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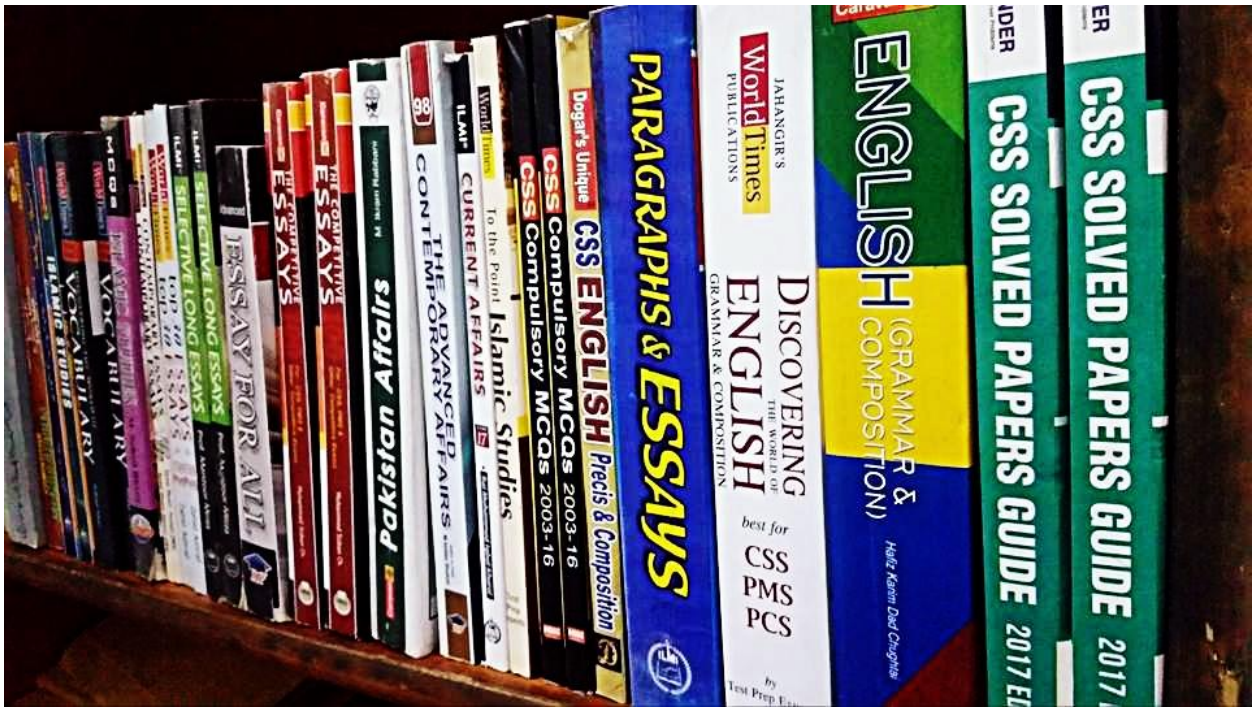

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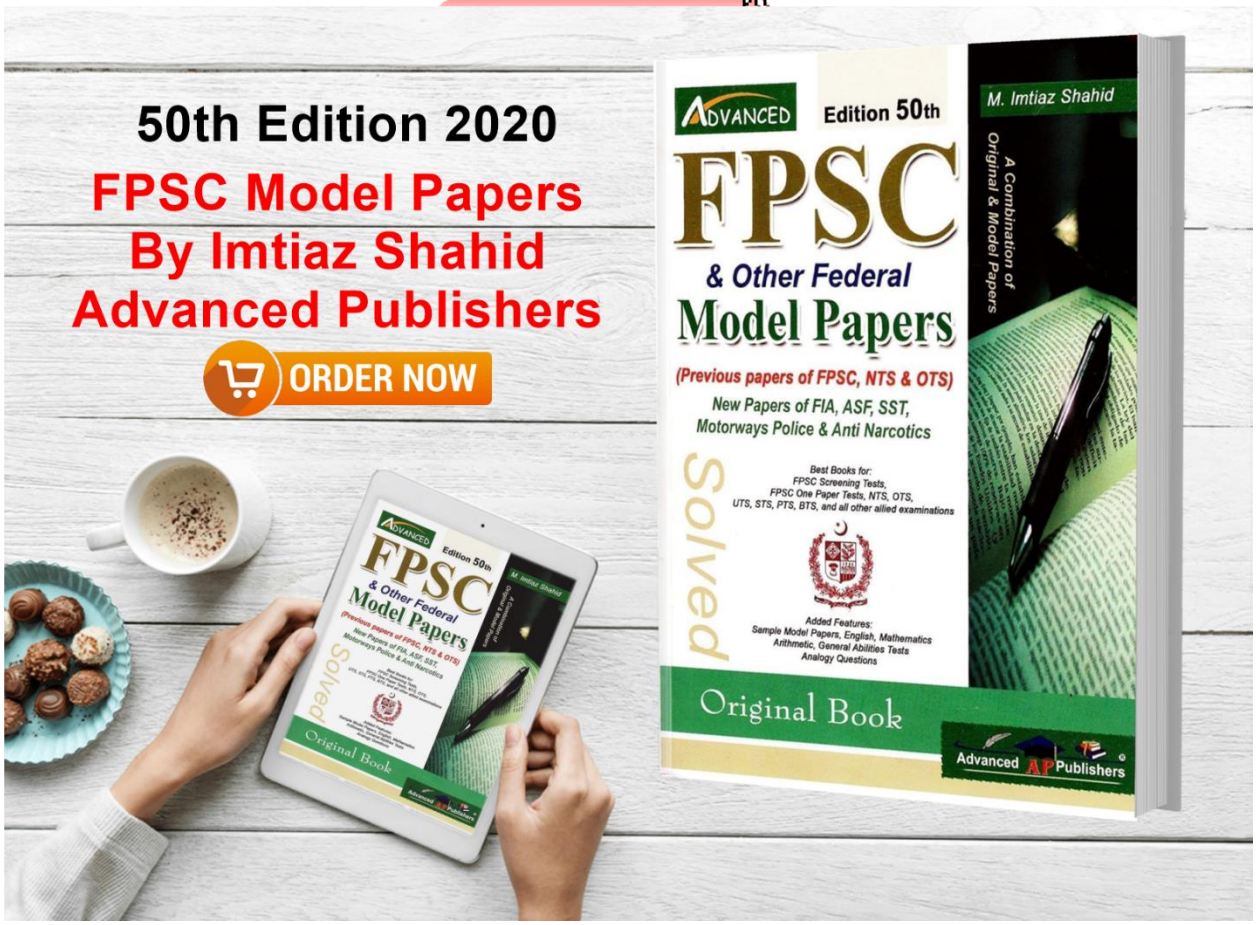

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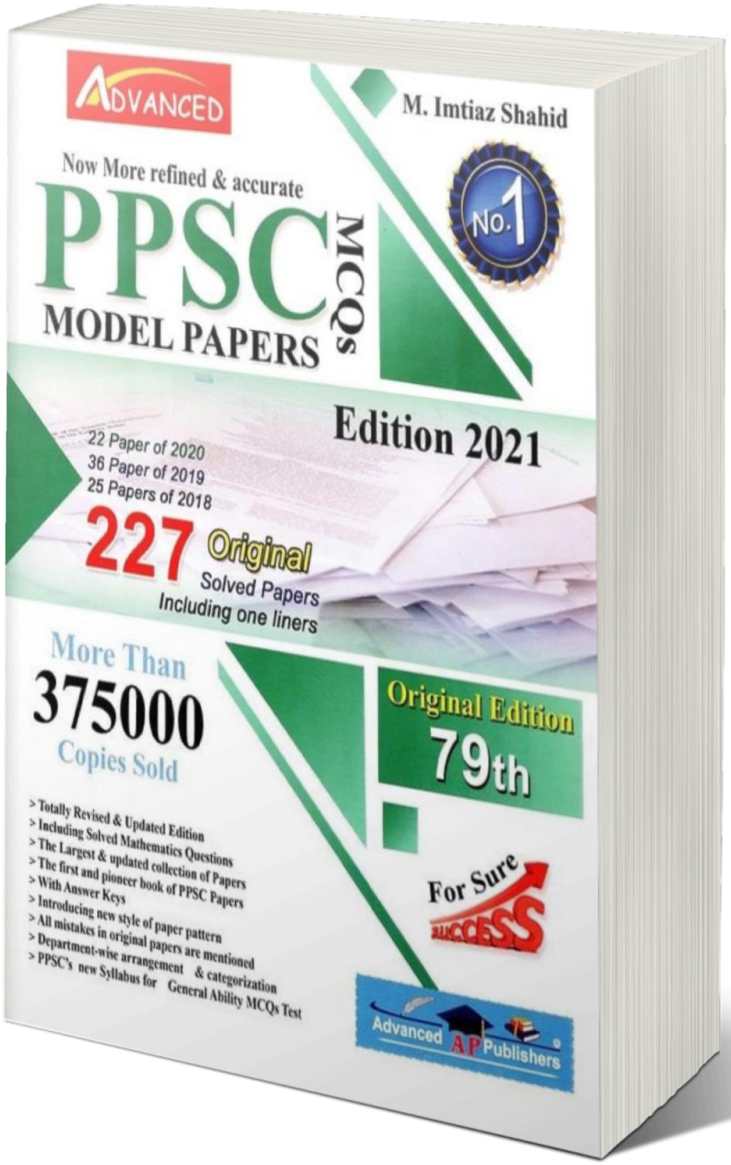

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Volume 100, Number 2

DECLINE AND FALL

COVER: PABLO DELCAN

March/April 2021

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Volume 1, Number 1 • September 1922

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

March/April 2021 · Volume 100, Number 2

Published by the Council on Foreign Relations

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Canada Post Customer #4015177 Publication #40035310

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YELING TAN studies how globalization changes the incentives of authoritarian governments. Trained at Harvard, she is now a professor of political science at the University of Oregon and the author of the forthcoming book *Disaggregating China, Inc.: State Strategies in the Liberal Economic Order*. In "How the WTO Changed China" (page 90), Tan reckons with the mixed legacy of China's accession to the World Trade Organization and the prospect of future economic reforms.

An expert on pandemic preparedness, dean of the School of Public Health at Brown University, and a practicing internist, **ASHISH JHA** has emerged as a leading advocate for a bold U.S. federal response to the COVID-19 crisis. He raised the alarm about the virus last March and has since published research on masks, testing, and lockdowns. In "System Failure" (page 103), he makes the case for a new, less U.S.-centric approach to global health.

A former adviser to such leading Republican figures as Marco Rubio and Mitt Romney, **OREN CASS** is widely known as a conservative antipoverty crusader. After four years as a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, Cass now serves as the executive director of American Compass, an organization he founded that aims to reorient conservative economic thinking. In "A New Conservatism" (page 116), he calls on the Republican Party to abandon its obsession with low taxes and free-market economics.

DECLINE AND FALL

With the storm past, it is time to assess the damage, clean up the mess, and mull what to rebuild and how. Jessica Mathews and Jonathan Kirshner survey the broken, battered world the Biden administration has inherited and how its players view Washington now. Robert Kagan traces the gulf between the United States' large geopolitical burdens and its public's modest preferences. And Reuben Brigety explores the deep domestic divisions that Americans have to overcome.

My own essay asks whether history has any direction, and if so, how the new administration can find out and follow it. Consider it a valedictory, for after 20 years at the magazine, this will be my last issue.

Foreign Affairs was founded in the wake of World War I by Americans who believed that with great power came great responsibility. The United States could not hide from the world; it had to engage, intelligently and constructively. That required a space for informed public discussion. And that meant starting a magazine. George Kennan captured the vision of the new publication in his obituary for Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the magazine's dominant figure:

> A forum for the opinions of others, expressing no opinion of its own. A place for fact, for thought, for calmly reasoned argument, with no room in its columns for polemic, for anger, for personal attack. A literary tone that would be quiet and serious, but never pretentious. Importance, as the main criterion in the selection of material—whether the importance was to come from the significance and originality of the subject matter or from the authority of the author. But no concessions to any would-be contributor, humble or great, when it came to clarity of thought, significance of content, and moderation of language.

For nigh on a century, *Foreign Affairs* has not deviated from that path. It has been an honor and a privilege to carry on the tradition.

—*Gideon Rose, Editor*

What Biden regularly calls "the power of our example" is nothing like what it used to be.
– Jessica Mathews

PABLO DELCAN

Present at the Re-creation?

U.S. Foreign Policy Must Be Remade, Not Restored

Jessica T. Mathews

For years, Joe Biden has portrayed the presidency of Donald Trump as an aberration from which the United States can quickly recover. Throughout the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign, Biden asserted that under his leadership, the United States would be "back at the head of the table." But a return to the pre-Trump status quo is not possible. The world—and the United States—have changed far too much. And although hailing the return of American hegemony might seem comforting to Americans, it reveals a degree of tone-deafness to how it sounds to the rest of the world. When people elsewhere look at Washington's track record over the past two decades, they don't see confident leadership. What they see, instead, are a series of disasters authored by Washington, chief among them the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the subsequent destabilization of much of the Middle East and the 2008 global financial crisis. During those decades, Washington also pursued an ineffectual war in Afghanistan, an incoherent policy in Syria, and ill-judged humanitarian interventions, most notably in Libya.

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The failures have also been domestic. To date, the United States has handled the COVID-19 pandemic worse than any other major country. Americans make up only four percent of the world's population but account for a staggering 25 percent of global COVID-19 cases and 19 percent of deaths from the disease. The failure has come at all levels: a stunning lack of national leadership, an alienated population unwilling to make modest sacrifices in the common interest, and a health-care system that is deeply inequitable and administratively fractured.

These maladies predated Trump, of course. President Barack Obama's administration had to design international agreements such as the Paris climate accord and the Iran nuclear deal in a way that would avoid the need for formal ratification, because the world knows that the U.S. Senate has been unable to approve a multilateral treaty for nearly 15 years, even one modeled directly on U.S. domestic law. But Trump's "America first" populist nationalism has cut deeply into the foundation of American foreign policy, as his administration called into question long-standing alliances, embraced authoritarian rulers, denigrated allies, and withdrew the United States from a wide range of international agreements and organizations that it founded. Beyond the moves that garnered headlines were a great many more that made it impossible for valuable institutions to operate. Under Trump, for example, the United States vetoed every nominee to the World Trade Organization's Appellate Body, purposely keeping the number of judges below the required quorum and thereby depriving all 164 WTO member countries of the means to resolve disputes.

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In short, what Biden regularly calls "the power of our example" is nothing like what it used to be. When it comes to the pillars of a law-abiding democracy, the United States is now more an example of what to avoid than of what to embrace. The country retains military primacy and the economic heft to impose sanctions, but the former has limited utility, and the latter are seldom effective when wielded unilaterally. To achieve its ends, Washington will have to heal at home—a long, slow process—while it rebuilds its power to persuade. As secretary of state, Antony Blinken will likely lead an important effort to rebuild morale and effectiveness within the country's diplomatic corps, luring back talented professionals who fled Trump's chaos, broadening recruitment, pursuing reforms to make the department's work more efficient and creative, and appointing diplomatic veterans to key posts at home and abroad. But such steps will take a long time to make a difference. Meanwhile, Biden's team may be seriously overestimating the leverage that the United States retains for initiatives that depend on its example, such as the global summits the president wants to convene on climate change and renewing democracy.

Facing a globalized world in which power is dispersed and the United States' reputation is diminished, Biden will confront cautious, even skeptical foreign partners—a challenge to which American leaders are unaccustomed. Much of his agenda will have to be carried out through executive orders, which, the world knows, can be just as quickly undone by the next president. Foreign governments understand that last year's presidential election was not a repudiation of Trumpism. Even close allies have therefore been forced into a dangerous game of American roulette, dealing with a United States that can flip unpredictably from one foreign policy posture to its opposite. The logical response for them is to hedge: avoiding major commitments and keeping their options open, even when it comes to U.S. policies that would otherwise be welcome. In such an environment, everything that Washington hopes to achieve will be more difficult.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Unless there is a current crisis, foreign policy generally plays a negligible role in U.S. elections. That was never more true than in the 2020 Democratic primary campaign, in which every contender named repairing democracy at home as the most important "foreign policy" priority. Biden was an extreme example. The fact sheet that accompanied his first major foreign policy address, delivered in October 2019, listed "remake our education system" as the first bullet point and "reform our criminal justice system" as the second.

Nor was foreign policy a significant topic in the general election campaign, even though the past half century has shown that what occurs overseas is more than likely to determine a president's legacy. Disastrous wars or foreign imbroglios severely damaged the administrations of five of Trump's nine most immediate predecessors: Lyndon Johnson (the Vietnam War), Richard Nixon (Vietnam, again), Jimmy Carter (the Iran hostage crisis), Ronald Reagan (the Iran-contra affair), and George W. Bush (the Iraq war). Foreign policy is also the source of sudden surprises that call for leaders with experience in rapid,

high-stakes decision-making and a knowledge of recent history. Nonetheless, voters don't seem to care much—and thus neither do most candidates.

Still, Biden's intentions can be inferred from his record in government, from what he has said and written in the past few years, and, particularly, from his early high-level appointments. Although together those things shed a good deal of light on what he will try to do, it is too early to know what a U.S. Senate that features the thinnest possible Democratic majority will allow him to accomplish or how doubting foreign governments will respond. Unknowable, too, are the effects of dangers now building offstage, the kinds of systemic shocks that have become almost a norm of the last several decades. Finally, there are practical issues of sequencing that get lost in campaign rhetoric. For instance, it is one thing to say, as Biden has, that new trade agreements will have to wait until after the federal government has made major investments in infrastructure and research and development; it is quite another thing to do that in practice. The world won't take a time-out while the United States makes badly needed repairs at home.

It is certain that Biden will make two overarching changes to the foreign policy of Trump and his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo. Biden understands the strength inherent in Washington's network of allies and friends and will do all he can to rebuild close relationships with them, especially in Europe. He will also reverse the Trump administration's dismissive attitude toward multilateral problem solving and the international institutions that make it possible. Washington will now show up at even the most boring meetings, represented by officials who know something about what is being discussed and who support, rather than oppose, the mission of the international organizations that convene them. These will be sweeping changes, welcomed around the world.

Among specific priorities, climate change is clearly at the top of Biden's mind. The president has assembled a team whose strength signals the weight he attaches to this issue: a former secretary of state (John Kerry) as a special envoy on climate, an experienced former head of the Environmental Protection Agency (Gina McCarthy) in a newly created senior environmental post in the White House, a highly regarded state official (Michael Regan) to lead the EPA, and a former Michigan governor (Jennifer Granholm) known for her expertise in alternative energy sources, especially electric vehicles, as head of the Department of Energy.

Conversely, Granholm's nomination to lead the department (75 percent of whose budget goes to nuclear weapons and infrastructure) and the choice of the retired general Lloyd Austin to head the Department of Defense suggest that nuclear issues will not be a priority, as neither of them, nor Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, is a widely recognized expert in this area. Biden will act immediately to extend the New START agreement with Russia, the last remaining major nuclear arms control treaty. And he will be prepared to spend a great deal of political capital to rejoin and rescue the Iran nuclear deal. But there are many other consequential items in the nuclear portfolio. As vice president, Biden took a strong stance in favor of reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense strat-

egy, limiting their use to deterrence rather than war fighting. The Trump administration took the opposite position, and Biden will need to try to wrench policy back toward his preferred course. Meanwhile, the country is in the early stages of a second nuclear arms race, this time with both China and Russia. A bloated, $2 trillion nuclear modernization program is underway that urgently requires reexamination. Also, new technologies are being developed that will raise the likelihood of an unintended nuclear war and erase the once sharp barrier between conventional and nuclear conflicts. Addressing any of this successfully will require leadership from someone of real stature in the field.

A FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS?

Throughout the campaign, Biden spoke of his intention to craft "a foreign policy for the middle class." No other theme was as prominent. In practice, however, his administration will have to face the question of whether such a thing actually exists. Changing the rules of international trade is a small part of the answer, but technological change has played a far larger role than trade in the loss of high-paying U.S. manufacturing jobs. That may be why, when discussing how his foreign policy will help Americans, Biden tends to veer quickly from trade to other issues: a higher minimum wage, better education, more affordable health care. All of those are important, but none is the province of foreign policy. Biden's "Build Back Better" economic plan promises enormous federal investments in infrastructure—roads, railways, the electric grid, and broadband Internet—and in research and development in certain sectors. This is old-fashioned industrial policy. Whether it is good economic policy and where the money will come from are debatable issues; whether they are the stuff of foreign policy is not. The more closely one examines the specifics, the more the concept of a foreign policy for the middle class slips away.

First among the true foreign policy challenges is the need for a balanced, nonideological approach to China. Beijing's military buildup, its provocative maneuvers in the South China Sea, its increasingly repressive policies (including egregious human rights abuses against Uighurs in Xinjiang and a crackdown on pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong), and its withholding of critically important information on the emergence of the novel coronavirus that led to the COVID-19 pandemic all form a threatening backdrop. The United States has no choice, however, but to develop a strategy for successful coexistence with this fast-rising economic and military power. Trump's approach swung from fawning praise of Chinese President Xi Jinping to unrelieved enmity and pointless name-calling. The administration's single achievement on China was a ballyhooed trade deal that pushed the most important structural issues to a second round of negotiations—which never took place. Beijing pledged to buy an additional $200 billion worth of U.S. goods and services but has not come close to actually doing so. Meanwhile, the percentage of Americans with an unfavorable view of China has increased from 47 percent at the beginning of Trump's presidency to 73 percent last fall, according to the Pew Research Center. Even in the business and financial sectors, which

still hope to profit from access to the huge Chinese market, views on China have turned decidedly negative.

To reverse the downward spiral in relations, Washington needs to abandon the lazy habit of demonizing China and drop the pretense that the contest with Beijing is an ideological struggle akin to the Cold War. Instead, the United States needs to identify China's legitimate interests in Asia and around the world and determine what Washington should accept, where it should try to outcompete China, and what it must confront. It should base its posture on its relations with allies and potential partners across the region, recognizing how conditions have changed since the global financial crisis and avoiding an approach that would force Asian governments to choose between the two superpowers. Washington should get back into multilateral trade and economic agreements in Asia and join forces with European countries in its approach to Beijing, rather than allowing Europe to become a battleground in the U.S.-Chinese rivalry. Most urgently, Beijing, Taipei, and Washington (including some heedless members of the U.S. Congress) must recognize that the "one China" policy is in imminent danger of unraveling after having kept the peace in an interrupted civil war for four decades. Instead of maintaining the policy's delicate balance of ambiguities, Trump and Pompeo played a game of chicken, thus inviting massive and utterly unnecessary risks. If the agreement falls apart, the possibility of war between China and the United States will be high, since for the United States to back away from a fight would mean abandoning its commitment to a democratic ally at tremendous reputational cost. A U.S.-Chinese war would be unlikely to stay nonnuclear.

"POSTWAR THINKING WITHOUT THE WAR"

Biden has taken office at a moment when the broad bipartisan consensus that underlay U.S. foreign policy for half a century following World War II has collapsed. Since the end of the Cold War—and especially since the end of the so-called unipolar moment of the 1990s—Americans have debated what kind of world order is most in their interest and what role the United States should assume in it, without any common view emerging.

U.S. foreign policy specialists fall into two broad camps, one of which advocates continued U.S. leadership globally and across the full spectrum of issues. The other believes that the United States should define its interests more narrowly with regard to both where and what. Within the former group are those who argue that the world requires leadership and there is no alternative leader to the United States now or on the horizon. Some go further, claiming that U.S. interests inevitably will be damaged more by doing too little than by trying to do too much. They favor a unilateral brand of leadership and generally approve of armed interventions. They tend to rely more on familiarity with the past than on insight into the future, and they largely ignore the force of domestic public opinion. Others see a more restrained role for the United States as the first among equals in a multilateral community.

Recently, some in this first camp have begun to question the fitness of the current order in a world characterized

by surging populism and authoritarian governance. They argue for an order defined by a coalition of democracies on one side in opposition to authoritarian governments on the other. Biden sometimes gives unsettling hints of sharing this view. Should such an order emerge, the world would be less likely to deal successfully with the global challenges that pose the greatest risk to everyone: nuclear proliferation, corruption, cyberwar, pandemics, and climate change.

The second camp sees the U.S. track record of the past 20 years as evidence that Washington has gotten used to defining its interests too broadly, which has led to a habit of starting wars and military interventions without a clear national interest at stake. Some who hold this view argue for a major retrenchment, paring back the definition of U.S. core interests to include little more than relations with China, Russia, and Europe. Promoting democracy, advancing human rights, helping poorer nations develop, and other goals that have consumed U.S. foreign policy in the past three decades would lie beyond those boundaries. Others advocate a much more modest correction, focused mostly on pulling back from the troubled Middle East.

It seems unlikely that this debate will be resolved within the next four years. Far more than in a typical presidency, foreign policy during Biden's time in office will be devoted to undoing a mountain of his predecessor's mistakes, consuming not only time and diplomatic effort but also political capital. A good deal of what can be accomplished will depend on whether would-be Trump successors in the Senate make a return to "America first" policies a main thrust of their public postures. And although the various expert views on foreign policy do not line up exactly with the differences between the two political parties, the country's deep polarization and the almost even partisan representation in Congress mean that nearly every policy shift will be a political battle. Meanwhile, public opinion is divided. In 2016, the last time the Pew Research Center asked Americans to describe their country's global role "in terms of solving world problems," 41 percent of respondents said the United States did "too much," 27 percent said "too little," and 28 percent said the United States did "the right amount." Finally, fresh thinking is always hard to come by, absent a major upheaval. Decades ago, the U.S. diplomat Harlan Cleveland was fond of saying that what Washington needed was "postwar thinking without the war." That remains true—but is unlikely in the present environment.

If the Biden administration continues as early indications suggest, it will fall squarely into the first of the two broad camps, and if it stumbles, it will be because it looks too much to the past and tries to do more than the country's resources, will, and reputation can currently support. It will try hard to make progress on key issues, although it may overreach in attempting to promote democracy. But if it can develop a strategically sound relationship with China, reassert itself in relations with Russia, pursue economic policies that see international economic growth as a win-win and not a zero-sum competition, and recapture the confidence of allies and friends, it will have done more than enough to be proud of, even without leaving behind a new foreign policy consensus.

