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Contents

Introduction by James McAllister, Williams College	2
Review by James W. Davis, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland	4
Review by Brendan Rittenhouse Green, Williams College	8
Review by C. William Walldorf, Jr., Wake Forest University	19
Author's Response by Brian C. Rathbun, USC Dornsife	22

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Introduction by James McAllister, Williams College

Brian Rathbun's *Trust in International Cooperation* is one of the more important books in recent years written about American foreign policy and multilateral cooperation in world politics. While historians of American foreign policy will find much of interest in the empirical chapters on the origins of the League of Nations and NATO, Rathbun's primary task is to challenge how International Relations [IR] theorists think about the origins of cooperation. In his view, "the way that most in the field go about explaining international cooperation and the creation of international organizations, as the rational and functional response to objective security environments marked by uncertainty, is almost always too narrow, often obvious, and sometimes exactly wrong" (xi). In contrast to rationalist approaches, which view the creation of multilateral institutions as necessary for the establishment of subsequent relations of trust among states, Rathbun argues that the causal relationship is exactly the opposite: "Trust rather than distrust leads states to create international institutions. It is a cause, not the effect, of international organizations" (5).

All the contributors to this roundtable acknowledge the considerable virtues of *Trust in International Cooperation*. James Davis believes that it is a "creative and innovative study." William Walldorf writes that Rathbun's work "is a fascinating, well-researched addition to the study of international politics." Brendan Green is the most effusive in his praise, as he argues that the book is "magisterial" and one that will assume a place alongside classic works by Robert Keohane and John Ikenberry.¹ Needless to say, given the wide-ranging nature of Rathbun's theoretical and historical claims, it is not a surprise that the reviewers have some important reservations about various aspects of his argument. In different ways, the reviewers all suggest that the author has produced a book that explains much more about individual preferences and American domestic politics than it does about the emergence of multilateral institutions.

As Walldorf notes in his review, good scholarship sparks new questions and lines of inquiry for other scholars to address. Judging by the contributions to this roundtable, it seems clear that *Trust in International Cooperation* far exceeds this standard. Political scientists will likely be grappling with the issues raised by Rathbun for years to come.

Participants:

Brian Rathbun is the author of *Trust in International Cooperation: International Security Institutions, Domestic Politics and American Multilateralism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), *Partisan Interventions: European Party Politics and Peace Enforcement in the Balkans* (Cornell University Press, 2004) as well as articles in *International Organization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *the Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *the European Journal of*

¹ See Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); and G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

International Relations, Security Studies and other journals. His research focuses on the psychology of foreign policy decision-making, the role of political parties in foreign affairs and the structure of foreign policy attitudes in the mass public. His most recent book manuscript, *Diplomacy's Value*, provides an account of how diplomacy matters in international affairs. Brian received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley in 2002 and has taught at USC since 2008. He is also the recipient of the 2009 USC Parents Association Teaching and Mentoring Award.

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For both Realist and Liberal Institutional scholar of international relations, anarchy leads states to fear exploitation and, perhaps worst of all, unprovoked military attack. Even if states share common interests, common aversions, or would like nothing more than to preserve the status quo, the lack of an international sovereign creates incentives to regard others with suspicion. From this perspective, international relations resemble an n-person Prisoner's Dilemma. Even in situations where cooperation would leave everyone better off, anarchy leads individuals to behave in ways that lead to suboptimal collective outcomes. When it comes to the ability of states to mitigate the structural impediments to trust and long-run cooperation, however, Realists and Liberals part company. Whereas the former see little room for states to move beyond a narrow, short-run focus on relative position in pursuit of security when the ultimate intentions of others are unknowable, the latter are more sanguine about the ability of states to develop relationships of trust by means of institutions that provide credible information over the preferences and behaviors of others. Since both Realists and Liberal Institutionalists assume that foreign policy choices reflect a rational response to the constraints of the external environment, differences in their assessments of the prospects for cooperation are usually explained by differing assumptions regarding the nature of state utilities. Realists assume that states aim to maximize their relative position in the international system, whereas Liberals assume that states seek to maximize absolute gain.¹

The mere fact that we are alive suggests there may be something wrong with the Realist perspective on anarchy: either that statesmen have proven more adept than scholars at solving the Prisoner's Dilemma; or that Prisoner's Dilemmas are less common than most Realist theories imply. For Liberals, the problem is one of logic. Institutions are possible in situations where mutual cooperation is preferable to exploitation, but absent the information provided by institutions, states cannot be certain that others do not, in fact, prefer defection. How can trust be said to emerge from institutions when trust is necessary for their emergence in the first place?

In his creative and innovative study *Trust in International Cooperation*, Brian C. Rathbun reverses the causal direction of the Liberal account. Defining trust as "the belief that cooperation will be reciprocated," (2) Rathbun argues that multilateral cooperation is possible because some individuals (or groups of the likeminded) display "generalized" rather than "strategic trust" (31). When confronting a situation where desired outcomes are the product of interdependent choice, generalized trusters assume others will respond to cooperation in kind.² Generalized trust is thus a disposition, a property of the truster and not of the relationship (32). Hence, trust is more convincingly conceived as a (necessary) cause, but not the effect of international organizations (5).

¹ For an overview of the debate, see David A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

² Or to use Axelrod's terminology, they are "nice." See Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984)

For over forty years psychologists have used experiments, as well as clinical and field studies, to demonstrate that individuals respond to the same structural circumstances in very different ways. Many of these studies suggest that individuals vary in their general social orientation. Some are generally optimistic with regard to the basic disposition of others. They believe that most individuals will reciprocate cooperation, even in situations that resemble the Prisoner's Dilemma. Others see the world as a competitive realm. These individuals seek unilateral advantage in strategic situations and expect others to do the same. A second strand of literature stresses variation in the way individuals frame choice situations. From this perspective, individual variation in similar structural circumstances is attributed less to the individual's general social orientation and more to the way in which the situation is framed.³ Moreover, individual variation in structurally equivalent circumstances forms much of the focus of the emerging fields of neuroscience and behavioral epigenetics.⁴

After setting out the puzzle of international cooperation and the shortcomings of rationalist accounts in chapter one, Rathbun devotes chapter two of his book to developing a theory of trust, international cooperation, and institutional design rooted in the strand of social psychological literature that focuses on an individual's social orientation. At the heart of differences in social orientation are different dispositions to trust. Generalized trust is held to account for the surprisingly high degree of cooperation in social dilemmas where defection would be the rational strategy. Because generalized trust is a disposition rather than a response to a given actor or situation, Rathbun suggests that generalized trusters exhibit a general tendency toward more inclusive and multilateral cooperative institutions.

