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KATHLEEN HICKS is a leading scholar-practitioner of U.S. defense policy. As a top Pentagon official in the Obama administration, she led the Defense Department's efforts to pivot to Asia and helped devise contingency plans for crises the U.S. military might face in the decades ahead. In "Getting to Less" (page 56), Hicks, now a senior vice president and director of the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, argues that although it is possible to decrease U.S. defense spending, drastic cuts would require dangerous shifts in strategy.

A fluent Pashto speaker, **CARTER MALKASIAN** spent two years in Afghanistan as a U.S. State Department official, working mostly in the war-torn district of Garmser, often traveling without a security detail to meet with village leaders. He reflected on that work in *War Comes to Garmser,* one of the best books yet written about the U.S. war in Afghanistan, before going on to become an adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, from 2015 to 2019. In "How the Good War Went Bad" (page 77), Malkasian explores the factors that have made U.S. success in Afghanistan unlikely—and the decisions that have made it impossible.

ANNE CASE AND ANGUS DEATON have dedicated their careers to studying the economic issues that shape the lives of everyday people. Since receiving her Ph.D. in economics from Princeton, Case has focused her research on human health outcomes, examining, among other things, how childhood circumstances affect health and economic status in adulthood. Deaton, raised in Edinburgh and educated at the University of Cambridge, has shed light on people's saving and consumption choices, both in the aggregate and at the level of individual households—work for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2015. Today, both live in Princeton, where they have conducted groundbreaking research on the rise in deaths from drug abuse, alcohol-related illnesses, and suicide in the United States. In "The Epidemic of Despair" (page 92), Case and Deaton warn that other countries could succumb to this American disease.

COME HOME, AMERICA?

Wealth and power breed ambition, in countries as in people. Nations on the rise dream big, dare greatly, and see failure as a challenge to be overcome. The same process works in reverse: nations on the wane scale back their ambitions, cut losses, and see failure as a portent to be heeded.

Feeling down these days, the United States is questioning the global role it once embraced. The empire that Washington absent-mindedly acquired during flusher times now seems to cost more than it's worth, and many want to shed the burden. What that might involve is the subject of this issue's lead package.

Thomas Wright and Stephen Wertheim kick off the debate with strong statements of the central arguments on each side. In general, Wright notes, American alliances, security guarantees, and international economic leadership over recent generations have been a great success. It makes sense to prune lesser commitments, but certainly not to abandon Washington's essential global role. On the contrary, says Wertheim: it is precisely the notion of American primacy that needs to go. Instead of policing the world with endless military interventions, Washington should withdraw from much of the greater Middle East, rein in the "war on terror," rely on diplomacy instead of force, and concentrate its attention on trying to steer the global economy toward fairer and greener pastures.

Three tough-minded pieces offer different ways Washington could lower its sights. Graham Allison suggests dealing with the loss of hegemony by accepting spheres of influence. Jennifer Lind and Daryl Press favor limiting U.S. objectives to whatever the domestic and international markets will bear. And Stephen Krasner advises settling for good enough governance in the world. Lastly, Kathleen Hicks throws cold water on hopes (or fears) of any dramatic defense cuts, explaining what it would actually take to reduce military spending and why it's so much easier said than done.

Similar calls for retrenchment were heard half a century ago, when the United States was at another low ebb in its global fortunes—facing declining relative power, increasing isolationism, a lost war in the periphery, a scandal-ridden president under siege. But just a few years later, after some creative strategy and diplomacy, the country had extricated itself from Vietnam, reshaped the global balance of power, reestablished its position in Asia, and become the dominant force in the Middle East. And although it took a while, the U.S. economy ultimately rose to the challenge posed by increased international competition and came out stronger for it. Could such miracles repeat themselves, or is it finally time for America to come home?

—Gideon Rose, Editor

The United States is questioning the global role it once embraced.

EMMANUEL POLANCO

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The Folly of Retrenchment

Why America Can't Withdraw From the World

Thomas Wright

For seven decades, U.S. grand strategy was characterized by a bipartisan consensus on the United States' global role. Although successive administrations had major disagreements over the details, Democrats and Republicans alike backed a system of alliances, the forward positioning of forces, a relatively open international economy, and, albeit imperfectly, the principles of freedom, human rights, and democracy. Today, that consensus has broken down.

President Donald Trump has questioned the utility of the United States' alliances and its forward military presence in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. He has displayed little regard for a shared community of free societies and is drawn to authoritarian leaders. So far, Trump's views are not shared by the vast majority of leading Republicans. Almost all leading Democrats, for their part, are committed to the United States' traditional role in Europe and Asia, if not in the Middle East. Trump has struggled to convert his worldview into policy, and in many respects, his administration has increased U.S. military commitments. But if Trump wins reelection, that could change quickly, as he would feel more empowered and Washington would need to adjust to the reality that Americans had reconfirmed their support for a more inward-looking approach to world affairs. At a private speech in November, according to press reports, John Bolton, Trump's former national security adviser, even predicted that Trump could pull out of NATO in a second term. The receptiveness of the American people to Trump's "America first" rhetoric has revealed that there is a market for a foreign policy in which the United States plays a smaller role in the world.

Amid the shifting political winds, a growing chorus of voices in the policy community, from the left and the right, is calling for a strategy of global retrenchment, whereby the United States would withdraw its forces from around the world and reduce its security commitments. Leading scholars and policy experts, such as Barry Posen and Ian Bremmer, have called on the United States to significantly reduce its role in Europe and Asia, including withdrawing from NATO. In 2019, a new think tank, the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, set up shop, with funding from the conservative Charles Koch Foundation and the liberal philanthropist George Soros. Its mission, in its own words, is to advocate "a new foreign policy centered on diplomatic engagement and military restraint."

Global retrenchment is fast emerging as the most coherent and ready-made alternative to the United States' postwar strategy. Yet pursuing it would be a grave mistake. By dissolving U.S. alliances and ending the forward presence of U.S. forces, this strategy

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would destabilize the regional security orders in Europe and Asia. It would also increase the risk of nuclear proliferation, empower right-wing nationalists in Europe, and aggravate the threat of major-power conflict.

This is not to say that U.S. strategy should never change. The United States has regularly increased and decreased its presence around the world as threats have risen and ebbed. Even though Washington followed a strategy of containment throughout the Cold War, that took various forms, which meant the difference between war and peace in Vietnam, between an arms race and arms control, and between détente and an all-out attempt to defeat the Soviets. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States changed course again, expanding its alliances to include many countries that had previously been part of the Warsaw Pact.

Likewise, the United States will now have to do less in some areas and more in others as it shifts its focus from counterterrorism and reform in the Middle East toward great-power competition with China and Russia. But advocates of global retrenchment are not so much proposing changes within a strategy as they are calling for the wholesale replacement of one that has been in place since World War II. What the United States needs now is a careful pruning of its overseas commitments—not the indiscriminate abandonment of a strategy that has served it well for decades.

RETRENCHMENT REDUX

Support for retrenchment stems from the view that the United States has overextended itself in countries that have little bearing on its national interest. According to this perspective, which is closely associated with the realist school of international relations, the United States is fundamentally secure thanks to its geography, nuclear arsenal, and military advantage. Yet the country has nonetheless chosen to pursue a strategy of "liberal hegemony," using force in an unwise attempt to perpetuate a liberal international order (one that, as evidenced by U.S. support for authoritarian regimes, is not so liberal, after all). Washington, the argument goes, has distracted itself with costly overseas commitments and interventions that breed resentment and encourage free-riding abroad.

Critics of the status quo argue that the United States must take two steps to change its ways. The first is retrenchment itself: the action of withdrawing from many of the United States' existing commitments, such as the ongoing military interventions in the Middle East and one-sided alliances in Europe and Asia. The second is restraint: the strategy of defining U.S. interests narrowly, refusing to launch wars unless vital interests are directly threatened and Congress authorizes such action, compelling other nations to take care of their own security, and relying more on diplomatic, economic, and political tools.

In practice, this approach means ending U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, withdrawing U.S. forces from the Middle East, relying on an over-the-horizon force that can uphold U.S. national interests, and no longer taking on responsibility for the security of other states. As for alliances, Posen has argued that the United States should abandon the mutual-defense provision of NATO, replace the organization "with

a new, more limited security cooperation agreement," and reduce U.S. commitments to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. On the question of China, realists have split in recent years. Some, such as the scholar John Mearsheimer, contend that even as the United States retrenches elsewhere, in Asia, it must contain the threat of China, whereas others, such as Posen, argue that nations in the region are perfectly capable of doing the job themselves.

Since Trump's election, some progressive foreign policy thinkers have joined the retrenchment camp. They diverge from other progressives, who advocate maintaining the United States' current role. Like the realists, progressive retrenchers hold the view that the United States is safe because of its geography and the size of its military. Where these progressives break from the realists, however, is on the question of what will happen if the United States pulls back. While the realists favoring retrenchment have few illusions about the sort of regional competition that will break out in the absence of U.S. dominance, the progressives expect that the world will become more peaceful and cooperative, because Washington can still manage tensions through diplomatic, economic, and political tools. The immediate focus of the progressives is the so-called forever wars—U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and the broader war on terrorism—as well as the defense budget and overseas bases.

Although the progressives have a less developed vision of how to implement retrenchment than the realists, they do provide some guideposts. Stephen Wertheim, a co-founder of the Quincy Institute, has called for bringing home many of the U.S. soldiers serving abroad, "leaving small forces to protect commercial sea lanes," as part of an effort to "deprive presidents of the temptation to answer every problem with a violent solution." He argues that U.S. allies may believe that the United States has been inflating regional threats and thus conclude that they do not need to increase their conventional or nuclear forces. Another progressive thinker, Peter Beinart, has argued that the United States should accept Chinese and Russian spheres of influence, a strategy that would include abandoning Taiwan.

IS LESS REALLY MORE?

The realists and the progressives arguing for retrenchment differ in their assumptions, logic, and intentions. The realists tend to be more pessimistic about the prospects for peace and frame their arguments in hardheaded terms, whereas the progressives downplay the consequences of American withdrawal and make a moral case against the current grand strategy. But they share a common claim: that the United States would be better off if it dramatically reduced its global military footprint and security commitments.

This is a false promise, for a number of reasons. First, retrenchment would worsen regional security competition in Europe and Asia. The realists recognize that the U.S. military presence in Europe and Asia does dampen security competition, but they claim that it does so at too high a price—and one that, at any rate, should be paid by U.S. allies in the regions themselves. Although pulling back would invite regional security competition, realist retrenchers admit, the United States could be safer in a

Hearts and minds: U.S. soldiers searching farmers in Afghanistan, December 2009

FRANCO PAGETTI / VII / REDUX

more dangerous world because regional rivals would check one another. This is a perilous gambit, however, because regional conflicts often end up implicating U.S. interests. They might thus end up drawing the United States back in after it has left—resulting in a much more dangerous venture than heading off the conflict in the first place by staying. Realist retrenchment reveals a hubris that the United States can control consequences and prevent crises from erupting into war.

The progressives' view of regional security is similarly flawed. These retrenchers reject the idea that regional security competition will intensify if the United States leaves. In fact, they argue, U.S. alliances often promote competition, as in the Middle East, where U.S. support for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has emboldened those countries in their cold war with Iran. But this logic does not apply to Europe or Asia, where U.S. allies have behaved responsibly. A U.S. pullback from those places is more likely to embolden the regional powers. Since 2008, Russia has invaded two of its neighbors that are not members of NATO, and if the Baltic states were no longer protected by a U.S. security guarantee, it is conceivable that Russia would test the boundaries with gray-zone warfare. In East Asia, a U.S. withdrawal would force Japan to increase its defense capabilities and change its constitution to enable it to compete with China on its own, straining relations with South Korea.

The second problem with retrenchment involves nuclear proliferation. If the United States pulled out of NATO or ended its alliance with Japan, as many realist advocates of retrenchment recommend, some of its allies, no longer protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella, would be tempted to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. Unlike the progressives for retrenchment, the realists are comfortable with that result, since they see deterrence as a stabilizing force.

Most Americans are not so sanguine, and rightly so. There are good reasons to worry about nuclear proliferation: nuclear materials could end up in the hands of terrorists, states with less experience might be more prone to nuclear accidents, and nuclear powers in close proximity have shorter response times and thus conflicts among them have a greater chance of spiraling into escalation.

Third, retrenchment would heighten nationalism and xenophobia. In Europe, a U.S. withdrawal would send the message that every country must fend for itself. It would therefore empower the far-right groups already making this claim—such as the Alternative for Germany, the League in Italy, and the National Front in France—while undermining the centrist democratic leaders there who told their populations that they could rely on the United States and NATO. As a result, Washington would lose leverage over the domestic politics of individual allies, particularly younger and more fragile democracies such as Poland. And since these nationalist populist groups are almost always protectionist, retrenchment would damage U.S. economic interests, as well. Even more alarming, many of the right-wing nationalists that retrenchment would empower have called for greater accommodation of China and Russia.

A fourth problem concerns regional stability after global retrenchment. The most likely end state is a spheres-of-influence system, whereby China and Russia dominate their neighbors, but such an order is inherently unstable. The lines of demarcation for such spheres tend to be unclear, and there is no guarantee that China and Russia will not seek to move them outward over time. Moreover, the United States cannot simply grant other major powers a sphere of influence—the countries that would fall into those realms have agency, too. If the United States ceded Taiwan to China, for example, the Taiwanese people could say no. The current U.S. policy toward the country is working and may be sustainable. Withdrawing support from Taiwan against its will would plunge cross-strait relations into chaos. The entire idea of letting regional powers have their own spheres of influence has an imperial air that is at odds with modern principles of sovereignty and international law.

A fifth problem with retrenchment is that it lacks domestic support. The American people may favor greater burden sharing, but there is no evidence that they are onboard with a withdrawal from Europe and Asia. As a survey conducted in 2019 by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs found, seven out of ten Americans believe that maintaining military superiority makes the United States safer, and almost three-quarters think that alliances contribute to U.S. security. A 2019 Eurasia Group Foundation poll found that over 60 percent of Americans want to maintain or increase defense spending. As it became apparent that China and Russia would benefit from this shift toward retrenchment, and as the United States' democratic allies objected to its withdrawal, the domestic political backlash would grow. One result could be a prolonged foreign policy debate that would cause the United States to oscillate between retrenchment and reengagement, creating uncertainty about its commitments and thus raising the risk of miscalculation by Washington, its allies, or its rivals.

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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THE FLETCHER SCHOOL
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Realist and progressive retrenchers like to argue that the architects of the United States' postwar foreign policy naively sought to remake the world in its image. But the real revisionists are those who argue for retrenchment, a geopolitical experiment of unprecedented scale in modern history. If this camp were to have its way, Europe and Asia—two stable, peaceful, and prosperous regions that form the two main pillars of the U.S.-led order—would be plunged into an era of uncertainty.

THE CHINA CHALLENGE

Such are the inherent flaws of retrenchment, downsides that would apply at any time in the post–Cold War era. But the strategy is particularly poorly suited for the current moment, when the United States finds itself in a systemic competition with China, in which each side threatens the other not just because of what they do but also because of what they are.

To China and other autocracies, the United States' democratic system is inherently threatening. The free press promises to reveal vital secrets about the Chinese regime simply because it can, with American journalists' 2012 reports about elite corruption in China and Hong Kong and their 2019 revelations about the repression of China's Uighurs serving as Exhibits A and B. Social media, businesses, universities, nongovernmental organizations, and Congress have all played a role in undermining the regime in Beijing and sowing the seeds of democracy.

To combat these threats, Beijing is increasingly relying on repression, often facilitated by innovations such as facial recognition technology and artificial intelligence. But its ambitions are not limited to its own territory: Beijing has exported its tactics and technology abroad in an attempt to undermine liberalism. It has cracked down on foreign nongovernmental organizations with a presence in China, pressured foreign corporations to endorse its behavior, and grown more vocal within the UN Human Rights Council in an effort to weaken international norms. China has also attempted to illicitly influence Western democracies through operations such as illegally funneling money into Australian politics to support politicians favorable to China. These actions are seen as threatening by the United States.

The competition of systems between the United States and China increasingly involves all parts of society—business, the media, sports, technology, education, politics, diplomacy, intelligence, the military. This competition does not generally involve the use of force, but the geopolitical balance of power is a vital component. It is the United States' strength and the deterrence it produces that prevents this competition from spilling over into the military domain. The U.S. alliance system also provides a basis for helping other states preserve and strengthen their democratic systems in the shadow of Chinese influence. But advocates of retrenchment aim to weaken both the U.S. military and U.S. alliances. It is vitally important that the United States manage this competition of systems responsibly to protect U.S. interests and to prevent the rivalry from spiraling out of control.

In a moment of such ideological competition, global retrenchment would effectively concede victory to China

and other authoritarian states. It would make it impossible to maintain a political alliance with the democratic world—most notably, with France, Germany, and the United Kingdom in Europe and with Australia, Japan, and South Korea in Asia. In the absence of U.S. support, these countries could never hold the line against China. Governments would begin to give Beijing the benefit of the doubt on everything from human rights to 5G wireless technology. As the U.S. defense budget plummeted, the United States would fall behind in new technologies, giving China an additional edge.

PICK AND CHOOSE

For all the flaws with retrenchment, it would be wrong for the United States to pretend that the world has not changed, to deny that the unipolar moment is over and that great-power competition has replaced counterterrorism as the central objective of U.S. foreign policy. In acknowledging the new circumstances it faces, the United States can employ retrenchment selectively, carefully abandoning some of its post–Cold War and post-9/11 commitments.

For one thing, the United States should end its involvement in the war in Afghanistan. There are now some 13,000 U.S. troops in the country, and 2019 was the deadliest year for them since 2014. The initial objective in Afghanistan was to root out al Qaeda after 9/11, but in subsequent years, the mission expanded to include preventing Afghanistan from destabilizing Pakistan and strengthening the Afghan government so it could stand up for itself and negotiate a peace agreement with the Taliban. But the Afghan government is likely to remain weak, and even if a peace deal were somehow achieved, the Taliban are unlikely to abide by it.

The United States cannot afford such an open-ended and deadly military conflict, one in which the only identifiable national interests are to avoid losing and to hold on to the gains in human rights, as precious as those are. The United States has achieved its fundamental objective of rooting out al Qaeda, and the threat from Islamist terrorism now arises more from other places, such as Iraq, Syria, and the Sahel. To mitigate the human cost of withdrawal, the United States should use diplomatic and economic tools to maintain governance standards and increase its intake of Afghan refugees. It is time to bring the longest-running American war to an end.

In Iraq and Syria, U.S. forces cannot simply leave, because the resurgence of the Islamic State (or ISIS) there remains a real danger. The Obama administration's withdrawal of forces from Iraq and its diplomatic neglect of Baghdad contributed to the rise of ISIS, and the Trump administration seems intent on repeating that error. With its indiscriminate attacks against civilians and its global recruitment, ISIS poses a direct threat to the United States, and Americans overwhelmingly support military operations to defeat it. But Washington can carry out this mission while limiting its military involvement in the Middle East. It should narrow the focus of its military operations in the region to counterterrorism and the protection of other U.S. national interests, such as preventing genocide, nuclear proliferation, the use of chemical or biological weapons, and interruptions in the oil supply. The United States should not

embark on military interventions to bring about a broader transformation of governance in the Middle East, whether through democratizing Iraq or effecting regime change in Iran.

As part of selective retrenchment, the United States should also impose new limits and conditions on its alliances with many authoritarian states. The emerging competition with China's authoritarian model has an unavoidable ideological element. Those who want to defend democratic, open, and free systems will be drawn to the United States, whereas those who do not will be drawn to China. This will put significant pressure on nondemocratic American allies, such as Turkey and the Gulf Arab states, to decide which side to back in diplomatic and geopolitical crises.

The United States regularly allied itself with autocracies during the Cold War and will need to do so again, but only when it is necessary to protect vital U.S. interests. To mount an effective campaign against China in Southeast Asia, for example, Washington may need to develop closer relations with Vietnam, a one-party state. But there will also be times when allying with an authoritarian state has no clear benefit apart from merely racking up the score. In those instances, the United States should avoid repeating one of the worst mistakes of the Cold War: competing for influence in states that do not really matter. For example, if Hungary continues to drift away from democracy, the United States must reassess its alliance with Budapest. When there is a clear rationale for partnering with a distasteful regime, the United States should make the alliance transactional and avoid pretending that they are cooperating based on shared values. With Saudi Arabia, for example, this may mean partnering with the country on counterterrorism and preventing Iranian aggression but refusing to be a party to its bloody intervention in Yemen. And Washington should avoid lending political legitimacy to the regime by appealing to shared values and downplaying differences.

As the United States debates the future of its global role, it must be clear-eyed about what unilateral withdrawal would really mean. Part of the folly of global retrenchers comes from an inability to differentiate the United States' involvement in the Middle East from its involvement in Europe and Asia. Critics are right to be frustrated about U.S. policy in the Middle East. After decades of quixotic attempts to transform the region, Washington finds itself bogged down there, with vast commitments but no clear strategy and few reliable partners. But using the Middle East as a justification for unilateral global withdrawal ignores the tangible benefits of U.S. engagement in Europe and Asia, where there is a clear purpose, strong partners, and shared interests.

Now is not the time for a revolution in U.S. strategy. The United States should continue to play a leading role as a security provider in global affairs. But it can and should be more selective as it safeguards its interests—an approach that would have the added benefit of addressing the concerns that have attracted some people to retrenchment in the first place. The United States must be disciplined enough to understand the distinction between the places and things that really matter and those that do not.

The Price of Primacy

Why America Shouldn't Dominate the World

Stephen Wertheim

The collapse of the Soviet Union revealed the bankruptcy of international communism. In time, the absence of a Cold War foe also exposed the bankruptcy of Washington's global ambitions. Freed from major challengers, the United States had an unprecedented chance to shape international politics according to its wishes. It could have chosen to live in harmony with the world, pulling back its armed forces and deploying them only for vital purposes. It could have helped build a world of peace, strengthening the laws and institutions that constrain war and that most other states welcome. From this foundation of security and goodwill, the United States could have exercised leadership on the already visible challenges ahead, including climate change and the concentration of ungoverned wealth.

Instead, Washington did the opposite. It adopted a grand strategy that gave pride of place to military threats and methods, and it constructed a form of global integration that served the immediate interests of a few but imperiled the long-term interests of the many. At best, these were mistaken priorities. At worst, they turned the United States into a destructive actor in the world. Rather than practice and cultivate peace, Washington pursued armed domination and launched futile wars in Afghanistan in 2001, in Iraq in 2003, and in Libya in 2011. These actions created more enemies than they defeated. They killed hundreds of thousands of civilians and overextended a generation of U.S. service members. They damaged laws and institutions that stabilize the world and the United States. They made the American people less safe.

As the United States inflated military threats and then poured resources into countering them, it also failed to provide for the global common good. Although it has led some laudable efforts to address the AIDS pandemic and climate change, the overall record is grim. Since 1990, the United States, despite having only four percent of the global population, has emitted about 20 percent of the world's total carbon dioxide, the main contributor to climate change. Although China is now the world's top emitter, the United States' emissions per capita remain more than twice as high as China's. American leaders have alternated between denying the problem and taking insufficient steps to solve it. It remains unclear whether humanity can prevent the overall global temperature from rising to between 1.5 and 2.0 degrees Celsius over preindustrial levels; if not, the damage may prove irreversible, and fires, droughts, and floods may proliferate.

Meanwhile, the economic growth that has contributed to climate change has not benefited enough people. True, extreme poverty has plummeted globally since the early 1990s. This spectacular achievement is substantially the result of

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growth in China and India, on terms accepted but hardly defined by the United States. In the same period, however, the share of income accruing to the wealthiest one percent of the world's population has steadily climbed, whereas that of the bottom 50 percent has stagnated. The rest of the world, including the vast majority of Americans, has actually lost ground. Wealth is now concentrated to the point that an estimated 11.5 percent of global GDP lies offshore, untaxed and unaccountable. The populist revolts of the past few years were a predictable result. And American leaders bear direct responsibility for these outcomes, having spearheaded an economic order that puts capital first.

U.S. President Donald Trump often portrays himself as breaking with the basic pattern of recent American foreign policy. Many of his detractors also see him that way. In truth, Trump has carried forward and even intensified the post–Cold War agenda of his predecessors: spare no expense for military hegemony, and find little to spare for the earth's climate or the well-being of anyone who is not wealthy. Trump stands out chiefly because he describes this agenda as national aggrandizement rather than farsighted international leadership. In this regard, he has a point.

Washington's post–Cold War strategy has failed. The United States should abandon the quest for armed primacy in favor of protecting the planet and creating more opportunity for more people. It needs a grand strategy for the many.

THE WAR MACHINE

Both champions and critics of U.S. grand strategy after the Cold War have christened the project "liberal hegemony." But American objectives and methods were always more hegemonic than liberal. Despite diverging over whether and how to promote liberalism, U.S. policymakers have for nearly three decades converged around the premise that Pentagon planners set forth in 1992: the United States should maintain a military superiority so overwhelming that it would dissuade allies and rivals alike from challenging Washington's authority. That superiority quickly became an end unto itself. By seeking dominance instead of merely defense, the strategy of primacy plunged the United States into a downward a spiral: American actions generated antagonists and enemies, who in turn made primacy more dangerous to pursue.

For most of the 1990s, the costs of this strategy remained somewhat hidden. With Russia flattened and China poor, the United States could simultaneously reduce its defense spending and expand NATO, launch military interventions in the former Yugoslavia and for the first time station tens of thousands of troops in the Middle East. Yet by the end of the decade, U.S. dominance had begun to generate blowback. Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda terrorist group declared war on the United States in 1996, citing the U.S. military's presence in Saudi Arabia as their top grievance; two years later, al Qaeda bombed the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing 224 people. U.S. policymakers, for their part, were already exaggerating the threat posed by weak "rogue states" and gearing up for ambitious military interventions to promote democracy and human rights. These pathologies shaped Washington's overly militarized reaction to the 9/11 attacks, as the United States entered into successive

Fuel to the fire: American troops in Kuwait, February 2010

JOÃO SILVA / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

conflicts in which its capabilities and interests did not exceed those of local actors. The result was endless war.

Now, as the United States struggles to extricate itself from the Middle East, China is growing into an economic and political powerhouse and Russia is asserting itself as a spoiler. That outcome is exactly what primacy was supposed to prevent. The rise of a near-peer competitor does not necessarily pose a grave danger to the United States, whose nuclear deterrent secures it from attack. But clinging to the dream of never-ending primacy will ensure trouble, mandating the containment of rivals and provoking insecurity and aggression in return. China has yet to undertake a costly bid for military dominance in East Asia, let alone the world, but U.S. actions could push Beijing in that direction.

BEARING THE COSTS

Primacy has not merely failed to provide security as it is narrowly defined. It has also damaged the environment, undercut

the economic interests of most Americans, and destabilized democracy. The U.S. military consumes more oil and produces more greenhouse gases than any other institution on earth, according to Brown University's Costs of War Project. In 2017, the U.S. military's emissions exceeded those of entire industrialized countries, such as Denmark and Sweden.

Nor does primacy offer a net economic benefit. From the 1940s through the 1960s, U.S. military preponderance lubricated international capitalism by containing communism and facilitating the expansion of the dollar, to which all other currencies were pegged. But after the collapse of the Bretton Woods monetary system and then of the Soviet Union, currencies were floated, and global markets were integrated. As a result, U.S. military strength became largely detached from the international economic order. Today, the status of the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency, which allows Americans to borrow cheaply, rests largely on path dependence, the currency's stability, and the dearth of attractive alternatives—factors that no longer rely on the global projection of U.S. force that helped usher them in originally. And the quest for primacy is now leading the United States to erode its own financial position by maintaining unnecessary hostilities with states such as Iran, imposing crippling sanctions on them and forcing third parties who use the dollar to follow suit. These actions have compelled European states to seek alternatives to the dollar and have driven down the dollar's share in global foreign exchange reserves.

The U.S. military contributes to global commerce by protecting the sea-lanes through which goods (including oil) flow. But doing so does not require globe-spanning dominance; it requires effective local partners to handle day-to-day tasks, with a light U.S. air and naval presence that can be reinforced if and when those partners cannot overcome a genuine challenge to maritime security. Whatever economic benefits primacy may indirectly yield, what is certain is that year after year, the United States spends half of its federal discretionary budget to fund a military that is costlier than the next seven largest armed forces combined. Military spending is one of the least efficient ways to create jobs, ranking behind tax cuts and spending on education, health care, infrastructure, and clean energy. The estimated $6.4 trillion poured into the "war on terror" so far could have rebuilt communities across the United States that were devastated by the financial crisis and the recession that followed. Now, many members of those communities resent the political elites who allowed them to crumble.

Primacy has also corroded the U.S. political system, which has in turn produced irresponsible leaders to wield primacy's power. During the Cold War, the need to counter a threatening adversary sometimes worked to unify disparate political factions and social groups in the United States. The post–Cold War quest for primacy offers a perverse contrast. The United States has acquired a kaleidoscope of foreign enemies, whom U.S. officials and the mass media have encouraged the American public to fear and punish. Small wonder that in the second decade of the war on terror, a demagogue was able to turn hatred of foreigners into a premise that propelled him to the presidency, dividing the country further still.

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HOW TO FIX GLOBALIZATION

Americans and their leaders must act now to end primacy's downward spiral. This will not require overturning the familiar definitions of fundamental U.S. interests: security for the nation and its people, prosperity for all, and the preservation of the constitutional republic. But those interests must be related to the domestic and international realities of 2020, rather than to those of 1947.

The United States should seek to transform globalization into a governable and sustainable force, one that protects the environment, spreads wealth equitably, and promotes peace. Such an agenda would bring Americans together and bring their country into a healthy alignment with the rest of the world. Climate change affects everyone, and two of the very few trends common to both U.S. political parties are mounting support for economic progressivism and a profound wariness of military intervention. A strategy to transform globalization would also transcend the current impasse between "America first" nationalism and nostalgia for the U.S.-led "liberal international order." The former is implacably hostile to the outside world (and hurts the United States by defining it in opposition to others rather than in terms of itself and its interests). The latter submerges U.S. interests in a vague abstraction (and hurts the world by subordinating everyone to U.S. leadership). A better approach would be to focus on definable interests and major threats that genuinely require action across borders.

First among these is climate change. Nothing better encapsulates the backwardness of U.S. priorities than the fact that Washington directs at least $81 billion per year to its military to ensure the abundant supply of cheap oil around the globe, according to Securing America's Future Energy, a clean energy advocacy group. The United States should work to reduce the world's reliance on fossil fuels rather than underwrite it.

The world still has a chance to avert the most severe climate impacts. To set the stage, the United States should use its market power and its international influence. At home, it should vastly increase investment in the Department of Energy's research-and-development agency, levy taxes on producers and importers of carbon-emitting fuels, and expand credits for electric vehicles and other renewables. At the same time, the United States should adopt a range of green regulatory standards on which to condition foreign access to its large market, along the lines of the tailpipe emissions requirements that the Obama administration imposed on imported automobiles.

Globally, the United States should seek much more far-reaching results than the voluntary national emissions standards established by the Paris climate accord in 2015. After rejoining that agreement, Washington should ratify the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which calls for vastly limiting the use of hydrofluorocarbons, and should insist that multilateral development agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, support only those projects that would lead to fewer emissions.

The United States should also rally the industrialized world to provide developing countries with technology and financing to bypass fossil fuels. Coercion will be less effective, and less

just, than provision. Washington can jump-start this initiative by investing at least $200 billion in the UN Green Climate Fund and opening discussions for debt relief with countries in the global South.

A sticking point would be China, which spews by far the most carbon dioxide of any country—over a quarter of the global total—but also leads the world in mass-producing low-carbon energy technologies. The highest priority in U.S. relations with China should be to green Chinese behavior, an objective that would preclude a policy of Cold War–style containment. Washington should encourage Beijing to keep innovating renewable technologies, in part by stepping up U.S. research and development, and should push China to implement those technologies in its domestic energy production and international development practices.

A new U.S. strategy would not just green the global economy; it would also democratize it. As Joseph Stiglitz, Todd Tucker, and Gabriel Zucman recently argued in these pages, the next U.S. president should launch a campaign to combat global tax evasion by backing a global registry to reveal the true owners of all assets and by preventing corporations from shifting money to subsidiaries in low-tax jurisdictions. Those moves alone would increase U.S. tax revenue by approximately 15 percent. Still more revenue would come from establishing a global minimum tax to end race-to-the-bottom tax havens. Washington could use that revenue to ensure that U.S. workers benefit from the transition away from fossil fuels. In this way, environmental protection, economic justice, and the restoration of trust in government would proceed in lockstep.

HOW TO END ENDLESS WARS—AND NOT START NEW ONES

It will not suffice, however, to simply lay environmentalist and social democratic initiatives on top of U.S. military primacy, in pursuit of which the United States has formally obligated itself to defend approximately one-third of the world's countries (and informally dozens more) and to maintain an archipelago of more than 800 foreign bases. The United States will also have to demilitarize its foreign policy.

The essential first step would be to end the era of costly and counterproductive warfare that began after the 9/11 attacks. The United States should remove its air and ground forces from Afghanistan within 12 to 18 months and even sooner from Iraq and Syria. It should bring those troops home rather than reposition them elsewhere in the region. Washington should of course try to broker the best possible settlements to the conflicts in those places, and it should continue to provide assistance to the Afghan and Iraqi governments after turning over the appropriate facilities and equipment to them. But the United States should withdraw from these conflict zones even in the absence of credible agreements to end the fighting. Washington lacks the leverage to demand what it could not impose through two decades of warfare. Although withdrawals may set back U.S. allies and partners in the short run, the region must find its own balance of power in order to achieve peace and stability over time.

Indeed, no strategic logic warrants the continuation of the war on terror, which perpetuates itself by producing new enemies. That is why a swift and

sweeping termination would be best. If significant attacks occur, the United States should respond militarily but with clear restrictions regarding whom, where, and for how long it can fight. Its leaders should make a political virtue out of restraint, declaring that the United States will defeat terrorists in part by avoiding the kinds of indiscriminate attacks that militants exploit to swell their coffers and attract new recruits.

Accordingly, the next president should drastically reduce so-called targeted killing operations. "Signature strikes," in which drones take aim at unidentified persons, should cease immediately because they hit unworthy targets, kill innocent civilians, and cause blowback. Any remaining use of drone strikes should be subject to a more literal conception of "imminent threat" than the elastic definition applied by the Obama administration and further degraded by Trump. Congress, for its part, should replace the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force, which was passed after 9/11, with a far narrower version that allows the president to use force against specific organizations, in specific countries, and for a specific period and prohibits lethal operations against all others. Congress can also dissuade the president from launching unlawful strikes by empowering U.S. federal courts to review after-the-fact lawsuits brought on behalf of victims.

Beyond dismantling the war on terror, the United States should also shed unnecessary nemeses, especially weak states that would not threaten the United States except for its belligerent posture toward them. Take North Korea. Washington should abandon the fantasy that the regime of Kim Jong Un will fully denuclearize as a result of external pressure; instead, the United States should seek to normalize relations with North Korea and build peace on the peninsula. Doing so would require a step-by-step process in which the United States, acting with its partners, would lift sanctions and offer development assistance in return for North Korea's accepting arms control measures, including capping its nuclear arsenal, ceasing missile tests and other belligerent actions, and permitting UN inspections. This course offers the best way to address the nuclear threat: it would make North Korea's intentions less antagonistic and limit its capabilities to the extent feasible. It would also be unlikely to cause proliferation by Japan and South Korea, which have now lived with North Korea's nuclear capability for 14 years. Although some may be tempted to condition nuclear diplomacy on human rights improvements in North Korea, the regime's abuses are likely to diminish significantly only if it no longer perceives itself to be besieged.

Iran is another enemy worth losing. The United States should end its grudge match with the Islamic Republic by lifting sanctions and coming back into compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the nuclear deal that Washington and other major powers negotiated with Tehran. That agreement proved not only that diplomacy with Iran is possible but also that it is the most effective method for addressing bilateral tensions. A thirst for vengeance, which seems to be driving U.S. policy toward Iran under Trump, is not a legitimate U.S. interest. In fact, no U.S. interest—not even the goal of preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons—would

warrant war with Iran given that diplomacy with Tehran has worked.

In the rest of the region, Washington should be guided by the maxim "no permanent friends, no permanent enemies." It should downgrade relations with partners such as Saudi Arabia and make clear that they are responsible for defending themselves. The United States should close nearly all its military bases in the region. Retaining one or two for air and naval forces, perhaps in Bahrain and Qatar, would give Washington what it needs: the ability to ensure access to the maritime commons should a serious threat arise that regional actors cannot handle themselves. More broadly, the United States should cease acting as a partisan in disputes such as Yemen's civil war and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; it would do more to help resolve those fights by relying on diplomacy without taking sides.

HOW TO DEAL WITH CHINA AND RUSSIA

In the past three years, the Trump administration and a flotilla of defense analysts have proposed a strategy of "great-power competition," which would generally intensify geopolitical contestation in the service of maximizing Washington's military power. Precisely the opposite is needed. Competition among great powers is inevitable, but it should be a byproduct of underlying interests and is hardly to be desired in its own right. As the United States attempts to elicit cooperation from China and Russia on combating climate change and governing global finance, it should avoid costly military rivalries and ruinous large-scale wars. Washington should therefore significantly

reduce its forward-deployed military presence in Asia and Europe alike, while retaining the ability to intervene if either power truly threatens to become a hostile hegemon in its region.

Despite the rising alarm in Washington, China is not poised to dominate East Asia by force. Having grown in rough proportion to China's economy, the People's Liberation Army remains focused on local issues: defending the Chinese mainland, winning disputes over small border areas and islands, and prevailing in what China sees as its unresolved civil war with the government in Taiwan. A new administration should abandon its predecessors' overreactions to Chinese military expansion. In order to prevent a serious clash in the South China Sea, where Beijing's interests outstrip those of Washington, the United States should extricate itself from maritime jurisdictional disputes and cease freedom-of-navigation operations and surveillance near disputed islands. It is not worth antagonizing China over such issues.

The possibility that China might become more belligerent if it continues to grow stronger is a legitimate concern. To account for this possibility without taking actions that make it more likely, Washington should strengthen the defenses of U.S. allies in Asia in ways that do not provoke China. The United States can provide its allies with so-called anti-access/area-denial capabilities, such as improved surveillance and missile systems, which would severely impede any Chinese attack without signaling an offensive posture. It could then retract its offensive weaponry. In Taiwan, such an approach would fulfill the long-standing U.S. objective of preserving a peaceful status quo, deterring a Chinese invasion while dissuading Taiwan from thinking it could back its independence aspirations with U.S. forces.

If it took this approach, the United States would still have ample time to mobilize and deploy its forces if China were to turn bellicose. For now, Washington must make a serious bid to secure Beijing's cooperation on core objectives, especially climate change. To attempt to contain China would be a grave mistake, guaranteeing Chinese enmity and directing resources into military escalation instead of environmental cooperation. The United States should clearly prioritize the present danger of an uninhabitable planet above the speculative and manageable prospect of an aggressive peer.

U.S. relations with Russia also require a redesign. Russia, with an economy smaller than that of Italy, is not a credible aspirant to hegemony in Europe and need not pose a security threat to the United States. The fact that, according to a Gallup poll conducted last year, a majority of Americans consider Russia to be a "critical threat" testifies to decades of policy failure, including U.S. provocations (NATO expansion and law-breaking American military interventions) and Russian hostility (culminating in its U.S. election meddling in 2016). The next U.S. president should end this cycle by pursuing a policy that respects Russia's consistent view of its vital interests: preserving its regime, avoiding hostile governments in its "near abroad," and participating in core European security and diplomatic discussions.

Because those objectives align with U.S. interests, the United States should assuage Russian concerns by ending

NATO expansion and rejecting Ukraine's existing bid for membership in the alliance. It should then, in consultation with its allies, begin a ten-year drawdown of U.S. forces stationed in Europe. Most of those troops should return to the United States, although some air and naval forces could remain with the agreement of their hosts. In addition, the United States should encourage Russia and Ukraine to reach a deal whereby Russia would stop backing separatists in eastern Ukraine and Ukraine and the United States would recognize Crimea as part of Russia. Such a settlement would allow the United States to lift many of its sanctions on Russia and lay the foundation for decent relations.

These measures, in addition to being rooted in U.S. interests, would serve to reassure Russia on security issues as the two powers grapple over climate change and financial corruption. Russia relies on oil and gas revenue, and some Russians believe that their country, or the parts of it that are thawing, will benefit commercially from warming temperatures. Russia is also a global leader in money laundering and tax evasion. No U.S. strategy is going to wean Russia off petrodollars or kleptocracy. By minimizing points of friction, however, Washington would make it more likely that Moscow would temper its resistance to international campaigns on the climate and finance. Doing so may even ultimately open the door to mutually beneficial exchanges through scientific research and the transfer of green technologies. At a minimum, U.S. military retrenchment would help prevent Russia from becoming desperate and aggressive as a result of international pressure.

THE CHOICE

The time has come to bid good riddance to the unipolar moment. Over three decades, the United States has extended its military deployments and commitments to the breaking point. Its poor stewardship of globalization has left ordinary Americans and the earth's climate in a similar place. To correct its course, the United States should make the conscious choice to pull back militarily—the better to build a world that is habitable, governable, and prosperous.

The United States must use its power and influence to take on challenges that bombs and bullets cannot fix. This is a task for grand strategy in its broadest sense. More than that, it is a task for politics. A grand strategy for the many must be demanded by the many so that their leaders will pursue the common good.

The New Spheres of Influence

Sharing the Globe With Other Great Powers

Graham Allison

In the heady aftermath of the Cold War, American policymakers pronounced one of the fundamental concepts of geopolitics obsolete. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice described a new world "in which great power is defined not by spheres of influence . . . or the strong imposing their will on the weak." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that "the United States does not recognize spheres of influence." Secretary of State John Kerry proclaimed that "the era of the Monroe Doctrine is over," ending almost two centuries of the United States staking claim to its own sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere.

Such pronouncements were right in that something about geopolitics had changed. But they were wrong about what exactly it was. U.S. policymakers had ceased to recognize spheres of influence—the ability of other powers to demand deference from other states in their own regions or exert predominant control there—not because the concept had become obsolete. Rather, the entire world had become a de facto American sphere. Spheres of influence had given way to a sphere of influence. The strong still imposed their will on the weak; the rest of the world was compelled to play largely by American rules, or else face a steep price, from crippling sanctions to outright regime change. Spheres of influence hadn't gone away; they had been collapsed into one, by the overwhelming fact of U.S. hegemony.

Now, however, that hegemony is fading, and Washington has awakened to what it calls "a new era of great-power competition," with China and Russia increasingly using their power to assert interests and values that often conflict with those of the United States. But American policymakers and analysts are still struggling to come to grips with what this new era means for the U.S. role in the world. Going forward, that role will not only be different; it will also be significantly diminished. While leaders will continue announcing grand ambitions, diminished means will mean diminished results.

Unipolarity is over, and with it the illusion that other nations would simply take their assigned place in a U.S.-led international order. For the United States, that will require accepting the reality that there are spheres of influence in the world today—and that not all of them are American spheres.

THE WORLD AS IT WAS

Before making pronouncements about the new rules of geopolitics, post–Cold War U.S. secretaries of state should have looked back to the final months of World War II, when U.S. policymakers were similarly resistant to accepting a world in which spheres of influence

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remained a central feature of geopolitics. Competing views on the issue lay at the core of a debate between two top Soviet experts in the U.S. government.

On February 4, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt met with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at Yalta. At Roosevelt's side was his translator and principal adviser on the Soviet Union, Charles Bohlen. Just that morning, Bohlen had opened an urgent private missive from his close colleague George Kennan in Moscow. Kennan correctly forecast that the Soviet Union would attempt to maintain control of as much of Europe as it could. The question was what the United States should do about that. Kennan asked, "Why could we not make a decent and definitive compromise with it—divide Europe frankly into spheres of influence—keep ourselves out of the Russian sphere and keep the Russians out of ours?"

