

contain interesting material, valuable to researchers and students interested in Austrian economics.

Although the papers included in the volume are largely self-contained, they share a number of common threads. Besides being jointly inspired by Hayek's views of spontaneous orders, competition, and the evolution of institutions, they also offer a cohesive ethical framework based on the recognition of legitimate property rights as the foundation of capitalism.

Public choice analysis is one element that is used relatively sparingly in the book. The arguments against EU institutions, for instance, do not consider the possibility that the political dimension of the project—as opposed to the mere dismantling of barriers existing at the national level—may serve as a commitment device for self-seeking politicians who would otherwise be tempted to renege on a regime of free trade or free movement of people if they were not constrained by the potential penalties imposed from Brussels. This is not to say that such public choice considerations would provide a satisfactory account of the emergence of EU institutions, but they certainly merit explicit consideration.

While we should not assume politics away from our discussions of alternative institutional arrangements, there is no reason to believe that the current form of the EU is desirable or “optimal” in any sense of the word. And neither does the relative absence of public choice arguments detract from the value of the book as a resource for academics and laymen wishing to learn more about the positive applications of Hayekian thinking with regard to both real-world policy problems and problems of economic theory.

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The Conservatarian Manifesto: Libertarians, Conservatives, and the Fight for the Right's Future

Charles C.W. Cooke

New York: Crown Forum, 2015, 231 pp.

It's altogether fitting that a book throwing down the gauntlet for a libertarian-conservative fusion in the 2010s has emerged from an author linked to the same magazine as the progenitor of the original

fusionism of a half-century earlier. I only recently met Charlie Cooke—though we’ve exchanged many tweets—and never had the chance to meet Frank Meyer—though I’m heavily involved with the Federalist Society, which his son Eugene has long led—but I have no doubt that the two would get on swimmingly.

And it comes as no surprise that both cut their writing chops at *National Review*, which many assume is a stodgy journal of untraditionalist redoubt when in fact it has produced some of the most innovative reformist ideas in the conservative movement. Or, should I say, that it has featured ideas from the full range of center-right thought, along with various manifestations of entertainingly untraditional personal style.

But enough about *NR*, which is only relevant for having the good sense to employ someone keen on relaunching the noble quest for that elusive synthesis of conservatives and libertarians—the chimera best equipped to do battle with the New New Left.

Although the term Cooke settled on to describe this mythical beast’s resurrection is ungainly, it does have the virtue of quite literally putting into one word a concept that otherwise needs explanation to too many (“classical liberal”) or is exactly the same thing but two words (“libertarian conservative”). So fine, “conservatarian”—but why?

Well, as Cooke puts it, “both libertarianism and conservatism are seductive to the man who is motivated by a desire for ordered liberty.” Of course, these ideologies aren’t the same—and are often bitterly opposed—or else we wouldn’t need to “fuse” them. But they do both have weaknesses, especially in practice, and Cooke’s description of them is perhaps my favorite part of his whole project.

Libertarians’ blind spot is that they can become “unmoored from reality” and “behave like Jacobins,”

disrespectful of tradition, convinced that logic-on-paper can answer all the important questions about the human experience, dismissive of history and cultural norms, possessed of a purifying instinct, and all too ready to pull down institutions that they fail to recognize are vital to the integrity of the society in which they wish to operate.

Doesn’t that sound like a lot of the “liberty movement’s” social gatherings, associated blogs, and social media? Of course, conservatism is even worse,

relying as it does on the Burkean presumption that society is the way it is for a reason, it can refuse too steadfastly to adapt to emerging social and economic realities and it is apt to transmute solutions that were the utilitarian product of a particular time into articles of high principle.

All Republicans need to recapture the White House is to offer Reagan's tax cuts—but not his immigration policy—and send Henry Kissinger shuttling around the world to “Just Say No to Drugs” (or something like that). Add a dollop of wry observational humor to Cooke's political exegesis and you would have the beginnings of a book by Cato's H. L. Mencken Fellow, P. J. O'Rourke.

Indeed, much like the best satire, the heart of *The Conservatarian Manifesto* is an unflinching diagnosis of the practical problems with frenemy tribes. The appeal of fusionism, then, is equally practical: conservatives ground libertarian flights of fancy (many institutions have value), while libertarians counter conservative endowment effects (some change is good).

But why should we care about these moderating functions? After all, libertarians and conservatives alike, whether activists, intellectuals, or “mere” citizens, identify with their ideology in the good-faith belief that it offers the best of all possible worlds. Why should anyone compromise that noble goal?

