

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces**

Radley Balko

New York: Public Affairs, 2013, 383 pp.

Criminal justice reform has been gaining momentum in Washington, attracting policymakers from both sides of the aisle. Draconian mandatory minimum sentences, overcrowded prisons, and bloated criminal justice budgets have made reform a bipartisan issue. This is undoubtedly a positive development, but—as is typical with the political process—the most popular reforms are not enough. Most of the political capital and rhetoric focuses on “back-end” criminal justice reforms, such as sentencing reform, early release, and alternatives to incarceration. While these reforms are sorely needed, the “front end” of the criminal justice system—criminal laws, the courts, and policing itself—also needs thorough examination. Radley Balko’s *Rise of the Warrior Cop* is an exemplar of what these assessments should look like in the American context.

So many popular policy solutions today seem cut and dry. Whether it’s the War on Drugs, Obamacare, or the Federal Reserve System, critics can look at where a bad policy started, put a finger on it, and say, “That’s where the government went wrong. If we undo it, things will be better.” With police militarization, neither the cause nor the solution is so simple, and Balko goes to great lengths to show why that is.

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Starting with patrols in ancient Rome, to the shire reeves in medieval England (where we get the word “sheriff”), to slave patrols in antebellum America, and through to modern times, *Rise of the Warrior Cop* traces the evolution of policing from a community institution to a governmental entity. In the past 40 years in the United States, there has been a dramatic change from flatfoots walking the neighborhood beat to aggressive teams serving warrants on nonviolent suspects with the help of armored personnel carriers, flash-bang grenades, and battering rams. Through each decade since the 1960s, Balko explains how these changes took place.

Looking at police officers’ Internet message boards where cops talk shop, or even at many police departments’ websites, one may reflexively blame the officers for this change. Plenty of police talk about suspects as if they were enemies to be resented and destroyed. Some don camouflage gear and pose with their militaristic hardware, becoming virtually indistinguishable from a military assault team. SWAT teams were the brainchild of former LAPD police chief Darryl Gates, and some might want to place the fault with him.

While Gates bears a lot of responsibility for police militarization, laying the blame at his feet alone, or even just at the feet of police officers, is too simplistic. “If anything, this is an anti-politician book,” Balko writes.

The social upheaval of the 1960s frightened a lot of Americans. Riots, looting, rising crime rates, and other social unrest made people feel unsafe and thus crime-fighting became a hot-button political issue. To address those concerns, politicians sold themselves as “law and order” candidates, passing harsher legislation to show that they were doing something to deter crime and thus to make citizens safer. Being considered “soft on crime” likely contributed to resounding electoral defeats, thus incentivizing both political parties to up the spending and the rhetoric against crime. In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, politicians at local, state, and federal levels began to link drugs to the public’s fear of crime, and the War on Drugs went into full swing. Drug dealers and users were demonized and became convenient targets for politicians who ramped up enforcement by using tactics long barred by American law.

The complicity that has enabled police militarization extends not only to the police and politicians but to the courts as well. The Supreme Court has played a role in eroding the Castle Doctrine,

which was passed down from English common law (and, as Balko notes, is an idea that dates back to at least Cicero) and holds that a person should be safe from government interference within one's home except in very limited circumstances. If the home must be breached, then it should be done without violence unless absolutely necessary. Today that doctrine is essentially a dead letter. Police routinely use destructive tactics against nonviolent suspects who have not been convicted of a crime. Court-created Fourth Amendment doctrines like "exigent circumstances" that allow warrantless police entry and "good-faith exceptions" to the exclusionary rule have helped eliminate the traditional protections of the home. Those exceptions are read broadly by most courts, allowing police officers to violate these once-sacred spaces almost habitually.

Those changes were not put forth unanimously, however. Balko highlights some of the champions who stood up against the incursions on our rights, such as North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin, who blocked, if only temporarily, liberty-stripping legislation in Congress. Others, like Justice William Brennan, dissented from Supreme Court decisions that put the country on the trajectory toward where cops are often indistinguishable from soldiers. And while the prospects of meaningful rollback of police militarization seem unlikely in the immediate future, using the arguments brought to bear by Senator Ervin and Justice Brennan 40 years ago may prove persuasive to a new generation of Americans.