Bohlen was appalled. "Utterly impossible," he erupted in response. "Foreign policy of that kind cannot be made in a democracy." Reflecting on this moment later, Bohlen explained: "The American people, who had fought a long, hard war, deserved at least an attempt to work out a better world." Between 1945 and 1947, Bohlen worked alongside other leading figures in the Roosevelt and then the Truman administration to realize their "one world" vision, in which the allies who had fought together to defeat the Nazis would remain allied in creating a new global order. But he ultimately resigned himself to the world as it was—in short, Kennan had been right. "Instead of unity among the great powers on the major issues of world reconstruction—both political and economic—after the war, there is complete disunity between the Soviet Union and the satellites on one side and the rest of the world on the other," Bohlen acknowledged in the summer of 1947 in a memo to Secretary of State George Marshall. "There are, in short, two worlds instead of one."

When he finally came to share Kennan's diagnosis, Bohlen did not shrink from the implications. His memo to Marshall concluded:

> Faced with this disagreeable fact, however much we may deplore it, the United States in the interest of its own well-being and security and those of the free non-Soviet world must . . . draw [the non-Soviet world] closer together politically, economically, financially, and, in the last analysis, militarily in order to be in a position to deal effectively with the consolidated Soviet area.

This conviction became a pillar of the United States' strategy for the coming decades, and it rested on the acceptance of spheres of influence. There would be areas that would be subjected to Soviet domination, with often terrible consequences, but the best course for the United States was to bolster those powers on the periphery of this Soviet sphere while reinforcing the strength and unity of its own sphere.

For the four decades that followed, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in the great-power competition that we know as the Cold War. In the Soviet sphere, the captive nations of Eastern Europe remained under the boot of an "evil empire." American presidents faced repeated crises in which they had to choose between sending

troops into Soviet-dominated nations to support freedom fighters seeking to exercise rights that the American creed declares universal and standing by as those freedom fighters were slaughtered or suppressed. Without exception, U.S. presidents chose to watch instead of intervene: consider Dwight Eisenhower when Hungarians rose up in 1956 and Lyndon Johnson during the Prague Spring of 1968 (or, after the Cold War, George W. Bush when Russian troops attacked Georgia in 2008 and Barack Obama when Russian special forces seized Crimea). Why? Each had internalized an unacceptable yet undeniable truth: that, as U.S. President Ronald Reagan once explained in a joint statement with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

This bit of Cold War history should serve as a reminder: a nation that is simultaneously idealistic and realistic will always struggle to reconcile rationales and rationalizations of purpose, on the one hand, with realities of power, on the other. The result, in the foreign policy analyst Fareed Zakaria's apt summary, has been "the rhetoric of transformation but the reality of accommodation." Even at the height of U.S. power, accommodation meant accepting the ugly fact of a Soviet sphere of influence.

TECTONIC SHIFTS

After nearly half a century of competition, when the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union disappeared, in 1991, the United States was left economically, militarily, and geopolitically dominant. In the first two decades of the post–Cold War era, U.S. defense spending exceeded the defense budgets of the next ten nations combined (five of them U.S. treaty allies). Operationally, that meant that, as Secretary of Defense James Mattis's 2018 National Defense Strategy put it, the United States "enjoyed uncontested or dominant superiority in every operating domain. We could generally deploy our forces when we wanted, assemble them where we wanted, and operate how we wanted." The United States and its allies could welcome new members into NATO, applying to them its Article 5 security guarantee, without thinking about the risks, since the alliance faced no real threat. In that world, strategy in essence consisted of overwhelming challenges with resources.

But that was then. The tectonic shift in the balance of power that occurred in the first two decades of the twenty-first century was as dramatic as any shift the United States has witnessed over an equivalent period in its 244 years. To paraphrase Vaclav Havel, then the president of Czechoslovakia, it has happened so fast, we have not yet had time to be astonished. The U.S. share of global GDP—nearly one-half in 1950—has gone from one-quarter in 1991 to one-seventh today. (Although GDP is not everything, it does form the substructure of power in relations among nations.) And as the United States' relative power has declined, the menu of feasible options for policymakers has shrunk. Consider, for example, the U.S. response to China's Belt and Road Initiative. With currency reserves of almost $3 trillion, China can invest $1.3 trillion in infrastructure linking most of Eurasia to a China-centered order. When Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the United

Influencers: Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin at the Yalta conference, 1945

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

States would increase its own investments in the Indo-Pacific in response, he was able to come up with just $113 million in new investments.

China has, of course, been the chief beneficiary of this transformation. In the past generation, its GDP has soared: from 20 percent of the U.S. level in 1991 to 120 percent today (measured by purchasing power parity, the metric that both the CIA and the International Monetary Fund use to compare national economies). Although China faces many internal challenges, there are more reasons to expect this basic economic trend to continue than to bet that it will

stop soon. With four times as many citizens as the United States, and if Chinese workers become as productive as Portuguese workers are today (that is, around half as productive as Americans), China will see its GDP rise to double that of the United States.

In Asia, the economic balance of power has tilted especially dramatically in China's favor. As the world's largest exporter and second-largest importer, China is the top trading partner of every other major East Asian country, including U.S. allies. (And as an aggressive practitioner of economic statecraft, Beijing does not hesitate to use the leverage this provides, squeezing countries such as the Philippines and South Korea when they resist Chinese demands.) Globally, China is also rapidly becoming a peer competitor of the United States in advanced technologies. Today, of the 20 largest information technology companies, nine are Chinese. Four years ago, when Google, the global leader in artificial intelligence (AI), the most significant advanced technology, assessed its competition, Chinese companies ranked alongside European companies. Now, that state of affairs is barely visible in the rearview mirror: Chinese companies lead in many areas of applied AI, including surveillance, facial and voice recognition, and financial technology.

China's military spending and capabilities have surged, as well. A quarter century ago, its defense budget was one-25th that of the United States; now, it is one-third and on a path to parity. And whereas the U.S. defense budget is spread across global commitments, many of them in Europe and the Middle East, China's budget is focused on East Asia. Accordingly, in specific military scenarios involving a conflict over Taiwan or in the South China Sea, China may have already taken the lead. Short of actual war, the best tests of relative military capabilities are war games. In 2019, Robert Work, a former U.S. deputy secretary of defense, and David Ochmanek, one of the Defense Department's key defense planners, offered a public summary of the results from a series of classified recent war games. Their bottom line, in Ochmanek's words: "When we fight Russia and China, 'blue' [the United States] gets its ass handed to it." As *The New York Times* summarized, "In 18 of the last 18 Pentagon war games involving China in the Taiwan Strait, the U.S. lost."

Russia is a different matter. Whatever President Vladimir Putin might want, Russia will never again be his father's Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union dissolved, the resulting Russian state was left with less than half the GDP and half the population and saw its borders rolled back to the days before Catherine the Great. Yet Russia remains a nuclear superpower with an arsenal that is functionally equivalent to that of the United States; it has a defense industry that produces weapons the world is eager to buy (as India and Turkey have demonstrated in the past year); and it boasts military forces that can fight and win—as they have demonstrated repeatedly in Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria. On a continent where most of the other nations imagine that war has become obsolete, and maintain military forces more for ceremonial than combat operations, military prowess may now be Russia's major comparative advantage.

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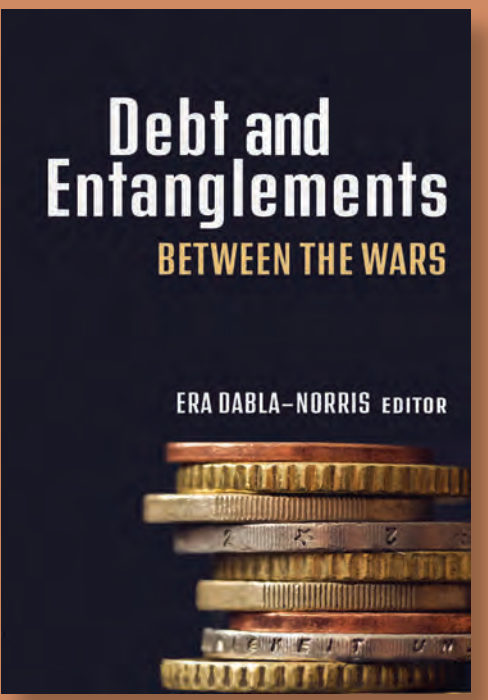

With contributions by Thomas Sargent, Martin Ellison, George Hall, Harold James, and Andrew Scott

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"Debt and Entanglements *provides a fascinating history of sovereign debt management during the interwar period – a period characterized by dramatic economic and political instability. The authors masterfully blend new data, deep institutional knowledge and modern economic theory to sharpen our understanding of this critical period and to draw timeless lessons for economic policymaking. A must-read for scholars and policymakers alike."*

—Mario Draghi, Former head of ECB

"Debt and Entanglements Between the Wars *weaves together a masterful set of essays. While the narratives are primarily about the interwar era, these are rich in parallels and implications for modern times in which many of the world's largest economies face the challenges posed by slowing growth and rising debts. Anyone who is interested in gaining insights on how these challenges may play out would do well to consult the book."*

—Carmen Reinhart, Harvard University, author of *This Time is Different*

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

BACK TO BASICS

The claim that spheres of influence had been consigned to the dustbin of history assumed that other nations would simply take their assigned places in a U.S.-led order. In retrospect, that assumption seems worse than naive. Yet because many U.S. analysts and policymakers still cling to images of China and Russia formed during this bygone era, their views about what the United States should and should not do continues to reflect a world that has vanished.

Over the course of centuries of geopolitical competition, policymakers and theorists developed a set of core concepts to help clarify the complexities of relations among states, including spheres of influence, balances of power, and alliances. These concepts must be adapted to take account of specific conditions in the twenty-first century. Yet they remain the sturdiest building blocks available for understanding and constructing international order.

Where the equilibrium of forces between one state and another shifts to the point where the first becomes predominant, the resulting new balance of power casts a shadow that becomes, in effect, a "sphere of influence." That specific term entered the vocabulary of diplomacy in the early nineteenth century, but the concept is as old as international relations itself. (As Thucydides noted, after the defeat of the Persians in the fifth century BC, Sparta demanded that Athens not rebuild the walls around its city-state to leave itself vulnerable.) Traditionally, great powers have demanded a degree of deference from lesser powers on their borders and in adjacent seas, and they have expected other great powers to respect that fact. Recent actions by China and Russia in their respective neighborhoods are just the most recent examples of that tradition.

Spheres of influence also extend beyond geography. When the United States led the world in the creation of the Internet, and the hardware and software that empowered it, the United States enjoyed what Michael Hayden, a former director of the National Security Agency, later called a "golden age of electronic surveillance." Since most countries were unaware of the surveillance capabilities revealed by the former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, the United States had an unparalleled ability to exploit technology to listen to, track, and even influence them. But post-Snowden, many states are resisting the current U.S. campaign to prevent them from buying their 5G wireless infrastructure from the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei. As the leader of a country currently considering the choice recently put it, Washington is trying to persuade other countries not to buy Chinese hardware because it will make it easier for China to spy and instead to buy American hardware, which would make it easier for the United States to spy.

A REALISTIC RECKONING

From the perspective of American interests and values, the consequences of increases in China's and Russia's power relative to that of the United States are not good. As great powers, China and Russia can use their power to suppress protesters' freedom in Hong Kong or block Ukrainian membership in NATO. The South China Sea is likely to become more like the Caribbean than the Mediterranean—that is, China's neighbors in Southeast Asia will be as beholden to

China as Latin Americans have been to their hemispheric hegemon. Ukraine will have to get over the loss of Crimea as countries in Russia's "near abroad" learn to be both more fearful of and more deferential to the Kremlin.

For many other nations and individuals around the world who have found shelter under the American security umbrella and found inspiration in a vision of an American-led international order that safeguards core liberties, the consequences will be tragic. Recent events in Syria offer a preview of what's to come. As the Arab Spring erupted in late 2010 and 2011, Obama famously declared that Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad "must go." But Putin had other ideas, and he was willing to act on them. He demonstrated that a nation Obama had dismissed as a "regional power" could use its military forces to defy the United States and help the Syrian leader consolidate his control.

This has been a horror for Syrians, and the millions of displaced people have had a major impact on neighboring countries and Europe. But did Obama, or, later, President Donald Trump, conclude that this outcome was so costly that it would be better to send large numbers of U.S. troops to fight and perhaps die in Syria? Can Americans sleep soundly in a world in which Putin and Assad now smile when they ask visitors who is gone and who is still standing? U.S. inaction speaks for itself.

Sadly, Americans will come to accept such outcomes as good enough—at least for the foreseeable future. Like Assad's atrocities, Russia's absorption of Crimea and China's militarization of the South China Sea are now facts on the ground that no one will contest militarily.

Acknowledging that other powers have spheres of influence does not, of course, mean that the United States can do nothing. It is a reflection of the recent overmilitarization of U.S. foreign policy that restraint in the use of military force is often equated with acquiescence. Washington has other ways in which it can shape other countries' calculations of costs and benefits: through the condemnation of unacceptable actions; the denial of legal status; the imposition of economic sanctions on countries, companies, and individuals; and support for local resisters. But such tools can rarely decisively alter a decision another power has made when interests it sees as vital are at stake. And it is worth remembering how often a refusal to recognize and accept realities on the ground in the shadow of other powers has led to major U.S. policy failures. From General Douglas MacArthur's rush to the Chinese border during the Korean War (which triggered Chinese intervention and a bloody, inconclusive war) to George W. Bush's insistence that NATO offer membership to Georgia and Ukraine (which led to Georgian overconfidence, ending in the country's partial dismemberment by Russia), a stubborn disregard of brute facts has been counterproductive.

THE MUSEUM OF RETIRED INTERESTS

When it comes to doing what it can, Washington should focus above all on its alliances and partnerships. If China is destined to be "the biggest player in the history of the world," as the longtime Singaporean leader Lee Kuan Yew once claimed, the United States must work to assemble allied

powers who together will constitute a correlation of forces to which China will have to adjust.

This logic is most evident in the economic arena. Before the Trump administration ended U.S. participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, that trade agreement promised to bring together countries accounting for 40 percent of global GDP under a common set of rules on everything from tariffs to state-owned enterprises to labor and environmental standards—providing a counterweight to Chinese economic might that could have made Beijing a rule-taker rather than a rule-maker. Thanks to the efforts of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the TPP is now a reality—but without the United States. If American policymakers could find a way to allow strategic interests to trump politics, the United States could rejoin the TPP. If that new TPP were combined with the parallel trade agreement between the United States and the European Union that was being negotiated at the end of the Obama administration, nearly 70 percent of the world's GDP could be on one side of the balance, versus China's approximately 20 percent on the other.

In the military arena, the same logic applies, but with more complexity. Washington will need partners—but partners that bring more in assets than they introduce in risks. Unfortunately, few of the United States' current allies meet this standard. The U.S. alliance system should be subjected to a zero-based analysis: every current ally and partner, from Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand to Latvia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, should be considered in terms of what it is doing to enhance U.S. security and well-being, and with what risks and costs. Alliances are not forever. Historically, when conditions have changed, particularly when a focal enemy has disappeared or balances of power have shifted dramatically, so, too, have other relationships among nations. Most Americans today have forgotten an era in which NATO had a counterpart in Asia, SEATO (the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), and even an analogue in the Middle East, CENTO (the Central Treaty Organization); both of those are now artifacts in the museum of retired national interests. As Kennan noted, "There is more respect to be won . . . by a resolute and courageous liquidation of unsound positions than by the most stubborn pursuit of extravagant or unpromising objectives."

To understand the risks entailed in the inheritance of current U.S. alliances, consider two scenarios U.S. defense planners worry about today. If, watching China's suppression of protests in Hong Kong, Taiwan should make a dramatic move toward independence that leads China to react violently, would the United States go to war with China to preserve Taiwan's status? Should it? On the European front, if in response to an uprising of ethnic Russian workers in Riga's shipyards, the Latvian government cracked down on ethnic Russians and sparked Russia's annexation of a swath of Latvia—Crimea 2.0—would NATO launch an immediate military response, in accordance with its Article 5 guarantee? Should it? If the answer to any of those questions is not a straightforward yes—and it is not—then the time has come for an alliance-focused version of the stress tests for banks used after the 2008 financial crisis.

Such an approach is all the more important given the realities of nuclear weapons in this new world. Both China and Russia have reliable second-strike nuclear capabilities—that is, the ability to withstand an initial nuclear attack and conduct a retaliatory strike that could destroy the United States. Accordingly, not only is nuclear war not a viable option; even a conventional war that could escalate to nuclear war risks catastrophe. Competition must thus be tempered by caution, constraints, and careful calculations in risk taking. For a nation that has accumulated a long list of entanglements with nations that may have, or may imagine they have, a blank check from Washington, this creates a big problem. The line between reassuring an ally and emboldening its leadership to act recklessly is a fine one.

If the balance of military power in a conventional war over Taiwan or the Baltics has shifted decisively in China's and Russia's favor, current U.S. commitments are not sustainable. The gap between those commitments and the United States' actual military capabilities is a classic case of overstretch. What a zero-based assessment would mean for the current alliance system, and for U.S. relations with each of more than 50 treaty allies and partners, should emerge as a result of an analysis of the evidence. But it would likely lead the United States to shed some allies, double down on others whose assets are as important for U.S. security as U.S. assets are for them, and radically revise the terms of each commitment to make obligations and restraints as prominent as reassurances and guarantees.

This process would also enhance the credibility of the commitments that the United States chose to renew. While

the veterans of the Cold War rightly claim that NATO has been the greatest alliance in the history of the world, neither Trump nor Obama before him was convinced. Tellingly, American military commanders doubted that the North Atlantic Council would authorize a military response to the Russian annexation of Crimea or that the U.S. government would be able to make a decision about how to respond before the event was over. Rethinking the United States' commitments to its allies would enhance American security and make these same pacts stronger.

PRESENT AT THE (RE-)CREATION

Strategy is the purposeful alignment of means and ends. Among the many ways in which a strategy fails, the two most common are mismatch—when the means an actor can organize and sustain are insufficient to achieve the stated ends—and vision blindness, when an actor is mesmerized by an ideal but unachievable end. The United States' twenty-first-century wars in the Middle East offer vivid examples of both.

Going forward, U.S. policymakers will have to abandon unattainable aspirations for the worlds they dreamed of and accept the fact that spheres of influence will remain a central feature of geopolitics. That acceptance will inevitably be a protracted, confusing, and wrenching process. Yet it could also bring a wave of strategic creativity—an opportunity for nothing less than a fundamental rethinking of the conceptual arsenal of U.S. national security.

The basic view of the United States' role in the world held by most of today's foreign-policy makers was imprinted in the quarter century that followed the U.S. victory in the Cold War. That world is now gone. The consequences are as profound as those that Americans confronted in the late 1940s. Accordingly, it is worth remembering how long it took individuals now revered as "wise men" to understand the world they faced. Nearly five years passed between Kennan's "Long Telegram," an early warning of Cold War competition, and the policy paper NSC-68, which finally laid out a comprehensive strategy. The confusion that reigns in the U.S. foreign policy community today should thus not be a cause for alarm. If it took the great strategists of the Cold War nearly five years to forge a basic approach, it would be beyond hubris to expect this generation to do better.

Reality Check

American Power in an Age of Constraints

Jennifer Lind and Daryl G. Press

For the past three decades, as the United States stood at the pinnacle of global power, U.S. leaders framed their foreign policy around a single question: What should the United States seek to achieve in the world? Buoyed by their victory in the Cold War and freed of powerful adversaries abroad, successive U.S. administrations forged an ambitious agenda: spreading liberalism and Western influence around the world, integrating China into the global economy, and transforming the politics of the Middle East.

In setting these goals, Washington did, to some extent, factor in external constraints, such as the potential objections of important regional powers around the world. But for the most part, foreign policy debates focused on what a given measure might cost or on whether spreading Western institutions was desirable as a matter of principle. The interests of other countries, particularly adversaries, were secondary concerns.

This approach to foreign policy was misguided even at the peak of American power. As the endless wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and Russian interventionism in eastern Europe have shown, adversaries with a fraction of the United States' resources could find ways to resist U.S. efforts and impose high costs in the process. Today, Washington's primacy mindset—its disregard for the core interests of potential adversaries—is even more counterproductive. With China on the rise, Russia defiant, and the United States' liberal international coalition weakened from within, Washington faces a much more constrained environment. A foreign policy that neglects that fact will stymie cooperation and set the United States on a collision course with its rivals.

To avoid that outcome, U.S. foreign policy must adapt both in substance and in mindset. In the coming decades, the essential question will be a new one: What global aims can the country pursue that its allies can support and that its geopolitical rivals can accept? Taking this approach will open up possibilities for compromise with Beijing and Moscow and will help establish mutually acceptable, if imperfect, equilibriums around the globe.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF PRIMACY

To understand where U.S. foreign policy went wrong, compare the two pivotal moments when the United States reached the pinnacle of world power: once at the end of World War II and again at the end of the Cold War. In 1945, the country's economic and military might was unmatched. The United States had emerged from the war as the only major power to have avoided both large-scale bombing and the occupation of its mainland. The country had lost an estimated 0.3 percent of its population in the war—compared with four percent for Japan,

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nine percent for Germany, and a staggering 14 percent for the Soviet Union. The U.S. economy accounted for nearly half of total world economic output. And of course, the United States was the only country that possessed the atomic bomb.

Given the United States' dominant position, several American voices called for a muscular foreign policy to roll back Soviet influence and communist regimes in eastern Europe. But ultimately, U.S. leaders adopted a more restrained strategy: to help reestablish democracy and markets in western Europe, protect those countries from Soviet expansion, and limit Soviet influence around the globe. In the interest of preventing a war, that strategy, which came to be known as "containment," sought to avoid steps that the Soviet Union would deem unacceptable, such as the elimination of communist buffer states in eastern Europe.

Containment was neither modest nor meek. During the brief postwar period of primacy and the decades of bipolarity that followed, the United States and its allies spread their influence and battled communism all over the world, often excessively, engaging in covert actions and bloody wars. Critically, however, the strategy respected core Soviet national interests, especially communist control of what the Soviets viewed as their "near abroad." In the prescient vision of the diplomat George Kennan, the architect of containment, the United States would defeat Moscow by allowing the Soviet system to collapse from its own internal rot.

The second U.S. experience with primacy played out differently. When the Soviet Union dissolved, the United States had the world's largest economy, the most powerful military, and a roster of allies that included the world's richest, most technologically advanced countries. At this unipolar moment, a few voices argued for a strategy of restraint, calling on the United States to husband its economic resources, focus on domestic challenges, and avoid stumbling into new conflicts. But Washington, unconstrained by the lack of any peer competitor, rejected this approach. Russia was on its knees; China was weak. And potential opponents of liberalism and free markets were chasing a dead-end cause. The "end of history" had arrived.

American leaders chose to promote the U.S.-led liberal international order. In concert with its allies, Washington steadily expanded core Western institutions, above all NATO and the European Union, into eastern Europe. As they did so, Washington and its partners debated the appropriate speed of expansion and the political and economic criteria that entrants into their order should meet. But they paid little heed to Russian concerns about Western encroachment, despite earlier pledges to the contrary. Russia, wrote the journalist Julia Ioffe, had become "a place to be mocked rather than feared": not a great power any longer but "Upper Volta with missiles." And after the 9/11 attacks, Washington embarked on a project not merely to destroy al Qaeda but also to transform the Middle East. Afghanistan and Iraq were just the first two targets; the goal was broader: regime change in Iran, Syria, and elsewhere.

Even at the peak of American power, it was unwise to disregard the core interests of potential adversaries. But 30 years after the end of the Cold War, Washington's relative power has dramatically declined.

SPUTNIK PHOTO AGENCY

Here's to great power: Chinese President Xi Jinping and Putin in Tajikistan, June 2019

In Russia and China, the United States now faces two emboldened rivals willing to push against what they see as American overreach. To make matters worse, a fierce populist backlash rejecting core tenets of the liberal international order has roiled both the United States and Europe. As a result, the unified and powerful bloc of Western democracies that once amplified U.S. influence across the globe has fractured, leaving Washington without a crucial source of support in its competition with great-power rivals. And as Washington's global influence wanes, the costs of the primacy mindset are rising.

GETTING REAL WITH RUSSIA

One source of geopolitical change is Russia. The country is in many ways an unlikely impediment to U.S. primacy. It is neither a thriving society nor a rising power. On the contrary, it is a country with an aging, shrinking population; it is rife with corruption; and it is almost totally reliant on oil revenues—hardly markers of innovation and growth. And yet Moscow has found clever and effective ways to push back against an international order that Russian President Vladimir Putin correctly views as hostile to his country's interests. Through wars against Georgia and Ukraine, Russia has managed to not only halt those countries' movements toward integration with the U.S.-backed order but also create divisions between Washington and its European allies. And by spreading disinformation via government-funded media outlets and bankrolling extremist European parties, Russia has exploited vulnerabilities in the open political systems of its adversaries and has sown polarization and division within their electorates.

As a result, Washington and Moscow are now locked in a dangerous cycle of escalation. The United States

and Europe continue to expand their political and military influence into Russia's near abroad. (Bosnia, Georgia, North Macedonia, and Ukraine all are queuing up for entry into NATO, for example.) Russia, in turn, has launched covert military interventions in Ukraine, carried out dramatic assassination attempts in the United Kingdom, and conducted political interference campaigns across the West.

To de-escalate this conflict, the two sides should strike a bargain: Western nonexpansion for Russian noninterference. The West would cease any further enlargement of NATO and the EU in eastern Europe. In return, Russia would agree to cease its campaign of domestic political interference. (The degree of U.S. government interference in Russia's domestic politics is unclear, but Washington would also need to disavow such methods.)

Whatever the specifics of the deal, its goal would be mutual accommodation. Let the Russians come forth and list whatever they see as the most egregious Western encroachments on their interests—perhaps it is indeed the expansion of NATO and the EU, perhaps some other policy. Western governments can do the same, and the two sides can negotiate with the goal of removing the worst irritants. Such an understanding, even if it leaves both sides dissatisfied on the margins, would offer a clear path forward.

Critics might object that such a deal would be unenforceable given the difficulty, in an age of disinformation, of proving who carried out what political operation against whom. But during the Cold War, the two sides managed this problem and established rules of the game to limit each side's espionage and covert actions against the other. If one side determined that the other had gone too far, it would retaliate, after which things would go back to normal. There is no reason why Washington and Moscow could not manage the same today. Nor would such an agreement require much trust, which is clearly lacking on both sides. Were Moscow to continue its policy of domestic political interference, Washington could initiate programs to destabilize Russia's own domestic politics. Authoritarian regimes, always afraid of rivals at home, are at least as vulnerable to such outside interference as democracies are. And if the West reneges on its promises, Moscow can retaliate by ramping up its own information war.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle to achieving such an agreement—even an informal one—is the reluctance of U.S. foreign policy leaders to acknowledge that Russia has valid national security interests in eastern Europe. But ignoring Russia's concerns will not make them disappear. "It is totally unrealistic to think that the West can gain desired Russian restraint and cooperation," wrote the former U.S. diplomat Leslie Gelb in 2015, "without dealing with Moscow as a great power that possesses real and legitimate interests."

A DEAL FOR CHINA

U.S. primacy has also come under strain from a rising China. In 1990, the country was a geopolitical afterthought: its economy was only six percent of the size of the U.S. economy; today, that figure is 63 percent. (Considering purchasing power parity adjustments to GDP, China has already surpassed the

United States economically.) More important, China's fast economic growth—which even after slowing down is nearly triple the rate of U.S. growth—means that unless some political catastrophe befalls China, the country will be the economic juggernaut of the twenty-first century.

China has also become a regional military power. Beijing has transformed the bloated, technologically backward military it fielded in 1990 into one with sophisticated capabilities for the types of missions that Chinese leaders care about most: coercing Taiwan and hindering U.S. military movements in East Asian waters. Deng Xiaoping, China's leader in the 1980s, famously counseled his country to "hide your strength, bide your time." Today, the country is done with hiding and biding. Instead, it has extended its reach in Asia by building two aircraft carriers, constructing and then militarizing artificial islands in the South China Sea, and securing access to military bases across Asia and the Indian Ocean. As a result, China is on its way to becoming a peer competitor in a region where U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military power went unrivaled not long ago.

U.S. foreign policy was relatively mindful of Beijing's core interests even before China's rise. In deference to Beijing's claims of sovereignty over Taiwan, the Nixon administration ended the U.S. alliance with the Republic of China (Taiwan), officially recognized that there was only "one China," and normalized relations with Beijing. That policy was undermined by pushback from Congress and by continued U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, which the Chinese say violate U.S.-Chinese bilateral agreements. Still, the "one China" policy has been the cornerstone of cooperative relations with Beijing from the last decades of the Cold War to the present.

Several other aspects of U.S. policy, however, antagonize Beijing. The United States' policy of economic engagement with China, often cast as a benign effort to welcome the country into the global trade regime, also has a transformative logic. Its proponents have talked openly about their hopes that the policy would force China to reform its illiberal institutions, reduce its human rights violations, and create a new, wealthy elite that would reject the Chinese Communist Party's grasp on power. Chinese observers have correctly considered a U.S. strategy endowed with such hopes to be a soft form of regime change.

The Chinese are also wary of U.S. alliances in the region, fearing that Washington's decision to maintain Cold War alliances in Asia after 1990 was aimed at containing China. Resenting U.S. military dominance, the Chinese have seethed when U.S. military vessels have crossed into Chinese waters and airspace, or when the United States sailed two aircraft carriers through the Taiwan Strait in 1995, at a time of heightened tension between Taiwan and the mainland. More recently, as the United States has strengthened political and military ties with countries along the region's major trade routes and along China's borders (notably India and Vietnam), Chinese leaders have complained of encirclement.

Today, however, China can do much more than complain. As part of a sweeping overseas influence campaign, Beijing has interfered in the domestic politics of other countries (Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, for example), used eco-

nomic pressure to punish countries that it deems hostile to China, and built the capabilities needed to challenge U.S. military superiority in East Asia. In an era in which U.S. political, economic, and military dominance in the region has declined, avoiding conflict and cooperating with Beijing will require respect for its core concerns. The two countries share many interests, regionally and globally. They both want a denuclearized North Korea and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The same goes for addressing climate change, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and numerous other global problems. Washington and Beijing can make headway on such issues together, or they can have a hostile relationship. They cannot do both.

In a post-primacy era, U.S. leaders should ask what they can realistically achieve without poisoning U.S.-Chinese relations. Of course, the United States wants China to democratize and respect the human rights of its people. It also wants to see the Taiwan question resolved in a way that grants peace and autonomy to that thriving democratic society. But pushing for those goals would directly challenge core interests of the Chinese Communist Party. Doing so would stymie bilateral cooperation, threaten the United States' relationship with partners in the region (who want to maintain stable relations with China), and risk war.

A deal with Beijing would center on a few central issues. One is the future of American alliances in the region. The United States' relationships in East Asia are an important source of U.S. political and military power, so it would be unwise for Washington to sacrifice them for a rapprochement with China. But the United States can refrain from adding new allies and military partners, in particular along China's borders. Establishing such relationships would ignore Beijing's concerns in the same way Washington disregarded Moscow's by extending NATO into the Baltics. And in Asia, the United States would be poking the eye of a rising, not a declining, power.

In exchange for these concessions, Washington could require Beijing to respect the status quo in Taiwan and in other territorial disputes. Out of concern for human rights and for geopolitical reasons, the United States does not want the Taiwan issue settled forcibly, nor does it want the region's several island or border disputes to lead to violence that could spiral into a wider war. If Beijing were to agree but later stray from its commitments, Washington could use force if appropriate (for example, to defend its allies) or covertly intervene in Chinese domestic politics, calibrating its response based on the severity of China's transgressions.

China may well be open to a deal of this kind. Chinese leaders routinely emphasize the need to avoid conflict with the United States and say they welcome a U.S. presence in the region, so long as the United States does not seek to contain China. Beijing also understands that U.S. disengagement would likely cause Japan to increase its military power and adopt a more assertive security policy—something China would prefer to avoid.

Détente with Washington would be the more prudent path for Beijing, because its leaders face pressing domestic problems, such as corruption, environmental degradation, and an insufficient social safety net. But China is a rising

power flush with pride in its achievements and brimming with a sense of righteousness from the regime's narrative about past national humiliations. Although the country has good reasons to take a deal, there is no guarantee that it will.

BACK TO NORMAL

The challenges to American primacy do not end with its great-power rivals. U.S. power has also weakened from within. In the United States and among several of its core allies, large parts of the public have lost confidence in the liberal project that long animated Western foreign policy. The disillusion is in part a reaction to the twin forces of economic globalization and automation, which have decimated employment in manufacturing in the developed world. It is also reflected in growing opposition to immigration, which contributed to the United Kingdom's vote to leave the EU, the rise of chauvinist parties across Europe, and the election of Donald Trump in the United States. In his 2017 inaugural address, Trump lamented the "American carnage" that he asserted the former presidents and assorted officials sitting in the gallery behind him had caused. Their policies, he said, had "enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry" and benefited other countries even as the United States' own wealth, strength, and confidence had crumbled.

Trump's political ascent, his disdain for U.S. allies, and his administration's controversial policies—on matters such as trade, Syria, and Iran, for example—have all dismayed longtime U.S. partners. Doubts about the United States' reliability as a military ally have grown. And allies across Asia and Europe, keen to maintain valuable economic relationships with China, have demurred to Washington's more confrontational approach toward Beijing. With its voters overwhelmed by the burden of global leadership and its alliances fraying, the United States lacks the domestic and coalitional unity necessary to pursue a confrontational and costly foreign policy.

Some may dispute that so much has really changed. After all, many measures of national power (GDP per capita, total defense spending, and the metrics of economic innovation, to name just a few) suggest that the United States remains a geopolitical titan. And many people hope that perhaps after a brief dalliance with reckless chauvinism, democratic peoples around the world will decide they prefer the old, safer order.

But this optimism is misguided. Opponents of the U.S.-led order around the world have discovered that they can resist U.S. influence even if they lag far behind the United States in aggregate power. Recall that the Soviet Union competed with the United States for more than four decades without ever having the equivalent of more than 40 percent of U.S. GDP. China already vastly exceeds that threshold. The United States' great-power rivals have the added advantage of being able to apply their military and political resources close to home, whereas Washington must spread its capabilities across the world if it is to maintain its current status. Nor will the domestic backlash against the liberal order subside quickly. Even if voters decide to reject the most extreme and incompetent populist standard-bearers, the sources of their dissatisfaction will remain, and more effective leaders will arise to give voice to it.

Together, those shifts leave the United States little option but to adapt. For roughly 25 years, the United States' all-surpassing power allowed the country to take a vacation from geopolitics. That Zeitgeist was captured by a senior adviser in the George W. Bush administration who, in a 2004 conversation with the writer Ron Suskind, scoffed at what he called "the reality-based community" for its judicious policy analyses of pros and cons. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," the official said. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality."

Because no other country had the power to mount a powerful resistance, U.S. leaders felt free to reimagine reality largely unconstrained by the objections of those who opposed the global liberal project. Scholars will debate the wisdom of the path they took—some arguing that, on balance, the United States' project of liberal hegemony achieved many of its goals, others saying that the country squandered its power and expedited a return to multipolarity. Yet whatever the verdict, it is clear today that the United States' geopolitical vacation is over and that a major course correction is due.

To some, such a change may feel like a traumatic revision, but it would in fact be a return to normalcy. For almost all countries throughout history, the essence of foreign policy has been to pursue pressing national interests in a world of constraints and competing powers. Indeed, this was the mindset of U.S. leaders during the Cold War, when they settled on a policy to compete intensely with the Soviet Union around the globe but to defer to its core interests near its borders. At the time, hawks disparaged containment as too accommodating or immoral. Now, Americans venerate containment as brilliant statecraft.

If the United States wants to avoid war and cooperate on matters of shared interests with powerful countries, its leaders need to shed the primacy mindset and combine their laudable ambition and creativity with a pragmatism appropriate to an era of great-power competition. The question is no longer what the United States wants to achieve. It is rather what the United States can achieve that an increasingly fractured coalition can support and that its rivals can live with.

Learning to Live With Despots

The Limits of Democracy Promotion

Stephen D. Krasner

Throughout its history, the United States has oscillated between two foreign policies. One aims to remake other countries in the American image. The other regards the rest of the world as essentially beyond repair. According to the second vision, Washington should demonstrate the benefits of consolidated democracy—free and fair elections, a free press, the rule of law, the separation of powers, and an active civil society—but not seek to impose those things on other countries. The George W. Bush administration took the first approach. The Obama administration took the second, as has the Trump administration, choosing to avoid actively trying to promote freedom and democracy in other countries.

Both strategies are, however, deeply flawed. The conceit that the United States can turn all countries into consolidated democracies has been disproved over and over again, from Vietnam to Afghanistan to Iraq. The view that Washington should offer a shining example but nothing more fails to appreciate the dangers of the contemporary world, in which groups and individuals with few resources can kill thousands or even hundreds of thousands of Americans. The United States cannot fix the world's problems, but nor does it have the luxury of ignoring them.

Washington should take a third course, adopting a foreign policy that keeps the country safe by working with the rulers the world has, not the ones the United States wishes it had. That means adopting policies abroad that can improve other states' security, boost their economic growth, and strengthen their ability to deliver some services while nevertheless accommodating a despotic ruler. For the purposes of U.S. security, it matters more that leaders in the rest of the world govern well than it does that they govern democratically. And in any case, helping ensure that others govern well—or at least well enough—may be the best that U.S. foreign policy can hope to achieve in most countries.

THE WAY WE LIVED THEN

Homo sapiens has been around for about 8,000 generations, and for most of that time, life has been rather unpleasant. Life expectancy began to increase around 1850, just seven generations ago, and accelerated only after 1900. Prior to that point, the average person lived for around 30 years (although high infant mortality explained much of this figure); today, life expectancy is in the high 70s or above for wealthy countries and approaching 70 or more for many poor ones. In the past, women—rich and poor alike—frequently died in childbirth.

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Pandemic diseases, such as the Black Death, which wiped out more than one-third of Europe's population in the fourteenth century, were common. In the Western Hemisphere, European colonists brought diseases that devastated indigenous populations. Until the nineteenth century, no country had the rule of law; at best, countries had rule by law, in which formal laws applied only to some. For most people, regardless of their social rank, violence was endemic. Only in the last century or two has per capita income grown significantly. Most humans who have ever lived have done so under despotic regimes.

Most still do. Consolidated democracy, in which the arbitrary power of the state is constrained and almost all residents have access to the rule of law, is a recent and unique development. The experience of people living in wealthy industrialized democracies since the end of World War II, with lives relatively free of violence, is the exception. Wealthy democratic states have existed for only a short period of history, perhaps 150 years, and in only a few places in the world—western Europe, North America, Australasia, and parts of Asia. Even today, only about 30 countries are wealthy, consolidated democracies. Perhaps another 20 might someday make the leap, but most will remain in some form of despotism.

The United States cannot change that, despite the hopes of policymakers who served in the Bush administration and scholars such as the political scientist Larry Diamond. Last year, Diamond, reflecting on his decades of studying democratization all over the world, wrote that "even people who resented America for its wealth, its global power, its arrogance, and its use of military force nevertheless expressed a grudging admiration for the vitality of its democracy." Those people hoped, he wrote, that "the United States would support their cause." The trouble is that, regardless of such hopes, despotic leaders do not want to provide benefits to those they govern; they want to support with arms or money those who can keep them in power. They will not accept policies that aim to end their rule. What's more, organizing against a despot is dangerous and unusual. Revolutions are rare. Despots usually stay in power.

Yet although the United States cannot build wealthy democracies abroad, it cannot ignore the problems of the rest of the world, either, contrary to what Americans have been told by people such as U.S. President Donald Trump, who in his first speech after he was elected said, "There is no global anthem, no global currency, no certificate of global citizenship. We pledge allegiance to one flag, and that flag is the American flag. From now on, it's going to be America first, OK? America first. We're going to put ourselves first."

The trouble with wanting to withdraw and focus on home is that, like it or not, globalization has indeed shrunk the world, and technology has severed the relationship between material resources and the ability to do harm. A few individuals in badly governed and impoverished states control enough nuclear and biological weapons to kill millions of Americans. And nuclear weapons are spreading. Pakistan has sold nuclear technology to North Korea; the North Koreans might one day sell it to somebody else. Nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of jihadi groups. Pandemic diseases can arise naturally in badly governed states and

No James Madison: President Jair Bolsonaro in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, July 2019

PILAR OLIVARES / REUTERS

could spread to the developed world, killing millions. The technology needed to create artificial pathogens is becoming more widely available. For these reasons, the United States has to play a role in the outside world, whether it wants to or not, in order to lower the chances of the worst possible outcomes.

And because despots are here for the foreseeable future, Washington will always have to deal with them. That will mean promoting not good government but good enough governance. Good government is based on a Western ideal in which the government delivers a wide variety of services to the population based on the rule of law, with laws determined by representatives selected through free and fair elections. Good government is relatively free of corruption and provides reliable security for all citizens. But pushing for elections often results only in bloodshed, with no clear improvement in governance. Trying to eliminate corruption entirely may preclude eliminating the worst forms of corruption. And greater security may mean more violations of individual rights. Good government is not in the interests of the elites in most countries the United States wants to change, where rulers will reject or undermine reforms that could weaken their hold on power.

A foreign policy with more limited aims, by contrast, might actually achieve more. Greater security, some economic growth, and the better provision of some services is the best the United States can hope for in most countries. Achieving good enough governance is feasible, would protect U.S. interests, and would not preclude progress toward greater democracy down the road.

Policies aiming for good enough governance have already succeeded. The best example comes from Colombia,

where for the past two decades, the United States has sought to curb violence and drug trafficking by providing financial aid, security training, military technology, and intelligence under what was known until 2016 as Plan Colombia (now Peace Colombia). The results have been remarkable. Between 2002 and 2008, homicides in Colombia dropped by 45 percent. Between 2002 and 2012, kidnappings dropped by 90 percent. Since the turn of the century, Colombia has improved its scores on a number of governance measures, including control of corruption, the rule of law, government effectiveness, and government accountability. That progress culminated in 2016 with a peace deal between the government and the guerilla movement the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).

Yet despite Plan Colombia's success, it has not transformed the country. Violence has declined, but Colombia is not yet on the path to becoming a consolidated democracy. A narrow elite still dominates the country. Colombia's high economic inequality has not budged. Elections matter, but they serve mostly to transfer power from one segment of the ruling class to another.

Colombia's elites accepted intrusive U.S. assistance not because they were committed to making the country a consolidated democracy but because, by the 1990s, violence in Colombia had reached such an extreme level that the country was near collapse. Without U.S. help, the elites would not have been able to maintain their position. Plan Colombia provides both a model for U.S. intervention elsewhere and a sobering reminder of the limits of change that can be brought from the outside.

THE SWEET SPOT

American naiveté about the likelihood of creating wealthy democratic states has been based on a widely held view of development and democracy known as "modernization theory." This theory holds that wealth and democracy can be attained relatively easily. All that is necessary are population growth and technological progress. Greater wealth begets greater democracy, which in turn begets greater wealth. If countries can find the first step of the escalator, they can ride it all the way to the top. Yet modernization theory has a conspicuous failure: it cannot explain why consolidated democracy has emerged only very recently, only in a small number of countries, and only in certain geographic areas.

U.S. leaders have also been influenced by a second perspective on development, one that emphasizes institutional capacity. They have usually assumed that rulers in poorly governed states want to do the right thing but fail because their governments do not have the capacity to govern well, not because the rulers want to stay in power. But theories that stress institutional capacity fall at the first hurdle: they cannot explain why leaders in most countries would want to act in the best interests of their populations rather than in their own best interests.

U.S. leaders would be more successful if they adopted a third theory of development: rational choice institutionalism. This theory emphasizes the importance of elites and stresses that only under certain conditions will they be willing to tie their own hands and adopt policies that benefit the population as a whole.

The sweet spot, in which the government is strong enough to provide key services but does not repress its people,

has been achieved by only a few polities. As James Madison wrote in *The Federalist Papers*, no. 51, "In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself." No wiser words on government have ever been written.

Rational choice institutionalism makes it clear that wealth and democracy are not the natural order of things. More wealth and a large middle class may make democracy more likely, but they do not guarantee it. Luck matters, too. If the wind had blown in a different direction in June 1588, the Spanish Armada might have been able to support the Duke of Parma's invasion of England. Queen Elizabeth I would probably have been deposed. Great Britain might never have become the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution or the cradle of liberty. Likewise, in 1940, if the waters of the English Channel had prevented the small boats from rescuing the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk, the British government might have sought peace, and Nazi Germany might have been able to devote all its resources to the defeat of the Soviet Union. The outcome of World War II might have been very different.

