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Peter Hays Gries. *The Politics of American Foreign Policy: How Ideology Divides Liberals and Conservatives over Foreign Affairs.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014. xviii + 347 pp. $25.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8047-9088-8.

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In his preface to Peter Hays Gries's recent study on popular attitudes toward American global engagement, *The Politics of American Foreign Policy*, former governor, Oklahoma senator, and current president of the University of Oklahoma David L. Boren remarks that "our dysfunctional political system is a national embarrassment. Whether the issue is the budget, gun control, health care, or immigration, the executive and legislative branches are unable to work together to solve the nation's problems. Partisan posturing has pushed out bipartisanship and compromise. Cooperation between liberals and conservatives is becoming a quaint memory. U.S. foreign policy is increasingly hamstrung by partisan politics as well. From Europe to the Middle East to China, Republicans and Democrats not only cannot agree; they are disinclined to work together to promote the national interest" (p. xv).

Elite polarization represents both a significant political obstacle to governance in the United States and one of the most fundamental structural shifts in the American political party system since the 1960s. Virtually all policy conflict in the American Congress can be understood in reference to a broad yet sharply delineated liberal-conservative ideological divide as both parties have witnessed a "hallowing out" of political moderates from both parties' cores and an increasingly ideologically driven primary process in which only members of the ideological extremes participate.[1] Gries notes that "politicians today are no longer elected by 'median' voters in their districts. Their job security, instead, depends on a small minority within their own parties: primary voters. The logic of the electoral connection today is that elected politicians are responsive to the views of those who elect them: not 'the public' as a uniform whole but a small group of the most liberal and conservative Americans who are motivated to vote in party primaries" (p. 25). American politicians adhere more and more to ideologically extreme positions and are less responsive to calls for political moderation. Given the now characteristic polarized and ideologically driven American political climate,[2] Gries seeks to place ideology front and center in his analysis of popular attitudes toward American foreign affairs, positing ideology as a critical link between elite behavior and citizen political engagement, noting that "a better grasp of how ideology shapes international attitudes should help us understand not just American public opinion, but also the ways that American elites themselves view

the world, framing and constraining the foreign policy options they pursue" (p. 27).

For some time now, the study of popular attitudes toward the conduct of American foreign affairs has been dominated by studies that either disregard or underestimate the degree to which American voters hold strong preferences on emergent international events; the deployment of American power regionally or trans-regionally; or the functioning and scope of American bilateral and multilateral relationships, including American participation in international organizations, such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the United Nations. It has long been understood that Americans know very little about politics in general and even less about foreign affairs and political dynamics in other world regions. Because of the information deficit characteristic of the American public,[3] scholars often suggest that average voters look to political elites and the media for information on foreign policy, taking "cues" from their preferred sets of elites and viewing this information through the lens of partisan identification (pp. 16, 130). While accepting that "on average, Americans are not very knowledgable about world politics," the research posited by Gries finds that "in the absence of much knowledge, gut feelings toward foreign countries serve as a vital mediator between ideological predispositions on the one hand, and specific foreign policy preferences on the other" (p. 43). Far from adhering to a "Main Street" consensus on American foreign policy (p. 102), Americans are very much divided on the nature of American global engagement, holding disparate views across such policy fields as humanitarian assistance, the use of military force, and multilateral coalition building. Liberals and conservatives have different attitudes toward policies (as well as toward other countries and regions), according to Gries, because political ideologies are undergirded by a host of psychological, emotional, cognitive, and, importantly, moral predispositions and values. The author explains that "a major reason why American liberals and conservatives differ in their domestic and foreign policy preferences is that their moral values differ. Liberals tend to esteem the 'individualizing' moral values of compassion and fairness more than conservatives do. Conservatives, by contrast, prize the 'binding' moral values of authority, loyalty, and purity more than liberals do. Compassion and justice motivate liberals to approach the world (at home and abroad) to provide for it, while greater contamination disgust and desires for order motivate conservatives to avoid the world and protect a narrower in-group" (p. 97).

The Politics of American Foreign Policy is an important contribution to a much broader discussion across the social sciences on the role of political ideology in public political life.[4] Gries effectively demonstrates that, through the exploration of an April 2011 survey of over one thousand American adults, Americans have a wide-ranging and coherent set of foreign policy preferences, independent of political elites, produced through complex interactions between deep-seated moral convictions and cognitive as well as group-level attributes. Conservatives feel significantly "cooler" than liberals toward foreign countries, are more likely to favor the use of military force, and prefer unilateral engagement over multilateral international initiatives (p. 90). The author finds that liberals, on average, are more likely to support international engagement and multilateral international initiatives, including coalition building, diplomatic ventures, humanitarian interventions, and foreign aid. Conservatives, conversely, support more isolationist policies, the deployment of unilateral American power, and the use of military force over diplomacy. Conservatives trend more nationalist than liberals and are less likely to support spending on humanitarian efforts or support interventions to stymie or mitigate humanitarian crises.

Notes

[1]. Edward G. Carmines, Michael J. Ensley, and Michael W. Wagner, "Who Fits the Left-Right Political Divide? Partisan Polarization in the American

Electorate," *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, no. 12 (2012): 1631-1653.

[2]. For more on the links between mass polarization, political ideology, and elite behavior, see Torben Iversen and David Soskice, "Information, Inequality, and Mass Polarization: Ideology in Advanced Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 48, no. 13 (2015): 1781-1813.

[3]. For instance, even at the height of the Iraq War, six out of ten eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds in the United States could not find Iraq on a world map. See Andrew Buncombe, "Six of 10 Young Americans Cannot Find Iraq on a Map," *The Independent*, May 2, 2006.

[4]. See John T. Jost, Brian A. Nosek, and Samuel D. Gosling, "Ideology: Its Resurgence in Social, Personality, and Political Psychology," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3, no. 2 (2008): 126-136.