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Gone But Not Forgotten

Trump's Long Shadow and the End of American Credibility

Jonathan Kirshner

In the first lecture of any introduction to international relations class, students are typically warned of the pitiless consequences of anarchy. World politics, they are informed, is a self-help system: in the absence of a global authority to enforce rules, there are no guarantees that the behavior of others—at times, dangerous and malevolent others—will be restrained. With their very survival on the line, countries must anticipate the worst about the world and plan and behave accordingly.

Like most abstractions, IR 101's depiction of the consequences of anarchy is a radical oversimplification, useful as an informal modeling device, as far as it goes. In the real world—that is, for most states, most of the time—survival is not actually at stake when they are deciding which among various possible foreign policies to adopt. And countries rarely retreat into a defensive crouch, unwilling to trust any others, paralyzed by the fear that today's apparent friend will become tomorrow's mortal foe.

Still, also like most abstractions, there is an inviolable kernel of truth to the anarchy fable. Ultimately, the world of states is indeed a self-help system, and so countries must necessarily make guesses about the anticipated future behavior of others—about what seems likely and the range of the possible and the plausible.

This is why even though Donald Trump has become a member of a rather exclusive club—one-term U.S. presidents—the Trump presidency will have enduring consequences for U.S. power and influence in the world. Leo Tolstoy warned that "there are no conditions to which a man may not become accustomed, particularly if he sees that they are accepted by those around him," and it is easy, especially for most insular Americans, to implicitly normalize what was in fact a norm-shattering approach to foreign policy. Level whatever criticisms you may about the often bloodstained hands of the American colossus on the world stage, but Trump's foreign policy was different: shortsighted, transactional, mercurial, untrustworthy, boorish, personalist, and profoundly illiberal in rhetoric, disposition, and creed.

Some applauded this transformation, but most foreign policy experts, practitioners, and professionals are breathing a sigh of relief that a deeply regrettable, and in many ways embarrassing, interlude has passed. (It is exceedingly unlikely that any future president will exchange "beautiful letters" with and express their "love" for the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.) But such palpable relief must be tempered by a dispiriting truth, rooted in that notion of anarchy:

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Plunkett

the world cannot unsee the Trump presidency. (Nor, for that matter, can it unsee the way members of the U.S. Congress behaved in the final weeks of the Trump administration, voting opportunistically to overturn an election and helping incite violence at the Capitol.) From this point forward, countries around the globe will have to calculate their interests and expectations with the understanding that the Trump administration is the sort of thing that the U.S. political system can plausibly produce.

Such reassessments will not be to the United States' advantage. For 75 years, the general presumption that the United States was committed to the relationships and institutions it forged and the norms it articulated shaped the world in ways that privileged U.S. interests. If it is increasingly perceived to be feckless and self-serving, the United States will find the world a more hazardous and less welcoming place.

POWER AND PURPOSE

One country tries to anticipate the foreign policy behavior of another by making assessments about two factors: power and purpose. Measuring the former seems straightforward, although it is often not. (France seemed to boast a formidable military in 1939, and the Soviet Union was considered a superpower a half century later, yet both countries suddenly and unexpectedly collapsed under pressure.) Measuring the latter—purpose—requires more guesswork in practice but is even more important. Is a country a friend or a foe, and in either case, for how long? Is a country's word its bond, or are its commitments ephemeral and its pronouncements little more than shallow, opportunistic posturing? Ultimately, these are questions of trust and confidence that require judgment calls. And for better or worse, it is easier to partner with a country whose underlying foreign policy orientation is rooted in purposes that are reasonably consistent over time.

For U.S. partners in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, however, Washington's priorities on the world stage must now be interrogated, and any conclusions reached must be held with qualifications rather than confidence. And there is nothing that President Joe Biden and his team of immaculate professionals can do to stop that. From now on, all countries, everywhere, must hedge their bets about the United States—something that will unnerve allies more than adversaries. Whatever promises are made and best behaviors followed over the next few years, a resurgence of knuckle-dragging America firstism will loom menacingly in the shadows. That possibility will inevitably shape other states' conclusions about their relations with the United States, even as nearly every world leader rushes to shake the hand of the new U.S. president.

Thus, even with the election of Biden—a traditional, centrist liberal internationalist, cut from the same basic foreign policy cloth of every U.S. president (save one) across nine decades—countries will now have to hedge against the prospect of an indifferent, disengaged, and clumsily myopic U.S. foreign policy. After all, anarchy also demands that states see the world as it is, not as they wish it might be. And the warning signs that the United States is perhaps not the country it once was could not be flashing more brightly.

Although the margin of victory in the 2020 U.S. presidential election was wide (the two candidates were separated by seven million votes, a 4.5 percent edge in the popular vote, and 74 electoral votes), it was not, by any stretch of the imagination, a renunciation of Trump. In 2016, some argued that Trump's election was a fluke. This was always whistling past the graveyard, but the case could be made. After all, the election hinged on only about 80,000 votes, spread across three swing states. Even with that, but for the historically contingent geographic quirks of Michigan (the Upper Peninsula) and Florida (the Panhandle), those states would have gone blue. And the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton (who did walk away with the popular vote by a large margin), was, for some key constituencies, a suspect candidate.

The 2020 election put to rest the comforting fable that Trump's election was a fluke. Trump is the United States—or at least a very large part of it. Many Americans will choke on that sentiment, but other countries don't have the luxury of clinging to some idealized version of the United States' national character. Trump presided over dozens of ethical scandals, egregious procedural lapses, and startling indiscretions, most of which would have ended the political career of any other national political figure of the past half century. But the trampling of norms barely registered with most of the American public. Nor did the sheer, horrifying incompetence of the administration's handling of the gravest public health crisis in a century chase Trump from the political scene in disgrace. (Imagine what would have happened to Jimmy Carter, a decent man dealt a difficult hand by an oil shock and the Iranian hostage crisis. Those events were enough to have his approval rating plummet into the 20s and soon send him packing after his landslide defeat in 1980.) Rather, Trump characteristically treated a pandemic that killed well more than a quarter of a million of the people under his charge as a personal inconvenience, to be managed exclusively for perceived political advantage. Even so, 74 million people voted for him—nine million more than did in 2016 and the most votes ever cast for a U.S. candidate for president, with the exception of Biden, who garnered 81 million.

One cannot paint a picture of the American polity and the country's future foreign policy without including the significant possibility of a large role for Trumpism, with or without Trump himself in the Oval Office. Looking ahead four years, America watchers must anticipate that the next U.S. presidential election could turn out quite differently. This does not bode well for U.S. interests and influence in world politics. As Mark Leonard, the director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, observed, "If you know that whatever you're doing will at most last until the next election, you look at everything in a more contingent way."

Indeed, the story of the 2016 election wasn't just about Trump's victory over Clinton; from the perspective of other countries trying to guess the future of U.S. foreign policy, what happened in that year's primaries was even more informative and chilling. In the GOP's contest, a political novice, reality TV star, boastful businessman of questionable repute, and indifferent, only occasional member of the party itself managed to steamroll a strong

field of established competitors by disparaging the party's heroes and trampling on its long-held core policy beliefs about global engagement. Because it took place within the Republican Party, this astonishing, unanticipated upheaval cannot be attributed to the possible flaws of Clinton or liberal overreach in the culture wars, explanations subsequently trotted out after the shock of the general election. And a similar story was seen in the Democratic Party's nomination process. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont—another long-shot outsider, an old socialist from a tiny state—came very close to wresting the prize from a powerful political machine fully backed by the party apparatus.

What did Trump and Sanders have in common? Almost nothing—except for their rejection of internationalism. The 2016 campaign revealed that the bipartisan postwar internationalist consensus, cracks in which had been visible and growing for decades, had been shattered. A telling casualty marking the end of American internationalism was the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a far-reaching trade agreement among a dozen Pacific Rim countries, including the United States. The agreement was at the center of the Obama administration's "pivot" to Asia. Clinton, as secretary of state, had orchestrated the painstaking negotiations that produced the treaty and crowed that the pact set "the gold standard in trade agreements to open free, transparent, fair trade." Yet during the pitched battle for the Democratic nomination, she was forced to renounce the TPP, which many in her party had been wary of. (Sanders led the charge against what he described as "another trade deal disaster.") In fact, the agreement became law thanks only to overwhelming Republican support in both houses of Congress. Trump withdrew from the pact on his first day in office.

IT GETS WORSE

Carrying through to the Biden administration, then, is the observation that the center of political gravity in the United States has shifted away from the engaged internationalism that characterized the previous 75 years before Trump and toward something closer to isolationism, of which there is a long tradition in U.S. history. In assessing the future trajectory of U.S. foreign policy, outside observers will have to make assessments about each political party. Even with Trump out of office, the Republican Party will likely decline to distance itself from Trumpism, given how much elected officials live in fear that Trump will turn his large and loyal following against those who criticize him. Rhetorically at least, the party will likely remain nativistic and nationalist in its attitude toward the rest of the world. The Democratic Party's foreign policies, even though they may be less overtly malevolent, will not offer much reassurance. Biden can be expected to flood the field with an impressive foreign policy team and give every reassuring impression that the United States will behave as a responsible great power, one that is engaged with the world, respects rules, and follows norms. But his mandate is limited.

Biden, elected mostly on a platform of being everything Trump isn't, has precious little political capital, and he is unlikely to deploy it for the purpose of

fighting for his foreign policy priorities. The Democrats, united in their horror at the Trump presidency, are divided on much else. Visible fissures run through the party, often on generational lines, between the party's centrist and left-leaning wings. And its median constituent, although neither nativistic nor nationalist, might be described as globalism-wary and even isolationism-curious. The conflicts within the Democratic Party will be exacerbated by the salience of Biden's age at the time of his inauguration (78). Given that Biden himself has repeatedly hinted that his might very well be a one-term, transitional presidency, his fellow Democrats will quickly begin jockeying for position in the anticipated battle for party leadership. Thus, predicting U.S. behavior will again require looking down the road at the likely range of political outcomes four years into the future.

Worse, foreign assessments of the United States must consider the possibility that it will soon simply be out of the great-power game altogether. Looked at objectively, the country boasts a colossal economy and commands the world's most impressive military. But as the old saying about sports teams goes, they don't play the games on paper, and there are reasons to question whether Washington has the wherewithal to behave as a purposeful actor on the world stage and pursue its long-term interests. The problem is not just that with politics no longer stopping at the water's edge, U.S. foreign policy could veer unpredictably from administration to administration. It is that the United States is taking on water itself. The country has entered what can only be characterized as an age of unreason, with large swaths of its population embracing wild conspiracy theories. The United States today looks like Athens in the final years of the Peloponnesian War or France in the 1930s: a once strong democracy that has become ragged and vulnerable. France, descending into appeasement, would soon well illustrate that a country consumed by domestic social conflict is not one that will likely be capable of practicing a productive, predictable, or trustworthy foreign policy.

NO MORE BLANK CHECKS

This dystopian scenario may not come to pass. It might not even be the most likely American future. But the logic of anarchy requires that all countries must at least process the United States' polarization and domestic dysfunction, think through the implications of that scenario in which all bets are off, and imagine a world in which Washington, for all its raw power, is less relevant in world politics. This prospect will invite major reassessments of U.S. behavior.

Some of the impending revisions will be benign and even beneficial from a U.S. perspective. On the positive side of the ledger, Middle Eastern countries may finally begin to imagine life without strong U.S. military commitments in the region. In 1990, it was understandable that U.S. allies welcomed the U.S.-led war to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Had that invasion gone unchecked, Iraq would likely have achieved political domination over the vast oil reserves of the entire Persian Gulf region. Thus, in the absence of a peer military competitor or a pressing security threat, the United States was well positioned to repel that aggression.

But much has changed in the intervening three decades. The United States is now the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas; China is currently the biggest export market for Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia; and if anything, given climate change, the United States should be looking to discourage, not subsidize, the burning of fossil fuels. If one were designing U.S. foreign policy from scratch today, it would be quite difficult to justify a U.S. security commitment in the Gulf. The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia, in particular, has always been more a marriage of convenience than a deeply rooted friendship. That was especially evident in the Trump era, which featured the shady princeling-to-princeling connection between the president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince. But personal ties are the most fleeting. They account for the Trump administration's near silence over the assassination of the *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi (allegedly ordered by the crown prince himself) and its tacit approval of the humanitarian nightmare that is the Saudi war in Yemen. In contrast, as a candidate, Biden said that should he be elected, Saudi Arabia would no longer enjoy a "dangerous blank check." It is always possible that campaign-trail rhetoric will yield to the realities of power politics, but in assessing their own national security in the coming years, Saudi Arabia and its fellow Gulf kingdoms have no choice but to at least anticipate the withdrawal of U.S. power from the region.

Israel must confront similar calculations. During the Obama administration and after, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made the radical decision, rare and risky in the annals of diplomacy, to throw in his lot with a foreign political party rather than a country. By sidestepping President Barack Obama to work directly with congressional Republicans and then by embracing Trump with a bear hug, Netanyahu hitched his strategic wagon to the star of a U.S. president who did not see past the perceived domestic political advantages to be gained from his Middle East policy. Trump reciprocated by dashing off another political blank check, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, withholding criticism of any of that country's transgressions (and thus abandoning the notion that the United States might be an honest broker in peace negotiations with the Palestinians), and essentially bribing some countries to normalize their diplomatic relations with Israel—all without receiving anything in return from the perspective of U.S. national interests. It remains to be seen whether bilateral relations between Israel and the United States will emerge unscathed now that U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East has passed from the hands of Trump's small coterie of Middle East advisers.

AFTER AMERICA

If the post-Trump perceptions of the United States in the Middle East may be good news for U.S. power and interests, the same cannot be said for the rethinking that will take place in the rest of the world. And in contrast to in the Gulf region and the Middle East more generally, in Europe and Asia, the United States has enormous geostrategic, political, and economic interests—as it has for a century. What happens in Europe and East Asia, which are among

the world's vital centers of economic activity, matters for the United States. Reduced engagement with and commitment to partners in these regions will create opportunities for others—actors who will be indifferent or even hostile to what the United States wants in the world. These challenges defy easy reassurance. Biden will surely (and wisely) reaffirm the U.S. commitment to NATO. It is unlikely that the alliance would have survived a second Trump administration, given Trump's ambivalence about democratic allies in general and participation in what he oddly perceived to be a dues-paying organization in particular. Will the alliance survive much past 2025? There are reasons to be doubtful.

In 1993, the realist international relations scholar Kenneth Waltz argued that with the Soviet Union gone, NATO had outlived its usefulness, and he predicted, "NATO's days are not numbered, but its years are." The alliance turned out to have decades of life left, of course. What Waltz missed was that NATO has always been more than a narrow military alliance; it is also a broader security community of like-minded states and a stabilizing force on a historically war-prone continent. As such, the alliance has advanced what another realist scholar, Arnold Wolfers, called "milieu goals"—measures designed to make the international environment more benign. NATO has managed to achieve these goals at very little cost, considering that it has always been unlikely that the United States would cut its overall spending on defense and thus save money if it withdrew from NATO.

But now, NATO faces existential threats on both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe, authoritarian backsliding in Hungary, Poland, and Turkey is endangering the notion of the alliance as a like-minded security community. (It was this notion that caused Spain to join the alliance in 1982, after it transitioned to democracy.) A NATO that contains authoritarian members will rot from within. In the United States, meanwhile, growing skepticism of internationalism may mean that the country no longer has any interest in pursuing milieu goals. Washington might simply pick up its marbles and go home. Europe would be compelled to test the theory that the alliance is a force for comity and stability. But the implications of American abandonment would go far beyond the continent. It could also presage a post-American world that is darker, more authoritarian, and less able to address collective challenges.

There is no region of the world where revised assessments about the United States will be more consequential than Asia. Many observers fret over the prospect of a ruinous shooting war between China and the United States, as Beijing looks to assert what it considers to be its rightful place as the dominant power in the region. Emerging great powers with revisionist aspirations are nothing new and are commonly destabilizing, as they invariably step on the toes of the contented guardians of the status quo. That said, the future of Asia will be determined more by political calculations than military confrontations. Regional actors, once again, will have to make guesses about the future international disposition and reliability of the United States.

The main geopolitical assessment that regional powers will have to make is not whether the United States would win

a war against China; it is whether the United States will stay involved. Will Washington retain its alliance commitments? Will it demonstrate enough political engagement and recognizable military capacity to give regional powers the confidence to balance against China? If countries figure that the United States is out, or indifferent, then many will decide they have little choice but to bandwagon with China, given its overwhelming power. If it becomes apparent that China's power and influence will be left unchecked, countries in the region will increasingly accede to more of China's demands in bilateral disputes and show greater deference for its preferences more generally.

The ground in Asia is clearly shifting. Washington renounced its own grand trade agreement, the TPP, and a TPP that includes the United States is not likely coming back. As international trade agreements will almost certainly remain a lightning rod and perhaps even a litmus test for powerful constituencies in both political parties, trying to breathe life back into the TPP by joining its successor pact is unlikely to be successful—nor deemed worth the anticipated political blowback. China, in contrast, has picked up that dropped ball and recently signed on to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Less ambitious than the TPP, that agreement nevertheless boasts countries that intended to join the U.S.-led pact: Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and South Korea, among others. And international politics and economics are not easily disentangled. Trump commonly disparaged military allies as freeloaders and viewed American troops stationed abroad, including in South Korea, as a for-profit, mercenary force. China is now South Korea's largest export market, and South Korea sells almost twice as much to that country as it does to the United States. Should Seoul assess that a future U.S. president might cut the cord of the U.S. alliance with South Korea, South Korea might increasingly fall into the orbit of China's influence.

SCARRED FOR LIFE

The future of U.S. influence—in Europe, Asia, and everywhere else—depends a great deal on what the United States says it will do and whether it follows through with consistent actions. Biden is capable of following through. But in an anarchic world, U.S. influence will depend at least as much on something else: how other states measure long-term American purpose. By producing a Trump presidency and calling attention to the underlying domestic dysfunctions that allowed a previously inconceivable development to occur, the United States is now looked at far differently than it once was. These new and consequential perceptions will endure, and for some time.

A second Trump administration would have done irretrievable damage to the United States as an actor in world politics. But even with Trump's defeat, the rest of the world cannot ignore the country's deep and disfiguring scars. They will not soon heal.

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A Superpower, Like It or Not

Why Americans Must Accept Their Global Role

Robert Kagan

All great powers have a deeply ingrained self-perception shaped by historical experience, geography, culture, beliefs, and myths. Many Chinese today yearn to recover the greatness of a time when they ruled unchallenged at the pinnacle of their civilization, before "the century of humiliation." Russians are nostalgic for Soviet days, when they were the other superpower and ruled from Poland to Vladivostok. Henry Kissinger once observed that Iranian leaders had to choose whether they wanted to be "a nation or a cause," but great powers and aspiring great powers often see themselves as both. Their self-perception shapes their definition of the national interest, of what constitutes genuine security and the actions and resources necessary to achieve it. Often, it is these self-perceptions that drive nations, empires, and city-states forward. And sometimes to their ruin. Much of the drama of the past century resulted from great powers whose aspirations exceeded their capacity.

Americans have the opposite problem. Their capacity for global power exceeds their perception of their proper place and role in the world. Even as they have met the challenges of Nazism and Japanese imperialism, Soviet communism, and radical Islamist terrorism, they have never regarded this global activism as normal. Even in the era of the Internet, long-range missiles, and an interdependent global economy, many Americans retain the psychology of a people living apart on a vast continent, untouched by the world's turmoil. Americans have never been isolationists. In times of emergency, they can be persuaded to support extraordinary exertions in far-off places. But they regard these as exceptional responses to exceptional circumstances. They do not see themselves as the primary defender of a certain kind of world order; they have never embraced that "indispensable" role.

As a result, Americans have often played it poorly. Their continental view of the world has produced a century of wild oscillations—indifference followed by panic, mobilization and intervention followed by retreat and retrenchment. That Americans refer to the relatively low-cost military involvements in Afghanistan and Iraq as "forever wars" is just the latest example of their intolerance for the messy and unending business of preserving a general peace and acting to forestall threats. In both cases, Americans had one foot out the door the moment they entered, which hampered their ability to gain control of difficult situations.

This on-again, off-again approach has confused and misled allies and adversaries, often to the point of spurring conflicts that could have been avoided by a clear and steady application of American power and influence in the service of a peaceful, stable, and liberal world

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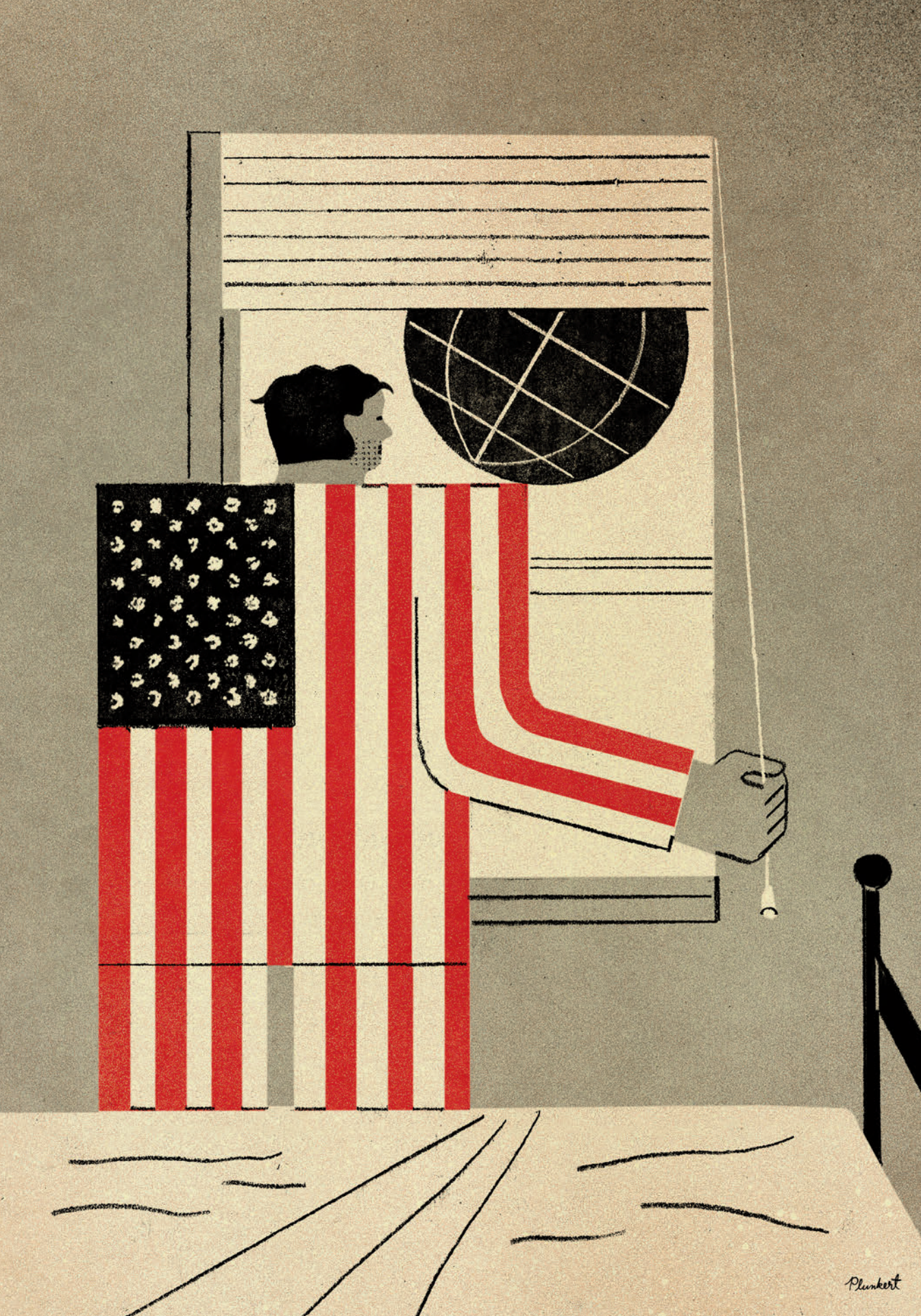
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order. The twentieth century was littered with the carcasses of foreign leaders and governments that misjudged the United States, from Germany (twice) and Japan to the Soviet Union to Serbia to Iraq. If the twenty-first century is not to follow the same pattern—most dangerously, in the competition with China—then Americans will need to stop looking for the exits and accept the role that fate and their own power have thrust upon them. Perhaps after four years of President Donald Trump, Americans are ready for some straight talk.

OF TWO MINDS

Americans' preference for a limited international role is a product of their history and experience and of the myths they tell themselves. Other great powers aspire to recapture past glories. Americans have always yearned to recapture what they imagine as the innocence and limited ambition of their nation's youth. For the first decades of the new republic's existence, Americans struggled merely to survive as a weak republic in a world of superpower monarchies. They spent the nineteenth century in selfishness and self-absorption, conquering the continent and struggling over slavery. By the early twentieth century, the United States had become the richest and potentially most powerful country in the world, but one without commitments or responsibilities. It rose under the canopy of a benevolent world order it had no part in upholding. "Safe from attack, safe even from menace," the British historian James Bryce wrote of the United States in 1888, "she hears from afar the warring cries of European races and faiths, as the gods of Epicurus listened to the murmurs of the unhappy earth spread out beneath their golden dwellings." For the moment, Bryce wrote, "she sails upon a summer sea."

