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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023

## The World Putin Made

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023 • VOLUME 102, NUMBER 1

*Published by the Council on Foreign Relations*

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# Putin's Last Stand

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## The Promise and Peril of Russian Defeat

LIANA FIX AND MICHAEL KIMMAGE

Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine was meant to be his crowning achievement, a demonstration of how far Russia had come since the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991. Annexing Ukraine was supposed to be a first step in reconstructing a Russian empire. Putin intended to expose the United States as a paper tiger outside Western Europe and to demonstrate that Russia, along with China, was destined for a leadership role in a new, multipolar international order.

It hasn't turned out that way. Kyiv held strong, and the Ukrainian military has been transformed into a juggernaut, thanks in part to a close partnership with the United States and Western allies. The Russian military, in contrast, has demonstrated poor strategic thinking and organization.

---

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*Illustration by Eduardo Morciano*

The political system behind it has proved unable to learn from its mistakes. With little prospect of dictating Putin's actions, the West will have to prepare for the next stage of Russia's disastrous war of choice.

War is inherently unpredictable. Indeed, the course of the conflict has served to invalidate widespread early prognostications that Ukraine would quickly fall; a reversal of fortunes is impossible to discount. It nevertheless appears that Russia is headed for defeat. Less certain is what form this defeat will take. Three basic scenarios exist, and each

one would have different ramifications for policymakers in the West and Ukraine.

---

A long war in Ukraine would probably spark a revolutionary flame in Russia.

The first and least likely scenario is that Russia will agree to its defeat by accepting a negotiated settlement on Ukraine's terms. A great deal would have to change for this scenario to materialize because any semblance of diplomatic dialogue among Russia, Ukraine, and the West has vanished. The scope of Rus-

sian aggression and the extent of Russian war crimes would make it difficult for Ukraine to accept any diplomatic settlement that amounted to anything less than a total Russian surrender.

That said, a Russian government—under Putin or a successor—could try to retain Crimea and sue for peace elsewhere. To save face domestically, the Kremlin could claim it is preparing for the long game in Ukraine, leaving open the possibility of additional military incursions. It could blame its underperformance on NATO, arguing that the alliance's weapon deliveries, not Ukraine's strength, impeded a Russian victory. For this approach to pass muster within the regime, hard-liners—possibly including Putin himself—would have to be marginalized. This would be difficult but not impossible. Still, under Putin this outcome is highly improbable, given that his approach to the war has been maximalist from the beginning.

A second scenario for Russian defeat would involve failure amid escalation. The Kremlin would nihilistically seek to prolong the war in Ukraine while launching a campaign of unacknowledged acts of sabotage in countries that support Kyiv and in Ukraine itself. In the worst case, Russia could opt for a nuclear attack on Ukraine. The war would then edge toward a direct military confrontation between NATO and Russia. Russia would transform from a revisionist state into a rogue one, a transition that is already underway, and that would harden the West's

conviction that Russia poses a unique and unacceptable threat. Crossing the nuclear threshold could lead to NATO's conventional involvement in the war, accelerating Russia's defeat on the ground.

The final scenario for the war's end would be defeat through regime collapse, with the decisive battles taking place not in Ukraine but rather in the halls of the Kremlin or in the streets of Moscow. Putin has concentrated power rigidly in his own hands, and his obstinacy in pursuing a losing war has placed his regime on shaky ground. Russians will continue marching behind their inept tsar only to a certain point. Although Putin has brought political stability to Russia—a prized state of affairs given the ruptures of the post-Soviet years—his citizens could turn on him if the war leads to general privation. The collapse of his regime could mean an immediate end to the war, which Russia would be unable to wage amid the ensuing domestic chaos. A coup d'état followed by civil war would echo what happened after the Bolshevik takeover in 1917, which precipitated Russia's withdrawal from World War I.

No matter how it comes about, a Russian defeat would of course be welcomed. It would free Ukraine from the terrors it has suffered since the invasion. It would reinforce the principle that an attack on another country cannot go unpunished. It might open up new opportunities for Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova, and for the West to finish ordering Europe in its image. For Belarus, a path could emerge toward the end of dictatorship and toward free and fair elections. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine could strive together for eventual integration into the European Union and possibly NATO, following the model of Central and Eastern European governments after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Though Russia's defeat would have many benefits, the United States and Europe should prepare for the regional and global disorder it would produce. Since 2008, Russia has been a revisionist power. It has redrawn borders, annexed territory, meddled in elections, inserted itself into various African conflicts, and altered the geopolitical dynamic of the Middle East by propping up Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Were Russia to pursue radical escalation or splinter into chaos instead of accepting a defeat through negotiation, the repercussions would be felt in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Disorder could take the form of separatism and renewed conflicts in and around Russia, the world's largest country in landmass. The transformation of Russia into a failed state riven by civil war would revive questions that Western policymakers had



to grapple with in 1991: for example, who would gain control of Russia's nuclear weapons? A disorderly Russian defeat would leave a dangerous hole in the international system.

#### CAN'T TALK YOUR WAY OUT

Trying to sell Putin on defeat through negotiation would be difficult, perhaps impossible. (It would be much likelier under a successor.) Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky would demand that Moscow abandon its claim on the nominally Russian-controlled territories in Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia. Putin has already celebrated the annexation of these areas with pomp and circumstance. It is doubtful he would do an about-face after this patriotic display despite Russia's tenuous hold on this territory. Any Russian leader, whether Putin or someone else, would resist relinquishing Crimea, the part of Ukraine that Russia annexed in 2014.

Conditions on the ground in Russia would have to be conducive to compromise. A new Russian leadership would have to contend with a demoralized military and gamble on a complacent public acceding to capitulation. Russians could eventually become indifferent if the war grinds on with no clear resolution. But fighting would likely continue in parts of eastern Ukraine, and tensions between the two countries would remain high.

Still, an agreement with Ukraine could bring normalization of relations with the West. That would be a powerful incentive for a less militaristic Russian leader than Putin, and it would appeal to many Russians. Western leaders could also be enticed to push for negotiations in the interest of ending the war. The hitch here is timing. In the first two months after the February 2022 invasion, Russia had the chance to negotiate with Zelensky and capitalize on its battlefield leverage. After Ukraine's successful counteroffensives, however, Kyiv has little reason to concede anything at all. Since invading, Russia has upped the ante and escalated hostilities instead of showing a willingness to compromise. A less intransigent leader than Putin might lead Ukraine to consider negotiating. In the face of defeat, Putin could resort to lashing out on the global stage. He has steadily expanded his framing of the war, claiming that the West is waging a proxy battle against Russia with the goal of destroying the country. His 2022 speeches were more megalomaniacal versions of his address at the Munich Security Conference 15 years earlier, in which he

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denounced American exceptionalism, arguing that the United States “has overstepped its national borders in every way.”

Part bluster, part nonsense, part trial balloon, Putin’s rhetoric is meant to mobilize Russians emotionally. But there is also a tactical logic behind it: although expanding the war beyond Ukraine will obviously not win Putin the territory he craves, it could prevent Ukraine and the West from winning the conflict. His bellicose language is laying the groundwork for escalation and a twenty-first-century confrontation with the West in which Russia would seek to exploit its asymmetric advantages as a rogue or terrorist state.

Russia’s tools for confrontation could include the use of chemical or biological weapons in or outside Ukraine. Putin could destroy energy pipelines or seabed infrastructure or mount cyberattacks on the West’s financial institutions. The use of tactical nuclear weapons could be his last resort. In a speech on September 30, Putin brought up Hiroshima and Nagasaki, offering jumbled interpretations of World War II’s end phase. The analogy is imperfect, to put it mildly. If Russia were to use a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine, Kyiv would not surrender. For one thing, Ukrainians know that Russian occupation would equal the extinction of their country, which was not the case for Japan in 1945. In addition, Japan was losing the war at the time. As of late 2022, it was Russia, the nuclear power, that was losing.

The consequences of a nuclear attack would be catastrophic, and not just for the Ukrainian population. Yet war would go on, and nuclear weapons would not do much to assist Russian soldiers on the ground. Instead, Russia would face international outrage. For now, Brazil, China, and India have not condemned Russia’s invasion, but no country is truly supporting Moscow in its horrific war, and none would support the use of nuclear weapons. Chinese President Xi Jinping made this publicly explicit in November: after he met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, he issued a statement declaring that the leaders “jointly oppose the use or threat of the use of nuclear weapons.” If Putin did defy this warning, he would be an isolated pariah, punished economically and perhaps militarily by a global coalition.

For Russia, then, threatening to use nuclear weapons is of greater utility than actually doing so. But Putin may still go down this path: after all, launching the invasion was a spectacularly ill-conceived move, and yet he did it. If he does opt for breaking the nuclear taboo, NATO is unlikely to respond in kind, so as to avoid risking

an apocalyptic nuclear exchange. The alliance, however, would in all likelihood respond with conventional force to weaken Russia's military and to prevent further nuclear attacks, risking an escalatory spiral should Russia launch conventional attacks on NATO in return.

Even if this scenario could be avoided, a Russian defeat after nuclear use would still have dangerous repercussions. It would create a world without the imperfect nuclear equilibrium of the Cold War and the 30-year post-Cold War era. It would encourage leaders around the globe to go nuclear because it would appear that their safety could only be assured by acquiring nuclear weapons and showing a willingness to use them. A helter-skelter age of proliferation would ensue, to the immense detriment of global security.

#### HEAVY IS THE HEAD

At this point, the Russian public has not risen up to oppose the war. Russians may be skeptical of Putin and may not trust his government. But they also do not want their sons, fathers, and brothers in uniform to lose on the battlefield. Accustomed to Russia's great-power status through the centuries and isolated from the West, most Russians would not want their country to be without any power and influence in Europe. That would be a natural consequence of a Russian defeat in Ukraine.

Still, a long war would commit Russians to a bleak future and would probably spark a revolutionary flame in the country. Russian casualties have been high, and as the Ukrainian military grows in strength, it can inflict still greater losses. The exodus of hundreds of thousands of young Russians, many of them highly skilled, has been astonishing. Over time, the combination of war, sanctions, and brain drain will take a massive toll—and Russians may eventually blame Putin, who began his presidential career as a self-proclaimed modernizer. Most Russians were insulated from his previous wars because they generally occurred far from the home front and didn't require a mass mobilization to replenish troops. That's not the case with the war in Ukraine.

Russia has a history of regime change in the aftermath of unsuccessful wars. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 and World War I helped lead to the Bolshevik Revolution. The collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991, came two years after the end of the Soviet military's misadventure in Afghanistan. Revolutions have occurred in Russia when the government has failed in its economic and political objectives and has been unresponsive to crises. Generally, the coup de grâce has been the puncturing of the government's



underlying ideology, such as the loss of legitimacy of Russia's monarchy and tsardom in the midst of hunger, poverty, and a faltering war effort in 1917.

Putin is at risk in all these categories. His management of the war has been awful, and the Russian economy is contracting. In the face of these dismal trends, Putin has doubled down on his errors, all the while insisting that the war is going "according to plan." Repression can solve some of his problems: the arrest and prosecution of dissidents can quell protest at first. But Putin's heavy hand also runs the risk of spurring more dissatisfaction.

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Russia has a history of regime change in the aftermath of unsuccessful wars.

If Putin were deposed, it is unclear who would succeed him. For the first time since coming to power in 1999, Putin's "power vertical"—a highly centralized government hierarchy based on loyalty to the Russian president—has been losing a degree of its verticality. Two possible contenders outside the traditional elite structures are Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Wagner Group, a pri-

ate military contractor that has furnished mercenaries for the war on Ukraine, and Ramzan Kadyrov, the leader of the Chechen Republic. They might be tempted to chip away at the remains of Putin's power vertical, encouraging infighting in the regime in hopes of securing a position in the center of Russia's new power structure after Putin's departure. They could also try to claim power themselves. They have already put pressure on the leadership of the Russian army and the Defense Ministry in response to failures in the war and attempted to broaden their own power bases with the backing of loyal paramilitary forces. Other contenders could come from traditional elite circles, such as the presidential administration, the cabinet, or military and security forces. To suppress palace intrigue, Putin has surrounded himself with mediocrities for the past 20 years. But his unsuccessful war threatens his hold on power. If he truly believes his recent speeches, he may have convinced his subordinates that he is living in a fantasy world.

The chances that a pro-Western democrat would become Russia's next president are vanishingly small. Far more likely is an authoritarian leader in the Putinist mold. A leader from outside the power vertical could end the war and contemplate better relations with the West. But a leader who comes from within Putin's Kremlin would not have this option because he would be trailed by a public record of supporting the war. The challenge of being a Putinist after Putin would be formidable.



One challenge would be the war, which would be no easier to manage for a successor, especially one who shared Putin's dream of restoring Russia's great-power status. Another challenge would be building legitimacy in a political system without any of its traditional sources. Russia has no constitution to speak of and no monarchy. Anyone who followed Putin would lack popular support and find it difficult to personify the neo-Soviet, neoimperial ideology that Putin has come to embody.

In the worst case, Putin's fall could translate into civil war and Russia's disintegration. Power would be contested at the top, and state control would fragment throughout the country. This period could be an echo of the Time of Troubles, or *smuta*, a 15-year crisis of succession in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries marked by rebellion, lawlessness, and foreign invasion. Russians regard that era as a period of humiliation to be avoided at all costs. Russia's twenty-first-century troubles could see the emergence of warlords from the security services and violent separatists in the country's economically distressed regions, many of which are home to large numbers of ethnic minorities. Although a Russia in turmoil might not formally end the war in Ukraine, it might simply be unable to conduct it, in which case Ukraine would have regained its peace and independence while Russia descended into anarchy.

#### AGENT OF CHAOS

Putin's invasion of Ukraine as a first step in refashioning a Russian empire has had the opposite effect. The war has diminished his ability to strong-arm Russia's neighbors. When Azerbaijan fought a border skirmish with Armenia last year, Russia refused to intervene on Armenia's behalf, even though it is Armenia's formal ally.

A similar dynamic is at play in Kazakhstan. Had Kyiv capitulated, Putin might have decided to invade Kazakhstan next: the former Soviet republic has a large ethnic Russian population, and Putin has no respect for international borders. A different possibility now looms: if the Kremlin were to undergo regime change, it might free Kazakhstan from Russia's grasp entirely, allowing the country to serve as a safe haven for Russians in exile. That would be far from the only change in the region. In the South Caucasus and in Moldova, old conflicts could revive and intensify. Ankara could continue to support its partner Azerbaijan against Armenia. Were Turkey to lose its fear of Russian opprobrium, it might urge Azerbaijan to press forward with further attacks on Armenia. In Syria, Turkey would have reason to step up its military presence if Russia were to fall back.

If Russia descended into chaos, Georgia could operate with greater latitude. The shadow of Russia's military force, which has loomed over the country since the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, would be removed. Georgia could continue its quest to eventually become a member of the European Union, although it was bypassed as a candidate last year because of inner turmoil and a lack of domestic reforms. If the Russian military were to withdraw from the region, conflicts might again break out between Georgia and South Ossetia on the one hand and between Georgia and Abkhazia on the other. That dynamic could also emerge in Moldova and its breakaway region Transnistria, where Russian soldiers have been stationed since 1992. Moldova's candidacy for European Union membership, announced in June 2022, might be its escape from this long-standing conflict. The European Union would surely be willing to help Moldova with conflict resolution.

Leadership changes in Russia would shake Belarus, where the dictator Alexander Lukashenko is propped up by Russian money and military might. Were Putin to fall, Lukashenko would in all likelihood be next. A Belarusian government in exile already exists: Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who lives in Lithuania, became the country's opposition leader in 2020 after her husband was jailed for trying to run against Lukashenko. Free and fair elections could be held, allowing the country to rescue itself from dictatorship, if it managed to insulate itself from Russia. If Belarus could not secure its independence, Russia's potential internal strife could spill over there, which would in turn affect neighbors such as Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine.

If Russia were to truly disintegrate and lose its influence in Eurasia, other actors, such as China, would move in. Before the war, China mostly exerted economic rather than military influence in the region. That is changing. China is on the advance in Central Asia. The South Caucasus and the Middle East could be its next areas of encroachment.

A defeated and internally destabilized Russia would demand a new paradigm of global order. The reigning liberal international order revolves around the legal management of power. It emphasizes rules and multilateral institutions. The great-power-competition model, a favorite of former U.S. President Donald Trump, was about the balance of power, tacitly or explicitly viewing spheres of influence as the source of international order. If Russia were to suffer a defeat in Ukraine, policymakers would have to take into account the presence and the absence of power, in particular the absence or severe decline of Russian power.

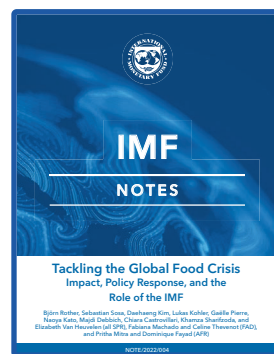
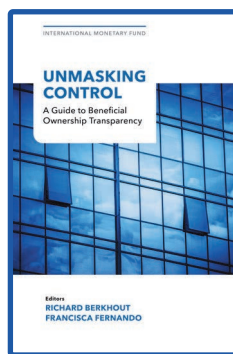
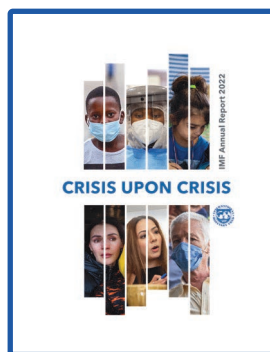
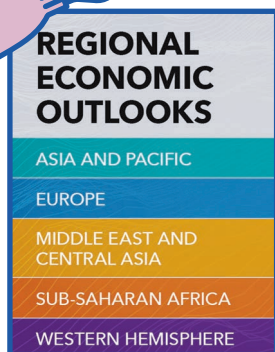
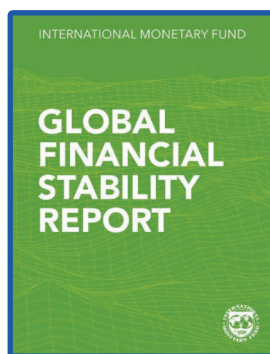
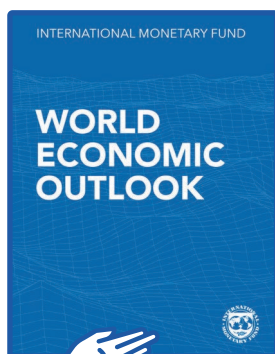
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A diminished Russia would have an impact on conflicts around the globe, including those in Africa and the Middle East, not to mention in Europe. Yet a reduced or broken Russia would not necessarily usher in a golden age of order and stability.

A defeated Russia would mark a change from the past two decades, when the country was an ascendant power. Throughout the 1990s and into the first decade of this century, Russia haphazardly aspired to integrate into Europe and partner with the United States. Russia joined the G-8 and the World Trade Organization. It assisted with U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan. In the four years when Dmitry Medvedev was Russia's president, from 2008 to 2012, Russia appeared to be playing along with the rules-based international order, if one did not look too closely behind the curtain.

A Russia amenable to peaceful coexistence with the West may have been an illusion from the beginning. Putin projected a conciliatory air early in his presidency, although he may have harbored hatred of the West, contempt for the rules-based order, and an eagerness to dominate Ukraine all along. In any case, once he retook the presidency in 2012, Russia dropped out of the rules-based order. Putin derided the system as nothing more than camouflage for a domineering United States. Russia violently encroached on Ukraine's sovereignty by annexing Crimea, reinserted itself in the Middle East by supporting Assad in Syria's civil war, and erected networks of Russian military and security influence in Africa. An assertive Russia and an ascendant China contributed to a paradigm of great-power competition in Beijing, Moscow, and even a post-Trump Washington.

Despite its acts of aggression and its substantial nuclear arsenal, Russia is in no way a peer competitor of China or the United States. Putin's overreach in Ukraine suggests that he has not grasped this important point. But because Putin has intervened in regions around the world, a defeat in Ukraine that tore apart Russia would be a resounding shock to the international system.

The defeat could, to be sure, have positive consequences for many countries in Russia's neighborhood. Look no further than the end of the Cold War, when the demise of the Soviet Union allowed for the emergence of more than a dozen free and prosperous countries in Europe. A Russia turned inward might help foster a "Europe whole and free," to borrow the phrase used by U.S. President George H. W. Bush to describe American ambitions for the continent after the Cold War ended. At the same time, disarray

in Russia could create a vortex of instability: less great-power competition than great-power anarchy, leading to a cascade of regional wars, migrant flows, and economic uncertainty.

Russia's collapse could also be contagious or the start of a chain reaction, in which case neither the United States nor China would profit because both would struggle to contain the fallout. In that case, the West would need to establish strategic priorities. It would be impossible to try to fill the vacuum that a disorderly Russian defeat might leave. In Central Asia and the South Caucasus, the United States and Europe would have little chance of preventing China and Turkey from moving into the void. Instead of attempting to shut them out, a more realistic U.S. strategy would be to attempt to restrain their influence and offer an alternative, especially to China's dominance.

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Putin's fall  
could translate  
into civil war.

Whatever form Russia's defeat took, stabilizing eastern and south-eastern Europe, including the Balkans, would be a herculean task. Across Europe, the West would have to find a creative answer to the questions that were never resolved after 1991: Is Russia a part of Europe? If not, how high should the wall between Russia and Europe be, and around which countries should it run? If Russia is a part of Europe, where and how does it fit in? Where does Europe itself start and end? The incorporation of Finland and Sweden into NATO would be only the beginning of this project. Belarus and Ukraine demonstrate the difficulties of protecting Europe's eastern flank: those countries are the last place where Russia would give up on its great-power aspirations. And even a ruined Russia would not lose all its nuclear and conventional military capacity.

Twice in the last 106 years—in 1917 and in 1991—versions of Russia have broken apart. Twice, versions of Russia have reconstituted themselves. If Russian power recedes, the West should capitalize on that opportunity to shape an environment in Europe that serves to protect NATO members, allies, and partners. A Russian defeat would furnish many opportunities and many temptations. One of these temptations would be to expect that a defeated Russia would essentially disappear from Europe. But a defeated Russia will one day reassert itself and pursue its interests on its terms. The West should be politically and intellectually equipped both for Russia's defeat and for Russia's return. 🌐



# The Global *Zeitenwende*

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## How to Avoid a New Cold War in a Multipolar Era

OLAF SCHOLZ

**T**he world is facing a *Zeitenwende*: an epochal tectonic shift. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has put an end to an era. New powers have emerged or reemerged, including an economically strong and politically assertive China. In this new multipolar world, different countries and models of government are competing for power and influence.

For its part, Germany is doing everything it can to defend and foster an international order based on the principles of the UN Charter. Its democracy, security, and prosperity depend on binding power to common rules. That is why Germans are intent on becoming the guarantor of European security that our allies expect us to be, a bridge builder within the European Union and an advocate for multilateral solutions to global problems. This is the only way for Germany to successfully navigate the geopolitical rifts of our time.

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OLAF SCHOLZ is Chancellor of Germany.



The *Zeitenwende* goes beyond the war in Ukraine and beyond the issue of European security. The central question is this: How can we, as Europeans and as the European Union, remain independent actors in an increasingly multipolar world?

Germany and Europe can help defend the rules-based international order without succumbing to the fatalistic view that the world is doomed to once again separate into competing blocs. My country's history gives it a special responsibility to fight the forces of fascism, authoritarianism, and imperialism. At the same time, our experience of being split in half during an ideological and geopolitical contest gives us a particular appreciation of the risks of a new cold war.

#### END OF AN ERA

For most of the world, the three decades since the Iron Curtain fell have been a period of relative peace and prosperity. Technological advances have created an unprecedented level of connectivity and cooperation. Growing international trade, globe-spanning value and production chains, and unparalleled exchanges of people and knowledge across borders have brought over a billion people out of poverty. Most important, courageous citizens all over the world have swept away dictatorships and one-party rule. Their yearning for liberty, dignity, and democracy changed the course of history. Two devastating world wars and a great deal of suffering—much of it caused by my country—were followed by more than four decades of tension and confrontation in the shadow of possible nuclear annihilation. But by the 1990s, it seemed that a more resilient world order had finally taken hold.

Germans, in particular, could count their blessings. In November 1989, the Berlin Wall was brought down by the brave citizens of East Germany. Only 11 months later, the country was reunified, thanks to far-sighted politicians and support from partners in both the West and the East. Finally, “what belongs together could grow together,” as former German Chancellor Willy Brandt put it shortly after the wall came down.

Those words applied not only to Germany but also to Europe as a whole. Former members of the Warsaw Pact chose to become allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and members of the EU. “Europe whole and free,” in the formulation of George H. W. Bush, the U.S. president at the time, no longer seemed like an unfounded hope. In this new era, it seemed possible that Russia would become a partner to the West rather than the adversary that the Soviet Union



had been. As a result, most European countries shrank their armies and cut their defense budgets. For Germany, the rationale was simple: Why maintain a large defense force of some 500,000 soldiers when all our neighbors appeared to be friends or partners?

The focus of our security and defense policy quickly shifted toward other pressing threats. The Balkan wars and the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, heightened the importance of regional and global crisis management. Solidarity within NATO remained intact, however: the 9/11 attacks led to the first decision to trigger Article 5, the mutual defense clause of the North Atlantic Treaty, and for two decades, NATO forces fought terrorism shoulder to shoulder in Afghanistan.

Germany's business communities drew their own conclusions from the new course of history. The fall of the Iron Curtain and an ever more integrated global economy opened new opportunities and markets, particularly in the countries of the former Eastern bloc but also in other countries with emerging economies, especially China. Russia, with its vast resources of energy and other raw materials, had proved to be a reliable supplier during the Cold War, and it seemed sensible, at least at first, to expand that promising partnership in peacetime.

The Russian leadership, however, experienced the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact and drew conclusions that differed sharply from those of leaders in Berlin and other European capitals. Instead of seeing the peaceful overthrow of communist rule as an opportunity for more freedom and democracy, Russian President Vladimir Putin has called it "the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century." The economic and political turmoil in parts of the post-Soviet space in the 1990s only exacerbated the feeling of loss and anguish that many Russian citizens to this day associate with the end of the Soviet Union.

It was in that environment that authoritarianism and imperialistic ambitions began to reemerge. In 2007, Putin delivered an aggressive speech at the Munich Security Conference, deriding the rules-based international order as a mere tool of American dominance. The following year, Russia launched a war against Georgia. In 2014, Russia occupied and annexed Crimea and sent its forces into parts of the

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The world is not doomed to once again separate into competing blocs.



Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, in direct violation of international law and Moscow's own treaty commitments. The years that followed saw the Kremlin undercut arms control treaties and expand its military capabilities, poison and murder Russian dissidents, crack down on civil society, and carry out a brutal military intervention in support of the Assad regime in Syria. Step by step, Putin's Russia chose a path that took it further from Europe and further from a cooperative, peaceful order.

#### EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

During the eight years that followed the illegal annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of conflict in eastern Ukraine, Germany and its European and international partners in the G-7 focused on safeguarding the sovereignty and political independence of Ukraine, preventing further escalation by Russia and restoring and preserving peace in Europe. The approach chosen was a combination of political and economic pressure that coupled restrictive measures on Russia with dialogue. Together with France, Germany engaged in the so-called Normandy Format that led to the Minsk agreements and the corresponding Minsk process, which called for Russia and Ukraine to commit to a cease-fire and take a number of other steps. Despite setbacks and a lack of trust between Moscow and Kyiv, Germany and France kept the process running. But a revisionist Russia made it impossible for diplomacy to succeed.

Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine in February 2022 then ushered in a fundamentally new reality: imperialism had returned to Europe. Russia is using some of the most gruesome military methods of the twentieth century and causing unspeakable suffering in Ukraine. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians have already lost their lives; many more have been wounded or traumatized. Millions of Ukrainian citizens have had to flee their homes, seeking refuge in Poland and other European countries; one million of them have come to Germany. Russian artillery, missiles, and bombs have reduced Ukrainian homes, schools, and hospitals to rubble. Mariupol, Irpin, Kherson, Izyum: these places will forever serve to remind the world of Russia's crimes—and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

But the impact of Russia's war goes beyond Ukraine. When Putin gave the order to attack, he shattered a European and international peace architecture that had taken decades to build. Under Putin's leadership, Russia has defied even the most basic principles of international law as enshrined in the UN Charter: the renunciation of the use of

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force as a means of international policy and the pledge to respect the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all countries. Acting as an imperial power, Russia now seeks to redraw borders by force and to divide the world, once again, into blocs and spheres of influence.

#### A STRONGER EUROPE

The world must not let Putin get his way; Russia's revanchist imperialism must be stopped. The crucial role for Germany at this moment is to step up as one of the main providers of security in Europe by investing in our military, strengthening the European defense industry, beefing up our military presence on NATO's eastern flank, and training and equipping Ukraine's armed forces.

Germany's new role will require a new strategic culture, and the national security strategy that my government will adopt a few months from now will reflect this fact. For the last three decades, decisions regarding Germany's security and the equipment of the country's armed forces were taken against the backdrop of a Europe at peace. Now, the guiding question will be which threats we and our allies must confront in Europe, most immediately from Russia. These include potential assaults on allied territory, cyberwarfare, and even the remote chance of a nuclear attack, which Putin has not so subtly threatened.

The transatlantic partnership is and remains vital to confronting these challenges. U.S. President Joe Biden and his administration deserve praise for building and investing in strong partnerships and alliances across the globe. But a balanced and resilient transatlantic partnership also requires that Germany and Europe play active roles. One of the first decisions that my government made in the aftermath of Russia's attack on Ukraine was to designate a special fund of approximately \$100 billion to better equip our armed forces, the Bundeswehr. We even changed our constitution to set up this fund. This decision marks the starkest change in German security policy since the establishment of the Bundeswehr in 1955. Our soldiers will receive the political support, materials, and capabilities they need to defend our country and our allies. The goal is a Bundeswehr that we and our allies can rely on. To achieve it, Germany will invest two percent of our gross domestic product in our defense.

These changes reflect a new mindset in German society. Today, a large majority of Germans agree that their country needs an army able and ready to deter its adversaries and defend itself and its allies.

Germans stand with Ukrainians as they defend their country against Russian aggression. From 2014 to 2020, Germany was Ukraine's largest source of private investments and government assistance combined. And since Russia's invasion began, Germany has boosted its financial and humanitarian support for Ukraine and has helped coordinate the international response while holding the presidency of the G-7.

The *Zeitenwende* also led my government to reconsider a decades-old, well-established principle of German policy on arms exports. Today, for the first time in Germany's recent history, we are delivering weapons into a war fought between two countries. In my exchanges with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, I have made one thing very clear: Germany will sustain its efforts to support Ukraine for as long as necessary. What Ukraine needs most today are artillery and air-defense systems, and that is precisely what Germany is delivering, in close coordination with our allies and partners. German support to Ukraine also includes antitank weapons, armored troop carriers, antiaircraft guns and missiles, and counterbattery radar systems. A new EU mission will offer training for up to 15,000 Ukrainian troops, including up to 5,000—an entire brigade—in Germany. Meanwhile, the Czech Republic, Greece, Slovakia, and Slovenia have delivered or have pledged to deliver around 100 Soviet-era main battle tanks to Ukraine; Germany, in turn, will then provide those countries with refurbished German tanks. This way, Ukraine is receiving tanks that Ukrainian forces know well and have experience using and that can be easily integrated into Ukraine's existing logistics and maintenance schemes.

NATO's actions must not lead to a direct confrontation with Russia, but the alliance must credibly deter further Russian aggression. To that end, Germany has significantly increased its presence on NATO's eastern flank, reinforcing the German-led NATO battle group in Lithuania and designating a brigade to ensure that country's security. Germany is also contributing troops to NATO's battle group in Slovakia, and the German air force is helping monitor and secure airspace in Estonia and Poland. Meanwhile, the German navy has participated in NATO's deterrence and defense activities in the Baltic Sea. Germany will also contribute an armored division, as well as significant

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Our message to  
Moscow is clear:  
we will defend  
every single inch  
of NATO territory.



air and naval assets (all in states of high readiness) to NATO's New Force Model, which is designed to improve the alliance's ability to respond quickly to any contingency. And Germany will continue to uphold its commitment to NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements, including by purchasing dual-capable F-35 fighter jets.

Our message to Moscow is very clear: we are determined to defend every single inch of NATO territory against any possible aggression. We will honor NATO's solemn pledge that an attack on any one ally will be considered an attack on the entire alliance. We have also made it clear to Russia that its recent rhetoric concerning nuclear weapons is reckless and irresponsible. When I visited Beijing in November, Chinese President Xi Jinping and I concurred that threatening the use of nuclear weapons was unacceptable and that the use of such horrific weapons would cross a redline that humankind has rightly drawn. Putin should mark these words.

Among the many miscalculations that Putin has made is his bet that the invasion of Ukraine would strain relations among his adversaries. In fact, the reverse has happened: the EU and the transatlantic alliance are stronger than ever before. Nowhere is this more evident than in the unprecedented economic sanctions that Russia is facing. It was clear from the outset of the war that these sanctions would have to be in place for a long time, as their effectiveness increases with each passing week. Putin needs to understand that not a single sanction will be lifted should Russia try to dictate the terms of a peace deal.

All the leaders of the G-7 countries have commended Zelensky's readiness for a just peace that respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and safeguards Ukraine's ability to defend itself in the future. In coordination with our partners, Germany stands ready to reach arrangements to sustain Ukraine's security as part of a potential postwar peace settlement. We will not, however, accept the illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory, poorly disguised by sham referendums. To end this war, Russia must withdraw its troops.

#### GOOD FOR THE CLIMATE, BAD FOR RUSSIA

Russia's war has not only unified the EU, NATO, and the G-7 in opposition to his aggression; it has also catalyzed changes in economic and energy policy that will hurt Russia in the long run—and give a boost to the vital transition to clean energy that was already underway. Right after taking office as German chancellor in December 2021, I asked my advisers



Scholz in Bali, Indonesia, November 2022

whether we had a plan in place should Russia decide to stop its gas deliveries to Europe. The answer was no, even though we had become dangerously dependent on Russian gas deliveries.

We immediately started preparing for the worst-case scenario. In the days before Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine, Germany suspended the certification of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which was set to significantly increase Russian gas supplies to Europe. In February 2022, plans were already on the table to import liquefied natural gas from the global market outside Europe—and in the coming months, the first floating LNG terminals will go into service on the German coast.

The worst-case scenario soon materialized, as Putin decided to weaponize energy by cutting supplies to Germany and the rest of Europe. But Germany has now completely phased out the importation of Russian coal, and EU imports of Russian oil will soon end. We have learned our lesson: Europe's security relies on diversifying its energy suppliers and routes and on investing in energy independence. In September, the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines drove home that message.

To bridge any potential energy shortages in Germany and Europe as a whole, my government is bringing coal-fired power plants back onto the grid temporarily and allowing German nuclear power plants to operate longer than originally planned. We have also mandated

that privately owned gas storage facilities meet progressively higher minimum filling levels. Today, our facilities are completely full, whereas levels at this time last year were unusually low. This is a good basis for Germany and Europe to get through the winter without gas shortages.

Russia's war showed us that reaching these ambitious targets is also necessary to defend our security and independence, as well as the security and independence of Europe. Moving away from fossil energy sources will increase the demand for electricity and green hydrogen, and Germany is preparing for that outcome by massively speeding up the shift to renewable energies such as wind and solar power. Our goals are clear: by 2030, at least 80 percent of the electricity Germans use will be generated by renewables, and by 2045, Germany will achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, or "climate neutrality."

#### PUTIN'S WORST NIGHTMARE

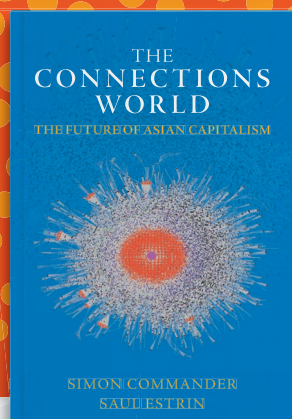
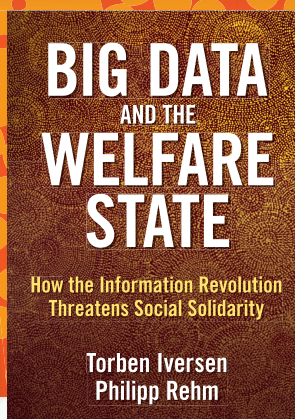
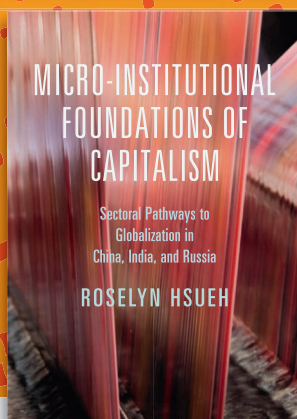
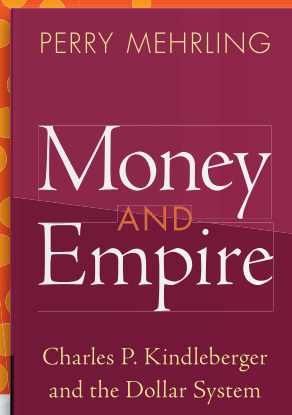
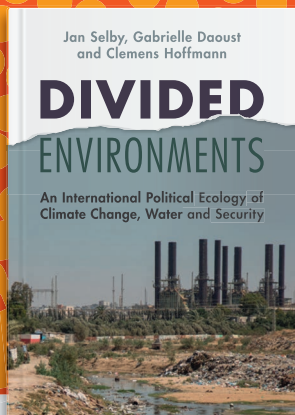
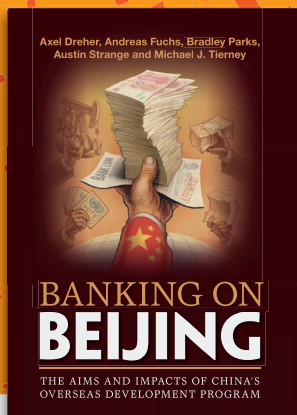
Putin wanted to divide Europe into zones of influence and to divide the world into blocs of great powers and vassal states. Instead, his war has served only to advance the EU. At the European Council in June 2022, the EU granted Ukraine and Moldova the status of "candidate countries" and reaffirmed that Georgia's future lies with Europe. We also agreed that the EU accession of all six countries of the western Balkans must finally become a reality, a goal to which I am personally committed. That is why I have revived the so-called Berlin Process for the western Balkans, which intends to deepen cooperation in the region, bringing its countries and their citizens closer together and preparing them for EU integration.

It is important to acknowledge that expanding the EU and integrating new members will be difficult; nothing would be worse than giving millions of people false hope. But the way is open, and the goal is clear: an EU that will consist of over 500 million free citizens, representing the largest internal market in the world, that will set global standards on trade, growth, climate change, and environmental protection and that will host leading research institutes and innovative businesses—a family of stable democracies enjoying unparalleled social welfare and public infrastructure.

As the EU moves toward that goal, its adversaries will continue to try to drive wedges between its members. Putin has never accepted the EU as a political actor. After all, the EU—a union of free, sovereign, democratic states based on the rule of law—is the antithesis of his imperialistic and autocratic kleptocracy.

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Putin and others will try to turn our own open, democratic systems against us, through disinformation campaigns and influence peddling. European citizens have a wide variety of views, and European political leaders discuss and sometimes argue about the right way forward, especially during geopolitical and economic challenges. But these characteristics of our open societies are features, not bugs; they are the essence of democratic decision-making. Our goal today, however, is to close ranks on crucial areas in which disunity would make Europe more vulnerable to foreign interference. Crucial to that mission is ever-closer cooperation between Germany and France, which share the same vision of a strong and sovereign EU.

More broadly, the EU must overcome old conflicts and find new solutions. European migration and fiscal policy are cases in point. People will continue to come to Europe, and Europe needs immigrants, so the EU must devise an immigration strategy that is pragmatic and aligns with its values. This means reducing irregular migration and at the same time strengthening legal paths to Europe, in particular for the skilled workers that our labor markets need. On fiscal policy, the union has established a recovery and resilience fund that will also help address the current challenges posed by high energy prices. The union must also do away with selfish blocking tactics in its decision-making processes by eliminating the ability of individual countries to veto certain measures. As the EU expands and becomes a geopolitical actor, quick decision-making will be the key to success. For that reason, Germany has proposed gradually extending the practice of making decisions by majority voting to areas that currently fall under the unanimity rule, such as EU foreign policy and taxation.

Europe must also continue to assume greater responsibility for its own security and needs a coordinated and integrated approach to building its defense capabilities. For example, the militaries of EU member states operate too many different weapons systems, which creates practical and economic inefficiencies. To address these problems, the EU must change its internal bureaucratic procedures, which will require courageous political decisions; EU member states, including Germany, will have to alter their national policies and regulations on exporting jointly manufactured military systems.

One field in which Europe urgently needs to make progress is defense in the air and space domains. That is why Germany will be strengthening its air defense over the coming years, as part of the NATO

framework, by acquiring additional capabilities. I opened this initiative to our European neighbors, and the result is the European Sky Shield Initiative, which 14 other European states joined last October. Joint air defense in Europe will be more efficient and cost effective than if all of us go it alone, and it offers an outstanding example of what it means to strengthen the European pillar within NATO.

NATO is the ultimate guarantor of Euro-Atlantic security, and its strength will only grow with the addition of two prosperous democracies, Finland and Sweden, as members. But NATO is also made stronger when its European members independently take steps toward greater compatibility between their defense structures, within the framework of the EU.

#### THE CHINA CHALLENGE—AND BEYOND

Russia's war of aggression might have triggered the *Zeitenwende*, but the tectonic shifts run much deeper. History did not end, as some predicted, with the Cold War. Nor, however, is history repeating itself. Many assume we are on the brink of an era of bipolarity in the international order. They see the dawn of a new cold war approaching, one that will pit the United States against China.

I do not subscribe to this view. Instead, I believe that what we are witnessing is the end of an exceptional phase of globalization, a historic shift accelerated by, but not entirely the result of, external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine. During that exceptional phase, North America and Europe experienced 30 years of stable growth, high employment rates, and low inflation, and the United States became the world's decisive power—a role it will retain in the twenty-first century.

But during the post-Cold War phase of globalization, China also became a global player, as it had been in earlier long periods of world history. China's rise does not warrant isolating Beijing or curbing cooperation. But neither does China's growing power justify claims for hegemony in Asia and beyond. No country is the backyard of any other—and that applies to Europe as much as it does to Asia and every other region. During my recent visit to Beijing, I expressed firm support for the rules-based international order, as enshrined in the UN Charter, as well as for open and fair trade. In concert with its European partners, Germany will continue to demand a level playing field for European and Chinese companies. China does too little in this regard and has taken a noticeable turn toward isolation and away from openness.

In Beijing, I also raised concerns over the growing insecurity in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait and questioned China's approach to human rights and individual freedoms. Respecting basic rights and freedoms can never be an "internal matter" for individual states because every UN member state vows to uphold them.

Meanwhile, as China and the countries of North America and Europe adjust to the changing realities of globalization's new phase, many countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America

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China's rise  
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isolating Beijing  
or curbing  
cooperation.

that enabled exceptional growth in the past by producing goods and raw materials at low costs are now gradually becoming more prosperous and have their own demand for resources, goods, and services. These regions have every right to seize the opportunities that globalization offers and to demand a stronger role in global affairs in line with their growing economic and demographic

weight. That poses no threat to citizens in Europe or North America. On the contrary, we should encourage these regions' greater participation in and integration into the international order. This is the best way to keep multilateralism alive in a multipolar world.

That is why Germany and the EU are investing in new partnerships and broadening existing ones with many countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Many of them share a fundamental characteristic with us: they, too, are democracies. This commonality plays a crucial role—not because we aim to pit democracies against authoritarian states, which would only contribute to a new global dichotomy, but because sharing democratic values and systems will help us define joint priorities and achieve common goals in the new multipolar reality of the twenty-first century. We might all have become capitalists (with the possible exception of North Korea and a tiny handful of other countries), to paraphrase an argument the economist Branko Milanovic made a few years ago. But it makes a huge difference whether capitalism is organized in a liberal, democratic way or along authoritarian lines.

Take the global response to COVID-19. Early in the pandemic, some argued that authoritarian states would prove more adept at crisis management, since they can plan better for the long term and can make tough decisions more quickly. But the pandemic track

records of authoritarian countries hardly support that view. Meanwhile, the most effective COVID-19 vaccines and pharmaceutical treatments were all developed in free democracies. What is more, unlike authoritarian states, democracies have the ability to self-correct as citizens express their views freely and choose their political leaders. The constant debating and questioning in our societies, parliaments, and free media may sometimes feel exhausting. But it is what makes our systems more resilient in the long run.

Freedom, equality, the rule of law, and the dignity of every human being are values not exclusive to what has been traditionally understood as the West. Rather, they are shared by citizens and governments around the world, and the UN Charter reaffirms them as fundamental human rights in its preamble. But autocratic and authoritarian regimes often challenge or deny these rights and principles. To defend them, the countries of the EU, including Germany, must cooperate more closely with democracies outside the West, as traditionally defined. In the past, we have purported to treat the countries of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America as equals. But too often, our words have not been backed by deeds. This must change. During Germany's presidency of the G-7, the group has coordinated its agenda closely with Indonesia, which holds the G-20 presidency. We have also involved in our deliberations Senegal, which holds the presidency of the African Union; Argentina, which holds the presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States; our G-20 partner South Africa; and India, which will hold the G-20 presidency next year.

Eventually, in a multipolar world, dialogue and cooperation must extend beyond the democratic comfort zone. The United States' new National Security Strategy rightly acknowledges the need to engage with "countries that do not embrace democratic institutions but nevertheless depend upon and support a rules-based international system." The world's democracies will need to work with these countries to defend and uphold a global order that binds power to rules and that confronts revisionist acts such as Russia's war of aggression. This effort will take pragmatism and a degree of humility.

