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REVIEWS & RESPONSES

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ROBERT ZOELLICK has served in some of the most consequential positions in U.S. foreign policy, including as U.S. trade representative and deputy secretary of state. From 2007 to 2012, he led the World Bank. Now a senior fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Zoellick argues in "Before the Next Shock" (page 86) that despite calls to fundamentally overhaul the global economic order, what it needs is more modest reform.

Born in Copenhagen to a mother from Denmark and a father from Comoros, **JACOB MCHANGAMA** is an acclaimed advocate for free speech and human rights. Mchangama has taught at the University of Copenhagen and is the founder and director of Justitia, a Danish think tank focused on the rule of law and civil liberties. He is also the host of the podcast *Clear and Present Danger* and the author of *Free Speech: A History From Socrates to Social Media*. In "The War on Free Speech" (page 117), he argues that freedom of expression is under assault everywhere—not just in authoritarian states.

One of the foremost authorities on mass migration, refugees, and security policy, **KELLY GREENHILL** has written extensively on coercion and disinformation in international relations. Greenhill is a visiting professor at SOAS University of London and sits on the faculties of Tufts University and MIT. In "When Migrants Become Weapons" (page 155), she argues that migrants have a long history of being used by states as a tool of coercive diplomacy.

THE MIDDLE EAST MOVES ON

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. invasion of Iraq, President George W. Bush announced a "forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East," driven by American "energy and idealism." A few years after that, President Barack Obama proclaimed a hopeful "new beginning" for U.S. Middle East policy and later hailed the Arab uprisings as "a chance to pursue the world as it should be," after "decades of accepting the world as it is in the region." But it didn't take long for the grand pronouncements to collide with harsh reality—leaving U.S. policymakers scrambling ever since to walk back such commitments without making things even worse.

"Under both Democratic and Republican administrations," writes F. Gregory Gause, "Washington has proved that it is much better at destroying states than building them." In his view, it must settle for less in the Middle East, accepting that "dealing with extremely flawed regimes, with blood on their hands, is sometimes the only way to check the dangers of disorder." Amaney Jamal and Michael Robbins concur that progress has faltered, but drawing on years of public opinion research, they find the cause in democracy's failure "to produce the kind of economic change that people across the Middle East desperately craved"—prompting more and more of them to look to China rather than the United States as a model.

Amid changes in U.S. policy, regional powers are both confronting new risks and finding new opportunities. Karim Sadjadpour argues that Iran has pursued a strategy that delivers short-term regional dominance at the cost of grave weakness at home. Michael Singh sees the Abraham Accords and the growing wave of Arab-Israeli normalization as "heralding a dramatic reordering of the Middle East." And Marwa Daoudy considers how regional actors are weaponizing climate change, exploiting scarcity and suffering for short-term gain.

Finally, Marc Lynch contends that a better approach to the region must start by fixing a more basic problem: an obsolete map. U.S. scholars and policymakers have clung to a definition of the Middle East that "threatens to blind U.S. strategy to the actual dynamics shaping the region—and, worse, makes Washington all too likely to continue making disastrous blunders there."

—Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, Editor

Amid changes in U.S. policy, regional powers are both confronting new risks and finding new opportunities.

RAUL ARIAS

The Price of Order

Settling for Less in the Middle East

F. Gregory Gause III

There is no question that the Middle East is a mess. The usual explanations for the disarray, however, fail to capture the root cause. Sectarianism, popular discontent with unrepresentative governments, economic failure, and foreign interference are the usual suspects in most analyses, but they are symptoms of the regional crisis, not causes. The weakness, and in some cases collapse, of central authority in so many of the region's states is the real source of its current disorder. The civil wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, along with the frail governments in Iraq, Lebanon, and the quasi state of Palestine, define the long-term geopolitical challenge of the region. These political vacuums invite the intervention of powers near and far. They allow sectarian and ethnic identities to become more salient. They give terrorist groups opportunities for growth. They impede economic development. And they create profound human suffering, which leads to massive refugee flows.

Rebuilding central government authority is the necessary first step for the region to escape its current Hobbesian nightmare. The problem is that state building has historically been a long and violent process. It is done by ruthless men (in the Middle East, always men) who have little regard for democratic niceties or international norms of human rights. Afghanistan and Iraq have shown that this kind of order creation cannot be done by outside powers. Under both Democratic and Republican administrations, Washington has proved that it is much better at destroying states than building them.

It is foolish to think that the choice in the Middle East's weak and failed states is between good governance and bad governance, or between democracy and authoritarianism. In reality, the choice now is between harsh governance and no governance. Once order is established, there will be a chance for economic development and political progress, but no guarantee of either. For those interested in a less violent, more predictable, and even, at some point in the future, more just Middle East, the hard reality is that dealing with extremely flawed regimes, with blood on their hands, is sometimes the only way to check the dangers of disorder.

STRONGMEN AND STABLE STATES

The irony of the current crisis of state weakness and collapse in the Middle East is that during the last three decades of the twentieth century, the regimes in power were becoming more stable and better able to govern their societies, for good (providing social services) and for ill (building institutions of surveillance and control). The Arab states that gained independence after World War II were weak by design. France and the United Kingdom, the colonial powers, had seen little reason to build effective govern-

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ments or provide social services to the populations. The strongest institutions they created were armies, but even those were kept small and aimed at maintaining domestic order, not fighting wars. The endemic instability of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, with frequent military coups, the fall of monarchies, and the challenge of revolutionary pan-Arabism, followed naturally from that inherent state weakness. Then, in the 1970s, a switch flipped. The Arab world, famous in the decades following World War II for its instability, became stable. The remaining monarchies in Jordan, Morocco, and the Arabian Peninsula endured, as did military regimes in Algeria and Egypt. Baath Party rule in Iraq and Syria, which had been two of the most volatile Arab countries, solidified under Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Assad, respectively. Even more personalist dictatorships—namely, those of the erratic Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen—were able to beat back challenges to their power for decades.

This is not to say that stability reigned everywhere. Revolution convulsed Iran in 1978–79 and produced the Islamic Republic. Turkey experienced military coups in 1971 and 1980, followed by a shaky transition to democracy. In both countries, however, the state itself continued to function. (In fact, one could argue that these short-term disruptions led to long-term stability: the governments in Iran after the revolution and Turkey after the 1980 coup each became more effective at controlling their populations.) There was also the glaring exception of Lebanon, where power was formally divided among its sectarian groups. It experienced civil war and foreign military interventions from the mid-1970s through the 1980s and beyond.

The strengthening of Middle Eastern states was partly the result of the socialist policies that so many regimes pursued after gaining independence. Land reform, the nationalization of industries, and top-down economic planning—all empowered the state. Meanwhile, the 1970s energy crises drove up the price of oil and redoubled the incentives for massive government growth. Formerly poor states now had the revenue to build large bureaucracies, armies, and internal security forces, enabling them both to distribute more benefits to their populations and to exercise greater control over them. Even the countries that exported little to no oil, such as Egypt and Jordan, benefited from the regional energy windfall, receiving foreign aid and investment from the oil states. The booming Arab petrostates welcomed millions of workers from their neighbors, relieving unemployment pressures in resource-poor Arab states.

A more stable and statist Middle East was not necessarily a more peaceful Middle East. There were violent crackdowns against armed opposition movements in a number of countries, with Syria experiencing civil-war-like conditions in the early 1980s, Algeria through most of the 1990s, and Iraq after its defeat in the Gulf War in 1991. In each case, however, the regime had the resources to hold on to power, and the fighting was largely contained inside national borders. There were international conflicts, as well: not just the Gulf War but also the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 and the Iran-Iraq War of 1980–88. Yet all were state-to-state wars, not civil or

guerilla wars. They could be ended through conventional diplomacy and, in the case of the Arab-Israeli war, by real peace treaties with Israel. Stronger states were also able to fend off the kind of political pressures and foreign meddling that in the 1950s and 1960s had brought down governments in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen and kept the region on edge. And despite the efforts of the new regime in Tehran to spread Islamist revolution to other Middle Eastern states in the 1980s, it succeeded only in the weak state of Lebanon, and there only partially so, by establishing Hezbollah.

This process of state strengthening was not pretty. The regimes that carried it out were not democratic. Political freedoms were severely curtailed, if they existed at all. The leaders were brutal to their opponents. Their bureaucracies were stultifying barriers to private-sector economic development and the functioning of civil society. The human and economic costs of building stronger states were real. But the process brought more stable domestic orders and a regional scene that, although still subject to interstate war, was also more responsive to international pressures for peace and stability. The region was neither the site of large-scale humanitarian disasters nor the source of massive refugee flows, as it is now. It was not perfect, but it was also far from today's mess.

THINGS FALL APART

Why was the Middle Eastern trend of stronger states and more stable regimes reversed in the twenty-first century? In the countries that didn't export oil, populations grew faster than resources, putting pressure on the welfare states that had been built in the 1950s and 1960s. Israel and Turkey survived by adopting export-led growth models as the world turned toward neoliberal, free-market policies in the 1990s, but both had very specific advantages: Israel had access to the American market and American aid, and Turkey enjoyed membership in the EU's free-trade association. Other Middle Eastern states that took the same neoliberal turn were less successful. Egypt's and Tunisia's partial embrace of neoliberalism tended to promote crony capitalists and exacerbate inequality. For the oil states, it was feast or famine. The volatility of oil prices put great pressures on oil exporters with large populations and modest per capita energy exports. Iraq was motivated to invade Kuwait in 1990 in part because of the fiscal crisis brought on by the collapse of oil prices in the mid-1980s. Algeria, too, suffered from that same collapse, with the decline in oil revenues leading to spending cuts, protests, elections, and, eventually, a brutal civil war in the 1990s. Only the super-rentier oil states, such as Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, which had enormous per capita energy wealth, avoided problems.

These longer-term demographic and economic trends formed the backdrop to more immediate political pressures, which kicked off the current crisis of state weakness. The starting point was the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Thanks to more than a decade of brutal international sanctions, the relatively efficient redistributive bureaucracy and terrifying police state that Saddam had built with Iraq's oil wealth had morphed into a more limited patronage regime, held together by sectarian and clan loyalty and unconstrained violence.

Iraq was a weak state when the United States invaded. But it became a failed state after the invasion.

In the hubris of its Cold War victory and the dislocation it felt after the 9/11 attacks, the United States believed that it could destroy what was left of the Iraqi state and rebuild it from the ground up. The George W. Bush administration, in an effort to purge the country of Saddam's influence, disbanded the army, outlawed the ruling party, and dismantled the bureaucracy, thereby toppling the three pillars of the modern Middle Eastern authoritarian state. The result was social breakdown: multiple armed insurgencies, a lack of electricity, the collapse of the educational system, and the looting of state wealth. Iraq, which had been a major player in regional politics, became a playing field for others, most successfully Iran. The United States was unable to build a strong, well-functioning, democratic state in Iraq, much as it was unable to do so in Afghanistan. Instead, it created a political vacuum in which nonstate actors such as the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) could flourish.

The next regional shock was the Arab uprisings of 2010–11. This contagion of protest was a reminder that, despite the demise of pan-Arabism, Arab citizens still saw themselves as sharing not just a language and a culture but also some sort of common political identity. Soon, however, the heady days of (largely) peaceful protests mobilizing citizens across sectarian, regional, and ideological lines devolved into civil wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The democratic victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egyptian parliamentary and presidential elections was snuffed out by a coup in 2013 that returned to power the military elite that had ruled Egypt since 1952. Tunisia's successful democratic experiment is now facing the challenge of an elected, and seemingly popular, president who has suspended parliament and the constitution.

In Egypt and Tunisia, the regime fell, but the state itself never cracked. Both countries' militaries remained united; their bureaucracies continued to function. In Libya, Syria, and Yemen, order broke down. They joined Iraq in the company of the region's failed and failing states. When one Middle Eastern state becomes a political vacuum, as Lebanon did in the 1970s and 1980s, the consequences can to some extent be kept local, with only the surrounding states directly affected. When so many states descend into conflict, however, a national crisis becomes regional, and even global.

THE GLOBAL COSTS OF CHAOS

The civil wars experienced by so many states in the region have had horrible consequences for their citizens. Both Syria and Yemen have, at various times in the last decade, been described as the location of the world's worst humanitarian crisis. In the Middle East, however, what happens in these civil wars is not contained within the borders of the affected states. The crisis of state authority in the region carries three serious international consequences.

Two are relatively easy to grasp. First, nonstate actors thrive in areas where the state can no longer claim a near monopoly on the legitimate use of force. The vacuum created in Afghanistan by the Soviets' 1989 withdrawal gave al Qaeda the safe harbor it needed to plot the 9/11 attacks. The collapse of Iraq after the

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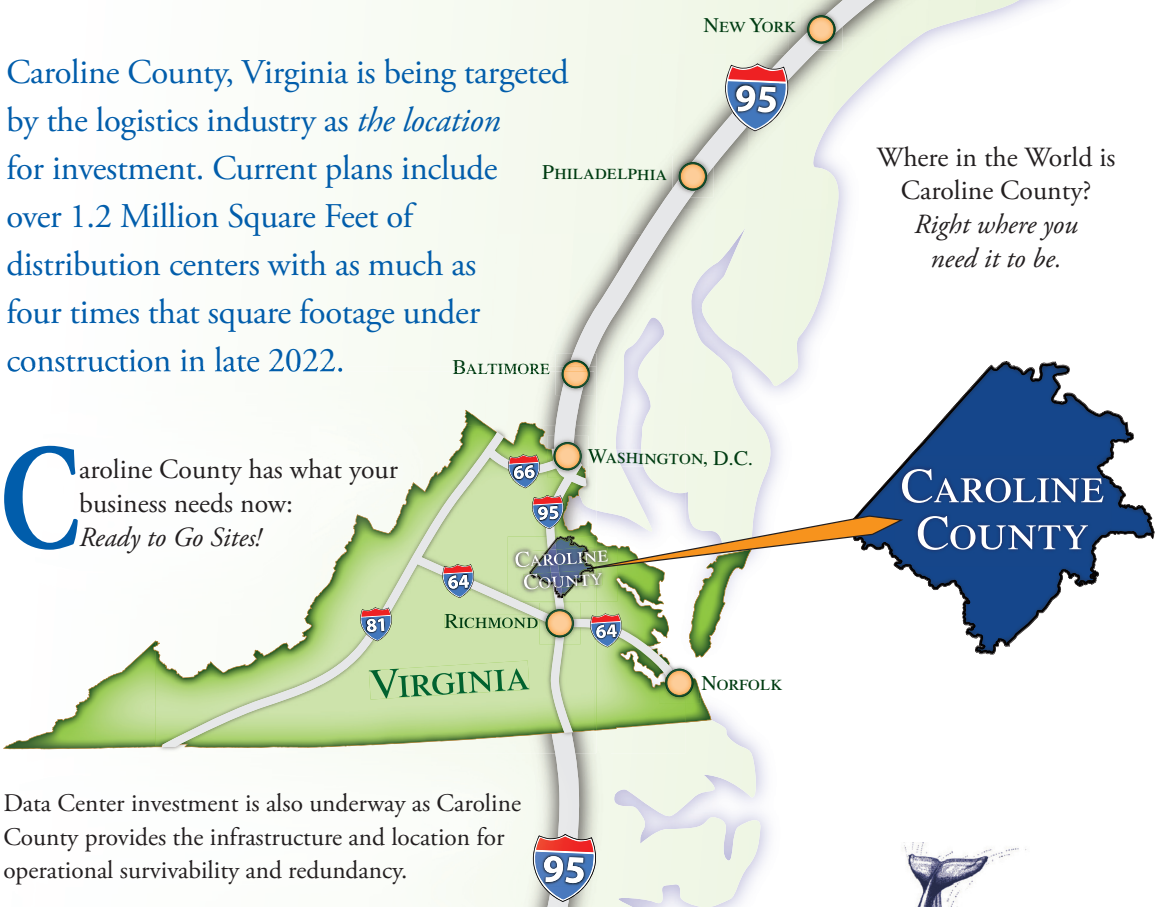

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2003 U.S. invasion offered ISIS a base from which to develop and expand into Syria. The lack of order in Yemen, even before the civil war there began, enabled the rise of a local al Qaeda affiliate, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. (The group's ranks were filled with Saudis who had found that the strong state in their home country made it impossible for them to operate there.) The chaos in Libya has allowed the North African branch of the Islamic State to find a territorial base. Failed states give terrorists the freedom they need to pursue their broader ambitions.

Second, the humanitarian crises of civil wars cause massive numbers of people to flee their home countries. When those civil wars are close to Europe, the consequences for the United States' NATO allies are particularly difficult to manage. The refugee issue has shaken the political scene in a number of European countries, accelerated the growth of right-wing populism, and occasioned serious divisions within the European Union. When a country such as Belarus can use Iraqi refugees at the Polish border as pawns to pressure the EU to lift sanctions against it, as it did in the latter part of 2021, it is easy to see how the consequences of the collapse of state authority in the Middle East are not confined to the region.

The third international consequence is more complicated: weak and failed states become arenas in which rivalries are played out among the Middle East's ambitious stronger states and, in some cases, international powers. As the state recedes, unable to provide basic order and minimal services to its people, those people have to look for support and protection in their local communities. Given the history in many of these states, those communities are often (although not always) sectarian. The collapse of Iraq's state, for example, made Shiite and Sunni identities among Arab Iraqis more central to their politics, while also permitting Kurdish Iraqis, both Shiite and Sunni, to realize their hopes for ethnonational autonomy (although not internationally recognized independence). Given the strong cross-border connections in the Middle East based on tribal, ethnic, sectarian, and ideological identities, it is not surprising that the people in these broken states seek help from their neighbors. Shiite Arabs in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen look to Iran, the region's major Shiite power, for support in their fights. Sunni Arabs ask for help from the leading Sunni states, particularly Turkey and Saudi Arabia but also the smaller, wealthy Gulf monarchies in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The regional players do not have to fight their way into these states. Local actors, engaged in life-and-death struggles for the future of their communities, invite them in. Those local actors need the money, guns, political support, advisers, and fighters that their regional patrons can supply. The sectarianization of regional conflicts emerges from the sectarian divisions within these states. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey take advantage of it, but they do not impose it on unwilling proxies. The sectarian struggle in the Middle East is a bottom-up, not a top-down, phenomenon.

Proof that sectarianism is more a consequence than a cause of the regional crisis can be found in Libya. There are no significant sectarian differences in the country. Almost everyone is a Sunni Muslim. But when the Qaddafi regime

collapsed under the pressure of the U.S.-led military intervention of 2011, Libya became as fractured a society as any in the region. Groups formed on regional, tribal, and ideological bases to fight for power. Egypt, France, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and others picked their proxies. Sectarianism played no role in Libya, but the situation in the country now strongly resembles those in Syria and Yemen, where sectarian divides do exist. When a state collapses, the lines along which the society fractures are a product of its unique history. The regional consequences, however, are depressingly similar.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

The big winner in the Middle East's crisis today is Iran. It has found a successful formula for extending its influence into broken Arab states with significant Shiite populations. The formula involves providing money, guns, political and logistical support, and even fighters to its allies. But the core of its success is that its local allies have an ideological commitment to the Iranian regional project. Hezbollah, various Afghan and Iraqi militias, and the Houthis in Yemen all want to be Tehran's junior partners and are willing to act across borders to support Iranian policy. They see Iran as a political model and thus accept its leadership as legitimate. Hezbollah, along with Shiite militias from Afghanistan and Iraq, has fought in Syria to support the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and its fighters have trained the Houthis. Iran has been able to extend its influence throughout the broken polities of the eastern Arab world despite the relative weakness of its conventional military forces. Nobody in the region fears an Iranian military invasion; many fear the proven ability of Iran to infiltrate their societies.

Iran's regional rivals have not enjoyed nearly the same level of success. Saudi Arabia has more money to give its clients than Iran does, but money is not everything in this game. The problem for Riyadh is that its natural ideological allies, Salafi jihadi movements such as al Qaeda and ISIS, hate the Saudis and want to kill them. Thus, the Saudis have suffered setbacks in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Saudi money is useful for established state actors that are looking to consolidate their power, such as the Egyptian government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. But Riyadh does not have loyal nonstate allies and proxies that can advance its interests in the region's civil wars.

Turkey put itself forward in the wake of the Arab Spring as the natural leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and similar Sunni Islamist movements in the Arab world. This was a potentially potent play for influence. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had demonstrated that a populist Sunni Islamist party could dominate free elections, implement successful (at least for a while) economic policies, and govern a major regional state. The Muslim Brotherhood, following Erdogan's playbook and positioning itself as a moderate, democratic, populist Islamist political party, did very well in elections in Egypt and Tunisia. Islamists with similar platforms had success in Libya's elections in 2012, as well—the country's first elections in several decades. With the Assad regime seeming on the brink of collapse in 2011, it looked like the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, a

longtime foe of the regime, would be the natural inheritor of power there.

Unfortunately for Erdogan, the Muslim Brotherhood's moment was brief. The Brotherhood's rule in Egypt ended with the 2013 coup. The restored military regime cracked down on the Brothers in a brutal campaign that filled Egyptian jails and morgues. Sisi found support from the Emirati and Saudi governments, which feared bottom-up populist Sunni movements as much as they feared the growth of Iranian power. As popular uprisings morphed into civil wars in Libya and Syria, Salafi jihadis schooled in violence supplanted the Brothers, who had chosen peaceful democratic participation over the use of force. The Brotherhood's last success, the Ennahda Party in Tunisia, is on its back foot with the closure of parliament and the consolidation of power by President Kais Saied in July 2021. Erdogan now has more problems at home, both economically and politically, than he could have imagined ten years ago, when he thought Turkey could lead the Sunni world after the Arab uprisings. With preponderant influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, Iran is the regional power that has best been able to take advantage of the crisis in the Middle East.

One of the problems of seeing the current Middle Eastern crisis purely through a sectarian lens is that the Sunni world is hardly united. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi jihadi groups, such as al Qaeda and ISIS, have fundamentally opposed views of what an Islamic polity should look like. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are not only geopolitical rivals; during the Arab Spring, they also held very different ideas about what role Islam should play in politics. The old elites in the Sunni world, who were neither Brothers nor Salafists, might have suffered temporary setbacks in 2011, but they are back with a vengeance in Egypt and Tunisia now. If the regional crisis is a sectarian fight, the Sunnis do not have their act together.

IS DEMOCRACY THE ANSWER?

Reducing sectarian violence requires domestic order. If that can be established, the opportunities for cross-border interventions on sectarian (or other) grounds will diminish. Creating domestic order, however, is not an easy thing to do.

Democracy in the region's broken states is unlikely to provide that necessary domestic order. Just as it is problematic to see the crux of the Middle Eastern crisis as sectarianism, it is equally mistaken to see it as the absence of democracy. Recent antigovernment protests in the Arab world, particularly in Algeria, Iraq, and Lebanon in 2019, have kept alive the argument that the root cause of Middle Eastern instability is the disconnect between peoples and their leaders. It is hard to argue with the assertion that more responsive governments would face less opposition. That is practically tautological. But when societies are profoundly divided, to whom should the government be responsive? Addressing the demands of one group will almost automatically disadvantage, or at least be seen to disadvantage, other groups.

There is no evidence that elections in and of themselves can solve the problems of state weakness and social division. Elections in Iraq in the wake of the U.S. invasion hardly ended the violence in that

country or gave the resulting governments the ability to fend off foreign intervention. On the contrary, Iranian support for various Iraqi political parties meant that Tehran could insist on approving the deals for putting together new governments after those elections. Egypt's free parliamentary and presidential elections were easily overturned by the military, with substantial popular support. Libya's second parliamentary election in the post-Qaddafi period, in 2014, only exacerbated preexisting regional and political divisions, leading to dueling governments in the eastern and western parts of the country and thus perpetuating the civil war. The Libyan presidential election scheduled for December 2021 was postponed amid rising tensions. The Algerian protests of 2019 forced the resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, but his successor, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, came from the same political elite against which the protests were mounted, and the election that brought him to power was deeply flawed. Those who believe that elections are the best path to bridging societal divides should take a look at the last two presidential elections in the United States.

CHOOSING ORDER

For the United States, which still has interests in the Middle East, it is important to diagnose the problem accurately so that it can respond to it properly. Although it is inevitable that the region is not going to be the prime focus of U.S. foreign policy, as it was for years after 9/11, that does not mean that the United States is withdrawing from the Middle East. Despite the headlines, there is much continuity in U.S. policy and posture in the region. The system of U.S. military bases is not being deconstructed, even as the number of troops kept there is reduced. The Biden administration, like every recent U.S. administration, has stated that it opposes the extension of Iranian influence in the region, even as it negotiates with Tehran on its nuclear program. Oil remains a strategic commodity, and the Persian Gulf has more of it than any place else in the world. A good U.S. relationship with Israel is still a bipartisan pillar of U.S. foreign policy. The United States has plenty of reasons to want to see a Middle East that is less riven by conflict, more orderly, and more predictable.

Wanting something, however, is not the same as being able to bring it about. The core problem of state weakness is not something that the United States can solve. Ambitious U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were failures, demonstrating that the United States cannot directly build strong regional states, despite its military power and seemingly limitless military budget. A chastened and more modest United States needs to identify specific interests in the Middle East rather than general regional goals, such as stability. The restoration of stable governance in the oil-rich Persian Gulf, for example, is more important than stability elsewhere. De-escalation of the looming nuclear crisis with Iran is more important than who governs Libya. The United States can help Middle Eastern governments at the margins with economic and military aid, but it should not expect too much from that or spread its resources too thin across too many states. Instead, the United States needs to pick places where it has intrinsic interests and where the government in power seems to be

making progress on building its capabilities, exerting some form of control over its borders, and providing for its society.

Iraq is one such place. It has the resources from oil to fund a real state. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi has demonstrated a desire to establish some distance from Iran and to respond to the needs of Iraq's citizens. He deserves American support and understanding. He cannot be expected to break completely with Iran; his political future depends, and will for some time, on Iranian acceptance. A more stable, organized, and independent Iraq, an actor rather than a playing field in Persian Gulf politics, would be a major advance toward a more orderly and predictable region. The Biden administration should continue to support the Kadhimi government with a modest military presence and political backing, while not forcing it into a confrontation with Iran.

Other areas of the Middle East are too disordered for American aid, threats, or entreaties to have much of an effect. Libya, too fractious and violent, is far from beginning the process of state rebuilding, despite its oil wealth. Lebanon is suffering a historic collapse of its economic and social systems. This is heartbreaking for Americans who have invested their resources and their selves in the country, helping build a university system and a medical infrastructure that were once the finest in the region. But there is little that U.S. foreign policy can do to solve Lebanon's problems, and there are few vital U.S. interests at stake there.

Yemen is in a similar position. Diplomatic efforts to bring about an end to the fighting there are praiseworthy and an essential first step toward alleviating the humanitarian crisis, a good purpose in and of itself. But Yemen is not going to be stable or well ordered anytime in the near future. There is little that the United States can or should do in terms of long-term commitments there, short of continuing to push Saudi Arabia toward a diplomatic solution.

The United States is just not very good at dealing with broken societies and the nonstate actors that help determine their future. But it does have the economic, military, and diplomatic power to affect how well-ordered states behave in the region. Washington does not always get its way with Egypt, Israel, or Saudi Arabia, but it does so more often than not. It can even bring pressure to bear on its regional foes, as the multilateral diplomatic effort the Obama administration made to reach the Iran nuclear deal demonstrated. Prioritizing diplomacy with functioning states to achieve specific American objectives on oil, counterterrorism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and nuclear nonproliferation makes much more sense than chasing after chimeras such as state building, regime change, and the spread of democracy. At a time when there is a near consensus that the United States has sacrificed too much blood and treasure in the Middle East over the past 20 years, American goals in the region need to be adjusted to the resources the country is willing to spend.

If a more ordered and predictable Middle East is in the interest of the United States, that means Washington must be willing to do business with the leaders of those states in the region that are actually governed, even if they are doing it in ways that are autocratic and, at times, abhorrent. Negotiating with the

Islamic Republic of Iran is not a favor that Washington is bestowing on the regime; it is a necessity to reduce the chances of nuclear proliferation. No one doubts the authoritarian nature of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, or the United Arab Emirates, all important partners in the region. There is nothing wrong with urging them to treat their own citizens with dignity and respect, but U.S. leverage with them should be reserved for practical and specific regional diplomatic ends.

It is in Syria where the tension between order and liberal principles will play out most clearly. An orderly Syria, able to prevent terrorist organizations from using its territory and, over time, to put some distance between itself and its current Iranian and Russian patrons, would be better than the Syria that exists now. Unlike the governments in Libya and Yemen, the Assad regime is on its way toward defeating its domestic foes and reestablishing some amount of control over the country. As loathsome as Assad is, it makes sense to recognize this reality and begin a process of contact with his government, at first to minimize the risks to the few American forces still in Syria but eventually to pursue the common interest of preventing Salafi jihadis from maintaining their foothold in the country. The Baathist regime of Assad and his father kept the Syrian border with Israel quiet for decades and prevented Islamist terrorist organizations from using Syria as a base for attacks on the United States. Getting back to that point would be a worthwhile goal.

Although it would be emotionally satisfying to continue to shun Assad and condemn him for his war crimes, that will not change the Syrian reality one bit. It will only further strengthen Assad's ties to Iran, increasing the likelihood of an Iranian-Israeli crisis played out on Syrian soil. It would be nice to see a democratic, prosperous, and liberal Syria, just as it would be nice to see progress in other Middle Eastern autocracies, but that transition will not happen anytime soon, if ever. For now, a more orderly Middle East is all the United States can hope for.

Why Democracy Stalled in the Middle East

Economic Despair and the Triumph of the China Model

Amaney A. Jamal and Michael Robbins

In 2011, citizens across the Middle East took to the streets to demand more representative governments, social justice, and economic reforms. In Egypt and Tunisia, protest movements toppled dictators who had ruled for decades; authoritarian regimes elsewhere in the region were rattled as never before. The Arab Spring captured imaginations around the world and challenged long-held assumptions about the region's political culture.

Within just a few years, however, hope had mostly given way to despair: the old order came roaring back—even more repressive than before in some places. That outcome, however, did not settle the underlying question of the future of democracy in the Middle East. Protest movements and nascent democratic governments ultimately failed to end a decades-long era of authoritarian rule, but that did not necessarily mean that the desire for democratic change had dissipated. Even as autocrats reasserted control in the years immediately following the Arab Spring, many analysts continued to aver that the revolts had unleashed aspirations for new economic and political arrangements, signaling the dawn of a more inclusive era. According to that view, in the Middle East, the arc of history was indeed long, but it was nevertheless still bending toward democracy.

A little over a decade after the initial uprisings, there are fewer grounds for such optimism. Not only have authoritarians further consolidated their rule, but even more important, attitudes toward democracy and political rights have dramatically shifted. At the time of the revolts, most citizens across the region believed that democracy was the best political system, according to the Arab Barometer research network, where we serve as co-principal investigators. In eight of the ten countries that Arab Barometer surveyed in 2010–11, more than 70 percent of respondents held that view. By 2018–19, however, support had fallen: in only seven of the 12 countries surveyed did at least 70 percent of respondents prefer democracy over all other systems.

To understand why the Arab world's ardor for democracy has faded, it is crucial to grasp that most of the people who took to the streets in 2011 were motivated not just by a desire for liberty but also by intense frustration with the material conditions of their lives. "Bread, freedom, and justice" was the protest slogan often heard in Cairo

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during the Egyptian uprising—and there is a reason bread comes first on the list. Egyptians and Tunisians saw economic considerations as the primary reason for the Arab Spring revolts in their countries, according to Arab Barometer surveys conducted in both places in 2011. The protesters were tired of political repression, but they were deeply angry about the meager opportunities that authoritarian systems afforded. The brief flowering of pro-democracy passions and movements failed to produce durable democratic governments. Perhaps more important, however, it also failed to produce the kind of economic change that people across the Middle East desperately craved.

Today, the region is plagued by the same issues that have dragged down its economic development for decades: high unemployment, especially among young people; low rates of participation in the labor force, especially among women; a lack of high-quality education; rising inequality; and rampant corruption. The COVID-19 pandemic has made things much worse, not only leading to illness and death but also spurring a collapse in oil prices, a dramatic drop in tourism, and an across-the-board decline in economic activity of all kinds. The International Monetary Fund has estimated that the annualized growth rate across the region of the Middle East and North Africa in 2020 was negative 4.7 percent, and the World Bank has estimated that the pandemic has left tens of millions of Arab citizens at income levels that qualify as below the poverty line in upper-middle-income countries.

All these pressures and hardships might lead some observers to expect another explosion of protests and calls for change. In 2019, prior to the onset of the pandemic, long-standing dictators were deposed in Algeria and Sudan, and protests forced changes of government in Iraq and Lebanon. To a large extent, however, the movements behind those developments were calling for better governance and economic management rather than democracy per se. It appears that the people of the Arab world have internalized one lesson above all from the revolts of the last decade: democratic change does not necessarily produce economic improvement. Indeed, today, people in the more authoritarian countries across the region tend to view their economic situations in a significantly more favorable light than do people in the countries that lean more toward democracy.

Meanwhile, in the decade since the Arab Spring, the United States has retreated from the region in ways that have called into question its support for those who oppose oppressive regimes. Although Washington declined in 2011 to strongly support the Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak, a longtime U.S. ally, it also declined to counter the 2013 military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government that had eventually emerged after Mubarak's downfall. Nor did the United States match its rhetorical praise for the opposition to the Syrian autocrat Bashar al-Assad with genuine support.

As U.S. influence has waned and regional economies have stagnated, the Chinese economic and development model and, to a lesser extent, the Russian one have become more attractive to many Arabs, particularly in contrast to the perceived limitations of

Western neoliberalism. The Chinese and Russian systems, at least as viewed by many in the Middle East, appear to avoid the political tumult of democracy and offer the promise of stability and economic growth. This shift in perceptions may have complex and somewhat counterintuitive ramifications for the future of U.S. involvement in the Middle East. Surprisingly, in the countries that have leaned toward democracy in recent years, people tend to see China and Russia as more beneficial economic partners than the United States—whereas in some of the Middle East's authoritarian-leaning countries, the idea of strengthening economic links to the United States fares better.

DID DEMOCRACY DELIVER?

To get a more detailed sense of these trends in the Middle East, it is useful to consider two groups of countries in which Arab Barometer has conducted regular surveys during the past decade. In the first group are three authoritarian-leaning countries: Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan. These three countries have followed a similar path since the Arab Spring. In each one, the major changes sought by the protesters in 2011 were not fully realized, the regimes that ruled prior to the revolts remain more or less in place today, and economic growth has stayed relatively weak, owing in part to a lack of significant reforms.

In Egypt, massive protests in early 2011 led to the fall of Mubarak, followed by elections in which a candidate loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood triumphed. A military coup in 2013, however, cut short the democratic experiment, and the old regime reasserted itself under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Sisi has curtailed political rights, but economic growth has increased after remaining mostly flat during Egypt's brief democratic phase.

In Morocco, small-scale protests in 2011—and the regime's wary eye on events elsewhere—led to constitutional reforms. But the changes did not dramatically alter the monarchical system, and King Mohammed VI maintains the vast majority of power. The average rates of economic growth had fallen gradually over the last decade but have declined sharply since the onset of the pandemic.

Jordan also saw modest protests in 2011, and there, too, the monarchy supported limited constitutional reform. In the years since, King Abdullah II has pursued further constitutional reforms, first in 2016 and again in 2022, in large part in response to growing frustration over economic stagnation and the damage wreaked by COVID-19. But the monarchy remains firmly in control.

In the second group are three democratic-leaning countries: Iraq, Lebanon, and Tunisia. These are the three countries surveyed by Arab Barometer in which elections are the most meaningful. But their elected governments have failed to address major economic problems. In the wake of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and occupation, Iraq developed a political system that is not fully democratic but in which power has regularly changed hands through elections. Economic growth has been erratic, mostly because of the fluctuating price of oil, which is Iraq's main export. Even when oil prices are high, however, endemic corruption guarantees that relatively little wealth flows to ordinary Iraqis.

Lebanon is also far from a full democracy, but the system of governance that emerged from the 1989 Taif accord resulted in relatively regular elections in which multiple parties compete. Despite a complex system of sharing top government positions among the country's main sects, in recent decades, elections have managed to alter the balance of political power. But rampant corruption and the failure of the political elite to address long-standing economic challenges led to a full-blown crisis in late 2019, culminating in the country's default on its debt in 2020. Since the crisis began, the Lebanese pound has lost 90 percent of its value. The World Bank has concluded that Lebanon may be experiencing one of the three worst economic collapses since the mid-nineteenth century.

Of all the countries surveyed by Arab Barometer, Tunisia—despite a recent autocratic turn—comes the closest to having emerged from the Arab Spring as a full democracy, with regular elections in which parties freely compete for actual power. In the past decade, however, per capita income there has declined, in large part because of the failure of consecutive governments to meaningfully tackle a legacy of economic problems inherited from the former regime.

When comparing these two groups of countries, a striking contrast emerges in citizens' views of their state's economy: those in the three authoritarian-leaning states tend to have a far more positive economic outlook than those in the three democratic-leaning ones. In Egypt, 41 percent of citizens surveyed rated their economy as good or very good in 2018–19; in Morocco, 36 percent shared that assessment; and in Jordan, the figure was 23 percent. Compared with in wealthy, developed countries, even ones elsewhere in the Middle East, those numbers are quite low; for example, in Kuwait, 77 percent of citizens polled perceived their economy as good or very good in 2019. But the levels of public satisfaction with economic conditions in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan were generally higher than they were in Iraq (21 percent), Lebanon (14 percent), and Tunisia (seven percent).

This pattern recurred when respondents were asked to rate their government's performance in creating jobs. Twenty-two percent of respondents in Egypt, 20 percent in Morocco, and 14 percent in Jordan agreed that their government was doing a good job on employment. Again, compared with in wealthier countries, these numbers are quite low; in Kuwait, over half of respondents held that view. Yet they shine in comparison with assessments of job creation in the three democratic-leaning countries: only 17 percent of Tunisians, six percent of Iraqis, and four percent of Lebanese gave their government a positive evaluation on job creation.

Citizens in the democratic-leaning countries are not merely griping about their leader's performance on economic issues, however: many have come to believe that the democratic system itself, at least as it works in their country, is the problem. In Lebanon, according to a 2020 survey conducted by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 55 percent of respondents agreed with this statement: "Our country should abolish elections and have experts govern." In Tunisia, 45 percent agreed. (The survey did not include Iraq.) In all three

countries, a sense of despair about the future has taken root, especially among young people. In the foundation's survey, 53 percent of Lebanese respondents aged 18 to 29 said they had considered leaving their country, as did 47 percent of Tunisian respondents in that cohort. By comparison, lower percentages in Jordan (36 percent) and Morocco (31 percent) had considered leaving their homeland.

TUNISIA'S TRAVAILS

Of the three democratic-leaning countries, Tunisia offers perhaps the most striking example of how persistent economic hardship has soured people on democracy. During the past decade, the country had often been held up as democracy's greatest hope in the Middle East. Analysts suggested that of all the countries in the region, Tunisia had the best basis for success: an ethnically homogeneous, relatively well-educated population; a comparatively large middle class; and a military that was generally apolitical. In the Constituent Assembly elections that followed the revolution, Ennahda, a moderate Islamist party, won a plurality of the seats and governed in a coalition with two other parties. After high-profile political assassinations in 2013 led to a crisis, a new government headed by a technocratic prime minister was formed in early 2014. Elections later that year were won by Nidaa Tounes, a secular party established largely to oppose Ennahda.

Ongoing infighting within Nidaa Tounes, however, and its rivalry with Ennahda resulted in weak governments. In presidential elections in 2019, Kais Saied, a previously obscure constitutional law professor, defeated Nabil Karoui, a populist business leader. Both candidates were complete outsiders, suggesting a broad rejection of the political elite by ordinary citizens. Then, last year, Saied dissolved parliament, claiming the economic crisis made such a move necessary and effectively ending Tunisia's democratic experiment—with a good deal of public support. As in Egypt in 2013, the majority of citizens in Tunisia had lost faith in the process of change that the Arab Spring had ushered in.

Saied has met with relatively little opposition because Tunisia's democratic transition failed to bring tangible economic benefits and solutions to its people. Today, the country's economy is in worse condition than it was before the Arab Spring: in 2011, per capita income in Tunisia stood at $4,265; by 2020, it had fallen to $3,320. Unsurprisingly, people's economic frustrations have grown. In 2011, only a few months after the fall of the dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, 27 percent of Tunisians surveyed by Arab Barometer said they believed their economy was in good or very good shape; in 2018, that figure had fallen to just seven percent.

Many Tunisians have concluded that the root of the problem is the very system they fought to put in place after toppling Ben Ali. In 2011, when asked if democratic regimes are indecisive and full of problems, only 19 percent of Tunisians agreed; by 2018, that figure was 51 percent. In 2011, 17 percent of Tunisian respondents agreed with the statement "In democratic systems, economic performance is weak." By 2018, that proportion had more than doubled, to 39 percent. This trend was especially pronounced among young

Tunisians, many of whom came of age during the democratic transition. In 2011, just 21 percent of Tunisians between the ages of 18 and 29 associated democracy with weak economic performance; by 2018, that figure had jumped to 43 percent. It is not hard to see why. According to the Tunisian economist Mongi Boughzala, "The share of unemployed people [in Tunisia] who are younger than 35 years old is 85 percent. And the higher the level of education attainment, the higher the rate of unemployment: 40 percent of the unemployed have university degrees."

AUTHORITARIAN ANSWERS

What emerges clearly from the Arab Barometer results is a stark message: ordinary Arabs want economic dignity and are desperately searching for a system of governance that can offer it. And because democracy has failed to deliver economically across the Middle East, many ordinary Arabs—including some who had hoped for democracy a decade ago—now appear more open to the authoritarian models offered by China and Russia. Since the late 1970s, the Chinese system has lifted more than 800 million people out of extreme poverty, according to the World Bank—just the kind of economic transformation that many across the Middle East are desperate to achieve. In China, GDP per capita was $2,194 in 2000 and reached $10,431 in 2020. Russia's GDP per capita roughly quadrupled over those 20 years, from around $7,000 to about $28,000. Meanwhile, average GDP per capita in the wealthy countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development barely doubled, rising from around $25,000 to around $45,000.

As the United States has focused less on the Middle East, China and Russia have stepped in. Through its Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing has signed economic cooperation agreements with several Arab governments. As the researcher Charles Dunne has noted, "China became the largest foreign investor in the region in 2016, and since BRI was inaugurated, Beijing has pumped at least $123 billion into the Middle East in BRI-related project financing." Russia has not provided the same type of economic aid but has played an active military role. By intervening to support its allies in Libya and Syria, Moscow signaled its reengagement with the region after decades of retrenchment following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

It comes as no surprise, then, that many Arabs are inclined to want their government to forge stronger economic ties with Beijing and Moscow, even if doing so means reducing their country's economic links with the United States. Here, however, a revealing pattern emerges from the Arab Barometer surveys: in the democratic-leaning countries, people clearly favor improved economic ties with China and Russia over stronger economic links with the United States, whereas in the autocratic-leaning countries, stronger economic ties with the United States retain a good deal of appeal. In Lebanon in 2018, 42 percent of respondents wanted stronger economic ties with China, and 43 percent wanted them with Russia, whereas only 36 percent wanted stronger ties with the United States. Among Iraqis, 51 percent favored stronger ties with China, 43 percent with Russia, and only 35 percent with the United States.

In Tunisia, 63 percent agreed that they would like to see stronger ties with China, 50 percent with Russia, and only 45 percent with the United States. Citizens in these countries do not seem to take into account the U.S. democratic system when forming opinions about economic relations with Washington.

The picture is more complex in the autocratic-leaning countries, where the prospect of stronger economic ties with the United States fared better. In Jordan, 70 percent of respondents agreed they wanted stronger economic ties with China, higher than the 57 percent who responded the same way regarding the United States. But stronger ties with Russia were favored by only 43 percent. In Egypt, Russia received the highest evaluation: 38 percent of respondents wished for stronger economic ties with Russia, 36 percent wanted them with the United States, and 30 percent with China. In Morocco, 49 percent of respondents wanted greater economic links with China, 43 percent with the United States, and 40 percent with Russia.

Among the global powers, China was the most popular potential economic partner in the 12 countries that Arab Barometer surveyed in 2018–19. And yet it is unclear to what degree such closer ties might benefit Beijing, at least in terms of winning the hearts and minds of ordinary Arabs, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite China's aggressive efforts at "vaccine diplomacy," for example, views of China in the region changed relatively little between the summer of 2020 and the spring of 2021, according to Arab Barometer surveys conducted in seven countries there.

WHATEVER WORKS

As democratization and economic development continue to sputter in the Middle East, many analysts and pundits will place the blame on what they perceive as flaws in Arab political culture, which some see as uniquely inhospitable to democracy. This view is faulty not only because it exonerates outside actors that bolster authoritarian rulers in the Middle East to advance their own interests but also because it elides the role of economic stagnation in turning many ordinary Arabs against the idea of democratic change. The steep decline in interest and faith in democracy in recent years does not reflect a failure of Arab polities to grasp the value of liberty. It reflects, rather, the failure of international, regional, and local actors to solve the region's deeply rooted economic problems.

To slow the advance of authoritarianism and give democratic and liberal ideals another chance in the Middle East, the United States and international actors need to get back to basics. Any effort to promote democracy must take into account citizens' aspirations for economic dignity. Appeals to abstract notions alone will not be persuasive. Arabs crave freedom and justice—but if democracy does not also deliver bread, Arabs will back political systems that do.

Iran's Hollow Victory

The High Price of Regional Dominance

Karim Sadjadpour

Few countries have maintained clearer or more consistent aspirations over the last four decades than the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since 1979, when Islamic revolutionaries transformed the country from an U.S.-allied monarchy into an ardently anti-American theocracy, Iran has sought to expel the United States from the Middle East, replace Israel with Palestine, and remake the region in its image. Unlike U.S. strategy toward Iran and the greater Middle East, which has shifted markedly with different administrations, Iranian strategy toward the United States and the Middle East has exhibited remarkable continuity. Tehran has not achieved any of its lofty ambitions, but it has made progress toward them—and it is feeling emboldened by its recent successes.

Over the last two decades, Iran has established primacy in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, the four failed or failing states that constitute what Iranian officials call their "axis of resistance." It has done so by successfully cultivating regional militias, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen, and by exploiting the power vacuums left by the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Arab uprisings of 2010–11. Neither the United States nor Iran's regional rivals have demonstrated the will or the capacity to challenge Tehran's foothold in these countries.

Iran has also exacerbated numerous other U.S. national security challenges, including nuclear proliferation, cyberwarfare, terrorism, energy insecurity, and the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen and that between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Although Tehran and Washington have faced numerous shared threats since 1979—including the Soviet Union, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, al Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Islamic State (or ISIS)—U.S. attempts to induce or pressure Iran to shift course have repeatedly failed. The Islamic Republic has proved too rigid to bend and too ruthless to break.

Like a bodybuilder with failing organs, however, Iran displays external vigor that conceals ultimately incurable internal maladies. The historian John Lewis Gaddis defines grand strategy as "the alignment of potentially unlimited aspirations with necessarily limited capabilities." Iran has invested more of its limited capabilities in its aspiration to upend the U.S.-led world order than perhaps any other country in the world, including China and Russia. In so doing, it has neglected the well-being of its people and made itself poorer and less secure. Moreover, the gulf between the Islamic Republic's aspirations and its capabilities means that Iran will continue to bleed national resources to subsidize regional militias and external conflicts,

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deepening the public's economic, political, and social frustration and necessitating ever-greater repression.

Despite the disillusionment it has wrought, Iran's revolution has not mellowed with age. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's 82-year-old supreme leader, is one of the world's longest-serving and most dogmatic autocrats. Since becoming supreme leader in 1989—the last time he left the country—Khamenei has skillfully vanquished four Iranian presidents, brutally quelled several mass uprisings, expanded Iranian power throughout the Middle East, and withstood efforts by six U.S. presidents to sideline him, engage with him, or coerce him. He has never met face-to-face with a U.S. official and has so far prohibited Iranian diplomats from talking to their U.S. counterparts during the ongoing negotiations over whether to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. He has handpicked fellow hard-line "principlists"—so called for their loyalty to the revolution's principles—to run the regime's most powerful institutions.

Khamenei's commitment to Iran's revolutionary principles is driven by his own desire for self-preservation. Like many dictatorships, the Islamic Republic faces a reform dilemma: it must open up and adapt to survive, but doing so could destroy it. In contrast to more pragmatic Iranian revolutionaries, such as the former presidents Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Hassan Rouhani, who favored a Chinese-style economic opening and rapprochement with the United States, Khamenei long ago concluded that abandoning the revolution's principles—including its opposition to the United States and Israel—would be like taking a sledgehammer to the pillars of a building. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which Khamenei believes was hastened by Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost reforms, further convinced him of the wisdom of Alexis de Tocqueville's warning that "the most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways."

Although ending their four-decade cold war would serve the interests of both Iran and the United States, Washington will not be able to reach a peaceful accommodation with an Iranian regime whose identity is premised on opposing the United States and whose leader believes that softening this opposition could cost him everything. Nor are there any quick fixes—whether in the form of greater U.S. engagement or more pressure—that can swiftly change the nature of the U.S.-Iranian relationship or the Iranian regime. For this reason, the United States must deal with Iran like any adversary: communicate to avoid conflict, cooperate when possible, confront when necessary, and contain with partners.

IDEOLOGY BEFORE NATION

Like many old civilizations that have experienced great triumphs and great humiliations, Iran is both self-assured and deeply insecure. The ancient Persian Empire was arguably the world's first superpower. But for centuries before 1979, foreign powers usurped Iran's territory and violated its sovereignty. Between 1813 and 1828, imperial Russia forcefully seized vast territories in the Caucasus from Persia under the Qajar dynasty. In 1946, Soviet forces occupied and sought to annex Iran's northwestern province of Azerbaijan,

only to be expelled thanks to the efforts of U.S. President Harry Truman. Seven years later, in 1953, the United Kingdom and the United States orchestrated a coup that deposed Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq.

Given this history, many Iranians, regardless of their politics, believe that great powers want to prevent their country from becoming prosperous and independent. The Islamic Republic, like many dictatorships, exploits this history to justify its internal repression and external ambitions: peaceful protesters, civil rights activists, and journalists are invariably tarred as foreign agents and subjected to violence and imprisonment. Iran defends its nuclear ambitions and its cultivation of regional militias—which flagrantly violate the sovereignty of its Arab neighbors—as both an inalienable right and a form of resistance against foreign imperialism.