Pointing out that outside actors cannot usually create democracy, effective government, and a free-market economy hardly amounts to a revelation. The successes in West Germany, Italy, and Japan after World War II were aberrations made possible by the power of the United States, the delegitimization of fascist governments, and the existence of local members of the elite who saw aligning with Washington as the best of difficult choices. General Douglas MacArthur allied with the emperor of Japan rather than trying him as a war criminal. Hirohito was no democrat. But the alternative, a communist system, was even worse.

There is no teleological trajectory, no natural and inevitable path from extractive, closed states to inclusive, open states. Sustained economic growth and consolidated democracy have eluded most societies. Progress requires aligning the incentives of repressive elites with those of the repressed masses. This has happened rarely and has depended on many factors that cannot be controlled by outside powers.

GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOVERNMENT WORK

The United States can still exert influence on the rest of the world, but it must carefully tailor its strategy to fit the circumstances. There are three main kinds of countries: wealthy, consolidated democracies, countries that are transitional (with a mix of democratic and nondemocratic features), and despotic regimes.

Of the world's wealthy countries, defined as having a per capita annual income greater than $17,000, around 30 are consolidated democracies according to the measures used by the Center for Systemic Peace's Polity Project, which rates the democratic quality of countries on a scale of negative ten to ten. All the consolidated democracies (with the exception of Australia and New Zealand) are in East Asia, Europe, or North America. The United States can best help these countries by working to perfect its own democracy, as well as

strengthening the U.S. alliance system, containing or deterring threats to the U.S.-led order, keeping trade barriers low, and sharing intelligence.

Demonstrating the effectiveness of democracy is not an easy task. The U.S. Constitution is difficult to change. What worked at the end of the eighteenth century does not necessarily work today. The U.S. Senate is growing less democratic as the population ratio between the most populous and the least populous state increases. That ratio was about 13 to 1 (Virginia to Delaware) when the Constitution was written; it is now more than 60 to 1 (California to Wyoming). This means that a small part of the population (less than 20 percent) can frustrate legislation. The Internet has changed political communication. Anyone can publish anything, including groups acting at the direction of foreign entities, which can now influence U.S. politics far more cheaply and easily than in the past. And as digital technology advances, distinguishing between true and false information will only become harder.

Imperfect though American democracy may be, Washington can nevertheless help countries that are in transition. The best chances exist in the 19 countries with per capita annual incomes between $7,000 and $17,000 and Polity scores of six or higher, a group that includes Botswana, Brazil, Croatia, Malaysia, and Panama. The most promising candidates in this group are former satellite states of the Soviet Union, such as Bulgaria and Romania, which have relatively high incomes and levels of education, robust EU development programs, and, in many cases, leaders who want their countries to be a part of Europe.

The key to helping these places reach consolidated democracy is to identify and support the right local leaders. Even democratic elections, after all, can produce leaders with little commitment to democracy, such as Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. And some leaders who have only a limited commitment to democracy can prove to be valuable partners, as Hirohito did in Japan after World War II.

Knowing which leaders are likely to deliver good enough governance—regardless of their commitment to democracy—requires an intimate knowledge of local elites, their beliefs, and their followers. To that end, the U.S. State Department should alter its practice of moving Foreign Service officers from post to post every two or three years and instead institute longer stays so that they can develop a close, deep understanding of the countries to which they are assigned. The department will also need to find ways to allow Foreign Service officers to have greater access to and more influence with top decision-makers.

With luck, the United States, working with other advanced democracies, might succeed in moving some countries toward consolidated democracy and the greater wealth that comes from unleashing individual initiative and constraining the state from seizing its fruits. Most of the world's polities, however, are not going to make the jump to sustained growth or full democracy. In those places, most of which are poor, despots are too anxious to cling to power. Here, too, the most important task is to pick the right leaders to support. First, Washington should ask not whether local elites are committed to democratic values but

whether they can maintain effective security within their borders. The United States should support these leaders with security assistance. Local elites might also accept help from Washington that would result in improvements in public services, especially health care, because better public health might mean more popular support. Finally, rulers in despotic regimes might accept assistance in boosting economic growth, provided that such growth does not threaten their own hold on power.

The question is how to provide such assistance. Outside actors have difficulty suggesting reforms because they have their own interests and only limited knowledge of local conditions. A more realistic approach that can achieve good enough governance would start with a series of practical questions. For example, U.S. policymakers should be asking if the government of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is inclusive and competent enough to establish stability, not whether the general came to power through a coup. If the answer is yes, then the United States should support Egypt's security forces, help strengthen the regime's provision of public health services, and open U.S. markets to at least some Egyptian exports.

Similar considerations should guide U.S. policy elsewhere. For example, Washington should be asking if there are local leaders in Afghanistan and Iraq who could provide stability, regardless of their past sins or how they might have come to power. The United States should acknowledge that there is little it can do to alter the political systems in China and Russia, despotic states with strong central governments. Humanitarian aid is a good thing, but the United States should give it because it helps individuals and not because it will lead to good government.

Washington can succeed only if its policies align with the interests of local rulers; in most cases, those rulers will be despots. Tolerating them and even cooperating with them may be anathema to many Americans. But the alternatives—hubristically trying to remake the world in the image of the United States or pretending that Washington can simply ignore leaders it dislikes—would be even worse.

Getting to Less

The Truth About Defense Spending

Kathleen Hicks

On the question of how much to spend on national defense, as with so much else, Americans are divided. A Gallup poll taken in 2019 found that 25 percent of them think the United States spends too little on its military, 29 percent believe it spends too much, and 43 percent think it is spending about the right amount—a remarkable degree of incoherence for politicians trying to interpret the public's will. President Donald Trump, having campaigned on a promise to "rebuild" the U.S. military, has touted the "billions and billions of dollars more" he has added to the Pentagon's budget each year of his tenure. On the campaign trail, some Democratic candidates are moving in the opposite direction. To free up money for her health-care plan, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts has said she plans to slash defense spending. Likewise, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont has said that in order to "invest in the working families of this country and protect the most vulnerable," the United States should put an end to "massive spending on a bloated military budget."

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Rarely, however, does this debate touch on the real question at the heart of defense spending: what the U.S. military should be doing and should be prepared to do. The closer one looks at the details of military spending, the clearer it becomes that although radical defense cuts would require dangerous shifts in strategy, there are savings to be had. Getting them, however, would require making politically tough choices, embracing innovative thinking, and asking the armed forces to do less than they have in the past. The end result would be a less militarized yet more globally competitive United States.

UP AND DOWN

Since World War II, U.S. defense spending has followed a well-worn pattern of rising during major operations and falling (although never by equal measure) in their aftermath. At the outset of the Korean War, in 1950, military spending grew by a remarkable 290 percent in two years—reaching $692 billion in current dollars and 13 percent of GDP—before declining by 51 percent between 1952 and 1955. During the Vietnam War, it grew again, hitting $605 billion in current dollars and nine percent of GDP in 1968, after which it dropped by 25 percent between then and 1975. But as Cold War tensions rose in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan increased the Pentagon's budget. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it shrank again under Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, with spending falling 34 percent between 1985 and 1997.

Then came 9/11. The wars that followed, in Afghanistan and Iraq, caused defense spending to shoot up again,

reaching almost $820 billion and 4.7 percent of GDP in 2010. Spending kept climbing through the Obama administration's budget for fiscal year 2012, only to run into the budget standoff in Congress and the resultant automatic cuts (or so-called budget sequestration) of 2013. For the next three years, spending fell slightly in accordance with congressional budget caps.

The drop didn't last long. Soon, Russia annexed Crimea, the Islamic State (or ISIS) emerged in Iraq and Syria, and China expanded its campaign of land reclamation in the South China Sea. And so U.S. military spending started rising again, beginning with the budget for fiscal year 2016, the last one enacted under the Obama administration. It increased even more in 2017, after the inauguration of Trump, who had campaigned on the need to build up the military. During his first three years in office, Trump delivered modest annual growth in defense spending, assisted by the newfound willingness of Republicans to raise spending caps and the availability of the Overseas Contingency Operations account—a budget line not subject to congressionally imposed budget caps that was originally created to fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq but is now used for a much broader range of purposes. In fiscal year 2020, the United States is set to spend some $738 billion on defense.

Is that too little, too much, or just right? Looking merely at the numbers is not particularly helpful. On the one hand, defense spending now constitutes a smaller percentage of GDP and federal discretionary spending than at any time since 1962. On the other hand, in inflation-adjusted dollars, the Defense Department is spending almost as much today as it was in 2010, at the height of the combined U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan and Iraq. What is more useful is to look at how the money is spent. Broadly speaking, there are three purposes toward which the funds can be directed: making the military ready for today (readiness), preparing it for tomorrow (investment), and designing and sizing it (structure).

Consider some of the new tasks the U.S. military has taken on to deal with the threat posed by Russia in the wake of its annexation of Crimea. To improve readiness, it has upped the pace of military exercises in eastern Europe and trained new armored forces. In terms of investment, it has increased the research, development, and procurement of short-range missile and air defense systems. As for structure, it has deployed more forces in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states.

The challenge of how to apportion resources plays out across a wide array of U.S. interests, including nuclear deterrence, counterterrorism, and the assurance of the free flow of commerce in the Pacific Ocean. Currently, spending is split almost equally among those three categories. Clearly defined priorities make it easier to accept tradeoffs between various missions and time frames, but finding the perfect balance is always difficult. Doing that involves the tricky business of predicting global and domestic trends—including the desires of future policymakers.

THE WRONG WAY TO CUT

Making the right strategic choices can go a long way toward getting the most out of the defense budget, but it is also crucial that the Pentagon execute those

choices in an efficient manner. In practice, however, efforts to wring out savings from efficiency have tended to fall flat. Too often, policymakers have harbored outsize expectations, achieved short-lived results, and dodged politically difficult choices.

One common error has been the temptation to reach for the easiest, rather than the smartest, cuts—to slash the budget items that can be reduced quickly and without much of a political fight. A good example of this is research and development. Compared with procurement, R & D is relatively easy to cut fast: whereas halting production of a major weapons system can threaten thousands of jobs, shutting down a program at an earlier stage of development generally threatens far fewer. Yet R & D is the lifeblood of future capabilities, and cuts made today have consequences a decade down the line, when the military could be forced to forgo its advantage or play an expensive game of catch-up. Another go-to cost-saving strategy is to defer spending on scheduled maintenance and keep ships, planes, and other equipment in the field longer. Again, the effects are felt years later, this time in the form of higher accident rates and fewer combat-ready units. Poor maintenance partly explains why the Marine Corps saw aviation accidents rise by 80 percent between 2013 and 2017 and why in the fall of 2019 every single one of the U.S. Navy's six East Coast–based aircraft carriers was sitting in dry dock.

Another error has been the reflexive tendency to concentrate on reducing staff at headquarters. As in the corporate world, cutting overhead can signal resolve, by showing that the leadership is willing to absorb some of the pain from budget cuts. Indeed, during both the Clinton and the Obama administrations, the Defense Department undertook major efforts to increase efficiency by reducing management staffing across the department, especially the jobs of federal civilian employees, and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper has sought to do the same. But the savings achieved from such efforts are usually far less than projected. Predictably, for example, even though Congress directed the Defense Department to cut $10 billion through administrative efficiencies between 2015 and 2019, the Pentagon failed to substantiate that it had achieved those savings. The reason these efforts rarely succeed is that they merely shift the work being done by civilians to others, such as military personnel or defense contractors. It is especially foolish, then, to count on those imagined savings while planning future budgets, as the Pentagon typically does.

Yet another error is to assume away missions despite strong evidence that they will remain relevant. Perhaps the most egregious example of this was the George W. Bush administration's failure to plan for the occupation of Iraq. From the beginning of that war, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld resisted calls from the U.S. Army to ready more troops for a stabilization mission, resulting in chaos in the country and untold human, financial, and strategic costs. After a four-year delay, Rumsfeld was forced out, and the Pentagon and the White House ultimately reversed his approach with the 2007 U.S. troop surge. For the defense strategist or budgeter, it can be tempting to believe that today's problems will

The price is right: the USS John F. Kennedy *in Virginia, October 2019*

ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

fade, or that tomorrow's problems will magically solve themselves, but history suggests otherwise.

Policymakers also make the mistake of avoiding politically challenging cuts. Personnel costs are one of the touchiest targets. Adjusting for inflation, spending per active-duty member of the military grew by more than 60 percent between 1999 and 2019. Part of the rise is attributable to increases in cash compensation, but most has to do with benefits. Over the same period, the costs of military health care alone more than doubled. Yet policymakers have taken only modest steps to check the explosion of personnel costs, failing to slow the growth of military pay or bring insurance copays in line with those in the private health-care market. Any changes in these areas would need to take into account goals about recruiting and retaining capable people, but the status quo leaves much room for improvement.

Closing military installations is another third rail. The Defense Department itself admits that it has 19 percent excess capacity domestically, and by consolidating or closing unneeded facilities, Congress could reap major savings. But legislators, fearful of the political consequences of shutting down bases in their own districts, have declined to do so. It has been 15 years since the last round of closures, and it is long past time for another one, which, after some upfront costs, could save several billion dollars every year. Similarly, politicians have been reluctant to curtail procurement programs that have outlived their usefulness. Doing so could make room for new investments better tailored to future challenges but would carry big political costs: lost jobs, shuttered facilities, and bankrupt defense suppliers. These are not easy

choices, but the pain can be lessened through job-transition programs akin to the ones that have traditionally accompanied base closures.

STRATEGY AND SPENDING

Strategic fallacies have been equally unhelpful in the quest for defense savings. Consider Trump's repeated pledge to bring U.S. troops home. Overseas military spending is a tempting target, since it is politically safer to cut than funds spent at home. But keeping forces stationed on allied soil is often cheaper than moving them to the United States, where their presence is not subsidized by foreign governments and where significant new spending would be needed to house, train, and deploy them.

Or look at Warren's call for "shutting down a slush fund for defense spending"—liquidating the entire Overseas Contingency Operations account and using the freed-up money for nondefense priorities. That proposal is also deeply misguided: the majority of the account covers expenses not directly related to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. It pays for efforts as varied as the stationing of ground and air forces in Europe, naval operations in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and the ability to scramble jets over American cities in the event of an emergency.

Short of full-scale disarmament, the most radical approach to reducing defense spending would be to adopt a truly "America first" national security strategy. One could imagine ways to reap $100 billion or so in defense cuts, which could grow over time. The United States could rely largely on its nuclear deterrent to keep would-be aggressors at bay. It could back out of current treaty commitments, forsaking permanent alliances in favor of temporary coalitions. The military could shed much of its conventional power-projection capability, especially its ground forces, but retain enough for a limited set of missions: securing the means of American commerce, responding to direct attacks as needed, and thwarting terrorists before they attack. It could lay off tens of thousands of military personnel and federal workers.

But it is worth remembering just how radical a departure such a strategy would be. The defense of places such as Alaska, Guam, and Hawaii—far from the continental United States—would be particularly difficult with the military that this strategy would buy. American people and businesses abroad would have to accept that their interests and security would be protected more by the United States' diplomatic and economic power than by its military might. Nuclear proliferation would surely grow, as former allies no longer covered by the U.S. nuclear umbrella, along with foes sensing an American retreat, would seek to build their own nuclear capabilities. And perhaps most important, if the United States changed its mind and decided that it needed to regenerate its military capabilities, it might not be able to do so quickly, and it would almost certainly pay a substantial premium if it tried. Given the strategic price, an "America first" strategy is not a rational choice—and is in no way a bargain.

A DIFFERENT PATH

There is a better way. A wiser strategy, and one more in line with public opinion, would build trust in the United

States' promises and reimagine the United States' role as a leader in solving the most difficult global challenges, even as it accepted that American primacy was not what it used to be. Under this strategy, the United States would nurture, rather than spurn, allies, cultivating a vital—and increasingly imperiled—advantage over China and Russia. Working in concert with like-minded states, Washington would protect the global economy so as to allow private commerce and free people to flourish even in the face of rising authoritarianism. At the same time, U.S. allies would be expected to take primary responsibility for their own defense.

Abroad, the United States would build out its nonmilitary tools of foreign policy, appointing ambassadors and building back up cadres of U.S. diplomats and development workers. At home, it would build up its sources of strength, devoting more resources to education (which, by increasing the pool of qualified candidates, reduces the costs of military recruitment and training), investing in R & D (which generates innovation that benefits the military), and letting in a healthy influx of immigrants with science, technology, engineering, and math skills (which would also promote innovation). The end result would be a lesser burden on the U.S. military—especially for security missions that fall short of war, such as cyber-operations and counterterrorism—and thus reduced defense costs.

Nevertheless, military capabilities still have an important role to play. The United States' armed forces underwrite its economic prosperity and strengthen its alliances. American diplomacy is stronger when it rests on military prowess, which gives credence to both commitments to allies and threats to enemies. To maintain that type of credibility, the United States will need to keep forces deployed overseas, especially in Asia and Europe. It will need to reaffirm its commitment to extended nuclear deterrence for its treaty allies, which has the added benefit of strengthening nonproliferation by reducing their incentives to go nuclear. It will need to contribute to combined efforts to head off threats in the air, the sea, space, and cyberspace. And it will need to retain its counterterrorism and crisis-response capabilities in and around the Middle East, even as it reduces its overall force levels in the region.

This strategy would require reshaping the defense budget. As ever, the military would need to navigate painful tradeoffs among readiness, investment, and structure, since all three types of spending are needed to keep pace with China and Russia. Yet because this strategy envisions a somewhat smaller force, the Pentagon could spend less on structure, which would in turn lessen the pressure on the other two categories. In terms of investment, it could favor long-term priorities over upgrades of current hardware. Spending on readiness would have to be kept high, although the absolute costs would go down since the force would be smaller.

At the same time as they reshaped the overall priorities of defense spending, policymakers could seek to generate the political courage and cultural changes to achieve savings within it. Here, domestic and foreign policy objectives can converge. Lowering overall health-care costs, for instance, also lowers the cost of military health insurance, which is second

only to pay as the biggest driver of growing personnel spending in the military. Investments in education, infrastructure, and programs that help workers transition between jobs have the added benefit of making it easier for politicians to stop protecting manufacturing plants that produce yesterday's equipment and instead invest in capabilities for tomorrow. Strong trade with trusted democracies reduces the costs of supplying the military. Closing and consolidating excess defense installations is perhaps the hardest political hurdle to jump, but Congress could ease the pain by using existing transition-assistance programs to encourage commercial redevelopment in places that stand to lose military facilities.

But to truly achieve enduring capabilities and savings, the military would have to embrace a culture of innovation and experimentation. There are ways to encourage that. The secretary of defense could, for example, create special funds for which the various branches and commands of the military would compete, with the winning ideas getting written into the budget. The Pentagon could also place a premium on agility and foresight when it awarded promotions.

Together, these choices—reshaping overall strategy, pursuing politically difficult efficiency gains, and cultivating innovation—would yield substantial savings. After some upfront investment, the Defense Department could expect to reduce its annual costs by some $20 billion to $30 billion.

WHAT AMERICANS WANT

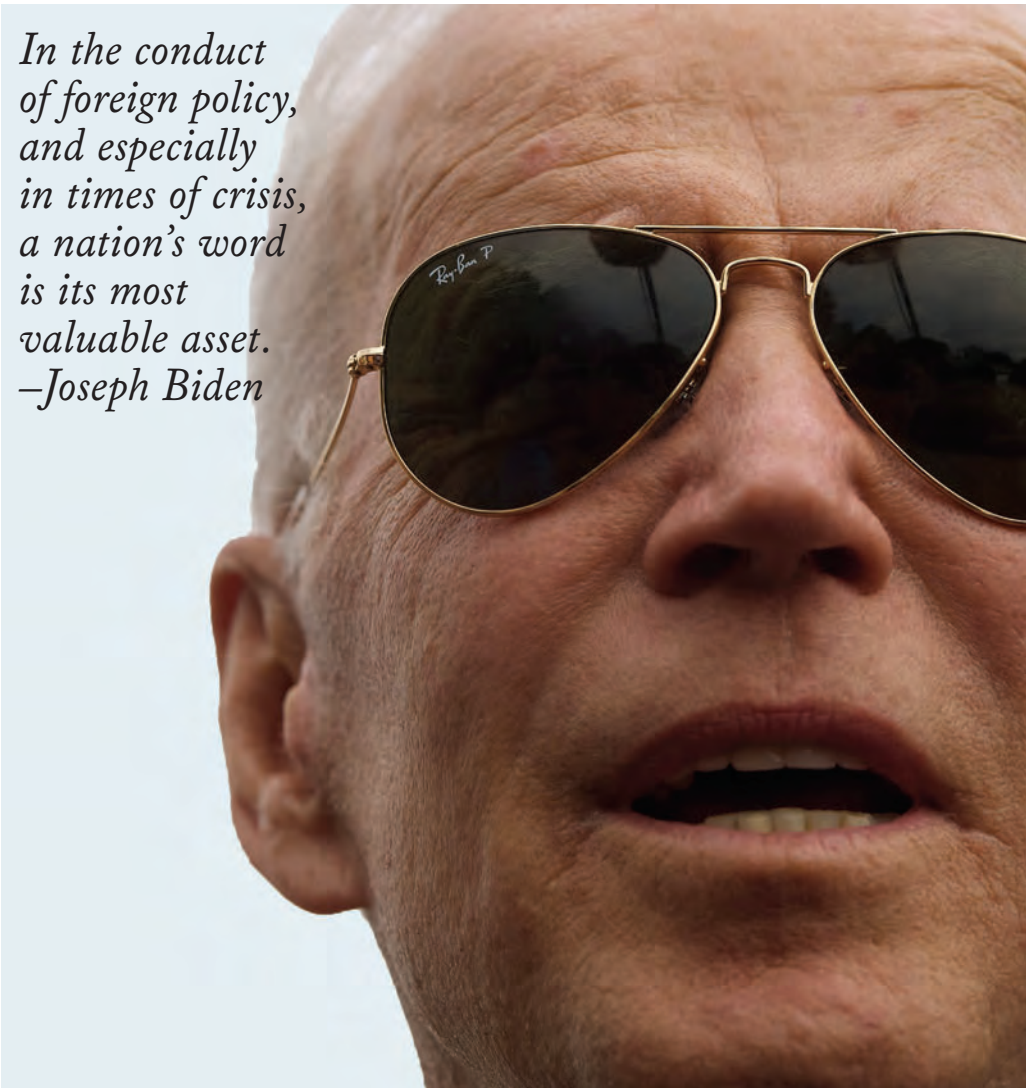
For too long, Washington has had an overly militarized approach to national security. A world in which the United States' primacy is fading calls for a new approach, especially as authoritarian competitors pursue new strategies to hasten the decline of American power. The time is right, then, for a grand strategy that expands the range of foreign policy tools well beyond what defense spending buys.

But for all the savings that can and should be had, it's worth remembering that the least expensive military is small, rarely used, inexpensively housed, and poorly paid. That is not a military that Americans want or need. Poll after poll has shown that a large majority of Americans believe that their prosperity and security are tied to events beyond U.S. borders. Protecting the country from foreign threats and securing U.S. interests abroad will necessarily involve costly military power.

It's also worth remembering that the core of the United States' fiscal challenge is not discretionary spending, such as the budget for defense, but the inability to make up the shortfall between declining tax revenue and the increasing costs of the social safety net and growing interest on the national debt. In other words, the United States may not be able to finance the future it seeks primarily through defense savings. But it can build a better and more efficient defense for its future.

ESSAYS

In the conduct of foreign policy, and especially in times of crisis, a nation's word is its most valuable asset.
–Joseph Biden



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Why America Must Lead Again

Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

By nearly every measure, the credibility and influence of the United States in the world have diminished since President Barack Obama and I left office on January 20, 2017. President Donald Trump has belittled, undermined, and in some cases abandoned U.S. allies and partners. He has turned on our own intelligence professionals, diplomats, and troops. He has emboldened our adversaries and squandered our leverage to contend with national security challenges from North Korea to Iran, from Syria to Afghanistan to Venezuela, with practically nothing to show for it. He has launched ill-advised trade wars, against the United States' friends and foes alike, that are hurting the American middle class. He has abdicated American leadership in mobilizing collective action to meet new threats, especially those unique to this century. Most profoundly, he has turned away from the democratic values that give strength to our nation and unify us as a people.

Meanwhile, the global challenges facing the United States—from climate change and mass migration to technological disruption and infectious diseases—have grown more complex and more urgent, while the rapid advance of authoritarianism, nationalism, and illiberalism has undermined our ability to collectively meet them. Democracies—paralyzed by hyperpartisanship, hobbled by corruption, weighed down by extreme inequality—are having a harder time delivering for their people. Trust in democratic institutions is down. Fear of the Other is up. And the international system that the United States so carefully constructed is coming apart at the seams. Trump and demagogues around the world are leaning into these forces for their own personal and political gain.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR., served as Vice President of the United States from 2009 to 2017 and is a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination.

The next U.S. president will have to address the world as it is in January 2021, and picking up the pieces will be an enormous task. He or she will have to salvage our reputation, rebuild confidence in our leadership, and mobilize our country and our allies to rapidly meet new challenges. There will be no time to lose.

As president, I will take immediate steps to renew U.S. democracy and alliances, protect the United States' economic future, and once more have America lead the world. This is not a moment for fear. This is the time to tap the strength and audacity that took us to victory in two world wars and brought down the Iron Curtain.

The triumph of democracy and liberalism over fascism and autocracy created the free world. But this contest does not just define our past. It will define our future, as well.

RENEWING DEMOCRACY AT HOME

First and foremost, we must repair and reinvigorate our own democracy, even as we strengthen the coalition of democracies that stand with us around the world. The United States' ability to be a force for progress in the world and to mobilize collective action starts at home. That is why I will remake our educational system so that a child's opportunity in life isn't determined by his or her zip code or race, reform the criminal justice system to eliminate inequitable disparities and end the epidemic of mass incarceration, restore the Voting Rights Act to ensure that everyone can be heard, and return transparency and accountability to our government.

But democracy is not just the foundation of American society. It is also the wellspring of our power. It strengthens and amplifies our leadership to keep us safe in the world. It is the engine of our ingenuity that drives our economic prosperity. It is the heart of who we are and how we see the world—and how the world sees us. It allows us to self-correct and keep striving to reach our ideals over time.

As a nation, we have to prove to the world that the United States is prepared to lead again—not just with the example of our power but also with the power of our example. To that end, as president, I will take decisive steps to renew our core values. I will immediately reverse the Trump administration's cruel and senseless policies that separate parents from their children at our border; end Trump's detrimental asylum policies; terminate the travel ban; order a review of Temporary Protected Status, for vulnerable populations;

and set our annual refugee admissions at 125,000, and seek to raise it over time, commensurate with our responsibility and our values. I will reaffirm the ban on torture and restore greater transparency in U.S. military operations, including policies instituted during the Obama-Biden administration to reduce civilian casualties. I will restore a government-wide focus on lifting up women and girls around the world. And I will ensure that the White House is once again the great defender—not the chief assailant—of the core pillars and institutions of our democratic values, from respecting freedom of the press, to protecting and securing the sacred right to vote, to upholding judicial independence. These changes are just a start, a day-one down payment on our commitment to living up to democratic values at home.

As a nation, we have to prove to the world that the United States is prepared to lead again.

I will enforce U.S. laws without targeting particular communities, violating due process, or tearing apart families, as Trump has done. I will secure our borders while ensuring the dignity of migrants and upholding their legal right to seek asylum. I have released plans that outline these policies in detail and describe how the United States will focus on the root causes driving immigrants to our southwestern border. As vice president, I secured bipartisan support for a $750 million aid program to back up commitments from the leaders of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to take on the corruption, violence, and endemic poverty driving people to leave their homes there. Security improved and migration flows began to decrease in countries such as El Salvador. As president, I will build on that initiative with a comprehensive four-year, $4 billion regional strategy that requires countries to contribute their own resources and undertake significant, concrete, verifiable reforms.

I will also take steps to tackle the self-dealing, conflicts of interest, dark money, and rank corruption that are serving narrow, private, or foreign agendas and undermining our democracy. That starts by fighting for a constitutional amendment to completely eliminate private dollars from federal elections. In addition, I will propose a law to strengthen prohibitions on foreign nationals or governments trying to influence U.S. federal, state, or local elections and direct a new independent agency—the Commission on

Federal Ethics—to ensure vigorous and unified enforcement of this and other anticorruption laws. The lack of transparency in our campaign finance system, combined with extensive foreign money laundering, creates a significant vulnerability. We need to close the loopholes that corrupt our democracy.

Having taken these essential steps to reinforce the democratic foundation of the United States and inspire action in others, I will invite my fellow democratic leaders around the world to put strengthening democracy back on the global agenda. Today, democracy is under more pressure than at any time since the 1930s. Freedom House has reported that of the 41 countries consistently ranked "free" from 1985 to 2005, 22 have registered net declines in freedom over the last five years.

From Hong Kong to Sudan, Chile to Lebanon, citizens are once more reminding us of the common yearning for honest governance and the universal abhorrence of corruption. An insidious pandemic, corruption is fueling oppression, corroding human dignity, and equipping authoritarian leaders with a powerful tool to divide and weaken democracies across the world. Yet when the world's democracies look to the United States to stand for the values that unite the country—to truly lead the free world—Trump seems to be on the other team, taking the word of autocrats while showing disdain for democrats. By presiding over the most corrupt administration in modern American history, he has given license to kleptocrats everywhere.

During my first year in office, the United States will organize and host a global Summit for Democracy to renew the spirit and shared purpose of the nations of the free world. It will bring together the world's democracies to strengthen our democratic institutions, honestly confront nations that are backsliding, and forge a common agenda. Building on the successful model instituted during the Obama-Biden administration with the Nuclear Security Summit, the United States will prioritize results by galvanizing significant new country commitments in three areas: fighting corruption, defending against authoritarianism, and advancing human rights in their own nations and abroad. As a summit commitment of the United States, I will issue a presidential policy directive that establishes combating corruption as a core national security interest and democratic responsibility, and I will lead efforts internationally to bring transparency to the global financial system, go after illicit tax

havens, seize stolen assets, and make it more difficult for leaders who steal from their people to hide behind anonymous front companies.

The Summit for Democracy will also include civil society organizations from around the world that stand on the frontlines in defense of democracy. And the summit members will issue a call to action for the private sector, including technology companies and social media giants, which must recognize their responsibilities and overwhelming interest in preserving democratic societies and protecting free speech. At the same time, free speech cannot serve as a license for technology and social media companies to facilitate the spread of malicious lies. Those companies must act to ensure that their tools and platforms are not empowering the surveillance state, gutting privacy, facilitating repression in China and elsewhere, spreading hate and misinformation, spurring people to violence, or remaining susceptible to other misuse.

A FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

Second, my administration will equip Americans to succeed in the global economy—with a foreign policy for the middle class. To win the competition for the future against China or anyone else, the United States must sharpen its innovative edge and unite the economic might of democracies around the world to counter abusive economic practices and reduce inequality.

Economic security is national security. Our trade policy has to start at home, by strengthening our greatest asset—our middle class—and making sure that everyone can share in the success of the country, no matter one's race, gender, zip code, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. That will require enormous investments in our infrastructure—broadband, highways, rail, the energy grid, smart cities—and in education. We must give every student the skills necessary to obtain a good twenty-first-century job; make sure every single American has access to quality, affordable health care; raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour; and lead the clean economy revolution to create ten million good new jobs—including union jobs—in the United States.

I will make investment in research and development a cornerstone of my presidency, so that the United States is leading the charge in innovation. There is no reason we should be falling behind China or anyone else when it comes to clean energy, quantum com-

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puting, artificial intelligence, 5G, high-speed rail, or the race to end cancer as we know it. We have the greatest research universities in the world. We have a strong tradition of the rule of law. And most important, we have an extraordinary population of workers and innovators who have never let our country down.

A foreign policy for the middle class will also work to make sure the rules of the international economy are not rigged against the United States—because when American businesses compete on a fair playing field, they win. I believe in fair trade. More than 95 percent of the world's population lives beyond our borders—we want to tap those markets. We need to be able to build the very best in the United States and sell the very best around the world. That means taking down trade barriers that penalize Americans and resisting a dangerous global slide toward protectionism. That's what happened a century ago, after World War I—and it exacerbated the Great Depression and helped lead to World War II.

The wrong thing to do is to put our heads in the sand and say no more trade deals. Countries will trade with or without the United States. The question is, Who writes the rules that govern trade? Who will make sure they protect workers, the environment, transparency, and middle-class wages? The United States, not China, should be leading that effort.

As president, I will not enter into any new trade agreements until we have invested in Americans and equipped them to succeed in the global economy. And I will not negotiate new deals without having labor and environmental leaders at the table in a meaningful way and without including strong enforcement provisions to hold our partners to the deals they sign.

China represents a special challenge. I have spent many hours with its leaders, and I understand what we are up against. China is playing the long game by extending its global reach, promoting its own political model, and investing in the technologies of the future. Meanwhile, Trump has designated imports from the United States' closest allies—from Canada to the European Union—as national security threats in order to impose damaging and reckless tariffs. By cutting us off from the economic clout of our partners, Trump has kneecapped our country's capacity to take on the real economic threat.

The United States does need to get tough with China. If China has its way, it will keep robbing the United States and American companies of their technology and intellectual property. It will also keep using

subsidies to give its state-owned enterprises an unfair advantage—and a leg up on dominating the technologies and industries of the future.

The most effective way to meet that challenge is to build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China's abusive behaviors and human rights violations, even as we seek to cooperate with Beijing on issues where our interests converge, such as climate change, nonproliferation, and global health security. On its own, the United States represents about a quarter of global GDP. When we join together with fellow democracies, our strength more than doubles. China can't afford to ignore more than half the global economy. That gives us substantial leverage to shape the rules of the road on everything from the environment to labor, trade, technology, and transparency, so they continue to reflect democratic interests and values.

BACK AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE

The Biden foreign policy agenda will place the United States back at the head of the table, in a position to work with its allies and partners to mobilize collective action on global threats. The world does not organize itself. For 70 years, the United States, under Democratic and Republican presidents, played a leading role in writing the rules, forging the agreements, and animating the institutions that guide relations among nations and advance collective security and prosperity—until Trump. If we continue his abdication of that responsibility, then one of two things will happen: either someone else will take the United States' place, but not in a way that advances our interests and values, or no one will, and chaos will ensue. Either way, that's not good for America.

American leadership is not infallible; we have made missteps and mistakes. Too often, we have relied solely on the might of our military instead of drawing on our full array of strengths. Trump's disastrous foreign policy record reminds us every day of the dangers of an unbalanced and incoherent approach, and one that defunds and denigrates the role of diplomacy.

I will never hesitate to protect the American people, including, when necessary, by using force. Of all the roles a president of the United States must fill, none is more consequential than that of commander in chief. The United States has the strongest military in the world, and as president, I will ensure it stays that way, making the investments necessary to equip our troops for the challenges of this

century, not the last one. But the use of force should be the last resort, not the first. It should be used only to defend U.S. vital interests, when the objective is clear and achievable, and with the informed consent of the American people.

It is past time to end the forever wars, which have cost the United States untold blood and treasure. As I have long argued, we should bring the vast majority of our troops home from the wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East and narrowly define our mission as defeating al Qaeda and the Islamic State (or ISIS). We should also end our support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. We must maintain our focus on counterterrorism, around the world and at home, but staying entrenched in unwinnable conflicts drains our capacity to lead on other issues that require our attention, and it prevents us from rebuilding the other instruments of American power.

Diplomacy should be the first instrument of American power.

We can be strong and smart at the same time. There is a big difference between large-scale, open-ended deployments of tens of thousands of American combat troops, which must end, and using a few hundred Special Forces soldiers and intelligence assets to support local partners against a common enemy. Those smaller-scale missions are sustainable militarily, economically, and politically, and they advance the national interest.

Yet diplomacy should be the first instrument of American power. I am proud of what American diplomacy achieved during the Obama-Biden administration, from driving global efforts to bring the Paris climate agreement into force, to leading the international response to end the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, to securing the landmark multilateral deal to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Diplomacy is not just a series of handshakes and photo ops. It is building and tending relationships and working to identify areas of common interest while managing points of conflict. It requires discipline, a coherent policymaking process, and a team of experienced and empowered professionals. As president, I will elevate diplomacy as the United States' principal tool of foreign policy. I will reinvest in the diplomatic corps, which this administration has hollowed out, and put U.S. diplomacy back in the hands of genuine professionals.

Diplomacy also requires credibility, and Trump has shattered ours. In the conduct of foreign policy, and especially in times of

crisis, a nation's word is its most valuable asset. By pulling out of treaty after treaty, reneging on policy after policy, walking away from U.S. responsibilities, and lying about matters big and small, Trump has bankrupted the United States' word in the world.

He has also alienated the United States from the very democratic allies it needs most. He has taken a battering ram to the NATO alliance, treating it like an American-run protection racket. Our allies should do their fair share, which is why I'm proud of the commitments the Obama-Biden administration negotiated to ensure that NATO members increase their defense spending (a move Trump now claims credit for). But the alliance transcends dollars and cents; the United States' commitment is sacred, not transactional. NATO is at the very heart of the United States' national security, and it is the bulwark of the liberal democratic ideal—an alliance of values, which makes it far more durable, reliable, and powerful than partnerships built by coercion or cash.

As president, I will do more than just restore our historic partnerships; I will lead the effort to reimagine them for the world we face today. The Kremlin fears a strong NATO, the most effective political-military alliance in modern history. To counter Russian aggression, we must keep the alliance's military capabilities sharp while also expanding its capacity to take on nontraditional threats, such as weaponized corruption, disinformation, and cybertheft. We must impose real costs on Russia for its violations of international norms and stand with Russian civil society, which has bravely stood up time and again against President Vladimir Putin's kleptocratic authoritarian system.

Working cooperatively with other nations that share our values and goals does not make the United States a chump. It makes us more secure and more successful. We amplify our own strength, extend our presence around the globe, and magnify our impact while sharing global responsibilities with willing partners. We need to fortify our collective capabilities with democratic friends beyond North America and Europe by reinvesting in our treaty alliances with Australia, Japan, and South Korea and deepening partnerships from India to Indonesia to advance shared values in a region that will determine the United States' future. We need to sustain our ironclad commitment to Israel's security. And we need to do more to integrate our friends in Latin America and Africa into the broader network of democracies and to seize opportunities for cooperation in those regions.

In order to regain the confidence of the world, we are going to have to prove that the United States says what it means and means what it says. This is especially important when it comes to the challenges that will define our time: climate change, the renewed threat of nuclear war, and disruptive technology.

The United States must lead the world to take on the existential threat we face—climate change. If we don't get this right, nothing else will matter. I will make massive, urgent investments at home that put the United States on track to have a clean energy economy with net-zero emissions by 2050. Equally important, because the United States creates only 15 percent of global emissions, I will leverage our economic and moral authority to push the world to determined action. I will rejoin the Paris climate agreement on day one of a Biden administration and then convene a summit of the world's major carbon emitters, rallying nations to raise their ambitions and push progress further and faster. We will lock in enforceable commitments that will reduce emissions in global shipping and aviation, and we will pursue strong measures to make sure other nations can't undercut the United States economically as we meet our own commitments. That includes insisting that China—the world's largest emitter of carbon—stop subsidizing coal exports and outsourcing pollution to other countries by financing billions of dollars' worth of dirty fossil fuel energy projects through its Belt and Road Initiative.

On nonproliferation and nuclear security, the United States cannot be a credible voice while it is abandoning the deals it negotiated. From Iran to North Korea, Russia to Saudi Arabia, Trump has made the prospect of nuclear proliferation, a new nuclear arms race, and even the use of nuclear weapons more likely. As president, I will renew our commitment to arms control for a new era. The historic Iran nuclear deal that the Obama-Biden administration negotiated blocked Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. Yet Trump rashly cast the deal aside, prompting Iran to restart its nuclear program and become more provocative, raising the risk of another disastrous war in the region. I'm under no illusions about the Iranian regime, which has engaged in destabilizing behavior across the Middle East, brutally cracked down on protesters at home, and unjustly detained Americans. But there is a smart way to counter the threat that Iran poses to our interests and a self-defeating way—and Trump has chosen the latter. The recent killing of Qasem Soleimani, the com-

mander of Iran's Quds Force, removed a dangerous actor but also raised the prospect of an ever-escalating cycle of violence in the region, and it has prompted Tehran to jettison the nuclear limits established under the nuclear deal. Tehran must return to strict compliance with the deal. If it does so, I would rejoin the agreement and use our renewed commitment to diplomacy to work with our allies to strengthen and extend it, while more effectively pushing back against Iran's other destabilizing activities.

The United States cannot be a credible voice while it is abandoning the deals it negotiated.

With North Korea, I will empower our negotiators and jumpstart a sustained, coordinated campaign with our allies and others, including China, to advance our shared objective of a denuclearized North Korea. I will also pursue an extension of the New START treaty, an anchor of strategic stability between the United States and Russia, and use that as a foundation for new arms control arrangements. And I will take other steps to demonstrate our commitment to reducing the role of nuclear weapons. As I said in 2017, I believe that the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack. As president, I will work to put that belief into practice, in consultation with the U.S. military and U.S. allies.

When it comes to technologies of the future, such as 5G and artificial intelligence, other nations are devoting national resources to dominating their development and determining how they are used. The United States needs to do more to ensure that these technologies are used to promote greater democracy and shared prosperity, not to curb freedom and opportunity at home and abroad. For example, a Biden administration will join together with the United States' democratic allies to develop secure, private-sector-led 5G networks that do not leave any community, rural or low income, behind. As new technologies reshape our economy and society, we must ensure that these engines of progress are bound by laws and ethics, as we have done at previous technological turning points in history, and avoid a race to the bottom, where the rules of the digital age are written by China and Russia. It is time for the United States to lead in forging a technological future that enables democratic societies to thrive and prosperity to be shared broadly.

These are ambitious goals, and none of them can be reached without the United States—flanked by fellow democracies—leading the way. We are facing adversaries, both externally and internally, hoping to exploit the fissures in our society, undermine our democracy, break up our alliances, and bring about the return of an international system where might determines right. The answer to this threat is more openness, not less: more friendships, more cooperation, more alliances, more democracy.

PREPARED TO LEAD

Putin wants to tell himself, and anyone else he can dupe into believing him, that the liberal idea is "obsolete." But he does so because he is afraid of its power. No army on earth can match the way the electric idea of liberty passes freely from person to person, jumps borders, transcends languages and cultures, and supercharges communities of ordinary citizens into activists and organizers and change agents.

We must once more harness that power and rally the free world to meet the challenges facing the world today. It falls to the United States to lead the way. No other nation has that capacity. No other nation is built on that idea. We have to champion liberty and democracy, reclaim our credibility, and look with unrelenting optimism and determination toward our future.

How the Good War Went Bad

America's Slow-Motion Failure in Afghanistan

Carter Malkasian

The United States has been fighting a war in Afghanistan for over 18 years. More than 2,300 U.S. military personnel have lost their lives there; more than 20,000 others have been wounded. At least half a million Afghans—government forces, Taliban fighters, and civilians—have been killed or wounded. Washington has spent close to $1 trillion on the war. Although the al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is dead and no major attack on the U.S. homeland has been carried out by a terrorist group based in Afghanistan since 9/11, the United States has been unable to end the violence or hand off the war to the Afghan authorities, and the Afghan government cannot survive without U.S. military backing.

At the end of 2019, *The Washington Post* published a series titled "The Afghanistan Papers," a collection of U.S. government documents that included notes of interviews conducted by the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction. In those interviews, numerous U.S. officials conceded that they had long seen the war as unwinnable. Polls have found that a majority of Americans now view the war as a failure. Every U.S. president since 2001 has sought to reach a point in Afghanistan when the violence would be sufficiently low or the Afghan government strong enough to allow U.S. military forces to withdraw without significantly increasing the risk of a resurgent terrorist threat. That day has not come. In that sense, whatever the future brings, for 18 years the United States has been unable to prevail.

