, because his conception of moral norms is uncompromisingly deontological. This is clearest in his discussion of Hans Morgenthau, to whose views he contrasts his position. Avoiding the trap of misreading Morgenthau as a moral, culturally relativist, or “state moralist,” McElroy presents him as a consequentialist who maintained that state behavior is and ought to be guided by the “national interest.” Although McElroy exaggerates the indeterminacy of the Morgenthau’s conception of the “national interest” by citing other authors (pp. 23–24), he correctly acknowledges Morgenthau’s belief that the national interest has “moral dignity” because, absent a transna-

tional moral consensus, its conscious pursuit results in morally justifiable consequences. Hence governments should not and, for the most part, do not seek to promote moral ends directly. McElroy challenges this view by demonstrating that state behavior is at times motivated by the direct application of universal moral norms shared by a transnational moral consensus, even when they run counter to the national interest, defined in self-interested or morally consequentialist terms. Moreover, although McElroy does not make as much as he might out of what is a decisive point, the effects of such policies appear to have been morally justifiable. This is a conclusion rarely encountered outside of the literature on international law.

McElroy makes an important contribution by introducing three mechanisms, drawn from Immanuel Kant and other liberal internationalists, by which norms can be translated into policy: individual conscience, domestic public opinion, and international pressure. To extend and sharpen classical liberal insights, he musters modern political science. Social learning theory establishes the plausibility of individual moral conscience, agenda-setting theory the plausibility of domestic constraints, and relational contracting theory the importance of maintaining an international reputation.

The case studies are convincing, appropriately selected to demonstrate the modest claim that universal moral norms can *sometimes* make a difference. In examining humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union and the renunciation of chemical and biological weapons, McElroy discredits alternative explanations based on self-interest. The link between the Panama Canal treaty and international moral outrage is more ambiguous, however, since alternative explanations are barely considered. Was United Nations pressure for decolonialization actually grounded in common moral beliefs or in the age-old desire of state elites to maintain political sovereignty, as Robert Tucker and Steven Krasner have long maintained? Were foreign critics of U.S. policy really concerned with the implications for future U.S. behavior, as the more utilitarian relational contracting approach seems to imply? Or were they simply outraged by the “last vestige” of American imperialism, as a purely normative approach would predict and President Jimmy Carter’s own assessment seems to support (p. 136)?

McElroy’s work suggests the need for further research seeking to establish the precise conditions under which morality matters. In the final pages of this book, McElroy briefly addresses the issue, offering two generalizations: where “vital security interests” are secure, leaders may act morally, and where negative moral *consequences* of an action do not outweigh its direct moral *value*, they may seek to pursue moral goals directly (p. 182–184). These are curious conclusions, for they return the analysis, unacknowledged, back to its starting point: the eternal verities of Realist statecraft, expressed in the writings of Hans Morgenthau.

If we take Liberalism seriously, as I believe we should, Realist maxims do not define the fundamental conditions under which moral action is possible. Liberal theory would recommend instead a closer analysis of the societal sources of morality, as well as political institutions and social practices through which soci-

etal pressure is translated into state policy. In short, for Liberals, the key to moral improvement lies in state–society relations. For the analysis this assumption implies, Robert McElroy’s new book provides an indispensable point of departure.

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The Conservative Political Tradition in Britain and the United States by Arthur Aughey, Greta Jones, and W. T. M. Riches. Rutherford, NJ, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992. 175 pp. \$35.00.

“Conservatism” has proven a slippery term in political discourse. Even more than its linked rival, liberalism, it covers such a wide variety of beliefs and attitudes, some of which are directly contradictory to each other, that some political analysts as well as politicians suggest that as a label it has become almost useless. But, of course, no one trying to explain modern politics can get along without it.

The authors of this volume, political scientists at universities in England and Northern Ireland, set out to define and interpret conservatism as a single though complex phenomenon. They have not wholly succeeded, but their effort does much to illuminate a range of ideas, practices, and values that are at least related, and have crucial effect on contemporary political life.

In their first chapter, the authors offer a “working definition” of conservatism: “the ‘inner vision’ of the life of the state” (p. 20). This seems a bit murky. Just any state, including the late Soviet Union and Nazi Germany? And what about the considerable body of people calling themselves conservative who are determinedly antistatist? They never say. Perhaps it is part of the nature of conservatism to be murky. The authors compare it to “existentialism without the self-indulgent angst” (p. 19). Certainly, conservatives typically disdain the neat categories and fine-tuned abstractions that enthrall many liberals and socialists.

The book examines American conservative theorists such as Russell Kirk, Willmoore Kendall, and Richard Weaver, but generally treats these as pale reflections of such British heavyweights as Michael Oakeshott and Roger Scruton. Libertarian conservatives like Milton Friedman and Robert Nozick are hardly mentioned.

The roots of both British and American conservatism are traced to Edmund Burke. Many active conservative politicians in the United States have probably never heard of Burke, but it is true that Burkean values and ideas such as limited government, the essentiality of order, the authority of tradition, and the sanctity of property, have always been major presences in American conservatism. The problems with which Burke dealt remain those with which conservatives continue to wrestle. “The modern task of conservative politics,” the authors write, “is to