Since its inception, Tehran's revolutionary regime has placed its ideological aspirations above the prosperity and security of the Iranian people. In doing so, it has routinely made decisions that were deeply detrimental to the country's national interests—for instance, prolonging its ruinous eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s in order to consolidate domestic power and, more recently, prohibiting COVID-19 vaccines from the United States in the midst of a pandemic that has devastated Iran. (After thousands of preventable COVID-19 deaths, the ban was quietly rescinded.)

No country in the Middle East has Iran's combination of geographic size, human capital, ancient history, and vast natural resources. But instead of leveraging these endowments to become a global economic power or to promote its national interests, the Islamic Republic has built its foreign policy on the twin pillars of confronting the United States and Israel. Using three distinct ideologies—anti-imperialism, Shiite sectarianism, and Iranian nationalism—it has cultivated diverse partners across the Middle East and beyond and used them as proxies against its enemies.

Tehran's ideal vision is a Middle East in which there is no U.S. presence, a popular referendum has rendered Israel a Palestinian state, and Khomeinist theocracy is a source of inspiration for Arab and Muslim hearts and minds. This vision is far from becoming a reality. Despite its military drawdowns from Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States retains between 45,000 and 65,000 troops in the Persian Gulf, mostly to deter Iran. Israel, for its part, is a global technological hub that is more integrated into the Arab world than ever before, especially now that it has normalized relations with Bahrain, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates. And the model most Arabs aspire to is the socially liberal, globally integrated, and economically prosperous UAE, not Khomeinist Iran.

Still, Iran is closer to realizing its vision than it was a decade ago. Back then, the United States had nearly 200,000 troops in Afghanistan and Iraq; now, that number is 2,500. Meanwhile, Syria's once embattled leader, Bashar al-Assad, who owes his life to Iranian support, is slowly being normalized by Arab governments. And in addition to Hezbollah in Lebanon and various Shiite militias in Iraq, Iran can count the Houthis in Yemen as devoted allies willing to launch attacks against their common adversaries.

AXIS OF MISERY

Iran's success in the Middle East is as attributable to opportunism as it is to resolve. The Lebanese civil war, the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and the Arab uprisings all created power vacuums that Iran filled with its network of foreign militias, whose total ranks now number between 50,000 and 200,000 fighters. In other words, the story of the modern Middle East is more about Arab weakness than Iranian strength: Arab disorder has facilitated Iranian ambitions, and Iranian ambitions have exacerbated Arab disorder.

The crown jewel of the Iranian Revolution is Hezbollah. Founded in 1982, following Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the group pioneered the strategy that Iran would come to embrace with other proxies: carrying out lethal attacks against U.S. forces in the Middle East in order to turn American public opinion and weaken U.S. resolve. In October 1983, it attacked a multinational peacekeeping operation with truck bombs, killing over 300 people while they slept, including 241 U.S. soldiers. Iran and Hezbollah celebrated the attack but denied official responsibility. Four months later, the Reagan administration began withdrawing U.S. forces from Lebanon.

Today, Hezbollah is the most powerful force in Lebanon. It assassinates its political opponents and critics with impunity, runs its own underground economy, and reportedly has more than 100,000 rockets and missiles capable of striking Israel. It denounces its Lebanese adversaries as traitors but no longer even pretends to be independent from Iran. "We are open about the fact that Hezbollah's budget, its income, its expenses, everything it eats and drinks, its weapons and rockets, are from the Islamic Republic of Iran," Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, said in a 2016 speech. "As long as Iran has money, we have money. . . . Just as we receive the rockets that we use to threaten Israel, we are receiving our money."

Iran followed a similar approach to turn Iraq into an inferno for the United States, fearing that Washington planned to use a successful, democratic Iraq as a platform to subvert or threaten Iran. Iranian-backed Shiite militias employed improvised explosive devices to cause as many as 1,000 American casualties. Unlike the United States, which was saddled with the task of rebuilding Iraq, Tehran sought only to thwart Washington's efforts. As Qais al-Khazali, the leader of an Iranian-backed Shiite militia in Iraq, told U.S. military interrogators, the United States spends "billions" on the war, while Iran spends "millions"—and yet Iran is more effective. Today, Iran's Shiite militias are Iraq's most powerful fighting force and a predatory Mafia that both enriches itself and secures Iran's interests in the country.

Iran and its militias also played a decisive role in preventing the collapse of the brutal Assad regime in Syria, Tehran's lone governmental ally in the region. What began as a tactical partnership against Saddam's Iraq in the 1980s has been sustained by mutual antipathy toward the United States and Israel and by shared survival instincts. Despite renewed efforts by Arab states to lure Assad away from Tehran, the two governments are now dependent on each other: Assad needs Iran's money and arms, and Tehran needs Syrian

territory as a bridge to Hezbollah and a beachhead against Israel. In 2017, the BBC reported that Iran was building a "permanent military base" in Syria as an additional front against the Jewish state.

Despite theocratic Iran's moral pretensions, its proxies, under economic duress, have increasingly turned to the illicit economy to grow their wealth. The cash-strapped Syrian government's most valuable export is now Captagon, an illegal amphetamine that Hezbollah traffics globally with Tehran's tacit support. The Iranian government, which has executed thousands of its own citizens for drug offenses, has become the de facto kingpin of one of the world's largest narcotics smuggling networks.

More recently, Tehran has added Yemen to the list of countries where it wields significant sway through proxy militias. Iran provides the Houthis, who seized power in Sanaa in 2014, with weapons and other forms of support—also reportedly financed in part through the illicit sale of drugs. This has proved to be a low-cost way for Tehran to inflict enormous financial and reputational damage on Saudi Arabia, which is estimated to have spent over $100 billion on its intervention in Yemen and is widely considered to be responsible for the conflict's horrific humanitarian toll. The Houthis' intolerant rule and provocative slogans—wishing death to America, Israel, Jews, and followers of the Bahai faith—reflect the ideology of their Iranian patrons. And the group has sought to do to Saudi Arabia what Hamas and Hezbollah have long done to Israel—except with precision drones and other twenty-first-century technology instead of antiquated rockets and suicide bombers.

As the Middle East's lone theocracy, Iran has learned to harness Islamist radicalism—Sunni as well as Shiite—better than any of its peers. Among the reasons Tehran has bested its Sunni Arab rivals is that virtually all Shiite radicals are willing to fight for Iran, whereas most Sunni radicals, including al Qaeda and ISIS, oppose the ruling Arab governments. Indeed, Tehran's top criterion for strategic alliances is ideology, not religion, as evidenced by its close ties with the Sunni radical groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, to which it has given billions of dollars to fight Israel. "Iran is one of the countries that helps Hamas most," Moussa Abu Marzouk, a grateful Hamas official, said in a 2021 interview. "The only country that ignores the limits imposed on Hamas is Iran. It helps us militarily in training, weapons, and expertise."

Tehran has even occasionally worked with Sunni fundamentalists—including al Qaeda and the Taliban—who regularly attack Iran's Shiite brethren, whom they consider to be heretics. Instead of prioritizing Iran's national interests, the Islamic Republic's grand strategy is built on a hierarchy of enmity: any enemy of the United States and Israel is a potential partner for Tehran. As Khamenei put it in 2021, "We will support and assist any nation or any group anywhere who opposes and fights the Zionist regime, and we do not hesitate to say this."

SUCCESS BEGETS HUBRIS

What began as a revolution against the corruption and repression of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi is now an Islamist foreign legion that is elbow deep in its own far greater political

repression, assassinations, hostage taking, economic corruption, and drug trafficking. For all of Iran's success in cultivating militant groups across the Middle East, however, there are tangible signs that it has overreached. Opinion polls show that nearly two-thirds of young Arabs in the region now view Iran as an adversary, a sizable majority of Arabs of all ages want Iran to withdraw from regional conflicts, and more than half of Arab Shiites hold an "unfavorable" view of Iran. In recent years, Iraqi protesters have attacked and set fire to the Iranian consulates in Najaf and Karbala—two Shiite shrine cities that are longtime Iranian strongholds in Iraq—and Lebanese Shiites have protested against Hezbollah in the southern Lebanese city of Nabatiyah.

Mutual fears of Iran also helped midwife the Abraham Accords, the 2020 normalization agreements that gave Israel a strategic foothold several dozen miles from Iran's border. Khamenei, who denounced the accords as a "betrayal to the Islamic world," still contends that the plight of the Palestinians is the most important issue in the Islamic world, and he continues to dedicate significant resources to resisting Israel. His support for regional proxies in the occupied territories and elsewhere has created an axis of misery that stretches across the Middle East: Syria and Yemen are still mired in civil war, and in Lebanon, a recent Gallup poll revealed that 85 percent of the population finds it difficult to get by, over 50 percent cannot afford food, and 63 percent want to leave the country permanently.

Iran's regional policies may be alienating Arabs, but they are unlikely to provoke a meaningful backlash from the United States. In contrast to radical groups that have launched direct attacks on U.S. soil, such as al Qaeda and ISIS, Iran's theocrats—who control a nation-state with vast resources and therefore have much more to lose—target U.S. interests in the Middle East using proxies and drones, giving them two degrees of separation. Moreover, Iran aims to wield its significant influence in the Middle East without taking any responsibility for day-to-day governance. No major national security decision can be made in Iraq or Lebanon without the blessing of Iran's Shiite militias, yet those same militias bear no responsibility for addressing unemployment or corruption, or for collecting garbage. Iran's militias have the power; the government has the accountability.

Where the Iranian regime's grand strategy threatens its own survival is on the home front. As Iran's economy has deteriorated, Iranians have naturally come to question the government's policies, including its hostility toward the United States and its external adventurism. Among the slogans commonly heard at popular protests in Iran are "Forget about Syria; think about us" and "They are lying that our enemy is America; our enemy is right here." Yet there are often two prerequisites for the collapse of an authoritarian regime: pressure from below and divisions at the top. Although Iran is experiencing increasing popular tumult, for now the regime's security forces appear—from afar, at least—to be united and willing to kill, while the country's discontented masses are divided and leaderless.

This near-term stability means that Iran's grand strategy will not change as long as Khamenei is supreme leader, and

it will probably outlast him, given its perceived success. The United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan has emboldened Tehran to try to force Washington to abandon Iraq and its military bases in the Persian Gulf. And given the relatively low penalties Iran has paid for its regional policies—certainly compared with the enormous costs Tehran has endured in the form of sanctions and sabotage for its nuclear intransigence—it has little reason to cease supporting militias across the Middle East.

UNITED FRONT

Four decades of hostility have spawned a library's worth of facile prescriptions for ending the U.S.-Iranian cold war. Why doesn't the United States simply pursue diplomacy, make peace with the Islamic Republic, or side with the Iranian people to overthrow the regime? Yet the most fundamental question has no easy answers: How should Washington deal with an adversary that eschews direct dialogue, whose identity is premised on hostility to the United States, and that has both the resources and the resolve to sow chaos throughout the Middle East and kill thousands of its own citizens to preserve its power?

Washington's perception of Iran has suffered from four decades of estrangement and strategic narcissism, with policymakers believing that Iran's revolutionary ideology can be either moderated by American engagement or extinguished by American toughness. Many progressives think that Tehran's intransigence is merely a reaction to hostile U.S. policies, whereas many conservatives have posited that greater economic hardship would force Tehran to choose between its ideology and the regime's survival. Yet for Khamenei, preserving Iran's revolutionary ideology is both an end in itself and a means to ensure the regime's survival.

As is often said of Russia, the Islamic Republic has sought security in the insecurity of others. And just as Iran has taken advantage of ideological, sectarian, and religious divisions to gain influence in weak states, it has proved equally adept at exploiting competition among great powers. Given that Washington has only limited leverage over Tehran—virtually all Iranian trade is with countries other than the United States—an effective strategy to contain and counter Iran will require both U.S. leadership and international consensus building.

The first step toward such a strategy is forging domestic political consensus. Up until the 2015 nuclear deal was signed, Democrats and Republicans were in broad agreement about the nature of the Iranian regime and its threats to regional security. The 2015 accord—which lifted U.S. and international sanctions in exchange for Iranian nuclear concessions—polarized the policy debate along partisan lines: Republicans accused the Obama administration of appeasement, and Democrats accused the Republicans of being warmongers.

Yet the broad contours of a bipartisan Iran strategy are clear. Republicans may passionately oppose the Iranian regime and the nuclear deal, but they also recognize that their constituents do not want another U.S. conflict in the Middle East. Democrats, for their part, may be generally supportive of engaging with Tehran and returning to the nuclear deal, but polls from the Pew Research Center show that 70 percent of Democratic voters have an "unfavor-

able" view of Iran. In other words, there is enough bipartisan common ground to build consensus around a sober understanding of the nature of the Iranian regime, one that does not exaggerate the threat Iran poses to the United States itself but also does not minimize the threat it poses to Washington's interests and partners in the Middle East.

Transatlantic consensus is also critical. For the last few decades, European countries have intermittently pursued dialogue with Tehran, and dangled economic incentives, in the hopes of moderating Iranian policies in four areas: human rights, proliferation, terrorism, and Middle East peace. Yet this dialogue has failed to yield any meaningful changes in Iran's internal or external policies. To the contrary, Tehran has threatened to exacerbate Europe's refugee crisis with its regional policies and has continued to take European residents and citizens hostage, even executing a French resident in 2020. Partly as a result, European public opinion remains as critical of Iran as is U.S. public opinion.

Arguably the only time that European policy has positively influenced Iranian behavior was in 2012, when the EU, in close coordination with the Obama administration, ceased importing Iranian oil, which paved the way for the 2015 nuclear deal. An Iranian government that feels that Europe is on its side—as it did in 2018, after U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal—will not compromise in the face of U.S. demands.

But Washington will need to pursue cooperation beyond Europe. By some estimates, Iran's oil exports to China have quadrupled over the last year, reducing the urgency of Tehran's need to return to the nuclear deal. Any effort to shift Iran's calculus will require buy-in from China. Although Washington and Beijing view Iran differently, they share the common goal of wanting to avoid both an Iranian bomb and conflict with Iran. What is more, China seeks a stable Middle East to ensure the free flow of oil from the region. Iran's detention of oil tankers and drone attacks against Saudi Arabia and the UAE—each of whose trade with China exceeds Iran's—threaten Chinese interests more than they threaten U.S. interests, given that the United States has become a net energy exporter.

Finally, the United States will need to help strengthen those Arab countries where Iran currently holds sway and foster unity among them. Iran exploits Arab states with weak and embattled governments or fractured societies. Just as nationalism played an instrumental role in combating Soviet and Western colonialism in the twentieth century, Iraqi, Lebanese, Syrian, and Yemeni nationalism—or a collective Arab nationalism—will be needed to repel Iranian influence and restore these countries' sovereignty. Inter-Arab unity is also crucial. The recent rift between members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, resulting in Saudi Arabia and the UAE blockading Qatar from 2017 until early 2021, significantly undermined the council's ability to articulate common concerns about Tehran's nuclear and regional policies.

Although the United States, Europe, and China have divergent interests vis-à-vis Iran, none of them wants to fight a war with Iran or see Tehran get the bomb. Washington united these

powers during the negotiations that preceded the 2015 nuclear deal, and it should try to do so again in new talks on Middle Eastern security. A region that does not respect the rule of law, sovereignty, or the free flow of energy serves no one's interests (with the possible exception of Russia's). The same is true of a region where terrorist groups are resurgent. Washington must work to persuade its partners of this fact—and then rally them to expose Iran's malign activities and limit and counter its capabilities.

KING OF THE RUBBLE

Iranian power in the Middle East appears ascendant, but it will likely prove ephemeral. Arabs who chafed under centuries of Turkish and Western hegemony will not countenance Iranian influence easily. Even those Arabs seen as sympathetic to Iran, such as former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who spent years living in exile in Tehran prior to his political career, harbor private resentment toward the country. "You don't know how bad it can be until you're an Arab forced to live with the Persians," Maliki once told the U.S. ambassador in Baghdad.

Tehran's grand strategy burns the candle of Iran's resources and credibility at both ends, exporting the same political repression, social intolerance, and economic misery abroad that Iranians have long endured at home. Iran could remain king of the rubble for years or even decades. Few foreign or regional powers have the desire or the capacity to challenge Iranian primacy in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, and after two decades of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, there is virtually no U.S. support for sending more American troops to die in the Middle East. Like a skyscraper with a rotting foundation, therefore, the Islamic Republic could continue to cast a shadow over parts of the Middle East, although precariously, for the foreseeable future.

Or the structure could come crashing down. Washington cannot change Iranian aspirations to counter American influence and end Israel's existence, but it can—with the help of other countries—contain Tehran until the country gets a government that seeks to do what is good for Iran instead of what is bad for its ideological enemies. Ultimately, the Islamic Republic's grand strategy will be defeated not by the United States or Israel but by the people of Iran, who have paid the highest price for it.

Axis of Abraham

Arab-Israeli Normalization Could Remake the Middle East

Michael Singh

On September 15, 2020, then U.S. President Donald Trump brought together an unusual group of Middle Eastern politicians on the South Lawn of the White House: the prime minister of Israel, the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates, and the foreign minister of Bahrain. The UAE had never formally recognized Israel, and Bahrain had held off on opening an embassy there. In the not-too-distant past, both countries had boycotted Israel. But all three states had come together to move beyond this frosty history by signing the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords, in which they agreed to establish normal diplomatic relations.

The accords themselves were simple. In the case of the Bahraini-Israeli agreement, normalization required just a single page. Yet the effect was profound. Since Israel was established, almost all Arab states have refused to recognize its existence. But the deal is smashing that embargo and, in doing so, opening up new avenues for cooperation and heralding a dramatic reordering of the Middle East. The agreement didn't come out of nowhere; an inchoate partnership between Israel and conservative Arab states had existed long before 2020, galvanized by the 2011 Arab uprisings and shared concerns about Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood, among other threats. But the Abraham Accords stand to build powerfully on those relationships, with major economic and geopolitical consequences.

These consequences have the potential to be quite positive for the United States. The signatories are all U.S. partners, and they could together offer something that Washington has long wanted: a bloc of Middle Eastern countries that can safeguard U.S. interests, allowing the United States to step back from the region. But the reality is more complicated. Washington will find that working through partners diminishes its ability to influence the outcome of key regional conflicts, including in Libya, in Yemen, and with Iran—all places where the United States and its allies do not see eye to eye. Washington's friends in the Middle East are also wary of being drawn into its growing competition with China, a country they view more as an opportunity than a threat. They may be wary of hitching themselves too closely to Washington in other areas, as well. One of the trends pushing U.S. partners together is what they see as the decreasing reliability and predictability of the United States.

But it is a mistake to think about the Abraham Accords purely, or even mostly, as an opportunity or a risk for Washington. They have much bigger implications for the Middle East itself.

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The agreement will encourage deeper economic integration in a region of the world that has seen little of that. It will draw investors from outside the Middle East who now see better opportunities, leading to greater growth in the region overall. The deal might expand the number of Muslim-majority countries outside the Middle East that are willing to work with Israel. Indeed, it has already done so: Morocco and Sudan concluded normalization agreements with Israel not long after the Abraham Accords were signed. And the deal will open the door to a level of political and security cooperation between Israel and Arab states previously deemed unthinkable, potentially giving rise to a coalition that can help quell regional disputes or deter states such as Iran without the support of outside intervention.

COME TOGETHER

In Western capitals, the Abraham Accords tend to be seen as the next step in the decades-long process of Middle East peacemaking. The signing ceremony recalled similar scenes in 1978 and 1994, with images of regional leaders and the U.S. president seated at a table at the White House. The 1978 ceremony, held to sign the Camp David accords, helped establish peace between Egypt and Israel and return the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian control. The 1994 gathering was for the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement, which settled disputes over territory between the two states and formally ended their war.

Both deals dramatically narrowed the scope of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but they produced at best a cold peace. The Abraham Accords, on the other hand, could build a deeper strategic partnership. Its parties struck deals not simply to end disputes but because the region's overall politics have pushed them closer together. The Arab uprisings that began in late 2010, which threw the traditional heavyweights Egypt and Syria into turmoil, helped shift the region's center of gravity to the Arab Gulf states, emboldening them to embark on major regional initiatives without deference to Cairo or Damascus. The uprisings also indicated that U.S.-allied Arab governments faced a variety of threats, including the growing power of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups, internal instability requiring economic and political transformation, and Iran, which seeks to use the region's turmoil for its own advantage. Finally, the United States' "pivot to Asia" left these allies feeling increasingly alone and anxious.

Many began searching for new partners, and they quickly found that Israel, with its powerful military and robust economy, could be a valuable friend. The UAE's recent trajectory is illustrative. The country was once affectionately dubbed "Little Sparta" by U.S. officials for its willingness and ability to collaborate with Washington on security matters. But faced with less U.S. involvement and new pressures, it decided that it wanted to be seen as what Emirati officials term "Little Singapore": a state not only able to leverage its wealth and openness to lure international investors but also capable of being a bridge for external powers to its region. Led by the ambitious Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, the UAE eventually scaled back its involvement in Yemen substantially—escaping, to a significant degree, international opprobrium. It also sought de-escalation with

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its regional rivals: Iran, Qatar, and Turkey. Viewed in this context, normalization with Israel was not a shocking, isolated development but the centerpiece of the country's pivot, a straightforward way for the UAE to protect itself and prosper amid greater geopolitical uncertainty.

Israel and the UAE have anchored their partnership in economic cooperation, and they've done so with substantial success. Israeli-Emirati bilateral trade exceeded $1 billion in 2021, up from $180 million in 2020, thanks to increased activity in the diamond, industrial goods, tourism, and services sectors. They are aiming to conclude a free-trade agreement this year, which the RAND Corporation estimates would add 0.8 percent to the UAE's GDP over the next decade. RAND projects that bilateral free-trade agreements with Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the UAE would increase Israel's GDP by 2.3 percent over the same time period. Israel and the UAE also signed a bilateral investment treaty in late 2020, the former's first with an Arab state.

But the real economic promise of the accords lies in their potential to spark broader regional economic integration. The Middle East has long lagged behind almost every other region in the world on this measure. In Europe, for example, nearly 66 percent of trade takes place among European countries; in the Middle East, that figure is less than 13 percent. According to RAND, a plurilateral free-trade agreement among just Bahrain, Israel, Morocco, Sudan, and the UAE would raise the GDP of each by an estimated two to three percent and also spur gains in employment. This would not solve all of the region's economic woes, but it would be a significant step toward addressing the many issues, including high unemployment and private-sector underinvestment, that contribute to the Middle East's instability.

Economic growth is not the only possible upside of the pact. Israel and the UAE have differing military priorities, in part because the UAE does not wish to provoke Iran or portray its new partnership with Israel as targeted at regional adversaries. But Israel and the UAE do share an interest in deterring Tehran and countering regional terrorist groups, and they are taking initial steps toward open security cooperation. In October 2021, for the first time, the chief of the UAE's air force attended Israel's multilateral "Blue Flag" drill as an observer. Israel offered to provide Abu Dhabi with "security and military" assistance after a Houthi militia attacked the capital in January 2022. The accords could deepen this relationship. Shortly after the deal was signed, Israel was added to the responsibilities of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), which has led to breakthroughs that would once have seemed highly improbable. Israel, for instance, was included in a November 2021 CENTCOM exercise that also included the Bahraini and UAE navies. The CENTCOM expansion also means that Israeli and Arab officers will now have the opportunity to build relationships at staff colleges, regional bases, and events run by Washington.

The biggest uncertainty about the Abraham Accords is what they will mean for diplomacy. Israel and the other signatories are mutually involved in conflicts across the region, but they have refrained from staking out common

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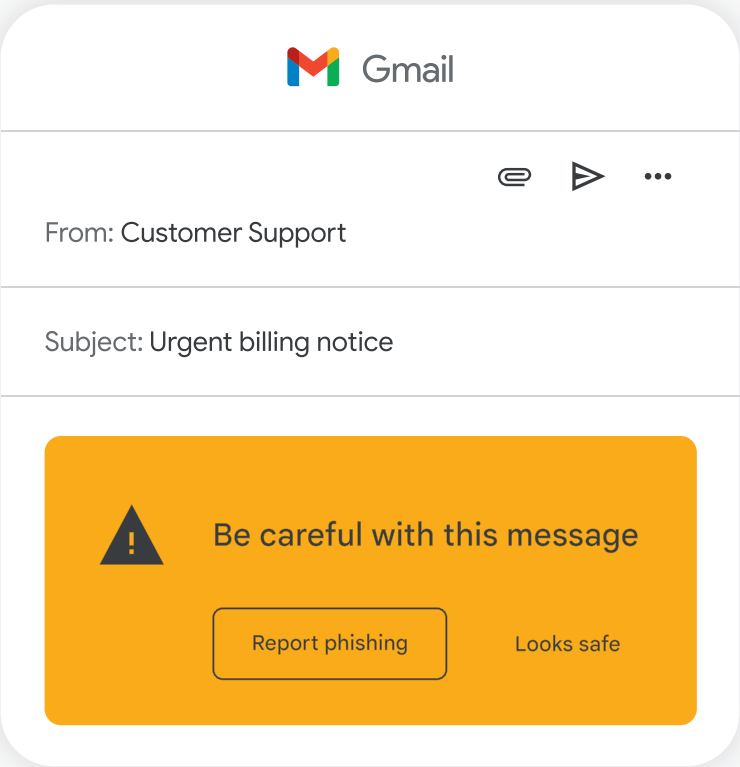

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positions. Bahrain recently voted at the UN Human Rights Council to establish an open-ended investigation into Israeli actions in Gaza, as did Sudan. Israel and the UAE have a better rapport; both states have been effusive about the agreement and have engaged in a flurry of high-level reciprocal visits since its signing. But perhaps because the UAE values the idea of Arab unity or because it simply wants to avoid embroiling its new partnership in controversy, Israeli-Emirati statements have generally steered clear of the region's political disputes.

This underscores one of the accords' principal limits. As long as other Arab states do not recognize Israel, political coordination between Israel and the other signatories is likely to remain ad hoc, and the diplomatic potential of the accords, underdeveloped. This means that the Middle East will continue to lack any true multilateral mechanism to handle key regional disputes, even though it sorely needs one.

RIPPLE EFFECT

Prior to 2011, the prevailing order in the Middle East was a hub-and-spoke system with the United States at its center. Major regional countries, such as Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, enjoyed extensive cooperation with Washington but little with one another. This was often true even of states that were formally allied. For example, in the early years of this century, U.S. President George W. Bush struggled in his attempt to establish a Gulf security dialogue because the Gulf Arab states were reluctant to engage with the United States in a multilateral format for fear of diluting the special relationships they enjoyed with Washington.

This system, however, collapsed in the aftermath of the Iraq war and the Arab Spring. The former ultimately contributed to acute fatigue with the Middle East among Americans, and the latter swept aside several long-standing U.S. partners. The region is now dominated by a few ad hoc blocs of states: the Iranian-led "axis of resistance," which includes Lebanon, Syria, and various Iranian proxy groups in Iraq and Yemen; an Islamist bloc containing Qatar and Turkey; and a U.S.-leaning bloc composed of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and many of the Gulf Arab states.

The Abraham Accords were the first attempt to formalize one of these coalitions, and that effort raised the question of whether other U.S.-leaning states might join, as Morocco already has. Certain U.S. partners, such as Iraq and Oman, are unlikely candidates; those two states go to great lengths to balance their ties with Tehran and Washington. Qatar has hosted an Israeli trade office in Doha for years, yet it is also likely to shy away from normalization of relations with Israel for fear of offending Israel's regional adversaries.

But there are other potential signatories, such as Comoros, Mauritania, and Saudi Arabia. For Israel, this last country would be the brass ring. Saudi Arabia is both a leader in the Islamic world and a far larger player than the UAE in the global economy. Normalizing relations with Saudi Arabia would substantially bolster Israel's prestige among countries traditionally wary of Israel, further its growth, and possibly open up new avenues for military cooperation.

Israel and Saudi Arabia have grown more friendly in recent years, and both already quietly coordinate on certain

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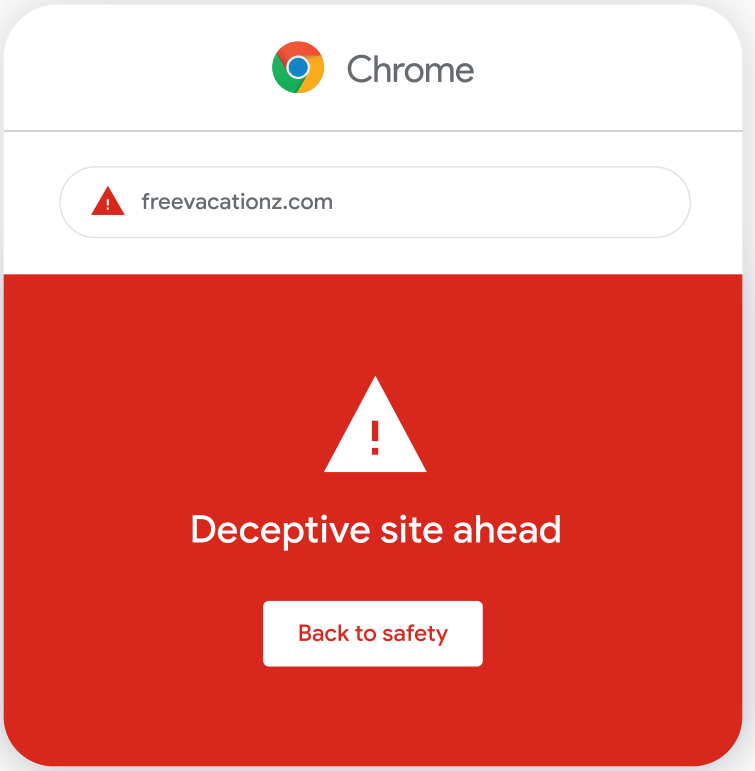

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security issues. But the obstacles to normalization are still formidable. Riyadh would have to implicitly abandon or modify the late King Abdullah's Arab Peace Initiative, which set Israeli-Palestinian peace as a precondition for broader Arab normalization, and overcome the skepticism of a population much larger and perhaps less moderate than that of the UAE. The United States' role in an Israeli-Saudi deal would also be more fraught. In recent years, the U.S. Congress has repeatedly sought to punish Riyadh for its participation in the war in Yemen and for murdering Jamal Khashoggi, a U.S. permanent resident, a *Washington Post* columnist, and a critic of the Saudi government. Washington might decline to offer Riyadh the sort of sweeteners it gave to Abu Dhabi and other signatories of the accords, such as selling F-35 stealth fighters or providing civil nuclear cooperation.

In the longer run, however, normalization with Israel seems to align with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's worldview. Prince Mohammed has sought to transform Saudi Arabia's economy, society, and regional role, including by scaling back Riyadh's support for Islamic fundamentalism and reducing the Saudi economy's dependence on hydrocarbon exports. Normalization with Israel would arguably further open up the country and bolster Riyadh's political profile, and it would deny Abu Dhabi, both a partner and a rival of Riyadh, a comparative advantage in the eyes of investors and diplomats.

But even if no additional states join the Abraham Accords, the agreement is bound to have a broader impact on Israel's foreign relations. The accords may give cover to Muslim-majority states both in the Middle East and farther afield, such as Indonesia, to engage in greater cooperation with Israel, even if they balk at normalizing relations. The accords have already led to more multilateral cooperation between the signatories and Israel's "first generation" peace partners: Egypt and Jordan. In November 2021, for example, Israel, Jordan, and the UAE announced a deal in which the UAE will produce electricity in Jordan and sell it to Israel, which in turn will provide Jordan with desalinated water. Such an exchange between Israel and Jordan would have been possible before the accords, but the UAE's involvement made it more economically and politically attractive.

The Abraham Accords can also expand international engagement with the Middle East. The agreement already helped pave the way for the quadrilateral forum among India, Israel, the UAE, and the United States, announced in October 2021. The forum was started for economic reasons, but it could eventually expand into other areas, such as maritime security. The accords could also make Israel and the UAE the partners of first resort for external states looking to engage with the region. This dynamic, in turn, may entice additional countries to join the agreement for fear of losing out.

To be sure, the Abraham Accords also bring challenges. They could reduce the salience of the Palestinian issue, which has been declining in international importance for decades. The accords are not built on shared political norms or traditions, and so they are unlikely to advance human rights in the Middle East. There is even

a risk that states will hope to use the international praise that comes from normalizing relations with Israel to divert attention from these issues. Yet any downsides of the accords pale in comparison to the advantages they offer the signatories, the wider region, and, indeed, policymakers in Washington.

THE FORCE AWAKENS

In the United States, the Abraham Accords have been celebrated by leaders across the political spectrum, from Trump to U.S. President Joe Biden, and not just because the deal heralds growing Arab-Israeli normalization. Policymakers from both parties believe that the accords could offer Washington a way out of its Middle East conundrum. Although the United States wants to focus less on this region and more on Asia, it retains important interests in the Middle East, including preventing terrorist attacks, stopping Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and even competing with China. The easiest way to manage these issues would be to outsource them, and at first blush, the accords appear to present precisely such an opportunity.

But this potential is complicated by the United States' diminished regional standing. The agreement cannot, for instance, improve the damage inflicted by the increasing partisanship in U.S. foreign policy. The U.S.-Saudi relationship, intimate during the Trump administration, has turned frosty under Biden, and Abu Dhabi believes that Washington abruptly turned against the UAE's operations in Yemen for domestic political reasons. The U.S.-Israeli relationship has become increasingly caught up in feuding between Democrats and Republicans, as some Democrats have become more critical of Israel and as issues involving the country—including Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—have become more contentious in both Israel and the United States.

More significant, the accords cannot fix the widening strategic divergence between the United States and its regional partners. Unlike during the Cold War and the "war on terror," Washington's closest Middle Eastern allies do not share its view of global threats today, and they are wary of siding with the United States against its rivals, both because that could cost them economic opportunities and because they are unsure of U.S. trustworthiness.

But the accords can still allow Washington to advance its strategic aims. Deeper regional integration could by itself help the United States, including by crowding out some of the Chinese investment that troubles Washington. After the accords were signed, for example, the Emirati conglomerate DP World entered into a partnership with Israel's Bank Leumi that could allow them to jointly develop Israel's ports. The result was credible competition for Chinese state-owned port developers, something Western states have struggled to produce. The same story could play out across other sectors. Regional joint ventures marrying Israeli technology and Emirati capital, for instance, could more successfully challenge Chinese dominance in the telecommunications and infrastructure sectors than have Western initiatives.

Integration will prove especially effective at curtailing Chinese investment if the accords increase economic engagement between the Middle East

and external powers previously wary of the fraught Arab-Israeli dynamic, such as India, Japan, and the European Union. China will also seek to capitalize on the economic opportunities created by the Abraham Accords. Washington's best chance of countering any inroads that Beijing makes will be to recruit other external powers to invest as a counterweight.

A regional partnership could also help shield individual countries from Chinese leverage. This is not an idle concern. In recent years, Beijing has grown bolder in using its economic power to further its political ends, threatening states ranging from Australia to Lithuania to try to bring them to heel. Although this has yet to happen in the Middle East, the region's countries will need to support one another if it does, and the Abraham Accords could provide an important tool for doing so. The need for economic protection might even motivate the Middle East's smaller or poorer states to join the accords.

The agreement could also strengthen cooperation between the signatories and the U.S. military, even if the deal does not expand to include formal security partnerships with the United States. The signatories already rely on Washington's cooperative military architecture. Israel and the UAE depend heavily on the United States for military equipment, and they participate extensively in CENTCOM exercises and training. Russia and other states could try to sell military systems to the signatories, but for the foreseeable future, no other external power will be able to match the security package offered by Washington. If anything, the Abraham Accords will only strengthen the United States' advantage by incentivizing more states to link up with Washington: countries looking to join the partnership will gain maximum value only by aligning with the U.S. military system that underpins it.

It will take time for all these benefits to accrue, and Washington will have to be patient. It will also need to put in effort. In the diplomatic and security spheres, the United States will have to continue to act as a convener and sometimes serve as an intermediary. It will need to steadily bolster partners' diplomatic, military, and economic capabilities so that they can achieve critical outcomes without Washington's direct intervention. To expand the alliance, the United States may have to sweeten the deal for interested states by offering incentives for joining, such as stepped-up diplomatic and security cooperation with Washington, preferential trade and tax treatment, or financial assistance for projects conducted between signatories. This illuminates a hard truth for U.S. policymakers: the Abraham Accords may point to a future in which the United States can do less in the Middle East—but to get there, the country must first do more.

Scorched Earth

Climate and Conflict in the Middle East

Marwa Daoudy

Of all the regions of the world that will face severe devastation as a result of global warming, perhaps none seems poised to suffer as much as the Middle East, already the planet's hottest and driest. Between 1961 and 1990, temperatures in the Middle East and North Africa rose by 0.2 degrees Celsius, and they could increase by up to seven degrees Celsius by the end of this century. The signs of distress are growing by the year, with normal weather patterns being replaced by chaotic events. In 2020, flooding ravaged Egypt, Iran, and Tunisia, and wildfires spread in Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. The summer of 2021 brought Iraq's worst drought in 40 years and Syria's worst in 70.

But environmental shifts are only part of the story, and climate catastrophe in the region is hardly a preordained outcome. Nor, despite claims to the contrary, is climate change the main driving force in the region's conflicts. In the Middle East, as elsewhere, climate change is primarily a problem of earthly institutions. Governments are exploiting people's basic needs, such as water and food, whose scarcity is driven by climate change, and they are dragging their feet when it comes to building resilience and shifting to green energy.

The bad news is that climate change is already doing grave damage to the people of the Middle East, and a number of actors have figured out how to exploit those effects to further their own interests. The good news is that governments in the region, civil society groups, and international organizations can make a difference, even when dealing with intransigent and sometimes brutal regimes. So, too, can the United States. By working with local actors and international organizations, prodding wealthier Gulf states to aid their poorer neighbors, leveraging aid to countries such as Jordan, and influencing U.S. allies such as Israel, Washington can foster a more environmentally sustainable and peaceful Middle East.

WEAPONIZING SCARCITY

In the past decade, discussions about the Middle East in Western media, academia, and policy circles have frequently revolved around the idea that climate change is driving much of the conflict in the region. Although environmental shifts are affecting the region in crucial ways, this emerging narrative mischaracterizes—or misunderstands—the way that political choices shape how vulnerable populations interact with their environment.

Consider Syria: when that country spiraled into civil war in 2011, some observers pointed to climate change as the instigating cause. Rising temperatures, the theory went, caused a major drought in Syria from 2006 to 2010, which triggered agricultural failure.

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This, in turn, spurred migration and discontent; the uprisings were a natural consequence. In 2015, U.S. President Barack Obama put forward something akin to this argument. Climate change, he said, "helped fuel the early unrest in Syria, which descended into civil war."

This interpretation doesn't stand up to scrutiny. After all, previous droughts had been severe and did not lead to violent protests. And struggling farmers and migrants fleeing the drought were not the instigators of the 2011 uprisings: the earliest protests were against political repression.

Politics shaped the environmental challenges preceding the Syrian crisis. After Bashar al-Assad took power in 2000, the regime ramped up its commitment to neoliberal policies at the behest of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and domestic elites who stood to profit from such structural adjustments. These developments came with drastic consequences for rural populations. The uneven transition from Baathist socialism to what the regime dubbed a "social market economy" made Syria's rural poor even poorer. The discriminatory decisions the government took in building infrastructure—such as the construction of the Tabqa dam, on the Euphrates River, in the 1970s, which displaced thousands of residents—also left the country vulnerable, 40 years later, to the rapid advance of the Islamic State (also known as ISIS), which capitalized on the lack of local control over energy and water to take over wide swaths of rural Syria. Since the escalation of the crisis in Syria into an all-out war, large groups of displaced people moving from the country to Europe have joined the massive cohort of vulnerable populations fleeing conflict-stricken areas. They have faced coercive border practices and extremely precarious living conditions in refugee camps. And yet their number pales in comparison to the number of internally displaced people in Syria.

There is no clear evidence, however, that climate change alone triggered these and similar new migration trends. Multiple social, economic, and political factors lead people to migrate, and it is difficult to isolate the environment from those other drivers. It is dangerous, moreover, to point to climate change as the root of the region's ills, because that supposition risks promoting deceptively simple conflict-resolution measures and limiting the ability of policymakers to lay the groundwork for real change.

One of the top priorities when it comes to improving conditions for the people most at risk in countries such as Syria is recognizing the intersections between the environment and armed conflict and the ways in which various parties have weaponized the region's vulnerability to climate-driven scarcity. Governments and nonstate actors have repeatedly targeted key infrastructure, depriving people of vital goods and services. During the war in Yemen, for example, Saudi forces have cut off local populations' access to clean water and sanitation, placing citizens at high risk for communicable illnesses. As a result, Save the Children classified Yemen's 2016 cholera epidemic as a "man-made crisis."

In Syria, the government and nonstate actors alike have deliberately damaged water resources and vital infrastructure as a wartime strategy. In 2013 and 2014, battles between regime

forces and ISIS destroyed water plants and sewage pipelines. At one point, approximately 35 percent of Syria's water treatment plants no longer functioned. Meanwhile, ISIS's capture of the Tabqa dam in 2013 represented a significant victory for the group: ISIS threatened to cut off electricity delivery to Damascus, and it released 11 million cubic meters of water to flood the surrounding farmland, forcing local populations into submission and the central government into a no-strike agreement. Turkey also weaponized water during the conflict: to squelch the rise of Kurdish autonomy in northeastern Syria, which threatened to further radicalize Turkey's own Kurdish population, Turkish troops shut off water to 460,000 people in the Syrian province of Hasakah and in three different refugee camps at a time when COVID-19 was running rampant.

The targeting of other infrastructure has also put civilians at risk: when the Syrian government, in conjunction with Russia, damaged oil refiners in the northeastern part of the country, the leaks contaminated surrounding groundwater—a risk factor for gastrointestinal illness, damage to the nervous and reproductive systems, and chronic diseases such as cancer. The Syrians and the Russians aren't alone in wreaking havoc: water shutoffs by Turkey, combined with low rainfall, led the Khabur River to dry up; the river became a landfill and an open sewage site, spreading disease to neighboring villages.

WATER FOR EVERYONE

Although the United States and European countries seem to be preparing to pivot away from the Middle East, they and international organizations must work harder to foster international norms that protect natural resources and infrastructure even in the midst of conflict. Washington has a limited appetite for confronting such partners as Saudi Arabia on human rights violations, but applying pressure on U.S. partners in the Middle East, including Ridayh, to adopt a common set of standards on this issue could help protect civilians around the globe.

After all, there are no long-term winners when infrastructure is destroyed. In addition to the devastating effects it has on civilians, obliterating basic services creates complications that foreign actors would prefer to avoid. In Syria and Yemen, the destruction of infrastructure has helped foster lucrative war economies, with both pro- and anti-regime elites carrying out smuggling and extortion rackets in exchange for food, water, and fuel. This dynamic doesn't work to the benefit of even the most cynical international actors operating in the region: when civilians can no longer look to the state to provide necessities such as potable water, there is room for nonstate actors such as ISIS to make inroads. In the end, the most vulnerable populations, such as refugees, pay the ultimate price.

In Yemen, people's already insecure access to food supplies has been exacerbated by the Saudi-led blockade of two major ports, Hodeidah and Salif, where 80 percent of food imports enter the country. All the parties to the conflict there have used the food supply as a shortsighted weapon. This includes the Houthis, the Shiite sect that is fighting the country's Saudi-backed central government, who have expropriated food

aid provided by the World Food Program for extortion rackets to fund their wartime operations. The COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified the crisis by disrupting vital supply chains and limiting the purchasing power of local populations.

The devastating effects of the interventions by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the war in Yemen will no doubt limit Yemeni authorities' ability to manage environmental risks. Extreme natural events, such as swarms of locusts and massive flooding, could be in the offing. Saudi Arabia has begun to face increasing international condemnation for its conduct in Yemen; at the same time, Riyadh will inevitably be shackled by the burden of maintaining stability in Yemen for years to come. If Saudi Arabia exercised greater restraint when it comes to targeting water infrastructure, not only would such a move alleviate human suffering, but it could also enhance domestic and regional stability, by limiting the resentment of thirsting and famished populations on Saudi Arabia's southern border.

As the conflicts in Syria and Yemen have made clear, if there is an international consensus against the weaponization of water, it exists in principle but not in practice. The efforts of the Geneva Water Hub, a research institute focused on resolving water-related conflicts, present a starting point for countries to cooperate on the management of shared water resources. UN-Water, an effort connecting the United Nations and other international organizations that was established in 2003 to address issues of water and sanitation, can also play a role, especially in conflicts involving the destruction of transboundary water resources. By coordinating and distributing information on water insecurity in conflict zones, it could raise awareness among member states.

It remains unclear when and how the conflicts in Syria and Yemen will end. But when they do, accountability for environmental harm must be part of any postconflict transition. The UN and the Arab League appear to be taking tentative steps toward allowing Syria back into the global community; as they do so, they should make the Assad regime answer for its disastrous assaults on the environment as well as its mass atrocities against civilians. Any agreement to normalize relations with Syria should include a requirement that Assad and his Russian ally cease their bombardment of rebel populations and infrastructure in northwestern Syria. And postconflict reconstruction aid should be given only if Assad agrees to provide safe drinking water and sufficient food to his citizens.

BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD

Of course, the environmental crisis in the Middle East extends beyond war zones. Droughts and sandstorms are forcing hundreds of thousands of rural residents to leave their homes. This is one reason the Middle East currently hosts 45 percent of all the refugees officially registered with the UN system. Although the Middle East is not as food insecure as sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 50 million people in the region face chronic undernourishment. Policymakers there need to push forward a Green New Deal that focuses on the vulnerable and the displaced.

One critical piece of any green transition will be better data. The

refugees fled for a reason; determining the role climate change has played in their dispersal will aid policymaking. There is no doubt that climate change is a factor: in 2011, the World Bank conducted surveys in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, and Yemen and found widespread loss of income, crops, and livestock; many respondents attributed these challenges to extreme weather events. The World Bank should build on this work and conduct an annual study to forecast the impact of climate stress on vulnerable communities, with an eye toward addressing the priorities of local populations.

Another factor that drives mass migration in the Middle East is the region's intense economic inequality, which climate change threatens to exacerbate. Oil-exporting Gulf countries with diversified, nonagricultural economies, such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, have the financial and technological resources they will need to lower their own emissions, help protect their populations from the effects of climate change, and adapt to a future in which the demand for fossil fuels will be far lower than it is today. Far from losing out in the green economy of the future, those countries are poised to reap significant gains: aggregate demand for oil is likely to increase before it falls, and they are well positioned to become major suppliers of solar energy, which will become an increasingly important resource.

In contrast, impoverished countries such as Libya, Syria, and Yemen will not be able to adapt to climate change on their own. As extreme weather events and shortages of basic staples threaten their survival, people in those countries will increasingly flee. That, in turn, will pose a security risk for the region's wealthier states—giving them an incentive to help pay for a transition to renewable energy across the Middle East and help poorer countries pay for infrastructure improvements that can increase their resilience to extreme weather.

Nevertheless, the rich Gulf states have so far dragged their feet on such measures. They are unlikely to take the necessary steps without external pressure or inducements—even though doing so would be in their interest. The United States and international organizations should partner with the Arab Gulf countries to help them implement an energy transition plan for the region. It is to their economic benefit to do so, after all: oil is a notoriously volatile commodity, particularly during periods of structural transition. The fact that carbon prices could eventually account for the negative externalities of carbon dioxide emissions provides another strong incentive for oil-producing states to take climate change seriously and plan for the coming energy transition.

Of course, it's not just the Gulf states that can play a role in a green plan for the region. The West and international organizations have particular leverage in aid-dependent countries such as Egypt and Jordan, where international assistance will help determine who benefits from climate adaptation efforts. To ensure help reaches the most vulnerable, international organizations should support grassroots efforts, which are more attuned to local dynamics and needs.

For example, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in conjunction with local and other interna-

tional organizations, such as the IKEA Foundation, made the Azraq refugee camp, in Jordan, the first in the world to be powered by renewable energy, connecting 10,000 shelters to the grid and also offering employment and training opportunities for the refugees. In Yemen, the same organizations used local materials such as *khazaf*—woven palm leaves—to construct durable shelters that can withstand heavy rains, strong winds, high humidity, and scorching heat.

Also, the United States needs to get tough with its allies in the region. Left unchecked, states such as Israel and Saudi Arabia will continue to engage in greenwashing, pursuing initiatives that pay lip service to concerns about climate change but do little to protect or empower vulnerable populations. Witness how Israel routinely weaponizes water and infrastructure against the Palestinians, especially in Gaza, by damaging wastewater treatment plants and contaminating groundwater during its repeated military operations. Israel also touts supposedly green energy projects in the occupied Golan Heights, which it illegally annexed from Syria in 1981. Saudi Arabia announced during the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference that as part of its Middle East Green Initiative, it would lower its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2060. But the kingdom continues to bomb critical civilian infrastructure in Yemen. Such practices leave U.S. allies in the region vulnerable to further instability. And that, in turn, makes the United States vulnerable. By signaling to its allies that human and environmental security are inseparable from national security, Washington could restore its leadership and foster effective peace building in the region.

No one should downplay the importance of climate change in today's Middle East or in the region's future. But policymakers must also understand that the worst outcomes related to environmental stress and scarcity in the region are caused not by long-term shifts in the climate, which are difficult to control, but by short-term choices made and actions taken by powerful people and institutions, which are far easier to influence. Grasping that fundamental truth is the first step to both protecting the most vulnerable people in the region and helping governments transition to more sustainable practices. The cost of those tasks will be high—but the gains to human security and prosperity far greater.

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The End of the Middle East

How an Old Map Distorts a New Reality

Marc Lynch

In early December 2021, the Ethiopian government pulled off a dramatic reversal in its yearlong civil war with rebels from the Tigray region. Armed with a new arsenal of drones and other forms of military support from Iran, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Ethiopian forces were able to push back an offensive by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, which itself was supported by Somali fighters, who were in turn backed by Qatar.

Many American observers were surprised by the direct involvement of no fewer than four Middle Eastern countries in what appeared to be an African conflict. But such interest is hardly unusual. In recent years, Turkey has established more than 40 consulates in Africa and a major military base in Somalia. Israel has announced a "return to Africa," in part to find new alliances as it faces growing international pressure over its occupation of the West Bank. Saudi Arabia has bought wide swaths of agricultural land in Ethiopia and Sudan in pursuit of food security, and the UAE has built naval bases across the Horn of Africa. Egypt has been embroiled in a conflict with Ethiopia over its plans for a dam at the head of the Nile River.

Nor are these entanglements limited to Africa. Oman has traditionally seen itself as an Indian Ocean nation and maintains strong economic ties with India, Iran, and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have long meddled deeply in the affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Turkey has become increasingly involved in Central Asia, including with a military intervention in Azerbaijan. Almost every Gulf state has recently upgraded its partnerships with China and other Asian countries.

