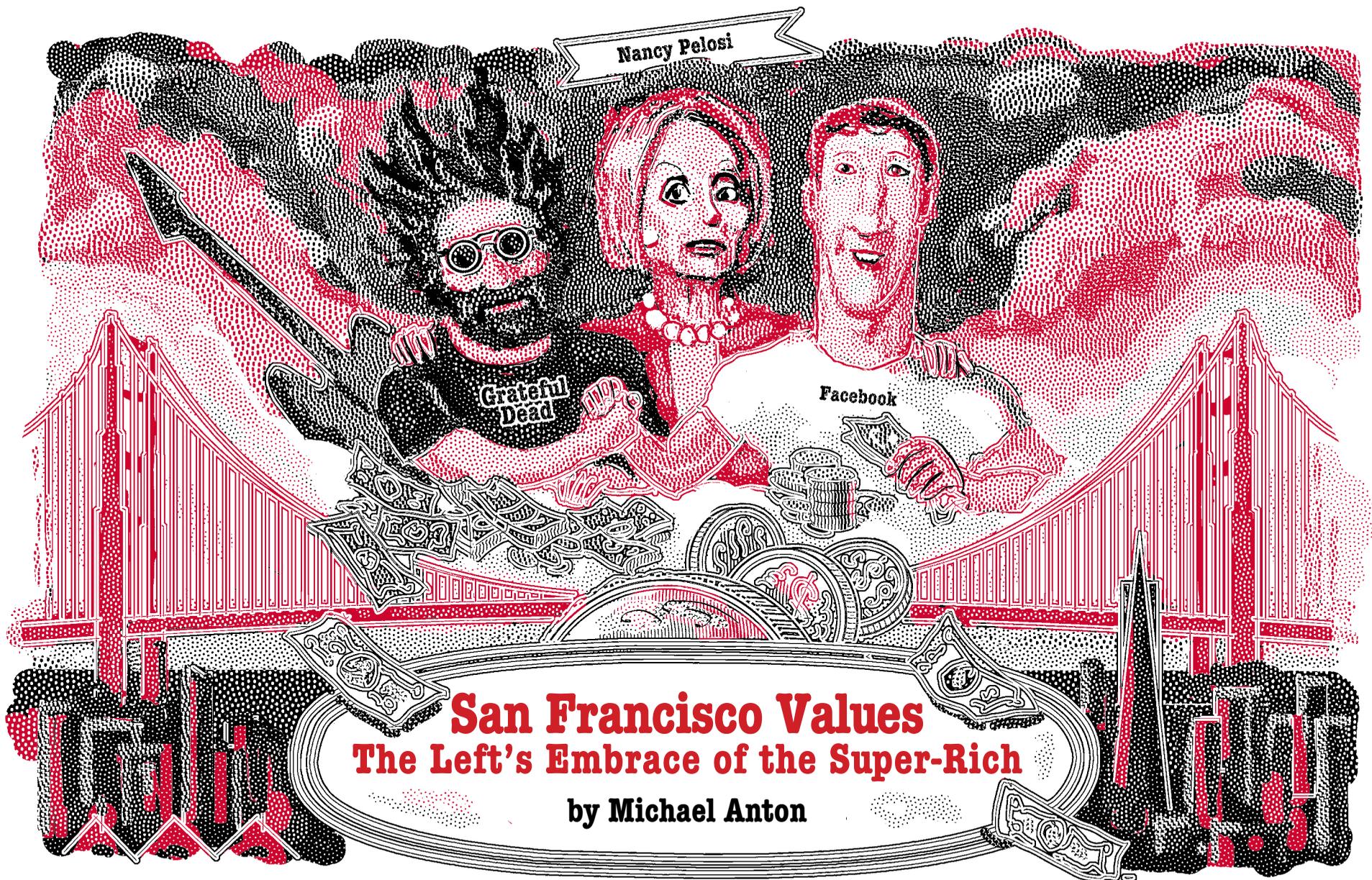


VOLUME XV, NUMBER 4, FALL 2015

# CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

*A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship*



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by Michael Anton

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Book Review by Stephen A. Cambone

## THERE WILL BE WAR

*You Run the Show or the Show Runs You: Capturing Professor Harold W. Rood's Strategic Thought for a New Generation*, by J.D. Crouch II and Patrick J. Garrity. Rowman and Littlefield, 268 pages, \$80



THOSE WHO STUDIED WITH HIM WILL welcome *You Run the Show or the Show Runs You: Capturing Professor Harold W. Rood's Strategic Thought for a New Generation*. In it J.D. Crouch and Patrick Garrity, both students of Rood's, elaborate many of the themes, subjects, and issues his students will recall from their time in the classroom.