Social psychologists have developed a variety of procedures for eliciting evidence of an individual's social orientation. Because, however, we usually do not have access to individual-level data for the relevant actors in international relations, Rathbun codes for social orientation in three ways. First, he looks for documentary evidence of the relevant actors' views on human nature. Does the documentary record suggest that the decision-maker viewed humans in general as "benign, altruistic or cooperative" (45)? Second, he looks for a concern on the part of decision-makers for opportunistic behavior in others. Third, and most interesting from the standpoint of method, is the choice of political ideology as a proxy for social orientation. "Generalized trust," we are told, "is ideological, a core belief about the nature of the world." By contrast, at the core of "rightist ideology" is the "belief that the world is a dangerous place" and "that others cannot be trusted" (46). Hence, the author argues that generalized distrust clusters with conservatism and competitive foreign policy preferences, whereas generalized trust clusters with liberal

³ Much, although not all, of this literature is inspired by Prospect Theory. See, for example, Margaret A. Neal and Max H. Bazerman, *Cognition and Rationality in Negotiation* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

⁴ For overviews of early findings as well as the evidentiary challenges of these fields, see Rose McDermott, "The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science," *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 2, No. 4 (December 2004), pp. 691-706 ; and Greg Miller, "The Seductive Allure of Behavioral Epigenetics," *Science* Vol. 329, No. 5987 (2 July 2010), pp. 24-27.

policy preferences in domestic and international affairs. A decision-maker's political ideology is then regarded to be a valid measure of social orientation (46-53).

The remainder of the book is devoted to demonstrating the plausibility of the argument through the analysis of U.S. policy preferences towards multilateral institutions in a number of historical cases. Chapters three through five examine American (and at times British) policy debates over the League of Nations, the United Nations, and the North Atlantic Treaty. Chapter six presents an analysis of the George W. Bush administration's rejection of multilateralism in the wake of 9/11 and the Barack Obama administration's efforts to reengage the world through multilateral institutions.

The individual case studies are well-written and Rathbun makes use of a wide range of primary and secondary sources to substantiate his claims. Taken together, the cases demonstrate the utility--but also the limitations-- of the approach as a means for explaining the emergence of multilateral institutions. Rathbun shows that political ideology is a strong predictor of an American politicians' preference for international cooperation in general and the form of cooperation in particular. Those furthest to the right of the political spectrum were the least likely to support the multilateral institutions in question and most likely to favor unilateralist policy options. Although less exhaustive, the evidence suggests a similar pattern in the foreign policy preferences in Britain.

But an explanation of individual policy preferences alone is insufficient for explaining the emergence of multilateral security institutions. The case studies show that American policy was ultimately a question of domestic politics and personality characteristics that were not captured by social orientation. Thus, whereas presidents Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman were both generalized trusters who sought to commit the United States to multilateral institutions, Wilson was unwilling to accept Senator Henry Cabot Lodge's reservations to the League of Nations Treaty and thus unable to secure Senate ratification in 1919. By contrast, Truman's willingness to compromise with Senator Arthur H.Vandenberg on the wording of Article V helped to secure Senate passage of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949.

That an individual's social orientation has its meaning for outcomes in particular domestic political settings becomes clear in Rathbun's short discussion of the ideas of Sir Robert Cecil that formed the basis of the Phillimore Committee's recommendations in the United Kingdom. The Phillimore Committee Report and various supporting memoranda written by Sir Robert Cecil conceived of the League more as an alliance based on negative security guarantees rather than a multilateral institution with positive security obligations. Although Sir Robert Cecil's preferences regarding the League's design were closer to those of Senator Lodge than of President Wilson, Rathbun characterizes him as a champion of the League idea in British domestic politics (86-90), whereas Lodge is cast more as a hindrance. And recognizing the need to keep Britain on board, Wilson proved more willing to compromise with Cecil than with Lodge (92-93).

The episode makes clear that explaining individual (or even national) preferences for institutionalized cooperation does not tell us whether or not an international institution

ultimately will be established, how it will operate, and whether or not it will persist. Because Rathbun does not systematically analyze the formation of preferences in all of the states party to the treaties discussed here, we do not know whether the proxy he uses for social orientation is generalizable beyond the United States and the United Kingdom, nor how widespread generalized trust must be in order to ensure the emergence of multilateral institutions. The question is suggested by Rathbun's discussion of continental European's preferences regarding the establishment of NATO: "Little attention is paid to the European side as the pronounced vulnerability of the prostrate continentals just three years after the devastating war drove their calculations, and to the extent that trust was involved it was particularized in nature: faith in the United States" (167). And whereas generalized trust of the sort that characterized US preferences is said in chapter two to be governed by a logic of diffuse reciprocity, "[t]he North Atlantic Treaty was based on a quid pro quo deal" (166). Preferences alone, it seems are insufficient for explaining the emergence of multilateral institutions. Political process intervenes between states' preferences and international outcomes.

Functionalist accounts of institutionalized cooperation too often make the mistake of reading history backward. They assume that because an institution serves a particular function today, it must have been created for that purpose.⁵ But we should also guard against assuming that the causes giving rise to an institution account for its persistence. To be fair, Rathbun's claims are more nuanced, and he does suggest that constructivist arguments regarding the importance of shared identities for sustaining multilateral cooperation, along with rationalist explanations that emphasize the hegemon's willingness to provide others with collective goods, may account for NATO's success (207). Yet the discussion in chapter six suggests that the general sense of fear created by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 rapidly eroded the generalized trust that sustained a U.S. preference for multilateralism. When put to the test, shared identities were no match for the "broad societal shift in generalized fear" (219).

The claim that George W. Bush played on the collective fears of a traumatized American public in order to secure support for a more unilateralist foreign policy exemplified by the invasion of Iraq is commonplace and plausible. Yet the account provided by Rathbun in chapter six points to inconsistencies in the overall theoretical argument. Thus, in chapter two we read: "All of the leading theorists in political psychology now agree that a general sense of threat is central for explaining the adoption of rightist political views" (46). The claim is used to justify using political views as a proxy for social orientation. But by chapter six the relationship seems reversed. We then read that, "generalized trust serves as a kind of shock absorber that blunts the impact of threatening events" (211). So which is it? Fear produces generalized distrust, or generalized trust mitigates the effects of fear?