But then the world shifted, and Americans suddenly found themselves at the center of it. The old order upheld by the United Kingdom and made possible by a tenuous peace in Europe collapsed with the arrival of new powers. The rise of Germany destroyed the precarious equilibrium in Europe, and the Europeans proved unable to restore it. The concurrent rise of Japan and the United States put an end to more than a century of British naval hegemony. A global geopolitics replaced what had been a European-dominated order, and in this very different configuration of power, the United States was thrust into a new position. Only it could be both a Pacific and an Atlantic power. Only it, with weak neighbors to the north and south and vast oceans to the east and west, could send the bulk of its forces to fight in distant theaters for prolonged periods while its homeland remained unthreatened. Only it could afford to finance not only its own war efforts but also those of its allies, mustering the industrial capacity to produce ships, planes, tanks, and other materiel to arm itself while also serving as the arsenal for everyone else. Only it could do all of this without bankrupting itself but instead growing richer and more dominant with each major war. The United States, the British statesman Arthur Balfour observed, had become the "pivot" on which the rest of the world turned or, in President Theodore Roosevelt's words, "the balance of power of the whole world."

The world had never known such a power—there was not the language to describe it or a theory to explain it. It was sui generis. The emergence of this

unusual great power led to confusion and misjudgment. Nations that had spent centuries calculating the power relationships in their own regions were slow to appreciate the impact of this distant deus ex machina, which, after long periods of indifference and aloofness, could suddenly swoop in and transform the balance of power. Americans, too, had a hard time adjusting. The wealth and relative invulnerability that made them uniquely capable of fighting major wars and enforcing peace in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East simultaneously also made them question the necessity, desirability, and even morality of doing so. With the United States fundamentally secure and self-sufficient, why did it need to get involved in conflicts thousands of miles from its shores? And what right did it have?

The case for a policy aimed at creating and preserving a liberal world order was first made by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson during World War I. With the United Kingdom and the other European powers no longer able to preserve order, they argued, and as the war demonstrated, it had fallen to the United States to create and defend a new liberal world order. This was the purpose of the "World League for the Peace of Righteousness," proposed by Roosevelt at the beginning of the war, and of the League of Nations, which Wilson eventually championed after it: to create a new peaceful order with American power at its center. Wilson believed it was the only feasible alternative to a resumption of the conflict and chaos that had devastated Europe. If Americans instead turned back to their "narrow, selfish, provincial purposes," he warned, the peace would collapse, Europe would again divide into "hostile camps," the world would again descend into "utter blackness," and the United States would again be dragged into war. The United States had an interest in a peaceful and predominantly liberal Europe, a peaceful Asia, and open and safe oceans on which Americans and their goods could travel safely. But such a world could not be built except around American power. Thus the United States had an interest in world order.

Such arguments met powerful opposition. The Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge and other critics condemned Wilson's league as both unnecessary and a betrayal of the founders' vision. For the United States to concern itself with world order was to violate the basic principles that made it an exceptional, peace-loving nation in a world at war. Two decades later, as Americans debated whether to enter another world war, another Republican senator, Robert Taft, ridiculed the idea that the United States, which was perfectly safe from attack, should "range over the world, like a knight-errant, protecting democracy and ideals of good faith, and tilting, like Don Quixote, against the windmills of Fascism." President Franklin Roosevelt argued that even if the United States was not directly threatened by Nazi Germany or imperial Japan, a world in which those powerful dictatorships dominated their regions would be a "shabby and dangerous place to live in." It was only a matter of time before the dictatorships would gather themselves for a final assault on the remaining citadel of democracy, Roosevelt believed, but even before that moment came, the United States might become "a lone

island" of democracy in a world of dictators, and democracy itself might simply perish. But the opponents of American intervention in World War II worried as much about the consequences of winning as about the costs of intervening. They did not want their country to subordinate itself to the interests of European empires, but neither did they want it to replace those empires as the dominant world power. Citing Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, they warned that in becoming the "dictatress of the world," the United States would lose its soul.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor cut short the debate but left it unsettled. Roosevelt fought the war with his eye on the postwar order he hoped to create, but most Americans saw the war as an act of self-defense, perfectly consistent with a continental perspective. When it was over, they expected to come home.

When the United States did end up dominating the world after World War II, therefore, Americans suffered from a kind of cognitive dissonance. During the Cold War, they took on unheard-of global responsibilities, deploying troops in distant theaters by the hundreds of thousands and fighting two wars, in Korea and in Vietnam, that were 15 times as costly in terms of combat deaths as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would be. They promoted an international free-trade regime that sometimes enriched others more than themselves. They intervened economically, politically, diplomatically, and militarily in every corner of the world. And whether or not they were conscious of it, they did create a liberal world order, a relatively peaceful international environment that in turn made possible an explosion of global prosperity and a historically unprecedented spread of democratic government.

That was the conscious aim of Roosevelt during World War II and of his successors in the Truman administration. They believed that a world order based on liberal political and economic principles was the only antidote to the anarchy of the 1930s. For such an order to exist, the United States could not "sit in the parlor with a shotgun, waiting," argued Dean Acheson, President Harry Truman's secretary of state. It had to be out in the world actively shaping it, deterring some powers and bolstering others. It had to create "situations of strength" at critical nodes, spreading stability, prosperity, and democracy, especially in the world's core industrial regions of Europe and Asia. The United States had to be "the locomotive at the head of mankind," Acheson said, pulling the world along with it.

AMERICA ADRIFT

Yet even as they created this order, few Americans ever understood world order as the goal. For most, it was the threat of communism that justified these extraordinary exertions, that justified the establishment of NATO and the defense of Japan, Korea, and, ultimately, Vietnam. Resisting communism became synonymous with the national interest, for communism was perceived as a threat to the American way of life. When Americans balked at supporting Greece and Turkey in 1947, the Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg told Truman administration officials to "scare hell out of the American people," and Acheson saw the

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expediency of making things, as he admitted in his memoirs, "clearer than truth." With communism as the sole enemy, everything mattered. Every act was as an act of defense.

When the Cold War ended, therefore, the disjunction between Americans' actual role and Americans' self-perception became untenable. Without the global threat of communism, Americans wondered what the purpose of their foreign policy should be. What was the point of having a globe-girdling security system, a hegemonic navy, far-flung alliances with dozens of nations, and an international free-trade regime?

The rebellion began immediately. When the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, President George H. W. Bush initially made the case for driving him out on world-order grounds. "A world in which brutality and lawlessness are allowed to go unchecked isn't the kind of world we're going to want to live in," Bush said in a televised address from the Oval Office, quoting the general who was commanding the U.S. marines fighting Saddam's forces. But when realists and conservatives criticized Bush's vision of a "new world order" as overly ambitious and idealistic, the administration fell back on the kind of narrow, continental rationale Americans could supposedly better understand—"jobs, jobs, jobs," was how Secretary of State James Baker explained what the Gulf War was about. When President Bill Clinton intervened twice in the Balkans and then expanded NATO, it was in defense of world order, both to stamp out ethnic cleansing in Europe and to prove the United States' continuing commitment to what Bush had called "a Europe whole and free." Clinton, too, was attacked by realists—for engaging in "international social work."

Then came President George W. Bush. The second war with Iraq was also aimed primarily at preserving world order—to rid the Middle East and the Persian Gulf of a serial aggressor who fancied himself the new Saladin. But the 9/11 attacks had caused world-order objectives to again become confused with continental defense, even for the war's advocates. When the intelligence on Saddam's weapons programs proved mistaken, many Americans felt that they had been lied to about the direct threat Iraq posed to the United States. President Barack Obama rode to power in part on the angry disillusionment that still shapes American attitudes today. Ironically, in accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, Obama observed that American willingness to "underwrite global security" had brought stability to the postwar world and that this was in the United States' "enlightened self-interest." Yet it quickly became clear that Americans were more interested in nation building at home. In the end, Obama's realism, like Taft's, consisted of accepting "the world as it is," not as advocates of world order might wish it to be.

In 1990, the former U.S. ambassador to the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick argued that the United States should return to being a "normal" nation with normal interests, give up the "dubious benefits of superpower status," end the "unnatural focus" on foreign policy, and pursue its national interests as "conventionally conceived." That meant protecting its

citizens, its territory, its wealth, and its access to "necessary" goods. It did not mean preserving the balance of power in Europe or Asia, promoting democracy, or taking responsibility for problems in the world that did not touch Americans directly. This is the continental perspective that still reigns today. It does not deny that the United States has interests, but it proposes that they are merely the interests that all nations have.

The problem is that the United States has not been a normal nation for over a century, nor has it had normal interests. Its unique power gives it a unique role. Bangladeshis and Bolivians also have an interest in global stability, after all, and they might suffer if another Germany came to dominate Europe or if another Japan came to dominate Asia. But no one would suggest that it was in their national interest to prevent that from happening, because they lack the capacity to do so, just as the United States lacked the capacity in 1798, when it was most threatened by the prospect of a European hegemon. World order became the United States' concern when the old world order collapsed in the early twentieth century and the country became the only power capable of establishing a new one in which its interests could be protected.

That is still the case today, and yet, even more than in Kirkpatrick's time, continentalism remains the dominant perspective. It informs the language Americans use to talk about foreign policy and the theoretical paradigms by which they understand such concepts as national interest and security. It also remains suffused with moralism. Calls for "restraint" still recite the founders' wisdom and declaim its betrayal as acts of hubris, messianism, and imperialism. Many internationalists still believe that what they regard as the unwarranted exercise of American power is the greatest obstacle to a better and more just world. The mixed results of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are not merely errors of judgment and execution but black marks on the American soul.

Americans still yearn to escape to a more innocent and simpler past. To a degree they probably don't recognize, they yearn to have less power. Realists have long understood that as long as the United States is so powerful, it will be hard to avoid what the political scientists Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson once called "the imperial temptation." That is one reason why realists have always insisted that American power is in decline or simply not up to the task. The columnist Walter Lippmann and the diplomat George Kennan made that argument in the late 1940s, as did Kissinger in the late 1960s and the historian Paul Kennedy in the 1980s, and many realists still make it today. Realists treat every unsuccessful war, from Vietnam to Iraq, as if it were the equivalent of the Sicilian expedition, the final act of folly that led to Athens's defeat in the war against Sparta in the fifth century BC. An entire generation of Americans has grown up believing that the lack of clear-cut victories in Afghanistan and Iraq proves that their country can no longer accomplish anything with power. The rise of China, the United States' declining share of the global economy, the advance of new military

technologies, and a general diffusion of power around the world—all have signaled the twilight, once again, of the American order.

Yet if the United States were as weak as so many people claim, it wouldn't have to practice restraint. It is precisely because the country is still capable of pursuing a world-order strategy that critics need to explain why it should not. The fact is that the basic configuration of international power has not changed as much as many imagine. The earth is still round; the United States still sits on its vast, isolated continent, surrounded by oceans and weaker powers; the other great powers still live in regions crowded with other great powers; and when one power in those regions grows too strong for the others to balance against, the would-be victims still look to the distant United States for help.

Although Russia possesses a huge nuclear arsenal, it is even more an "Upper Volta with rockets" today than when that wisecrack was coined, in the early Cold War. The Soviets at least controlled half of Europe. China has taken the place of Japan, stronger in terms of wealth and population but with unproven military capabilities and a much less favorable strategic position. When imperial Japan expanded in the 1930s, it faced no formidable regional competitors, and the Western powers were preoccupied with the German threat. Today, Asia is crowded with other great powers, including three whose militaries are among the top ten in the world—India, Japan, and South Korea—all of which are either allies or partners of the United States. Should Beijing, believing in Washington's weakness, use its own growing power to try to alter the East Asian strategic situation, it might have to cope not only with the United States but also with a global coalition of advanced industrial nations, much as the Soviets discovered.

The Trump years were a stress test for the American world order, and the order, remarkably, passed. Confronted by the nightmare of a rogue superpower tearing up trade and other agreements, U.S. allies appeased and cajoled, bringing offerings to the angry volcano and waiting hopefully for better times. Adversaries also trod carefully. When Trump ordered the killing of the Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani, it was reasonable to expect Iran to retaliate, and it may still, but not with Trump as president. The Chinese suffered through a long tariff war that hurt them more than it hurt the United States, but they tried to avoid a complete breakdown of the economic relationship on which they depend. Obama worried that providing offensive weapons to Ukraine could lead to war with Russia, but when the Trump administration went ahead with the weapons deliveries, Moscow acquiesced with barely a murmur. Many of Trump's policies were erratic and ill conceived, but they did show how much excess, unused power the United States has, if a president chooses to deploy it. In the Obama years, officials measured 50 times before deciding not to cut, ever fearful that other powers would escalate a confrontation. In the Trump years, it was other countries that worried about where a confrontation with the United States might lead.

GREAT POWER, GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

The United States is "lazily playing with a fraction of her immeasurable strength"—so the British historian Arnold Toynbee commented somewhat ruefully in the early 1930s. At the time, U.S. defense spending was between two and three percent of GDP. Today, it is a little over three percent. In the 1950s, during the Eisenhower administration—often seen as a time of admirable restraint in U.S. foreign policy—the United States had almost one million troops deployed overseas, out of a total American population of 170 million. Today, in an era when the United States is said to be dangerously overextended, there are roughly 200,000 U.S. troops deployed overseas, out of a population of 330 million. Setting aside whether this constitutes "lazily playing with a fraction" of American strength, it is important to recognize that the United States is now in peace mode. Were Americans to shift to a war footing, or even a Cold War–type footing, in response to some Chinese action—for instance, an attack on Taiwan—the United States would look like a very different animal.

At the height of the late Cold War, under President Ronald Reagan, the United States spent six percent of GDP on defense, and its arms industry produced weapons in such quantity and of such quality that the Soviets simply could not keep up. The Chinese could find themselves in a similar predicament. They might "run wild for the first six months or a year," as Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the commander of the Japanese fleet during World War II, predicted about his own forces. But in the long run, as he also warned, against a provoked America and its allies, they might well meet the same fate as other U.S. rivals.

The question is not whether the United States is still capable of prevailing in a global confrontation, either hot or cold, with China or any other revisionist power. It is. The real question is whether the worst kinds of hostilities can be avoided, whether China and other powers can be encouraged to pursue their aims peacefully, to confine the global competition to the economic and political realms and thus spare themselves and the world from the horrors of the next great war or even the still frightening confrontations of another cold war.

The United States cannot avoid such crises by continuing to adhere to a nineteenth-century view of its national interest. Doing that would produce what it produced in the past: periods of indifference and retrenchment followed by panic, fear, and sudden mobilization. Already, Americans are torn between these two impulses. On the one hand, China now occupies that place in the American mind that Germany and the Soviet Union once held: an ideological opponent that has the ability to strike at American society directly and that has power and ambitions that threaten the United States' position in a key region and perhaps everywhere else, too. On the other hand, many Americans believe that the United States is in decline and that China will inevitably come to dominate Asia. Indeed, the self-perceptions of the Americans and the Chinese are perfectly symmetrical. The Chinese think that the United States' role in their region for the past 75 years has been unnatural and is therefore transient, and so do the Americans. The

Chinese believe that the United States is in decline, and so do many Americans. The danger is that as Beijing ramps up efforts to fulfill what it has taken to calling "the Chinese dream," Americans will start to panic. It is in times like this that miscalculations are made.

Perhaps the Chinese, careful students of history that they are, will not make the mistake that others have made in misjudging the United States. Whether Americans have learned the lessons of their own history, however, remains to be seen. A century-long pattern of oscillation will be difficult to change. It will be especially so when foreign policy experts of all stripes regard support for a liberal world order as impossible and immoral. Among other problems, their prescriptions suffer from an unwarranted optimism about the likely alternatives to a U.S.-led order. Realists, liberal internationalists, conservative nationalists, and progressives all seem to imagine that without Washington playing the role it has played these past 75 years, the world will be just fine, and U.S. interests will be just as well protected. But neither recent history nor present circumstances justify such idealism. The alternative to the American world order is not a Swedish world order. It will not be a world of law and international institutions or the triumph of Enlightenment ideals or the end of history. It will be a world of power vacuums, chaos, conflict, and miscalculation—a shabby place indeed.

The messy truth is that in the real world, the only hope for preserving liberalism at home and abroad is the maintenance of a world order conducive to liberalism, and the only power capable of upholding such an order is the United States. This is not an expression of hubris but a reality rooted in international circumstances. And it is certainly a mixed blessing. In trying to preserve this order, the United States has wielded and will wield power, sometimes unwisely and ineffectively, with unpredictable costs and morally ambiguous consequences. That is what wielding power means. Americans have naturally sought to escape this burden. They have sought to divest themselves of responsibility, hiding sometimes behind dreamy internationalism, sometimes behind a determined resignation to accept the world "as it is," and always with the view that absent a clear and present danger, they can hang back in their imaginary fortress.

The time has come to tell Americans that there is no escape from global responsibility, that they have to think beyond the protection of the homeland. They need to understand that the purpose of NATO and other alliances is to defend not against direct threats to U.S. interests but against a breakdown of the order that best serves those interests. They need to be told honestly that the task of maintaining a world order is unending and fraught with costs but preferable to the alternative. A failure to be square with the American people has led the country to its current predicament, with a confused and angry public convinced that its leaders are betraying American interests for their own nefarious, "globalist" purposes. The antidote to this is not scaring the hell out of them about China and other threats but trying to explain, again, why the world order they created still matters. This is a job for Joe Biden and his new administration.

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The Fractured Power

How to Overcome Tribalism

Reuben E. Brigety II

When the United States looks abroad to assess the risk of conflict, it relies on a host of tools to understand other countries' social and political divisions and how likely they are to result in unrest or violence. These techniques reflect decades of research, in both government and academia, into the root causes of civil disorder and state failure. The idea is that by better understanding those causes, policymakers can prevent conflict before it breaks out or, failing that, help states recover quickly once it does.

One such tool is the U.S. Agency for International Development's Conflict Assessment Framework, which is designed to illuminate the underlying dynamics of countries in various stages of civil strife. Analysts use the CAF to understand local grievances and divisions in a particular country, the resilience of the country's political system, and events that could trigger violence. The process can require dozens of personnel and take months to complete. Diplomats and development experts scrutinize confidential cables in secure facilities in Washington and conduct public surveys in conflict-prone countries. They interview local stakeholders on the ground and consult experts in capitals around the world. They make every effort to understand fractured societies in granular detail, both to predict potential conflicts and to propose interventions to stop them.

For most of recent history, Americans have deployed such frameworks elsewhere, reserving concerns about instability or conflict for countries other than their own. When applied to the United States in 2021, however, the U.S. government's own tools paint a damning picture of American politics. The contentious 2020 presidential campaign laid bare deep divisions in American society, exhibiting precisely the kind of tribal politics—when strict loyalty to a foundational identity (such as race, religion, clan, or region) is the organizing principle of political life within a country—that sets off alarm bells when seen abroad. The campaign looked less like a contest of ideas and more like a battle between tribes, with voters racing to their partisan corners based on identity, not concerns about policy.

These divisions, moreover, are coupled with a growing belief that U.S. political and social institutions are no longer functioning as intended. According to a 2019 report by the Pew Research Center, over 60 percent of Americans believe that declining levels of trust, both interpersonal and in government, are making it difficult to solve the country's problems. Tools such as the CAF also note the importance of the longer-term context to understanding the likelihood of violence. And the context in the United States is troubling.

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Plunkert

The FBI has reported that in 2019, the United States saw more racially and religiously motivated hate crimes—including 51 murders—than it had at any point in the previous two decades. Sales of firearms reached new highs in 2020, with African Americans, worried about becoming the targets of racial violence, purchasing guns in record numbers. The killing of George Floyd in May 2020, and the summer of reckoning that followed, brought racial tensions in the United States to their highest levels in a generation.

Hardened ethnic and ideological identities affixed to political parties. Political leaders exacerbating sectarian divisions. Public institutions that are distrusted by more and more citizens for their failure to deliver policy solutions. The capitol stormed by rioters for the first time in over 200 years. A heavily armed society in which a defeated head of government claims that the election was illegitimate yet continues to enjoy the loyalty of nearly half the electorate. If American diplomats and aid specialists found this fact pattern elsewhere, they would call for diplomatic intervention. But just as experiences from elsewhere offer a reason to worry about American tribalism, they also provide valuable instructions for how to overcome it. If they learn the right lessons from their counterparts abroad, U.S. citizens, civic groups, and leaders can bridge the country's tribal divisions and begin to revive American democracy.

AMERICAN TRIBALISM

Tribalism, and the conflict that it can produce, is often understood through facile comparisons between primitive villages and civilized cities or between the West and "the rest." Contemporary U.S. politics, however, resists this simplistic dichotomy. Tools such as the CAF demonstrate that tribalism, and its potential to ignite conflict, is a general force that connects one's identity to one's politics—regardless of location or political system.

The more tribal a society is, the more closely membership in the tribe is policed and the less one is permitted to cooperate with outsiders. Such forces did not disappear with the advent of the modern nation-state, and they aren't limited by nationality. Modern Israeli Jews, Iraqi Shiites, and American Southern Baptists can exhibit the same tribal loyalties as ancient West African Ashantis, South American Incas, or imperial Persians. The central benchmark is whether citizens of diverse backgrounds can use reason and argument to transcend foundational identities and work together toward a common good.

Although there have been other moments in U.S. history when the country's governance failed to meet that ideal—most notably during the Civil War—the current era ranks high among them, especially by the standards the U.S. government uses to evaluate the risk of conflict abroad. Today, the tribes are the country's two major political parties, bolstered by the demographic subgroups that compose their most loyal and predictable constituencies. Over the past two decades, these groups have grown further and further apart—each side accusing the other of stirring up historical grievances among its core supporters. According to two 2020 studies by the Pew Research Center, roughly eight out of ten supporters of either Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee, or President Donald Trump, the Republi-

can nominee, said that they disagreed with the other side over "core American values," and roughly nine out of ten—again in both camps—said they worried that a victory by the other side would lead to "lasting harm" to the United States.

The two parties have also grown apart demographically. Although religion and race have long been two of the most salient predictors of a person's party affiliation, they now lock people into political viewpoints in dangerous ways. Even though Trump managed to improve his performance among minorities in 2020, people who identify as African American, Asian American, or Latino overwhelmingly vote Democratic. White Americans—particularly those who identify as evangelical Protestants—overwhelmingly vote Republican. Indeed, a majority of white Americans have voted for the Republican candidate in every presidential election in the last 50 years. Few other characteristics seem able to shake these dividing lines: education, income, region, and gender all pale in comparison when it comes to predicting a given voter's party preference.

Unsurprisingly, politicians' behavior reflects the growing divide among their constituents. According to one metric from the Brookings Institution, from 1992 to 2013, the ideological divergence on committee votes between Democratic and Republican House members grew by over 50 percent. In that environment, cooperation across the aisle is nearly out of the question. Such profound polarization has made it impossible, for example, to pass comprehensive immigration reform despite a clear need to address the issue. Likewise, a fundamental problem such as health care, which affects every single American, is still embroiled in partisan politics even as a global pandemic of biblical proportions ravages the country.

This is not politics as usual. It is worse than the gridlock and culture wars that began in the 1990s, which the Clinton White House or politically savvy moderate Republicans could sometimes overcome. Rather, the current state of affairs represents a real departure from both past practice and civic ideals. The United States' once resilient institutions are now largely incapable of keeping tribal influences in check. At the federal level, serious problems increasingly defy solution, not for a lack of feasible proposals but because politicians are determined to inflict defeat on their opponents in the name of tribal solidarity: Trump's impeachment over allegations of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, for instance, was decided almost entirely along party lines, notwithstanding the facts of the case. The United States has suffered the most COVID-19 deaths of any country in the world at least partly because of partisan differences at the state and the federal level, not a lack of information about how to defeat the virus. Such "chronic capacity deficits," to use the CAF's language, can produce serious grievances that, under the right circumstances, might spark conflict.

These developments have not gone unnoticed abroad. The United States' allies and partners regret that tribalism has diminished American diplomatic influence and soft power. Its enemies and rivals view that tribalism as an opportunity they can exploit. Russia, for example, took advantage of American society's racial and political fissures during the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns, when Russian cyberwarriors flooded social

media platforms with disinformation aimed at Black and Latino voters and targeted inflammatory racist posts toward white voters. (As a senior FBI agent told an election security conference in early 2020, "To put it simply, in this space, Russia wants to watch us tear ourselves apart.") Foreign adversaries determined to undermine U.S. governance from within could easily replicate these techniques. Efforts to stoke tribal hatreds and deepen partisan divisions have succeeded before; they could succeed again.

AMERICA, HEAL THYSELF

If diagnosing the United States' currently tribal politics relies partly on tools originally developed to assess foreign countries, such as the CAF, then the solution can be found in a similar place. By learning lessons from other societies that have emerged from tribal conflict, the United States might be able to overcome this divisive moment.

One central lesson is that leadership matters. On the whole, conflict-affected states have found it nearly impossible to overcome tribal divisions unless their opposing leaders commit to doing so. Conversely, strong and principled leaders can help point the way toward a more united future. Notwithstanding the generational brutality and oppression meted out by Afrikaners and other white South Africans against the Black and Coloured populations in South Africa, the antiapartheid activist Nelson Mandela famously worked with President F. W. de Klerk, a member of the party responsible for apartheid, to dismantle the apartheid system. The Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and the Unionist David Trimble bridged bitter and violent differences to negotiate the Good Friday Agreement and bring peace to Northern Ireland. To be sure, the conditions need to be ripe for leaders to move their supporters from hostility to comity with long-established adversaries, but a willingness to renounce violence and work across tribal divides matters immensely. It can be the difference between perpetual conflict and durable peace.

The United States is neither apartheid South Africa nor Northern Ireland during the Troubles. But even though political parties in the United States do not engage in open armed conflict, there is still an acute need for leaders who are prepared to cross tribal lines for the good of the country. To their credit, throughout 2020, every living U.S. president (save one) and many other former elected officials publicly called for an end to tribal politics in the country. Following the election, former President George W. Bush released a statement urging Americans to move beyond their entrenched boundaries, saying, "The challenges that face our country will demand the best of President-elect Biden and Vice-President-elect Harris—and the best of us all. We must come together for the sake of our families and neighbors, and for our nation and its future." Former President Barack Obama made a similar plea when he called for Americans to "do our part—to reach out beyond our comfort zone, to listen to others, to lower the temperature and find some common ground from which to move forward." Such statements were less forthcoming from political leaders in office. Although the political calculus of those actively serving differs from that of those who have left public life, taking personal risks for the greater good is the very definition of bravery. Americans must demand that

their elected leaders show the courage necessary to bridge partisan divides.