*Rise of the Warrior Cop* is an excellent history of the militaristic evolution of American policing. No one political party is responsible for today's predicament, and there was no defining moment that policymakers can revisit to restore the institutional humility that once made the police respect a citizen's front door. But there are steps politicians can take to rein in the broad powers currently trusted to police, and *Rise of the Warrior Cop* points to several.

Many other troubling facets of our criminal justice system—such as racial disparities in enforcement and incarceration, lifelong disfranchisement for felony convictions, and police corruption—deserve as much attention, research, and understanding as Balko brought to this topic. His book is a must-read for anyone concerned with the state of American criminal justice, its reform, and the manner with which police officers treat the general public.

Jonathan Blanks  
Cato Institute

## **Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order**

Richard N. Haass

New York: Basic Books, 2013, 208 pp.

For the better part of a decade, the United States has been mired in mediocrity, settling for what feels like a new normal of low economic growth, stagnant wages, political intransigence, and an unending war or terror. Many think America's better days are behind it. Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, disagrees. In *Foreign Policy Begins at Home*, Haass attempts to reverse American defeatism and assuage fears of American decline, arguing instead that the United States is simply underperforming, suffering from "American made" problems that can be corrected by restoring the "foundations of its power." He explains that America's true strength abroad comes from its strength at home, and if America is to provide global leadership it "must first put its house in order." While much of *Foreign Policy* focuses on policy prescriptions that would restore American strength, the true contribution of the book is its explanation of why such a strategy is needed.

Haass uses the opening chapters to convince readers that American leadership abroad is essential because, to Haass, it is the only option. Only America has the "capacity, habits, and willingness" necessary to lead in a nonpolar world in which the "potential for disorder is considerable." Other nations lack the ability, the desire, or both, to do so.

While Haass overstates the looming dangers of a nonpolar world, he correctly describes it as a forgiving place from America's perspective. Even after two prolonged "wars of choice," an economic crisis, and poor leadership and mismanagement from Washington, the United States holds considerable advantages over other nations: the strongest military, the largest economy, a stable political system, a commitment to the rule of law, and an abundance of natural resources—to name a few. And when you consider the difficulties facing other nations—the frailty of China's economy and political system, Russia's dependence on petrodollars, Europe's general economic malaise and disjointed structure, Japan's aging population, and India's corruption and lack of critical infrastructure—it is clear that a direct challenge to America is unlikely.

Haass is correct, the United States faces no existential threats. The countries often cited as potential rivals to America are more concerned with internal issues, and they currently lack the ability to project power over great distances. Moreover, according to Haass, those countries are dependent on the international system for their own well-being and are therefore “disinclined to attempt to disrupt an order that serves their national purposes.” Thus, Haass asserts, America has the space to fix what ails it, and it should take advantage of the opportunity to revamp both its domestic and foreign policy strategies because “changing just one would be desirable but insufficient.” America must rebuild at home and refocus abroad, a strategy Haass calls “restoration.”

For Haass, a foreign policy of restoration would require America to be much more restrained in how it acts abroad, relying more on diplomatic and economic means to influence others rather than military means. America would avoid nation building, wars of choice, and would focus its resources on areas where U.S. interests are most vital—namely, the Asia-Pacific and the Western Hemisphere (and away from the Middle East). It would work with others to promote trade and foreign investment, fight terrorism, and deal with issues emanating from weak states. And it would largely disavow faux doctrines of democracy promotion, humanitarianism, and counterterrorism, instead taking on such missions only when costs are low and probability of success is high.

Some of Haass’s other foreign policy suggestions, however, seem to be at odds with his wise prescription of restraint. Because he accepts the conventional wisdom regarding the dangers posed by a nuclear Iran and by North Korea, or posed to allies like Israel, South Korea, and Taiwan, Haass advocates policies that could go badly awry. He warns against striking Iran, but should Israel strike Iran, “the United States would want to do all it could to limit Iran’s reaction, making it clear it would pay a far higher price if it acted in a manner that drew the United States into the conflict.” Haass also leaves the door open for a U.S. strike against Iran. He stresses that the bar for initiating a strike should be high but admits that a strike would still be a war of choice, something he advises against and condemns throughout the book.