⁵ For discussions and applications of the concept of functional shift, see my *Terms of Inquiry: On the Theory and Practice of Political Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 126-130; and Kathleen Thelen, "Timing and Temporality in the Analysis of Institutional Evolution and Change," *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (Spring 2000), pp. 101-108.

It is not too high praise, I believe, to call Brian Rathbun's *Trust in International Cooperation* a magisterial work. Indeed, of the two problems I have with the book, one is the title. It is a shame that a book destined to rank with Robert Keohane's *After Hegemony* and John Ikenberry's *After Victory* in the literature on international institutions was not titled with the appropriate prepositional phrase.¹ Given Rathbun's sophisticated exposition of the psychological disposition to trust others as the font of international institutions, the book might have been profitably titled *After Trust*; or perhaps Rathbun's piercing, and often successful, attack on the rationalist consensus in the institutional literature could have produced the title *After Rationalism*.

In any event, Rathbun's more modest title should not obscure his own talents as a grand theorist of international relations. Scholars and informed citizens wishing to understand the origins of the multilateral institutions would do well to buy this book immediately—perhaps several copies of it. After all, Rathbun's work shows that the belief that others will reciprocate cooperation is often central to making political progress, and it would be a shame to leave the author's massively cooperative act hanging.

I do have one other problem with the book: it does not really explain much about international cooperation, as it purports to do. Nevertheless, *Trust in International Cooperation* is high-style International Relations theory at its finest. Moreover, Rathbun goes beyond a theoretical contribution by providing a convincing empirical explanation of the domestic politics of American institutionalism. His evidence amply demonstrates whence comes the fierce energy in debates over international organizations and the domestic political patterns that such energy produces. Rathbun's psychological theory shows why international institutions produce so much political sound and fury, despite their more limited international significance.

The Argument

Trust in International Cooperation is, at bottom, a new answer to a classic question of international relations: how can states cooperate in an anarchic environment where they are vulnerable to defection and generally uncertain about the intentions of other actors? In particular, how can they cooperate on issues of peace and security, where defection can be incredibly costly, even fatal?

The standard answer of rationalism, or 'neo-liberalism,' is that institutions solve the problem of uncertainty by providing information. By monitoring compliance with agreed upon rules, they identify which actors are cooperating and which are defecting. Institutions therefore show which actors have an interest in cooperation; establish

¹ Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

reputational stakes in being good citizens; and lengthen the ‘shadow of the future,’ allowing the long term benefits of cooperation to outweigh any short-term incentives to defect. The design of these institutions is driven by the same considerations: cooperation over issues where there is less information require greater hierarchical controls and surrender of sovereignty, and may even make cooperation impossible.

Rathbun offers an alternate explanation of cooperation based on the concept of ‘generalized trust.’ Generalized trust is the belief “that others are generally likely to reciprocate cooperation” (25) rather than sucker the trusting party. It is a moralistic rather than strategic concept: it is not based on information about potential partners, but instead “rests on a general belief in the benevolent character of others” (25). Rathbun theorizes that this psychological disposition to trust others explains the creation and design of multilateral security institutions. He tests his argument against rationalist and other alternatives by using it to explain the origins and legal structure of three prominent security institutions: the League of Nations, the United Nations, and the North Atlantic Treaty.

Theoretical Triumph

Trust in International Cooperation is in many respects a theoretical *tour de force*. Rathbun’s attack on the rationalist understanding of institutions is often quite compelling. He usefully reframes these theories in terms of “strategic trust.” As Rathbun summarizes, “distrust drives the creation of international organizations, which are the producers of strategic trust and cooperation. International organizations come before trust. They change incentives and provide information, altering the structure of the situation to solve the uncertainty problem that breeds distrust” (15).

Rathbun shows how this standard answer has serious limitations in explaining the origins and design of international institutions: it cannot explain ‘diffuse reciprocity:’ cooperation where the exchange of benefits is episodic or inconsistent over time. In rationalist theories, “it is the very repetition of cooperation that.... Provides the information about the interests of others’ cooperative intentions” (18). Rationalism thus has a particular problem explaining the formation and operation of multilateral security institutions, where cooperation—defending against aggressors or abiding by dispute resolution procedures at some nebulous point in the future—is necessarily based on diffuse reciprocity.

By contrast, those individuals with a trusting social orientation can accept diffuse reciprocity, and even consider greater hierarchical controls and loss of autonomy to enforce it, all of which are central to institutionalized cooperation on security issues. Generalized trust is a kind of “anarchical social capital” (4) that reduces concerns about opportunism, allowing its lucky bearers to reach joint gains beyond what rationalist utilitarian calculation can produce. In short, for Rathbun, trust precedes institutional creation rather than following it. This logic is difficult to refute, and it is hard to see how

rationalists can claim to explain cooperation in multilateral security institutions, where diffuse reciprocity and uncertainty of intentions are pervasive.²

Rathbun's alternative theory is made plausible by its extensive grounding in the social psychological literature. A vexing problem for rationalists of all stripes—studiously ignored by most IR theorists—is that people do not act as expected in experimental settings. One-shot prisoners' dilemmas, which ought to end with blood on the floor, often end with people hugging it out. Drawing on a wealth of this experimental research, Rathbun shows how tacit norms about trust and reciprocity underlie the substantial amount of cooperation that occurs in the face of rationalist incentives to defect. Many people have a general disposition to believe that cooperation will generally be reciprocated and that they are morally obligated to reciprocate in turn.

Importantly, this kind of generalized trust is independent of knowledge about other players or the structure of the situation, and varies throughout the population. Those with a 'cooperative' social orientation will cooperate and reciprocate whether or not they know anything about their partners, and whether or not the game structure provides greater or fewer benefits for defection. Those with a 'competitive' social orientation—lacking generalized trust of others—tend to defect even in situations where there are massive incentives towards cooperation, like iterated games, assurance games, or harmony games. It follows that cooperators will be more prone to ignore the possibility of opportunism involved in multilateral endeavors, while competitors will fear this kind of opportunism and favor unilateralism in order to guard against it. While Rathbun is careful to note that the influence of these dispositions in international relations is an empirical question (37), he is persuasive in his argument that they provide a logical explanation for variation in cooperation, both in degree and across actors.

