

**Nelson Rockefeller's Dilemma: The Fight to Save Moderate Republicanism.** By Marsha E. Barrett. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2024. 400p. \$36.95 cloth. doi:10.1017/S1537592724002378

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Marsha E. Barrett's book, *Nelson Rockefeller's Dilemma: The Fight to Save Moderate Republicanism*, is an impressive effort to detail Nelson Rockefeller's rise to the national political stage and his role as a stander-bearer of the Republican establishment at a critical moment in party development. While many efforts to understand today's modern Republican Party start with Barry Goldwater—as he represented the GOP's rightward turn—they pay little attention to the man who represented the Republican establishment from which Goldwater and the contemporary GOP diverged.

Part I of the book starts with Rockefeller's decision to run for governor of New York as a moderate Republican who embraced civil rights and the New Deal. At both the state, and then national level, Rockefeller was fighting against a growing conservative strain in his party. Initially, he had had some success. For example, Richard Nixon, the eventual Republican nominee in 1960, feared that Rockefeller might run to his left in the primary or not support him in the general election. To secure his support, Nixon adopted a stronger civil rights plank to placate the Rockefeller wing.

Part II details Rockefeller's 1964 campaign for the Republican nomination. Rockefeller's candidacy in 1964 stood in sharp relief against the ascendant conservative wing led by Barry Goldwater. Barrett argues that Rockefeller's embrace of civil rights proved an obstacle to his winning the GOP nomination in a party that had increasingly turned its back on commitment to racial progress. Rockefeller saw his job as preventing the party from being taken over by "extremists" and directed "away from its traditional path of moderation" (p. 139). It is hard to read parts of this chapter without thinking of more recent transformations of the Republican Party. In describing Goldwater's victory in the California Republican primary, Barrett writes, "Rockefeller's high-profile loss to a candidate who a year before was thought to be an impossible choice struck a decisive blow" for his campaign (p. 140).

But Barrett also sees that Rockefeller and moderate Republicans, not just Goldwater, were to blame for the party's shift to the right on civil rights. Moderate Republicans acquiesced or stayed silent in the face of the party's turn, she argues. This was, in part, because Rockefeller and presumably other northern Republicans were trying to swim in the opposite direction of the Republican electorate, which had already shifted right. To push against Goldwater, then, potentially created electoral peril for the Rockefeller contingent. One could also ask this question of Trump's transformation of today's

Republican Party. Was Trump able to rise in 2015–2016 because establishment Republicans stayed quiet and did not present enough pushback? Or was their silence explained by the same source that enabled Trump's rise: the Republican electorate was already receptive to Trump's message and resisting it would create electoral danger for more moderate voices?

Part II ends by describing Rockefeller's own turn to the right on race through supporting tough-on-crime legislation and "law and order" politics. This, Barrett argues, allowed Rockefeller not only to maintain his traditional support for civil rights but also to appeal to racial conservatives in the party. As she writes, Rockefeller's 1966 gubernatorial campaign "represents a pivotal moment in Rockefeller's career that makes it possible to understand how the twentieth century's most iconic moderate Republican...could also be the progenitor of the 1970s' most shockingly punitive drug laws" (p. 198).

Part III focuses on the end of Rockefeller's time as governor of New York. Rockefeller's 1970 gubernatorial campaign marked his shift rightwards, especially with the targeting of economic policies, like welfare, that held racial undertones. In 1971, Rockefeller pushed for welfare reform and in 1973, he introduced a program that imposed life sentences for drug dealers, even in small amounts, in an effort to reduce addiction. At the time, *The New York Times* called Rockefeller's drug laws, "political hysteria."

The end of Rockefeller's professional career is well documented—he became President Ford's vice president—but it is more interesting when situated in the context of his rightward turn at the state level. Despite efforts to placate the conservative tide in his party, the right of the GOP disdained Rockefeller during his tenure as vice president. Because of this, Ford asked Rockefeller to step down when he ran for re-election in 1976.

Barrett's book details a critical figure in US politics and should be of interest to readers across a range of academic backgrounds. To a political scientist, it offers a deep look into a critical era of party development and focuses on a political operative who is often glossed over. Reconstructing the political choices that Rockefeller faced—as well as how he negotiated those contradictions—makes an important contribution to contemporary understanding of this era.

**Death Penalty in Decline? The Fight against Capital Punishment in the Decades since Furman v. Georgia.**

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The question featured in the title of this book of essays asking whether the U.S. death penalty is in decline may