Haass supports maintaining a U.S. troop presence in South Korea to deter what would be a potentially costly war between North and South. He goes on to say that America “must communicate sufficient

resolve to its friends and allies, so as not to encourage aggression against them, but not unconditional resolve, lest potentially lead them to undertake provocative or even reckless behavior.” Where does Haass get his optimism? Balancing between “sufficient resolve” and “unconditional resolve” will be difficult, perhaps impossible. More likely, the United States will overcommit to its allies and either be drawn into an unwanted conflict or be seen as an unreliable friend and a weak nation.

Many of Haass’s more hawkish suggestions rest on assumptions that he never seems to question. For example, he never asks if U.S. allies are strong enough to protect themselves without security guarantees. Moreover, the same forces that Haass insists would prevent other nations from disrupting an international order “that serves their national purposes” largely eliminate the need of the United States to be the guardian of international stability.

With respect to domestic policy, Haass outlines several key areas in which the United States should take immediate action: debt and deficit reduction, energy, K–12 education, infrastructure, and immigration. Generally, his suggestions are a moderate’s greatest hits: reduce the debt through a balanced, “Simpson-Bowles” type approach; increase the domestic supply of carbon fuels through responsible extraction while implementing policies and regulation to reduce domestic demand; reform education to fit today’s job market; reform and rationalize the legal immigration system while securing the borders; and invest money in roads and bridges. Haass insists that his recommendations, including those regarding economic policy, would create a more resilient country that could better withstand large disasters, whether man-made or natural.

In his attempt to placate all sides, however, Haass at times contradicts himself. He advocates a business-friendly tax and regulatory system while also calling for a carbon tax that would put undue burden on American businesses. Haass also argues that the reputational damage done to America’s economic and political system could make others “much less likely to adopt open economic and political models and instead opt for more statist systems with less scope for individual freedom and markets,” but he says this while simultaneously advocating top-heavy policies in America. For example, Haass supports the federal government using money to incentivize states to adopt national education standards (Common Core), as well as

calling for greater fuel efficiency standards for motor vehicles and appliances.

The author's most meaningful policy contributions involve the defense budget. In discussing debt and deficit reduction, Haass calls for defense spending cuts of 5 to 10 percent. This is too modest a figure for a country that exists in a relatively safe world, and it is certainly too modest for a country that is in need, as Haass feels it is, of significant fiscal restructuring. But for an admitted "card-carrying member of the foreign policy establishment" and a former Bush official, calling for such a reduction is a step in the right direction. Haass also insists that the military entitlement system, which is "consuming an ever larger and unsustainable share of the total defense budget," needs to be reformed, an issue on which most people privately agree but few have the courage to say aloud.

Haass should also be applauded for highlighting issues rarely discussed in foreign policy circles but that are crucial for a country running massive deficits. Haass points out that U.S. debt, which should include local and state debt along with that of government-sponsored enterprises, is much higher than commonly reported. He also explains the importance of the bond market and interest rates to America's fiscal health.

One of the major shortcomings of *Foreign Policy* is the amount of time Haass spends addressing the issue that he deems the cause of most of America's ills: a broken political system. He spends a brief chapter outlining what he sees as the major problems: gerrymandered districts, a political funding system that hinders the development of broad coalitions, vast media options that create a more divided and less knowledgeable public, and special interests that have crowded out the general interests. But his recommendations seem uninspired. Some are plausible, such as making it easier to bring bills to the floor, reorganizing congressional committee structures to reduce overlapping jurisdictions, and increasing fast-track authority for trade deals. Others, like abolishing the Electoral College, are nonstarters. One of Haass's suggestions, making it easier to vote on presidential appointees, was recently adopted by the Senate, though the change to the filibuster rules seemed only to exacerbate political tensions.

Haass spends even less time on the lack of strong leadership, arguably the issue that undergirds America's broken politics. He describes the type of leadership needed as a "willingness to

advocate policies that are inconsistent with the narrow interests of many groups and individuals but that would be good for the society and country as a whole,” and he believes that such leadership is a prerequisite to restore the foundations of America’s power. He goes on to admit, however, that it would be difficult for anyone fitting such a description to survive in today’s political environment.