CARTER MALKASIAN is the author of *War Comes to Garmser: Thirty Years of Conflict on the Afghan Frontier.* From 2015 to 2019, he was Senior Adviser to U.S. General Joseph Dunford, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The obstacles to success in Afghanistan were daunting: widespread corruption, intense grievances, Pakistani meddling, and deep-rooted resistance to foreign occupation. Yet there were also fleeting opportunities to find peace, or at least a more sustainable, less costly, and less violent stalemate. American leaders failed to grasp those chances, thanks to unjustified overconfidence following U.S. military victories and thanks to their fear of being held responsible if terrorists based in Afghanistan once again attacked the United States. Above all, officials in Washington clung too long to their preconceived notions of how the war would play out and neglected opportunities and options that did not fit their biases. Winning in Afghanistan was always going to be difficult. Avoidable errors made it impossible.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF A LONG WAR

On October 7, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush launched an invasion of Afghanistan in retaliation for the 9/11 attacks. In the months that followed, U.S. and allied forces and their partners in the Northern Alliance, an Afghan faction, chased out al Qaeda and upended the Taliban regime. Bin Laden fled to Pakistan; the leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, went to the mountains. Taliban commanders and fighters returned to their homes or escaped to safe havens in Pakistan. Skillful diplomatic efforts spearheaded by a U.S. special envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, established a process that created a new Afghan government led by the conciliatory Hamid Karzai.

For the next four years, Afghanistan was deceptively peaceful. The U.S. military deaths during that time represent just a tenth of the total that have occurred during the war. Bush maintained a light U.S. military footprint in the country (around 8,000 troops in 2002, increasing to about 20,000 by the end of 2005) aimed at completing the defeat of al Qaeda and the Taliban and helping set up a new democracy that could prevent terrorists from coming back. The idea was to withdraw eventually, but there was no clear plan for how to make that happen, other than killing or capturing al Qaeda and Taliban leaders. Still, political progress encouraged optimism. In January 2004, an Afghan loya jirga, or grand council, approved a new constitution. Presidential and then parliamentary elections followed. All the while, Karzai strove to bring the country's many factions together.

But in Pakistan, the Taliban were rebuilding. In early 2003, Mullah Omar, still in hiding, sent a voice recording to his subordinates

What, us worry? Karzai and Rumsfeld in Washington, D.C., September 2006

JIM YOUNG / REUTERS

calling on them to reorganize the movement and prepare for a major offensive within a few years. Key Taliban figures founded a leadership council known as the Quetta Shura, after the Pakistani city where they assembled. Training and recruitment moved forward. Cadres infiltrated back into Afghanistan. In Washington, however, the narrative of success continued to hold sway, and Pakistan was still seen as a valuable partner.

Violence increased slowly; then, in February 2006, the Taliban pounced. Thousands of insurgents overran entire districts and surrounded provincial capitals. The Quetta Shura built what amounted to a rival regime. Over the course of the next three years, the Taliban captured most of the country's south and much of its east. U.S. forces and their NATO allies were sucked into heavy fighting. By the end of 2008, U.S. troop levels had risen to over 30,000 without stemming the tide. Yet the overall strategy did not change. Bush remained determined to defeat the Taliban and win what he deemed "a victory for the forces of liberty."

President Barack Obama came into office in January 2009 promising to turn around what many of his advisers and supporters saw as "the good war" in Afghanistan (as opposed to "the bad war" in Iraq,

which they mostly saw as a lost cause). After a protracted debate, he opted to send reinforcements to Afghanistan: 21,000 troops in March and then, more reluctantly, another 30,000 or so in December, putting the total number of U.S. troops in the country at close to 100,000. Wary of overinvesting, he limited the goals of this "surge"—modeled on the one that had turned around the U.S. war in Iraq a few years earlier—to removing the terrorist threat to the American homeland. Gone was Bush's intent to defeat the Taliban no matter what, even though the group could not be trusted to stop terrorists from using Afghanistan as a refuge. Instead, the United States would deny al Qaeda a safe haven, reverse the Taliban's momentum, and strengthen the Afghan government and its security forces. The plan was to begin a drawdown of the surge forces in mid-2011 and eventually hand off full responsibility for the country's security to the Afghan government.

The Taliban exemplified an idea—resistance to occupation—that runs deep in Afghan culture.

Over the next three years, the surge stabilized the most important cities and districts, vitalized the Afghan army and police, and rallied support for the government. The threat from al Qaeda fell after the 2011 death of bin Laden at the hands of U.S. special operations forces in Pakistan. Yet the costs of the surge outweighed the gains. Between 2009 and 2012, more than 1,500 U.S. military personnel were killed and over 15,000 were wounded—more American casualties than during the entire rest of the 18-year war. At the height of the surge, the United States was spending approximately $110 billion per year in Afghanistan, roughly 50 percent more than annual U.S. federal spending on education. Obama came to see the war effort as unsustainable. In a series of announcements between 2010 and 2014, he laid out a schedule to draw down U.S. military forces to zero (excluding a small embassy presence) by the end of 2016.

By 2013, more than 350,000 Afghan soldiers and police had been trained, armed, and deployed. Their performance was mixed, marred by corruption and by "insider attacks" carried out on American and allied advisers. Many units depended on U.S. advisers and air support to defeat the Taliban in battle.

By 2015, just 9,800 U.S. troops were left in Afghanistan. As the withdrawal continued, they focused on counterterrorism and on advising and training the Afghans. That fall, the Taliban mounted a

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series of well-planned offensives that became one of the most decisive events of the war. In the province of Kunduz, 500 Taliban fighters routed some 3,000 Afghan soldiers and police and captured a provincial capital for the first time. In Helmand Province, around 1,800 Taliban fighters defeated some 4,500 Afghan soldiers and police and recaptured almost all the ground the group had lost in the surge. "They ran!" cried an angry Omar Jan, the most talented Afghan frontline commander in Helmand, when I spoke to him in early 2016. "Two thousand men. They had everything they needed—numbers, arms, ammunition—and they gave up!" Only last-minute reinforcements from U.S. and Afghan special operations forces saved the provinces.

In battle after battle, numerically superior and well-supplied soldiers and police in intact defensive positions made a collective decision to throw in the towel rather than go another round against the Taliban. Those who did stay to fight often paid dearly for their courage: some 14,000 Afghan soldiers and police were killed in 2015 and 2016. By 2016, the Afghan government, now headed by Ashraf Ghani, was weaker than ever before. The Taliban held more ground than at any time since 2001. In July of that year, Obama suspended the drawdown.

When President Donald Trump took office in January 2017, the war raged on. He initially approved an increase of U.S. forces in Afghanistan to roughly 14,000. Trump disliked the war, however, and, looking for an exit, started negotiations with the Taliban in 2018. Those negotiations have yet to bear fruit, and the level of violence and Afghan casualties rates in 2019 were on par with those of recent years.

THE INSPIRATION GAP

Why did things go wrong? One crucial factor is that the Afghan government and its warlord allies were corrupt and treated Afghans poorly, fomenting grievances and inspiring an insurgency. They stole land, distributed government jobs as patronage, and often tricked U.S. special operations forces into targeting their political rivals. This mistreatment pushed certain tribes into the Taliban's arms, providing the movement with fighters, a support network, and territory from which to attack. The experience of Raees Baghrani, a respected Alizai tribal leader, is typical. In 2005, after a Karzai-backed warlord disarmed him and stole some of his land and that of his tribesmen, Baghrani surrendered the rest of his territory in Helmand to the Taliban. Many others like him felt forced into similar choices.

Washington could have done more to address the corruption and the grievances that Afghans felt under the new regime and the U.S. occupation, such as pushing Karzai to remove the worst-offending officials from their positions, making all forms of U.S. assistance contingent on reforms, and reducing special operations raids and the mistaken targeting of innocent Afghans. That said, the complexity of addressing corruption and grievances should not be underestimated. No comprehensive solution existed that could have denied the Taliban a support base.

Another major factor in the U.S. failure was Pakistan's influence. Pakistan's strategy in Afghanistan has always been shaped in large part by the Indian-Pakistani rivalry. In 2001, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf officially cut off support for the Taliban at the behest of the Bush administration. But he soon feared that India was gaining influence in Afghanistan. In 2004, he reopened assistance to the Taliban, as he later admitted to *The Guardian* in 2015, because Karzai, he alleged, had "helped India stab Pakistan in the back" by allowing anti-Pakistan Tajiks to play a large role in his government and by fostering good relations with India. The Pakistani military funded the Taliban, granted them a safe haven, ran training camps, and advised them on war planning. The critical mass of recruits for the 2006 offensive came from Afghan refugees in Pakistan. A long succession of U.S. leaders tried to change Pakistani policy, all to no avail: it is unlikely that there was anything Washington could have done to convince Pakistan's leaders to take steps that would have risked their influence in Afghanistan.

Underneath these factors, something more fundamental was at play. The Taliban exemplified an idea—an idea that runs deep in Afghan culture, that inspired their fighters, that made them powerful in battle, and that, in the eyes of many Afghans, defines an individual's worth. In simple terms, that idea is resistance to occupation. The very presence of Americans in Afghanistan was an assault on what it meant to be Afghan. It inspired Afghans to defend their honor, their religion, and their homeland. The importance of this cultural factor has been confirmed and reconfirmed by multiple surveys of Taliban fighters since 2007 conducted by a range of researchers.

The Afghan government, tainted by its alignment with foreign occupiers, could not inspire the same devotion. In 2015, a survey of 1,657 police officers in 11 provinces conducted by the Afghan Institute

for Strategic Studies found that only 11 percent of respondents had joined the force specifically to fight the Taliban; most of them had joined to serve their country or to earn a salary, motivations that did not necessarily warrant fighting, much less dying. Many interviewees agreed with the claim that police "rank and file are not convinced that they are fighting for a just cause." There can be little doubt that a far larger percentage of Taliban fighters had joined the group specifically to confront the United States and the Afghans who were cooperating with the Americans.

This asymmetry in commitment explains why, at so many decisive moments, Afghan security forces retreated without putting up much of a fight despite their numerical superiority and their having at least an equal amount of ammunition and supplies. As a Taliban religious scholar from Kandahar told me in January 2019, "The Taliban fight for belief, for *jannat* [heaven] and *ghazi* [killing infidels]. . . . The army and police fight for money. . . . The Taliban are willing to lose their heads to fight. . . . How can the army and police compete with the Taliban?" The Taliban had an edge in inspiration. Many Afghans were willing to kill and be killed on behalf of the Taliban. That made all the difference.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

These powerful factors have kept the United States and the Afghan government from prevailing. But failure was not inevitable. The best opportunities to succeed appeared early on, between 2001 and 2005. The Taliban were in disarray. Popular support for the new Afghan government was relatively high, as was patience with the foreign presence. Unfortunately, U.S. decisions during that time foreclosed paths that might have avoided the years of war that followed.

The first mistake was the Bush administration's decision to exclude the Taliban from the postinvasion political settlement. Senior Taliban leaders tried to negotiate a peace deal with Karzai in December 2001. They were willing to lay down their arms and recognize Karzai as the country's legitimate leader. But U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld shot down the deal—in a press conference, no less. After that, between 2002 and 2004, Taliban leaders continued to reach out to Karzai to ask to be allowed to participate in the political process. Karzai brought up these overtures to U.S. officials only to have the Bush administration respond by banning negotiations with any top Taliban figures. In the end, the new government was established

without the Taliban getting a seat at the table. Whether or not the entire group would have compromised, enough senior leaders were interested that future violence could have been lessened.

After pushing the Taliban back to war, Bush and his team then moved far too slowly in building up the Afghan security forces. After the initial invasion, a year passed before Washington committed to building and funding a small national army of 70,000. Recruitment and training then proceeded haltingly. By 2006, only 26,000 Afghan army soldiers had been trained. So when the Taliban struck back that year, there was little to stop them. In his memoir, Bush concedes the error. "In an attempt to keep the Afghan government from taking on an unsustainable expense," he writes, "we had kept the army too small."

The Bush administration thus missed the two best opportunities to find peace. An inclusive settlement could have won over key Taliban leaders, and capable armed forces could have held off the holdouts. Overconfidence prevented the Bush team from seeing this. The administration presumed that the Taliban had been defeated. Barely two years after the Taliban regime fell, U.S. Central Command labeled the group a "spent force." Rumsfeld announced at a news conference in early 2003: "We clearly have moved from major combat activity to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction activities. . . . The bulk of the country today is permissive; it's secure." In other words, "Mission accomplished."

The ease of the initial invasion in 2001 distorted Washington's perceptions. The administration disregarded arguments by Karzai, Khalilzad, U.S. Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry (then the senior U.S. general in Afghanistan), Ronald Neumann (at the time the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan), and others that the insurgents were staging a comeback. Believing they had already won the war in Afghanistan, Bush and his team turned their attention to Iraq. And although the fiasco in Iraq was not a cause of the failure in Afghanistan, it compounded the errors in U.S. strategy by diverting the scarce time and attention of key decision-makers.

"I DO NOT NEED ADVISERS"

After 2006, the odds of a better outcome narrowed. The reemergence of the Taliban catalyzed further resistance to the occupation. U.S. airstrikes and night raids heightened a sense of oppression among Afghans and triggered in many an obligation to resist. After

the Taliban offensive that year, it is hard to see how any strategy could have resulted in victory for the United States and the Afghan government. Nevertheless, a few points stand out when Washington might have cleared a way to a less bad outcome.

The surge was one of them. In retrospect, the United States would have been better off if it had never surged at all. If his campaign promises obligated some number of reinforcements, Obama still might have deployed fewer troops than he did—perhaps just the initial tranche of 21,000. But General Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, and General David Petraeus, the commander of U.S. Central Command, did not present the president with that kind of option: all their proposals involved further increases in the number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Afghanistan. Both generals believed that escalation was warranted owing to the threat posed by the possible reestablishment of Afghanistan as a safe haven for terrorists. Both had witnessed how a counterinsurgency strategy and unswerving resolve had turned things around in Iraq, and both thought the same could be done in Afghanistan. Their case that something had to be done and their overconfidence in counterinsurgency crowded out the practical alternative of forgoing further reinforcements. Had Obama done less, U.S. casualties and expenses would likely have been far lower and still the conditions would have changed little.

The intention to get out of Afghanistan met reality and blinked.

It is worth noting that the much-criticized 18-month deadline that Obama attached to the surge, although unnecessary, was not itself a major missed opportunity. There is scant evidence to support the charge that if Obama had given no timeline, the Taliban would have been more exhausted by the surge and would have given up or negotiated a settlement.

But Obama did err when it came to placing restrictions on U.S. forces. Prior to 2014, U.S. airstrikes had been used when necessary to strike enemy targets, and commanders took steps to avoid civilian casualties. That year, however, as part of the drawdown process, it was decided that U.S. airstrikes in support of the Afghan army and police would be employed only "in extremis"—when a strategic location or major Afghan formation was in danger of imminent annihilation. The idea was to disentangle U.S. forces from combat and, to a lesser extent,

to reduce civilian casualties. As a result of the change, there was a pronounced reduction in the number of U.S. strikes, even as the Taliban gained strength. Into 2016, U.S. forces carried out an average of 80 airstrikes per month, less than a quarter of the monthly average for 2012. Meanwhile, over 500 airstrikes per month were being conducted in Iraq and Syria against a comparable adversary. "If America just helps with airstrikes and . . . supplies, we can win," pleaded Omar Jan, the frontline commander in Helmand, in 2016. "My weapons are worn from shooting. My ammunition stocks are low. I do not need advisers. I just need someone to call when things are really bad." The decision to use airstrikes only in extremis virtually ensured defeat. Obama had purchased too little insurance on his withdrawal policy. When the unexpected happened, he was unprepared.

Bush had enjoyed the freedom to maneuver in Afghanistan for half his presidency and had still passed up significant opportunities. Facing far greater constraints, Obama had to play the cards he had been dealt. The Afghan government had been formed, violence had returned, and a spirit of resistance had arisen in the Afghan people. Obama's errors derived less from a willful refusal to take advantage of clear opportunities than from oversights and miscalculations made under pressure. They nevertheless had major consequences.

FEAR OF TERROR

Given the high costs and slim benefits of the war, why hasn't the United States simply left Afghanistan? The answer is the combination of terrorism and U.S. electoral politics. In the post-9/11 world, U.S. presidents have had to choose between spending resources in places of very low geostrategic value and accepting some unknown risk of a terrorist attack, worried that voters will never forgive them or their party if they underestimate the threat. Nowhere has that dynamic been more evident than in Afghanistan.

In the early years after the 9/11 attacks, the political atmosphere in the United States was charged with fears of another assault. Throughout 2002, various Gallup polls showed that a majority of Americans believed that another attack on the United States was likely. That is one reason why Bush, after having overseen the initial defeat of al Qaeda and the Taliban, never considered simply declaring victory and bringing the troops home. He has said that an option of "attack, destroy the Taliban, destroy al Qaeda as best we could,

and leave" was never appealing because "that would have created a vacuum [in] which . . . radicalism could become even stronger."

The terrorist threat receded during the first half of Obama's presidency, yet he, too, could not ignore it, and its persistence took the prospect of a full withdrawal from Afghanistan off the table in the run-up to the surge. According to the available evidence, at no point during the debate over the surge did any high-level Obama administration official advocate such a move. One concern was that withdrawing completely would have opened up the administration to intense criticism, possibly disrupting Obama's domestic agenda, which was focused on reviving the U.S. economy after the financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent recession.

Only after the surge and the death of bin Laden did a "zero option" become conceivable. Days after bin Laden was captured and killed, in May 2011, a Gallup poll showed that 59 percent of Americans believed the U.S. mission in Afghanistan had been accomplished. "It is time to focus on nation building here at home," Obama announced in his June 2011 address on the drawdown. Even so, concerns about the ability of the Afghan government to contain the residual terrorist threat defeated proposals, backed by some members of the administration, to fully withdraw more quickly. Then, in 2014, the rise of the Islamic State (or ISIS) in Iraq and Syria and a subsequent string of high-profile terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States made even the original, modest drawdown schedule less strategically and politically feasible. After the setbacks of 2015, the U.S. intelligence community assessed that if the drawdown went forward on schedule, security could deteriorate to the point where terrorist groups could once again establish safe havens in Afghanistan. Confronted with that finding, Obama essentially accepted the advice of his top generals to keep U.S. forces there, provide greater air support to the Afghan army and police, and continue counterterrorism operations in the country. The intention to get out had met reality and blinked.

So far, a similar fate has befallen Trump, the U.S. president with the least patience for the mission in Afghanistan. With Trump agitating for an exit, substantive talks between the Taliban and the United States commenced in 2018. An earlier effort between 2010 and 2013 had failed because the conditions were not ripe: the White House was occupied with other issues, negotiating teams were not in place, and Mullah Omar, the Taliban's leader, was in seclusion—and then died in 2013. By 2019, those obstacles no longer stood in

the way, and Trump was uniquely determined to leave. The result was the closest the United States has come to ending the war.

Khalilzad, once again serving as a special envoy, made quick progress by offering a timeline for the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces in return for the Taliban engaging in negotiations with the Afghan government, reducing violence as the two sides worked toward a comprehensive cease-fire, and not aiding al Qaeda or other terrorist groups. Over the course of nine rounds of talks, the two sides developed a draft agreement. The Taliban representatives in the talks and the group's senior leaders refused to meet all of Khalilzad's conditions. But the initial agreement was a real opportunity for Trump to get the United States out of Afghanistan and still have a chance at peace.

It fell apart. Although Trump toyed with the idea of holding a dramatic summit to announce a deal at Camp David in September 2019, he was torn between his campaign promise to end "endless wars" and the possibility of a resurgent terrorist threat, which could harm him politically. During an interview with Fox News in August, he was distinctly noncommittal about fully withdrawing. "We're going down to 8,600 [troops], and then we'll make a determination from there," he said, adding that a "high intelligence presence" would stay in the country. So when the Taliban drastically escalated their attacks in the run-up to a possible announcement, killing one American soldier and wounding many more, Trump concluded that he was getting a bad deal and called off the negotiations, blasting the Taliban as untrustworthy. Trump, like Obama before him, would not risk a withdrawal that might someday make him vulnerable to the charge of willingly unlocking the terrorist threat. And so yet another chance to end the war slipped away.

The notion that the United States should have just left Afghanistan presumes that a U.S. president was free to pull the plug as he pleased. In reality, getting out was nearly as difficult as prevailing. It was one thing to boldly promise that the United States would leave in the near future. It was quite another to peer over the edge when the moment arrived, see the uncertainties, weigh the political fallout of a terrorist attack, and still take the leap.

EXPECT THE BAD, PREPARE FOR THE WORST

The United States failed in Afghanistan largely because of intractable grievances, Pakistan's meddling, and an intense Afghan commitment to resisting occupiers, and it stayed largely because of unrelenting

terrorist threats and their effect on U.S. electoral politics. There were few chances to prevail and few chances to get out.

In this situation, a better outcome demanded an especially well-managed strategy. Perhaps the most important lesson is the value of forethought: considering a variety of outcomes rather than focusing on the preferred one. U.S. presidents and generals repeatedly saw their plans fall short when what they expected to happen did not: for Bush, when the Taliban turned out not to be defeated; for McChrystal and Petraeus, when the surge proved unsustainable; for Obama, when the terrorist threat returned; for Trump, when the political costs of leaving proved steeper than he had assumed. If U.S. leaders had thought more about the different ways that things could play out, the United States and Afghanistan might have experienced a less costly, less violent war, or even found peace.

This lack of forethought is not disconnected from the revelation in *The Washington Post*'s "Afghanistan Papers" that U.S. leaders misled the American people. A single-minded focus on preferred outcomes had the unhealthy side effect of sidelining inconvenient evidence. In most cases, determined U.S. leaders did this inadvertently, or because they truly believed things were going well. At times, however, evidence of failure was purposefully swept under the rug.

Afghanistan's past may not be its future. Just because the war has been difficult to end does not mean it will go on indefinitely. Last November, Trump reopened talks with the Taliban. A chance exists that Khalilzad will conjure a political settlement. If not, Trump may decide to get out anyway. Trump has committed to reducing force levels to roughly the same number that Obama had in place at the end of his term. Further reductions could be pending. Great-power competition is the rising concern in Washington. With the death last year of ISIS's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the shadow of 9/11 might at last recede, and the specter of terrorism might lose some of its influence on U.S. politics. At the same time, the roiling U.S. confrontation with Iran is a wild card that could alter the nature of the Afghan war, including by re-entrenching the American presence.

But none of that can change the past 18 years. Afghanistan will still be the United States' longest war. Americans can best learn its lessons by studying the missed opportunities that kept the United States from making progress. Ultimately, the war should be understood neither as an avoidable folly nor as an inevitable tragedy but rather as an unresolved dilemma.

The Epidemic of Despair

Will America's Mortality Crisis Spread to the Rest of the World?

Anne Case and Angus Deaton

Since the mid-1990s, the United States has been suffering from an epidemic of "deaths of despair"—a term we coined in 2015 to describe fatalities caused by drug overdose, alcoholic liver disease, or suicide. The inexorable increase in these deaths, together with a slowdown and reversal in the long-standing reduction in deaths from heart disease, led to an astonishing development: life expectancy at birth for Americans declined for three consecutive years, from 2015 through 2017, something that had not happened since the influenza pandemic at the end of World War I.

In the twentieth century, the United States led the way in reducing mortality rates and raising life expectancy. Many important health improvements—such as the decline in mortality from heart disease as a result of reductions in smoking and the increased use of antihypertensives and the decrease in infant mortality rates because of the development of neonatal intensive care units—originated in the United States and precipitated mortality reductions elsewhere as knowledge, medicines, and techniques spread.

Now, the United States may be leading Western nations in the opposite direction. Might American deaths of despair spread to other developed countries? On the one hand, perhaps not. Parsing the data shows just how uniquely bleak the situation is in the United States. When it comes to deaths of despair, the United States is

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hopefully less a bellwether than a warning, an example for the rest of the world of what to avoid. On the other hand, there are genuine reasons for concern. Already, deaths from drug overdose, alcohol, and suicide are on the rise in Australia, Canada, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Although those countries have better health-care systems, stronger safety nets, and better control of opioids than the United States, their less educated citizens also face the relentless threats of globalization, outsourcing, and automation that erode working-class ways of life throughout the West and have helped fuel the crisis of deaths of despair in the United States.

AN AMERICAN MALADY

Mortality rates in the United States fell through the last three quarters of the twentieth century. But then, in the late 1990s, the progress slowed—and soon went into reverse.

A major reason for the decline in life expectancy is increasing mortality in midlife, between the ages of 25 and 64, when the most rapidly rising causes of death are accidental poisoning (nearly always from a drug overdose), alcoholic liver disease, and suicide. Overdoses are the most prevalent of the three types of deaths of despair, killing 70,000 Americans in 2017 and more than 700,000 since 2000. The 2017 total is more than the annual deaths from AIDS at its peak in 1995 and more than the total number of U.S. deaths in the Vietnam War; the total since 2000 outstrips the number of U.S. deaths in both world wars. The U.S. suicide rate has risen by a third since 1999; there are now more suicides than deaths on the roads each year, and there are two and a half times as many suicides as murders. In 2017 alone, there were 158,000 deaths of despair, the equivalent of three fully loaded Boeing 737 MAX jets falling out of the sky every day for a year.

Younger birth cohorts—Americans born more recently—face a higher risk of dying from drugs, alcohol, or suicide at any given age than older cohorts, and their deaths rise more rapidly with age than was the case for earlier cohorts. This increase in mortality is similar for men and women, although the base rates for women are lower; women are less likely to die by suicide than men and less likely to overdose or to succumb to alcohol.

African Americans did not figure greatly in this trend until 2013; the subsequent rise in their deaths is attributable in part to a sudden slowdown in progress against heart disease and a rapid increase in deaths from drugs laced with fentanyl, a deadly opioid that hit the

streets in 2013. Until then, the epidemic of deaths of despair was largely confined to white non-Hispanic Americans.

The increase in deaths of despair has been almost exclusively among Americans without a four-year college degree. A bachelor's degree appears to be a shield against whatever is driving the increase in deaths from drugs, alcohol, and suicide. The proportion of the midlife population with an undergraduate degree has changed little in recent years, so any possible changes in the type of people who graduate from college are not what's shaping this pattern. It was long believed that suicide was an affliction of the more educated. The suicide rates for the more and less educated in the United States are virtually identical for people born before 1945, but they diverge markedly by education for those born later in the century: for Americans born in 1970, for example, the suicide rate for non-college graduates is more than twice that of college graduates. About two-thirds of white non-Hispanic Americans do not have a bachelor's degree, 42 percent of the adult population, and it is this group that is most at risk of deaths of despair.

ACROSS THE POND

The United States is not entirely alone in seeing a rise in deaths of despair. These three categories of death are, of course, present everywhere, but most rich countries show no upward trend. The exceptions are the English-speaking countries, which all show some increase since 2000, although their mortality rates from deaths of despair remain much lower than those of the United States. No other country has seen parallel increases in all three kinds of deaths of despair, nor are their rates of such deaths close to those in the United States.

The United Kingdom offers an informative case. Deaths of despair in England and Wales have risen steadily since 1990. There was a large upsurge in alcohol-related liver mortality in the 1990s and early years of this century, but that has subsided in recent years. Suicide rates have risen since 2000, but most of the growth in deaths of despair comes from drug overdoses. Deaths of despair are now more common in midlife than deaths from heart disease, long a major killer. But despite those unfortunate trends, the mortality rate from deaths of despair in England and Wales is still less than half of the rate in the United States. (One black spot in the United Kingdom as a whole is Scotland, where, thanks to illegal drug use, the rate of deaths from drug overdose is almost at the U.S. level.)

Drown your sorrows: in a bar in Janesville, Wisconsin, June 2009

Data linking level of education to deaths of despair are not generally available in countries outside the United States. However, there are several studies indicating that the gap in the rate of mortality (from all causes of death taken together) between those with low levels of education and those with high levels has been closing over time in several European countries, including the United Kingdom, in sharp contrast to what has been happening in recent years in the United States. U.S. rates of suicide have climbed to such an extent that the country finds itself drifting away from its Western counterparts and into a group that includes the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which have long suffered from high suicide rates.

Trends in life expectancy at birth also reveal how the United States differs from other rich countries. In what was a startling event, life expectancy in 11 European countries declined in 2015. This decline was attributed to an influenza vaccine that was poorly matched to the virus that year; many elderly people died as a consequence. Beyond that episode, there has been a slowing of progress more generally across the continent. Once again, the United Kingdom has fared par-

DANNY WILCOX FRAZIER / VII / REDUX

ticularly badly, and its long-standing increase in life expectancy has plateaued. These dolorous trends, in the United Kingdom as in much of the rest of northern Europe, come mostly from increased mortality—or slowdowns in the decrease of mortality—among the elderly. This trend is in sharp contrast to what has happened in the United States, where the biggest increase in mortality from all causes has been among middle-aged people vulnerable to both the rise in deaths of despair and the slowdown in progress against heart disease. Those over 65 in the United States have not been affected much, although there are signs now that the youngest people still considered elderly—those between 65 and 69—are beginning to experience increases in mortality from drugs, alcohol, and suicide.

WORKING-CLASS ELEGY

What is causing deaths of despair in the United States, and can those causes translate to other countries, either now or in the future? There has been a long-term, slow-moving undermining of the white working class in the United States. Falling wages and a dearth of good jobs have weakened the basic institutions of working-class life, including marriage, churchgoing, and community. The decline in marriage has contributed significantly to the epidemic of despair among those with less than a four-year college degree: marriage rates among that group at age 40 declined by 50 percent between 1980 and 2018. With lower wages, fewer poorly educated men are considered marriageable, and this has given rise to a pattern of serial cohabitation—when individuals live with a number of partners in succession without ever getting married—with the majority of less educated white mothers having children out of wedlock and with many fathers in midlife separated from their children, living without the benefits of a stable and supportive family life. These trends among less educated Americans—declines in wages, the quality and number of jobs, marriage, and community life—are central in instilling despair, spurring suicide and other self-inflicted harms, such as alcohol and drug abuse.

The Great Recession that began after the financial crisis of 2008 has caused much pain in the United States and elsewhere. But it did not spark the epidemic of deaths among the U.S. working class. Even though the recession worsened the conditions of many people's lives and stoked anger and division in both the United States and Europe, it was not an immediate cause of deaths of despair. These deaths were

rising long before the recession began and continued to rise smoothly and without pause after the recession ended, in 2009. The real roots of the epidemic lie in the long-term malaise that began around 1970, when economic growth in the United States slowed, inequality began to rise, younger workers realized that they would never do as well as their parents had done, and those without high-level skills fell further behind.

The roots of the epidemic lie in the long-term malaise that began around 1970.

In the United States, the median wage for men has been stagnant since the early 1970s, even though GDP has risen substantially; men without a bachelor's degree have seen their wages fall for half a century. There are echoes of this pattern in some European countries, but they are only echoes. Some other countries have also seen slowly growing or stagnant wages over the last 20 years, including Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Once again, the closest comparison to the United States is the United Kingdom, where there has been no increase in median or average earnings for more than a decade—the longest period of wage stagnation in the country since the Industrial Revolution. Still, even the British experience is but a shadow of the half century of wage stagnation and decline in the United States.

An important difference between the United States and Europe is that countries in the latter have well-developed social support systems that can mute or reverse the worst impacts of shifts in the labor market. In the United Kingdom between 1994 and 2015, for example, earnings in the bottom tenth of families grew much more slowly than earnings in the top deciles. And yet owing to the redistributive mechanisms of the British welfare state, the rate of growth in after-tax family incomes was roughly the same across all sections of the population. Nothing of the sort happened in the United States, where the social safety net is more limited. Between 1979 and 2007, for example, incomes after taxes and benefits grew by 18 percent for the bottom 20 percent of U.S. households, by 65 percent for those between the 80th and 99th percentiles, and by 275 percent for the top one percent. During this period, the system of tax and transfers became less favorable for poorer Americans.

Europe is also not experiencing the same breakdown of marriage on display in the United States. It's common for couples to live together out of wedlock in Europe, but cohabitation there more closely resembles marriage. The kind of serial cohabitation that often occurs

among less educated American men and women, many of whom have children with more than one person to whom they are not married, is much rarer across the Atlantic.

MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS

Another factor unique to the United States contributes significantly to the hollowing out of the U.S. labor market: the tremendous cost of the U.S. health-care system. The United States spends 18 percent of its GDP on health care; the second-highest percentage among countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is in Switzerland, where that figure is 12 percent. The United Kingdom spends only ten percent; Canada, 11 percent. But Americans don't get many health benefits in return for their huge expenditure. Life expectancy in the United States is lower than in any other rich country, levels of morbidity—the experience of ill health—are worse, and millions of people don't have health insurance.

The crucial problem is not that the system does so little for health but that it does so much harm to the economy. If the United States were to reduce its percentage of health-care spending to the level of the Swiss percentage, it would save six percent of GDP—over $1 trillion a year, or approximately $8,600 a year for every household in the country. Savings of that kind would come to 180 percent of what the United States spends on its military. This wasteful spending on health care is a cancer that has metastasized throughout the economy. (The investor Warren Buffett has referred to its effects on U.S. business as like those of a "tapeworm.") The cost inflates the federal deficit, compromises state budgets, and drains resources for education and other services. U.S. workers would have much better lives today if they didn't have to pay this enormous additional tribute. Yes, the health-care industry creates employment, pays the salaries of providers, and boosts the profits and dividends of shareholders; all that waste is an income for someone. But the resources swallowed up by the health-care industry would be better used in other ways, in improving education, investing in research and development, and repairing roads, bridges, airports, and railways.

Less skilled workers lose the most in this arrangement. Uniquely among rich countries, employers in the United States are responsible for the health insurance of their employees; firms with 50 employees or more must offer health insurance. In 2018, the average annual cost of a family policy was $20,000. For the employer, this is simply a labor

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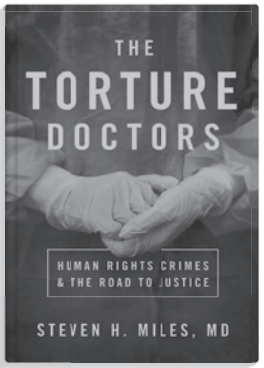

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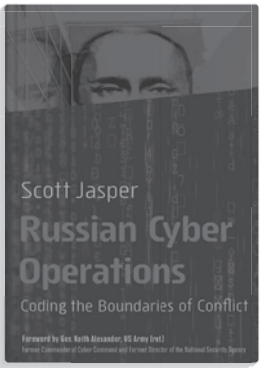

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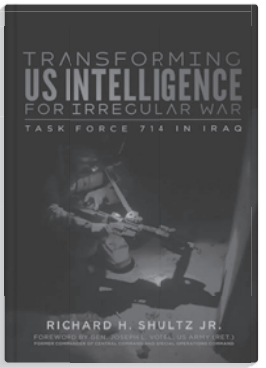

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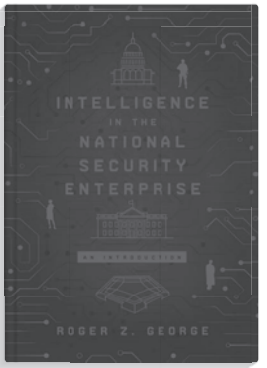

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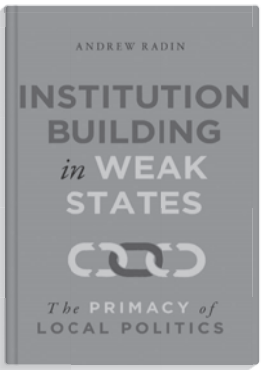

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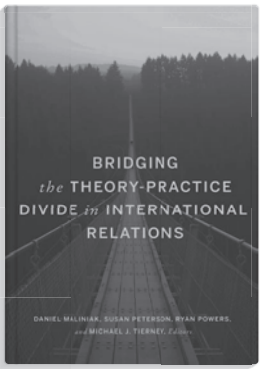

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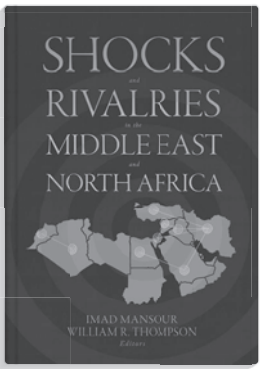

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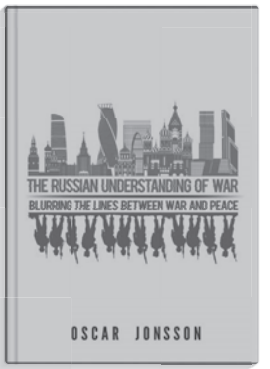

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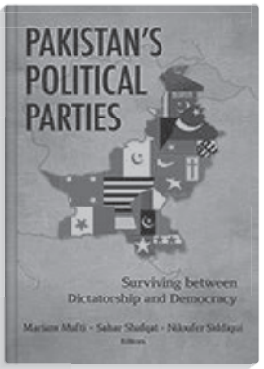

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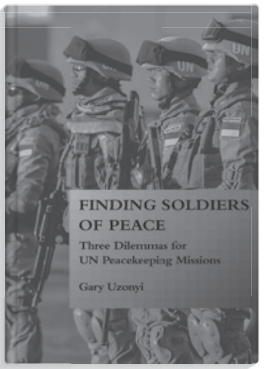

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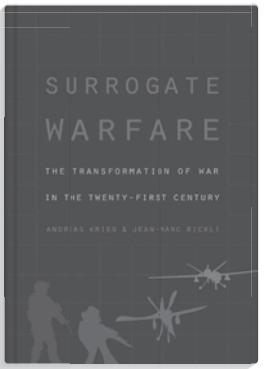

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cost, like wages, and the employer does not care whether the price of labor takes the form of wages or health insurance or other benefits. The inexorable rise in the cost of health care invariably compromises both employment and wage growth.

For high-skilled workers who earn $150,000 per year, for example, the cost of health insurance is a tolerable fraction for a firm, but for a lower-skilled and lower-wage worker, the health insurance cost can be a deal breaker. The firm tries to figure out whether it can do without the worker or whether it can perhaps outsource the job to the booming industry of companies that supply low-skilled labor. Outsourcing is growing quickly in Europe, too, and health care is increasingly expensive everywhere. But because health-care costs in other countries are not borne by employers and are not tied to employment, there is no immediate link there between rising health-care costs, on the one hand, and lower wages and fewer good jobs, on the other. The high costs of health care don't encourage Canadian and European firms to shed jobs.

Providing health care through employers would be less of a strain if U.S. health care were not so exceptionally expensive. As societies get richer, it makes sense for them to spend more of their national income on prolonging life and on making it less painful. The reduction in cancer mortality is one of the success stories of modern medicine. But not all medical expenditures produce such (or even any) benefits, and the costs of the whole system hamper the economy as a whole, contributing to falling wages, worsening jobs, declining marriages, and the consequent deaths of despair. The United States, unlike other rich countries, exercises no control over the prices of new drugs or procedures, and its health-care sector, including doctors, device manufacturers, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies, has developed immense political power. The health-care industry has five lobbyists for every member of Congress. Although there is lobbying on behalf of health-care companies in Europe, its scale pales in comparison to that in the United States.

The opioid epidemic in the United States is largely a failure of regulation and control in an environment where pharmaceutical companies have great political influence. Along with the rise in mortality rates since the late 1990s, the United States has witnessed a rise in morbidity with a sweeping increase in self-reported pain, disability, difficulty socializing, and inability to work. Pharmaceutical companies and their distributors took advantage of this growing desperation, pushing opioid painkillers such as OxyContin, a legal drug that is essentially FDA-approved

heroin. Between 1999 and 2018, more than 200,000 Americans died from prescription opioid overdoses. As the damage caused by these drugs mounted, physicians stopped prescribing them as readily, opening a gap for illegal drugs: heroin from Mexico and, more recently, fentanyl from China, which is much more lethal. Without working-class distress, these drugs would have done great harm and killed many people; when loosed into a void of social disruption and meaninglessness, they amplified the suicides and alcohol-related deaths that would have happened without them.

The mass prescription of legalized heroin should never have happened.

The mass prescription of legalized heroin should never have happened—and it did not happen in Europe. Painkillers such as OxyContin are legal in Europe, but their use is largely confined to hospitals, which employ them to treat pain in the immediate aftermath of surgery (for example, after a hip or knee replacement). In the United States, by contrast, doctors and dentists prescribed these drugs in such large numbers that in 2010 there were enough opioids prescribed to the public to give every American adult a month's supply. Pharmaceutical distributors flooded the market, on occasion sending millions of pills to pharmacies in towns with only a few hundred inhabitants. When the Drug Enforcement Administration tried to stop that practice, members of Congress brought pressure to remove the agents in charge, and in 2016, it passed a bill to make enforcement of controls on opioids more difficult. A subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson farmed poppies in Tasmania in the mid-1990s to provide the raw material for opioids, exploiting a loophole in international narcotic controls. Lobbyists successfully fought against attempts by the DEA to close the loophole. According to court documents, the Sackler family, which owns the privately held company Purdue Pharma, has made between $11 billion and $12 billion in profits largely from selling OxyContin since the drug's approval in 1995. Europe, unlike the United States, does not allow pharmaceutical companies to kill people for money.

CONTAINING THE EPIDEMIC

A number of practical measures would help curb the American epidemic of deaths of despair and end the United States' status as an outlier among wealthy nations. In health care, the United States needs an agency such as the United Kingdom's National Institute for Health

and Care Excellence (NICE), which assesses the costs and benefits of treatments and has the power to prevent the adoption of treatments whose benefits fail to exceed their costs. With an agency of this kind regulating the U.S. pharmaceutical industry, the scourge of opioids would never have been unleashed on the country.

More broadly, unregulated markets for health care are not socially beneficial. The United States should follow other rich countries in providing universal health insurance and in controlling health-care costs through an agency such as NICE; the former is important, and the latter even more so. The United States currently has the worst of both worlds, where government interference, instead of controlling costs, creates opportunities for rent seeking, which inflates costs and widens inequalities.

The roots of the crisis of deaths of despair lie in the loss of good jobs for less educated Americans, in part due to globalization, outsourcing, and automation, and in part due to the cost of health care. The loss of jobs devastates many communities and destroys ways of life. There is a strong case for public policy that raises wages and builds a more comprehensive social safety net.

Capitalism needs to serve people and not have people serve it. As an economic system, it is an immensely powerful force for progress and for good. The United States doesn't need some fantastic socialist utopia in which the state takes over industry; instead, what is required is better monitoring and regulation of the private sector, including the reining in of the health-care system. Other rich countries have a range of different ways of handling health care; any one of those would be an improvement over the current system in the United States.

The epidemic of deaths of despair in the United States neither was nor is inevitable, but other rich countries are not guaranteed to have immunity from this American disease. For now, the United States is something of an anomaly among wealthy nations, a status it owes to specific policies and circumstances. But other countries may find themselves following in American footsteps. If wage stagnation persists in Western countries and if the use of illegal drugs grows, the social dysfunctions of the United States could well spread in a more concerted way. Working classes elsewhere are also grappling with the consequences of globalization, outsourcing, and automation. The dynamic that has helped fuel the U.S. crisis of deaths of despair—of elites prospering while less educated workers get left behind—may produce similar devastating results in other wealthy countries.

The Digital Dictators

How Technology Strengthens Autocracy

Andrea Kendall-Taylor, Erica Frantz, and Joseph Wright

The Stasi, East Germany's state security service, may have been one of the most pervasive secret police agencies that ever existed. It was infamous for its capacity to monitor individuals and control information flows. By 1989, it had almost 100,000 regular employees and, according to some accounts, between 500,000 and two million informants in a country with a population of about 16 million. Its sheer manpower and resources allowed it to permeate society and keep tabs on virtually every aspect of the lives of East German citizens. Thousands of agents worked to tap telephones, infiltrate underground political movements, and report on personal and familial relationships. Officers were even positioned at post offices to open letters and packages entering from or heading to noncommunist countries. For decades, the Stasi was a model for how a highly capable authoritarian regime could use repression to maintain control.

In the wake of the apparent triumph of liberal democracy after the Cold War, police states of this kind no longer seemed viable. Global norms about what constituted a legitimate regime had shifted. At the turn of the millennium, new technologies, including the Internet and the cell phone, promised to empower citizens, allowing individuals greater access to information and the possibility to make new connections and build new communities.

