even though arguably risky and costly, response. The coding—or miscoding—at times becomes flagrant; coding becomes spin. For example, Johnson approvingly quotes the psychologist Ralph White’s rhetorical question, “Why do intelligent people torment themselves by imagining a monster-like enemy, or at least imagining that their human enemies are more monster-like than they actually are? Why do they wantonly increase their own fear?” (54).

It is revealing that Johnson nowhere specifies the differentiable alternative strategy, presumably more benign but with its own risks and costs, that would highlight his critique of the strategy that was actually in effect over five decades. Johnson (de rigueur) rejects “isolationism” and, in effect, opts for a kind of polite revisionism, which would claim credit for containment but would condemn what George Kennan, himself a polite revisionist of his own doctrine of containment (!), incessantly labeled the “dreadful militarization” of U.S. foreign policy.

This brings us to the second major element of Johnson’s book: its theoretical apparatus. It is commendable that Johnson traces out the connections between the specific acts of foreign policy and military strategy and the syndromes of attitudes or situations that form the causal matrix for such behavior. This theoretical project furnishes an organizing principle that gives exceptional coherence to the presentation of a series of events over a long period of time, and it imparts a gravity to this book.

The two pillars of Johnson’s theory are cognitive and political. (Fortunately, Johnson rejects the populist “military-industrial complex” myth.) Johnson himself places more emphasis on his first pillar of theory: cognitive distortion in the minds of American policymaking elites. Here Johnson is not innovating but, rather, applying the work of a host of cognitive theory gurus (Jervis, Moreno, Maslow, Renshon, and others). Thus it would take a volume or two to confront the cognitive (and, for that matter, the other subjective and nonrational) models that have substantially invaded the field of international relations. Here, I would phrase my objection as a mere warning: that it is extremely tenuous to avoid the overt and recognizable attribution of a nation’s strategic responses to the rational processes of its foreign policy decision makers and its defense planners. Nonrational models, such as Johnson’s, miss about 98 percent of the essence of strategic planning.

In the third element of this book, Johnson’s large-scale prescriptions for American conduct in the impending international system, lies its wisdom. One proposition sums it up: “The United States must learn to live with a world characterized by a very high incidence of disorder that is beyond American control” (237). Yet Johnson’s correct description of the interventionist propensities of America’s foreign policy elites reflects not his diagnosis of threat inflation but, rather, interest inflation. Once we adopt extensive objects of our foreign policy, the threats come with the territory.

EARL C. RAVENAL

Cato Institute
Washington, D.C.


Kelly Patterson has produced an interesting book examining the idea that political parties in the United States are in decline. He makes a compelling case for critical inquiry into the party resurgence and decline debate. Through an extensive original content analysis, he
suggests not only that political parties in the United States might be in better health than we believe but also that the standards to which we hold modern parties may indeed be unfair or inadequate.

Coming at the question of party health from the perspective of presidential campaigning, Patterson looks for links among three coalitions important to presidential candidates: nominating, electoral, and governing. Those who believe that political parties are atrophied contend that there are no links among these three coalitions. The bulk of the book is devoted to considering each of these three coalitions, their relationship to each other, and their relationship to the presidential candidate.

Patterson first addresses the conventional wisdom that the post-1968 presidential nomination reforms severed the historic ties between presidential candidates and political party leaders. Though presidential candidates now campaign for nominating delegates directly (by-passing party leaders), post-1968 candidates have had to pay more attention to the party platform. Patterson finds that presidential candidates in the postreform era have to make more issue promises than before. He therefore concludes that presidential candidates are not so isolated from party activists as conventional wisdom would predict.

Next, Patterson examines the link between the electoral and nominating coalitions by looking at the types of public policies presidential candidates champion. He explains that if political parties do not matter to the electorate, then presidential candidates should talk mostly about distributive issues and not about redistributive issues since the latter are fraught with ideological conflict. However, Patterson finds that presidential candidates engage in more discussions of redistributive issues relative to distributive issues in the postreform era, not fewer.

Finally, Patterson considers the links between elected presidents and their governing coalitions. This analysis begins with the time before the 1968 reforms when congressional leaders had strong links with the presidents of their party through their influence in the nomination process. The implication is that since such links have disappeared, policymaking between a president and his party in Congress is more difficult. Patterson finds little evidence to support this assertion. Instead, presidential candidates actually have a higher level of agreement with congressional leaders than they once did. Patterson concludes his book with a discussion of what an appropriate definition of “governability” might be when evaluating the link between political parties and liberal democracy. Patterson pushes the reader to reconsider just exactly what is expected of parties and whether those expectations are realistic.

This is a well-written book with very informative sections on political theory, the presidential nomination reform process, significant platform disputes, public policy typology, and the importance of congressional leadership. The methodology employed is innovative and substantial. The concluding chapter is especially rich in provocative questions and innovative interpretations of contemporary politics.

ROBIN KOLODNY

Temple University
Philadelphia
Pennsylvania


Following the publication of Osborne and Gaebler's Reinventing Government (1992), there has been an effort in many