Despite its shortcomings, *Foreign Policy* is a worthwhile read for anyone wanting to know more about the world and the issues America currently faces. Richard Haass adequately defends his central thesis: American leadership is needed but can only be provided if America is strong at home. His policy recommendations would go a long way to restore American strength at home and abroad. But his suggestions should not go unchallenged. Haass would have been better served to question his assumptions about the dangers posed by a nuclear Iran, North Korea, and climate change. Once one realizes that those issues, like many others, are overhyped, then the conclusion is clear: America could do even less abroad and put its house in order more quickly than Richard Haass appreciates.

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### **Why Capitalism?**

Allan H. Meltzer

New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 143 pp.

Allan Meltzer is one of the world’s most distinguished monetary economists and financial system experts. He is also a font of horse sense when it comes to how societies work and how they fail.

In *Why Capitalism?*<sup>9</sup> Meltzer has assembled a number of short studies of policy, the good and the bad, tied together by an aphorism from Immanuel Kant: “Out of timber so crooked as that from which man is made, nothing entirely straight can be carved.”

The quote comes from Kant’s essay “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View,” and it addresses a deep problem of politics: “Man is an animal which, if it lives among others of its kind, requires a master. For he certainly abuses his freedom with respect to other men, and although, as a reasonable being he wishes to have a law which limits the freedom of all, his selfish animal

impulses tempt him, where possible, to exempt himself from them. He thus requires a master, who will break his will and force him to obey a will that is universally valid, under which each can be free. But whence does he get this master? Only from the human race. But then the master is himself an animal, and needs a master.” Kant called that “the hardest problem of all” and concludes that “its complete solution is impossible.”

Meltzer calls that “the Kantian problem” and from it he draws implications about the legal and regulatory frameworks of modern economies. One cannot expect moral perfection from human agents; we’re all imperfect. Focusing on incentives that are likely to produce desirable outcomes is far more reasonable than exhortations from imperfect humans to imperfect humans to follow the rules because they are right in and of themselves. It’s not that Meltzer is against exhortations; it’s just that he thinks they’re less likely to get the desired results than institutional designs that incorporate incentives for desirable behavior and disincentives for undesirable behavior.

Of course, that presumes that there is some consensus on the desirable and the undesirable. Meltzer deals with that issue by implicitly assuming that we prefer prosperity over poverty and then arguing that a relatively limited government (rules of the game plus public goods plus some income redistribution) is necessary for the goals he stipulates. According to Meltzer, “Governments have a role in promoting growth and living standards—they are responsible for safeguarding the political infrastructure under which savings can best increase and generate productive investment. Governments exist to foster property rights and freedom of choice, encourage competition internally, where possible, and externally (free trade abroad), facilitate growth by providing quality education (South Korea’s postwar record of educating millions has been spectacular), maintain the rule of law, and reduce uncertainty about the future.” That’s an aspirational statement of what Meltzer believes good government will do, but not necessarily why “governments exist,” since plenty of governments are primarily predatory rather than providers of services. Meltzer also directs his attention to the design of social policies—such as those intended to reduce smoking, alcohol consumption, and narcotics use—and alerts advocates of such policies to the dangers of perverse incentives.

Meltzer favors regulated markets, in the sense that markets are subjected to rules. That gives him the opportunity to discuss what

rules will achieve desirable outcomes. As he argues, the cause of the recent financial crisis was not a lack of regulation: “All financial markets have been heavily regulated for decades.” The problem was inept regulation that did not take into account Kant’s maxim. Poorly designed regulations will be circumvented and, in the case of the Basel Accord governing bank capital adequacy, that led to “evasion that was nontransparent.”

Meltzer offers several statements of his “laws of regulation” in the book:

- “Lawyers and bureaucrats regulate. Markets circumvent regulation.”
- “Regulations that are costly to comply with and to administer make circumvention easier.”
- “Regulations are static. Markets are dynamic. If circumvention does not occur at first, it will occur later.”
- “Regulation is most effective when it changes the incentives of the regulated.”