The journey toward the democratic freedom we enjoy today has been full of setbacks and errors. Yet certain rights and principles were established and accepted centuries ago. Habeas corpus, the protection from arbitrary detention, is one such fundamental right—and was first recognized not by a democratic government but by the absolutist



monarchy of King Charles II of England. Equally important is the basic principle that no country can take by force what belongs to its neighbor. Respect for these fundamental rights and principles should be required of all states, regardless of their internal political systems.

Periods of relative peace and prosperity in human history, such as the one that most of the world experienced in the early post–Cold War era, need not be rare interludes or mere deviations from a historical norm in which brute force dictates the rules. And although we cannot turn back the clock, we can still turn back the tide of aggression and imperialism. Today’s complex, multipolar world renders this task more challenging. To carry it out, Germany and its partners in the EU, the United States, the G-7, and NATO must protect our open societies, stand up for our democratic values, and strengthen our alliances and partnerships. But we must also avoid the temptation to once again divide the world into blocs. This means making every effort to build new partnerships, pragmatically and without ideological blinders. In today’s densely interconnected world, the goal of advancing peace, prosperity, and human freedom calls for a different mindset and different tools. Developing that mindset and those tools is ultimately what the *Zeitenwende* is all about. 🌐

# A Free World, If You Can Keep It

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## Ukraine and American Interests

ROBERT KAGAN

**B**efore February 24, 2022, most Americans agreed that the United States had no vital interests at stake in Ukraine. “If there is somebody in this town that would claim that we would consider going to war with Russia over Crimea and eastern Ukraine,” U.S. President Barack Obama said in an interview with *The Atlantic* in 2016, “they should speak up.” Few did.

Yet the consensus shifted when Russia invaded Ukraine. Suddenly, Ukraine’s fate was important enough to justify spending billions of dollars in resources and enduring rising gas prices; enough to expand security commitments in Europe, including bringing Finland and Sweden into NATO; enough to make the United States a virtual co-belligerent in the war against Russia, with consequences yet to be seen. All these steps have so far enjoyed substantial support in

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both political parties and among the public. A poll in August last year found that four in ten Americans support sending U.S. troops to help defend Ukraine if necessary, although the Biden administration insists it has no intention of doing so.

Russia's invasion has changed Americans' views not only of Ukraine but also of the world in general and the United States' role in it. For more than a dozen years before Russia's invasion and under two different presidents, the country sought to pare its overseas commitments, including in Europe. A majority of Americans believed that the United States should "mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own," according to the Pew Research Center. As pollster Andrew Kohut put it, the American public felt "little responsibility and inclination to deal with international problems that are not seen as direct threats to the national interest." Yet today, Americans are dealing with two international disputes that do not pose a direct threat to the "national interest" as commonly understood. The United States has joined a war against an aggressive great power in Europe and promised to defend another small democratic nation against an autocratic great power in East Asia. U.S. President Joe Biden's commitments to defend Taiwan if it is attacked—in "another action similar to what happened in Ukraine," as Biden described it—have grown starker since Russia's invasion. Americans now see the world as a more dangerous place. In response, defense budgets are climbing (marginally); economic sanctions and limits on technology transfer are increasing; and alliances are being shored up and expanded.

#### HISTORY REPEATS

The war in Ukraine has exposed the gap between the way Americans think and talk about their national interests and the way they actually behave in times of perceived crisis. It is not the first time that Americans' perceptions of their interests have changed in response to events. For more than a century, the country has oscillated in this way, from periods of restraint, retrenchment, indifference, and disillusion to periods of almost panicked global engagement and interventionism. Americans were determined to stay out of the European crisis after war broke out in August 1914, only to dispatch millions of troops to fight in World War I three years later. They were determined to stay out of the burgeoning crisis in Europe in the 1930s, only to send many millions to fight in the next world war after December 1941.

Then as now, Americans acted not because they faced an immediate threat to their security but to defend the liberal world beyond their shores. Imperial Germany had neither the capacity nor the intention of attacking the United States. Even Americans' intervention in World War II was not a response to a direct threat to the homeland. In the late 1930s and right up to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, military experts, strategic thinkers, and self-described "realists" agreed that the United States was invulnerable to foreign invasion, no matter what happened in Europe and Asia. Before France's shocking collapse in June 1940, no one believed the German military could defeat the French, much less the British with their powerful navy, and the defeat of both was necessary before any attack on the United States could even be imagined. As the realist political scientist Nicholas Spykman argued, with Europe "three thousand miles away" and the Atlantic Ocean "reassuringly" in between, the United States' "frontiers" were secure.

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Americans were foreign policy realists for much of the nineteenth century.

These assessments are ridiculed today, but the historical evidence suggests that the Germans and the Japanese did not intend to invade the United States, not in 1941 and most likely not ever. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a preemptive effort to prevent or delay an American attack on Japan; it was not a prelude to an invasion of the United States, for which the Japanese had no capacity. Adolf Hitler mused about an eventual German confrontation with the United States, but such thoughts were shelved once he became bogged down in the war with the Soviet Union after June 1941. Even if Germany and Japan ultimately triumphed in their respective regions, there is reason to doubt, as the anti-interventionists did at the time, that either would be able to consolidate control over vast new conquests any time soon, giving Americans time to build the necessary forces and defenses to deter a future invasion. Even Henry Luce, a leading interventionist, admitted that "as a pure matter of defense—defense of our homeland," the United States "could make itself such a tough nut to crack that not all the tyrants in the world would dare to come against us."

President Franklin Roosevelt's interventionist policies from 1937 on were not a response to an increasing threat to American security. What worried Roosevelt was the potential destruction of the broader liberal world beyond American shores. Long before either the Germans or



the Japanese were in a position to harm the United States, Roosevelt began arming their opponents and declaring ideological solidarity with the democracies against the “bandit nations.” He declared the United States the “arsenal of democracy.” He deployed the U.S. Navy against Germany in the Atlantic while in the Pacific he gradually cut off Japan’s access to oil and other military necessities.

In January 1939, months before Germany invaded Poland, Roosevelt warned Americans that “there comes a time in the affairs of men when they must prepare to defend, not their homes alone, but the tenets of faith and humanity on which their churches, their governments, and their very civilization are founded.” In the summer of 1940, he warned not of invasion but of the United States becoming a “lone island” in a world dominated by the “philosophy of force,” “a people lodged in prison, handcuffed, hungry, and fed through the bars from day to day by the contemptuous, unpitying masters of other continents.” It was these concerns, the desire to defend a liberal world, that led the United States into confrontation with the two autocratic great powers well before either posed any threat to what Americans had traditionally understood as their interests. The United States, in short, was not just minding its own business when Japan decided to attack the U.S. Pacific Fleet and Hitler decided to declare war in 1941. As Herbert Hoover put it at the time, if the United States insisted on “putting pins in rattlesnakes,” it should expect to get bitten.

#### DUTY CALLS

The traditional understanding of what makes up a country’s national interests cannot explain the actions the United States took in the 1940s or what it is doing today in Ukraine. Interests are supposed to be about territorial security and sovereignty, not about the defense of beliefs and ideologies. The West’s modern discourse on interests can be traced to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when first Machiavelli and then seventeenth-century Enlightenment thinkers, responding to the abuses of ruthless popes and to the horrors of inter-religious conflict in the Thirty Years’ War, looked to excise religion and belief from the conduct of international relations. According to their theories, which still dominate our thinking today, all states share a common set of primary interests in survival and sovereignty. A just and stable peace requires that states set aside their beliefs in the conduct of international relations, respect religious or ideological differences,



Better together: demonstrating solidarity with Ukraine, Chicago, October 2022

forbear from meddling in each other's internal affairs, and accept a balance of power among states that alone can ensure international peace. This way of thinking about interests is often called "realism" or "neorealism," and it suffuses all discussions of international relations.

For the first century of their country's existence, most Americans largely followed this way of thinking about the world. Although they were a highly ideological people whose beliefs were the foundation of their nationalism, Americans were foreign policy realists for much of the nineteenth century, seeing danger in meddling in the affairs of Europe. They were conquering the continent, expanding their commerce, and as a weaker power in a world of imperial superpowers, they focused on the security of the homeland. Americans could not have supported liberalism abroad even if they had wanted to, and many did not want to. For one thing, there was no liberal world out there to support before the middle of the nineteenth century. For another, as citizens of a half-democracy and half-totalitarian-dictatorship until the Civil War, Americans could not even agree that liberalism was a good thing at home, much less in the world at large.

Then, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the United States became unified as a more coherent liberal nation and amassed the necessary wealth and influence to have an impact on the wider

world, there was no apparent need to do so. From the mid-1800s on, western Europe, especially France and the United Kingdom, became increasingly liberal, and the combination of British naval hegemony and the relatively stable balance of power on the continent provided a liberal political and economic peace from which Americans benefited more than any other people. Yet they bore none of the costs or responsibilities of preserving this order. It was an idyllic existence, and although some “internationalists” believed that with growing power should come growing responsibility, most Americans preferred to remain free riders in someone else’s liberal order. Long before modern international relations theory entered the discussion, a view of the national interest as defense of the homeland made sense for a people who wanted and needed nothing more than to be left alone.

Everything changed when the British-led liberal order began to collapse in the early twentieth century. The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 revealed a dramatic shift in the global distribution of power. The United Kingdom could no longer sustain its naval hegemony against the rising power of Japan and the United States, along with its traditional imperial rivals, France and Russia. The balance of power in Europe collapsed with the rise of a unified Germany, and by the end of 1915, it became clear that not even the combined power of France, Russia, and the United Kingdom would be sufficient to defeat the German industrial and military machine. A balance of global power that had favored liberalism was shifting toward antiliberal forces.

The result was that the liberal world that Americans had enjoyed virtually without cost would be overrun unless the United States intervened to shift the balance of power back in favor of liberalism. It suddenly fell to the United States to defend the liberal world order that the United Kingdom could no longer sustain. And it fell to President Woodrow Wilson, who, after struggling to stay out of the war and remain neutral in traditional fashion, finally concluded that the United States had no choice but to enter the war or see liberalism in Europe crushed. American aloofness from the world was no longer “feasible” or “desirable” when world peace was at stake and when democracies were threatened by “autocratic governments backed by organized force,” he said in his war declaration to Congress in 1917. Americans agreed and supported the war to “make the world safe for democracy,” by which Wilson did not mean spreading democracy everywhere but meant defending liberalism where it already existed.



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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Americans have ever since struggled to reconcile these contradictory interpretations of their interests—one focused on security of the homeland and one focused on defense of the liberal world beyond the United States' shores. The first conforms to Americans' preference to be left alone and avoid the costs, responsibilities, and moral burdens of exercising power abroad. The second reflects their anxieties as a liberal people about becoming a "lone island" in a sea of militarist dictatorships. The oscillation between these two perspectives has produced the recurring whiplash in U.S. foreign policy over the past century.

Which is more right, more moral? Which is the better description of the world, the better guide to American policy? Realists and most international theorists have consistently attacked the more expansive definition of U.S. interests as lacking in restraint and therefore likely both to exceed American capacities and to risk a horrific conflict with nuclear-armed great powers. These fears have never yet proved justified—Americans' aggressive prosecution of the Cold War did not lead to nuclear war with the Soviet Union, and even the wars in Vietnam and Iraq did not fatally undermine American power. But the core of the realist critique, ironically, has always been moral rather than practical.

In the 1920s and 1930s, critics of the broader definition of interests focused not only on the costs to the United States in terms of lives and treasure but also on what they regarded as the hegemonism and imperialism inherent in the project. What gave Americans the right to insist on the security of the liberal world abroad if their own security was not threatened? It was an imposition of American preferences, by force. However objectionable the actions of Germany and Japan might have seemed to the liberal powers, they, and Benito Mussolini's Italy, were trying to change an Anglo-American world order that had left them as "have not" nations. The settlement reached at Versailles after World War I and the international treaties negotiated by the United States in East Asia denied Germany and Japan the empires and even the spheres of influence that the victorious powers got to enjoy. Americans and other liberals may have viewed German and Japanese aggression as immoral and destructive of "world order," but it was, after all, a system that had been imposed on them by superior power. How else were they to change it except by wielding power of their own?

As the British realist thinker, E. H. Carr, argued in the late 1930s, if dissatisfied powers such as Germany were bent on changing a system that disadvantaged them, then “the responsibility for seeing that these changes take place . . . in an orderly way” rested on the upholders of the existing order. The growing power of the dissatisfied nations should be accommodated, not resisted. And that meant the sovereignty and independence of some small countries had to be sacrificed. The growth of German power, Carr argued, made it “inevitable that Czechoslovakia should lose part of its territory and eventually its independence.” George Kennan, then serving as a senior U.S. diplomat in Prague, agreed that Czechoslovakia was “after all, a central European state” and that its “fortunes must in the long run lie with—and not against—the dominant forces in this area.” The anti-interventionists warned that “German imperialism” was simply being replaced by “Anglo-American imperialism.”

Critics of American support for Ukraine have made the same arguments. Obama frequently emphasized that Ukraine was more important to Russia than to the United States, and the same could certainly be said of Taiwan and China. Critics on the left and the right have accused the United States of engaging in imperialism for refusing to rule out Ukraine’s possible future accession to NATO and encouraging Ukrainians in their desire to join the liberal world.

There is much truth in these charges. Whether or not U.S. actions deserve to be called “imperialism,” during World War I and then in the eight decades from World War II until today, the United States has used its power and influence to defend and support the hegemony of liberalism. The defense of Ukraine is a defense of the liberal hegemony. When Republican Senator Mitch McConnell and others say that the United States has a vital interest in Ukraine, they do not mean that the United States will be directly threatened if Ukraine falls. They mean that the liberal world order will be threatened if Ukraine falls.

#### THE RULEMAKER

Americans are fixated on the supposed moral distinction between “wars of necessity” and “wars of choice.” In their rendering of their own history, Americans remember the country being attacked on December 7, 1941, and Hitler’s declaration of war four days later but forget the American policies that led the Japanese to attack Pearl Harbor and led Hitler to declare war. In the Cold War confrontation

with the Soviet Union, Americans could see the communists' aggression and their country's attempts to defend the "free world," but they did not recognize that their government's insistence on stopping communism everywhere was a form of hegemonism. Equating the defense of the "free world" with defense of their own security, Americans regarded every action they took as an act of necessity.

Only when wars have gone badly, as in Vietnam and Iraq, or ended unsatisfactorily, as in World War I, have Americans decided,

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The defense  
of Ukraine is a  
defense of the  
liberal hegemony.

retrospectively, that those wars were not necessary, that American security was not directly at risk. They forget the way the world looked to them when they first supported those wars—72 percent of Americans polled in March 2003 agreed with the decision to go to war in Iraq. They forget the fears and sense of insecurity they felt at the time and

decide that they were led astray by some nefarious conspiracy.

The irony of both the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq is that although in later years they were depicted as plots to promote democracy and therefore as prime examples of the dangers of the more expansive definition of U.S. interests, Americans at the time were not thinking about the liberal world order at all. They were thinking only about security. In the post-9/11 environment of fear and danger, Americans believed that both Afghanistan and Iraq posed a direct threat to American security because their governments either harbored terrorists or had weapons of mass destruction that might have ended up in terrorists' hands. Rightly or wrongly, that was why Americans initially supported what they would later deride as the "forever wars." As with Vietnam, it was not until the fighting dragged on with no victory in sight that Americans decided that their perceived wars of necessity were in fact wars of choice.

But all of the United States' wars have been wars of choice, the "good" wars and the "bad" wars, the wars won and the wars lost. Not one was necessary to defend the United States' direct security; all in one way or another were about shaping the international environment. The Gulf War in 1990–91 and the interventions in the Balkans in the 1990s and in Libya in 2011 were all about managing and defending the liberal world and enforcing its rules.

American leaders often talk about defending the rules-based international order, but Americans do not acknowledge the hegemonism

inherent in such a policy. They do not realize that, as Reinhold Niebuhr once observed, the rules themselves are a form of hegemony. They are not neutral but are designed to sustain the international status quo, which for eight decades has been dominated by the American-backed liberal world. The rules-based order is an adjunct to that hegemony. If dissatisfied great powers such as Russia and China abided by these rules for as long as they did, it was not because they were converts to liberalism or because they were content with the world as it was or had inherent respect for the rules. It was because the United States and its allies wielded superior power on behalf of their vision of a desirable world order, and the dissatisfied powers had no safe choice other than acquiescence.

#### REALITY SETS IN

The long period of great-power peace that followed the Cold War presented a misleadingly comforting picture of the world. In times of peace, the world can appear as international theorists describe it. The leaders of China and Russia can be dealt with diplomatically at conferences of equals, enlisted in sustaining a peaceful balance of power, because, according to the reigning theory of interests, the goals of other great powers cannot be fundamentally different from the United States' goals. All seek to maximize their security and preserve their sovereignty. All accept the rules of the imagined international order. All spurn ideology as a guide to policy.

The presumption behind all these arguments is that however objectionable Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping might be as rulers, as state actors they can be expected to behave as all leaders have always allegedly behaved. They have legitimate grievances about the way the post-Cold War peace was settled by the United States and its allies, just as Germany and Japan had legitimate grievances about the postwar settlement in 1919. The further presumption is that a reasonable effort to accommodate their legitimate grievances would lead to a more stable peace, just as the accommodation of France after Napoleon helped preserve the peace of the early nineteenth century. In this view, the alternative to the American-backed liberal hegemony is not war, autocracy, and chaos but a more civilized and equitable peace.

Americans have often convinced themselves that other states will follow their preferred rules voluntarily—in the 1920s, when



Americans hailed the Kellogg-Briand Pact “outlawing” war; in the immediate aftermath of World War II, when many Americans hoped that the United Nations would take over the burden of preserving the peace; and again in the decades after the Cold War, when the world was presumed to be moving ineluctably toward both peaceful cooperation and the triumph of liberalism. The added benefit, perhaps even the motive, for such beliefs was that if they were true, the United States could cease playing the role of the world’s liberal enforcer and be relieved of all the material and moral costs that entailed.

Yet this comforting picture of the world has periodically been exploded by the brutal realities of international existence. Putin was treated as a crafty statesman, a realist, seeking only to repair the injustice done to Russia by the post–Cold War settlement and with some reasonable arguments on his side—until he launched the invasion of Ukraine, which proved not only his willingness to use force against a weaker neighbor but, in the course of the war, to use all the methods at his disposal to wreak destruction on Ukraine’s civilian population without the slightest scruple. As in the late 1930s, events have forced Americans to see the world for what it is, and it is not the neat and rational place that the theorists have posited. None of the great powers behave as the realists suggest, guided by rational judgments about maximizing security. Like great powers in the past, they act out of beliefs and passions, angers and resentments. There are no separate “state” interests, only the interests and beliefs of the people who inhabit and rule states.

Consider China. Beijing’s evident willingness to risk war for Taiwan makes little sense in terms of security. No reasoned assessment of the international situation should cause Beijing’s leaders to conclude that Taiwan’s independence would pose any threat of attack on the mainland. Far from maximizing Chinese security, Beijing’s policies toward Taiwan increase the possibility of a catastrophic conflict with the United States. Were China to declare tomorrow that it no longer demanded unification with Taiwan, the Taiwanese and their American backers would cease trying to arm the island to the teeth. Taiwan might even disarm considerably, just as Canada remains disarmed along its border with the United States. But such straightforward material and security considerations are not the driving force behind Chinese policies. Matters of pride, honor, and nationalism, along with the justifiable paranoia of an autocracy

trying to maintain power in an age of liberal hegemony—these are the engines of Chinese policies on Taiwan and on many other issues.

Few nations have benefited more than China from the U.S.-backed international order, which has provided markets for Chinese goods, as well as the financing and the information that have allowed the Chinese to recover from the weakness and poverty of the last century. Modern China has enjoyed remarkable security during the past few decades, which was why, until a couple of decades ago, China spent little on defense.

Yet this is the world China aims to upend.

Similarly, Putin's serial invasions of neighboring states have not been driven by a desire to maximize Russia's security. Russia never enjoyed greater security on its western frontier than during the three decades after the end of the Cold War. Russia was invaded from the west three times in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, once by France and twice by Germany, and it had to prepare for the possibility of a western invasion throughout the Cold War. But at no time since the fall of the Berlin Wall has anyone in Moscow had reason to believe that Russia faced the possibility of attack by the West.

That the nations of eastern Europe wished to seek the security and prosperity of membership in the West after the Cold War may have been a blow to Moscow's pride and a sign of Russia's post-Cold War weakness. But it did not increase the risk to Russian security. Putin opposed the expansion of NATO not because he feared an attack on Russia but because that expansion would make it increasingly difficult for him to restore Russian control in eastern Europe. Today, as in the past, the United States is an obstacle to Russian and Chinese hegemony. It is not a threat to Russia's and China's existence.

Far from maximizing Russian security, Putin has damaged it—and this would have been so even if his invasion had succeeded as planned. He has done so not for reasons having to do with security or economics or any material gains but to overcome the humiliation of lost greatness, to satisfy his sense of his place in Russian history, and perhaps to defend a certain set of beliefs. Putin despises liberalism much as Stalin and Alexander I and most autocrats throughout history despised it—as a pitiful, weak, even sick ideology devoted to

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All of the United States' wars have been wars of choice.

nothing but the petty pleasures of the individual when it is the glory of the state and the nation that should have the people's devotion and for which they should sacrifice.

#### BREAKING THE CYCLE

That most Americans should regard such actors as threatening to liberalism is a sensible reading of the situation, just as it was sensible to be wary of Hitler even before he had committed any act of aggression or begun the extermination of the Jews. When great powers with a record of hostility to liberalism use armed force to achieve their aims, Americans have generally roused themselves from their inertia, abandoned their narrow definitions of interest, and adopted this broader view of what is worth their sacrifice.

This is a truer realism. Instead of treating the world as made up of impersonal states operating according to their own logic, it understands basic human motivations. It understands that every nation has a unique set of interests peculiar to its history, its geography, its experiences, and its beliefs. Nor are all interests permanent. Americans did not have the same interests in 1822 that they have two centuries later. And the day must come when the United States can no longer contain the challengers to the liberal world order. Technology may eventually make oceans and distances irrelevant. Even the United States itself could change and cease being a liberal nation.

But that day has not yet arrived. Despite frequent assertions to the contrary, the circumstances that made the United States the determining factor in world affairs a century ago persist. Just as two world wars and the Cold War confirmed that would-be autocratic hegemonies could not achieve their ambitions as long as the United States was a player, so Putin has discovered the difficulty of accomplishing his goals as long as his weaker neighbors can look for virtually unlimited support from the United States and its allies. There may be reason to hope that Xi also feels the time is not right to challenge the liberal order directly and militarily.

The bigger question, however, has to do with what Americans want. Today, they have been roused again to defend the liberal world. It would be better if they had been roused earlier. Putin spent years probing to see what the Americans would tolerate, first in Georgia in 2008, then in Crimea in 2014, all the while building up his military capacity (not well, as it turns out). The cautious American reaction

to both military operations, as well as to Russian military actions in Syria, convinced him to press forward. Are we better off today for not having taken the risks then?

“Know thyself” was the advice of the ancient philosophers. Some critics complain that Americans have not seriously debated and discussed their policies toward either Ukraine or Taiwan, that panic and outrage have drowned out dissenting voices. The critics are right. Americans should have a frank and open debate about what role they want the United States to play in the world.

The first step, however, is to recognize the stakes. The natural trajectory of history in the absence of American leadership has been perfectly apparent: it has not been toward a liberal peace, a stable balance of power, or the development of international laws and institutions. Instead, it leads to the spread of dictatorship and continual great-power conflict. That is where the world was heading in 1917 and 1941. Should the United States reduce its involvement in the world today, the consequences for Europe and Asia are not hard to predict. Great-power conflict and dictatorship have been the norm throughout human history, the liberal peace a brief aberration. Only American power can keep the natural forces of history at bay. 🌐



# Open Secrets

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## Ukraine and the Next Intelligence Revolution

AMY ZEGART

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been a watershed moment for the world of intelligence. For weeks before the shelling began, Washington publicly released a relentless stream of remarkably detailed findings about everything from Russian troop movements to false-flag attacks the Kremlin would use to justify the invasion. This disclosure strategy was new: spy agencies are accustomed to concealing intelligence, not revealing it. But it was very effective. By getting the truth out before Russian lies took hold, the United States was able to rally allies and quickly coordinate hard-hitting sanctions. Intelligence disclosures set Russian President Vladimir Putin on his back foot, wondering who and what in his government had been penetrated so deeply by U.S. agencies, and made it more difficult for other countries to hide behind Putin's lies and side with Russia.

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The disclosures were just the beginning. The war has ushered in a new era of intelligence sharing between Ukraine, the United States, and other allies and partners, which has helped counter false Russian narratives, defend digital systems from cyberattacks, and assisted Ukrainian forces in striking Russian targets on the battlefield. And it has brought to light a profound new reality: intelligence isn't just for government spy agencies anymore.

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In modern warfare,  
weapons don't  
look like weapons.

Over the past year, private citizens and groups have been tracking what Russia is planning and doing in ways that were unimaginable in earlier conflicts. Journalists have reported battlefield developments using imagery from commercial space satellites. Former government and military officials have been monitoring on-the-ground daily events and offering over-the-horizon analyses about where the war is headed on Twitter. A volunteer team of students at Stanford University, led by former U.S. Army and open-source imagery analyst Allison Puccioni, has been providing reports to the United Nations about Russian human rights atrocities in Ukraine—uncovering and verifying events using commercial-satellite thermal and electro-optical imaging, TikTok videos, geolocation tools, and more. At the Institute for the Study of War, a go-to source for military experts and analysts, researchers have even created an interactive map of the conflict based entirely on unclassified, or open-source, intelligence.

Technological advances have been central to this evolution. It is, after all, the Internet, social media, satellites, automated analytics, and other breakthroughs that have enabled civilians to collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence. But although new technologies have helped shine a light on Russian military activity, their effects are far from uniformly positive. For the 18 agencies that make up the U.S. intelligence community, new technologies are creating more threats at a far faster rate. They are dramatically increasing the amount of data that analysts must process. They are giving companies and individual citizens a newfound need for intelligence, so that these private entities can help safeguard the country's interests. And they are giving new intelligence capabilities to organizations and individuals outside the U.S. government, as well as to more countries.

These shifts have been years in the making, and intelligence leaders are working hard to adapt to them. But anticipating the future

in the new tech era demands more. Washington must embrace wholesale changes in order to understand and harness emerging technologies. It must, in particular, get serious about creating a new agency dedicated to open-source intelligence. Otherwise, the U.S. intelligence community will fall behind, leaving Americans more vulnerable to catastrophic surprises.

#### BRAVE NEW WORLD

When the Central Intelligence Agency was created, in 1947, the world was in an unusually precarious place. The allies had won World War II, but Soviet troops already threatened Europe. Repressive regimes were on the rise, democracies were weary and weak, and the international system was dividing into free spheres and illiberal ones. Amid this intensifying uncertainty and anxiety, the United States was called to lead a new global order. U.S. policymakers realized that they needed new capabilities for this role, including better intelligence. Centralizing intelligence in a new agency, they thought, would deliver timely insights about the future to prevent the next Pearl Harbor and win the Cold War.

In many ways, the present looks eerily similar to those early postwar years. The dog-eat-dog world of strong states using brute force to get what they want has returned. An authoritarian leader in Moscow is invading neighbors and again menacing all of Europe. Once more, democracies are looking fragile. The United States and its allies are engaged in yet another great-power competition—this time with China, a country whose rise looks less peaceful by the day, with its crackdowns on freedoms in Hong Kong, belligerent rhetoric about retaking Taiwan, and provocative military exercises that encircled the island. Even Marxism-Leninism is making a comeback. In China's carefully choreographed 20th Party Congress, President Xi Jinping made it clear to party officials that ideology and personal loyalty were more important than continued economic liberalization. In case anyone missed the message, Xi's economic reform-minded predecessor, Hu Jintao, was pulled from his chair and escorted out of party proceedings, perp-walk style, in full view of the press.

But looks can be deceiving. Thanks to technological innovations, the challenges of today differ greatly from postwar ones. Emerging technologies are transforming the planet in an unprecedented fashion and at an unprecedented pace. Together, inventions are making the world far more interconnected and altering the determinants of geopolitical



advantage in fundamental ways. Increasingly, emerging technologies and data are major sources of national power, and they are intangible, harder to see and understand, and often created and controlled by companies, not governments. For the CIA and other intelligence agencies, understanding the geopolitical dangers and dynamics of the twenty-first century will likely be much harder than it was in the twentieth.

Consider the Internet. In the mid-1990s, less than one percent of the global population was online. Now sixty-six percent of the world is connected, from the far reaches of the Arctic to Bedouin tents in the desert. In the last three years alone, more than a billion more people have come online. This connectivity has already transformed global politics, for better and for worse. Social media has fueled protests against autocracies, such as the Arab Spring and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement. But it has also empowered a new wave of government techno-surveillance led by Beijing and has enabled Russia's massive disinformation operations to influence elections and undermine democracies from within.

Digital connectivity is not the only technology upending the world order. Artificial intelligence is disrupting nearly every industry—from medicine to trucking—to the point that one expert now estimates AI could eliminate up to 40 percent of jobs worldwide in the next 25 years. It is changing how wars are fought, automating everything from logistics to cyberdefenses. It is even making it possible for states to build unmanned fighter jets that could overwhelm defenses with swarms and maneuver faster and better than human pilots. Little wonder, then, that Russian President Vladimir Putin has declared that whoever leads in AI development “will become the ruler of the world.” China has also made no secret of its plans to become the global AI leader by 2030.

Technological breakthroughs are also making it far easier for anyone—including weak states and terrorist groups—to detect events unfolding on earth from space. Commercial satellite capabilities have increased dramatically, offering eyes in the sky for anyone who wants them. Satellite launches more than doubled between 2016 and 2018; now, more than 5,000 satellites circle the earth, some no larger than a loaf of bread. Commercial satellites have less sophisticated sensing capabilities than do their spying counterparts, but civilian technologies are rapidly improving. Some commercial satellites now have resolutions so sharp that they can identify manhole covers, signs, and even road conditions. Others have the ability to detect radio frequency emissions; observe vehicle movements



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and nuclear cooling plumes; and operate at night, in cloudy weather, or through dense vegetation and camouflage. Constellations of small satellites can revisit the same location multiple times a day to detect changes over short periods—something that was once impossible. All these changes are leveling the intelligence playing field, and not always in a good way. In 2020, for example, Iran used commercial satellite images to monitor U.S. forces in Iraq before launching a ballistic missile attack that wounded more than 100 people.

Other technological advances with national security implications include quantum computing, which could eventually unlock the encryption protecting nearly all the world's data, making even highly classified information available to adversaries. Synthetic biology is enabling scientists to engineer living organisms, paving the way for what could be revolutionary improvements in the production of food, medicine, data storage, and weapons of war.

Understanding the promise and perils of these and other emerging technologies is an essential intelligence mission. The U.S. government needs to know who is poised to win key technological competitions and what the effects could be. It must assess how future wars will be fought and won. It must figure out how new technologies could tackle global challenges such as climate change. It needs to determine how adversaries will use data and tech tools to coerce others, commit atrocities, evade sanctions, develop dangerous weapons, and secure other advantages.

But these important questions are becoming harder to answer because the landscape of innovation has changed and expanded, making inventions more difficult to track and understand. In the past, technological breakthroughs, such as the Internet and GPS, were invented by U.S. government agencies and commercialized later by the private sector. Most innovations that affected national security did not have widespread commercial application, so they could be classified at birth and, if necessary, restricted forever. Today, the script has flipped. Technological innovations are more likely to be “dual use”: to have both commercial and military applications. They are also far more likely to be invented in the private sector, where they are funded by foreign investors, developed by a multinational workforce, and sold to global customers in private and public sectors alike.

Those that are born in the private sector are more widely accessible and not as easily restricted. Artificial intelligence, for example, has become so prevalent and intuitive that high school students with no





DIY spy: taking a selfie, Donetsk region, Ukraine, September 2022

coding background can make deepfakes—AI-generated, manipulated videos that show people saying and doing things they never said or did. In March 2022, someone released a deepfake of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky telling Ukrainian soldiers to lay down their arms. More recently, deepfakes impersonating Michael McFaul, the former U.S. ambassador to Russia, have been used to dupe Ukrainian officials into revealing information about the war effort. McFaul deepfakes have become so pervasive that the real McFaul had to tweet warnings asking people not to fall for what he called “a new Russian weapon of war.”

These changes in the innovation landscape are giving private-sector leaders new power and national security officials fresh challenges. Power isn’t just shifting abroad. Power is shifting at home. U.S. social media platforms now find themselves on the frontlines of information warfare, deciding what is real and what is fake, what speech is allowed and what speech is not. Startup founders are inventing capabilities that can be used by enemies they can’t foresee with consequences they can’t control. Meanwhile, U.S. defense and intelligence agencies are struggling to adopt critical new technologies from the outside and move at the speed of invention instead of at the pace of bureaucracy. Private-sector leaders have responsibilities they don’t want, and government leaders want capabilities they don’t have.



UP TO SPEED

Intelligence is often misunderstood. Although spy agencies deal with secrets, they are not in the secrets business. Their core purpose is delivering insights to policymakers and anticipating the future faster and better than adversaries. Clandestinely acquired information from sources such as intercepted phone calls or firsthand spy reports is important, but secrets are just part of the picture. Most information in a typical intelligence report is unclassified or publicly available. And raw information—secret or not—is rarely valuable on its own because it is often incomplete, ambiguous, contradictory, poorly sourced, misleading, deliberately deceptive, or just plain wrong. Analysis is what turns uncertain findings into insight by synthesizing disparate pieces of information and assessing its context, credibility, and meaning.

Intelligence insights are not always correct. But when they are, they can be priceless. When U.S. intelligence agencies warned that Russia was about to invade Ukraine, it gave Washington critical time to help arm Kyiv and unify the West around a response. But it may soon become harder for spy agencies to replicate this success because the global-threat landscape has never been as crowded or as complicated as it is today—and with threats that move faster than ever. It is now more difficult for intelligence officers to do their jobs. After spending nearly half a century largely focused on countering the Soviet Union and two decades fighting terrorists, they today must confront a diverse multitude of dangers. They must deal with transnational threats such as pandemics and climate change; great-power competition with China and Russia; terrorism and other threats from weak and failed states; and cyberattacks that steal, spy, disrupt, destroy, and deceive at stunning speeds and scale. Intelligence agencies are, to put it mildly, overtaxed.

Technology makes today's threat list not only longer but more formidable. For centuries, countries defended themselves by building powerful militaries and taking advantage of good geography. But in cyberspace, anyone can attack from anywhere, without pushing through air, land, and sea defenses. In fact, the most powerful countries are now often the most vulnerable because their power relies on digital systems for business, education, health care, military operations, and more. These states can be hit by big attacks that disable their critical infrastructure. They can be subject to repeated small attacks that add up to devastating damage before security officials

even know it. China, for example, has robbed its way to technological advantage in a variety of industries, from fighter jets to pharmaceuticals, by stealing from U.S. companies one hack at a time, in what FBI Director Christopher Wray has called one of the greatest transfers of wealth in human history and “the biggest long-term threat to our economic and national security.”

Russia has also used cyberattacks to great effect, proving that technology can allow malignant actors to hack minds—not just machines. Russian operatives created bots and fake social media profiles impersonating Americans that spread disinformation across the United States during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, polarizing the country and undermining its democracy. Today, China could turn Americans against each other without even using U.S. tech platforms. The Chinese firm ByteDance owns TikTok, the popular social media app that boasts more than a billion users, including an estimated 135 million Americans, or 40 percent of the U.S. population. Both Democrats and Republicans now worry that TikTok could enable the Chinese government to vacuum all sorts of data about Americans and launch massive influence campaigns that serve Beijing’s interests—all under the guise of giving U.S. consumers what they want. In today’s world of information warfare, weapons don’t look like weapons.

Because cyberattacks can happen so quickly, and because policymakers can track breaking events and get hot takes with the touch of a button, U.S. intelligence agencies also need to operate with newfound speed. Timeliness, of course, has always been important to spycraft: in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, U.S. President John F. Kennedy had 13 days to pore over intelligence and consider his policy options after surveillance photographs from a U-2 spy plane revealed Soviet nuclear installations in Cuba, and on September 11, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush had less than 13 hours after the World Trade Center attacks to review intelligence and announce a response. Today, the time for presidents to consider intelligence before making major policy decisions may be closer to 13 minutes or even 13 seconds.

But moving fast also carries risks. It takes time to vet a source’s credibility, tap expert knowledge across fields, and consider alternative

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The line between  
the wisdom  
of crowds and  
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explanations for a finding. Without careful intelligence analysis, leaders may make premature or even dangerous decisions. The potential consequences of rash action became evident in December 2016, when a news story reported that Israel's former defense minister was threatening a nuclear attack against Pakistan if Islamabad deployed troops in Syria. Pakistan's Defense Minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, quickly tweeted: "Israeli def min threatens nuclear retaliation presuming pak role in Syria against Daesh. Israel forgets Pakistan is a Nuclear state too AH." But the original story had been fabricated. Asif had dashed off his response before finding out the truth. Satisfying policymakers' need for speed while carefully collecting, vetting, and assessing intelligence has always been a delicate balance, but that balance is getting harder to strike.

#### NEED TO KNOW

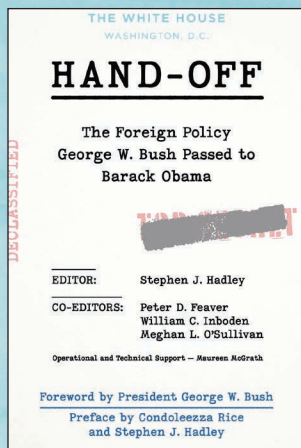
Intelligence agencies must deal with a data environment that is vast, not just fast. The volume of information available online has become almost unimaginably immense. According to the World Economic Forum, in 2019, Internet users posted 500 million tweets, sent 294 billion emails, and uploaded 350 million photos to Facebook every day. Every second, the Internet transmits roughly one petabyte of data: the amount of data that an individual would have consumed after binge-watching movies nonstop for over three years.

U.S. intelligence agencies are already collecting far more information than humans can analyze effectively. In 2018, the intelligence community was capturing more than three National Football League seasons' worth of high-definition imagery a day on each sensor they deployed in a combat theater. According to a source at the Department of Defense, in 2020, one soldier deployed to the Middle East was so concerned about the crushing flow of classified intelligence emails he was receiving that he decided to count them. The total: 10,000 emails in 120 days. These quantities are likely to grow. Some estimates show that the amount of digital data on earth doubles every 24 months.

And increasingly, intelligence agencies must satisfy a wider range of customers—including people who do not command troops, hold security clearances, or even work in government. Today, plenty of important decision-makers live worlds apart from Washington, making consequential policy choices in boardrooms and living rooms—not the White House Situation Room. Big Tech companies, including

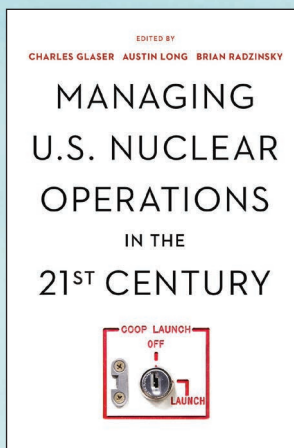
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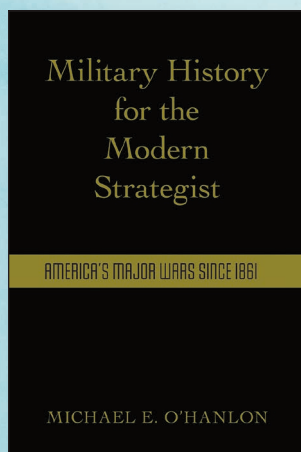


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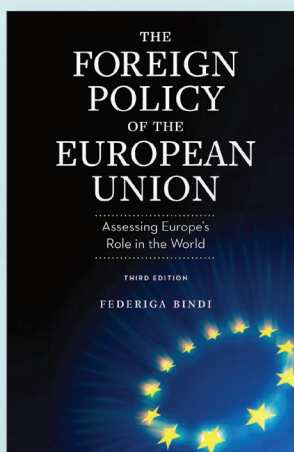


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Microsoft and Google, need intelligence about cyberthreats to and through their systems. Most of the United States' critical infrastructure is controlled by private firms, such as energy companies, and they also need information about cyber risks that could disrupt or destroy their systems. Voters need intelligence about how foreign governments are interfering in elections and waging operations to polarize society. And because cyberthreats do not stop at the border, U.S. security increasingly depends on sharing intelligence faster and better with allies and partners.

To serve this broader array of customers, the U.S. intelligence community is making unclassified products and engaging with the outside world to an extent it has not before. The National Security Agency, the FBI, and other intelligence agencies are now creating public service videos about foreign threats to U.S. elections. In September 2022, the CIA launched a podcast called *The Langley Files*, aimed at demystifying the agency and educating the public. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which collects and analyzes satellite imagery and other geospatial intelligence, launched a project called Tearline—a collaboration with think tanks, universities, and nonprofits to create unclassified reports about climate change, Russian troop movements, human rights issues, and more. In 2021, the NSA began issuing joint advisories with the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency detailing major cyberthreats, exposing the entities behind them, and explaining how firms could shore up their security. In October, these three agencies even released the technical details of the top 20 cyber vulnerabilities exploited by the Chinese government to hack into U.S. and allied networks, along with meticulous instructions about how to improve cyber defenses. The U.S. government is now also issuing advisories with foreign intelligence partners.

The success of this public-facing strategy has been on full display in Ukraine. It helped the United States warn the world about Russia's invasion. It helped rally the West behind a fast response. And it continues to frustrate Moscow. Most recently, after Washington revealed intelligence indicating that senior Russian military leaders were discussing using tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Xi issued a rare public warning against the "use of, or threats to use, nuclear weapons." Xi's "no limits" relationship with Putin suddenly had limits after all.

CROWD SURFING

In addition to more customers, technology has given U.S. intelligence agencies more competition. The explosion of open-source information online, commercial satellite capabilities, and the rise of AI are enabling all sorts of individuals and private organizations to collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence.

In the past several years, for instance, the amateur investigators of Bellingcat—a volunteer organization that describes itself as “an intelligence agency for the people”—have made all kinds of discoveries. Bellingcat identified the Russian hit team that tried to assassinate former Russian spy officer Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom and located supporters of the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) in Europe. It also proved that Russians were behind the shootdown of Malaysia Airlines flight 17 over Ukraine.

Bellingcat is not the only civilian intelligence initiative. When the Iranian government claimed in 2020 that a small fire had broken out in an industrial shed, two U.S. researchers working independently and using nothing more than their computers and the Internet proved within hours that Tehran was lying. As David Albright and Fabian Hinz quickly found, the building was actually a nuclear centrifuge assembly facility at Iran’s main uranium enrichment site. The damage was so extensive that the fire may well have been caused by an explosion—raising the possibility of sabotage. In 2021, nuclear sleuths at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in California used commercial satellite imagery to discover more than 200 new intercontinental ballistic missile silos in China, a finding that could signal historic increases in China’s nuclear arsenal.

For U.S. intelligence agencies, this burgeoning world of open-source intelligence brings significant new opportunities as well as risks. On the positive side, citizen-sleuths offer more eyes and ears around the world scanning for developments and dangers as they arise. The wisdom of the crowd can be a powerful tool, especially for piecing together tiny bits of information. Unbound by bureaucracy, open-source intelligence analysts can work quickly. And because open-source information is by definition declassified, it can be shared easily within government agencies, across them, and with the public without revealing sensitive sources or methods.

But these features are also flaws. Open-source intelligence is available to everyone, everywhere, no matter their motives, national

loyalties, or capabilities. Citizen-sleuths do not have to answer to anyone or train anywhere, and that invites all kinds of hazards. Volunteer analysts are rewarded for being fast (especially online) but are rarely punished for being wrong—which means they are more likely to make errors. And the line between the wisdom of crowds and the danger of mobs is thin. After a 2013 terrorist attack on the Boston Marathon killed three people and wounded more than 260 others, Reddit users jumped into action. Posting pet theories, unconfirmed chatter on police scanners, and other crowdsourced tidbits of information, amateur investigators fingered two “suspects” and the mainstream media publicized the findings. Both turned out to be innocent.

These weaknesses can create serious headaches for governments. When errors go viral, intelligence agencies have to burn time and resources fact-checking the work of others and reassuring policymakers that the agencies’ original intelligence assessments should not change. Accurate open-source discoveries can cause problems, too. Findings, for example, might force policymakers into corners by making information public that, if kept secret, could have left room for compromise and graceful exits from crises. To diffuse the Cuban missile crisis, for example, Kennedy agreed to secretly remove U.S. nuclear weapons from Turkey if the Soviets took their missiles out of Cuba. Had satellite imagery been publicly available, Kennedy might have been too worried about domestic political backlash to make a deal.

#### OPEN RELATIONSHIP

U.S. intelligence leaders know that their success in the twenty-first century hinges on adapting to a world of more threats, more speed, more data, more customers, and more competitors. Their agencies have been working hard to meet these challenges by launching organizational reforms, technology innovation programs, and new initiatives to recruit top science and engineering talent. They have had some important successes. But these are difficult problems to overcome, and so far, the intelligence community’s efforts have been piecemeal.

The rate of progress is especially concerning given that the challenges are well known, the stakes are high, and intelligence weaknesses have been festering for years. Multiple reports and articles (including one in this magazine) have found that intelligence agencies are not keeping pace with technological developments. These reports point to an unfortunate reality. Washington cannot

address its present challenges by making incremental changes to existing agencies. Instead, developing U.S. intelligence capabilities for the twenty-first century requires building something new: a dedicated, open-source intelligence agency focused on combing through unclassified data and discerning what it means.