Amid these continual and growing transregional connections, however, U.S. foreign policy remains wedded to a far narrower mental map of the Middle East. Since the early years of the Cold War, the Washington establishment has viewed the Middle East as the Arab world—broadly conceived as the member states of the Arab League (with the exception of the geographic outliers Comoros, Mauritania, and Somalia)—plus Iran, Israel, and Turkey. These parameters feel natural to many. Based on geographic continuity, common-sense understandings of the region, and twentieth-century history, this is the Middle East of American university departments and think tanks, as well as of the U.S. State Department.

But such a map is increasingly outdated. Leading regional powers operate outside the traditional Middle East in much the same way as they operate inside it, and many of the rivalries most important to the region now play out beyond those assumed borders. The Pentagon knows this: the region covered by U.S. Central Command, the combatant command that handles the Middle

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East, includes not only Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf states but also Afghanistan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan—a grouping that is directly at odds with the State Department's Middle East.

Such a dramatic misalignment of the U.S. policymaking and military establishments points to the dangers of clinging to the old model of the region. Not only is the concept out of step with current politics and military practice; it also hampers attempts to confront many of the biggest challenges of the day, from serial refugee crises to Islamist insurgencies to entrenched authoritarianism. Continuing to build scholarship and policy on a legacy definition of the Middle East threatens to blind U.S. strategy to the actual dynamics shaping the region—and, worse, makes Washington all too likely to continue making disastrous blunders there.

COLD WAR CARTOGRAPHY

As set in stone as it now seems, the American concept of the Middle East has little grounding in premodern history. For centuries, the Arab provinces of North Africa and the Levant were part of the vast, multinational Ottoman Empire. The coastal communities of the Gulf were organically linked to the Horn of Africa across the Red Sea. Islamic networks connected Egypt and the rest of North Africa to areas deep in sub-Saharan Africa. But instead of looking back that far, the United States adopted its version of the region from a more recent source: the colonialism and great-power politics of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe.

In the nineteenth century, British and French imperial projects gave rise to the idea of a distinct region defined by North Africa and the Levant. In 1830, France occupied Algeria; in 1881, it captured Tunisia; and by 1912, it also controlled Morocco. French colonial legacies of racial classification, and not the natural barrier of the Sahara, informed the distinction between Black French Africa and a French Maghreb of lighter-skinned Arabs and Berbers. That same racism drew a hard barrier between culturally similar populations of the Mediterranean basin, with white southern Europe forcibly distinguished from the Near Eastern peoples across the sea in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

The British, for their part, called the region "the Near East" because of its role as a transit point along the way to their primary colonial interests in India and "the Far East," or Asia. Following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the region took on new importance. British imperial interests now connected the Arabian Peninsula to Egypt and the Levant, while distinguishing those areas from points north, east, and south. And a string of protectorates along the Arabian Peninsula remained under British control all the way until 1971, reinforcing the old colonial boundaries long after other forces had begun to reshape the region. A set of ideological assumptions about the supposed exoticism of Arabs, Persians, and Turks, an outlook that was famously termed "Orientalism" by the late Palestinian American scholar Edward Said, helped give shape to the idea that this vast region shared a common, backward culture.

After World War II, as the United States plunged headlong into Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, the U.S. State Department adapted the

Anglo-French concept of the region for its own purposes. The definition of what the United States was now calling "the Middle East" (not quite as near to Washington as to London) was informed by policymakers' goals: maintain access to oil in the Arabian Peninsula, protect Israel, and keep former British and French possessions in North Africa out of the Soviet sphere of influence.

During the 1950s and 1960s, U.S. economic and political priorities helped institutionalize this map in academic and policymaking circles. The 1958 National Defense Education Act channeled federal resources toward area studies in support of Cold War priorities, and big nonprofits, such as the Ford Foundation, joined the effort. The new approach divided the world into distinct regions, one of which was the Middle East. As a result, scholars of the Middle East developed deep expertise about the cultures, languages, history, and politics of the countries in that tightly defined area. But they were not expected to know much of anything about sub-Saharan Africa or Afghanistan and Pakistan, no matter how important those places might be to the issues they were studying.

In those early years of the Cold War, the pan-Arabism of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser reinforced the notion of the Middle East as a cultural-political unity rather than an artificial construct. The Palestinian issue and struggles for decolonization energized and unified the Arab world, with heads of state defining themselves through their positions on Israel and Arab unification. And in Egypt and other North African countries, racist attitudes about the populations of sub-Saharan Africa contributed to the idea of the Middle East as ethnically and culturally distinct from surrounding areas. The incorporation of much of Central Asia into the Soviet Union, meanwhile, justified the exclusion of states such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan from a region defined by Cold War competition.

This concept of the Middle East provided the foundation for a series of U.S. foreign policy doctrines and security alliances, relationships that, despite upheavals such as the Iranian Revolution, for many decades served to keep the oil flowing and maintain stability. There were costs, however. Trained to think according to this map, and often informed by Orientalist views inherited from the colonial era, academics and policymakers tended to draw conclusions about the region without taking into account the many social and political forces that transcended its boundaries. For instance, the 9/11 attacks quickly produced a consensus that they had been driven by the specific pathologies of the Arab Middle East. The mountains of analysis explaining jihadism through Arab culture often simply ignored the parallel rise of Islamist and other forms of religious extremism in Africa, South Asia, and many other parts of the world.

Similarly, the long-held idea that Muslim countries are somehow uniquely resistant to democracy ignores the real drivers of autocratic resilience in the Middle East: Western-backed oil monarchies and Arab strongmen with little accountability to their poorly governed citizens. It also overlooks the regular participation of Muslims in many democracies outside the Middle East—from India and Indonesia to the United States itself. The assumption that Muslims would inevitably choose radical

Islamist governments if they had the chance has been used to justify decades of American failure to support real political reform there.

In all these ways, the American concept of the Middle East has more often been a limitation than an asset, yet for decades, it has proved remarkably sticky. Even after 9/11 forcefully exposed the global connections of a group such as al Qaeda, which had roots in Afghanistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, U.S. policy continued to be driven by the old paradigm. The invasion of Iraq was justified in part by a determination to remake the Middle East, with the George W. Bush administration's "freedom agenda" pushing a war of ideas aimed at an Arab world that was supposedly uniquely prone to authoritarianism and sectarian violence. More recently, similar assumptions led the United States to fail to anticipate—or react effectively to—the wave of popular revolts that engulfed the Arab world in 2010–11.

POLITICS OUT OF BOUNDS

For U.S. policymakers, the Arab uprisings provided a deceptive lesson. At first, the rapid spread of protests from Tunisia and Egypt to much of the rest of the region seemed to show the renewed coherence of the Middle East. Further underscoring the idea of a single geopolitical arena was the jockeying that followed: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE intervened in wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen and meddled in the transitions occurring in Egypt and Tunisia. Yet the countries in the region whose influence grew the most—Iran, Israel, and Turkey—were not part of the Arab world at all. Moreover, Arab autocrats quickly came to view the interconnectedness of their populations as a threat to their own survival, and many sought to crack down on pan-Arab political movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and liberal activist networks alike. The hopes of regionwide political change were instead quashed by a new fracturing, with Libya and Syria descending into chaos and many of the Arab monarchs looking for new sources of legitimacy that had little to do with the broader Arab public.

Today, if anything, political developments in many Middle Eastern countries have made the region's traditional boundaries increasingly meaningless. Sudan's 2018 revolution—and its more recent military coup, which was backed by Egypt, a leading Middle East power, but opposed by the African Union, an international body representing 55 African states—showed the extent to which the country straddles two regions. Elsewhere in Africa, migration and the growth of Islamist insurgencies across the Sahel have shifted the political, security, and economic interests of the Maghreb states southward. Libya's civil war has fueled flows of migrants, weapons, drugs, and radicalism across central Africa, further blurring the line between North Africa and the rest of the continent. Many of the migrants arriving in Europe from the Middle East originate in countries south of the Sahara. In response to the growing strategic importance of the Sahel, Morocco has focused on spreading its religious authority in West Africa, and Algeria has been involved in security operations in Mali.

Other political dynamics have also revealed the limited value of defining the Middle East as a single geographic area. The Iranian-Saudi rivalry, for example,

has little relevance in North Africa. The political battle among Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE after the 2017 blockade of Qatar by several states in the region played out in a competition for support not only in neighboring Arab countries but also across the African continent and even in Washington. The appeal of the Islamic State (also known as ISIS), even more than that of al Qaeda, was more global than regional, as manifested by the flow of foreign fighters to Syria and the spread of the movement across Africa and Asia. It is difficult to sustain counterterrorism models based on problems said to be uniquely Arab when some of the most active jihadi insurgencies unfold in Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia.

Meanwhile, some of the largest recent conflicts have defied the region's assumed geography. Libya's civil war destabilized Mali and other African neighbors. When Saudi Arabia built a coalition to back its intervention against Yemen's Houthi rebels in 2015, it not only sought help from like-minded Arab states; it also solicited support from Eritrea, Pakistan, and Sudan, which contributed bases and troops. At the same time, the UAE's enforcement of a naval blockade against the Houthis has led it to build up a military presence across the Horn of Africa and to fortify the strategically located island of Socotra, which is closer to Africa than the Arabian Peninsula. Although it is often seen as a paradigmatic Middle Eastern war, the conflict in Yemen has played out in ways that call into question the supposed borders of the region.

MARKETS MOVING EAST

Just as recent political dynamics have rendered the old map of the Middle East

obsolete, so have large-scale social changes. From the 1950s through the 1980s, the mass migration of laborers from poorer Arab countries to the rapidly developing Gulf states created powerful connections within the region. Remittances played a key role in the informal economies of Egypt and most of the states in the Levant, and workers' extended stays in Gulf countries enabled the spread of conservative Islamist ideas that had not previously found much purchase outside Saudi Arabia. But after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, during which Palestinian and Yemeni workers were often seen as disloyal, Arab migrant laborers were increasingly replaced in the country by politically safer South Asian workers. That trend has greatly weakened the economic and social ties between the Gulf and the rest of the Middle East, while correspondingly strengthening those ties between the Gulf and countries across the Indian Ocean.

Similarly, Arab media have lost much of their thematic coherence. Until 2011, Arab satellite television did much to shape a common culture at a popular level, including during the Arab uprisings. But in the decade since, the media landscape has become Balkanized, mirroring the region's political polarization. Thus, where Al Jazeera served as a common platform for Arab public politics in the 1990s and early years of this century, after 2011, it became just one among many partisan media platforms, including the Saudi-based Rotana Media Group, the Emirati-based Al Arabiya, and Iran's Arabic-language Al-Alam. Such stations reinforce political polarization, with each one's narrative embraced by those within its political ambit and scorned by those outside it. Social media, once a force for the Arab public's integration, has been weaponized by regimes such as those in Egypt and Saudi Arabia through the widespread use of bot armies and censorship and has fragmented into hostile silos.

Over the past two decades, global financial markets have themselves reshaped the orientation of some of the wealthiest Middle Eastern countries, including Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Given their deep investments in Western real estate and sports clubs, their growing economic ties to Asia, and their large populations of non-Arab service workers and Western expatriates, it increasingly makes more sense to view these places as centers of global capitalism than as Middle Eastern states; Dubai has more in common with Singapore or Hong Kong than with Beirut or Baghdad. Similarly, Saudi Arabia's and the UAE's use of Israeli-made digital surveillance tools mirrors China's model as much as it does those of other Arab regimes. Such global ties in economics and technology may soon come to play as much of a role in these states' foreign policies as any traditional regional priorities do—pushing them closer to Asia, say, or providing new incentives for them to manipulate elections in Western democracies.

In turn, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which once served as a unifying force in the Arab world, has dramatically faded in importance. The Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions movement, which is aimed at Israel's escalating settlements in the West Bank, has attracted more interest on American college campuses and in the halls of Congress than in the Middle East. Europe, the United Nations, and the

International Criminal Court are more central battlefields for Israeli-Palestinian disputes than any Arab capital. The Palestinian cause today, while gaining unprecedented support in the West, has rarely enjoyed less sympathy from the states of the Arab region, as demonstrated by the decision of Bahrain and the UAE to normalize relations with Israel in the 2020 Abraham Accords. Despite the limited tangible implications of that agreement, Israelis have seemed to embrace it with a sense of catharsis, in part because it signaled the passing of the Middle East as a primary arena of security or political concerns—for Arabs as well as for Israelis.

THEIR MAP, NOT OURS

For 75 years, the Middle East as we know it has in large part been a construct of American primacy. For much of that time, the U.S. map made sense because Washington's priorities in the region could go a significant way toward influencing the region's politics. Washington's Cold War strategic doctrines shaped alliances and interventions from the time of the 1956 Suez crisis, when the United States displaced France and the United Kingdom as the primary Western power in the region, until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The 1990–91 Gulf War entrenched an American regional order, in which all roads seemed to lead to Washington. The United States monopolized stewardship of the Arab-Israeli peace process, from the Madrid conference through the Oslo accords, and its dual containment of Iran and Iraq defined the geopolitics of the Gulf.

But the global position of the United States has rapidly declined, and so, too, has the coherence of a region largely organized around U.S. interests. Amid the fallout from the disastrous decision to invade Iraq in 2003, three successive U.S. presidents have sought to downgrade U.S. commitments in the Middle East and pivot toward Asia. And with the United States perceived to be in retreat, regional powers have asserted their own definitions of the region: an order centered on the Indian Ocean for the Gulf states, a trans-Sahel orientation for North African states. This does not mean that the traditional zones of conflict have vanished. Iran, for example, has spread its proxy networks and influence throughout the shattered states of Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen and is locked in a growing competition with Israel and Saudi Arabia. But like its regional rivals, Iran has also upped its activities in Africa and begun building partnerships with states in Asia, especially China.

For the United States, the rise of jihadi insurgencies in sub-Saharan Africa has rendered obsolete the Middle East–focused counterterrorism doctrine that emerged after 9/11. Although U.S. forces have withdrawn from Iraq and Syria, U.S. drone strikes and counterterrorism operations continue from Somalia through the Sahel. Confusingly, even as the United States signals that it is getting out of the Middle East, it is maintaining or expanding the same military architecture, to deal with many of the same security concerns, in the Sahel and East Africa.

And now, the United States must also contend with Beijing, which thinks differently about the Middle East than Washington does. China's map of the region follows its own strategic interests, not Washington's. Through its Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing has

expanded its energy interests in the Gulf and its presence in Africa. It has signed a series of agreements with Gulf states, bridging the divide between Iran and the Arab Gulf states by downplaying politics and focusing on infrastructure and energy resources. China's growing involvement has opened up new prospects for stabilizing oil production and other forms of regional cooperation, but it has also multiplied the opportunities for dangerous misunderstandings, as Washington seeks to balance its own regional interests with its growing rivalry with China.

If U.S. scholars, analysts, and policymakers were to begin to understand the Middle East less as a discrete geographic area and more as a fluid collection of states and populations through which broader social forces and shifting contests for power flow, many of these recent developments would seem far less surprising. Thinking beyond the traditional Middle East would also have direct analytic and strategic benefits for Washington, not only because it would entail the recovery of forgotten history but also because it would lead to a better understanding of the fast-changing realities on the ground.

But there are risks to a transregional approach. Simply adopting the Pentagon's broader definition of the region may end up reproducing the security-driven focus that has characterized many of the failed U.S. policies in Afghanistan and the Middle East over the past two decades. This would be a tragedy. A transregional lens should allow academics and policymakers not only to move beyond the old paradigms but also to rethink how the United States promotes development and good governance abroad. It could help Washington generate a more effective response to Africa's and Europe's migration crisis, better align world powers to respond to Libya's and Yemen's catastrophic wars, and avoid unnecessary conflict with China in areas and on issues on which cooperation would make far more sense. Abandoning old cultural and political assumptions about the Middle East and viewing the region within a broader global context could also enable the United States and its allies to finally get serious about defending human rights and promoting real democratic change there.

By remaining locked in an outdated concept of the region, Washington risks truncating its understanding of the behavior and interests of the Middle East's main players; misunderstanding the actions there of other global powers, such as China; and overestimating the effects of an American retreat. It will be difficult to think beyond the Middle East: accumulated expertise, deeply internalized thought patterns, and entrenched bureaucratic structures all stand in the way. But the changing dynamics of global power and regional practice are rapidly reorienting many leading Middle Eastern states, and the map they are following is no longer Washington's; the map is their own. It is now up to Washington to learn to read it.

ESSAYS

JERRY LAMPEN / REUTERS

Enemies of My Enemy

How Fear of China Is Forging a New World Order

Michael Beckley

The international order is falling apart, and everyone seems to know how to fix it. According to some, the United States just needs to rededicate itself to leading the liberal order it helped found some 75 years ago. Others argue that the world's great powers should form a concert to guide the international community into a new age of multipolar cooperation. Still others call for a grand bargain that divides the globe into stable spheres of influence. What these and other visions of international order have in common is an assumption that global governance can be designed and imposed from the top down. With wise statesmanship and ample summitry, the international jungle can be tamed and cultivated. Conflicts of interest and historical hatreds can be negotiated away and replaced with win-win cooperation.

The history of international order, however, provides little reason for confidence in top-down, cooperative solutions. The strongest orders in modern history—from Westphalia in the seventeenth century to the liberal international order in the twentieth—were not inclusive organizations working for the greater good of humanity. Rather, they were alliances built by great powers to wage security competition against their main rivals. Fear and loathing of a shared enemy, not enlightened calls to make the world a better place, brought these orders together. Progress on transnational issues, when achieved, emerged largely as a byproduct of hardheaded security cooperation. That cooperation usually lasted only as long as a common threat remained both present and manageable. When that threat dissipated or

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grew too large, the orders collapsed. Today, the liberal order is fraying for many reasons, but the underlying cause is that the threat it was originally designed to defeat—Soviet communism—disappeared three decades ago. None of the proposed replacements to the current order have stuck because there hasn't been a threat scary or vivid enough to compel sustained cooperation among the key players.

Until now. Through a surge of repression and aggression, China has frightened countries near and far. It is acting belligerently in East Asia, trying to carve out exclusive economic zones in the global economy, and exporting digital systems that make authoritarianism more effective than ever. For the first time since the Cold War, a critical mass of countries face serious threats to their security, welfare, and ways of life—all emanating from a single source.

This moment of clarity has triggered a flurry of responses. China's neighbors are arming themselves and aligning with outside powers to secure their territory and sea-lanes. Many of the world's largest economies are collectively developing new trade, investment, and technology standards that implicitly discriminate against China. Democracies are gathering to devise strategies for combating authoritarianism at home and abroad, and new international organizations are popping up to coordinate the battle. Seen in real time, these efforts look scattershot. Step back from the day-to-day commotion, however, and a fuller picture emerges: for better or worse, competition with China is forging a new international order.

ORDERS OF EXCLUSION

The modern liberal mind associates international order with peace and harmony. Historically, however, international orders have been more about keeping rivals down than bringing everyone together. As the international relations theorist Kyle Lascurettes has argued, the major orders of the past four centuries were "orders of exclusion," designed by dominant powers to ostracize and outcompete rivals. Order building wasn't a restraint on geopolitical conflict; it was power politics by other means, a cost-effective way to contain adversaries short of war.

Fear of an enemy, not faith in friends, formed the bedrock of each era's order, and members developed a common set of norms by defining themselves in opposition to that enemy. In doing so, they tapped into humanity's most primordial driver of collective action. Sociologists call it "the in-group/out-group dynamic." Philosophers call it "Sallust's the-

orem," after the ancient historian who argued that fear of Carthage held the Roman Republic together. In political science, the analogous concept is negative partisanship, the tendency for voters to become intensely loyal to one political party mainly because they despise its rival.

This negative dynamic pervades the history of order building. In 1648, the kingdoms that won the Thirty Years' War enshrined rules of sovereign statehood in the Peace of Westphalia to undermine the authority of the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire. Great Britain and its allies designed the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht to contain France by delegitimizing territorial expansion through royal marriages and the assertion of dynastic ties, Louis XIV's preferred method of amassing power. The Concert of Europe, the post-Napoleonic peace established in Vienna in 1815, was used by conservative monarchies to forestall the rise of liberal revolutionary regimes. The victors of World War I built the interwar order to hold Germany and Bolshevik Russia in check. After World War II, the Allies initially designed a global order, centered on the United Nations, to prevent a return of Nazi-style fascism and mercantilism. When the onset of the Cold War quickly hamstrung that global order, however, the West created a separate order to exclude and outcompete Soviet communism. For the duration of the Cold War, the world was divided into two orders: the dominant one led by Washington, and a poorer one centered on Moscow.

The main features of today's liberal order are direct descendants of the United States' Cold War alliance. After the Soviets decided not to join the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), these institutions were repurposed as agents of capitalist expansion—first, to rebuild capitalist economies and, later, to promote globalization. The Marshall Plan laid the foundation for the European Community by lavishing U.S. aid on governments that agreed to expel communists from their ranks and work toward an economic federation. NATO created a united front against the Red Army. The chain of U.S. alliances ringing East Asia was constructed to contain communist expansion there, especially from China and North Korea. U.S. engagement with China, which lasted from the 1970s to the 2010s, was a gambit to exploit the Sino-Soviet split.

Each of these initiatives was an element of an order designed first and foremost to defeat the Soviet Union. In the absence of the Cold War threat, Japan and West Germany would not have tolerated prolonged U.S. military occupations on their soil. The British, the

French, and the Germans would not have pooled their industrial resources. The United States—which had spent the previous two centuries ducking international commitments and shielding its economy with tariffs—would not have thrown its weight behind international institutions. Nor would it have provided security guarantees, massive aid, and easy market access to dozens of countries, including the former Axis powers. Only the threat of a nuclear-armed, communist superpower could compel so many countries to set aside their conflicting interests and long-standing rivalries and build the strongest security community and free-trade regime in history.

BUCKLING UNDER THE PRESSURE

For decades, the United States and its allies knew what they stood for and who the enemy was. But then the Soviet Union collapsed, and a single overarching threat gave way to a kaleidoscope of minor ones. In the new and uncertain post–Cold War environment, the Western allies sought refuge in past sources of success. Instead of building a new order, they doubled down on the existing one. Their enemy may have disintegrated, but their mission, they believed, remained the same: to enlarge the community of free-market democracies. For the next three decades, they worked to expand the Western liberal order into a global one. NATO membership nearly doubled. The European Community morphed into the EU, a full-blown economic union with more than twice as many member countries. The GATT was transformed into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and welcomed dozens of new members, unleashing an unprecedented period of hyperglobalization.

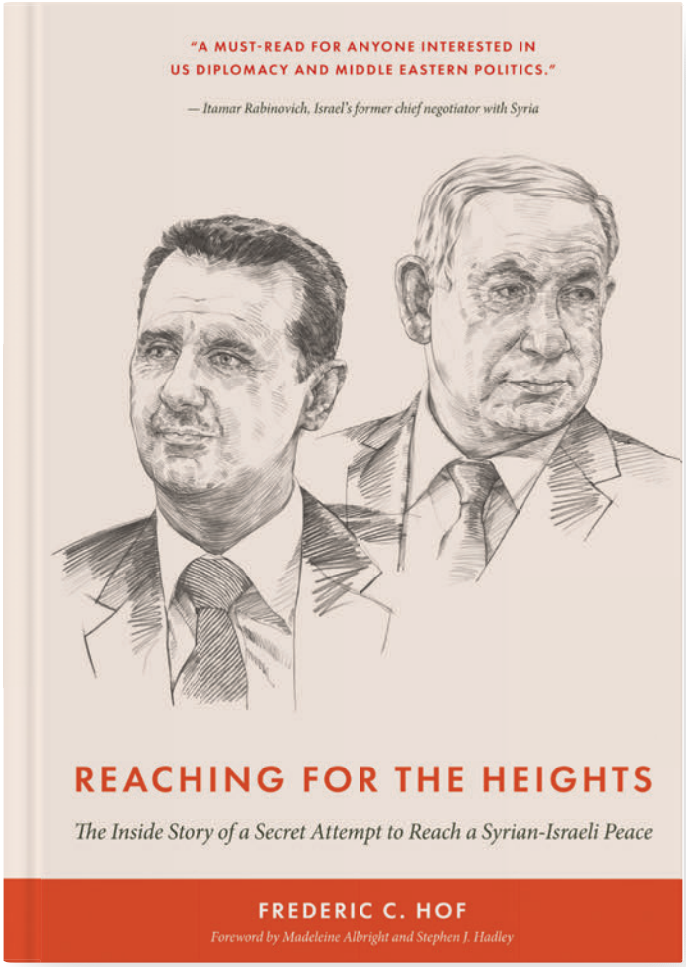
But it couldn't last. The liberal order, like all international orders, is a form of organized hypocrisy that contains the seeds of its own demise. To forge a cohesive community, order builders have to exclude hostile nations, outlaw uncooperative behaviors, and squelch domestic opposition to international rule-making. These inherently repressive acts eventually trigger a backlash. In the mid-nineteenth century, it came in the form of a wave of liberal revolutions, which eroded the unity and ideological coherence of the monarchical Concert of Europe. During the 1930s, aggrieved fascist powers demolished the liberal interwar order that stood in the way of their imperial ambitions. By the late 1940s, the Soviet Union had spurned the global order it had helped negotiate just a few years prior, having gobbled up territory in Eastern Europe in contravention of the UN Charter.

The Soviet representative at the UN derided the Bretton Woods institutions as "branches of Wall Street." Exclusionary by nature, international orders inevitably incite opposition.

Many in the West had long assumed that the liberal order would be an exception to the historical pattern. The system's commitment to openness and nondiscrimination supposedly made it "hard to overturn and easy to join," as the political scientist G. John Ikenberry argued in these pages in 2008. Any country, large or small, could plug and play in the globalized economy. Liberal institutions could accommodate all manner of members—even illiberal ones, which would gradually be reformed by the system into responsible stakeholders. As more countries joined, a virtuous cycle would play out: free trade would generate prosperity, which would spread democracy, which would enhance international cooperation, which would lead to more trade. Most important, the order faced no major opposition, because it had already defeated its main enemy. The demise of Soviet communism had sent a clear message to all that there was no viable alternative to democratic capitalism.

These assumptions turned out to be wrong. The liberal order is, in fact, deeply exclusionary. By promoting free markets, open borders, democracy, supranational institutions, and the use of reason to solve problems, the order challenges traditional beliefs and institutions that have united communities for centuries: state sovereignty, nationalism, religion, race, tribe, family. These enduring ties to blood and soil were bottled up during the Cold War, when the United States and its allies had to maintain a united front to contain the Soviet Union. But they have reemerged over the course of the post–Cold War era. "We are going to do a terrible thing to you," the Soviet official Georgi Arbatov told a U.S. audience in 1988. "We are going to deprive you of an enemy." The warning proved prescient. By slaying its main adversary, the liberal order unleashed all sorts of nationalist, populist, religious, and authoritarian opposition.

Many of the order's pillars are buckling under the pressure. NATO is riven by disputes over burden sharing. The EU nearly broke apart during the eurozone crisis, and in the years since, it has lost the United Kingdom and has been threatened by the rise of xenophobic right-wing parties across the continent. The WTO's latest round of multilateral trade talks has dragged on for 20 years without an agreement, and the United States is crippling the institution's core feature—the Ap-



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pellate Court, where countries adjudicate their disputes—for failing to regulate Chinese nontariff barriers. On the whole, the liberal order looks ill equipped to handle pressing global problems such as climate change, financial crises, pandemics, digital disinformation, refugee influxes, and political extremism, many of which are arguably a direct consequence of an open system that promotes the unfettered flow of money, goods, information, and people across borders.

Policymakers have long recognized these problems. Yet none of their ideas for revamping the system has gained traction because order building is costly. It requires leaders to divert time and political capital away from advancing their agendas to hash out international rules and sell them to skeptical publics, and it requires countries to subordinate their national interests to collective objectives and trust that other countries will do likewise. These actions do not come naturally, which is why order building usually needs a common enemy. For 30 years, that unifying force has been absent, and the liberal order has unraveled as a result.

ENTER THE DRAGON

There has never been any doubt about what China wants, because Chinese leaders have declared the same objectives for decades: to keep the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in power, reabsorb Taiwan, control the East China and South China Seas, and return China to its rightful place as the dominant power in Asia and the most powerful country in the world. For most of the past four decades, the country took a relatively patient and peaceful approach to achieving these aims. Focused on economic growth and fearful of being shunned by the international community, China adopted a "peaceful rise" strategy, relying primarily on economic clout to advance its interests and generally following a maxim of the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping: "Hide your strength, bide your time."

In recent years, however, China has expanded aggressively on multiple fronts. "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy has replaced friendship diplomacy. Perceived slights from foreigners, no matter how small, are met with North Korean–style condemnation. A combative attitude has seeped into every part of China's foreign policy, and it is confronting many countries with their gravest threat in generations.

This threat is most apparent in maritime East Asia, where China is moving aggressively to cement its vast territorial claims. Beijing is churning out warships faster than any country has since World War II,

and it has flooded Asian sea-lanes with Chinese coast guard and fishing vessels. It has strung military outposts across the South China Sea and dramatically increased its use of ship ramming and aerial interceptions to shove neighbors out of disputed areas. In the Taiwan Strait, Chinese military patrols, some involving a dozen warships and more than 50 combat aircraft, prowl the sea almost daily and simulate attacks on Taiwanese and U.S. targets. Chinese officials have told Western analysts that calls for an invasion of Taiwan are proliferating within the CCP. Pentagon officials worry that such an assault could be imminent.

China has gone on the economic offensive, too. Its latest five-year plan calls for dominating what Chinese officials call "chokepoints"—goods and services that other countries can't live without—and then using that dominance, plus the lure of China's domestic market, to browbeat countries into concessions. Toward that end, China has become the dominant dispenser of overseas loans, loading up more than 150 countries with over $1 trillion of debt. It has massively subsidized strategic industries to gain a monopoly on hundreds of vital products, and it has installed the hardware for digital networks in dozens of countries. Armed with economic leverage, it has used coercion against more than a dozen countries over the last few years. In many cases, the punishment has been disproportionate to the supposed crime—for example, slapping tariffs on many of Australia's exports after that country requested an international investigation into the origins of COVID-19.

China has also become a potent antidemocratic force, selling advanced tools of tyranny around the world. By combining surveillance cameras with social media monitoring, artificial intelligence, biometrics, and speech and facial recognition technologies, the Chinese government has pioneered a system that allows dictators to watch citizens constantly and punish them instantly by blocking their access to finance, education, employment, telecommunications, or travel. The apparatus is a despot's dream, and Chinese companies are already selling and operating aspects of it in more than 80 countries.

ACTION AND REACTION

As China burns down what remains of the liberal order, it is sparking an international backlash. Negative views of the country have soared around the world to highs not seen since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. A 2021 survey by the Pew Research Center found that roughly 75 percent of people in the United States, Europe, and Asia held unfa-

vorable views of China and had no confidence that President Xi Jinping would behave responsibly in world affairs or respect human rights. Another survey, a 2020 poll by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, revealed that about 75 percent of foreign policy elites in those same places thought that the best way to deal with China was to form coalitions of like-minded countries against it. In the United States, both political parties now support a tough policy toward China. The EU has officially declared China to be a "systemic rival." In Asia, Beijing faces openly hostile governments in every direction, from Japan to Australia to Vietnam to India. Even people in countries that trade heavily with China are souring on it. Surveys show that South Koreans, for example, now dislike China more than they dislike Japan, their former colonial overlord.

Democracies aren't merely balancing against China; they are also reordering the world around it.

Anti-Chinese sentiment is starting to congeal into concrete pushback. The resistance remains embryonic and patchy, mainly because so many countries are still hooked on Chinese trade. But the overall trend is clear: disparate actors are starting to join forces to roll back Beijing's power. In the process, they are reordering the world.

The emerging anti-Chinese order departs fundamentally from the liberal order, because it is directed at a different threat. In particular, the new order flips the relative emphasis placed on capitalism versus democracy. During the Cold War, the old liberal order promoted capitalism first and democracy a distant second. The United States and its allies pushed free markets as far as their power could reach, but when forced to choose, they almost always supported right-wing autocrats over left-wing democrats. The so-called free world was mainly an economic construct. Even after the Cold War, when democracy promotion became a cottage industry in Western capitals, the United States and its allies often shelved human rights concerns to gain market access, as they did most notably by ushering China into the WTO.

But now economic openness has become a liability for the United States and its allies, because China is ensconced in virtually every aspect of the liberal order. Far from being put out of business by globalization, China's authoritarian capitalist system seems almost perfectly designed to milk free markets for mercantilist gain. Beijing uses subsidies and espionage to help its firms dominate global markets and

protects its domestic market with nontariff barriers. It censors foreign ideas and companies on its own internet and freely accesses the global Internet to steal intellectual property and spread CCP propaganda. It assumes leadership positions in liberal international institutions, such as the UN Human Rights Council, and then bends them in an illiberal direction. It enjoys secure shipping around the globe for its export machine, courtesy of the U.S. Navy, and uses its own military to assert control over large swaths of the East China and South China Seas.

The United States and its allies have awoken to the danger: the liberal order and, in particular, the globalized economy at its heart are empowering a dangerous adversary. In response, they are trying to build a new order that excludes China by making democracy a requirement for full membership. When U.S. President Joe Biden gave his first press conference, in March 2021, and described the U.S.-Chinese rivalry as part of a broader competition between democracy and autocracy, it wasn't a rhetorical flourish. He was drawing a battle line based on a widely shared belief that authoritarian capitalism poses a mortal threat to the democratic world, one that can't be contained by the liberal order. Instead of reforming existing rules, rich democracies are starting to impose new ones by banding together, adopting progressive standards and practices, and threatening to exclude countries that don't follow them. Democracies aren't merely balancing against China—increasing their defense spending and forming military alliances—they are also reordering the world around it.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The architecture of the new order remains a work in progress. Yet two key features are already discernible. The first is a loose economic bloc anchored by the G-7, the group of democratic allies that controls more than half of the world's wealth. These leading powers, along with a rotating cast of like-minded states, are collaborating to prevent China from monopolizing the global economy. History has shown that whichever power dominates the strategic goods and services of an era dominates that era. In the nineteenth century, the United Kingdom was able to build an empire on which the sun never set in part because it mastered iron, steam, and the telegraph faster than its competitors. In the twentieth century, the United States surged ahead of other countries by harnessing steel, chemicals, electronics, aerospace, and information technologies. Now, China hopes to dominate modern strategic sectors—

including artificial intelligence, biotechnology, semiconductors, and telecommunications—and relegate other economies to subservient status. In a 2017 meeting in Beijing, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang told H. R. McMaster, then the U.S. national security adviser, how he envisioned the United States and other countries fitting into the global economy in the future: their role, McMaster recalled Li saying, "would merely be to provide China with raw materials, agricultural products, and energy to fuel its production of the world's cutting-edge industrial and consumer products."

Competition with China is forging a new international order.

To avoid becoming a cog in a Chinese economic empire, leading democracies have started forming exclusive trade and investment networks designed to speed up their progress in critical sectors and slow down China's. Some of these collaborations, such as the U.S.-Japan Competitiveness and Resilience Partnership, announced in 2021, create joint R & D projects to help members outpace Chinese innovation. Other schemes focus on blunting China's economic leverage by developing alternatives to Chinese products and funding. The G-7's Build Back Better World initiative and the EU's Global Gateway, for example, will provide poor countries with infrastructure financing as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative. Australia, India, and Japan joined forces to start the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, which offers incentives for their companies to move their operations out of China. And at the behest of the United States, countries composing more than 60 percent of the world's cellular-equipment market have enacted or are considering restrictions against Huawei, China's main 5G telecommunications provider.

Meanwhile, democratic coalitions are constraining China's access to advanced technologies. The Netherlands, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States, for example, have colluded to cut China off from advanced semiconductors and from the machines that make them. New institutions are laying the groundwork for a full-scale multilateral export control regime. The U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council creates common transatlantic standards for screening exports to China and investment there in artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies. The Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative, a joint project of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the

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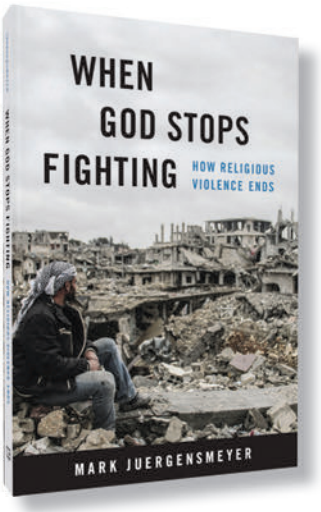

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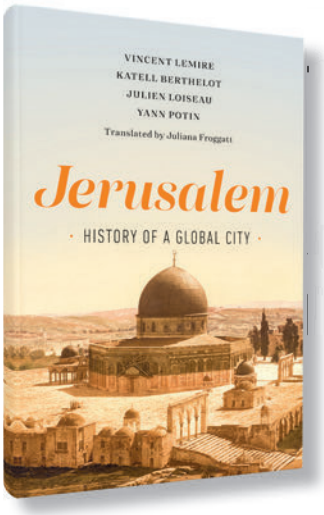

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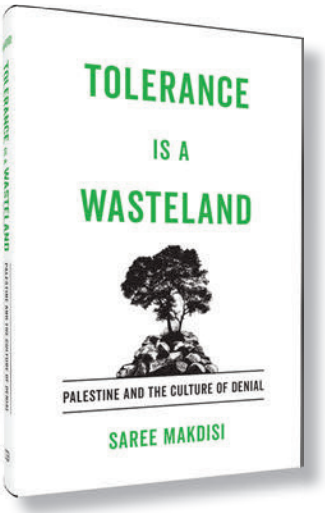

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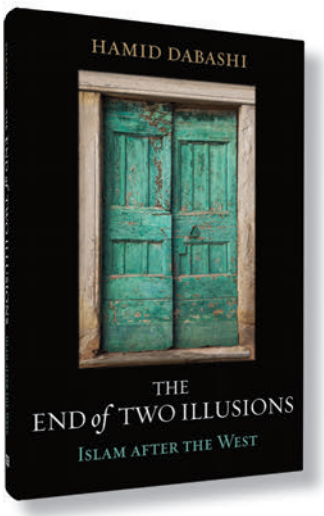

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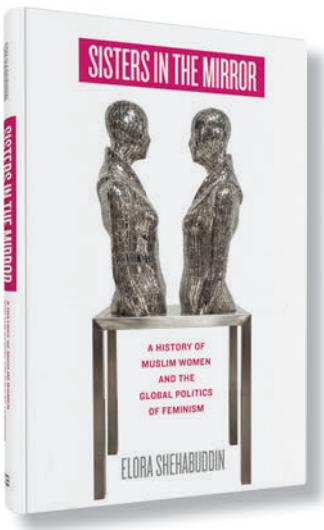

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United States that was unveiled in late 2021, is intended to do the same for technologies that could support digital authoritarianism, such as speech and facial recognition tools. The United States and its democratic allies are also negotiating trade and investment deals to discriminate against China, putting in place labor, environmental, and governance standards that Beijing will never meet. In October 2021, for example, the United States and the EU agreed to create a new arrangement that will impose tariffs on aluminum and steel producers that engage in dumping or carbon-intensive production, a measure that will hit no country harder than China.

The second feature of the emerging order is a double military barrier to contain China. The inside layer consists of rivals bordering the East China and South China Seas. Many of them—including Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam—are loading up on mobile missile launchers and mines. The goal is to turn themselves into prickly porcupines capable of denying China sea and air control near their shores. Those efforts are now being bolstered by an outside layer of democratic powers—mainly Australia, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These democracies are providing aid, arms, and intelligence to China's neighbors; training together so they can conduct long-range missile strikes on Chinese forces and blockade China's oil imports; and organizing multinational freedom-of-navigation exercises throughout the region, especially near Chinese-held rocks, reefs, and islands in disputed areas.

This security cooperation is becoming stronger and more institutionalized. Witness the reemergence of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad—a coalition made up of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States that had gone dormant shortly after its founding in 2007. Or look at the creation of new pacts, most notably AUKUS, an alliance linking Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The overarching goal of all this activity is to maintain the territorial status quo in East Asia. But a more explicit aim is to save Taiwan, the frontline democracy most at risk of Chinese conquest. Japan and the United States have developed a joint battle plan for defending the island, and in November 2021, Peter Dutton, Australia's defense minister, said it was "inconceivable" that his country would not also join the fight. The European Parliament, for its part, has adopted a comprehensive plan to boost Taiwan's economic resilience and international recognition.

Viewed individually, these efforts look haphazard and reactive. Collectively, however, they betray a positive vision for a democratic order, one that differs fundamentally from China's mercantilist model and also from the old international order, with neoliberal orthodoxy at its core. By infusing labor and human rights standards into economic agreements, the new vision prioritizes people over corporate profits and state power. It also elevates the global environment from a mere commodity to a shared and jointly protected commons. By linking democratic governments together in an exclusive network, the new order attempts to force countries to make a series of value judgments and imposes real penalties for illiberal behavior. Want to make carbon-intensive steel with slave labor? Prepare to be hit with tariffs by the world's richest countries. Considering annexing international waters? Expect a visit from a multinational armada.

If China continues to scare democracies into collective action, then it could usher in the most consequential changes to global governance in a generation or more. By containing Chinese naval expansion, for example, the maritime security system in East Asia could become a powerful enforcement mechanism for the law of the sea. By inserting carbon tariffs into trade deals to discriminate against China, the United States and its allies could force producers to reduce their emissions, inadvertently creating the basis for a de facto international carbon tax. The Quad's success in providing one billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Southeast Asia, an effort to win hearts and minds away from Beijing, has provided a blueprint for combating future pandemics. Allied efforts to prevent the spread of digital authoritarianism could inspire new international regulations on digital flows and data privacy, and the imperative of competing with China could fuel an unprecedented surge in R & D and infrastructure spending around the world.

Like the orders of the past, the emerging one is an order of exclusion, sustained by fear and enforced through coercion. Unlike most past orders, however, it is directed toward progressive ends.

THE CLASH OF SYSTEMS

The history of international order building is one of savage competition between clashing systems, not of harmonious cooperation. In the best of times, that competition took the form of a cold war, with each side jockeying for advantage and probing each other with every measure short of military force. In many cases, however, the competition eventually boiled

over into a shooting war and ended with one side crushing the other. The victorious order then ruled until it was destroyed by a new competitor—or until it simply crumbled without an external threat to hold it together.

Today, a growing number of policymakers and pundits are calling for a new concert of powers to sort out the world's problems and divide the globe into spheres of influence. But the idea of an inclusive order in which no one power's vision prevails is a fantasy that can exist only in the imaginations of world-government idealists and academic theorists. There are only two orders under construction right now—a Chinese-led one and a U.S.-led one—and the contest between the two is rapidly becoming a clash between autocracy and democracy, as both countries define themselves against each other and try to infuse their respective coalitions with ideological purpose. China is positioning itself as the world's defender of hierarchy and tradition against a decadent and disorderly West; the United States is belatedly summoning a new alliance to check Chinese power and make the world safe for democracy.

The history of international order building is one of savage competition between clashing systems, not of harmonious cooperation.

This clash of systems will define the twenty-first century and divide the world. China will view the emerging democratic order as a containment strategy designed to strangle its economy and topple its regime. In response, it will seek to protect itself by asserting greater military control over its vital sea-lanes, carving out exclusive economic zones for its firms, and propping up autocratic allies as it sows chaos in democracies. The upsurge of Chinese repression and aggression, in turn, will further impel the United States and its allies to shun Beijing and build a democratic order. For a tiny glimpse of what this vicious cycle might look like, consider what happened in March 2021, when Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the EU sanctioned four Chinese officials for human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The sanctions amounted to a slap on the wrist, but Beijing interpreted them as an assault on its sovereignty and unleashed a diplomatic tirade and a slew of economic sanctions. The EU returned fire by freezing its proposed EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

In the coming years, the trade and technology wars between China and the United States that began during the Trump administration will rage on as both sides try to expand their respective spheres.

Other countries will find it increasingly difficult to hedge their bets by maintaining links to both blocs. Instead, China and the United States will push their partners to pick sides, compelling them to reroute their supply chains and adopt wholesale the ecosystem of technologies and standards of one side's order. The Internet will be split in two. When people journey from one order to the other—if they can even get a visa—they will enter a different digital realm. Their phones won't work, nor will their favorite websites, their email accounts, or their precious social media apps. Political warfare between the two systems will intensify, as each tries to undermine the domestic legitimacy and international appeal of its competitor. East Asian sea-lanes will grow clogged with warships, and rival forces will experience frequent close encounters.

The standoff will end only when one side defeats or exhausts the other. As of now, the smart money is on the U.S. side, which has far more wealth and military assets than China does and better prospects for future growth. By the early 2030s, Xi, an obese smoker with a stressful job, will be in his 80s, if he is still alive. China's demographic crisis will be kicking into high gear, with the country projected to lose roughly 70 million working-age adults and gain 130 million senior citizens between now and then. Hundreds of billions of dollars in overseas Chinese loans will be due, and many of China's foreign partners won't be able to pay them back. It is hard to see how a country facing so many challenges could long sustain its own international order, especially in the face of determined opposition from the world's wealthiest countries.

Yet it is also far from guaranteed that the U.S.-led democratic order will hold together. The United States could suffer a constitutional crisis in the 2024 presidential election and collapse into civil strife. Even if that doesn't happen, the United States and its allies might be rent by their own divides. The democratic world is suffering its greatest crisis of confidence and unity since the 1930s. Nationalism, populism, and opposition to globalism are rising, making collective action difficult. The East Asian democracies have ongoing territorial disputes with one another. Many Europeans view China as more of an economic opportunity than a strategic threat and seriously doubt the United States' reliability as an ally, having endured four years of tariffs and scorn from President Donald Trump, who could soon be back in power. Europeans also hold different views from Americans on data security and privacy, and European govern-

ments fear U.S. technology dominance almost as much as they do Chinese digital hegemony. India may not be ready to abandon its traditional policy of nonalignment and back a democratic order, especially when it is becoming more repressive at home, and an order built around democracy will struggle to form productive partnerships with autocracies that would be important partners in any alliance against China, such as Singapore and Vietnam. Fear of China is a powerful force, but it might not be potent enough to paper over the many cracks that exist within the emerging anti-Chinese coalition.

If that coalition fails to solidify its international order, then the world will steadily slide back into anarchy, a struggle among rogue powers and regional blocs in which the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must. Some scholars assume—or hope—that an unordered world will sort itself out on its own, that great powers will carve out stable spheres of influence and avoid conflict or that the spread of international commerce and enlightened ideas will naturally maintain global peace and prosperity. But peace and prosperity are unnatural. When achieved, they are the result of sustained cooperation among great powers—that is, of an international order.

DOUBLING DOWN ON DEMOCRACY

History shows that eras of fluid multipolarity typically end in disaster, regardless of the bright ideas or advanced technologies circulating at the time. The late eighteenth century witnessed the pinnacle of the Enlightenment in Europe, before the continent descended into the hell of the Napoleonic Wars. At the start of the twentieth century, the world's sharpest minds predicted an end to great-power conflict as railways, telegraph cables, and steamships linked countries closer together. The worst war in history up to that point quickly followed. The sad and paradoxical reality is that international orders are vital to avert chaos, yet they typically emerge only during periods of great-power rivalry. Competing with China will be fraught with risk for the United States and its allies, but it might be the only way to avoid even greater dangers.

To build a better future, the United States and its allies will need to take a more enlightened view of their interests than they did even during the Cold War. Back then, their economic interests dovetailed nicely with their geopolitical interests. Simple greed, if nothing else, could compel capitalist states to band together to protect private property

against a communist onslaught. Now, however, the choice is not so simple, because standing up to China will entail significant economic costs, especially in the short term. Those costs might pale in comparison to the long-term costs of business as usual with Beijing—Chinese espionage has been estimated to deprive the United States alone of somewhere between $200 billion and $600 billion annually—to say nothing of the moral quandaries and geopolitical risks of cooperating with a brutal totalitarian regime with revanchist ambitions. Yet the ability to make such an enlightened calculation in favor of confronting China may be beyond the capacities of any nation, especially ones as polarized as the United States and many of its democratic allies.

If there is any hope, it lies in a renewed commitment to democratic values. The United States and its allies share a common aspiration for an international order based on democratic principles and enshrined in international agreements and laws. The core of such an order is being forged in the crucible of competition with China and could be built out into the most enlightened order the world has ever seen—a genuine free world. But to get there, the United States and its allies will have to embrace competition with China and march forward together through another long twilight struggle.

Before the Next Shock

How America Can Build a More Adaptive Global Economy

Robert B. Zoellick

During the coming decade, the world economy will confront a crisis. This forecast may sound rash, but the past half century revealed that disasters occur regularly. In recent times, policymakers have faced not just the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic trauma but also various eurozone crises. These dramas followed the global financial crisis of 2008 and the consequent recession, which were in turn preceded by the shock of 9/11. Before the terrorist attacks of that day, the world had coped with the Internet boom and bust at the turn of the millennium; the exchange-rate and debt travails of Russia, East Asia, and Latin America in the late 1990s; painful economic adjustments at the end of the Cold War; developing-country defaults in the 1980s following the petrodollar lending splurge of the 1970s; and stagflation. Crises have been the historical norm, not the exception.

The next exigency could stem from many sources. Financial markets may stumble during the transition from an era of government spending and debt, backed by a flood of monetary liquidity, to a period of less fiscal largess and higher interest rates. Interactions among wildlife, livestock, other domestic animals, and humans will probably result in the spread of more zoonotic viruses. Someday, a cyberattack will shut down critical infrastructure. Disruptive technologies are vying to transform traditional business models through new platforms and decentralized systems. The world is in the early stages of a vast and likely discontinuous energy transition that will match the Industrial Revolution in its hard-to-anticipate effects. The risk of war looms. Even old-fashioned natural disasters may destabilize societies.

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Whatever its origins, the next crisis will strike an economic system already under strain. People around the world are frustrated and restless. Leaders everywhere, attentive to domestic politics, are turning toward national industrial policies and hardening their borders. Geopolitical competition has bred mistrust among major economies, and the world seems to be fragmenting into regions pulled by economic gravity toward local poles of power.

The legacy institutions of earlier economic orders are struggling to adjust to these changes. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have to add climate and pandemic policies to their development missions. The World Trade Organization has been unable to modernize its rules through negotiations, and the United States has paralyzed the WTO dispute-settlement system by blocking appointees to appeals panels.

Today's fashion demands junking the old. It yearns for big, bold change. In the United States, the Biden administration decided the moment was ripe for a new New Deal. Internationally, the cognoscenti deposed the old "Washington consensus" in favor of a new geoeconomics. Planners at the United Nations, the RAND Corporation, and the World Economic Forum have heralded new economic orders.