Their systematic treatment of his thought is something Rood never did himself. He left few published writings, aside from his only book, *Kingdoms of the Blind* (1980), and his award-winning essay for the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings*, "Distant Rampart," and its sister essay for *Infantry Magazine*, "Why Fight in Vietnam?" His essays for the *CRB* and its earlier incarnation are still worth reading and can be found at the Claremont Institute's website. His writings for *Grand Strategy: Countercurrents* (an early publication of the Claremont Institute) in the 1980s are not yet available online. Work he did as an analyst for many years at the Stanford Research Institute is not publicly available. But why does it matter?

Crouch and Garrity provide their answer in their subtitle. They assert that Rood's strategic thought is important enough that it needed to be preserved for successive generations of students who look to enter the academy or public life. This ambition sets a high bar for the book. Not only must it faithfully represent Rood's teaching, lest it be subjected to merciless criticism by fellow students whose recollections

may differ; it must make the case that Rood's thinking about international relations (I.R.) was neither an artifact of the Cold War—and hence of antiquarian interest only—nor merely idiosyncratic, a contrarian view useful, perhaps, to illustrate the outer boundary of reasonable thought on serious subjects.

ROOD WAS NOT AN "I.R. THEORIST," Crouch and Garrity declare. At bottom, he was a political scientist, and in the course of the book, they derive and present his findings as a political scientist. Rood taught his students to understand the root causes and assess the consequences of human behavior. The behavior of most interest to him was that of human beings organized into a state, the purpose of which was to serve the needs of the rulers and, in better instances, the interests of the ruled. He taught that few peoples and states shared the same idea of what constituted peace, justice, and defense. Nevertheless, he was firmly convinced that however those terms were rendered by a state, their meaning and implications could be understood by others who did not hold or accept them or who stood in opposition to them.

The source of understanding was, in part, that every state performed many of the same functions for the same reasons. These included the defense of the territory and people of the state, administration of the law, collection of taxes, protection of trade, and the provi-

sion of essential goods and services. That said, Rome was not Carthage. For that reason each understood that their differences were fundamental and an inevitable source of conflict between them.

That there is nothing theoretical about international relations was a point Rood drove home, physically, when he opened his introductory classes wielding a Lee-Enfield rifle, bayonet fixed. International relations are about nations seeking their place in an unruly world, he taught. The strong wrest from others the opportunity to impose their rules on it. Strategy is the principal art of the leader of the state. It is successful when it has so prepared and positioned the state for war that its opponents either accede to its demands or lose the war they are compelled, or choose, to fight. At the tip of that bayonet, Rood would declare without equivocation, is where international relations begin.

Winning, he would teach with countless vivid historical examples, is always better than losing. That being so, understanding international relations and the development and execution of strategy are among the highest obligations of the state's leaders. Except, that is, in the case of liberal democracies. Although their institutions are similar to those of other states, the purposes of liberal democracies are singular—the happiness and well-being of the citizens and their protection while conducting their lawful activities. The habits inculcat-



ed by pursuing such pacific purposes, Rood taught, can cause citizens of liberal democracies to misunderstand or mischaracterize the activities of states with different habits, practices, and purposes.

**A**MONG NON-DEMOCRATIC STATES—despotic, theocratic, autocratic, or totalitarian—the well-being of the state itself and its leadership is the end of politics. The state is a self-defined entity. The people are its servants. The leadership exists to manage and control, by force if necessary, the servants. The leadership is the embodiment of the state, and its survival is paramount, even as it is always in peril from internal revolt or external threat. Hence, such states take naturally to the harsh realities of international relations and the practice of strategy. Their leaders understand they have only one choice: prepare for war with the intent of winning. The alternative is to suffer certain defeat at the hands of better strategists.