Creating a 19th intelligence agency may seem duplicative and unnecessary. But it is essential. Despite Washington's best efforts, open-source intelligence has always been a second-class citizen in the U.S. intelligence community because it has no agency with the budget, hiring power, or seat at the table to champion it. As long as open-source intelligence remains embedded in secret agencies that value clandestine information above all, it will languish. A culture of secrecy will continue to strangle the adoption of cutting-edge technical tools from the commercial sector. Agencies will struggle to attract and retain talent that is desperately needed to help them understand and use new technologies. And efforts to harness the power of open-source intelligence collectors and analysts outside government will fall short.

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Even the best  
open-source  
intelligence has  
limits.

A new open-source intelligence agency would bring innovation, not just information, to the U.S. intelligence community by providing fertile soil for the growth of far-reaching changes in human capital, technology adoption, and collaboration with the burgeoning open-source intelligence ecosystem. Such an agency would be a powerful lever for attracting the workforce of tomorrow. Because it deals with unclassified information, the agency could recruit top scientists and engineers to work right away, without requiring them to wait months or years for security clearances. Locating open-source agency offices in technology hubs where engineers already live and want to stay—places such as Austin, San Francisco, and Seattle—would make it easier for talent to flow in and out of government. The result could be a corps of tech-savvy officials who rotate between public service and the private sector, acting as ambassadors between both worlds. They would increase the intelligence community's presence and prestige in technology circles while bringing a continuous stream of fresh tech ideas back inside.

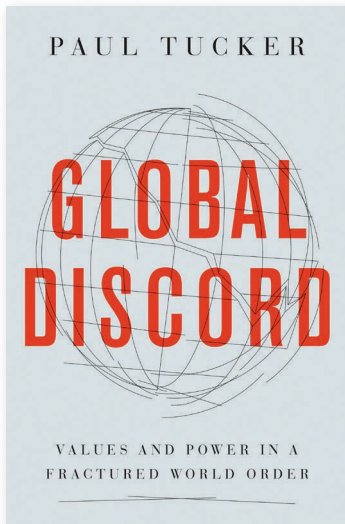
By working with unclassified material, the open-source agency could also help the intelligence community do a better and faster job of adopting new collection and analysis technologies. (The open-source



agency could test new inventions and, if they proved effective, pass them along to agencies that work with secrets.) The agency would also be ideally positioned to engage with leading open-source intelligence organizations and individuals outside the government. These partnerships could help U.S. intelligence agencies outsource more of their work to responsible nongovernmental collectors and analysts, freeing up intelligence officials to focus their capabilities and clandestine collection efforts on missions that nobody else can do.

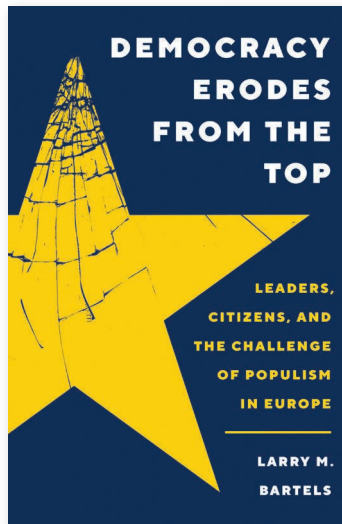
And there will still be many such missions. After all, even the best open-source intelligence has limits. Satellite imagery can reveal new Chinese missile silos but not what Chinese leaders intend to do with them. Identifying objects or tracking movements online is important, but generating insight requires more. Secret methods remain uniquely suited to understanding what foreign leaders know, believe, and desire. There is no open-source substitute for getting human spies inside a foreign leaders' inner circle or penetrating an adversary's communications system to uncover what that adversary is saying and writing. Analysts with clearances will also always be essential for assessing what classified discoveries mean, how credible they are, and how they fit with other, unclassified findings.

But secret agencies are no longer enough. The country faces a dangerous new era that includes great-power competition, renewed war in Europe, ongoing terrorist attacks, and fast-changing cyberattacks. New technologies are driving these threats and determining who will be able to understand and chart the future. To succeed, the U.S. intelligence community must adapt to a more open, technological world. 🌐



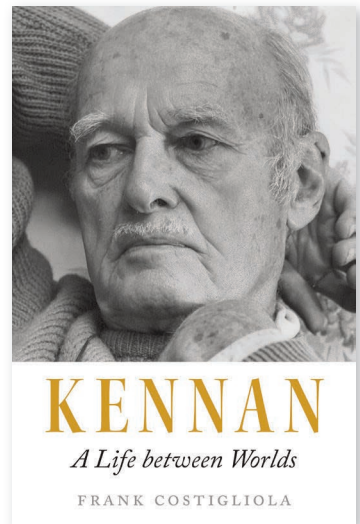
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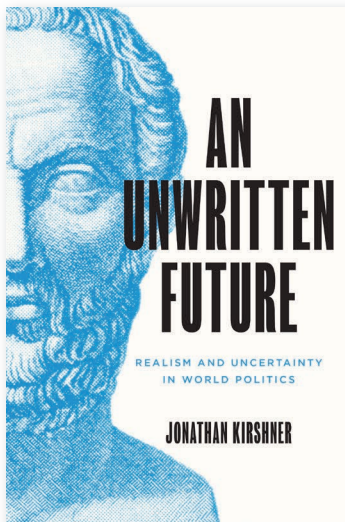
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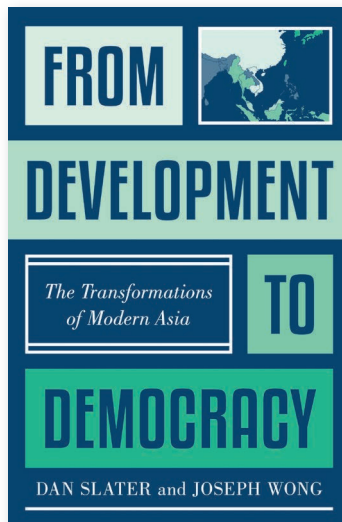
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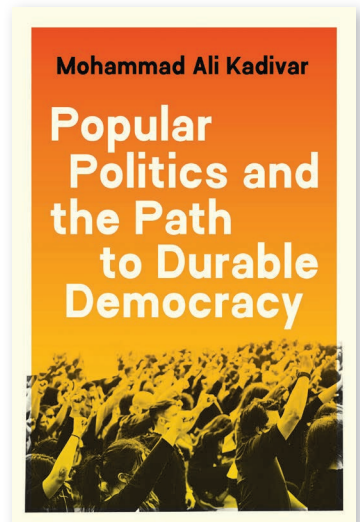
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# The Autocrat in Your iPhone

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## How Mercenary Spyware Threatens Democracy

RONALD J. DEIBERT

**I**n the summer of 2020, a Rwandan plot to capture exiled opposition leader Paul Rusesabagina drew international headlines. Rusesabagina is best known as the human rights defender and U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient who sheltered more than 1,200 Hutus and Tutsis in a hotel during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. But in the decades after the genocide, he also became a prominent U.S.-based critic of Rwandan President Paul Kagame. In August 2020, during a layover in Dubai, Rusesabagina was lured under false pretenses into boarding a plane bound for Kigali, the Rwandan capital, where government authorities immediately arrested him for his affiliation with an opposition group. The following year, a Rwandan court sentenced him to 25 years in prison, drawing the condemnation of international human rights groups, the European Parliament, and the U.S. Congress.

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RONALD J. DEIBERT is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy.





Less noted at the time, however, was that this brazen cross-border operation may also have employed highly sophisticated digital surveillance. After Rusesabagina's sentencing, Amnesty International and the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto, a digital security research group I founded and direct, discovered that smartphones belonging to several of Rusesabagina's family members who also lived abroad had been hacked by an advanced spyware program called Pegasus. Produced by the Israel-based NSO Group, Pegasus gives an operator near-total access to a target's personal data. Forensic analysis revealed that the phone belonging to Rusesabagina's daughter Carine Kanimba had been infected by the spyware around the time her father was kidnapped and again when she was trying to secure his release and was meeting with high-level officials in Europe and the U.S. State Department, including the U.S. special envoy for hostage affairs. NSO Group does not publicly identify its government clients and the Rwandan government has denied using Pegasus, but strong circumstantial evidence points to the Kagame regime.

In fact, the incident is only one of dozens of cases in which Pegasus or other similar spyware technology has been found on the digital devices of prominent political opposition figures, journalists, and human rights activists in many countries. Providing the ability to clandestinely infiltrate even the most up-to-date smartphones—the latest “zero click” version of the spyware can penetrate a device without any action by the user—Pegasus has become the digital surveillance tool of choice for repressive regimes around the world. It has been used against government critics in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and pro-democracy protesters in Thailand. It has been deployed by Mohammed bin Salman's Saudi Arabia and Viktor Orban's Hungary.

But the use of spyware is hardly limited to the world's authoritarians. As researchers have revealed, over the past decade many democracies, including Spain and Mexico, have begun using spyware, as well, in ways that violate well-established norms of human rights and public accountability. U.S. government documents disclosed by *The New York Times* in November 2022 show that the FBI not only acquired spyware services from NSO, possibly for counterintelligence purposes, but also contemplated deploying them, including on U.S. targets. (An FBI spokesperson told the *Times* that “there has been no operational use of the NSO product to support any FBI investigation.”)

The advent of advanced spyware has transformed the world of espionage and surveillance. Bringing together a largely unregulated



industry with an invasive-by-design digital ecosystem in which smartphones and other personal devices contain the most intimate details of people's lives, the new technology can track almost anyone, anywhere in the world. Governments have taken notice. For Israel, which approves export licenses for nso Group's Pegasus, the sale of spyware to foreign governments has brought new diplomatic clout in countries as disparate as India and Panama; a *New York Times* investigation found that nso deals helped Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seal the Abraham Accords with Bahrain, Morocco, and the UAE. In turn, client states have used Pegasus against not only opposition groups, journalists, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) but also geopolitical rivals. In 2020 and 2021, the Citizen Lab discovered that several devices belonging to officials in the United Kingdom's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office had been hacked with Pegasus, and that a client of nso Group in the UAE had used the spyware to infiltrate a device located at 10 Downing Street, the residence of the British prime minister. In November 2021, the tech giant Apple notified 11 staff members of the U.S. embassy in Uganda that their iPhones had been hacked with Pegasus.

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With spyware,  
governments  
can stop protests  
before they occur.

In response to these revelations, spyware firms have generally denied responsibility for their clients' abuses or have declined to comment. In a statement to *The New Yorker* in April 2022, nso Group said, "We have repeatedly cooperated with governmental investigations, where credible allegations merit, and have learned from each of these findings and reports and improved the safeguards in our technologies." The Israeli company has also said that its technology is designed to help governments investigate crime and terrorism. But advanced spyware has now been implicated in human rights violations and interstate espionage in dozens of countries, and spyware companies have few legal obligations or incentives for public transparency or accountability. nso Group has not provided any specific information to counter the Citizen Lab's detailed evidence of abuses.

The consequences of the spyware revolution are profound. In countries with few resources, security forces can now pursue high-tech operations using off-the-shelf technology that is almost as easy to acquire as headphones from Amazon. Among democracies, the technology has become an irresistible tool that can be deployed with little oversight; in the last year alone, security agencies in at least four

European countries—Greece, Hungary, Poland, and Spain—have been implicated in scandals in which state agencies have been accused of deploying spyware against journalists and political opposition figures. A global market for spyware also means that forms of surveillance and espionage that were once limited to a few major powers are now available to almost any country, and potentially to even more private firms. Left unregulated, the proliferation of this technology threatens to erode many of the institutions, processes, and values on which the liberal international order depends.

#### WE WILL SPY FOR YOU

The spyware revolution has emerged as a byproduct of a remarkable convergence of technological, social, and political developments over the past decade. Smartphones and other digital devices are vulnerable to surveillance because their applications often contain flaws and because they continually transmit data through insecure cellular and Internet networks. Although manufacturers of these technology platforms employ engineers to find and patch vulnerabilities, they tend to prioritize product development over security. By discovering and weaponizing “zero days”—software flaws that are unknown to their designers—spyware firms exploit the inherent insecurity of the digital consumer world.

But the extraordinary growth of the spyware market has also been driven by several broader trends. First, spyware takes advantage of a global digital culture that is shaped around always-on, always-connected smartphones. By hacking a personal device, spyware can provide its operators with a user’s entire pattern of life in real time. Second, spyware offers security agencies an elegant way to circumvent end-to-end encryption, which has become a growing barrier to government mass surveillance programs that depend on the collection of telecommunications and Internet data. By getting inside a user’s device, spyware allows its operators to read messages or listen to calls before they have been encrypted or after they have been decrypted; if the user can see it on the screen, so can the spyware. A third factor driving the industry’s growth has been the rise of digitally enabled protest movements. Popular upheavals such as the color revolutions in former Soviet states in the first decade of this century and the Arab Spring in 2010–11 took many autocrats by surprise, and the organizers often used phones to mobilize protesters. By offering an almost godlike way to get inside activist networks, spyware has opened



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up a powerful new method for governments to monitor dissent and take steps to neutralize it before large protests occur.

Finally, the spyware industry has also been fueled by the growing privatization of national security. Just as governments have turned to private contractors for complicated or controversial military operations, they have discovered that they can outsource surveillance and espionage to better-equipped and less visible private actors. Like soldiers of fortune, advanced spyware companies tend to put revenues ahead of ethics, selling their products without regard to the politics of their clients—giving rise to the term “mercenary spyware”—and like military contractors, their dealings with government security agencies are often cloaked in secrecy to avoid public scrutiny. Moreover, just as military contractors have offered lucrative private-sector careers for veterans of military and intelligence agencies, spyware firms and government security services have been building similarly mutually beneficial partnerships, boosting the industry in the process. Many senior members of NSO Group, for example, are veterans of Israeli intelligence, including the elite Military Intelligence Directorate.

Although lack of transparency has made the mercenary spyware industry difficult to measure, journalists have estimated it to be worth about \$12 billion per year. Before recent financial setbacks brought on by a growing number of lawsuits, NSO Group was valued at \$2 billion, and there are other major players in the market. Many companies now produce sophisticated spyware, including Cytrox (founded in North Macedonia and now with operations in Hungary and Israel), Israel-based Cyberbit and Candiru, Italy-based Hacking Team (now defunct), and the Anglo-German Gamma Group. Each of these firms can hypothetically serve numerous clients. Governments that appear to have used Cytrox’s Predator spyware, for example, include Armenia, Egypt, Greece, Indonesia, Madagascar, and Serbia. In 2021, Mexico’s secretary of Security and Public Safety, Rosa Icela Rodríguez, said that previous Mexican administrations had signed multiple contracts with NSO Group, totaling \$61 million, to buy Pegasus spyware, and as Mexican and international researchers have shown, the government has kept using Pegasus despite the present leadership’s public assurances that it would not. (In October 2022, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador denied the findings, stating that his administration was not using the spyware against journalists or political opponents.)

On the basis of such lucrative deals, spyware firms have enjoyed backing from major private equity funds, such as the San Francisco



firm Francisco Partners and the London-based Novalpina Capital, thus bolstering their resources. Francisco Partners, which had a controlling stake in NSO Group for five years, told Bloomberg News in 2021, “[We are] deeply committed to ethical business practices, and we evaluate all our investments through that lens.” Novalpina, which together with NSO’s founders acquired Francisco Partners’ stake in 2019, said it would bring the spyware firm “in full alignment with UN guiding principles on business and human rights,” but revelations of abuses of Pegasus have continued, and correspondence published by *The Guardian* in 2022 indicated that Novalpina sought to discredit NSO Group’s critics, including this author. (Lawyers for Novalpina told *The Guardian* that these were “tenuous and unsubstantiated allegations.”) After a dispute between Novalpina’s founding partners, the firm lost its controlling stake in NSO Group in 2021.

But the spyware industry also includes far less sophisticated firms in countries such as India, the Philippines, and Cyprus. As the surveillance equivalent of strip-mall phone repair shops, such outfits may lack the ability to identify zero days, but they can still accomplish objectives through simpler means. They may use credential phishing—using false pretenses, often via email or text message, to obtain a user’s digital passwords or other sensitive personal information—or they may simply purchase software vulnerabilities from other hackers on the black market. And these smaller firms may be more willing to undertake illegal operations on behalf of private clients because they are located outside the jurisdiction in which a victim resides or because enforcement is lax.

It is hard to overestimate the reach and power of the latest commercial spyware. In its most advanced forms, it can silently infiltrate any vulnerable device anywhere in the world. Take the zero-day, zero-click exploit that Citizen Lab researchers discovered in 2021 on a Pegasus-infected iPhone. Using the exploit, which researchers called ForcedEntry, a spyware operator can surreptitiously intercept texts and phone calls, including those encrypted by apps such as Signal or WhatsApp; turn on the user’s microphone and camera; track movements through a device’s GPS; and gather photos, notes, contacts, emails, and documents. The operator can do almost anything a user can do and more, including reconfigure the device’s security settings and acquire the digital tokens that are used to securely access cloud accounts so that surveillance on a target can continue even after the exploit has been removed from a device—all without the target’s awareness. After the Citizen Lab shared Pegasus’s ForcedEntry

with analysts at Apple and Google, Google's analysts described it as "one of the most technically sophisticated exploits we've ever seen," noting that it provided capabilities that were "previously thought to be accessible to only a handful of nation states."

#### SHOOTING THE MESSENGERS

Over the past decade, the rise of authoritarian regimes in many parts of the world has raised new questions about the durability of the liberal international order. As has been widely noted, many ruling elites have been able to slide toward authoritarianism by limiting or controlling political dissent, the media, the courts, and other institutions of civil society. Yet far less attention has been paid to the pervasive role of the mercenary spyware industry in this process. This neglect is partly the result of how little we know about spyware, including, in many cases, the identity of the specific government agencies that are using it. (Given the secretive nature of spyware transactions, it is far easier to identify victims than operators.) There is little doubt, however, that spyware has been used to systematically degrade liberal democratic practices and institutions.

One of the technology's most frequent uses has been to infiltrate opposition movements, particularly in the run-up to elections. Researchers have identified cases in which opposition figures have been targeted, not only in authoritarian states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE but also in democratic countries such as India and Poland. Indeed, one of the most egregious cases arose in Spain, a parliamentary democracy and European Union member. Between 2017 and 2020, the Citizen Lab discovered, Pegasus was used to eavesdrop on a large cross section of Catalan civil society and government. The targets included every Catalan member of the European Parliament who supported independence for Catalonia, every Catalan president since 2010, and many members of Catalan legislative bodies, including multiple presidents of the Catalan parliament. Notably, some of the targeting took place amid sensitive negotiations between the Catalan and Spanish governments over the fate of Catalan independence supporters who were either imprisoned or in exile. After the findings drew international attention, Paz Esteban, the head of Spain's National Intelligence Center, acknowledged to Spanish lawmakers that spyware had been used against some Catalan politicians, and Esteban was subsequently fired. But it is still unclear which government agency was responsible, and which laws, if any, were used to justify such an extensive domestic spying operation.

In some countries, spyware has proved equally effective against journalists who are investigating those in power, with far-reaching consequences for both the targets and their sources. In 2015, several devices belonging to Mexican journalist Carmen Aristegui and a member of her family were sent Pegasus exploit links while she was investigating corruption involving then Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto. There is no smoking gun that identifies the responsible party, though strong circumstantial evidence suggests a Mexican government agency. In 2021, a Hungarian journalist investigating corruption in President Viktor Orbán's inner circle was hacked with Pegasus. (The Hungarian government subsequently acknowledged that it had purchased the technology.) And that same year, the cellphone of *New York Times* Middle East correspondent Ben Hubbard was infected with Pegasus while he was working on a book about Saudi Arabia's de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

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One Egyptian opposition leader was targeted by two different governments.

Almost as frequently, spyware has been used to undermine judicial officials and civil society organizations that are trying to hold governments to account. Take the case of Alberto Nisman, a well-known Argentine anticorruption prosecutor who was investigating an alleged criminal conspiracy by high-level Argentine officials. In January 2015, Nisman was found dead in suspicious circumstances—his death was later ruled a homicide—the day before he was to provide testimony to Congress implicating then president of Argentina Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and her foreign minister, Héctor Timerman, in a cover-up of alleged Iranian involvement in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish center in Buenos Aires. Later that year, the Citizen Lab documented how a South American hack-for-hire group had been contracted to target Nisman with spyware before his death, suggesting that someone in power was keen to peer into his investigations. In Mexico in 2017, a still unknown government agency or agencies used Pegasus spyware against human rights groups and international investigators that were tracking down potential government cover-ups of the notorious disappearance and gruesome murder of 43 students in Iguala, Mexico. Subsequent reports showed that the Mexican government had badly botched the investigations and that government

personnel were implicated in a cover-up—findings that might never have come to light without the efforts of civil society watchdogs.

Other common Pegasus targets are lawyers involved with prominent or politically sensitive cases. In most liberal democracies, attorney-client privilege is sacrosanct. Yet the Citizen Lab has identified a variety of cases in which spyware has been used to hack or target lawyers' devices. In 2015, the tactic was used against two lawyers in Mexico who were representing the families of Nadia Vera, a slain government critic and women's rights advocate. More recently, multiple lawyers representing prominent Catalans were targeted as part of the Spanish surveillance campaign. And in Poland, Pegasus spyware was used several times to hack the device of Roman Giertych, legal counsel to Donald Tusk, a former prime minister and the leader of the country's main opposition party. (In early 2022, Polish Deputy Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski publicly acknowledged that the government had bought Pegasus spyware but denied that it had been used against the Polish opposition.)

As the availability of spyware grows, private-sector clients are also getting in on the act. Consider the activities of BellTroX, an Indian hack-for-hire company responsible for extensive espionage on behalf of private clients worldwide. Between 2015 and 2017, someone used BellTroX's services against American nonprofits that were working to publicize revelations that the oil company ExxonMobil had hidden its research about climate change for decades. BellTroX has also been used to target U.S. organizations working on net neutrality, presumably at the behest of a different client or clients that were opposed to that reform. BellTroX also has a burgeoning business in the legal world; law firms in many countries have used the company's services to spy on opposing counsel. In April 2022, an Israeli private detective who acted as a broker for BellTroX pleaded guilty in U.S. court to wire fraud, conspiracy to commit hacking, and aggravated identity theft, but BellTroX's India-based operators have remained out of reach of the law. (Asked by Reuters in 2020 to respond to the findings, the company's founder, Sumit Gupta, denied any wrongdoing and declined to disclose his clients.)

#### NOWHERE TO HIDE

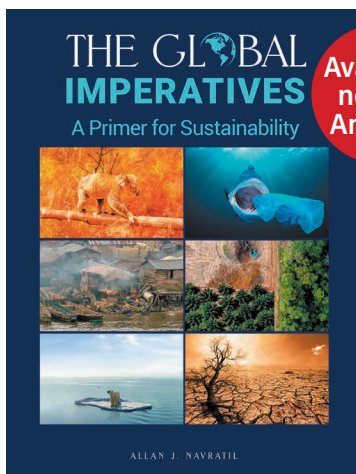
The proliferating use of spyware against political and civil society targets in advanced democracies is concerning enough. Even more threatening, however, may be the ways in which the technology has allowed authoritarian regimes to extend their repression far beyond



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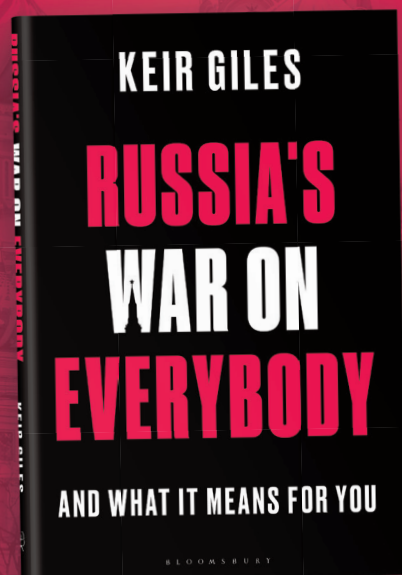
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their own borders. In past decades, autocrats faced significant barriers to repressing citizens who had gone into exile. With spyware, however, an operator can get inside a political exile's entire network without setting foot inside the target's adopted country, and with very few of the risks and costs associated with conventional international espionage.

Examples of this new form of transnational repression are manifold. Beginning in 2016, Cyberbit was used to target Ethiopian dissidents, lawyers, students, and others in nearly 20 countries. In 2021, the phones of two prominent Egyptians—exiled opposition politician Ayman Nour, who has been living in Turkey, and the host of a popular news program (who has asked to remain anonymous for his own safety)—were hacked with Cytrox's Predator spyware. In fact, the phone of Nour, who is an outspoken critic of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, was simultaneously infected with both Predator and nso Group's Pegasus spyware, each apparently operated by separate government clients—Egypt in the case of Predator and either Saudi Arabia or the UAE in the case of Pegasus. In a statement to *Vice News*, Cyberbit said that the Israeli government oversees its technology and that “the intelligence and defense agencies that purchase these products are obligated to use them in accordance with the law.” In the Egyptian hacking case, Cytrox's CEO, Ivo Malinkovski, declined to comment; according to *VICE* news, he subsequently deleted references to Cytrox in his LinkedIn profile. (The governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have declined to comment about the findings.)

Especially far-reaching has been the Saudi government's transnational spyware campaign. In 2018, a phone belonging to Ghanem al-Masarir, a Saudi dissident living in the United Kingdom, was hacked with Pegasus spyware. Coinciding with the infection of his device, al-Masarir was tracked down and physically assaulted by Saudi agents in London. Spyware may have also played a part in the notorious killing of the exiled Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Turkey. In 2018, a phone owned by Omar Abdulaziz—a Saudi activist, Canadian permanent resident, and close confidant of Khashoggi—was hacked with Pegasus spyware. Abdulaziz and Khashoggi had been discussing their activism against the Saudi regime over what they mistakenly assumed were secure communications platforms. After Khashoggi's killing, forensic analysis revealed that the devices of several other people closest to Khashoggi, including his Egyptian wife and his Turkish fiancée, had also been infected. To what extent Khashoggi's

own phones were hacked is not known because his fiancée turned them over to Turkish authorities, who have withheld them from independent analysis, but his closest contacts were all under surveillance, providing Saudi agents with windows into Khashoggi's personal life, political activism, and movements in the months leading up to his murder. (The Saudi government has declined to comment on the revelations. In 2021, nso Group told *The Guardian*, "Our technology was not associated in any way with the heinous murder of Jamal Khashoggi.")

In fact, targeting regime critics abroad with spyware is only one of several ways the Saudi government has employed digital technology to neutralize dissent. For example, according to a U.S. federal indictment, a top adviser to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman paid a Twitter employee \$300,000 and provided other gifts in 2014 and 2015, apparently in exchange for spying on dissidents on the platform. The employee, who left Twitter in 2015, was convicted in U.S. court in 2022. When such tactics are used in combination with the type of highly intrusive surveillance that spyware represents, dissidents can come under extraordinary psychological pressure. Many victims of hacking have experienced debilitating shock knowing that their compromised devices have also put friends and associates at risk and that their every move is being watched. One female Saudi activist explained that being digitally targeted was a form of "psychological and emotional war" that caused her "endless fear and anxiety." By using spyware, autocrats and despots are thus able to clamp down on civil society networks well beyond their own borders even as they strengthen autocracy at home.

Despite a large and growing body of documentation about spyware abuses around the world, there are several reasons that the technology seems likely to become even more widespread. First, although much scrutiny of mercenary spyware firms has concerned their contracts with national government agencies, many firms market to more than one client in a given country, including local law enforcement. For example, in a fact-finding trip to Israel in the summer of 2022, officials for the European Parliament learned that nso Group has at least 22 clients in 12 European countries, suggesting that a significant number of these clients are subnational agencies. Such deals raise further questions about accountability, given that research has shown

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One exploit  
can turn on a  
user's microphone  
and camera.

that local law enforcement agencies are often more susceptible to abuses, such as racial profiling or corruption, and tend to have poor transparency and insufficient oversight.

Second, although some mercenary spyware firms such as NSO Group claim that they deal only with government clients, there is little to prevent them from selling their technology to private firms or corrupt individuals. Evidence suggests that some already do: in July 2022, Microsoft's Threat Intelligence Center issued a report on an Austria-based spyware and hack-for-hire firm called DSIRF that had targeted individuals in banks, law firms, and consultancies in several countries. Though Microsoft did not specify what type of clients hired DSIRF, the firm advertises "due diligence" services to businesses, implying that these hacking operations were undertaken on behalf of private clients. When Reuters asked DSIRF about the Microsoft report, the company declined to comment. Although it is illegal if done without a warrant, such private-sector hacking is less likely to be deterred when hackers' firms are located outside the jurisdiction in which the targeting occurs. As protections for privacy rights, freedom of the press, and independent courts, come increasingly under threat in many countries, it will likely become even easier for corrupt firms or oligarchs to deploy mercenary spyware without accountability.

Third, spyware has become a central component of a broader menu of surveillance tools, such as location tracking and biometric identification, used by many government security agencies. The more that spyware is incorporated into everyday intelligence gathering and policing, the harder it will be to rein it in. More ominously, spyware may soon acquire even more invasive capabilities by exploiting wearable applications, such as biomedical monitors, emotional detection technology, and Internet-connected neural networks currently in development. Already, many digital applications aim to drill deeper into the subliminal or the unconscious aspects of users' behavior and gather data on their health and physiology. It is no longer science fiction to envision spyware that might use covert access to these data about our biological or cognitive systems to monitor and even manipulate a victim's behavior and overall well-being.

#### RESTRAINING ORDERS

For nearly a decade, the mercenary spyware industry has been able to expand its reach across the globe largely without regulation or accountability. But that is a choice governments have made, not an

inevitable outcome that must simply be accepted. As civil society watchdogs and journalists have brought to light flagrant abuses, it has become more difficult for major spyware vendors and government clients to hide their operations. In Europe and the United States, committees have held hearings on spyware, and government agencies have begun to develop new policies to limit its use. Notably, the U.S. Commerce Department has placed NSO Group, Candiru, and other hack-for-hire firms on an export restriction list, limiting their access to U.S. products and technology and sending a strong signal to potential investors that spyware companies are under growing scrutiny. Technology platforms have also taken action. Meta (the parent company of Facebook) and Apple have sued NSO Group in U.S. courts, notified victims of spyware infections, and worked to support civil society watchdogs. Apple has also donated \$10 million to cybersurveillance research and has pledged to do likewise with any damages awarded from its lawsuit against NSO Group.

But curbing the global spread of mercenary spyware will require a comprehensive approach. To begin with, companies need to devote far more resources to identifying and rooting out spyware and ensuring that their services are properly secured against exploitation. WhatsApp and Apple have already shown how to alert victims when spyware is detected and hold spyware vendors such as NSO Group legally responsible for violations of their terms of service and other legal offenses. Whether through a shift in business culture, or more likely through stronger government regulations, technology platforms should also put more emphasis on security and scale back the relentless quest to vacuum up user data. In turn, the forensic investigations of the Citizen Lab, Amnesty International, journalists, and others will need to be broadened and supplemented by other organizations doing similar work, whether at NGOs, universities, or investigative news organizations. Digital forensic science and digital accountability should be recognized as a formal research discipline that can monitor spyware activity, assist victims and targets, and keep pressure on governments and corporations to be more transparent and accountable for their actions. For such a field to emerge, many years of public, private, and philanthropic support will be needed.

Ultimately, governments themselves will need to adopt a robust regulatory framework for spyware use. Regulating the industry will likely require the enactment of a complex set of rules that address various aspects of the spyware market. For example, domestic-based



spyware companies could be required to make regular public disclosures about their exports, and, in turn, government agencies could be required to report from whom and where they are importing spyware. Export rules need to be strengthened to prevent the sale of spyware to governments or other clients that are likely to use them in violation of international human rights law. Clear rules and standards of oversight for the use of spyware are also necessary. Specific legislation addressing the zero-day market will likely also be needed, although it will have to be carefully crafted so that legitimate security research is not hindered. Governments could also pass legislation giving victims of spyware the right to sue both foreign governments and spyware vendors for harms caused by espionage.

Such efforts could be reinforced at an international level through the development of a global spyware control regime. Military activities, for example, have long been subject to international oversight through such mechanisms as the UN's Register of Conventional Arms and the policies that have been put in place relating to standards for private military and security contractors or the banning of land mines. A similar process could lead to the international regulation of spyware, including requirements for transparency and reporting about its use. These existing models, however, suggest that success will require the buy-in of a significant number of countries, and more pressure is needed to persuade governments and world leaders that mercenary spyware poses a serious and growing threat to international security and the liberal international order.

No doubt, authoritarian governments and security agencies that currently benefit from spyware will seek to obstruct such regulation, but the growing risks to national security of an unregulated market may prompt a more sober assessment. In November 2022, Sir Jeremy Fleming, a top British intelligence official, warned that the proliferating use of mercenary spyware and "hackers for hire" by countries and malefactors "will increase the future threat to UK cybersecurity." Should the use of mercenary spyware continue to grow unchecked, the risks for democracy will become acute. If elites in any country can use this technology to neutralize legitimate political opposition on any point on earth, silence dissent through targeted espionage, undermine independent journalism, and erode public accountability with impunity, then the values on which the liberal international order is built may soon be no more secure than the passwords on our phones. 🌐

# How to Stop Chinese Coercion

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## The Case for Collective Resilience

VICTOR CHA

**I**t took just seven words for the National Basketball Association to get canceled by Beijing. As pro-democracy protesters swarmed the streets of Hong Kong in October 2019, Daryl Morey, then the general manager of the Houston Rockets, one of the NBA's 30 teams, posted a simple message to his Twitter account: "Fight for freedom, stand with Hong Kong." Chinese broadcasters and streamers quickly announced that they would no longer show his team's games. The league, which has more viewers in China than in the United States, immediately tried to distance itself from Morey's tweet, writing that the general manager didn't speak for the NBA and issuing a statement that implicitly rebuked him. That response fostered a backlash among fans outside China and did nothing to please Beijing. A bipartisan collection of U.S. senators blasted the league for not

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standing by Morey's freedom of expression while all 11 of the NBA's Chinese sponsors and partners suspended their cooperation. With a couple of exceptions, China's broadcasters stopped airing NBA games until March 2022. The league's commissioner, Adam Silver, estimated that the rupture cost his organization hundreds of millions of dollars.

At first glance, the row between China and the NBA may seem like small potatoes: a tiny example of how the U.S.-Chinese relationship is now more defined by contestation than by close economic partnership. But Beijing's

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Biden cannot  
expect most  
states to decouple  
from China.

behavior toward the NBA is emblematic of a much bigger and extremely worrying pattern, and it is one that the Biden administration's China strategy does not wholly address. Over the last dozen years, Beijing has slapped discriminatory sanctions on trading partners that interact with Taiwan or support democracy in Hong Kong. It has imposed embargoes on

and fueled boycotts against countries and companies that speak out against genocide in Xinjiang or repression in Tibet. Indeed, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has gone after almost any entity that has crossed China in any way. And this strategy has worked. Because the Chinese economy is so integral to global markets, China's coercive behavior has caused tens of billions of dollars in damage. The mere threat of Chinese cutoffs is now prompting states and businesses to stay quiet about Beijing's abuses.

This silence is both deafening and dangerous. The CCP is carrying out a genocide of China's Uyghur minority in Xinjiang, engaging in a wide variety of other human rights abuses, and menacing nearby countries—but states are too afraid to respond. Left unchecked, this paralysis could hollow out the postwar liberal order. Should they fear major penalties, few governments, for instance, will come to Taiwan's defense if it is attacked by China. They will not help New Delhi if China attempts to take more Indian land in the Himalayas. They will hesitate to join the White House's supply chain initiatives.

Concerned countries could appeal to the World Trade Organization, the usual arbiter of international economic disputes, to try to free them from the specter of Chinese sanctions. But the WTO is unlikely to be of any help. It can investigate an 80.5 percent Chinese tariff on Australian barley as discriminatory, but if China simply stops importing bananas from the Philippines or stops sending tour groups to Korea by citing the "will of the Chinese people," there is little the organization can do in response.

The Biden administration is aware that Chinese economic predation is a major problem. It has responded by advocating resilient supply chains among like-minded partners in everything from personal protective equipment to memory chips, allowing these states to stop relying so much on Chinese-made goods. The administration has also imposed export controls on the transfer of advanced computing chips and chip-making equipment to China, and it may soon extend these controls to quantum information science, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and advanced algorithms.

But these efforts are at best a partial solution. Countries may be able to wean themselves from some Chinese goods in the supply chain, but Biden cannot reasonably expect most of them to decouple from one of the largest economies in the world. Export controls by the United States on the transfer of cutting-edge technologies to China won't work unless other countries possessing such technology—including Denmark, Japan, the Netherlands, South Korea, and the United Kingdom—join in. And these states may choose not to participate in Washington's supply-chain and technological coalitions because they fear Chinese economic retaliation.

To successfully compete with China, the United States needs to do more than insulate states from Chinese coercion. It needs to stop the coercion from happening in the first place. To do so, the United States will need to band together with its partners and draw up a new strategy, one of collective resilience. China assumes that it can boss other countries around because of its size and central role in the global economy. But China still imports enormous numbers of goods: for hundreds of products, the country's economy is more than 70 percent dependent on imports from states that Beijing has coerced. Together, these goods are worth more than \$31.2 billion to the Chinese economy. For nearly \$9.1 billion worth of items, China is more than 90 percent dependent on suppliers in states it has targeted. Washington should organize these countries into a club that threatens to cut off China's access to vital goods whenever Beijing acts against any single member. Through such an entity, states will finally be able to deter China's predatory behavior.

Dealing with China's weaponization of trade will be necessary if the Biden administration wants to successfully compete with Beijing. And although a U.S.-led collective-resilience bloc may strike proponents of globalization as mercantilist, they should understand

that it is in fact essential to their project. China will continue to abuse its economic position and distort markets until it is forced to stop. Collective deterrence, then, may be the best way to keep the global economy free and open.

#### WILD ABANDON

China's predatory actions are carefully designed to hit countries where it hurts most. Consider what Beijing did to Norway in 2010. After a Norwegian committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to a Chinese dissident, Beijing heavily restricted imports of Norwegian salmon. Over the next year, the product went from cornering almost 94 percent of China's salmon market to just 37 percent, a collapse that deprived the Norwegian economy of \$60 million in one year. After South Korea agreed to host a U.S. missile system in 2016, Beijing forced stores in China owned by the enormous Seoul-based Lotte Group to shut down, causing over \$750 million in economic damage. China similarly banned and then heavily restricted the sale of group tours to South Korea, costing the country an estimated \$15.6 billion.

Beijing also frequently targets individual businesses if they or their employees deviate from China's official positions. In 2012, Chinese protesters—encouraged, according to a *Los Angeles Times* report, by Beijing—shut down Toyota's manufacturing plants in China in response to tensions over the Senkaku Islands, which are administered by Tokyo but which Beijing claims (and refers to as the Diaoyu Islands). In 2018, Beijing took the website of Marriott Hotels offline for a week after the company sent an email to its rewards members in which it listed Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and Tibet as separate countries. The company apologized and issued a public statement against separatist movements in China. The same year, Beijing made more than 40 airlines—including American, Delta, and United—remove references to Taiwan as a separate country on their websites simply by sending them a menacing letter. And in 2021, the Chinese state media egged on a boycott of the Swedish fashion retailer H&M after it expressed concern about forced labor in Xinjiang. H&M sales in China quickly dropped by 23 percent.

To be fair, China is not the only country that engages in economic coercion. It is in some ways endemic to the international system. Writing in these pages in January 2020, the political scientists Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman observed that globalization



had enabled many countries to leverage financial power in pursuit of political ends, a phenomenon they have called “weaponized interdependence” in their earlier work. This isn’t always a negative. Indeed, in some situations, states have weaponized interdependence to target clearly bad international behavior. The widespread Western sanctioning of Russia for the war in Ukraine, for example, and the United States’ financial sanctions against North Korea and Iran for nuclear proliferation were designed to curtail illegal and dangerous acts.

But what China is doing is different, both in scale and kind. The United States may issue frequent sanctions, but these follow a clear set of processes: Washington does not weaponize economic interdependence through such a wide variety of means. One recent study identified 123 cases of coercion since 2010, carried out through popular boycotts against companies, restrictions on trade, limits on tourism to foreign countries, and other mechanisms. And aside from when the Trump administration levied a bizarre spate of tariffs against American allies, no other government has imposed sanctions or embargoes so casually, penalizing states for mild annoyances rather than broadly unacceptable international actions, such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. There is, for example, a direct correlation between countries whose leaders have met with the Dalai Lama and a decline in those states’ exports to China.

Beijing is unapologetic about the use of these sanctions and does not acknowledge that they violate global trading norms. It is not worried about domestic discontent arising from its behavior because the illiberal nature of China’s political system insulates the government from pushback. And because its trading partners are all more dependent on China than the other way around, Beijing usually has the advantage. As the Chinese ambassador to New Zealand warned in 2022, “An economic relationship in which China buys nearly a third of the country’s exports shouldn’t be taken for granted.”

#### HALF MEASURES

Beijing’s long-term objective is to force governments and companies to anticipate, respect, and defer to Chinese interests in all future actions. It seems to be working. Major democracies such as South Korea remained silent when China passed a national security law in Hong Kong suppressing democracy in 2020. In 2021, Brazil did not exclude the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei from its 5G

auction for fear of losing billions of dollars in business. In 2019, after the Gap clothing company released a T-shirt design with a map of China that did not include Taiwan and Tibet, it issued a public apology and removed the shirt from sale, even before Beijing said anything. After the salmon restrictions in 2010, Norwegian leaders refused to meet with the Dalai Lama when he visited in 2014. And according to reports and investigations by a variety of organizations, including *The Atlantic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the human rights nonprofit PEN America, Hollywood companies won't produce films that cast China in a negative light for fear of losing ticket sales.

Beijing's apparent success doesn't mean that countries have sat idly by while China has weaponized economic interdependence. The world's heavy reliance on Chinese manufacturing—starkly illustrated by shortages of masks and other personal protective equipment in the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic—has prompted almost every country to become more attuned to its own economic security. Japan, for instance, set up a new cabinet position for economic security in October 2021 and passed legislation to guard critical supply chains and technologies. During the spring of 2022, in the aftermath of both Beijing's coercion and the pandemic, South Korea created an early warning system designed to detect threats to nearly 4,000 key industry materials. The South Korean government also established a new economic security position in the presidential office.

States have also gotten better at redirecting trade, meaning that when China imposes tariffs or an import embargo on a target state's goods, the target state finds alternative markets. This strategy has seen some success. Throughout 2020, China approved tariffs on Australian barley, coal, and wine in response to Canberra's calls for an independent investigation into COVID-19's origins, prompting Australia to redirect these goods to the rest of the world. When China restricted exports of rare-earth minerals to Japan over a territorial dispute in 2010, Japan diversified its sources of critical minerals and invested more in domestic seabed exploration. As a result, it has reduced its dependence on China for critical minerals from 90 percent to 58 percent in a decade.

Countries are now following Biden's advice to "reshore" and "friend shore" supply chains, moving key elements of production from China (or places where China exercises inordinate influence) to manufacturers back home or to trusted partner economies. Through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, known as the Quad, Australia, India, Japan, and the



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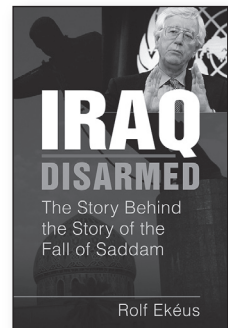
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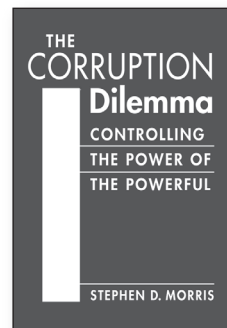
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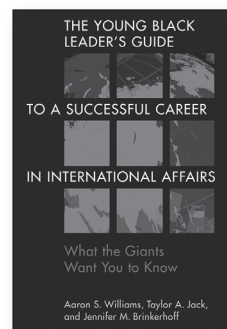
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United States are building resilient supply chains for COVID-19 vaccines, semiconductors, and emerging and critical technologies, including those related to clean energy. The countries participating in the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework are working on establishing an early warning system, mapping out critical supply chains, and diversifying their sources for important goods. In June, the United States announced the Minerals Security Partnership, an alliance with Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Japan, Norway, South Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the European Union to safeguard the supply of copper, lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare-earth minerals. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States are contemplating the creation of an alliance called Chip 4 that would consolidate the supply chain for semiconductors.

These measures are all useful and necessary. But they do not constitute a comprehensive solution. Reshoring and friend shoring insulate states against China's disruptions to the production chain while doing nothing to stop its economic coercion: securing the supply of one product does not prevent Beijing from cutting countries off from another product. Indeed, countries' enthusiasm for participating in such measures is limited by fears that China will retaliate. South Korea, for example, has hesitated to join the Chip 4 alliance in part because it is concerned that Beijing would once again ban many of its consumer goods and block the flow of Chinese tourists. Supply chain resilience, trade diversion, and reshoring can work only if complemented by a strategy crafted to end China's predatory economic behavior.

#### FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

Part of China's hubris in practicing economic coercion against its trade partners comes from confidence that the targets will not dare counter sanctions with concrete action. Beijing is right to be confident: it is hard for any single country to go up against an economic behemoth. China, for instance, accounts for 31.4 percent of global trade in Australia, 22.9 percent in Japan, 23.9 percent in South Korea, and 14.8 percent in the United States—whereas those countries respectively account for 3.6 percent, 6.1 percent, 6.0 percent, and 12.5 percent of China's trade.

But these states can fight back if they work together or, in other words, practice collective resilience. That strategy would flip the script. Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States may

individually be at a disadvantage, but combined they account for nearly 30 percent of China's imports, exceeding what China's exports account for in most of theirs. Add Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Lithuania, Mongolia, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, the Philippines, Sweden, and the United Kingdom—all countries that Beijing has coerced in the past—and the collective share of China's imports is 39 percent. These states all produce critical goods on which China is especially dependent. China gets nearly 60 percent of its iron ore, essential to its steel production, from Australia. It gets more than 80 percent of its bulldozers and Kentucky bluegrass seed, important for sowing fields, from the United States. More than 90 percent of China's supplies of scores of other goods—cardboard, ballpoint pens, cultured pearls—are sourced from Japan.