Rathbun pits his approach against rationalist theories, which expect the initiation of cooperation to be easier in structurally more forgiving circumstances or when states can afford to absorb opportunistic behavior. They also expect that states should engage in genuine surrender of sovereignty or autonomy to multilateral institutions only in small groups or if there is great hierarchical control.³ Rathbun's social psychological approach expects variation in multilateralism to occur according to the disposition of individuals:

² Rationalists *could* claim to explain these institutions by arguing no real loss of sovereignty or autonomy is occurring in them, as I do below. A certain group of rationalists, usually known as realists, have traditionally made exactly this claim. However, "rational design" and "neo-liberal" institutionalists have usually argued that the League of Nations, United Nations, and even NATO are triumphs of institutional cooperation. See, e.g., Ikenberry, *After Victory*; John Gerard Ruggie, ed., *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

³ Rathbun also deals with constructivist theories and propositions on domestic political economy, both of which have been invoked to explain the League of Nations and NATO cases. The economic arguments, in particular, have proliferated in recent years, with little serious examination of their claims. Rathbun presents powerful arguments against the political economic perspective, and I encourage interested readers to study them carefully (105-107, 205-206).

cooperators with generalized trust will back multilateral institution building, if necessary including hierarchical controls, while competitors will insist on unilateralism and resist hierarchical controls.

Testing his theory requires finding a way to measure trust, and here Rathbun's approach is ingenious. To generate expectations for his theory, he employs a 'triangulation' strategy, using three different measures of dispositions to trust. One might doubt that any particular measure actually reflects trust, but if they are all systematically correlated, it increases our confidence that psychological factors are at work (52-53).

First, he looks for direct evidence from policy-makers about core beliefs that implicate trust, such as statements about whether human nature is benign or malign. Second, he examines patterns of concern about opportunism, the key issue separating cooperative and competitive dispositions. Those with generalized trust should consistently frame policy debates in a way that minimizes concerns about opportunism, and should characterize the structure of international problems as though they were benign assurance games rather than prisoners' dilemmas. Conversely, those with a non-trusting disposition should highlight opportunism of all kinds. These patterns should be independent of the objective structure of international interaction. Cooperative dispositions should see even objectively more difficult problems as ripe for cooperation, while competitors should be concerned about all types of opportunism—exploitation, abandonment, entrapment, and free-riding—even if one concern is objectively more salient.

Finally, Rathbun argues that views on domestic political issues can also serve as a proxy for generalized trust. He draws on a variety of studies that show a strong connection between trust and political ideology in advanced industrial democracies. Put bluntly, the political right sees the world in threatening, pessimistic terms and favors moralistic, coercive, and authoritarian means to maintain stability and order in lieu of trusting others. The political left sees others as generally (but not totally) trustworthy, and therefore favors more libertarian and inclusive policies, especially on social issues. Survey evidence shows that this correlation extends to views on foreign affairs, with the right focused on power and the left focused on cooperation. Political partisanship should therefore be a proxy for trust, with the more ideologically pure on domestic issues having stronger opinions on multilateralism versus unilateralism. Conversely, those who deviate from their party's views on domestic policy will be more moderate on foreign policy as well. Though Democrats should generally be trusting multilateralists, and Republicans unilateralists, it is ideology that ultimately determines the theory's expectations.

I have reservations about Rathbun's contention that political ideology is a good proxy for generalized trust. The social psychological research that models right-wing ideology as authoritarianism may have some global purchase, but it seems hard to map onto American political discourse in a consistent fashion. The contemporary right appears to trust people to own guns, make business decisions, provide for and manage their families, and interact in the market place, but not to make moral decisions, stay off the dole, take drugs, or follow the law without strong restraints. The contemporary left doubts the trustworthiness of businesses, gun-owners, unregulated market interactions, and the police; while trusting

people to make personal choices about sex, religion, drug use, and government bureaucracies to make decisions about optimal resource allocation and social welfare.

The predominant divides appear to be about *who* is trusted to do *what*. Rathbun's efforts to root these highly varied political cleavages in a consistent story about trust falters on his need to keep changing these fundamental referents issue by issue (47-50, especially notes 15-18). To take just one instance, his contention that "conservatives' enthusiasm for government is almost exclusively premised on preventing negative outcomes through institutional restraints" (48) seems to describe a great deal of liberal support for the regulatory state.

These modern issues have historical analogues that are especially relevant to Rathbun's first case on the League of Nations debate. The progressive movement of the early twentieth century—on most accounts a left-wing movement and one central to Woodrow Wilson's political career—was a mish-mash of trusting and distrusting impulses. The progressives were the great nationalists of their time, which Rathbun says is a rightwing tendency (49). Wilson himself was an inveterate racist, and hardly out of step with many progressives. Prohibition, eugenics, and a violent wartime crack down on civil liberties are other distrustful legacies of the progressive movement. It is hardly a coincidence that the "irreconcilables" who killed both Wilson's Treaty and the Republican alternative were radical progressives. They were enthusiastic supporters of positive government at home, but also chest thumping American nationalists in the isolationist tradition.⁴

None of this is to deny a general connection between domestic ideology and foreign policy ideology, or a specific connection between trust and multilateralism. But giving all types of ideology a common root in trust requires heroic feats of interpretation. Rathbun's other indicators seem simpler and more persuasive.

Empirical Ambiguity

The pivotal question for Rathbun's theory is whether variation in trust can be shown to impact variation in international cooperation abroad. Of special importance for Rathbun is to explain what rationalism cannot: the surrender of sovereignty and autonomy in situations of diffuse reciprocity.