Rood taught that, to remain safe in a world populated with such states, democratic citizens need to be instructed in the harsh realities of international relations. Their own political experience will not instruct them, because nothing in their domestic politics, by definition, approximates the nature of international relations. And yet it is they who are responsible for their own security, in the end. Though

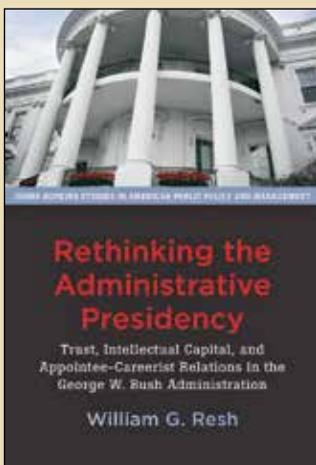
they depend on executive action to deal with each particular strategic concern, their leaders come from the people themselves, serve for only a brief time, and then return to their civilian lives. So, unless the citizenry, or at least the interested and committed among them, are educated in the fundamentals of strategy, executive leadership will be hamstrung in addressing the realities of international relations. Democratic citizens, themselves, need to appreciate at least in a basic way that in international relations the choice is stark: “you run the show or the show runs you.”

Having established the elements of Rood’s thought, Crouch, now the president and CEO of the United Service Organizations, and Garrity, a research faculty associate with the University of Virginia’s Miller Center, show how he then applied it. They cover “The German Problem,” “The Problems of Asia,” “The Middle Eastern Question,” and the “The Caribbean-Cuban Salient,” the latter including Rood’s controversial analysis of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Through these applications, they expound Rood’s teaching on the nature of politics (“power is intrinsic to politics”), international politics (“there is going to be a war” because war is “the political means by which humans...determine who will organize things”), and strategy (whose object is to impress on the enemy that “however much he may resist, [he] must ultimately conform to one’s will”).

**A**T THE HEART OF THEIR TREATMENT is a discussion of what they call “the democratic strategic deficit,” those blinkered habits of behavior and thinking characteristic of citizens of liberal democracies. This is how Rood described it in *Kingdoms of the Blind*:

The belief in the impossibility of war, coupled with the failure to contemplate the consequences of defeat, explain the weakness that democracies display in providing for their own defense.... Military policy must fit the requirements for successful strategy and successful strategy does not derive from the notion that war is impossible.

This is a timely reminder. Although current U.S. foreign policy is said to be predicated, in the case of Iran, Russia, and China, on the belief that the alternative to the current approach could be *war*, there is little apparent appreciation that the success of those policies could result in war *in any case*. Put another way, the Obama Administration’s apparent acquiescence in Iran’s claim to a right to enrich uranium and to exert force in the greater Middle East, its reluctance to send lethal aid to Ukraine, and its determination to further enmesh China in the existing international system all confirm its expectation that these



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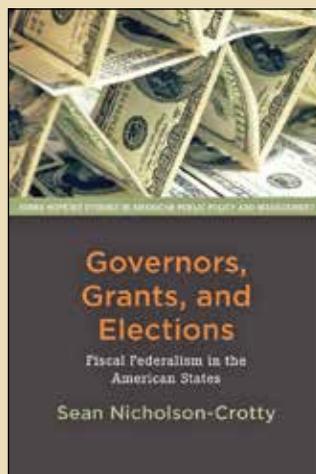
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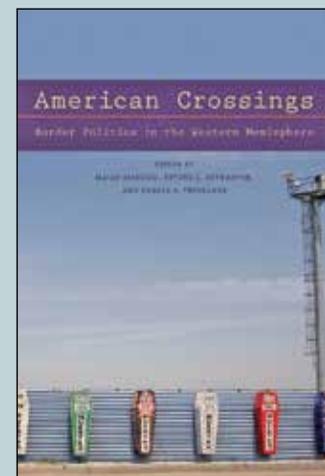


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policies will not only avoid a present conflict but also render one in the future nearly impossible. That is, we are told, the meaning of living in the 21st and not the 19th century.

But if we follow Rood's teaching, we should see strategic moves by the U.S. as bolstering the country's position in any future conflict; at the least, this would mean positioning the U.S. so as to deter each of these three adversaries from pursuing war as an instrument of state policy any time soon.