But would-be architects of fresh designs have a mistaken understanding of both economic behavior and effective policymaking. Economic systems develop through constant change, often precipitated by unpredictable and sporadic events. They are more likely to resemble evolutionary and ever-mutating processes than planned orders guided by governments. Policymakers should therefore adapt continually adjusting systems to new circumstances instead of inventing novel structures designed to suit the latest theories.

The economic diplomacy of the 2020s should aim to achieve resilience and foster adaptation. These concepts diverge from the geopolitical ideal of stability and balance, as well as from the hopeful vision of refashioning the world in an ideal image. Economic diplomacy should accept the reality of perpetual dynamism, which differs from the expectation of perpetual conflict and the dream of perpetual peace.

U.S. economic statecraft needs to guide the principal multilateral economic institutions—the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO—to adapt to a diverse mix of actors, states, and international challenges. The multilateral method of the 2020s must operate across a variety of public and private networks: regional, subnational, national, transnational, and

global. Ironically, even though the United States led the creation of the major international organizations, Washington rarely reflects on their practical uses and devotes little effort to their renewal. They have persevered through past disasters, adjusting their mandates to help manage whatever crises have arisen. They have fostered prosperity for decades, and if properly revived, they can continue to do so for decades to come.

EVOLUTIONARY ECONOMICS

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, political economists such as Thorstein Veblen and Joseph Schumpeter argued that economic behavior reflects complex motivations, emotions, events, cultures, histories, and technological changes. They believed that an evolutionary worldview based on biological science would help people better understand the resulting economic activity, including periodic shocks, crises, and revolutions in entrepreneurship. Schumpeter argued that the process led to "creative destruction," in which new economic innovations and organizations replace older, outdated ones.

Instead, academic economists turned to mathematical models to translate behavior into systems of equations that produce equilibriums. Shocks—such as those that led to the Great Depression—might occur, but economists focused on intervening to restore stability. Proponents of "rational expectations" and "efficient markets" took the idea of rational equilibriums to its logical conclusion, arguing that although individuals might act irrationally, the market, in aggregate, would behave as if everyone were rational. Socialists, in turn, tried instead to direct markets through government planning and state ownership.

Yet during the 1970s, even as theories of rational and efficient markets were winning adherents, Charles Kindleberger, an economic historian, offered a counterpoint. Kindleberger contended that irrational behavior was an important feature of economic systems and that crises occurred with "biologic regularity." He complemented this insight with the study of international interdependence and institutional behavior, drawing on his practical experience working on the Marshall Plan. That combination led Kindleberger to argue that the world needed systemic leadership that would press for cooperative solutions to achieve global public goods, especially during crises. The task of the leading economic power, according to Kindleberger, was to create and adapt to changing circumstances international regimes that would encourage and execute such adjustments. He syn-

Adrift: waiting to enter the port of Los Angeles, October 2021

ERIN SCHAFF / THE NEW YORK TIMES

thesized an evolutionary economic outlook with ideas about how governments could act in concert to counter cross-border economic collapses. One of Kindleberger's students, Robert Shiller, a winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics and the author of *Irrational Exuberance*, has researched behavioral economics, a psychological branch of biological thinking. Indeed, Shiller's recent work draws from epidemiology to study the contagion effects of economic events—a fitting complement to thinking about pandemics.

The application of evolutionary economics should not be an excuse for policy complacency. Nor should it suggest a revival of social Darwinism. To the contrary, policymakers need to adapt systems and institutions to changes and disruptions. But rather than replace the paradigms of the prior order, they must make continual functional fixes that help both national and transnational actors handle shocks and adjust.

MISREADING HISTORY

The penchant for devising new international economic orders traces to Bretton Woods folklore. According to the appealing tale, a farsighted band of Americans, with some input from poorer but learned Britons, recognized the failures of the international economic system after World War I, in particular the Great Depression. In 1944, even as World War II still raged, the Bretton Woods visionaries laid the institutional foun-

dations for a new international economic architecture. They established the IMF and the World Bank (officially, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) to manage exchange rates, support payment and capital flows, finance reconstruction, and encourage investment for development. They drew up plans for an international trade organization to facilitate commerce, but the negotiations collapsed over differences concerning the scope of regulations and controls.

The economic statesmen involved deserve respect. In facing vexing problems, they tried to learn from past mistakes. They sought to build the institutional pillars for a prosperous, peaceful international economy. They wanted to avoid the divisive and ultimately destructive policies of blocs and autarky.

Nevertheless—as the economist Benn Steil, a skillful historian of Bretton Woods, has pointed out—the architects of the conference drafted plans based on faulty assumptions. They supposed that the United States and the Soviet Union would cooperate, that Germany would be "pastoralized" after its economic dismantlement, that the British Empire would safely recede, and that the IMF's modest balance-of-payments assistance would rebuild global trade. By 1947, each of those assumptions had proved incorrect. As a result, Europe faced economic and political collapse, and the world economy remained moribund.

Within a few years of the conference, another group of economic leaders, led by U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Clayton, had to devise a new approach. They produced the Marshall Plan, encouraged the integration of Western European economies (including a new Federal Republic of Germany), and negotiated the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to lower tariffs and foster common rules. The Marshall Plan enabled the Western European countries to rebuild their economies in cooperation with one another. The reduction in trade barriers led to global opportunities for growth and export-led development.

BENDING, NOT BREAKING

Yet the post–World War II economic system had to keep changing. The fixed exchange rates of Bretton Woods lasted until 1971, when the United States eliminated the dollar-gold link. For a few years, the major economies tried to reestablish fixed exchange rates at different levels. But the search for a structured order of currencies gave way to another system, this time of flexible, floating exchange rates.

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The transition to floating rates was long and difficult, especially because sharp changes in monetary and energy policies triggered vast shifts of capital. France and Germany, for different reasons, eventually decided to return to fixed exchange rates and then, later, to devise a shared currency as part of their drive to unite Europe. Many emerging markets suffered exchange-rate and debt crises. Some developing countries wanted to avoid currency and price volatility, so they built up big dollar reserves and resorted to "dirty floats," allowing their currencies to fluctuate, but only within a certain range. But overall, flexible exchange rates freed governments to determine national macroeconomic policies without the fixed constraint of protecting the value of their currencies; they relied instead on markets to adjust each currency's relative price.

To avoid political pressures for trade protection, the United States decided in the second half of the 1980s to foster cooperation among the finance ministers and central bankers of the G-7 countries to manage imbalances in trade flows and between exchange rates. As developing economies became more important and the G-7 lost influence, the G-20 became a more useful forum. For example, the 2009 G-20 summit, in London, organized a timely fiscal and financial regulatory response to the global financial crisis. Now, the influence of the G-20 has faded because of its size, differences among the parties, and bureaucratization.

The IMF and the World Bank adapted to meet changed circumstances, as well. The IMF focused on macroeconomic reforms—fiscal and monetary policies—and became the financial firefighter for economies facing balance-of-payments and debt crises. It branched out into structural economic reforms, especially for states in transition to market economies. The IMF also served as an expert partner for the G-7 and, later, the G-20 in their efforts to cooperate. Eventually, the IMF assumed the role—along with the Financial Stability Board, which was formed in 2009—of monitoring and advising on the strength of financial institutions.

The World Bank, in turn, adjusted to changes in development experience and thinking. At first, it largely existed to provide capital for reconstruction in the postwar period in Europe and Japan, as well as for infrastructure in developing countries. But over time, it shifted to helping fund antipoverty programs, advising on structural reforms, offering crisis support and debt restructuring, promoting private-sector development, providing public goods, assisting fragile and insecure states, supporting the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, and sharing experience

with middle-income economies. The World Bank then even shifted back to infrastructure development through new financing vehicles.

The GATT grew from 23 members to 164. The participants negotiated eight trade rounds, cutting tariffs, expanding the topics covered, and adding rules. The Uruguay Round, completed in 1994, transformed the GATT into the WTO, which established a disciplined dispute-settlement system and, supposedly, an ongoing agenda of negotiations. The WTO offers the principal example of a multilateral body that has agreed-on rules, backed by a process to settle disputes. The system preserves members' sovereign rights to reject WTO decisions while authorizing counterparties to negotiate compensation or withdraw comparable trade benefits. The rules, backed by a neutral tribunal, have encouraged economies to lower barriers to trade.

Over the course of the 78 years since the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions, would-be architects have regularly proffered new international economic orders. Practical realities, however, have resulted in experiences that look more like those of the leaders of 1947—who recognized that the Bretton Woods system was not working as hoped. As the global economic system evolved, including through shocks and crises, policymakers experimented. Rather than search for a new constructed stability, pragmatic officials accepted that they had to continually navigate through dynamic conditions. The legacy institutions have not been the principal problem; people can adapt them to new needs. The system ossifies when leaders fail to adjust to the next phase of uncertainty.

AMERICAN INNOVATION

The most successful U.S. leaders anticipated—or at least recognized—shifting challenges. They adapted existing networks and institutions, or supplemented them with new ones, to solve novel problems. Leadership, they discovered, often required a mix of using old systems in new ways and devising innovative functional fixes. Schumpeter might have called it "the creative destruction of multilateralism."

Policymakers today can mine the U.S. experience for lessons about how to build and maintain successful adaptive systems. The first, and most important, lesson is that systems need the flexibility to adjust to changes in technology, finance, and business models. Private sectors are continually innovating. Entrepreneurs' experiments spark transformations. But disruptions also create costly adjustments.

Ironically, many U.S. foreign policy leaders have overlooked the United States' innovative strengths. In the 1970s, President Richard Nixon and his adviser Henry Kissinger mapped out a new multilateralism to help manage what they perceived as the United States' economic decline. Nixon designed his dramatic economic moves of August 1971, when he abandoned the dollar-gold link, to rebalance international economic responsibilities, just as the Nixon Doctrine called for sharing the burdens of security more equally. But in the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz had a more optimistic outlook about the U.S. economy's ability to renew itself. Accordingly, in the aftermath of Nixon's break with the fixed exchange rate tied to gold, Shultz favored flexible exchange rates instead of resetting currency prices at new levels. He believed markets had to be free to adjust.

Whatever its origins, the next crisis will strike an economic system already under strain.

Adaptive systems also recognize power shifts, whether driven by economics, technologies, demographics, or military strength. After World War II, the United States promoted recoveries in Europe and Japan. During the 1970s and 1980s, U.S. policy had to adapt to the larger size and influence of both. In the 1980s and 1990s, the United States began to recognize the continental opportunities—and risks—of changes in Mexico. Working with Canada, Washington created a new North American partnership, with the North American Free Trade Agreement as the cornerstone.

In recent decades, the United States has had to adapt to the growing influence—and problems—of emerging markets. China's rising power has become Washington's greatest external preoccupation, although the United States has yet to develop a clear concept of a system that can peacefully accommodate both countries. Americans recognize that India will be a place of power in the years ahead, but they have been slow to appreciate the changing economic patterns across Southeast Asia. The demographics of Africa loom over the future.

The final lesson from the U.S. experience is that successful adaptive systems have to be grounded in political support at home. From 1947 until today, presidents have kept a close eye on public support and built partnerships with Congress as they have developed foreign policies. Polls suggest that Americans recognize the value of global

interconnections, but public backing for international commitments ebbs and flows. Dramatic events can seize voters' attention, but their focus eventually turns to other issues. Successful political leadership has helped citizens perceive that domestic and international interests are different sides of the same coin. The U.S. government needs to help its citizens adapt to change without stifling innovation.

ANTICIPATION AND ADAPTATION

Policymakers find it hard to predict events, but they can and should anticipate developments. They should consider a number of evolving features of today's global economy. First, the world is in the midst of a historic fiscal-monetary experiment. Since the global financial crisis, major central banks have vastly expanded money and credit. In response to the pandemic, major economies, especially in the developed world, have spent trillions of dollars while relying on monetary policies to buy even more government securities. Even without hazarding judgments about future inflation, pockets of excess, balance-sheet and macroeconomic risks, and the standing of the U.S. dollar, policymakers need to prepare for large, sharp shifts in expectations about economic conditions, in the valuations of assets, and in financial flows across countries and markets.

The finance ministers and central bankers of major economies need a small, informal forum where they can regularly monitor macroeconomic and financial conditions, share perspectives, and, when necessary, act in concert. To avoid jousts over leadership, the IMF could organize quarterly sessions among the principal actors in the global financial system, those whose currencies are in the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), an international reserve asset created by the IMF: China, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the eurozone countries (and the European Central Bank). When the next crisis hits, these economies will need to cooperate.

The IMF, as host and neutral ground, should offer independent outlooks. The managing director of the IMF could serve as an economic diplomat, quietly suggesting cooperative steps. The G-7, the G-20, and the wider IMF membership would continue their work, contributing to and expanding the reach of the core SDR group.

Such a forum might also build habits of cooperation and a sense of shared responsibility. That ethos could help these actors devise approaches to problems such as developing countries' debts. Many

poorer economies now rely on Beijing as their lender of first resort, but China's lack of debt transparency inhibits improvements for all parties, including China itself. As the reserve-currency countries experiment with digital currencies and payment systems, the group could also consider questions of interoperability, confidence, and security. Although political constraints may limit or preclude cooperation, this forum could at least identify options for constructive action.

Economic stability isn't threatened just by fiscal policy and markets. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, external, noneconomic forces, such as diseases, can quickly create global economic crises, and the world is still learning how to prevent, recognize, and respond to dangerous viruses and other risks to biological security. The frequency and costs of viral disease outbreaks have been increasing as interactions among wildlife, livestock, other domestic animals, and people have expanded rapidly. Transportation networks accelerate global transmission. South Asia, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa are especially intense hot spots. The slow pace of vaccination in developing countries creates opportunities for more variants, which might then roll across the world in ruinous waves. The economic effects of disease have hit the poorest people the hardest.

The UN agencies charged with strengthening the provision of global public goods—such as the World Health Organization (WHO)—do not have the resources or the authority to match their mandates. The nation-states that compose their governing boards make (or veto) the real decisions. Each body has its own peculiar political culture. The multilateral economic institutions should add their expertise, resources, and convening power to assist these agencies. Even though most of the same governments participate in the United Nations and the multilateral economic organizations, each body draws from different ministries, power centers, and advocates.

For example, as the finance ministries of the world struggled with the global financial crisis in 2008, food prices surged in developing countries. The World Bank customized support for the UN humanitarian agencies that handle food and agriculture and worked with the WTO and the G-20 to resist export bans and boost transparency in order to avoid panic and hoarding. When the economist Chad Bown reviewed the transparency initiative over a decade later, he concluded that the better information networks were still helping counter price spikes and export controls that could exacerbate food price problems.

COVID-19 has demonstrated that the WHO does not have the field capacity to counter a global pandemic. In the first decade of this century, the organization supported the creation of GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance—a public-private partnership with the Gates Foundation, UNICEF, pharmaceutical companies, and the World Bank that helps develop vaccines in poor countries. COVAX, GAVI's initiative to fight COVID-19, has stumbled, but so have many national projects. The UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Export-Import Bank adapted rapidly to coordinate vaccine providers, encourage African production of vaccines, build on national delivery systems, and find fast finance.

The world economy operates more like an evolutionary organism than a rational model.

A new international biological security agreement could enhance this institutional and financial cooperation. Both health and veterinary authorities need to gather and share better and more timely information about zoonotic viruses. Research funding could enable health authorities to map the DNA sequences of potentially dangerous diseases. The World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development should work with the WHO to ensure strong connections all along the vaccine delivery chain, especially through the health-care systems of poor countries. The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, which the United States devised to suppress the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa almost 20 years ago, offers an obvious but inexplicably untapped model.

But a disease outbreak is just one way that nature could help spark an economic shock. Climate change is prompting new environmental and carbon policies that will change energy markets and costs during a lengthy era of transition away from fossil fuels. Huge structural shifts in energy sources, production, transmission, and pricing will create disconnects. Some major developing economies, already struggling with COVID-19, will object adamantly to paying for the transition. The world economy will face sizable adaptation costs, as well.

The World Bank raised money for the new Climate Investment Funds in 2008. The CIF experimented with climate initiatives for developing countries in technologies, resilience, energy access, and forestation. The original $8.5 billion leveraged total investments of roughly $70 billion. As a practical matter, developed-country donors were willing to entrust the World Bank and its regional counterparts

with innovative trust funds (and evaluation processes), but they were not ready to just write checks to developing countries.

The UN pressed for its own funding arm, leading to the creation of the Green Climate Fund. Over the course of a decade, the GCF has struggled to gain scale and confidence. Meanwhile, the World Bank's CIF has been sidelined. Developing countries are complaining that higher-income states are not fulfilling their pledges to help fund the transition to low- or no-carbon energy. The United States and its partners need practical adaptations to overcome this impasse; they should be building on a successful record.

The new International Sustainability Standards Board, created by the International Financial Reporting Standards Foundation, can help. It will draft climate disclosure criteria that should offer investors in 130 countries reliable, comparative environmental data. Investors, customers, and regulators are pressing companies to detail carbon net-zero commitments and energy transition plans. Almost 100 financial supervisors and the IMF are incorporating climate risks in their financial assessments of banks, other lenders, and countries. Taken together, these developments are creating the data infrastructure needed for carbon credit markets. The World Bank should connect development projects to institutional investors through new, large, liquid carbon finance markets, where carbon financial products will be tracked and traded like other commodities.

Energy markets are not the only sector that could disrupt the global economy or that would benefit from new monitoring and oversight. In the coming years, digital and data transfers will increasingly underpin the world economy. Even before the pandemic, growth in the trade of manufactured goods had slowed notably, but trade in services had jumped. Digital connectivity is enabling even more wide-ranging and numerous gains in services, and the pandemic economy has accelerated this trend. But the rules and standards for exchanges of data and digital products are ill defined. Conflicts will become more common. Cyberattacks will shut down vital information systems.

The United States has traditionally led in encouraging new international rules and standards, in part because U.S. firms have been in the forefront of cutting-edge activities. But today, economic and technological processes race ahead with little multilateral guidance. Washington should be preparing new rules for the digital trade, working first with like-minded partners. The rules should ease the transfer of

digital services and data across borders, while giving countries the freedom to judge their own needs for security, safety, and privacy.

But implementing these new, U.S.-made rules across the world will prove tricky. The United States is continuously clashing with the planet's second-largest economy: China. Both have been undermining the international economic system that enabled the former's unparalleled power and the latter's historic rise. Both have shown little inclination to sponsor systemic reforms.

Washington will need to decide whether it can conceive of working practically with Beijing on topics of mutual interest. At times, U.S. policy now attempts to limit, contain, decouple the U.S. economy from, or penalize China's economy. On other occasions, Washington demands that China purchase more U.S. exports and treat U.S. companies better—steps that would further integration. Sometimes, the United States wants China to adhere to rules, whether international or Washington's, but other times, the United States acts as if China is too big, bullying, or untrustworthy to function reliably within a system of rules at all. U.S. policies also have to account for the preferences of U.S. allies and partners, who cannot envisage containment of, or a full decoupling from, China.

When Kindleberger analyzed the causes of the Great Depression, he pointed to the absence of a leading country that would act on the basis of systemic as well as national interests. In the 1930s, the United Kingdom had the experience but no longer the capacity to lead; the United States had the potential but not the disposition or experience. Kindleberger also warned that an abdication of or conflict over leadership would lead to stalemate and economic hardship. He would have eyed today's U.S.-Chinese tensions with worry.

The United States will probably find its way toward a mixed approach with China: some combination of exclusion, participation, and perhaps even cooperation. In doing so, the United States will need to decide whether, as a general matter, it prefers to explore adaptive methods with China or to resist Chinese participation. The world economy is unlikely to evolve soundly and resiliently if the two biggest economies are in conflict.

The plight of the WTO typifies the challenge of adapting multilateral institutions to changing circumstances in an era when national governments find political posturing more tempting than negotiating useful, albeit imperfect, cooperative regimes. Globalization's op-

ponents have objected to the WTO's rules even as they have demanded new international rules for their favored causes. Others have insisted that WTO rules should account for their preferences—with or without a negotiating process. Even though the United States has won the vast majority of the WTO cases it has brought—and used the leverage of litigation to gain results in other situations—some U.S. interests have objected to losing any cases at all. The U.S. government has blamed the WTO's Appellate Body for adverse rulings and paralyzed the system by blocking appointments. So far, the Biden administration has joined the chorus complaining about the WTO instead of working to improve the organization.

AVOIDING EXTINCTION

The forces of globalization have not retreated. Consider the challenges of climate change, biological security, migration, and financial and data flows. But the governance of globalization has been fraying and fragmenting, and people across the world appear disconnected. These conditions explain the appeal of creating new, sweeping economic systems. But they won't work.

Since the Great Depression, U.S. economic diplomacy has been most successful when officials have combined a sense of direction about an open, cooperative, mutually beneficial international economic system with a spirit of problem solving. Americans have adapted to a variety of forces and events through pragmatic adjustments. They have recognized implicitly that the world economy operates more like an evolutionary organism than a rational model, whether purely capitalist or socialist. The goal has been to foster economic resilience.

Resilient systems do not avoid risks; indeed, risk-taking produces economic progress. The principal aim of a resilient, adaptive system is to prevent tipping points or downward spirals that could lead to its extinction. Multilateral economic institutions and regimes can help national governments and private participants withstand blows and adapt. They can forecast developments, encourage cooperation, provide buffers, recommend redundancies, mobilize resources, offer expertise and continuous learning, encourage negotiations, and help manage conflicts. But they adapt incrementally and need the support of their member governments. Multilateral institutions should now extend their economic and development missions to encompass transnational challenges in partnership with specialized UN agencies for

health, the environment, migration and refugees, and food and agriculture. They also can contribute to the economic, governance, and legal foundations for security in states and regions torn by conflict.

As the economist Markus Brunnermeier has observed, resilient and adaptive economic systems are natural complements to free and open societies. Such systems flourish with transparency, open information, and solutions achieved through the combined efforts of many private and independent actors. Free-flowing information creates feedback loops that speed adjustment. Authoritarian countries, by contrast, deal with crises by seeking to suppress disruptions. They opt for controls, as Beijing has done with COVID-19. Open societies and economic systems appear shaky when shocked but are more likely to rebound through adaptations. The United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union developed world-class vaccines and treatments; they are likely to weather future pandemic waves through a combination of high-quality vaccines, natural immunity, and treatments. China will have to choose between strict controls and adapting to virus waves that must pass through its population. An overreliance on suppression will lead to China's isolation.

The United States has been most successful when it has mobilized international coalitions that enabled other participants to pursue both national and systemic interests with Washington. The country will not become safer by retreating behind walls and borders, nor will it succeed by tearing down the existing order and pursuing chimeras. Washington needs to rediscover its ability to adapt pragmatically to dynamic conditions. As Helmut Schmidt, the West German chancellor, said in the late 1970s, "Those who have visions should see a doctor."

Revenge of the Patriarchs

Why Autocrats Fear Women

Erica Chenoweth and Zoe Marks

The pantheon of autocratic leaders includes a great many sexists, from Napoléon Bonaparte, who decriminalized the murder of unfaithful wives, to Benito Mussolini, who claimed that women "never created anything." And while the twentieth century saw improvements in women's equality in most parts of the world, the twenty-first is demonstrating that misogyny and authoritarianism are not just common comorbidities but mutually reinforcing ills. Throughout the last century, women's movements won the right to vote for women; expanded women's access to reproductive health care, education, and economic opportunity; and began to enshrine gender equality in domestic and international law—victories that corresponded with unprecedented waves of democratization in the postwar period. Yet in recent years, authoritarian leaders have launched a simultaneous assault on women's rights and democracy that threatens to roll back decades of progress on both fronts.

The patriarchal backlash has played out across the full spectrum of authoritarian regimes, from totalitarian dictatorships to party-led autocracies to illiberal democracies headed by aspiring strongmen. In China, Xi Jinping has crushed feminist movements, silenced women who have accused powerful men of sexual assault, and excluded women from the Politburo's powerful Standing Committee. In Russia, Vladimir Putin is rolling back reproductive rights and promoting traditional gender roles that limit women's participation in public life. In North Korea, Kim Jong Un has spurred women to seek refuge abroad at roughly three

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times the rate of men, and in Egypt, President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi recently introduced a bill reasserting men's paternity rights, their right to practice polygamy, and their right to influence whom their female relatives marry. In Saudi Arabia, women still cannot marry or obtain health care without a man's approval. And in Afghanistan, the Taliban's victory has erased 20 years of progress on women's access to education and representation in public office and the workforce.

The wave of patriarchal authoritarianism is also pushing some established democracies in an illiberal direction. Countries with authoritarian-leaning leaders, such as Brazil, Hungary, and Poland, have seen the rise of far-right movements that promote traditional gender roles as patriotic while railing against "gender ideology"—a boogeyman term that Human Rights Watch describes as meaning "nothing and everything." Even the United States has experienced a slowdown in progress toward gender equity and a rollback of reproductive rights, which had been improving since the 1970s. During his presidency, Donald Trump worked with antifeminist stalwarts, including Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, to halt the expansion of women's rights around the world. And despite the Biden administration's commitment to gender equity at the national level, Republican-controlled states are attempting to reverse the constitutional right to abortion, which is now more vulnerable than it has been in decades.

Not surprisingly, women's political and economic empowerment is now stalling or declining around the world. According to Georgetown University's Women, Peace, and Security Index, the implementation of gender equality laws has slowed in recent years, as have gains in women's educational attainment and representation in national parliaments. At the same time, intimate partner violence has increased, and Honduras, Mexico, and Turkey have seen significant increases in femicide. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these trends worldwide, forcing millions of women to leave the workforce and take on additional unpaid care, restricting their access to health care and education, and limiting their options for escaping abuse.

The assault on women's rights has coincided with a broader assault on democracy. According to Freedom House and the Varieties of Democracy Project at the University of Gothenburg, the last 15 years have seen a sustained authoritarian resurgence. Relatively new democracies, such as Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland, and Turkey, have slid back into autocracy or are trending in that direction. Countries

On the frontlines: protesting Turkey's gender policies in Istanbul, July 2021

that were considered partially authoritarian a decade ago, such as Russia, have become full-fledged autocracies. And in some of the world's oldest democracies—France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States—antidemocratic sentiment is rising in established political parties.

It is not a coincidence that women's equality is being rolled back at the same time that authoritarianism is on the rise. Political scientists have long noted that women's civil rights and democracy go hand in hand, but they have been slower to recognize that the former is a precondition for the latter. Aspiring autocrats and patriarchal authoritarians have good reason to fear women's political participation: when women participate in mass movements, those movements are both more likely to succeed and more likely to lead to more egalitarian democracy. In other words, fully free, politically active women are a threat to authoritarian and authoritarian-leaning leaders—and so those leaders have a strategic reason to be sexist.

Understanding the relationship between sexism and democratic backsliding is vital for those who wish to fight back against both. Established autocrats and right-wing nationalist leaders in contested democracies are united in their use of hierarchical gender relations to shore up nationalist, top-down, male-dominated rule. Having long

fought against social hierarchies that consolidate power in the hands of the few, feminist movements are a powerful weapon against authoritarianism. Those who wish to reverse the global democratic decline cannot afford to ignore them.

WOMEN ON THE FRONTLINES

Scholars of democracy have often framed women's empowerment as an outcome of democratization or even a function of modernization and economic development. Yet women demanded inclusion and fought for their own representation and interests through contentious suffrage movements and rights campaigns that ultimately strengthened democracy in general. The feminist project remains unfinished, and the expansion of women's rights that occurred over the last hundred-plus years has not been shared equally among women. As intersectional and anticolonial feminists have long argued, the greatest feminist gains have accrued to elite women, often white and Western ones. Yet women's political activism has clearly expanded and fortified democracy—a fact that autocrats and illiberal democrats intuitively understand and that explains their fear of women's empowerment.

In the past seven decades, women's demands for political and economic inclusion have helped catalyze democratic transitions, especially when those women were on the frontlines of mass movements. Democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Southeast Asia during the 1980s and 1990s were driven in part by mass popular movements in which women played key roles. Our research shows that all the major resistance movements during the postwar period—those seeking to topple national governments or to win national independence—featured women in support roles, such as providing food, shelter, intelligence, funds, or other supplies. But these movements differed in the degree to which they had women as frontline participants—those who took part directly in demonstrations, confrontations with authorities, strikes, boycotts, and other forms of noncooperation. Some, such as Brazil's pro-democracy movement in the mid-1980s, featured extensive women's participation: at least half of the frontline participants were women. Others, such as the 2006 uprising against the Nepalese monarchy, featured more modest frontline participation of women. Only one nonviolent campaign during this period seems to have excluded women altogether: the civilian uprising that ousted Mahendra Chaudhry from power in Fiji in 2000.

In the first half of the twentieth century, women played active roles in anticolonial liberation struggles across Africa and in leftist revolutions in Europe and Latin America. Later, pro-democracy movements in Myanmar and the Philippines saw nuns positioning their bodies between members of the security forces and civilian activists. During the first intifada, Palestinian women played a key role in the nonviolent resistance against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, organizing strikes, protests, and dialogues alongside Israeli women. In the United States, Black women have launched and continue to lead the Black Lives Matter movement, which is now a global phenomenon. Their organizing echoes the activism of forebears such as Ella Baker, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and other Black American women who planned, mobilized, and coordinated key aspects of the U.S. civil rights movement. Two women revolutionaries, Wided Bouchamaoui and Tawakkol Karman, helped lead the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Yemen, respectively, later winning the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to bring about peaceful democratic transitions through nonviolent resistance, coalition building, and negotiation. Millions more like them have worked to sustain movements against some of the world's most repressive dictatorships, from tea sellers and singers in Sudan to grandmothers in Algeria to sisters and wives in Chile demanding the return of their disappeared loved ones outside Augusto Pinochet's presidential palace.

It turns out that frontline participation by women is a significant advantage, both in terms of a movement's immediate success and in terms of securing longer-term democratic change. Mass movements in which women participated extensively on the frontlines have been much more likely to succeed than campaigns that marginalized or excluded women. Women have been much more likely to participate in nonviolent mass movements than in violent ones, and they have participated in much greater numbers in nonviolent than in violent campaigns. To explain why women's frontline participation increases the chances that a movement will succeed, therefore, one must first understand what makes nonviolent movements fail or succeed.

Generally, movements seeking to topple autocratic regimes or win national independence are more likely to prevail when they mobilize large numbers of people; shift the loyalties of at least some the regime's pillars of support; use creative tactics, such as rolling strikes, in addition to street protests; and maintain discipline and

resilience in the face of state repression and countermobilization by the regime's supporters. Large-scale participation by women helps movements achieve all these things.

On the first point, power in numbers, the advantage of women's participation is obvious. Movements that exclude or sideline women reduce their potential pool of participants by at least half. Resistance movements must achieve broad-based support to be perceived as legitimate. And the larger the mobilization, the more likely the movement is to disrupt the status quo. General strikes and other mass actions can bring a city, state, or country to a standstill, imposing immediate economic and political costs on a regime. Mass mobilization can also generate a sense of inevitability that persuades holdouts and fence sitters to join the resistance. People want to join the winning team, and when there are large numbers of diverse participants, that can help encourage tacit or overt support from political and business elites and members of security forces.

Second, popular movements improve their chances of success when they persuade or coerce their opponents to defect. In research on public attitudes toward armed groups, scholars have found that female fighters increase the legitimacy of their movements in the eyes of observers. The same is likely true for nonviolent mass uprisings. Significant participation by women and other diverse actors also increases the social, moral, and financial capital that a movement can use to erode its opponent's support system. When security forces, business elites, civil servants, state media, organized labor, foreign donors, or other supporters or enablers of a regime begin to question the status quo, they signal to others that it may be possible to defy that regime. For example, during the People Power Revolution in the Philippines in 1986, President Ferdinand Marcos ordered the security forces to attack large crowds of demonstrators who were demanding his ouster. But nuns who were participating in the protests put themselves between the tanks and other demonstrators. The security forces could not bring themselves to follow through with the assault, averting a massacre that could have altered the course of the revolution. High-level defections followed, and Marcos eventually fled the country, leading to a democratic transition.

A third way women's participation makes mass movements more effective is by expanding the range of tactics and modes of protest available to them. Everywhere it has been studied, diversity has been

found to improve teamwork, innovation, and performance, and mass movements are no exception. In particular, diversity enhances creativity and collaboration, both of which help movements tap into broader information networks and maintain momentum in the face of state crackdowns. Women's participation also makes possible culturally gendered tactics, such as marching in full beauty queen regalia, as women did in Myanmar's pro-democracy protests in 2021; cooking food at the frontlines of demonstrations, as women did during an uprising of farmers in 2020 and 2021 in India; or protesting naked, as women in Kenya, Nigeria, and many other countries have done in order to stigmatize or disarm their opponents. Some protest movements have relied on social shaming. For example, during anti-government protests in Algeria in 2019, grandmothers told riot police to go home, threatening to report the officers' bad behavior to their mothers. In Sudan that same year, a women's Facebook group named and shamed plainclothes policemen: its members outed their own brothers, cousins, and sons as members of the shadowy militias that were trying to terrorize the opposition into submission.

Misogyny and authoritarianism are not just common comorbidities but mutually reinforcing ills.

Women have also developed other forms of gendered noncooperation that can benefit mass movements. Consider the origins of the term "boycott." In the late nineteenth century, women cooks, maids, and laundresses in County Mayo, Ireland, refused to provide services and labor to an absentee British landlord named Captain Charles Boycott. They encouraged others to join them, making it impossible for Boycott to remain in Ireland and inspiring a new name for their tactic. Women have pioneered other forms of social noncooperation, as well. Although the antiwar sex strike in *Lysistrata* was fictional, it is likely that Aristophanes had some historical precedent in mind when he wrote the comedic play. Women activists have organized sex strikes over the millennia: Iroquois women used this method, among others, to secure a veto over war-making decisions in the seventeenth century; Liberian women used it to demand an end to civil war in the early years of this century; Colombian women used it to urge an end to gang violence; and on and on.

Power in numbers, the persuasion of opponents, and tactical innovation all help facilitate a fourth key factor in the success of nonviolent

people power movements: discipline. When movements maintain nonviolent resistance in the face of violence or other provocations by security forces, they are more likely to mobilize additional support and, ultimately, to succeed. And movements with women on the frontlines, it turns out, are less likely to fully embrace violence or develop violent flanks in response to regime crackdowns. At least in part, that is likely because having large numbers of women on the frontlines moderates the behavior of other protesters, as well as the police. Gendered taboos against public violence against women and against violent confrontations in the presence of women and girls may explain part of this phenomenon. So might the higher political costs of violently repressing women who are participating in sit-ins and strikes.

Women from different backgrounds face different risks of violent repression, however. The women on the frontlines of movements demanding and expanding democracy often come from oppressed castes, classes, and minority groups. They are students and young people, widows and grandmothers. Women from marginalized backgrounds have often been ignored or subjected to greater violence during mass mobilizations than have wealthy or otherwise privileged women who benefit from patriarchal authoritarianism. This is why, for example, "Aryan" German women succeeded in securing the release of their Jewish husbands during the Rosenstrasse protest in Berlin in 1943, whereas Jewish women would have been arrested or executed for such a protest. Black Americans who powered the U.S. civil rights movement similarly faced much greater risks than did the white people who participated as allies. Only sustained cross-class, multiracial, or multiethnic coalitions can overcome these dynamics of privilege and power, which is why such coalitions are crucial for facing down violent authoritarian repression and pushing societies toward egalitarianism and democracy for all.

A RISING TIDE

Women who participate on the frontlines of mass movements don't just make those movements more likely to achieve their short-term objectives—for instance, removing an oppressive dictator. They also make those movements more likely to secure lasting democratic change. Controlling for a variety of other factors that might make a democratic transition more likely—such as a country's previous experience with democracy—our analysis shows that extensive frontline

participation by women is positively associated with increases in egalitarian democracy, as defined by the Varieties of Democracy Project.

In other words, women's participation in mass movements is like a rising tide, lifting all boats. Researchers have found that inclusive transition processes lead to more sustainable negotiated settlements and more durable democracy after civil wars. Although there is little research on settlements that come out of nonviolent mobilizations, the presence of women likely translates into increased demands for electoral participation, economic opportunity, and access to education and health care—all of which make democratic transitions more likely to endure.

What happens when inclusive popular mobilizations are defeated and no transitions take place? Incumbent regimes that stamp out inclusive mass movements tend to indulge in a state-sponsored patriarchal backlash. The greater the proportion of women in the defeated movement, the higher the degree of a patriarchal backlash—a dynamic that has ominous implications for Afghanistan, Belarus, Colombia, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Myanmar, Russia, Sudan, and Venezuela, all of which currently have inclusive people power movements whose outcomes are uncertain. Our research shows that countries with failed popular movements tend to experience major backsliding in both egalitarian democracy and gender equality, making them worse off than before the movements began. In other words, the impressive impact of women's frontline participation on the probability of democratization is contingent on the movement's victory; women's participation leads to democratic change and women's empowerment only when the broader movement succeeds.

THE AUTOCRAT'S PLAYBOOK

Authoritarian leaders and illiberal democrats have responded to the threat of women's political mobilization by reversing progress on gender equality and women's rights. Their motivation is not all strategic—many probably believe in sexist ideas—but their worldview is self-serving.

In fully authoritarian states, the mechanisms of sexist repression can be uncompromising and brutal. Often, they take the form of policies that exert direct state control over women's reproduction, including through forced pregnancies or forced abortions, misogynistic rhetoric that normalizes or even encourages violence against women, and laws and practices that reduce or eliminate women's representation in government and discourage women from entering or advancing in the workforce.

In China, for instance, Xi has launched a population suppression campaign against the Uyghurs and other ethnic and rural minorities, forcing birth control, abortions, and even sterilization on many women. Women from ethnic minorities now face the threat of fines or imprisonment for having what Beijing considers too many children. In Egypt, state control over women's reproduction is harnessed to the opposite effect: abortion is illegal in any and all circumstances, and women must seek a judge's permission to divorce, whereas men have no such requirement. In Russia, where abortion has been legal under any circumstance since 1920, Putin's government has attempted to reverse the country's declining population by discouraging abortions and reinforcing "traditional" values. In all three countries, despite nominal constitutional commitments to protect women against gender discrimination, women are dismally underrepresented in the workforce and in powerful official roles.

In less autocratic settings, where overtly sexist policies cannot simply be decreed, authoritarian-leaning leaders and their political parties use sexist rhetoric to whip up popular support for their regressive agendas, often cloaking them in the garb of populism. In doing so, they promote misogynistic narratives of traditionalist "patriotic femininity." The scholar Nitasha Kaul has described these leaders as pushing "anxious and insecure nationalisms" that punish and dehumanize feminists. Where they can, they pursue policies that assert greater state control over women's bodies, while reducing support for political and economic gender equality. They encourage—and often legislate—the subjugation of women, demanding that men and women conform to traditional gender roles out of patriotic duty. They also co-opt and distort concepts such as equity and empowerment to their own ends. Although such efforts to reassert a gender hierarchy look different in different right-wing settings and cultures, they share a common tactic: to make the subjugation of women look desirable, even aspirational, not only for men but also for conservative women.

One way that autocratic and illiberal leaders make a gender hierarchy palatable to women is by politicizing the "traditional family," which becomes a euphemism for tying women's value and worth to childbearing, parenting, and homemaking in a nuclear household—and rolling back their claims to public power. Female bodies become targets of social control for male lawmakers, who invoke the ideal of feminine purity and call on mothers, daughters, and wives to reproduce an idealized version of the nation. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has argued that

women are not equal to men and that their prescribed role in society is motherhood and housekeeping. He has called women who pursue careers over motherhood "half persons." Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government has similarly encouraged women to stop trying to close the pay gap and focus instead on producing Hungarian children.

Across the full range of authoritarian and semiauthoritarian regimes, sexual and gender minorities are often targeted for abuse, as well. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people are seen as undermining the binary gender hierarchy celebrated by many authoritarians. As a result, they are frequently marginalized and stigmatized through homophobic policies: Poland's "LGBT-free zones," for instance, or Russia's bans on "LGBTQ propaganda" and same-sex marriage. Beijing recently went as far as banning men from appearing "too effeminate" on television and social media in a campaign to enforce China's "revolutionary culture."

Fully free, politically active women are a threat to authoritarian leaders.

Despite their flagrant misogyny—and, in some cases, because of it—some authoritarians and would-be authoritarians succeed in enlisting women as key players in their political movements. They display their wives and daughters prominently in the domestic sphere and sometimes in official positions to obscure gender unequal policies. Valorizing traditional motherhood, conservative women often play supporting roles to the masculine stars of the show. There is perhaps no better illustration of this dynamic than the dueling women's movements that supported and opposed Jair Bolsonaro's 2018 presidential campaign in Brazil. Bolsonaro's opponents organized one of the largest women-led protests in the country's history under the banner of *Ele Não*, or "Not Him." His female supporters swathed themselves in the Brazilian flag and derided feminism as "sexist."

In the patriarchal authoritarian's view, men are not real men unless they have control over the women in their lives. Trump's masculine authority was therefore heightened when his wife, Melania Trump, walked behind him onto Air Force One, and it was challenged when she refused to appear with him in public. Sara Duterte-Carpio, the mayor of Davao City, in the Philippines, and a daughter of President Rodrigo Duterte, was a front-runner to succeed her father until he announced that women are "not fit" to be president. Despite the coun-

try's history of female heads of state and Duterte-Carpio's leading poll numbers, she dutifully filed her candidacy for vice president instead.

While women are pigeonholed into traditionally feminized roles, patriarchal authoritarian leaders trumpet their power with gratuitous displays of masculinity. Putin posing topless is the viral version of this public peacocking, but casual misogyny, carefully staged photo ops, and boastful, hypermasculine rhetoric also fit the bill. Think of Trump's oversize red tie, aggressive handshake, and claims that his nuclear button was bigger than Kim's—or Bolsonaro's call for Brazilians to face COVID-19 "like a man." This kind of talk may seem ridiculous, but it is part of a more insidious rhetorical repertoire that feminizes opponents, then projects hypermasculinity by criticizing women's appearance, joking about rape, threatening sexual violence, and seeking to control women's bodies, all in order to silence critics of patriarchal authoritarianism.

The counterpart to this violent rhetoric is paternalistic misogyny. As Kaul writes, "While Trump, Bolsonaro, and Duterte have most explicitly sexualized and objectified women, projecting themselves as profusely virile and predatory, [Indian Prime Minister Narendra] Modi and Erdogan have promoted themselves as protective, and occasionally, even renunciatory, father figures . . . to keep women and minorities in their place. . . . [They] are at times deeply and overtly misogynist, and yet at other times use progressive gender talk to promote regressive gender agendas."

As tolerance for misogyny in general increases, other shifts in the political and legal landscape occur: protections for survivors of rape and domestic violence are rolled back, sentences for such crimes are loosened, evidentiary requirements for charging perpetrators are made more stringent, and women are left with fewer tools with which to defend their bodily and political autonomy. For instance, in 2017, Putin signed a law that decriminalized some forms of domestic abuse, despite concerns that Russia has long faced an epidemic of domestic violence. On the campaign trail in 2016, Trump famously minimized a video that surfaced of him bragging about sexual assault, dismissing it as "locker room talk," despite the fact that numerous women had accused him of sexual assault and misconduct. Once Trump became president, his administration directed the Department of Education to reform Title IX regulations to give more rights to those accused of sexual assault on college campuses.

Finally, many autocrats and would-be autocrats promote a narrative of masculine victimhood designed to gin up popular concern about

how men and boys are faring. Invariably, men are portrayed as "losing out" to women and other groups championed by progressives, despite their continued advantages in a male-dominated gender hierarchy. In 2019, for instance, Russia's Ministry of Justice claimed that reports of domestic violence were overstated in the country and that Russian men faced greater "discrimination" than women in abuse claims. In a similar vein, aspiring autocrats often maintain that masculinity is under threat. Among Trump supporters in the United States, such claims have become commonplace. For instance, Senator Josh Hawley, a Republican from Missouri, recently blamed leftist movements for redefining traditional masculinity as toxic and called for reviving "a strong and healthy manhood in America." Representative Madison Cawthorn, a Republican from North Carolina, echoed Hawley's sentiments in a viral speech in which he complained that American society aims to "de-masculate" men and encourages parents to raise "monsters."

FIGHT ON

As an engine of genuine democratic progress, activism by women and gender minorities threatens authoritarian leaders. Although many autocrats and aspiring autocrats no doubt believe the sexist and misogynistic things they say, their campaigns to restrict women's empowerment and human rights also seek to undermine potential popular democratic movements that would oust them.

Those who wish to combat the rising tide of authoritarianism will need to make promoting women's political participation central to their work. Domestically, democratic governments and their supporters should model and protect the equal inclusion of women, especially from diverse backgrounds, in all places where decisions are being made—from community groups to corporate boards to local, state, and national governments. Democratic governments should also prioritize issues that directly affect women's ability to play an equal role in public life, such as reproductive autonomy, domestic violence, economic opportunity, and access to health care and childcare. All these issues are central to the broader battle over the future of democracy in the United States and around the world, and they should be treated as such.

Democratic governments and international institutions must also put defending women's empowerment and human rights at the center of their fight against authoritarianism worldwide. Violent, misogynistic threats and attacks against women—whether in the home or in pub-

lic—should be denounced as assaults on both women and democracy, and the perpetrators of such attacks should be held accountable. The "Year of Action" promoted by the Biden administration to renew and bolster democracy should include an uncompromising commitment to stand up for gender equity at home and abroad. Efforts by the U.S. Agency for International Development to support human rights activists and civil society groups could likewise make explicit that women's empowerment and political participation need to be integrated throughout all democracy renewal efforts.

Internationally, a multinational coalition is needed to explicitly reject patriarchal authoritarianism and share knowledge and technical skills in the fight against it. Those who are best equipped to build and sustain such a coalition are feminist grassroots and civil society leaders, as they are often the most aware of acute needs in their communities. An ambitious summit or conference convened by a multilateral group of countries or a regional or global organization could help jump-start such an effort by bringing women and their champions from around the world in contact with one another to share their experiences and strategies. One step in the right direction would be to dramatically increase the support and visibility given to the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Finally, organizers and supporters of mass movements for democratic change need a gender-inclusive agenda in order to attract women to the frontlines and to leadership roles. Supporters of democracy at home and abroad should focus on assisting, amplifying, and protecting civil society groups and movements that are pushing for gender equity and work to make sure they are included in any negotiations or transitions that follow mass uprisings or democratic movements. Prodemocracy groups and organizations must understand that truly inclusive movements—those that transcend class, race, gender, and sexual identity—are the most likely to achieve lasting change.

If history is any guide, authoritarian strategies will fail in the long run. Feminists have always found ways to demand and expand women's rights and freedoms, powering democratic advancement in the process. But unchecked, patriarchal authoritarians can do great damage in the short run, erasing hard-won gains that have taken generations to achieve.

The War on Free Speech

Censorship's Global Rise

Jacob Mchangama

The roots of free speech are ancient, deep, and sprawling. The Athenian statesman Pericles extolled the democratic values of open debate and tolerance of social dissent in 431 BC. In the ninth century, the irreverent freethinker Ibn al-Rawandi used the fertile intellectual climate of the Abbasid caliphate to question prophecy and holy books. In 1582, the Dutchman Dirck Coornhert insisted that it was "tyrannical to . . . forbid good books in order to squelch the truth." The first legal protection of press freedom was instituted in Sweden in 1766. In 1770, Denmark became the first state in the world to abolish any and all censorship.

Today, people in developed democracies take for granted that free speech is a fundamental right. That concept, however, would never have taken root if not for the work of trailblazers who were vilified and persecuted for ideas that many of their contemporaries considered radical and dangerous. They include the seventeenth-century Dutch Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza, who argued that "in a free state everyone is at liberty to think as he pleases, and to say what he thinks"; the so-called Levellers of seventeenth-century England, for whom free and equal speech was a precondition for egalitarian democracy; the French feminist Olympe de Gouges, who wrote in 1791 that "a woman has the right to be guillotined; she should also have the right to debate"; and the American abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who saw free speech as a weapon against slavery and thought that "the right of speech is a very precious one, especially to the oppressed."

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If these pioneers were alive today, they would no doubt see the twenty-first century as an unprecedented golden age of free speech. They would marvel at what people in much of the world can freely and immediately discuss, across time zones and borders, with no *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Index of Forbidden Books) to censor blasphemy, no Star Chamber to punish sedition, no Committee of Public Safety to guillotine political heretics, and no lynch mobs to attack abolitionists. At a global level, the principle of free speech has been transformed into an international human rights norm, and its practice has been aided by advances in communications technology unimaginable to the early modern mind.

Given the epic struggles and enormous sacrifices that led to this happy outcome, there is indeed much to celebrate about the current condition of free expression. But despite the unprecedented ubiquity of speech and information today, the golden age is coming to an end. Today, we are witnessing the dawn of a free-speech recession.

According to V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy), a research institute that analyzes global democracy, 2020 saw substantial declines in the respect for freedom of expression in 32 countries; in the year before that, censorship intensified in a record-breaking 37 countries. These developments had terrible consequences for the media and reporters. The Committee to Protect Journalists documented the imprisonment of 1,010 individual journalists between 2011 and 2020, an alarming 78 percent increase from the previous decade.

In some countries, the free-speech recession looks more like a depression. In India, the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has relied heavily on the type of colonial-era laws against sedition and enmity that the British once used to convict Mahatma Gandhi and other Indian nationalists. Modi has used those laws to silence environmental activists, politicians, journalists, academics, and minorities—in stark contrast to Gandhi's passionate defense of free speech, which he considered "absolutely necessary for a man to breathe the oxygen of liberty."

Free speech is faring even worse in Hong Kong, where the Chinese Communist Party has completed a striking transformation of the city since cracking down on pro-democracy protests in 2019. What had been a small oasis of free expression, with a vibrant civil society and a critical press, is now a barren desert where democracy activists, academics, and independent media are punished with draconian laws against what the CCP deems terrorism, secession, or sedition.

Freedom of speech and the media have also been targeted in the EU member states of Hungary and Poland, where illiberal governments view media pluralism and minority voices as a threat rather than a strength. In both places, right-wing leaders have put in place laws aimed at ensuring de facto dominance by government-friendly media outlets and reducing the visibility of LGBTQ people.

But brutal repression in authoritarian states and creeping censorship in illiberal democracies only partly explain why free speech is in retreat. Liberal democracies, rather than constituting a counterweight to the authoritarian onslaught, are themselves contributing to the free-speech recession. In the wealthy, established democracies of Europe and North America, elites in political, academic, and media institutions that once cherished free expression as the lifeblood of democracy now worry that "free speech is killing us," as the title of a 2019 *New York Times* op-ed by the writer Andrew Marantz put it. Many now point to unmediated disinformation and hateful speech on the Internet as evidence that free speech is being weaponized against democracy itself. Meanwhile, the growing strength and geopolitical clout of authoritarian and illiberal regimes have led to brutal limits on freedom of expression in many developing and middle-income countries that not long ago seemed poised to become freer, more open societies.