Rathbun's discussion of variation in cooperation, which he measures by its degree of "qualitative multilateralism," is admirably clear. Were the actions to which the United States pledged to engage in or refrain from specific and detailed, or did they "water down their security guarantees [or other commitments], making them contingent on particular

⁴ Rathbun's solution to the irreconcilables, who were the decisive swing votes in the Senate, is to give the game away to constructivist theories: he claims they were motivated by an anti-European identity, which generated "particularized distrust" rather than "general distrust" (81-85). This seems an unnecessary concession. It is clear the irreconcilables were distrustful. It is clear the treaty failed because a broader set of distrusters voted against it. Q.E.D. A more elaborate explanation is forced only by Rathbun's strong claim about a causal link between generalized trust and left-wing ideology.

circumstances or not specifying the nature of the action to be taken?” Were there penalties or costs for rule breaking, or were dispute resolution procedures “diluted... by not providing any penalty for non-compliance?” Most importantly, was the application of the rules impossible to legally circumvent, or did America “insist on a veto for all matters affecting [its] sovereignty?” In brief, were formal rules powerfully binding, or did they “reduce qualitative multilateralism by removing the general nature of commitments and making them more discretionary” (22)?

These standards mean that Rathbun’s empirical chapters are dominated by discussions of the formal legal rules associated with various proposals. My discussion is likewise focused on the same issues.⁵ Unfortunately, Rathbun is rarely explicit about the ultimate degree of qualitative multilateralism found in the rules of the League of Nations, United Nations, and the North Atlantic Treaty, and never explicitly compares them. But the exercise is easy enough. I summarize Rathbun’s own findings in the text and table below.

The League’s famous Article X prohibition against aggression did not, in Rathbun’s terms, specify any particular action to be taken in the event of a breach of peace (96). Furthermore, arbitration was not binding, serving only as a method of delaying hostilities—no nation that submitted to arbitration was obliged to accept the outcome (94). Finally, the League Council could only recommend action unanimously, meaning that any member effectively had a veto, and even then its proclamations were only suggestions to national governments (95-96, 71).

The United Nations was formed with a Great Power veto as well, despite the ardent wishes of genuine collective security advocates (112). It also omitted a security guarantee and eliminated any obligations, diluted or otherwise, for dispute resolution (112). Member states remained their own arbiters on the use of force, meaning the costs or penalties under the charter were minimal. As Rathbun concedes, “the United Nations was constructed so as not to significantly threaten American sovereignty in the first place. Therefore generic support for multilateralism... asked little of the United States” (9).

Finally, the North Atlantic Treaty’s security guarantee pledged a member to take only “such action as it deems necessary,” to assist a state under armed attack (187). Such action might be taken collectively, or individually, or presumably not at all, depending on how each state interpreted its obligations. Indeed, the treaty was specifically designed to preserve national sovereignty and the constitutional structure of the United States, which required reserving the role of Congress in decisions of war and peace (171).

⁵ Philosophical aside: I would have made a different choice. I suspect the power of international organizations is found much less in their formal structure or legal rules than in the institutional practice associated with them, which might limit states in ways not indicated by treaty text. The book could have profitably focused more on the substance, rather than the form, of American commitments.

	League of Nations	United Nations	North Atlantic Treaty
Specific Legal Obligations in Security Guarantee?	Very Mild. ⁶	No.	No.
Costs or Penalties for Rule Breaking?	No.	No.	No.
Veto?	Yes.	Yes.	N/A.

In sum, there was very little genuine qualitative multilateralism to be found in the terms of any of these treaties. On the face of it, it would seem that the rationalist hypotheses on institutional design have won out: where the surrender of sovereignty or autonomy is perceived to be “impossible or too costly, states will attempt to limit their exposure to untrustworthy behavior by insisting on control—unilateralism or its institutional equivalent (42).”

Rathbun essentially spends the bulk of the book making a series of counter-arguments, with varying degrees of emphasis. At times he proposes that quantitative multilateralism—the sheer number of states in an international organization—is a fact of great evidentiary weight. Rationalist states can limit their liability to opportunism by entering into agreements only with those about whom they have good information and have already established strategic trust; more partners means more exposure (22-23). The broadly inclusive membership of both the League and the UN, and the fact that in each of the three cases only the trusting Democrats supported more inclusive membership, pose puzzles that only the social psychological approach can explain (58, 111).

But quantitative multilateralism only matters if there is a real surrender of sovereignty or autonomy. If an organization requires nothing of its members, it matters little how many members there are. Qualitative multilateralism is the true measure of the diffuse reciprocity that Rathbun seeks to explain. It is hard to see why we should credit Rathbun’s theory for explaining facts that are not relevant to the special character of international cooperation that rationalism finds so puzzling.

More frequently, Rathbun insists that the very fact of domestic disagreement about American interests in the creation and design of international organizations is enough to blast holes in rationalism (57-58, 111, 164). As he puts it, rationalism “expects all decision-makers in the same position with the same information and preferences to make the same

⁶ There was one actual legal obligation in the League Covenant—if states did not at least go through the motions of arbitration, they would be subject to immediate economic sanctions. There was, of course, no mechanism for initiating, coordinating, or enforcing these sanctions. But the obligation legally existed.

choices” (40). Since Rathbun exhaustively demonstrates intense disagreement about these issues, rationalism is in trouble and his social psychological explanation should be favored.⁷

I have no particular attachment to rationalism, but this argument turns an imposing alternate explanation into an army of straw men. I do not think that most rationalists, at least, would insist that their theories work because human beings are automatons that perfectly transmit information into outcomes. There will always be disagreement about what the structure of the situation incentivizes; what matters is which logic ultimately guides strategic choices. Other times, differences of opinion are driven by domestic political expediency. Changes in an actor’s political position often produce important reversals in policy position. The crucial question is: what will the leaders in power do at the critical moments of policy decision? The answer in Rathbun’s cases appears to be: abandon qualitative multilateralism.

Indeed, Rathbun devotes his main effort to the idea that social psychology influences international institutions through the back door of domestic politics: trusting leaders are held back by the concerns of competitive orientations. Where the less trusting are accommodated, agreements can come into force, but only at the cost of reducing qualitative multilateralism. Maladroit politicking led to the League’s defeat (60-61), but political savvy saved the UN and the North Atlantic Treaty at the cost of their genuinely multilateral features (111, 165). In short, trusting Democrats wanted to pursue diffuse reciprocity, and they would have gotten away with it, too, if it weren’t for those meddling Republicans.

However, in each case it is clear that the insistence on retaining American sovereignty and autonomy originated in an executive branch dominated by trusting Democrats, rather than from Republican pressure. As an example, I examine the evolution of the League of Nations below.⁸

Rathbun wisely notes that the terms of how “the new League would function were vague in Wilson’s mind and became more specific only over time (62).” He is persuasive that Wilson himself believed, at least some of the time, that the League would entail real qualitative multilateralism and some sort of sacrifice on America’s part (62-63, 92-93), relying in large

⁷ Rathbun is by no means alone in this error. Many scholars who seek to push structural incentives out of the way for their own domestic political theories make a similar argument: see Kevin Narizny, *The Political Economy of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789-1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); John M. Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000). The argument is not improved by its ubiquity.