But this wishful vision of a more democratic future proved naive. Instead, new technologies now afford rulers fresh methods for preserving power that in many ways rival, if not improve on, the Stasi's

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tactics. Surveillance powered by artificial intelligence (AI), for example, allows despots to automate the monitoring and tracking of their opposition in ways that are far less intrusive than traditional surveillance. Not only do these digital tools enable authoritarian regimes to cast a wider net than with human-dependent methods; they can do so using far fewer resources: no one has to pay a software program to monitor people's text messages, read their social media posts, or track their movements. And once citizens learn to assume that all those things are happening, they alter their behavior without the regime having to resort to physical repression.

This alarming picture stands in stark contrast to the optimism that originally accompanied the spread of the Internet, social media, and other new technologies that have emerged since 2000. Such hopefulness peaked in the early 2010s as social media facilitated the ouster of four of the world's longest-ruling dictators, in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. In a world of unfettered access to information and of individuals empowered by technology, the argument went, autocrats would no longer be able to maintain the concentration of power that their systems depend on. It's now clear, however, that technology does not necessarily favor those seeking to make their voices heard or stand up to repressive regimes. Faced with growing pressure and mounting fear of their own people, authoritarian regimes are evolving. They are embracing technology to refashion authoritarianism for the modern age.

Led by China, today's digital autocracies are using technology—the Internet, social media, AI—to supercharge long-standing authoritarian survival tactics. They are harnessing a new arsenal of digital tools to counteract what has become the most significant threat to the typical authoritarian regime today: the physical, human force of mass antigovernment protests. As a result, digital autocracies have grown far more durable than their pre-tech predecessors and their less technologically savvy peers. In contrast to what technology optimists envisioned at the dawn of the millennium, autocracies are benefiting from the Internet and other new technologies, not falling victim to them.

THE SPECTER OF PROTEST

The digital age changed the context in which authoritarian regimes operate. Such new technologies as the Internet and social media reduced barriers to coordination, making it easier for ordinary citizens to mobilize and challenge unresponsive and repressive governments.

I'll be watching you: outside a mosque in Xinjiang, China, June 2008

KADIR VAN LOHUIZEN / NOOR / REDUX

Data from the Mass Mobilization Project, compiled the political scientists David Clark and Patrick Regan, and the Autocratic Regimes data set, which two of us (Erica Frantz and Joseph Wright) have helped build, reveal that between 2000 and 2017, 60 percent of all dictatorships faced at least one antigovernment protest of 50 participants or more. Although many of these demonstrations were small and posed little threat to the regime, their sheer frequency underscores the continuous unrest that many authoritarian governments face.

Many of these movements are succeeding in bringing about the downfall of authoritarian regimes. Between 2000 and 2017, protests unseated ten autocracies, or 23 percent of the 44 authoritarian regimes that fell during the period. Another 19 authoritarian regimes lost power via elections. And while there were nearly twice as many regimes ousted by elections as by protests, many of the elections had followed mass protest campaigns.

The rise in protests marks a significant change in authoritarian politics. Historically, coups by military elites and officers posed the greatest threat to dictatorships. Between 1946 and 2000, coups ousted roughly a third of the 198 authoritarian regimes that collapsed in that period. Protests, in contrast, unseated far fewer, accounting for about 16 percent of that total. Fast-forward to this century, and a different reality emerges: coups unseated around nine percent of the dictatorships that fell between 2001 and 2017, while mass movements led to the toppling of twice as many governments. In addition to toppling regimes in the Arab Spring, protests led to the ouster of dictatorships in Burkina Faso, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. Protests have become the most significant challenge that twenty-first-century authoritarian regimes face.

The growing threat of protests has not been lost on today's autocrats. In the past, when they feared coups, most such leaders relied on "coup proofing" tactics, such as overpaying the security services to win their loyalty or rotating elites through positions of power so that no one could develop an independent base of support. As protests have increased, however, authoritarian regimes have adapted their survival tactics to focus on mitigating the threat from mass mobilization. Data compiled by Freedom House reveal that since 2000, the number of restrictions on political and civil liberties globally has grown. A large share of this increase has occurred in authoritarian countries, where leaders impose restrictions on political and civil liberties to make it harder for citizens to organize and agitate against the state.

Beyond narrowing the space for civil society, authoritarian states are also learning to use digital tools to quell dissent. Although technology has helped facilitate protests, today's digitally savvy authoritarian regimes are using some of the same technological innovations to push back against dangerous popular mobilizations.

MEANS OF CONTROL

Our analysis using data from Varieties of Democracy's data set (which covers 202 countries) and the Mass Mobilization Project shows that autocracies that use digital repression face a lower risk of protests than do those autocratic regimes that do not employ these same tools. Digital repression not only decreases the likelihood that a protest will occur but also reduces the chances that a government

will face large, sustained mobilization efforts, such as the "red shirt" protests in Thailand in 2010 or the anti-Mubarak and antimilitary protests in Egypt in 2011. The example of Cambodia illustrates how these dynamics can play out.

The government of Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has been in office since 1985, has adopted technological methods of control to help maintain its grip on power. Under Hun Sen's rule, traditional media have restricted their coverage of the Cambodian opposition. In the run-up to the July 2013 election, this led the opposition to rely heavily on digital tools to mobilize its supporters. The election was fraudulent, prompting thousands of citizens to take to the streets to demand a new vote. In addition to employing brute force to quell the protests, the government ratcheted up its use of digital repression. For instance, in August 2013, one Internet service provider temporarily blocked Facebook, and in December 2013, authorities in the province of Siem Reap closed down more than 40 Internet cafés. The following year, the government announced the creation of the Cyber War Team, tasked with monitoring the Internet to flag antigovernment activity online. A year later, the government passed a law giving it broad control over the telecommunications industry and established an enforcement body that could suspend telecommunications firms' services and even fire their staff. Partly as a result of these steps, the protest movement in Cambodia fizzled out. According to the Mass Mobilization Project, there was only one antigovernment protest in the country in 2017, compared with 36 in 2014, when the opposition movement was at its peak.

As protests have increased, authoritarian regimes have adapted their survival tactics.

Dictatorships harness technology not only to suppress protests but also to stiffen older methods of control. Our analysis drawing from Varieties of Democracy's data set suggests that dictatorships that increase their use of digital repression also tend to increase their use of violent forms of repression "in real life," particularly torture and the killing of opponents. This indicates that authoritarian leaders don't replace traditional repression with digital repression. Instead, by making it easier for authoritarian regimes to identify their opposition, digital repression allows them to more effectively determine who should get a knock on the door or be

thrown in a cell. This closer targeting of opponents reduces the need to resort to indiscriminate repression, which can trigger a popular backlash and elite defections.

THE CHINA MODEL

The advancement of AI-powered surveillance is the most significant evolution in digital authoritarianism. High-resolution cameras, facial recognition, spying malware, automated text analysis, and big-data processing have opened up a wide range of new methods of citizen control. These technologies allow governments to monitor citizens and identify dissidents in a timely—and sometimes even preemptive—manner.

No regime has exploited the repressive potential of AI quite as thoroughly as the one in China. The Chinese Communist Party collects an incredible amount of data on individuals and businesses: tax returns, bank statements, purchasing histories, and criminal and medical records. The regime then uses AI to analyze this information and compile "social credit scores," which it seeks to use to set the parameters of acceptable behavior and improve citizen control. Individuals or companies deemed "untrustworthy" can find themselves excluded from state-sponsored benefits, such as deposit-free apartment rentals, or banned from air and rail travel. Although the CCP is still honing this system, advances in big-data analysis and decision-making technologies will only improve the regime's capacity for predictive control, what the government calls "social management."

China also demonstrates the way digital repression aids the physical variety—on a mass scale. In Xinjiang, the Chinese government has detained more than a million Uighurs in "reeducation" camps. Those not in camps are stuck in cities where neighborhoods are surrounded by gates equipped with facial recognition software. That software determines who may pass, who may not, and who will be detained on sight. China has collected a vast amount of data on its Uighur population, including cell phone information, genetic data, and information about religious practices, which it aggregates in an attempt to stave off actions deemed harmful to public order or national security.

New technologies also afford Chinese officials greater control over members of the government. Authoritarian regimes are always vulnerable to threats from within, including coups and high-level elite defections. With the new digital tools, leaders can keep tabs on government officials, gauging the extent to which they advance regime

objectives and rooting out underperforming officials who over time can tarnish public perception of the regime. For example, research has shown that Beijing avoids censoring citizens' posts about local corruption on Weibo (the Chinese equivalent of Twitter) because those posts give the regime a window into the performance of local officials.

In addition, the Chinese government deploys technology to perfect its systems of censorship. AI, for example, can sift through massive amounts of images and text, filtering and blocking content that is unfavorable to the regime. As a protest movement heated up in Hong Kong last summer, for example, the Chinese regime simply strengthened its "Great Firewall," removing subversive content from the Internet in mainland China almost instantaneously. And even if censorship fails and dissent escalates, digital autocracies have an added line of defense: they can block all citizens' access to the Internet (or large parts of it) to prevent members of the opposition from communicating, organizing, or broadcasting their messages. In Iran, for example, the government successfully shut down the Internet across the country amid widespread protests last November.

Although China is the leading player in digital repression, autocracies of all stripes are looking to follow suit. The Russian government, for example, is taking steps to rein in its citizens' relative freedom online by incorporating elements of China's Great Firewall, allowing the Kremlin to cut off the country's Internet from the rest of the world. Likewise, Freedom House reported in 2018 that several countries were seeking to emulate the Chinese model of extensive censorship and automated surveillance, and numerous officials from autocracies across Africa have gone to China to participate in "cyberspace management" training sessions, where they learn Chinese methods of control.

THE VELVET GLOVE

Today's technologies not only make it easier for governments to repress critics; they also make it easy to co-opt them. Tech-powered integration between government agencies allows the Chinese regime to more precisely control access to government services, so that it can calibrate the distribution—or denial—of everything from bus passes and passports to jobs and access to education. The nascent social credit system in China has the effect of punishing individuals critical of the regime and rewarding loyalty. Citizens with good social credit scores benefit from a range of perks, including

expedited overseas travel applications, discounted energy bills, and less frequent audits. In this way, new technologies help authoritarian regimes fine-tune their use of reward and refusal, blurring the line between co-option and coercive control.

Dictatorships can also use new technologies to shape public perception of the regime and its legitimacy. Automated accounts (or "bots") on social media can amplify influence campaigns and produce a flurry of distracting or misleading posts that crowd out opponents' messaging. This is an area in which Russia has played a leading role. The Kremlin floods the Internet with pro-regime stories, distracting online users from negative news, and creates confusion and uncertainty through the spread of alternative narratives.

China is the leading player in digital repression, but others are following suit.

Maturing technologies such as so-called microtargeting and deepfakes—digital forgeries impossible to distinguish from authentic audio, video, or images—are likely to further boost the capacity of authoritarian regimes to manipulate their citizens' perceptions. Microtargeting will eventually allow autocracies to tailor content for specific individuals or segments of society, just as the commercial world uses demographic and behavioral characteristics to customize advertisements. AI-powered algorithms will allow autocracies to microtarget individuals with information that either reinforces their support for the regime or seeks to counteract specific sources of discontent. Likewise, the production of deepfakes will make it easier to discredit opposition leaders and will make it increasingly difficult for the public to know what is real, sowing doubt, confusion, and apathy.

Digital tools might even help regimes make themselves appear less repressive and more responsive to their citizens. In some cases, authoritarian regimes have deployed new technologies to mimic components of democracy, such as participation and deliberation. Some local Chinese officials, for example, are using the Internet and social media to allow citizens to voice their opinions in online polls or through other digitally based participatory channels. A 2014 study by the political scientist Rory Truex suggested that such online participation enhanced public perception of the CCP among less educated citizens. Consultative sites, such as the regime's "You Propose My Opinion" portal, make citizens feel that their voices matter

without the regime having to actually pursue genuine reform. By emulating elements of democracy, dictatorships can improve their attractiveness to citizens and deflate the bottom-up pressure for change.

DURABLE DIGITAL AUTOCRACIES

As autocracies have learned to co-opt new technologies, they have become a more formidable threat to democracy. In particular, today's dictatorships have grown more durable. Between 1946 and 2000—the year digital tools began to proliferate—the typical dictatorship ruled for around ten years. Since 2000, this number has more than doubled, to nearly 25 years.

Not only has the rising tide of technology seemingly benefited all dictatorships, but our own empirical analysis shows that those authoritarian regimes that rely more heavily on digital repression are among the most durable. Between 2000 and 2017, 37 of the 91 dictatorships that had lasted more than a year collapsed; those regimes that avoided collapse had significantly higher levels of digital repression, on average, than those that fell. Rather than succumb to what appeared to be a devastating challenge to their power—the emergence and spread of new technologies—many dictatorships leverage those tools in ways that bolster their rule.

Although autocracies have long relied on various degrees of repression to support their objectives, the ease with which today's authoritarian regimes can acquire this repressive capacity marks a significant departure from the police states of the past. Building the effectiveness and pervasiveness of the East German Stasi, for example, was not something that could be achieved overnight. The regime had to cultivate the loyalty of thousands of cadres, training them and preparing them to engage in on-the-ground surveillance. Most dictatorships simply do not have the ability to create such a vast operation. There was, according to some accounts, one East German spy for every 66 citizens. The proportion in most contemporary dictatorships (for which there are data) pales in comparison. It is true that in North Korea, which ranks as possibly the most intense police state in power today, the ratio of internal security personnel and informants to citizens is 1 to 40—but it was 1 to 5,090 in Iraq under Saddam Hussein and 1 to 10,000 in Chad under Hissène Habré. In the digital age, however, dictatorships don't need to summon immense manpower to effectively surveil and monitor their citizens.

Instead, aspiring dictatorships can purchase new technologies, train a small group of officials in how to use them—often with the support of external actors, such as China—and they are ready to go. For example, Huawei, a Chinese state-backed telecommunications firm, has deployed its digital surveillance technology in over a dozen authoritarian regimes. In 2019, reports surfaced that the Ugandan government was using it to hack the social media accounts and electronic communications of its political opponents. The vendors of such technologies don't always reside in authoritarian countries. Israeli and Italian firms have also sold digital surveillance software to the Ugandan regime. Israeli companies have sold espionage and intelligence-gathering software to a number of authoritarian regimes across the world, including Angola, Bahrain, Kazakhstan, Mozambique, and Nicaragua. And U.S. firms have exported facial recognition technology to governments in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

A SLIPPERY SLOPE

As autocracies last longer, the number of such regimes in place at any point in time is likely to increase, as some countries backslide on democratic rule. Although the number of autocracies globally has not risen substantially in recent years, and more people than ever before live in countries that hold free and fair elections, the tide may be turning. Data collected by Freedom House show, for example, that between 2013 and 2018, although there were three countries that transitioned from "partly free" to "free" status (the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, and Tunisia), there were seven that experienced the reverse, moving from a status of "free" to one of "partly free" (the Dominican Republic, Hungary, Indonesia, Lesotho, Montenegro, Serbia, and Sierra Leone).

The risk that technology will usher in a wave of authoritarianism is all the more concerning because our own empirical research has indicated that beyond buttressing autocracies, digital tools are associated with an increased risk of democratic backsliding in fragile democracies. New technologies are particularly dangerous for weak democracies because many of these digital tools are dual use: technology can enhance government efficiency and provide the capacity to address challenges such as crime and terrorism, but no matter the intentions with which governments initially acquire such technology, they can also use these tools to muzzle and restrict the activities of their opponents.

Pushing back against the spread of digital authoritarianism will require addressing the detrimental effects of new technologies on governance in autocracies and democracies alike. As a first step, the United States should modernize and expand legislation to help ensure that U.S. entities are not enabling human rights abuses. A December 2019 report by the Center for a New American Security (where one of us is a senior fellow) highlights the need for Congress to restrict the export of hardware that incorporates AI-enabled biometric identification technologies, such as facial, voice, and gait recognition; impose further sanctions on businesses and entities that provide surveillance technology, training, or equipment to authoritarian regimes implicated in human rights abuses; and consider legislation to prevent U.S. entities from investing in companies that are building AI tools for repression, such as the Chinese AI company SenseTime.

AI and other innovations hold great promise, but they have indisputably strengthened the grip of authoritarian regimes.

The U.S. government should also use the Global Magnitsky Act, which allows the U.S. Treasury Department to sanction foreign individuals involved in human rights abuses, to punish foreigners who engage in or facilitate AI-powered human rights abuses. CCP officials responsible for atrocities in Xinjiang are clear candidates for such sanctions.

U.S. government agencies and civil society groups should also pursue actions to mitigate the potentially negative effects of the spread of surveillance technology, especially in fragile democracies. The focus of such engagement should be on strengthening the political and legal frameworks that govern how surveillance technologies are used and building the capacity of civil society and watchdog organizations to check government abuse.

What is perhaps most critical, the United States must make sure it leads in AI and helps shape global norms for its use in ways that are consistent with democratic values and respect for human rights. This means first and foremost that Americans must get this right at home, creating a model that people worldwide will want to emulate. The United States should also work in conjunction with like-minded democracies to develop a standard for digital surveillance that strikes the right balance between security and respect for privacy and human rights. The United States will also need to work closely

with like-minded allies and partners to set and enforce the rules of the road, including by restoring U.S. leadership in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations.

AI and other technological innovations hold great promise for improving everyday lives, but they have indisputably strengthened the grip of authoritarian regimes. The intensifying digital repression in countries such as China offers a bleak vision of ever-expanding state control and ever-shrinking individual liberty.

But that need not be the only vision. In the near term, rapid technological change will likely produce a cat-and-mouse dynamic as citizens and governments race to gain the upper hand. If history is any guide, the creativity and responsiveness of open societies will in the long term allow democracies to more effectively navigate this era of technological transformation. Just as today's autocracies have evolved to embrace new tools, so, too, must democracies develop new ideas, new approaches, and the leadership to ensure that the promise of technology in the twenty-first century doesn't become a curse.

Too Big to Prevail

The National Security Case for Breaking Up Big Tech

Ganesh Sitaraman

When executives at the biggest U.S. technology companies are confronted with the argument that they have grown too powerful and should be broken up, they have a ready response: breaking up Big Tech would open the way for Chinese dominance and thereby undermine U.S. national security. In a new era of great-power competition, the argument goes, the United States cannot afford to undercut superstar companies such as Amazon, Facebook, and Alphabet (the parent company of Google). Big as these companies are, constraints on them would simply allow Chinese behemoths to gain an edge, and the United States would stand no chance of winning the global artificial intelligence (AI) arms race. That technology executives would proffer these arguments is not surprising, but the position is gaining traction outside Silicon Valley; even Democratic politicians who have been critical of Big Tech, such as Representative Ro Khanna of California and Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, have expressed concerns along these lines.

But the national security case against breaking up Big Tech is not just weak; it is backward. Far from competing with China, many big technology companies are operating in the country, and their growing entanglements there create vulnerabilities for the United States by exposing its firms to espionage and economic coercion. At home, market concentration in the technology sector also means less competition and therefore less innovation, which threatens to leave the United States in a worse position to compete with foreign rivals. Rather than threatening to undermine national security, breaking up and regulating Big Tech is necessary to protect the United States' democratic freedoms and preserve its ability to compete with and defend against new great-power rivals.

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DESTINATION: CHINA

Competition with China will define U.S. national security conversations for decades to come, and Americans need to think carefully about the role technology will play in this increasingly competitive environment. But to claim that the likes of Amazon and Google are helping counter China's technological and geopolitical rise simply because they are American companies makes little sense.

Almost all big U.S. technology companies have extensive operations in China today. Google announced plans for an AI research center in Beijing in 2017 and is exploring a partnership with the Chinese Internet behemoth Tencent. Microsoft is expanding its data centers in China and has recently built an entire operating system, Windows 10 China Government Edition, for the Chinese government. Amazon's cloud service in China is second in popularity only to that of its Chinese counterpart, Alibaba. Apple famously designs its phones in California but manufactures them in China. Facebook, notably, does not operate in China—but not for lack of trying. The company repeatedly attempted to gain access to the Chinese market only to be blocked by Chinese government officials.

Merely operating in China may seem harmless. Yet according to scholars, U.S. government officials, and even American business associations, any U.S. technology company working in China could very well be supporting the Chinese state and the expansion of digital authoritarianism. In the course of their operations in the country, U.S. companies routinely interact with Chinese companies, some of which are run or partly owned by the state. Those that are not still have informal ties to state and Communist Party officials and face strong incentives to behave as the state wishes even without direct pressure from the government. Because the Chinese market and the state are intertwined in this way, Chinese companies that partner with foreign ones are highly likely to pass along operational and technological developments to the Chinese government and military, including in ways that could advance Beijing's emerging surveillance state and accelerate its ability to spread its model of digital authoritarianism around the world.

These challenges are particularly clear in the case of AI, as commercial innovations in that field can also have military implications. Under Beijing's doctrine of "civil-military fusion," Chinese researchers and private companies are working ever more closely with the government

and the military, which means that technological innovations that may have originated with a foreign company active in China can find their way to supporting the People's Liberation Army. "If you're working in China," Ashton Carter, a former U.S. defense secretary, has said, "you don't know whether you're working on a project for the military or not."

In addition to widely known concerns about Chinese espionage and surveillance, integration with the Chinese market also opens Big Tech—and the United States—to pressure from China, which can use that influence to hurt U.S. interests. Scholars refer to this tactic—turning economic interdependence into political leverage—by a variety of terms, including "geoeconomics," "reverse entanglement," and "weaponized interdependence." Whatever it's called, China has a long track record of doing it, across countries and industries. To retaliate against South Korea's adoption of a U.S. missile defense system in 2017, China blocked Chinese travel agencies from offering trips to the country. And after the dissident Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, China temporarily blocked imports from Norway.

To claim that the likes of Amazon are helping counter China's rise makes little sense.

To avoid offending Chinese officials and potentially losing access to the country's large market, companies are adapting their behavior even outside China's borders. Hollywood studios have been accused of rewriting scripts and editing scenes for that purpose: choosing to blow up the Taj Mahal instead of the Great Wall of China in the movie *Pixels*, according to Reuters, and replacing China with North Korea as the main adversary in the 2012 remake of *Red Dawn*, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. In 2019, Daryl Morey, the general manager of the NBA basketball team the Houston Rockets, tweeted in support of pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong; soon thereafter, he deleted the post. In the days that followed, the owner of the Rockets wrote that Morey did "NOT speak" for the team, and the NBA said it was "regrettable" that Morey's views had "deeply offended many of our friends in China." (After a public outcry, the NBA clarified that it would not censor or fire Morey.) A year earlier, Mercedes-Benz had posted a quote from the Dalai Lama on Instagram. After an online backlash in China, the automaker quickly erased the quote, and its parent company, Daimler, said that the post had contained

Don't be evil: a security guard at Google offices in Shanghai, April 2016

ALY SONG / REUTERS

an "erroneous message" and had "hurt the feelings of people" in China. The *People's Daily*, China's largest newspaper, later branded Mercedes-Benz as an "enemy of the people."

Such conduct by Western companies illustrates a broader point: they act based on their commercial interests, not in the name of abstract democratic principles or for the cause of U.S. national security. The same is true when these companies try to influence government policy. The potential stakes are high. The U.S. Department of Commerce, for instance, has the power to set export restrictions on some sensitive technologies, including AI; those restrictions may be important from a national security standpoint, even if they negatively affect some companies' bottom lines. Yet the dominant ideology among corporate lawyers today holds that the sole aim of managers is to maximize shareholder profits, and corporate lobbyists are thus likely to advocate public policies that support those profits even if they run counter to U.S. national interests.

Practically all U.S. companies active in China are subject to such pressures to one degree or another, and how to address that predicament is another question altogether. But the size and dominance of American technology companies are part of the problem. As the U.S. technology sector becomes more concentrated and the few players in it

become more dependent on the Chinese market for consumers and profits, these firms—and, by extension, the United States—become more vulnerable to pressure from Beijing. Antimonopoly policies could help remedy this problem: in a fractured market with many players, the sheer number of firms would all but guarantee that some would build supply chains that circumvented China, or build their products wholly in the United States, or simply choose not to engage in the Chinese market—whether because of idiosyncratic preferences, competitive dynamics, product differentiation, higher costs, or other factors.

Consider another industry whose structure resembles that of Big Tech: Hollywood. Like the technology industry, today's entertainment sector consists of a handful of studios that are increasingly dominant at the box office and able to pressure theaters to give their content preferential treatment. If these big, integrated companies comply with Chinese censors out of a concern for market access, then U.S. consumers will not see content that offends the Chinese government. By contrast, in a system with a large number of small studios and competitive distribution channels, many companies would lack the size, scope, or desire to cater to the Chinese market, let alone be dependent on it. Nor would they have the power or scale to lock out new competitors through vertical integration. The result would be a market in which Americans had a range of content choices, including entertainment that might not accord with the views of foreign censors.

Of course, in theory, it is possible that a small number of big U.S. technology firms, each with monopoly-like power, might be so profitable as to have no need for the Chinese market, whereas small companies with razor-thin profit margins might depend more on that market for consumers and profits. But this hypothesis has not been borne out. The current technology sector is already highly concentrated, and yet today's technology companies are not forsaking the Chinese market; instead, they are desperate to expand their business there.

As they do so, they will likely be subject to the same pressures bearing down on Hollywood, the NBA, Mercedes, and other entities that want to operate in China. Companies such as Amazon and Google, which both produce their own content and distribute it through their platforms, may over time be tempted to make that content palatable to Chinese censors. And because those firms have immense market power within the United States, American consumers will be left with no serious, scalable alternatives.

A more competitive technology sector, with many smaller players, would also mitigate the ill effects of lobbying, for much the same reasons. Fewer companies would be dependent on the Chinese market, and those that were would be differentiated enough to often end up on different sides of policy debates. Their lobbying efforts would be less likely to cut in a single direction and thus less likely to capture government.

THE VIRTUE OF MONOPOLY

Big Tech's market dominance, some will argue, has benefits: free of constant worries about vicious competition, technology giants can focus on the big questions. They have the time and resources to invest copiously in cutting-edge research, where success is rare but the potential payoff—for technological innovation and thus for U.S. competitiveness and national security—is massive.

Whether or not they say it explicitly, those who want to protect Big Tech from antitrust laws and other regulations are advocating a "national champions" model—a system in which the state shields a few select big companies from competition, allowing them to spend on research and development. But there is strong evidence that this approach is imperfect, at times even counterproductive. As the legal scholar Tim Wu has noted, it is usually competition, not consolidation, that fosters innovation. Competitors have to find ways to differentiate themselves in order to survive and expand. Large, protected firms become lethargic, are slow to innovate, and rest on their laurels.

Recall the race for supremacy in the electronics industry that played out between the United States and Japan in the 1980s. Japan, according to Wu, chose to protect its national champions, giving direct government support to such powerhouses as NEC, Panasonic, and Toshiba. The United States took the opposite tack. Its largest electronics firm at the time, IBM, came under antitrust scrutiny by U.S. authorities, and the ensuing decadelong legal battle discouraged the company from engaging in conduct that might run afoul of antitrust laws. That created the space for a variety of other hardware and software companies, among them Apple, Lotus, and Microsoft, to flourish. Competition led to innovation and the creation of some of the most forward-looking companies of the era.

National champions also have an incentive to hide breakthroughs that might undermine their market power. Bell Labs, one of the pillars of AT&T's telecommunications empire, has long been celebrated for its role as an "ideas factory." But Bell Labs and AT&T also suppressed

innovations that threatened their business model. Starting in the 1930s, for example, AT&T's management sat on recording inventions that could have been used for answering machines, for fear this innovation might jeopardize the use of the telephone.

Skeptics might argue that this time is different—that today's next-generation technologies are so resource-intensive that smaller companies in a competitive environment couldn't afford the necessary investments. But even if broken up and regulated, Big Tech's main players would have considerable money left to spend on AI, robotics, quantum computing, and other next-generation technologies. Facebook would still have billions of users without Instagram and WhatsApp. Amazon's platform would still have enormous market power in online sales even if it wasn't allowed to produce its own products.

Whatever resource constraints did arise could be offset by greater public investment in R & D. As the economist Mariana Mazzucato has argued, such government spending has historically been a significant driver of innovation; the Internet, for example, began as a U.S. Defense Department network. There is no reason the government could not play the same role today.

Unlike research by national-champion firms, research funded by public investment would not be tied to the profit motive. It could therefore cover a wider range of subjects, extend to basic research that does not have immediate or foreseeable commercial applications, and include research that might challenge the incumbency and business models of existing companies. Public research could also de-emphasize areas of inquiry that may be profitable but are socially undesirable. For many of the biggest technology companies, surveillance, personalized targeting, and the eliciting of particular behavioral responses lie at the heart of their business models, which means that their efforts to innovate are geared in no trivial way toward improving those tactics. An authoritarian country may see those as valuable public goals, but it is not at all clear why a free and democratic society should.

Public investment in R & D also has the potential to spread the benefits of technology, innovation, and industry throughout the United States. At present, much of the country's technological and innovative prowess is concentrated in a few hubs—the most prominent being Northern California, Seattle, and Boston. This is not surprising, as unlike the government, technology companies have no reason to want to spread development evenly. Amazon's competition to decide the location

of its second headquarters is a good example. After inviting countless pitches from cities across the country and much public attention, the company settled on New York and Washington, D.C.—two cities that hardly need an economic boost. Public investment, as the economists Jonathan Gruber and Simon Johnson have argued, could remedy these geographic imbalances and spur successful economies in dozens of mid-size cities all over the country, with spillover benefits for their regions.

Mountains of data are needed to improve AI's precision and accuracy, and some might think that only Big Tech can collect and handle data in such vast quantities. But this need not be the case, either. The United States could create a public data commons with data collected from a variety of government sources (and regulate it with strict rules about personal privacy), for use by businesses, local governments, and nonprofits to train machines. Any new data would be fed back into the data commons, allowing the quality and quantity of the information to improve over time. Alternatively, the government could require technology companies to make their data available in interoperable formats. If those companies effectively have monopoly power over data, then they could be regulated as monopolies—with public access to the data sets as a condition for their continued protection as monopolies. No legal obstacles stand in the way of these options, and both would enable innovation and expand the number of players working on important technological developments.

SQUEEZING THE GOVERNMENT

For the moment, such public initiatives exist only as proposals. Big technology companies have considerable market power, and the U.S. government increasingly relies on their services, including to run its national security apparatus. Technology is, of course, a crucial aspect of warfare, and firms such as Amazon and Microsoft have contracts to provide cloud services to U.S. defense and intelligence agencies. These technology companies are fast becoming part of the United States' defense industrial base—the collection of industries that are indispensable for U.S. military equipment. As they do so, the curse of monopoly capitalism that already affects the country's overconsolidated defense sector—causing higher costs, lower quality, reduced innovation, and even corruption and fraud—will likely grow worse.

To see the challenge ahead, consider the present state of the U.S. weapons industry, which is already remarkably uncompetitive. In 2019, the Government Accountability Office found that 67 percent of 183

contracts for major weapons systems did not have a competitive bidding process. Almost half the contracts went to one of five companies—a stunning testament to the dominance of a handful of firms. And in 2018, the Defense Department released a report on the military's supply chain that listed numerous items for which only one or two domestic companies (and in some cases none) produced the essential goods. Perhaps most striking of all, the report found that the United States no longer had the capacity to build submarines on a rapid timetable because of single suppliers and declining competition.

Competition and public investment, not consolidation, provide the path to innovation.

Unsurprisingly, as Frank Kendall, a former head of acquisitions at the Pentagon, has pointed out, large defense contractors "are not hesitant to use this power for corporate advantage." In a recent article in *The American Conservative*, the researchers Matt Stoller and Lucas Kunce argue that contractors with de facto monopoly at the heart of their business models threaten national security. They write that one such contractor, TransDigm Group, buys up companies that supply the government with rare but essential airplane parts and then hikes up the prices, effectively holding the government "hostage." They also point to L3 Technologies, a defense contractor with ambitions, in the words of its one-time CEO, to become "the Home Depot of the defense industry." According to Stoller and Kunce, L3's de facto monopoly over certain products means that it continues to receive lucrative government contracts even after it admitted in the settlement of a 2015 civil fraud lawsuit that it had knowingly supplied defective weapons sights to U.S. forces.

As technology becomes more integral to the future of U.S. national security, Big Tech's market power will likely lead to much the same problems. Technology behemoths will amass defense contracts, and the Pentagon will be locked into a state of dependence, just as it is currently with large defense contractors. Instead of healthy innovation, the government will have created what Michael Chertoff, a former homeland security secretary, has called a "technological monoculture," which is unwieldy and vulnerable to outside attack. The cost to taxpayers will increase, whether due to higher prices or fraud and corruption, and much of their money—funding that could have been available for innovation—will become monopoly profits for technology executives and shareholders.

A WAY FORWARD

That technology companies do not want to be broken up is unsurprising. They are profitable, growing, and powerful. Nor is it a mystery why they try to play the trump card of invoking national security in their defense. But even from the viewpoint of national security, the case for shielding Big Tech from competition is weak. Technology companies are not competing with China so much as integrating with it, at significant risk to U.S. interests. In the United States, competition and public investment in R & D, not today's consolidated technology sector, will provide the best path forward to innovation.

Policymakers should embrace proposals to break up and regulate big technology companies: to unwind mergers and acquisitions such as Facebook's decision to buy the social networking and messaging services Instagram and WhatsApp. They should require technology platforms such as Amazon to separate from businesses that operate on their platforms. They should apply nondiscrimination principles drawn from public utilities and common carrier laws to digital platforms. And they should adopt stringent privacy regulations.

In this era of great-power competition, the best way to remain competitive and innovative is through market competition, smart regulations, and public spending on R & D. Breaking up Big Tech won't threaten national security; it will bolster it.

Saving America's Alliances

The United States Still Needs the System That Put It on Top

Mira Rapp-Hooper

In his three years in office, U.S. President Donald Trump has aimed his trademark vitriol at a wide range of targets, both foreign and domestic. Perhaps the most consequential of these is the United States' 70-year-old alliance system. The 45th president has balked at upholding the country's NATO commitments, demanded massive increases in defense spending from such longstanding allies as Japan and South Korea, and suggested that underpaying allies should be left to fight their own wars with shared adversaries. Trump's ire has been so relentless and damaging that U.S. allies in Asia and Europe now question the United States' ability to restore itself as a credible security guarantor, even after a different president is in the White House.

But the tattered state of the alliance system is not Trump's doing alone. After decades of triumph, the United States' alliances have become victims of their own steady success and are now in peril. In the early years of the Cold War, the United States created the alliance system to establish and preserve the balance of power in Asia and Europe. To adapt the phrase of the commentator Walter Lippmann, alliances became the shields of the republic. These pacts and partnerships preserved an uneasy peace among the major industrialized countries until the end of the twentieth century. And they came with far fewer financial and political costs than Trump and some international relations scholars have claimed. When the Soviet Union collapsed, American policymakers wisely preserved this trusty tool of statecraft. But because the United States had no real

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peer competitors, the alliance system was repurposed for a world of American primacy and lost its focus on defense and deterrence.

Nearly 30 years later, an undeniably powerful China and a revanchist Russia have developed military and nonmilitary strategies that seek to unravel the system entirely. Trump's antagonistic instincts are certainly destructive, but the changing nature of conflict is the true hazard. Faced with cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, economic coercion, and more, Washington needs its alliance system to preserve order. If the pacts are to be saved, however, they must be renovated for the world they confront: one in which most threats to security and prosperity pass just below the military threshold.

A BRAVE NEW WORLD

World War II transformed the scope and lethality of conflict. The United States had long benefited from its relatively isolated geographic location, but the spread of long-range airpower, missile technology, and nuclear weapons meant that its security was no longer guaranteed. Newly exposed, the United States sought a strategy that would allow it to secure the international balance of power from afar, averting conflicts on its territory and preventing the only other superpower left standing after the war, the Soviet Union, from dominating Asia and Europe. The United States created a network of alliances precisely with these goals in mind. U.S. policymakers reasoned that by acquiring allies and building overseas bases on those countries' territory, Washington would be able to confront crises before they reached the homeland. What's more, with this forceful presence, the United States could practice so-called extended deterrence, dissuading adversaries from starting wars in the first place.

Unlike the alliance systems of the past, the U.S. system was intended to prosecute or deter not a single war but all wars, and to do so indefinitely. The novelty—and the gamble—was that if the new security system worked, the world would see little evidence of its power. This new approach was a radical departure from the pre–Cold War norm, when the United States considered itself largely self-sufficient and pursued few foreign entanglements; it had no formal allies between the Revolutionary War and World War II. Between 1949 and 1955, in contrast, the United States extended security guarantees to 23 countries in Asia and Europe. By the end of the twentieth century, it had alliances with 37.

Friends in need: U.S.–South Korean joint military drills in South Korea, March 2016

KIM HONG-JI / REUTERS

The United States' Cold War alliances were successful in meeting the goals that strategists had set out for them. For the duration of the Cold War, no U.S. treaty ally was ever the victim of a major attack. And until the 9/11 attacks, no NATO member had ever invoked the treaty's Article 5 guarantee, which obligates the allies to assist any member state that comes under assault. Of course, Washington had intervened at times to support allies in a fix—helping Taiwan manage Chinese aggression during two crises in 1954–55 and 1958, for example—but it did so chiefly when it saw its own interests at risk and often with the explicit aim of preventing war. In addition to maintaining the balance of power in Asia and Europe, the system contributed to the flourishing of the United States' allies, most notably Japan and West Germany, which became close military partners, consolidated themselves as democracies with vibrant economies, and eventually emerged as leading regional powers.

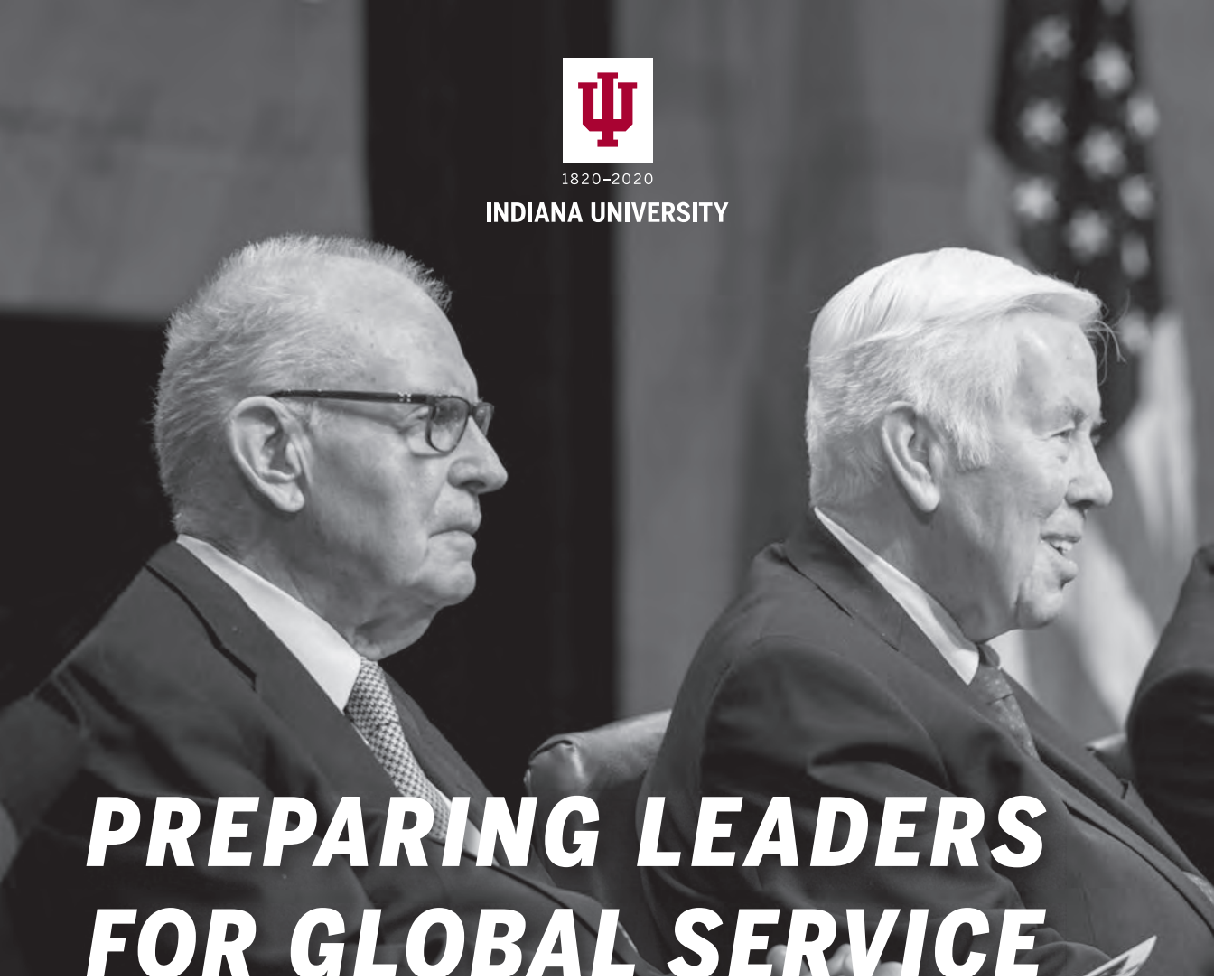
The alliance system also lowered the cost of U.S. military and political action worldwide. Since the early 1950s, U.S. treaty allies have joined every major war the United States has fought, despite the fact that for almost all these conflicts, they were not required to do so by the terms of their alliances. What's more, the system ensured that the allies' foreign policies supported, rather than undermined, Washington's.

The United States used security guarantees to convince South Korea, Taiwan, and West Germany to abandon illicit programs to develop their own nuclear weapons. Other states that, if they had not been included in U.S. alliances, would surely have sought their own military protection—building state-of-the-art armies, navies, and air forces—chose instead to rely on the United States' military might. And by maintaining close defense relationships with a number of those states, the United States also gained support in international institutions for everything from peacekeeping missions to sanctions—support that would otherwise have been much harder to secure. These contributions were crucial, as they allowed the United States to project its power without becoming overstretched.

LONELY AT THE TOP

The alliance system continued to function smoothly until 1991, when the adversary for which the United States' entire security posture had been designed suddenly disintegrated. The Soviet Union vanished, and with it, so did the logic of American security guarantees. Notable international relations scholars—primarily those of a realist orientation—believed that in a unipolar world, U.S. alliances had become outmoded. But U.S. policymakers were unpersuaded. The Cold War system had performed so admirably that they decided it should be retained and repurposed for new objectives. Because the United States was now utterly unmatched in its military and political power, however, their alliance reforms did not focus on defense or deterrence as traditionally understood.

U.S. President Bill Clinton's administration supported the entry of former Eastern-bloc states (such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland) into NATO in the belief that an expanded Atlantic alliance would help spread democracy and promote stability in post-Soviet eastern Europe—an urgent task given the humanitarian crisis that seized the Balkans with the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 and 1992. In other words, Clinton decided to expand the alliance in the aftermath of the Cold War rather than dismantle it. Far from treating Russia as a vanquished adversary, his administration sought to gain Moscow's acquiescence to NATO enlargement. And through the Partnership for Peace—a NATO-backed military-cooperation program designed to build trust with post-Soviet states without officially including them in the alliance—Clinton sought to give eastern European countries ways



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to associate with NATO without spooking the Russians. For most of the 1990s, as the alliance pushed eastward, this approach appeared to be working: in private, Russian officials even floated the idea that their country might someday join NATO.

But by extending NATO to the Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—in 2004, U.S. military planners inadvertently made the alliance much harder to defend. Russia still sought a buffer zone that would keep it safe from western Europe and the United States and saw the countries on its western border as its first line of defense. The United States' old rival, preoccupied by its failing economy, was not deeply troubled by the earlier rounds of NATO expansion. But the situation quickly changed after the Baltic states entered the alliance. Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 to ensure that neither country would join NATO. Along the way, it developed a military strategy designed to demonstrate the United States' inability to defend the Baltics, relying on the prospect of a rapid invasion that would leave Washington with the painful choice between escalation and surrender.

Trump's alliance shakedown is almost certain to backfire.

In the meantime, an ascendant China has sought to corrode U.S. alliances in the Pacific. Beginning in the early 1990s, Beijing has invested in missiles and other military technology that would deter the United States from intervening in a conflict close to China's shores—namely, one over Taiwan. By making it costlier for Washington to enter a war, China's leaders have attempted to undermine U.S. security guarantees and demonstrate to U.S. allies in the Pacific that the United States' ability to protect them is waning. After years of dizzying growth that fueled huge increases in military spending, Chinese President Xi Jinping has set his sights higher than his predecessors, seeking to reestablish China as a great power.