It is true that freedom of speech can be exploited to amplify division, sow distrust, and inflict serious harm. And the right to free expression is not absolute; laws properly prohibit threats and incitement to violence, for example. But the view that today's fierce challenges to democratic institutions and values can be overcome by rolling back free speech is deeply misguided. Laws and norms protecting free speech still constitute "the great bulwark of liberty," as the British essayist Thomas Gordon wrote in 1721. If not maintained, however, a bulwark can break, and without free speech, the future will be less free, democratic, and equal—and more ignorant, autocratic, and oppressive. Rather than abandon this most essential right, democracies should renew their commitment to free speech and use it to further liberal democratic ideals and counter authoritarian advances.

SAY ANYTHING

Europe is the laboratory where the principle of free speech was first developed and experimented with in a systematic fashion. Over time, different rulers tinkered with different combinations of free-

dom and restriction. So far in the twenty-first century, more restrictions than freedoms have been added to the mix.

Since 2008, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, western European countries have experienced a sharp decline in civil liberties as "infringements of free speech . . . have increased." In recent years, both the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Denmark, France, and the United Kingdom have pursued what the German political scientist Karl Loewenstein termed "militant democracy": the idea that democracies must deny basic democratic freedoms to those who reject basic democratic values. France has adopted a law prohibiting the online "manipulation of information" during elections. French President Emmanuel Macron's government has also issued decrees banning the right-wing anti-immigrant organization Génération Identitaire (citing alleged hate speech) and the antidiscrimination group the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (citing what was considered the group's defense of terrorism and anti-Semitism). Even criticizing Macron himself is risky these days. Last September, a man was fined more than $11,000 for depicting Macron as Adolf Hitler on billboards protesting France's COVID-19 policies.

In 2020, Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, coordinated a crackdown on online hate speech in seven member countries. Among them was Germany, where police searched more than 80 houses, seizing smartphones and laptops, and questioned almost 100 suspects about hateful posts that included "insulting a female politician."

Denmark, along with its Scandinavian neighbors, ranks as one of the world's most open democracies, with a long tradition of tolerating even totalitarian ideas. But during the past decade, Danish governments on both the left and the right have restricted free speech by toughening libel laws, increasing the punishment for insulting public officials and politicians, instituting a de facto ban on wearing veils that fully cover one's face in public, adopting laws punishing religious "hate preachers" at home and banning foreign ones from entering the country, expanding the scope of laws against hate speech, and presenting a draft bill requiring social media platforms to remove any illegal content within 24 hours of receiving a complaint.

In the United States, the legal protections afforded by the First Amendment remain strong. But for many Americans, the underlying ideal of what some First Amendment scholars have termed "free speech exceptionalism" has lost its appeal. As an abstract principle,

Americans continue to support free speech. In practice, however, that support frequently collapses along unforgiving tribalistic and identitarian lines. Despite American liberalism's tenet that free speech is necessary to protect historically persecuted minorities against outbreaks of majoritarian intolerance, this civil libertarian ideal no longer persuades a new generation of progressives who want to purge an ever-broadening collection of ideas and views they deem racist, sexist, or anti-LGBTQ from universities, media outlets, and cultural institutions. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education documented more than 500 attempts between 2015 and 2021 to professionally sanction scholars for engaging in constitutionally protected forms of speech. Over two-thirds of the scholars targeted for speech involving race or gender faced investigations, suspension, censorship, demotion, or termination. Many of those cases stemmed from pedagogically justifiable uses of offensive language. Last year, for example, the University of Illinois law professor Jason Kilborn was suspended after a student complained about an exam question that referenced racial and misogynistic slurs—even though the exam presented only the first letter of each term, with asterisks replacing the rest of the word.

This new American skepticism of free speech is hardly consigned to the political left. As president, Donald Trump attacked the media as "the true Enemy of the people," proposed tightening libel laws, and advocated punishing people who burn the American flag, an act protected by the First Amendment. Consequently, according to polls conducted by YouGov during Trump's presidency, a plurality of Republicans supported giving courts the power to shut down media outlets for inaccurate or biased news stories and stripping flag burners of U.S. citizenship. Despite professing concern for free speech, conservatives have also responded to the rise of so-called identity politics and what they decry as "cancel culture" with illiberal laws prohibiting the discussion of certain conceptions of and theories about race, gender, and even history in educational settings.

On occasion, the assault on free speech has become a bipartisan affair. Several states and a bipartisan majority in the U.S. Senate have adopted or promoted laws punishing businesses for supporting boycotts of Israel and Israeli settlements, despite federal court rulings that the right to boycott to influence political change is protected by the First Amendment. Many Democrats and Republicans have also found common ground on the idea of stripping social media platforms

of the broad legal protections they enjoy when it comes to user-generated content—although the liberal and conservative justifications for that proposed step differ greatly. Democrats want to rein in disinformation and hate speech, whereas Republicans oppose Big Tech because of what they see as Silicon Valley's anticonservative bias. But the combined force of this enmity raises serious questions about the long-term prospects for free speech in the United States.

EGALITARIAN OR ELITIST?

Perhaps nowhere has the erosion of free speech been more apparent than on the Internet. In 1999, one of the primary architects of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee, described his vision of a decentralized space unfettered by the censorship of "hierarchical classification systems" imposed by others. In 2020, however, Internet freedom receded for the 11th straight year according to Freedom House, which attributed the trend to a "record-breaking crackdown on freedom of expression online." The techno-optimist's ideal has given way to an Internet aggressively policed by states and by corporate behemoths that carry out what some have dubbed "moderation without representation," using opaque algorithms to define the limits of global debate with little transparency or accountability.

In hindsight, it should have been obvious that the global expansion of free speech that the Internet allows would produce harmful unintended consequences. Along with spreading truthful information and fostering tolerance, a free and open network accessible to billions of people across the world inevitably disseminates lies and amplifies hateful rhetoric. It was also predictable that authoritarian regimes whose hold on power was challenged by the Internet would invest heavily in reimposing their control of the means of communication. In the twentieth century, authoritarians and totalitarians of every stripe turned the press and broadcast media into fine-tuned instruments of propaganda at the same time as they ruthlessly censored and repressed dissent. Today, authoritarian states—with China leading the charge—are reverse engineering the technology that was supposed to make it impossible for censorship to silence dissent at home and sow division and distrust abroad. In 2000, U.S. President Bill Clinton famously remarked that China's attempts to crack down on the Internet were "like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall." Some 20 years later, the Jell-O is firmly attached to the wall—and a portrait of Chinese President Xi Jinping hangs on the nail.

History should have made clear that radical developments in communications technology would not entice elites and gatekeepers to willingly give up their privileges and admit previously voiceless groups into the public sphere. New communications technology is inevitably disruptive. Every new advancement—from the printing press to the Internet—has been opposed by those whose institutional authority is vulnerable to being undermined by sudden change. In 1525, the great humanist scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam, himself a prodigious writer, complained that printers "fill the world with pamphlets and books [that are] foolish, ignorant, malignant, libelous, mad, impious and subversive." In 1858, *The New York Times* lamented that communication via transatlantic telegraph was "superficial, sudden, unsifted, too fast for the truth." In 2006, Barack Obama, then a Democratic senator from Illinois, praised the Internet as "a neutral platform" that allowed him to "say what I want without censorship." Social media would later play an important role in his rise to the presidency. But 14 years later, after the presidential election of 2020, Obama declared online disinformation "the single biggest threat to our democracy."

The fundamental disagreement about free speech among democrats in the digital age can be boiled down to two opposing understandings. An egalitarian conception of free speech stresses the importance of providing everyone with a voice in public affairs regardless of status or education. An elitist conception, on the other hand, prefers a public sphere mediated by institutional gatekeepers who can ensure the "responsible" diffusion of information and opinion. The clash between these two perspectives stretches back to antiquity and originated in the differences between Athenian democracy and Roman republicanism. In Athens, ordinary free male citizens enjoyed a direct voice in political decision-making and the right to speak frankly in public (the fate of Socrates notwithstanding). Rome, in contrast, limited free speech to a small elite; others had to tread carefully, lest they run afoul of laws against licentiousness, which could lead to banishment or execution.

THE DIGITAL CITY

The tension between these egalitarian and elitist ideals has dominated the history of free speech ever since, even as the mediums have changed and technology has advanced. Outbreaks of elite panic often reflect real concerns and dilemmas but often result in policies that are likely to worsen the problems they were intended to solve. Take Germany's Network En-

forcement Act (NetzDG), which was put into effect in 2017 and obliges social media platforms to remove illegal content or face huge fines. The law has done little to check hatred online but has incentivized Big Tech platforms to expand their definitions of prohibited speech and extremism and turbocharge their automated content moderation—resulting in the deletion of massive amounts of content that was perfectly legal.

The law's most discernible impact, however, may have been to serve as a blueprint for Internet censorship, providing a veneer of legitimacy to authoritarian regimes around the globe that have explicitly cited the German law as an inspiration for their own censorship laws. The law was a good faith effort to curb online hate speech but has helped spark a regulatory race to the bottom that undermines freedom of expression as guaranteed by international human rights standards. Although it would be misleading to blame Germany for the draconian laws adopted in authoritarian states, those countries' embrace of restrictions resembling NetzDG should give Germany and other Western democracies pause.

The importance of free speech in the digital space is clear to embattled pro-democracy activists in places such as Belarus, Egypt, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Russia, and Venezuela, where they depend on the ability to communicate and organize—and to the regimes of these countries, which view such activities as an existential threat. And when liberal democracies pass censorship laws or when Big Tech platforms prohibit certain kinds of speech or bar certain users, they make it easier for authoritarian regimes to justify their repression of dissent. In this way, democracies and the companies that thrive in them sometimes unwittingly help entrench regimes that fuel propaganda and disinformation in those very same democracies.

These conflicting dynamics are playing out in a context in which there is no clear legitimate authority, shared values, or principles on which to build a global framework for free speech. This reflects a much deeper and fundamental disconnect between what the philosopher of technology L. M. Sacasas has called "the Digital City," where we live our hyperconnected lives in the Internet era, and "the Analog City," where life took place in the industrial era, prior to mass digitization. Modern humans increasingly inhabit the former while trying to make sense of its unprecedented informational order according to the principles and assumptions of the latter. The result has been a tendency toward a fragmentation of the public sphere, with plummeting trust in established sources of information and political institutions.

The disruptive effects of switching from the Analog City to the Digital City are unlikely to run their course anytime soon. The printing press had been around for 70 years before it caught on and helped launch the Protestant Reformation. In comparison, the World Wide Web has been around for only 30 years or so, and Google, Facebook, and Twitter were founded in 1998, 2004, and 2006, respectively. These may well be just the early days of the digital age, with massive disruptions still to come.

A new generation of progressives want to purge ideas they deem racist, sexist, or anti-LGBTQ.

Over the past two years, a torrent of lies and conspiracy theories have taken a toll. They have made it harder to contain a deadly pandemic. And they led millions to reject the legitimacy of a presidential election in the world's most powerful democracy, culminating in the first violent attack on the peaceful transfer of power ever witnessed in the United States. If these pathologies are but a harbinger of things to come in the Digital City, no wonder many still cling to the relative certainty and informational structure of the Analog City. It might be tempting to simply condemn huge swaths of cyberspace as irreparably corrupt and close them off, much as the Ottoman emperors in the sixteenth century shunned the printing press in a bid to avoid the political chaos and religious conflict that had unsettled Europe in part because of changes ushered in by the freer spread of information. That choice might have seemed prudent at the time; now, however, it looks like a costly miscalculation, as the compound knowledge and ideas spread by the printing press eventually helped Europe lay the foundation for global dominance, even as religious wars were raging across the continent. Modern democracies are unlikely to err so badly. But when Macron insists that in democracies, the "Internet is much better used by those on the extremes," and when Obama cautions that online disinformation poses "the single biggest threat" to democracy, they are inflating the threat and courting overreaction.

There is no denying that the backlash against social media has had consequences. Facebook and Twitter originally displayed a strong civil libertarian impulse inspired by First Amendment ideals. As late as 2012, Twitter only half-jokingly described itself as "the free speech wing of the free speech party." But as the scrutiny grew more intense and the calls for more content removal and regulation grew ever louder,

the platforms changed their tune and started emphasizing the values of "safety" and preventing "harm." In a 2017 hearing before a hostile British Parliament, a Twitter vice president waved the white flag and announced that the platform was ditching its "John Stuart Mill–style philosophy." And in 2019, Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's chief executive, called for stronger regulation of the Internet, knowing full well that few other platforms would be able to spend as many resources on content moderation as Facebook does.

Instead of sacrificing free speech, democracies must rediscover its enormous potential.

In recent years, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have altered their terms of service in ways that have led to the banning of more content and broader categories of speech. Facebook deleted 26.9 million pieces of content for allegedly violating its standards on hate speech in the last quarter of 2020. That is nearly 17 times the 1.6 million deletions of alleged hate speech in the last quarter of 2017. Twitter and YouTube also removed record levels of content in 2020. Those caught in the dragnet are not all neo-Nazis or violent jihadis; others whose content has been purged include activists documenting war crimes in Syria, racial and sexual minorities using slurs to expose bigotry, and Russians critical of President Vladimir Putin. No government in history has ever been able to exert such extensive control over what people all over the world are saying, writing, reading, watching, listening to, and sharing with others.

Ultimately, any society that becomes dependent on the centralized control of information and opinion will be neither free nor vibrant. Past attempts to rid the public sphere of ideas that authorities or elites considered extreme or harmful have tended to exclude the poor and the propertyless, foreigners, women, and religious, racial, ethnic, national, and sexual minorities. Until relatively recently in historical terms, those in power have deemed people in these categories too credulous, fickle, immoral, ignorant, or dangerous to have a voice in public affairs.

Liberal democracies must come to terms with the fact that in the Digital City, citizens and institutions cannot be shielded from hostile propaganda, hateful content, or disinformation without compromising their egalitarian and liberal values. Whatever fundamental

reforms governments must pursue to ensure that humans can thrive, trust one another, and flourish in the Digital City, a robust commitment to free speech should be recognized as a necessary part of the solution rather than an outdated ideal to be discarded.

THE POWER OF SPEECH

Rather than trying to save democracy by sacrificing free speech, democracies must rediscover its enormous potential. Recent history provides both inspiration for how they can do so and stark warnings about the dangers of letting authoritarian states win the fight on where to draw redlines. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the legally binding International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) were negotiated at the UN in the years following World War II, liberal democracies and the Soviet bloc fought bitterly about the limits of free speech. The Soviets sought to include an obligation to ban hate speech in accordance with Article 123 of Joseph Stalin's 1936 constitution, which prohibited any "advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt."

In the face of this pressure, Eleanor Roosevelt, the first chair of what was then the UN Commission on Human Rights, emerged as an eloquent defender of free-speech maximalism. She warned that the Soviet proposals "would be extremely dangerous" and were likely to be "exploited by totalitarian States." Democracies managed to defeat hate-speech bans in the UDHR, but ultimately, the Soviet agenda won the day: Article 20 of the ICCPR obliges states to prohibit specific forms of incitement to hatred. Predictably, Soviet-backed communist states used laws against hate speech and incitement as part of their arsenal against dissent and political enemies at home, a tactic still in use by authoritarian states. But the initial fight at the UN over the limits of free speech in international human rights law was only the first of several rounds that would be fought over the coming decades.

In 1975, the Helsinki Final Act was signed by 35 countries under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The act's primary ambition was to ease Cold War tensions, but Western democracies persuaded the Soviet bloc to accept the inclusion of human rights provisions. The communist regimes objected to the human rights language during the lengthy negotiations. They were already fighting an uphill battle to jam the radio signals of Western radio stations that broadcast uncensored news into the homes of millions of people behind

the Iron Curtain. In 1972, using rhetoric eerily similar to that now used by many democratic leaders, Soviet officials had declared that they would never tolerate "the dissemination of . . . racism, fascism, the cult of violence, hostility among peoples and false slanderous propaganda." Nevertheless, the Soviet bloc swallowed the human rights concessions, which they viewed as little more than empty rhetoric.

But through newspaper reports, word of mouth, samizdat publications, and Western radio broadcasts, people in Eastern Europe quickly learned about the new rights that their governments had solemnly promised to respect. And among the rights guaranteed by the Helsinki Final Act, perhaps none was more important than freedom of expression. The principle and practice of free speech were used by Western democracies and burgeoning human rights organizations to empower and amplify the protests of Soviet-bloc dissidents. The famous Charter 77 manifesto, authored in 1977 by an eclectic mix of Czechoslovak dissidents—including Vaclav Havel, the country's future leader—complained that "the right to freedom of expression, for example, guaranteed by Article 19 of the ICCPR, is in our case purely illusory." In 1990, after Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution, Havel, who had become president, gave a triumphant speech to the U.S. Congress:

> When [Communist authorities] arrested me . . . , I was living in a country ruled by the most conservative communist government in Europe, and our society slumbered beneath the pall of a totalitarian system. Today, less than four months later, I'm speaking to you as the representative of a country that has set out on the road to democracy, a country where there is complete freedom of speech.

Likewise, Lech Walesa, the trade union leader who went on to serve as the president of Poland in the post–Cold War period, recalled that in his successful struggle to topple communism, "one of the central freedoms at stake was freedom of expression." Walesa noted that "without this basic freedom, human life becomes meaningless; and once the truth of this hit me, it became part of my whole way of thinking."

Later, free speech also contributed to ending apartheid in South Africa, where censorship and repression had been used to maintain white supremacy. In 1994, shortly before winning the country's first free presidential election, Nelson Mandela gave a speech in which he credited the international media for shining a global spotlight on the atrocities committed by the apartheid regime. He then promised to abolish

apartheid-era laws limiting free expression, a right that he pledged would constitute one of the "core values" of South African democracy.

More recently, in 2011, the Obama administration notched a rare but important win amid the current era's free-speech recession. For more than a decade, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation had mobilized majorities at the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council to support resolutions against "the defamation of religion." The OIC's campaign was an attempt to pass a legally binding ban on religious blasphemy at the UN—a step that would have effectively extended the writ of regimes in Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia that severely punish satire, criticism, and irreverent discussions of Islam. In response, the United States, with assistance from a number of European democracies, launched a multilateral global offensive to stop the OIC's effort. The strategy worked and not only defended but also expanded existing free-speech norms, leading to the adoption of a resolution that affirmed that human rights law protects people, not religions or ideologies. Although the resolution condemned advocacy of incitement to hatred, it called on the criminalization only of "incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief." Moreover, the resolution helped remedy the original sin of international human rights law by narrowing the obligation to prohibit incitement to hatred inserted in the ICCPR at the behest of the Soviet Union back in the 1960s.

THE TALKING CURE

These precedents provide democracies with a guide for how to promote the fundamental value of free speech. Instead of launching global initiatives limiting that freedom, democracies should join forces to expand the shrinking spaces for dissent and civil society around the globe. One way to do so is through concerted efforts to expose and condemn censorship and repression and to offer civil society organizations and dissidents technical support that can amplify dissent and circumvent repressive measures. Democracies must be vigilant about protecting norms within international institutions and preventing authoritarian states from taking advantage of elite panic to dilute hard-won speech protections.

Democracies should also push for global Big Tech platforms to voluntarily adopt robust human rights standards to help guide and inform their content moderation policies and practices. This would solidify the sprawling and ever-changing terms of service that previously set the bar significantly lower than what follows from human rights norms

and constitutional freedoms in liberal democracies. Such a move would also help online platforms resist the pressure to act as privately outsourced censors of dissent in countries where social media may be the only way for citizens to circumvent official censorship and propaganda.

In addition to direct government action, civil society and technology companies can also contribute to the promotion and protection of free speech. A cottage industry has sprung up to map, analyze, and counter disinformation and propaganda—a far healthier approach than attempts to ban harmful speech. Likewise, several studies suggest that organized campaigns of strategic "counterspeech" can provide an antidote to online hate speech, which frequently targets minority groups. For example, the Swedish online community #jagärhär (#iamhere) has tens of thousands of members who respond to hateful posts on social media—an approach that has been copied by groups in many other countries.

Innovative journalists, activists, and collectives such as Bellingcat are also using open-source intelligence and data to expose the criminal deeds and human rights violations of authoritarian states. Not even China can avoid such scrutiny: unlike the suffering of victims in the Soviet Union's gulag, to which the world was mostly oblivious, the horrific conditions in China's network of "reeducation camps" in the western region of Xinjiang have been exposed by journalists, activists, and victims using smartphones, social media, satellites, and messaging apps.

The free-speech recession must be resisted by people around the world who have benefited from the revolutionary acts and sacrifices of the millions who came before them and fought for the cherished right to speak one's mind. It is up to those who already enjoy that right to defend the tolerance of heretical ideas, limit the reach of disinformation, agree to disagree without resorting to harassment or hate, and treat free speech as a principle to be upheld universally rather than a prop to be selectively invoked for narrow, tribalistic point-scoring. As George Orwell put it in 1945: "If large numbers of people are interested in freedom of speech, there will be freedom of speech, even if the law forbids it; if public opinion is sluggish, inconvenient minorities will be persecuted, even if laws exist to protect them." Free speech is still an experiment, and in the digital age, no one can guarantee the outcome of providing global platforms to billions of people. But the experiment is noble—and worth continuing.

The Allies Are Alright

Why America Can Get Away With Bullying Its Friends

Robert E. Kelly and Paul Poast

The presidency of Donald Trump seemed to throw the U.S. alliance system into disarray. In 2016, when still a candidate, Trump disparaged Washington's traditional allies, dismissed NATO as "obsolete," and claimed that maintaining military and financial commitments in Europe and elsewhere was "bankrupting" the United States. This tough rhetoric continued during his administration. After his withdrawal from a host of international accords, including the Paris climate agreement and the Iran nuclear deal, it seemed possible that Trump would also fail to fulfill long-standing commitments to U.S. allies in Europe and East Asia. The U.S. foreign policy establishment feared that the alliances underpinning the so-called liberal international order were in jeopardy.

So traumatic were these years believed to be that, on taking office, President Joe Biden, along with many in the Washington foreign policy community, rushed to reassure U.S. allies that order had been restored. "America is back," declared Biden in February 2021. "We must recommit to our alliances," asserted Secretary of State Antony Blinken at NATO headquarters in March. Chuck Hagel, Malcolm Rifkind, Kevin Rudd, and Ivo Daalder, two U.S. and two allied former statesmen and foreign policy elites, called for "a return to fundamentals" to reassure wary U.S. allies. In other words, the United States needed to undertake what Secretary of State George Shultz once called "gardening": grooming allies, soothing their sensitivities, and signaling solidarity and cooperation.

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But those calling for Biden to carefully minister to wounded U.S. alliances misunderstood what really happened during Trump's presidency. The ostensibly great threat of Trump had little effect on Washington's major allies. The Trump years did not alienate traditional U.S. allies so much as it exposed their chronic weakness and their reluctance to push back against the United States. Trump's brazen and often distasteful behavior revealed a bald truth: U.S. allies will put up with more capriciousness, browbeating, and neglect than anyone expected.

The U.S. alliance system is built on hierarchy, dependency, and the stubborn persistence of American power. This network benefits the United States by supporting its efforts to achieve and maintain global influence, and it benefits U.S. allies by dramatically reducing their defense costs and increasing their trade gains. As a result, these countries are willing to tolerate U.S. actions that deviate from Washington's traditional liberalism and multilateralism—such as Trump's abuse and tariffs or Biden's unilateral withdrawal from Afghanistan. There was also no sign that the allies feared abandonment or sensed a major decline in the relative power of the United States. Despite the sound and fury of recent years, U.S. alliances remain quite robust. The rhetorical agonizing over the need to assuage allies is unnecessary: the United States can pressure its allies far more than anyone imagined it could. No reassurance is required.

PROTÉGÉS, NOT FRIENDS

The United States' alliances—whether multilateral arrangements such as NATO or bilateral agreements with states such as Japan and South Korea—are strikingly unequal. Diplomatic politesse about "friendship" or "partnership" obscures U.S. military dominance in all these relationships. U.S. allies—particularly those whose military capabilities have atrophied since the Cold War—are more accurately described as junior members of a patron-protégé relationship in which the patron can be simultaneously demanding and neglectful of its protégés. The substantial gulf in economic capacity and military capability between the United States and its allies pushes these associations toward hierarchy in practice, if not in form. That hierarchy, in turn, creates a dependency on U.S. power, permitting Washington to ignore militarily weak allies when it suits U.S. interests. There is little the neglected allies can do about it.

States around the world join and value alliances with the United States for two reasons: they face military threats on their borders, and

Kiss the ring: Merkel and Trump in Biarritz, France, August 2019

they want access to U.S. markets. The United States is economically and militarily strong enough to act as an importer of last resort for smaller economies and to project power to defend weaker countries. Geographically distant enough to not pose a direct military threat itself, it is the ideal state for shifting local balances of power in favor of weaker states under threat.

For this reason, U.S. alliances have weathered many past storms, from seemingly endless trade disputes between Japan and the United States since the 1970s to French and German opposition to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. U.S. allies tolerate Washington's abuse of its position of strength because, from their perspective, it is worth the cost. The benefits of a world-class security guarantee and access to the world's leading economy vastly outweigh the humiliations of Trump's browbeating or the political costs of occasionally being pressed into unwanted foreign policy ventures, such as the so-called war on terror. The alternative—the massive cost of self-defense and the vulnerability of standing alone against the likes of China or Russia—is worse. It is in this sense that the United States is what former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called "the indispensable nation." But this indispensability does not derive from the country's adherence to democratic values or liberal norms. Instead, it comes from American power and the benefits gained from aligning with that power.

ERIN SCHAFF / THE NEW YORK TIMES

That blunt reality compels a reconsideration of the supposed crisis of the Trump years, when much of the foreign policy establishment feared that the White House was doing untold damage to U.S. alliances. Analysts may have fretted about Trump's bullying and bristling antagonism, but the allies targeted did not seem hugely bothered. Their actual behavior during the Trump presidency did not suggest any attempt to defect from, hedge against, or drift away from the patronage of the United States.

Trump antagonized allies everywhere, but the examples of four core treaty allies—Germany, France, Japan, and South Korea—in the crucial theaters of Europe and East Asia are especially telling. Many analysts now continue to urge Biden to reassure these U.S. allies of Washington's steadfast commitment, but it is hard to see the need. By the logic of those urging reassurance, Trump's behavior should have pushed these countries away from the United States politically or strategically. But that was not the case. None of them tried to distance itself from the United States to protect itself from Trump's unpredictability. To the contrary, they all flattered Trump. They tolerated his antics and did not risk expulsion from under the U.S. security umbrella. The Trump years have turned the conventional wisdom on its head: Washington has considerable room to neglect its allies without incurring reprisals.

THE FORGIVING CHANCELLOR

Germany is arguably the United States' most important partner in Europe, home to more U.S. troops and military infrastructure than any other U.S. ally. And naturally, Trump went out of his way to antagonize the country and its then chancellor, Angela Merkel.

Trump deeply disliked Merkel, speaking of her pejoratively in private remarks that were leaked. He complained on Twitter that Germany owed a "fee" to NATO, allegedly handed Merkel a made-up bill for back pay owed to NATO, and proposed withdrawing U.S. troops from Germany. He left the U.S. ambassadorship to Germany open for much of his term and then selected an intentionally polarizing figure, the commentator and right-wing Internet firebrand Richard Grenell, who hectored the German foreign policy establishment and promoted Trumpian populists throughout Europe. In short, Trump provided adequate cause for German elites to rethink their country's relationship with the United States. Indeed, Merkel warned as early as 2017 that Europe could "no longer rely on allies" and that "Europe must really take our fate into our own hands."

But Germany did precious little to end its reliance on the United States or take Europe's fate into its own hands. Germany did not, for example, seek a serious side deal or separate agreement with NATO's primary opponent, Russia. (The chancellor had already agreed with Russia to the creation of a controversial oil pipeline running from Russia to Germany—Nord Stream 2—before Trump came into office.) Merkel supported the 2018 renewal of sanctions against Russia over its meddling in Ukraine, and she routinely criticized Russia for its repression of internal dissent. The Trump years did not see any improvement in the tense, if businesslike, German-Russian relationship, much less a German turn against the United States.

Bullied by Washington, Berlin could have chosen to strengthen Europe as a political and military counterweight to the United States. Proponents of a stronger Europe have long talked about bulking up EU institutions, for instance, a move that would allow the continent to act more independently on the world stage. But institutional reform in Europe was at a standstill during the Trump years, and it remains so. Similarly, EU hawks have argued for decades for a stronger European defense program. Merkel herself seemed to embrace the notion of a more independent and capable European military after her first meeting with Trump. Germany, as the continent's largest economy, would have to play an essential role in developing an integrated European military. But the Germans were indecisive, and nothing came of these rumblings. As in the years before Trump, there is still no European military or unified command, no sharing of large platforms such as aircraft carriers, much less weapons of mass destruction, and no joint strategic doctrine.

Defense spending is an obvious area where more resources could have strengthened Berlin's hand when facing Washington. But Merkel declined to invest more in her country's military during the Trump years. As a percentage of GDP, German defense spending stood at 1.15 percent in 2017, 1.17 percent in 2018, and 1.28 percent in 2019. In terms of military strategy, meanwhile, German officials made no effort to separate from the Americans. The closest thing Germany has to a formal grand strategy is presented in an irregularly updated white paper on national security. The most recent dates from 2016, a revealing date in and of itself: Trump's rhetoric and the resulting indignant talk of European self-reliance did not prompt German officials to update their formal strategy.

FLATTERY IN PARIS

France was the U.S. ally most likely to respond to Trump with meaningful policy shifts. Under former President Charles de Gaulle, France partially withdrew from NATO in the 1960s. It pursued a somewhat independent foreign policy during the Cold War and has long explicitly promoted the notion of a stronger pan-European defense posture as a counterweight to the United States.

True to form, Trump sought to dominate and embarrass French President Emmanuel Macron. During a 2017 visit to Paris, Trump forced Macron into a bizarre, 29-second white-knuckle handshake. The next year, he showily brushed dandruff off Macron's suit in front of the media at the White House. As he did with Merkel, Trump often slid gleefully into a war of words with Macron. After a 2018 spat over nationalism, Trump tweeted, "Emmanuel suffers from a very low approval rating," and then, peevishly, "Make France Great Again!" After Macron criticized Trump's disdain for NATO at the alliance's summit in 2019, Trump struck back, calling Macron "nasty, insulting, and disrespectful."

Given France's history of an independent foreign policy, here was an opportunity to reorient the country's relationship with the United States. But Macron, like Merkel, sought to appease and flatter Trump. Macron himself admitted in 2018, "Our relationship with the United States is absolutely critical. Fundamental. We need it."

Macron's behavior during the Trump years revealed just how dependent France was. Unhappy with Trump's abuse, France might have pursued separate deals with Russia, the traditional opponent of the Western alliance. But the French made no such effort to go around the United States or any attempt to emulate de Gaulle's partial defection from the alliance. As did Germany's, France's relationship with Russia remained measured and did not noticeably improve. France continued to support the regular renewal of sanctions against Russia after its annexation of Crimea in 2014. France, like Germany, cleaved to the antagonistic NATO line on Russia.

France also did not forcefully seek a European military arrangement as a substitute for a U.S.-based alliance. The French government did make at least rhetorical gestures toward greater military integration among European allies. For years, Macron has variously called for European defense autonomy, an EU army, an end to European dependence on U.S. arms, and so on. But this posturing merely borrowed from the familiar stable of French Europeanist rhetoric. European military ini-

tiatives, such as the Eurocorps, a small, mostly symbolic force of just 1,000 soldiers, or the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, a small Anglo-French rapid-reaction force, remain embryonic. EU member states are no closer to forming large multinational military units or sharing heavy weapons platforms. Competition between France and Germany also makes this regional consolidation harder. Germany still suspects that France's vision of continental unity actually means yoking German economic power to French foreign policy ambitions.

The United States can pressure its allies far more than anyone imagined it could.

France's defense spending as a percentage of its GDP is higher than Germany's. But like German spending, French spending did not tick upward in the Trump era. In 2017, France spent 1.91 percent; in 2018, 1.85 percent; and in 2019, 1.86 percent. These sums are not enough to buttress an EU army or make a more audacious bid for Gaullist independence.

Nor did France revise its strategic approach to the United States. France's primary grand strategy statement is its 2017 Defense and National Security Strategic Review, complemented by the shorter 2021 Strategic Update. The 2017 document emphasizes traditional French themes about strategic autonomy (from the Americans) and Macron's particular interest in having France lead a European defense posture. The 2021 update renounces a breach with the United States, mentioning Trump only once in passing commentary about "mistrust" and his "transactional approach." Even the Biden administration's decision to pursue the so-called AUKUS agreement in 2021, which led Australia to cancel a submarine contract with France in favor of having the submarines produced by the United States, induced only a short-lived diplomatic row between France and the United States, before Macron and Biden announced that they were putting the matter behind them. If anything, the incident revealed France's appreciation of the mood of the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Paris seemed to be stirring up a dispute to get attention from Washington precisely because it recognized U.S. fears about antsy allies and knew that it could exploit them.

RIDING THE TIGER

Trump did not alarm the United States' Asian allies as much as he did its European ones. Analysts in East Asia did not fret about the

collapse of the liberal international order as much as their counterparts in Europe and in the Washington foreign policy community did. The leaders of Japan and South Korea both vigorously flattered Trump. As a British journalist in Japan put it, "The Japanese saw Trump as just another loud American."

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe massaged Trump's ego. Abe repeatedly took Trump golfing, his favorite sport. They took selfies on the green, and Abe even gave Trump a gold-plated driver. He brought Trump to a dinner with the Japanese emperor. Abe's most obsequious gift was a baseball hat embroidered with the words "Donald & Shinzo Make Alliance Even Greater."

Still, Trump's rhetoric on Japan was provocative. Although he avoided personal attacks on Abe, Trump decried, as he often did in regard to other countries as well, trade imbalances with Japan; threatened enormous tariffs on Japanese automotive exports; and complained about the scale of U.S. defense contributions to Japan. He also publicly disagreed with Abe on the severity of the North Korean missile threat in 2019 and, with his usual brusque tone, inveighed against Japanese pacifism. "If Japan is attacked, we will fight World War III," he said on Fox News. "But if we're attacked, Japan doesn't have to help us at all. They can watch it on a Sony television."

In the face of all these insults, Japan, like Germany and France, bent to accommodate Trump. Tokyo did not strike substantive side deals with any local opponents, most obviously China but also North Korea and Russia. Trumpian demands for concessions might have pushed Japan to resolve its disputes with these countries—including wrangles with North Korea over the fate of abducted Japanese people and with Russia over the ownership of the Kuril Islands. But Japan did nothing of the sort.

Nor did it make many lateral moves to strengthen ties with other U.S. protégés. The most obvious target of such an effort would have been nearby South Korea. Instead, Japanese–South Korean relations deteriorated during the Trump years, as the United States stopped bothering to calm tensions between the two over Japan's past imperial behavior in Korea. Since Biden became president, Japan has aligned somewhat more closely with Taiwan, Australia, and India, but only under the aegis of U.S. regional leadership. As Biden has pushed back against China over Taiwan, Japan has followed suit. Tokyo has reached out to Canberra and New Delhi within the rubric of the U.S.-led Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad. Japan did

make an effort to save a Pacific-area trade deal—the Trans-Pacific Partnership—from which Trump withdrew. But the replacement deal, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, was an economic move to expand trade ties, not an effort to contest U.S. security leadership in East Asia.

Defense spending was an area in which Japan had room to grow. Before Trump, Tokyo spent less than one percent of GDP on defense, an astonishingly low figure for a state adjacent to China and with great-power pretensions. But Trump's demands changed nothing. Japanese spending on defense barely budged during his presidency, staying stuck at around 0.9 percent of GDP. Japan relied on U.S. guarantees while mollifying Trump with flattering gifts.

At the level of strategic doctrine, Japan made no changes in the Trump period. Its current National Security Strategy dates to 2013 but is still in force. A short write-up of the strategy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2016 lists its second objective as "strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance." None of the three other U.S. allies' national security strategies, not Germany's, or France's, or South Korea's, prioritizes the U.S. alliance as centrally as Japan's doctrine does. All of Trump's bellicosity and sharp elbows did not affect Japanese policy choices or defense spending. Japan chose to ride the tiger instead.

PERSEVERANCE ON THE PENINSULA

Of all the major U.S. allies, Trump seemed to harbor special disdain for South Korea. In 2020, he allegedly told a meeting of U.S. governors that South Koreans were "terrible people." As with other allies, he complained regularly about the United States' trade deficit with South Korea and the costs of U.S. military support for the country. He repeatedly gestured toward pulling U.S. troops out, and observers feared that, if reelected in 2020, he would actually try to do so. Trump personally intervened in U.S.–South Korean cost-sharing negotiations, demanding that Seoul raise its $1 billion contribution to $5 billion. Trump also ordered a revision of the U.S.–Korea Free Trade Agreement, signed during the George W. Bush administration, even as he hinted that U.S. car and steel tariffs would carry on regardless. He even called South Korean President Moon Jae-in an "appeaser" of North Korea in 2017 and repeatedly said he did not like dealing with Moon, while making clear his preference for the North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, with whom he supposedly "fell in love."

But like the other allies, South Korea was largely unaffected. Moon and his first foreign minister waxed lyrical about Trump's "courage," "determination," and "leadership." After publicly warning Trump in 2017 not to attack North Korea, Moon pivoted to flattery, even floating the idea that Trump would merit a Nobel Peace Prize should he meet with Kim. The blatant pandering and lack of seriousness of this suggestion was an open secret in South Korea.

South Korean behavior supported this assertion. Despite Trump's contempt—and Moon's left-wing politics with its tradition of anti-Americanism—the relationship between Seoul and Washington remained much as it was before. During the Trump presidency, South Korea made no changes to its otherwise businesslike relationship with Russia, and its relations with China remained fraught. Regarding North Korea, Moon did not make a breakthrough, despite a vigorous effort to reach a détente.

South Korea could have responded to Trump's disdain by trying to bury the hatchet with Japan and strengthen its ties with the other major democratic power of the region. After all, both countries' fear of abandonment by the United States under Trump created room for rapprochement. Instead, the opposite happened. Moon doubled down on the traditional anti-Japanese line of the South Korean left, provoking a small crisis with the United States in 2019 when he resisted an intelligence-sharing deal with Japan. In the face of Trump's derision, South Korea could have strengthened its hand by increasing its defense spending. It did so—but only slightly, and as part of long-term military modernization efforts planned well before Trump came to office.

At the strategic level, South Korea remained—and remains—yoked to the U.S. military presence on the peninsula. The most important marker of this integration is that operational wartime control of the South Korean military has yet to return to the South Korean government even after 20 years of discussion. Should war break out with North Korea, a U.S. general would still command the South Korean army in the field. The U.S. military forces on the peninsula also remain deeply integrated with the South Korean military, and the tempo of joint training exercises has picked up since Trump left office. South Korea last published a national security strategy in 2018. It emphasized outreach to North Korea but, critically, did not frame such overtures as a substitute for the alliance with the United States.

South Korea had good reason to drift away from the United States. Trump repeatedly publicly condemned it, and it is governed by a coalition with roots in anti-American protest. But it did not. Like the actions of the other allies, Seoul's approach was to flatter and persevere, not bolt.

THE HIGH COSTS OF BREAKING WITH THE UNITED STATES

Each of these four allies chose to tolerate Trump's abuse rather than distance itself from Washington. This choice was a reflection not of Trump's persona or acumen but of the reality of U.S. power. However humiliating, accommodating Trump was cheaper than the potential costs of distancing themselves from the United States.

Perhaps U.S. allies restrained themselves. They might have seen Trump as a bizarre, one-off outcome of the unusual U.S. presidential election system, and so they politely chose to bite their tongues. Had Trump been reelected, the allies might then have shifted to more independent foreign policies. But that seems unlikely. These allies had faced the erratic consequences of the U.S. presidential election system just a little more than a decade before. President George W. Bush was maligned as a unilateralist cowboy who led a hyperpower into an aggressive, unnecessary war. But when Bush was reelected in 2004, nothing happened. Then as now, the structures of the U.S. alliance system stayed intact, and the core European and Asian protégés remained committed to their U.S. patron.

Trump may have raised the hackles of the U.S. foreign policy establishment more than he alarmed the governments of allied countries. But even if Berlin, Paris, Tokyo, or Seoul was so perturbed by Trump that it felt compelled to do something, its options were limited and costly. Would it suddenly pursue an independent foreign policy at great expense in the face of Chinese and Russian power? These allied governments and the strategy documents they produced never seriously considered alternatives to an alliance with the United States, even under a possible second Trump term, because those choices were all too costly.

The costs of delinking from the U.S. military, for instance, would be high. Germany, France, and Japan spend less than two percent of their GDPs on their militaries and are decidedly uninterested in matching the U.S. figure of over three percent. Worse, most U.S. allies are now tacitly dependent on the United States for the logistical and administrative depth required by modern combat operations, as illustrated by France and the United Kingdom's dependence on

U.S. logistics in the 2011 intervention in Libya and Japan's and South Korea's dependence on the U.S. Navy to participate in anti-piracy actions in the Indian Ocean.

Any attempt to meaningfully hedge against the United States would require substantial spending increases, massive expansions of recruitment (including the expansion of conscription in South Korea), and other costly moves that might rankle taxpayers and voters. Erstwhile allies would also risk the economic ramifications of falling afoul of the United States. Access to the world's largest open market is crucial for their growth, particularly for export-driven, mercantilist economies such as Japan and South Korea. Trump made clear his willingness to leverage allies' trade dependence and target allies with tariffs.

But perhaps the most powerful factor keeping the allies bound to the United States is the reality that they don't really have anywhere else to turn. For democracies, a certain scorn for allying with dictatorships is natural, and options such as rapprochement with China or Russia or an inter-Korean federation have obvious political risks. The persistence of the animosity between Japan and South Korea and of the competitive rivalry between France and Germany would complicate efforts by these powers to band together on their own. Humiliation by Trump was a small price to pay in the absence of better options.

WHAT MAKES THE UNITED STATES INDISPENSABLE

The U.S. alliance system is predicated on hierarchy and dependency. Trump's treatment of U.S. allies was boorish and unnecessarily hostile, likely driven by egotistical cravings for status and masculine domination. A general contempt for his behavior is appropriate, but that behavior also illuminated, however harshly, two long-standing truths about U.S. alliances.

These relationships are deeply unequal. This point is frequently obscured by U.S. rhetoric about solidarity and standing "shoulder to shoulder" with allies. Such language masks fundamental power imbalances and the fact that U.S. alliances ultimately rest on an alignment of interests. As the political scientists Patrick Porter and Joshua Shifrinson have argued, the American predilection for calling allies "friends" breeds false expectations and encourages allies with underpowered militaries to assume Washington will tolerate their piggybacking on U.S. defense guarantees. Because of their shared liberal values, U.S. allies are also inclined to believe that the United States

will solicit and respect their opinions. But these allies then complain of bullying when U.S. indifference to their viewpoints lays bare the fundamental asymmetries of their relationships with the United States, as happened under Trump and as happened again last summer when Biden withdrew from Afghanistan while ignoring NATO allies' objections. To remedy this, U.S. allies should address the root causes of Washington's ability to ride roughshod over them: their low defense spending and their consequent weak power projection capabilities.

The Trump years also underlined the fact that the U.S. alliance system is not in decline. A wider liberal international order—reliant on reasonably liberal behavior from nondemocracies, especially China, in a rule-bound trading network—may indeed be eroding. But the more limited, patron-protégé arrangement between the United States and its core allies in Europe and Asia appears stable. U.S. allies still want this structure.

Ideally, the United States would behave solicitously toward and cooperatively with its allies. Trump's crude belligerence was both reprehensible and, in practical terms, pointless. But the record of the Trump period strongly suggests that, although desirable, it is not necessary for the United States to be diplomatic in its relations with its allies. U.S. alliances are asymmetric and are becoming more so as the power projection capabilities of the junior partners atrophy. The United States has a lot of unused leverage to push its allies even harder. It can neglect them without reprisal, even if many commentators do not think it should. Trump produced a clarifying moment; for a few years, he starkly revealed that U.S. allies have a high threshold for mistreatment and bullying. Attestations of American decline, which would likely entail the defection of U.S. allies to other patrons, are exaggerated.

This realization should allow the Biden administration to demand more from U.S. allies than most administrations have asked for in the past, particularly in the realm of defense spending. The United States can at times bully its allies because they rely on American power. The politesse of reassurance may be desirable and decorous, but U.S. allies are not about to abandon their patron.

The Dictator's New Playbook

Why Democracy Is Losing the Fight

Moisés Naím

Around the world, from the richest countries to the poorest, a dangerous new crop of leaders has sprung up. Unlike their totalitarian counterparts, these populists entered office through elections, but they show decidedly undemocratic proclivities. They propagate lies that become articles of faith among their followers. They sell themselves as noble and pure champions of the people, fighting against corrupt and greedy elites. They defy any constraints on their power and concentrate it in their own hands, launching frontal attacks on the institutions that sustain constitutional democracy, stacking the judiciary and the legislature, declaring war on the press, and scrapping laws that check their authority.

The new autocrats include current leaders such as Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, Hungary's Viktor Orban, India's Narendra Modi, Mexico's Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte, Russia's Vladimir Putin, and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The label also applies to leaders who are no longer in power, such as the late Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, Austria's Sebastian Kurz, and, yes, the United States' Donald Trump. All reengineered the old dictator's playbook to enhance their ability to impose their will on others. Despite the enormous national, cultural, institutional, and ideological differences among their countries, the new autocrats' approaches are uncannily similar. Bolsonaro and López Obrador, for example, could not be more different ideologically or more similar in their strategies to grab and retain power.

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Turkey, home to early civilizations and once the cradle of empires, and the United States, the modern, mighty superpower, are lands of stark contrasts. Yet both Erdogan and Trump waged unrelenting campaigns against the institutions that might hem them in. Kurz, the debonair former Austrian chancellor, who dressed in finely tailored suits, seemed nothing at all as a leader like Duterte, the brawling Philippine leader, yet both launched vigorous and calculated offensives to distort their countries' public spheres until, politically, up was down and down was up.

In essence, this cohort uses populism, capitalizes on polarization, and revels in post-truth politics to undermine democratic norms and amass power, preferably for life. These techniques are not new; in fact, they have always been part of the struggle for power. But the ways they are being combined and deployed worldwide today are unprecedented. Many of the new autocrats have successfully co-opted the free press in their respective countries, in some cases by having their business cronies snap up media properties. The explosion of information and media online, moreover, has created opportunities for deception, manipulation, and control that simply didn't exist as recently as a decade ago. Declining trust in the traditional institutions that once served as gatekeepers to the public sphere has vastly lowered the reputational costs of bald-faced lying. And the globalization of polarization has created new opportunities for alliances with leaders who are using similar wedge issues in other countries. The result is a crisis in the sustainability of democratic government on a scale not seen since the rise of fascists across Europe in the 1930s.

PLAYING TO THE CHEAP SEATS

A commonality in the new breed of autocrats is how they portray themselves as embodying the will of the people, championing their cause against a corrupt elite. Populists work to collapse all political controversies into this "noble people" versus "venal elite" dichotomy, explaining any and every problem as the direct consequence of a dastardly plan by a small but all-powerful group harboring contempt for a pure but powerless people whom it exploits. Of course, if that is the case, what the people need is a messianic savior, a champion able to stand up to that voracious elite, to bring it to heel on behalf of the people.

It is a common mistake to treat populism as an ideology. It is better understood as a technique for seeking power that is compatible with a nearly limitless range of specific ideologies. Virtually any ob-

stacle to autocratic rule can be characterized as another trick of the corrupt elite, and virtually any move to concentrate and amass power in the hands of the populist ruler can be justified as necessary to defeat the rich and powerful and protect the people. Populism's adaptability is its strength: it can be deployed anywhere, because in the hands of the power hungry, resentment against the elite can be mobilized everywhere, especially in the many countries where economic inequality has spiked.

Polarization follows naturally from populism. Once the basic opposition between the noble people and the corrupt elite has been put at the center of political life, the priority becomes to sharpen the opposition between them. Marxists would call this "heightening the contradictions." Polarization strategies aim to sweep away the possibility of a middle ground between political rivals, depicting compromise as betrayal and seeking to amplify and exploit any opening for discord.

Polarization warps the relationship between followers and their leaders. In a healthy democracy, citizens can support or oppose a given leader on a certain issue without necessarily feeling the need to support him or her on every issue. But when politics become deeply polarized, a populist leader redefines what it means to agree. As the representative of the people in the fight against the elite, the populist leader maintains the right to decide which views define membership in the true citizenry. That is why so many populist leaders manage to extract from their followers complete and unconditional loyalty to all their views—even those that contradict the ones they espoused the day before. Thus, the Brazilians who support Bolsonaro unquestioningly back their president both when he claims that there is no corruption in his government at all and when he claims that the corruption in his government is not his fault, because he doesn't know about it.

Populism and polarization are old political tactics. Charismatic leaders dating back to Julius Caesar and Charlemagne built cults of personality. And fostering an idealized public image necessarily requires lying. But the post-truthism that the new autocrats are so apt at employing goes far beyond fibbing: it denies the existence of a verifiable reality. Post-truthism is not chiefly about getting lies accepted as truths but about muddying the waters to the point that it becomes difficult to discern the difference between truth and falsehood. Autocrats constantly spewing lies and half-truths get their followers to accept that things are true entirely because they have said them. The truth of an

Populist in chief: Trump at the White House, Washington, D.C., July 2019

DAVID BUTOW / REDUX

utterance is therefore independent from its correspondence with reality and derives instead from the identity of the person saying it.

There is a deep nihilism involved in a post-truth philosophy. Seemingly absurd ideas come to be regarded as gospel. In Bolivia, President Evo Morales got millions of his followers to accept as an article of faith that presidential term limits amounted to a fundamental human rights violation. In the Philippines, Duterte built support for extrajudicial killings by relentlessly portraying concern for human rights as an affectation of a corrupt elite. And Trump, of course, persuaded countless supporters that assaulting the U.S. Capitol to derail the certification of election results constituted a brave stand in favor of election integrity.

Such absurdities become accepted by autocrats' followers because their psychological relationship to the leader is distorted by the prism of identity. These are the politics of fandom: the supporters of an autocrat are much like the fans of a sports team who put their emotional identification with the club at the center of their sense of who they are. The melding of an individual's identity with the identity of the leader explains why it is often hopeless to try to reason with the followers of politicians such as Morales, Duterte, or Trump. When one's identity is built on identification with a leader, any criticism of that leader feels like a personal attack on oneself.