Rood would probably view U.S. policy in Iraq and Syria and toward the concerns of Egypt and Saudi Arabia as lacking in strategic force relative to Iran and more lately toward Russia. The cavalry ride by a U.S. Army mechanized unit through NATO allies from the Baltics into Eastern Europe, and the rotation of a handful of U.S. fighter aircraft to Europe, he might criticize as unserious. The "pivot" to Asia, Rood might observe, has ap-

parently not given China pause as it deploys its "belt" and "road" to encircle the Indo-Pacific region, dredges islands for itself in regions of the South China Sea to which it has no indisputable claim, and pursues military capability that has U.S. strategists discussing the merits of offshore deterrence.

**C**ROUCH AND GARRITY CONCLUDE their presentation of Rood's work with a compelling discussion of the challenges it poses for those thinking about I.R. and strategy. They admit that he could make an argument "in the most provocative fashion to overcome the intellectual straightjacket of received wisdom." Such arguments were made in the service of prompting students and practitioners alike to take seriously his abiding challenge: "In a world that can promise neither peace nor safety to sovereign nations it is the burden of statesmanship to look ahead to dis-

tant dangers that are today obscured by more immediate concerns, visible, perhaps, only to the informed, thoughtful and far-sighted."

Crouch and Garrity derive six insights from this challenge. First, "human beings are *strategic animals*" (emphasis in the original). They organize and use power in a systematic way to gain their ends, which leads to war. Strategy is how states prepare to win wars. Second, neither the nature of human beings nor that of international relations has changed. Preparing for war remains the best way to deter war and to win it if it occurs. Third, deception is integral to strategy; in international relations it is rare that anything happens without a reason. Looking for anomalies and asking about their meaning is a way to gain insight into an enemy's intentions. Fourth, the "democratic strategic deficit" is a burden U.S. leaders have no choice but to shoulder. That means they must take what measures they can even in the face of little public interest in or support for the requirements of strategy. Fifth, there are patterns of behavior to be deduced in observing the actions of great powers. Patterns are not predictions, but they do suggest indicators of potential changes in international relations for which strategy needs to account. Last, the bedrock principle of American strategy is to prevent direct attack on the U.S. and, if there is to be war, to fight abroad. This implies having won positions abroad from which to fight, which in turn implies the possibility of having to fight many small wars to gain strategic advantage as a way of avoiding a big one.

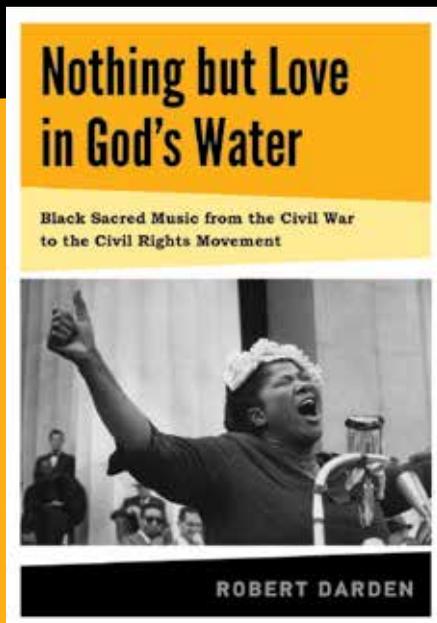
**T**HE U.S. HAS EXPERIENCED A PERIOD of nearly 150 years of ascendant, then preeminent, power in international relations. It proved itself to be sufficiently strategic over that time to create an international system within which it is comfortable. Harold W. Rood might remind us, however, that this system is by design and in its operation intended as an obstacle to the ambitions of those who would challenge it and an affront to those who oppose its fundamental principles. In the face of Russia's revanchism, China's determination to recoup for its past humiliations, Iran's assertion of its interests in the greater Middle East, and a violent repudiation of modern liberal democracy by jihadist movements worldwide, Crouch and Garrity are right to conclude that the student and practitioner of international politics "would do well to ponder whether such a thesis can be responsibly set aside and what might take its place."

*Stephen A. Cambone, a student of Harold Rood's, has served in senior level positions in the Department of Defense and in the private sector. He is the founder of Adirondack Advisors, LLC.*

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