Beijing and Moscow have also developed nonmilitary means—economic coercion, cyberwarfare, and political interference—to advance their objectives. China and Russia use these tactics in very different ways, but the underlying logic is the same: to achieve their goals without activating U.S. security guarantees or violating laws against the use of force. In 2007, for instance, Russian cyberattacks paralyzed Estonia, taking down bank and government websites. And between 2014 and 2016, China initiated a massive island-building campaign in

the South China Sea, transforming former reefs and rocks into military bases, upending the balance of power, and threatening U.S. allies—namely, the Philippines. In both cases, the transgressions undermined the security of U.S. treaty partners and demonstrated that the pacts were powerless to stop nonmilitary aggression.

To make matters worse, the Trump administration is deeply critical of NATO members and other U.S. allies, a hostility that acts as an accelerant to the geopolitical forces that were already weakening the system of pacts. Unlike previous presidents, who privately pressed U.S. allies to contribute more to the security relationship, Trump engages in the public and arbitrary coercion of U.S. allies, making extravagant spending demands and stating that the United States will abandon them if they do not pay up. (Asked if the United States would defend the Baltics against a Russian attack, for example, Trump replied, "If they fulfill their obligations to us.") In general, Trump views the protection of the American homeland as his near-exclusive national security objective and places little value on the U.S. military presence abroad, instead fixating on border security. This view is at odds with the United States' long-standing reliance on forward defense and deterrence, which was based on the belief that the homeland is best protected through a network of alliances and overseas bases that keep war from starting.

Trump's alliance shakedown is almost certain to backfire. Some of the costs are already on display: South Korea, for instance, has tilted toward China by using diplomacy to mend previously strained ties and to establish military hotlines. Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron has bemoaned the "brain death" of NATO, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel has questioned whether U.S. allies can trust the United States. If U.S. allies do eventually devote more to defense because of slackened American leadership, they are likely to do so in ways disadvantageous to the United States, spending more on independent forces and strategies rather than assuming protection from and partnership with the United States. U.S. interests may fall by the wayside as a result. For instance, the Trump administration has declared competition with China to be the United States' highest national security priority, and leaders in both political parties agree that the challenge is momentous. To date, however, Washington has found little support among its allies for its campaign against Beijing. The United States can steady the shift-

ing twenty-first-century balance of power only in tandem with its allies in Asia and Europe. Otherwise, it will be a feeble and lonely competition, indeed.

THE PRICE OF POWER

Both the Trump administration and notable international relations scholars worry that the United States' alliances lead to chronic free-riding, allowing U.S. allies to benefit from American security guarantees and military cooperation even though they add comparatively little to the relationship. Nearly every U.S. president has wished that the country's allies would spend more on defense, and there is little doubt that the United States has generally outspent most of its treaty allies in Asia and Europe. The imbalance persists even today: the United States spends over three percent of its GDP on defense; the next-highest spenders among the United States' allies spend 2.5 percent, and many others spend 1.5–2.0 percent. But these numbers are deceptive. The United States, after all, maintains a global defense posture, whereas its partners generally spend on security in their immediate neighborhoods. What's more, U.S. military spending in such countries as Germany and Japan is largely devoted to a regional defense strategy, as opposed to the defense of a single host ally. There is no reason to expect those countries' defense budgets to be comparable to that of the United States.

U.S. allies also contribute to their alliances with the United States in ways that aren't captured by their defense expenditures—such as by granting low-cost leases for U.S. bases and constructing facilities for use by U.S. troops. Contrary to common perceptions, alliances themselves cost nothing: it is the spending on deployments and infrastructure that results in high costs. And Washington's allies often assume part of the burden. Moreover, the price of the American alliance system has, historically, been an acceptable portion of the U.S. national budget. There is little evidence that alliance-related spending has forced other major tradeoffs or has been a drag on economic growth. And the asymmetry between Washington's spending and that of its allies is a feature of the alliance system, not a bug: it gives the United States more influence over its partners, who depend on American strength for their security.

There is also relatively little evidence that the United States' alliances have imposed major political costs. International relations

scholars often fret about "alliance entrapment," which would occur if the United States intervened in crises or conflicts that it might have ignored if it did not have obligations to another state. Yet there is almost no proof of that phenomenon. U.S. allies are no more likely to become involved in conflicts than other states, and although the United States has waged some ill-advised wars—such as the Vietnam War and the Iraq war—no ally was responsible for those decisions. Instead, when Washington has backed its allies in crises, it has done so because it has also had a clear national interest at stake. Moreover, the United States has never found itself in an alliance arrangement that it was unable to exit. In the few cases in which alliances became politically inconvenient, as with the underperforming Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, Washington was able to disentangle itself easily.

The United States has never found itself in an alliance arrangement that it was unable to exit.

Entrapment is uncommon because the United States designed its alliance system to reduce its exposure to risky commitments. Take Taiwan, for instance. In 1955, the United States allied with Chiang Kai-shek, the brash Taiwanese president who still hoped to retake the Chinese mainland. In their negotiations with Chiang over the alliance, U.S. officials took special care to impress on him that he did not have U.S. backing to attack the People's Republic of China, and they made clear that the treaty they were to sign with him did not apply to the offshore islands that were still in dispute between Taiwan and China. So in 1958, when the two came to loggerheads over those same islands, the United States had the freedom to support its ally only as it saw fit—in this case, by offering diplomatic support and by helping supply the islands. Washington has also been selective in its choice of partners, rejecting requests for security pacts when the associated commitments were too dangerous. Despite a close relationship, the United States has declined to extend formal security guarantees to Israel, for example, calculating that the risk of an unwanted war is too high.

It is no easier to find examples of U.S. allies that have reneged on their commitments to Washington. From the formation of the alliance system until the 9/11 attacks, neither the United States nor any of its partners had been the victim of an unprovoked assault, so there

have ultimately been few opportunities for an ally to jilt Washington on the brink of a conflict. This is not to say that the United States has never faced downsides from its alliance system. Chronic, if modest, allied free-riding on U.S. defense spending is surely an annoyance. On rare occasions, moreover, an ally has reneged on its commitments in costlier ways, as French President Charles de Gaulle did when he pulled France out of NATO's military structure but not the alliance altogether. And once the alliance system was put in place, it may have encouraged the United States to define its security needs more expansively than it might have without the pacts. Nevertheless, the system's drawbacks have been far fewer, both in number and in intensity, than some scholars and policymakers would have people believe.

RECALIBRATING ALLIANCES

Despite the U.S. alliance system's manageable cost and incredible success, the United States' ties to its allies are under more scrutiny now than at any time in recent memory. The American public remains broadly supportive of international coalitions, yet for the first time since World War II, U.S. alliances have become deeply politicized. Although foreign policy experts from both political parties defend the system, the Trump administration's core supporters abhor it. With Congress and the public polarized on all manner of issues, the country's alliances could remain objects of controversy even under new leadership.

International forces have not been any kinder to the postwar alliance system. In Asia, relative power is shifting in China's favor. Russia is stagnant but remains a force to be reckoned with. And overall, the United States and its allies together hold a smaller share of global GDP and military spending than they did at the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, they also have highly developed, technologically sophisticated economies, and their combined defense spending dwarfs that of their rivals. This all suggests that the United States can salvage its wildly successful but badly bruised alliance system, so long as it does so on entirely new terms.

Over the second half of the twentieth century, the nature of conflict changed dramatically. The spread of nuclear weapons and the growth of economic interdependence raised the cost of great-power war to such heights that challengers now seek to avoid it. Although it remains possible that U.S. allies will face major military attacks, this

is not terribly likely. China and Russia prefer nonmilitary coercion that will not trigger NATO's Article 5 guarantee. But the United States and its allies need not wait for the United Nations or any other international body to sanction new forms of collective self-defense. International law already allows them to fashion joint responses to actions deemed threatening to their political independence—the very sorts of injuries that result from cyberattacks, election meddling, and extreme economic pressure. Washington and its partners have all the power they need to reform the system, but to succeed, they will have to focus on the challenges to security and prosperity that stop just short of the military threshold.

The United States' ties to its allies are under more scrutiny now than at any time in recent memory.

The United States and its allies must start by rebalancing their respective responsibilities. Although Washington's alliance strategy was affordable during the Cold War, the Trump administration's heavy-handed demand that U.S. allies assume greater costs does contain a kernel of sanity. When the treaty system was formed, the United States' main allies were war-torn states teetering on the brink of collapse. They are now thriving democracies with developed economies capable of contributing to a more symmetric defense effort. Many U.S. allies have trouble increasing their defense budgets for domestic political reasons—their citizens are accustomed to relatively low defense spending and resist budget hikes. The allies can, however, contribute to nonmilitary defense and deterrence, as most of this spending does not show up in military budgets; rather, it appears on foreign affairs, intelligence, and homeland security ledgers. Moreover, compared with the United States' rivals, American treaty allies are leaders in covert information gathering, public diplomacy, and technological research and development. They can also spend more easily in these areas. Like them, the United States will need to reorganize its security expenditures, spending less on the military in favor of the nondefense national security tools necessary to lead alliances.

Even so, the United States will need to keep primary responsibility for high-end military defense, as its allies focus on other missions. Now that the Baltic states are firmly ensconced in NATO, Washington will have to guide its partners toward their credible defense. In particular, NATO allies must improve their military read-

iness and deter Russian aggression by demonstrating their ability to quickly reach and secure NATO's eastern flank. The military picture in Asia is far more urgent: U.S. partners will have no chance of countering China's growing power without American assistance. Asia must therefore be the United States' primary military theater, with Europe an important but clear second. U.S. spending and presence should reflect those priorities, with more dollars spent on platforms that are intended to deter China and more deployments directed toward the western Pacific.

Despite continued security guarantees, U.S. allies must take primary responsibility for lower-end defense and deterrence. This is only appropriate: China and Russia each use coercion to the greatest effect in their immediate neighborhoods, so such geographically exposed allies as Japan and the Baltics are the frontline states at greatest risk. U.S. allies must assume financial and political leadership roles that place them in charge of specific countercoercion efforts. And they must take the lead in crafting responses that are tailored to their specific needs. After Estonia became the victim of a massive cyberattack allegedly carried out by Russia, for example, it expanded its capabilities in cyberspace and pioneered resilience efforts that will blunt the power of Moscow's cyberwarfare in the future.

But the allies must go further than self-defense: they must devise regional responses to the threats in their respective parts of the world. Australia and Japan, for example, should build up the allies' capabilities in Southeast Asia, to ensure that the assistance that they and the United States give to China's maritime counterclaimants is used efficiently and effectively. And because security issues are no longer clearly bounded by geography, U.S. allies should set up cross-regional working groups to address questions that affect them all, such as cyberthreats and foreign investment. The United States should remain an enthusiastic participant in and contributor to these efforts, but the choice of strategies and the development of alliance infrastructure must be subject to the regional partners' initiatives and funded by their investments. The United States cannot credibly claim to expand its defense guarantees to these domains by itself; new deterrence efforts will succeed only if they are truly collective.

Washington and its allies must also acknowledge that they do not always see threats from shared rivals in the same way, and that even when they understand the situation similarly, they may still have

disproportionate stakes. Even when the allies might share threat assessments—such as the United States and Japan's common view of China's assertiveness in the East China Sea—the regional ally may have a greater incentive to act, given its proximity to the threat. Japan has indeed taken primary responsibility for the handling of the dispute over the Senkaku Islands (known as the Diaoyu Islands in China), conducting its own coast guard patrols to counter Chinese pressure. Simply by equipping themselves with better information about coercive threats, the United States and its allies can improve their deterrence and their ability to respond, even if they do not view the challenges identically.

To be sure, Chinese and Russian nonmilitary aggression will not usually call for a conventional military response. Hence, the alliance members must work together in a multiyear effort to determine how each pact will confront nonmilitary coercion. Each type of attack may require a different type of response: for instance, cyberspace may be more responsive to deterrence measures than economic coercion. What's more, Washington must commit more concretely to its allies and accept some additional risk of entrapment in new areas if it seeks to strengthen deterrence.

REFORM, NOT RESTORATION

The contemporary debate over the U.S. alliance system has devolved into a false choice between the positions of two camps: antagonists who would prefer to let the system crumble and nostalgic champions who hope to restore it to its post–Cold War zenith. Neither of those positions represents a path forward. If the United States continues to reprimand its allies for underspending as it pursues rapprochement with its adversaries, the system will surely collapse. But a restoration of the old alliance network is no longer on the table: nostalgists ignore the fact that continued domestic volatility, inexorable power shifts, and the changing nature of conflict itself will make such a return impossible.

The stakes of failing to reform the alliance system could scarcely be higher. If Washington does not act, it will miss the opportunity to protect its dearest interests on relatively favorable terms, before China's growing power and Russia's revanchism undermine the system's proven guarantees. The reform agenda recommended here is vast, but it is far less burdensome than a U.S. foreign policy that

cannot rely on allies. The United States can no more go it alone now than it could in the immediate postwar years. Whether the United States has alliances or not, American security and prosperity will still require an open and independent Asia and Europe. Even if Washington pulled back from both theaters, the United States would still face cyberattacks, financial and infrastructural disruptions, and assaults on its democratic institutions. And by retrenching, Washington would lose whatever readiness for conflict it currently has. If the country later joined a war abroad, it would have to do so only after significant time delays and without the allied cooperation that might have allowed it to prevail. Put simply, the United States might fall into a conflict that it could have instead deterred—one now waged with hypersonic speed and destruction.

The United States' alliance system endured because it advanced the country's security and prosperity at a reasonable cost. The network outlasted the Soviet Union, the foe that it was meant to combat, and weathered drastic changes in the nature of conflict. If reformed, this remarkable system can again serve as the fulcrum of U.S. grand strategy and provide defense and deterrence for decades to come. If neglected, it will become irrelevant, just when it is needed most.

Mean Streets

The Global Traffic Death Crisis

Janette Sadik-Khan and Seth Solomonow

Some causes of death have little trouble catching the public's attention. Avian flu, Ebola, and Zika have dominated news cycles and prompted international travel advisories. Plane crashes interrupt broadcasts and lead to thorough government investigations. Cancer, heart disease, and HIV/AIDS now attract billions of dollars of research. But one of the biggest killers of all gets little attention from governments, the media, or the general public. Car crashes killed 1.35 million people in 2016—the last year for which World Health Organization data are available—a grisly 3,698 deaths a day. Traffic injuries are now the top killer of people aged five to 29 globally, outpacing any illness and exceeding the combined annual casualties of all of the world's armed conflicts. And the toll continues to rise: it grew by 100,000 in just three years, from 2013 to 2016. This does not include the up to 50 million people who are hit and injured by motor vehicles each year, some grievously, but who nonetheless survive. The economic losses are estimated at three percent of global GDP.

In many high-income countries, the per capita traffic death rate has dropped over the last 50 years, in part thanks to advances in car safety and stricter drunk-driving laws. In the United States, traffic fatalities have fallen by nearly a third since the middle of the twentieth century. But even so, 36,560 Americans died in car crashes in 2018—about as many as were killed by guns. Moreover, the news is getting worse for people not in a vehicle. In 2018, the number of Americans killed by cars while walking or riding a bike reached

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7,140—the highest since 1990, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and a 41 percent increase since 2008.

Globally, the absolute number of traffic deaths has crept upward as ever-greater numbers of people make more trips. Low-income countries, with lax safety standards and poorly designed roads, fare the worst: they boast just one percent of the world's motor vehicles but suffer 13 percent of total traffic deaths. Ethiopia, for instance, had 26.7 traffic deaths per 100,000 residents in 2016, almost ten times the rate in Sweden and double that in the United States.

To the extent that policymakers have reacted to this crisis, they have tended to do so through incremental measures: passing universal seatbelt laws, mandating air bags and antilock brakes, lowering speed limits, and raising penalties for drunk driving. These are valuable steps, but they are nowhere near enough. That's because the root cause of traffic danger isn't defective cars or unruly drivers. It's the roads themselves.

DANGEROUS BY DESIGN

At the turn of the twentieth century, city streets were largely shared spaces, where people on foot mixed in the street with vendors, streetcars, cyclists, and carriages. The arrival of the motor vehicle was initially viewed with horror, as U.S. traffic deaths climbed from just 26 in 1899 to 29,592 in 1929. To increase speed and safety, streets were widened and cleared of obstacles. Engineers and public officials jammed multilane roads, highways, and bridges into previously quiet neighborhoods in order to move as many cars as quickly as possible through cities. Many cities didn't even bother to build new sidewalks since destinations were so far away from one another that it was not feasible to walk. When the widened roads became just as congested and dangerous as the ones they replaced, engineers responded with still more construction, turning streets into automotive monocultures, where the mere idea of walking, biking, or taking public transit was viewed as foolish. But the multilane roads did not solve traffic congestion; they only enabled more and more drivers to take to the streets. In 1955, the urbanist Lewis Mumford noted that widening roads to solve traffic congestion was like loosening one's belt to solve obesity—it temporarily eased constraints but did not solve the underlying problem.

The result of a century of car-focused design is that on every continent, roads and lanes tend to be wider than is necessary or safe. Although this keeps cars farther apart, bigger lanes—usually around

12 feet wide—reduce what traffic planners call "friction," a healthy interaction among drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and others that induces safer behavior. Inevitably, roads designed for speed are deadlier. Psychology plays a role—oversize lanes encourage drivers to drive at dangerous speeds and to view everyone else on the street as obstacles—but so does physics. A pedestrian struck by a car moving at 25 miles per hour has a 90 percent chance of surviving. If that car is moving at 40 miles per hour, the odds drop to 50 percent.

Widening roads to solve congestion is like loosening one's belt to solve obesity—it eases constraints but does not solve the problem.

Compare the traffic death statistics for four sprawling cities—Charlotte, Dallas, Jacksonville, and Phoenix—to those for New York City. Although New York City's traffic-choked streets might not seem safe, its pedestrian death rate in 2017 was no more than a third of that in each of those cities, and the overall traffic death rate was a mere fifth. That's not because the residents of those cities are worse drivers but because those cities' roads were built for fast driving and without safeguards for pedestrians.

In the United States, federal and state street-design guidelines explicitly promote wider lanes, even though they are known to be deadlier. In other words, far from being "accidents"—and indeed, the World Health Organization and other traffic-safety proponents have shunned that term—traffic deaths are caused by roads that are operating exactly as designed.

Traffic segregation is another principle that dominated twentieth-century road design, to the detriment of safety. The idea is that pedestrians (and everyone else) should be kept safely out of drivers' ways. In London and Tokyo, pedestrian fences force the walking public onto the sidewalk. Meanwhile, Hong Kong posts bright blue signs: "Beware of Traffic." But segregation isn't always possible. Streets throughout Africa, the Americas, and Asia have poor or no sidewalks. Many cities in the developing world have seen pedestrian spaces taken over by parked cars, motorcycles, and vendors, forcing people to walk into the street.

Even though the root of the problem is the way the streets were designed, the trend has been to blame the victim. In many places, news reports of crashes tend to repeat claims (often dubious) that injured pedestrians or cyclists were distracted, delinquent, or insufficiently

visible. In 2017, Honolulu criminalized texting while walking across the street despite having no evidence that it was a serious safety issue. Other American cities, such as Salt Lake City, implore pedestrians to carry high-visibility flags when crossing the street.

In cities as different as Chicago and Los Angeles, there is frequent talk of licensing bike riders or requiring them to wear bike helmets. Although bike helmets are a reasonable precaution, legally requiring them for all riders only reduces the number of cyclists on the street and thus the traffic-calming effect that they bring. In many Australian cities, for example, helmet laws have not lowered traffic deaths; instead, they have merely hobbled public bike-share systems, whose riders don't want to carry a helmet wherever they go. Helmets aren't what make biking safer. There are no helmet requirements in Denmark, the Netherlands, or Norway—countries where bikes are widely used for transportation and that nonetheless report fewer bike deaths per mile ridden than the United States.

As well meaning as most traffic-safety laws tend to be, they aren't enough. Many societies have already had a century of practice training better drivers and writing better safety laws. Despite the laws on the books, vast numbers of crashes involve excessive speed, a failure to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, or drinking and drug use. In 2017, 29 percent of traffic deaths on American roads involved alcohol. An estimated ten percent of crashes involved distracted drivers, many of whom were using cell phones. Instead of trying to legislate safety, a more effective approach is to design it.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The process can and should begin in cities. Although a 2018 study of 26 countries by the International Transport Forum found that most traffic deaths occur in rural areas, where speeding is common and where there is no space on the road for pedestrians, cyclists, or motorcyclists, the pattern is shifting as urbanization continues across the world. (By 2050, city dwellers are expected to compose 68 percent of the global population.) In city after city, a new generation of urban planners is finding new ways to reduce traffic deaths by retrofitting roads, sometimes dramatically.

Although the average transportation agency confines itself to repairing potholes, repaving roads, maintaining signs, and so on, there is much more that municipal governments can do. From 2007 to 2013, both of us worked in the New York City Department of Transportation

Unsafe at any speed: a traffic jam in New Delhi, January 2008

under Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Our approach to traffic safety was simple and cost effective. Instead of dreaming up megaprojects, we took a long, hard look at the streets we already had, this time from the perspective of the most vulnerable people.

Between 2007 and 2013, the Department of Transportation redesigned lengthy portions of 137 streets and revamped 113 intersections—expanding the space to walk, decreasing crossing distances for pedestrians, and making streets navigable enough for children, senior citizens, and people with physical disabilities to cross. By narrowing lanes and putting drivers in closer contact with pedestrians and cyclists, the redesigns forced drivers to proceed, turn, and change lanes more slowly and predictably. We also collaborated with the New York City Police Department to implement reduced speed limits, using cameras to catch cars speeding, running red lights, or intruding in bus lanes.

What's more, we converted 180 acres of New York City road space into bike lanes, bus lanes, and new pedestrian space. This included making 2.5 acres in Times Square car free: Broadway was transformed from a taxi-choked corridor into a walkable haven. Instead of being forced by crowds to venture into the street, pedestrians now amble

TOMAS MUNITA / THE NEW YORK TIMES

through the iconic destination at their leisure. We also introduced the first parking-protected bike lanes in the United States. In many cities, if a bike lane even exists, it is sandwiched between a lane of parked cars and a lane of moving traffic. Parking-protected bike lanes, by contrast, run alongside the curb and push the parking zone for cars a full lane into the street. This means cyclists don't have to ride within arm's reach of passing cars.

Transportation officials can't wait for driverless cars to make streets safe.

The results were visible in every borough—in the crowded avenues of Manhattan, the residential side streets of Brooklyn, the commercial centers of Queens, and the busy boulevards of the Bronx and Staten Island, many of which hadn't changed in generations. From 2001 to 2019, traffic deaths along all of New York City's 6,000 miles of roadway dropped by over 44 percent—from 394 to just 219—even as the number of pedestrians on the city's streets increased and bike ridership tripled. The city saw a 37 percent drop in pedestrian deaths and similar reductions for those injured in a car.

This people-focused strategy has worked for some of the world's most unforgiving streets, including in several cities where we worked with Bloomberg Associates and the Global Designing Cities Initiative to apply many of the designs pioneered in New York City. Mexico City was once one of the world's most dangerous cities, with some 1,000 traffic deaths a year. But between 2015 and 2017, Mayor Miguel Ángel Mancera had 171 intersections redesigned so that there were clearly defined lanes, pedestrian medians, and crosswalks. He also reduced the citywide speed limit and ramped up traffic enforcement by using speed cameras. The redesigns helped lead to an 18 percent reduction in traffic deaths, including a 24 percent drop in pedestrian deaths. The number of bike riders killed fell by 78 percent.

Halfway around the world, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, officials introduced shortened crosswalks for pedestrians at a busy intersection in the city center, modifications that made it easier to cross the street while also forcing vehicles to slow down significantly in order to turn. The number of serious injuries fell by half in the six months after the project, and the number of deaths went down from one before the change to zero after.

In Mumbai in 2017, a traffic-safety project at the menacing Mithchowki intersection reclaimed 17,760 square feet of roadway

from cars and redesigned them for crowds of pedestrians. Using brightly painted movable barriers, a road-safety team created safe waiting spaces and simplified the process of crossing the street. After the modifications, officials noticed a 53 percent increase in sidewalk use. More important, 81 percent of people surveyed said they felt safer at the location as a result of the project.

Similarly, between 2018 and 2020, Milan under Mayor Giuseppe Sala transformed ten squares that were once clogged with parked cars into community-friendly spaces, with benches, tables, and planters. Where cars once roamed, children now play ping pong and neighbors greet one another.

Most of the time, urban planners do not have to reinvent the wheel. They have the experience and testimony of others to draw on. For instance, the *Global Street Design Guide* synthesizes the real-world experience and practices of experts from 72 cities spanning 42 countries. The guide has now been adopted by 100 cities and several nongovernmental organizations focused on traffic safety. It represents a sea change for street design, putting pedestrians and cyclists, rather than freight and private vehicles, at the top of the street hierarchy.

Often, all it takes to make streets safer is paint, planters, and basic materials already in stock in city depots, such as stones, signs, and flexible traffic posts. Even so, given the scale of the changes, municipal governments will require sustained investment to expand on these proven safety practices and turn the tide on traffic deaths.

THE ROAD AHEAD

If low-tech solutions can have such a tremendous impact on human health, what about high-end technologies? The driverless-car industry contends that it is at the forefront of the traffic-safety charge—promising that autonomous vehicles could be programmed to maintain safe speeds no matter the environment. They point out that a combination of GPS data and sign-recognition cameras in cars can limit a vehicle to the posted or official speed limits.

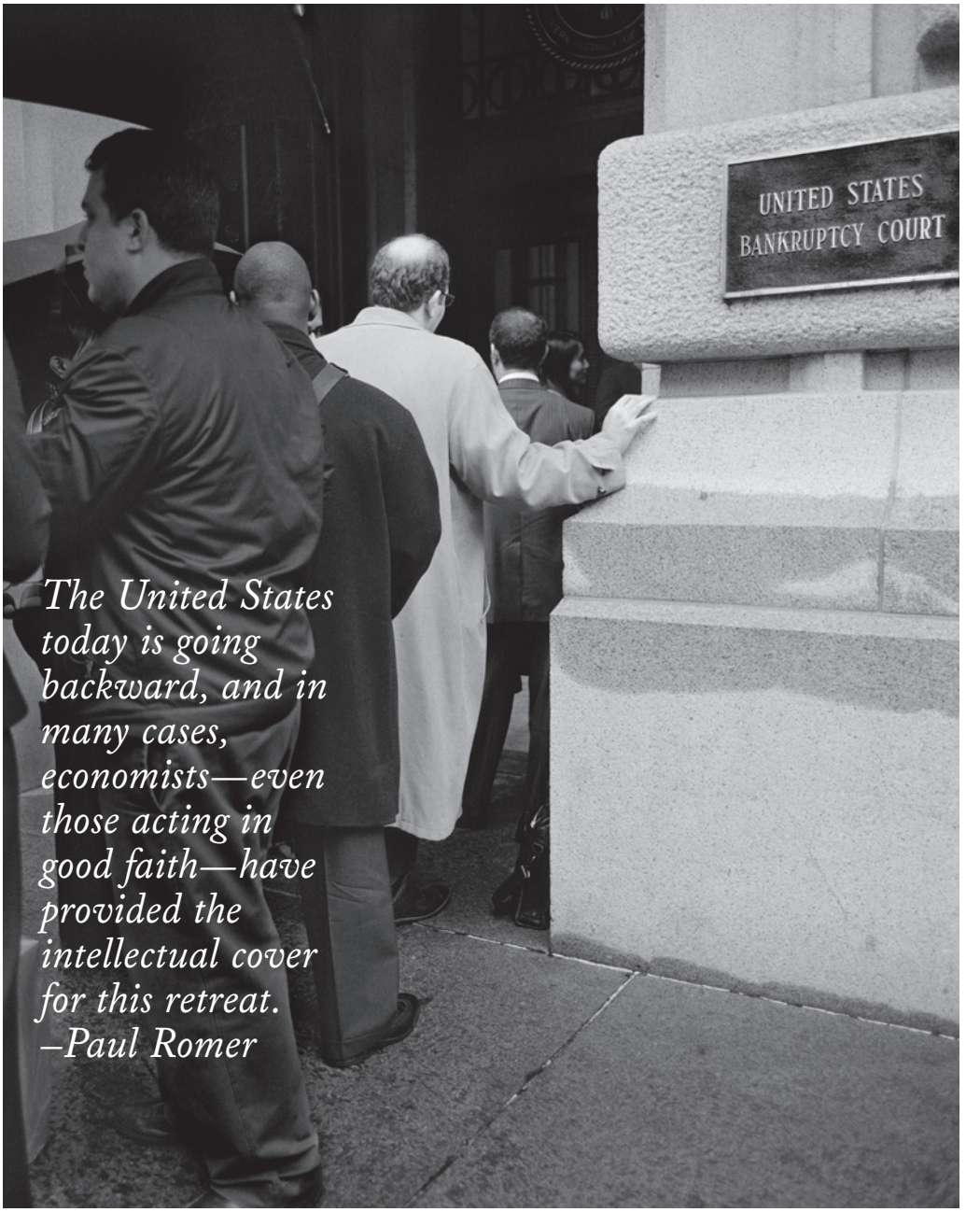
It's all well and good to claim that driverless cars operating in a closed, connected system would be safer. But everything is different on the open road, where those cars would need to drive alongside hundreds of millions of human-driven vehicles, whose operators are still speeding, cutting one another off, and jockeying for position. There has been only one death involving an autonomous car, but even one

death doesn't speak well of the technology's capabilities in city centers alive with thousands of human actors—a jumble of people walking, biking, making deliveries, panhandling, and so on.

Transportation officials can't wait for driverless cars to make streets safe. Sidewalks won't extend themselves; crosswalks won't magically appear. Countries can't bet their futures on the promise that better cars or better drivers will reverse the damage caused by a century of car-obsessed roadway design. If cities want infrastructure that accommodates all users, they need to lead by example and reclaim, redesign, and reconstruct their roads.

Government and public health officials routinely face problems that exceed their capacities and powers. Traffic deaths are not one of them. Indeed, traffic-related fatalities are unusual in that their causes are as straightforward as their solutions. Eliminating most health hazards on the roadway doesn't require new technologies or unsustainable investments. It requires changing how we view traffic deaths and injuries, treating them as avoidable byproducts of a crisis in urban design rather than an inevitable feature of modern life. There is already a revolution underway to redesign city streets to a new standard. But there is still much work to be done and a growing population that needs protection.

REVIEWS & RESPONSES



The United States today is going backward, and in many cases, economists—even those acting in good faith—have provided the intellectual cover for this retreat.
–Paul Romer

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The Dismal Kingdom

Do Economists Have Too Much Power?

Paul Romer

The Economists' Hour: False Prophets, Free Markets, and the Fracture of Society
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Transaction Man: The Rise of the Deal and the Decline of the American Dream
BY NICHOLAS LEMANN. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019, 320 pp.

Over the past 60 years, the United States has run what amounts to a natural experiment designed to answer a simple question: What happens when a government starts conducting its business in the foreign language of economists? After 1960, anyone who wanted to discuss almost any aspect of U.S. public policy—from how to make cars safer to whether to abolish the draft, from how to support the housing market to whether to regulate the financial sector—had to speak economics. Economists, the thinking went, promised expertise and fact-based analysis. They would bring scientific precision and rigor to government interventions.

For a while, this approach seemed a sure bet for steady progress. But several decades on, the picture is less encouraging. Consider, for example, the most basic quantitative indicator of well-being: the average length of a life. For much of the last century, life expectancy in the United States increased roughly in tandem with that in western Europe. But over the last four decades, the United States has been falling further and further behind. In 1980, the average American life was a year longer than the average European one. Today, it is two years shorter. For a long time, U.S. life expectancy was still rising but more slowly than in Europe; in recent years, it has been falling. A society is hardly making progress when its people are dying younger.

Binyamin Appelbaum makes this point in his new book, *The Economists' Hour.* That book and another recent one—*Transaction Man,* by Nicholas Lemann—converge on the conclusion that the economists at the helm are doing more harm than good.

Both books are compelling and well reported, and both were written by journalists—outsiders who bring historical perspective to the changing role of economists in American society. Appelbaum tracks their influence across a wide range of policy questions since the 1960s. The language and the concepts of economics helped shape debates about unemployment and taxation, as one would expect. But they also influenced how the state handled military conscription, how it regulated airplane and railway travel, and how its courts interpreted laws limiting corporate power. Together, Appelbaum writes, economists'

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countless interventions in U.S. public policy have amounted to no less than a "revolution"—well intentioned but with unanticipated consequences that were far from benign.

Lemann chronicles another, related revolution. In the first half of the twentieth century, especially after the calamity of the Great Depression, the conventional wisdom held that the power of corporations must be held in check by other comparably sized organizations—churches, unions, and, above all, a strong national government. But in the decades that followed, a new generation of economists argued that tweaks to how companies operated—more hostile takeovers, more reliance on corporate debt, bigger bonuses for executives when stock prices increased—would enable the market to regulate itself, obviating the need for stringent government oversight. Their suggestions soon became reality, especially in a newly deregulated financial sector, where they precipitated the emergence of junk bonds and other questionable innovations. Like Appelbaum, Lemann concludes that economists' uncritical embrace of the market changed U.S. society for the worse.

Voters, too, have their doubts, in the United States and beyond. In the run-up to the 2016 Brexit vote, Michael Gove, then the British justice secretary, was asked to name economists who supported his position that the United Kingdom should leave the European Union. He refused. "People in this country have had enough of experts," he snapped. "I'm not asking the public to trust me. I'm asking the public to trust themselves." A majority of the British electorate followed his cue and voted to leave the EU, the warnings of countless economists be damned.

Economists should take that outcome as an admonition warranting a major course change. Writing in 2018, the economists David Colander and Craig Freedman proposed one such correction. Over the course of the twentieth century, they contended, economists had built more and more sophisticated models to guide public policy, and many succumbed to hubris in the process. To regain the public's trust, economists should return to the humility of their nineteenth-century forebears, who emphasized the limits of their knowledge and welcomed others—experts, political leaders, and voters—to fill in the gaps. Economists today should recommit to that approach, even if it requires them to publicly expel from their ranks any member of the community who habitually overreaches.

ESCAPE FROM THE BASEMENT

Appelbaum's book begins with a revealing anecdote from the 1950s about Paul Volcker, at the time a young economist working in the bowels of the Federal Reserve System and disillusioned about his career prospects. Among the Fed's national leadership were bankers, lawyers, and a hog farmer from Iowa—but no economists. In 1970, William McChesney Martin, Jr., then chair of the Federal Reserve's Board of Governors, could still explain to a visitor that although economists asked good questions, they worked from the basement because "they don't know their own limitations, and they have a far greater sense of confidence in their analyses than I have found to be warranted."

But Martin was on his way out, and as Appelbaum shows in the chapters that follow, economists were emerging from the basement—not just at the Fed

but also across the government. To take just one example, consider the rapid spread of cost-benefit analysis as the tool of choice for assessing health and safety regulations. When the U.S. Congress created the Department of Transportation in 1966 and told it to make motor vehicles safer, lawmakers did not ask regulators to weigh the potential costs and benefits of proposed new rules: after all, no one could possibly determine the value of a human life. The economists Thomas Schelling and W. Kip Viscusi disagreed, arguing that people did in fact place a dollar value on human life, albeit implicitly, and that economists could calculate it.

Regulators initially rejected this approach, but as complaints about burdensome safety regulations grew louder, some began to waver. In 1974, the Department of Transportation used a cost-benefit analysis to reject a proposed requirement that trucks be fitted with so-called Mansfield bars, designed to prevent the type of accident that had killed the actress Jayne Mansfield in 1967. The cost of installing the bars on every truck, regulators calculated, would exceed the combined value of the lives that the bars would save. Soon, every participant in the conversation about safety regulations was expected to state and defend a specific dollar value for a life lost or saved.

Unfortunately, asking economists to set a value for human life obscured the fundamental distinction between the two questions that feed into every policy decision. One is empirical: What will happen if the government adopts this policy? The other is normative: Should the government adopt it? Economists can use evidence and logic to answer the first question. But there is no factual or logical argument that can answer the second one. In truth, the answer lies in beliefs about right and wrong, which differ from one individual to the next and evolve over time, much like people's political views.

In principle, it is possible to maintain a clear separation between these two types of questions. Economists can answer such empirical questions as how much it would cost if the government required Mansfield bars. It is up to officials—and, by extension, up to the voters who put them in office—to answer the corresponding normative question: What cost should society bear to save a life in any particular context?

In practice, however, voters can provide only so much in the way of quantifiable directives. People may vote for an administration that promises safer cars, but that mandate alone is not specific enough to guide decisions such as whether to require Mansfield bars. Lacking clear guidance from voters, legislators, regulators, and judges turned to economists, who resolved the uncertainty by claiming to have found an empirical answer to the normative question at hand. In effect, by taking on the responsibility to determine for everyone the amount that society should spend to save a life, economists had agreed to play the role of the philosopher-king.

In Appelbaum's account, this arrangement seems to have worked out surprisingly well in setting standards for automobile safety. Economists in the mold of Schelling and Viscusi seem to have channeled as best they could the moral beliefs of the median voter.

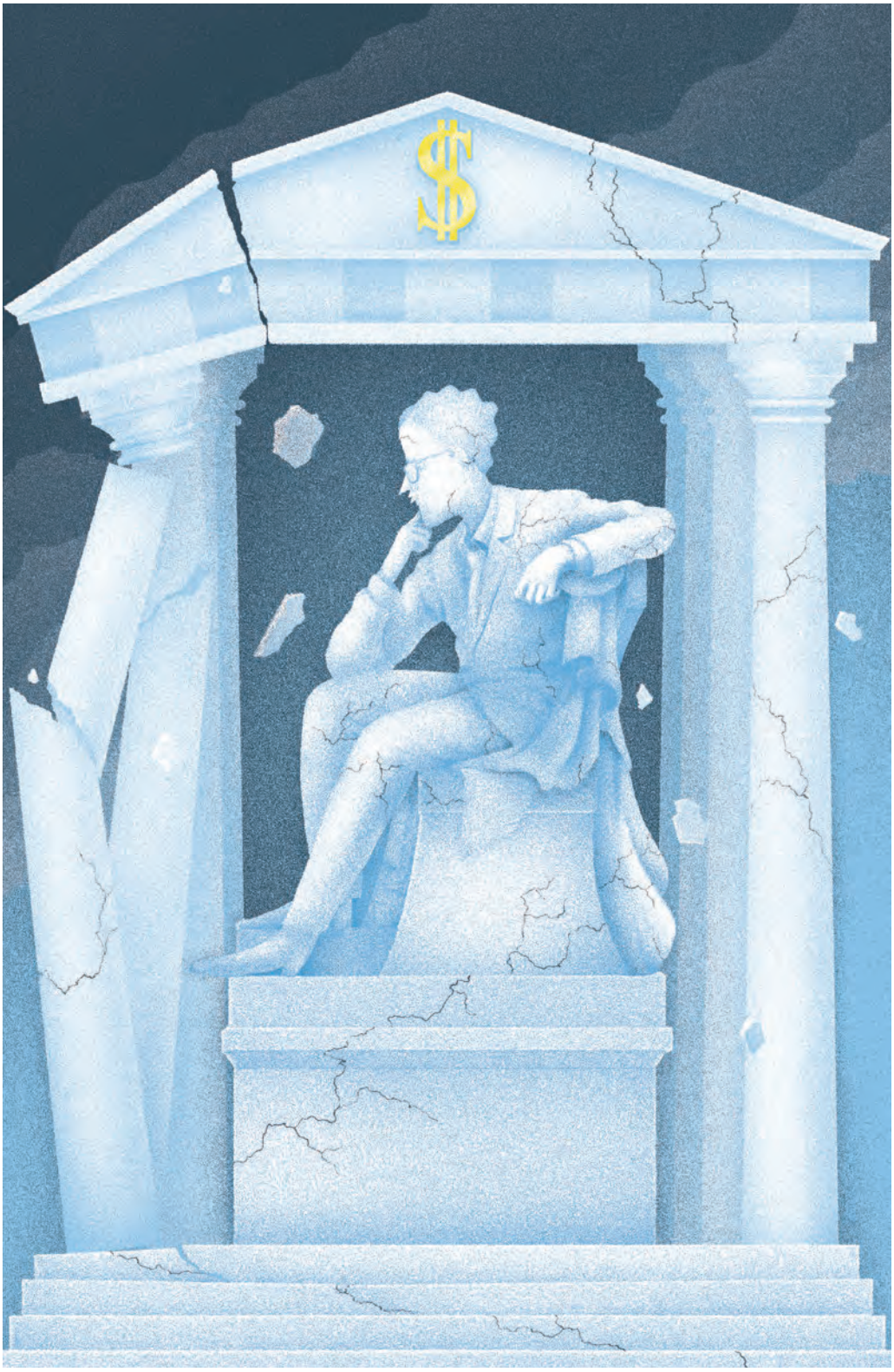

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN McSORLEY

When regulators first rejected Mansfield bars, in 1974, they put the value of a life at $200,000, but in response to pressure from voters demanding fewer traffic fatalities, economists and regulators gradually adjusted that number upward. Eventually, as the estimated value of the human lives lost to car accidents began to exceed the cost of installing Mansfield bars, regulators made the bars mandatory, and voters got the outcome they wanted.

Unfortunately, this outcome may have been possible only because, although the moral stakes were high, the financial stakes were not. No firm faced billions of dollars in gains or losses depending on whether the government mandated Mansfield bars. As a result, none had an incentive to use its massive financial resources to corrupt the regulatory process and bias its decisions, and the "don't ask, don't tell" system of using economists as philosopher-kings worked reasonably well.

The trouble arose when the stakes were higher—when the potential gains or losses extended into the tens of billions or hundreds of billions of dollars, as they do in decisions about regulating the financial sector, preventing dominant firms from stifling competition, or stopping a pharmaceutical firm from getting people addicted to painkillers. In such circumstances, it is all too easy for a firm that has a lot riding on the outcome to arrange for a pliant pretend economist to assume the role of the philosopher-king—someone willing to protect the firm's reckless behavior from government interference and to do so with a veneer of objectivity and scientific expertise.

Simply put, a system that delegates to economists the responsibility for answering normative questions may yield many reasonable decisions when the stakes are low, but it will fail and cause enormous damage when powerful industries are brought into the mix. And it takes only a few huge failures to offset whatever positive difference smaller, successful interventions have made.

One such failure is prescription drug regulation. In the United States in 1990, overdoses on legal and illegal drugs accounted for four deaths per 100,000. By 2017, they were causing 20 deaths per 100,000. A little math reveals that this increase is a major reason why average life expectancy in the United States lags so far behind that in western Europe today. A recent paper by four economists—Abby Alpert, William Evans, Ethan Lieber, and David Powell—concluded that OxyContin, the opioid-based painkiller that generated billions in revenue for the U.S. pharmaceutical giant Purdue Pharma, was responsible for a substantial fraction of those new drug overdoses.

Imagine making the following proposal in the 1950s: Give for-profit firms the freedom to develop highly addictive painkillers and to promote them via sophisticated, aggressive, and very effective marketing campaigns targeted at doctors. Had one made this pitch to the bankers, the lawyers, and the hog farmer on the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve back then, they would have rejected it outright. If pressed to justify their decision, they surely would not have been able to offer a cost-benefit analysis to back up their reasoning, nor would they have felt any need to. To know that it is morally wrong to let a company make a profit by killing people would have been enough.

By the 1990s, such arguments were out of bounds, because the language and elaborate concepts of economists left no opening for more practically minded people to express their values plainly. And when the Drug Enforcement Administration finally tried to limit the distribution of these painkillers, pharmaceutical companies launched a massive lobbying effort in favor of a bill in Congress that would strip the DEA of the power to freeze suspicious narcotics shipments by drug companies. It is a safe bet that these lobbyists made their arguments to Congress in the language of growth, incentives, and the danger of innovation-killing regulations. The push succeeded, and the DEA lost one of its most powerful tools for saving lives.

Of course, during earlier eras, regulators allowed many industries to profit massively from products known to be harmful; Big Tobacco is the most obvious example. But until the 1980s, the overarching trend was toward restrictions that reined in these abuses. Progress was painfully slow, but it was progress nonetheless, and life expectancy increased. The difference today is that the United States is going backward, and in many cases, economists—even those acting in good faith—have provided the intellectual cover for this retreat.