And 80 percent of China's whiskey comes from the United Kingdom.

To build a bloc that can stop Chinese coercion, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States must first come to an agreement among themselves. The first three governments are the United States' key allies in the Pacific, and all four nations are prominent market democracies and the core stakeholders in the region's liberal political and economic order. A commitment to join forces would not be without risk, but all have been prime targets of Chinese economic predation and have a powerful incentive to collaborate.

These four states must then take stock of which other countries are willing and able to join in, working through existing partnerships such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework to promote the strategy. The best candidates for membership would be the 12 other states most profoundly affected by Chinese economic coercion. Many of these countries may be very weak compared with China. But if they joined forces with the four main members, they would enjoy formidable leverage: for 406 items, China imports more than 70 percent of what it uses from one of these 16 states; for 171 of those items, the import figure rises to 90 percent. (Lithuania and Palau do not produce any of these goods, but both are frontline states in need of protection, and so they should be welcomed into the coalition.) The four founding countries could also approach the European Union,

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It is hard for any single country to go up against an economic behemoth such as China.



which is currently considering milder measures to counter Beijing's coercion, to see whether it is interested in joining their effort.

The impact of these imports is far from trivial. For example, China relies on Japan for more than 70 percent of its supplies of 114 items, amounting to over \$6.2 billion in trade, and for more than 90 percent of its supplies of 47 items, worth over \$1.7 billion. China is over 70 percent dependent on U.S. producers for 94 items, totaling over \$6.0 billion, and 43 items for which China is over 90 percent dependent on U.S. producers, worth over \$1.5 billion. Added up, all 406 of the "high dependence" goods produced by coerced states are worth more than \$31.2 billion to China.

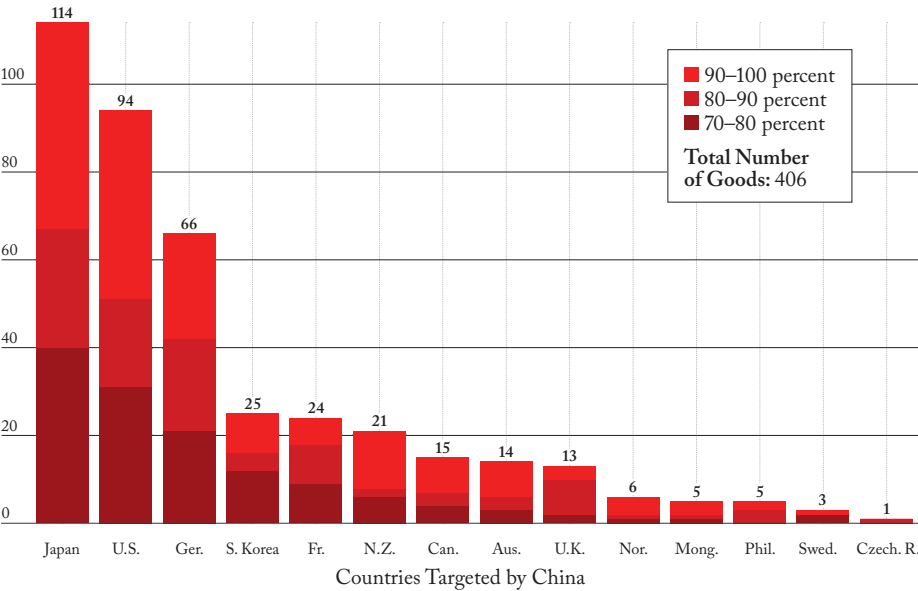
#### STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

But having the capability to fight back is only half the battle. The other half is political will: For collective resilience to be credible, countries must be willing to sign up for it in the face of fierce Chinese resistance. Beijing is likely to use a combination of carrots, such as offering discounted digital infrastructure, and sticks, such as more export restrictions, to deter countries from joining and to try to peel them off if they do. States will need to build enough domestic political support to withstand the external pressure and resist the temptation to free-ride by accepting coalition support without ever actually sanctioning China.

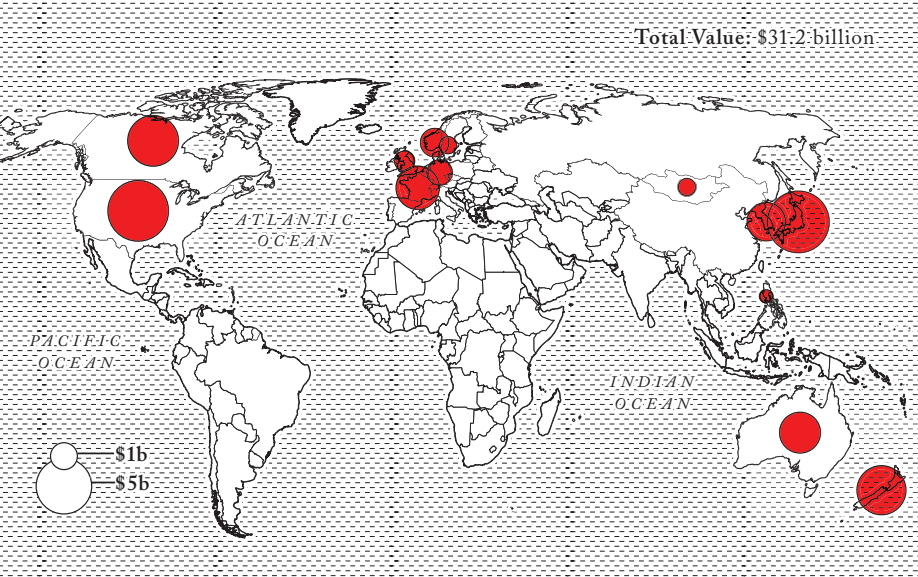
Given that most participants would be democracies, this will prove difficult. But the pact's bigger countries can take several steps to help smaller or poorer states endure the discomfort. They can create a collective compensation fund for losses and offer alternative export or import markets to divert trade in response to Chinese sanctions. Bigger states can also provide clear reassurances to smaller powers that they would not be left high and dry if Beijing slapped them with sanctions. That means the larger countries, particularly the original four, would need to delineate clear actions they would take to restrict important exports to China if Beijing bullied any pact member, even if those steps were economically costly to them. The four organizing members would also have to agree on what types of bullying would elicit a response. Disputes over trade that could be adjudicated by the WTO, such as whether China can adjudicate Western technology patent protections in its courts, would not meet the threshold. The trigger would be coercive Chinese economic actions taken for political purposes.

THE POWER OF THE COERCED

Number of goods exported, by country, that account for at least 70 percent of China's supply of those goods



Value of goods exported to China that account for at least 70 percent of China's supply of those goods



Source: United Nations COMTRADE database

Yet despite the challenges, states would likely recognize that joining the pact and staying the course is worth the short-term costs. They would need to recognize and explain to their citizens that ultimately, ending Chinese economic coercion would be in their long-term interests. China could initially fight back against the new group by finding alternative suppliers for one, two, or even several high-dependence goods. But if tariffs, nontariff barriers, or embargoes were applied to a wide range of the 406 high-dependence items made by prospective coalition members, the costs of finding new suppliers might cause Beijing to think twice before taking coercive actions. Eventually, China would have to stop such behavior, which would result in a level playing field for all of the collective's participants.

The participating states could feel confident that China would indeed stop. Despite its authoritarian system, China has proved quite sensitive to supply chain obstacles, evidenced by the fact that it rarely applies sanctions to imports of high-dependence goods. Beijing was happy to cut off South Korea from Chinese tourists, but it has not sanctioned Samsung; it needs the company's memory chips. It has not touched Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, another critical supplier of computer chips, even as tensions with Taipei reach new heights. In all its sanctioning of Australia, Beijing never so much as threatened Australian iron ore even though it is one of the country's most lucrative exports.

If Beijing was unwilling to locate alternative sources for Australian iron ore at dependency levels of 60 percent, it will certainly be sensitive to the many goods for which it is more than 70 percent dependent on outside countries—not to mention the ones where its dependence exceeds 90 percent. Then there are the 40 products made in the United States and Japan on which China is 99 or 100 percent reliant. Beijing does not want to lose access to any of them, especially when it is already struggling from a general economic slowdown.

#### FAIR AND SQUARE

The idea of collective resilience may trouble proponents of free trade and globalization. But collective resilience is not a trade war strategy; it is a peer competition strategy. It is defensive, resting first on the threat to weaponize trade, not on the actual use of sanctions. If China does not use its economic power to coerce, there is no need to make good the threat.

The strategy is also clearly and narrowly targeted. Its participants are not trying to punish China just for the sake of doing so; the goal is not to undermine the nation's economy. The goal is to deter acts of economic coercion that do not conform to WTO rules and are aimed at meeting Chinese political goals unrelated to trade. According to an analysis published by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, a nonprofit think tank, about a proposed European Union instrument to combat Chinese coercion, collective resilience could even comply with WTO regulations. China's acts of economic hostility are beyond the remit of the organization's laws, and nothing in the WTO rulebook prohibits states from engaging in self-defense.

That's not to say that practicing economic resilience will never require sanctions on China. It may well do so, at least at first. But policymakers can rest easy knowing that any sanctions, if properly structured, would ultimately be in service of protecting economic interdependence. That notion may seem paradoxical, but sometimes conducting international relations requires living with contradictions. It certainly wouldn't be the first time the United States has played dirty to keep a global system clean. During the Cold War, Washington routinely countenanced illiberal practices to protect the liberal order—for example, supporting anticommunist military regimes in South Korea and Taiwan as bulwarks against more brutal nearby powers. Today, the West may need to compromise on its free trade principles if it wants to prevent Beijing from corrupting globalization. It may need to be aggressive. A successful defense, after all, requires a good offense—including in great-power competition. 🌐

# The Taiwan Long Game

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## Why the Best Solution Is No Solution

JUDE BLANCHETTE AND RYAN HASS

**F**or 70 years, China and the United States have managed to avoid disaster over Taiwan. But a consensus is forming in U.S. policy circles that this peace may not last much longer. Many analysts and policymakers now argue that the United States must use all its military power to prepare for war with China in the Taiwan Strait. In October 2022, Mike Gilday, the head of the U.S. Navy, warned that China might be preparing to invade Taiwan before 2024. Members of Congress, including Democratic Representative Seth Moulton and Republican Representative Mike Gallagher, have echoed Gilday's sentiment.

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There are sound rationales for the United States to focus on defending Taiwan. The U.S. military is bound by the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to maintain the capacity to resist the use of force or coercion against Taiwan. Washington also has strong strategic, economic, and moral reasons to stand firm on behalf of the island. As a leading democracy in the heart of Asia, Taiwan sits at the core of global value chains. Its security is a fundamental interest for the United States.

Ultimately, however, Washington faces a strategic problem with a defense component, not a military problem with a military solution. The more the United States narrows its focus to military fixes, the greater the risk to its own interests, as well as to those of its allies and Taiwan itself. War games held in the Pentagon and in Washington think tanks, meanwhile, risk diverting focus from the sharpest near-term threats and challenges that Beijing presents.

The sole metric on which U.S. policy should be judged is whether it helps preserve peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait—not whether it solves the question of Taiwan once and for all or keeps Taiwan permanently in the United States’ camp. Once viewed this way, the real aim becomes clear: to convince leaders in Beijing and Taipei that time is on their side, forestalling conflict. Everything the United States does should be geared toward that goal.

To preserve peace, the United States must understand what drives China’s anxiety, ensure that Chinese President Xi Jinping is not backed into a corner, and convince Beijing that unification belongs to a distant future. It must also develop a more nuanced understanding of Beijing’s current calculus, one that moves beyond the simplistic and inaccurate speculation that Xi is accelerating plans to invade Taiwan. Support for Taiwan should bolster not only the island’s security but also its resilience and prosperity. Assisting Taiwan will also require new U.S. investments in tools that benefit the island beyond the military realm, including a more holistic deterrence strategy to deal with Beijing’s coercive gray-zone tactics. Critics may contend that this approach sidesteps the hard questions at the root of the confrontation, but that is precisely the point: sometimes, the best policy is to avoid bringing intractable challenges to a head and kick the can down the road instead.

#### SEA CHANGE

In the final years of the 1945–49 Chinese Civil War, the losing Nationalists retreated to Taiwan, establishing a mutual defense treaty with the United States in 1954. In 1979, however, Washington severed those

ties so it could normalize relations with Beijing. Since then, the United States has worked to keep the peace in the Taiwan Strait by blocking the two actions that could lead to outright conflict: a declaration of independence by Taipei and forced unification by Beijing. At times, the United States has reined in Taiwan when it feared the island was tacking too close to independence. In 2003, President George W. Bush stood next to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and publicly opposed “comments and actions” proposed by Taipei that the United States saw as destabilizing. At other times, the United States has flexed its military muscle in front of Beijing, as it did during the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis, when U.S. President Bill Clinton sent an aircraft carrier to the waters off Taiwan in response to a series of Chinese missile tests.

Also important to the U.S. approach have been statements of reassurance. To Taiwan, the United States has made a formal commitment under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to “preserve and promote extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations” with Taiwan and to provide the island “arms of a defensive character.” To Beijing, the United States has consistently stated that it does not support Taiwan’s independence, including in its 2022 National Security Strategy. The goal was to create space for Beijing and Taipei to either indefinitely postpone conflict or reach some sort of political resolution.

For decades, this approach worked well, thanks to three factors. First, the United States maintained a big lead over China when it came to military power, which discouraged Beijing from using conventional force to substantially alter cross-strait relations. Second, China was focused primarily on its own economic development and integration into the global economy, allowing the Taiwan issue to stay on the back burner. Third, the United States dexterously dealt with challenges to cross-strait stability, whether they originated in Taipei or Beijing, thereby tamping down any embers that could ignite a conflict.

Over at least the past decade, however, all three of these factors have evolved dramatically. Perhaps the most obvious change is that China’s military has vastly expanded its capabilities, owing to decades of rising investments and reforms. In 1995, as the United States sailed the USS *Nimitz* toward the Taiwan Strait, all the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) could do was watch in indignation. Since then, the power differential between the two militaries has narrowed significantly, especially in the waters off China’s shoreline. Beijing can now easily strike targets in the waters and airspace around Taiwan, hit U.S. aircraft carriers

operating in the region, hobble American assets in space, and threaten U.S. military bases in the western Pacific, including those in Guam and Japan. Because the PLA has little real-world combat experience, its precise effectiveness remains to be seen. Even so, its impressive force-projection capabilities have already given Beijing confidence that in the event of conflict, it could seriously damage the United States' and Taiwan's forces operating around Taiwan.

Alongside China's military upgrades, Beijing is now more willing than ever to tangle with the United States and others in pursuit of its broader ambitions. Xi himself has accumulated greater power than his recent predecessors, and he appears to be more risk-tolerant when it comes to Taiwan.

Finally, the United States has abandoned any pretense of acting as a principled arbiter committed to preserving the status quo and allowing the two sides to come to their own peaceful settlement. The United States' focus has shifted to countering the threat China poses to Taiwan. Reflecting this shift, U.S. President Joe Biden has repeatedly said that the United States would intervene militarily on behalf of Taiwan in a cross-strait conflict.

#### READY, SET, INVADE?

Driving this change in U.S. policy is a growing chorus arguing that Xi has decided to launch an invasion or enforce a blockade of Taiwan in the near future. In 2021, Admiral Philip Davidson, then the head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, predicted that Beijing might move against Taiwan "in the next six years." That same year, the political scientist Oriana Skylar Mastro likewise contended, in *Foreign Affairs*, that "there have been disturbing signals that Beijing is reconsidering its peaceful approach and contemplating armed unification." In August 2022, former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Elbridge Colby wrote, also in *Foreign Affairs*, that the United States must prepare for an imminent war over Taiwan. All these analyses base their judgments on China's expanding military capabilities. But they fail to grapple with the reasons why China has not used force against Taiwan, given that it already outmatches the island in military strength.

For its part, Beijing has stuck to the message that cross-strait relations are moving in the right direction. China's leaders continue to tell their people that time is on their side and that the balance of power is increasingly tilting toward Beijing. In his speech at the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Beijing in October 2022,



Xi declared that “peaceful reunification” remains the “best way to realize reunification across the Taiwan Strait,” and that Beijing has “maintained the initiative and the ability to steer in cross-strait relations.”

Yet at the same time, Beijing believes that the United States has all but abandoned its “one China” policy, in which Washington acknowledges China’s position that there is one China and Taiwan is a part of it. Instead, in the eyes of Beijing, the United States has begun using Taiwan as a tool to weaken and divide China. Taiwan’s internal political trends have amplified China’s anxieties. The historically pro-Beijing Kuomintang Party has been marginalized, while the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party has consolidated power. Meanwhile, public opinion in Taiwan has soured on Beijing’s preferred formula for political reconciliation, the “one country, two systems” policy, in which China rules over Taiwan but allows Taipei some room to govern itself economically and administratively. Taiwan’s public became especially skeptical of the idea beginning in 2020, when Beijing abrogated its promise to provide Hong Kong a “high degree of autonomy” until 2047 by imposing a hard-line national security law. In high-level pronouncements, Beijing has reiterated that “time and momentum” are on its side. But beneath public projections of confidence, China’s leaders likely understand that their “one country, two systems” formula has no purchase in Taiwan and that public opinion trends on the island run against their vision of greater cross-strait integration.

JULIA KUO

Taipei has its own sense of urgency, driven by concerns over Beijing's growing military might and the ongoing worry that U.S. support might diminish if Washington's attention shifts elsewhere or Americans turn against overseas commitments. The new refrain from the administration of Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen—"Ukraine today, Taiwan tomorrow"—is both a genuine reflection of Taipei's worries about Chinese aggression and an attempt to galvanize support that will extend beyond the current geopolitical upheaval. In other words, the one thing that Beijing, Taipei, and Washington seem to agree on is that time is working against them.

This sense of urgency is to some extent grounded in fact. Beijing does have a clear and long-held ambition to annex Taiwan and has openly threatened to use military force if it concludes that the door to peaceful unification has been closed. Beijing's protestations that the United States is no longer adhering to understandings on Taiwan are, in some cases, accurate. And for its part, Taipei is right to worry that Beijing is laying the groundwork to suffocate or seize Taiwan. But American anxieties have been intensified by sloppy analysis, including assertions that China could take advantage of the United States' distraction in Ukraine to seize Taiwan by force or that China is operating along a fixed timeline toward military conquest. The first of these examples has been disproved by reality. The second reflects a misreading of China's strategy.

In fact, there is no conclusive evidence that China is operating on a fixed timeline to seize Taiwan, and the heightened worry in Washington is driven primarily by China's growing military capabilities rather than any indication that Xi is preparing to attack the island. According to Bill Burns, the director of the CIA, Xi has instructed his military to be prepared for conflict by 2027, and he has declared that progress on unification with Taiwan is a requirement for fulfilling the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," for which he set 2049 as the target date. But any timeline that has a target date nearly three decades in the future is little more than aspirational. Xi, like leaders everywhere, would prefer to preserve his freedom of action on matters of war and peace and not lock himself into plans from which he cannot escape. China's leadership appears to be spending profligately to secure the option of a military solution to the Taiwan problem, and the United States and Taiwan must not be complacent. By the same token, however, it would be wrong to conclude that the future is foretold and that conflict is inescapable.

Fixating on invasion scenarios pushes U.S. policymakers to develop solutions to the wrong near-term threats. Defense officials prefer to prepare



for blockades and invasions because such scenarios line up most favorably with American capabilities and are the easiest to conceptualize and plan for. Yet it is worth recalling that Chinese leaders in the past have chosen options other than military occupation to achieve their objectives, such as building artificial islands in the South China Sea and using lawfare in Hong Kong. Indeed, Taiwan has been defending itself against a wide variety of Chinese gray-zone attacks for years, including cyberattacks, meddling in Taiwan's electoral politics, and military exercises meant to undermine the island's

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## The United States must avoid backing China into a corner.

confidence in its own defenses and the credibility of U.S. support. China's response to U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's August 2022 visit to Taiwan underlines China's efforts to erode Taiwan's psychological confidence in its self-defense. After the visit, Beijing lobbed missiles over Taiwan for the first time, conducted unprecedented air operations across the Taiwan

Strait median line, and simulated a blockade of Taiwan's main ports.

Although the military threat against Taiwan is real, it is not the only—or most proximate—challenge the island faces. By focusing narrowly on military problems at the expense of other threats to Taiwan, the United States risks making two serious mistakes: first, overcompensating in ways that do more to escalate tensions than deter conflict; and second, losing sight of broader strategic problems that it is more likely to confront. Beijing is already choking Taiwan's links to the rest of the world and attempting to persuade the people of Taiwan that their only option for avoiding devastation is to sue for peace on Beijing's terms. This is not a future hypothetical. It is already an everyday reality. And by hyping the threat of a Chinese invasion, U.S. analysts and officials are unintentionally doing the ccr's work for it by stoking fears in Taiwan. They are also sending signals to global companies and investors that operating in and around Taiwan brings with it a high risk of being caught in a military conflict.

Another mistake is to presume conflict is unavoidable. By doing so, the United States and Taiwan bind themselves to preparing in every way possible for the impending conflict, precipitating the very outcomes they seek to prevent. If the United States backs China into a corner, for example, by permanently stationing military personnel on Taiwan or making another formal mutual defense commitment with Taipei, Chinese leaders might feel the weight of nationalist pressure and take drastic actions that could devastate the island.

Moreover, unilaterally risking a war with the United States over Taiwan would not mesh with Xi's grand strategy. His vision is to restore China as a leading power on the world stage and to transform China into, as he puts it, a "modern socialist nation." The imperatives of seizing Taiwan on the one hand and asserting global leadership on the other are thus in direct tension. Any conflict over Taiwan would be catastrophic for China's future. If Beijing moves militarily on Taiwan, it will alert the rest of the region to China's comfort with waging war to achieve its objectives, likely triggering other Asian countries to arm and cohere to prevent Chinese domination. Invading Taiwan would also jeopardize Beijing's access to global finance, data, and markets—ruinous for a country dependent on imports of oil, food, and semiconductors.

Even assuming Beijing could successfully invade and hold Taiwan, China would then face countless problems. Taiwan's economy would be in tatters, including its globally invaluable semiconductor industry. Untold civilians would be dead or injured, and those who survived the initial conflict would be violently hostile to the invading military power. Beijing would likely face unprecedented diplomatic blowback and sanctions. Conflict just off China's eastern shoreline would incapacitate one of the world's busiest maritime corridors, bringing with it disastrous consequences for China's own export-driven economy. And of course, by invading Taiwan, China would be inviting military engagement with the United States and perhaps other regional powers, including Japan. This would be the very definition of a Pyrrhic victory.

These realities deter China from actively considering an invasion. Xi, like all his predecessors, wants to be the leader who finally annexes Taiwan. But for more than 70 years, Beijing has concluded that the cost of an invasion remains too high, and this explains why China has instead relied largely on economic inducements, and more recently, gray-zone coercions. Far from having a well-thought-out plan to achieve unification, Beijing is, in fact, stuck in a strategic cul-de-sac. After Beijing trampled on Hong Kong's autonomy, no one can believe that China will solve the crisis in the strait through a policy of "one country, two systems." China's hope that the gravitational pull of its economy would be enough to bring Taipei to the negotiating table has likewise been dashed, a victim of both Taiwan's economic success and Xi's economic mismanagement.

An invasion of Taiwan doesn't solve any of these problems. Xi would risk it only if he believed that he had no other options. And there are no signs that he is anywhere close to drawing such a conclusion.

The United States should try to keep it this way. None of Xi's speeches resemble the menacing ones that Russian President Vladimir Putin gave in the run-up to his invasion of Ukraine. It is impossible to rule out the chance that Xi might miscalculate or blunder into a conflict. But his statements and behavior do not indicate that he would act so recklessly.

#### HOLD YOUR FORCES

Even if Xi is not yet considering forced unification, the United States must still project sure-footedness in its ability to protect its interests in the Taiwan Strait. Meanwhile, military decisions must not be allowed to define the United States' overall approach, as many analysts and policymakers are effectively suggesting they should. The inescapable reality is that no additional increment of U.S. military power that is deployable in the next five years will fundamentally alter the military balance. The United States must rely on statecraft and a broader array of tools to make clear to Beijing the high price of using force to compel unification.

The ultimate goal of a sustainable Taiwan policy should be to preserve peace and stability, with a focus on elongating Beijing's time horizon such that it sees unification as a "some day" scenario. The United States must especially avoid backing Xi into a corner, preventing a situation in which he no longer treats Taiwan as a long-term objective but as an impending crisis. This different approach would entail an uncomfortable shift in mindset for many analysts and policymakers, who see the United States and China as locked in an inevitable showdown and view any consideration of Beijing's sensitivities to be a dangerous concession.

This is not to say that the goal of U.S. policy should be to avoid angering Beijing. There is no evidence that diminished U.S. support for Taiwan would reduce China's eagerness to absorb the island, which is elemental to the founding narrative of the ccp. But this reality means that the United States should bolster Taiwan's prosperity, security, and resilience in ways that don't gratuitously antagonize its powerful neighbor ruled by an increasingly nationalistic leader.

U.S. support should be dedicated to fortifying Taiwan's capacity to withstand the full range of pressures the island already contends with from China: cyber, economic, informational, diplomatic, and military. But critically, the United States must be disciplined in declining Taiwan's requests to provide symbols of sovereignty, such

as renaming Taiwan's diplomatic office in the United States, which would aggravate Beijing without improving security in the Taiwan Strait. Similarly, congressional delegations should be geared toward advancing specific objectives to ensure that benefits exceed costs. The United States should channel its support for Taiwan into areas that concretely address vulnerabilities, such as by helping Taiwan diversify trade flows, acquire asymmetric defensive weapons systems, and stockpile food, fuel, medicine, and munitions that it would need in a crisis. It is a comforting illusion that the solution to cross-strait tensions lies in simply strengthening the military capabilities of Taiwan and the United States such that Beijing decides that it must stand aside and let Taiwan go its own way. In reality, Beijing would not sit idly by as the defense capabilities of the United States and Taiwan grow ever stronger. Indeed, the demonstration of U.S. naval power during the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis had the unintended consequence of provoking a wave of new PLA investments that have eroded U.S. military dominance. Current efforts by Taipei or Washington to prepare for military conflict should account for the PLA's predictable reaction.

Any approach to maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait must begin with understanding how deeply political the issue of Taiwan is for China. It is noteworthy that the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis and the recent spike in tensions over Pelosi's visit to Taiwan were driven by issues of high political visibility—not by U.S. arms sales to Taiwan or efforts to back Taipei in international organizations or initiatives to strengthen bilateral economic ties. The lesson is that the United States has more room to concretely support Taiwan when it focuses on substance rather than publicly undercutting Beijing's core domestic narrative that China is making progress toward unification. Chinese authorities will inevitably grumble about quieter efforts, such as expanding defense dialogues between the United States and Taiwan, but these remain below the threshold of public embarrassment for Beijing.

Accordingly, U.S. actions should both meaningfully support Taiwan and give Xi domestic space to proclaim that a path remains open to eventual unification. Examples of such efforts include deepening coordination between the United States and Taiwan on supply

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On Taiwan, the United States should do more and say less.

chain resilience, diversifying Taiwan's trade through negotiation of a bilateral trade agreement, strengthening public health coordination, making more asymmetric defensive weapons available to Taiwan, and pooling resources to accelerate innovations on emerging technologies such as quantum computing and artificial intelligence applications. All such efforts would strengthen Taiwan's capacity to provide for the health, safety, and prosperity of its people without publicly challenging Beijing's narrative of eventual unification.

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The very idea that  
“strategic clarity” is  
“clear” is a myth.

In addition, the United States must back its policy with a credible military posture in the Indo-Pacific, placing greater emphasis on small, dispersed weapons systems in the region and making larger investments in long-range antisurface and antiship missile systems. Such investments could bolster the

United States' ability to deny China opportunities to secure quick military gains on Taiwan. And if the United States sends weapons in a low-key manner, it will frustrate Beijing but leave little room for China to justify the use of force as an appropriate response. In other words, the United States should do more and say less.

The United States should also resist viewing the Taiwan problem as a contest between authoritarianism and democracy, as some officials in Taipei have urged. Such a framework is understandable, especially in the wake of Russia's disastrous invasion of Ukraine. It is easier to convince Americans of the value of a safe and prosperous Taiwan when contrasting its liberal democratic identity with Beijing's deepening autocratic slide. Yet this approach misdiagnoses the problem. The growing challenge to maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait stems not from the nature of China's political system—which has always been deeply illiberal and unapologetically Leninist—but from its increasing ability to project power, combined with the consolidation of power around Xi.

Perhaps more troubling, this approach boxes Washington in. If the United States paints cross-strait relations with bright ideological lines, it will hinder U.S. policymakers in making nuanced choices in gray areas. As American game theorist Thomas Schelling demonstrated, deterring an adversary requires a blend of credible threats and credible assurances. The assurance requires convincing Beijing that if it refrains from using force, then the United States will hold



off on supporting Taiwan's independence. When U.S. policy on Taiwan becomes infused with ideology, the credibility of American assurances diminishes, and the United States' willingness to offer assurances to China becomes proscribed. Taking Beijing's concerns into consideration may not fit the hawkish *Zeitgeist* in Washington, but this type of strategic empathy is imperative for anticipating an opponent's calculus and decision-making.

Framing tensions as an ideological struggle risks backing China into a corner, too, because it feeds Beijing's anxieties that the United States will stand in permanent opposition to any type of resolution to the Taiwan problem. This, in turn, might lead Beijing to conclude that its only choice is to exploit its military strength to override the United States' opposition and forcibly subsume the island, even at significant economic and political cost. Any Chinese leader would consider Taiwan's escape from China's grasp an existential loss. Biden's comments in September 2022 that the United States would come to Taiwan's defense if China were to launch an "unprecedented attack" have again sharpened the debate on whether U.S. policy is shifting toward a clearer articulation of when and how it would intervene on Taiwan's behalf. Yet this debate over "strategic clarity" is a distraction. For one thing, the Chinese military already assumes that the United States would intervene if China were to launch an all-out invasion, so from Beijing's perspective, U.S. involvement is already factored into military plans. Moreover, in the absence of a mutual defense treaty between the United States and Taiwan, which is not on the table, there is no binding requirement for Washington to intervene, even if a president has suggested that it should do so. What's more, an outright and unprovoked invasion by the PLA is the least likely scenario the United States will encounter, and so the way in which the United States responds to Beijing's aggression would inevitably depend on the specific circumstances of a Chinese attack. In this sense, the very idea that "strategic clarity" is "clear" is a myth.

More important than rehashing a decades-old debate over strategic clarity is to focus on how the United States' "one China" policy should be adapted to meet the new and pressing challenges presented by a vastly more powerful and aggressive China. Simply stating that U.S. policy has not shifted, as the White House did following Biden's remarks, rings hollow to Beijing and to any honest observer of U.S. policy over the past six years.

BALANCING ACT

Rather than perpetuate the fiction of constancy, the United States should tell the truth: its decisions are guided by a determination to keep the peace in the Taiwan Strait, and if Beijing intensifies pressure on Taipei, Washington will adjust its posture accordingly. And the United States should pledge that it will do the same if Taiwan pursues symbolic steps that erode cross-strait conditions. Such an approach would recognize that the status quo in the Taiwan Strait is dynamic, not fixed. It would recognize Beijing's agency in either sustaining or undermining peace. Washington should make it clear that if Beijing or Taipei upsets stability in the strait, it would seek to reestablish the equilibrium. But for such an approach to work, the actions and intentions of the United States must be clear, and its commitment to this equilibrium must be credible.

The United States should be firm and consistent in declaring that it will accept any resolution to cross-strait tensions that is reached peacefully and in accordance with the views of Taiwan's people. If Xi wants to find a peaceful path to unification, which he and other Chinese leaders still stress is their preference, then he must sell this option to Taiwan's public. The truth is that such a reconciliation may not come for decades, if ever. But it is nonetheless worth pursuing a peace that allows Taiwan to grow and prosper in a stable regional environment, even if such a goal does not have the sense of finality that many American analysts and policymakers crave.

After half a decade of deterioration, the U.S.-Chinese relationship stands at the edge of crisis. Bilateral frictions have moved from trade to technology and, now, to the threat of direct military confrontation. To be sure, Beijing's threats toward Taiwan are the fundamental cause of the tensions across the strait. But this blunt fact only serves to highlight just how vital it is for the United States to act with foresight, resolve, and dexterity. A direct confrontation between the United States and China would wreak devastation for generations. Success will be measured by each day that the people of Taiwan continue to live in safety and prosperity and enjoy political autonomy. The fundamental objectives of American efforts must be to preserve peace and stability, strengthen Taiwan's confidence in its future, and credibly demonstrate to Beijing that now is not the time to force a violent confrontation. Achieving these objectives requires elongating timelines, not bringing an intractable challenge to a head. Wise statecraft, more than military strength, offers the best path to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. 🌐

# The Kingdom and the Power

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## How to Salvage the U.S.-Saudi Relationship

F. GREGORY GAUSE III

**I**n October 2022, Saudi Arabia announced that OPEC+, a group of oil-exporting countries, would cut oil production targets substantially: by two million barrels per day. As the world's top exporter of oil, the Saudis have always taken the lead in the group's efforts to manage the world oil market. The move had an immediate if relatively modest impact on oil prices, which rose from a low for the year of around \$76 per barrel before the announcement to a range of about \$82 to \$91 by mid-November. The shock felt by Americans was more geopolitical than economic: the Biden administration had asked Saudi Arabia to delay the cut. But Riyadh went ahead with it anyway, snubbing Washington.

The resulting recriminations between Washington and Riyadh have called into question the future of the bilateral relationship. In response to the OPEC+ decision, the Biden administration announced that it

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would reevaluate its relationship with Saudi Arabia and said the cuts “would increase Russian revenues and blunt the effectiveness of sanctions” introduced in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Robert Menendez, a Democratic senator from New Jersey, vowed to block arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Several members of Congress introduced a bill mandating the removal of U.S. troops from the kingdom. Riyadh refused to backtrack, saying the OPEC+ decision was unanimous and based “purely on economic reasons.”

In the intervening months, tempers on both sides have cooled, and it seems unlikely that the Biden administration’s promised reevaluation of ties with Saudi Arabia will lead to a major change. U.S.-Saudi relations have weathered worse crises. And in November 2022, the Biden administration granted sovereign immunity to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MBS, on the basis of his role as Saudi Arabia’s prime minister, in a U.S. civil case brought against him by the fiancée of Jamal Khashoggi, a journalist murdered at the hands of Saudi operatives. The immunity is one sign, among many others, that the U.S.-Saudi relationship is not headed for rupture. But the OPEC+ imbroglio and its aftermath signal the arrival of a new phase in the relationship. For the first time since the mid-twentieth century, when the relationship began, Riyadh is not on board with Washington’s grand strategy.

Analysts and observers of U.S.-Saudi affairs tend to focus on individuals and their agendas. MBS is headstrong and authoritarian, seeking to remake Saudi Arabia’s economy and elevate his country’s role as an independent global player. U.S. President Joe Biden, by contrast, has a more cautious style and wants to make democracy a centerpiece of his foreign policy, rallying the world against Russia and China. This gap between the two men’s personalities and goals is no doubt important in shaping their countries’ relations. But to paraphrase Karl Marx in one of his more lucid moments, individuals make history, but not necessarily in any way they choose. The OPEC+ controversy points to three important changes in the bilateral relationship that go beyond personalities and will have more lasting consequences than the actions and reactions of any decision-makers.

First, the global balance of power has shifted. Washington’s relative influence is waning as the international order becomes multipolar, making moderately powerful countries such as Saudi Arabia more likely to hedge their bets and less likely to throw in their lot with just one great power. Second, as climate change pushes the world away from fossil fuels,

Saudi Arabia is under pressure to cash in on its oil reserves while it still can—a sense of urgency that is coloring its approach to production and pricing. Third, like almost every issue of significance in American politics, the question of U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia has become intensely polarized along partisan lines in the United States, in no small part because the Saudis themselves have made their preference for Republicans clear.

The grand strategic overlap that for decades defined the U.S.-Saudi relationship no longer exists. But the prospects for cooperation on a relatively narrow set of regional and economic issues remain good, if both sides understand these shifts so they can reach a more realistic set of mutual expectations.

#### BLOWING HOT AND COLD

Saudi Arabia became important to the United States after World War II, a conflict that highlighted the central role that oil would play in modern military strategy and economic development. Since then, the world has experienced three periods in the distribution of global power. In the first, the Cold War, Saudi Arabia had little choice but to support the United States' geopolitical goals. After all, it could not rely on security and economic assistance from the Soviet Union, which backed many of Riyadh's regional rivals and espoused a revolutionary communist ideology antithetical to the conservative Islamic basis of Saudi rule. At the time, decisions about Saudi oil production remained in the hands of the American oil companies that developed the Saudi oil industry in the 1950s and 1960s. Riyadh did not have the power to deal with Moscow on questions of oil, even if it wanted to.

The United States and Saudi Arabia were also an ideological odd couple. Shared enemies and complementary economic needs made them partners by default; common interests substituted for common values. The one exception to their alignment was the Arab-Israeli conflict. Their divergence on that issue led to the biggest crisis in the bilateral relationship's history: the oil embargo of 1973–74, when in response to U.S. support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War, Saudi Arabia and five other Arab countries briefly reduced the production of oil and stopped shipping it to the United States. The disruption led to panic buying, a quadrupling of oil prices, and a profound shift in power relations within the oil market. Producer countries such as Saudi Arabia now called the shots; the American companies that had run the Saudi oil industry became the junior partners and service providers to the Saudi government.



Saudi policy directly damaged the American economy, and Washington threatened military intervention. The crisis was quickly averted after American diplomacy ended the war and led negotiations that culminated in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979. Washington and Riyadh's common strategic goals in the Cold War, including minimizing Soviet influence in the Middle East, helped to heal the breach between the two capitals. In the years that followed, as oil became an ever more salient issue for U.S. policymakers, maintaining good relations with the Saudis became an increasingly important bipartisan goal. Cooperation grew during the 1980s, as the two countries jointly aided the Afghans and foreign fighters resisting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and reached its peak during the Gulf War of 1990–91, which coincided with the end of the Cold War and demonstrated the utility of the bilateral relationship to both sides.

The second period was that of U.S. unipolarity, which stretched from the collapse of the Soviet Union to sometime in the 2010s. In this era, the United States was the only option for countries such as Saudi Arabia that sought to partner with a great power. During this period, another great crisis occurred: the 9/11 attacks, which were planned by Osama bin Laden, a scion of one of Saudi Arabia's wealthiest families, and perpetrated by 15 Saudis (out of a total of 19 hijackers). Since al Qaeda targeted the Saudi ruling family as well as the United States, however, the two countries once again found that a common enemy could bring them together. During the subsequent "war on terror," U.S. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama both nurtured close intelligence relations with Saudi Arabia. Washington was the only game in town, and Riyadh backed U.S. initiatives even when the kingdom publicly questioned their wisdom, most notably during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The end of the Cold War and the dawn of Pax Americana were relatively sudden and involved a series of dramatic events. The end of the unipolar moment, by contrast, took place gradually. Yet by 2020, the squandering of U.S. assets and credibility in Iraq and Afghanistan, the growth of dysfunction and polarization in American domestic politics, the rise of China, and Russia's attempted comeback as a great power had all combined to create a new international balance of forces. Unlike in the two previous periods, in the third, no common enemy cements U.S.-Saudi relations. The Biden administration seeks to rally international coalitions against Russia and China, but Saudi Arabia sees neither of those great powers as enemies. China is now its largest



Out of step: Biden and MBS, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, July 2022

oil customer and trade partner. Trade between Saudi Arabia and China increased from less than \$500 million in 1990 to \$87 billion in 2021. That same year, the value of Saudi exports to China, overwhelmingly oil and petroleum products, was more than three times greater than Saudi exports to the United States and nearly double those to India and Japan, the second and third largest Saudi export targets. Russia is Saudi Arabia's necessary (although occasionally difficult) partner in the management of the world oil market. OPEC+ countries produce roughly 40 million barrels of oil per day; Saudi Arabia and Russia combined account for over half that number. Only if Moscow and Riyadh are on the same page can OPEC+ decisions have an impact on the market.

For all those reasons, when Saudi leaders survey the geopolitical landscape, the picture they see differs markedly from the one their American counterparts see. For Washington elites that had become accustomed to almost guaranteed Saudi support for the United States, this new reality is a shock, which is why some politicians reacted hysterically to the OPEC+ decision. These reactions are not merely about oil prices in the run-up to a midterm election. Saudi Arabia and the United States have disagreed plenty in the past about oil prices. The difference this time around is the geopolitical context—especially the war in Ukraine, which the Biden administration has defined as a

historic inflection point that will determine the future of world order. For Saudi Arabia, as for many other countries, including India and Israel, it is simply a regional war.

Meanwhile, the Saudis have their own complaints. The past three U.S. presidents have campaigned on the premise that the United States needs to spend less time and effort on the Middle East. This is not comforting to a Saudi regime that sees Iran, which has expanded its influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, as a serious regional threat. The stated purpose of the United States' focus on the Persian Gulf region for the past 70 years has been to protect the free flow of oil. But when Iran launched a missile and drone attack on Saudi oil facilities in September 2019—the most serious assault on the free flow of oil since the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein set Kuwait's oil fields on fire in 1991—the Trump administration did nothing, despite the close relations it had fostered with Riyadh.

The kingdom is no longer an automatic partner to the United States. The cozy strategic relationship of earlier eras isn't coming back. But more limited cooperation is possible, even if domestic politics on both sides continue to present difficulties.

#### LIKE OIL AND WATER

Although Saudi Arabia always prefers higher oil prices than U.S. presidents would like, the kingdom used to occasionally accede to Washington's requests to increase supply and get more oil on the market, normally in the run-up to U.S. elections. But in October 2022, Washington's pleas went unheeded.

From Riyadh's perspective, the kingdom must exploit its last chance to cash in before the oil era ends. That is the assumption behind the crown prince's ambitious Vision 2030 economic restructuring plan—to create a more diversified Saudi economy before the world market for oil craters under the pressure of climate change, the move to alternative fuels, and other technological changes. That will not happen for years. But the crown prince needs all the leverage he can get to invest in non-oil sectors of the Saudi economy and to buffer his population from the painful consequences of necessary reforms, such as the reduction of substantial subsidies for public utilities, including water and electricity, and the introduction of a 15 percent value-added tax on consumer purchases.

That explains why Saudi oil policy is aimed at maintaining prices at a level that can fund MBS's ambitious plans and still sustain a steady level of global demand. Those imperatives will not always match up

with the United States' electoral calendar. With less overlap between Washington's grand strategy and Riyadh's foreign policy concerns, the Saudi leadership is less likely than in the past to do U.S. presidents any electoral favors when it comes to oil.

If the important changes affecting the bilateral relationship on the Saudi side are about political economy, the domestic American changes are about partisan politics. U.S.-Saudi ties, like so many other issues, have been drawn into the vortex of the partisan polarization of U.S. politics. In the past, relations with Saudi Arabia had little support among the general public, but whoever was in the White House wanted to have good relations with the world's largest oil exporter. That began to change during the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Trump made no secret of his affection for the Saudis, and MBS in particular. In an unprecedented step, he made Riyadh the first foreign capital he visited. He bragged about, and exaggerated, the arms sales he negotiated with the kingdom. In a risky move, Trump publicly hinted his support of MBS as the prince outmaneuvered his cousin Mohammad bin Nayef, the main interlocutor of previous U.S. administrations, and removed him from power in 2017. Historically, U.S. presidents have not publicly involved themselves, even indirectly, in palace politics. Trump equivocated about MBS's complicity in the murder of Khashoggi, even in the face of substantial evidence that the crime was carried out at the crown prince's direction. ("It could very well be that the crown prince had knowledge of this tragic event—maybe he did and maybe he didn't," Trump said.) Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, developed a direct relationship, outside normal diplomatic channels, with the crown prince. After leaving office, Kushner and Steven Mnuchin, who served as treasury secretary under Trump, both received substantial investments from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund for their private equity ventures. And this past November, Trump's company agreed to license the Trump name to a multibillion-dollar luxury housing and golf complex being developed in Oman by a major Saudi real estate firm.

To the Democratic foreign policy establishment, it seemed as if the Saudis had chosen sides, and its stance tracked accordingly. The Khashoggi killing and Saudi involvement in Yemen's civil war

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came under steady Democratic criticism. During the campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, Biden called Saudi Arabia “a pariah.” This was shockingly harsh language from a former U.S. vice president and senator who had dealt with the Saudis for decades and had always been a reliable indicator of conventional wisdom on foreign policy within the Democratic Party.

When the Biden administration came into office, it put into practice the disdain for Saudi Arabia the president had expressed during the campaign. Biden refused to speak with the crown prince and authorized the release of a CIA report that held him responsible for Khashoggi’s death. Washington limited its support for the Saudi war effort in Yemen and withdrew Patriot antiaircraft missiles from the kingdom, even as Saudi Arabia faced missile attacks from the Houthis in Yemen.

The war in Ukraine and the subsequent surge in oil prices caused the administration to reconsider. Isolating the Saudis was feasible during the drop in world oil demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. But when the United States tried to cut off Russian oil exports as the world economy and oil demand began to recover, Washington needed Saudi Arabia. Riyadh was one of the few actors that could pump more oil immediately. Yet Biden’s trip to Saudi Arabia accomplished little and generated even more bad feelings. The Saudis resented the U.S. contention that Biden had come not to meet the crown prince but rather to attend a multilateral meeting with the Gulf Cooperation Council states. The two sides feuded in public over whether Biden brought up the Khashoggi case during a private conversation with MBS; Biden said he had, and the Saudis said he had not. A meeting meant to smooth relations only ruffled them further.