Another lesson drawn from conflict-affected countries is the importance of civic engagement. Precisely because serving leaders are constrained by politics, civic groups dedicated to peace may be needed to make compromise possible. The Community of Sant'Egidio, a group of Catholic laity based in Rome, for example, helped negotiate an end to the civil war in Mozambique in 1992. The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, led by the peace activist Leymah Gbowee, played a similar role in ending the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003 by organizing Christian and Muslim women across confessional lines to demand a negotiated settlement to the conflict. For her efforts, Gbowee shared the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

In the United States, all manner of groups could take up the challenge of building these sorts of bridges. Many already have. The civic campaign Millions of Conversations, founded by the Tennessee attorney and former White House fellow Samar Ali, seeks to foster dialogue across party lines and social divisions. In November 2020, it sponsored a "depolarization summit," which sought to proactively address potential violence following the 2020 election. The Episcopal Church, likewise, has made racial reconciliation a priority in its national ministry. Beyond the moral imperative underlying such work, the documented correlation between racial and political identities in the United States means that healing the country's racial wounds will have an important effect on governance. A full accounting of the country's racial history, coupled with focused attention on stubborn socioeconomic inequalities that affect communities of color, could help move the United States' political culture beyond one of its most entrenched tribal divisions: partisan identity tied to race.

Although this is work in which every citizen can engage, as president, Biden must take the lead. To start, he should convene a national summit on tribalism and American politics to examine the issue, explore its threat to U.S. governance and security, and propose recommendations to address it. The gathering could be co-chaired by two former U.S. presidents of opposite political parties and include academics, members of the business community, civic leaders, and other former elected politicians, all on a bipartisan basis. Together, they could produce tangible proposals, from the local to the national level, designed to fortify American governance against the scourge of tribalism.

Beyond civic engagement, however, institutions also matter. Legal systems and constitutions can either encourage or discourage cooperation. This is why many peace agreements brokered in countries riven by tribal conflict have concluded with either a substantially revised constitutional framework (as in South Africa after apartheid) or a binding power-sharing deal (as in Burundi in 2000, after the country's civil war). Americans are proud of the durability of their country's constitution, which the Founding Fathers designed to stifle factionalism. Yet today, the framework provided by the U.S. Constitution is no longer up to the task.

Of the various proposed constitutional reforms designed to modernize U.S. institutions, the most important for addressing the challenge of political tribalism is ending partisan gerrymandering. The

practice, employed by both political parties, creates majority districts without regard to natural or sensible geographic boundaries. In so doing, it incentivizes legislators to play to a partisan base rather than seek compromise across the aisle, lest challengers further to their party's ideological extreme penalize them. Tribalism is thus reinforced by the system. Efforts to end political gerrymandering have been underway for years, but politicians need to accelerate the process. One option is for individual states to ban the practice in their jurisdictions. The other is for national leaders to amend the U.S. Constitution to end the practice nationwide. Although both approaches would face stiff political opposition, there is no other structural reform that would do more to diminish the impact of tribalism on U.S. politics.

MEETING THE MOMENT

In Bosnia, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, and many other countries beset by tribalism, it took external intervention to resolve ongoing conflicts. In some instances, that intervention took the form of mediation efforts by regional organizations such as the African Union or the Organization of American States. In others, it involved peacekeeping forces from third parties such as the UN or NATO. Unsurprisingly, the United States is unlikely to tolerate outside help when it comes to bridging its divisions. The country will never listen to a démarche from the European Union expressing concern about rising tribalism, nor will it invite peacekeepers to rescue Black neighborhoods from aggressive policing.

So it will fall to Americans to do the work themselves of bridging their country's tribal divisions. The task will not be easy, not least because the citizens on whom the burden of addressing the crisis falls are themselves caught up in the tribalism that pervades society. Solving tribalism in the United States is not unlike the biblical admonition "Physician, heal thyself." Yet the state of U.S. democracy, as well as the country's place in the world, depends in large measure on whether its citizens can meet this challenge. American foreign policy and national security experts, accustomed to dealing with events beyond the country's shores, would do well to participate in domestic forums aimed at healing schisms at home. Citizens who are normally loath to engage in anything political should find ways to spend time regularly and meaningfully interacting with people from distinct backgrounds and perspectives. The goal is not to eliminate differences but to learn how to govern despite them.

Although the United States is not at imminent risk of a civil war, it is unable to resolve many of its pressing domestic problems or encourage other countries to do the same. Tribal divisions within the United States are susceptible to manipulation by enterprising politicians at home and malevolent adversaries abroad. Strengthening the country's capacity to govern itself across these boundaries is more than a moral good; it is a national security priority. The case for U.S. global leadership has never been simply that the country has an economy or a military that is stronger than any other. It is that the United States' example, and the ideals the United States embodies, is worthy of emulation and respect. A country that reveres its freedom and insists on its exceptionalism should also meet the standards of governance it sets for itself.

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Foreign Policy for Pragmatists

How Biden Can Learn From History in Real Time

Gideon Rose

Bismarck once said that the statesman's task was to hear God's footsteps marching through history and try to catch his coattails as he went past. U.S. President George W. Bush agreed. In his second inaugural address, Bush argued that "history has an ebb and flow of justice, but history also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty." President Donald Trump had a different take. His National Security Strategy claimed: "A central continuity in history is the contest for power. The present time period is no different." The Bush team saw history moving forward along a sunlit path; the Trump team saw it as a gloomy eternal return. Those beliefs led them to care about different issues, expect different things of the world, and pursue different foreign policies.

Theories of history, fundamental beliefs about how the world works, are usually assumed rather than argued and rarely get subjected to serious scrutiny. Yet these general ideas set the parameters for all the specific policy choices an administration makes. Know an administration's theory of history, and much of the rest is easy to fill in.

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There are a lot of possible theories of history, but they tend to fall, like Bush's and Trump's, into two main camps: optimistic and pessimistic. Thus, the Clinton administration followed its own version of happy directionality—think of it as Bush with less muscular Christianity. And there have been earlier believers in Trump's dark and stormy night, as well.

Unfortunately, given the stakes of the question, no one really knows whether the optimists or the pessimists have the better case. Political theorists have fought about that for centuries, with neither side winning. A few generations ago, modern social scientists joined in, generating and testing lots of theories in lots of ways, but still, neither camp bested the other. And then, in the last few years, history got interesting again and erased some of the few things the scholars thought they had learned.

As individuals, presidents have had strong views on these matters. As a group, they have not. American foreign policy is notorious for its internal tensions. Its fits and starts and reversals do not fit easily into any single theoretical framework. Yet this pluralism has proved to be a feature, not a bug. Precisely because it has not embraced any one approach to foreign policy consistently, Washington has managed to avoid the worst aspects of all. Blessed with geopolitical privilege, it has slowly stumbled forward, moving over the centuries from peripheral obscurity to global hegemony. Its genius has been less strategic insight than an ability to cut losses.

By now, it seems fair to say that the debate between the optimists and the pessimists will never be settled conclusively, since each perspective knows something big about international politics.


Plunkert

Instead of choosing between them, the new administration should keep both truths in its pocket, taking each out as appropriate.

Learning in U.S. foreign policy has come largely across administrations. President Joe Biden's goal should be to speed up the process, allowing it to happen within an administration. Call it the Bayesian Doctrine: rather than being wedded to its priors, the administration should constantly update them.

The way to do so is to make theorists, not principals, the administration's true team of rivals, forcing them to make real-world predictions, and to offer testable practical advice, and then seeing whose turn out to be better in real time. In this approach, searching intellectual honesty is more important than ideology; what people think matters less than whether they can change their minds. Constantly calculating implied odds won't always win pots. But it will help the administration fold bad hands early, increasing its winnings over time.

THE RISE AND FALL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

The canonical modern statements of the pessimistic and optimistic visions were set out by the English philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke in the seventeenth century. Hobbes argued that states in the international system were like individuals in a hypothetical state of nature, before the invention of government. Living under anarchy, with no sovereign above them to provide order and security, they were at perpetual risk, trapped in a permanent war of all against all, doomed to spend eternity jockeying for power. Locke's view was less bleak, and his version of the state of nature was more permissive. He didn't think anarchy necessarily forced states into inevitable conflict. If they wanted, they could avoid war through cooperation, gaining security and protection by association.

Hobbes's world and Locke's world looked quite different, so it was clearly important for policymakers to determine which one corresponded better to reality. If war was inevitable and any stretch of international quiet was just the calm before another storm, states would be suckers for ever letting their guard down. But if sustained peaceful cooperation was possible, they would be fools for not trying to achieve it. For 300 years, the argument raged without end. Pessimists tended to follow Hobbes, and became known as "realists." Optimists were drawn to Locke, and became known as "liberals." And history piled up data higher and higher.

After World War II, scholars of international relations tackled the problem. They imposed order on the discussion and refined its concepts. They showed how one could operationalize realist and liberal theories in many ways, using different variables and processes to produce different outcomes. They tested the theories with sophisticated methods and hoped that eventually their collective efforts would yield greater understanding. Studies proliferated, researchers got better, and work became more rigorous. But the anticipated knowledge failed to materialize, and it was hard to tell what, if any, intellectual ground had really been gained. Because of this conspicuous failure, by the twenty-first century, the status claims of realism, liberalism, and rationalistic theorizing in general were being called

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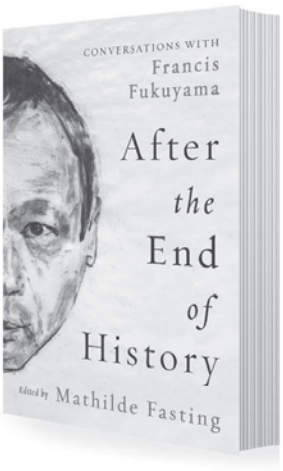

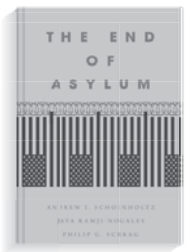

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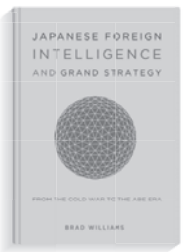

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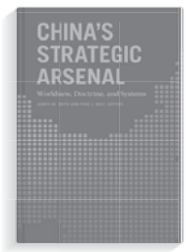

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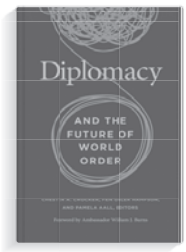

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—Mark Giordano, Cinco Hermanos Chair in Environment and International Affairs, Georgetown University

into question within the discipline. Competing theoretical perspectives crept back into serious discussion, and scholars increasingly abandoned big questions altogether. Journals published articles on "the end of international relations theory." And then the world started to go off the rails.

Where do things stand now? Liberals are on the defensive. They argued that globalization would build on itself and increasingly tie the world together, but instead it provoked a massive backlash, and states are weaponizing interdependence. They saw democracy as improving at its core and marching forward on the periphery, but it is now regressing and retreating. They saw Chinese authoritarianism as doomed to fail, but it has succeeded beyond all expectations. They preached cosmopolitanism, but it turns out that everybody's a little bit nationalist (and gets more so under stress). They claimed that norms constrained behavior, but the reality is that shameless people can break them without consequence. These setbacks may be temporary, and the world may get back on the upward track it seemed to be traveling. But maybe not.

Realists, meanwhile, having taken the other side of those bets, are feeling validated. Relations between the United States and China are playing out like a classic security dilemma. The Trump administration's most notable foreign policy accomplishment, its Arab-Israeli peace deals, emerged from classic realpolitik. In practice, liberal hegemony looks a lot like . . . hegemony.

Nevertheless, the picture is problematic here, too. Realism emphasizes states' relative power, and that matters. But so do leaders, publics, nonstate actors, ideas, institutions, and everything else. War, meanwhile, can no longer be automatically considered the greatest danger countries face. The pandemic has caused more death and economic destruction than anything short of nuclear war or a world war, and climate change will be even more significant. Global issues such as these do not fit well into the realist paradigm.

The problems go deeper still. "International relations scholars," the political scientist Daniel Drezner has written, "are certain about two facts: power is the defining concept of the discipline and there is no consensus about what that concept means."

Consider the question of how a declining United States should respond to a rising China. But first, explain just what is rising and falling about each. Military strength? Economic potential? Perceptions about the long-term trends of those? Perceptions about the willingness to deploy them? The worth of each country's alliances? Their national cohesiveness and institutional performance? Power obviously comes in multiple forms and depends on context. This means that the apparently straightforward question about the U.S.-Chinese power differential is actually quite complicated.

For all the realists' ominous predictions about recurring conflict, finally, great-power war has not occurred for generations. Nobody knows for sure what has driven this so-called long peace or how much longer it will endure. Suggestions include luck, nuclear weapons, historical memory, U.S. power and policy, economic interdependence, changing value systems, and more. But whatever the cause, until this unprecedented stretch of great-power peace is broken, it is a bit rich for pessimistic realists to claim that optimistic liberals are obviously naive.

Interestingly, the dissidents in international relations—sociologists, psychologists, constructivists, critical theorists, cultural theorists, Marxists, feminists, network theorists, and others outside the U.S. mainstream—have weathered recent decades better. This is not because their own findings have cumulated; they haven't. But scholars drawn to those approaches made wiser bets than the rationalists, both realist and liberal, on what ultimately mattered in political life. They focused on hierarchy as well as anarchy, making them better at seeing domination when it was occurring. They were more attuned to social relationships. And they started from better assumptions about their basic unit of analysis.

We now know that humans are cognitively biased against reason. Our brains are hardwired to make us emotional, volatile, and tribal. We act according to personal webs of meaning that do not necessarily overlap with those of others. The dissidents in international relations took those factors as starting points, not afterthoughts. They looked at political actors from the inside as well as out, focused on identity, and appreciated culture and contingency. Their approaches were better suited for a world in which identity politics is central to everything and small numbers of people can wreak vast amounts of damage—not to mention a world in which those people increasingly live through social media, the addicted customers of private companies with business models based on custom-tailoring reality, inflaming emotional volatility, and stoking group conflict.

THE DRAMA AT THE CAPITOL

Studying these strange particles is difficult. It's hard to count the irrational numbers. Humans' multiple cognitive deficiencies, for example, make them susceptible to lies, which play a major but understudied role in politics.

Ordinary lying, knowingly telling untruths, is common. Big lying, peddling a full-fledged alternative reality akin to the Marvel Universe, is not.

Big lies are the territory of prophets and demagogues, people who hear divine voices themselves or play a divinity for others. They are self-contained intellectual paradigms immune from scientific falsification. As the scholar Nina Khrushcheva notes, the big lie "covers everything and redefines reality. There are no holes in it. You . . . either accept the whole thing or everything collapses." The bigger the lie, the further it is from reality, the more psychic potential energy builds up in between. And when the collapse comes, the energy gets released in a sudden burst. It was that kind of cathartic explosion that blew over the U.S. Capitol on January 6.

Was the riot a political protest that got out of hand? An attempted putsch? A heroic defense of the republic against satanic pedophiles? It was all of these and more, because the event was streaming on several platforms simultaneously—not just the conventional TV networks but also the inner mental channels of the deluded rioters. This was history as tragedy and farce combined; the casualties included a woman who was reportedly trampled to death while carrying a flag saying "Don't Tread on Me."

The most persuasive reading of the day is as immersive theater, and not just because the marchers came in costume. It played like a mass live production of Euripides's *Bacchae*, the tale of a myste-

rious cult leader who wreaks vengeance on a city that disrespects him by whipping its citizens into a frenzied nihilistic rampage. Some men just want to watch the world burn. And some crowds just like the way it hurts.

The riot's practical implications are deeply disturbing. But its theoretical implications are more so. For example, one leading proponent of the big lie in question, Peter Navarro, was a crucial architect of the Trump administration's trade policy. It will be interesting to see how mainstream scholarship on international political economy incorporates conspiracy theorizing into the heart of its analysis.

Once they seized the Capitol, meanwhile, these terrorists took selfies rather than hostages. Like most of their predecessors in the 1970s, they wanted a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead. But what if among them had been an even prouder boy, one like Timothy McVeigh, the 1995 Oklahoma City bomber? Then, the entire U.S. Congress could easily have been wiped out, along with the vice president. It will be interesting to see how the episode affects risk assessments of all kinds. Clearly, it isn't so hard to decapitate the United States. Just as clearly, it hasn't happened recently not because anybody prevented it but because almost nobody was trying.

Most disturbing is what the incident revealed about Trump. As Bob Corker, a former Republican senator from Tennessee, put it: "The one plus that comes out of this [is] people have been able to see firsthand what all of us have known, just who he really is." With that in mind, imagine a scenario in which a few hundred thousand votes went the other way last November, letting Trump win the presidency and the Republicans keep the Senate, fair and square.

In that branch of the multiverse, January 6 in Washington plays out rather differently. The same crowd comes, but it is much, much larger. They don't want to hang Vice President Mike Pence; they want to hug him. They don't storm the Capitol; they stand outside cheering as he certifies the president's reelection. Trump is happy, too. And why not? He gets to be the supreme leader of the world's most powerful military, in unquestioned control of his party and all three branches of government, with an official propaganda network and a cult of personality that has millions of members who will literally believe him over their own eyes. For four more years.

It didn't happen. But it could have, easily, with all the consequences one might spin out for everything from foreign policy and trade, to American ideals and institutions, to the future course of international politics. Democracy didn't prevail. It lucked out. One does not come away from the thought experiment struck by some larger pattern of history, optimistic or pessimistic. One comes away struck by its radical contingency.

FOREIGN POLICY AS ORIENTEERING

Some call for abandoning the search for a larger theoretical framework for foreign policy altogether. "Grand strategy is dead," claimed Drezner and two other political scientists, Ronald Krebs and Randall Schweller, in these pages last year. They argued:

> The world today is one of interaction and complexity, wherein the most

> direct path between two points is not a straight line. A disordered, cluttered, and fluid realm is precisely one that does not recognize grand strategy's supposed virtue: a practical, durable, and consistent plan for the long term.

To debate grand strategy, they wrote, "is to indulge in navel-gazing while the world burns. So it is time to operate without one." They want an administration's agenda to emerge piece by piece, bottom up from departments and the field, rather than spring from the head of some scribbler in Washington who thinks he knows where history is going. In place of overarching theoretical frameworks, they propose flexibility and incremental experimentation.

Drezner, Krebs, and Schweller are correct when they argue that simplistic road maps are not very helpful in dealing with today's complex international landscape, and both convinced optimists and convinced pessimists seem fated to produce crude and incomplete surveys. But that is not an argument for throwing the maps away. It is an argument for figuring out how to use two bad maps simultaneously.

Foreign policy, after all, is not cartography. It's orienteering—racing madly through dangerous, unknown territory. And theorists aren't mapmakers, they're coaches: their job is to help players race better. Maps provide crucial information, but the players have to use them out in the field, trying to move as fast as possible relative to others without getting hurt. Offered two bad maps, smart players wouldn't pick one or toss both. They'd take both along and put them to use. Policymakers should do the same, carrying both realist and liberal maps of the world with them as they go, filtering and combining them as possible.

The first thing a player with two bad maps would learn was not to trust either completely. The learning would show itself over time primarily through the avoidance of extreme failure. Interestingly, this is just what Drezner and his co-authors find in the history of American foreign policy—which is precisely why they suggest listening to the inductive, experiential wisdom of practical policymakers: "The push and pull between the establishment and its critics and between the executive branch and Congress eventually reined in the worst excesses of American activism and prevented the overembrace of restraint." The pattern is there, but miscoded. The United States has not succeeded because it has operated without theory. It has succeeded because it has relied on multiple theories.

The process works like this. An optimistic administration, believing the world can be improved, invades a developing country (Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.) and tries to make it look like Nebraska. After many years of futile, costly effort, the administration is kicked out and replaced with a pessimistic successor that withdraws. It can go the other way, too. A pessimistic administration, thinking cooperation is for suckers, tries to go it alone in the world—only to achieve little and be swapped out for optimistic successors able to work better with others. The motor of U.S. diplomatic success has been the combination of multiple foreign policy traditions, multiple dogmatic administrations, and regular political turnover.

American foreign policy has always involved flying blind, making mistakes, and slowly, painfully learning what not to do. But the process has played out unconsciously, across administrations and eras rather than within them. By recognizing and surfacing the pattern, by becoming aware of itself, the country could own its behavior and more consciously control and direct it.

An excellent way to do just this in practice emerges from the forecasting research of Philip Tetlock, an expert in political psychology. Tetlock began with a simple experiment: he asked supposed experts to make specific predictions about future political events and then checked to see how they did. The results showed that Yeats was right: the best lacked all conviction, while the worst were full of passionate intensity. As the international security scholar Peter Scoblic and Tetlock wrote in these pages last year:

> Those who were surest that they understood the forces driving the political system ("hedgehogs," in the philosopher Isaiah Berlin's terminology) fared significantly worse than their humbler colleagues, who did not shy from complexity, approaching problems with greater curiosity and open-mindedness ("foxes").

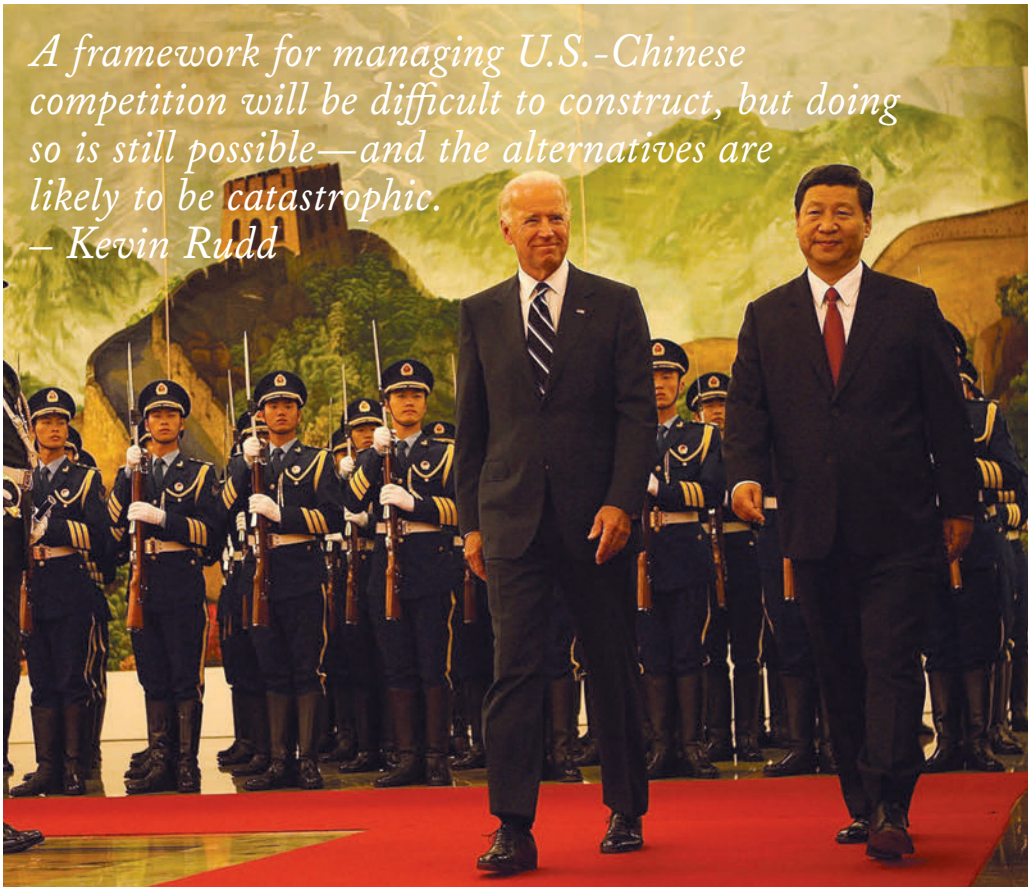
More experiments followed, including tournaments with large numbers of experts and amateurs, repeating and elaborating on the findings. Out of the whole, a picture emerged of what the most successful forecasters did: they kept an open mind and thought flexibly. The essence of successful forecasting, Tetlock decided, was combining multiple maps with good decision rules for choosing among them—which meant incorporating the two basic approaches to prediction, scenario planning and probabilistic forecasting, into a unified framework. As Scoblic and Tetlock put it:

> The answer lies in developing clusters of questions that give early, forecastable indications of which envisioned future is likely to emerge, thus allowing policymakers to place smarter bets sooner. Instead of evaluating the likelihood of a long-term scenario as a whole, question clusters allow analysts to break down potential futures into a series of clear and forecastable signposts that are observable in the short run.

The Biden administration, in short, does not face a tragic choice of pessimism, optimism, or just winging it. Instead of embracing realism or liberalism, it can choose pragmatism, the true American ideology. The key is to draw on diverse theoretical traditions to develop plausible scenarios of many alternative futures, design and track multiple indicators to see which of those scenarios is becoming more likely, and follow the evidence honestly where it goes.

Such an approach to foreign policy would not change the world. But it would allow the United States to see the world clearly and operate in it more effectively. Which would be nice for a change.

ESSAYS



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Short of War

How to Keep U.S.-Chinese Confrontation From Ending in Calamity

Kevin Rudd

Officials in Washington and Beijing don't agree on much these days, but there is one thing on which they see eye to eye: the contest between their two countries will enter a decisive phase in the 2020s. This will be the decade of living dangerously. No matter what strategies the two sides pursue or what events unfold, the tension between the United States and China will grow, and competition will intensify; it is inevitable. War, however, is not. It remains possible for the two countries to put in place guardrails that would prevent a catastrophe: a joint framework for what I call "managed strategic competition" would reduce the risk of competition escalating into open conflict.