Well, to put it bluntly, the only reason to contemplate fusionism and take the time arguing over the recipe for the ideal conservatarian manifesto is to win elections and advance the ball against a common enemy. Because even libertarians who are uncomfortable being associated with “the Right”—what about social issues? and Bush's wars?—have to recognize that, in the Age of Obama, it's the Left that's the great enemy of freedom. For example, Nancy Pelosi and Elizabeth Warren threaten the liberties of gay people (and everyone else) much more than Rick Santorum and Michelle Bachmann. It's not like a president could issue an executive order criminalizing homosexual (or unmarried) cohabitation—or even sign a law to that effect that wouldn't be instantly struck down.

The key things that philosophically consistent conservatives and libertarians agree on are federalism, civil society, and the Constitution—and, not coincidentally, these are the subjects of Cooke's more philosophical chapters (before he gets into discussions of particular policy areas). Government needs to be as close to the

people as possible to allow different visions of the good life to flourish—and the Constitution sets out a governing structure based on those exact premises.

That's why it's so easy for the mainstream media to paint conservatives and libertarians as the same: on economic/regulatory policy, as well as such things as the right to bear arms for self-defense, there isn't much daylight there. And even so-called law-and-order conservatives have begun to recognize that overcriminalization has led to policing practices that are both abusive and counterproductive. Cooke also puts ending the drug war in his conservatarian agenda—though that's a tougher sell, at least at the state level, for the conservative reader.

But recall what William F. Buckley—who set the *NR* line on this issue early on—said in a debate with Jesse Jackson: not everything that's legal is honorable. Or, to take the inverse: we shouldn't prohibit everything we don't like.

And that's where we come to “social issues” (which the author also puts in quotation marks). Here Cooke wisely separates abortion and same-sex marriage. On abortion, public opinion has rejected the extremes (always/never) but has generally moved toward the pro-life side—perhaps because technological advances allow us to save more premature babies and see life in the womb. On gay marriage, there is no third party whose rights at some point—birth? conception? second trimester? ensoulment? quickening?—conflict with those of consenting adults, so the argument resisting gay marriage ultimately rests on amorphous societal effects.

Cooke, who personally favors gay marriage, counsels conservatives to recognize that the battle “has been lost, and that it has been lost badly,” but that they should be pragmatic so that the retreat becomes Dunkirk rather than the Alamo. In other words, conservatives should band together with libertarians so social reform is “placed in its proper legal and philosophical context and that the more excitable advocates of change are not permitted to sacrifice deeply entrenched American principles in the excitement of their moment.”

I quite agree (and I agree with Cooke's notion that the Constitution doesn't contain a right to marriage, except that it does require equal eligibility for *state marriage licenses*). The resistance of progressives in the marriage-equality movement to carve-outs for religious liberty, and their desire to ostracize anyone holding

“incorrect” views, is both disappointing and dangerous. Even before Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote his long-expected majority opinion in the marriage cases this past June, conservatives needed a response aside from screaming “judicial activism.”

On foreign policy too it really shouldn't be too hard to be conservatarian. For one thing, there's nothing particularly ideological about foreign policy in the conventional sense: both progressives and conservatives can be realist or idealist, and classical liberal first principles are often not very helpful. In other words, should the United States deal with enemy country X by bombing it, invading it, trading with it, not trading with it, engaging in secret talks, making speeches at the UN, or anything else? The answer is simply that it depends on the circumstances.

Now, good conservatarians should certainly be on board with the idea that strategy and mission should dictate budgets and tactics—Republicans lose credibility when they blindly call for more Pentagon funding—but the key is *prudence*. Reagan used force only three times (Beirut, Grenada, Libya) and yet he's thought of as bellicose, while there seems to be no rhyme or reason to peacenik Obama's periodic force insertions.

I could go on in discussing the tensions inherent to any fusionist project, or the areas in which I disagree with the author here—which include immigration policy and the scope of judicial review—but you get the idea and should read the book to make up your own mind.

At base, if we're to change the climate of ideas and ultimately secure, protect, and expand liberty, then political coalitions are inescapable, as is the understanding that *old* political coalitions won't cut it. Just ask the Tammany Hallers or the Silent Majority—along with John McCain and Mitt Romney, who would've been elected president had they been facing a 1980s electorate.

Not everyone associated with Cato or reading the *Cato Journal* will agree with Cooke's thesis or my delineation of the policy dynamics at play. But that's okay, because the liberty movement itself needs all kinds to be successful.

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