⁸ The other historical cases display the same pattern. President Franklin Roosevelt cared very little about the UN, envisioned it as a great power concert from the beginning, was against genuine multilateralism in its design, and scrapped tiny remaining shreds of legal restraints to appease Stalin (116-117, 131, 149). The Truman administration emphasized that the United States would not make a genuinely binding security guarantee from the very beginning of negotiations on the North Atlantic Treaty and repeated the point throughout, even when not under domestic pressure (171, 187). Rathbun’s struggle against these facts is sophisticated, intelligent, and highly entertaining, though not ultimately persuasive to me.

part on Wilson's public rhetoric and the short "Magnolia" draft of ideas for a League he wrote with Colonel Edward M. House in the summer of 1918. This latter document contained a positive security guarantee for all members, provisions for compulsory arbitration with mandatory economic and military sanctions against parties that refused to submit to or abide by arbitration, and was governed a "Body of Delegates" operating by majority vote.⁹

But Wilson's "First Paris Draft" of January 10, 1919—made before either the Versailles negotiations or domestic counter-pressure had begun—eliminated the tough arbitration provisions in favor of the non-compulsory cooling off period that ultimately ended up in the covenant¹⁰; Rathbun refers to the nearly identical British proposals as "low on qualitative multilateralism. (88)" Wilson also changed the primary governing body of the League to an executive council operating by super-majority. Over the course of the negotiations this quickly became a unanimity requirement.¹¹ And never, at any point in the development of the League of Nations, did Wilson entertain the idea of "specifying the nature of the action to be taken" (22) to enforce Article X's positive guarantee of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as genuine qualitative multilateralism would have.

Moreover, despite earlier objections to British proposals that had "no teeth" (93), Wilson went to great lengths to ensure that the League was all gums. When pressed to give a definite meaning to the territorial guarantee in the covenant during its negotiation, Wilson demurred, arguing that it "may in many cases be fulfilled without the necessity of war."¹² He opposed a series of Belgian amendments to allow the Executive Council to make arbitration recommendations by a majority vote; to make Council decisions compulsory on a unanimous vote; and to make the violation of Article X at least subject to automatic sanctions.¹³ He damned French security proposals—to give the League a military planning capacity and a supervisory role ensuring its members kept sufficient forces to aid the League—as substituting "international militarism for national militarism."¹⁴ And on his

⁹ Document 3, "Wilson's First Draft" (Magnolia Draft), August 15, 1918, in David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, vol. 2 (New York: G.P. Putnum's Sons, 1928), 12–16.

¹⁰ Document 7, "Wilson's Second Draft or First Paris Draft," January 10, 1919, *Ibid.*, 2:66–67, 74–76.

¹¹ For the speed with which the major powers accepted the basic concept of Council action only by unanimity, see David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, vol. 1 (New York: G.P. Putnum's Sons, 1928), 146–148. Wilson did not become absolutely explicit on this issue until later drafts, and though he rapidly agreed to it, Council unanimity was not among the changes he sought to appease Republicans at home. See Document 28, "Text Agreed on by Wilson and Cecil," March 18, 1919, in Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, 1928, 2:582; David Hunter Miller Diary, March 18, 1919, in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 55: 75–81.

¹² Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, 1928, 1:170.

¹³ Document 19, "Fifth Meeting of the League of Nations Commission," February 7, 1919, in Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, 1928, 2:269–270.

¹⁴ Document 19, "Eighth Meeting of the League of Nations Commission," February 11, 1919, David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, vol. 2 (New York: G.P. Putnum's Sons, 1928), 290–297, quote 294.

famous public speaking tour in defense of the Versailles Treaty, Wilson went so far as to say that “if you want to put out a fire in *the Balkans*... you do not send to the United States for troops.”¹⁵ Given the pivotal role of that region in the conflagration the world had just witnessed, it is an open question as to whether Wilson was really equipping the League to be a fireman.

In sum, even if we take seriously Wilson’s claim that the League was a moral obligation, though not a legal one (71), the content of that obligation is utterly unclear.¹⁶ Wilson himself led the charge away from a genuinely multilateral League, and he did so largely before domestic pressure was brought to bear. His own understanding of how the obligation would work was, at best, confused and inconsistent.

Conclusion: The Power of Trust

Despite my criticisms, I think Rathbun is onto something very important. Perhaps the most striking part of the book is just how well his measures of trust appear to capture something real. Those arguing against multilateralism often have a clear history of pessimism about human nature, while those arguing for it are much more optimistic, just as Rathbun expects. Even more impressively, the motives behind these debates are voiced in just the way his theory predicts. The opponents of multilateralism appear obsessed with the dangers of opportunism, often awkwardly arguing that the United States will be simultaneously entrapped and abandoned by its partners. The proponents of multilateralism blithely dismiss any possibility that Washington will be made the sucker, and are quite willing to surrender American freedom of action with only distant prospect of benefits. The character of the proposed cooperation, or the international situation, means very little in these debates—the arguments are always the same on both sides, even when adjustments are made to the terms of agreements, or momentous events occur abroad.

What is more, both sides assess the significance of institutional proposals well out of proportion to their actual impact, even when measured by the concerns of the participants. When Wilson went to the Republicans with a treaty that he admitted contains only a moral obligation—which they clearly did not believe in—but no institutional constraints, one would expect them to have rejoiced. When the Republicans proposed to accept the treaty with the principal reservation that the United States would decide its own obligations—just like the treaty already provided for—one would expect Wilson to have pocketed his gains. Instead both sides dug in. In the later cases, when the two parties painstakingly reached

¹⁵ Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 54. Emphasis added.