Biden has handled the relationship clumsily, but the Saudis are hardly without fault. The murder of Khashoggi was, of course, an unforgivable crime. And the Saudis were far too public in their embrace of Trump, from their lavish welcome at the outset of his presidency to their participation in his and his family’s business ventures since his 2020 defeat. In the end, Trump did not even act to defend the kingdom when Iran attacked Saudi oil facilities in 2019. Even so, the Saudi leadership seems to have concluded that it cannot get a fair hearing from Democrats and can only hope that Republicans return to power. When the Saudis rebuffed the Biden administration’s request to delay the OPEC+ production cut until after the midterm elections, it strengthened the sense that Riyadh did not want to do Democrats any favors.



The United States' relationships with foreign countries cannot be sustained by only one party. Such partisan polarization poses the greatest threat to the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

#### MENDING FENCES

For those who believe that U.S. foreign policy should privilege human rights and shun fossil fuels, the fraying U.S.-Saudi relationship poses no problem. But even the Biden administration, which entered office happy to distance itself from Riyadh, quickly came around to the need for a working relationship with the world's largest oil exporter. No matter how committed the United States is to adopting clean energy, oil will be needed during the transition. No matter how badly Americans want to pivot away from the Middle East, Washington has geopolitical commitments in the region that draw the United States back in: keeping Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, preventing a resurgence of jihadism, maintaining regional stability to reduce refugee pressures on Europe, and sustaining the relationship with Israel. If oil and the Middle East remain even marginally important for U.S. interests, a working relationship with Saudi Arabia is necessary.

Step one in sustaining such a relationship is to recognize how it has changed. The days when Saudi Arabia would automatically side with the United States on grand strategic issues are gone; for the Saudis, China and Russia now loom larger than ever. That does not mean that Riyadh will work against the United States at the global level. It just means that the Saudis will consider issues case by case. That will require the United States to take an open and consultative approach, maintaining channels of communication to convince the Saudis of common interests on global issues. Keeping Riyadh at arm's length is not the way to keep it on Washington's side.

On the big issues in the Middle East, Washington and Riyadh are not that far apart. The traditional stumbling block, the close U.S.-Israeli relationship, is no longer an obstacle, thanks to warming Saudi-Israeli relations. The Saudis are increasingly willing to work with Israel, even if they are not yet ready to follow Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates into the so-called Abraham Accords, through which those countries have normalized their relations with Israel.

Another point of tension with Riyadh that suddenly seems less salient is Washington's effort to curtail Iran's nuclear activities through diplomacy, which the Saudis worried would entail concessions to Iran

that would solidify Tehran's regional influence. It seems likely that efforts to revive the Iran nuclear deal, which Trump pulled out of in 2018, will fail. Washington will inevitably have to find a new policy to deter or prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons while also limiting or rolling back Iranian influence in the region. Saudi Arabia has the same interest.

Although terrorism is not at the top of the agenda today, the United States still has an interest in preventing a resurgence of Salafi jihadism, extremism fueled by a revolutionary and violent interpretation of Islam, as represented by al Qaeda, the Islamic State (also known as ISIS), and other groups. Under MBS, Saudi Arabia has not only opposed those groups in the region but has also reduced the influence of the Salafi religious establishment in the kingdom.

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Democrats should  
not isolate MBS or  
work around him.

When Saudi Arabia encourages a more tolerant and open interpretation of Islam, it undercuts the appeal of Salafi jihadism.

Despite their differences over oil prices, the two countries' economic interests still overlap in important ways. They share an interest in maintaining the dominance of the U.S. dollar. Riyadh prices its oil in dollars, which buttresses the dollar's role as the world's reserve currency because oil consumers must have dollars on hand to fund their energy needs. Unfriendly oil producers such as Iran, Venezuela, and Russia occasionally push to conduct transactions in alternative currencies. Saudi Arabia has always resisted such overtures, because anything that damages the dollar's centrality reduces the value of Saudi Arabia's dollar-denominated assets, which is significant given the volume of Saudi financial assets in U.S. markets, including substantial holdings of U.S. government debt, and investments in U.S. companies.

Finally, it is in the interest of both the United States and Saudi Arabia to continue to cooperate on military and intelligence issues. For Saudi Arabia, neither China nor Russia can provide the level of security cooperation that the United States can. Only Washington can project substantial military power into the Persian Gulf region, as demonstrated during the Gulf War of 1990–91. And the United States benefits from cooperation, too. Saudi arms purchases reduce the unit costs of U.S. arms production and link the two states' militaries, fostering long-term partnership. With the likely failure of the nuclear talks with Tehran, the chance of a confrontation between

the United States and Iran grows. Cooperation with Saudi Arabia on military contingencies increases the military efficiency of the United States in the region, thereby deterring Iran.

Little can be done to reverse the shift in the global balance of power or to ease the pressure Riyadh feels to cash in on oil. But both the United States and Saudi Arabia can bolster bilateral ties if each side reconsiders how it views the other's domestic politics. The Saudis must jettison the self-defeating belief that one of the United States' political parties is against them and the other is for them. Efforts to influence U.S. politics in favor of one party are bound to fail in the long-term since in a two-party system, the out party always eventually becomes the governing one. Riyadh needs to make a major effort to convince Washington's Democratic establishment that it seeks good relations with the United States, and not just with Republicans. That means, as a beginning, resisting the siren calls of Trump world to assist in its 2024 restoration, either through indirect financial support or policy moves aimed at weakening the Biden administration. It also means that Saudi Arabia should make overtures to the kingdom's Democratic critics in Washington. Their minds might not be changed, but their fears about Saudi interference in U.S. domestic politics could be assuaged.

On the U.S. side, Democrats should accept the fact that MBS will very likely be the next king of Saudi Arabia and will rule for a long time. It makes no sense to try to isolate him or work around him. This might be distasteful for advocates of human rights, but if U.S. diplomats and officials can deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and many other governments that violate the human rights of their citizens and others, they can certainly meet with MBS.

Indeed, in the new global configuration, Washington will have to meet with Riyadh more often, convincing the kingdom to see things its way. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has visited Saudi Arabia only once, during Biden's July 2022 trip to the kingdom. The Saudi-American Strategic Dialogue has not been held for two years. Saudis notice these things.

The elements of continued cooperation between the United States and Saudi Arabia are still in place. But the two countries must set aside their unrealistic dreams of changing or influencing the other's domestic politics. Both sides must learn to deal with the other side as it is—not as they wish it to be. 🌐

# Inevitable Outbreaks

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## How to Stop an Age of Spillovers From Becoming an Age of Pandemics

LARRY BRILLIANT, MARK SMOLINSKI,  
LISA DANZIG, AND W. IAN LIPKIN

**I**n 1918, the world was struck by the Great Influenza, which killed between 25 and 100 million people over three years. The pandemic took people in the prime of their lives, with most victims between the ages of 20 and 40. In the United States, where about 675,000 died, some have estimated that it was responsible for shortening life expectancy by up to 12 years. Despite the havoc wreaked by the Great Influenza, it didn't take long for people to move on and for memories to fade. Americans especially came to think of such events as things of the past—relics from the time of tenement living and premodern medicine.

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Over the rest of the twentieth century, the United States skirted the worst ravages of other pandemics. The 1957–58 Asian flu, the 1968 Hong Kong flu, and the 1977 Russian flu all left the country relatively unscathed. When the first American case of HIV/AIDS was reported in 1981, the disease was cruelly dismissed by many as only a “gay plague,” even as it went on to kill some 675,000 people of all identities in the United States. Americans also felt safe from and largely avoided the worst of the outbreaks of SARS in 2002–4, the swine flu in 2009, and MERS in 2012.

COVID-19 shocked the entire world out of its complacency. Hardly anyone could claim that their lives had not been disrupted in some way as the pandemic overwhelmed hospitals, shut down schools and cities, sealed off borders, brought economies to a standstill, and, of course, killed so many people—in the United States, so far, twice as many as the Great Influenza. As of September 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recorded 6.5 million deaths from COVID-19, but the true toll may be two or three times that number. In a perverse way, however, the scale of the pandemic has invited a sense of resignation and wishful thinking—surely, humanity has earned another long reprieve from such horror. And the timing of the pandemic, coming as it did almost exactly 100 years after the 1918 pandemic, brought comparisons to a “100-year flood.” This actuarial term suggests a one percent chance of disaster in any given year, but it is often incorrectly thought to mean that surviving one such event buys 100 years of safety. After all the death and disruption that COVID-19 has brought about, people naturally want to believe that this outbreak was a once-in-a-century event.

Sadly, the real anomaly was not this pandemic; it was the preceding 100 years of relative calm. All the while, the risk of pandemics had been steadily rising. The causes are numerous, including population growth, urbanization, greater consumption of meat, and increasing proximity to wildlife. Taken together, these factors increase the risk of animal viruses spilling over to humans. Once novel viruses infect people, other factors make it more likely that they will quickly spread far beyond their origins. With the rise of long-distance travel, a pathogen can now transit the globe in hours, and the growth of mass gatherings—from the Olympics to Oktoberfest in Germany to the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia—increases the odds of super-spreader events that can infect large numbers of people at one time. A hundred years ago, a farmer who contracted bird flu while butchering his chickens likely lived a rural life and thus would probably infect only his family or village. Today, that farmer may well work

in an industrial slaughterhouse near a large city, easily board an airplane, and make it halfway across the world before feeling any symptoms.

Population growth in both animals and humans, industrialization, urbanization, and modernization have raised the risk that diseases will jump to humans and spread. But modern advances have also given the world new tools to prevent, track, and contain infections, allowing us to stop spillover from turning into global chaos.

In other words, spillover and outbreaks are inevitable, but pandemics are not. Humanity's greatest task now, therefore, is to do everything possible to sever the link between the former and the latter. It is a task made easier than ever by modern science, yet also one that requires crucial elements sorely lacking in the age of COVID-19—speed, cooperation, and trust. Without overcoming these deficits, the chain will remain unbroken.

#### SPILOVER HAPPENS

It is hard to say how many viruses are circulating among animals, but the number is staggering—by one estimate, there are more than 300,000 animal viruses that scientists have yet to characterize. Roughly every minute, somewhere on earth, an animal virus spreads to a human, an event known as a “zoonotic jump.” Maybe it’s a farmer in rural America who catches a new type of swine flu from his pig farm. Maybe it’s a bushmeat hunter in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who contracts a monkeypox variant while handling a chimpanzee. Or maybe it’s a shopper browsing a wildlife market in a Chinese city who picks up a novel coronavirus.

In most cases, the story ends there, with the person at the receiving end of spillover never infecting anyone else, often because the virus was initially blood-borne and had never mutated into an easily spreadable respiratory disease. In other cases, the spillover leads to small clusters of disease that quickly die out. Consider that in the summer of 2021, while the world was focused on COVID-19, the WHO received alerts about more than 5,000 new outbreaks around the world, few of which made global headlines. Sometimes, however, the world gets unlucky, and a new variant achieves airborne spread in the first few cases. The rate of spillover appears to be increasing, although by how much remains unclear, since part of the apparent rise may be a result of faster, better detection. Every year, about one to three novel viruses with the potential to start a pandemic are reported to jump from animals to humans.

What is causing the uptick in spillover outbreaks? In a word, modernity. The world’s population has more than tripled from 1950 to the present,

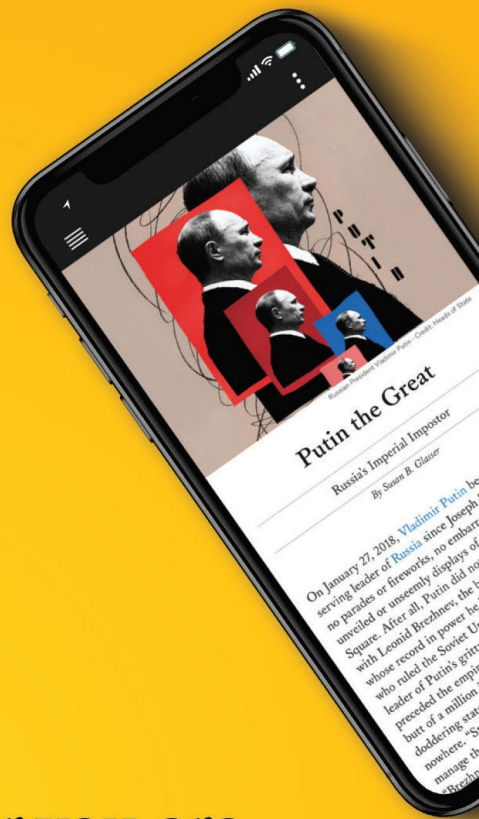
pushing more humans (and their domesticated animals) into contact with the wilderness. As humans have multiplied, they have slashed countless acres of forests not only to harvest timber but also to make space for new roads, cities, factories, mines, and, above all, farms. The most invasive species of all is us: humans have converted half the planet's habitable land to agriculture. Climate change has exacerbated these problems. It has generated yet more habitat loss and pushed wild animals from hotter to cooler climates, where they are more likely to mix with new animals and more people. It has led to water shortages and crop failures that have driven humans into dense megacities and migrant camps where pathogens spread easily. And it has lengthened the breeding seasons and expanded the habitats of disease-carrying ticks, mosquitoes, and flies.

Other aspects of modernity aren't helping, either. Bushmeat consumption has risen at both ends of the economic spectrum, with the poor resorting to wildlife as an inexpensive protein source and the rich having developed a taste for the exotic. Some six million tons of bushmeat are harvested every year from the Congo River basin alone. Meanwhile, the trade in exotic pets is thriving, with more people adopting animals that once lived only in the wild. The growing trend of backyard chickens is bringing domestic livestock into urban settings.

Hundreds of years ago, most large epidemics, such as plague and cholera, were caused by bacteria or by diseases so familiar that they were considered the natural order among humans. Viral spillover is now the way most pandemics begin. The 1918 influenza may have begun at an American pig farm. The 1957–58 Asian flu and the 1968 Hong Kong flu both came from birds. The 2009 swine flu crossed over from pigs, which acted as mixing vessels in which porcine, avian, and human influenza strains recombined. In fact, since the advent of antibiotics and modern vaccines, most new contagious diseases of any kind have begun as viral animal infections that spilled over to humans. The virus that caused the 2002–4 SARS outbreak, SARS-CoV-1, and the one behind the COVID-19 pandemic, SARS-CoV-2, probably spilled over from bats, as did the Ebola virus. MERS came from camels. HIV traces its origins to chimpanzees. Smallpox may have spilled over from a rodent.

#### LEAKY LABS

Even though natural spillover is the most likely origin of the next pandemic, it could theoretically start in another way: in a laboratory. Even after a 1972 treaty banned biological weapons, the Soviet Union



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undertook a \$1 billion effort to develop such a capability. One attempt involved combining smallpox and Ebola into a single “chimera” virus. That experiment failed, as did others involving anthrax and tularemia. But many Soviet workers were accidentally killed in the secret labs where these experiments were conducted.

More innocent accidents are much likelier. Labs are often home to large collections of monkeys, rats, and bats, all of which can infect workers. Infectious agents can also spread via petri dishes or other

equipment. That appears to be how smallpox claimed its last victim: in 1978, just as the disease was on the cusp of eradication, Janet Parker, a medical photographer at a British university, died of smallpox, having somehow caught it at the lab where she worked.

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A fierce debate rages about whether SARS-CoV-2 might have escaped from a lab. Nearly everyone agrees that an early epicenter of the

COVID-19 pandemic was the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, China, where thousands of live wild animals were sold. What is disputed is whether the market was the site of the original spillover that kicked off the pandemic or merely its first super-spreader event. Although no wildlife there was found to be infected with SARS-CoV-2, Chinese investigators did detect genetic material from it in samples collected from surfaces in the market—before the area was quickly scrubbed.

Most proponents of the “lab leak” theory contend that SARS-CoV-2 originated at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, where researchers are thought to have conducted “gain of function” experiments on bat viruses—genetically altering the viruses to make them more transmissible as part of scientists’ efforts to understand how they spread and can be prevented or treated. Beijing only added fuel to this theory when, in early 2020, it closed the lab to international inspection. But there is no evidence that the Wuhan Institute of Virology held viruses that closely resemble SARS-CoV-2, while bats in the wild have been found to be infected by viruses that do. Moreover, the Wuhan Institute of Virology is more than ten miles from the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market.

But a different lab, the Wuhan Center for Disease Control and Prevention, is just 300 yards away—a few minutes’ walk. That lab is also thought to have had an active program for collecting viruses from wildlife, including bats. Given that the 2002–4 SARS outbreak also likely came from bats,



it would be neither unusual nor nefarious for it to have gathered specimens of these animals infected with SARS-CoV-2. If a lab worker caught the virus there, that may indicate poor lab practices but not criminal intent.

The world may never know how the COVID-19 pandemic began, and as the trail grows colder, the odds of determining its origins are becoming slimmer. One can say with confidence that there is no credible evidence that SARS-CoV-2 was genetically engineered. Even if a mad scientist had wanted to create this virus, many of the aspects that make it so transmissible were unknown in 2019; the rapid emergence of new variants shows that it needs no engineering help. Beyond that, however, the jury is still out. On the one hand, the brisk trade in wildlife at the market and the clusters of infection nearby are consistent with the theory that SARS-CoV-2 originated in animals sold there. On the other hand, one cannot exclude the possibility that the virus escaped from bats in a laboratory close to the market or from bat collectors or that lab workers who became infected brought the virus to the market. Finding out the source of COVID-19 is important. Ultimately, however, solving the mystery is a lower priority than recognizing that spillover in a lab or a market are both viable pathways to pandemics.

#### THE NEXT BIG ONE

Of the many large outbreaks, epidemics, and pandemics of new diseases in the last 100 years, only the Great Influenza and COVID-19 have been catastrophic. What will be the next “big one”? Epidemiologists have a good idea of the types of diseases that make the shortlist. It will most likely be a virus that spills over naturally as a result of human contact with animals, has a short incubation period, and spreads rapidly through the respiratory pathway—all of which adds up to explosive spread. Two families of viruses stand out.

The first are coronaviruses. Spread mostly through the breathing of shared air, they have short incubation periods—sometimes two or three days—and often mutate promiscuously, splitting readily into variants and types. The most famous coronavirus, of course, is SARS-CoV-2, but other members of the family have much higher fatality rates. SARS-CoV-1, the strain behind the 2002–4 SARS outbreak, killed somewhere between ten and 60 percent of people infected, depending on age, and MERS-CoV, the coronavirus behind MERS, has an estimated fatality rate of 35 percent. The difference was that what SARS-CoV-2 lacked in deadliness, it made up for in transmissibility. Yet as devastating as COVID-19 has been, it could

have been worse: it was simply a lucky spin of the genomic roulette wheel that SARS-CoV-1 and MERS-CoV never developed variants as spreadable as SARS-CoV-2. But the lucky streak might not last.

Tied for public enemy number one are highly pathogenic influenza viruses. These are grouped by two proteins on the surface of the virus, hemagglutinin and neuraminidase, which give the variants their names, such as H1N1 (which caused the 1918 influenza pandemic) and H2N2 (which caused the 1957–58 Asian flu). With 18 hemagglutinin and 11 neuraminidase proteins known, the permutations and combinations are many, leading to a high number of variants. That is one reason it is so difficult to make seasonal flu vaccines that match each year's particular H and N combination.

It is worth noting that in the last 100 years, only these two groups of diseases—coronaviruses and influenza viruses—managed to make the leap from animals to humans and demonstrate the combination of transmissibility and deadliness to become catastrophic pandemics. With more and more human-animal viral exchanges and a few mutations, humanity could get hit with a novel coronavirus or an influenza virus that spreads like H1N1 and kills like MERS. Such a pandemic would challenge the very survival of our species.

#### THE OTHERS

Next on the not-wanted list are vector-borne diseases. The main concern is infections from a category of viruses called arboviruses, which are viruses transmitted to humans from arthropods—mostly insects such as fleas, ticks, gnats, and mosquitoes. Some of the most prominent viruses in this category are yellow fever, West Nile, Zika, chikungunya, dengue, and Japanese encephalitis. All spread primarily through mosquitoes, making this insect the most dangerous animal alive. Although these viruses are not particularly transmissible from one human to another through casual contact, they can spread through blood transfusions and organ transplants and via sexual contact.

Orthopoxviruses, a category that includes smallpox, are another pandemic threat. The reason orthopoxviruses do not top the list today is that the big killer in this group, *Variola major*, which causes smallpox, was declared eradicated in 1980, following a decades-long campaign. Although no cases have occurred since then, under a 1979 WHO agreement, infectious viruses are confined to two laboratories—the Centers for Disease Control, in Atlanta, and the Vector Institute,

in Siberia—raising the terrifying possibility of a lab accident or even a deliberate release. But even setting smallpox aside, other orthopoxviruses are worth worrying about, such as rodentpox, horsepox, camelpox, and monkeypox. Perhaps one of these could mutate over time to become as deadly as smallpox.

That is one reason the 2022 outbreak of monkeypox was so concerning. The disease has long been endemic in African rodents and primates, but only in 1970 was the first human case identified, and throughout the rest of the 1970s, only a handful of cases were reported each year. But then came the eradication of smallpox, which had an unfortunate consequence with respect to monkeypox. The smallpox vaccine offered excellent protection against monkeypox, and with the end of smallpox came the end of worldwide compulsory smallpox vaccination. In the decades that followed, as more and more people born after 1980 were left unvaccinated against smallpox, the incidence of monkeypox rose, reaching around 3,000 annual cases in recent years. Nearly all these cases occurred in unvaccinated people and were confined to Africa, appearing in small clusters and likely caused by spillovers from rodents to monkeys to humans.

That pattern changed in May 2022, when an outbreak began in Europe and spread from person to person, primarily among men who have sex with men. The disease has now reached more than 90 countries for the first time. Fortunately, of the two known families of monkeypox, the current epidemic is of the less virulent one. Moreover, preexisting smallpox vaccines and new monkeypox vaccines are excellent, and some even work if given as late as a few days after exposure. Although the monkeypox case count is decreasing, a dire, if small, risk remains: that people with monkeypox might “spill back” the disease to animals, especially the rodent population of large cities. If monkeypox were to become endemic in the rats or mice of New York, São Paulo, or Tokyo, given enough time, this slow-mutating virus might come to resemble a lesser form of smallpox: spreading through the respiratory pathway and killing many people.

The next pandemic could be bacterial rather than viral. Indeed, the deadliest pandemic in recorded history—the Black Death—was caused by the flea-borne bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. The outbreak, which began in 1346, may have killed a third of Europe. Since the advent of antibiotics in

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Another novel coronavirus or an influenza virus could challenge the very survival of our species.

the middle of the twentieth century, plague and other bacterial diseases with epidemic potential, such as cholera and tuberculosis, have been kept in check. But the bacteria are still out there—in 2021, more than 100 cases of plague were reported in the United States—and there is always a chance that they could reemerge with a vengeance.

That risk has grown as bacteria have developed resistance to existing antibiotics and as strikingly few new antibiotics have been brought to market. Like viruses, bacteria respond to the evolutionary pressure exerted by immune hosts; nature selects for bacteria with mutations that allow them to evade existing defenses. The result is hard-to-treat infections, such as multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (also known as MRSA), and vancomycin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (or VRSA). It's even possible that penicillin and other mainstay antibiotics could lose their power to control sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, returning society to Dickensian times.

Last but not least is something entirely new. With hundreds of thousands of viruses that have not yet jumped to humans now circulating in animals, it is important for scientists to be humble about how much they do not know. To that end, the WHO has undertaken an initiative to identify what it calls "Pathogen X." It might be a new outbreak of a long-hidden virus, as was the case with the Zika virus, which, although identified in 1947, did not emerge as a major threat until 2015. It might be an unknown disease caused by a family of animal viruses that had never been identified before, as HIV/AIDS was initially. Or it might be something else altogether.

#### SEEK, AND YE SHALL FIND

The logical starting point for pandemic prevention is to stop spillover. Because the main drivers of viral jumps are hard-to-reverse long-term trends—population growth, migration, climate change, habitat encroachment—it may seem as if little can be done. But innovations in animal disease surveillance are allowing scientists to detect zoonotic viruses before they make the leap to humans. Through mobile apps and hotlines, people can now report unusual sickness in livestock or poultry and unexpected die-offs among wildlife, giving authorities a chance to identify the disease, cull the infected animals as needed, and quarantine nearby humans. These programs are cost-effective and more practical than ever, given the ubiquity of Internet-connected phones, and deserve investment. To close off another route for spillover, governments should crack down

on the illegal trade in exotic wildlife and their sale in crowded markets, which not only enable the spread of disease but also contribute to species endangerment. To reduce the risk of lab accidents, governments should establish strong, transparent international standards requiring careful precautions, especially in labs collecting animal specimens.

Realistically, however, for the foreseeable future, some degree of spillover is inevitable. Much of the work of preventing pandemics will have to wait until the virus infects its first human victim, so time is of the essence. The faster spillover is detected, the sooner the spread can be contained. Interrupting transmission becomes harder as viruses adapt to humans, since the pathogens become more efficient at reproducing and better at evading our immune systems—as the nearly 100 combinations and mutations of SARS-CoV-2 make clear. Fortunately, new technology and larger public health workforces have allowed for faster detection. Twenty years ago, it could take six months for news of an outbreak in a remote region to reach a national health department, an eternity in epidemiological terms. Today, that same outbreak might be found in a week or two.

Some of the most inspiring developments are coming from spillover hotspots in Asia. Animal-to-human transmissions of the bird flu and of coronaviruses are usually associated with South and Southeast Asia, particularly in and around the Mekong River basin. (The region has a deadly combination of factors: it is a chokepoint for migrating birds, has many farms where chickens and pigs feed next to one another, and has high population density.) The 1957–58 Asian flu, the 1968 Hong Kong flu, and the 2002–4 SARS outbreak all originated in and around southern China.

But technology can mitigate these risks. In 2016, for example, the Cambodian Ministry of Health partnered with the nonprofit organization Ending Pandemics (which one of us, Mark Smolinski, heads) to roll out a hotline for reporting outbreaks. Simply by dialing 1-1-5, Cambodians could tell an automated voice system if they had witnessed any illness or death in poultry or livestock or if they or their family members had fallen ill. The system averaged nearly 600 daily calls during its first four years of operation, resulting in 20 to 30 follow-up actions by the authorities each month. At one point, for example, public health officials responded to a report from a farmer who had dialed the hotline after one of his chickens died and his daughter became sick. The authorities quickly tested the dead bird and found it to be infected



with H5N1, the highly pathogenic avian influenza, and slaughtered his flock of chickens to contain the outbreak—saving the farms, and perhaps the lives, of the surrounding villagers.

#### STOP THE SPREAD

Even if a disease is not contained at its source, there is still time to prevent the outbreak from going global. As with efforts to detect outbreaks, new technology has vastly enhanced public health officials' ability to recognize epidemics. Thanks to the explosion of data collected online, disease detectives can track emerging diseases faster than ever. Albania, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Pakistan, and Tanzania, for example, are working with Ending Pandemics to build data dashboards that combine feeds from a variety of sources: local news articles, social media posts, digital disease-surveillance systems, wastewater data, and tips from hotlines.

Technological upgrades have been matched by improvements to the global public health system. Just a few decades ago, the WHO could respond to an outbreak only if it had been reported by the government of the country where it occurred. But since 2005, when the member states of the WHO updated their rules, the organization has been able to respond to an outbreak no matter how it learns of it. As part of that reform, the WHO also built its own high-tech tool for detecting early signs of potential pandemics. The Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources initiative continuously scans 20,000 digital sources for red flags, looking for everything from a local news report of a market closure to a spike in online searches for pediatric thermometers. Much more investment in such situational awareness is needed. Although wealthy nations can afford the equipment, supplies, and personnel required to identify and monitor infectious threats, low- and middle-income countries, where these threats often emerge, largely cannot.

Cooperation is a key element of surveillance. In a promising sign, countries are increasingly sharing public health information across borders, helping ensure that local or national spread does not become global spread. Twenty-eight countries regularly report tips through Connecting Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance, or CORDS, a group founded in 2009 by the Nuclear Threat Initiative and the Rockefeller Foundation and backed by several UN agencies and various private organizations. Such early sharing of information is crucial because it permits a coordinated response,

giving public health officials a better chance of preventing it from going global. And it builds trust, something that is much harder to generate once a pandemic has begun.

#### VIRUSES ON THE LOOSE

By the time an epidemic has escaped national or regional boundaries to spread worldwide, it is by definition a pandemic and thus too late for prevention. Nonetheless, timely interventions can minimize its impact. Governments will need to issue and enforce classic public health recommendations: limit travel, isolate, wash your hands, wear a mask, and avoid mass gatherings. And viral sequencing—which is now faster and cheaper than ever—is essential for developing diagnostic tests and should be made more globally available. Doctors in developing countries need this powerful tool, too.

Ultimately, vaccines are the main pathway out of a pandemic. After COVID-19 broke out, decades of investment in vaccine technology paid off, allowing billions of doses of highly effective vaccines to be produced in record time. Humanity can do even better, however, as there are still limits to how quickly production can be scaled up and doses can be distributed. It may be possible to expedite the deployment of vaccines by developing rapid vaccine trials to determine safety and efficacy—speed that will be crucial as the virus learns to evade first-generation vaccines. Also vital will be a more distributed infrastructure for manufacturing vaccines. One major source of delay in fighting COVID-19 was what some say was the hoarding of vaccines by the countries that developed and manufactured them. To be defeated, global pandemics of vaccine-preventable diseases require more manufacturing capacity in the global South.

For now, vaccine development still takes too long to stop the most likely type of pandemic: one caused by a novel respiratory virus, such as an influenza virus or a coronavirus. Both are RNA viruses, which mutate much more easily than DNA viruses—hence the dozens of variants and subvariants spun out of the original version of SARS-CoV-2. RNA viruses' proclivity for mutation explains how they adapt to new environments and jump to new species. It also makes them moving targets for vaccine development. This is not to say that vaccines have no value against RNA viruses; they are still marvelous at protecting people against serious illness and death. But the shapeshifting nature of RNA viruses does call for interventions that retain their potency even as the pathogens evolve.

Enter antiviral drugs. Unlike fungi and most bacteria, which can grow on surfaces, viruses are “obligate parasites,” unable to reproduce without the machinery inside the cells they infect. Antiviral drugs attack that Achilles’ heel, hitting various stages of a virus’s life cycle as it replicates within cells. Whereas an RNA virus can evolve relatively easily to evade vaccines, the probability is low that it can simultaneously develop all the mutations required to survive a multipronged attack from an antiviral drug. And because many viruses use the same reproductive strategies, researchers can develop drugs that will likely work against classes of viruses that haven’t yet emerged. Such drugs will not eliminate the need for vaccines, and they are more expensive to produce and distribute. But they should form one pillar of pandemic preparedness.

#### THE DEADLIEST CATCH

For catastrophic pandemics, modernity is both cause and cure. Like spillover itself, all these tools for combating its consequences are the product of human advances. Some of these tools are already available; others are far off. But all hold the promise of severing one or more links in the chain of events that leads a single mutation in a virus in a bat to upend the entire world: from spillover to outbreak, from outbreak to epidemic, from epidemic to moderate pandemic, and from moderate pandemic to catastrophic pandemic.

In this effort, the developed world should accept that it must shoulder the burden—not just out of altruism but also out of self-interest. As the COVID-19 pandemic made clear, even the richest and supposedly most prepared countries can be overrun by viruses originating in faraway corners of the world. Rich countries must invest worldwide in surveillance systems and vaccine production.

But one thing no amount of money can cure is a lack of trust. The pandemic laid bare the mistrust among countries, with some governments concealing data and others hoarding vaccines. And it exposed the mistrust between populations and their own public health officials, with tensions erupting over mask mandates, school closures, and vaccinations. Trust is the difference between calling a hotline and choosing not to, between sharing information internationally and hiding it, between following quarantine rules and flouting them, and between sharing vaccines and hoarding them. Without trust, even the best public health policies will fail. It is this human element that will, above all, determine whether the world can use modernity’s gift of science to stave off catastrophe. 🌐

# The New Industrial Age

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## America Should Once Again Become a Manufacturing Superpower

RO KHANNA

**F**or many citizens, the American dream has been downsized. In recent decades, the United States has ceased to be the world's workshop and become increasingly reliant on importing goods from abroad. Since 1998, the widening U.S. trade deficit has cost the country five million well-paying manufacturing jobs and led to the closure of nearly 70,000 factories. Small towns have been hollowed out and communities destroyed. Society has grown more unequal as wealth has been concentrated in major coastal cities and former industrial regions have been abandoned. As it has become harder for Americans without a college degree to reach the middle class, the withering of social mobility has stoked anger, resentment, and distrust. The loss of manufacturing has hurt not only the economy but also American democracy.

China has played a significant role in this deindustrialization of the United States. The explosion in job losses occurred after the U.S.

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Congress granted China the status of “permanent normal trade relations” in 2000, ahead of China’s accession to the World Trade Organization. Between 1985 and 2000, the U.S. trade deficit with China had grown steadily from \$6 billion to \$83 billion. But that deficit ballooned more dramatically after China joined the WTO in 2001, and it now stands at a stratospheric \$309 billion. Once in the WTO, China unfairly undermined U.S.-based manufacturing by using exploited labor and providing sweeping state subsidies to Chinese firms. Even more than NAFTA—the 1994 free trade deal that allowed many U.S. manufacturing and farm jobs to move to Mexico—the liberalization of trade with China decimated factory and rural towns, particularly in the Midwest and in the South. This devastation fueled the rise of anti-immigrant xenophobia, anti-Asian hate, and right-wing nationalism that has threatened democracy at home through extremism and violence in U.S. politics.

It has become standard practice in U.S. foreign policy circles to rue American naiveté in believing that Beijing and Washington would benefit equally from China’s inclusion in the system of global trade. But that recognition has not always been accompanied by the requisite clarity and ambition in U.S. policymaking. The Biden administration has taken important steps in encouraging the return of jobs from overseas, supporting U.S. manufacturers, and seeking to deny China access to cutting-edge U.S. semiconductor technology. But the United States needs to enhance this agenda with specific place-based strategies to revitalize struggling parts of the country and strengthen partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Americans should embrace a new economic patriotism that calls for increasing domestic production, bringing jobs back from overseas, and promoting exports. An agenda focused on regional revitalization will offer hope to places that have endured decades of decline as policymakers watched haplessly and offered little more than Band-Aids to people laid off as a result of automation and outsourcing. A commitment to rebuild the U.S. industrial base does not mean the country should turn its back on the world and adopt the kind of insular economic nationalism that powered the 2016 Brexit vote in the United Kingdom. Instead, the United States can revive important industries while still preserving key trading relationships, welcoming immigrants, and encouraging the dynamism and innovation of its people.

Economic imperatives must drive U.S. foreign policy toward China, as much for domestic and global security as for national prosperity.



Reducing the trade imbalance will lower tensions and mitigate the risk of populist anger or supply shocks inflaming conflicts between the geopolitical rivals. In every conversation with Beijing, Washington should focus on rebalancing production. U.S. policymakers should set annual targets for reducing the trade deficit with China. They can meet such goals through tough negotiations—for instance, regarding China’s artificially depreciated currency—and by unilateral policy adjustments, such as supporting manufacturers in the United States and in friendly countries. Such actions will help address the job losses, deindustrialization, and consequent opioid crises that have destabilized U.S. society. By realizing this vision, the United States will not just improve relations with China but further the goal of building a thriving, multiracial democracy that is an example to the world.

“WE STILL MAKE THINGS”

The trade deficit is an important proxy for the decline of the United States’ industrial base. In the first decade of this century, as MIT economist David Autor has shown, the United States lost 2.4 million jobs because labor-intensive industries moved to China. Beijing’s new trade status and low wages, along with its undervalued currency, incentivized U.S. companies to relocate manufacturing facilities there. Two decades later, the job loss count is up to 3.7 million, owing to the mushrooming trade deficit with China. The deficit reflects the decline in domestic industry: manufacturing accounted for 71 percent of the world’s trade in 2020, and nearly 73 percent of U.S. imports from China in 2019 were manufactured goods. Put bluntly, by running a trade deficit with Beijing, Washington creates jobs in China instead of in the United States.

Many economists and business owners do not regret the loss of manufacturing in the United States, arguing that the country’s economy has become more oriented around the service sector and producing knowledge and innovation. But innovation is intrinsically linked to production. Manufacturing companies account for more than half of U.S. domestic spending on research and development. And, as Intel chief Andrew Grove argued more than a decade ago, a key part of innovation is the “scaling” up that happens as new technologies move from prototype to mass production. That scaling happens less and less in the United States because so much manufacturing has shifted overseas. “Without scaling,” Grove lamented, “we don’t just

lose jobs—we lose our hold on new technologies. Losing the ability to scale will ultimately damage our capacity to innovate.”

Manufacturing workers are also more likely to belong to unions, receiving protections that secure their membership in the American middle class; a solid industrial base and strong union participation expanded the middle class by leaps and bounds from the 1940s to the 1970s. The replacement of U.S. manufacturing jobs with service-sector jobs is, in truth, the erasure of reliable well-paying jobs in favor of more precarious low-paying ones.

Some argue that automation, more than the flight of industry to China, is to blame. Automation and shifts in the manner of production no doubt account for some of these losses. But a comparison with Germany, where automation has also affected the workforce, is illuminating. Between 2000 and 2010, the United States lost around 33 percent of its manufacturing jobs, whereas Germany lost only 11 percent, largely because it maintained a trade surplus. When both were still in office, British Prime Minister Tony Blair asked German Chancellor Angela Merkel to explain Germany’s success. She responded, “Mr. Blair, we still make things.” In Germany, as the economist Gordon Hanson has observed, workers pushed out of jobs in textiles and furniture making were able to transition to manufacturing machine jobs because Germany expanded exports of machine parts. Around 20 percent of Germany’s labor force works in manufacturing jobs; only eight percent of the U.S. workforce does. Germany was able to cushion the hit from the growth of Chinese industry by expanding its own export-oriented manufacturing. U.S. workers, on the other hand, were left to find employment in the low-wage service sector, dealing a severe blow to the country’s middle class. Germany has also invested heavily in apprenticeship programs and in training its workforce for the high-tech future; the United States has not.

The enormous trade deficit with China has become a flash point in U.S. politics. During the trade war waged by U.S. President Donald Trump, the deficit with China decreased by nearly \$100 billion between 2018 and 2020. Although his tariffs began to patch holes in the sinking ship of the U.S. manufacturing sector, Trump lacked a comprehensive agenda to get the United States to make things again. He cut corporate taxes instead of investing in next generation manufacturing, and big companies funneled their gains from the tax cuts into speculation in secondary financial and tertiary derivatives markets. The deficit spiked back up in 2021 during the

COVID-19 pandemic, as Americans stayed at home more and increased their purchases of housewares and electronics made in China. In 2021, the United States imported \$135 billion worth of Chinese-made electronic equipment, such as semiconductors and cellphones, and \$60 billion worth of televisions, cameras, and cordless telephones. It also imported \$116 billion in Chinese machinery and \$40 billion worth of toys, games, and sporting equipment. China has also supplanted the United States in making car parts; it produces 30 percent of the global automobile supply chain. These dynamics reflect more than the habits of U.S. consumers and producers; they manifest in shuttered factories, desolate towns, and struggling communities across the United States.

Of course, the assessments of technocrats debating the extent to which trade and automation have hurt workers in the United States are not more important than those of the American public. In a democratic country, the lived experience of citizens matters. Anyone who has spent time in North Carolina, Ohio, or Pennsylvania will attest that many Americans there believe the job losses in their communities are directly tied to offshoring to China, Mexico, and Asia more broadly. They have reached that conclusion through deep consideration and through the record of their own lives. Policymakers inside the Beltway need to spend time visiting factory towns and listening to what people there have to say.

#### THE LONG SHADOW OF THE OPIUM WARS

Every U.S. industry faces a major obstacle when trying to export products: the strength of the U.S. dollar. The dollar is more attractive and stable than the euro, the rupee, the yen, or the renminbi. The deep irony of having the world's reserve currency is that the United States is effectively subsidizing the rest of the world's exports while making U.S. products and services too expensive to aggressively compete in global markets. At the same time, China, the world's largest exporter, continues to keep the value of its currency artificially low, boosting its own exports. The United States must work swiftly to counteract these market distortions.

First, the United States can negotiate a currency and goods accord with China, just as U.S. President Ronald Reagan did with the 1985 Plaza Accord with Germany and Japan, when both agreed to limit the dumping of their manufactured goods on the United States and accepted the depreciation of the dollar to strengthen global demand for



ailing U.S. exports. Each government's central bank agreed to coordinate purchases of one another's currencies to keep the dollar from rising too high. Germany and Japan also agreed to impose restraints on their exports to the U.S. market. Although these agreements were voluntarily negotiated, Germany and Japan were told in no uncertain terms what the alternative would be: the United States would have no choice, in the absence of an accord, but to act unilaterally both to curtail German and Japanese imports and to devalue the then overpriced dollar.

U.S. officials should use a similar approach with China. Beijing is unlikely to cooperate unless Washington threatens targeted tariffs as it did in the 1980s with Germany and Japan. In essence, Washington must make clear to Beijing precisely which industries it sees as vital, explain what targeted tariffs and quotas it will impose if forced to act unilaterally, and then explain what voluntary measures China can take to avoid those consequences. In the final analysis, the greatest beneficiaries of lopsided trade imbalances also have the most to lose if those trade relationships are terminated. Trade pacts are not suicide pacts, and the United States must make plain to China that the slow-motion economic deindustrialization of the past decades will end—with or without Chinese cooperation.

The United States should also revitalize and invest in the Export-Import Bank, the official export credit agency of the U.S. government that helps U.S. companies sell their goods abroad. For too long, Washington has refused to back its exports. It can no longer afford to do so. By assisting U.S. firms in marketing their products abroad, the EXIM Bank removes risks that disincentivize investment in U.S. industry, such as the threat of losing out to competing firms abroad whose governments massively subsidize them. Although the United States should be careful not to use the EXIM Bank to hamper the establishment of industries in low-income countries, Washington should focus on subsidizing exports of clean energy technology around the world to compete with China's subsidized clean energy exports, such as batteries and solar panels. The United States should boost its own exports, just as its rivals do.

I made many of these arguments to Qin Gang, the Chinese ambassador to the United States, earlier this year. He told me that he was willing to talk about the trade imbalance. In turn, he wanted the United States to more strongly reaffirm its commitment to the "one China" policy, which recognizes the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of the country and does not recognize the Republic of China, based in Taiwan, as a separate sovereign entity.

Acknowledging the dangers of trade deficits, he pointed out that the Opium Wars between China and the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century stemmed from the trade imbalance between the two countries. The United Kingdom and the West had a strong demand for Chinese goods, such as tea, porcelain, and silk, in the early 1800s. China, however, did not care for British goods, such as wool. The British paid for Chinese goods in silver, which led to an outflow of millions of pounds of silver, weakening the pound. To rebalance the trade deficit, British merchants sold opium to the Chinese. British opium profits skyrocketed as millions of people became addicted, unraveling Chinese society, which ultimately led the Chinese emperor to ban and destroy the drugs imported from Britain. This act started the First Opium War in 1839. Yes, the conflict took place in the context of an era of aggressive European imperial expansion, but the ambassador suggested that this episode was a powerful example of how trade deficits can provoke conflict between countries.

Today, great-power competition and underlying Chinese overreach certainly inflame tensions between China and the United States, but



the trade deficit feeds animosity and exacerbates the fears of many Americans, who simply seek economic security. Rebalancing trade will lessen the resentment in the United States against China for job losses, deindustrialization, and the harm those economic developments have caused to the social fabric of the country, including in the form of the opioid crisis (made worse by the import of Chinese-made fentanyl).

China will not easily accommodate the United States' economic goals. Chinese President Xi Jinping will be hesitant to rebalance trade, out of concern for factory owners who do not want to lose business. Local Chinese Communist Party leaders also have a vested interest in not losing manufacturing and in protecting large factories as visible symbols of a thriving economy. But over the long term, as Xi recognizes, overproduction is not healthy for the emergence and maintenance of a middle class. What is underway in China is a conflict pitting the parochial short-term interests of party hacks and factory owners against the sustained long-term growth of China's middle class. Xi has long believed that China must slowly wean itself from dependence on exports and develop a more consumer-driven economy whose engine would be the increased purchasing power of the Chinese middle class. The United States must continue to press the case publicly and privately that rebalancing trade will ultimately lead to a stable and sustainable middle class in China.

#### MAKE IN AMERICA

To become a more committed exporter, the United States needs to make more things at home. The administration can unleash manufacturing and production at a level not seen since World War II. First, it should set up a new Economic Development Council, which would report to the president, to invest in and build partnerships with industry. It would have the authority to study the trade deficit and solicit information from across the federal government, academia, and the private sector. This Economic Development Council should convene key agencies—including the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Energy, the Interior, State, and the Treasury, along with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative—as well as private-sector representatives, to determine the necessary capital investment needed to make the United States the world's preeminent manufacturing power again. In crafting strategies for revitalizing deindustrialized parts of the country, it should look, for example, at the volumes of data that Hanson is compiling on both

the economic and the social conditions in distressed economic regions. Executing a broad agenda of reindustrialization requires a coordinating body to ensure that all agencies are working in sync.

The Economic Development Council should use federal financing and purchase agreements to help companies access the capital needed to rebuild the country's manufacturing base. The government must make its financial interventions targeted, surgical, and finite, with a particular focus on communities affected by deindustrialization in the Midwest and South. The government should not indefinitely support firms with public capital and should help facilitate the scaling up of only those projects that have already attracted private-sector financing.

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Trade pacts are  
not suicide pacts.

Congress, too, has a role to play. It should pass a tax credit to persuade companies to bring production back to the United States and, conversely, levy a ten percent offshoring corporate tax on U.S. firms that close facilities in the United States and move manufacturing jobs overseas. Congress should also increase funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, which is a public-private partnership that provides various forms of technical assistance to manufacturers. The budget that President Joe Biden proposed this year calls for a \$125 million increase to the partnership, but it should provide ten times that amount to support small- and medium-sized manufacturers across the United States.

