

Book Review

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Friendship Among Nations: A History of a Concept

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Friendship Among Nations invites the reader to take a journey through the long legacy of contractual friendship agreements and the role they have played in international relations. This book draws upon history of concepts and international political theory to explore the role of friendship in voluntary contractual agreements between states. This is a perspective which has been neglected in the fairly recent re-emergence of scholarship on friendships in politics and international relations. Roshchin does an excellent job of setting the stage for this book by discussing some of the most prevalent discourses around friendship in international relations, in particular the scholarship that explores political friendship as analogous to personal friendship and which focuses on the moral and ethical obligations of friendship. He contends that this normative view of friendship has become central to the current political views on friendship especially since modernity.

The premise of the book is that ethical or naturalistic perspectives on friendship between states within international society have resulted in a loss of the pragmatic and contractual understanding of friendship which is important to diplomatic practice. The book suggests that recovering this understanding of the role of friendship in negotiated political agreements will demonstrate a serious commitment to diplomatic accords rather than a perception of insincerity or 'lip service' (p.8). The book questions the fascination with the moral side of friendships and instead suggests a need to revisit the diverse ancient conceptualizations of friendship which were not wholly dependent on ethical and normative judgements.

Roshchin positions his analysis within the English School of thought and offers a perspective of friendship that relates to how friendship agreements have been used to maintain order within international society. This book specifically focuses on friendships between governments in a variety of historical settings. However, this book diverges from much of the current scholarship on friendship in politics which takes either a purely theoretical approach or looks at friendship

through the liberal lens which views friendship as a structural relationship between security communities. Roshchin points out the lack of scholarship on friendship in international relations is due in large part to the prominence of the realist paradigm in international relations which focuses largely on rival and enemy themes.

The first chapter analyzes some of the earliest classical sources on friendship and the terms and way friendship was conceptualized by drawing upon a variety of works including Aristotle and Cicero. The book briefly discusses the three types of friendship advanced by Aristotle including friendship of pleasure, utility and virtue. In addition, the chapter discusses other concepts of friendship in Greek literature two of which include *philia* and *amicitia*. *Philia* is a concept that refers to ethical relations that bind people together. Whereas, *amicitia* relates to relations that bind members of a political community together based on pragmatism and free from ethical constraints. *Amicitia* forms the basis for the contractual friendship that provided political and legal order within society. It also serves as the foundation of the friendship of utility which is the basis for political practices in the modern political system. This chapter notes the challenge of prioritizing the Aristotelian view of virtuous friendship as most important and treating the other types of friendship as second rate. Friendship of utility has a vital role in holding states and cities together and providing order in society. In the international system friendships of utility have been manifest in alliances and treaties between states.

The second chapter sets out the centrality of the contractual form of friendship by giving an overview and analysis of the historical basis for the use of friendship in agreements during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Although contractual agreements, these agreements often used Christian and emotional language of love, peace and friendship which often conditioned the longevity of the accord on leaders engaging in 'friendship duties' (p.106). These agreements represented a legal type of friendship which could be negotiated even based on unequal rights and obligations and could be breached. This book suggests that these legal agreements formed the basis for order in the international system in the absence of the system of state sovereignty.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss how the advent of modernity and influence of humanistic scholars brought about a shift to the more normative and ethical views of friendship. During this time, much of the discourse revolved around the pursuit of the virtuous form of friendship. These chapters show why the contractual and contingent forms of friendship agreements disappeared from much of the philosophical and political discourse. The shift was related to the debate around natural law and the perceptions on the condition of mankind. To combat the Hobbesian perspective, there was a shift in discourse based on an intent to prioritize virtuous behavior and to set up prescriptive standards of how to achieve such behavior. The virtuous discourse was advanced by proponents like Pufendorf who maintained that love, friendship and sociability are inherent in human nature and should be the focus on political relations in society, rather than fear. Pufendorf also argued that friendship treaties are an 'archaic diplomatic practice' and unnecessary among civilized nations that had learned the law of nature better (p.155).

In Chapter 5 Roshchin argues that the normative shift to how friendship is viewed in international politics has consequences to diplomatic practice because it doesn't take into consideration the

complexity of political relations. The chapter explores a variety of treaties including trade, maritime and even some with native American tribes and how these friendship agreements facilitated a variety of commercial relations and formation of international law. Although contractual in nature, these agreements contained 'value-ascribing proclamations' which Roshchin argues makes them worthy of recognition (p.178). The use of friend language in bilateral agreements reinforced the liberalist perspective in international relations where friendly language was contained within conditional agreements with the purpose of encouraging friendly and mutually beneficial behavior. The use of this benevolent language could be perceived as a bit manipulative especially with the native American people and countries that were colonized.

This is a well written book about the historical evolution of contractual friendship agreements which are a kind of friendship of utility which have helped to provide order within the international system. The book is structured in way that is easily accessible to all readers and comprehensive in its review of relevant historical literature. The only thing I found myself looking for more of was a further integration of the English School paradigm throughout the entire book. In the end, this book provides a thorough analysis of the contractual role of friendship in international relations and the complimentary role it plays alongside the moral views of friendship. It is a must read for anyone interested in the study of friendship in politics and international relations.

About the reviewer:

Lisa Gibson has achieved a JD in law and is currently pursuing a PhD in International Relations at University of Nottingham where she is researching the role of friendship in citizen diplomacy efforts between Libya and America. She has served as a lecturer in China and the US.