Meltzer applies those maxims to a wide range of topics, including economic growth, income distribution, bailouts and the policy of “too big to fail,” deposit insurance and banking reserve ratios, and other issues. He also offers quite interesting essays that deal with the growth of U.S. budget deficits, discretionary monetary policy, the Phillips Curve, stagflation, foreign aid, and his prophesied return of inflation.

*Why Capitalism?*<sup>9</sup> offers a short (143 pages), readable, and timely collection of insights from a distinguished economist. It’s accessible throughout and a valuable application of a principle attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte: “Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence.”

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### **Change They Can’t Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America**

Christopher S. Parker and Matt A. Barreto

Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2013, 361 pp.

Political science professors Christopher Parker and Matt Barreto investigate the causes and consequences of support for the tea party

movement in their book *Change They Can't Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*. They suggest the tea party is a reactionary right-wing movement, akin to the 1920s Ku Klux Klan, that perceives “the election of Barack Obama, the first black president of the United States,” to represent change that “threatens to displace the segment of America that the Tea Party has come to represent: mostly white, middle class, middle-aged men.” Specifically, they suggest tea partiers believe Obama’s position as the most powerful person in the world threatens to “undermine their sense of social prestige” and that tea partiers fear they will no longer receive “the deference to which they have become accustomed” as members of the white majority. Throughout their work, there are a number of methodological problems that lead them to overemphasize the role of racism and social dominance in the tea party movement and place too little emphasis on the economic complaints of the movement.

In this review, I will focus on three main points: their test of whether the tea party is comprised of “reactionary” or “responsible conservatives,” their statistical methods testing if racism and a preference for social dominance drive tea party supporters, and their comparison of the tea party to the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s.

The authors prematurely reject the argument that the tea party is primarily motivated by genuine concerns about spending, the size and scope of government, and taxes in part because they rely on a problematic comparison of local tea party group websites to the *National Review Online* (NRO). From this analysis, they conclude the movement is a contemporary manifestation of paranoid reactionary conservatism.

If the tea party is sincere, argue the authors, then it should be comprised of what they call “responsible conservatives” who prioritize “maintaining order and stability while allowing at least incremental change as a means of avoiding revolutionary change.” Responsible conservatives should also “accept gracefully social and economic changes that have firmly been established in a successful way of life.” Otherwise, tea partiers must be reactionary conservatives motivated by “extreme reactions to change” and are concerned with subversion and displacement of the “dominant” group leading to “paranoid social cognition and conspiratorial thinking.”

This “responsible conservative” litmus test raises several questions. First, why are there only two options? Their method sets up a

situation that precludes conservatives from desiring social change without being categorized as nefarious reactionaries. How would libertarians be categorized with this approach? Using their method, the only sanctioned position for conservatives is to ask liberal reformers to slow down, not change course. This also assumes that New Deal economic debates have been resolved, but this is simply not the case.

As part of their method to determine if the tea party is comprised of “responsible conservatives,” the authors measure if tea party websites are significantly different from articles on the *National Review Online*, their measuring stick for responsible conservatism. The authors then categorize and compare articles on the NRO and tea party websites according to issues they associate with “fusionist” responsible conservatism and others they associate with reactionary conservatism. It should come as little surprise that the content comparison between tea party group websites and the NRO did detect significant differences. For instance, the NRO was more than six times as likely to mention “responsible” issues such as foreign policy and national security, and three times more likely to mention social issues. Tea party websites, on the other hand, were six times more likely to mention what the authors deem as conspiratorial issues, labeled “Conspiracy/Socialism/Govt. Bad.” For instance, websites which urged supporters to oppose “Elected officials who support Socialist Government and forced redistribution of wealth,” or those claiming the president was moving the country closer to socialism would be categorized as conspiratorial. Based on the differences between tea party and NRO website content, the authors conclude that “the Tea Party supporters are different from mainstream conservatives” because “the Tea Party and its supporters are reactionaries.”

Parker and Barreto’s analysis raises several additional issues. They offer no clear category to measure the explicit overriding themes of the tea party movement, that is, opposition to redistribution (such as the stimulus, bailouts, spending, and taxes) and the “government rewarding bad behavior,” as tea party catalyst Rick Santelli put it. Instead, they categorize such concerns as “Conspiracy/Socialism/Govt. Bad.” But by lumping frustration with government (“Govt. Bad”) and redistribution into the same category as conspiracies, they combine substantively different types of concerns into one. For instance, by categorizing as “conspiratorial” the tea party belief that Obama is moving the country toward socialism, they assume this complaint is a proxy for an abstract fear of Obama.