Here it is worth considering the tactics of Chávez, in particular his famously long-winded Venezuelan television show, *Aló Presidente*, which aired weekly for most of his tenure in office. In it, the president ranged broadly, zipping back and forth between telling stories, spouting political diatribes, singing songs from his childhood, phoning Fidel Castro, broadcasting from Moscow, and fulminating against enemies real and imagined. But at its core, the theme of the show was always the same: empathy. In each episode, Chávez would chat, one-on-one, with a few of his supporters, asking about their lives, their aspirations, and their problems, and always, always feeling their pain. If Trump liked to play a mogul on TV, Chávez liked to play Oprah.

Chávez's performances could be spellbinding. He would decry the rising price of chicken and then, teary-eyed, hug a woman over her trouble finding the money for school supplies for her children. He would sit and listen carefully as people described their problems, learning their names and asking them questions to draw out the details of their situation. It was during these moments of personally bonding with his followers, more than during his ideological tirades, that Chávez shifted the basis of allegiance to him from the political realm to the realm of primary identification. Such moments turned followers into fans, fans who in time would coalesce into a political tribe: people who crafted an identity out of their shared devotion to "El Comandante."

The adulation audiences showered on their star was the raw material Chávez turned into power, which he then used to dismantle the checks and balances at the heart of Venezuela's constitution. I grew up in Venezuela, and the experience of seeing Chávez transform his fame into power and his power into celebrity marked me. So when Trump's circus engulfed U.S. politics in 2016, I watched with a horror suffused with déjà vu. The histrionics, the easy answers, the furious denunciations by a nebulous elite that woke up to the danger far too late—I had seen this movie before. In Spanish.

POWER AT ANY PRICE

The spread of this new kind of autocracy around the world amounts to a new kind of challenge for the world's democracies. Whereas the tragic events that marked much of the twentieth century revealed the threats that democracy faced from the outside—fascism, Nazism, communism—the threats in the twenty-first century are coming from inside the house. The

new breed of autocrats corrode democracy by taking part in democratic politics and then hollowing them out until only an empty shell remains.

The new autocrats can do this because they have neither an interest in nor a need for a coherent ideology. Their agenda is to obtain and keep power at any cost. The result is quite different from the political movements that characterized the twentieth century. Fascists and communists challenged democracy based on all-encompassing alternative systems of belief that may have been morally abhorrent but were, at least, internally consistent. Today's autocrats don't bother with any of that. Instead of proposing an alternative ideology, they adopt the phraseology of the ideology they are seeking to supplant, debasing it in the process.

The defenders of democracy have failed to counter the poisonous power of post-truth deceit.

Rather than do away with elections altogether, the new pseudo-dictators hold pseudo-elections. That is, they hold events that mimic the appearance of a democratic election but that lack the essential elements of free and fair competition through the ballot box. In Nicaragua, President Daniel Ortega did not abolish elections; he merely jailed all his main opponents in the months preceding the election of 2021. In Hungary, parliamentary districts were manipulated to severely underrepresent areas opposed to Orban. And in the United States, Republicans and, to a lesser extent, Democrats have turbocharged the venerable old gerrymander with sophisticated election-mapping software that will make an increasing share of congressional districts noncompetitive.

Not only are elections debased in this way, but the rule of law is also reliably drained of meaning through the use of pseudo-law. New laws are drafted in ways designed to apply to just one case—invariably undoing a constraint on the power of the leader. Examples abound: in 2001, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi helped change the rules on conflict of interest to exempt his own media ventures; in 2008, Putin evaded term limits by concocting a job swap with his prime minister. These autocrats hound independent judges off the bench, intimidate them into silence, or render them powerless through court packing. Tribunals continue to hand down rulings that punctiliously observe all the conventions of normal legal procedure but that have predetermined outcomes based on political grounds. The biggest prize, of course, is

the supreme court. Controlling it changes the game. In 2015, a group of Venezuelan legal scholars published an analysis showing that from 2005 to 2013, Chávez's handpicked supreme court handed down 45,474 rulings, and in every case, it sided with the executive branch. The Duma, the lower house of Russia's parliament, has exhibited a similar pattern in its dealings with Putin. No law that threatens his power or interests has been passed in two decades.

Soon, the public sphere is falsified, as well. Twentieth-century autocrats jailed dissenting voices and sent censors into newsrooms. Old-style dictators still behave that way today. The more recent breed of autocrats, however, often seek the same results but through less visible—and more democratic-looking—means. Rather than shut down newspapers and TV networks, they fine them into financial unsustainability or send ostensible private investors (who are in fact government cronies) to buy them outright. Orban's allies, for example, have bought up and consolidated hundreds of private Hungarian news outlets. For anyone outside a very small, politically savvy circle of observers, it was easy to miss. But the media content gradually changed until it became difficult to distinguish the reporting from the regime's propaganda. Similar developments have taken place in Egypt, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Montenegro, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, and Venezuela, among other countries.

Over time, a pseudo-press arises, maintaining all the conventions and outward trappings of independent journalism but none of its substance. The combination of pseudo-elections, pseudo-law, and a pseudo-press yields pseudo-democracy: a system of government that mimics democracy in order to subvert it.

CAPOS IN CHARGE

But falsifying democracy is a means, not an end. The ultimate goal is to turn the state into a profit center for a new criminalized coterie and to use the proceeds of large-scale criminality to tighten its grip on power. The new autocrats go well beyond traditional corruption; they are not merely overseeing a system in which some criminals inside and outside government furtively enrich themselves. Rather, they use criminal actions and strategies to further the political and economic interests of their government at home and abroad.

Criminalized states put the usual repertoire of a mob boss, such as demands for protection money, overt intimidation, and back-street

beatings, to political ends: silencing opponents, cowing critics, enforcing complicity, enriching allies, and buying political support internally and externally. A criminalized state combines traditional statecraft with the strategies and methods of transnational criminal cartels, and it deploys this mixture in the service of both domestic political goals and geopolitical competition. Some cases are infamous, such as the thick morass of business, intelligence, and political ties between the Trump Organization and Russian oligarchs and officials that led to Trump's first impeachment and is the focus of continuing investigations by various different U.S. agencies. In Russia, Putin has managed to turn the old Soviet system into a Mafia state in which a minuscule elite enjoys security and extraordinary wealth and answers to him alone. Venezuela provides an even more extreme example: in cahoots with the regime of President Nicolás Maduro, Colombian guerrillas in the jungles of Venezuela illegally mine gold that is then laundered in Qatar and Turkey, circumventing U.S. sanctions on financing the Venezuelan regime. This is organized crime, yes, but it is much more than that; it is organized crime as statecraft, coordinated by the governments of three separate nation-states.

SLEEPWALKING TOWARD AUTOCRACY

Democracies are at a structural disadvantage when it comes to combating the rise of this new breed of autocrats. Debate, forbearance, compromise, tolerance, and a willingness to accept the legitimacy of an adversary's bid for power are necessary for a functioning democracy. But in the age of politics as entertainment, these values continually lose space to their opposites, namely, invective, maximalism, intolerance, fandom, messianism, the demonization of opponents, and, too often, hate and violence.

The traditional separation of politics and entertainment imposed its own set of guardrails: formal institutions (such as laws, legislatures, and courts) and informal norms (of decorum, the dignity of office, and so on) were highly effective ways of hemming in power. But norms are unspoken and ill defined, making them vulnerable. When politicians are just public servants, it is much easier for the political system to impose restraints on their behavior. The new autocrats' celebrity status loosens those restraints. Their fans have so much of their own identities invested in their leaders that they can't allow them to fail.

Moreover, burgeoning discontent around much of the globe has created a fertile environment for these autocrats. This frustration is not

limited to those in penury, for it is not just the poor who are disappointed with their lot in life. Nor is this anger solely attributable to economic inequality, although inequality, having acquired unprecedented potency as a source of social conflict, feeds the feeling of injustice that makes people angry. An important source of anxiety for those who have their basic needs covered (food, a roof over their heads, some regular income, health care, safety) is status dissonance: the bitterness that wells up when people conclude that their economic and social progress is blocked, and they are stuck on a lower rung than the one they expected to occupy in society. Status dissonance is amplified by the sense that rather than coming closer to your rightful place in society, you are falling further and further below your natural spot in the pecking order.

Democracies are at a structural disadvantage when it comes to combating this new breed of autocrats.

This experience of status dissonance ties together the outlooks of widely different people who have supported aspiring autocrats in very different contexts. The downwardly mobile schoolteacher in the Philippines, the displaced autoworker in Michigan, the unemployed university graduate in Moscow, and the struggling construction worker in Hungary may not have much in common, but they all feel the sting of disappointment from a life that doesn't live up to the expectations they had formed, to the future they had envisioned for themselves and their families. The story of the twenty-first century so far is of how the disappointed lash out politically, creating a series of crises that liberal political systems are ill equipped to process and respond to in a timely way.

Even when they are operating effectively, the best democratic systems rely on messy compromises that leave everyone somewhat—but never too—disaffected and dissatisfied. More and more, however, democracies are not at their best. Instead of involving messy but workable compromises, they are gripped by perpetual gridlock. Compromises, when they are found, are sometimes so minimal as to leave all sides seething with contempt. It is when this happens—when the capacity for problem solving dips below a critical threshold—that the terrain is ready for autocrats who promise simple solutions to complex problems.

This sclerosis can be chalked up in part to regulatory capture, in which industries, through lobbying and political contributions, are able to exert

enormous influence over the regulatory agencies supposed to watch over them. This is sometimes seen as a purely U.S. disease, but it shouldn't be. In all mature democracies, well-organized interest groups increasingly own the decision-making processes in the issue areas of concern to them. It is nearly impossible for the European Union, for instance, to make significant changes to its agricultural policies without the approval of European agribusiness. Mining interests in Australia, telecommunications companies in Canada, and cement firms in Japan have all perfected the dark arts of regulatory capture, becoming by far the predominant voices in the policy debates in each of their areas. In the United States, Wall Street, Hollywood, and Silicon Valley are not just geographic locations; they are also home to the headquarters of large companies that have a tight grip on their regulators. The inability to contain regulatory capture means that as income inequality deepens, growth itself has become one of those policies that benefits a few people a lot and many people hardly at all. Hemmed in by more areas of policy that have been captured by industry interests, today's democracies find it increasingly hard to provide adequate responses to the demands of the voters. Recent evidence is the political upheaval in Chile, a developing country that had become both economically successful and a stable democracy. The dashed expectations of an already frustrated middle class fueled the resentment that built gradually and then boiled over all at once, rocking the system that had been in place for three decades.

Weaknesses commonly found in democracies also make it difficult to mount a united front against the new autocrats. Look, for instance, at how voting structures in the European Union have prevented it from holding Orban to account or from stopping Hungary from blocking criticism of China and Russia. The Trump administration's frustrations with the challenges and democratic norms of multilateral diplomacy caused it to withdraw from various international bodies. In 2018, it pulled out of the UN Human Rights Council, citing the membership of malefactors such as China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Venezuela. Yet as Eliot Engel, then a Democratic congressman from New York, noted, that withdrawal just allowed "the council's bad actors to follow their worst impulses unchecked." The way to strengthen democracy is not to withdraw from universalist bodies, which are the battlegrounds for influence, but to forge alliances within them and use them more effectively. For instance, democracies account for 80 percent of the funding for the World Health Organiza-

tion: properly concentrated, such power could have blunted the effort of China, which contributes only two percent, to distort the organization's initial investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO US?

"We do not know what is happening to us," the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset wrote in the disorienting year of 1929, adding, "and that is precisely what is happening to us." The plight of democracy today recalls his admonition.

The defenders of democracy seem caught off balance not just by the blatant criminality of the new autocrats but also by the onslaught against democratic checks and balances. Political leaders and policymakers have failed to counter the illiberal, populist narratives; the polarizing tactics; and the poisonous power of post-truth deceit. They have not yet put forward a compelling case for liberal democracy under the rule of law—an institutional arrangement too many young people have come to see as a quaint throwback with little relevance to contemporary realities. Worse, disoriented by the multiple layers of dissimulation that modern autocracy involves, democratic societies have not even fully grasped that they are in a fight to protect their freedoms. This is a key strategic advantage for autocratic leaders: they know that they must undermine democracy to survive, whereas democrats have yet to realize that they need to defeat the new autocracy if they are to survive.

Fighting back will require determination and the mobilization of all types of resources—political, economic, and technological. Those battling on behalf of democratic institutions will need to fortify checks and balances and pass measures aimed at fostering fair political competition. Diplomats keen to preserve democracy will need to push for more effective rules in the international arena to check the spread of post-truth deception in media new and old.

None of this is possible without clarity. No problem has ever been solved without first being identified, and no fight has ever been won without first being waged. Recognizing the magnitude of the problem is an important first step; action must follow. If democracies wait until the new autocrats' endgame is unambiguous, it will be too late.

When Migrants Become Weapons

The Long History and Worrying Future of a Coercive Tactic

Kelly M. Greenhill

In the fall of 2021, the leaders of several European countries announced that they were being confronted by an entirely new security threat: weaponized migration. Over the course of a few months, Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian leader of Belarus, enticed thousands of migrants and would-be asylum seekers, primarily Kurds from Iraq and Syria, as well as some Afghans, to his country with promises of easy access to the European Union. Flown into the capital, Minsk, on special visas, they were bused to Belarus's western border, where they were left in large, unprotected encampments as winter approached and temperatures plunged. Despite EU legislation and UN treaties guaranteeing humanitarian protections for asylum seekers, border guards from Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland pushed those attempting to enter their countries back into Belarus, employing tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets. In orchestrating a televised humanitarian crisis on the EU's doorstep, Lukashenko produced a major headache for European policymakers. Although the Belarusian leader's motivations remain opaque, a key objective appears to have been to discomfit, humiliate, and sow division within the EU for failing to recognize him as the legitimate winner of the flawed 2020 Belarusian presidential election and for imposing sanctions on his country after he brutally suppressed the pro-democracy protests that followed.

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To many observers, the manufactured crisis marked the beginning of a dangerous new era in international power politics. Ylva Johansson, the EU commissioner for home affairs, suggested that Lukashenko's strategy was a novel way of "using human beings in an act of aggression," and commentators warned that what Gabrielius Landsbergis, the Lithuanian foreign minister, called "a hybrid weapon" could soon be adopted by other leaders: since conventional wars have become too costly, the argument went, more and more governments may seek to turn migrants and asylum seekers "into bullets," as the political scientist Mark Leonard warned—especially to target the EU, a coveted destination that is surrounded by impoverished, repressive, and unstable states.

For European governments, trumpeting the novelty of Belarus's actions has been politically useful. At a time when an unprecedented number of people are on the move and anti-immigration sentiment is at an all-time high, irregular migration flows pose far-reaching challenges. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, there are now more than 82 million forcibly displaced people worldwide—or one out of every 95 people on earth. And that number is unlikely to shrink anytime soon. As some politicians have declared, only by defending the EU's external borders with fences, walls, and robust policing can the bloc protect itself from future acts of predation.

But all the handwringing in European capitals has missed the point. For one thing, there was nothing remotely original about Lukashenko's actions. Fifty years ago, in language strikingly similar to Johansson's, India's ambassador to the UN, Samar Sen, accused Pakistan of a "new crime of refugee aggression" after an estimated ten million refugees were induced to cross into India from what was then East Pakistan. Even the techniques that Lukashenko employed were old-school: in using travel agents to lure migrants to Minsk, the Belarusian leader stole a page from the playbook of East Germany, which in the mid-1980s placed advertisements throughout the Middle East and South Asia promising "comfortable flights" to East Berlin and "quick and smooth transit" into the West as part of a successful scheme to extract economic and political concessions from West Germany.

Nor has weaponized migration been confined to Europe. The United States has been an especially frequent target, with the tactic used against nearly every U.S. administration from Dwight Eisenhower's in the 1950s through George W. Bush's in the first decade of this century. And Nicaragua's recent decision to eliminate visa re-

Unwelcome: migrants at the Greek-Turkish border, March 2020

quirements for Cubans entering Nicaragua has not only created a valuable pressure relief valve for Cuba but also offered Nicaragua an additional potent source of leverage against the United States, should it feel the need for another bargaining chip.

While hardly new, Lukashenko's gambit did serve to bring this oft-deployed weapon into full view. In doing so, the Belarusian leader showed how little Western governments, even now, understand the tactic and the ways it plays on the inherently contradictory and hypocritical politics surrounding migration in many advanced democracies. By exploiting political divisions that exist within the targeted states, the threatened or actual deployment of engineered flows of migrants has long been a distressingly effective policy instrument, and it is unlikely to go away anytime soon. Unless policymakers begin to confront the forces that enable weaponized migration, the favored policy responses seem destined to increase, rather than curtail, its use.

FROM RAPID CASH TO REGIME CHANGE

Although it has multiple uses, weaponized migration is often employed as an instrument of state-level coercion, undertaken to achieve a wide range of geopolitical and other foreign policy goals that have been frustrated by other means. States and nonstate actors have resorted to this tactic at least 81 times—and possibly many more—since the advent of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which granted those fleeing political persecu-

DIMITRIS TOSIDIS / XINHUA / EYEVINE / REDUX

tion the right to seek asylum in states that are signatories to the agreement. Governments that weaponize migration to achieve foreign policy objectives are often, but not always, autocratic; their targets have disproportionately, but not exclusively, been advanced liberal democracies.

The foreign policy objectives sought have been as diverse as the coercers themselves. Often, weak, relatively impoverished countries have used weaponized migration to extract financial and other forms of in-kind aid from wealthier and more powerful targets. In at least four separate episodes in the 1990s, for example, the Albanian government obtained food aid, economic assistance, and even military assistance from Italian special forces in exchange for stanching flows of Albanian migrants into Italy. On other occasions, the tool has been deployed to achieve political and military aims. In 1994, the exiled Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide persuaded a reluctant United States to reinstall him in office in part by threatening to mobilize large numbers of Haitians to "take to the sea" and head for the United States if the Americans failed to do so. And in the early 1980s, the Pakistani leader Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq agreed to continue to host three million Afghan refugees then residing in Pakistan—many of whom were allied with the United States in its fight against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan—in exchange for a variety of concessions from Washington, including the cessation of U.S. opposition to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program.

Weaponized migration has long been a distressingly effective policy instrument.

When weaponized migration is used, it is often successful. In nearly three-quarters of the 81 cases I have identified, the tactic achieved at least some of the desired objectives; in well over half, it obtained most or all of what was sought. By comparison, traditional forms of coercive diplomacy—including sanctions and military operations short of all-out war—tend to succeed, at best, only about 40 percent of the time. Although governments usually resort to weaponized migration quite selectively, when there is a high probability of a favorable outcome, the record shows how attractive the tool can be. But migrants seeking a better life and refugees fleeing wars and devastation do not in themselves constitute a weapon. Crucially, the effectiveness of migration flows as a method of coercive statecraft depends on the attitude and politics of the targeted country.

A CONVENIENT THREAT

For many countries, the specter of an influx of migrants has reliably triggered a fraught political response. On multiple occasions in the first decade of this century, for example, the Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi promised to "turn Europe Black" and "Muslim" if the EU failed to meet his various demands for financial and other forms of assistance. Such threats played into long-standing European concerns about being overrun by African migrants, and for many years, the EU complied. (In the years since the 2011 uprising, the militias that now control Libya have found new ways to continue the practice.) Similarly, over the past decade, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly threatened to "flood" the EU with migrants from the Middle East and farther afield unless Brussels provided certain concessions. In 2016, this resulted in an infamous deal in which he received promises of six billion euros in financial assistance, a revival of EU accession talks, and visa-free travel for Turkish citizens seeking to enter the EU in exchange for continued assistance from Ankara in stanching migration flows into the European Union.

For Libya and Turkey, the mere issuance of such threats has often been sufficient to obtain desired concessions. It helps that both countries understand that the Europeans are caught between a rock and a hard place: they do not want to take refugees, but they cannot easily refuse to do so, either. In a meeting with EU officials in late 2015, Erdogan reportedly quipped, "So how will you deal with refugees if you don't get a deal? Kill the refugees?"

As these and many other cases show, manufacturing an influx of people—or simply threatening to do so—can be an effective way of leveling the playing field with more powerful adversaries. Direct testimony from officials in countries that have used weaponized migration—including Cuba, Haiti, and Turkey—indicates that a migration emergency often opens up bargaining space that did not previously exist through conventional diplomatic channels. And even when coercers do not obtain their preferred outcomes, such engineered migration flows often force their countries' interests into view. Indeed, in a significant number of cases, including perhaps Belarus in 2021, a key objective may simply be to create a crisis that forces the engagement of the targeted countries; migration happens to be a particularly useful instrument for doing so.

CREATING MORE TARGETS

Historically, the policy responses to weaponized migration have fallen into several distinct categories. As the high success rate of the tactic shows, governments have frequently chosen to concede to the coercers' demands. In addition to potential reputational and other political costs, however, a drawback to conceding is that it encourages the weaponizers, like successful hostage takers, to return to the strategy time and again. Cuba, for instance, used weaponized migration against the United States on three different occasions between the 1960s and the 1990s—most notoriously permitting the departure to the coast of Florida of more than 125,000 Cubans during the 1980 Mariel boatlift—in order to obtain a variety of concessions. Haiti did the same in the 1970s and 1980s under the Duvaliers. This continued in the 1990s and into the early years of this century under Aristide, at which point Aristide made one migration threat too many and found himself being flown into exile in central Africa by a fed-up Washington. More recently, the EU's concessions to Libya and Turkey have encouraged those countries to come back for more. The fact that the Europeans have paid these countries over sustained periods to host ever-larger numbers of displaced people—Turkey is host to more refugees than any other country—also means that their threats should be treated as credible.

Alternatively, targeted governments can respond to a threatened migration inflow by abrogating their humanitarian commitments, closing their borders, and locking their doors. In some cases, countries have reacted to engineered migration crises—as they have to ordinary migration flows—by partially or completely outsourcing the handling of the influx. The United States used this tool with varying degrees of success in the latter part of the twentieth century, seeking assistance from Panama and other Latin American countries to house Haitian migrants in exchange for financial aid and other assistance. Similarly, since the early years of this century, Australia has paid the tiny island nation of Nauru and other remote islands in its vicinity to detain would-be asylum seekers and keep them away from Australian shores. These "warehouse" countries, however, can become weaponizers themselves—as Nauru has demonstrated on multiple occasions, demanding, according to some reports, ever-larger payments from the Australian government for doing its bidding.

For advanced liberal democracies, buying off others to keep migrants at bay may also come at a high political and moral cost. Contravening their humanitarian and legal obligations can reinforce

anti-immigration sentiment domestically and further undermine the values that liberal states claim to hold dear. And when one country does it, that may encourage others to follow suit, triggering a cascade of illiberal anti-migration measures, a process that has been well underway in many countries for decades. Indeed, considering the EU's Faustian bargain with the militias now controlling Libya—which have set up EU-funded detention centers for thousands migrants trying to reach Europe—one might reasonably conclude that the EU has adopted and vigorously embraced the Australian model of offshore warehousing. Unfortunately for European leaders, apart from facing the moral cost of such arrangements, they, too, are now experiencing the knock-on effects, including the militias' brandishing of those same detainee populations for the purposes of serial weaponization and coercion.

Yet another possible policy response, if one used less frequently, is to take military action to change conditions on the ground in the coercing country. But wars can be costly, and their outcomes uncertain. Although foreign-imposed or foreign-assisted regime change has sometimes achieved its primary objective—Qaddafi was removed from power in 2011—no such venture in the last three decades has gone wholly according to plan. Moreover, in almost every case, the military incursion cost more, and generated more refugees and internally displaced people, than was expected at the outset. In Libya in 2011, the NATO-led intervention helped destabilize not only the country itself but also the broader region, generating an even larger pool of displaced people on Europe's periphery—and making the EU even more vulnerable to weaponized migration.

DISARMING THE WEAPON

Paradoxically, part of the recurring effectiveness of weaponized migration seems to stem precisely from the fact that policymakers are often woefully unaware of its long history and the lessons that can be drawn from its past use. Time and time again, governments confronted with such a situation erroneously believe that what they are seeing is a brand-new form of blackmail or aggression. Victor Palmieri, who was the U.S. coordinator for refugee affairs at the time of the 1980 Mariel boatlift, would later describe his bafflement that this tool had long been in use, including by Castro himself—in the Camarioca boatlift 15 years earlier. "We spent a week in the Situation Room worrying about what to do . . . before I heard the word 'Camarioca,'" Palmieri recalled. He continued: "I remember saying, 'You mean this has happened before?'" Officials in

both Havana and Washington would later acknowledge that the Mariel boatlift might have been avoided altogether had key policymakers recognized it as a tactic that had been used before. Even amid the 1999 Kosovo crisis, during which Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic carried out his threat to uproot some 800,000 Kosovar Albanians from their homes, Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, admitted that he regretted not having taken Milosevic seriously when the Serbian leader said he could empty Kosovo "within a week." Although what happened in Kosovo is often remembered purely as an episode of ethnic cleansing, Milosevic's actions were aimed squarely at NATO. He was betting that the manufactured refugee crisis—which he had previously threatened—would make the alliance reconsider its bombing campaign.

With a better understanding of how weaponized migration has been used in the past—and when it has worked and when it has not—the range of policy responses becomes broader. One option is to negotiate with would-be weaponizers in the very early stages of a potential confrontation, despite strong predispositions not to do so. History shows that weaponized migration is rarely a strategy of first resort, and in a number of cases, such as the Cuban boatlifts, earlier and more proactive diplomacy would most certainly have staved off unnecessary crises. Preemptive engagement would require careful monitoring of the prevailing conditions in the potential weaponizing state, coupled with efforts to respond quickly when a government begins to make threatening noises. Evidence from past cases strongly suggests that a bit less hubris, less public name-calling, and more private negotiations could result in fewer future confrontations, especially when a coercer has sent signals that it is turning to migrant flows only because its more powerful counterparts have refused to take its concerns seriously. Although there are few indications that leading Western governments are prepared to adopt such a proactive approach, better familiarity with how migration has been instrumentalized in the past—and of the missed opportunities along the way—could result in new thinking on the issue.

Finally, there is another way to deal with weaponized migration that may be the most effective, although it is often the least talked about: accommodation. Theoretically, targeted governments could greatly diminish the potency of the tool simply by absorbing and assimilating the migrants. In effect, faced with the threat of an engineered migrant influx, a targeted country or block of countries could refuse to make any concessions and instead, without fanfare, receive and process the dis-

placed people, thus removing the strategic leverage of the government sending them. After all, although it was portrayed as a large-scale threat, the Belarusian crisis involved at most several thousand people and would have represented little more than a blip in overall EU asylum figures.

Of course, a successful accommodation strategy would require astute and proactive political management and, more broadly, efforts to change negative perceptions of migrants among less welcoming constituents. Essential would be the rapid provision of financial assistance and other forms of support to the communities, regions, and states expected to take in the newcomers. This holds true inside individual countries as well as within multinational entities, such as the European Union. Although not associated with an episode of weaponized migration, the warm reception granted to Afghan refugees in many countries and communities following the August 2021 withdrawal of the United States and its allies from Afghanistan demonstrates that accommodation is still possible under the right circumstances, even in today's fraught and polarized political climate.

For now, however, the prospect of a larger change of course by targeted states seems unlikely. If anything, governments are moving in the opposite direction, by continuing to tighten their immigration laws and asylum policies and by further limiting their legal commitments to the protection of the most vulnerable populations of the world. These trends only accelerated with the rise of populist nationalism and Trumpism and are not easily divisible along political party lines on either side of the Atlantic. It is also worth noting that cultural hostility toward migrants often has little to do with the size of an influx or the ability of the destination country to accommodate them. It is revealing that weaponized migration has succeeded in cases featuring only tens of people and failed in others involving millions.

OUT IN THE OPEN

If what Lukashenko sought to do on the Belarusian border wasn't novel, it did accomplish something that many other recent episodes of weaponized migration have failed to do: it laid bare in a visible and dramatic way a paradoxical reality of the current global order. Although the world is highly interconnected and the movements of goods, services, and money are now treated as global issues, most governments continue to think in national terms about the movement of people. And the extensive history of responses to weaponized migration sug-

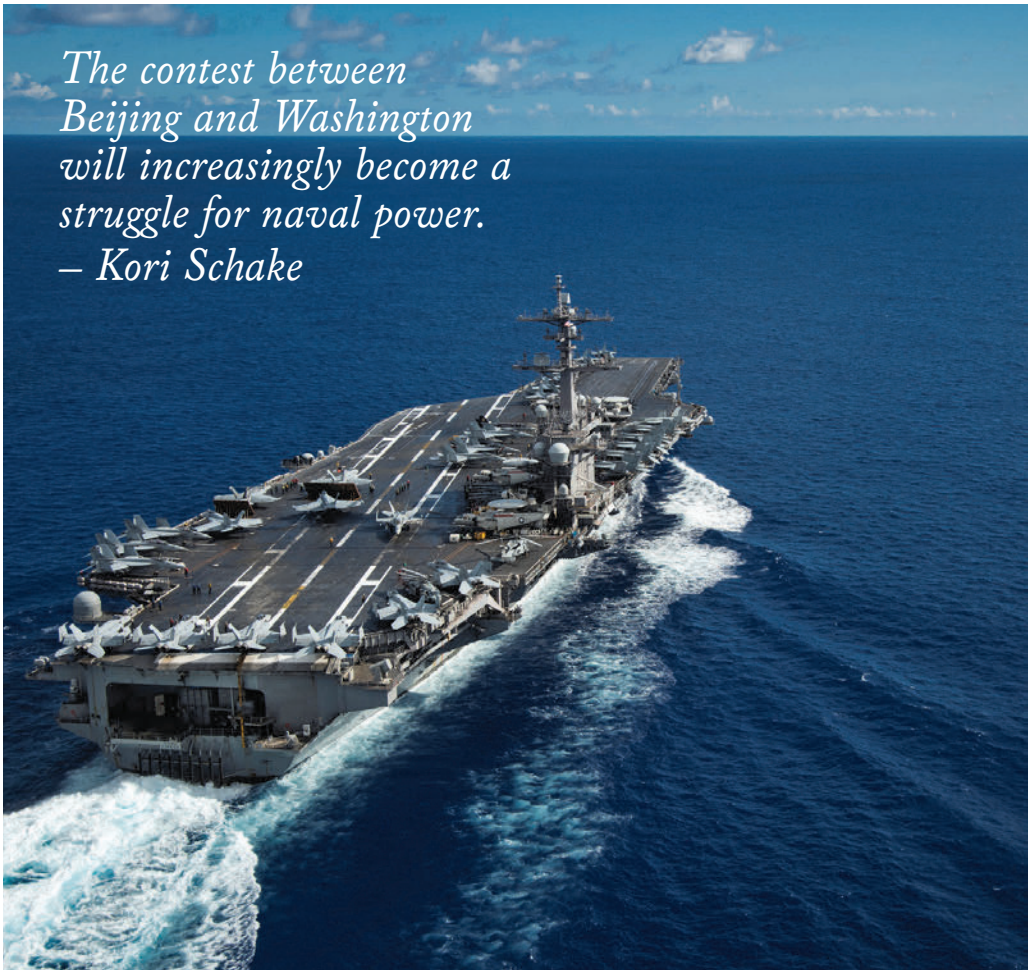
gests that the tool has long been a particularly effective way for governments to exploit that understanding of migrants and other people on the move to get their demands met.

But the Belarusian crisis—and the European reaction to it—also showed the extent to which the tactic itself has come far more into the open. As the number of governments willing to use the tactic publicly—as opposed to privately, by issuing threats directly to government officials—has risen, so has the number of targeted countries that are prepared to publicly acknowledge that they are being blackmailed. This marks a substantive and important change from decades past. And it makes the use of this kind of coercion far more difficult to miss, which might help explain why some observers mistakenly believe that it is new and that its use is suddenly proliferating.

This growing transparency, however, may be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it makes coercers' demands more credible and more likely to be taken seriously, which could in turn push targeted governments to pursue early, pre-crisis negotiations. On the other hand, it can also serve as political cover for targeted states' own harsh and illiberal immigration policies: as long as irregular migration is seen as posing a security threat, the current trend toward ever-tighter immigration restrictions, despite declining birthrates in many advanced democracies, is likely to continue. These moves will further weaken the framework that undergirds the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which strengthened the original convention, and the universal humanitarian standards for refugees they set out to establish. And although the fledgling Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration—a nonbinding agreement endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2018—includes a host of admirable aspirations, it has no actionable methods to sanction noncompliance and other bad behaviors.

None of this bodes well for the future of liberal democracy or for the protection of the world's most vulnerable. If the current dynamic prevails, not only will weaponized migration continue to be an ever more pervasive symptom of a collapsing global migration regime, with the destabilizing, self-reinforcing effects that come with it. In addition, Western governments may begin to undermine the human rights and freedoms they purport to stand for. If the advanced liberal democracies are to survive as advanced and liberal and democratic, they will need to find a way to keep their borders secure without losing their identity, their values, and the liberal state itself.

REVIEWS & RESPONSES



U.S. NAVY HANDOUT / REUTERS

Lost at Sea

The Dangerous Decline of American Naval Power

Kori Schake

To Rule the Waves: How Control of the World's Oceans Shapes the Fate of the Superpowers
BY BRUCE D. JONES. Scribner, 2021, 400 pp.

The Blue Age: How the US Navy Created Global Prosperity—and Why We're in Danger of Losing It
BY GREGG EASTERBROOK. PublicAffairs, 2021, 304 pp.

In 1897, the British Parliament pressed George Goschen, first lord of the Admiralty, about the potential maritime threat posed by a deepening alliance of continental European powers. Asked what the United Kingdom would do if it were confronted by multiple European navies at sea, Goschen replied, "Trust in Providence and a good Admiral." In other words, the United Kingdom had no good answer for a challenge of that magnitude.

The same could be said of the United States when it comes to the threat of a rapidly rising China. For years, the United States clung to a near-religious belief that as China grew more prosperous, it would become more democratic and politically liberal. Now that the authoritarian regime in Beijing has disproved this theory, it seems the American public can trust only in the good admirals of the U.S. Navy to handle the looming threat of an increasingly belligerent China, even as the American economy grows more and more reliant on that same adversary. That is because to a degree many observers fail to appreciate, the contest between Beijing and Washington will increasingly become a struggle for naval power.

Naval analysts joke that in a war with China, the U.S. military should first strike the port of Long Beach, in California, since disrupting China's seaborne commerce to the United States would inflict more damage on Beijing than attacking the Chinese mainland. So interwoven are transnational supply chains that pandemic delays in China caused container ship traffic jams in Long Beach so costly that the Biden administration considered deploying the National Guard to help unsnarl them. The COVID-19 pandemic has raised awareness of those global linkages and spurred some governments to consider "reshoring" production in crucial areas, but the webs of investment, communication, and production that bind economies together continue to expand. Maritime trade and power are critical to these global networks: around 90 percent of the world's traded goods are transported by sea. Discussions of power and strategy in the twenty-first century often revolve around the novel frontiers of cyberspace and outer space. But in the near term, the geopolitical

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future will play out mostly in an older, more familiar arena: the sea.

Two new books assess the challenges and importance of contemporary maritime power relations. Bruce Jones's *To Rule the Waves* and Gregg Easterbrook's *The Blue Age* are primarily concerned with international security, building on the naval strategist and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan's premise that "the history of sea power . . . is largely a military history." Both make strong cases that U.S. security and prosperity depend on naval dominance, and both are laden with omens that commercial waters will once again turn violent. These books will exasperate experts but will offer most readers helpful insights into maritime aspects of the global economy, the rise of China, and climate change.

MAKING WAVES

Jones takes a journalistic approach, using accounts of his own encounters and conversations as a foundation for his ideas and explanations. To illuminate the centrality of the oceans in everyday commerce and communications, he charts the enormous web of undersea fuel pipelines and transmission cables, underscoring global economic reliance on seaborne delivery. And he makes powerfully clear that the oceans "play a surprisingly central role in the realities of energy, and in the global fight over climate change."

Jones sets out to show that "the world's oceans are rapidly becoming the most important zone of confrontation between the world's great military actors." He argues that the cooperative patterns of the twentieth century are eroding, setting the stage for a large-scale conflict—and that geopolitical struggles are now playing out on the high seas. Given this grim forecast, Jones warns against the diminishment of U.S. maritime hegemony. His recommendations, however, are unrealistic and lack analytic rigor: he calls, for example, for an "alliance of alliances" in which the United States would orchestrate global cooperation among all energy-consuming economies. He would also have Washington "tackle the question of winners and losers from globalization" and "adopt the kinds of plans needed to abate carbon emissions." But he offers few specifics to flesh out any of these proposals.

Easterbrook likewise advocates maintaining U.S. maritime dominance, but he takes a different tack. He is clearly writing for people on the political left. "Many people do not like military organizations," he declares. "The reasons to dislike them are self-evident, and we can dream of the day when no nation requires an army or navy." Nonetheless, Easterbrook wants to make "a liberal case for the U.S. Navy" on the basis that its power has produced "an amazing reduction of poverty in the developing world . . . and higher material standards almost everywhere." Easterbrook argues that beyond maintaining U.S. naval dominance, Washington could seek to enhance the U.S. Navy's global reach by having its ships make more port calls, establishing more bases to defend allies, and enforcing freedom of navigation. But he undercuts his argument by concluding that the U.S. national debt is already too large to make such steps fiscally attainable.

Easterbrook, like Jones, offers a number of policy prescriptions, but he makes little effort to evaluate alternatives. Easterbrook is even more utopian than Jones, proposing the establishment

of a "World Oceans Organization" that would provide "a true global governance system" to protect worker rights, restrict weapons, regulate offshore energy projects, enforce free trade, and guarantee environmental standards throughout the world's waters.

Both authors make faulty assertions that dent the credibility of their analyses and prescriptive ideas. Contrary to Jones's interpretation of the 1956 Suez crisis, it was not "one of the first moments when the Cold War might have escalated into actual conflict": the 1948–49 crisis over the Soviet blockade of Berlin and the Korean War fit that description more closely. For his part, Easterbrook wrongly states that "the United States has nearly the same number of deployable modern naval vessels as do all other nations combined," when China alone has a larger navy than the United States. He also blames friction between China and the United States on "threat inflation by the military-industrial complex and alarmism by journalists," absolving China of any responsibility. Regarding the South China Sea, where China has routinely violated other countries' territorial sovereignty and created artificial islands to establish military bases, Easterbrook concludes: "So far these waters are mostly peaceful—for which China receives no credit in the West."

BOILING THE OCEAN

Despite their flaws, both books are admirable attempts to lure general readers into specialized waters. For the United States to meet the challenges of globalization, the rise of China, and climate change, ordinary Americans will need to develop a better grasp of maritime issues and of their own country's role as a naval power.

To preserve the decaying international order that Jones and Easterbrook laud, the United States will need to restore the military and civilian maritime power that it has allowed to atrophy. The global interconnectedness that both authors praise has enabled the rise of enormous private logistics conglomerates that now dwarf the U.S. merchant marine fleet, which is essential for the United States' capacity to mobilize for military purposes in times of war. In 1950, the U.S. merchant marine fleet accounted for 43 percent of global shipping; by 1994, that share had dropped to four percent, despite a 1920 law requiring ships passing between U.S. ports to be built and registered in the United States and operated by a crew of mostly U.S. citizens. The current U.S. merchant fleet of 393 vessels ranks just 27th in the world. By contrast, China has the world's second-largest merchant marine fleet, and that doesn't include the notorious paramilitary fishing fleet it uses to launch incursions into disputed waters.

The United States' lack of an extensive merchant fleet makes the country more reliant on its navy, whose fleet has also shrunk precipitously. The U.S. Navy had more ships in 1930 than it does today; China supplanted the United States as the world's largest naval power in 2020. And the Pentagon's goal of increasing the size of the fleet from 306 to 355 ships has a target date of 2034—a far-off objective for which Congress has not yet provided funding.

The United States' current military strategy puts a severe operational strain on this already limited force. Given Washington's preparations for a poten-

tial conflict with China, its commitment to send troops to Europe in the event of an attack on a NATO ally, and its use of diplomatic port visits and military exercises as a way of solidifying relationships with American partners, the U.S. military is stretched very thin. And on a number of occasions, President Joe Biden has seemed to add to the burden by publicly committing the United States to the defense of Taiwan—coming close to ending Washington's decades-long policy of "strategic ambiguity" about whether the United States would come to the island's aid in the event of a Chinese invasion. That is a demanding set of responsibilities—and one that U.S. forces cannot currently handle.

Further straining the U.S. military is the fact that, as the defense analyst Mackenzie Eaglen has written, commanders responsible for crafting war plans "make substantial (and outsized) demands for forces that outmatch or over-tax supply." Even a fleet of 500 ships would fail to satisfy combatant commanders' impossible requests. This discrepancy between the supply and the demand of U.S. naval forces takes a toll on service members: every year, an average of 20 ships have their deployments extended, and aircraft carriers regularly conduct back-to-back deployments without pauses for maintenance.

The gap between maritime obligations and fleet capabilities is wearing down the U.S. Navy, as evidenced by an increasing number of accidents at sea. The USS *Connecticut*, an attack submarine, recently struck an unidentified object while operating at depth in the South China Sea. And last year, the USS *Bonhomme Richard* had to be scrapped after a fire (allegedly set by a sailor) ravaged the ship and the crew proved unable to extinguish it; dozens of sailors and civilians were injured. Two U.S. Navy destroyers have collided with merchant ships in the past four years, resulting in the deaths of 17 sailors. In 2021, the Government Accountability Office, a federal watchdog, blamed these failures on the undermanning of crews, fatigue, and a lack of training. In 2018, an internal navy assessment found that 85 percent of junior officers were deficient in the skills they needed to handle ships.

These operational challenges are exacerbated by administrative ones. A recent report commissioned by congressional Republicans led some to criticize a naval culture that "values administrative chores over training to fight, ship commanders that are micromanaged, and an aversion to risk." The report's critique affirms complaints from several naval officers that the brilliant World War II naval commander Chester Nimitz, who was court-martialed for reckless behavior early in his career but went on to become one of the most celebrated officers in the force's history, would never have survived the bureaucratic culture of today's navy.

In his account of the decline of the British Royal Navy, the historian Andrew Gordon distinguishes between two types of military personnel: "ratcatchers," who bend rules and win wars, and "regulators," rule followers who work within the bureaucratic framework and advance in peacetime militaries only to subsequently lose wars. By prioritizing administrative tasks rather than the substantive skills necessary to win wars, the United States is creating a navy of regulators.

TURNING THE TIDE

The cultural problem of inattention to warfighting proficiency in the U.S. Navy comes from the top. The Biden administration is channeling its energy to other priorities: its Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, issued last March, prioritizes "a global pandemic, a crushing economic downturn, a crisis of racial justice, and a deepening climate emergency." When announcing Lloyd Austin as his nominee for defense secretary, Biden extolled the need for the military to distribute vaccines. Defense Department social media accounts stress the agency's commitment to expanding diversity, ending sexual harassment, and tackling climate damage. These are all important issues, but they are not the reasons the United States has a military. Nor is there adequate funding in the Pentagon's budget to include them without further displacing money needed for personnel, equipment, and operations. The Pentagon's embrace of what it calls "integrated deterrence" emphasizes economic and diplomatic tools of defense and sounds a lot like a justification for not using military power to deter adversaries.

Biden's security strategy pledges to make sure that "the U.S. Armed Forces remain the best trained and equipped force in the world," but current funding for those forces calls into question that commitment. In Biden's proposed budget for 2022, the Department of Defense was the only federal agency whose funding would not have been increased; other domestic agencies' budgets were to be increased by an average of 16 percent. Meanwhile, the Biden administration declined to fund programs such as the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which was proposed by a senior regional commander and outlined an investment in forces in the Indo-Pacific that most military experts consider critical to deterring China. (A version of the initiative was ultimately passed by Congress.) The overall spending that the Biden administration allocated for defense in its proposed budget was so inadequate that Congress ultimately added $24 billion to the administration's request.

But even with that addition, the current budget doesn't come close to the level of spending needed to carry out U.S. obligations. The United States has for nearly two decades tolerated a growing gap between its military means and its stated strategy. Biden is not wholly responsible for the problem, but it falls to his administration to manage it. And managing it will require Washington to constrict its aims, increase its spending, or find revolutionary ways to improve military performance.

The United States' current strategy would require a defense budget of about $1 trillion a year (which would equal roughly five percent of U.S. GDP) and would also necessitate doubling the $59 billion budgeted for the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Despite the gargantuan increases in domestic spending that the Biden administration has undertaken, its national security budget is unlikely to come anywhere near those levels. Allied contributions can defray some of the current funding deficiencies, but nowhere near all of them.

SEA CHANGE

British hegemony faltered in the late nineteenth century in part because the United Kingdom's global dominance

hinged on its control of the sea, and the emergence of railroads as a form of reliable land travel broke the United Kingdom's ability to interdict commerce and communication. Today, the United States is similarly facing the risk that technological and operational breakthroughs could undermine its military dominance—or even render it obsolete.

For all their emphasis on the importance of naval power, neither Jones nor Easterbrook pays much attention to actual maritime warfare and how it is changing. Innovation ought to be the strong suit of the U.S. military, and U.S. defense spending should reflect that priority. The U.S. military has conducted an array of experiments in operations that have produced important adaptations: for instance, the Marine Corps's return to amphibious operations and its investment in smaller and more mobile units. These kinds of developments are necessary to give the U.S. military the edge it needs to defend U.S. interests. But they are not enough, nor are they happening fast enough.

The Biden administration, much as the Trump administration did, sees China as the United States' primary military threat—and the Indo-Pacific, where conflict is most likely to break out, is a maritime theater. Unless the Biden administration allocates substantially more funding to the entire U.S. military, defense spending will need to shift accordingly. The defense budget will need to prioritize the U.S. Navy over the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force. Ensuring the strength of the navy is critical: without a capable and well-resourced naval force, the United States will be unable to defend its allies in Japan and the Philippines or to secure the theater more broadly in the event of a conflict. In this regard, Jones and Easterbrook are absolutely correct: control of the sea will be the defining factor of the next century.

The United States is an anomalous hegemonic power in that it is a reluctant participant in an international order of its own creation. Washington, for instance, drove the negotiations behind the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, developing "a constitution for the oceans" in order to establish standards for international maritime activity—but the United States itself never ratified the agreement. Concerns as varied as congressional anxiety over international treaties and commercial interests in deep seabed mining have made presidents despair of ever ratifying it, even though the Pentagon and the State Department have advocated doing so. Despite this formal reluctance to join the treaty, the United States not only abides by its terms; it enforces them on other states. What some countries have called the "exceptionalism" of U.S. behavior, as evidenced by Washington's refusal to commit to the convention while reaping its benefits, fuels criticism that the United States has destabilized the international order and become an unreliable ally. Washington's waning interest in naval strength sends the wrong message to its allies and partners. If the United States wants to continue setting and enforcing the rules of the international order, it should heed some age-old advice: never turn your back on the ocean.

A Rival of America's Making?

The Debate Over Washington's China Strategy

The Real Liberal Bet

G. John Ikenberry

Most observers would agree with John Mearsheimer that the liberal bet on China did not work out ("The Inevitable Rivalry," November/December 2021). Welcoming the country into the world economy after the Cold War did not cause it to open up, liberalize, and become a responsible stakeholder in the global order. Worse, under President Xi Jinping, the country has taken a dangerous autocratic and illiberal turn. But Mearsheimer goes further, arguing that the United States' strategy of engagement with China ranks as one of its worst foreign policy disasters and that an alternative strategy, containment, would have prevented or at least delayed the emergence of China as a threat.

What Mearsheimer misses is that U.S. policy toward China was just one piece of a broader approach that sought to strengthen the foundations of the American-led liberal international order after the Cold War, a strategy that brought considerably more benefits than costs. Building on a long tradition of order building, the United States pushed and pulled the international system in a direction that broadly aligned with its interests and values, promulgating rules and institutions to foster liberal democracy, expanding security cooperation with European and East Asian allies, and generating international coalitions for tackling the gravest threats to humanity.

Abandoning this strategy once China started to rise would have put the United States in a dramatically worse position not just globally but also in terms of countering China. In Mearsheimer's world, the United States would have fewer allies and partners. And it would face a China with accrued enmity and grievances in a global order that was less stable and prosperous—and less capable of generating the cooperation needed to grapple with the problems of the twenty-first century.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE ORDER

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the last great alternative to the U.S.-led liberal order suddenly disappeared, and countries clamored to join the free world. The proportion of democracies more than doubled, rising from under 30 percent of all countries in the early 1980s to almost 60 percent in the first decade of the twenty-first century. NATO and the European Union expanded. Regional free-trade agreements proliferated, and in 1995, the World Trade Organization was created. The United States presided over an expanding global system that was creating more wealth, security, and glimmers of social justice than had been seen in any previous era. This was the overarching liberal bet, and it was a world-historical success. U.S. officials obviously hoped that China would become a stakeholder in this expanding order, but that was never the main

purpose. The far more important goal was to build a liberal-oriented international order dominated by the United States and its allies.

The brand of realism that Mearsheimer is offering as a guide to confronting China simply could not see, explain, or appreciate this accomplishment. When the Cold War ended, Mearsheimer and other leading realists argued that the U.S.-led alliance system would unravel. "The Soviet threat provides the glue that holds NATO together," Mearsheimer observed in *The Atlantic* in 1990. "Take away that offensive threat and the United States is likely to abandon the Continent; the defensive alliance it has headed for forty years may well then disintegrate, bringing an end to the bipolar order that has kept the peace of Europe for the past forty-five years." But the opposite occurred in both Europe and East Asia. The Soviet threat disappeared, and yet the U.S. alliance system survived, and solidarity among liberal democracies deepened.

Thirty years after the end of the Cold War, many realists, including Mearsheimer, are again voicing questions about U.S. alliances and, under the banner of "offshore balancing," arguing for a smaller American security footprint in the world. In their view, Washington should focus on defending the Western Hemisphere, while playing a more limited, backup role in protecting allies in Europe and East Asia. But U.S. retrenchment would surely be an invitation for China and Russia to extend their imperial reach, heralding a return to a realist world with a familiar and tragic logic to it. As China grows more powerful, everyone should be grateful that the United States did not follow Mearsheimer's realist script.

CONGAGEMENT

Mearsheimer also fails to appreciate that U.S. strategy toward China was always about more than just engagement. Across the post–Cold War administrations, the United States did seek to draw China into the global order. After all, Beijing was already inside—a member of the UN Security Council and a host of other regional and global bodies, including, from 1992 on, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. But there were two other components to this U.S. strategy.