The United States should aim to revitalize production in certain key industries. In 1970, U.S. steel made up 20 percent of global production; today, that figure is down to just four percent. The United States is now the 20th-largest steel exporter in the world but the second-largest steel importer. China, by contrast, makes up 57 percent of the global steel market. Since 1990, the number of people working in U.S. steel mills has dropped from around 257,000 to around 131,000. The federal government can ramp up U.S. steel production through financing as well as requiring federal infrastructure builders to purchase American-made steel. U.S. steel exports do not need to dominate the global market, but the United States can take the lead in innovations, such as the next-generation lightweight and high-strength steel that will allow electric cars to go farther on a single charge. New U.S. facilities are already heading in this direction:

the Nucor steel plate manufacturing plant under construction in Kentucky, for example, will provide the thick precision steel needed for in-demand machines such as wind turbines.

Aluminum is another industry in which the United States has lost considerable ground to China. In 1980, the United States was the world's top producer, but it fell last year to ninth place in global aluminum production. China accounts for 57 percent of global aluminum production. In 2001, the United States had over 90,000 aluminum workers; today, it has about 56,000. Cheap and cost-effective aluminum smelting depends on low-cost energy sources, which is why China uses coal plants for aluminum production. The United States can use cleaner green energy to produce aluminum and take the lead in another industry of tomorrow, in the process bringing back tens of thousands of jobs.

The Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act have revitalized industry by investing hundreds of billions of dollars in key technologies of the future. As a result, a new \$20 billion Intel semiconductor factory complex in Ohio will create more than 10,000 jobs in the state. The memory and data storage firm Micron, an American company that also has three locations in Taiwan, will invest \$100 billion and create 50,000 new jobs in upstate New York, and Kentucky will be home to a potentially \$1 billion Ascend Elements lithium-ion battery facility. The return of these companies to the United States was enabled in part by automation. But they will still create many better-paying jobs than are now available. The United States is already on pace to bring back 350,000 jobs from overseas in 2022. Reshoring manufacturing to the United States is possible.

Some will argue that government investments in industry will encourage companies that lose productivity and competitiveness to become reliant on federal funding to stay afloat. But history offers many examples to the contrary. Companies such as Chrysler, General Motors, and Lockheed Martin that received significant federal funding during World War II and the U.S.-Soviet space race remained productive and successful. Companies backed by federal funds were also better able to raise private capital. For instance, Intel's initial investment in Ohio is \$20 billion, but that investment could increase to \$100 billion. Only a fraction of that funding will come from the CHIPS Act. Private capital will power the reindustrialization of the United States. Moreover, the government must support only firms that have participated in open and competitive bidding processes,

and it must make sure that companies that receive government funds have survived some level of market rigor to avoid situations such as that of Solyndra, the failed solar energy startup that won government backing during the Obama administration. Although Solyndra remains a Republican talking point, the Obama administration deserves more credit for successfully supporting other companies such as electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla and the spacecraft manufacturer Space X. And the GOP continues to call for government investment in companies all the time with their tax incentive policies and subsidies at the state level.

The government should support not just advanced manufacturing but also the next generation of care jobs. As the economist Dani Rodrik has argued, digital technologies can specifically help increase the productivity of employees in the growing care industry. The government should provide technology grants and incentives to improve childcare and eldercare work and in the process make those jobs better paying.

A new economic patriotism would represent an explicit rejection of Chinese-style state capitalism. Unlike the United States, China has state-owned companies and banks. The Chinese state rewards companies on the basis of local political imperatives and favoritism. The market does not get to decide which enterprises are truly productive and successful, which weakens Chinese companies in the long run. Additionally, China doesn't have the federal, state, local community, and electoral checks on wasteful government spending, much less the scrutiny of a free press, that protect the American system. *The Wall Street Journal* editorial board pilloried the CHIPS Act week after week. But such criticisms in an open society help minimize the risk of crony capitalism. Leaders in government, business, and education can work together to develop human capital and support high-paying jobs in communities that will generate dynamic growth, building a progressive capitalism for the twenty-first century.

#### THE RARE EARTH CATALOG

As the United States revives traditional industries, it also needs to focus on acquiring the materials and components for the industries of the future. China currently has 76 percent of the world's lithium battery production capacity and 60 percent of rare-earth metals needed for building electric vehicles, wind turbines, and solar energy. The United States accounts for eight percent of the world's lithium batteries and 15.5 percent of rare-earth metals.

In the run-up to World War II, the Roosevelt administration understood this imperative. As Cornell economist Robert Hockett has pointed out, to avoid relying on adversaries for key products, the administration preemptively bought up American products and natural resources and made major investments in domestic productive capacity before conflict began. The success of U.S. efforts in Europe and Asia during and after World War II relied in part on this approach, as did the country's industrial preeminence during the decades that followed.

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Unfettered  
globalization hurts  
democracies.

The United States today needs a plan to acquire the necessary lithium, cobalt, and graphite to build the green energy future at home. The battery company Novonix, a beneficiary of the Inflation Reduction Act, is charting new territory by opening a factory in Chattanooga that will produce synthetic graphite, which with new procedures can be much cleaner to process than natural graphite. The government should act swiftly to support similar efforts.

The government can also use the National Defense Stockpile, which stores rare-earth minerals in the event that U.S. supply chains are disrupted. Over the last 70 years, the value of this stockpile has fallen from \$42 billion (inflation adjusted) in 1952 to \$888 million in 2021. Congress should at least double the value of the stockpile and purchase domestic rare-earth materials.

Most urgent, U.S. officials must determine which defense systems rely on Chinese-made products. The United States is dependent on China for a variety of essential materials, including the antimony used in night-vision goggles and nuclear weapons. Congress should require the defense department to determine the country of origin of the content of all defense equipment and to identify alternate sources in case of future troubles and disruptions.

Perhaps no product developed abroad is more essential for modern life than the smartphone. The cellphone supply chain underscores both the difficulties and the imperative of making the United States less dependent on China, where most smartphones are packaged and assembled. For example, according to the latest available data, 25 percent of the Apple iPhone's value chain runs through China. Over 80 percent of the cellphones the United States imports have a component assembled in China.



Washington should encourage companies to move the production of valuable component parts—display screens, semiconductor chips, batteries, sensors, and circuit boards—to the United States or to allied countries. It also needs to push friendly countries such as Australia, India, and Japan to increase their own production of electronic components for phones. With the right combination of action in the United States and those countries, the percentage of Chinese-assembled phones the United States imports could be cut in half in five years.

Reindustrializing the United States need not come at the expense of the rest of the world. The United States and the G-7 should offer an alternative to China's vast Belt and Road Initiative, which finances infrastructure outside China. To do so, Washington should find out what developing countries need and want, respect their right to self-determination, and chart a development future that best serves their people instead of creating debtor countries as Chinese policies have done. Washington should also share technological know-how with friendly low-income countries so they can develop their own modern industries. Not every part of the supply chain can return to the United States, so Americans will need to help partners gain access to the materials and develop the production capability to build the goods the United States still needs to import.

#### A ROOTED GLOBALIZATION

The ramifications of restoring U.S. industry would be immense. Unfettered globalization has failed to help democracies thrive—in fact, it has fostered their decline. In the last 20 years, as globalization has intensified, democracies around the world, including the United States, have experienced backsliding. In Europe and the United States, polarization and far-right nationalism have increased, with many political figures inciting fears of immigrants in the wake of industrial job losses. Across the globe, high-income countries have prioritized the profits of multinational corporations over the civic health of communities and the lives of their citizens.

In 1996, as the forces of market liberalization rippled largely unimpeded around the world, the legal scholar Richard Falk captured the limits of globalization, cautioning against embracing “cosmopolitanism as an alternative to nationalist patriotism without addressing the subversive challenge of . . . market-driven globalism.” Twenty years later, China had long failed to live up to its WTO promises, and

Trump, who called NAFTA the “worst trade deal in history,” became president. In the United Kingdom, the percentage of industrial workers had dropped from almost half the workforce in 1957 to just 15 percent in 2016. This trend allowed the far right in the United Kingdom to weaponize fear of immigrants, drive a cultural wedge between the deindustrialized north and the more prosperous south of England, and win the referendum to leave the EU. Neighboring France’s domestic production capacity is 20 percent lower than it was 20 years ago—a fact not unrelated to the rise of Marine Le Pen, a far-right leader who denigrates immigrants and French Muslims and appeals to many disillusioned working-class voters by saying, “We can no longer accept this massive deindustrialization.”

The United States has seen its own share of xenophobic backlashes, but the country’s rich diversity remains a model for the world, especially in contrast to China, which seeks to suppress its own political, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. But as Falk insisted, it is no good singing the praises of diversity while allowing communities to be decimated by the forces of global capital. U.S. leaders must revitalize communities across the country by boosting domestic production and rebalancing trade. Shared prosperity will allow every American to contribute to an overarching national culture built on an eclectic mix of traditions. This patriotism need not veer into a bristling nationalism. Whereas patriotism reflects pride in community and place, nationalism turns pride into chauvinism and seeks to make a community insular and exclusive.

Even if the United States rebalances its trade, China will remain a rival, and Washington will need a comprehensive national security strategy to deter the invasion of Taiwan. But the United States must not default to a Cold War McCarthyism against the Chinese or any other people or country. It should work with China to prevent competition from erupting into war, and the two countries should cooperate on issues of mutual interest such as climate change, global food security, and arms control.

A new economic patriotism calls for a globalization rooted in the interests of ordinary Americans, not the unrestricted version that has shredded the United States’ economic and social fabric over the past four decades. Rebalancing trade through domestic production will help lessen tensions with China, realize the promise of a thriving democracy at home, and ensure that globalization works for all Americans, not just some. 🌐

# The Gospel of Deglobalization

## What's the Cost of a Fractured World Economy?

RAGHURAM G. RAJAN

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*Homecoming: The Path to Prosperity in a Post-Global World*

BY RANA FOROOHAR. Crown, 2022, 400 pp.

*The Globalization Myth: Why Regions Matter*

BY SHANNON K. O'NEIL. Yale University Press, 2022, 240 pp.

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**T**he most recent era of globalization seems to have come to an end. The ratio of global exports of goods and services to world GDP peaked in 2008 and has trended down ever since. According to the World Bank, foreign direct investment peaked in 2007 at 5.3 percent of world GDP and drifted down to 1.3 percent by 2020. The world's two largest economies, China and the United States, have become increasingly hostile, trying to reduce their dependence on each other for goods and services. They are not the only ones. Since the global financial crisis of 2008, there have been five times as many protectionist measures enacted across the world as there have been liberalizing ones.

And, of course, immigration remains an important issue in many countries, with nationalist parties pledging to pull up the drawbridge and keep foreigners out. Deglobalization is well underway.

In a recent speech, Janet Yellen, the U.S. treasury secretary, advocated "friend shoring," that is, restricting U.S. trade and investment to countries that share U.S. values. Two books, largely written before Yellen's speech, help assess whether friend shoring is a goal worth pursuing. In *Homecoming*, Rana Foroohar, a business columnist and editor at the *Financial Times*, says yes: the United States should not trade with countries such as China that do not share its values, and it may even want to cut back on trade with others

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that do. In *The Globalization Myth*, Shannon O'Neil, a vice president at the Council on Foreign Relations and a scholar of trade and Latin America, claims that there has never been such a thing as unfettered globalization; the United States has always traded more with friendly neighbors than with distant, possibly adversarial regimes. In other words, most U.S. trade is already friendshored. O'Neil insists on the importance of maintaining and strengthening regional trade and investment. Both authors foreclose the notion of a world entirely open and connected by trade: in their view, globalization is passé, and a fragmented future lies ahead. Their claims certainly reflect a growing consensus, but the costs of giving up on globalization are immense and will be borne disproportionately by those these books pay insufficient attention to: people who live outside the developed world, the young, and future generations.

#### TAKE BACK CONTROL

In *Homecoming*, Foroohar highlights the flaws of a globalized world increasingly dominated by profit-maximizing multinational corporations, global supply chains focused on efficient production, and large countries such as China that don't share the United States' values. Foroohar traverses familiar territory in documenting the decline of traditional manufacturing and the disappearance of middle-income jobs in the United States as a result of either automation or outsourcing. She worries about the consequent rise in income inequality in recent decades as many people without college degrees now have to juggle multiple jobs only to earn a precarious

living, while the highly skilled make stratospheric incomes. She blames globalization, financialization, and excessive corporate concentration for the United States' ailments. To counter these developments, Foroohar, who wears her progressive inclinations on her sleeve, wants the U.S. economy to prioritize the "local rather than global, Main Street rather than Wall Street, stakeholders rather than shareholders, and small rather than big."

A number of authors have emphasized the need for more local (and thus widely distributed) economic activity to revitalize the United States. Starting with a fascinating description of new technologies such as vertical farming and 3D printing, Foroohar argues that such advances, together with strengthened traditional service sectors such as health care and home care, can allow good jobs to move away from the big cities to more semiurban and disadvantaged communities. For instance, small but efficient local vertical farms could supply much of a community's food needs, creating skilled jobs and saving on costly and energy-intensive transportation and warehousing. Apart from giving the community the economic basis for survival, the localization of good jobs also has collateral benefits, such as providing a solid basis of support for institutions such as schools and community colleges. As Foroohar puts it, "More focus on the local is actually crucial to saving what is best about globalization."

It is surprising, then, that Foroohar is much less supportive of the devolution of political power, apart from an engaging riff on how digitization can engage common people in governance.

Yes, competition from global and national markets has undermined the economic basis of local communities. But the disempowerment stemming from the centralization of regulations, standard setting, and dispute resolution that accompanies market integration has also undermined the political basis of communities. For instance, the Brexit battle cry “Take back control” reflected not only British resentment of EU immigration rules but also the United Kingdom’s inability to reject the myriad EU regulations the country had to accept in the interest of a “harmonized” market. The slogan even channeled the antipathy of local communities to obeying the dictates of a globalized London.

Of course, the world needs global agreements to deal with global problems, such as climate change. But sometimes such agreements go too far. Globalization does ride roughshod over the wishes of many people when large corporations push for a seamless uniformity across the countries they operate in. Big firms encourage governments to conclude intrusive global agreements that enforce homogeneity without the direct consent of those who will be governed by these arrangements. For example, many people in developing countries resent the 1994 Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights agreement because stronger patent protections raise the costs of essential medicines and pad the bottom lines of multinational pharmaceutical companies. Foroohar is therefore right when she argues that globalization is fundamentally antidemocratic, yet she wants to restrict the power of

global and even national corporations but not necessarily rein in global or national governance. Foroohar does not criticize international standard setting and rule-making. Indeed, she calls for more U.S. coordination with Europeans in setting global standards, in part to prevent China from having too much say in the standards of the future. But in the process, she underemphasizes some of the ways that globalization squashes local interests.

Similarly, within a country, the imperative of creating a seamless national market leads to national policies that disempower regional and local governments. Centralized one-size-fits-all programs and regulations are often inappropriate for local conditions. Once again, Foroohar does not question (and even favors) certain forms of centralized industrial policy in the United States, including the push toward friend shoring.

Foroohar understands that many consumers are better off because of globalization, but she wants U.S. producers, by which she typically means small firms and workers, to get a better deal. Yet even if cloaked in rhetoric about values, any protectionism that benefits small firms and workers will also simultaneously reduce foreign competition for large firms. Big companies will inevitably manipulate protectionist policies to their own advantage.

Foroohar dislikes a global trading system that helps China, which does not share U.S. values and plays by its own rules. The surest path to development in recent years, however, has been export-led growth. Such a strategy has helped not just China but also smaller economies such as those of Poland,



Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. As globalization fueled their growth, these countries were for the most part governed by authoritarian regimes. Any form of globalization today that insists on shared values would disrupt the growth prospects of poor developing countries, many of which have unstable, undemocratic governments. It may even prevent some of them from becoming more democratic.

The downsides of globalization highlighted in *Homecoming*, such as the disproportionate burden of adjustment that falls on people who have little capacity to bear it, are very real. But some countries have learned to live with international market forces. Scandinavian countries, for instance, have facilitated extraordinary cooperation among businesses, unions, and governments, ensuring that workers have the skills for new jobs when global competition or automation renders old ones unviable. Contrast such efforts with the feeble attempts in the United States to help workers who have lost their jobs because of trade. Maybe Americans can learn from the successes of others and find that, with globalization, they can actually have their cake and eat it, too.

#### LOWER FENCES MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS

Compared with Foroohar, O'Neil is much more convinced of the virtues of trade across borders. But she insists that the notion of a world flattened by globalization is a myth. The world has never been one integrated market. Instead, regional trade and investment has always accounted for far more of a country's trade than flows to and from

distant lands. Indeed, the well-known "gravity model" of trade postulates that trade between two countries is inversely proportional to the distance between them. As the political and economic costs of trading at a distance rise, countries will rely on more regionalization, routing supply chains through neighboring countries. This, in O'Neil's view, offers the best of both worlds: it secures the benefits of globalization without the baggage, such as the headaches of trading with unreliable rivals.

O'Neil offers a defense of globalized free trade similar to the one that scores of liberal economists have been making for decades. For example, the departure of traditional manufacturing from the United States, she suggests, is not a bad thing. When U.S. companies build manufacturing facilities abroad, they make cheaper, higher-quality goods and open up foreign markets, both of which have the effect of expanding opportunities and creating jobs in the United States. Of course, these new jobs will not be the same as the jobs that were lost, and they may not be located in the same place. Workers must adjust constantly, a reality that is a source of volatility and anxiety. Unlike many liberal economists, however, O'Neil does not dismiss these costs as something that can be easily taken care of by reallocating the profits from trade—which rarely happens in reality. The benefits of globalization have been uneven, and many who have suffered the loss of their jobs or the hollowing out of their communities are justifiably angry.

According to O'Neil, these costs are much smaller when trade occurs at a more regional scale. In contrast to the



Precious cargo: unloading masks from China, Leipzig, Germany, April 2020

loss of two million or so manufacturing jobs the United States caused by importing goods from China in the first decade of this century, job losses and their adverse effects on community health were far more muted under NAFTA, the 1994 trade agreement between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Regional supply chains increase work for everyone in the region since the supply chains snake in and out of all the countries involved, making use of each country's comparative advantage.

On average, 40 percent of U.S. imports from Mexico are made in the United States, and 25 percent of U.S. imports from Canada are made in the United States. By contrast, on average, only four percent of a product coming from China into the United States is made in the United States, which may explain why trade with China has produced more job losses for American

workers than has trade within North America. Of course, these numbers do not account for any jobs created in the United States over the last mile, in transportation, retail, and financing, for instance, to help Chinese-made goods reach U.S. consumers. They also do not account for any jobs created in connection with U.S. goods that China imports (think of Boeing airplanes). But they offer a neat representation of the difference between regional trade and trading at a distance.

O'Neil argues that the danger of the recent moves toward deglobalization is that countries may throw out the baby of regional trade with the bath water of globalization. She fears this will happen even though the United States is poised to benefit from the next wave of globalization, which will be driven by ideas and innovation and will favor the better-paid, better-educated, and relatively young U.S. workforce.

Foroohar and O'Neil reach the same place—regionalization—but differ on how to get there. Foroohar wants government to push companies to shrink their global footprint because she fears that profit-maximizing companies do not sufficiently value resilience and are all too willing to run vulnerable portions of their supply chains through strategic rivals such as China. O'Neil argues that companies have already been diversifying regionally to build more resilient supply chains. Further protectionism could end up hampering regionalization, she believes, and make the United States worse off.

#### GLOBAL WARMING IS GLOBAL

And yet these visions of a deglobalized world will offer cold comfort to many people. A future of friend shoring and regionalization will split the globe into blocs, including a North American bloc centered on the United States, an East Asian bloc centered on China, and a European bloc. Both books highlight the benefits of regionalization to those in the regional blocs. But what happens to the rest of the world?

Deglobalization has many costs, some of which are already evident. They include the higher cost of goods and services as production no longer takes place in the most efficient locations, the loss of scale economies as production becomes fragmented, the increase in the power of domestic oligopolies as global competition is restrained, the decline of learning by doing as multinational corporations no longer spread best practices, and the rise in inflationary pressures as local supply-demand imbalances are no longer tempered by a global market.

Rather than revisiting these, consider a cost that the world can no longer afford to ignore—the way deglobalization into isolated regions might hamper attempts to deal with climate change, the existential global challenge of the age.

Climate action falls into three categories: mitigating harm to the environment by reducing emissions, adapting to changes in the climate, and allowing migration to better climes. The sequence is important, as each category of action bears more of the burden if less is done in the previous ones. For instance, if countries do nothing at all on mitigation and adaptation, expect hundreds of millions of refugees to flee their unlivable tropical native lands for lands farther away from the equator.

All three kinds of action require continued globalization. Take emissions, for example. Any serious commitment to make cuts will be painful for all who undertake them. And geopolitical rivalry will make everything even more difficult. How can China and the United States agree to meaningful emission cuts without each sensing the other is securing an economic advantage?

Surely, ongoing trade and investment between the two countries facilitates such agreement by giving them more reasons and occasions to talk to and understand each other and more chips with which to barter: a technology transfer here in return for an emission commitment there, for instance. Both sides would also have something to lose if they did not cooperate. Mutual openness, including the free movement of businesspeople, tourists, and officials across countries, will also make

it easier to monitor climate action. Deglobalization and decoupling will only make it harder to know what others are doing or not doing.

Regionalization will hinder the production, investment, and innovation necessary to replace carbon-intensive production processes with climate-friendly ones. Take, for instance, battery production, which is necessary to store the power from sustainable energy sources. Lithium, nickel, and cobalt are the key metals used to make batteries, and the last two are projected to be in short supply within the decade, as are the rare earths used for the motors of electric vehicles. Global battery production would suffer if manufacturers sourced these commodities only from within their regions or from countries that share the values of their own. Much of the existing mining for these commodities is in conflict-ridden countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and much of the existing refining is done in China. Although each region will want to reduce interdependence, isolation would incur enormous costs. Regionalization would severely limit production capacity and increase production costs over the foreseeable future, a period when delays will reduce the chance of keeping global average temperatures below the critical threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures.

Adaptation to climate change will also be harder in a deglobalized, regionalized world. Planet heating will make it harder to grow traditional crops in the tropics using traditional methods—as demonstrated by the floods that devastated Pakistan last year. New crops and new technolo-

gies will help but will require investment and financing. Many developing countries outside the major regional blocs, however, will find it hard to secure such funding.

Even if farmers do their best to adapt, agriculture will become unprofitable for many in the tropics. They will have to look for new livelihoods outside of agriculture, which will require an acceleration in economic development. The surest way for countries to develop is to export their way to growth, benefiting from dependable demand in the more developed, and less heat-affected, world. Rising protectionist barriers in more developed regions will impede growth in Africa and South Asia, thereby limiting the ability of their people to adapt.

Reshoring supply chains entirely within a country or even a region would also increase its exposure to climate catastrophes and other risks. Greater resilience will be possible through geographic diversification. Ideally, every segment of the supply chain would draw on multiple suppliers across different regions and continents, giving them the ability to shift quickly from a supplier hit by a climate disaster to a supplier elsewhere.

Interestingly, surgical mask production during the pandemic, something both authors touch on, exemplifies the value of geographic diversification and flexibility. O'Neil points out that China contained the early strains of the COVID-19 virus relatively quickly. As a result, while the rest of the world was closing down, it was able to ramp up production of masks. In the spring of 2020, it exported more than three times the number of masks that were

made in the entire world in 2019. Foroohar writes about how a group of U.S. clothing factories organized to produce masks. With the help of machinery imported from Taiwan and Europe, existing textile production chains were flexibly repurposed to make masks. The examples are powerful, but they support continued globalization, not fragmentation into regions. Production capacities in both China and the United States, when capable of being repurposed and scaled up to supply a global market, offer the world more resilience than any single regional market could.

Similarly, in the case of commodities, especially critical ones such as food and energy, the best form of insurance against disruption is the existence of a well-connected, freely accessible global market where shortages can be smoothed over and no producer has undue leverage. The more local or regional the market, the harder it will be hit by severe weather, a malevolent rival, or other disruptions.

When mitigation and adaptation fail, people in badly affected areas will be forced to migrate. If countries do little on mitigation and adaptation, the scale of migration will be unprecedented. It would be myopic for mildly affected regions to assume they will live comfortably behind border walls. They will find it hard to ignore the humanitarian tragedy occurring outside. No matter how deglobalized, decoupled, localized, or regionalized such places wish to remain, desperate climate refugees will climb or break down any wall. Instead, governments should reach global agreements about how to place

climate refugees in countries that can absorb them best and how to provide them with job training and language instruction so they can be productive when they do eventually migrate. Once again, such tasks will be better advanced by continued globalization than by regional fragmentation.

#### A DISASTROUS RETREAT

Foroohar and O'Neil offer different views of friend shoring and reshoring. Foroohar wants more of it for the United States, whereas O'Neil believes the country has already been pushed by economics toward regionalization. She fears political trends will lead to further harmful isolation. That Yellen, a confirmed internationalist, has counseled friend shoring suggests how strong the political tides are in favor of this turn away from globalization.

Both books are valuable contributions to the understanding of the trends toward regionalization. They do not, however, adequately address how these trends will affect the existential challenge of our time—climate change—or about what regionalization would mean for the developing world. From the perspective of those living in the major regional blocs, regionalization is a problem because it hampers climate action. For those outside the major regional blocs, regionalization will be a calamity; once protectionism gets rolling, it can spread in leaps and bounds, and the disastrous retreat into walled regions will proceed apace. Faced with an existential threat, humanity will eventually realize it needs improved globalization, not less globalization—and the sooner, the better. 🌐



# Profiles in Power

## The World According to Kissinger

JESSICA T. MATHEWS

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*Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*

BY HENRY KISSINGER. Penguin Press, 2022, 528 pp.

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Setting aside Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Narendra Modi, and Benjamin Netanyahu, each leading his country backward in different ways, the contemporary world does not offer examples of masterful, long-tenured political leadership. And so Henry Kissinger's new book, *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*, seems at first glance to be both timely and potentially valuable. Kissinger sets out to examine the ability of great leaders not just to deal successfully with the circumstances they face but to profoundly alter the history unfolding around them.

The leaders Kissinger chooses cover a broad swath of the history of the second half of the twentieth century. He shows Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, as a man humble enough

to shoulder the moral burden of Hitler's defeat; strong enough to give his divided country "the courage to start again," this time with democracy firmly enplaced; and prescient enough to see the need for a federated Europe. The studies of Charles de Gaulle and Lee Kuan Yew, the architects of postwar France and modern Singapore, respectively, are fresh and full of interest. The chapter on U.S. President Richard Nixon, and to a lesser degree, the one on the Egyptian leader Anwar al-Sadat are largely devoted to retelling what Kissinger has written many times before about the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the opening to China, dealings with Russia, and shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East. Sadat's story struggles at times to emerge from that of his powerful predecessor, Gamal Abdel Nasser. It comes alive with the

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1973 war with Israel and that conflict's diplomatic aftermath, including the Camp David accords, which Kissinger reads as part of a broader (and ultimately failed) effort by Sadat to create a "new order in the Middle East." The final study, of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, whom Kissinger credits with rescuing the United Kingdom from a spiral of mortal decline, is weakened by repeated descriptions of her warmth and "charm"—qualities that are hard to tally with a leader known, even to admirers, for extreme divisiveness and an inclination to bully.

If *Leadership* were a work of history or memoir, the volume would stand as an interesting treatment of six extraordinary individuals, though diminished by Kissinger's need, even as he nears the age of 100, to keep himself in the spotlight, continually polishing his legacy and sanding the rough spots off his record in Washington from nearly a half century ago. But the book's subtitle, "Six Studies in World Strategy," advertises that readers will learn things relevant to solving present and future international challenges, especially those on a world scale. Here the book falls down, for it never convincingly leaves the two periods and places that have defined Kissinger throughout his life. One is Europe from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, from the Treaty of Westphalia to the outbreak of World War I, an era known for balance-of-power policy. Paraphrasing Napoleon, who remarked that to understand a man you have to know what was happening in the world when he was 20, it helps to recall that, as a young man, Kissinger wrote his doctoral dissertation on the 1814–15

Congress of Vienna, and his devotion to that era and its statecraft has never wavered. The other is the Cold War, the time of Kissinger's service in government, which was defined by the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union and the small countries that became involuntary proxies in that conflict. He writes that his six subjects were "architects of the post-war . . . international order." That may be true, but that order is over. Today's disorder is profoundly different. These short biographies tell us little about the strategies that could work to tame it.

#### MICE AND MEN

Americans are likely to know Charles de Gaulle as the insufferably arrogant World War II ally whom President Franklin Roosevelt dismissed as having a Joan of Arc complex. Kissinger shows us a completely different man, possessed of great military insight and tremendous political gifts. In June 1940, de Gaulle was France's most junior general, having served all of two weeks as undersecretary of defense. Yet as German forces closed in on Paris, he flew to London and, "with effectively nothing but his uniform and his voice," invested himself as leader of the French resistance. There was more than merechutzpah in this. He convinced British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to recognize him "as leader of the Free French" and to give de Gaulle's forces—which did not yet exist—the right to operate as autonomous units under their own officers. It was an astonishing performance by someone for whom, as Kissinger perfectly captures it, "politics was not the art of the possible but the art of the willed."

De Gaulle's friction with his wartime allies stemmed from divergent aims: the United States and the United Kingdom sought to defeat Germany, whereas de Gaulle was focused on obliterating the Vichy government and quickly "restoring France's faith in itself." In late 1944, with the war not yet won, de Gaulle judged that France needed to reenter international diplomacy as an independent actor and undertook to meet with Joseph Stalin. Unable to safely reach Moscow directly on a French plane, de Gaulle took, as Kissinger recounts, a circuitous route "via Cairo and Teheran to Baku on the Caspian Sea, followed by a five-day journey in a special train," managing to become the first Allied leader to discuss the postwar settlement with the Soviet leader. Later, as the head of the provisional French government, he pushed through a series of dramatic policies, including the establishment of universal suffrage. By 1946, however, disagreeing with the weak executive emerging in drafts of France's new constitution, de Gaulle abruptly resigned, entering what would become a 12-year political exile. Kissinger traces the intricate maneuvers by which the general returned to power and established the Fifth Republic's strong presidency. The chapter covers much more: his dealing with the agony of Algeria, the restoration of Franco-German relations, his nuclear and NATO policies, and his dexterous handling of the 1968 protests that threatened yet another governmental collapse but ended instead with "the first absolute majority for one political grouping in the entire history of the French Republics."

Kissinger concedes that de Gaulle could be "haughty, cold, abrasive and

petty," but balancing that, "no twentieth-century leader demonstrated greater gifts of intuition"; these were matched by the courage to act on his beliefs no matter how divorced they were from popular opinion. More than half a century after his death, Kissinger notes, French foreign policy can still be called Gaullist. "He walks through history as a solitary figure—aloof, profound, courageous, disciplined, inspiring, infuriating, totally committed to his values and vision."

Kissinger is similarly admiring of Lee Kuan Yew, the founder of modern Singapore. Like de Gaulle, Lee willed something into being: in his case, a successful, stable country. Through three decades in power, he transformed a tiny, poor island—home to a splintered population of Chinese, Indians, and Malays with no shared history, language, or culture—into a cohesive state with the highest per capita income in Asia. He was able to do so in part by quickly crushing his political opposition and then ruling unchallenged. He was extraordinarily innovative in his economic and social policies, as well as in his creation of a national ethos of "shared success," establishing four official languages—Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English—and in his early years, spending an astonishing one-third of the national budget on education. He used racial and income quotas to eliminate segregation in housing and defied the economic wisdom of the time by actively recruiting multinational corporations. He fought off corruption, reduced pollution, planted trees, and received a weekly report on the cleanliness of the restrooms at the airport where foreign investors might form their first impressions of the country.

He also built, in Kissinger's judgment, the most capable armed forces in South-east Asia. What Lee did not do was leave Singapore with a democracy. Sounding a note of caution, Kissinger concludes that economic growth may not be enough to sustain Singapore's social cohesion. Someday, the country will have to find a better balance between "popular democracy and modified elitism."

Lee's foreign policy was also deft. He held off neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia and, confronting the looming threat of the great powers, referred to Singapore as a "mouse" among "elephants," and then set himself to closely study the elephants' habits. Eventually he became a respected adviser to both Beijing and Washington. He counseled the United States not to "treat China as an enemy from the outset," lest it push Beijing to "develop a counter-strategy to demolish the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific." In turn, he warned China's rulers that it was vital that younger Chinese be "made aware of the mistakes China made as a result of hubris and excesses in ideology" and learn to "meet the future with humility and responsibility." Earlier than most, Lee understood the dilemmas that China's growth would present, especially for Washington, and exhorted leaders on both sides of the Pacific to prevent the inevitable contest from turning into war. It is difficult to read Lee's warnings without wishing that someone of equal stature was being heard today.

#### A MASSACRE REVISITED

Kissinger's treatment of Nixon will be familiar to readers of his previous books. With few exceptions, the roles of the president and of Kissinger him-

self, who served as national security adviser and later as secretary of state, are indistinguishable. Much of the chapter is defensive. Regarding the prolonged withdrawal from Vietnam, he asserts that "the righteous idealism that had inspired and sustained the country's post-Second World War assumption of international responsibilities was now . . . invoked in wholesale repudiation of America's global role." Neither then nor now can Kissinger acknowledge that public and elite opposition to the war was not just a product of woolly-headed idealism or bleeding-heart morality. As, for example, in the case of his realist colleague Hans Morgenthau, it also stemmed from reasoning as hardheaded as his own that the war was jeopardizing U.S. national security interests.

What is new is a lengthy discussion of the 1971 crisis in what were then the separated parts of East and West Pakistan. This once forgotten episode, in which the U.S.-backed armed forces of West Pakistan massacred an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 East Pakistanis and drove some ten million refugees into India, became more widely known after the Princeton political scientist Gary Bass published *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide* in 2013. The crisis arose when voters in East Pakistan chose a leader who called for the region's autonomy from Pakistan, and that country's military dictator, General Yahya Khan, ordered his military to crush the newly elected regional government. The United States did not object publicly or privately, and Nixon and Kissinger continued to secretly supply Pakistan with weapons, including F-104 fighter jets,

ammunition, and spare parts, despite warnings from State Department and Pentagon lawyers and White House staff that the transfers were illegal.

Eventually, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi decided that the only way to stop the flood of refugees was to end the killing. India invaded East Pakistan and crushed the Pakistani army, eventually leading to the founding of an independent Bangladesh. But despite its nonaligned status, India had recently concluded a friendship and military assistance pact with the Soviet Union. Kissinger claims that the pact transformed the conflict “from a regional and humanitarian challenge into a crisis of global strategic dimensions.” Indeed, during the invasion, Nixon dispatched ships from the U.S. Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal and urged China to threaten India by moving troops to the two countries’ shared border.

Kissinger attributes the passionate opposition to Nixon’s policy by U.S. diplomats in East Pakistan and others in Washington to “human-rights advocates” arguing for “largely symbolic gestures.” Pakistan, he asserts, was “already amply armed,” and U.S. disapproval would do nothing except “diminish American leverage.” But he also admits, in so many words, that what actually determined the U.S. stance was that Yahya Khan was serving as the key intermediary in the administration’s efforts to open relations with Mao Zedong’s China. Unfortunately, Kissinger writes, “the tragedy unfolding in East Pakistan coincided with and complicated our communications over the date and agenda of my impending secret trip to Beijing.” The administration would

not take any action that held even the remotest chance of jeopardizing that process. (Kissinger does not make clear that that first crucial trip took place in July 1971, a timing that might account for the White House’s policy before that but that is less satisfactory in explaining its continued silence in the months that followed.)

A vicious, bigoted anti-Indian sentiment was also at work. Drawing on the once secret Nixon tapes, Bass shows that Nixon and Kissinger inflamed each other. The president said that what India really needed was a “mass famine” and that he couldn’t understand “why the hell anybody would reproduce in that damn country.” In these conversations, Indira Gandhi was “the witch” or “the old bitch.” The United States, Kissinger says at another point, cannot allow “Indian-Soviet collusion, raping a friend of ours.” Obviously, attitude affected policy, notwithstanding Kissinger’s insistence that the administration’s approach to the crisis had nothing to do with what he calls “insensitivity.” (He further belittles that term by adding that some conversations “did not reflect moral elevation.”)

What is most striking are the conclusions that Kissinger now draws from the tragic affair. This previously unremarked episode now becomes “a turning point in the Cold War” because of China’s potential involvement and, even more far-fetched, “the first crisis over the shape of the first genuinely global order in world history.” Raising the bar still higher, Kissinger even posits that a “global war over Bangladesh” was “possible.” Few would dispute that Nixon and Kissinger were juggling critical U.S. relations with both



China and the Soviet Union or that the opening of relations with China held far greater strategic value in 1971 than did autonomy for East Pakistan. But serious questions remain. Did pursuing that opening require the stance Washington took? When policy in a democracy requires secrecy because of widespread opposition, how often does it produce a beneficial result in the long run? Do illegal acts—in this case arms transfers—by the government lower the threshold for bad behavior, leading others, in and out of government, to break the law? Is there a better balance to be found than obtained here between a realist concern for the national interest and a decent respect for human life, including brown, non-Christian life? Answers are not to be found here.

#### GOODBYE TO ALL THAT

In his closing chapter, Kissinger suggests that the subjects of his study lived in a golden time when the aristocratic system that had produced earlier generations of leaders was merging with a new, middle-class meritocracy. Aristocratic statesmen, recognizing that they had not earned their stations, felt a duty to public service. Leaders from different countries, belonging to the same social class, “shared a sensibility transcending national boundaries.” Kissinger intones that “to the extent that an aristocracy lived up to its values of restraint and disinterested public service, its leaders would tend to reject the arbitrariness of personal rule, governing through status and moral suasion instead.” Looking back at history, one can only conclude that they seldom did.

By contrast, the meritocratic leadership that arose after World War

I made intelligence, education, and effort the path to success. When the two eras overlapped, individuals got the best of both worlds. But now the meritocracy, as Kissinger sees it, is faltering. Society pays too little attention to character, and education in high school and college shortchanges the humanities, producing “activists and technicians” but not citizens, including potential statesmen. It is true that the study of the humanities is out of fashion among students, but the criticism is badly overdrawn. Kissinger’s claim that “few universities offer an education in statecraft” ignores the great proliferation of schools of public policy in recent decades devoted to providing exactly that.

Further, he laments, today’s elites “speak less of obligation than of self-expression or their own advancement.” This seems to assume that social obligation can be expressed only in government service. How then can one account for the explosive growth in the number, size, and ambition of nongovernmental organizations—charities; aid, medical, and humanitarian groups; environmental organizations; think tanks; community development groups; and others—since the 1960s? Such groups are mostly staffed by people expressing their individual sense of social obligation. No one can quarrel with the importance of character, but there is too much rosy-hued nostalgia in Kissinger’s view of the past and not enough attention to the realities of the present.

Kissinger is on more solid ground when he steps away from the nature of leadership and turns to relations between China, Russia, and the United States. On the deepening rivalry

between Washington and Beijing, he observes that China expects that its ancient civilization and recent economic advance should command deference, while the United States assumes that its own values are universal and should be adopted everywhere. Each is impinging “partly by momentum, importantly by design” on what the other considers its core interests. Given these collisions and incompatible world-views, the two powers will have to learn “to combine inevitable strategic rivalry with a concept and practice of coexistence.” This is a widely understood diagnosis. Unfortunately, as he does so often, Kissinger leaves the all-important “how” unaddressed.

Turning to Russia, Kissinger believes that the former superpower will remain influential for decades, notwithstanding its declining population and narrow economic base. He cautions that because of its vast territory and lack of geographic defenses, Russia suffers from “an abiding perception of insecurity” deeply rooted in its history. This is true. Catherine the Great captured this idiosyncratic fear in her remark that “I have no way to defend my borders but to extend them.” If Ukraine were to join NATO, Kissinger points out, the alliance’s border would be “within 300 miles of Moscow,” eliminating the strategic depth that Russia has always counted on. He has suggested elsewhere that the solution to the current conflict must therefore be a neutral Ukraine, but he does not explain how the country’s security as a neutral buffer state could be guaranteed. Russia, after all, has twice pledged to respect Ukraine’s sovereignty, once when Kyiv was assigned an independent seat at

the United Nations on the breakup of the Soviet Union and again in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum when Ukraine acceded to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and Russia, with the United Kingdom and the United States, formally committed itself “to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and the existing borders of Ukraine.”

Having been a close observer of U.S. foreign policy for longer than many current officials have been alive, Kissinger has as deep a knowledge as anyone of international affairs and of the beliefs and foibles of today’s leading international actors. He has an unparalleled—almost inhuman—memory. He knows how international deals get made and why they may fail. It is true that twenty-first century conditions are fundamentally different from those Kissinger knows best—1814, 1950, or 1975. National borders are infinitely more porous; crucial assets now lie outside nation-states; the influence of nongovernmental actors, from CARE to criminals, is immensely larger; the Cold War is over; nuclear arsenals, cheap cyberweapons, and a disrupted climate all pose existential threats; and the relative power of the United States is far less than it was when Kissinger served in government. Moreover, electorates all over the world are drastically changed from those of the Cold War and before, making the twentieth-century models Kissinger portrays of dubious relevance to today’s struggling leaders. For all that, if Kissinger could just allow the past to be past and put what he knows to work on the conditions of today and tomorrow, he could surely offer so much more. 🌐

# The Ghosts of Kennan

## Lessons From the Start of a Cold War

FREDRIK LOGEVALL

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*Kennan: A Life Between Worlds*

BY FRANK COSTIGLIOLA. Princeton University Press, 2023, 591 pp.

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WE all read him, those of us who did graduate work in U.S. diplomatic history in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For although there were other important figures in modern U.S. foreign relations, only one was George Kennan, the “father of containment,” who later became an astute critic of U.S. policy as well as a prize-winning historian. We dissected Kennan’s famous “Long Telegram” of February 1946, his “X” article in these pages from the following year, and his lengthy and unvarnished report on Latin America from March 1950. We devoured his slim but influential 1951 book, *American Diplomacy*, based on lectures he gave at the University of Chicago; his memoirs, which appeared in two installments in 1967 and 1972 and

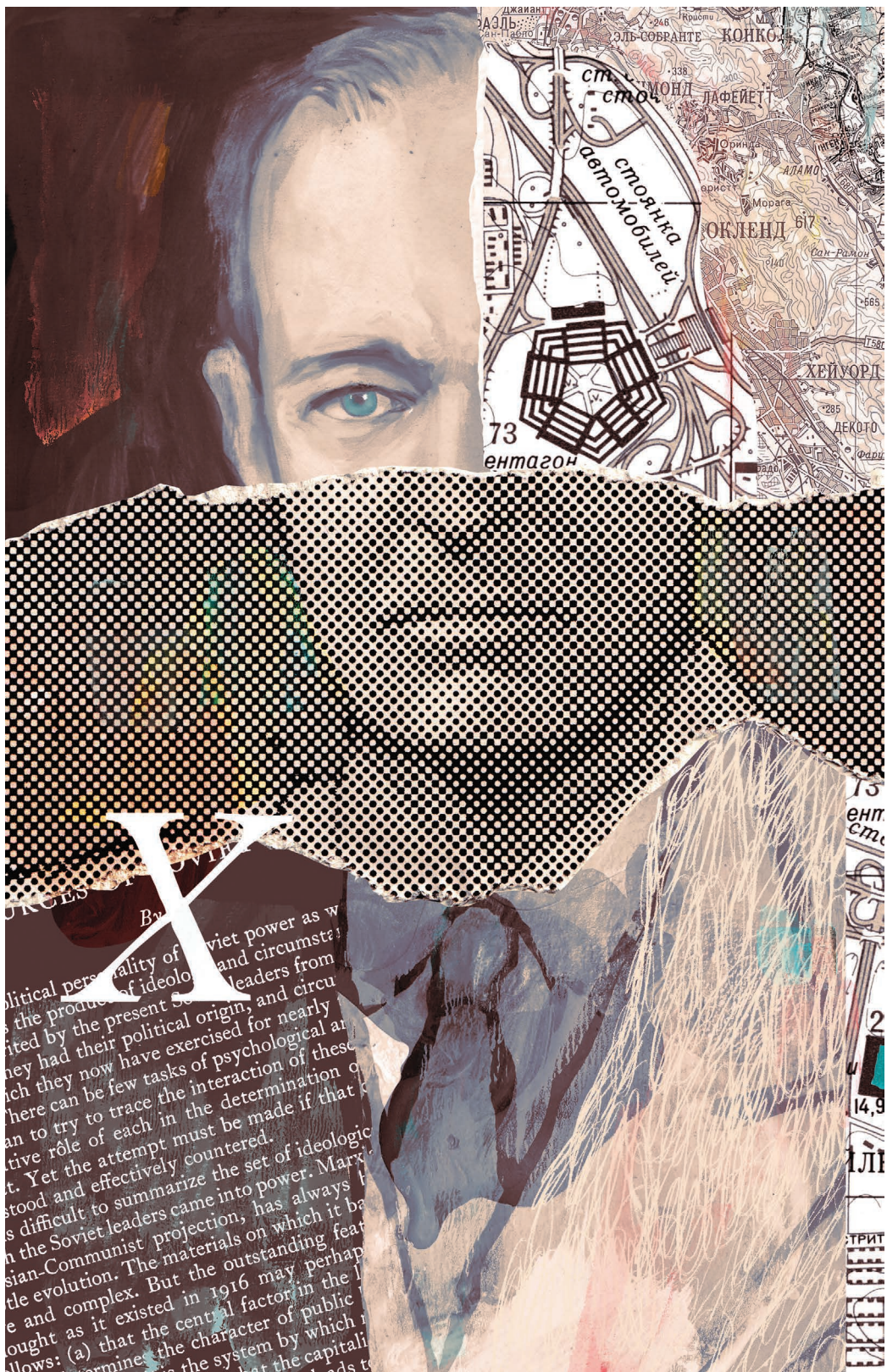
the first of which received both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award; and any other publication he wrote that we could get our hands on. (I figured there was no skipping *Russia Leaves the War*, from 1956, as it won not only the same awards garnered by the first volume of his memoirs but also the George Bancroft Prize and the Francis Parkman Prize.) And we dove into the quartet of important studies of Kennan then coming out in rapid succession by our seniors in the guild—by David Mayers, Walter Hixson, Anders Stephanson, and Wilson Miscamble.