THE COST OF DEREGULATION

Perhaps no one has captured the mindset that made possible such a massive regulatory failure—the mindset that economists really are philosopher-kings, who can instruct the public on right and wrong—better than Alan Greenspan, who was chair of the Federal Reserve at the time when Washington was easing regulations on many sectors. "Unfettered markets create a degree of wealth that fosters a more civilized existence," Greenspan told a group of business economists in 2002. "I have always found that insight compelling."

Greenspan was hardly alone in this conviction, and the most damaging forms of deregulation were those that removed constraints on financial firms, as Lemann reveals in his account of the career of Michael Jensen, an economist who helped reshape the U.S. financial sector in the late twentieth century. Jensen rightly worried about several problems that bedeviled the market, including how to keep corporate executives from promoting their own interests at the expense of shareholders. His proposed solutions—hostile takeovers, debt, and executive bonuses that tracked the share price of a firm, among other changes—were widely adopted.

Corporate shareholders saw their earnings skyrocket, but the main effect of the changes was to empower the financial sector, which Greenspan, for his part, worked doggedly to unfetter. As Lemann writes, Jensen's ideas also helped chip away at the power of the traditional Corporate Man—the sort of executive whose pursuit of profit was tempered somewhat by a commitment to noneconomic norms, among them a belief in the need to foster trust and build long-term relationships across company lines. Taking his place was Transaction Man, who focused on little more than driving up share prices by any means necessary.

Deregulation, coupled with the new ethos of Transaction Man, invited immensely destructive behavior. One particularly egregious example occurred

in 2007. That year, Paulson & Company, a hedge fund led by the investor John Paulson, paid Goldman Sachs approximately $15 million to structure and market a bundle of mortgage-backed securities. According to a civil lawsuit later filed against Goldman (but not against Paulson & Company) by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Goldman had included in the investment product mortgages that Paulson & Company believed were likely to end in default. In a 2010 settlement with the SEC, Goldman conceded that in marketing the product to clients, it had omitted both the role of Paulson & Company in designing the product and the hedge fund's bet against it. According to the SEC, investors soon lost over $1 billion; Paulson & Company, by taking the opposite position, earned approximately the same amount.

Jensen quickly realized that Goldman's behavior was cause for concern, and he inveighed against the cultural changes that had eroded the firm's erstwhile commitment to integrity in its long-term relationships with its clients. Banks were, Lemann quotes him as saying, "lying, cheating, stealing." It "sickened" Jensen that senior executives had avoided jail time in the wake of the financial crisis that followed.

It is not clear whether Jensen has ever considered the possibility that by promoting a system that relied on transactions instead of relationships, he himself may have contributed to the erosion of trust and integrity in the U.S. financial sector. He seems not to have lost his faith that one more adjustment to the system might restore the miracle of the market. But he has not found that adjustment. He ended his professional career preaching the gospel of corporate integrity to empty pews.

Lemann balances his account of Jensen's career with the story of people whose lives were damaged by a deregulated financial system that let a new breed of mortgage broker mimic the predatory practices of payday lenders with impunity. In the 1990s, so many of those brokers opened storefront offices on Pulaski Road, on Chicago's South Side, that residents came to refer to it as "Mortgage Row." Lemann describes the effect these lenders had on one nearby neighborhood, Chicago Lawn. Teaser rates kept mortgage payments low for the first 24 months of a loan, but then they increased dramatically to levels that many borrowers could not possibly afford. Like clockwork, two years after being purchased, houses went into foreclosure. Many were abandoned.

Neighborhood activists tried to stop the destruction of human capital caused by debt that overwhelmed the tenuous lives of the working poor, the destruction of physical capital caused by thieves who stripped water heaters and copper pipe from abandoned houses, and the destruction of social capital caused by abandoned houses that turned into crime hot spots. On top of these visible injuries, the people of Chicago Lawn had to bear the insult of official indifference. A decade before the collapse of the U.S. housing market rocked the global financial system, the damage done by subprime lending was already evident in their neighborhood. But in 1998, the Federal Reserve, under Greenspan, refused requests from alarmed consumer advocates that it examine the subprime-lending activities of the banks it regulated.

After more than a decade of damage to their neighborhood, the citizens of Chicago Lawn watched as the officials who would not even look into that damage saved the banks that had caused it. No amount of econosplaining could change the message this conveyed: everybody has to accept what the market gives them—except the people who work in the financial sector. Today's record-low unemployment rate shows that ten years on, the most direct harm from the financial crisis has healed. But deeper wounds remain. Wage growth for workers has been slow, and the crisis caused a massive and long-lasting reduction in incomes across the world—and perhaps an even longer-lasting populist backlash against the political institutions of many countries.

A NEW HUMILITY

In their attempt to answer normative questions that the science of economics could not address, economists opened the door to economic ideologues who lacked any commitment to scientific integrity. Among these pretend economists, the ones who prized supposed freedom (especially freedom from regulation) over all other concerns proved most useful—not to society at large but to companies that wanted the leeway to generate a profit even if they did pervasive harm in the process. When the stakes were high, firms sought out these ideologues to act as their representatives and further their agenda. And just like their more reputable peers, these pretend economists used the unfamiliar language of economics to obscure the moral judgments that undergirded their advice.

Throughout his entire career, Greenspan worked to give financial institutions more leeway and in doing so helped create the conditions that led to the financial crisis. He did so in the name of economics—indeed, in the public consciousness, he came to personify the field. But his opposition to regulation was invulnerable to evidence. Until he took control at the Fed, he was a hired gun, ready to defend firms in the financial sector from regulators who tried to protect the public. In this role, he reportedly said that he had "never seen a constructive regulation yet." If economists continue to let people like him define their discipline, the public will send them back to the basement, and for good reason.

The alternative is to make honesty and humility prerequisites for membership in the community of economists. The easy part is to challenge the pretenders. The hard part is to say no when government officials look to economists for an answer to a normative question. Scientific authority never conveys moral authority. No economist has a privileged insight into questions of right and wrong, and none deserves a special say in fundamental decisions about how society should operate. Economists who argue otherwise and exert undue influence in public debates about right and wrong should be exposed for what they are: frauds.

The Wily Country

Understanding Putin's Russia

Michael Kimmage

Between Two Fires: Truth, Ambition, and Compromise in Putin's Russia
BY JOSHUA YAFFA. Tim Duggan Books, 2020, 368 pp.

Not since the McCarthy era has Russia been so present in the American psyche and so close to the fevered core of American politics. But being present is not the same as being known. Russia's recent ubiquity in U.S. politics has coincided with a precipitous decline in contact between the two countries: among diplomats (a result of U.S. efforts to isolate Russia for its misdeeds in Ukraine and elsewhere), among heads of state and political elites, among scholars, and among ordinary citizens. U.S. academic work on Russia has been steadily diminishing since the end of the Cold War. Very few Americans now learn the Russian language or study Russian history, and a great deal of U.S. journalism on Russia suffers from hyperbole, paranoia, and clichés.

In this milieu, the journalist Joshua Yaffa has distinguished himself with his rigor, his acumen, and his nuanced voice. Since 2013, Yaffa (who earlier in his career was an editor at this magazine) has been writing about Russia for *The New Yorker,* filing articles on politics, diplomacy, and culture not only from the country's big cities but also from Russia's many far-flung regions; he has also written some of the most penetrating and well-researched essays on U.S.-Ukrainian relations in the Trump era. His in-depth reporting consistently allows him to move beyond the headlines, revealing the deeper historical and sociological patterns that underpin that notoriously contradictory country.

Yaffa's excellent new book, *Between Two Fires*, traces the lives of a group of ambitious Russians who lived through the transition from the Soviet era to the post-Soviet one. Each is aware of a certain truth about the Russian world, and each must navigate a political system that runs less on tyranny than on carefully calibrated compromises. A few of them succeed because they learn the dance. Others bear the burden of being principled.

And yet as finely tuned to complicated Russian realities as Yaffa is, *Between Two Fires* is ultimately a missed opportunity. Like many other books written by Westerners about contemporary Russia, it takes as its baseline the intelligentsia of Moscow and St. Petersburg, exploring their dreams of liberty and wondering whether they will ever come true. That is an old and venerable subject, one that Russian and foreign observers alike have speculated about extensively since the early nineteenth century. But focusing on it obscures the more basic and more consequential task of evaluating post-Soviet Russia as it is, rather than as it should be—or should be from an American point of view.

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For more than two decades after the Soviet collapse, U.S. analysts and policymakers saw Russia as predisposed to mirror the United States in political economy and culture. Russia, however, stubbornly refused to do so. In 2014, when Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded and annexed Crimea, the U.S.-Russian divergence was complete. In the years since, Washington's anger and disappointment over Russia's course have boiled over, especially after Moscow meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. According to a view common among American pundits, Russia has become a rogue state, an unnatural entity more akin to a criminal enterprise than a nation-state. And yet after a long series of dashed expectations, many still believe that one day the rogue will vanish and the "real" Russia will finally emerge. This is a fantasy. The sober intellectual chore of U.S. policymakers and Russia watchers is to understand Russian recalcitrance and tease out the non-Western trajectory of this sprawling country on Europe's edge.

THE STORY SO FAR

Yaffa's book unfolds in three acts. The first act chronicles a phase of relative openness in Russian society during the 1990s, when personal freedom was palpable; both the Soviet past and the Russian future were bracingly uncertain, both susceptible to interpretation and reinterpretation. But this period was shadowed by the chaotic shift from one form of government to another, in which executive authority expanded in direct proportion to the loss of democratic agency. In a poignant chapter set partly during this time, Yaffa details the construction of a gulag museum in Siberia. Opened in 1996, it was a site of public memory, an instance of civil society in action, and a chance to link an honest discussion of history with the new directions of Russian political life. For a while, the museum did its job, hosting exhibitions that authorities sometimes saw as unwelcome provocations. Then, around 2014, the difficulties began. State control supplanted independent leadership, and a museum that had registered criticism of the Soviet regime yielded to one that celebrated victory in World War II. It was an emblematic transition: in Putin's Russia, either the institutions of civil society are absorbed into the regime or they cease to exist.

The second act begins in 2000, when Putin took power, which Yaffa recalls as "a moment between the abject chaos and hardship of the nineties and the routinized, top-down strictures of the vertical of power that would descend in the years to come." Putin bestowed prosperity with one hand and dished out repression with the other, not depriving Russians of their newfound freedoms so much as forcing those freedoms into the margins, where they would not disrupt the government's hold on power. Some Russians stood to benefit from the relative stability of early Putinism. To do so, they had to make their peace with the Kremlin's imperatives, assisting when requested and avoiding criticism that might have proved destabilizing.

In Yaffa's telling, the system depends on more than run-of-the-mill opportunism and coercion. He probes the evolution of the human rights advocate Heda Saratova, who is not motivated by money or personal gain but whose work is made easier by government support. Over time, she starts to cooperate with Chechnya's strongman ruler,

Ramzan Kadyrov, a relationship that helps her with her day-to-day projects and helps Kadyrov with his public image. The coils of co-optation are not necessarily chains. They can be worn lightly and, at times, in the name of doing good.

In the past few years, Yaffa relates, the early Putin period has faded into an ongoing third act, in which "things begin to look a lot more fragile." Inequality is rising, the middle class is under pressure, and Putin is getting old. Russians today are "open, curious, and ambitious, but not—at least not yet—desperate and insurrectionary," Yaffa writes. Their quiescence or their rage will set the stage for the fourth act, post-Putin. Yaffa devotes an intriguing chapter to the sad story of Pavel Adelgeim, a Russian Orthodox priest who suffered for his faith during the Soviet era and who, until his death in 2013, refused to align himself with the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church in post-Soviet Russia and supported protests against Putin. Adelgeim personifies a regime-critical Christianity that could fit into a future pro-democracy movement, one in which dissent would be a vehicle of patriotism and empathy would act as a social glue.

SURVIVAL OF THE WILIEST

Although Yaffa's three acts coincide with periods in Putin's rise and rule, *Between Two Fires* does not put the Russian leader at the center of the drama. Yaffa contends that Putin is "less the country's captor than a manifestation of its collective subconscious." And the wellspring of the collective Russian subconscious, according to Yaffa, is wiliness. Soviet citizens were reliant on the state. They had to adjust to its demands, and in the process, a "survival mechanism" evolved into an ethos: "citizen and state subconsciously worked together to ensure that the individual took agency in stifling his own freedom and chances for self-realization."

Putin has cultivated the Russian talent for wiliness, Yaffa explains. Putin constructed a regime that is knowingly arbitrary in its depredations, forcing any ambitious person to figure out the rules of engagement and decide how much personal freedom and initiative to carve out and how opportunistic to be. This compromising balance of reward and punishment, of liberty and state control, describes "the future contours of Russian society," in Yaffa's words.

Yaffa wisely avoids prophecy, yet he is convinced that wiliness has an enduring appeal in Russia. If Putin can continue harnessing it, he will go forward. If the wily Russian mind starts to see diminishing returns in the house that Putin built, the social contract will unravel, and Putin will become a politician in search of a constituency.

Wiliness is a universal trait, and for Yaffa, it serves as a reasonable enough bridge between the Soviet past and the Russian present. It's debatable whether Russia is a country where "venal self-interest had long become the norm" and is therefore especially prone to wiliness, as Yaffa asserts. But his beautifully wrought portraiture more than proves the residual nature of wiliness in Russian society. As an explanation for why contemporary Russians think and act as they do, the persistence of wiliness is more convincing than the return of a totalitarian political culture, which many Putin critics allege has taken place. "Most people are neither Stalin nor Solzhenitsyn," Yaffa writes, "but, in their own way,

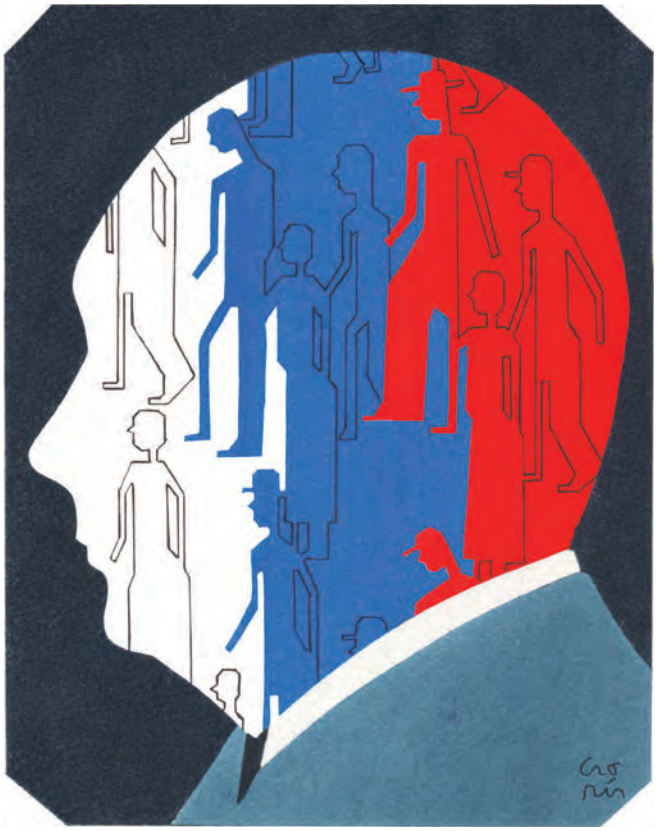

ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN CRONIN

wily." In office, Putin has burnished the reputations of the Soviet leader and the Soviet dissident and has embraced the iconography of the Soviet Union and that of the Russian Orthodox Church. As the wiliest of them all, Putin is no stranger to such contradictions.

However, by reaching back to wiliness and an attitude that is so indigenously Soviet, Yaffa understates the distinctiveness of post-Soviet Russia. The Soviet Union fell apart not only because the Georgians, the Lithuanians, the Ukrainians, and other non-Russians rose up against it but also because the Russians themselves did. The aspirations of independence-minded Russians in 1991 were similar to those of the Soviet Union's other separatist populations. They wanted a country of their own. The Soviet empire had been robustly multiethnic. Not all of its leaders were ethnic Russians, whereas ethnic Russians figured prominently among the victims of Soviet rule.

The Russian Federation that crawled out from the Soviet Union was by no means homogeneous. Today's Russia is a patchwork of languages, religions, and peoples, and because of shifting borders (and Soviet population moves), many who consider themselves Russian live outside Russia's borders—especially in Ukraine. Yet the realignment of borders in 1991 also yielded the most coherently Russian state in Russian history. In particular, the top-down project of mapping a Russian identity onto an internationalist Soviet identity died with the Soviet Union, and for the first time since 1917, it was possible to contemplate an explicitly Russian polity in Russia, under a single Russian flag, even though the Russian language continues to have two different terms for affiliation with the Russian Federation: *russkii* (ethnic Russian) and *rossiiskii* (adhering to the Russian state).

For Russians, acquiring a country was the pivotal consequence of the 1991 revolution. Boris Yeltsin's presidency flowed directly from his challenge to the scrupulously communist and internationalist Mikhail Gorbachev, a widely disliked figure in post-Soviet Russia. Putin's popularity stems not just

from the stability that he imposed on the country after the messy 1990s, and not just from the wealth that gave some Russians an incentive to carry out wily service to the state, but also from the fact that most Russians have judged Putin an effective advocate for Russian nationhood. A key part of this advocacy has been a willingness to confront the West, which Putin began doing long before the Ukraine crisis. What Russians want more than a liberal country—a goal that galvanizes relatively few people outside Moscow and St. Petersburg—is an autonomous country. Putin has arranged Russian politics to enable such autonomy.

Yaffa is aware of this dynamic. He writes that "the two forces [in Russia]—state and citizen—speak in dialogue, a conversational timbre often missed by the foreign ear." But only by reading between the lines of *Between Two Fires* can one discern that dialogue. One of Yaffa's subjects, Oleg Zubkov, is a zookeeper and entrepreneur living in Crimea. Zubkov is a free spirit and a bon vivant, and Yaffa relishes his antiauthoritarian spirit. In the referendum that Putin conducted to decide Crimea's future after the Russian invasion in 2014, Zubkov happily voted for the territory to join Russia, although he later found himself in conflict with the Russian legal system. In the sincerity of his patriotism and his independence of mind, Zubkov ends up demonstrating a lack of wily gamesmanship—"at least the way the game is played in the Putin era," as Yaffa notes.

Another of Yaffa's main characters is the television producer Konstantin Ernst, who achieves wealth and status through his profession, assisting the powerful while retaining the sensibility of an aesthete. Ernst produces television that is regime-friendly yet sophisticated. He is a talented and obedient operator, but even this Kremlin insider displays sentiments that cannot be reduced to wiliness. In Yaffa's observation, Ernst approved of Russian policy toward Ukraine circa 2014, sensing in it "a moment of geopolitical score-settling, of upending a post–Cold War order that Ernst—like Putin, the rest of the Kremlin elite, and millions of Russians—felt had treated Russia harshly." Ernst is a sincere propagandist, free of the implacable cynicism that dominated the Soviet Union in its final decades.

One explanation for the pronounced wiliness of Yaffa's subjects is that almost all of them were born long before the breakup of the Soviet Union. They were forced to move as best they could between the two "fires" of the book's title: the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. In the final chapter of the book, however, Yaffa writes about a younger Russian, and the results suggest that he should have devoted far more attention to Russians born in the 1970s or later. Danila Prilepa captured Yaffa's interest when he asked a question on a 2017 televised call-in show with Putin. Prilepa, who was 16 at the time, confronted Putin about corruption, asking him what he planned to do about it and about the mounting loss of faith in the government. Some time later, Yaffa visited Prilepa at his family's home in Nefteyugansk, far from Moscow. In conversation, Prilepa revealed himself to be very critical of the Russian government, but to Yaffa's surprise, he was not alienated from it. Yaffa asked Prilepa if he "saw a difficulty in serving a state he had begun to sour on. 'No,' he said, 'I'm planning to serve my homeland, not a certain circle of people.'" This comment

contains multitudes. Perhaps in another book, Yaffa will bring his ample journalistic talent to bear in fleshing it out. If so, he would be doing a great service to his non-Russian readers.

BIRTH OF A NATION

American assessments, journalistic and otherwise, must do more to address Russian nationhood. It is one of Putin's crucial sources of legitimacy. His government is corrupt and inefficient. It does not grant Russian citizens real rights, and there is no freedom in Russia that the Kremlin does not have the power to curtail. Russians know these downsides of the Putin system. They tolerate them not only because they are wily and capable of profiting from the status quo. They tolerate the authoritarianism and the corruption because in some crucial sense the Russian government is theirs. It is the product of the state-citizen dialogue Yaffa identifies as inaudible to non-Russian ears. And in no domain is the Russian government so much the possession of Russians as in foreign policy. Russia's actions in Ukraine and in Syria since 2014 may bring few tangible benefits to the country's citizens, and they certainly incur costs, but they are the visible proof of Russian autonomy. Achieving autonomy is the goal of Russian foreign policy far more than an abstraction such as regaining great-power status, which is what Western policymakers usually define as the desired end state of Russian strategy.

The Russian hunger for national autonomy presents a conundrum for U.S. policy. For Moscow, the easiest way to demonstrate Russia's autonomy is to defy the United States, whatever the United States is doing. Washington and Moscow

have been engaged in geopolitical competition since 1945 (at least), with Moscow having already once been a spectacular loser in this contest. The American superpower is the single greatest obstacle to Russian autonomy. Consequently, the United States has the potential to inspire immense enmity in Russia, and its ability to generate goodwill is highly circumscribed. The Trump administration, which speaks a language of assertive nationalism at home and abroad, has allowed U.S.-Russian relations to deteriorate from the low point it inherited in January 2017. Meanwhile, Donald Trump's Democratic opponents have expressed horror at his slavish flattery of Putin but have failed to articulate a coherent Russia strategy of their own.

In conceptualizing a workable approach to Russia, the first thing American policymakers should do is acknowledge Russian nationhood as the key factor in the post-Soviet world. Putin has sought, with some success, to nudge the international system away from the ideals of democracy and sustained multilateralism and toward the imperatives of national power, prestige, and influence. The goal of projecting autonomous nationhood outward will guide Russian foreign policy long after Putin chooses to retire or is pushed aside. Washington can seek out ways of bending this Russian goal to U.S. interests by stipulating redlines (such as NATO's inviolability and the integrity of the U.S. democratic process), exploring potential points of cooperation on counterterrorism and climate change, and signaling to the Russian people that a European security architecture and Russian nationhood are not mutually exclusive, whatever the Kremlin might say about the impossibility of decent relations with the West. This message can be delivered through speeches and cultural diplomacy directed at the Russian public—a form of communication that high-level U.S. politicians have long neglected—and through a public willingness to engage in a bilateral strategic dialogue Moscow, as Washington regularly does with Beijing.

The familiar story of Russian liberty lost or unachieved—of which *Between Two Fires* is a superb example—can help inform a better U.S. approach to Russia. But much more helpful would be the less frequently told story of Russian nationhood and of its development along lines very different from those that led to American or western European nationhood. In this time of fervid preoccupation with Russia, that is not a narrative in search of an audience. It is a narrative in search of an author.

Recent Books

Political and Legal

G. John Ikenberry

The Light That Failed: Why the West Is Losing the Fight for Democracy
BY IVAN KRASTEV AND STEPHEN HOLMES. Pegasus Books, 2020, 256 pp.

In this original and deeply thought-provoking study, Krastev and Holmes argue that the retreat from liberal democracy in eastern Europe and elsewhere is rooted in liberalism's post-1989 global triumph. With the collapse of communism, Western liberalism had no rival. U.S. unipolarity set the stage, and liberal democracy became an all-encompassing model of modernity. What followed was "copycat Westernization," in which countries all over the world found themselves pressured to mimic the institutions, values, and ways of life of the United States and western Europe. In eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, this mimicry was all the more painful because these same countries had just been released from the ideological and institutional impositions of the Soviet era; now, they were again adopting the ideas and identities of a superpower, albeit under less duress. The result has been a deep and festering resentment in those societies, a collective "psychological stress" that has culminated in a widespread political backlash against liberalism. In Krastev and Holmes's account, the right-wing politics coming to the fore in Hungary, Poland, and other postcommunist countries has less to do with the reassertion of primordial nationalist and illiberal identities than with a perceived need on the part of citizens in those places for independence, recognition, and dignity. The authors argue that, especially after the long wake of the 2008 financial crisis, Western defenders of liberal democracy need to offer a more realistic vision of world order, making room for alternative models while maintaining faith in the resilience of liberalism.

Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination
BY ADOM GETACHEW. Princeton University Press, 2019, 288 pp.

In the mid-twentieth century, empires collapsed and postcolonial peoples around the world struggled for self-rule. In this important book, Getachew presents a sweeping new account of the global visions of the activists who led this charge. Scholars have typically seen the post-1945 decolonization movement as a story of nation building as postcolonial leaders in Africa and Asia embraced Western norms of sovereignty and self-determination. Looking closely at the political ideas of figures such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Michael Manley, Getachew identifies a more revolutionary project aimed at pushing the world in a more egalitarian and anti-imperial direction. She explores this new thinking as it appeared in three domains—the push for self-determination at the United Nations, the building of pan-African and pan-Asian regional federations, and the calls to adopt the New International Economic Order (a trade agenda launched by some UN member

states to bolster the interests of developing countries). In each instance, postcolonial leaders were not simply seeking to renegotiate relations between former imperial masters and newly liberated peoples. They offered a more far-reaching critique of prevailing geopolitical and racial hierarchies, emphasizing cosmopolitan solidarities and principled mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth and power. Getachew traces these ideas into the 1970s, when, in the face of a powerful Westphalian global order, anticolonial world-making gave way to more traditional political struggles that reinforced the nation-state.

Constructing Allied Cooperation: Diplomacy, Payments, and Power in Multilateral Military Coalitions
BY MARINA E. HENKE. Cornell University Press, 2019, 258 pp.

This impressive study provides one of the best efforts yet to understand how and why states have built coalitions to pursue military operations in the face of human atrocities, terrorism, and the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Surveying dozens of military operations since the end of World War II, Henke shows that coalitions rarely emerge naturally in response to shared perceptions of threats, through a convergence of momentary interests, or from the coercive efforts of a hegemonic power. They need to be built by "pivotal states" that can overcome obstacles to collective action and orchestrate complex military operations. Henke looks closely at the coalition-building processes around the Korean War in the 1950s, the Australian-led operation in East Timor in 1999, the UN deployment in Darfur in 2007, and the EU interventions in Chad and the Central African Republic in 2008. Henke finds that building coalitions requires "embedded diplomacy"—a pivotal state's complex array of institutional connections and networks of relations with other states—which creates ways for officials to make commitments, bargain, exchange information, and broaden the scope of negotiations to include other issues. Henke demonstrates the importance of diplomacy and leadership in building a successful coalition but does not try to determine in which circumstances the use of military force was (or would be) wise or just.

The Arc of Protection: Reforming the International Refugee Regime
BY T. ALEXANDER ALEINIKOFF AND LEAH ZAMORE. Stanford University Press, 2019, 184 pp.

This short book takes a sobering look at today's global refugee crisis and presents an ambitious agenda for action. A record 70 million refugees have fled conflicts in their homelands in recent decades. Most of these displaced people have crossed international borders and are now trapped in semipermanent camps or are seeking asylum in countries increasingly hostile to refugees. Aleinikoff and Zamore recognize a few positive developments, such as the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, a UN agreement that calls for rich states and international financial institutions to provide more funding to those developing countries that predominantly shoulder the refugee burden. But they argue that the refugee regime is broken and propose sweeping reforms, starting with the expansion of refugee rights and protections. The keystone of their approach is

the establishment of a global system of "responsibility sharing" that would be hammered out in a worldwide gathering of donor and host states, international organizations, and civil society groups. Aware of the political obstacles to such action, the authors argue that the first step would be to build consensus around the principles that must guide the global response to forced displacement—social justice, human solidarity, and proportional and fair contributions from outside powers.

Contested World Orders: Rising Powers, Non-Governmental Organizations, and the Politics of Authority Beyond the Nation-State
EDITED BY MATTHEW D. STEPHEN AND MICHAEL ZURN. Oxford University Press, 2019, 416 pp.

In this impressive collection, political theorists map the contours of today's unsettled global order. Stephen and Zurn argue that the current struggle over world order is unlike past great-power collisions, when the terms of the global order were decided in a contest between a rising power and a declining one. In this era, the global system is so densely institutionalized that competition is more complex and decentralized, with a multitude of states, international organizations, and transnational groups aligning and clashing over the reform of rules and regimes. In assessing the health of the liberal international order and the demands for reforming its old norms and institutions, the contributors focus on a wide variety of global institutions, including the World Trade Organization, the G-7, and the UN Human Rights Council. Stephen and Zurn conclude that the rise of China and other non-Western developing states has not sparked a clear-cut conflict over the fundamental principles of global order. Instead, a contest is underway in which states vie for authority and status primarily within specific international institutions. Rising states do not want to extinguish the liberal character of the global system as much as reform existing intergovernmental institutions to better advance and protect their societies and political regimes.

Economic, Social, and Environmental

Richard N. Cooper

Good Economics for Hard Times
BY ABHIJIT V. BANERJEE AND ESTHER DUFLO. PublicAffairs, 2019, 432 pp.

This book, published shortly before the authors both won the Nobel Prize in Economics, in October 2019, covers a wide swath of structural and policy issues in both advanced and developing countries. They write that the discipline of economics has much to offer but that it needs to stretch well beyond the models that modern economists favor. They emphasize the importance of dignity for people from all walks of life, something the economics profession struggles to consider in its analysis. The authors' own research is mainly in developing countries, especially India, where their observations are subtle and nuanced. Their analysis is less nuanced when it comes to rich countries but valuable

nonetheless, particularly in making economics readily accessible to nonexperts through many stories and examples.

Revolutionizing World Trade: How Disruptive Technologies Open Opportunities for All
BY KATI SUOMINEN. Stanford University Press, 2019, 360 pp.

Suominen examines the opportunities that new technologies will open up in world trade, ushering in what she calls "globalization 4.0" within a decade. This future is already apparent, in an incipient form. It involves the digitization of buying and selling (e-commerce), additive manufacturing (3D printing), the use of blockchain technology in various business practices, and the greater availability of credit thanks to direct lending by savers to borrowers. Such changes could enable small and medium-sized enterprises to engage in cross-border trade through e-commerce, in effect becoming mini-multinationals, a prospect of particular interest to the author. Suominen finds many inefficiencies in today's outdated practices, which she believes can be overcome through international digital standards not only for e-commerce but also for customs processes and for digital services that transmit data across borders.

Trade Is Not a Four-Letter Word: How Six Everyday Products Make the Case for Trade
BY FRED P. HOCHBERG. Avid Reader Press, 2020, 336 pp.

Hochberg, a former president of the U.S. Export-Import Bank, makes a vigorous case for foreign trade in both goods and services, which he claims enriches American lives and creates better jobs. He examines six familiar products—taco salad, automobiles (the Honda Odyssey incorporates the highest share of U.S. labor of any car), bananas (the most consumed fruit by far), iPhones, college education, and entertainment (especially the TV show *Game of Thrones*)—to demonstrate how foreign trade is a pervasive and invaluable part of modern life. He effectively debunks many myths about trade, including the misguided belief that bilateral trade deficits are harmful. His book is an easy and enjoyable read, drawing predominately on American examples but applicable to many other countries, as well.

Don't Be Evil: How Big Tech Betrayed Its Founding Principles—and All of Us
BY RANA FOROOHAR. Currency, 2019, 368 pp.

Foroohar, a business journalist and associate editor at the *Financial Times*, launches a trenchant critique of the world's largest technology firms, including Google and its parent company, Alphabet. The book's title borrows the original motto of Google—now belied by its actual behavior, in the author's view. Foroohar writes in an easy-to-read journalistic style, citing many speeches and interviews with numerous tech titans. She suggests a variety of ways to rein in the technology giants, including breaking up the firms (or at least limiting their growth), making clear that individuals (and not companies) own their personal data, and ensuring that highly profitable technology firms are properly taxed, mainly by closing egregious loopholes brought about and preserved by political lobbying.

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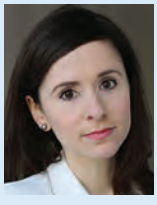
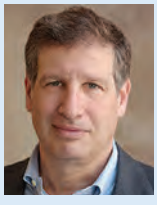
Kishore Mahbubani, Ph.D.: Distinguished Fellow at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. He served as the Singapore Ambassador to the UN and served a term on the UN Security Council. Dr. Mahbubani is a prolific author and co-authors articles with distinguished global thought leaders.

Minxin Pei, Ph.D.: Professor of Government & Chairman of the Government Department, Claremont McKenna College. Dr. Pei was the inaugural Library of Congress Chair in U.S.-China Relations (2019). Dr. Pei is the author of *China's Crony Capitalism: The Dynamics of Regime Decay* among other works.



Mira Rapp-Hooper, Ph.D.: Senior Research Scholar in Law at Yale Law School; Senior Fellow at Yale's Paul Tsai China Center. Dr. Rapp-Hooper's academic and policy analyses have appeared in all the major foreign policy journals as well as featured in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and on NPR, MSNBC, and the BBC.



Gideon Rose, Ph.D.: Editor of Foreign Affairs since 2010. Former Deputy Director of Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Associate Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs on the staff of the National Security Council 1994–1995. Dr. Rose authored *How Wars End* and other works.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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THE JOURNEY WITHIN

A Question of Power: Electricity and the Wealth of Nations
BY ROBERT BRYCE. PublicAffairs, 2020, 352 pp.

This informative and highly readable book explains the basic physics of electricity, the modern history of electric power since the 1880s, the role that electricity plays today in both production and consumption, and the costs inflicted on a society when its electrical grid is badly damaged, as Iraq's was by U.S. bombing in 2003 and as Lebanon's was by Israeli bombing in 2006. Bryce persuasively claims that world electricity demand will double between 2015 and 2040, despite big improvements in the efficiency of generating and distributing electric power. In his view, there is no way that climate change can be arrested by the use of renewable fuels alone. Nuclear power (along with natural gas) will be required if the world is serious about greatly slashing coal consumption.

Military, Scientific, and Technological

Lawrence D. Freedman

The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History
BY ALEXANDER MIKABERIDZE. Oxford University Press, 2020, 960 pp.

The regime that came to power in the wake of the French Revolution posed a unique threat to its rivals in Europe. Other European powers feared both its military strength and the spread of republican ideas. The epic struggle between France and its European competitors rocked the international system with constant warfare until 1815, when the British and the Prussians defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. The monarchies survived, and a sort of order emerged. Nonetheless, the repercussions of these wars were felt for the rest of the century. Most books on this period concentrate on the famous battles, from Austerlitz and Jena to Borodino and Waterloo, or on the figure of Napoleon himself, delving into his reformist politics and how he transformed the practice of war. Mikaberidze goes much further, providing vital context, illuminating the social and political forces unleashed by the revolution, revealing the impact of technological advances, and analyzing the complex interactions among domestic politics, commercial interests, alliance diplomacy, and imperial endeavors. The global consequences of the Napoleonic Wars—often neglected in such studies—also occupy much of the book. Mikaberidze shows, for instance, how Spain's struggles affected its ability to hold on to its South American colonies and how the United States saw the chaos on the European continent as an opportunity to invade Canada. This is an extraordinary work of scholarship. Despite the book's length, scope, and detail, the narrative never flags. It is hard to see how anyone will improve on this account.

All Hell Breaking Loose: The Pentagon's Perspective on Climate Change
BY MICHAEL T. KLARE. Metropolitan Books, 2019, 304 pp.

Although the Trump administration has embraced an official policy of denial, the reality of climate change—manifested in

fires, floods, droughts, and hurricanes—is becoming hard to avoid. The administration's stance has placed U.S. officials charged with preparing for future military contingencies in an absurd position. Thousands of military installations on U.S. soil are vulnerable to extreme weather events. Rising water levels and temperatures may have dire effects on key allies and aggravate conflicts within and between states. Klare has cleverly used the Pentagon's continuing assessments of the impact of climate change and the military's experience of dealing with its effects to illuminate not only the folly of denialism but also the seriousness of the potential climate threats. He traces a "ladder of escalation," climbing from humanitarian disasters, to oil shocks, to disrupted supply chains, to collapsing states, to major-power conflicts (perhaps over water disputes). The book's title is derived from a scenario in which the U.S. military must confront multiple warming-related crises abroad after fires and rising sea levels have immobilized it.

Empire's Labor: The Global Army That Supports U.S. Wars
BY ADAM MOORE. Cornell University Press, 2019, 264 pp.

Coverage of U.S. military operations often focuses on the flashier areas of combat and technology, ignoring the extraordinary logistical efforts required to sustain these operations. Moore avoids this trap in this useful survey of the army of workers who support the U.S. military. Private contractors maintain a global network of bases. In some cases, more foreign workers than U.S. military personnel are engaged in servicing U.S. military campaigns—four times as many in the later stages of the war in Afghanistan. Although mercenaries tend to be the focus of research on private contractors, only a relatively small number of these contractors serve in armed roles. Still, logistical work can be hazardous and deadly. Moore has undertaken detailed research, including interviews with workers, to explore the labor force buttressing the U.S. military. He traces patterns of recruitment (especially in Bosnia and the Philippines), finds evidence of exploitative and discriminatory labor practices, and explores how the military's recruitment of legions of workers affects their countries of origin.

The Fire and the Darkness: The Bombing of Dresden, 1945
BY SINCLAIR MCKAY. St. Martin's Press, 2020, 400 pp.

On February 13, 1945, two days of air raids on the German city of Dresden began with 796 British bombers dropping blockbuster bombs and incendiaries, setting off a firestorm that left the city gutted and at least 25,000 dead. With Germany on the edge of defeat and Soviet troops closing in, there was little strategic need for this exercise in destruction. But years of war had blunted moral sensibilities. The Royal Air Force embraced the doctrine of city bombing with the conviction that killing huge numbers of civilians was worthwhile if it brought the war to a speedier end. Dresden had a rich artistic and cosmopolitan heritage, but it had already lost its Jews to the Holocaust, and its dogmatic Nazi leadership was still committed to the war effort. In this evocative and poignant account, McKay describes the

bombing and its aftermath through the experiences of many of those involved, including the writers Victor Klemperer and Kurt Vonnegut, who had recently been taken prisoner by the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge. McKay ends on a positive note, describing the reconstruction of the city and its more recent role in efforts at reconciliation.

The Taliban at War, 2001–2018
BY ANTONIO GIUSTOZZI. Hurst, 2019, 384 pp.

Giustozzi provides a detailed and dense account of the Taliban's resilience. He shows how the group persevered and regrouped after both the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the "surge" of U.S. troops in 2009, under the Obama administration. Based on many conversations with former and current members of the organization, this study is an important contribution to the history of the American-led war in Afghanistan. Giustozzi explores how the Taliban financed their campaigns, raised the morale of their members, and managed the tensions among a variety of distinct factions within the group.

The United States

Jessica T. Mathews

The Ambassadors: America's Diplomats on the Front Lines
BY PAUL RICHTER. Simon & Schuster, 2019, 352 pp.

In a book that straddles history and biography, Richter follows the careers of four extraordinary U.S. diplomats: Ryan Crocker, Robert Ford, Anne Patterson, and J. Christopher Stevens, who between them held 14 ambassadorships and deputy chief of mission posts in the greater Middle East. They served mostly in war-torn states, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya (where Stevens was killed in an attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi in 2012), and Syria. Both the George W. Bush and the Obama administrations recognized the unique knowledge and abilities of these diplomats, asking them to return again and again to dangerous, chaotic situations in the region. The ambassadors practiced what Richter calls a "new diplomacy of the front lines," working closely with their military counterparts. Even so, all four frequently had to decide whether to continue working in service of what they considered "disastrous policy blunders," and as officials in Washington often ignored their advice. Richter embeds the stories of the four diplomats in a broader narrative that follows floundering U.S. policies in the Middle East. His book is at once

inspiring, infuriating, and, as a chronicle of U.S. involvement in the region, deeply sad.

Unmaking the Presidency: Donald Trump's War on the World's Most Powerful Office
BY SUSAN HENNESSEY AND BENJAMIN WITTES. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020, 432 pp.

Hennessey and Wittes track the evolution of the powers of the U.S. presidency and how President Donald Trump has used, abused, and changed those powers. Their understated description of Trump as conducting an "expressive presidency" doesn't begin to do justice to the extent of his wrongdoing: his propensity to lie, his routinely unethical behavior, his devotion to the use of law enforcement as "an instrument of power against enemies," and, tellingly, his refusal to endure scrutiny of his own conduct. Unfortunately, the authors' discussion of the Nixon and Clinton impeachment processes and of the Mueller report does not compensate for the fact that the book was completed before Trump's impeachment in December 2019. Still, the authors deliver a chilling analysis of the damage that has been done to the office of the president. Even if Congress can rouse itself to reinforce the separation of powers, the record of the past few years reveals that those powers of the presidency over which Congress has little or no jurisdiction—including the president's independence in foreign policy and law enforcement, his power of the pardon, and his capacity to mislead the public—are immensely influential when abused by a president who does not take his oath of office sincerely. The authors dread a collapse of norms and the transformation of laws into "paper tigers."

The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America From 1890 to the Present
BY DAVID TREUER. Riverhead Books, 2019, 528 pp.

Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, still in print half a century after its original publication, presented the story of Native Americans as one of tragic decline. Treuer's counternarrative is destined to last at least as long as Brown's classic. Its story of resilience and cultural, economic, and political renaissance among native communities will be revelatory for most readers who are not Native American. Treuer, who grew up on an Ojibwe reservation in Minnesota, combines interviews, personal memoir, history, and literature to vividly trace the last 40 years of Native American history, including many positive developments. There is plenty of tragedy in the story of Native Americans' relationship with the U.S. government, most of which stems from Washington's various efforts to subdue or wipe out the tribes. But there are also glimmers of hope. For example, U.S. military service has provided a positive sense of belonging for many Native Americans, even though their heroism has often gone unrecognized. Continuing legal battles have righted some past wrongs. Treuer interweaves his analysis with intimate tales of "becoming Indian" in a context in which that identity can bring empowerment and personal success rather than victimization.

How the South Won the Civil War: Oligarchy, Democracy, and the Continuing Fight for the Soul of America
BY HEATHER COX RICHARDSON. Oxford University Press, 2020, 264 pp.

Richardson draws a straight line from the radical inequality of the pre–Civil War South to its resurrection a century later in the modern conservative movement in the West. There, "Confederate ideology took on a new life." An oligarchic economy emerged in the region, centered on mining, oil extraction, and railroads, which, like the cotton economy of the South, depended on lots of capital and masses of unskilled workers. In the late nineteenth century, the protections of the 14th Amendment (adopted in 1868) did not apply to Native Americans and were also interpreted in the West to exclude Chinese and other immigrants, leading to what effectively amounted to what Richardson terms "the shadow of legal slavery." Forgetting the federal government's role in giving land to homesteaders and investing in irrigation, so-called movement conservatives in the West embraced the myth that all a true American needed from the government was to be left alone. As reflected in Barry Goldwater's Stetson and Ronald Reagan's broad-brimmed hat, the free-roaming cowboy became the movement's emblem.

Border Wars: Inside Trump's Assault on Immigration
BY JULIE HIRSCHFELD DAVIS AND MICHAEL D. SHEAR. Simon & Schuster, 2019, 480 pp.

Ever since a staffer hit on the idea of "build a fence" as a mnemonic to remind candidate Donald Trump to talk about immigration at his rallies, the groundwork was laid for immigration policy to become the "beating heart" of Trump's presidency. The Muslim travel ban, the crackdown on undocumented immigrants, the cuts in the number of refugees accepted, the much-invoked wall, the inveighing against caravans of migrants, and the calculated cruelty of the family-separation policy have dominated news cycles for almost three years. Davis and Shear, *New York Times* reporters who have long covered these subjects, wisely saved much of their best material for this book. They have assembled here a view from within the White House, including through accounts of interactions with the president that verge on the surreal. Trump's immigration policies stem from impulse, ignorance about substance and legality, deep bigotry, and—their saving grace—bureaucratic chaos and incredible ineptitude. The book reveals much about how Trump thinks, why he instinctively "grasped for the solution that looked toughest," and, in hair-raising insider detail, how he governs from day to day. If journalism is the first draft of history, this volume is a solid second draft.

Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

The Brussels Effect: How the European Union Rules the World
BY ANU BRADFORD. Oxford University Press, 2020, 424 pp.

This may well be the single most important book on Europe's global influence to appear in a decade. Many believe that Europe's international standing is declining in a world dominated by China and the United States and in which the forces of globalization are creating a race to the bottom that undermines the European model of high regulation and social protection. Bradford demolishes these myths by showing how the European Union's stringent regulations raise the standards of producers in China, the United States, and other countries across the globe. The EU manages to wield this influence by conditioning access to its market, the world's second largest, on compliance with its standards. Bradford illustrates this "Brussels effect"—modeled on a similar "California effect," which intensifies regulations within the United States—with detailed case studies of EU policies in a range of areas, including food safety, data privacy, and environmental protection. Farmers in Nebraska, for instance, grow pesticide-free products so that they meet EU standards. Globally integrated producers of goods as various as chemicals, automobiles, and banking services find that it often makes more business sense to produce just one product line to the highest standard in the world, which is, almost inevitably, that of Europe. Even big technology firms, such as Google and Microsoft, must toe the line of EU antitrust and cartel policy.

For the Record
BY DAVID CAMERON. Harper, 2019, 752 pp.

Politics is an ugly game, and few who play it are self-reflective. So memoirs by leading politicians almost always disappoint. Even when they avoid outright lies, most mislead by omission, revealing little backroom maneuvering and evading personal responsibility for errors. This book is no exception: the former British prime minister, aware that history will remember him primarily for his disastrous choice to hold the ill-fated Brexit referendum, offers a retrospective self-justification. Throughout, he claims, unconvincingly, that his hands were tied. The referendum was inescapable because the EU had mistreated the United Kingdom and because sincerely Euroskeptical British citizens deserved to have their voices heard. Cameron denies that he was ever pressured by parliamentary backbenchers to hold the Brexit vote. The victory of the Leave campaign, he claims, was at once impossible to predict and inevitable, due to the lack of the EU's willingness to reform; the perfidy of the then recently departed mayor of London, Boris Johnson; and the dynamics of modern media campaigns. Cameron comes across as a sincere and decent fellow severely lacking in the Machiavellian foresight, ruthlessness, and savvy required for political success.

Learning From the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil
BY SUSAN NEIMAN. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019, 432 pp.

Firmly convinced of the exceptional nature of their country, many Americans resist opportunities to learn from the history of others. They interrogate the history and legacy of American slavery, imperialism, genocide, and other mass evils without considering how other countries have dealt with similar misdeeds. Neiman, a Jewish American philosopher who grew up in the American South and now lives in Berlin, has written a corrective. She compares the German response to the Holocaust since World War II to the southern response to slavery and segregation in that same period. Both societies went through decades of denial: for 25 years after World War II, the Germans argued that everyday citizens neither knew about nor supported the Holocaust; American southerners during that same time maintained myths that slavery and segregation were beneficial and that the Civil War was really about states' rights. Starting in the 1960s, however, Germany officially apologized, paid reparations, banned the glorification of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, and memorialized the victims. By contrast, Neiman argues, many southerners and their conservative defenders elsewhere in the United States continue to suppress the record of the past. They defend monuments and symbols celebrating those who took up arms to defend slavery, label official apologies as treasonous, resist reparations, and applaud politicians who employ coded racist language.

After the Berlin Wall: Memory and the Making of the New Germany, 1989 to the Present
BY HOPE M. HARRISON. Cambridge University Press, 2019, 478 pp.

How should Germans feel about the Berlin Wall? During the Cold War, East German leaders insisted that it was a defensive and stabilizing barrier, whereas their counterparts in West Germany denounced it as a humanitarian outrage that revealed the bankruptcy of communist ideology. This carefully researched and superbly readable book explores the wall's place in Germany's collective memory. After 30 years, the events of 1989, seemingly so clear at the time, have become the subject of heated debate. Who in the East was responsible for the wall's fall: Protesters on the streets of East Germany? Tens of thousands of their fellow citizens who snuck through the Hungarian border? The guards who opened the gates on their own? The top Communist politicians who refused to order a violent clampdown? Or the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who declined to back the government in Berlin? Today, the wall has become a contested political symbol. Critics of continuing economic disparities between eastern and western Germany see commemorations of the fall of the wall as opportunities to criticize the current order. Some in the former East Germany view Berlin's current policy of blocking Mediterranean migrants, instituted after the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015, as evidence that stern international barriers are normal and legitimate.

European Disintegration? The Politics of Crisis in the European Union
BY DOUGLAS WEBBER. Red Globe Press, 2018, 278 pp.

Over the past decade, many observers have written about the four large crises facing the European Union: the economic instability of countries in the eurozone, Russian aggression toward Ukraine, mass migration, and Brexit. Of course, the EU has surmounted crises in the past, but Webber suggests that the breadth, depth, and length of these recent ones render them more threatening. This approachable textbook-style treatment of the topic summarizes existing research and compares EU responses in each area. It rejects the conventional view that EU policy grows out of managing the tension between the interdependence of member states and the domestic calculus of nationalist politicians. Instead, Webber argues, EU policies today mostly reflect the power of Germany and, in particular, the idiosyncratic beliefs and motivations of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Although it is hard to deny that the leader of Europe's most powerful country plays a critical role, one wonders if her actions are as separate from the broader forces shaping the EU as Webber seems to believe.

Braver, Greener, Fairer: Memos to the EU Leadership, 2019–2024
EDITED BY MARIA DEMERTZIS AND GUNTRAM B. WOLFF. Bruegel, 2019, 269 pp.

Every five years, the European Union elects a new parliament, appoints a new commission, and replaces the president of the council and its high representa-

tive for foreign policy. Traditionally, this turnover is also a moment for EU officials to establish new priorities and a budgetary framework to pay for them. Just such a transition is occurring now. In this collection, analysts from Bruegel, one of Brussels's most respected think tanks, review 11 issues and offer concrete policy recommendations for EU leaders. Each chapter constitutes a concise memo to the relevant officials. There are limitations: the chapters focus almost exclusively on industrial regulation, financial and digital services, competition policy, and other economic matters, areas in which Bruegel specializes; foreign policy, migration, Russian subversion, homeland security, and other important issues go neglected. The market-oriented recommendations are too numerous and idealistic, focusing on what would increase aggregate welfare rather than what is politically viable. The writing is jargon laden. Nonetheless, those who seek a succinct overview of the EU's potential course of action over the next five years are unlikely to find a better starting point.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

Unfulfilled Promises: Latin America Today
EDITED BY MICHAEL SHIFTER AND BRUNO BINETTI. Inter-American Dialogue, 2019, 166 pp.

This eclectic collection brings together leading scholars of economics, social policy, public security, and international relations in sketching the progress and frustrations of Latin American development. The contributors generally advocate incremental approaches that build on previous progress, rather than root-and-branch upheaval. The separate chapters advance sound, if at times exacting, policy recommendations: countries should diversify their higher-quality exports, raise their labor productivity, enlarge their fiscal capacity, target pockets of poverty, bolster their social safety nets to safeguard their emerging middle classes, make their governance and regulatory structures more effective and transparent, and adopt comprehensive crime-fighting strategies. The contributors underplay the overwhelming pressures of population growth and rapid urbanization in some parts of Latin America, as well as the growing aspirations of middle classes that current growth rates will not soon satisfy. In highlighting the shortcomings of Latin American development, some essays inadvertently feed the notion, employed by authoritarian demagogues, that the region's "unful-

filled promises" are reason enough to dismantle open, democratic capitalist systems. Hard-pressed democratic governments will have to judiciously select their priorities, leaving a lot for future generations to accomplish.

Paths for Cuba: Reforming Communism in Comparative Perspective
EDITED BY SCOTT MORGENSTERN, JORGE PÉREZ-LÓPEZ, AND JEROME BRANCHE. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019, 408 pp.

Revolutionary Cuba is ironically among the more static political systems on earth. To imagine what a new Cuba might eventually look like, the contributors to this thoughtful collection examine the factors that have driven change in other one-party authoritarian systems. They paint a rather melancholy picture. Cuba has some advantages: an educated and low-wage workforce, a capable state, and proximity to dynamic economies, nearby democracies, and a prosperous Cuban diaspora in the United States. But Cuba seems unlikely to follow the path of China and Vietnam, communist countries that found prosperity in opening up their closed markets. The economies of China and Vietnam only blossomed once elites agreed to programs of reform; Cuban conservatives have resisted even the most modest market-oriented measures. The relative success stories of formerly communist countries in eastern Europe demonstrate the benefit of having a historical tradition of democracy, an independent civil society, and, most important, the liberalizing influence of the European Union—all conditions largely absent from Cuba. The animosity of Washington doesn't help: subject to prolonged U.S. hostility, many Cubans view liberal democracy and free-market capitalism with deep mistrust.

Ghosts of Sheridan Circle: How a Washington Assassination Brought Pinochet's Terror State to Justice
BY ALAN MCPHERSON. University of North Carolina Press, 2019, 392 pp.

On September 21, 1976, the secret police of the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet assassinated Orlando Letelier, a former ambassador and a leader of the opposition in exile, and his colleague, Ronni Moffitt, in broad daylight on Embassy Row, in Washington, D.C. Drawing heavily on previously published accounts, McPherson retraces the many twists and turns of the lengthy joint U.S.-Chilean investigation to identify and prosecute the perpetrators. The brazen violation of American national sovereignty, McPherson argues, as much as the violation of human rights, shook the U.S. government. The Letelier case established important precedents in international human rights law. There are many heroes in this account, including tenacious U.S. government attorneys, alert U.S. diplomats, and dogged pro bono lawyers, but Letelier's widow, Isabel, stands out for her intrepid, relentless activism. Arguably, the strong U.S. response served as a deterrent to other would-be political assassins: the killing of Letelier remains the only state-sponsored assassination of a foreign diplomat on U.S. soil.

Del centenario a los chilennials: 100 años de transformaciones y 25 tendencias que cambiaron Chile (From 1910 to the Chilennials: 100 Years of Transformations and 25 Trends That Changed Chile)
BY PEDRO DOSQUE AND JOSÉ TOMÁS VALENTE. Ediciones UC, 2019, 274 pp.

A recent wave of antigovernment protests in Chile that called for more affordable public education and health care, greater economic mobility, and a more inclusive democracy was spearheaded by high school and university students—the *chilennials* (millennial Chileans) of this book's title. But older generations reminded these young people that their current living standards are far superior to those of their grandparents. This timely, readable study documents Chile's sweeping transformation over the last 100 years from a dirt poor, semifeudal agricultural society into a modern, educated, and urbanized nation. These days, Chileans compare themselves not to their Latin American neighbors but rather to the developed nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, of which Chile is a proud member. Dosque and Valente beseech their fellow Chileans to "feel very proud and thankful" for these achievements and for the century of social struggles that made them possible, even as they warn against complacency. The authors fear that a lack of appreciation for the nation's history might lead to a misdiagnosis of its current troubles that could jeopardize hard-won progress. This valuable, persuasive text should be required reading in all Chilean high schools.

The Second American Revolution: The Civil War–Era Struggle Over Cuba and the Rebirth of the American Republic
BY GREGORY P. DOWNS. University of North Carolina Press, 2019, 232 pp.

Drawing on existing scholarship, Downs argues that the era of Reconstruction that followed the U.S. Civil War amounted to a second foundational moment in the history of the United States, when the government in Washington employed military force and other measures to radically transform labor and property relations in the American South and fundamentally revise the U.S. Constitution. With graceful and forceful prose, Downs links the mid-nineteenth-century history of the United States to that of the broader Atlantic world—in particular, to Cuba and Mexico in their struggles against European powers to end slavery and establish anti-imperialist democracies. The U.S. example was powerful, spreading revolutionary impulses and promising, however briefly, to produce a network of "free-trading antislavery republics" on either side of the Atlantic. Extending his historical interpretations to today's politics, Downs suggests that Americans could benefit from reexamining the bold measures of nineteenth-century Republicans: the carving out of new states, the passing of constitutional amendments, and the introduction of federal oversight of elections.

Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Republics

Maria Lipman

The Tragedy of Property: Private Life, Ownership, and the Russian State
BY MAXIM TRUDOLYUBOV. TRANSLATED BY ARCH TAIT. Polity, 2018, 216 pp.

Trudolyubov traces the roots of what he sees as the tragedy of Russia: its failure to establish democratic institutions that would defend its citizens against the whims of their rulers. With concision and clarity, he blames Russia's historical lack of robust property rights. Through much of Russian history, the ruler dispensed private property—and especially real estate—as a "privilege" to the upper class. In western Europe, by contrast, property rights emerged in the course of long social battles and were closely associated with the development of common law and the liberal tradition. Anxious to maintain the state's unchallenged supremacy, Russian rulers at all times were wary of private property. The Bolsheviks outlawed it altogether; for decades, the state was the sole owner and distributor of all land and urban housing. Today's Russians may own their apartments and have better opportunities for a private life than earlier generations, but the state retains discretionary power over large properties, and the threat of sudden redistribution remains. Although he draws a bleak picture, Trudolyubov finds some solace in the fact that Russia's top leaders do not seek to reinstate across-the-board state ownership or return to a Soviet-style totalitarian past.

Stuck on Communism: Memoir of a Russian Historian
BY LEWIS H. SIEGELBAUM. Northern Illinois University Press, 2019, 216 pp.

Remembering Leningrad: The Story of a Generation
BY MARY MCAULEY. University of Wisconsin Press, 2019, 256 pp.

These two memoirs are both written by respected left-wing scholars of Russia, but they differ in the extent to which their authors immersed themselves in Russian life. Siegelbaum entered Columbia University in 1966 and chose to study the Soviet Union because of his communist leanings. His memoir reads like a bildungsroman: Siegelbaum describes his early years as a child of "a Red" (his father joined the U.S. Communist Party in 1939), his participation as a young Marxist in the 1967–68 student protests, and his subsequent development into a Russian labor historian schooled in Marxist theory. As labor history receded in importance, his somewhat reluctant shift toward cultural and material history proved fortunate: his history of the Soviet automobile was awarded two prestigious prizes. Siegelbaum's memoir is also a chronicle of the trends and debates in his field from the 1970s until his retirement in 2018, with a special focus on the new research opportunities that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, as archives were opened and

collaboration with Russian colleagues became possible. Apart from Russian historians, informants, and landlords, however, Siegelbaum mentions almost no encounters with the people of contemporary Russia. A Russia that had "shed its Sovietness and other-worldness" apparently lost its attraction for him.

McAuley's memoir, by contrast, is strongly focused on the Russian people and mentions her academic career only in passing. When she came to Leningrad as an Oxford student in the early 1960s to write a thesis on the settlement of labor disputes in industrial enterprises, she immersed herself deeply in Soviet life and personal friendships. She spent a lot of time in conversation with her Russian friends, shared the hardships of daily Soviet life, went camping, and attended drunken parties. In the early 1990s, she ventured into buying an apartment—just as the Soviet housing system was opening up to private real estate. She tells the story of the Soviet Union and modern Russia through the experiences of her close friends: the hopes and dreams of the thaw that took place under Nikita Khrushchev, the dullness and demoralization of stagnation under Leonid Brezhnev, the enthusiasm of Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika, and the sweeping and often shocking transformations of post-Soviet Russia. Her deep embeddedness in Russian life has never interfered with her position as a shrewd outside observer: in the early 1990s, when so many firmly believed that Russia was on the way to democracy, she noted the low interest in politics, the lack of political language, the naive belief in the market, and the persistence of Soviet practices.

The Stuff of Soldiers: A History of the Red Army in World War II Through Objects
BY BRANDON M. SCHECHTER. Cornell University Press, 2019, 344 pp.

Schechter looks at the Great Patriotic War (as World War II is referred to in Russia) through Soviet soldiers' everyday objects (spoons, spades, knapsacks, uniforms, weapons, war trophies), with the aid of their letters and diaries, wartime manuals, and postwar fiction and memoirs. With this original approach—in itself an amazing achievement given the immense literature in this historical field—Schechter uses the material culture of the Red Army to trace the makeover of Soviet life and politics brought about by the war. The story of *pogony* (shoulder boards) is a good example of Schechter's nimble analysis. This feature of the military uniform was discarded initially as a trapping of the ancien régime, only to be reintroduced during World War II. In Schechter's view, this shift illustrates the transformation of the Soviet Union from a project of global proletarian revolution into a nation drawing on its history in defending the motherland from a foreign enemy. For the many millions of Red Army soldiers of different cultures and nationalities, the everyday reliance on the same government-issued gear was a unifying experience, one that came to define the Soviet Union until its eventual implosion.

The Siberian Dilemma
BY MARTIN CRUZ SMITH. Simon & Schuster, 2019, 288 pp.

Back in 1981, Smith's mystery novel *Gorky Park*, set in the contemporary Soviet Union, won him great success: it became a bestseller and was later made

into a movie. *Gorky Park*'s protagonist, the criminal investigator Arkady Renko, has since proceeded to solve crimes in an ongoing series of novels that now take place in modern Russia. *The Siberian Dilemma*, the latest in this series, unfolds in 2019 and refers to real events, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin's reelection the previous year. Renko, however, has not aged one bit and remains as astute and battle seasoned as ever. He faces a deadly dilemma as he finds himself personally implicated in the events he happens to be investigating, and he narrowly escapes death in the Siberian taiga. Those drawn to Smith's mysterious Russian settings will be fully rewarded by the depictions of vast and cold Siberian expanses, monstrous bears, and precious sables (Smith appears to have a special feeling for the last: a sable-smuggling operation was central to the plot of *Gorky Park*), as well as small-time mobsters, big-time oil tycoons, dirty politics, *banyas*, and vodka. Russian readers, however, might smile at the book's small cultural inaccuracies.

Middle East

John Waterbury

Islam, Authoritarianism, and Underdevelopment: A Global and Historical Comparison
BY AHMET T. KURU. Cambridge University Press, 2019, 316 pp.

Kuru, a political scientist, undertakes an ambitious and, on balance, successful analysis of the ills of the authoritarianism, economic backwardness, and religious violence that plague 49 Muslim-majority states. He rejects the essentialist notion that the fault for the struggles of these states lies in Islamic doctrine, but he also dismisses apologias that point to the lingering effects of European colonial domination. Kuru traces a longer arc of decline. He describes a period of Islamic scientific and cultural efflorescence from roughly the eighth to the eleventh century, in which a dynamic mercantile bourgeoisie allied with a vibrant intelligentsia. That golden age came to an end thanks to the rise of a conservative and anti-intellectual alliance of religious scholars and state officials. Despite covering a vast amount of secondary literature, he does not adequately explain why the clergy failed to see the bourgeoisie as potential partners. He more convincingly makes the case that Muslim societies inherited the model of the powerful military-theocratic state—composed of warrior-rulers, religious authorities, and their subjects—from Persian tradition, not the Koran.

Owners of the Republic: An Anatomy of Egypt's Military Economy
BY YEZID SAYIGH. Carnegie Middle East Center, 2019, 360 pp.

Sayigh brilliantly dissects the Egyptian military's dominance of Egypt's economy. The tentacular reach of the Ministry of Defense into the economy is almost seven decades old, but its growth accelerated under the 30-year rule of Hosni Mubarak and has increased even more under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who came to power in 2013. The military may control as much as 20 percent of total public spending. At the same time, it is not subject to external audit or parliamentary oversight. It is a rent-making machine, controlling the commercial use of most of Egypt's land. It imports and manufactures drugs and food staples, labeling these commodities as strategic. It has a bevy of private-sector allies. It is exempt from taxes and import duties on most of its activities. And it benefits from the silence of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United States. All that can check its hold over the economy is its own drag on Egypt's potential growth.

Crony Capitalism in the Middle East: Business and Politics From Liberalization to the Arab Spring
EDITED BY ISHAC DIWAN, ADEEL MALIK, AND IZAK ATIYAS. Oxford University Press, 2019, 464 pp.

The contributors to this important collection parse the variety of crony-capitalist arrangements in the Middle East. They cover Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and the Palestinian territories. The book proposes that the structural liberalization programs forced by international financial institutions and private creditors on the autocracies of the region in the 1980s and 1990s produced a grand bargain between political and business elites. Well-connected firms accepted limited market reforms in exchange for special benefits that boosted their profits. The authors contend that today's autocrats have an inveterate suspicion of their own private sectors and fear that greater market reforms would shift power to assertive business elites. This hypothesis seems to fit the observed facts in the region, but there's no evidence that the compromise was an explicit state strategy. Moreover, it is not clear why incumbent autocrats should fear their private sectors given how easily business interests were swept aside in the populist era of the 1950s and 1960s.

City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk
BY ARBELLA BET-SHLIMON. Stanford University Press, 2019, 296 pp.

This fine social history of the city of Kirkuk, in northern Iraq, traces a century of political upheaval. Bet-Shlimon was born in the United States but hails from an Assyrian family with roots in Kirkuk. The ancient, polyglot city was transformed in 1927 by the discovery of oil nearby. Kirkuk had long been dominated by its Turkish-speaking Turkmen population, but the oil boom drew in a large population of poor, rural Kurds to work in the oil fields. With them came Iraq's Communist Party, which sought to organize the workers. The Iraq Petroleum Company helped build a middle class in the city but neglected the mostly Kurdish lower class. The 1958 revolution that

toppled the Iraqi monarchy exposed the fault lines created during the oil era. Kurds and Turkmens chose opposite sides in Iraq's national-level struggles. The rise of Saddam Hussein added the force of Arabization and anti-Kurdish animus to the volatile politics of the city. The book criticizes essentialist explanations of ethnicity, but the massacres that rocked Kirkuk in the late 1950s smack of visceral enmities. In this case, essentialist and contingent explanations can both be true.

Sunnis and Shi'a: A Political History
BY LAURENCE LOUËR. TRANSLATED BY ETHAN RUNDELL. Princeton University Press, 2019, 240 pp.

In this succinct, probing survey of a major divide in the Muslim world, Louër explores relations between the Shiites and the Sunnis in seven different countries in the Middle East and South Asia. She does not tap new sources or make many new interpretations, but she compellingly mingles analysis of Shiite and Sunni doctrine and an examination of the political dynamics between the sects. Neither camp fully accepts the legitimacy of the other—although coexistence and cooperation have occurred, as in Mughal India. A major watershed was the advent of the Safavid dynasty in Persia in the sixteenth century, which wed Shiism to a geopolitical entity wedged between the Ottoman and Mughal empires. Ever since, the rivalry has become as much geopolitical as doctrinal and is more prone to militant and violent forms of confrontation (as exemplified by the evolution of Yemen's Houthis, a Zaydi Shiite group).

Asia and Pacific

Andrew J. Nathan

Democracy in China: The Coming Crisis
BY JIWEI CI. Harvard University Press, 2019, 432 pp.

There is a Chinese saying about the audacity of negotiating with a tiger for its pelt. In this closely argued book, Ci, a Hong Kong–based philosophy professor, embarks on a similar enterprise. He directs what he calls a "prudential" argument at the Chinese Communist Party: it should give up its dictatorship in order to save China from impending chaos. He argues that authoritarian rule no longer suits a Chinese society that is sophisticated, egalitarian, and dissatisfied with mere material comforts. In reaction to the spread of liberal values, the regime is cracking down harder, but this only accelerates the weakening of what Ci calls its "teleological-revolutionary legitimacy." By his reckoning, even outstanding economic performance can keep the regime in power no more than another ten or 20 years before a major crisis will trigger its collapse. He says the party should get ahead of events by opening Chinese politics up to dissenting views—something liberals in China have hoped for ever since Mao Zedong's death, only to be disappointed by each new leader. Ci offers shrewd insights into the contradictions in the party's ideology, the mentality of China's middle class, and the various ways the party sustains its legitimacy. But his argument

is more philosophical than empirical: the book offers no assessment either of the level of popular support for the regime or of the looming challenges to the regime's performance.

Last Days of the Mighty Mekong
BY BRIAN EYLER. Zed Books, 2019, 384 pp.

Eyler's vivid travelogue and elegy to the Mekong River explores the threats to the river's diversity. The Mekong supports more fish species, more livelihoods, and more distinct ethnic groups than any other river system. But dams, roads, railways, and tourists are changing all that—so quickly that Eyler was able to observe the process of destruction personally during the 15 years in which he led study tours through the region. China is a prime driver of the changes, with its scores of upstream hydropower dams and swarms of newly rich tourists. But governments and developers all along the watercourse are scrambling to exploit its natural and social resources. It seems too late for them to repair the resulting damage: mass displacement, reduced fish catches, stunted agricultural yields, and the loss of local cultures as young people leave the highlands "to melt into emerging modern lifestyles."

China and Intervention at the UN Security Council: Reconciling Status
BY COURTNEY J. FUNG. Oxford University Press, 2019, 304 pp.

Fung makes sense of China's seemingly confused voting record at the UN Security Council on issues involving armed interventions and the referral of leaders to the International Criminal Court. In 2005, China used an abstention to allow a referral of the Sudanese leader Omar al-Bashir to the ICC, and in 2007, it voted for a peace-enforcement operation in Darfur; in 2011, it voted for an ICC referral of the Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi and refrained from vetoing the no-fly zone that led to his fall from power. But between 2012 and 2014, China vetoed a series of resolutions that would have authorized interventions against Bashar al-Assad in Syria. What explains these carefully modulated choices, in Fung's view, is Beijing's effort to balance its commitment to the principle of sovereignty with its desire to play a major role on the international stage alongside Western powers while also maintaining solidarity with key regional actors, such as the African Union and the Arab League. She thinks that in the future, Beijing will mostly resist what it sees as Washington's fetish for regime change. But her analysis also suggests that Beijing would more willingly authorize UN interventions if it saw them as serving its own interests instead of Washington's.

Migration in the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia, and the Cold War
BY TAOMO ZHOU. Cornell University Press, 2019, 318 pp.

This impressively researched study of Sino-Indonesian relations from 1945 to 1967 links three levels of diplomacy: state-to-state relations between China and Indonesia's leftist leader Sukarno, party-to-party relations between the Chinese Communist Party and the Indonesian Communist Party, and the

struggle between the rival regimes in Beijing and Taipei for influence over Indonesia's ethnic Chinese community. Chinese and Indonesian archives show how Beijing and Jakarta cooperated in the fluid politics of the global anti-imperialist movement, siding in 1963–64 against what they viewed as a British imperialist plot to create Malaysia, a new state formed by the merger of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore. The book dispels the myth that China directed the attempted coup in 1965 that led to the rise of the anticommunist strongman General Suharto, a break in Sino-Indonesian relations, and a massacre of suspected Communists, many of them ethnic Chinese. The Beijing-Taipei contest for influence in the ethnic Chinese community exacerbated the suspicion that the Chinese represented a fifth column. Throughout the turbulent politics of the time, Chinese Indonesians were victims of discrimination and violence, paradoxically accused both of capitalist exploitation and of pro-Beijing loyalties—suspicions that persist even today, when the two countries have full diplomatic and economic ties.

Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy
BY IAN HALL. Bristol University Press, 2019, 236 pp.

Hall offers a lucid account of Indian foreign policy since 2014, when Narendra Modi became prime minister. Modi promised a foreign policy revolution, has gathered decision-making power to himself, and has traveled abroad more often than his predecessors. He has articulated a Hindu nationalist philosophy, promoting India as a "world guru" that can solve global problems with its civilizational wisdom of "happiness, peace, and harmony." He has sought more foreign investment but still protected Indian manufacturers from foreign imports. And he has adopted a muscular security stance, building up naval and missile forces and responding forcefully to provocations from Pakistan. Identifying China as India's main rival, Modi has tightened India's strategic partnerships with other countries worried about China and sponsored infrastructure projects to prevent India's South Asian neighbors from falling totally under Beijing's economic influence. Hall acknowledges that Modi has brought his characteristic energy to promoting India as a major power but judges that the results have shown more continuity than change. India remains more protectionist than globalist, distrusted by its neighbors, and wary of aligning too clearly with other powers against China.

Model City: Pyongyang
BY CRISTIANO BIANCHI AND KRISTINA DRAPIĆ. MIT Press, 2019, 224 pp.

If you can't visit Pyongyang, this is the next best thing: a book filled with photographs of its weirdly shaped and oddly colored buildings. Under the Dear Leader (Kim Jong Il) and the current supreme leader (Kim Jong Un), North Korean architects over the past quarter century reversed an earlier trend of copying Soviet styles. The unfinished, 105-story Ryugyong Hotel is built in the shape of a rocket ship. The City of Sports complex boasts 12 huge buildings, each devoted to a particular game. The two-and-a-

half-mile-long, 400-foot-wide Kwangbok Street is lined with 30- to 42-story residential towers, each built on one of seven designs. Every edifice, every cluster of buildings, and the city plan as a whole make ideological statements of fealty to the leader, national power, and ultramodernity. Vast spaces and long vistas overwhelm the visitor's sense of individuality. Pyongyang is designed as a people's paradise—one with mostly empty streets.

China and Japan: Facing History
BY EZRA F. VOGEL. Harvard University Press, 2019, 536 pp.

Vogel uses the powerful lens of the past to frame contemporary Chinese-Japanese relations. He does not begin with the horrors of World War II; instead, he takes the reader back over 1,500 years to examine the contentious dynamics that shaped how these two Asian giants view each other. With scholarly care and an eye on contemporary policy, Vogel suggests that over the centuries—across both the imperial and the modern eras—friction has always dominated their relations. China and Japan are now rich, powerful societies that were transformed both by Western imperialism and by the ravages of war in the twentieth century. But they have struggled to overcome past hostilities, in particular the memory of the Japanese invasion of China between 1937 and 1945. Vogel insists that the Chinese must better understand Japan's unique strategic challenges and that the Japanese must better address China's desire to right past wrongs. Asia's future depends on their ability to build a more forgiving relationship.

SHEILA A. SMITH

Africa

Nicolas van de Walle

Legislative Development in Africa: Politics and Postcolonial Legacies
BY KEN OCHIENG' OPALO. Cambridge University Press, 2019, 290 pp.

This fine study of the role that African legislatures play in promoting democracy and government accountability deserves to be widely read. Opalo's well-informed general history of the development of legislatures in the region shows how the origins of parliaments in the waning days of colonial rule—as well as their evolution in the ensuing postcolonial authoritarian regimes—ensured their institutional weaknesses relative to the executive branch, an imbalance that continues in some countries. Two well-researched case studies in Kenya and Zambia offer contrasting examples of how an authoritarian past can produce different kinds of legislatures. In Kenya, the executive branch of the colonial and early postcolonial governments centralized power, granting the legislature only a modicum of procedural autonomy. But in the democratic era, the legislature has emerged as a relatively strong institution; being left to its own devices allowed it to develop organically over time. In Zambia, on the other hand, the regime micromanaged the legislature and thus prevented it from developing its own mechanisms of accommodation and compromise. The result in Zambia, Opalo argues, is a much weaker institution.

The Quality of Growth in Africa
EDITED BY RAVI KANBUR, AKBAR NOMAN, AND JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ. Columbia University Press, 2019, 480 pp.

This solid collection of essays assesses sub-Saharan Africa's economic performance during the last two decades. Recent growth has neither delivered adequate improvements in individual welfare nor produced more dynamism in African economies. The book's best chapters carefully parse and interpret the recent growth record and its achievements. High commodity prices have played a big role in the region's overall growth. Political instability helps explain the persistence of economic volatility. Although economic growth has had a real (if limited) impact on reducing poverty, it has also contributed to a rise in inequality. The authors lament the poor quality of the available data. One abiding puzzle remains Africa's persistently high unemployment rates and the seeming failure of economic growth to produce more high-quality jobs, a problem several chapters link to the limited development of export-oriented manufacturing sectors in the region. The essays are weaker in their prescriptions; it may be right to call for more considered industrial policies, for example, but that suggestion is too vague and aspirational to be useful.

Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations, and the Decolonisation of Africa
BY HENNING MELBER. Hurst, 2019, 184 pp.

The second UN secretary-general remains a controversial figure in the history of the Cold War. In some accounts, Dag Hammarskjold appears as a Machiavellian agent of the West; in others, he comes across as a noble idealist who tried to defend the interests of the less developed countries and facilitate decolonization. Melber, director emeritus of the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, clearly agrees with the latter portrait and has produced a nuanced defense of Hammarskjold's tenure at the UN. The core of the book is concerned with the 1960 UN intervention in the Republic of the Congo, launched to defend the new postcolonial government against Belgian-backed secessionists, and Hammarskjold's death in a mysterious plane crash in 1961 in what is today Zambia. On the former, Melber argues that the secretary-general struggled to fulfill his ambition of carving out greater operational autonomy for both his office and the UN in general; by 1961, Hammarskjold's prickly independence and sometimes sanctimonious eloquence made him useful to virtually none of the main actors in the process of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa. Regarding the plane crash—about which there are many conspiracy theories—Melber's summary of the multiple, inconclusive investigations breaks little new ground, but he suggests convincingly that forces hostile to decolonization, including southern African white settlers, caused the crash.

South Sudan's Injustice System: Law and Activism on the Frontline
BY RACHEL IBRECK. Zed Books, 2019, 264 pp.

South Sudan has been at war for much of the last several decades. In her analysis of the South Sudanese legal system, Ibreck claims with great optimism that insecurity and violence have pushed the population to depend on the law to

improve its security and welfare. Her study of the South Sudanese legal system—and the small band of activists who work in sometimes extremely difficult conditions to support it—is often inspiring: what is taken for granted in peaceful countries becomes more explicitly important and worth fighting for in war-torn countries such as South Sudan. The book describes the workings of the country's formal legal system and analyzes the largely failed attempts to put in place stronger legal mechanisms to protect individual rights. Enlivened by fascinating case studies, her book gives a voice to the lawyers, volunteers, and activists (such as herself) who, in tough circumstances, have tried to make the system work better for average citizens.

Africa's Totalitarian Temptation: The Evolution of Autocratic Regimes
BY DAVE PETERSON. Lynne Rienner, 2020, 279 pp.

In a lively and wide-ranging study of authoritarianism in Africa, Peterson defines as "totalitarian" any regime that creates political institutions to dominate society, espouses an all-encompassing utopian ideology, and attempts to mobilize its citizens on a mass scale. He identifies three contemporary African countries as totalitarian (Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Rwanda) and another three as having strong totalitarian tendencies (Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, and Zimbabwe). The latter set of regimes are not viewed as totalitarian because they often have strong civil societies and, especially in the case of Zimbabwe, political oppositions. Informative chapters examine the evolution of each of these six states. Are these enough states to add up to a continental trend toward totalitarianism? Since the return of multiparty electoral politics in the early 1990s, the most typical kind of regime in Africa seems to be an electoral autocracy, a system that combines many authoritarian practices with regular elections. Peterson recognizes that this kind of system cannot be defined as totalitarian but argues that totalitarian tendencies continue to appeal to autocrats in the region. He worries that the developmental success of Ethiopia and Rwanda will make a harder-edged authoritarianism attractive to both international donors in search of economic efficiency and budding autocrats who wish to entrench their power.

Foreign Affairs (ISSN 00157120), March/April 2020, Volume 99, Number 2. Published six times annually (January, March, May, July, September, November) at 58 East 68th Street, New York, NY 10065. Print subscriptions: U.S., $54.95; Canada, $66.95; other countries via air, $89.95 per year. Canadian Publication Mail–Mail # 1572121. Periodicals postage paid in New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Foreign Affairs*, P.O. Box 324, Congers, NY 10920. From time to time, we permit certain carefully screened companies to send our subscribers information about products or services that we believe will be of interest. If you prefer not to receive such information, please contact us at the Congers, NY, address indicated above.

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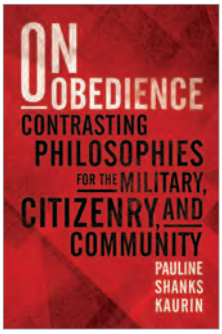

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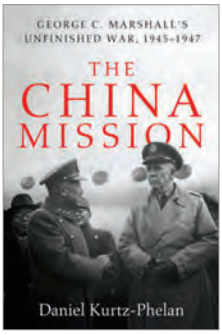

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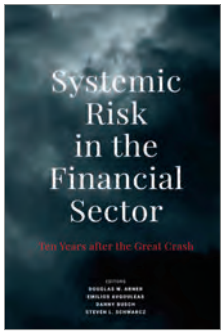

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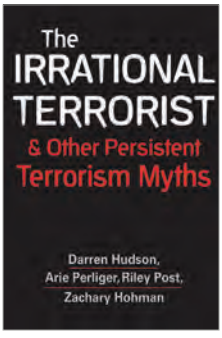

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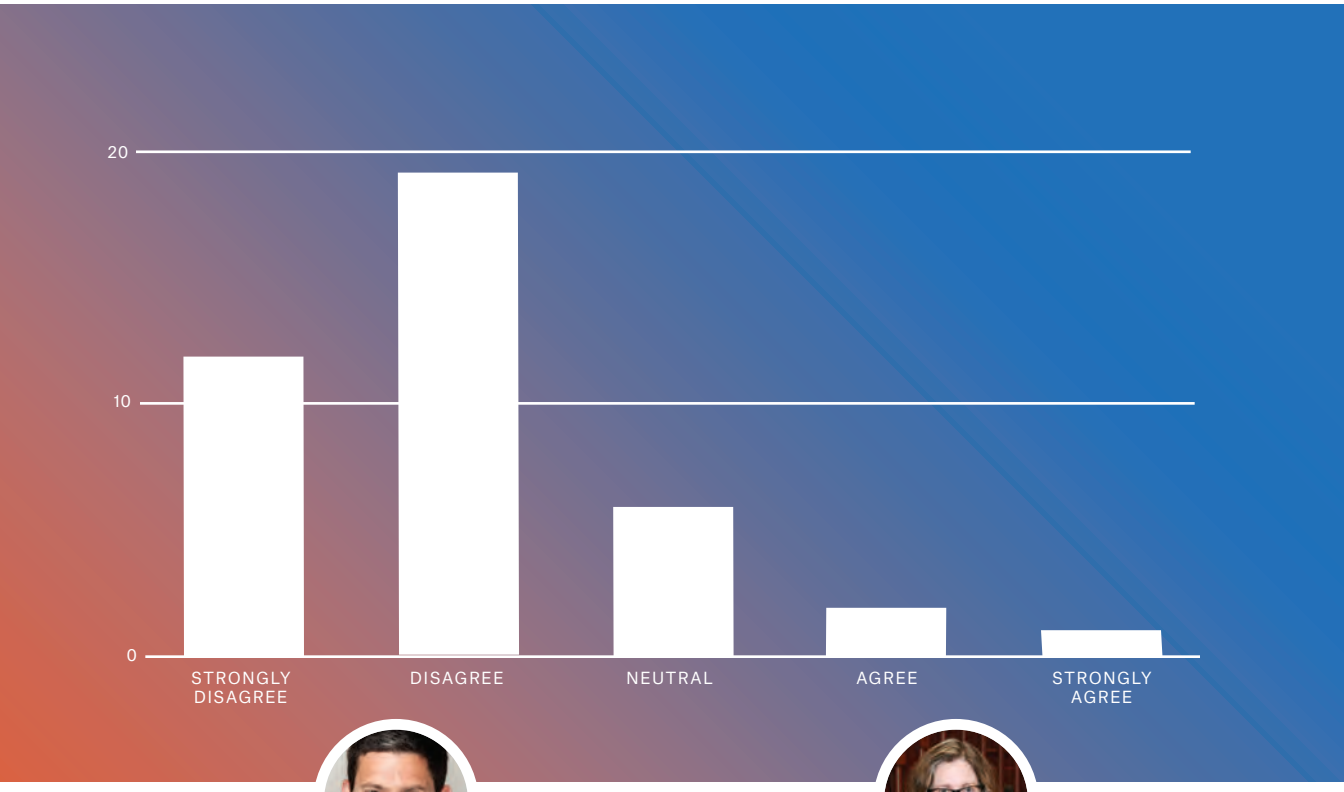
We asked dozens of experts whether they agreed or disagreed that in the wake of Brexit, the European Union will be better off without the United Kingdom. The results are below.



DISAGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 9

David Miliband

President and CEO, International Rescue Committee, and former Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom

"Despite being a sometimes difficult partner, the United Kingdom has overall been a source of ideas, balance, ballast, practicality, and global projection in and for the EU. Departure costs the United Kingdom more, but it is a net negative for the EU."

STRONGLY AGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 10

Kathleen McNamara

Professor of Government and Foreign Service, Georgetown University

"In an ideal world, the United Kingdom would be an essential member of a robust and effective EU. But the reality of British politics means that the EU will be far better off moving forward without Britain's shambolic obstructionism."

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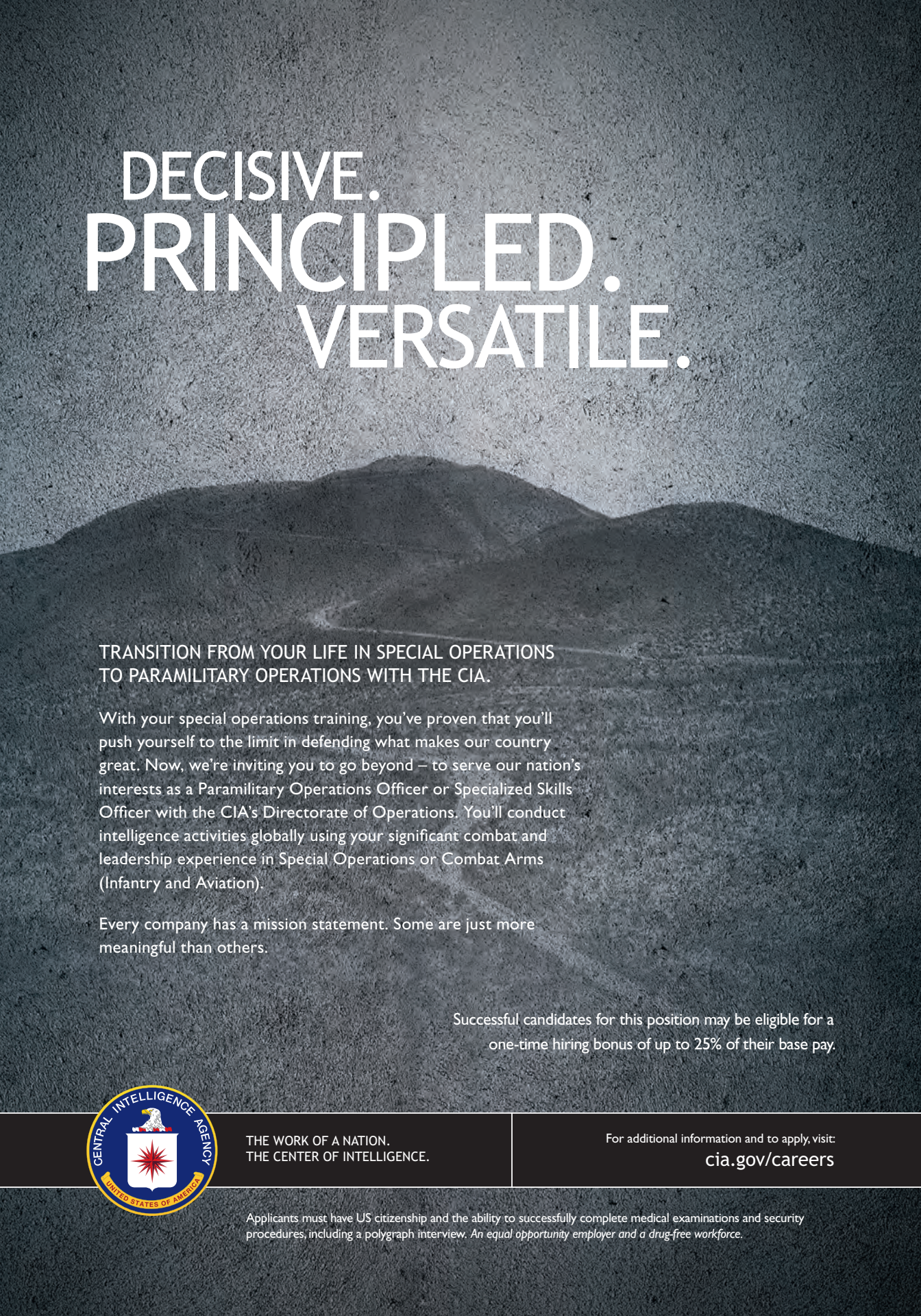

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