The Chinese Communist Party is increasingly confident that by the decade's end, China's economy will finally surpass that of the United States as the world's largest in terms of GDP at market exchange rates. Western elites may dismiss the significance of that milestone; the CCP's Politburo does not. For China, size always matters. Taking the number one slot will turbocharge Beijing's confidence, assertiveness, and leverage in its dealings with Washington, and it will make China's central bank more likely to float the yuan, open its capital account, and challenge the U.S. dollar as the main global reserve currency. Meanwhile, China continues to advance on other fronts, as well. A new policy plan, announced last fall, aims to allow China to dominate in all new technology domains, including artificial intelligence, by 2035. And Beijing now intends to complete its military modernization program by 2027 (seven years ahead of the previous schedule), with the main goal of giving China a decisive edge in all conceivable scenarios for a conflict

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with the United States over Taiwan. A victory in such a conflict would allow President Xi Jinping to carry out a forced reunification with Taiwan before leaving power—an achievement that would put him on the same level within the CCP pantheon as Mao Zedong.

Washington must decide how to respond to Beijing's assertive agenda—and quickly. If it were to opt for economic decoupling and open confrontation, every country in the world would be forced to take sides, and the risk of escalation would only grow. Among policymakers and experts, there is understandable skepticism as to whether Washington and Beijing can avoid such an outcome. Many doubt that U.S. and Chinese leaders can find their way to a framework to manage their diplomatic relations, military operations, and activities in cyberspace within agreed parameters that would maximize stability, avoid accidental escalation, and make room for both competitive and collaborative forces in the relationship. The two countries need to consider something akin to the procedures and mechanisms that the United States and the Soviet Union put in place to govern their relations after the Cuban missile crisis—but in this case, without first going through the near-death experience of a barely avoided war.

Managed strategic competition would involve establishing certain hard limits on each country's security policies and conduct but would allow for full and open competition in the diplomatic, economic, and ideological realms. It would also make it possible for Washington and Beijing to cooperate in certain areas, through bilateral arrangements and also multilateral forums. Although such a framework would be difficult to construct, doing so is still possible—and the alternatives are likely to be catastrophic.

BEIJING'S LONG VIEW

In the United States, few have paid much attention to the domestic political and economic drivers of Chinese grand strategy, the content of that strategy, or the ways in which China has been operationalizing it in recent decades. The conversation in Washington has been all about what the United States ought to do, without much reflection on whether any given course of action might result in real changes to China's strategic course. A prime example of this type of foreign policy myopia was an address that then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered last July, in which he effectively called for the overthrow of the CCP. "We, the freedom-loving nations of the world, must induce China to change," he declared, including by "empower[ing] the Chinese people."

The only thing that could lead the Chinese people to rise up against the party-state, however, is their own frustration with the CCP's poor performance on addressing unemployment, its radical mismanagement of a natural disaster (such as a pandemic), or its massive extension of what is already intense political repression. Outside encouragement of such discontent, especially from the United States, is unlikely to help and quite likely to hinder any change. Besides, U.S. allies would never support such an approach; regime change has not exactly been a winning strategy in recent decades. Finally, bombastic statements such as Pompeo's are utterly counterproductive, because they strengthen Xi's hand at home, allowing him to point to the threat of foreign subversion to justify ever-tighter domestic security measures, thereby making it easier for him to rally disgruntled CCP elites in solidarity against an external threat.

That last factor is particularly important for Xi, because one of his main goals is to remain in power until 2035, by which time he will be 82, the age at which Mao passed away. Xi's determination to do so is reflected in the party's abolition of term limits, its recent announcement of an economic plan that extends all the way to 2035, and the fact that Xi has not even hinted at who might succeed him even though only two years remain in his official term. Xi experienced some difficulty in the early part of 2020, owing to a slowing economy and the COVID-19 pandemic, whose Chinese origins put the CCP on the defensive. But by the year's end, official Chinese media were hailing him as the party's new "great navigator and helmsman," who had prevailed in a heroic "people's war" against the novel coronavirus. Indeed, Xi's standing has been aided greatly by the shambolic management of the pandemic in the United States and a number of other Western countries, which the CCP has highlighted as evidence of the inherent superiority of the Chinese authoritarian system. And just in case any ambitious party officials harbor thoughts about an alternative candidate to lead the party after Xi's term is supposed to end in 2022, Xi recently launched a major purge—a "rectification campaign," as the CCP calls it—of members deemed insufficiently loyal.

Meanwhile, Xi has carried out a massive crackdown on China's Uighur minority in the region of Xinjiang; launched campaigns of repression in Hong Kong, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet; and stifled dissent among intellectuals, lawyers, artists, and religious organizations across China. Xi has come to believe that China should no longer fear any sanctions that the United States might impose on his country, or on

individual Chinese officials, in response to violations of human rights. In his view, China's economy is now strong enough to weather such sanctions, and the party can protect officials from any fallout, as well. Furthermore, unilateral U.S. sanctions are unlikely to be adopted by other countries, for fear of Chinese retaliation. Nonetheless, the CCP remains sensitive to the damage that can be done to China's global brand by continuing revelations about its treatment of minorities. That is why Beijing has become more active in international forums, including the UN Human Rights Council, where it has rallied support for its campaign to push back against long-established universal norms on human rights, while also regularly attacking the United States for its own alleged abuses of those very norms.

Xi is also intent on achieving Chinese self-sufficiency to head off any effort by Washington to decouple the United States' economy from that of China or to use U.S. control of the global financial system to block China's rise. This push lies at the heart of what Xi describes as China's "dual circulation economy": its shift away from export dependency and toward domestic consumption as the long-term driver of economic growth and its plan to rely on the gravitational pull of the world's biggest consumer market to attract foreign investors and suppliers to China on Beijing's terms. Xi also recently announced a new strategy for technology R & D and manufacturing to reduce China's dependence on imports of certain core technologies, such as semiconductors.

The trouble with this approach is that it prioritizes party control and state-owned enterprises over China's hard-working, innovative, and entrepreneurial private sector, which has been primarily responsible for the country's remarkable economic success over the last two decades. In order to deal with a perceived external economic threat from Washington and an internal political threat from private entrepreneurs whose long-term influence threatens the power of the CCP, Xi faces a dilemma familiar to all authoritarian regimes: how to tighten central political control without extinguishing business confidence and dynamism.

Xi faces a similar dilemma when it comes to what is perhaps his paramount goal: securing control over Taiwan. Xi appears to have concluded that China and Taiwan are now further away from peaceful reunification than at any time in the past 70 years. This is probably correct. But China often ignores its own role in widening the gulf. Many of those who believed that China would gradually liberalize its political system as it opened up its economic system and became more

connected with the rest of the world also hoped that that process would eventually allow Taiwan to become more comfortable with some form of reunification. Instead, China has become more authoritarian under Xi, and the promise of reunification under a "one country, two systems" formula has evaporated as the Taiwanese look to Hong Kong, where China has imposed a harsh new national security law, arrested opposition politicians, and restricted media freedom.

With peaceful reunification off the table, Xi's strategy now is clear: to vastly increase the level of military power that China can exert in the Taiwan Strait, to the extent that the United States would become unwilling to fight a battle that Washington itself judged it would probably lose. Without U.S. backing, Xi believes, Taiwan would either capitulate or fight on its own and lose. This approach, however, radically underestimates three factors: the difficulty of occupying an island that is the size of the Netherlands, has the terrain of Norway, and boasts a well-armed population of 25 million; the irreparable damage to China's international political legitimacy that would arise from such a brutal use of military force; and the deep unpredictability of U.S. domestic politics, which would determine the nature of the U.S. response if and when such a crisis arose. Beijing, in projecting its own deep strategic realism onto Washington, has concluded that the United States would never fight a war it could not win, because to do so would be terminal for the future of American power, prestige, and global standing. What China does not include in this calculus is the reverse possibility: that the failure to fight for a fellow democracy that the United States has supported for the entire postwar period would also be catastrophic for Washington, particularly in terms of the perception of U.S. allies in Asia, who might conclude that the American security guarantees they have long relied on are worthless—and then seek their own arrangements with China.

Beijing has concluded that the United States would never fight a war it could not win.

As for China's maritime and territorial claims in the East China and South China Seas, Xi will not concede an inch. Beijing will continue to sustain pressure on its Southeast Asian neighbors in the South China Sea, actively contesting freedom-of-navigation operations, probing for any weakening of individual or collective resolve—but stopping short of a provocation that might trigger a direct military confrontation with

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Washington, because at this stage, China is not fully confident it would win. In the meantime, Beijing will seek to cast itself in as reasonable a light as possible in its ongoing negotiations with Southeast Asian claimant states on the joint use of energy resources and fisheries in the South China Sea. Here, as elsewhere, China will fully deploy its economic leverage in the hope of securing the region's neutrality in the event of a military incident or crisis involving the United States or its allies. In the East China Sea, China will continue to increase its military pressure on Japan around the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, but as in Southeast Asia, here too Beijing is unlikely to risk an armed conflict, particularly given the unequivocal nature of the U.S. security guarantee to Japan. Any risk, however small, of China losing such a conflict would be politically unsustainable in Beijing and have massive domestic political consequences for Xi.

AMERICA THROUGH XI'S EYES

Underneath all these strategic choices lies Xi's belief, reflected in official Chinese pronouncements and CCP literature, that the United States is experiencing a steady, irreversible structural decline. This belief is now grounded in a considerable body of evidence. A divided U.S. government failed to craft a national strategy for long-term investment in infrastructure, education, and basic scientific and technological research. The Trump administration damaged U.S. alliances, abandoned trade liberalization, withdrew the United States from its leadership of the postwar international order, and crippled U.S. diplomatic capacity. The Republican Party has been hijacked by the far right, and the American political class and electorate are so deeply polarized that it will prove difficult for any president to win support for a long-term bipartisan strategy on China. Washington, Xi believes, is highly unlikely to recover its credibility and confidence as a regional and global leader. And he is betting that as the next decade progresses, other world leaders will come to share this view and begin to adjust their strategic postures accordingly, gradually shifting from balancing with Washington against Beijing, to hedging between the two powers, to bandwagoning with China.

But China worries about the possibility of Washington lashing out at Beijing in the years before U.S. power finally dissipates. Xi's concern is not just a potential military conflict but also any rapid and radical economic decoupling. Moreover, the CCP's diplomatic establishment fears that the Biden administration, realizing that the United States will soon

be unable to match Chinese power on its own, might form an effective coalition of countries across the democratic capitalist world with the express aim of counterbalancing China collectively. In particular, CCP leaders fear that President Joe Biden's proposal to hold a summit of the world's major democracies represents a first step on that path, which is why China acted rapidly to secure new trade and investment agreements in Asia and Europe before the new administration came into office.

Mindful of this combination of near-term risks and China's long-term strengths, Xi's general diplomatic strategy toward the Biden administration will be to de-escalate immediate tensions, stabilize the bilateral relationship as early as possible, and do everything possible to prevent security crises. To this end, Beijing will look to fully reopen the lines of high-level military communication with Washington that were largely cut off during the Trump administration. Xi might seek to convene a regular, high-level political dialogue, as well, although Washington will not be interested in reestablishing the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, which served as the main channel between the two countries until its collapse amid the trade war of 2018–19. Finally, Beijing may moderate its military activity in the immediate period ahead in areas where the People's Liberation Army rubs up directly against U.S. forces, particularly in the South China Sea and around Taiwan—assuming that the Biden administration discontinues the high-level political visits to Taipei that became a defining feature of the final year of the Trump administration. For Beijing, however, these are changes in tactics, not in strategy.

As Xi tries to ratchet down tensions in the near term, he will have to decide whether to continue pursuing his hard-line strategy against Australia, Canada, and India, which are friends or allies of the United States. This has involved a combination of a deep diplomatic freeze and economic coercion—and, in the case of India, direct military confrontation. Xi will wait for any clear signal from Washington that part of the price for stabilizing the U.S.-Chinese relationship would be an end to such coercive measures against U.S. partners. If no such signal is forthcoming—there was none under President Donald Trump—then Beijing will resume business as usual.

Meanwhile, Xi will seek to work with Biden on climate change. Xi understands this is in China's interests because of the country's increasing vulnerability to extreme weather events. He also realizes that Biden has an opportunity to gain international prestige if Beijing co-

operates with Washington on climate change, given the weight of Biden's own climate commitments, and he knows that Biden will want to be able to demonstrate that his engagement with Beijing led to reductions in Chinese carbon emissions. As China sees it, these factors will deliver Xi some leverage in his overall dealings with Biden. And Xi hopes that greater collaboration on climate will help stabilize the U.S.-Chinese relationship more generally.

Adjustments in Chinese policy along these lines, however, are still likely to be tactical rather than strategic. Indeed, there has been remarkable continuity in Chinese strategy toward the United States since Xi came to power in 2013, and Beijing has been surprised by the relatively limited degree to which Washington has pushed back, at least until recently. Xi, driven by a sense of Marxist-Leninist determinism, also believes that history is on his side. As Mao was before him, Xi has become a formidable strategic competitor for the United States.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

On balance, the Chinese leadership would have preferred to have seen the reelection of Trump in last year's U.S. presidential election. That is not to say that Xi saw strategic value in every element of Trump's foreign policy; he didn't. The CCP found the Trump administration's trade war humiliating, its moves toward decoupling worrying, its criticism of China's human rights record insulting, and its formal declaration of China as a "strategic competitor" sobering. But most in the CCP's foreign policy establishment view the recent shift in U.S. sentiment toward China as structural—an inevitable byproduct of the changing balance of power between the two countries. In fact, a number have been quietly relieved that open strategic competition has replaced the pretense of bilateral cooperation. With Washington having removed the mask, this thinking goes, China could now move more rapidly—and, in some cases, openly—toward realizing its strategic goals, while also claiming to be the aggrieved party in the face of U.S. belligerence.

But by far the greatest gift that Trump delivered to Beijing was the sheer havoc his presidency unleashed within the United States and between Washington and its allies. China was able to exploit the many cracks that developed between liberal democracies as they tried to navigate Trump's protectionism, climate change denialism, nationalism, and contempt for all forms of multilateralism. During the Trump years, Beijing benefited not because of what it offered the

world but because of what Washington ceased to offer. The result was that China achieved victories such as the massive Asia-Pacific free-trade deal known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, which will enmesh the Chinese and European economies to a far greater degree than Washington would like.

China is wary of the Biden administration's ability to help the United States recover from those self-inflicted wounds. Beijing has seen Washington bounce back from political, economic, and security disasters before. Nonetheless, the CCP remains confident that the inherently divisive nature of U.S. politics will make it impossible for the new administration to solidify support for any coherent China strategy it might devise.

Biden intends to prove Beijing wrong in its assessment that the United States is now in irreversible decline. He will seek to use his extensive experience on Capitol Hill to forge a domestic economic strategy to rebuild the foundations of U.S. power in the post-pandemic world. He is also likely to continue to strengthen the capabilities of the U.S. military and to do what it takes to sustain American global technological leadership. He has assembled a team of economic, foreign policy, and national security advisers who are experienced professionals and well versed in China—in stark contrast to their predecessors, who, with a couple of midranking exceptions, had little grasp of China and even less grasp of how to make Washington work. Biden's advisers also understand that in order to restore U.S. power abroad, they must rebuild the U.S. economy at home in ways that will reduce the country's staggering inequality and increase economic opportunities for all Americans. Doing so will help Biden maintain the political leverage he'll need to craft a durable China strategy with bipartisan support—no mean feat when opportunistic opponents such as Pompeo will have ample incentive to disparage any plan he puts forward as little more than appeasement.

To lend his strategy credibility, Biden will have to make sure the U.S. military stays several steps ahead of China's increasingly sophisticated array of military capabilities. This task will be made more difficult by intense budgetary constraints, as well as pressure from some factions within the Democratic Party to reduce military spending in order to boost social welfare programs. For Biden's strategy to be seen as credible in Beijing, his administration will need to hold the

line on the aggregate defense budget and cover increased expenses in the Indo-Pacific region by redirecting military resources away from less pressing theaters, such as Europe.

As China becomes richer and stronger, the United States' largest and closest allies will become ever more crucial to Washington. For the first time in many decades, the United States will soon require the combined heft of its allies to maintain an overall balance of power against an adversary. China will keep trying to peel countries away from the United States—such as Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, and the United Kingdom—using a combination of economic carrots and sticks. To prevent China from succeeding, the Biden administration needs to commit itself to fully opening the U.S. economy to its major strategic partners. The United States prides itself on having one of the most open economies in the world. But even before Trump's pivot to protectionism, that was not the case. Washington has long burdened even its closest allies with formidable tariff and nontariff barriers to trade, investment, capital, technology, and talent. If the United States wishes to remain the center of what until recently was called "the free world," then it must create a seamless economy across the national boundaries of its major Asian, European, and North American partners and allies. To do so, Biden must overcome the protectionist impulses that Trump exploited and build support for new trade agreements anchored in open markets. To allay the fears of a skeptical electorate, he will need to show Americans that such agreements will ultimately lead to lower prices, better wages, more opportunities for U.S. industry, and stronger environmental protections and assure them that the gains won from trade liberalization can help pay for major domestic improvements in education, childcare, and health care.

The Biden administration will also strive to restore the United States' leadership in multilateral institutions such as the UN, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. Most of the world will welcome this after four years of watching the Trump administration sabotage much of the machinery of the postwar international order. But the damage will not be repaired overnight. The most pressing priorities are fixing the World Trade Organization's broken dispute-resolution process, rejoining the Paris agreement on climate change, increasing the capitalization of both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (to provide credible alternatives to China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and its Belt and Road Initiative),

and restoring U.S. funding for critical UN agencies. Such institutions have not only been instruments of U.S. soft power since Washington helped create them after the last world war; their operations also materially affect American hard power in areas such as nuclear proliferation and arms control. Unless Washington steps up to the plate, the institutions of the international system will increasingly become Chinese satrapies, driven by Chinese finance, influence, and personnel.

MANAGED STRATEGIC COMPETITION

The deeply conflicting nature of U.S. and Chinese strategic objectives and the profoundly competitive nature of the relationship may make conflict, and even war, seem inevitable—even if neither country wants that outcome. China will seek to achieve global economic dominance and regional military superiority over the United States without provoking direct conflict with Washington and its allies. Once it achieves superiority, China will then incrementally change its behavior toward other states, especially when their policies conflict with China's ever-changing definition of its core national interests. On top of this, China has already sought to gradually make the multilateral system more obliging of its national interests and values.

But a gradual, peaceful transition to an international order that accommodates Chinese leadership now seems far less likely to occur than it did just a few years ago. For all the eccentricities and flaws of the Trump administration, its decision to declare China a strategic competitor, formally end the doctrine of strategic engagement, and launch a trade war with Beijing succeeded in making clear that Washington was willing to put up a significant fight. And the Biden administration's plan to rebuild the fundamentals of national U.S. power at home, rebuild U.S. alliances abroad, and reject a simplistic return to earlier forms of strategic engagement with China signals that the contest will continue, albeit tempered by cooperation in a number of defined areas.

The question for both Washington and Beijing, then, is whether they can conduct this high level of strategic competition within agreed-on parameters that would reduce the risk of a crisis, conflict, and war. In theory, this is possible; in practice, however, the near-complete erosion of trust between the two has radically increased the degree of difficulty. Indeed, many in the U.S. national security community believe that the CCP has never had any compunction about lying or hiding its true intentions in order to deceive its adversaries. In this view, Chinese

diplomacy aims to tie opponents' hands and buy time for Beijing's military, security, and intelligence machinery to achieve superiority and establish new facts on the ground. To win broad support from U.S. foreign policy elites, therefore, any concept of managed strategic competition will need to include a stipulation by both parties to base any new rules of the road on a reciprocal practice of "trust but verify."

The idea of managed strategic competition is anchored in a deeply realist view of the global order. It accepts that states will continue to seek security by building a balance of power in their favor, while recognizing that in doing so they are likely to create security dilemmas for other states whose fundamental interests may be disadvantaged by their actions. The trick in this case is to reduce the risk to both sides as the competition between them unfolds by jointly crafting a limited number of rules of the road that will help prevent war. The rules will enable each side to compete vigorously across all policy and regional domains. But if either side breaches the rules, then all bets are off, and it's back to all the hazardous uncertainties of the law of the jungle.

The first step to building such a framework would be to identify a few immediate steps that each side must take in order for a substantive dialogue to proceed and a limited number of hard limits that both sides (and U.S. allies) must respect. Both sides must abstain, for example, from cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure. Washington must return to strictly adhering to the "one China" policy, especially by ending the Trump administration's provocative and unnecessary high-level visits to Taipei. For its part, Beijing must dial back its recent pattern of provocative military exercises, deployments, and maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait. In the South China Sea, Beijing must not reclaim or militarize any more islands and must commit to respecting freedom of navigation and aircraft movement without challenge; for its part, the United States and its allies could then (and only then) reduce the number of operations they carry out in the sea. Similarly, China and Japan could cut back their military deployments in the East China Sea by mutual agreement over time.

If both sides could agree on those stipulations, each would have to accept that the other will still try to maximize its advantages while stopping short of breaching the limits. Washington and Beijing would continue to compete for strategic and economic influence across the various regions of the world. They would keep seeking reciprocal access to each other's markets and would still take retaliatory measures when such access was denied. They would still compete in foreign investment

markets, technology markets, capital markets, and currency markets. And they would likely carry out a global contest for hearts and minds, with Washington stressing the importance of democracy, open economies, and human rights and Beijing highlighting its approach to authoritarian capitalism and what it calls "the China development model."

Even amid escalating competition, however, there will be some room for cooperation in a number of critical areas. This occurred even between the United States and the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. It should certainly be possible now between the United States and China, when the stakes are not nearly as high. Aside from collaborating on climate change, the two countries could conduct bilateral nuclear arms control negotiations, including on mutual ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and work toward an agreement on acceptable military applications of artificial intelligence. They could cooperate on North Korean nuclear disarmament and on preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. They could undertake a series of confidence-building measures across the Indo-Pacific region, such as coordinated disaster-response and humanitarian missions. They could work together to improve global financial stability, especially by agreeing to reschedule the debts of developing countries hit hard by the pandemic. And they could jointly build a better system for distributing COVID-19 vaccines in the developing world.

The trick is to reduce the risk to both sides by jointly crafting rules of the road.

That list is far from exhaustive. But the strategic rationale for all the items is the same: it is better for both countries to operate within a joint framework of managed competition than to have no rules at all. The framework would need to be negotiated between a designated and trusted high-level representative of Biden and a Chinese counterpart close to Xi; only a direct, high-level channel of that sort could lead to confidential understandings on the hard limits to be respected by both sides. These two people would also become the points of contact when violations occurred, as they are bound to from time to time, and the ones to police the consequences of any such violations. Over time, a minimum level of strategic trust might emerge. And maybe both sides would also discover that the benefits of continued collaboration on common planetary challenges, such as climate change, might begin to affect the other, more competitive and even conflictual areas of the relationship.

There will be many who will criticize this approach as naive. Their responsibility, however, is to come up with something better. Both the United States and China are currently in search of a formula to manage their relationship for the dangerous decade ahead. The hard truth is that no relationship can ever be managed unless there is a basic agreement between the parties on the terms of that management.

GAME ON

What would be the measures of success should the United States and China agree on such a joint strategic framework? One sign of success would be if by 2030 they have avoided a military crisis or conflict across the Taiwan Strait or a debilitating cyberattack. A convention banning various forms of robotic warfare would be a clear victory, as would the United States and China acting immediately together, and with the World Health Organization, to combat the next pandemic. Perhaps the most important sign of success, however, would be a situation in which both countries competed in an open and vigorous campaign for global support for the ideas, values, and problem-solving approaches that their respective systems offer—with the outcome still to be determined.

Success, of course, has a thousand fathers, but failure is an orphan. But the most demonstrable example of a failed approach to managed strategic competition would be over Taiwan. If Xi were to calculate that he could call Washington's bluff by unilaterally breaking out of whatever agreement had been privately reached with Washington, the world would find itself in a world of pain. In one fell swoop, such a crisis would rewrite the future of the global order.

A few days before Biden's inauguration, Chen Yixin, the secretary-general of the CCP's Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, stated that "the rise of the East and the decline of the West has become [a global] trend and changes of the international landscape are in our favor." Chen is a close confidant of Xi and a central figure in China's normally cautious national security apparatus, and so the hubris in his statement is notable. In reality, there is a long way to go in this race. China has multiple domestic vulnerabilities that are rarely noted in the media. The United States, on the other hand, always has its weaknesses on full public display—but has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity for reinvention and restoration. Managed strategic competition would highlight the strengths and test the weaknesses of both great powers—and may the best system win.

Accomplice to Carnage

How America Enables War in Yemen

Robert Malley and Stephen Pomper

In late March 2015, Saudi officials came to the Obama administration with a message: Saudi Arabia and a coalition of partners were on the verge of intervening in neighboring Yemen, whose leader had recently been ousted by rebels. This wasn't exactly a bolt from the blue. The Saudis had been flagging their growing concerns about the insurgency on their southern border for months, arguing that the rebels were proxies for their archrival, Iran. Still, the message had what Obama administration officials characterized as a "five minutes to midnight" quality that they had not quite anticipated: Saudi Arabia was going to act imminently, with or without the United States. But it much preferred to proceed with American help.

President Barack Obama's advisers looked on the decision facing the administration with queasiness. Both of us were serving in senior positions at the National Security Council at the time, one advising on Middle East policy and the other on human rights and multilateral affairs. Everyone in the administration knew the checkered history of U.S. interventions in the Arab world, most recently in Libya, and was well aware of the president's strong distaste for another one. From Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, officials knew how hard it was to defeat an insurgency—how promises of a quick victory over a determined group of rebels have a way of disappointing. In this case, there was extra reason to be skeptical. U.S. officials thought Saudi Arabia was exaggerating Iran's role, and they had no illusions that the Saudi armed forces, although well supplied with modern U.S. weap-

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ons, were a precision instrument. In short, there was plenty that could go wrong. As a former senior official would later tell one of us, "We knew we might be getting into a car with a drunk driver."

And yet the United States climbed in anyway. Thinking that it could offer sober guidance and grab the wheel when necessary, Washington shared intelligence, refueled aircraft, sold weapons, and provided diplomatic cover. Now, almost six years after the Saudi intervention, the war in Yemen is nothing short of a disaster. It has further destabilized the Middle East, empowered Iran, and sullied the United States' global reputation. Above all, it has devastated the Yemeni people, who are now experiencing the world's worst ongoing humanitarian catastrophe. Close to a quarter of a million people have died as a result of the conflict, according to the UN, roughly half from indirect causes such as malnutrition and disease. Many millions more are starving or homeless. And with power fragmented among a growing number of Yemeni actors on the ground, the conflict has become even harder to resolve.