¹⁶ Rathbun spends great effort arguing generalized trusters take the distinction between moral and legal obligations very seriously: because they believe that others will reciprocate cooperation, they rarely see the need for organizational structures that might ensure it (30). Here, for instance, is Wilson: the League was “binding in conscience only, not in law,” but “moral obligation is of course superior to legal obligation, and, if I may say so, has a greater binding force” (71). It is a testament to Rathbun’s analytical power that he can make this kind of sophistry seem almost plausible in terms of his theory.

the obvious compromise of an institution without real constraints on the leading powers, neither side was really happy about it. Hardliners on in both parties continued to breathe fire, with Taft Republicans convinced that the agreements meant the end of American civilization, and Wallace Democrats worried that the United States had signed up for some kind of imperialism.

This history is redolent with comparisons to the contemporary foreign policy scene. Whatever their tactical differences on particular issues, the Republicans and Democrats endorse broadly similar strategic visions. No one in Washington doubts that a global alliance structure, military commitments that span continents, and an active interest in managing regional politics are essential to American security. It is neither particularly surprising, nor all that controversial, when the presumptively trusting Obama states that he will not allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon or that he is going to double down, again, on the American commitment to Afghanistan. But mention institutions, and partisans on both sides lose their collective minds. To chose just two minor examples, the debate over the Kyoto Protocol, which virtually no one honors, or the Law of the Sea Treaty, which virtually no one cares about, contain a level of intensity more commonly associated with life or death decisions.

Rathbun ends his study with the conclusion that “Overall, it seems best to trust in international cooperation. (228)” Given that there is very little actual international cooperation discussed in the book, it is hard to find much warrant for this claim. But that, I think, is exactly the point. If Rathbun is right, such statements stem from beliefs held with “certainty beyond observable evidence. (25)” Debates about international institutions are often far removed from the cooperation those institutions are supposed to secure; they are driven by factors “not epistemological in nature. (214)” On the surface, these debates are like the famous sitcom *Seinfeld*: a show about nothing. But *Seinfeld* was a triumph of pop culture because its ephemeral substance tapped into something much deeper about modern society, just as debates over institutions reveal something fundamental about the American political psyche. If domestic politics influences foreign policy in any respect, we would do well to understand it. Rathbun has given us an important map. You are going to want to buy this book—trust me.

Sometimes, the simplest observations can be the most profound. Such is the case with Brian Rathbun's discussion about generalized trust in his book, *Trust in International Cooperation: International Security Institutions, Domestic Politics and American Multilateralism*. The conventional rationalist account of international cooperation that has long-prevailed in the study of international politics tells us that distrust between states leads them to build multilateral institutions, which in turn generates trust between states and allows cooperation to flourish. In his fascinating new book, Rathbun turns this logic on its head. He argues, and convincingly demonstrates, a simple yet provocative point: states need some form of trust *first*, prior to even entering the institution-building phase, in order to initiate the pathway to international cooperation. Rathbun gives us an answer, then, to how states facing extreme uncertainty or limited information about other actors take the initial steps toward multilateral cooperation in ways that often confound rationalist explanations. In doing so, he tells a story about domestic politics and how competing levels of generalized trust among different subgroups within the state generate varying levels of commitment to multilateral organizations. In rich and detailed case studies, Rathbun demonstrates his argument in the role the United States played in setting up the League of Nations, the United Nations (UN), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Using party as a proxy for different levels of generalized trust (Democrats more prone to generalized trust, Republicans less so), he convincingly shows that political battles over competing conceptions of trust contributed directly to U.S. decisions about how to build, and whether or not to join, these regimes.

Overall, Rathbun's argument is interesting and his dissection of rationalist accounts at all stages across the cases is especially compelling. His turn to domestic politics is particularly important. This is a domain that has drawn too little systematic attention when it comes to understanding the process of institution building. This book sets the stage, then, in critical ways for new discussions about international cooperation in years to come. In short, it is a fascinating, well-researched addition to the study of international politics.

I have only two questions regarding Rathbun's analysis, neither of which takes away from the general importance of the book to the field of international relations. The first comes from Rathbun's labeling of his argument as "social psychological," or at points simply "the psychological argument" (p.167). The problem with this label is one that is really bigger than Rathbun's book. Constructivist (or ideational) and psychological approaches to international relations have collapsed in on one another over the past two decades or so. Consequently, the theoretical and empirical boundaries between the causal factors identified by each school of thought have become increasingly difficult to identify. I find this problem evident in *Trust in International Cooperation*. More specifically, I can see what is 'social,' or better yet 'cultural,' about Rathbun's approach. But the psychological side is murky. Perhaps the psychological aspect is that the topic at hand – 'trust' – involves a human emotion, making the locus of activity inside the psyche of individual actors. Yet, Rathbun's theory and his case study narratives seem to belie this. Both are far more about different *collective* conceptions of trust among certain subgroups (Republican and

Democratic party elites) than conceptions of trust within the heads of individuals actors. No doubt, individuals from President Woodrow Wilson to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Senator Arthur Vandenberg and President Harry Truman played a part in institution building. But, as Rathbun notes at many points, these actors and others were not autonomous or driven by their own psychological dispositions. Instead, they were, more than anything else, carriers of broader conceptions of trust that resonated with a certain subgroup or subculture within the state. While recognizing that Rathbun's central objective is to offer a sharp counter to rationalism, more attention to the ideological subcultures would have been interesting. Other scholars, namely John Owen and Mark Haas, explore the effects of party ideology on international politics from a more ideational or cultural, rather than psychological, angle.¹ How does Rathbun's argument intersect or differ from that of these scholars? This question is all the more important given that Owen and Haas deal with issues of party subculture and patterns of international security cooperation that closely parallel Rathbun's analysis.

Second, I wonder about the role of the broader public in the process of multilateral institution building for a democratic state like the U.S. Rathbun notes at numerous points, especially in discussions about the UN, NATO, and the post-911 period, that actors from both parties took certain steps with electoral considerations in mind. This leads one to wonder exactly what role national mood or temperament plays in the elite party-based dynamics of Rathbun's argument. Rathbun does not explore this question. Yet, it could be important. We know, for instance, that after World War II, President Truman was paranoid about being labeled soft on communism, not because the label came from Republicans but because Republican charges along these lines resonated with a national disposition that carried potential electoral implications for Truman. Could it be the same with trust and international institutions? Perhaps Truman's sensitivity to Republican positions on generalized trust when it came to the UN and NATO was a product, at least in part, of fears about a broad national political culture that Republican argument successfully tapped.