First, Washington built counterweights to Chinese power through an invigorated and deepened alliance system in East Asia. The Clinton administration renewed the U.S.-Japanese alliance and redefined the security pact as a force for stability, a feat that surely ranks as one of the great accomplishments in post–Cold War U.S. foreign policy. In a 1995 article in these pages, the political scientist Joseph Nye, then serving in the Pentagon and reflecting the thinking of the Clinton administration, noted "the rise of Chinese power" and made the case for a strategy of "deep engagement" in East Asia. It was not altogether obvious that the United States would stay in the region after the Cold War or remain a security provider there through the forward deployment of its forces. But the case was made, and deep engagement remains at the core of U.S. strategy to this day.

The second part of the U.S. strategy was to strengthen regional institutions in the broader Asia-Pacific region. Looking beyond the traditional boundaries of East Asia, Washington worked with Australia, India, and the Americas to bolster the Asia-Pacific's security and economic architecture, the idea being that a larger region would be more open and less

dominated by China. Given these efforts, it is not surprising that many observers in the 1990s—including, one might note, many Chinese—referred to U.S. policy toward China as "congagement," a mix of containment and engagement.

The major failure of U.S. strategy toward China was to not make the country's integration into the liberal capitalist system more conditional. During the Cold War, the liberal order was a club, a sort of mutual aid society in which members embraced liberal democratic principles in return for access to the Western-oriented system of trade and security. After the Cold War ended, this logic of conditionality broke down. The liberal order became more like a shopping mall, in which states could pick and choose which aspects of the order to buy into. China joined and benefited from parts of the order, such as favorable trade terms, while ignoring others, such as the commitment to human rights, the rule of law, and openness. Mearsheimer writes that "U.S. leaders should have negotiated a new bilateral trade agreement that imposed harsher terms on China." But such conditionality would have required a strong and unified liberal order—not his realist world of divided and competing states.

Mearsheimer argues that the United States, beyond demanding more of China on trade, should have pursued something more radical: a post–Cold War grand strategy aimed at systematically limiting Chinese economic growth and power. In his counterfactual history, the United States would have sought to keep China weak, poor, and peripheral. But there are reasons to doubt that such an alternative course was desirable—or even possible.

For one thing, the American public was unlikely to have supported a grand strategy of, in effect, putting a boot on China's throat. Most Americans would have found this policy politically offensive and morally suspect. Many would also have wondered what Chinese threat demanded this illiberal realpolitik. Even realists at the time were not seized by the idea of China as a future peer competitor. In 1992, for example, a quintessentially realist report, written by advisers to Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and leaked to the press, argued that the United States' mission in the new era was to ensure that no rival superpower emerged in Europe or Asia—yet it identified Germany and Japan, not China, as the potential future challengers to U.S. leadership.

The problems with Mearsheimer's counterfactual go beyond this. Full-throttle containment of China would have required allies and partners that were willing to cooperate. In all likelihood, however, other states would have calculated correctly that China was not a threat to them in the way that it might have been to the United States. Just as important, the U.S. government itself would have found it impossible to sustain a decades-long strategy of containment. Pursuing that path would have required a unified political class, business community, and foreign policy elite—all of which seem fanciful at best. Mearsheimer has long voiced deep misgivings about the ability of liberal democracies to soberly pursue their long-term national interests. Imagining that the United States could have done so to prevent a power transition that is, even now, decades in the future—and that might not even

happen—is a bit rich. Yet in his article, Mearsheimer suggests that such a careful and coherent grand strategy not only was possible but also could have been sustained for generations.

Were it somehow pursued, Mearsheimer's strategy would have been an act of national self-harm. Containment would have left the United States and its partners more divided and the liberal international order in greater disarray. The United States would have lost out economically to other states that benefited from trade with China. Its reputation as a global leader would have been weakened, perhaps irreparably. And ultimately, the strategy would have failed to prevent the rise of China. Worse, China would have emerged from this failed effort at containment more powerful, more aggrieved, and more disconnected from liberal internationalist principles and norms. In Mearsheimer's counterfactual world, the United States would be getting even less cooperation from China than it gets today, precisely at a moment when cascading planetary threats, such as global warming, health pandemics, cyberwar, and nuclear proliferation, require more cooperation.

Mearsheimer is right that China presents a formidable challenge to the United States. The two countries are hegemonic rivals with antagonistic visions of world order. One wants to make the world safe for democracy; the other wants to make the world safe for autocracy. The United States believes—as it has for more than two centuries—that it is safer in a world where liberal democracies hold sway. China increasingly contests such a world, and therein lies the grand strategic rub. But in the face of this challenge, the United States would do well to work with its allies to strengthen liberal democracy and the global system that makes it safe—and to do so while looking for opportunities to work with its chief rival.

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The China Threat in Perspective

Andrew J. Nathan

John Mearsheimer is right to look at the fundamentals of demographics, geography, and the structure of the international system to assess the threat China poses to U.S. interests. In his view, China's massive population will make the country almost twice as wealthy as the United States by 2050, the absence of a clear geographic dividing line in Asia between rival camps makes war more "thinkable" than during the Cold War, and China's lack of allies will give it "greater flexibility to cause trouble abroad." As the power balance shifts, "China is acting exactly as realism would predict," he writes. "Who can blame Chinese leaders for seeking to dominate Asia and become the most powerful state on the planet?"

But a proper understanding of these factors does not lead to the dire forecast Mearsheimer provides. In each area, China suffers from major weaknesses. It will not become, as he says it wants to, "the most powerful state in its backyard and, eventually, in the world." Rather, it will remain one among several major

powers both regionally and globally, presenting threats to important, but not existential, U.S. interests.

THE SOURCES OF POWER

China's demographic structure is full of problems. For one thing, Beijing must build a modern nation-state within the boundaries of a traditional multiethnic empire. It inherited from the Qing dynasty 55 officially recognized "national minorities" that occupy strategic territories around the rim of the Han Chinese heartland. Among these, the Kazakh, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uyghur ethnic groups are severely alienated from central rule and present a continuing problem of domestic security and territorial integrity, despite the extreme measures Beijing is taking to assimilate them.

In the Han heartland, China's population is aging and will start shrinking sometime in the next decade. With an economic growth rate that has declined since the go-go years of the 1990s and the following decade and is likely to fall further as its economy matures, China is unlikely to reach even half the United States' per capita income by 2050—the more modest of the scenarios Mearsheimer envisions in his article. Meanwhile, the government is under pressure to provide better living standards to the growing middle class and to aspirant rural dwellers and the working class. That is why a 2015 Chinese law defined national security primarily in domestic terms, as "the relative absence of international or domestic threats to the state's power to govern, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, the welfare of the people, sustainable economic and social development, and other major national interests." And it is why in 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping identified the "principal contradiction" facing his government as that "between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life."

The country's geographic position is also unfavorable. Along its land and sea borders, China confronts distrustful neighbors. Among them are seven of the 15 most populous countries in the world (India, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, and Vietnam) and five countries with which China has fought wars within the past 80 years (India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and Vietnam). None of China's neighbors is culturally Chinese or ideologically aligned with the Chinese Communist Party. All may cooperate with China at various times and to varying degrees for strategic or economic reasons, but all seek to hedge against Chinese domination, often by cultivating relations with the United States. As Chinese behavior has become more assertive, this counterbalancing behavior is growing more evident. India has compromised its traditional strategic autonomy in order to participate in joint military exercises with Australia, Japan, and the United States as part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, known as the Quad. Japan has taken the unprecedented step of officially declaring stability in the Taiwan Strait to be a national interest. And Australia has reaffirmed its U.S. alliance by accepting help in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines under the 2021 AUKUS agreement. China is unlikely to achieve anything like hegemony over any but the smallest of its neighbors.

Geography helps explain another Chinese weakness: its lack of allies other

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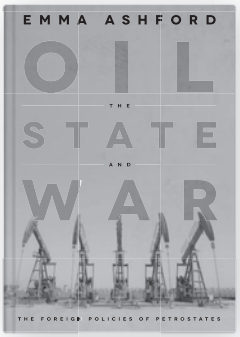

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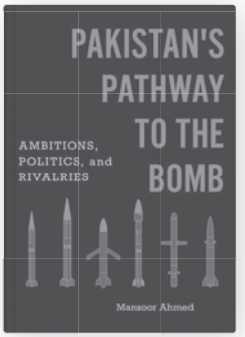

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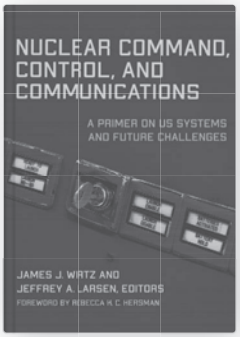

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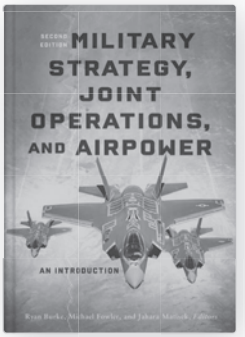

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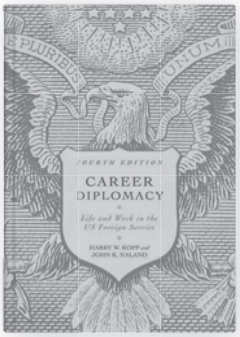

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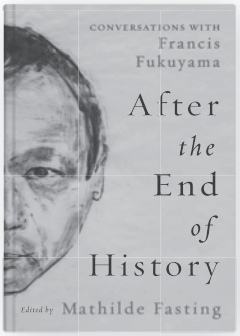

"Students of geopolitics and world history will find Fukuyama's thoughts both provocative and inspiring."

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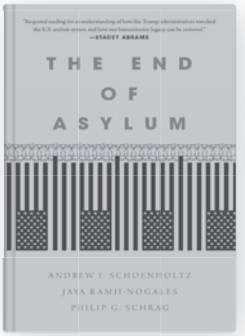

"The authors deliver comprehensive guidance for rebuilding an asylum system that again upholds American ideals."

—**Stacey Abrams**

than North Korea. There are countries that are nearby enough to receive substantial help from China in the case of a military conflict, but they all fear China more than they fear any other state. The lack of allies is more a liability than an asset, for it deprives China of ways to multiply the pressure it can put on uncooperative neighbors and of the ability to position sizable military forces around the world. To be sure, none of the United States' 60-some allies and partners has interests identical to Washington's. None can be counted on to follow every component of U.S. strategy toward China. But U.S. alliances and partnerships still complicate China's military calculations, increase the pressure on Beijing to comply with the international norms preferred by other states, and expand the alternatives available to countries considering whether to accept Chinese investments.

Nor is the structural distribution of international power favorable to Chinese global dominance. Barring catastrophic mismanagement by other states, China will continue to face five powerful rivals—India, Japan, Russia, the United States, and the European Union—in a multipolar system that is not going to disappear. A unipolar moment, if one ever really existed, cannot be re-created, not by the United States and certainly not by China.

THREAT PERCEPTION

The challenge the United States faces from China is bad enough without exaggerating it. As realism would predict, Beijing is dissatisfied with the status quo: it is closely hemmed in by Washington's allies, partners, and military forces; its supply lines are vulnerable to U.S. interdiction; and its society is influenced by American culture. China wants to push the United States away from its shores and weaken its alliances, and this means a real chance of conflict, especially over Taiwan. I agree with Mearsheimer that if such a war occurred, it would probably be a limited war, albeit highly destructive and tragic. I also agree that it would have the potential—not a great one, but more than zero—to escalate to a nuclear exchange.

But Mearsheimer is wrong to describe China's determination to gain control over Taiwan as either "emotional" or "expansionist," because these descriptors make China sound irrationally aggressive. Mearsheimer's own theory of realism better explains why Beijing will not lose its appetite for Taiwan, given the long-standing legal basis of its sovereignty claim and the island's strategic, economic, and technological importance to Chinese security. Also consistent with realism is China's preference for avoiding a premature strike on Taiwan and instead deterring Taiwanese independence as long as it takes to achieve what Beijing calls "peaceful reunification." But deterring Taiwanese independence has meant that China has had to build up military assets capable of threatening the aircraft carriers and forward air and naval bases that the United States has long relied on to stave off any attempt to take Taiwan by force. The result: a U.S.-Chinese arms race that raises the risk of war through miscalculation.

And Mearsheimer is wrong to describe Beijing's goal as global dominance. In a multipolar world, China will seek to shape global institutions to its advantage, just as major powers have always done. But it has no proposal for

an alternative, Beijing-dominated set of institutions. It remains strongly committed to the global free-trade regime, as well as to the UN and that organization's alphabet soup of agencies. It participates actively in the UN human rights system in order to help its allies and frustrate its rivals. Its Belt and Road Initiative operates alongside, rather than in place of, long-standing Western-funded development programs. China seeks influence, but it has little prospect of dominance as long as other powers also stay active in these institutions.

Overestimating the China threat is just as dangerous as underestimating it. Hyping the hazard makes it harder to manage, by creating panic among both the American public and Chinese policymakers. Whether or not engagement was the mistake that Mearsheimer claims, whether or not there was ever an option to constrain China's growth as he believes, we are where we are. I agree with Mearsheimer that what the United States must do now is manage the situation—which should mean not exacerbating what is already, on cold realist grounds, a serious challenge.

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The Barriers to War

Susan Thornton

John Mearsheimer's article engenders a sense of foreboding and doom. "Engagement may have been the worst strategic blunder any country has made in recent history," he writes. As a result, "China and the United States are locked in what can only be called a new cold war. . . . And this cold war is more likely to turn hot."

I cannot agree that the U.S. policy of engaging China was a major strategic blunder. During the Cold War, that policy succeeded at convincing China to stop sponsoring communist revolutions in East Asia and helped counter the Soviet Union. After the Cold War ended, engagement enabled massive economic growth in China that lifted hundreds of millions of Chinese out of poverty—a significant reason that the share of people worldwide living in extreme poverty, by the World Bank's definition, fell from 36 percent in 1990 to 12 percent in 2015. Surely, this counts as a major human achievement.

What would be a strategic blunder, however, is whatever series of missteps might lead to a military conflict between China and the United States. Mearsheimer argues that structural factors are inexorably leading to such a conflict. But his realist view of the situation disregards modern international realities.

There are a number of formidable restraints in place to keep the peace. The United States has worked hard over the decades to build these barriers—often as part of the very engagement strategy that Mearsheimer criticizes. These bulwarks have helped preserve peace and promote prosperity for the last 70 years, and they are still strong enough to prevent a U.S.-Chinese conflict. Although accidents or incidents connected to military brinkmanship may occur, they would almost certainly not lead to a wider war. That would require something exceedingly unlikely: the simultaneous failure of every restraint.

First, bilateral diplomacy would have to break down. Engagement is the opposite of estrangement, which describes the absence of U.S.-Chinese relations from 1949 to 1972. The purpose of engagement is to forestall misperceptions, provide reassurance, and prevent conflict. It is true that diplomacy and communication between China and the United States have been anemic for the past five years. And it is difficult to discern authoritative policy amid the current cacophony of diplomatic posturing on Twitter and elsewhere, creating an environment ripe for confusion and overreaction. But these deficiencies are not structural; they can be remedied. If top-level leaders in both countries consistently communicate and work to reduce public posturing, as they should, then the diplomatic barriers to war can be reinforced.

For a war to break out, the international system would also have to fail. China and the United States are connected to a global network of countries and institutions that have a stake—in some cases, an existential stake—in preventing conflict between these two countries. Almost every government and institution on the globe would be grievously damaged by a U.S.-Chinese war, and so they all would try to prevent an imminent conflict through diplomatic pressure, mediation, or acts of resistance, such as denying overflight and basing rights. Critics may be quick to deny the influence of others in heading off a major-power clash. But in the current international system, there is no way for either side to emerge victorious, and those outside China and the United States would see this most clearly.

Then there is the restraint created by globalization. Mearsheimer argues that it was a catastrophic mistake for the United States to help China grow wealthy, as its resulting strength will inevitably lead it to challenge the United States. But it is also plausible that the inextricably integrated nature of the global economy, and specifically of the Chinese and U.S. economies, makes any war unwinnable and thus acts as a deterrent to conflict. It is true, as critics will point out, that economic dependencies failed to prevent World War I. But the economic relations of the early twentieth century were nothing like the complex entanglements of today's international economic system. In the case of China and the United States, they create a situation of mutual assured economic destruction.

Another restraint is public opinion, at least on the U.S. side. Politicians in the United States respond to various incentives, but they cannot ignore the sentiments of their voters. And after a 20-year fight against terrorism, the American public is decidedly wary of protracted and costly overseas conflicts. If U.S. policymakers appeared poised for a conflict with China, one would also expect that the press, having learned its lesson from the war in Iraq, would perform its watchdog function, question the official narratives, and activate public concern.

All these barriers should work to prevent a conflict. But if they somehow didn't, there is a final fail-safe that is even harder to imagine not working: military deterrence. Taiwan is the most likely issue over which a U.S.-Chinese war could break out. But the quantity and quality of the weaponry on both sides translates to certain catastrophic losses for all, which should provide a sufficient deterrent to war. And because the devastation of a conflict over Taiwan would spiral out of control quickly, one cannot rule out the

use of nuclear weapons. Strange as it may sound, that is good news: just as the nuclear age prevented direct military conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States for more than 40 years, so it should between China and the United States, both of which are nuclear-armed powers with survivable second-strike capabilities. Although China has many fewer missiles and warheads than the United States—something China is working on remedying—the doctrine of mutually assured destruction still operates. The balance of terror holds.

Looking through this list of potential failures, one might find cause for pessimism, given that each restraint has seen its share of erosion in recent years. But China and the United States are not prisoners of history. The two countries will find that they cannot escape one another, and eventually, they will have to seek accommodation. This may now seem a distant vision, but it is a far more likely outcome, given the countervailing currents, than an apocalyptic war.

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In Search of a Strategy

Sun Zhe

In John Mearsheimer's view, China is on a single-minded quest to dominate the United States, and therefore conflict between the two powers is all but inevitable. But this argument rests on a misreading of what Beijing wants. In reality, China is in the midst of a process of soul-searching, with multiple perspectives inside the country on the future of U.S.-Chinese relations. China's thinking is not monolithic, and its strategic direction is not preordained.

There are a number of Chinese views on relations with the United States. One is that due to domestic constraints, the two countries will inevitably grow apart and decouple, at least in key areas such as science and technology. Another is that Washington is determined to contain Beijing and diminish its power, making compromise impossible and cooperation futile. Still another view emphasizes the confrontational nature of interactions between the two countries and sees a decisive battle on the horizon for which China must prepare, in part by working more closely with Iran, North Korea, Russia, and even Taliban-led Afghanistan. These overlapping perspectives share a sense of pessimism and hostility. They all reflect a zero-sum mindset.

Mearsheimer sees this type of thinking as guiding Chinese policy. But there is in fact another, contrary outlook that he ignores. This position still holds out hope for productive relations with Washington. As Chinese President Xi Jinping said himself in 2017, "There are a thousand reasons to make the China-U.S. relationship work, and no reason to break it." Qin Gang, the Chinese ambassador to the United States, has repeated this message, saying in July 2021 that cooperation was "the call of the times and the will of the people." He added, "China and the United States are entering a new round of mutual exploration, understanding, and adaptation, trying to find a way to

get along with each other in the new era." In this optimistic view, bilateral ties can be sustained, even in the most antagonistic moments.

The debate over China's strategy toward the United States will continue. Some Chinese media figures and policy practitioners are advocating a much firmer line, but most mainstream strategic advisers are insisting on a more accommodating policy. Indeed, Xi and the rest of the current Chinese leadership are decidedly cautious. They have generally refrained from openly criticizing American leaders, especially the president. (In August 2020, Beijing did sanction 11 U.S. politicians and leaders of pro-democratic organizations who had denounced China, but the group was carefully selected, and the sanctions came only after Washington imposed restrictions on an equal number of Chinese officials.) China's leaders understand that their country will suffer greatly if a sweet relationship goes sour, if win-win gives way to mutual destruction. Inside Chinese diplomatic circles, this policy for handling the relationship with the United States even has a slogan: "Criticize but don't alienate; fight over core interests but don't break the relationship."

Engagement, which Mearsheimer spends much of his article criticizing, can take some of the credit for this pacifistic strain of Chinese thinking. He may call it "a risky policy," but the bet paid off. Engagement modernized China to an extraordinary degree. The policy slashed the number of China's poor and generated in their place a large cosmopolitan and increasingly liberal-minded middle class. Domestically, this middle class overwhelmingly prizes such values as freedom and property rights; on foreign policy, it prefers peace and negotiation. Although this group does not have the power to direct China's future, the leadership cannot afford to ignore it entirely. And its influence in China will only diminish if the U.S.-Chinese relationship becomes more hostile.

Mearsheimer views China as robotically destined for war: once you wind it up, it will march toward power expansion. China's power, its nationalism, and its lack of allies that might restrain it, he says, will lead the country to try to revise the status quo abroad. But this portrayal of Chinese intentions neglects the fact that engagement with Western countries, especially the United States, helped China integrate into the world system. Given China's emphasis on sovereignty and negotiation, it is more accurate to call the country a conservative, status quo power. It is the United States, in contrast, that has shown itself to be revisionist. The country tried to export democracy to Afghanistan and Iraq. In Asia, it is now seeking to encircle China by forging the AUKUS security pact with Australia and the United Kingdom and reinvigorating the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, with Australia, India, and Japan. Mearsheimer is wrong to see China as a growing hegemon whose only goal is to challenge the United States. Rather, China sees itself as a victim of bullying. As a rising, but not fully risen, power, it has by no means given up hopes of coexisting and even cooperating with the United States within the current international system.

Mearsheimer's prescriptions are as wrong-headed as his diagnosis. Since

the source of U.S.-Chinese competition is "structural," he writes, "the problem cannot be eliminated with clever policymaking." He concludes that "at best, this rivalry can be managed in the hope of avoiding a war." Then he offers two pieces of advice to Washington: "maintain formidable conventional forces in East Asia to persuade Beijing that a clash of arms would at best yield a Pyrrhic victory" and "work to establish clear rules of the road for waging this security competition—for example, agreements to avoid incidents at sea or other accidental military clashes." The first recommendation assumes that China can be deterred from starting a war; the second, that China will be rational enough to follow a clear code of conduct. If Mearsheimer is convinced that these policies offer the best way out of the U.S.-Chinese rivalry, then he is essentially arguing that with wise leadership and rational decision-making on both sides, the worst outcomes can be prevented. Therefore, contrary to what he claims, structure alone does not determine the future; agency also matters.

Instead of subscribing to Mearsheimer's gloomy view of U.S.-Chinese relations, Washington should recognize that those relations can be characterized by decency, understanding, and pragmatism. The Biden administration appears to grasp this. As Secretary of State Antony Blinken put it in 2021, "Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be." Mearsheimer may criticize this policy as naive and dovish, just as he has done with engagement. But the history of U.S.-Chinese relations has shown that leaders in both countries need not be enchained by structural forces. Whether voluntarily or through pressure, they can choose cooperation over conflict.

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Mearsheimer Replies

It is good to see John Ikenberry acknowledge that engagement failed abysmally: in his words, China and the United States are now "hegemonic rivals with antagonistic visions of world order." Unable to defend engagement with China, he instead focuses on the broader policy of liberal hegemony that U.S. policymakers pursued during the so-called unipolar moment. He maintains, oddly, that "it was a world-historical success."

The facts do not support that claim. Consider the U.S. position in the world today compared to in 1990. Back then, the United States was the sole great power on the planet; today, it faces two hostile and dangerous great powers, China and Russia. The liberal international order that Ikenberry has championed for decades is in tatters. U.S. policy in the greater Middle East has failed at almost every turn and has caused an enormous amount of death and destruction. Democracy, which appeared to be on the march after the Cold War, is now in retreat. Worse, American democracy is under siege, in part thanks to the excesses and failures of liberal hegemony. Ikenberry tells us

that the United States "is safer in a world where liberal democracies hold sway." But the policies he has long endorsed have undermined democracy at home and abroad, making the country less safe by his logic.

Ikenberry mischaracterizes my views on containment, claiming that I would have preferred that the United States try "to keep China weak, poor, and peripheral." But I have never made that case, since this would have been an unrealistic goal; China was always destined to grow economically. What I actually argued was that Washington should have sought to slow the country's growth, not only to delay the day it became a great power but also to make sure it never became a peer competitor.

Ikenberry is correct when he says that containment was not a viable option, given that it was opposed by U.S. allies and partners and by figures within the United States, including the foreign policy elite. That was precisely my point: the U.S. foreign policy establishment was enamored with engagement and had no time for realist arguments. I believe, however, that if U.S. leaders had been committed to realism, they could have fashioned an effective containment policy that would have enjoyed substantial support at home and abroad. Contra Ikenberry's view, a powerful China poses an even greater threat to its Asian neighbors than it does to the United States.

Before dismissing containment as infeasible and saying that it "would have been an act of national self-harm," Ikenberry claims the United States actually pursued "a mix of containment and engagement" of China. This policy of "congagement," he writes, is exempli-

fied by Joseph Nye's 1995 article in these pages about "deep engagement" in East Asia, a strategy Ikenberry portrays as synonymous with deep containment. Problems abound with this argument. First, Ikenberry cannot logically maintain that containment was both politically impossible and a central element of U.S. policy. Second, engagement and containment are not complementary strategies: engagement accepts that the global balance of power will shift in China's favor as that country develops, a stance that is directly at odds with containment. Third, U.S. policymakers invariably rejected containment—as Nye himself clearly did in the article Ikenberry cites. "It is wrong to portray China as an enemy," Nye wrote. "A containment strategy would be difficult to reverse," he added. "Enmity would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Clinton administration's policy of engagement is a far better approach to dealing with emerging Chinese power."

Ikenberry claims that as an advocate of "offshore balancing," I have little use for allies and believe that "Washington should focus on defending the Western Hemisphere, while playing a more limited, backup role in protecting allies in Europe and East Asia." I have never made that argument with respect to East Asia. On the contrary, I have long held that the United States has no choice but to directly confront China—including by defending Taiwan—and that it must work closely with its allies to contain China's rise.

Lastly, Ikenberry's recommendations for how to deal with a powerful China suggest he has learned little from recent experience. Having begun his response by acknowledging that engagement failed, he ends it by recommending that the United States focus on "looking for opportunities to work with its chief rival." Been there, done that. The results speak for themselves.

WHAT CHINA WANTS

Andrew Nathan focuses less on engagement than on how U.S.-Chinese strategic competition is evolving. He worries that I am "hyping" the China threat and "creating panic." He does not say China is a paper tiger, but he leans in that direction. Specifically, he maintains that the country "suffers from major weaknesses" and is not going to become a regional hegemon, much less the most powerful state in the world.

I never said China was in fact going to dominate Asia or attain global primacy. Rather, I argued that as China grows more powerful, it will try to achieve those goals. In response, the United States and its allies will go to great lengths to contain China, as they did with imperial Germany, imperial Japan, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union. Whether China succeeds remains to be seen. Regardless, the ensuing competition between Beijing and Washington is likely to be more dangerous than Nathan seems to think.

Taiwan is a case in point. Nathan recognizes that as China tries "to push the United States away from its shores and weaken its alliances," there will be "a real chance of conflict, especially over Taiwan." But he sees Taiwan from a purely realist perspective, rejecting my argument that nationalism might help fuel a conflict over Taiwan on the grounds that my characterization makes "China sound irrationally aggressive." In fact, Beijing views Taiwan as sacred

territory and is deeply committed to making it part of China. Japan and the United States stand in the way, however, which antagonizes many Chinese and makes the likelihood of conflict over that island greater than realist logic alone would predict.

Then there is Nathan's claim that "China suffers from major weaknesses" that will severely hamper its efforts to dominate Asia. China does confront several challenges, but Nathan overstates them. It does contain numerous minority groups, for example, but 92 percent of its population is Han Chinese, and there is little evidence that ethnic unrest is sapping Chinese power. Nathan claims that China operates in a multipolar world in which it faces "five powerful rivals." But the European Union is not a country, India and Japan are not great powers, and Russia is not an adversary. The United States is China's only great-power rival. Of course, China will have to contend with a U.S.-led balancing coalition that includes India and Japan, but that is a far cry from facing five great powers well positioned to stop it from achieving regional hegemony. Making the situation even more favorable to China is the fact that India, Japan, and the United States are thousands of miles apart, which will impair their ability to work together to contain China. Moreover, China is not as friendless as Nathan portrays it to be: the country has fostered increasingly friendly relations with two of its most powerful neighbors, Pakistan and Russia.

The most serious difficulty Nathan identifies is China's aging population, but it is hard to know what its effects will be in the foreseeable future. Beijing will surely turn to automation to mitigate the problem, which anyway will take a few decades to have a significant impact. Also, many of China's competitors are dealing with similar demographic challenges, including Japan, South Korea, and even the United States to some extent. Nathan argues that China's economy is likely to slow down markedly moving forward, and he may be right, but it is difficult to know how much that economy will grow in the next few decades (and how the U.S. economy will perform over that same period). After all, few experts predicted China's spectacular growth over the past 30 years. But even if the country's economy grows more slowly than it has in recent years, it will still be enormously powerful and will provide Beijing with the military wherewithal to cause its neighbors and the United States much trouble.

THE ODDS OF WAR

Susan Thornton disagrees with my categorization of engagement after the Cold War as a serious "strategic blunder," arguing that the policy "lifted hundreds of millions of Chinese out of poverty," which is "a major human achievement." I agree, but that accomplishment has little to do with the security of the United States, which is the issue on the table. Thornton never explains why a policy that hastened the emergence of a formidable peer competitor was not, from the U.S. perspective, a colossal misstep.

Thornton recognizes that China and the United States are now engaged in an intense security competition—which makes one wonder why she has no reservations about the policy of engagement that got us here. It may be because

she is not worried that the rivalry will lead to war, arguing that "there are a number of formidable restraints in place to keep the peace." She maintains that in contrast I believe that the rivalry is "inexorably leading" to "an apocalyptic war." But I did not say that war is inevitable. Indeed, I emphasized that war is unlikely. After describing the different ways fighting might break out, I wrote, "None of this is to say that these limited-war scenarios are likely." To be clear, I recognize that there are significant barriers to armed conflict. Those barriers are not impregnable, however, as logic and history make clear.

It is worth remembering that great powers were heavily engaged with one another before the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, the Franco-Prussian War, World War I, and World War II. In some cases, they were also important trading partners. Yet major war happened anyway. And despite what Thornton may wish, victory is still possible in modern war; not every conflict leads to "certain catastrophic losses for all," as she says a U.S.-Chinese war would. War is always a real possibility when great powers struggle over regional hegemony. Helping China rise rapidly made a clash of this sort more likely—even if it is not inevitable.

Like Thornton, Sun Zhe misrepresents my argument when he claims that I view China as "robotically destined for war," making a U.S.-Chinese war "all but inevitable." In fact, I maintained that security competition is inescapable but war is not—as Sun should recognize, since he quotes me saying, "This rivalry can be managed in the hope of avoiding a war."

Sun seems to think that even an intense security competition can be avoided, but he is wrong. In his view, China is "a conservative, status quo power," and the United States is moving toward a China policy that emphasizes cooperation over conflict. Neither characterization is accurate. China is explicitly committed to radically altering the political status quo regarding the East China and South China Seas, Taiwan, and its border with India. Meanwhile, the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden shows no sign of returning to the failed policy of engagement. It is willing to talk with Beijing and manage bilateral relations, but the available evidence—such as the continuation of U.S. President Donald Trump's trade war and repeated signals of a growing commitment to defend Taiwan—suggests that Biden and his team intend to maintain a hard-nosed containment strategy.

Sun also emphasizes that although numerous Chinese are pessimistic about the future of U.S.-Chinese relations, there are also many who hold an optimistic view and want to improve ties. The same is true in the United States. At the end of the day, however, those debates are eclipsed by the competitive pressures inherent in an anarchic system, where each state must ultimately take care of itself. Those pressures will encourage China to strive for hegemony in Asia and lead the United States to try to prevent it—even if there are dissenters in both countries.

Sun writes that "engagement modernized China to an extraordinary degree." He is correct, of course, and that is wonderful news for China. But it is not good news for the United States, which mistakenly helped create a peer competitor that it ultimately may not be able to contain.

Can Sanctions Be Smart?

The Costs and Benefits of Economic Coercion

The Right Tool for the Job

Justyna Gudzowska and John Prendergast

Daniel Drezner's skeptical take on sanctions gets much right ("The United States of Sanctions," September/October 2021). Most practitioners agree that sanctions are overused, that they often come with costs, both predictable and unforeseen, and that they should therefore be employed on a more surgical basis. The U.S. Treasury Department's much-anticipated sanctions review, which was released just weeks after Drezner's article, arrives at many of the same conclusions.

Yet it is also clear that sanctions are not going away and that when used appropriately, they still represent an indispensable instrument of foreign policy. Given our respective experiences with sanctions, in and out of government, we have a far more optimistic outlook on the power of these tools.

TARGET ACQUIRED

Like most critics of sanctions, Drezner focuses largely on comprehensive country-based measures, which prohibit commercial transactions with an entire country and its people. These are the most antiquated form of sanctions and the most deserving of criticism. But with the profusion of sanctions programs in recent decades, a series of new tools have been developed that operate much more precisely. Drezner makes little reference to thematic programs such as counterterrorism sanctions, targeted nonproliferation sanctions, counternarcotics sanctions, and human rights and anticorruption sanctions—all of which are aimed at specific actors engaged in problematic conduct, no matter what jurisdiction they are in. These are the most advanced tools in governments' financial pressure toolkits, and they are designed to avoid many of the problems that Drezner describes.

Because such policies target specific individuals or entities anywhere in the world, rather than a country writ large, these sanctions minimize collateral damage and avoid the danger of so-called wholesale de-risking, whereby U.S. banks or businesses indiscriminately withdraw from an entire national economy. Although Colombia and Mexico, for example, have some of the highest numbers of sanctioned individuals and entities, financial institutions have not left, because compliance with the sanctions is straightforward.

In contrast to countrywide sanctions, which often come under fire for their alleged political motivations and unintended humanitarian consequences, thematic sanctions also create less friction with allies. In 2016, Congress passed the Global Magnitsky Act, which authorizes the president to impose asset freezes and visa bans on human rights abusers and corrupt actors worldwide. The law galvanized U.S. allies: Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and

the EU have since adopted similar measures, and other countries are considering their own versions, as well. These nimble and targeted sanctions are also better suited to transnational issues such as corruption, which U.S. President Joe Biden recently designated a core national security threat.

Like any other tool of foreign policy, however, targeted sanctions don't work in isolation. It is unfair to expect them to produce results on their own. Instead, sanctions are best employed as part of a broader multilateral strategy. Governments should pair them with sustained diplomacy, technical assistance to other countries' financial institutions, regional outreach, and public-private partnerships. They should employ other instruments of pressure, too, such as enforcement actions, asset recovery strategies, and anti-money-laundering advisories (which alert financial institutions to red flags). And whenever possible, governments should impose sanctions on the entire networks of targeted individuals—not just on the individuals themselves. Any target with the slightest sophistication is likely to shroud his activities with corporate opacity and operate through intermediaries and shell companies, thus rendering individual sanctions less effective.

This strategy has proved successful in two recent cases in Africa. In 2017, the U.S. government introduced targeted sanctions against the Israeli billionaire Dan Gertler as part of a broader multilateral effort to convince Joseph Kabila, then president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, not to run for an unconstitutional third term. Gertler was a close friend of Kabila and a key middleman for the sale of Congolese mining assets to multinational companies. The U.S. government, in its inaugural use of its authority under the Global Magnitsky Act, sanctioned Gertler for allegedly having "amassed his fortune through hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of opaque and corrupt mining and oil deals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo." It also sanctioned his business network—blacklisting one of his main partners and 19 associated companies. In 2018, it went further, sanctioning 14 other Gertler-affiliated entities. The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, or FinCEN, the Treasury Department's foreign intelligence unit, also issued an anti-money-laundering advisory that described Gertler's use of offshore shell companies to launder stolen mining revenues.

With this sort of follow-up, the U.S. government displayed a level of persistence that it has rarely evinced with respect to bad actors operating in Africa. That is the key to successful sanctions: adjusting and calibrating actions against an entire corrupt network over an extended period of time and with a clear objective, rather than engaging in one-off, brute force measures. In the end, Kabila stepped down and did not run for a third term, paving the way for the first peaceful transition of power in Congo's history. Our discussions with interlocutors in the region have led us to believe that persistent and integrated U.S. pressure, including the targeting of one of Kabila's close allies, played a substantial role in that decision.

Another recent success came in South Sudan. Beginning in 2017, the United States hit the inner circle of South

Sudanese President Salva Kiir, including his brother-in-law, with a combination of targeted sanctions and anti-money-laundering mechanisms in response to corruption and human rights abuses. Many observers credit the pressure campaign with helping persuade Kiir to form a unity government in February 2020 and tempering his incentives to re-escalate the country's long-running civil war.

BAD BEHAVIOR

On a deeper level, the notion that the success of sanctions can be measured only by the appearance of specific behavioral changes is simplistic and unhelpful. Vladimir Putin is not going to stop being a tyrant because the United States imposes more sanctions on Russia, just as Osama bin Laden was not going to give up on terrorism because Washington sanctioned al Qaeda. Such binary tests are a very narrow way of measuring the effectiveness of sanctions.

Often, sanctions programs are designed not to evoke a sudden epiphany on the part of bad actors but to introduce friction into their lives. By denying resources to terrorists, human rights abusers, nuclear weapons proliferators, and kleptocrats, sanctions make it more difficult for such figures to do what they do. These types of actors also tend to rely on networks of international facilitators, who are usually more pragmatic than ideological and often have one foot in the legitimate business world. Their behavior, therefore, is more easily influenced by sanctions—whether by being directly sanctioned themselves or by becoming the subject of an enforcement action.

Drezner dwells on what he perceives as the failure of sanctions to change behavior, but he may be looking at behavioral change the wrong way. Rather than fixating on the inability of isolated sanctions to alter the behavior of bad actors, better to focus on the ways in which these tools can influence the people and businesses that bank with those bad actors, trade with them, create their shell companies, ship their goods, supply them with materials, sell them arms, and launder their money.

One might object that a state or individual with malign intent can always find other facilitators to stay in business. But as the sanctions targeting the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) have demonstrated, these measures create a real and sometimes significant tax. Repeated rounds of U.S. and UN sanctions have degraded the group's access to the international financial system and forced it to rely on more precarious methods of moving funds, such as couriers. This is another reason why sanctions must target an entire network, not just individual militia leaders or government officials. Blacklisting whole networks shuts service providers out of the global financial system and sends a message to other potential facilitators to think twice before doing business with targeted entities. It would be naive to think that U.S. sanctions changed Gertler's moral calculus or personal convictions, but losing access to U.S. dollars complicated his business prospects to a point where he pushed aggressively to have the sanctions removed. (He succeeded, briefly, in this effort at the end of the Trump administration, when the sanctions were lifted. They were reimposed by the Biden administration last March, with additional restrictions

added in the run-up to the December 2021 Summit for Democracy.)

In our experience, it is the international facilitators and quasi-legitimate businesspeople—figures such as Gertler—who go to the greatest lengths to lobby governments or file lawsuits to have sanctions removed. If these sanctions were ineffective, why would they work so hard to overturn them? Moreover, focusing on the narrow litmus test of behavioral change makes it easy to lose sight of the important normative and preventive function that sanctions serve. How many future Dan Gertlers might now be dissuaded from engaging in corrupt activities out of a rational fear that sanctions could profoundly disrupt their livelihoods?

We wholeheartedly agree with Drezner that sanctions should be smart, strategic, and targeted. The comprehensive state-based programs that Drezner focuses on, however, are not the only options out there. More precise tools already exist and are already being used—with real success.

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JOHN PRENDERGAST is Co-Founder of the Sentry and Strategic Director of the Clooney Foundation for Justice.

Drezner Replies

Justyna Gudzowska and John Prendergast get a lot right in their response to my essay. Their argument that not all sanctions are ineffective is theoretically correct: applied properly, both the threat and the use of economic coercion are vital components of U.S. foreign policy in the twenty-first century. They are also right to highlight instances in which such measures have achieved their well-defined purpose, as appears to be the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

In their enthusiasm for thematic sanctions focused on human rights and anticorruption, however, Gudzowska and Prendergast also reveal why my wariness about the overuse of economic pressure is justified. As I wrote, my concerns are threefold. First, the United States has leaned more on sanctions as support for alternative and complementary policy instruments has atrophied. Second, in trying to demonstrate resolve by threatening sanctions, the United States has eroded its ability to credibly commit to lifting them. Third, targeted sanctions tend to become less targeted over time, morphing into more comprehensive measures that cause humanitarian suffering.

As Gudzowska and Prendergast acknowledge, "Targeted sanctions don't work in isolation." They go on to advocate a "broader multilateral strategy" that includes sustained diplomacy, technical assistance, and regional outreach. These are precisely the areas in which U.S. government support has at best plateaued and at worst declined. The authors even concede that the success in Congo was an anomaly, given the persistence and focus it required. Unless it decides to invest in these alternative approaches, Washington will continue to rely on sanctions in isolation—rather than in concert with other diplomatic tools.

Gudzowska and Prendergast also argue that even if sanctions fail to

produce concessions, economic coercion may still be worthwhile because it introduces "friction" into bad actors' lives. Although there are times when such measures are entirely appropriate, this sounds like sanctioning for sanctioning's sake. If the friction doesn't change the target's behavior, then it is hard to see what purpose it serves, other than allowing the sanctioner to claim that something has been done. Moreover, as the conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria have demonstrated, diplomacy in conflict-ridden areas sometimes requires bargaining with nasty actors. Gudzowska and Prendergast need to acknowledge the possibility that excessive sanctions might lead an amoral but pivotal player—say, a warlord who controls territory and commands the respect of a key demographic—to conclude that the United States cannot credibly commit to lifting sanctions and that therefore, there is no point in negotiating with it.

Finally, Gudzowska and Prendergast's insistence that there is a bright dividing line between targeted sanctions and more comprehensive measures is fanciful. As they note, for targeted programs to work, they must target an entire network. In some economies, criminal enterprises and violent nonstate actors make up such a large portion of the economy that no dividing line exists.

Consider Afghanistan. Ongoing targeted sanctions against specific members of the Taliban and the decision not to recognize that group's control over the country have badly complicated attempts to supply foreign aid. Afghanistan is now teetering on the edge of a humanitarian disaster. This is due in no small part to economic sanctions, which have impeded relief efforts and helped crash the country's economy. As the International Crisis Group recently observed, "Economic strangulation is unlikely to change the Taliban's behaviour but will hurt the most vulnerable Afghans." This is all happening despite the Biden administration's recent sanctions review, which sought to alleviate the suffering experienced by ordinary Afghans.

I share Gudzowska and Prendergast's desire for the adroit use of economic sanctions. I am more skeptical, however, about the U.S. government's capacity to act in such an agile manner—and concerned about the humanitarian effects of its clumsiness.

Recent Books

Political and Legal

G. John Ikenberry

Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century
BY SERGEI GURIEV AND DANIEL TREISMAN. Princeton University Press, 2022, 360 pp.

Guriev and Treisman offer a deeply researched *tour d'horizon* of the evolving dark arts of authoritarian politics. The old model of dictatorship was embodied in the violence and brutality of Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao's China, regimes built on coercion, fear, and the gulag. Authoritarianism today manifests in the "low-intensity coercion" of regimes on both the left and the right, exemplified by the governments of Hungary, Russia, Singapore, Turkey, and Venezuela. The goal of dictatorship remains the same: dominance and control over society. But the method of the new breed of autocrats is not to be feared but to become popular through the control and manipulation of information. They wrap their regimes in the symbols and rhetoric of democracy, while using the powers of the state to incrementally weaken and silence opposition. The new dictatorships are harder to combat because they tend to operate within the framework of constitutional and parliamentary systems. But the good news is that these regimes are also vulnerable to push back from antiauthoritarian actors: lawyers, judges, civil servants, activists, and journalists.

The Age of AI and Our Human Future
BY HENRY A. KISSINGER, ERIC SCHMIDT, AND DANIEL HUTTENLOCHER. Little, Brown, 2021, 272 pp.

Three leading public thinkers deliver a bracing introduction to the promise and peril of artificial intelligence (AI). Machine learning has already begun to change human society, for good and ill. Computers that can perform tasks that require human-level intelligence are finding their way into more and more spheres of life, including medicine, environmental protection, transportation, and defense. The authors argue that AI will have sweeping implications for militaries, altering doctrines and battle tactics and influencing the global balance of power. Equally important will be how dictators and other leaders use AI to shape the "information space" at home and abroad. The authors argue that AI's most profound impact will be in the mysterious ways that machines gain access to aspects of reality that are beyond the understanding of humans, subtly altering our Enlightenment-era understanding of human reason, knowledge, and choice. In a world where machines are smarter than people, what does it actually mean to be human? The book asks more questions than it answers. But that is its point: to provoke a wide-ranging conversation about how societies can make AI a partner in—rather than an obstacle to—the pursuit of human betterment.

Postliberal Politics: The Coming Era of Renewal
BY ADRIAN PABST. Polity, 2021, 160 pp.

Liberalism is dead. Long live liberalism. That is the implicit message of this passionate call for a "new politics" in the liberal democratic world. Pabst, a leading thinker of the culturally conservative British "Blue Labour" movement, offers a searing indictment of pandemic-era liberal capitalist societies that are home to soaring wealth inequality, social misery, polarization, and the breakdown of civic culture. He argues that neither liberalism, nor populism, nor authoritarianism can adequately grapple with the deterioration of modern industrial societies. The only viable way forward, he claims, is the invention of a postliberal politics that combines democracy with a new spirit of localism and shared community. The book offers glimmers of what a "postliberal space" might entail, providing ideas on how to build new coalitions to "reweave" liberal society. Fundamentally, Pabst wants to retrieve national and community-level control of the economy and society from the dynamics of globalization and the neoliberal organization of the world economy. He seeks a rebalancing of liberal society in which its excessive emphasis on individualism and impersonal market forces are replaced with a more communitarian politics that focuses on repairing civic and cultural ties and renewing traditions of toleration and respect.

Partial Hegemony: Oil Politics and International Order
BY JEFF D. COLGAN. Oxford University Press, 2021, 300 pp.

In this groundbreaking study, Colgan shows that, contrary to the notion of a single coherent world system, international order in fact takes a great variety of forms across different regions and sectors of the globe. The book explores this insight through an illuminating account of the rise and fall of the 1970s-era OPEC regime, which demonstrated that although the United States and the other advanced industrial democracies may have dominated and led the global system, they were unable to control the massive wealth-transferring efforts of weak and peripheral oil-exporting states. OPEC eventually declined in influence because it was unable to control the market, although it continued to generate political benefits for its members. In telling this story, Colgan shows how a diverse and unexpected group of states were able to set the terms of the order within a specific functional setting, at least for a little while. The larger contribution of the book is to complicate received notions of U.S. hegemony and the liberal international order, which, according to Colgan, miss the political agency of weaker actors, such as oil-exporting developing countries, and the ideologies behind and movements for decolonization and self-determination. If Colgan is right, great powers may have less control over the global system than they assume.

Secrets in Global Governance: Disclosure Dilemmas and the Challenge of International Cooperation
BY ALLISON CARNEGIE AND AUSTIN CARSON. Cambridge University Press, 2020, 362 pp.

Scholars have long argued that international organizations help promote cooperation among states by encouraging transparency in global governance. In this groundbreaking book, Carnegie and Carson show that the story is actually more complicated. In fact, surprisingly, international organizations often work hard to keep secrets. Organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the International Atomic Energy Agency have stored sensitive information confidentially to better implement peacekeeping missions, combat drug trafficking, enforce sanctions regimes, and address environmental degradation. The authors develop a theory to explain when cooperation is better served through the safeguarding of private information and when it is better served by its disclosure. Having general information about whether particular states uphold commitments is critical for the enforcement of rules and agreements. But the disclosure of some sensitive information can be counterproductive. For instance, publishing satellite photos of a country's hidden nuclear weapons can lead to greater efforts at concealment. Publishing information regarding the health of a country's financial sector could lead to an adverse market reaction, compounding the problem. The book explores these complexities in detailed empirical studies in the areas of nuclear proliferation, international trade, and war crimes. The challenge for international organizations is formidable: their legitimacy as intergovernmental bodies hinges on their openness and accountability, but their effectiveness as problem solvers depends in part on their ability to guard secrets.

Economic, Social, and Environmental

Barry Eichengreen

The Border Within: The Economics of Immigration in an Age of Fear
BY TARA WATSON AND KALEE THOMPSON. University of Chicago Press, 2021, 304 pp.

Watson and Thompson provide a thoughtful, carefully written, historically informed description of U.S. interior immigration enforcement—that is, deportation proceedings and other measures and controls targeting immigrants when they are already within the United States—depicting its impact on individuals, their families, and the economy. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement gained fresh notoriety in the Trump years, but controversy over deportation is not new. President Barack Obama, sometimes referred to by immigrant advocates as "the deporter in chief," oversaw an enormous expansion of the Secure Communities program, through which federal authorities partnered with local jails to carry

out immigration enforcement. The authors interweave scholarly studies with the personal accounts of undocumented workers and their families. Interior immigration enforcement, they show, engenders uncertainty and a sense of vulnerability among the undocumented. Its chilling effect discourages workers from reporting work-site safety problems and seeking health care for themselves and their family members. Watson and Thompson call for a more politically temperate discussion of immigration and conclude with recommendations for a more humane and economically efficient interior enforcement regime.

Harry White and the American Creed: How a Federal Bureaucrat Created the Modern Global Economy (and Failed to Get the Credit)
BY JAMES M. BOUGHTON. Yale University Press, 2021, 464 pp.

The economist and bureaucrat Harry Dexter White is known for his service to the U.S. Treasury Department in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations and for designing the post–World War II international economic and financial order in partnership with John Maynard Keynes. White is rightly regarded as a central figure in the creation of the twentieth-century global economy, but his reputation has been clouded by accusations that he might have been a Soviet spy, a fellow traveler, or, at the very least, an enabler. Boughton describes White's early scholarly contributions and rise from academic obscurity. He goes to great lengths to demolish, presumably once and for all, claims that White was disloyal to the United States. He recounts White's consequential role in the design of the New Deal, in U.S. foreign financial diplomacy in the 1930s, in securing financing for World War II, and in the historic negotiations leading to the establishment of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. White emerges as something of an international economic Forrest Gump, a witness to and a participant in the major events of his time. He finally has the biography he deserves.

China and the WTO: Why Multilateralism Still Matters
BY PETROS C. MAVROIDIS AND ANDRÉ SAPIR. Princeton University Press, 2021, 264 pp.