The United States has had a major hand in Yemen from the beginning and thus must answer for its part in the tragedy. For reasons both moral and strategic, the Biden administration should make it a priority to disentangle the United States from the war in Yemen and do what it can to bring the conflict to a long-overdue conclusion. But to prevent history from repeating itself, the administration should also make it a priority to learn from the conflict's sad lessons. The story of U.S. involvement in the war is one of entangling partnerships, wishful thinking, and expediency. Seeking to avoid a rift with a close ally, an administration that was determined to steer clear of another war in the Middle East ended up becoming complicit in one of the region's most horrific ones.

OBAMA'S CHOICE

How did the United States get pulled into this wretched mess? The tale begins in 2011, with the fall of Yemen's aging, corrupt, and authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was forced by protests to hand over power to his vice president, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Hadi was supposed to serve as a bridge between the old regime and a brighter future, but it didn't work out that way. A nine-month "national dialogue conference" delivered an aspirational, if flawed, blueprint for political reform in January 2014. But by then, the economy was near collapse, and a group of rebels that had been fighting the central gov-

Blockaded: a malnourished girl in Hodeidah, Yemen, March 2019

ABDULJABBAR ZEYAD / REUTERS

ernment for the past decade was making rapid territorial gains. These were the Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah (Partisans of God), followers of the Zaydi branch of Shiite Islam who were based in the country's north, near the Saudi border. In September 2014, riding a wave of antigovernment anger, the Houthis seized control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, and eventually chased Hadi to the southern port city of Aden.

Saudi Arabia feared that its neighbor would be completely taken over by Iranian surrogates. In early 2015, it rallied a coalition of nine mostly Sunni Arab states, the United Arab Emirates chief among them, and prepared to launch a military intervention to restore Hadi to power and counter what it perceived as an expanding Iranian threat to the region. The decision came on the heels of a power transition in Saudi Arabia that resulted in the rise of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, or MBS, who would become the face of the war in Yemen.

That was the context in which the Saudis made their request for American help. U.S. officials scrambled to consolidate their views and make a recommendation to the president. Many had concerns about the coalition's possible heavy-handedness and were of mixed minds about whether MBS should be seen as a potential rising star or a worrying hothead, but in the end, the decision was not an especially close

call. Obama's senior national security team unanimously recommended proceeding with some measure of assistance for the Saudi campaign, and the president concurred. The White House announced that he had authorized "the provision of logistical and intelligence support" to the coalition and that the United States would work with its new partners to create a joint planning cell in Riyadh that would "coordinate U.S. military and intelligence support."

The United States has had a major hand in Yemen from the beginning and thus must answer for its part in the tragedy.

Why the Obama administration did this had much to do with Hadi. In its view, he was the legitimate leader of Yemen and a vast improvement over his much-disliked predecessor. Hadi was also seen as a reliable counterterrorism partner, someone who gave the United States wide berth in its operations against al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which many U.S. officials rated as the most dangerous of al Qaeda's franchises. When the Houthis, who were vehemently anti-American, ran Hadi out of Sanaa, the U.S. government saw their triumph as an affront to its interests in Yemen and to international law. For reasons that seemed to it both principled and pragmatic, Washington hoped for a restoration.

That was not all. U.S. officials also sought to improve relations with the Saudis and with Washington's other Gulf partners, most notably the United Arab Emirates. For decades, the United States had viewed its partnerships in the region as key to protecting its energy and security interests, and in the spring of 2015, those ties were under strain. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies saw the Iran nuclear deal, then nearing completion, as giving Iran a leg up at their expense. But they were nursing other grievances, too—notably about U.S. policy during the Arab Spring, particularly toward Egypt, where they thought the Obama administration had been too quick to abandon President Hosni Mubarak and then too willing to normalize relations with the Muslim Brotherhood government that replaced him. The Gulf states also believed that the United States was withdrawing from the region, leaving them vulnerable to Islamist attacks.

Thus, the watchword of U.S. policy became "reassurance." This meant reinforcing to the Saudis that Washington would stand behind a decades-old security assurance to defend their country against certain

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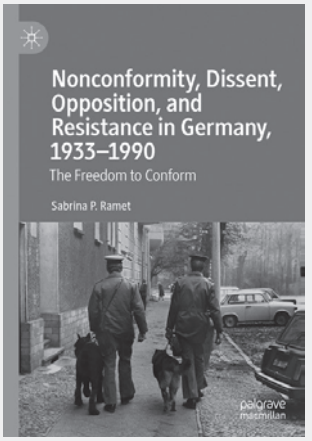

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external threats, as well as spreading some of that feeling of steadfast support to other regional partners. When U.S. officials were planning a summit of Gulf leaders at Camp David for May 2015, they had one major deliverable in mind: a communiqué affirming the United States' readiness to come to their countries' aid in the event of external aggression. Now, the Saudis felt threatened by an Iranian-backed militia on their southern border. Giving them a flat no would have been off message, to say the least.

Another reason U.S. officials decided to support the Saudi-led coalition in 2015 was that they thought Washington could act as a moderating influence. The support that Obama authorized came with limits, caveats, and safety features. Obama's guidance was that American help should serve the purpose of protecting Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity, making the assistance essentially defensive in nature. The administration also hoped that the joint planning cell would act as a forum where American advisers could professionalize their Saudi counterparts, learn what they were doing, and, when necessary, rein them in.

REINING IN THE SAUDIS

As soon become apparent, and has since become incontrovertible, the United States greatly underestimated the challenge it would face in curbing Saudi operations and minimizing both humanitarian damage and civilian casualties. The coalition resorted to brass-knuckle tactics early on. First, it prevented imports from entering Houthi-held areas, strangling the flow of commodities into the country's largest and most important port, Hodeidah. Then, it bombed critical infrastructure, such as container cranes and food-production facilities. Strikes hit residential neighborhoods and weddings. In several instances, U.S. officials worried that the coalition was acting intentionally, perhaps perceiving these strikes to have a tactical benefit.

The U.S. response was to try to fix the problem. American diplomats backed an import-verification regime to help persuade Saudi Arabia to ease its restrictions on goods going into the country, but the flow of goods grew only slightly, and Yemenis struggled with increasing hardship. To reduce civilian casualties from the bombing campaign, U.S. officials developed "no strike" lists for Saudi pilots, but there was a giant loophole: the lists applied only to preplanned strikes, not to ones decided on while a pilot was in the air. As for the joint

planning cell in Riyadh, the personnel that the Pentagon assigned to it tended to specialize in logistics and intelligence, not in techniques for avoiding civilian harm during airstrikes. On top of that, most (if not all) of them were seated away from the operations floor where targeting decisions were made; they were either on a separate floor or in a separate building. The State Department eventually sent its own expert to work with the cell, but after a spike in civilian casualties in August 2016, it reversed its decision, worried that the adviser's presence would give an American imprimatur to irresponsible targeting practices.

The United States greatly underestimated the challenge it would face in curbing Saudi operations.

Amid this blur of effort to contain a worsening humanitarian disaster, what the United States did not do was walk away. American planes continued to refuel Saudi jets on their way to bomb Yemeni targets, without necessarily knowing what those targets were. Washington provided intelligence, shipped weapons, and sent contractors to help keep the Saudi air force flying. It did all of this in part out of deference to the same interests that had led to its involvement in the conflict in the first place, and in part because it continued to believe that its position at the coalition's side allowed it to do some good—steering the coalition away from even worse decisions than it was already making and coaxing it to the negotiating table.

In its last six months, the Obama administration took a number of steps that several former officials later said they wished it had taken earlier. In August 2016, Secretary of State John Kerry pushed peacemaking efforts into high gear by moving away from the unrealistic framework that had guided earlier diplomatic pushes. (A 2015 UN Security Council resolution had insisted that the Houthis hand over their heavy weapons and allow Hadi's government to return to Sanaa to rule; Kerry offered the Houthis and their allies a role in a power-sharing arrangement in return for handing over weapons and territory.) After an October 2016 airstrike on a funeral hall in Sanaa killed 155 people, the Obama administration also rethought its approach to arms sales to the Saudis. In December, it announced that it was halting a planned sale of precision-guided munitions.

It was too little, too late. For several months before this decision, as the U.S. presidential election loomed, it had become harder for

U.S. diplomats to motivate the Saudis to focus on the peace plan. When Donald Trump won, it became impossible. The Saudis suspected that the administration waiting in the wings would be both more supportive of its anti-Iranian agenda and more willing to look the other way on civilian casualties. The suspension of weapons sales, for its part, barely stung. The Saudis correctly predicted that the Trump administration would reverse it. By the time the Obama administration started to toughen its approach somewhat, it was time to pass the torch to its successor. The worst was yet to come.

A BLANK CHECK

The Trump administration saw the Middle East through very different eyes. It shared the Saudis' fixation on Iran, and Trump himself displayed a particular affinity for strongmen in the mold of MBS. Although some senior U.S. officials, such as Secretary of Defense James Mattis, had little appetite for the conflict in Yemen, seeing no feasible military solution, the new administration's priorities were clear, and they did not include peacemaking. The Trump team cared much more about making Saudi Arabia an even bigger purchaser of American weapons and a partner in a notional Israeli-Palestinian peace deal and turning Yemen into a front in its "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

Under Trump, the U.S. approach to the war in Yemen zigged and zagged. At first, attention to the peace process withered, as it was left in the hands of subcabinet officials, while operational support for the military campaign grew. The United States opened the taps on sharing intelligence that enabled strikes on Houthi targets, and in June 2017, the Trump administration unlocked the delivery of arms that the Obama administration had suspended. Trump's team also sent mixed signals about whether it might approve of a renewed attack on the port of Hodeidah—this time by land rather than sea—something that the prior administration had said was categorically unacceptable. In a particularly jarring act, in September 2018, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo formally notified Congress that the coalition was doing enough to protect civilians, a prerequisite for continuing refueling operations, mere weeks after an errant Saudi strike hit a school bus and killed 40 children.

U.S. policy took another turn after the Saudis murdered the *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi at their consulate in Istanbul in October 2018. With Congress outraged, the Trump ad-

ministration pushed for renewed peace talks between the Hadi government and the Houthis. Thanks in part to personal outreach by Mattis to members of the coalition, in December 2018, negotiations took place outside Stockholm under the auspices of the UN. These talks resulted in a cease-fire around Hodeidah and created what might have been a foundation for a broader effort to reach peace. But later that month, Mattis stepped down, and U.S. attention to the peace process once again waned.

As time passed, the confluence of an escalating conflict in Yemen and intensifying U.S. pressure on Iran turned the war into an increasingly central arena in a regional power struggle. On one side were the United States and its regional partners, and on the other were Iran and its allies. How much the Houthis depend on Iranian support and to what extent their actions reflect Iranian desires have been matters of intense debate. But two things seem clear: first, that Iran saw the conflict from the start as a low-cost, high-reward opportunity to bog down and bleed its Saudi rival, and second, that as the war has persisted, ties between the rebels and Tehran have deepened, with the Houthis becoming progressively more willing to turn to Iran for succor, whether in the form of training or material assistance.

Thanks in part to this support, the Houthis upped their drone and missile attacks against Saudi territory. Iran itself seemed to jump into the fray. In September 2019, a complex drone attack was carried out against oil facilities in eastern Saudi Arabia. Although the Houthis claimed responsibility, the sophistication of the strikes and the flight paths of the drones suggested an Iranian hand. In part, the attack was Iran's way of responding to Washington's maximum pressure campaign and discouraging Gulf countries from participating in it. The war in Yemen has given Iran both the motivation and the opportunity to flex its muscles, and it has obliged.

Over the course of 2020, Saudi Arabia recognized that the quick war it envisaged had turned into a long slog, coming at a heavy cost, both materially and reputationally. MBS has been keen to repair his seriously damaged standing in Washington, which has suffered as a result of the Khashoggi murder and the brutal campaign in Yemen. In the wake of the drone attack on its oil facilities, Saudi Arabia revitalized talks with the Houthis, and Riyadh has worked hard to bring the fissiparous anti-Houthi bloc under a single umbrella. But ending the war has proved far more difficult than launching it. As of

January 2021, the Houthis had consolidated their control over northwestern Yemen, with 70 to 80 percent of the country's people falling under their rule, and were threatening the government stronghold of Marib, near the northeastern corner of their zone of control. The rest of the country is a political patchwork, variously dominated by government forces, sundry militias, and local authorities.

THE CASE FOR CARING

Joe Biden has signaled that the issues he will focus on as U.S. president will be those with tangible domestic impacts: climate change, the pandemic, China. Why, given his overflowing plate, should he even care about solving the crisis in Yemen?

Three reasons stand out. First is the United States' responsibility in what has unfolded. Saudi Arabia almost certainly would have intervened in Yemen even if the Obama administration had rejected its call for help, and it may well have prosecuted its campaign with even less regard for the laws of war absent the United States' defective supervision. But without U.S. support, Saudi Arabia would have found it harder to wage war and, arguably, would have been more eager to find a way out. Washington has a responsibility to help clean up the mess it helped create.

Second is the sheer magnitude of Yemen's humanitarian crisis. According to UN statistics, as of mid-2020, some 24 million Yemenis, 80 percent of the country's population, needed some form of assistance. Roughly 20 million were teetering on the brink of starvation. In November 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that Yemen was "now in imminent danger of the worst famine the world has seen for decades." The conflict is not alone to blame—Yemen was the region's poorest country even before the conflict began—but the collapse of the economy and the loss of access to or the closure of airports and seaports, all byproducts of the war, are primarily responsible.

Third is the potential for regional spillover. As long as the conflict endures, so does the risk that it could provoke a direct confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. As a candidate, Biden committed to steering the United States away from adventurism in the Middle East. But such commitments can be difficult to keep at moments of crisis. Should conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia begin to escalate on the Arabian Peninsula, the Biden administration could come under enormous pressure to get involved, despite

its better judgment. That risk alone should be reason enough for Biden, at the beginning of his administration, to both disentangle the United States from the conflict in Yemen and seek to end it.

There's one big problem with this plan, however: it may not work.

GIVING PEACE A CHANCE

Biden faces a conundrum in Yemen. Senior members of his team, including Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, signed a letter in 2018 (which we also signed) acknowledging the failure of the Obama administration's Yemen policy. As a candidate, Biden himself pledged to "end U.S. support for the disastrous Saudi-led war in Yemen and order a reassessment of our relationship with Saudi Arabia." He has also vowed to rejoin the nuclear deal with Iran. Those moves will inevitably raise tensions with Saudi Arabia. Yet the Biden administration is also committed to ending the war in Yemen and negotiating a follow-on deal with Iran on regional issues, steps that by definition will require working closely with Riyadh. Further complicating matters, the administration will have to somehow make sure that the Houthis, who are likely to feel as buoyed by any reduction in U.S. backing for the war effort as Saudi Arabia will feel forsaken, nonetheless come under enough pressure to agree to a peace deal. Deft diplomatic juggling will be needed for the United States to do several things at once: step back from the war while helping end it, squeeze Saudi Arabia but not overly alienate it, and engage directly with the Houthis without excessively emboldening them.

Any U.S. official trying to navigate this terrain might construct the following road map. First, Biden would reverse the Trump administration's last-minute decision to designate the Houthis a terrorist organization. Far from creating leverage over the Houthis, as Trump officials maintained, that move triggered sanctions that could have catastrophic humanitarian implications and severely complicate diplomatic efforts. Second, he would announce a halt to U.S. military assistance to the Saudi war effort. To avoid estranging Riyadh to the point where it refuses to cooperate, Washington would also reiterate its commitment to help the kingdom and its partners defend their territorial integrity, while making clear that this promise applies only to threats of a certain magnitude. In Sullivan's words, the goal should be "to balance anxiety with reassurance." The administration might also make clear that the

direction of bilateral relations would depend in large part on whether the Saudis worked with it to come up with a practical way to end the war. In parallel, Washington would intensify its support for the UN-led peace process and perhaps name a U.S. special envoy for Yemen to that end. Finally, on the margins of discussions with Iran over a mutual return to the nuclear deal, the administration would press Tehran to convince the Houthis to cease hostilities and show flexibility in peace talks—not as a condition for rejoining the deal but as a step that would lower regional tensions and build trust.

Among the items on the new administration's Middle East to-do list, Yemen is one of those that may be ripest for progress.

Among the items on the new administration's Middle East to-do list, Yemen is one of those that may be ripest for progress, although that is not the same thing as saying that the effort will succeed. One likely problem involves calibrating how much reassurance Washington should extend to Saudi Arabia and its partners. History suggests that the very concept of reassurance invites trouble. After all, that was the rationale that led the Obama administration to support the Saudis' campaign in the first place. As much as the Biden administration should try to make clear what it is and isn't willing to do, with a shooting war underway, that exercise is sure to be fraught.

That is largely because it will be challenging to figure out which elements of U.S. support for the Saudi-led campaign to continue and which to halt. What constitutes defense, and what offense? On what side of the line does interdicting arms shipments to the Houthis fall? What about sharing intelligence that the Saudis could use to target Houthi missile launch sites, or helping the Saudis maintain their aircraft? The Houthis have crossed the border into Saudi Arabia and control territory there. When Washington provides intelligence or weapons to counter the Houthis, is it fulfilling its commitment to defend Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity or merely entangling itself further in the war in Yemen? Deciding to end support for the war in Yemen doesn't answer these questions. It is just another way of posing them. It is sobering to remember that Obama also sought to draw such distinctions yet ended up getting sucked into a broader fight anyway. But the Biden team at least has the benefit of seeing what did not work for the Obama administration, and it can prepare

itself to be far more restrained about the circumstances in which it is prepared to lend assistance.

Moreover, however much the Saudis may cooperate on the peace process, at this late date, it may prove insufficient. Obstacles to peace abound. The Houthis will have to accept that given the resistance of large portions of the Yemeni population, a viable deal will not simply convert territorial realities into international recognition of their rule. But having been ascendant for the past two years, they are unlikely to show interest in compromise. Hadi will have to accept that his demands for a return to power in Sanaa through a Houthi surrender are wholly unrealistic. But the embattled president has proved remarkably stubborn, and he is likely to see the formation of a new government as a sign that the tide is finally turning in his favor. The United States and Iran, for their part, may find themselves struggling to come to an accommodation on Yemen even if they reach agreement on the nuclear deal. Although the end of the maximum pressure campaign should diminish Iran's incentive to act aggressively in the Gulf, it might not be reason enough for the country to seriously pressure the Houthis to compromise—something it might not even be able to do anyway.

Ending the war may prove to be beyond the new administration's influence. Ending U.S. complicity in it is not.

A final obstacle: Yemen is no longer the country it was when the war began. As the conflict has ground on, power has become diffused across a multitude of armed actors on the ground—not just the Houthis and the Hadi government but also separatist forces in the south and militias under the authority of Tareq Saleh, a nephew of Hadi's predecessor. The war now rages on multiple fronts, each with its own political dynamics and lines of command and control. Absent the buy-in of all these actors, a peace settlement is unlikely to be sustainable. And getting their buy-in will be difficult: many of the groups in Yemen have developed economic incentives to prolong the conflict. Further complicating matters, multiple regional players have taken an interest in backing different groups on the ground.

The Biden administration should not allow these considerations to dissuade it from making a major push for peace in Yemen. The stakes are too high not to try. But the administration should also bear in mind that

whatever it does, it will have to be firm with Saudi Arabia about its decision to pull the United States back from most activities relating to the war, however difficult that may be. Ending the war may prove to be beyond the new administration's influence. Ending U.S. complicity in it is not.

PREVENTING FUTURE YEMENS

The intractability of the war in Yemen should serve as a stark reminder of the costs of entering such conflicts to begin with. It should also, then, compel the Biden administration to come to grips with a crucial question: How can the United States avoid becoming complicit in similar disasters?

A good place to start would be with the fundamentals of U.S. security partnerships in the Gulf. Washington has given far-reaching assurances that it will come to the defense of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and has arranged to place in their hands a large arsenal of American weapons, sustained by American parts and personnel. Because of the way in which these partnerships are structured, when one of these states chooses to launch an unwise war, especially when there is a defensive rationale, the United States will face a hard choice. Should it join the effort to demonstrate fealty to its assurances and try to influence how its weapons are used? Should it refuse to participate but continue to allow arms and assistance to flow? Or should it cut off support and risk rupturing its relations with a regional partner, recognizing that other would-be weapons suppliers, such as China, Russia, or Turkey, might well step in?

These are the sorts of questions that ought to be examined in the reassessment of U.S.-Saudi relations that Biden has promised. At the heart of that review will be a calculation of which of two paths would better serve U.S. interests. The United States could reaffirm its steadfast commitment to a long-standing partner, even if it risks drawing the United States into future wars of precisely the sort that a growing number of both Democratic and Republican leaders appear set on avoiding. Alternatively, it could lessen that commitment in an effort to reduce the danger of damaging entanglements, even if that means loosening a bond long seen as key to protecting U.S. energy and security interests in the Gulf. If the balance of the risks leads the administration down the second path, which seems the right one to us, it will likely want to revise U.S. security assurances so as to provide more room for maneuver in Yemen-like situations, which, although serious, fall far short of an existential threat.

The soul-searching should extend beyond the executive branch. Congress has a role to play in preventing future Yemens, and indeed, it appears to recognize as much. In 2019, both the House and the Senate, outraged by the killing of Khashoggi, passed a resolution that would have required the United States to withdraw from the hostilities in Yemen, but Trump vetoed it. The bill invoked the 1973 War Powers Resolution, which was designed to limit the executive branch's power to enter armed conflicts, but even if it had passed, it would likely have been ignored by the administration because of the latitude that the executive branch has given itself over the years to interpret key terms in the 1973 resolution flexibly. If Congress wants to play a bigger role in decisions about whether to involve the United States in future misadventures, it will have to amend that act. In its current form, the War Powers Resolution applies only to conflicts in which U.S. troops are either giving or receiving fire, not ones in which the United States is merely providing arms and advisers. Congress should change the law so that a president must obtain approval—and periodic reapproval—if he or she wants the United States to give support at levels that would effectively make it a party to a conflict. A reform like this would do nothing if Congress were more bellicose than the president, of course, but even so, it would be wise if it took the consent of two branches of government, rather than one, to enter a war. Such a change would make it less likely that the United States would get drawn into quagmires in the first place and more likely that it would correct course if it did.

The war in Yemen is a tragedy for its people, an enduring source of instability for the region, and an open wound for the United States. At this point, however it ends, it is unlikely to end well. At the very least, the United States owes it to itself and to the victims of the war to learn something from the disaster. That would be one way in which the precedent in Yemen might do Washington and the world some good: if it forced U.S. officials to candidly reexamine the United States' posture in the Gulf and recognize how easy it can be, despite the best of intentions, to get pulled into a disaster.

How the WTO Changed China

The Mixed Legacy of Economic Engagement

Yeling Tan

When China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, the event was hailed as a pivotal development for the global economic system and a bold marker of the country's commitment to reform. It took 15 long years of negotiation to reach the deal, a reflection of the challenge of reconciling China's communist command economy with global trading rules and of the international community's insistence that China sign on to ambitious commitments and conditions. U.S. officials had high hopes that those terms of entry would fix China on the path of market liberalization and integrate the country into the global economic order. U.S. President Bill Clinton called Beijing's accession to the WTO "the most significant opportunity that we have had to create positive change in China since the 1970s" and argued that it would "commit China to play by the rules of the international trading system."

Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji evinced similar resolve in securing WTO membership. In their view, joining the organization was not only appropriate for a country of China's size and economic potential; it would also force China to move forward on necessary domestic reforms. Chinese state media noted at the time that entry into the WTO would "expedite the process of China's reform and opening up"; spur the "cleaning up of laws, regulations, and policies"; facilitate the establishment of an "impartial, efficient

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judicial system"; and bring much-needed external competition to the country's inefficient state-owned enterprises (SOEs). China accepted far more stringent terms than any other new member before or since. These commitments included not just large cuts to tariffs on imports into China but also a sweeping overhaul of domestic institutions and policies to allow market forces freer rein within the economy. Beijing pledged to improve the rule of law by strengthening courts and increasing protections of intellectual property rights, to allow firms greater autonomy and limit the government's interference in their affairs, and to revamp regulation to make governance more transparent.

Such commitments generated widespread anticipation that China's accession to the WTO would bring about major change and tie a rising China more tightly to global economic networks and institutions. But these hopes now seem like wishful thinking. In 2018, the office of Robert Lighthizer, the U.S. trade representative, proclaimed that the United States had "erred in supporting China's entry into the WTO," arguing that China's "state-led, mercantilist trade regime" was "incompatible with the market-based approach expressly envisioned by WTO members." Kurt Campbell and Ely Ratner, two former Obama administration officials, claimed in these pages in 2018 that "the liberal international order has failed to lure or bind China as powerfully as expected." By most accounts, in Washington and more broadly, China's economic model has not turned toward market liberalism since 2001 but instead consolidated into a form of state capitalism that Beijing hopes to export globally. WTO membership, the new consensus goes, has allowed China access to the American and other global economies without forcing it to truly change its behavior, with disastrous consequences for workers and wages around the world. China seems to pay lip service to international norms and still play by its own rules, taking advantage of loopholes and naive policymakers abroad.

But if the hopes for China's WTO accession were overblown, so is this new consensus, which oversimplifies a complex story that holds different lessons about the path of, and prospects for, China's reform and about the future of trade liberalization globally. China has surely not followed the course envisioned by Clinton—or, for that matter, that anticipated by Jiang and Zhu. But rather than judge China's WTO entry in the categorical terms of success or failure, a more productive way forward would be to understand the ways in which WTO membership did lead to positive change within China—and when and why that

positive change started to slow and then reverse. Joining the WTO had a stronger liberalizing effect in some parts of the Chinese state than in others, and that liberalization was more forceful at some points in time than at others. At least for a few years, China's accession to the trade body bolstered Chinese reformists and helped authorities push through necessary changes, in the process showing that multilateral institutions can boost domestic reform in China. But the impetus for reform wavered, and other actors within China pushed in opposite directions, steering the economy toward greater state control. It's not impossible to foster positive change in China, but it will be uneven, contested, and require ongoing pressure and engagement from the outside.

THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

China first embarked on the path of reform under Deng Xiaoping in 1978, when the Chinese leader began to gradually open the economy by decollectivizing agriculture. Beijing accelerated these market-oriented reforms in the ensuing years, granting more leeway to private enterprises, opening the door to foreign firms, and steadily privatizing large SOEs. An economy that had become moribund in the 1970s was growing at a breakneck clip of nearly ten percent per year by the late 1990s. But that story of rapid growth and incipient liberalization concealed a much more complicated picture: China's economy consisted of a welter of different actors pursuing different, sometimes contradictory interests. Accession to the WTO in 2001 was a fillip for the country's pro-market liberalizers, but many others evaded or remained hostile to liberalizing reform.

The Chinese state is vast, sprawling, and highly decentralized, especially when it comes to economic policy. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) comprises about 90 million members, which would make the organization larger than the 16th most populous country in the world (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has a population of around 89 million). Its members have a wide range of backgrounds and views, from executives with international business experience to dyed-in-the-wool apparatchiks who eagerly study the ideals articulated by President Xi Jinping. The central government oversees over 30 provinces, hundreds of cities, and thousands of counties. As a result, Beijing has long struggled to coordinate, implement, and enforce policies across the country. Subnational governments enjoy broad discretion over how to run their local economies.

China makes, the world takes: sock textiles in Zhuji, China, February 2015

CHINA STRINGER NETWORK / REUTERS

Governors and mayors compete with their neighbors to produce ever-higher and more spectacular growth rates, and they enjoy enough autonomy to selectively enact, creatively interpret, and even subvert guidelines from Beijing.

When China was preparing to join the WTO, its system of economic governance was decidedly mixed. Some actors within China's massive party-state advocated liberalization based on free-market principles. Others supported a strategy akin to those adopted decades prior by Japan and South Korea, which involved offering financial incentives and instituting administrative measures to support firms in industries deemed strategic. And still others counseled adhering to China's command economy.

The various actors within China's large and complex economy had to reckon with the seismic shift of entry into the WTO. Accession triggered many significant changes and strengthened the hand of the country's reformists, who in the first few years following WTO entry implemented large cuts to import tariffs, loosened rules around trading licenses to introduce domestic private and foreign competition, shrank the state-owned sector, and enhanced the functioning of market forces in the economy. Beijing strengthened the rule of law and the protection of

intellectual property rights to greatly improve the ease and predictability of doing business in China and limit government interference.

The central government drove much of the resulting change, because it felt the pressure of adhering to WTO rules more keenly than did provinces and cities lower down in the administrative hierarchy. WTO membership spurred Beijing to undertake a formidable legislative and regulatory overhaul in order to bring domestic laws and policies into compliance with the international trading system. For example, it amended its law regulating the quality of products, with the aim of improving standards and strengthening the state's ability to guard against counterfeit and subpar goods. It reformed a commodity inspection law to create a common certification process for foreign and domestic goods and put in place similar reforms for customs laws; rules governing pharmaceutical products; and copyright, patent, and trademarks laws. It also overhauled national economic institutions to strengthen the state's regulatory capacity, merging a number of agencies to eliminate overlap. The new General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine (AQSIQ) took the lead in assessing over 21,000 domestic technical standards, abolishing about 1,400 of them, and revising over 9,000 others to bring the country's standards regime into conformity with WTO rules.

Liberal reform in China ran up against deep-seated bureaucratic resistance.

The central government's liberalizing efforts did not stop with legal and institutional reforms. Beijing established research and advisory centers in various parts of the country to provide guidance on matters pertaining to WTO rules and procedures. Authorities launched a national campaign through state media to raise awareness about the consequences of the country's joining the WTO and held training sessions for government officials to help them navigate the complex process of implementing the trade body's rules.

This effort to set in motion greater market liberalization ran up against deep-seated bureaucratic and industry resistance. Those in the state-owned sector feared that foreign competition would crush their businesses. The automotive industry had even petitioned Jiang for greater protection when he was negotiating the entry deal. Powerful industrial ministries within Beijing bristled at the idea that

international rules would now curb their autonomy to make policy. The agricultural sector protested the opening up of China's markets to highly subsidized goods from developed countries.

Foreign businesses immediately benefited from the measures that followed China's accession. By 2003, roughly 70 percent of U.S. firms surveyed in China reported that Chinese domestic reforms had improved their business climate "to a great extent" or "to a very great extent." Those measures would not have occurred without the external impetus of entry into the WTO. And they reflected the degree to which China's leaders had succeeded in using multilateral trade commitments to drive forward difficult domestic changes.

But the actions of the central government tell only part of the story. Subnational authorities, which escaped direct WTO scrutiny, did not match Beijing's commitment. China's entry into the WTO reframed local economies, inviting foreign competition while creating opportunities for commerce abroad. Regional governments had to keep their economies growing while dealing with potential import threats and pursuing potential export gains. Some local leaders responded by liberalizing their markets and facilitating more business-friendly regulations, but many found ways to resist opening up and to promote their own interests in other ways.

Anhui Province, for instance, issued an industrial policy in 2001 that drew from South Korea's success in automobile exports, targeting state support to favored firms. Authorities in Shandong Province noted that the territory should "seize the opportunity" created by WTO entry to expand and develop its shipbuilding industry—which meant not liberalization but increased preferential credits and subsidies in order to expand exports out of the province. Other, smaller jurisdictions responded to the threat of intensified competition with even more forceful interventions aimed at suppressing market forces, using administrative directives to reshape local businesses. The autonomous prefecture of Yanbian, in northeastern China, for example, launched a restructuring drive in 2003 to consolidate its cement industry. Rather than let the market dictate which firms would thrive and which would die, the local government picked winners and losers, taking away business licenses, cutting off the electricity supply, and dismantling the machinery and equipment of factories that were deemed to be too small or inefficient.

Accordingly, China's entry into the WTO produced a wide range of shifts, often in contradictory directions. It initially spurred sweeping

efforts to liberalize the economy, reshape policies to accord with international rules, strengthen institutions to support the free market, and reduce the role of direct state intervention—transforming China's economic landscape and vastly expanding the scope for private and foreign enterprises to do business in China. But the country did not move in lockstep toward liberalization. Subnational governments adopted a plethora of strategies to pursue economic growth, many of them in clear contrast to Beijing's liberalizing agenda. A stark internal divergence in China's economic policies emerged, with some parts of the state strengthening their commitment to market liberalization and others following more statist paths.

China did fulfill the majority of the terms of its WTO accession within a few years. Tariff rates on foreign imports were slashed, and a multitude of nontariff barriers were eliminated. The authority to engage in foreign trade, previously restricted to SOEs and foreign firms located in special economic zones, was broadened to all firms, including private Chinese enterprises. Beijing substantially improved legal protections for and reduced administrative burdens on businesses. Foreign investment surged once more into China, after having plateaued during the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s.

THE STATE ADVANCES

Market-friendly reforms, however, would soon lose their luster for the central government. Observers in China use the term *guojin mintui*, or "the state advances, while the private sector retreats," to describe the central government's slide starting around the middle of the first decade of this century toward greater state intervention in the economy. Several domestic and external factors pushed China's powerful central government to embrace state capitalism. In the first few years after the accession, pro-reform ministries in Beijing drove the agenda for market liberalization, empowered by the mandate of China's pledges to the WTO. The Ministry of Commerce, China's trade agency, led efforts to harmonize China's trading regime with international rules. AQSIQ, the new quality-control agency, encouraged the adoption of international standards and established a direct link with the WTO to manage potential conflicts. These agencies further benefited from the leadership of Jiang and Zhu, who were not just ideologically well disposed to reform but also able to wrangle the country's sprawling central bureaucracy to keep the reforms on course. Under the two leaders, the

government instituted important macroeconomic reforms to recalibrate revenue-sharing arrangements between the center and localities, better control inflation, and improve central oversight of the banking sector. And in a major administrative restructuring in 1998, Zhu had slashed the central bureaucracy in half, from eight million to four million people, and cut the number of central ministries from 40 to 29.

But as China fulfilled its WTO commitments on schedule, pro-liberalization forces lost momentum; swiftly meeting the terms of China's accession had the effect of sapping the urgency of reform. Without the outside pressure that WTO entry first provided in 2001, it was difficult for reformists in Beijing to keep up the push for greater liberalization. Instead, rival agencies that oversaw industrial policy gained the latitude to expand their influence.

Dysfunction in the WTO dealt a blow to the cause of pro-market reform.

This shift in bureaucratic power dovetailed with a change in leadership in 2003 from Jiang and Zhu to President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao. The leaders differed less in their essential views on reform than in their abilities to control the state bureaucracy. Hu and Wen did not have their predecessors' political strength to discipline the state. Wen, in particular, had spent the majority of his career within the central government. He rose to the top with support from networks deeply embedded in the Beijing bureaucracy. Although this milieu might have given him some advantage in understanding the inner workings of the central state, it also left him beholden to that bureaucracy. Unlike Zhu, who was able to halve the size of the central government in 1998, Wen's attempt at administrative restructuring in 2003 was relatively unsuccessful. Reports at the time indicated that Wen planned to whittle down the number of ministries by as many as seven, but he eventually axed only one central agency. Instead, agencies dedicated to industrial policy, such as the National Development and Reform Commission, gained greater influence: the NDRC became informally known as the "mini State Council." In 2008, the newly created Ministry of Industry and Information Technology added to the central government's increasingly activist role in enacting statist industrial policies.

The cause of pro-market reform was dealt a further blow by the failure of WTO members to agree to another comprehensive package

for trade liberalization as part of the Doha Round of negotiations in Geneva in 2006. The disagreement over farm subsidies and import taxes underlined tensions within the trade body, and the ensuing impasse strengthened the hand of agencies in Beijing that oversaw industrial policy and did not subscribe to the market-friendly imperatives of the WTO. Dysfunction in the trade body meant that Chinese reformists could not repeat the success of 2001, lacking renewed external impetus for domestic liberalization.

The central government's new policy trajectory started to become clear in the 2006 iteration of the Five-Year Plan, China's periodic policy blueprint. It emphasized domestic innovation and reducing China's reliance on foreign technology, reaffirming the dominant role of the state in the economy—and inevitably dispiriting foreign firms doing business in China. According to the American Chamber of Commerce in the People's Republic of China's annual surveys of its members, positive sentiment among U.S. firms operating in China fell to an all-time low in 2006.

The 2008 global economic crisis and its aftermath reinforced the regime's statist turn by setting the stage for greater government intervention and laying bare the weaknesses of free-market capitalism. China responded to the downturn with a $580 billion fiscal stimulus and channeled the funds largely through SOEs and local governments. This spending strengthened the central state's hand and boosted the ideological justification for statism. While many wealthy countries that had also enacted large fiscal stimulus programs soon shifted back to economic austerity (and a diminished role for the state), China continued on the path that it had embarked on before the crisis, toward greater state control of the economy. The state-owned sector had steadily shrunk in the years following China's accession to the WTO. In 2001, 40 percent of all jobs in China were in the state sector. That figure had fallen to 20 percent by 2008, but this decline came to a halt in the years after 2008 and showed little change up to the end of the Hu-Wen administration, in 2012. Between 2008 and 2012, assets managed by state firms rose from over 12 trillion yuan to more than 25 trillion yuan.

Since Xi's ascent to power in 2012, the state's role in the economy has only become stronger and more pronounced. Private investment had for many years expanded at a faster pace than investment by state entities, but this dynamic began to weaken after 2012, and it even re-

versed from 2015 to 2016. China has continued to pursue free trade in its foreign relations, inking numerous deals with countries far and near, but the political energy for domestic market reform has all but disappeared. Recent years have seen the country's SOEs become stronger and larger than before, boosted by national policies that reaffirm the dominant role of the state and the overarching supremacy of the CCP over the economy. China's overseas economic footprint has also expanded significantly, most notably through Xi's vast infrastructure and investment program known as the Belt and Road Initiative, sparking fears that China is seeking to export its brand of state capitalism globally. Such fears, however, are overblown.

CONTAINING MULTITUDES

China may have dashed the hope that it would become a liberal free-market economy, well integrated into the international economic system. But even now, its model of state capitalism is not the juggernaut that many make it out to be. In many respects, China still lives under the shadow of its entry into the WTO. Ultimately, the Chinese system is not likely to prove strong enough to completely resist the liberalizing effects of globalization or coordinated enough to effectively pursue its ambitions on the global stage through its SOEs.

In some ways, WTO membership reinforced the central government's inability to prevent local governments from interpreting higher-level directives to serve their own interests. WTO entry brought a new surge of foreign capital into China, reducing the reliance of subnational governments on funding from Beijing and providing them with alternative resources to pursue their own goals—and the flexibility to disregard dictates from the capital. For example, despite Beijing's desire to orient economic growth around increasing productivity, boosting technological development, and training a more skilled workforce, subnational governments have fixated on a quantitative approach to growth that relies on capital investment and high-profile development projects, undermining the overarching national effort. Instead of making long-term investments to raise the productivity of firms and their capacity for innovation, local officials seek out foreign direct investment to expand output for short-term gains, leading to projects that duplicate the work of others and generate problems of excess capacity.

China's policy on so-called new-energy vehicles (electric and hybrid cars) illustrates this divide. In 2012, the central government's

State Council issued an industrial policy on such vehicles that stressed the importance of promoting innovation and explicitly warned local governments against "blindly making low-quality investments and duplicating construction." But that same year, Hubei Province issued its own policy, which ignored the central government's focus on technological innovation and high-quality production and instead stressed the need for "investment promotion" and "large-scale production" to scale up the manufacturing of the vehicles. Nor was Hubei alone in pushing for rapid expansion and disregarding the longer-term imperative of improving technological capacity. By 2017, the central government had to issue a new directive to curb the overinvestment of local governments in the production of new-energy vehicles.

Similar conflicts plague China's overseas economic ambitions. Although some SOEs (particularly those in strategic sectors, such as automobiles and shipping) have retained a more statist orientation to trade, not all are faithful agents or reliable exemplars of state capitalism. China's entry into the WTO granted more foreign trading rights to domestic private enterprises, lowered import barriers, and allowed private companies greater freedom to operate. Once exposed to foreign competition and global rules, many SOEs—especially those participating in highly competitive sectors not protected by state industrial policy—came to resemble more traditional commercial actors, responding to price signals in the same way as private firms. It is not a given that China's SOEs will act as agents of China's overseas economic statecraft. The extent to which an SOE might directly serve Beijing's interests is instead determined by a bevy of factors, including the competitiveness or strategic importance of a particular sector, the degree to which the central government can monitor the firm's overseas behavior, and the specific political context of the country in which the firm is operating.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Some Chinese state and nonstate actors see their interests as aligned with international economic rules; others seek to exploit gaps in global governance. Some dependably behave as operatives of Beijing, whereas others actively subvert national policy in pursuit of their own narrow interests. These dynamics have persisted even as Xi has sought to consolidate CCP rule over many aspects of Chinese political, economic, and social life. Despite Xi's efforts, China's global economic

posture remains mostly the product of the country's messy internal politics and not the result of a coordinated master plan.

This reality complicates matters for Washington and other governments. Given the multitude of actors and interests involved in Chinese economic affairs, traditional state-to-state diplomacy, centered on communications between national capitals, is necessary but insufficient. Substate actors, such as provinces and cities, wield substantial authority over economic affairs. The actions of Chinese firms do not necessarily represent the will of Beijing. Countries must therefore take a multipronged approach to engage with China at different levels. A policy of overt hostility that overlooks the diversity of interests driving China's massive economy will end up being counterproductive.

Recent U.S. policy has demonstrated how not to encourage greater market liberalization in China. The U.S.-Chinese trade war launched by the administration of former President Donald Trump has created conditions opposite to the ones that spurred market reform back in 2001. Washington levied unilateral tariffs, launched trade-dispute cases, instituted export bans, and placed restrictions on foreign investment in the United States. The Trump administration framed relations with China in terms of a zero-sum competition and even went so far as to threaten the decoupling of the two countries' giant (and thoroughly enmeshed) economies.

Chinese leaders view these actions as part of a hostile U.S. strategy to contain or undermine China's rise. The confrontation has empowered the nationalists and conservatives opposed to market liberalization, who point to U.S. coercion as a reason to further protect China's high-tech manufacturing and secure the country's supply chains. The trade war has marginalized pro-reform officials who have called for many of the changes to Chinese policy that the United States has requested, such as the liberalization of the financial sector and the loosening of rules around foreign investment. China's reformists no doubt have less clout than their more statist counterparts. But their relative weakness has led them in the past to seek external leverage—as reform-minded officials did during China's WTO accession. This dynamic is by no means restricted to trade. China's banking regulators, for instance, have drawn on frameworks put forward by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (an international committee of central bankers) to overcome the resistance of state banks, SOEs, and local governments to greater oversight of the banking system.

U.S. policymakers should not abet the nationalists in China by focusing on threats and punishments. A broader strategy of engagement that offers significant benefits in return for Chinese commitments to further liberalization would provide domestic reformists with just the sort of leverage they enjoyed in 2001. Initiatives backed by multilateral institutions would have more legitimacy than would Washington's unilateral demands. Today, segments of the Chinese political elite remain open to adopting the high product standards and market-oriented rules of multilateral trade arrangements. A number of current and former Chinese officials have even spoken positively about the prospect of China's joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, a free-trade deal, a step that would benefit the United States (although it is not a party to the deal) by bringing greater external oversight of problematic issues, such as the governance of Chinese SOEs and foreign investment in China, into the bilateral relationship.

The sweeping liberalization that China's central government embarked on at the beginning of this century showed the positive effects of the country's joining the WTO. But it was naive then to expect China to fully open up its economy and integrate it into the international trading system, just as it is simplistic now to think that China has abandoned liberal reform for the more familiar comforts of state capitalism. The Chinese economy is neither entirely marketized nor completely state-controlled, and any sensible China policy cannot treat the system as a monolith.

System Failure

America Needs a Global Health Policy for the Pandemic Age

Ashish Jha

Shared transnational challenges are supposed to bring the world together. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has done the opposite, exposing the shortcomings of the structures that govern global health. At the start, countries scrambled in a free-for-all for medical supplies. They imposed travel bans and tightly guarded data about the novel disease. The World Health Organization (WHO), after struggling to secure Chinese cooperation, became a scapegoat for U.S. President Donald Trump, who announced that the United States would withdraw from the international health body.

U.S. President Joe Biden, promising to break with Trump's retreat to vituperative nationalist politics, has signaled his intent to rejoin the WHO and revive the United States' leading role more broadly. As welcome as those steps are, the Biden administration cannot simply pick up the mantle of U.S. leadership after it was discarded four years ago. Even before Trump's presidency, American primacy in global health governance was ebbing. No one can turn back the clock to the bygone era in which the United States set the agenda.

The great health challenges of the twentieth century—including HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis—affected poor countries more than wealthy ones. To address those diseases, the United States embraced a model of global health that resembled patronage, providing aid to institutions and countries. Washington shaped the international agenda through funding and its broad sway over multilateral health organizations, chief among them the WHO. In the twenty-first century, the United States has contributed about one-fifth of the WHO's budget, much of it earmarked for specific programs that have been high

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priorities for Washington, including children's health and infectious diseases. Likewise, U.S. bilateral global health funding over the last 20 years—the United States spent $9 billion in 2020 alone—has given Washington overweening influence over the health systems of recipient countries. The outsize U.S. role has made it hard for multilateral organizations to function effectively without tacit U.S. support. No doubt the money spent by the U.S. government has done tremendous good, but it has also allowed the United States to unilaterally set international health priorities and define the metrics of success, sometimes at the expense of what is actually needed on the ground.

But this model is now becoming obsolete. Unlike the health threats of the last century, the COVID-19 pandemic has reached nearly every corner of the globe. The United States cannot sit aloof from a troubled world, dispensing its benevolence and largess; it, too, is caught up in the crisis. At the same time, new networks and institutions, including philanthropies, regional organizations, and private companies, now play a major role in addressing global health challenges. Western researchers once steered the development of best practices and scientific knowledge in matters of public health; now scientists and organizations in the developing world wield influence, too. The technological revolution has generated many forms of new data that promise to transform the way governments and their health agencies work.

As a result, the governance of global health is becoming more decentralized, determined less by Washington's prerogatives than by the combined work of governments, nongovernmental organizations, and private actors. In such a world, Washington must reimagine how it can lead: instead of trying to define the agenda, it must work with other governments, regional organizations, and the private sector to put partnership at the center of its efforts to protect public health.

THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD

The U.S.-led global health order of the past did achieve major victories, with the high-water mark being the bid by the George W. Bush administration in 2003 to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic through the program known as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Activists capitalized on the moral standing that the United States had gained in the wake of the 9/11 attacks to build an unprecedented coalition with conservative Christian policymakers. They launched PEPFAR with an initial budget of $15 billion over five

Their turn: testing COVID-19 samples in Nairobi, Kenya, April 2020

BRIAN INGANGA / AP PHOTO

years. Since then, Congress has reauthorized the program every five years. Having devoted to date over $95 billion, it remains the largest commitment of any government in history to address a disease and the largest commitment by the U.S. government to any cause since the Marshall Plan. It has been enormously successful, preventing, by one estimate, 18 million deaths.

But even as PEPFAR marked a seminal achievement in U.S.-led global health policy, it also pointed the way forward to a new world less dominated by the United States. PEPFAR adopted multilateral approaches from the outset, working with the UN and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to build the capacities of local health systems around the world. In recent years, PEPFAR has focused its work on 13 countries, and it intends to direct 70 percent of its future funding to partner organizations headquartered in poor countries, not in the capitals of the West.

That change in emphasis is revealing of a broader shift. The United States and the WHO no longer hold total sway over the governance of global health. When the WHO was founded, in 1948, there were few other organizations of its kind. But smaller, regional organizations now help lead the way in a more interconnected world. The Pan American Health Organization, for example, has funded immunization ini-

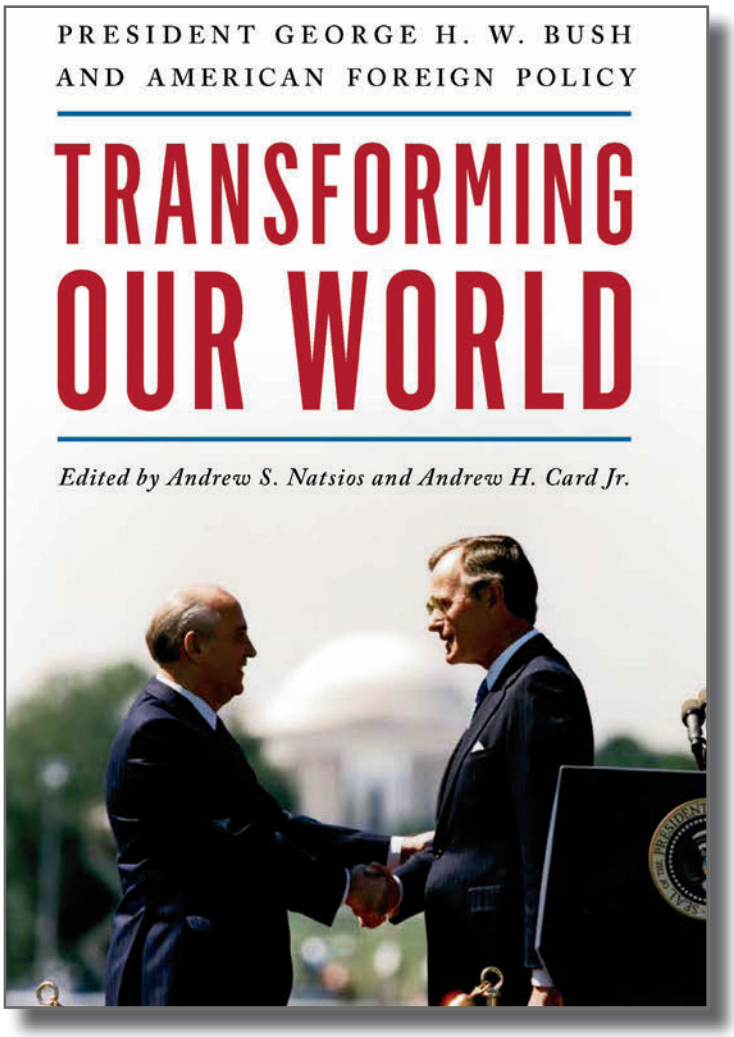
tiatives and supported health education programs across Latin America. And health agencies in South Korea and Vietnam have led far more effective responses to the pandemic than their counterparts elsewhere.

Africa has seen perhaps the most dramatic progress in coordinating a regional health policy. In 2017, the African Union's members launched the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. When an Ebola disease outbreak began in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2018, the Africa CDC supported six laboratories that conducted tens of thousands of tests and trained thousands of health-care workers. As the Ebola outbreak was ending in 2020, the Africa CDC shifted its focus to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizing the region's response and helping distribute medical supplies across Africa.

In a world of increasingly diffuse power, no single player can drive the global health agenda.

The Africa CDC has actively pushed back against the old Western-centric model of global health. In April 2020, its director, John Nkengasong, refused to sanction a trial in Africa of a tuberculosis vaccine that might offer protection against the novel coronavirus. A French doctor had suggested in a televised discussion that such a vaccine should be tested in Africa because the continent had "no masks, treatment, or intensive care, a bit like we did in certain AIDS studies or with prostitutes." The doctor later apologized, but the implication of Nkengasong's refusal was clear: African countries, which have to date managed the pandemic much better than the United States and western European countries, will decide their own health priorities and ensure that medical studies conducted in Africa are led by African researchers in the interests of African peoples. Indeed, in November, 13 African countries launched the ANTICOV study, a joint effort to devise treatments for mild to moderate cases of COVID-19 in a bid to keep hospitalization rates down.