Yet a CBS/*New York Times* poll found that tea partiers were the only political group in which a majority could—using their own words even—correctly define the word socialism, by a margin of 56 to 22 percent compared to non-tea partiers. If we include those who defined socialism more broadly as redistribution of wealth or as government taking away rights, this margin increases to 76 percent of tea partiers compared to 32 percent of non-tea partiers. For tea partiers, the word socialism connotes a very specific complaint, not just general trepidation.

National surveys indicate that the tea party is clearly the fiscally conservative wing of the Republican coalition. It is hardly surprising that a group of grassroots fiscal hawks would pay disproportionate attention to redistribution and thus differ from a website that appeals to the “fusionist” spectrum of the right-wing coalition. The authors nevertheless create this false choice between “responsible” NRO conservatives and reactionary conservatives anxious over their “social prestige.”

Next, the authors use a statistical method to simultaneously test several possible sources of tea party support and find evidence that the tea party is in part driven by fear of losing social prestige. But the test they constructed likely led them to overestimate the role that out-group hostility and social dominance have played in motivating tea party support.

Their test uses original survey data collected by the authors from respondents in 13 states, selecting disproportionately from competitive states: Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, North Carolina, Nevada, Michigan, Georgia, Colorado, Arizona, California, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The results found preferences for limited government, racism, social dominance, and fear of Obama are statistically influential in predicting tea party support. Undermining some alternative theories of tea party support, they did not find economic anxiety, authoritarianism, or ethnocentrism to be statistically influential.

To fully evaluate the authors’ findings, one must first understand the choices the authors made when initially constructing their statistical model. Some of those choices are problematic, and others the reader will want to evaluate further. First, it is unfortunate that their model excludes opposition to redistribution, the ostensible catalyst of the movement. While couched in the rhetoric of liberty and freedom, tea partiers’ specific complaints are about government spending, taxes, and what they view as unfair

government policies rewarding bad behavior and punishing producers—in other words, redistribution. By excluding a variable to measure these concerns from the model, a plausible explanation for tea party support is omitted.

Second, without adequate justification, the authors assume that if tea partiers believe President Obama is moving the country toward socialism, then they perceive him as a “powerful person from a ‘subordinate’ group” and consequently view him as “symbolic of their declining social prestige.” The authors presume that tea partiers define socialism as an abstract, scary bogeyman rather than a system in which government owns the means of production. Yet the fact that the tea party is the only political group able to accurately define socialism shows that to them socialism means something specific, not abstract. This is not to say that the authors are necessarily incorrect, but they did not adequately substantiate their assumption that concerns about socialism are actually anxiety over declining social prestige and the subversion a social “hierarchy.”

Third, the authors use a commonly accepted battery to measure latent racism. Although the questions can understandably be used to detect latent racial hostility, some debate exists as to whether these questions may also detect other beliefs. A full discussion is beyond the scope of this book review. Instead, here are some examples of the questions used, and interested readers can evaluate them: “Irish, Italians, Jews, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.” “Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.”

Fourth, in order to determine if tea partiers have the “drive to dominate other ‘subordinate’ groups,” they problematically combine a battery of questions that have been found to predict racism and aggressive intergroup interactions with questions measuring egalitarianism that predict opposition to redistribution. The traditional measures of social dominance they use, such as whether a respondent believes “inferior groups should stay in their place,” make sense as proper measures of social dominance. Research has shown they predict intergroup competition and racism (Ho et al. 2011). However, very small numbers of Americans endorse such views, typically about 1 to 10, which make them difficult to use in statistical models. Perhaps this is why the authors combine these traditional measures of social dominance with a separate (and some view as a

related) construct measuring preferences for egalitarianism. For example, whether a respondent agrees or disagrees that “we should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups” or “we should increase social equality.” This egalitarianism battery has been shown to predict “conservatism and opposition to redistributive social policies” (Ho et al. 2011)