Early hopes that admitting China into the World Trade Organization would induce Beijing to undertake far-reaching economic and political reforms were disappointed. Instead, the expansion of Chinese exports following the country's accession to the WTO in 2001 gave rise to chronic commercial conflict with the United States. Mavroidis and Sapir focus on the problems for the global order created by China's continued reliance on state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and its policy of forced technology transfer. The country is unlikely, they acknowledge, to significantly modify its economic system in response to foreign pressure. It is doubtful, in particular, that bilateral negotiations with the United States will result in any meaningful reforms. Only multilateral pressure applied through the WTO can ensure that China's SOEs operate in greater conformity with the market and can encourage the country to strengthen

its intellectual property protections. The authors suggest that China should adopt provisions relating to SOEs and intellectual property from the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Asia-Pacific's newly negotiated trade agreement. They argue that Beijing just might agree to subject itself to WTO rules and embrace the liberal spirit of the organization in return for admission into the major regional trade deal.

The Future of Money: How the Digital Revolution Is Transforming Currencies and Finance
BY ESWAR S. PRASAD. Belknap Press, 2021, 496 pp.

Prasad demystifies the esoteric world of cryptocurrencies, so-called stablecoins (digital tokens pegged one-to-one to the U.S. dollar or other underlying assets), and central bank digital currencies, drawing out the new currencies' implications for monetary policy, financial regulation, and economic development. Are cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin just tulip bulbs for the twenty-first century, or do they offer investors tangible benefits of diversification and reliable protection against inflation? Will stablecoins significantly reduce the cost of cross-border transactions or just replace local currencies in developing countries, undermining the capacity of their central banks to pursue independent monetary policies? Are digital currencies really a way of enhancing the utility of central bank money and fostering financial inclusion, or are they merely a rear-guard action by central banks to avoid losing control of the payments system to stablecoin providers? Prasad's answer to all these questions is, in a word, yes. Given the rapidly changing digital landscape, any book-length treatment of these issues risks quickly going out of date. For the moment, however, Prasad's analysis is the best single point of entry for those interested in the nitty-gritty of digital finance.

Military, Scientific, and Technological

Lawrence D. Freedman

The Ledger: Accounting for Failure in Afghanistan
BY DAVID KILCULLEN AND GREG MILLS. Hurst, 2021, 368 pp.

This polemic, eloquent, and bleak book is one of the first to address the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in the summer of 2021. It opens with the authors scrambling to help friends and colleagues who had worked with coalition forces escape the Taliban's retribution. Kilcullen and Mills know the country and the conflict well, having spent many years between them advising both civilian and military leaders on the war in Afghanistan. They eviscerate the Biden administration for what they see as its betrayal of the people of Afghanistan, but their analysis points to multiple failures spread over the previous two decades. The United States occupied the country in 2001 without any long-term strategy, and the Bush administration soon distracted itself with its invasion of

Iraq. The U.S.-led military coalition chased unrealistic goals and misunderstood the enemy and Afghan society and politics. Economic assistance to the Afghan government in Kabul fueled corruption as much as development. Pakistan never abandoned the Taliban. Many of the lessons of the last two decades should have been learned from the U.S. debacle in Vietnam or the Soviet experience in Afghanistan.

Hitler's American Gamble: Pearl Harbor and Germany's March to Global War
BY BRENDAN SIMMS AND CHARLIE LADERMAN. Basic Books, 2021, 528 pp.

Adolf Hitler's decision to declare war on the United States, four days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, in 1941, has long vexed historians. U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt may have been ready to prioritize the fight against Germany, but Japan had attacked the United States, and so there was an argument for concentrating on the Pacific. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who later claimed that after the attack on Pearl Harbor he knew at once the war would be won, was actually anxious that the United States would be so distracted by Japan that it would leave the United Kingdom alone, with dwindling material support, to deal with the Nazis. In a detailed reconstruction of the events of those few days, illuminating the importance of confusion, chance, and choice in the stream of history, Simms and Laderman explain that Hitler assumed that war with the United States was inevitable—because the country was supposedly controlled by Jews—and preferred to wage it earlier rather than later, buttressed by supplies of food and oil he hoped to gain by defeating the Soviet Union.

Flying Camelot: The F-15, the F-16, and the Weaponization of Fighter Pilot Nostalgia
BY MICHAEL W. HANKINS. Cornell University Press, 2021, 280 pp.

Hankins, a curator at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, describes how the design and production of two fighter aircraft—the F-15 and the F-16—were initially shaped by a group of purists, including engineers and pilots, who wanted simple, agile aircraft that would prevail in dogfights and that would not be saddled with superfluous roles, such as attacking ground positions. In this lively, absorbing account, Hankins demonstrates the influence of a specific culture that celebrated the fighter pilot as a "knight of the air" who thrilled to aerial combat. This close-knit group, of which Colonel John Boyd became the most prominent member, was uncompromising in its advocacy but was disappointed when the designs for the new aircraft introduced additional technologies and functions. Hankins acknowledges some important contributions from this group, but he sees its purism as a nostalgic yearning for a past form of warfare that glorified the daring individual without appreciating the importance of supporting technologies. Its claims were undermined by the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War, which featured few dogfights but many attack missions on Iraqi ground positions. Technology, not individual bravado, provided the winning edge.

Disruption: Inside the Largest Counterterrorism Investigation in History
BY AKI J. PERITZ. Potomac Books, 2021, 408 pp.

In this gripping account of a complex and ultimately successful counterterrorism investigation, Peritz opens with the two sets of terrorist attacks in London in July 2005, the first leading to many deaths but the second failing as the bombs fizzled rather than exploded. The British-bred Rashid Rauf orchestrated the attacks from Pakistan. Disappointed that one of the bombs had failed to detonate, he decided to improve the explosives used, eventually devising a plot to bring down passenger aircraft using bottles of liquid hydrogen peroxide disguised as sodas. British intelligence got wind of the plot and began a vast surveillance operation, following the terrorists as they acquired the ingredients for their bombs and filmed their martyrdom videos. One of the most significant aspects of the story is the tension between British officials who wanted to gather evidence to be sure a case against Rauf and his collaborators would stand up in court and their impatient American counterparts, who were keen to move before the plotters launched their attack. The Americans eventually preempted the issue by getting Rauf arrested in Pakistan (he later escaped custody), forcing the British into rushing arrests in the United Kingdom and jeopardizing the trial of the conspirators.

The United States

Jessica T. Mathews

Looking for the Good War: American Amnesia and the Violent Pursuit of Happiness
BY ELIZABETH D. SAMET. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021, 368 pp.

The United States entered World War II still struggling to climb out of the Great Depression and with its military ranked 19th in the world in terms of manpower, just behind Portugal. It emerged from the war a towering colossus, by far the world's greatest military and economic power. Unsurprisingly, then, World War II occupies a special place in the national psyche. Samet, an English professor at West Point and an accomplished author, reviews American literature, film, and culture to convincingly argue that something dangerous has occurred through the false remembrance of the war. Increasingly thick layers of "nostalgia, sentimentality, and jingoism" have produced a profoundly distorted collective memory of the war as it was fought abroad and at home. In turn, this has shaped unwarranted beliefs in American exceptionalism. Mythmaking about World War II blossomed around the war's 50th anniversary and after the end of the Cold War. Samet's treatment of the works of the historian Stephen Ambrose and the journalist Tom Brokaw and, to a lesser degree, Steven Spielberg's Hollywood epic *Saving Private Ryan* is devastating. Looking ahead, she

warns against the abiding power of the "seemingly indestructible fantasy" that U.S. military interventions will "naturally produce" good outcomes, a delusion that continues to prompt the unsuccessful quest for another equally transformational conflict.

Red Carpet: Hollywood, China, and the Global Battle for Cultural Supremacy
BY ERICH SCHWARTZEL. Penguin Press, 2022, 400 pp.

In 1994, Beijing began to allow the import of a trickle of American movies into China, just ten a year. By 2020, the Chinese market accounted for the largest box office in the world. Schwartzel tells the story of how Chinese investments in Hollywood and the Communist Party's role in deciding what Chinese audiences could see swiftly inverted the power relationship between China and the United States in this immensely influential industry. With the Chinese market "too lucrative to anger," Hollywood executives learned the troubling art of "anticipatory censorship," stripping films of anything that might annoy Beijing. In 2010, news that a soon-to-be-released remake of the 1984 hit *Red Dawn* featured a Chinese invasion of the United States prompted angry editorials in China. Spooked, MGM transformed the already filmed movie into a preposterous story of an invasion by North Korea. Fear of Chinese retaliation against possible blockbusters makes movie executives attentive to Chinese sensibilities down to the potential ramifications of a single shot. Only a studio that has failed to break into the Chinese market, such as Netflix, can retain a degree of freedom to film what it chooses. Schwartzel makes this story of big stars and big money a page-turner, but its implications are much larger. Whose history, whose successes, whose future agenda, and what values—of democracy or authoritarianism—will the world see on the big screen?

100% Democracy: The Case for Universal Voting
BY E. J. DIONNE, JR., AND MILES RAPOPORT. New Press, 2022, 224 pp.

In 2024, when many fear that a complete breakdown of U.S. democracy will occur, Australia will mark the 100th anniversary of its adoption of mandatory universal voting. In this closely argued short volume, Dionne and Rapoport contend that making voting a universal civic duty, as well as a right, could massively strengthen the United States' troubled democracy. At first, the idea seems fantastical. But the authors methodically lay out a series of philosophical, practical, constitutional, and cultural arguments for it and compellingly describe Australia's own experience with compulsory voting. The United States would need to start by instituting reforms to make voter registration and voting easily accessible. Those who did not vote would be subject to a minor noncompliance fee, but the First Amendment would be protected by allowing the submission of a blank ballot and the option to vote "none of the above." Compulsory voting would end the country's long, sorry history of voter suppression. The massive sums now directed to generating voter turnout would become unnecessary. More attention might be directed

to substantive policy issues. The authors acknowledge the cultural hurdle that such a universal civic duty might pose in the United States. They note, however, that rights and duties are closely related. Americans accept the obligations of jury duty, getting a driver's license, and registering for military service, among others. Voting could just be one more duty among many. The book provides a strong base for beginning a consequential national discussion.

Lincoln and the Fight for Peace
BY JOHN AVLON. Simon & Schuster, 2022, 368 pp.

Avlon braves a subject about which thousands of books have already been written by finding a relatively empty niche in the gigantic literature on President Abraham Lincoln, namely the president's plans for winning the peace after the Civil War. It is a particularly timely subject now in a polarized United States and world. Lincoln wanted to pair an unambiguous military victory—he insisted on the Confederacy's unconditional surrender—with plans for a magnanimous peace that would emphasize political reconciliation, economic growth, and incremental movement toward racial inclusion. Although those plans were fatally undermined by his chosen successor, Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's wisdom has influenced successful postwar reconstructions ever since, especially in Germany and Japan after World War II. In his research, Avlon was "struck by how thin the study of peace and postwar stabilization is compared to the study of war" and how much scholarship on these two ends of the same stick needs to be "recalibrated." His own book underlines this thinness in its comments on current thinking about postwar policies (particularly by making some incorrect statements about U.S. planning for Iraq after the 2003 invasion), but this doesn't diminish the value of its highly readable, original treatment of Lincoln's tragically interrupted plans to heal the country.

A Troubled Birth: The 1930s and American Public Opinion
BY SUSAN HERBST. University of Chicago Press, 2021, 296 pp.

Herbst explores the forces that shape the amorphous thing known as "public opinion," concerning herself with its quality more than its specific content. Drawing on political science, cultural studies, and media analysis, she concludes that the "astonishingly dark" decade of the 1930s is the most important time for understanding what American public opinion is today. The cultural cauldron of that period saw the catastrophe of the Great Depression, the omnipresence of President Franklin Roosevelt, the swift diffusion of radio (the first national broadcast medium), and the rise of fearsome totalitarianism abroad on the heels of what had seemed like a solid victory in World War I. The brands of populism that arose in the 1930s, along with the racism, anti-intellectualism, and burgeoning consumer culture fueled by the new national media, produced a public that was and remains less engaged and rational than it is able to be "blown around like a feather by professional persuaders." The art of polling, another product of this decade, wrongly assumes that inter-

viewees share the perspective behind the questions. Herbst describes polling as a "crude, authoritarian and extraordinarily rigid" way to measure public opinion that cannot hope to discern the forces at work. Other, less rigid types of measurement are not much better (the televised focus group "uses the worst of all methods . . . simultaneously").

Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History of Modern Ireland
BY FINTAN O'TOOLE. Norton, 2021, 624 pp.

The centenary of Irish independence has inspired a flood of writing. Among the many traditional histories and current political commentaries, this book stands out. It charts the extraordinary economic, social, and political transformation of Ireland since 1958, the year the author was born. Before, the country was "a backwater and an irrelevance," with an "ancient way of life" marked by low economic growth, a stagnant and emigrating population, rigid (if often hypocritical) Catholic moralism, and, O'Toole notes, no running water in most rural houses. To achieve economic and demographic growth, political and religious leaders soon embraced free trade, military cooperation, foreign travel, and Hollywood culture—yet many continued to believe they could maintain premodern practices regarding religion, sexuality, and the traditional family hierarchy. O'Toole reserves his most scathing criticism for the hypocrisy of the last defenders of that old order, above all the Catholic Church. The author, perhaps Ireland's foremost public intellectual, employs a unique combination of intimately personal narrative, piquant facts and figures, and sharp (often ironic) commentary to describe the experience of this transformation.

My Secret Brexit Diary: A Glorious Illusion
BY MICHEL BARNIER. Polity, 2021, 450 pp.

This book's title promises lurid and personal revelations. The author—a genially earnest French politician who headed the EU delegation in the Brexit negotiations—delivers neither. Yet his blandness perfectly suits the perspective on Brexit he offers. The European Commission, much maligned on the British right, emerges as a skilled, moderate, and results-oriented institution that entrusts important negotiations to experienced professionals such as Barnier. By contrast, British ministers and officials represented a fractious group of Conservative politicians who had espoused Brexit for reasons more electoral than economic—and thus had little idea what they really wanted or how to get it. Barnier records his surprise as the British side made one tactical error after another, often conceding on major issues without even seeming to grasp what was at stake. At the last minute, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's amateurish effort to

circumvent the European Commission entirely by negotiating directly with national leaders collapsed when German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron refused to take his calls. In the end, Europe outnegotiated the United Kingdom across the board. The British people—faced with confusion on the border with Ireland, severe labor and product shortages, and continuing squabbles over a host of issues from fishing to banking—are now paying the price.

Western Jihadism: A Thirty-Year History
BY JYTTE KLAUSEN. Oxford University Press, 2021, 560 pp.

A striking number of jihadi terrorists grew up in the United States or Europe. Based on an intensive 15-year study of over 6,000 members of global jihadi networks, the author explains why. Jihadis in the West are disproportionately young and are motivated by a deep desire to participate in a social movement that gives their lives meaning, rather than by any immediate experiences of deprivation or discrimination or by extreme religious conviction. Today, Europe is the center of these networks because it is home to a large number of asylum seekers and has relatively lax asylum and criminal laws. This type of jihadi movement is difficult to combat because many individuals act alone, even if their actions are coordinated through (largely online) groups. The good news is that skillful and patient police work can uncover and dismantle such networks. The bad news is that ideologues with concrete geopolitical and religious grievances can effectively harness the groups to stage attacks—and thus the Western jihadi movement shows no signs of disappearing anytime soon.

Pandemonium: Saving Europe
BY LUUK VAN MIDDELAAR. Agenda Publishing, 2021, 208 pp.

Among the many alarmist policy experts, sensationalistic journalists, idealistic federalists, and spinning politicians who dominate debates over the European Union, the Dutch political philosopher and former policy adviser van Middelaar stands out as a balanced and thoughtful observer. Like his previous books, this one convincingly demolishes the many "false prophets" who over recent decades have predicted that the euro, the Schengen area, the common foreign policy, and even the EU itself cannot survive—a group that includes not just Euroskeptics but also surprisingly many among the EU's leaders and supporters. Instead, he argues, crises within the EU often elicit pragmatic and permanent reforms, even if they are sometimes slow in coming. Moreover, such initiatives generally come not from a distant EU bureaucracy but from national leaders working together informally in the European Council, comfortably insulated from direct public scrutiny. The author approves of this behind-the-scenes diplomacy, although he depicts it as more egalitarian and legalistic than it really is. Convincing though much of it is, this book, compared with the author's previous writing, relies more on philosophical pronouncements and less on an insider's feel for how everyday policymaking works.

The Golden Horde: Revolutionary Italy, 1960–1977
EDITED BY NANNI BALESTRINI AND PRIMO MORONI. TRANSLATED BY RICHARD BRAUDE. Seagull Books, 2021, 600 pp.

Developed countries witnessed far more radical politics and more political violence in the 1960s and 1970s than they do today. This classic book, now translated into English, uses eyewitness accounts from those decades to trace uprisings of workers and students in Italy, a country where the extreme left was particularly strong. Some radicals were inspired by global events: marchers brought placards displaying Mao Zedong and Che Guevara to protests against neocolonial wars in places such as Algeria and Vietnam. Some followed cultural trends in the United Kingdom and the United States: Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg mesmerized Italian writers, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones filled the airwaves, a feminist movement took hold, and parents were unnerved by their long-haired and promiscuous children. Marxist students pressed universities to hire professors committed to the class struggle. After two decades, with the radical left waning, extremist elements took over as masked terrorists threw Molotov cocktails and splinter groups bombed train stations. The Italian state ended it all with a brutal crackdown. This sprawling book vividly portrays the chaos, confusion, and contradictions of those years.

The Last Neoliberal: Macron and the Origins of France's Political Crisis
BY BRUNO AMABLE AND STEFANO PALOMBARINI. Verso, 2021, 192 pp.

This updated version of a book that first appeared during the 2017 French presidential election—in which Emmanuel Macron prevailed—argues that France has become ungovernable. In the authors' view, all the major parties in France have given up on the traditional postwar "social-liberal" compromise that combined moves toward fluid labor markets, external openness, and EU cooperation with continued redistribution, social solidarity, and upward mobility. Instead, both left-wing and center-right parties have sacrificed the latter for the former. A center-right "bourgeois bloc" is now pushing this process further, triggering rising inequality and the marginalization of low-wage labor and stoking intense disillusionment and opposition on the traditional left and the far right. Although it is certainly true that in recent decades France has moved toward more free-market policies in some areas, one cannot help sensing that these authors often miss the forest for the trees. Inequality in France today is roughly equal that in Sweden. Its levels of taxation and social spending top the European charts. Its public services—not to mention the five weeks of paid vacation guaranteed for all full-time workers—are the envy of most of its neighbors. If France's welfare-state model is collapsing, then bring on the collapse!

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

Resisting Extortion: Victims, Criminals, and States in Latin America
BY EDUARDO MONCADA. Cambridge University Press, 2022, 300 pp.

Moncada urges his readers to recognize that targets of armed criminal gangs, far from being helpless victims, often summon the courage and power to confront their aggressors. Moncada's well-chosen, carefully researched case studies compare the ways in which people have resisted the predations of organized crime in Latin America; he looks at the strategies adopted by small businesses in the city of Medellín, in Colombia; subsistence farmers in El Salvador; and industrial-scale producers of avocados and berries in the Mexican state of Michoacán. These resistance strategies include sporadic vigilante killings of gang members, collective paramilitary defense, the formation of opportunistic alliances with trustworthy security forces, and attempts to negotiate or end extortion payments to criminals. Some victims even managed to reclaim a sense of personal dignity through verbal jousting with gang members. The choice of the method of resistance was contingent on a number of factors, such as whether the criminal activity was a one-off or long term, whether victims could organize their own defense, and whether the criminals had co-opted the police. Moncada acknowledges that some of these actions blurred the line between the legal and extralegal realms and between victims and predators.

The Last Emperor of Mexico: The Dramatic Story of the Habsburg Archduke Who Created a Kingdom in the New World
BY EDWARD SHAWCROSS. Basic Books, 2021, 336 pp.

Shawcross deftly reexamines the tragicomic rule of the Austrian archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, the Habsburg prince whom France briefly imposed on Mexico in the 1860s. Maximilian is often portrayed as a vainglorious buffoon, a quixotic old-school European aristocrat egged on by an ambitious wife. In Shawcross's persuasive retelling, Maximilian was a well-intentioned, if flawed, Enlightenment ruler buffeted by the great forces of the mid-nineteenth century. Napoleon III, the French emperor, installed Maximilian in Mexico to challenge the growing power of the United States. Ultraconservative Mexican exiles championed him as an autocratic ruler to combat rising republican liberalism. Maximilian tried but failed to reconcile these opposing forces. After the end of the American Civil War, the United States reasserted the Monroe Doctrine, which sought to prevent further European colonization in the Western Hemisphere, and demanded that the French government withdraw from Mexico. Washington backed the uncompromising secular reformer Benito Juárez, who swept aside Maximilian's forces and ordered the archduke's execution by firing squad. In *The Execution of Maximilian*, the French painter Édouard

Manet captured the proud stoicism of the defeated, abandoned Habsburg prince. Equally tragic was the fate of his young, brilliant wife, Carlota, who, after futilely pleading with the French emperor and Pope Pius IX for renewed support for her husband's beleaguered kingdom, lost her sanity.

Unrevolutionary Mexico: The Birth of a Strange Dictatorship
BY PAUL GILLINGHAM. Yale University Press, 2021, 464 pp.

Gillingham digs deep into the archives of two contrasting Mexican states in the early twentieth century: rural, disorderly Guerrero, on the Pacific coast, and the more urban, cosmopolitan, if fragmented, Veracruz, on the Caribbean coast. He seeks to explain how state builders during the 1940s and 1950s at the provincial and national levels constructed a remarkably enduring system of *dictablanda*, or "soft dictatorship"—a mixture of conciliation and coercion, competitive democracy and strong-armed authoritarianism that foreshadowed the hybrid regimes increasingly common around the world today. Gillingham explores the repressive violence of official police forces, state-driven socioeconomic modernization, and the elevation by the nation-state of a hegemonic cultural narrative of heroism, altruism, and social justice that sought to suppress radical factionalism. Systemic corruption helped maintain political stability by satisfying dissidents, even as its shocking scale undermined the legitimacy of governments. This soft dictatorship goes some way toward explaining how Mexico avoided the Latin American disease of rule by a full-fledged military dictatorship, but Gillingham forgets geopolitics. The implicit security guarantee (however much Mexican nationalists might refuse to acknowledge it) of the dominant regional power, the United States, and the demilitarization (at least until recently) of the country's long northern border helped empower civilian leaders in Mexico City.

States of Belonging: Immigration Policies, Attitudes, and Inclusion
BY TOMÁS R. JIMÉNEZ, DEBORAH J. SCHILDKRAUT, YUEN J. HUO, AND JOHN F. DOVIDIO. Russell Sage Foundation, 2021, 280 pp.

Through extensive surveys and in-depth interviews, the authors contrast the pro-immigration policies of New Mexico with the more hostile policies of neighboring Arizona. Not surprisingly, Latinos feel more welcome in New Mexico. Their degree of comfort and belonging in the state affords them greater material, as well as valuable psychological, benefits. Interestingly, many white people—mostly liberal Democrats—also gain psychologically from New Mexico's immigration-friendly climate, which validates their liberal values. Not everybody agrees, of course: white Republicans in New Mexico report a decreased sense of social belonging. In Arizona, anti-immigration policies alienate not only Latinos but also liberal white people, who, according to surveys, feel less attached to the state as a result. Encouragingly, the authors find broad bipartisan sympathy in these two states and across the country for a legal pathway

to citizenship for worthy immigrants, even if meaningful immigration reform at the federal level remains elusive. Instead, the authors place their hope in state-level reforms. California, which in the 1990s adopted several anti-immigration measures, is now the most pro-immigration state in the country because of its growing Latino population, grassroots organizing, and the general leftward shift among California Democrats. Arizona, the authors suggest, may eventually follow suit.

Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Republics

Maria Lipman

Beyond: The Astonishing Story of the First Human to Leave Our Planet and Journey Into Space
BY STEPHEN WALKER.
HarperCollins, 2021, 512 pp.

Walker's enthralling book covers the early stages of the space race, when the Soviet Union—despite the country's utter devastation in World War II, in which 27 million Soviet citizens perished—demonstrated technological supremacy over the United States, the world's richest and most advanced country. In 1961, the Soviet Union launched the first man into space. U.S. President John F. Kennedy, then newly in office, did not prioritize the space race with the Soviet Union; he was focused instead on Soviet meddling in Cuba. The Bay of Pigs invasion, which Kennedy secretly authorized, ended in a disaster just days after the Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin triumphantly orbited the earth. Walker's narrative alternates between Soviet preparations for Gagarin's flight and U.S. preparations for the United States' first manned flight. It culminates in a suspenseful 50-page account of Gagarin's 108-minute journey that reads in one breath. The Soviet space program was strictly classified. Gagarin's name was first made public only when he was already in orbit; Sergey Korolyov, the program's chief designer, was not identified by name until after his death in 1966; and some of the serious malfunctions during Gagarin's flight remained secret until the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

The Volga: A History of Russia's Greatest River
BY JANET M. HARTLEY. Yale University Press, 2021, 400 pp.

Hartley's chronological narrative, rich in vivid detail, begins over 1,000 years ago, when the principality of Kievan Rus vied with the Khazar Khaganate and the Bulgars for the lucrative trade on the Volga River. By the mid-sixteenth century, Tsar Ivan IV had established control along the entire length of the river, thereby turning Russia into a multiethnic and multiconfessional empire. The Russian state's dominance, however, was not yet secure: in the eighteenth century, the Volga was the scene of massive Cossack revolts that sparked outbursts of peasant violence.

Russian authorities struggled to protect the transportation of valuable goods on the Volga against banditry. Hartley offers a fascinating account of the logistics of navigating the Volga before the introduction of steamships, including the herculean work of barge haulers, who had to drag boats upstream. In the nineteenth century, the Volga, which had once been the marker of a frontier, came to be seen as an intrinsically Russian river, the "Mother Volga" glorified in art, music, poetry, and later also film. In 1943, the Battle of Stalingrad, fought on the river's west bank, produced the ultimate victory of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany and reinforced the Volga's standing as a powerful national symbol.

We Shall Be Masters: Russian Pivots to East Asia From Peter the Great to Putin
BY CHRIS MILLER. Harvard University Press, 2021, 384 pp.

Miller's broad historical overview of Russian foreign policy in Asia challenges the conventional view that the country has enduring interests in the Far East. He demonstrates that over the past two centuries, Russia has followed periods of deep engagement in Asia—involving territorial expansion, military buildups, and the intensification of commercial ties—with times of neglect and disengagement. For instance, in the early nineteenth century, Russia established colonies in Alaska and California but soon came to see those outposts as an unprofitable distraction and gave them up to the Americans. In the 1860s, Russia conquered the territories around the Amur and Ussuri Rivers, on the Chinese border, but made no use of those sparsely populated lands for three decades. Soviet leaders sought to build a broad anti-imperialist front in Asia, but hostilities with China undermined that effort. By the 1980s, the Soviet Union's influence in Asia had significantly decreased. For Russia, Miller argues, Asia has been a land of unfulfilled promises, which makes him skeptical about the long-term prospects of Russian President Vladimir Putin's current pivot to the east and his attempted rapprochement with China.

Faustian Bargain: The Soviet-German Partnership and the Origins of the Second World War
BY IAN ONA JOHNSON. Oxford University Press, 2021, 384 pp.

Drawing on archives in five countries, Johnson delves into the fascinating secret military cooperation between Germany and the Soviet Union in the interwar period. After the end of World War I, a defeated and disarmed Germany sought ways to rearm despite the severe restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. Meanwhile, most major powers refused to recognize the new Bolshevik government in Russia, which was in dire need of investment and foreign assistance to build up its armed forces. The two countries' pariah status drew them together. The Soviet Union provided a place—beyond the reach of Allied inspectors—for the research, development, and testing of German combat aircraft, tanks, and chemical weapons. Cooperation with Germany played a crucial role in the development of the Soviet military industry and Red Army cadres. Thousands of Soviet military officers trained alongside their German

counterparts. Later on, Hitler's massive rearmament was enabled in part by the military capabilities that Germany had developed in the Soviet Union before the Nazis came to power. Hitler ended German-Soviet military cooperation in 1933, soon after he became chancellor. But in 1939, the two countries grew close again: they signed the Treaty of Nonaggression, renewed their military ties, and agreed to partition eastern Europe between them. Their extensive trade partnership continued until Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.

Deception: Russiagate and the New Cold War
BY RICHARD SAKWA. Lexington Books, 2021, 382 pp.

Sakwa contends that the investigations into "Russiagate"—the alleged collusion of the Russian government with Donald Trump ahead of the 2016 U.S. presidential election—were politically biased and rested on unverified material. In the end, the main investigation, headed by the U.S. special counsel Robert Mueller, concluded that the Russian government and the Trump campaign did not engage in a criminal conspiracy, thus throwing cold water on the notion that Trump owed his victory to Russian interference and was therefore beholden to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The investigations themselves, Sakwa argues, did grave damage to the United States by exacerbating the polarization of U.S. society, compromising the media, and politicizing the security services. Russiagate reduced relations between the United States and Russia to a new Cold War and ruled out any rapprochement between them. Sakwa is not the first to make these points, but his is an exceptionally detailed and well-documented account of all the major episodes covered by the Trump-Russia probes. He aims to help his audience "understand the main issues and facts" of Russiagate. But in the divisive social and political environment that spurred the investigations in the first place, his argument is unlikely to change the minds of those Americans who were anxious to blame outside forces for the defeat of Trump's 2016 opponent, Hillary Clinton.

Middle East

Lisa Anderson

Shelf Life: Chronicles of a Cairo Bookseller
BY NADIA WASSEF. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021, 240 pp.

Diwan Bookstore revolutionized the cultural landscape of Cairo when it opened its first outlet in 2002. Light, airy, inviting, and well stocked, the shop included a pleasant café as well as open shelves of books in Arabic, English, French, and German. There was nothing else like it in the entire city, and this memoir by one of its three founders—all women, itself an indication of the shop's novelty and ambition—is as original and extraordinary as the store itself. Organized in chapters reflecting the store's sections, including "Self-Help," "The Classics," "Business and Management," and "Egypt Essentials," the book weaves

stories of doing business in Egypt with tales of the author's home and family. It is a clear-eyed and often brash account of success and failure, both professional and personal. The ambiguities and contradictions of class in Egypt—who reads books, who can afford books, who steals books, and where one buys books (from the fading storefronts of central Cairo or the glittering malls in the city's new suburbs)—are explored with frank insight and affection. The sales clerks had their pockets sewn shut to discourage petty theft, but these workers could debate the merits of the writer Naguib Mahfouz's Nobel Prize.

Master of the Game: Henry Kissinger and the Art of Middle East Diplomacy
BY MARTIN INDYK. Knopf, 2021, 688 pp.

After his own decades-long effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including during the Clinton and Obama administrations, came to naught, the veteran U.S. diplomat and policy analyst Indyk asks, "Has the United States lost the art of peacemaking in the Middle East?" He returns to the earliest and, in his view, most successful iteration of this art: Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Although Indyk is lavish in his praise of Kissinger's wisdom and wiliness, the story he tells exposes Kissinger's responsibility for many of the subsequent flaws of U.S. diplomacy in the region. As Indyk documents, Kissinger was not really interested in securing peace so much as stabilizing a regional order in which the United States would remain indispensable. The peace process was about the process, not the peace, and judged by this standard, the United States neither aspired to nor failed at "the art of peacemaking." Moreover, in his enthusiasm for the role of the great figures in history, Kissinger conflated the vision and skills of rulers with the interests and capabilities of their states, creating a reliance on personal diplomacy that has debilitated U.S. policy in the region ever since. Indyk tells this story with style and intelligence, but it is a darker tale than he acknowledges.

A Sultan in Autumn: Erdogan Faces Turkey's Uncontainable Forces
BY SONER CAGAPTAY. I.B. Tauris, 2021, 144 pp.

This slim volume provides a brisk and informative review of the Turkish political scene, particularly Ankara's foreign policy, through an examination of the recent political fortunes of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Arguing that Erdogan is "an autocrat ruling a democracy," Cagaptay suggests that his successful transformation of Turkish democracy from a parliamentary to a presidential system in 2018 may eventually haunt him. Not only has the resulting centralization of power deprived Erdogan of the relatively diverse circle of political allies and advisers once supplied by a coalition government; it also seems to be providing an incentive for the opposition to band together to defeat him in the scheduled 2023 elections. Cagaptay usefully parses the head-spinning convolutions of recent Turkish foreign policy, tracing various regional and global fault lines into which Turkey has

inserted itself, including in Azerbaijan, Libya, Syria, and eastern Mediterranean gas fields. He usefully highlights the contradictions of Erdogan's reliance on Russian President Vladimir Putin in the context of Turkey's long-standing distrust of Russia. Erdogan is widely criticized for his promotion of political Islam and for his highhanded dismissal of the civil and political rights of his critics, but Cagaptay suggests his future will be decided by the now flagging Turkish economy.

Revolutionary Life: The Everyday of the Arab Spring
BY ASEF BAYAT. Harvard University Press, 2021, 336 pp.

Bayat, a sociologist and an acute chronicler of everyday life in the Middle East and North Africa, explores the fate of marginalized people in the uprisings of the Arab Spring, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia. He concedes that from a conventional, state-centric perspective, these uprisings failed as revolutions. But he argues that the experience of liberation, brief as it may have been, changed the self-image and, to some degree, the political efficacy of women, young people, workers in the informal economy, and what he labels the "middle-class poor," the vast numbers of unemployed university graduates. "The rise of a new imaginary . . . , which the new rulers could not simply overlook," enabled political reform in Morocco; social, cultural, and religious transformation in Saudi Arabia; and perhaps even the prominent role of women in the Egyptian cabinet. The uprisings succeeded indirectly; autocrats co-opted reform to placate the new aspirations and expectations of populations that had tasted freedom and dignity. This is a partial victory, no doubt, but Bayat insists that "the chronicle of the Arab Spring . . . is not simply doom, gloom, and failure."

Asia and Pacific

Andrew J. Nathan

India Before Modi: How the BJP Came to Power
BY VINAY SITAPATI. Hurst, 2021, 400 pp.

Since the 1920s, Hindu nationalists in India have labored to create a political arm that could win elections by unifying Hindus across divisions of caste and region. This electoral component went through several incarnations, emerging in 1980 as today's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which mobilizes its vote base on a fear of enemies at home and abroad, especially Muslims. Sitapati offers an innovative analysis of the party's evolution by focusing on the intertwined lives of two of its founders, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a member of Parliament and three-time prime minister, and Lal Krishna Advani, a longtime activist, parliamentarian, and party official. Sitapati's sweeping and richly textured account details how the two initially moderate leaders led the party through a series of victories and defeats, in the process stirring up an intense culture of "defensive violence" among their followers, which eventually led to

several tragic incidents of mass violence by Hindu mobs. As the party became more radical, a new and younger leader arose from within its ranks: Narendra Modi, who as prime minister today is driving India in an increasingly exclusionary and authoritarian direction.

The Digital Silk Road: China's Quest to Wire the World and Win the Future
BY JONATHAN E. HILLMAN. Harper Business, 2021, 368 pp.

Hillman shows how Western companies, hungry for access to the Chinese market, allowed their digital technology to be hacked, stolen, transferred, and copied, and how the resulting Chinese-manufactured equipment, produced at low prices with state support, has been installed all around the world, including in the United States. If this process continues, it could confer on China the power to set hardware and software standards for future equipment; expand the network of Chinese-made cables, switches, and satellites; and allow China to collect information on individuals and countries, silence critics, and, if desired, turn off other countries' communications, transport, banking, and water systems. The country is poised, in Chinese President Xi Jinping's words, "to dominate advanced technology manufacturing by 2025, to lead standard setting by 2035, and to become a global superpower by 2050." Western governments began to push back only when the Chinese strategy was already well advanced, but Hillman argues that the contest is not over. He advises leading democracies and major emerging markets to invest cooperatively in research and development, set open technical standards and ethical norms that promote freer societies, and provide public support to help their private firms market high-quality equipment at competitive prices.

Policing China: Street-Level Cops in the Shadow of Protest
BY SUZANNE E. SCOGGINS. Cornell University Press, 2021, 198 pp.

Governing and Ruling: The Political Logic of Taxation in China
BY CHANGDONG ZHANG. University of Michigan Press, 2021, 350 pp.

Chinese Village Life Today: Building Families in an Age of Transition
BY GONÇALO SANTOS. University of Washington Press, 2021, 320 pp.

These three books provide insights into Chinese social and political life at the grassroots, far from the high politics of Beijing. Scoggins's enterprising fieldwork finds the fabled Chinese police state to be surprisingly ineffective at the level of the street. The regime is so obsessed with "stability maintenance"—surveilling dissidents, detaining petitioners, and snuffing out protests—that the mundane work of protecting citizens and solving crimes "limps along as overworked, underpaid, and poorly trained officers struggle to get through another week." As a result, she argues, the police often ignore crimes, resolve cases by bribing victims to withdraw their complaints, or close them by torturing suspects to get them to confess. Low pay and lax supervision open the way for corruption. Reform mandates sent out from Beijing serve only to increase paperwork and reduce

efficiency. Ironically, popular dissatisfaction with the police stimulates the very protests and petitioning that the stability maintenance program is designed to suppress.

Zhang, a Peking University professor with an insider's knowledge of Chinese local government, explores how the country's fiscal and tax systems foster cooperation between private entrepreneurs and officials. County governments are mostly on their own when it comes to raising the money they need to meet Beijing's mandates, and this encourages them to attract private investors. Authorities set corporate tax rates high, but officials exercise wide discretion in overlooking tax evasion, punishing it, or negotiating partial payments. This drives entrepreneurs to cultivate relations with officials through financial and social ties and by seeking membership in local people's congresses. The system was not designed for these purposes, but for now, it helps keep corruption at tolerable levels, promotes economic growth, and deters businesspeople from challenging the regime. Zhang's close analysis helps explain why the rising middle class has so far not demanded democratic reforms, contrary to the expectation of classical modernization theory that societies would grow more democratic as they grew wealthier.

Santos spent 20 years repeatedly visiting a village in northern Guangdong Province, where he traced the impact of rapid modernization and growing government intrusiveness on the intimate decisions of family life. Many younger people leave the village to engage in factory work or to farm vegetables closer to urban markets, but they stay rooted in the community, sending money back to build houses they plan to return to one day. When making reproductive decisions, young couples face pressure from relatives on one side, who often expect at least two and preferably more male children per family, and the state on the other, which has tried to limit rural couples to two children total, regardless of their sex, and which has enforced the limit with widely resented policies such as compulsory gynecological exams, mandatory insertions of intrauterine devices, sterilizations and abortions, fines, and the destruction of property. Working mothers from the village often ignore the disapproval of urban childcare experts and state media and leave their children in the village to be raised by grandparents. Not surprisingly, grandparents often struggle with this burden. Even as the central government propagates "socialist spiritual civilization," local temple fairs continue to celebrate the immemorial values of making money and having children.

Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: Threats and Opportunities for Democracy
EDITED BY CHIARA FORMICHI.
Cornell University Press, 2021, 276 pp.

Close to 90 percent of Indonesians are Muslim, but there are five other officially recognized religions in the country, plus hundreds of folk and new religions. To knit the country together, Sukarno, one of Indonesia's founders, articulated the principle of the political equality of all religions. But in deference to Muslim sensibilities, he added that all should recognize one God—placing religions such as Buddhism,

Confucianism, Hinduism, and folk traditions in an ambiguous position of being tolerated but not fully approved of. As this lively, informative multi-author volume shows, Islamists from the beginning argued that Indonesia should be an Islamic state, and they pressed this demand with renewed force after the country's transition to democracy in 1998. Indonesia has witnessed an increase in observant behavior among Muslims, the widening of a policy role for a semiofficial Islamic council, the incorporation of principles of sharia into regional law codes, more prosecutions of non-Muslims for blasphemy, and rising support for Islamist movements and parties. Christian and Hindu populations have reacted by imposing their own values on minorities in regions where they dominate. Sukarno's optimistic template for tolerant pluralism has given way to hardening boundaries along religious lines.

The Secret Listener: An Ingenue in Mao's Court
BY YUNG-TSUNG CHEN. Oxford University Press, 2022, 320 pp.

In this beautifully crafted memoir, Chen, who lived in China during the first years of Communist Party rule, before immigrating to Hong Kong in the 1970s, seeks to counteract the "Orwellian rewriting" of the Cultural Revolution underway in Beijing. Authorities have blandly recast the period as part of a decade of "arduous exploration and development achievement," suppressing the story of its upheaval and brutality. By contrast, the now 90-year-old Chen depicts a tumultuous time, when she and many other intellectuals faced incredibly difficult choices—to stay or leave, to speak out or remain silent—as the Chinese leader Mao Zedong encouraged the radical social and political transformation of the country. Mao's disastrous Great Leap Forward precipitated mass starvation, and several years later, the Cultural Revolution caused further suffering, with, for instance, teachers beaten to death and prominent writers and artists driven to commit suicide after facing intense ritual denunciations. Chen moved in elite circles, and some specialists will be most fascinated by vignettes featuring Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and other notable figures. But equally illuminating are the book's deeply empathetic portraits of more ordinary people, from minor members of Beijing's literary world to villagers Chen befriended after she was exiled to the countryside. The book is thus a good antidote not just to official, sanitized versions of China's past but also to flattened-out portrayals of Mao's China as peopled by neatly separate groups of perpetrators and victims. As in other tragic times, the Cultural Revolution was one in which people could alternate between both roles.

JEFFREY WASSERSTROM

Africa

Nicolas van de Walle

The Wealth and Poverty of African States: Economic Growth, Living Standards, and Taxation Since the Late Nineteenth Century
BY MORTEN JERVEN. Cambridge University Press, 2022, 180 pp.

The economic and social data available on Africa are extremely poor. As Jerven makes clear, few reliable historical data series go back to the beginning of the colonial period, in the late nineteenth century. Data from the postcolonial era are riddled with missing values for key countries and years. Nevertheless, scholars and analysts still produce confident generalizations about African economic history and its implications for policy. Jerven succeeds in discussing a wide array of methodological issues regarding African data with instructive precision and nuance. He then undertakes some careful combining and massaging of both old and newly available data to create longer and more complete time series of economic data for the region, with a focus on state revenues and the growth of production. His new estimates show that analysts have underestimated the real growth of African economies in the past century and that the deep recession that hit the continent in the 1980s and early 1990s was an exception rather than the rule.

Salafism and Political Order in Africa
BY SEBASTIAN ELISCHER. Cambridge University Press, 2021, 306 pp.

Based on extensive fieldwork in six countries where Salafi Islam has an organized presence (Chad, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Uganda), Elischer seeks to understand why Salafi organizations get involved in or stay removed from political violence. He argues compellingly that the key mechanism is the relationship between the state and the faithful. Chad, Niger, and Uganda created informal regulatory mechanisms in the immediate postindependence era, prior to the growth of extremist Salafism. As a result, they have largely managed to avoid the emergence of homegrown Salafi violence. Elischer's impressive case studies show that governments in those places co-opted the Islamic establishment to regulate the building of mosques and the content of sermons at Friday prayers, for instance, and responded to early signs of emerging extremism with the support of local Islamic leaders. On the other hand, Kenya, Mali, and Mauritania complacently ignored the rise of this extremist threat or allowed Islamic groups to organize themselves without state supervision. In these states, Islamist extremism was more likely to emerge and grow in strength before the state could react. Too often, observers assume that the weakness of African states condemns them to impotence; this powerful book suggests otherwise.

Holy War: The Untold Story of Catholic Italy's Crusade Against the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
BY IAN CAMPBELL. Hurst, 2021, 336 pp.

This stunning book explores the Catholic Church's support for and encouragement of Mussolini's campaign against the Ethiopian Orthodox Church during Italy's invasion and occupation of Ethiopia from 1935 to 1943. Italian forces targeted the Orthodox Church; they ransacked and destroyed hundreds of churches and summarily executed several thousand Ethiopian clergy. Amicable relations had long existed between the Catholic Church in Rome and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but the Roman episcopate embraced Mussolini's regime and its aggressive foreign policy in the mid-1930s. In 1935, Pope Pius XI openly supported the invasion of Ethiopia as a crusade against a country of heretics, schismatics, pagans, and infidels. This papal support of the war, reinforced by church sermons across Italy, helped mobilize volunteers to join the Italian army to fight in Ethiopia. Eloquent and based on authoritative archival research in both Ethiopia and Italy, Campbell's book sheds new light on a key episode in African history.

Performing Power in Nigeria: Identity, Politics, and Pentecostalism
BY ABIMBOLA A. ADELAKUN. Cambridge University Press, 2021, 286 pp.

With Pentecostalism as the fastest-growing religion in West Africa, the Pentecostal Church in Nigeria has become a wealthy and influential social actor. In her fine study of the dramaturgy of the church's rites and rhetoric, Adelakun argues that the emphasis the church puts on affirming its social influence helps develop a narrative of Pentecostal believers as "people of power," an identity that church members embrace. Drawing examples not only from the liturgy but also from Pentecostal films, plays, and novels in which individuals grapple with the devil successfully thanks to their faith, she shows that the church's activities can be viewed as performances that embed the Pentecostal spiritual message in everyday practices; this is done in a way that confers a sense of agency on its members. An interesting final chapter recasts the argument in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: Adelakun suggests that the movement has been put on the defensive by its evident inability to protect members from the disease.

The Enduring Struggle: The History of the U.S. Agency for International Development and America's Uneasy Transformation of the World
BY JOHN NORRIS. Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, 338 pp.

This comprehensive history of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. government's official bilateral foreign aid agency, deserves to be read by all students of U.S. foreign policy. The "enduring struggle" of the title is meant to refer to the difficulties of ending poverty in the developing world. But Norris's description of the repeated attempts by the White House and the State Department to use USAID to advance foreign policy and strategic goals rather than developmental ones suggests another enduring struggle, in which Washington's imperatives are more salient than those of low-income countries. Norris ably defends the record of USAID in promoting development but also documents its decline. Under President John F. Kennedy, the agency's director enjoyed major resources and direct access to the Oval Office. Every president after Kennedy would contribute to USAID's progressive marginalization, Norris shows, through poor choices of directors to lead the agency, ill-conceived administrative reorganizations, and the decision to allow the agency to lose its autonomy to the State Department. By George W. Bush's first term, few in Washington objected when the president ignored USAID and preferred to create new bureaucracies to advance major new development initiatives, such as the task of addressing HIV/AIDS.

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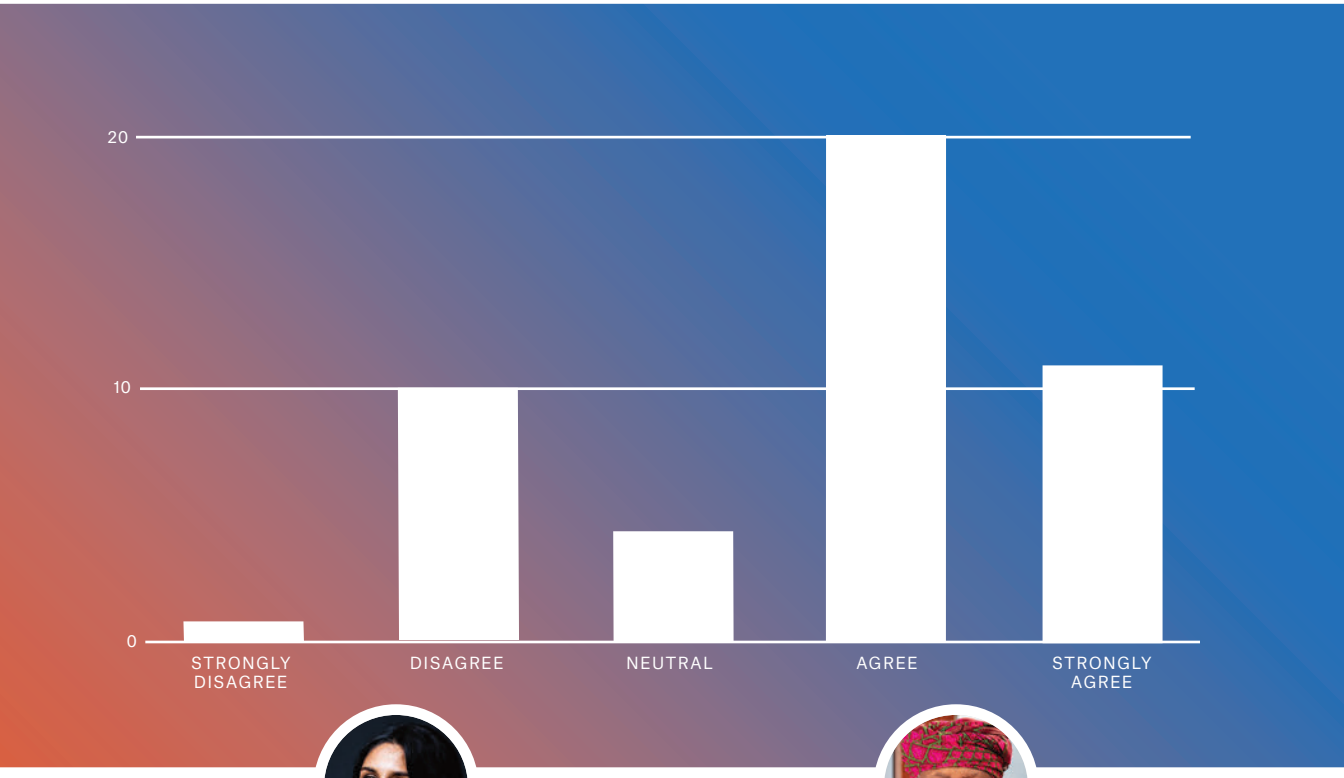
When Will the Pandemic End?

Foreign Affairs Brain Trust

We asked dozens of experts whether they agreed or disagreed that by the end of 2022, most countries will no longer be employing extraordinary public health measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. The results are below.



NEUTRAL, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 8

Syra Madad

Senior Director, System-wide Special Pathogens Program at NYC Health + Hospitals, and Fellow, Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

"The wildcards of the COVID-19 pandemic—new variants and low vaccination rates—make it difficult to predict the future. What we do know is that the Omicron variant will boost immunity across the world. What we don't know is how long immunity, from previous infection or from vaccination, will last. A low public appetite for extraordinary public health measures will also make them increasingly difficult to employ."

AGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 7

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Director General, World Trade Organization, and former Finance Minister of Nigeria

"Yes, based on the assumption that the international community works harder to improve vaccine access in developing countries, to deal firmly with vaccine denial and misinformation in developed countries, and to get jabs in arms. If much more of the world is not vaccinated, no one can rule out other dangerous variants emerging."

→ **See the full responses at ForeignAffairs.com/covid19**

GREAT DECISIONS

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