Even then, some of us wondered whether Kennan was quite as important to U.S. policy during the early Cold War as numerous analysts made him out to be. Perhaps, we thought,

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he should be considered *an* architect of American strategy, not *the* architect. Perhaps the most that could be said was that he gave a name—containment—and a certain conceptual focus to a foreign policy approach that was already emerging, if not indeed in place. Even at the Potsdam Conference in mid-1945, after all, well before either the Long Telegram or the “X” article, U.S. diplomats understood that Joseph Stalin and his lieutenants were intent on dominating those areas of Eastern and Central Europe that the Red Army had seized. Little could be done to thwart these designs, officials determined, but they vowed to resist any effort by Kremlin leaders to move farther west. Likewise, the Soviets would not be permitted to interfere in Japan or be allowed to take control of Iran or Turkey. This was containment in all but name. By early 1946, when Kennan penned the Long Telegram from the embassy in Moscow, the wartime Grand Alliance was but a fading memory; by then, anti-Soviet sentiment was a stock feature of internal U.S. policy deliberations.

Still, the 1946 telegram and the 1947 article were remarkable pieces of analytical writing that explained much about how U.S. officials saw the postwar world and their country’s place in it. That Kennan soon began to distance himself from containment, and to claim that he had been grievously misunderstood, that the policy in action was turning out to be more bellicose than he had envisioned or wanted, only added to the intrigue. Was he more hawkish regarding Moscow in this early period than he later claimed? Or had he merely been

uncharacteristically loose in his phrasing in these writings, implying a hawkishness he did not feel? The available evidence suggested the former, but one held off final judgment, pending the full opening of Kennan’s personal papers and especially his gargantuan diaries, which spanned 88 years and ran to more than 8,000 pages.

These materials were indeed rich, as the world learned with the publication of John Lewis Gaddis’s authorized biography, three decades in the making, which appeared to wide acclaim in 2011 and won the Pulitzer Prize. Gaddis had full access to the papers and made extensive and incisive use of them. Then, in 2014, came the publication of *The Kennan Diaries*, a 768-page compendium of entries ably selected and annotated by the historian Frank Costigliola. Scholars had long known about Kennan’s prickly, complex personality and his tendency toward curmudgeonly brooding, but the diaries laid bare these qualities. What emerged was a man of formidable intellectual gifts, sensitive and proud, expressive and emotional, ill at ease in the modern world, prone to self-pity, disdainful of what he saw as America’s moral decadence and rampant materialism, and given to derogatory claims about women, immigrants, and foreigners.

Yet in one key respect, Kennan’s diaries proved unrevealing. Like many people, Kennan journaled less when he was busy, and there is virtually nothing of consequence from 1946 or 1947, when he wrote the two documents on which his influence rested and when he began to reconsider fundamental assumptions about the nature of the



Soviet challenge and the preferred American response. For the entirety of 1947, arguably the pivotal year of both the early Cold War and Kennan's career, there is but a single entry: a one-page rhyme. Any serious assessment of Kennan's historical importance—How deeply did he shape U.S. policy at the dawn of the superpower struggle? When and why did he sour on containment as practiced? Is it proper to speak of “two Kennans” with respect to the Cold War?—must center on this period of the late 1940s.

Now Costigliola has come out with a full-scale biography of the man, from his birth into a prosperous middle-class family in Milwaukee, in 1904, to his death in Princeton, New Jersey, in 2005. (What a century to live through!) It is an absorbing, skillfully wrought, at times frustrating book, more than half of which is focused on the diplomat's youth and early career. Costigliola's unmatched familiarity with the diaries is on full display, and although he does not shy away from quoting from some of their more unsavory parts, his overall assessment is sympathetic, especially vis-à-vis the “second” Kennan, the one who decried the militarization of containment and pushed for U.S.-Soviet negotiations. Kennan, he writes, was a “largely unsung hero” for his diligent efforts to ease the Cold War.

Intriguingly, as Costigliola shows but could have developed more fully, these efforts were already underway in the late 1940s, while the superpower conflict was still in its infancy. This transformation in Kennan's thinking is especially resonant today, in an era that many analysts are calling the

early stages of yet another cold war, with U.S.-Russian relations in a deep freeze and China playing the role of an assertive Soviet Union. If the analogy is correct, then it bears asking: How did Kennan's thinking change? And does his evolution hold lessons for his successors as they forge policy for a new era of conflict?

#### OUR MAN IN MOSCOW

Kennan's love of Russia came early, and partly because of family ties: his grandfather's cousin, also named George Kennan, was an explorer who achieved considerable fame in the late nineteenth century for his writings on tsarist Russia and for casting light on the harsh penal system in Siberia. Soon after graduating from Princeton, in 1925, the younger Kennan joined the Foreign Service and developed an interest in the country; in time, it became much more. Costigliola writes, “Kennan's love for Russia, his quest for some mystical connection—impulses that stemmed in part from the hurt and loneliness in his psyche going back to the loss of his mother—had enormous consequences for policy.” That is a pregnant sentence indeed, with claims that would seem hard to verify, but there can be no doubt that Kennan's passion for pre-revolutionary Russia and its culture was real and abiding, staying with him to the end of his days.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, as an ambitious young State Department officer, Kennan toggled between Germany, Estonia, and Latvia, working hard to develop facility in the Russian language and serving from 1931 to 1933 at the Soviet listening post in Riga. There followed an intense,

exhilarating, draining period in the U.S. embassy in Moscow, under the mercurial ambassador William Bullitt. Costigliola finds the middle of the decade to be a formative period for Kennan—he devotes an entire 48-page chapter to “The ‘Madness of ’34,’” and another of equal length to the years 1935–37, writing, in effect, a small book within a book and adding much to our understanding of Kennan’s worldview—as the diplomat worked to the point of exhaustion to establish himself as the premier Soviet expert in the Foreign Service.

Kennan treasured Russians as a warm and generous people but looked askance at Marxist-Leninist ideology, speculating even then that Russian communism was headed toward ultimate disintegration, on account of its disregard for individual expression, spirituality, and human diversity. About Western capitalism he had scarcely better things to say: it was characterized by systemic overproduction, crass materialism, and destructive individualism. He disliked and distrusted the “rough and tumble” of his own country’s democracy and longed for rule by an “intelligent, determined ruling minority.”

During World War II, Kennan served first as the chief administrative officer of the Berlin embassy and then, after a brief assignment in Washington in 1942, as second-in-command at the U.S. diplomatic mission in Lisbon. The top U.S. representative at the post, Bert Fish, seldom set foot in the building, which left Kennan to negotiate base rights in the Azores with Portugal’s premier, António de Oliveira Salazar, whose dictatorial but

anti-Nazi rule Kennan admired. He grew disenchanted, by contrast, with U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt’s wartime diplomacy. He opposed the president’s demand that Germany and Japan unconditionally surrender, as it foreclosed the possibility of a negotiated settlement. And after returning to the Moscow embassy in mid-1944, he faulted as naive Roosevelt’s belief that the United States could secure long-term cooperation with Stalin. Both then and later, Costigliola maintains, Kennan failed to detect Roosevelt’s underlying realism and shrewd grasp of power politics, as he continually mistook the president’s public statements for his private views. He missed the degree to which, despite their differences, he and Roosevelt “agreed on the fundamental issue of working out with the Soviets separate spheres of influence in Europe.”

About the subsequent Cold War, Costigliola is unequivocal: it need not have happened and, having broken out, need not have lasted nearly as long as it did. This argument is less novel than the book implies, but the author is certainly correct that “the story of Kennan’s life demands that we rethink the Cold War as an era of possibilities for dialogue and diplomacy, not the inevitable series of confrontations and crises we came to see.”

All the more puzzling, then, that Costigliola gives scant attention to the sharp downturn in U.S.-Soviet relations that began in the fall of 1945, as the two powers clashed over plans for Europe and the Middle East. He notes in passing that Kennan was “unaware how rapidly U.S. opinion and policy were souring

on Russia” in this period, but he does little to contextualize this important point. The schism over the Soviet occupation of Iran goes unmentioned, and readers learn nothing of Washington’s decision in early 1946 to abandon atomic cooperation with Moscow. And if indeed Kennan was incognizant of how swiftly American views and policy were changing as the year turned, how is this ignorance to be explained?

#### “X” MARKS THE SPOT

Costigliola is surely correct to note Kennan’s transformation from a position of opposing negotiations with the Kremlin in 1946 to one of advocating them in 1948. But one wants to know more about this metamorphosis. Costigliola is authoritative (if, especially compared to Gaddis, terse) on the Long Telegram and the “X” article, but one wishes for more context—even in a biography—especially concerning 1947, when the latter piece appeared. There is no discussion, or even mention, of the crises in Greece and Turkey that raged during that year; of President Harry Truman’s speech to a joint session of Congress, in which he asked for \$400 million in aid for the two countries and articulated what became known as the Truman Doctrine, by which the United States pledged to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures”; or of the 1947 National Security Act, which was closely tied to the perceived Soviet threat and which gave the president vastly enhanced power over foreign affairs.

Kennan, as other sources reveal, objected to the expansive nature of

Truman’s speech and what it implied for policy. But he chose not to alter the “X” article—then still in production—by emphasizing his desire for a limited form of containment. Appearing in these pages in July under the pseudonym “X” and the title “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” the essay was widely seen as a systematic articulation of the administration’s latest thinking about relations with Moscow, as its author laid out policy of “firm containment, designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world.” For the foreseeable future, Kennan seemed to be saying, diplomacy was a waste of time. Stalin’s hostility to the West was irrational, unjustified by any U.S. actions, and thus the Kremlin could not be reasoned with; negotiations could not be expected to ease or eliminate the hostility and end the U.S.-Soviet clash. The Soviet Union, he wrote, was “committed fanatically to the belief that with the United States there can be no permanent *modus vivendi*, that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional ways of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure.”

The assertion likely raised few eyebrows among *Foreign Affairs* readers that tense summer of 1947. But not everyone in the establishment was convinced. The influential columnist Walter Lippmann railed against Kennan’s essay in a stunning series of 14 articles in *The New York Herald Tribune*

in September and October that were parsed in government offices around the world. The columns were then grouped in a slim book whose title, *The Cold War*, gave a name to the super-power competition. Lippmann did not dispute Kennan's contention that the Soviet Union would expand its reach unless confronted by American power. But to his mind, the threat was primarily political, not military.

Moreover, Lippmann insisted that officials in Moscow had genuine security fears and were motivated mostly by a defensive determination to forestall the resurgence of German power. Hence their determination to seize control of Eastern Europe. It distressed Lippmann that Kennan, as well as the Truman White House, seemed blind to this reality and to the possibility of negotiating with the Kremlin over issues of mutual concern. As he wrote,

The history of diplomacy is the history of relations among rival powers, which did not enjoy political intimacy and did not respond to appeals to common purposes. Nevertheless, there have been settlements. Some of them did not last very long. Some of them did. For a diplomat to think that rival and unfriendly powers cannot be brought to a settlement is to forget what diplomacy is all about. There would be little for diplomats to do if the world consisted of partners, enjoying political intimacy, and responding to common appeals.

Containment as outlined by Kennan, Lippmann added, risked drawing Washington into defending any number of distant and nonvital parts of the world. Military commitments in such peripheral areas might bankrupt the Treasury and would in any event do

little to enhance U.S. security. American society would become militarized to fight a "Cold War."

Kennan was stung by this multi-pronged, multiweek takedown, which Costigliola oddly does not discuss. The diplomat admired Lippmann's stature as perhaps the most formidable foreign policy analyst in Washington, and he felt flattered that the great man would devote so much space to something he had written. More than that, he found himself agreeing with much of Lippmann's interpretation, including with respect to Moscow's defensive orientation and the need for U.S. strategists to distinguish between core and peripheral areas. "The Soviets don't want to invade anyone," he wrote in an unsent letter to Lippmann in April 1948, adding that his intention in the "X" article had been to make his compatriots aware that they faced a long period of complex diplomacy when political skills would dominate. Once Western Europe had been shored up, he assured Lippmann, negotiations under qualitatively new conditions could follow.

In the months thereafter, Kennan, now director of the newly formed Policy Planning Staff in the State Department, began to decry the militarization of containment and the apparent abandonment of diplomacy in Truman's Soviet policy. He pushed for negotiations with the Kremlin, just as Lippmann had earlier. His influence waning, Kennan left the government in 1950, returning for a brief stint as ambassador to Moscow in 1952 and later, under President John F. Kennedy, a longer spell as ambassador to Yugoslavia.

OUT OF THE ARENA

So began George Kennan's second career, as a historian and public intellectual, from a perch at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. It would last half a century. Costigliola is consistently fascinating here, even if he is less interested in Kennan's writings and policy analysis than in his deep and deepening alienation from modern society and his strenuous efforts to curate his legacy. Readers get almost nothing on *American Diplomacy*, Kennan's important, realist critique of what he called the "legalistic-moralistic" approach to U.S. foreign policy, or on the two volumes of memoirs, the first of which must be considered a modern classic. Costigliola says little about Kennan's analysis of the U.S. military intervention in Vietnam (he was less dovish in 1965–66 than Costigliola implies) but a great deal about his loathing of the student protesters—with their "defiant rags and hairdos," in Kennan's words—against the war. As elsewhere in *A Life Between Worlds*, more would have been better. Readers deserve more, for example, on what the diplomat-historian made of the crises over Berlin and Cuba under Kennedy in the early 1960s or on how he interpreted the severe worsening of superpower tensions under Jimmy Carter in 1979–80.

More and more as the years passed, Kennan felt underappreciated. Never mind the literary prizes and other accolades, never mind the Presidential Medal of Freedom presented to him by President George H. W. Bush in 1989. On more days than not, he was a Cassandra, despairing at the

state of the world and his place in it, worried about how he would be remembered. Thrilled to secure in Gaddis a brilliant young historian as his biographer, he grew apprehensive, especially as it became clear that Gaddis did not share his low opinion of U.S. Cold War policy in general and nuclear strategy under President Ronald Reagan in particular. (Another worry: that Gaddis would be too distracted by other commitments to complete the work in a timely fashion, thus allowing supposedly less able biographers—"inadequate pens," Kennan called them—to come to the fore.)

Even the Soviet Union's collapse, in 1991, brought Kennan little cheer. For half a century, he had predicted that this day would come, but one finds scant evidence of public or private gloating, only frustration that the Cold War had lasted so long and concern that Washington risked inciting Russian nationalism and militarism with its support for NATO expansion into former Soviet domains. The result, he feared, could be another cold war. In the fall of 2002, at the age of 98, he railed against what he saw as the George W. Bush administration's heedless rush into war in Iraq. The history of U.S. foreign relations, he told the press, showed that although "you might start a war with certain things on your mind . . . in the end you found yourself fighting for entirely different things that you had never thought of before." It dismayed him that the administration seemed to have no plan for Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and he doubted the evidence about the country's



supposed weapons of mass destruction. For that matter, he argued, if it turned out Saddam in fact had the weapons or would soon acquire them, the problem was in essence a regional one, not America's concern.

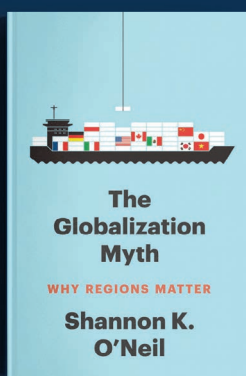
All the while, Kennan condemned what he saw as the abuses of industrialization and urbanization and called for a restoration of "the proper relationship between Man and Nature." In the process, Costigliola convincingly argues, he became an early and prescient advocate of environmental protection. And all the while, his antimodernism showed a retrograde side, as he looked askance at feminism, gay rights, and his country's increasing ethnic and racial diversity. Maybe only the Jews, Chinese, and "Negroes" would keep their ethnic distinctiveness, he suggested at one point, and thus use their strength to "subjugate and dominate" the rest of the nation. Costigliola comments acidly: "Kennan was aware enough to confine such racist drivel to his diary and the dinner table, where his adult children squirmed."

Kennan's long-held skepticism about democracy, meanwhile, showed no signs of abating. "The people haven't the faintest idea what's good for them," he grouched in 1984. Left to themselves, "they would (and will) simply stampe into a final, utterly disastrous, and totally unnecessary nuclear war." Even if they somehow managed to avoid that outcome, they would complete their wrecking of the environment, "as they are now enthusiastically doing." In his 1993 book, *Around the Cragged Hill*, a melancholy rumination on all that plagued modern American life,

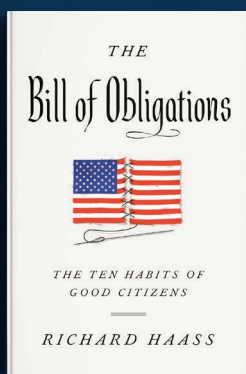
Kennan called for the creation of a nine-member "Council of State," an unelected body to be chosen by the president and charged with advising him on pressing medium- and long-term policy issues, with no interference by the hoi polloi. The idea was half-baked at best. That American democracy was in its essence a messy, fractious, pluralistic enterprise, with hard bargaining based on mutual concessions and with noisy interest groups jockeying for influence, he never fully grasped.

What he did understand was diplomacy and statecraft. Here, his body of writing, published as well as unpublished, historical as well as contemporaneous, stands out for its cogency, intricacy, and fluency. He was not always consistent; he got some things wrong. But as a critic of the militarization of U.S. foreign policy, in the Cold War and beyond, Kennan had few if any peers. For he grasped realities that have lost none of their potency in the almost two decades since his death—about the limits of power, about the certainty of unintended consequences in war-making, about the prime importance of using good-faith diplomacy with adversaries to advance U.S. strategic interests. Understanding the growth and projection of American power over the past century and its proper use in this one, it may truly be said, means understanding this "life between worlds." 🌀

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# To Kill a Democracy

## What a Mysterious Murder Says About Modern Indonesia

KRITHIKA VARAGUR

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*We Have Tired of Violence: A True Story of Murder, Memory,  
and the Fight for Justice in Indonesia*

BY MATT EASTON. New Press, 2022, 288 pp.

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Indonesia held its first direct presidential election in July 2004, and it was immediately classified as one of the largest ever in world history: 121 million Indonesians voted in the initial round, far outstripping the 111 million Americans who had voted in the 2000 U.S. presidential election. But Indonesian democracy, at that point, was still somewhat experimental. After Indonesia achieved its independence from the Netherlands in 1949, its first president, Sukarno (who, like many Indonesians, went by one name), ushered in a brief period of liberal parliamentary democracy. That evolved into a more authoritarian system known as “guided democracy,” which sought to incorporate traditional village consensus structures, but was cut short in 1965, when

army general Suharto took power in a transition that included the killing of up to a million suspected communists and leftists. He ruled until 1998, when mass protests and the Asian financial crisis finally prompted him to resign.

Both of the final presidential candidates in 2004 had strong ties to those tumultuous early years of the republic. Megawati Sukarnoputri, the incumbent president, was Sukarno’s eldest daughter. Her challenger, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a retired army general, had served in the military under Suharto. The huge, procedurally complex election was an undeniable accomplishment for a six-year-old democracy. But its results—Yudhoyono won, perpetuating the Suharto-era military’s influence on electoral politics—were somewhat less inspiring.

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Indonesia's modern democracy attracts no shortage of superlatives. The sprawling country of nearly 300 million people and more than 17,000 islands has made huge strides since the end of the Suharto dictatorship. Average life expectancy has risen from about 47 years in 1960 to 72 today, the economy has entered the ranks of the G-20, and the government has undertaken ambitious social welfare projects, including one of the world's largest health insurance schemes. But Indonesia's democracy can nevertheless feel rather hollow or insubstantial. Corruption is hopelessly entrenched, civil society is extremely weak, labor organizing is practically impossible, people are jailed for blasphemy, environmental activists are murdered, and the press is, if freer than in neighboring countries such as Myanmar or Vietnam, perennially muzzled. No one can be an "issues voter" because patronage, rather than ideology, drives party politics.

Indonesia's current president, Joko Widodo, also known as Jokowi, came to office in 2014 pledging reform but has done little to address these challenges—and he has arguably exacerbated some of them. Jokowi made history as the first modern president without direct ties to the Suharto regime, yet respect for human rights has declined throughout his two administrations. (He was reelected in 2019.) Today, millions of Indonesians may be able to vote, but the substantive rights typically accorded to citizens of a democracy are far from guaranteed.

Why? Some answers can be found in a probing new book about an assassination that took place in 2004, the same year as that first direct election.

In *We Have Tired of Violence*, the American human rights researcher Matt Easton gives the true-crime treatment to the life and death of Munir Said Thalib, an influential human rights activist who was murdered on a flight from Jakarta to Amsterdam. By exhuming the crime's motives and actors and reconstructing the convoluted trials that followed, Easton also sheds light on why so many democratic institutions remain weak in post-Suharto Indonesia—and why one of the world's biggest democracies remains so haunted by its violent past.

#### DETECTIVE WORK

Munir died in the airspace above the Ukrainian-Romanian border around 4:00 AM on September 7, 2004. He left behind a wife and two young children, as well as KontraS, the human rights organization that he co-founded to serve Indonesians who had been disappeared, killed, or injured by the state. Originally from an Arab-Indonesian trading family in East Java, Munir became a prominent labor organizer and activist over the course of the 1990s. He was about to start a year-long master's degree at Utrecht University in the Netherlands when he was administered a fatal dose of arsenic.

Munir's national and international stature—in 2000, he had won the Right Livelihood Award, a Swedish prize often called the "alternative Nobel"—meant that his death was met with considerable outcry and quickly classified by Indonesian police as premeditated murder. Munir's wife, Suci, and his activist friends were also unusually proactive in pushing for answers. Their scrappiness, as recounted by Easton, is impressive.



Justice denied: protesting in Jakarta, Indonesia, September 2007

Together, friends and family pulled phone logs, flight manifests, and obscure biographical data of various members of Indonesian intelligence services and politics, and they wrangled meetings with important officials, such as the director of the state-owned Garuda Indonesia airlines on which Munir took his last flight.

These friends organized an action committee for Munir, while Yudhoyono, the victor in the 2004 election, appointed a dedicated fact-finding team to investigate Munir's death. But even the latter had a meager remit. It couldn't compel witnesses to appear or conduct searches; it could "only share information with the police and make suggestions, hoping the police would follow up," Easton writes. The investigation also faced countless obstacles: the crime scene was a mess, critical evidence on the plane was destroyed by a clumsy Dutch investigation, a provisional toxicology

report wasn't filed for over three weeks, and the Indonesian police delegation to Amsterdam never obtained the full autopsy report. Still, the fact-finding team and the action committee managed to identify key suspects and even to home in on the location of Munir's poisoning, which was his layover at Singapore's Changi Airport.

The first suspect to emerge in the book is Pollycarpus Budihari Priyanto, a co-pilot for Garuda. He immediately appears so shady and sinister that, were this a television crime drama, he would be dismissed as a too-obvious culprit. He is rumored to have close ties to the military and cannot provide a consistent account of anything he did on Flight 974, including how exactly he upgraded Munir to business class. During their investigation, one of Munir's activist friends received three anonymous text messages claiming that Pollycarpus became an agent of the state intelligence



agency (Badan Intelijen Negara, or BIN) in 2002. These messages further alleged that BIN officials orchestrated Munir's murder because they were afraid that he would sound the alarm abroad about several disappeared anti-Suharto activists. This theory has the ring of truth, and despite its hazy provenance, the book essentially endorses it. Its claims appear borne out by the slowly unfurling web of intelligence contacts, countless incriminating details about Polycarpus's actions in the months before Munir's death, and the discovery of more than three dozen calls between Polycarpus and a prominent former Special Forces commander. In December 2005, Polycarpus was convicted of Munir's murder and sentenced to 14 years in prison. But although Polycarpus likely committed the murder, a far bigger question remained: Who ordered the hit and *cui bono*? The book posits that one likely candidate, though perhaps not the only one, was Muchdi, the former general and Polycarpus's reputed BIN handler.

When Munir was still alive, he once counseled a fellow activist, "Don't be too preoccupied with the bullets," when it came to investigating disappearances—meaning, focus on the why instead of the how. Regrettably, this book does not take that advice. Easton recounts a years-long investigation and lengthy trials, but the basic contours of these events were already reported over a decade ago, and he struggles to finesse the raw material into a gripping narrative. The courtroom drama is hard to follow; it includes, for instance, extended speculation over whether the "vector of poisoning" was orange juice or noodles. This book is clearly a labor of love, but concordant with Easton's professional

background, it sometimes reads like a human rights report. There is neither a dramatic twist nor a novel conclusion; the people who seem most guilty by the book's end were the same ones who stood trial over a decade ago. All that said, I couldn't help but be touched by Easton's diligent sourcing and exhaustive research. As a onetime foreign correspondent in Indonesia, I am acutely aware that few Anglophone writers have made such an effort to cover any Indonesian subject in recent years, let alone an 18-year-old case of limited global or American significance. I hope this book does not remain such an exception.

#### TOPSOIL AND BEDROCK

*We Have Tired of Violence* does not explain Munir's murder in an exciting or new way, but it does illuminate just how and why so many institutions in newly democratic Indonesia faltered right out of the gate. The protest movement that finally dethroned Suharto in 1998 was called *reformasi*, or reformation. Its target, however, was not the military as a whole but Suharto's regime more narrowly, as the name of Munir's organization, KontraS, signaled: *kontra*, or against, Suharto. According to one infamous Transparency International estimate, Suharto was the most corrupt world leader in recent history, swindling as much as \$35 billion over three decades. But he held onto power until the 1997 Asian financial crisis and a massive student protest movement finally turned his regime into a sinking ship. His military allowed him to drown. When student protesters camped out on the grounds of parliament, Easton writes, "the army appeared loyal, and yet the days passed, and they did not remove the occupying students."

By tacitly allowing the inevitable collapse of the regime, the military managed to transition nearly unscathed into democratic Indonesia. Many of its members found prestigious employment after 1998. Retired generals such as Yudhoyono entered electoral politics and rose quickly. Easton writes that these pre- and post-Suharto elites “accepted the procedural democracy of free elections and peaceful transitions, as long as everything else could stay the same: criminality, corruption and impunity.”

Every democracy is imperfect in its own way. If many of the United States’ excesses stem from the outsize role of individualism in the country’s culture, the Achilles’ heel of Indonesia’s democracy may be the stranglehold of the military, and the near-total impunity it has enjoyed for its past violence. Today, the Indonesian military is like bedrock under the few inches of soil where nominally democratic institutions have sprouted since 1998. Their roots cannot extend past a certain point.

The abiding power of the military in Indonesia manifested at several junctures in Munir’s life and death. Take the clearly partial treatment that the police gave major suspects with military backgrounds. General Hendropriyono, who led a massacre on the island of Sumatra in 1989, became the head of BIN in 2001. Munir stood out as a vocal opponent of Hendropriyono’s appointment. But when Hendropriyono was finally implicated in Munir’s case, he was, according to Easton, “interviewed [not] at police headquarters, which would be beneath an army general, but in his hotel suite.” When two members of the Munir fact-finding team tried to question him, he filed a defamation

complaint, which police promptly acted on by calling the members in for questioning instead. Muchdi, the former Special Forces general most likely to have ordered the hit, was even harder to pin down. Munir’s supporters believe his advocacy for people abducted by the Special Forces in 1998 torpedoed Muchdi’s army career, spurring a personal vendetta. But the police never fully cooperated with the Munir fact-finding team, providing it “with only 18 records of interrogation out of about a hundred” interviews conducted with suspects, according to Easton. Muchdi ignored four court summonses in a row in 2005, and once he was finally forced into court in 2008, his defense presented him as a home-grown hero. The stands were packed with his cheering supporters. Unsurprisingly, Muchdi was acquitted. He then swiftly entered politics, joining the Gerindra Party of former lieutenant general Prabowo Subianto.

The fact-finding commission became more and more ineffectual as the months dragged on. Their investigation likely never stood a chance against the deep networks, strengthened over decades, of the military and intelligence communities. Ultimately, only Polycarpus and two Garuda officials, convicted of facilitating a murder, served any jail time. In 2010, Garuda was also ordered to pay an undisclosed sum of more than 600 million rupiah (about \$68,000) to Munir’s widow, but its officials simply ignored the directive.

#### ORIGINAL SIN

No one would have been less surprised by all this than Munir, whose intended graduate research hoped, in Easton’s words, “to answer the puzzling question

of why it was so hard to protect human rights even after a military-backed government had come to an end.” Munir had a genius for big-picture analysis. His experience organizing workers informed his understanding of the extent of ongoing anticommunist paranoia, and its distortive effects on Indonesian society. Easton writes that with KontraS, Munir hoped to rethink “the entire role of the military and intelligence in a democracy.”

The success of the protest movement that dethroned Suharto meant that for a while the winds of change were with Munir. Indonesia once again had political parties, the press was declared free, the military was no longer granted automatic seats in the assembly, and the police became a civilian force separate from the military. As Easton writes, “Four years into *reformasi*, Indonesia was still drafting and passing a raft of laws on human rights, the military, police, terrorism, and intelligence.”

But the military never actually answered for its crimes in 1997 and 1998, especially the disappearances of activists and dissidents. Although curbing state violence was an imperative of *reformasi*, the young democracy’s subsequent leaders emphasized not justice, but reconciliation and forgiveness. So it stands to reason that the military really hasn’t confronted its even more malign actions from 1965 and 1966, namely the mass murder of up to a million suspected communists, leftists, intellectuals, and various minorities. This event was so traumatic, so far-reaching, and so bloody—and its perpetrators in power for so long afterward—that most Indonesians reacted by adopting a traumatized code of silence.

The sheer scale of the 1965–66 killings may have permanently hobbled civil society in modern Indonesia. Today, the remit of politics in “the country with no left,” as Australian activist Max Lane memorably put it, is “barren terrain.” There are genuine and brave activists across the country today—fighting corruption and advocating for open democracy, free speech, and minority rights—but not that many of them. Their problems are, as in Munir’s time, small numbers and large institutional resistance.

#### DEMOCRATIC LIP SERVICE

Munir once cannily observed of Yudhoyono that he was “a user of democracy rather than a believer in it.” It was Yudhoyono who first formed the committee to investigate Munir’s death in 2004, and it was he who ordered an end to the investigation not long after his reelection in 2009. This tactic of announcing symbolic change through new institutions or flashy appointments followed up with stonewalling, delays, and obfuscation remains broadly useful in modern democratic Indonesia.

Indeed, the current president has mastered this move. Jokowi, once dubbed Indonesia’s Obama, swept into office on a platform of reform. But the halo of potential change he once wore has thoroughly dissipated in the drab reality over which he presides. In his 2014 campaign, Jokowi took up such third-rail topics as the 1965–66 killings and the 1998 disappearances—one of Munir’s signature causes. But once in office, he focused almost monomaniacally on the economy.

In 2015, Indonesian activists formed a symbolic people's tribunal in The Hague to address the mass killings, but the Jokowi administration simply ignored their recommendations that Indonesia "apologize to all victims, survivors, and their families for . . . crimes committed in Indonesia in relation to the 1965 events," investigate and prosecute said crimes, and provide compensation to victims and survivors. (His vice president at the time dismissed the tribunal as "drama.")

It was in the Jokowi era that Pollycarpus was released from his second prison stint, having served just eight years of his 14-year sentence. Jokowi also appointed Hendropriyono, the brutal general allegedly involved in Munir's murder, as a transition team adviser—one of many Suharto-era military hands in his administration.

If there is any powerful new bloc of Indonesian civil society, it is that of Muslim populists and religious conservatives, who became much freer after the relatively secular Suharto era and who have been far more successful in effecting change than human rights advocates have. In recent years, right-wing Muslim groups have organized huge protests of over 200,000 people and helped get dozens of sharia-inspired local bylaws on the books.

As for liberal activists, it's a small and shrinking world. Reading Easton's book, I bittersweetly realized that I knew not only most of the human rights organizations of the early millennium but even many of the individuals cited by name, such as Maria Sumarsih, who has organized a weekly protest near the Presidential Palace since 2007. She is now 70 years old.

It's unclear whether people without direct memories of the 1998 student protests—and Indonesia is a young country, so there are fewer every day—will find their own ways to challenge the military's stranglehold. The mood of Indonesian youth is summed up less by any specific activist movement than by *golput*, the movement to abstain from voting altogether.

The parallels between Munir's and today's Indonesia are why this book's study of how democratic institutions can frustrate justice is so valuable. In 2017, I attended a community event at the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute. A planned seminar on the 1965–66 mass killings had been dialed down into a night of music and poetry. Nevertheless, the event was controversial and by sundown had attracted a huge mob of Islamist protesters, who shouted, "Kill Communist Party members!," blockaded the exits, and trapped some people there until four in the morning. (The Communist Party of Indonesia, or PKI, was violently disbanded in 1965.) At one point the police used tear gas not on the belligerent protesters but on the event attendees. Munir, too, patronized the Legal Aid Institute, which helped him get his bearings as a labor organizer in the 1990s. He, too, was injured in a violent riot at the institute in 1996, during which a soldier stomped on his hand and broke his finger. And, as in Indonesia today, authorities did not seek out the perpetrators. Instead, they arrested the leader of a new leftist pro-democracy group. As Easton writes, "Under pressure to investigate the violence, the government instead prosecuted the victims." 🌐

# Recent Books

## Political and Legal

G. JOHN IKENBERRY

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*Human Rights for Pragmatists:  
Social Power in Modern Times*  
BY JACK SNYDER. Princeton  
University Press, 2022, 328 pp.

In this masterful work, Snyder offers a bold explanation for why, how, and when societies make progress in expanding political rights and freedoms. Typically, the story of the rise and spread of human rights has been told as a moral, legal, and ideological struggle, centered on the promulgation of norms and treaties and the efforts of activist groups to name and shame violators. Snyder's contrarian claim is that the successes, failures, and setbacks of the rights revolution are better explained by the forces of liberal modernity. Only when societies become modern, with rising middle classes and democratic institutions, can systems of political rights truly thrive. Surveying the ups and downs of the human rights movement over the last two centuries, Snyder shows that breakthroughs have occurred primarily when large coalitions emerge

to push for expanded political rights as part of wider agendas of economic and social reform. In modernizing societies, human rights are embraced not because of their intrinsic ethical virtues or the dogged work of small groups of idealists, but because they serve the interests of a country's dominant political coalition. In the shift to a rights-based society, according to Snyder, power and politics must come first, and rights will follow.

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*The Shortest History of Democracy:  
4,000 Years of Self-Government—  
A Retelling for Our Times*  
BY JOHN KEANE. The Experiment,  
2022, 240 pp.

In this fast-paced and engaging book, Keane tells the story of societies across the ancient and modern eras struggling for self-government. Democracy's journey is best seen not as the steady march of the Western world to freedom and enlightenment but rather as an odyssey, full of twists and turns, crises, and reinventions. Keane locates the first glimmers of self-rule centuries before its emergence in ancient Greece in the public assemblies of the cities of Mesopotamia that functioned



as a counterweight to kingly power. The later assemblies of Athens prefigured the parliaments that would emerge in parts of medieval Europe, a new vision of democracy that would eventually be taken up in the colonies of North America, leading to the American and French Revolutions and the anti-imperial republican revolutions in South America. Keane argues that a pivotal new phase began in the 1940s with the rise of what he calls “monitory democracy,” characterized by the emergence of new forms of power-monitoring institutions and legal forms of accountability. This last era of democratic expansion, in Keane’s view, was truly global and not just Western. Democracy must be defended, he claims, as the surest enabler of open-mindedness, diversity, and an ethical way of life.

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*Governing the World  
Without Government*

BY ROBERTO MANGABEIRA UNGER.  
Verso, 2022, 96 pp.

In this slender book, Unger ruminates elegantly on the problems of world governance. At times of global upheaval, such as today, thinkers and diplomats eagerly put forth grand new schemes for governing the world. The UN Security Council could be expanded; a new Council of Regions could be established. Unger argues that the fatal flaw in such proposals is that they threaten to transfer sovereignty upward toward a centralized authority precisely when states are seeking to protect their sovereignty and defend their ways of life. The only

way to get cooperation without such transfers of sovereignty is through ad hoc and shifting coalitions of states. These initiatives are best exemplified by the Conference of Parties framework organized under the auspices of the UN, an approach currently used to foster cooperation regarding climate change. Unger sees a future in which various sorts of coalitions of the willing operate to produce collective action. But the success of this approach to global governance will still depend on whether the great powers can manage their rivalries and not allow their enmity to make international cooperation impossible.

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*Ascending Order: Rising Powers  
and the Politics of Status in  
International Institutions*

BY ROHAN MUKHERJEE. Cambridge  
University Press, 2022, 336 pp.

The most dangerous moments in international affairs occur when rising states emerge to challenge the dominance of a reigning great power. In this excellent study, Mukherjee shows that these power transitions do not inevitably culminate in great-power conflict or hegemonic war. He argues that what drives the choice of rising states to either cooperate or seek to overturn the existing order hinges on perceptions of status. As the United States grew powerful in the late nineteenth century, Washington rejected maritime and commercial agreements that relegated it to the status of a secondary power while embracing international law that gave it equal standing among Atlantic powers. By contrast, imperial Japan’s

struggles to secure peer status alongside Western great powers, coupled with the U.S. ban on Japanese immigration, turned Tokyo against the existing order, setting the stage for the Pacific War. Mukherjee also looks at India's post-independence nuclear diplomacy, attributing its refusal to join the 1968 nonproliferation treaty to the treaty's failure to accord New Delhi symbolic equality as a great power. Looking at China today, the book argues that Beijing is also aggressively engaged in the search for status, driven by a sense that Western powers have not granted it the recognition it deserves.

## Economic, Social, and Environmental

BARRY EICHENGREEN

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*21st Century Monetary Policy: The Federal Reserve From the Great Inflation to COVID-19*

BY BEN S. BERNANKE.  
Norton, 2022, 512 pp.

*A Monetary and Fiscal History of the United States, 1961–2021*

BY ALAN S. BLINDER. Princeton University Press, 2022, 432 pp.

**B**ernanke and Blinder, both former U.S. Federal Reserve officials, have written complementary books on the history of central banking and macroeconomic policy in the United States. In contrast to Bernanke's 2015 book, *The Courage to Act*, which was a firsthand account of the global financial crisis during his ten-

ure as chair of the Federal Reserve, his latest book places the evolution of Fed policy in historical context. Bernanke traces U.S. monetary policy from the founding of the Fed in 1913 to the turn of the twenty-first century, when he joined the central bank's board. He then describes the central bank's response to the 2008–9 financial crisis, the slow recovery that followed, and the COVID-19 pandemic. He does not neglect to examine policy missteps, including the Fed's failure to counter the Great Depression in the 1930s and the loss of control over inflation in the 1970s. But Bernanke tells an essentially optimistic story of how central bankers came to appreciate the importance of low and stable inflation, to understand inflation dynamics, and to effectively deploy an expanding array of policy tools. Although the author takes note of the acceleration of inflation in 2021, one wonders whether he would have been equally sanguine about the Fed's ability to anticipate inflation and so positive about its current policy framework had he not completed his book before the further acceleration of inflation in 2022.

Blinder's title is a riff on Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz's 1963 *Monetary History of the United States*, which left off where this book picks up. The author emphasizes what Friedman and Schwartz left implicit, namely that monetary and fiscal policies cannot be analyzed in isolation from one another. Blinder describes instances when monetary and fiscal policies were well coordinated but also when they worked at cross-purposes. He eschews simple themes, such as Friedman and Schwartz's organizing insight that "money is all that matters," in favor of

a complex narrative that stresses the importance of ideas, circumstances, and individuals. He is at his best when describing which policymakers occupied the “first chair,” in the sense of setting the tone for policy overall. He then seeks to explain successive shifts in primacy toward fiscal policy in the 1960s and 1970s, monetary policy when then Fed Chair Paul Volcker sought to suppress inflation in the 1980s, fiscal policy again during the Clinton presidency, and monetary policy in the run-up to the financial crisis of 2008. Straddling the fence between analysis and thick description, Blinder provides just enough detail to satisfy both the specialist and the general reader.

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*Confronting South Korea's  
Next Crisis: Rigidities, Polarization,  
and Fear of Japanification*

BY JAEJOON WOO. Oxford University Press, 2022, 656 pp.

With a per capita GDP of roughly \$34,000 and prominence in a range of high-tech sectors, South Korea is one of the great economic success stories of the twentieth century. Yet many Koreans are profoundly dissatisfied with their country's economic performance and pessimistic about its future. In this careful and comprehensive volume, Woo reviews the Korean economy's history while focusing mainly on current problems and their likely solutions. He depicts a society troubled by a large income gap between rich and poor, where future prospects are dimmed by unfavorable demographics and declining productivity growth. Households contend with high levels of debt, job insecurity, pervasive

youth unemployment, and old-age poverty. Rising sociopolitical polarization has frustrated the efforts of successive presidential administrations to address these problems. The country is squeezed economically by Chinese competition and geopolitically by North Korean belligerence. Woo provides not a polemic but rather a careful, painstakingly documented analysis of these issues. If he is less than successful at pointing a way forward, it is not for lack of trying.

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*Understanding Global Migration*

EDITED BY JAMES F. HOLLIFIELD  
AND NEIL FOLEY. Stanford  
University Press, 2022, 520 pp.

This multidisciplinary collection of essays broadens the analysis of migration from the handful of cases that dominate popular discussion and scholarly literature—typically to do with migration to Europe from the Middle East and Africa and migration to the United States from Latin America. It adopts a global perspective, describing how countries in both the global North and the global South deal with migration. The editors categorize migration policies in terms of four types of states. First is the “post-colonial migration state” in Africa and the Middle East, where governments adopt and then adapt migration policies inherited from the colonial period. Second is the Asian “developmental migration state” characterized by strong borders and institutionalized rights for specific categories of migrants. Third are the “settler migration states” of the Americas, historically committed to attracting immigrants but often challenged

by anti-immigrant nativist movements. Fourth are “post-imperial migration states,” notably in Western Europe, that extend preferential treatment to migrants from their former colonies. Each kind of state has its strengths and weaknesses: there is no one ideal type. This ambiguity underscores the editors’ conclusion that crafting effective policies that respect the rights of migrants while addressing the legitimate concerns of natives will be one of the key economic challenges of the twenty-first century.

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*Backfire: How Sanctions Reshape the World Against U.S. Interests*

BY AGATHE DEMARAIS. Columbia University Press, 2022, 304 pp.

This book went to press shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, but not so shortly that the author was unable to incorporate material on the sanctions placed on Moscow by Washington and its allies. Demarais documents the increasing reliance on economic and financial sanctions, by the United States in particular, in response to violations of economic, political, territorial, and human-rights norms. She invokes historical evidence to support her contention that sanctions are effective only if they have limited purposes, deliver results quickly, target an economically vulnerable country, and are well coordinated internationally—conditions that rarely obtain in practice. She highlights the limitations and negative side effects of sanctions, some of which will be familiar from recent events. Sanctions can have negative humanitarian consequences, although such collateral damage will

not deter targeted authoritarian leaders. Banks and firms find complying with sanctions difficult. Sanctions can hurt the countries that impose them, as illustrated currently by the high energy prices prevailing in the West. Current sanctions may undermine the effectiveness of future sanctions; thus, weaponizing Western banks and currencies against Russia may encourage Moscow and others to increase their reliance on China’s financial system. Demarais posits that the use of sanctions as a policy instrument has probably peaked, although she does not describe what alternative instruments and stratagems countries should use instead when confronting a rogue government.

## Military, Scientific, and Technological

LAWRENCE D. FREEDMAN

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*Black Snow: Curtis LeMay, the Firebombing of Tokyo, and the Road to the Atomic Bomb*

BY JAMES M. SCOTT.  
Norton, 2022, 432 pp.

**T**he massive air raids conducted by the Allies during the later stages of World War II against both Germany and Japan remain controversial because of their enormous human toll as well as their dubious strategic benefit. In this powerful and compelling narrative history, Scott explains how and why the United States bombed Japan in this way. The production of the heavy bomber B-29 Superfortress made these raids possible, but U.S. planners

chose to use the B-29 to attack cities only after failing to employ the bombers with precision. Scott acknowledges the bravery of the crews who conducted these missions and the single-minded determination and innovative tactics of General Curtis LeMay, the U.S. air force commander. All this culminated in a raid on Tokyo in March 1945 that involved 279 B-29s flying low and dropping incendiaries. The firebombing of Tokyo killed as many as 100,000 people. Scott vividly describes the horrific impact of the inferno on the city and its residents. The attack created the moral climate in which it was possible, five months later, to use atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

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*Norman Cousins: Peacemaker  
in the Atomic Age*

BY ALLEN PIETROBON.

Johns Hopkins University Press,  
2022, 440 pp.

In August 1945, 12 days after learning of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Norman Cousins, the American editor of the small circulation *Saturday Review of Literature*, wrote a forceful essay titled “Modern Man Is Obsolete,” describing his fear of “forces man can neither channel nor comprehend.” The essay gained attention and set Cousins on his path as a passionate yet wily anti-nuclear campaigner. Despite his zealous opposition to nuclear weapons, he never played down the dangers of Soviet communism or shunned the policy-makers responsible for developing and maintaining the United States’ nuclear arsenal. Whether in raising money to treat Japanese women disfigured by the

atomic bombs or in warning about the dangers of fallout from atmospheric nuclear tests, he pursued his campaigns with flair. He gained access to political and religious leaders. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower was sympathetic to but not indulgent of Cousins. President John F. Kennedy found him a useful go-between with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in pushing forward a partial test ban treaty. Cousins even provided a draft for Kennedy’s famously dovish American University speech of June 1963. As a sympathetic biographer, Pietrobbon does a good job of describing how Cousins’s combination of deep moral convictions and political pragmatism managed to make such an impact.