Similarly, I wonder at points if the cohesion of parties around their respective ideological dispositions may have been affected by broader national mood. Rathbun is right to note that national disillusionment after World War I cannot explain why many Democrats on Capitol Hill voted for President Wilson's League of Nations. But perhaps this disillusionment mattered in other ways (Wilson certainly thought it did as he complained about the "universal cynicism" across the nation that killed the League).² Could national disillusionment in this case have, at the very least, helped Republicans cohere in the face of President Wilson's public-relations initiative to change the debate on the League? An answer in the affirmative does not take away from the importance of Rathbun's argument

¹ John M. Owen, IV, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) and Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1989-1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

² Cited in Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism: An Interpretive Essay* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1957), 207.

about elite ideology. Instead, it points to the potential need for further attention to national dispositions and their impact on policy. Broader ideas like these may reinforce, and perhaps sometimes alter, certain dynamics of elite interactions that affect policy outcomes, like the construction of multilateral security organizations.

In the end, none of this takes away from the richness of Rathbun's analysis or argument. Instead, questions about the social and psychological or the role of national temperament validate the importance of Rathbun's book. Good scholarship sparks new questions, proposes new lines of inquiry. Rathbun's impressive study of trust in international cooperation falls squarely within that category.

Author's Response by Brian C. Rathbun, USC Dornsife

James Davis, Brendan Rittenhouse Green, and William Walldorf offer trenchant critiques of *Trust in International Cooperation* and I thank them for their close reading of the book. Rather than offer a point-by-point rebuttal of particular objections (or surrender in a couple of instances), it is perhaps more useful for readers of this roundtable if I focus my response on four interrelated issues raised by the commentators. First, what is the role of individuals in this process? Second, what is the role of the domestic political process? Third, am I describing a social process or a psychological one? Fourth, does any of this matter at all?

Davis raises the first point, something that all international relations scholars struggle with (or willfully ignore). Individuals, by which I mean particular historical figures, obviously impact foreign affairs but it is often hard to gauge their precise effect. And it is even harder to say something systematic about their role. The latter is the crucial issue because it gets to the *raison d'être* of international relations scholars and political scientists. It is our value-added. If we can't answer it, we might as well leave it to the historians.

I confess to struggling with this issue myself, which is one reason that I continue to work with political parties. By knowing something about an individual's party affiliation we know something about his or her view of the world, since parties always have ideologies. And since that view of the world is shared with others we can say something more generalizable about his or her approach. Plus knowing someone's party affiliation allows us to measure certain attributes independent of behavior, thereby avoiding tautology. Parties enable us to look inside the black box yet continue to see the forest for the trees. I think of them as the 1.5 level of analysis, between individual leaders and domestic institutions.

Yet individuals often depart, leaving a certain residual to explain. In my book, it is Robert Cecil, the British advocate of the League of Nations in the Conservative Party. I do not argue that Cecil was a true believer in collective security, only that he was a greater believer in the League than others in his party. I can't explain why this was the case in any systematic way. But the fact that he was marginalized by his colleagues as a consequence tells me something about the validity of my argument about conservatives in general and their approach to multilateralism. He is the exception that proves the rule.

This raises the question of party ideology and its connection to psychology and sociology. Walldorf asks whether ideology is not a social phenomenon rather than a psychological one if it binds people together. While recognizing the natural affinity between psychological and sociological accounts of international relations, particularly their common phenomenological nature, I would say no. This is because I believe that ideology comes first and leads individuals to find common cause with others. The ideas come first, the social grouping second. Of course this is something that I do not show in the book. Indeed, it would require something else entirely, an understanding of how we acquire our views of the world. A true sociological account of ideology would need to show that group membership causes the views rather than the reverse, through a process of socialization.

Davis asks whether an explanation for the emergence of multilateral security institutions can be offered with individual policy preferences alone or whether we need to take into account domestic politics. Given the title of the book, I think it is pretty clear that I would answer this question affirmatively. Indeed one of the main empirical points of the book is that Presidents Woodrow Wilson on the one hand and Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman on the other managed domestic politics in a completely different manner, and that this is necessary in order to understand why the U.S. Senate rejected the League and not the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty. Roosevelt and Truman of course had the benefit of Wilson's experience. Indeed they were haunted by it. It is true that I do not offer a theoretical account of this process, but I am hardly unaware of it. It is central.

This domestic political process also helps explain what appear to be anomalies to Green, who argues that Wilson was hardly the great proponent of collective security we propose. Green claims that Wilson easily capitulated on matters such as collective sanctions and majority voting, things that would have given the League real strength. At the end of the day we are left with somewhat innocuous institutions with no real teeth. I think that this generally (but not completely, see below) characterizes the outcome but gets the cause wrong. Wilson was a stubborn advocate of the League, but he was not stupid. He knew that had he insisted on his core preferences for the League, it would have had no chance of either Senate approval or British assent. In the end, he underestimated Republican hostility, but his understanding of it accounts for much of his behavior at the Versailles Peace Conference. And the major changes he made to voting and sanctioning procedures were made after taking the British temperature. Green's critique shows the importance of separating preferences from behavior and public from private rhetoric. Public rhetoric and behavior in negotiations are endogenous to one's sense of what is politically possible. They are not a measure of one's true preferences.

Green also raises perhaps the biggest question of all. By the time that the Democrats negotiated with Republicans over all of these institutions, the final product was relatively weak in authority and power. In cases where it is not, as was true of the League, it failed in the Senate. I would respond in a couple of ways. First, empirically, the League was stronger than Green gives it credit for. It had economic sanctions provisions and states could not vote on disputes in which they were involved, unlike in the United Nations. And even if the League could not force states to meet their obligations to sanction aggressors, there was always the reputational cost of not meeting one's obligation. Indeed politicians were obsessed with this in all the cases. They never wanted to sign up to do something they might not follow through on. Why is this the case? Second, even though the domestic political debates centered on the nuts-and-bolts of formal rules, it is likely that the true power of international organizations is in their very creation, precisely because they cannot force states to comply with all of their obligations. This is something that we know very little about: what are the informal effects of international organizations? How would the world be different if the United Nations, weak as it is, were never created in the first place? I don't know. I can only offer an opinion on what was necessary to bring it about, a compromise between two very different ideological visions which at their core can be reduced to differences in levels of trust. But I don't think there are very many scholars who

would argue, for instance, that NATO did not affect the Cold War, and that NATO would have come into being had Republican reservations not been incorporated into the treaty.

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