There are two issues that arise from this method. In efforts to measure a preference for social dominance, it is problematic to combine one battery that has been shown to predict racism and zero-sum competition with another battery that predicts conservatism and opposition to redistributive social policies. By using this method, one could erroneously conclude that opposition to government redistribution is indicative of a preference for social dominance and racial hierarchy. In addition, the egalitarian questions used are unclear. For instance, it is unclear *who* the “we” is that tries to equalize conditions. Is it the government? It’s also unclear what kinds of conditions are being equalized. One could strongly favor equal treatment before the law but strongly disagree with the government equalizing economic conditions. Particularly for economic conservatives, the type of equality being discussed determines whether they will support or oppose a policy. Consequently, it is not obvious that questions about egalitarianism are measuring whether tea partiers believe President Obama has “stepped out of his place” by becoming president. The conclusions do not follow.

Even despite the issues with the social dominance measurement, Parker and Barreto found that only 7 percent of tea partiers score “high” on this measure. Most score in the middle or low range, which makes sense given the vagueness of the egalitarian questions. This further suggests that these are not the prevailing concerns across tea partiers.

Instead, far more prevalent in the tea party movement is their preference for limited government. The authors find that nearly 90 percent of tea partiers score *high* on preference for limited government, compared to 40 percent of non-tea partiers. More importantly, they find that a desire for limited government is a significant driver of the movement, even while controlling for other explanations. It is puzzling that despite the preference for limited government having a strong statistical significance and overwhelming prevalence in the movement, little attention is given to this finding. For instance, the words “limited government” are mentioned only

18 times in the book, while “social dominance” is mentioned 82 times, and “racism” or “racist” are mentioned 100 times.

While certainly the authors’ results on social dominance, racism, and anxiety about the president merit thorough discussion and investigation, their finding that tea partiers are sincerely concerned about the scope of government also warrants greater attention than it is given. Had the authors pursued it, they may have shed light on what tea partiers mean when they say they want limited government. Parker and Barreto likely would have found that language about limited government for these conservatives represents a deeper moral concern about government fairness and redistribution.

Finally, their comparison of the tea party to the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) of the 1920s is problematic, overlooks other analogous social movements, and conveys the message that the tea party is primarily concerned with phenotypes. The authors explain the tea party is the successor to the John Birch Society (JBS) and the 1920s KKK because “all three appeal to the same demographic and draw on similar rhetoric.” They do not adequately demonstrate, however, that the substantive rhetoric was the same or that similar demographics are sufficient for connecting these movements. For instance, they describe the Klan as being concerned about groups they perceived as “either racially or ethnically un-American” and that “the Klan defined the American way of life ethnoculturally.” The JBS “drew more on ideology to communicate its brand of nationalism than overt ethnic or racial intolerance.” From their explanations, it is unclear that the tea party, the KKK, and the JBS share substantively similar rhetoric.

Another question remains: Are there other social movements that are antecedents to the tea party movement? If so, why weren’t these connected? Unlike the KKK and JBS, the tea party emerged after a period of easy money, a bubble bursting, and a financial crisis that punished law-abiding and villain alike. In fact, the tea party emerged in an environment similar to the tax revolts of the 1930s, or the Jacksonian populists after the 1819 economic downturn (Beito 1989, Howe 2007). After the Crash of 1929, thousands of taxpayer groups and “economy leagues” formed in every state complaining that recipients of government funds were “tax eaters.” Echoing 2008, the Panic of 1819, according to Daniel Walker Howe, was “profoundly disturbing” because “personal fortunes could be unrelated to personal merit” and “the hardworking and honest suffered along with the undeserving” (Howe 2007: 144). Many blamed government

intervention, particularly government favoritism, for the nation's woes. Why weren't these other social movements examined as intellectual antecedents of the tea party movement? Had the authors focused more on tea partiers' complaints about government action and redistribution, perhaps those other social movements would have been given further consideration.

In conclusion, despite methodological problems in their analysis, it is reasonable to conclude that the tea party movement does include some who hold tendencies toward social dominance and out-group hostility. However, the authors do not adequately show that social dominance and fear of the displacement of white males is the prevailing moral passion motivating the movement. Consequently, more attention should have been given to explaining the meaning behind tea party complaints about government expansion, particularly their aversion to redistribution.

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