with increasingly complex policy dilemmas that involve competing moral values (p. 1). Don Welch cautions (p. 2) that he is not seeking to provide definitive answers to such questions, but rather to supply the tools needed ‘to improve the quality of individual and collective deliberation about our responses’ and, in so doing, ‘establish a sure footing for ethical reflection about public policy decision making’. As Welch correctly notes (p. 2), discussions concerning how to most effectively respond to policy dilemmas are at their heart ‘moral conversation[s]’.

Welch identifies (p. 2) in turn the following five ‘benchmarks’ ‘to be used in the moral evaluation of public policy: Benefit, Effectiveness, Fairness, Fidelity and Legitimacy’. The initial two reflect a concern that governments pursue policies that effectively generate benefits (and avoid harms). Fairness requires that policies distribute benefits and burdens in a just manner, while fidelity concerns the obligation of government to act respectfully towards all those affected by its actions; and legitimacy captures judgements about the appropriateness of government serving as the instrument to address the dilemma in question. Welch contends (p. 2) that empirical evidence suggests that those benchmarks are the focus of ‘a broad-based national consensus … [concerning] what we as a nation want government to do’ (he is referring to the citizens of the United States, but it does not seem unreasonable to presume that his conclusions would be equally applicable to other contemporary liberal democracies).

Importantly, Welch emphasises (p. 3) that the insertion of ethics into public policy decision-making does not necessitate that policymakers engage in ‘endless quixotic quests’, but requires only that they ‘look past how things are and are likely to be, and … consider how things ought to be’ (emphasis added). A Guide to Ethics and Public Policy presents a readily accessible yet analytically rigorous argument that wonderfully illuminates the critical relationship between ethics and public policy.

Shaun P. Young
(University of Toronto)

International Relations


Amitav Acharya’s The End of American World Order belongs to a new wave of scholarship on American Decline that arose after the financial crisis in 2008. In this debate, few works are as lucid as Acharya’s book. It introduces the notion of the ‘Multiplex World’ as a non-Western-centric academic approach in the world order debate. Arguing against the continuation of American supremacy and the prolongation of American hegemonic institutions, the author presents a compelling argument that the future world order does not depend on the question of US decline. What matters is that the American World Order is declining.

An analogy to the multiplex cinema, the Multiplex World offers different movies, from different producers, in different size theatres, at the same time (pp. 7–8). Therefore, the Multiplex World is very diverse, decentralised and much more complex than Joseph Nye’s three-dimensional chess board, as put forward in his 2002 book The Paradox of American Power. According to that argument, US unipolarity is only one film in the multiplex compound, much like the continuation of US hegemony through international institutions. Yet alongside these two ideas, these blockbusters, as Acharya puts it, there are also Bollywood movies and films from other rising powers’ production units – alternative and low budget, regional and topic-specific, hits and flops (p. 7).

All these world order visions coexist and interplay. Acharya presents four dimensions of such a Multiplex World: power (great powers, rising powers), geographic scope (regional orders, global institutions), leadership (legitimacy) and time (unable to replicate the past world orders). Comparing different cultural-historic perceptions of hierarchy in the East and West, the author portrays different approaches to global governance. He argues
that regions should be the building blocks of the future world order, since the legitimacy of global governance rests with the entity that acknowledges cultural-historic particularities. Such a ‘bottom-up’ approach depicts a non-Western-centric vision and argument, much needed in contemporary International Relations. Stressing the importance of legitimacy and regions with cases from practice, the author’s idea can be absorbed by diplomats and statesmen.

On that note, it would be helpful if Acharya elaborated how different spheres of influence function within the Multiplex World. Additionally, the book could benefit from a more detailed discussion regarding differences between the Multipolar and the Multiplex World, as well as differences between the Nonpolar and the Multiplex World (see ‘The Age of Nonpolarity, What Will Follow US Dominance’ by Richard Haass in Foreign Affairs, 87:3). Amitav Acharya has proved once more to be a prolific writer and presented a new idea, which should be taken into consideration by policy makers and scholars alike.

Igor Kovač
(University of Cincinnati)


While scholars in sociology, anthropology, history and even philosophy have taken steps towards not only examining issues of race and racism but also reflecting upon the racism that underpinned the establishment of these disciplines, the field of IR has largely avoided this sort of critical turn. Thus does Race and Racism in International Relations constitute a long-overdue corrective that borrows freely from other disciplines to produce a compelling array of theoretical works and case studies driving home the point that issues of race can no longer be sidelined from IR theory.

The volume’s editors open their book by noting that IR emerged ‘as a policy science designed to solve the dilemmas posed by empire-building and colonial administration facing the white Western powers’, with the discipline’s flagship journal, Foreign Affairs, being first published under the title Journal of Race Development (p. 2). Errol Henderson follows this up by examining how the primary theoretical constructs for IR theory – state of nature, social contract and anarchy – are underpinned by significant racist assumptions. Likewise, for Branwen Gruffydd Jones, the current ‘state failure’ discourse ‘should be recognised as the latest variant in a long history of racialised international thought legitimising the interference of western governments across the world’ (p. 66). The second part of the volume offers a series of case studies on the international practices of race and racism. In a delightfully iconoclastic chapter, Sankaran Krishna, after examining Gandhi’s time in South Africa and his fight against Dalit political organisation, concludes that Gandhi ‘was instrumental in a particular postcolonial rendition of race and space in our world, one that is hostile to ideals of equality and democracy, non-violence and peace’ (pp. 139–140). In another fine chapter, Richard Seymour explicates how the United States government framed communism as a ‘conspiracy against civilisation’ and thus made anticommunism an effort to preserve global white supremacy.

For a reader already versed in critical race theory and Whiteness studies, this book may occasionally tread upon well-worn ground, but it remains nonetheless instructive to read IR specialists grappling with the significance of W.E.B. Du Bois’ ‘global colour line’. This book offers a welcome opportunity, as philosopher Charles W. Mills writes in conclusion, to produce a subversive remapping of the IR terrain by imagining ‘how a different narrative, centered on the gradual establishment of and resistance to global white supremacy’, can serve to revise our story of modernity (p. 210).

Guy Lancaster
(Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture)


Despite the growth that research in the field of small states in IR has seen since the end of