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*The Inheritance: America’s Military  
After Two Decades of War*

BY MARA E. KARLIN. Brookings  
Institution Press, 2021, 320 pp.

In between her stints of service in the Pentagon, first under U.S. President Barack Obama and now under President Joe Biden, Karlin explored what went wrong with the two big U.S. wars of this century, in Afghanistan and Iraq. She considered, in turn, how the military went to war, how it waged war, who served in the ranks, and who led, before addressing what the prosecution of these wars meant for future conflicts. To this end, she interviewed around 100 civilian and military figures. Quotes from these interviews enliven her book and help bring home the importance of personalities, leadership, the emotions that can be aroused by apparently



dry debates about civil-military relations, and the dangers of too great a separation between the armed forces and the society they serve. Americans routinely express gratitude for soldiers without really understanding what their service entails or the toll of long tours in hostile environments. She urges continued reflection on mistakes as well as achievements, better dialogue between the civilian and military leadership, and holding them both to proper account.

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*Greek Fire, Poison Arrows, and Scorpion Bombs: Unconventional Warfare in the Ancient World*  
BY ADRIENNE MAYOR. Princeton University Press, 2022, 432 pp.

In this revised and updated edition of a book first published nearly two decades ago, Mayor explores how the ancients used irregular methods to kill their foes. She explains in this fascinating account how ancient warriors siphoned venoms from snakes and insects, poisoned food and water supplies, introduced plagues to opposing armies and populations, and conducted experiments in toxicology. In AD 198, the defenders of the city of Hatra in modern-day Iraq used “scorpion bombs” (terra cotta jars stuffed with deadly scorpions) to repel a Roman attack. Sometimes, understandings of animal biology led to clever stratagems. At the Battle of Thymbra, in 547 BC, a Persian army was about to be overwhelmed by the Lydian cavalry. But Persian leaders rescued the situation when they recalled that horses cannot abide the smell of camels.

They shielded their regular cavalry and infantry with camels from their baggage train. The enemy cavalry recoiled at the odor of the camels, disrupting its advance, and the Persians won the day.

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*Command: The Politics of Military Operations From Korea to Ukraine*  
BY LAWRENCE D. FREEDMAN.  
Oxford University Press, 2022, 624 pp.

In this historical and geographical tour de force, Freedman cogently examines the interplay of politics and command—the balance of decision-making by civilian leaders and their military counterparts. His account ranges from the end of World War II to the present, and across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America assessing the record of a host of important civilian and military officials who were in positions of command during times of war and peace. One of the critical questions Freedman explores is what military officers should do when civilian leaders demand actions that are illegal or contradict core national or professional values—and, conversely, what civilian commanders should do when generals refuse to follow orders. During wartime, it is not just the contest of civil and military authorities that complicate command but also the clashing imperatives of politics, expertise, resources, and individual egos. Freedman’s book is a must-read, and even more so today, as it sheds light on the dynamics of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which challenges the very core of the postwar international order.

MONICA DUFFY TOFT

# The United States

JESSICA T. MATHEWS

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*Pandemic Politics: The Deadly Toll of Partisanship in the Age of COVID*

BY SHANA KUSHNER GADARIAN, SARA WALLACE GOODMAN, AND THOMAS B. PEPINSKY. Princeton University Press, 2022, 400 pp.

*The Trump Tapes: Bob Woodward's 20 Interviews with President Donald Trump*

BY BOB WOODWARD. Simon & Schuster, 2022, 11h 29m.

Officially, close to 1.1 million Americans are reported to have died as a result of COVID-19 through the end of 2021, a total close to the 1.2 million U.S. soldiers who died in all U.S. wars from the American Revolution to the Afghan war. But if one includes estimates of unreported deaths and those caused by the diversion of medical resources to contend with the COVID-19 pandemic, the actual total is calculated to exceed two million, second only to the number of excess deaths in India. Moreover, the United States is the only high-income country among those countries that account for a large proportion of the global total. In short, U.S. performance in the pandemic was terrible in absolute terms and when compared with that of all other developed countries. Two recent books offer revealing portraits of this disaster.

Gadarian and her co-authors conducted large surveys of public opinion and behavior from the beginning of the

pandemic in 2020 through 2021. Their book is a sophisticated study, based on voluminous data, of U.S. politics as revealed by the strains and stresses of the pandemic. They find that the “core explanation” for the United States’ calamitous performance is U.S. President Donald Trump’s handling of the crisis. Beginning with the crucial early window of opportunity to contain the virus, Trump and his Republican allies chose to prioritize a strong economy in an election year over public health, wanted to project “an image of strength” rather than scramble to mobilize necessary resources, and did not “encourage deference to trusted public health leaders” (an unduly generous way to describe the torrent of misinformation, conspiracy theories, and phony science advanced by the administration). Instead of uniting already polarized Americans in the face of a shared threat, Trump’s policies drove them farther apart, undermining their willingness to act to protect others and even themselves in the name of partisan tribalism.

In Trump’s four years in office, Woodward concludes in his newest release, the president’s “greatest failure was his handling of the coronavirus.” The engrossing audio book of 20 lengthy interviews with Trump and various aides highlights his missteps. Trump received early warning of what was coming. Deputy National Security Adviser Matthew Pottinger had extensively covered the SARS epidemic of 2002–4 while living in China as a reporter. In early January, he called Chinese doctors he knew from that time and learned that the virus was vastly worse than Chinese officials had

let on. “Don’t think SARS ’03,” he was told, “think 1918”—a reference to the devastating Spanish influenza pandemic. By that time, China had already quarantined more than 50 million people, and thousands were already dead. Frighteningly, the Chinese doctors reported to Pottinger, the disease could spread asymptotically. Based on this unique information, Pottinger’s boss, National Security Adviser Robert O’Brien, told Trump at his intelligence briefing on January 28 that the new virus would be the biggest national security threat of his presidency. A few days later, Trump virtually ignored the brewing pandemic in his State of the Union speech. When Woodward asked Trump whether O’Brien’s bald prediction led him to see the pandemic as “the leadership test of a lifetime,” he demurred. Regarding the pandemic, he said, “I had nothing to do with this” and “I take no responsibility for this.” He has since denied O’Brien’s account of this briefing.

The two books emphasize the same fundamental point: several hundred thousand American lives were unnecessarily lost because of Trump’s mishandling of the pandemic. There has been little public recognition of the dimensions of this catastrophe and, incredibly, neither Trump nor any Trump administration officials have been held to account. There is much more in the audiobook worth listening to, including Woodward’s ultimate verdict that Trump simply does not believe in democracy. Trump claimed that all the administration’s ideas “were mine. Everything’s mine.” Woodward adds that his meaning was clear: “The presidency is mine.”

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*Democratic Justice: Felix Frankfurter, the Supreme Court, and the Making of the Liberal Establishment*

BY BRAD SNYDER. Norton, 2022, 992 pp.

In 1894, Felix Frankfurter arrived in the United States from Austria as an 11-year-old who spoke no English. Less than a dozen years later, he graduated first in his class from Harvard Law School. He kept climbing at that speed through a career that placed him at the center of national affairs for more than half a century. Frankfurter was a celebrated advocate for progressive causes, a legendary Harvard law professor, a close adviser of President Franklin Roosevelt during the New Deal, and a Supreme Court justice for 23 years. There, his unquenchable energy, powerful intellect, and sometimes overbearing manner made him a force on the bench—but also a poor coalition builder. He had long believed that the judiciary should leave social policy to Congress. As the Court became more liberal, especially under Earl Warren, Frankfurter’s advocacy of judicial restraint severely disappointed progressives. The notable exceptions were cases involving racial discrimination: for example, he played a key role in achieving a unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 verdict that ruled that racial segregation in schools was unconstitutional. With some prescience, he argued that progressives would come to rue a Court that was active in making policy when it was again staffed with conservatives. Such a Court now

holds sway, making this authoritative, albeit overly detailed biography of an extraordinary figure in American history and jurisprudence very timely.

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*The Roots of American Individualism: Political Myth in the Age of Jackson*

By Alex Zakaras. Princeton University Press, 2022, 432 pp.

Zakaras makes a powerful argument that the Jacksonian era (1820–50), generally treated by historians as a politically unimportant interlude between the founding of the United States and the Civil War, was instead a seminal time that saw the formation of the narrative of a uniquely American individualism, which still shapes politics today. Three overlapping myths—of the “independent proprietor” (think of the striving farmer, the small businessman, and other enterprising, hard-working individuals); of the “rights bearer” (a definition of Americanness that imagined Americans as exiles united against political oppression and religious persecution); and of the “self-made man”—emerged during those decades, describing related ideas of personal freedom and American exceptionalism. Although Americans embraced these notions as self-evident truths, they were in fact idealized stories of a country whose people, economic institutions, and enormous tracts of land made it uniquely favorable to individual independence. But these myths also made personal failure the fault of the individual rather than in part the result of wider forces or lack of support; struggling people had only themselves to blame. Unlike with

most political ideas, liberals and conservatives jointly subscribed to these myths. Then and now, these ideas defined “a shared terrain on which anyone hoping for a broad audience was constrained to argue.” In his closing chapter, Zakaras leaves history for a compelling exploration of how these individualist myths still shape American political thought and societal expectations, especially regarding the appropriate role of the state and acceptable levels of inequality.

## Western Europe

ANDREW MORAVCSIK

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*Democracy Erodes From the Top: Leaders, Citizens, and the Challenge of Populism in Europe*

BY LARRY M. BARTELS. Princeton University Press, 2023, 280 pp.

Barfels, a leading analyst of electoral democracy and public opinion in the United States, turns here to a central question in European politics: Do right-wing populist parties pose a threat to democracy, moderate politics, and multilateral cooperation? His point in this important book is simple yet powerful. Public opinion doesn't support the notion advanced by journalists and policy analysts that financial crises, mass migration, an undemocratic EU technocracy, warfare, and so-called wokeness have undermined popular support for moderate democratic politics. Ordinary Europeans support democratic moderation now as much as they did 20 years ago. In fact, Europeans have

more positive attitudes toward migrants, are more trusting of democracy, and perceive the EU more favorably than they did in previous decades. Yet these trends do not mean democracy is safe. Rather, the public is in truth a bystander to politics, as democracy erodes from the top. It is the machinations of political elites that have led to the decline of democracy, multilateralism, and tolerance in countries such as Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and the United Kingdom. To eliminate the incentives for this type of behavior, political institutions must be reformed—a subject Bartels could take up in another book.

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*A Troubled Constitutional Future:  
Northern Ireland After Brexit*

BY MARY MURPHY AND JONATHAN  
EVERSHED. Agenda, 2022, 208 pp.

The 1998 Anglo-Irish Good Friday Agreement seemed to resolve decades of conflict between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland. The EU had done much to advance this constitutional settlement, not just by offering a forum for informal discussions but also by reducing the significance of sovereign borders, allowing people to move with ease across the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Yet Brexit has called this peaceful arrangement into question. This study provides a sober explanation of how and why this thorny situation has developed. It is a story that baffles outsiders, largely because it involves partisan opportunism. Most Northern Irish political parties had opposed Brexit, but the ruling Democratic Unionist Party exploited its essential role in former British Prime

Minister Theresa May's parliamentary majority to veto compromises that would have allowed Northern Ireland to adopt certain EU regulations and thereby avoid having to erect a border in the Irish Sea. But May's successor, Boris Johnson, betrayed the DUP. He accepted the 2020 Anglo-Irish Protocol, which established border controls effectively in the Irish Sea and allowed Northern Ireland to remain subject to EU regulations, smoothing the rest of the United Kingdom's path to a hard Brexit. Although people in Northern Ireland are unlikely to support the reunification of Ireland immediately, these developments will likely lead to the renegotiation of the 1998 agreement, the consequences of which remain unknown.

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*France: An Adventure History*

BY GRAHAM ROBB. Norton, 2022,  
544 pp.

This book belongs to a contemporary genre—Robb calls it “slow history”—in which authors travel around on foot or by old-fashioned conveyance and recount tales about the history of the spots they visit. Robb, a British popular historian, delves into the past and present of France from the seat of his bicycle, on which he has logged over 14,000 miles crisscrossing the country. He also boasts of spending four years doing extensive library research. Accordingly, he meanders quite a bit while visiting France, detouring unexpectedly to dawdle over details. Some topics he discusses are well known, such as the origins and rituals of the Tour de France, the turn-of-the-twentieth-century political scandal known as the Dreyfus Affair, and current



French President Emmanuel Macron's inability to inspire public affection. Others are obscure, such as tales of ancient Goth chieftains, quirky medieval craftsmen, and old stores. Yet the improbable result is an exceptionally entertaining book. Even the timid reader will find passages of engaging and often witty storytelling, while adventurous ones may chart an itinerary for an upcoming trip.

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*The Death of Consensus: 100 Years of British Political Nightmares*

BY PHIL TINLINE. Hurst, 2022, 472 pp.

When I first cracked this book, the British Prime Minister Liz Truss's Conservative government—itsself the result of the shambolic collapse of governments led by David Cameron, Theresa May, and Boris Johnson—was less than 40 days old and already in its death throes. With interest rates rising and poll numbers plummeting, Truss fired her chancellor and reversed her signature tax reform policy, only to resign within days. What better moment to read this book about British political disasters by a prolific BBC writer and documentarian? Tinline offers an engaging anecdote-packed history based on the view that politics is driven not by hope but by fear. Politics lurches from crisis to crisis, with change occurring when politicians propose some way to exit a nightmare. The Great Depression and World War II encouraged necessary government intervention and social welfare provision. Thatcherism arose in response to the Winter of Discontent in 1978–79, when the Labour Party could not govern a gridlocked society or tame unreasonable unions.

And the 2008 financial crisis, the Brexit debacle, the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, economic inequality and mismanagement are dismantling the Thatcherite model. Tinline clearly hopes that a more European-style center-left politics will take hold in the United Kingdom, but he does not explain why.

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*Personality and Power: Builders and Destroyers of Modern Europe*

BY IAN KERSHAW. Penguin Press, 2022, 512 pp.

In this book, a veteran biographical historian revisits a question that has attracted the attention of famous thinkers as varied as Thomas Carlyle, Leo Tolstoy, and Karl Marx: What role do prominent individuals play in world history? The book's core lies in 11 breezy vignettes about dead white male European politicians (plus Margaret Thatcher). Experts may object to the thinness of the chapter-length pocket histories, each of which draws on a handful of well-known secondary sources, yet generalist readers may find them entertaining. More troubling is the ambivalence of Kershaw's conclusions: Adolf Hitler and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev seem to have had more of an individual impact than the others, yet he does not really account for their significance. Nor does he seem curious about more puzzling findings, for example, that even the most successful leaders fail as often as they succeed. In the end, his explicit conclusions—crises, concentrated power, and broad popular support create leadership opportunities, which require tenacity and skill to exploit—still beg the question with which he began.

## Western Hemisphere

RICHARD FEINBERG

*The Rebel Scribe: Carleton Beals and the Progressive Challenge to U.S. Policy in Latin America*

BY CHRISTOPHER NEAL. Rowman & Littlefield, 2022, 390 pp.

Neal admires the fierce intellectual independence and penetrating, skeptical eye of Carleton Beals, who died in 1979 at the age of 85. Beals was a remarkably prolific freelance writer of some 40 books and innumerable magazine articles that skewered the ruling elites of Latin America and their U.S. sponsors. As recorded in Neal's highly entertaining biography, Beals's best books, enriched by his extensive travels, offered colorful, often acerbic portraits of the leading political and intellectual figures of the day. His biggest scoop, a 1928 exclusive interview with Augusto Sandino, pictured the Nicaraguan guerrilla fighter as a romantic patriot battling against a misguided U.S. military intervention. Something of a celebrity in progressive intellectual circles, Beals foreshadowed the later anti-imperialist critiques of William Appleman Williams and Noam Chomsky and the popularity in academic circles of dependency theory, the notion that globalization impoverishes poorer countries. Like many left-leaning, politically engaged writers, Beals wavered between demanding that the U.S. government keep its hands off Latin America and urging Washington to put its thumb on the scales for progressive democrats.

*Human Rights in Latin America: A Politics of Transformation*

BY SONIA CARDENAS AND REBECCA ROOT. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022, 344 pp.

Targeting undergraduates, this easy read is also a useful reference for a broader audience seeking an accessible, comprehensive review of the evolution and impact of human rights advocacy in Latin America. Latin Americans were involved in the drafting of the 1948 UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and ever since then, the region has played a leading role in defining global human rights norms. This assessment by Cardenas and Root is stronger on politics than economics and richer in its coverage of international organizations and networks than in its slight assessment of the role of U.S. foreign policy in the region. But the authors' overarching judgments are sound. They celebrate the remarkable progress made by most countries in the region in advancing democracy and human rights over the last 50 years and note the measurable improvements in popular access to health care and education as well, even if reform is too often punctured by distressing setbacks. Today, with the ease of travel and communications, conversations on concepts such as "intersectionality"—the interaction of various forms of discrimination—occur with equal fluency in Santiago as they might in San Francisco.

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*Brazilian Politics on Trial: Corruption and Reform Under Democracy*

BY LUCIANO DA ROS AND  
MATTHEW M. TAYLOR.

Lynne Rienner, 2022, 281 pp.

In the 2022 presidential contest in Brazil, both Jair Bolsonaro and Luis Inácio Lula da Silva leveled charges of systemic corruption against one another. According to this well-researched and cogently argued study, both sets of accusations have merit; recent Brazilian history is “one long continuous process of state appropriation by corrupt actors.” Da Ros and Taylor find several reasons for this inglorious tradition. The fragmented multiparty system compels presidents to buy votes to forge majority coalitions. A monstrously large state apparatus is riddled with patronage and graft, campaign finance rules that fail to stem inflows of dark money, and appalling patterns of elite impunity whereby even repeat offenders evade punishment. To attack these root causes of corruption, the authors argue, the Brazilian government must enact reforms that would shrink the number of political parties, reduce the expense of political contests, ban misbehaving companies that seek public contracts, and monitor the incomes of political appointees. Improved audits, better anti-money-laundering laws, and effective interagency coordination would also help. Such incremental, piecemeal reforms are more likely to yield lasting results than big, splashy anticorruption campaigns that, as the Brazilian experience suggests, risk discrediting democracy itself.

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*As Strong as Our Weakest Link: Strengthening Global Supply Chains in a Rapidly Changing World*

BY THE WILSON CENTER.

*The Wilson Quarterly*, Fall, 2022.

This timely collection of brief essays and interviews calls attention to a long-standing business practice that has recently become a pressing national security matter: the outsourcing of the production of industrial components and services to overseas locations. U.S. consumers have benefited tremendously from the lower costs of goods produced by cheaper foreign labor but at the expense of the security of supply. Rising geopolitical tensions in Asia and now Europe have added to the urgency of relocating production to the United States, to friendlier nations, or to nearby trading partners. In response, the Biden administration and the U.S. Congress have passed legislation that subsidizes the national production of semiconductor chips and electric vehicles. The collection raises some provocative possibilities. The new emphasis on reshoring and resilience could jeopardize U.S. competitiveness and stoke inflation. Resurgent U.S. economic nationalism might strain relations with key Asian and European allies. And Mexico and other Latin American countries could benefit from implementing economic competitiveness policies that attract supply chain investors now wary of more distant Asian locations.

## Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Republics

MARIA LIPMAN

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### *Kilometer 101*

BY MAXIM OSIPOV. TRANSLATED  
BY BORIS DRALYUK, NICOLAS  
PASTERNAK SLATER, AND ALEX  
FLEMING. New York Review Books,  
2022, 296 pp.

Osipov, a cardiologist by training, practiced both medicine and the craft of fiction until he left Russia following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Nearly two decades ago, he founded a cardiology ward in a hospital in the small town of Tarusa, 101 kilometers from Moscow, and organized a fundraising campaign to have it renovated and turned into a modern facility. The town is unique: many artistic and literary figures used to live here, some of them former prisoners of Stalin's camps who were barred from living within 100 kilometers of big cities. The short stories in Osipov's collection are of two kinds. Some reflect his identity as a Moscow intellectual, describing the perennial dilemmas of a liberal facing an oppressive state: What are the acceptable moral compromises the individual can make with the powers that be? Is it time to emigrate or is life in Russia still tolerable? Other stories deal with his daily routine as a cardiologist in a provincial town where "alcohol is our battlefield. . . . It plays a role in the life of practically every family. And we acknowledge . . . its power over

ourselves." But his medical mission is still rewarding, and Osipov is able to tell himself that "this is as good as it'll ever get" and "this is what happiness is."

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### *Black Earth, White Bread: A Technopolitical History of Russian Agriculture and Food*

BY SUSANNE A. WENGLE. University  
of Wisconsin Press, 2022, 296 pp.

Wengle, a political scientist, offers a novel approach to the transformations of Soviet and post-Soviet agriculture, emphasizing the connections between the state, production, and technology, as well as consumers and nature, the latter two often neglected in political science. Concerned about feeding their increasingly urban population, communist leaders resorted to a variety of measures, from Stalin's brutal collectivization in the 1930s to the concerted use of agricultural science and tractors. But throughout the Soviet decades, the "grain problem" was never solved and food shortages persisted. In the first post-Soviet decade, Russia grew overly dependent on imports of food. Under Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia saw a "meteoric rise" of corporate agroholdings, which adopted the latest technological and methodological advances from the West. Russia reduced its dependence on food imports and, for the first time since the collapse of the Russian Empire, once again became a global breadbasket. This success reinforced Putin's public support and turned rural Russian agricultural elites into his staunch allies. But it also profoundly westernized the Russian food system and everyday

eating habits. With Western agricultural practices came problems all too familiar in the West, including obesity, waste, and unequal access to food.

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*Replacing the Dead: The Politics of Reproduction in the Postwar Soviet Union*  
BY MIE NAKACHI. Oxford University Press, 2021, 352 pp.

In 1920, the Soviet Union became the first country in the world to legalize abortion on demand. But in 1936, the Soviet leadership criminalized abortion: the collectivization of the early 1930s was followed by famine that took the lives of millions of people, and the government grew eager to recover the population. Drawing on an amazing wealth of archival material, Nakachi traces the dynamic of Soviet reproductive policies that were invariably guided by pronatalist goals but almost always had damaging consequences. The 1944 Family Law, aimed at making up for the enormous human losses of World War II (27 million people died, 20 million of them men), relieved men of parental responsibilities, legal or financial, thereby encouraging them to father children out of wedlock. Given the devastation of the war and inadequate levels of government support, many women sought to avoid such births. Their only recourse was abortion, which remained illegal and, as a result, often led to grave medical complications or even death—on top of being criminally punishable. Doctors were generally sympathetic to the women's plight but they could not challenge the system. It was only in the mid-1950s that abortion was

decriminalized, but until the end of the Soviet Union, modern contraception was barely available and abortion remained the primary method of birth control.

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*Stalin's Architect: Power and Survival in Moscow*  
BY DEYAN SUDJIC. MIT Press, 2022, 320 pp.

Sudjic's biography of Boris Iofan is a richly illustrated and highly readable story of Stalin's favorite architect. Born to Jewish parents in Odessa, as a young man Iofan went to Italy to pursue an artistic education. In 1924, he became friends with Aleksei Rykov, a top-ranking Soviet official visiting Italy. Rykov persuaded Iofan to return to Russia, which was now the Soviet Union, where he soon rose to become a major figure in Soviet architecture and helped create an architectural model for socialist realism. Iofan designed the House of Government, a housing project for Communist Party elites and one of Moscow's major landmarks. He and his family were among its first tenants. Soon, most of Stalin's functionaries were killed in the purges, including Iofan's neighbors and his friend and patron Rykov. That Iofan himself survived is a matter of good fortune and his savvy as courtier. Central to Sudjic's narrative is the drama surrounding the Palace of the Soviets, a monstrous project that Stalin ordered to create the tallest building in the world. Iofan struggled to fulfill Stalin's whims and in the end the palace was never built. He died in 1976 in a sanatorium he had designed 50 years earlier.



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*On the Edge: Life Along the Russia-China Border*

BY FRANCK BILLÉ AND CAROLINE HUMPHREY. Harvard University Press, 2021, 400 pp.

Based on their firsthand field research, anthropologists Billé and Humphrey present an enthralling portrayal of the 2,600-mile border between China and Russia as the line dividing two essentially different civilizations. Although the border runs mostly along rivers, the first vehicular bridge between the two countries, across the Amur River, only opened in 2022, after the book was already published—and even then only for freight traffic. A striking illustration of the border being “a break, not a connection” is the story of a divided island at the confluence of the Ussuri and the Amur Rivers. The island is called Heixiazi on the Chinese side and Bolshoi Ussuriiskii in Russia. No roads connect the two sides of the island. Although social interaction remains limited (in particular, romantic relations or intermarriage are not too common), there has been a rise in unofficial transborder contacts among indigenous peoples, such as the Buryats and the Bargas, whose communities span both sides of the boundary. Most important, cross-border economic activity is fairly frenetic. The detailed description of these thoroughly informal and often illicit interactions, including hunting and fishing, logging, gem production, and shuttle trade makes the book a page-turner. Russia and China have significantly expanded their trade and defense ties since Russian President

Vladimir Putin’s 2012 declaration of a “pivot to the East,” but this political rapprochement failed to invigorate social contacts between Russian and Chinese people.

## Middle East

LISA ANDERSON

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*The Arab Spring Abroad: Diaspora Activism Against Authoritarian Regimes*

BY DANA M. MOSS. Cambridge University Press, 2021, 272 pp.

This edifying study focuses on the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni communities in the United Kingdom and the United States before and during the 2011 uprisings in their countries of origin. Moss argues that the reach of transnational repression—exemplified by the late Libyan dictator Muammar al-Qaddafi’s bloodthirsty hunt for “stray dogs” around the world—and by divisions in the diaspora that parallel social fissures in the home country, such as those between Syrian Kurds and Syrian Arabs, shape the politics of exile and émigré communities. The consequences become clear when the autocrat back home loses control. As Moss shows, Libyans abroad were able to raise and send money to support the rebellion and found a largely sympathetic hearing in their host countries as they lobbied for support; Syrians abroad were typically less affluent and host governments less predisposed to support opposition to the teetering regime; Yemenis were

even less able to provide resources or draw attention to their compatriots' cause. In no case, however, were these diaspora activists successful in abetting sustained political transitions in any of their three home countries. Moss might have drawn more on the long and largely inglorious history of exile politics elsewhere. Nonetheless, this book memorably portrays many of those who strive for influence in far-away homes they hardly know.

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*The Awakening of Islamic Pop Music*  
BY JONAS OTTERBECK. Edinburgh  
University Press, 2021, 224 pp.

"Awakening" is a self-styled Islamic media company founded in London 20 years ago. It has produced some of the most popular contemporary pop music in the Muslim world; much like Christian rock, this music aims to reconcile the demands of faith with the attractions of modern life. Otterbeck, who toured with several Awakening artists—he is a semiprofessional musician as well as a professor of Islamic studies—argues that the development of new global musical idioms and superstars reflects a turn among Muslims away from doctrine and religious law to a focus on ethics in contemporary religious practice. When performers, songwriters, and audiences reconcile standards of piety and modesty with the thrill of live concerts and the pleasures of familiar songs, they are exerting an influence over young people all over the world at least as powerful as that of imams and theologians. Otterbeck also provides a link to an online playlist of the songs he discusses.

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*Digital Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Deception, Disinformation, and Social Media*  
BY MARC OWEN JONES. Oxford  
University Press, 2022, 272 pp.

By the time readers arrive at the end of Jones's astonishing examination of social media in the Middle East, they will be completely persuaded that it is now impossible to tell whether anything they read online is true. Replete with bots and sock puppets, trolls and dupes, this online world is both profoundly silly and deeply scary. Accordingly, the book is by turns funny and terrifying as it details efforts by governments, notably Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, to shape what people say, think, and do. Jones acknowledges that governments have always used public relations and propaganda to influence audiences at home and abroad. But he shows that the new information and communication technologies, which were once thought destined to free civil society and strengthen the public sphere, are also tremendously effective tools of deception and tyranny. Armies of bots and trolls motivated by money, power, and, sometimes, it seems, sheer perversity, spew out tweets and posts, fake news articles, fake news outlets, and even fake journalists; as Jones puts it, "You are being lied to by people who do not even exist." This deception pollutes public discourse across the Middle East and, more important, inhibits the critical thinking of the citizenry.

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*Protesting Jordan: Geographies of Power and Dissent*

BY JILLIAN SCHWEDLER. Stanford University Press, 2022, 392 pp.

Schwedler has crafted an extraordinarily rich portrait of the creation of Jordan and the fortunes of the Hashemite monarchy through the lens of those who contested its policies, its institutions, and sometimes even its very existence. In doing so, she demonstrates that protest has been a routine part of politics in Jordan since before the modern state was established. From resistance to Ottoman taxes to defiance of British rule, from opposition to Hashemite suzerainty to disputing neoliberal reforms, Jordanians have regularly made their views known. The patterns of protest—where they take place, who joins them and when, how the regime represses, manipulates, uses, and abuses popular demonstrations and revolts for its own purposes—reveal a complex and subtle politics often obscured by more conventional emphases on government institutions or established political movements. Rebellion is an important part of everyday political contestation, and Jordanians have used it often and with surprising effectiveness.

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*Oil Leaders: An Insider's Account of Four Decades of Saudi Arabia and OPEC's Global Energy Policy*

BY IBRAHIM ALMUHANNA. Columbia University Press, 2022, 304 pp.

This book is an unexpectedly candid glimpse into the usually murky world of Saudi oil policy by an unusually knowledgeable guide: AlMuhanna was an

adviser to the Saudi Ministry of Petroleum (now Ministry of Energy), working with pivotal actors for nearly 30 years. Thoughtful and perceptive, he emphasizes the role of individual leaders in making policy: variations in knowledge, education, ambition, and skill loom large when formal institutions, from international organizations to domestic bureaucracies, are new or fragile. When it comes to fluctuations in oil prices, AlMuhanna deftly and persuasively illustrates the outsize importance of actors with little interest in oil itself, including those in “hedge funds, banks, and other traders in the futures market,” politicians beholden to domestic constituencies, and partisans advocating for spending on development or conserving for future generations. And then there are the piques and temper tantrums of ministry officials and company executives who irritate their bosses, play politics or get into personal tiffs with their counterparts in other countries. In this telling, human foibles often eclipse market fundamentals.

## Asia and Pacific

ANDREW J. NATHAN

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*From Development to Democracy: The Transformations of Modern Asia*

BY DAN SLATER AND JOSEPH WONG. Princeton University Press, 2022, 368 pp.

Slater and Wong ask why economic development does not always lead to democracy, as traditional modernization theory predicted it would—and also why it sometimes does.

They compare 12 Asian states that started the post–World War II period with nondemocratic regimes that focused on economic development. Each regime was unique, but the authors’ explanatory theory makes general sense of diverse cases by considering structural forces, historical contingencies, and political agency. When domestic or international challenges confronted regimes that had built strong ruling parties and state institutions, such as those in South Korea and Taiwan, their leaders were confident enough to gamble on democratic reform to shore up stability and stay in power, achieving what the authors call “democracy through strength.” In Myanmar and Thailand, regimes overestimated their strength and had to reverse reforms when opposition forces posed genuine challenges. The least secure regimes, such as that of China during the 1989 pro-democracy uprising, were “too weak to concede” to challenges to authoritarian rule. But the authors have a warning for this last category of regimes: “pressures for political reform cannot be forestalled forever in the face of a modernizing, increasingly demanding society.”

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*Corruption Control in Authoritarian Regimes: Lessons From East Asia*

BY CHRISTOPHER CAROTHERS.  
Cambridge University Press,  
2022, 290 pp.

Carothers refutes the conventional wisdom that corruption is uncontrollable in authoritarian regimes because leaders have to divide the spoils to stay in power. He shows instead that

autocrats can be effective corruption fighters, provided they are advancing a state-building or revolutionary project that requires cleaning out the bureaucracy, exercising unconstrained personal power, and relying on party or state institutions strong enough to carry out their will. He gives numerous examples but relies especially on detailed case studies of campaigns conducted in Taiwan by President Chiang Kai-shek in the early 1950s and his son and successor, Chiang Ching-kuo, in the early 1970s; the military strongman Park Chung-hee in South Korea in the 1970s; Mao Zedong in 1950s China; and Chinese President Xi Jinping today. The anticorruption campaigns of dictators can be brutally effective and produce lasting results. Authoritarian regimes sometimes become more stable not by diffusing power but by centralizing it even more.

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*Open Borders, Open Society?  
Immigration and Social Integration  
in Japan*

EDITED BY TOAKE ENDOH. Verlag  
Barbara Budrich, 2022, 210 pp.

Japan has alleviated its labor shortage by importing workers—currently totaling some three million—from China, Nepal, the Philippines, Vietnam, and other countries through a variety of visa programs. Some have white-collar jobs, but most work in low-paid jobs in farms, fisheries, and small factories. Few of these migrants can hope to attain permanent residence in Japan. Those who overstay their visas are deported with little due process. Although Japan acceded to the UN Refugee

Convention in 1981, in practice, the country remains almost completely closed to refugees and asylum seekers. Some local governments and NGOs try to assist and integrate immigrants, but public opinion and politicians remain committed to the notion of an ethnically homogeneous country, and even long-term foreign residents are denied access to language training and social services. The contributors to this revelatory volume condemn the country's failure to come to grips with the fact that Japan is becoming a multiethnic society—whether it likes it or not.

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*Seeking Truth and Hiding Facts:  
Information, Ideology, and  
Authoritarianism in China*

BY JEREMY L. WALLACE. Oxford University Press, 2022, 288 pp.

In this readable general narrative of Chinese politics since the end of the Mao era, Wallace focuses on the function of numbers, both as a tool to motivate regime agents and as a story the government tells to support its legitimacy. From 1976, when Mao Zedong died, until 2012, when Chinese President Xi Jinping took power, Beijing promoted economic growth by rewarding local leaders for their performance mainly on three metrics: GDP, fiscal revenue, and investment. This strategy worked to goose the economy (even though the data were commonly exaggerated), but it also led to a surge in undesirable factors that the government did not weigh heavily in personnel evaluations, such as corruption, pollution, local government debt, and income inequality. Xi has tried to rein in these negative externalities

by imposing additional performance measures on local cadres. The more problems the Chinese Communist Party has faced, the more numbers it has collected, and the more untrustworthy statistics it has introduced.

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*Winning by Process: The State and  
Neutralization of Ethnic Minorities  
in Myanmar*

BY JACQUES BERTRAND, ALEXANDRE PELLETIER, AND ARDETH MAUNG THAWNGHMUNG. Cornell University Press, 2022, 270 pp.

The political liberalization that began in Myanmar in 2011 generated hopes that a decades-old, multifront civil war between the regime and various ethnic armed organizations could be resolved peacefully. The ethnic groups accepted a cease-fire and entered into negotiations with the military, who were joined on the government side in 2015 by the newly elected civilian authorities under the pro-democracy campaigner Aung San Suu Kyi. This volume provides a close-up view of politics in Myanmar during this period. The authors show how the divided, indecisive, and ultimately hard-line central authorities enmeshed the ethnic organizations in complex, slow-moving negotiations, created new institutions that seemed democratic but actually solidified the control of the state, and fostered divisions among and within ethnic communities, thus weakening their bargaining power. The ethnic areas enjoyed some infrastructure, economic, and social service improvements during this period, but the talks made no progress on the core issue of ethnic federalism. The “decade



of missed opportunity,” as the authors call it, ended with the military coup of 2021 and the renewal of armed struggle across the country.

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*The Fractured Himalaya:  
India, Tibet, China, 1949–1962*

BY NIRUPAMA RAO. India Penguin, 2022, 640 pp.

In India, the 1962 border war with China is unforgotten and unforgiven, shaping relations between Beijing and New Delhi today. As a former Indian ambassador to China and, later, the number two official in the Ministry of External Affairs, Rao has a practitioner’s understanding of the history-making role of personalities and misperceptions. India inherited from the United Kingdom the idea of Tibet as a buffer zone, with a boundary defined in part by the 1914 McMahon Line, and a belief that Tibet enjoyed a form of autonomy under Chinese “suzerainty” rather than full subordination under Chinese “sovereignty.” Indian policymakers were therefore shocked in 1950 when China sent troops into Tibet. Scrutinizing the diplomatic record in close detail, Rao faults Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for believing that New Delhi’s professions of friendship would prevent China from challenging the McMahon Line, and the Chinese for stealthy expansion of their positions on the border. The flight of the Dalai Lama from Tibet to India in 1959 worsened relations, and war soon followed. Because neither country could “accept the national humiliation of losing territory that it regarded as . . . integral to its ‘sacred’

geo-body,” as Rao writes, the border issues remain unresolved to this day and the source of mounting tension.

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*Overreach: How China  
Derailed Its Peaceful Rise*

BY SUSAN L. SHIRK. Oxford University Press, 2022, 424 pp.

Shirk draws on her rare combination of scholarly expertise and deep experience in U.S. foreign policy to offer a magisterial account of the excess of ambition in Beijing. She argues that China has gone too far in both its aggressive posture in foreign affairs and its repressive turn at home. Surprisingly, this process of overreach, she argues, began under Chinese President Xi Jinping’s predecessor, the more moderate Hu Jintao. Domestic corruption and dysfunctionality paved the way for Xi’s personalist dictatorship, which sees the projection of power overseas as a way of boosting the popularity of the regime at home. When the two “personalistic autocratic” leaders U.S. President Donald Trump and Xi held office concurrently from 2016 to 2020, U.S.-Chinese relations rapidly became confrontational. The bilateral relationship has fallen apart, resulting in what China fears most: containment by the United States and its allies. But Shirk soberly urges Washington not to overreact to Beijing in a way that would “weaken the country’s ability to compete successfully with China.” The best response to China’s overreach, she concludes, would be for the United States to “become a better version of its open-market democracy” and not to undermine its own democratic principles.

YUEN YUEN ANG

## Africa

NICOLAS VAN DE WALLE

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*Policing and Politics in Nigeria: A Comprehensive History*

BY AKALI OMENI. Lynne Rienner, 2022, 323 pp.

*Economic Diversification in Nigeria: The Politics of Building a Post-Oil Economy*

BY ZAINAB USMAN. Zed Books, 2022, 312 pp.

These two complementary books shed a great deal of light on contemporary Nigeria. Omeni's lively history of the Nigeria Police Force, founded in the late nineteenth century, traces the abiding imprint of British colonialism and the effects of several decades of military authoritarianism on the country's national institutions. Omeni argues that British rule created a relatively strong police body, but one with few organic links to society and focused more on maintaining the security of the state than protecting citizens. The police were already using violence with impunity against civilians when the military took over the country in 1966. Under military rule, the police force was largely neglected by successive regimes and lacked resources, qualified personnel, and administrative oversight. Since 1999, civilian governments have done little to revive and reform the police force, despite a rise in violent crime and recurring scandals involving police brutality. An excellent chapter on the emergence of antipolice protests in 2020 suggests the government must enact major police reforms to regain the trust of Nigerians.

Usman provides a sharp snapshot of the modern Nigerian economy. Well supported by striking examples and data, she argues that Nigeria has failed to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil because of elite politics. In particular, she argues that elite coalitions in power have been fragile, repeatedly undermined by changing political currents, and as a result have not committed themselves to long-term policy solutions. Economic growth has been uneven, owing in large part to the instability of the elite coalitions that have dominated Nigerian politics since independence in 1960 and have routinely redistributed power across political actors and institutions. Nonetheless, Usman is more optimistic than is Omeni about Nigeria's ability to reform. She notes that a vigorous private sector exists and has already begun the hard work of economic diversification. Her book points to past elite power-sharing arrangements that have produced stability and paved the way for more systematic reform. Unfortunately, Usman does not discuss the form these power-sharing arrangements should take or how they could prevent ongoing abuses of power at the apex of the state.

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*Angola at the Crossroads: Between Kleptocracy and Development*

BY RUI SANTOS VERDE. I.B. Tauris, 2021, 216 pp.

The retirement of long-standing Angolan strongman José Eduardo dos Santos in 2017, because of illness, did not initially seem to promise much change. Dos Santos had placed his daughter Isabel dos Santos at the top

of the state oil company (as well as a number of other prominent national firms) and had named his son José Filomeno dos Santos as head of the country's oil-rich sovereign fund. In addition, his hand-picked successor, João Lourenço, was a party insider with an unremarkable career. Santos Verde offers a well-informed political history of Angola since 2010, examining how the Lourenço government has in fact brought about political change, making a limited but significant attempt to address the massive corruption that has long characterized the country, and has begun a tentative process of political liberalization. For much of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the Dos Santos family, with Isabel in the lead, was able to privatize state assets for its personal profit. Lourenço initially seemed to accept this status quo but changed course. He moved aggressively against the Dos Santos children, arresting José Filomeno and naming Isabel as a suspect in a criminal investigation. Santos Verde argues that subsequent reforms, including some political liberalization, have been important, even if he concedes that they are selective and may be more motivated by Lourenço's desire to consolidate power.

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*Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa: Beyond the Coup d'État*

EDITED BY MOSES KHISA AND CHRISTOPHER DAY. Lynne Rienner, 2022, 249 pp.

A spate of coups in West Africa last year led to worries that military takeovers were back in fashion after years of generally more peaceful regime transitions

across the continent. This timely collection of essays discusses the current state of civilian-military relations in Africa and adopts a broader perspective by examining more than just military interventions in politics. Instead, the volume examines two variables that shape the sociopolitical role of the military: first, the degree of "social embeddedness" of the military, that is, the nature of the networks linking the military to broader society; second, what the authors refer to as "regime proximity," or the social relations between the government and armed forces. The authors suggest a widening gulf in Africa between countries in which a professional military has maintained its independence from individual governments and focused on its security responsibilities, and those in which militaries have been politicized and cannot avoid taking sides in partisan politics. Still, looking at the recent military coups, the authors resist the conclusion that military professionalization leads to a greater unwillingness to intervene. They point out that professionalization can also produce a lower tolerance for government corruption and authoritarian tendencies, leading to coups.

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*The Justice Laboratory:*

*International Law in Africa*

BY KERSTIN BREE CARLSON.

Brookings Institution Press, 2022, 240 pp.

This short, elegant book analyzes the attempts over the last two decades to establish international criminal justice standards in Africa. Critics of the International Criminal Court contend

that its attempts to prosecute African leaders such as Uhuru Kenyatta, the former president of Kenya, or Omar al-Bashir, the former president of Sudan, smacked of neocolonialism. Yet Carlson's perceptive analysis provides a more subtle and positive assessment. Her book focuses not only on the ICC but also other legal institutions such as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the *Chambres Africaines Extraordinaires* that tried former Chadian President Hissène Habré in Senegal between 2015 and 2016, the African Union-sponsored hybrid court for human rights abuses in South Sudan, and the East African Court of Justice in Tanzania. Through studies of each of these courts and tribunals, Carlson shows that international legal efforts to promote human rights are

always vulnerable to attack by national governments, even when those governments initiate the legal proceedings. The courts cannot compete with motivated national governments and must carefully choose their cases and doctrinal focus in order to present themselves as objective and impartial. Without such a hard-won reputation, they will not be able to improve international legal standards in Africa.

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**FOR THE RECORD**

The review essay "Boom and Bust" (November/December 2022) defines the global North as Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, and the United States. That definition of the global North should also have included the United Kingdom. 🌐

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*Foreign Affairs* (ISSN 00157120), January/February 2023, Volume 102, Number 1. Published six times annually (January, March, May, July, September, November) at 58 East 68th Street, New York, NY 10065. Print subscriptions: U.S., \$54.95; Canada, \$66.95; other countries via air, \$89.95 per year. Canadian Publication Mail–Mail # 1572121. Periodicals postage paid in New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. postmaster: Send address changes to *Foreign Affairs*, P.O. Box 324, Congers, NY 10920. From time to time, we permit certain carefully screened companies to send our subscribers information about products or services that we believe will be of interest. If you prefer not to receive such information, please contact us at the Congers, NY, address indicated above.

October 1953

# “The Grand Alliance Hesitates”

HAMILTON FISH ARMSTRONG

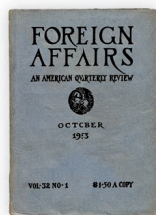
*Seven months after the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, in 1953, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of Foreign Affairs, considered how Soviet policy might change under a new regime. The West, he wrote, should not grow soft just because the “jealous old tyrant” was gone. Soviet objectives were likely to remain the same, regardless of who was in power—a warning that resonates today as policymakers and observers speculate about the prospects of a Russia without President Vladimir Putin.*

The crux of the situation for us, then, is not whether the current ruling force in the Kremlin is a junta or a committee under a “chairman of the board” or a new personal dictator, or even whether it is “stronger” or “weaker” than Stalin was. A government can, after all, go to war out of a sense of insecurity as well as from reckless strength. What we should watch for most closely are indications whether the régime is more or less rational. We may not be sure for some time. A government that was more rational than Stalin’s might be less dangerous in the short run, but in the long run much more so. Time and again Stalin was thwarted by his own pigheadedness—when he tried to destroy the Marshall Plan, when he tried to blockade Berlin,

when he tried to coerce Tito, when he tried to seize Korea by force. In each case, if he had used more subtle means he might well have succeeded. Has this lesson been taken to heart by Stalin’s successors? If so, the new régime may be more considerate of the needs of its sub-

ject peoples, restoring their previous standard of living to make them forget their lack of independence. It may be more willing to hear the truth from its representatives abroad and thus be more accurate in its appraisals and more skill-

ful in playing its antagonists off against each other. It may be more conciliatory on unessentials in negotiating and less provocative in propaganda. It may make even a considerable payment in a limited sphere in order to gain a greater freedom of manoeuvre in a wider one. 🌐





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