Meanwhile, in Geneva, the WHO has become an arena for geopolitical competition. As a membership organization, the WHO is vulnerable to the power dynamics among its member states, and China and the United States, in particular, have clashed over its decisions. The WHO made the mistake of appeasing China after the outbreak of COVID-19 at the end of 2019, presumably in an effort to gain better access to information about the progress of the disease. The WHO's leaders



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From the fall of the Soviet Union to the Gulf War, the presidency of George H. W. Bush dealt with foreign policy challenges that would cement the post-Cold War order for a generation. This book brings together a distinguished collection of foreign policy practitioners – career and political – who participated in the unfolding of international events as part the Bush administration to provide insider perspective by the people charged with carrying them out.

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applauded Beijing's response to the virus and overlooked early missteps and the withholding of critical data, sparking outrage in the United States and elsewhere. China has played an increasingly large role in global health in recent years, both through bilateral initiatives—its vast investment project known as the Belt and Road Initiative includes health infrastructure projects around the world—and through support for multilateral programs. A country of China's size must be engaged in these global efforts, but that engagement is most effective in the service of shared values and a broad, international consensus. Ironically, the U.S. decision a few months into the pandemic to withdraw from the WHO only made it harder for the international community to try to hold China accountable. The Trump administration's abandonment of multilateralism played into China's hands.

THE RISE OF THE PHILANTHROPISTS

Another powerful force remaking the governance of global health is the growing role of private and nongovernmental actors. The launch of the Gates Foundation in 2000 marked an important shift away from a model of global health centered on government action. In its first year of operation, the foundation spent $1.5 billion—orders of magnitude more than what any other organization of its kind had ever spent. The seismic impact of the Gates Foundation can be seen in a massive increase in global health spending, including at the WHO: the organization's budget grew from less than $1 billion in 2000 to nearly $6 billion in 2020. In 2018, the Gates Foundation was the second-largest funder of the WHO, after the U.S. government. The Gates Foundation has used its financial muscle to drive improvements in vaccinations and other lifesaving therapies for the world's poor. A private philanthropic organization having this much influence represents a sea change in global health.

Beyond philanthropies, a new kind of public-private partnership has arisen to address neglected problems at a time when many countries are struggling to provide basic health care to their citizens. Indeed, the cost of developing effective measures to fight future pandemics is prohibitively high for any individual country, but all countries benefit from the preparations of one. In 2017, a collection of private donors, pharmaceutical companies, and national governments launched the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. CEPI directs resources to develop vaccines against highly contagious dis-

eases. The group has helped address some of the biggest challenges in pandemic preparedness, ones that were difficult for the WHO to tackle on its own. CEPI has supported the development of vaccine platforms—technologies that can be quickly adapted to create vaccines for new diseases. It has sought to broker deals between private pharmaceutical companies and vulnerable nations to ensure greater access to vaccines during outbreaks. In 2019, for instance, CEPI helped deploy experimental Ebola vaccines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In 2020, with the pandemic raging, CEPI collaborated with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, a public-private global health partnership, and the WHO to launch the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, also known as COVAX, an effort to distribute effective and safe vaccines to countries otherwise unable to procure them. As of January 2021, COVAX had over 180 participating countries—but not the United States, which joined Belarus, Russia, and a handful of island states in declining to join the initiative. In keeping with Trump's "America first" foreign policy, this decision was one of several marking the administration's position of "vaccine nationalism," in which Washington saw the United States' health interests as part of a zero-sum contest with other countries. Under Trump, the United States stood mostly alone in approaching vaccines for COVID-19 as a matter of purely national importance. Meanwhile, the rest of the world—with China playing a prominent role—has participated in multilateral initiatives to help distribute COVID-19 vaccines.

Entities such as the Gates Foundation, CEPI, and COVAX have not made the United States or the WHO irrelevant. Far from it. But in a world of increasingly diffuse power, no single player can drive the global health agenda. This is largely a good thing. And it provides the United States an opportunity to engage as a partner—rather than as a patron—encouraging collective action and countering parochial nationalism.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

As global health leadership has become decentralized and less reliant on the West, so, too, has medical scholarship. Advocates for "decolonizing global health" have long pointed to the disproportionate share of Western authors featured in global health journals, studies, and reviews; researchers and practitioners in poor countries that bear the greater burden of disease are often sidelined. But times are changing. Cutting-edge health and pharmaceutical research increasingly takes

place outside the West. Chinese scientists who studied in the United States now run large, well-funded laboratories in China that are driving the next generation of scientific breakthroughs. Similar pioneering work is taking place in Southeast Asia and, increasingly, South Asia. In the years to come, African and Latin American scientists are poised to join their counterparts elsewhere in driving research forward.

Non-Western researchers are more often leading global health studies, particularly those presented in open-access publications—scholarship available to all for free. A 2019 analysis of medical research conducted in Africa—an area long dominated by Western scholars—found that 93 percent of infectious disease studies had at least one African author, and nearly half had an African lead author. As education and scientific capacity in the developing world improve, knowledge and best practices increasingly flow from poor countries to wealthy ones, bucking old colonial dynamics.

Private enterprises have also helped reshape the public health landscape in developing countries. The health technology company Baobab Circle, for instance, has introduced a popular app in sub-Saharan Africa that allows users to track their exercise, diet, and mental health and access online consultations with physicians. In Egypt, the startup TakeStep helps recovering addicts through telemedicine, allowing them to schedule appointments with counselors, psychiatrists, and clinicians. The Ugandan startup Matibabu has pioneered a device that can rapidly diagnose malarial infection (the cause of one million deaths globally per year) without requiring a blood sample. In India, Healthians delivers at-home tests for many diseases to rural communities that lack easy access to hospitals and clinics. Medicus AI, a company founded in Dubai, has designed an app that uses machine learning and artificial intelligence to explain complex medical diagnoses through user-friendly visualizations and recommendations.

The proliferation of technology-driven startups of this kind points to a new challenge in global health: managing the reams of health data that governments, health-care providers, and private companies produce. How data are generated, governed, and ultimately used will be the defining issue of global public health in the coming decades. Authoritarian countries have already started monitoring and controlling their populations by exploiting various data streams. Increasingly, multinational corporations are tapping into private data sources to build sophisticated models that will allow them to identify and respond to

disease outbreaks. Yet government agencies in democratic countries are struggling to determine how best to use these data without violating ethical standards and legal protections. Worried about privacy, they have proved reluctant to utilize the data sets held by private companies. As a result, they have missed out on the huge potential for data-driven approaches to public health, ceding the field to authoritarian governments and private industry. Fortunately, the coronavirus crisis may compel a reevaluation of this approach, as the contrast between the inadequacy of conventional public health data streams and the effectiveness of the tools available to autocratic regimes and private parties becomes apparent.

The United States must adjust to being a partner in a more decentralized global health system.

Consider how China has responded to the pandemic. In addition to imposing lockdowns more rigid than those feasible in democratic countries, China deployed a surveillance system that uses various relatively new technologies—including location tracking, facial recognition, and QR codes that allow citizens access to public spaces only if they aren't sick. In the early stages of the pandemic, for instance, the local government of Hangzhou introduced an app that assigned users a color code to indicate their health status. Only those with a green code—a clean bill of health—could enter subways, malls, and other public spaces. The app was decidedly opaque and invasive. Users, most of whom had not been tested for COVID-19, had no idea how determinations about their health status were made, and the app appeared to report users' locations and other personal information to the police. It was as if the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States had used Facebook to track suspected COVID-19 patients and then quietly shared their user information with the local sheriff's office. However disconcerting this approach was from a privacy perspective, it also allowed China to rapidly contain the virus.

Many Western countries, by contrast, continue to struggle to do so, in part because they are reluctant to resort to such invasive apps. The United States has lagged behind its European peers in gathering and sharing relevant data, including contact-tracing data and genomics analysis, and only a handful of U.S. states have enabled mobile phone contact-tracing capabilities. There are some signs of progress: the

state of California has pioneered a COVID-19 exposure notification system that safeguards privacy by protecting users' identities and blocking their locations. Facebook and Google have developed powerful tools for monitoring and responding to the pandemic, including community mobility data (analyzing anonymous data of the movements of people in a community) and symptom maps (tracking users' reports of COVID-19 symptoms on social media). But the federal government remains missing in action. If the United States does not lead the implementation and mainstreaming of these technologies, the country will be forced to choose between meeting future health challenges blindfolded and adopting approaches developed by authoritarian governments that do not share U.S. constitutional values.

FROM PATRON TO PARTNER

After decades of setting the global health agenda and almost singlehandedly funding key global health goals, the United States must adjust to being a partner in a broader, more decentralized system. This new partnership model should be understood as the inevitable result of long-term shifts, including the growing importance of private enterprise to public health, the increased role of China as a global power, and the decolonization of global health policy as more authority and resources are afforded to poor countries. Washington should not simply dwell on its lost standing and influence in the arena of global health governance. Instead, it should enthusiastically play a central and constructive role in this new order, working with a diverse set of partners to reform global health in ways that are consistent with American values.

As a first order of business, the United States must renew its commitment to the WHO. This does not mean that Washington should refrain from criticizing the WHO; indeed, reform of the organization, including encouraging the body to adopt a narrower, more focused agenda and granting it greater budgetary discretion to respond to emerging threats, must be a top priority of the Biden administration. But criticism will be meaningless without credible assurance that the United States will work to help the WHO succeed rather than simply walk away when the going gets tough.

Some argue that the WHO has become obsolete in the increasingly decentralized public health system, its consensus-based leadership cumbersome by comparison to ad hoc associations of countries and private entities. But in truth, the WHO is like a Rorschach test, with

each of its different constituents seeing in it a different agency that should prioritize different goals. For wealthy countries, for example, the WHO represents an opportunity to shape the global health agenda and keep disease outbreaks at bay. For less wealthy countries, the WHO is a lifeline, providing crucial technical assistance and helping eliminate diseases such as polio. Too often, the WHO tries to be all things to all countries, ensuring that it is effective in few of the objectives it pursues.

A clearer, more streamlined set of responsibilities would allow the WHO to build stronger capacities to monitor infectious disease outbreaks and share critical health data among countries. Having a more coherent agenda would help the organization secure more stable funding. The WHO must do the things that only it can do, including setting shared global health norms and targets and coordinating responses to transnational health threats. Its leadership, with full input from its member states, must ensure that such reforms aren't merely cosmetic; they must recast the WHO to meet modern challenges.

The United States should not make the WHO a battleground of geopolitical competition with China; instead, it should encourage the organization to adopt higher standards in several crucial areas, including data transparency. New data streams are essential to building modern surveillance systems for disease outbreaks. For instance, in 2020, using mobile phone data, investigators highlighted the role of informal cross-border migration in the transmission of malaria in Bangladesh. The WHO must recognize both the importance of these kinds of data and the necessity to shape the norms around their use. The body's current approach relies on more traditional data sources and methods of modeling disease that are inadequate to prepare for current threats. Indeed, the assessments the WHO had made before COVID-19 of various countries' pandemic preparedness were often completely wrong; some of the ostensibly best-prepared countries (notably the United States) have had the worst responses to COVID-19.

Beyond the WHO, the United States should invest in the growing diversity of the global health governance ecosystem by supporting new public-private entities. It should help fill niche gaps by, for example, supporting the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, which develops diagnostic tests for diseases that may spark pandemics, and allow the WHO to concentrate on a limited set of core competencies. Washington should expand its global health partnerships with entities such as the Africa CDC to improve public health in the devel-

oping world, promote American soft power, and strengthen the ability of poor countries to respond to disease outbreaks. A top priority of U.S. global health investments must be building the capacity of researchers and public health leaders in the developing world through prepublication support (offering advice and technical assistance to researchers), research partnerships, data sharing, and policy collaboration as peers. And the United States must help ensure that the information generated by the technological revolution, much of it in private hands, can be used for the good of public health without infringing on democratic values and individual rights.

In the twentieth century, global health challenges were rarely truly global. Instead, they were typically confined to particular countries or regions. But in the twenty-first century, threats to health affect the entire world. The United States needs to recognize that the centralized approach to global health that it dominated and the WHO managed is no longer viable. The era of U.S. agenda setting may have ended, but that only increases the importance of U.S. leadership. In years past, American priorities inevitably shaped global health; today, if the United States wants future global health initiatives to reflect its values, it must collaborate with others and seek to lead through partnership.

A New Conservatism

Freeing the Right From Free-Market Orthodoxy

Oren Cass

The COVID-19 pandemic sent U.S. policymakers scurrying to their bookshelves, searching for responses to a public health catastrophe that threatened to plunge households, businesses, and governments into financial despair. Republicans on Capitol Hill and in the White House flipped frantically through their dog-eared playbooks from the 1980s to determine just the right tax cut for the moment. But the chapter on society-wide lockdowns was nowhere to be found.

Many Republicans shrugged and proposed a tax cut anyway. President Donald Trump called for reducing the capital gains rate and joined Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in pushing for an expansion of the corporate meals-and-entertainment deduction. Stephen Moore, an economic adviser to Trump, argued for a payroll tax "deferral" that even the U.S. Chamber of Commerce dismissed as "unworkable." Two months after the passage of the CARES Act, as the novel coronavirus continued to rage, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial board questioned whether more relief was necessary, suggesting instead that "every private investment made for the rest of this year be exempt from any capital gains tax." On the same morning that a six-column *New York Times* headline blared, "MARKETS SPIRAL AS GLOBE SHUDDERS OVER VIRUS," Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor who served as U.S. ambassador to the UN, displayed the familiar instincts of a future Republican presidential candidate by tweeting, "As we are dealing with changes in our economy, tax cuts are always a good idea."

The pandemic's distinctness made for a distinctly inept response, but this was only the latest iteration of a pattern that had imprinted

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itself across the right-of-center in recent years. Even in the face of new economic challenges—China's aggressive mercantilism, the financial crisis, rising inequality—the Republican Party has hewed rigidly to an agenda of tax and spending cuts, deregulation, and free trade.

The descent into dogmatism is a time-honored tradition in American politics. What makes conservatism's present bout peculiar, however, is its lack of any discernible conservatism. The coalition of economic libertarians, social conservatives, and foreign policy hawks that kicked off the Reagan revolution, vanquished stagflation, and won the Cold War is rightfully proud of its accomplishments. But that bargain—whereby each camp took charge of its own portfolio—left wide swaths of public policy in the hands of a small clique of market fundamentalists. They shared few values or intuitions with conservatives, who were themselves consigned to talking about "social issues." As conservative economic thinking atrophied, libertarian ideas ossified into the market fundamentalism that most commentators today casually call "conservative." The result has been a political crisis, for conservatism especially and for American government broadly. A right-of-center that is neither conservative nor responsive to people's problems is incapable of playing its vital role as the outlet for a nation's conservative impulses and the counterweight to its progressive ones. Nor will it win many elections.

In his run for the White House, Trump exposed the weakness of the Republican establishment and the frustration and alienation of its voters. But he was no conservative. Indeed, he lacked any discernable ideology or capacity for governing. He left the White House in disgrace, having also lost his party the House and the Senate, abdicated all responsibility for leadership during the pandemic, and broken a centuries-long tradition of outgoing presidents conceding defeat and transferring power peacefully.

Now is the moment for conservatives to reassert their claim to the right-of-center. In the United States and in the rest of the world, serious problems created in part by the absence of a robust conservatism require conservative solutions. Progressivism, meanwhile, is increasingly obsessed with identity politics and the bugbears of its overeducated elite. That makes it uniquely vulnerable to competition from an ideological message focused on the worries shared by most Americans, regardless of their race or religion, about the foundations of their families and communities. In politics, the odds usually favor incumbents, but the establishment that is flying conservatism's ban-

ner has lost its vitality and now hunkers down behind crumbling walls, reciting stale pieties that few still believe. The circumstances today suggest that a realignment around a multiethnic, working-class conservatism might just have a chance.

THE TRUMP EARTHQUAKE

Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election was an extraordinary aberration. Had Trump run in a typical primary, he would have struggled to assemble a plurality of supporters. Had the opponent who finally emerged as his alternative been more popular with the Republican Party leadership than Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, Trump would likely have lost; compare how quickly Democrats rallied around Joe Biden four years later when it appeared that Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont might actually secure their party's nomination. In the general election, had his opponent been a competent politician, rather than Hillary Clinton, Trump would likely have lost. In the end, Trump won the Electoral College in 2016 by the narrowest of margins in several states and lost the popular vote decisively. Still, his success exposed deep rot in the American political system. A well-functioning party capable of serving its constituents does not allow itself to be commandeered as the GOP was. A country with a responsive and effective political class does not elect a vulgar reality TV star to the world's most powerful office.

Trump's heterodoxy and disruptiveness provided the equivalent of an enormous natural experiment, and the results were surprising. The problems Trump emphasized bore little resemblance to the standard stories both parties thought they should tell, yet they seemed to resonate with voters, even though he offered no solutions. His remarkable gains among nonwhites, compared with Republicans in prior election cycles, refuted many of the standard hypotheses about identity politics and gestured toward the possibility of the right-of-center consolidating a culturally conservative bloc across races. What Trump did not provide was any foundation for a political movement to build on.

Trump was not "conservative," in style or substance, under any meaningful definition of the word. But he didn't seem to be anything else, either. His background evinced no commitment to any set of political principles, and his campaign's message and agenda never adopted one. With no intellectual framework, his administration's

Party man: Trump at a rally in Des Moines, Iowa, October 2020

DOUG MILLS / THE NEW YORK TIMES

fortunes rose and fell on the highly variable quality of his appointees, who often seemed to be working at cross-purposes. For each statement, appointment, or policy action pushing in one direction, the administration typically had another one pushing the other way. Unsurprisingly, this proved to be an obstacle to both governance and coalition building, and it provided a poor basis for a reelection campaign. And yet, had the U.S. economy been booming in 2020 at the prior year's pace, rather than struggling against an unprecedented public health crisis, Trump might easily have won a second term.

In the wake of Trump's defeat, analysts have pondered whether his brand of populism might represent the conservative future. But this misunderstands his role. There is no discernible Trumpism independent of Trump himself. His presidency was an earthquake, the immediate result of a political landscape shifting after decades of mounting pressure. Earthquakes do not build anything. They disrupt and destroy, but they are temporary, and they provide the benefit of exposing structures that were sloppily built or that rested on crumbled foundations. People who relied on the old structures will rush in to put them right back up again. But after the earthquake comes a chance to reassess, to learn from what failed, and to rebuild

in a way better suited to contemporary conditions. The important question to ask about the earthquake is not about the earthquake at all. It is, What should we build now?

ESTABLISHMENT THINKING

The hallmark of conservativism is not, as is often thought, opposition to change or the desire for a return to some earlier time. The misconception that conservatives lack substantive preferences and merely reflect their environments leads to some confusing conclusions—for example, that the conservative of 1750 would oppose American independence but the conservative of 1800 would support it, or that today's conservative must favor rapid globalization and deregulated financial markets because that has been the recent tradition. What in fact distinguishes conservatives is their attention to the role that institutions and norms play in people's lives and in the process of governing. "When the foundations of society are threatened," wrote the political theorist Samuel Huntington, "the conservative ideology reminds men of the necessity of some institutions and the desirability of the existing ones."

Edmund Burke, the father of modern conservatism, provided a quintessential illustration of this dynamic. Although he was a member of the British House of Commons, Burke supported the American Revolution in 1776 on the grounds that the United Kingdom, through its overbearing administration and arbitrary taxation, had irrevocably breached its relationship with the Colonies. He thought the Americans could better continue in their tradition of self-government if they freed themselves from King George III's rule. Yet a decade later, Burke reacted with horror to the French Revolution, in which he saw a radical mob tearing away the guardrails and buttresses on which society depended. In both assessments, of course, he was proved entirely correct: the United States became a flourishing democracy, and France descended into chaos.

Burke was at once a "preserver of venerated traditions" and "a reformer of failing institutions," the conservative scholar Yuval Levin has written. As Burke himself put it, "a disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman." This same disposition is easily identifiable in conservatives today. The psychologist Jonathan Haidt, who has spent years testing the foundations of people's moral reasoning, has found that conservatives tend to exhibit a much broader range of moral concerns, giving

fairly equal weight to care, liberty, fairness, loyalty, authority, and sanctity. "They believe that people need external structures or constraints in order to behave well, cooperate, and thrive," Haidt has written. "These external constraints include laws, institutions, customs, traditions, nations, and religions." Liberals, by contrast, overwhelmingly prioritize care, particularly care for victims of oppression. Libertarians, for their part, are obsessed with liberty to the exclusion of other values.

Markets should never be an end unto themselves.

As a result, conservatism, more so than other ideologies, sees progress as a process of accumulation rather than disruption, recognizing what is good in society and striving to build on it. Conservatism approaches the project of governing with particular humility, grateful for whatever order a society's traditions have managed to wrangle from imperfect human nature. The problems it identifies and the solutions it proposes give relatively less weight to guaranteeing individual freedom and choice and more to reinforcing obligations and constraints, relationships and norms, and the mediating institutions that shape and channel people's energies toward productive ends.

Viewed this way, the conservative affinity for markets should seem natural. Markets limit the power of a central government and place it instead in the hands of those best positioned to take care of their own interests. They evolve over time in response to real-world conditions rather than at the whim of a technocrat. They are themselves institutions through which people develop informal codes and formal rules to help themselves cooperate and transact more productively. An alliance with libertarians to promote markets was logical in the second half of the twentieth century, during an era of great-power competition against communism and when the domestic market was choked by an exploding bureaucracy and welfare state, a sclerotic system of organized labor, confiscatory tax rates, and raging inflation.

Critically, however, a conservative skepticism of markets is equally natural. Markets reduce people to their material interests and reduce relationships to transactions. They prioritize efficiency to the exclusion of resilience, sentiment, and tradition. Shorn of constraints, they often reward the most socially corrosive behaviors and can quickly undermine the foundations of a stable community—for instance, pushing families to commit both parents to full-time market labor or

strip-mining talent from across the nation and consolidating it in a narrow set of cosmopolitan hubs. For conservatism, then, markets are a valuable mechanism for sustaining and advancing a flourishing society. But they should never be an end unto themselves. And their quality is contingent on the norms and rules by which they function and the vitality of the other institutions operating alongside them.

Libertarians have no time for such nuance, and the purportedly conservative establishment has paid it little heed, either. Senator Pat Toomey, Republican of Pennsylvania, has defined capitalism as "nothing more than economic freedom," a sentiment echoed by Haley, who has warned that any interference with that freedom would head down "the slow path to socialism." Jack Spencer, the vice president of the Heritage Foundation's Institute for Economic Freedom and Opportunity, has suggested, "Why don't we look at a policy and just ask, Does it expand economic freedom?" The conservative columnist Amity Shlaes has gone so far as to declare, "Markets do not fail us. We fail markets."

The right-of-center's preeminent public policy institutions display these same blinders in their mission statements—or, rather, mission statement, as they all seem to share the same one. The conservative think-tank world is dedicated to advancing the principles of "limited government, free enterprise, and individual liberty" (the Competitive Enterprise Institute), or "free markets and limited, effective government" (the R Street Institute), or "free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom" (the Heritage Foundation), or "individual liberty, limited government, free markets" (the Cato Institute), or "economic choice and individual responsibility" (the Manhattan Institute), or "individual, economic, and political freedom; private enterprise; and representative government" (the Hoover Institution). What began as entirely justified advocacy for the benefits of markets has mutated into a fundamentalism that throws bad policy after good, unable to distinguish between what markets can and cannot do and unwilling to acknowledge the harm that they can cause. Fortunately, it comes with an expiration date.

ANATOMY OF A FAILURE

It is telling that right-of-center coalitions across Western democracies find themselves under pressure simultaneously. The backlash can be seen in the United Kingdom, where Brexit rejected an antidemocratic

globalism; in eastern Europe, where the success of Poland's Law and Justice party and Hungary's Fidesz has revitalized a Christian traditionalism; and in Spain, where the rise of Vox has given the world a rare right-wing party with a labor union. The politics and circumstances of course vary by country, but tremors from the same tectonic shifts that set off the United States' earthquake can be felt far and wide. Three major trends seem responsible for the fall of the old orthodoxy, and all point toward the promise of a conservative resurgence.

The first is a changing world. Few observations are more trite than "the world changes," yet analysts cling to outdated economic claims with religious tenacity, as if each insight represents an eternal and universal truth. Perhaps this is because economists, play-acting at science, pretend that their models offer just that. Those models rely on countless unstated assumptions about the world as it happens to be, and they stop working when it becomes something else. Purveyors of the myth that free trade is always good and more is always better are eager to dismiss the havoc wreaked by the introduction of China's aggressive mercantilism into the global market as an outlier or the exception that proves the rule. But economic models and policy recommendations are of little use if they cannot account for a near-peer economy of 1.4 billion people dominated by the state-controlled enterprises of a communist, authoritarian regime.

Another change in the world has been the unmooring of ownership and management from the communities in which firms operate. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, the economist Adam Smith emphasized how societal expectations shape people's incentives. A person's "desire of being what ought to be approved of," he wrote, is "necessary in order to render him anxious to be really fit" for society. Such considerations for the traditional business owner lose their effect if he is replaced by a set of institutional investors or a consortium of private equity funds on another continent deploying capital held in trust by some government for workers' pensions. In his seminal case for the now prevalent doctrine of shareholder primacy, Milton Friedman, a leader of the Chicago school of economics, disregarded Smith's nuanced view of the prerequisites for a well-functioning society and celebrated instead a world in which the desires of owners "generally will be to make as much money as possible." If the character and constraints of capital ownership change, it should not be surprising that outcomes do, too.

The list goes on. Changes in cultural norms and expectations—"what ought to be approved of," in Smith's formulation—should cause policymakers to rethink economic assumptions. Instead, conservatives have developed the habit of saying, "that's a cultural problem" as an excuse to do nothing, for instance, when growing numbers of young men cannot find and hold steady jobs. Growth, investment, and what passes for innovation have become concentrated in a technology sector that defaults toward natural monopoly. Trillion-dollar tax cuts seem not to spur capital spending, and trillion-dollar deficits seem not to raise interest rates. Playbooks published in the 1980s do not contain answers.

American politics, guided by the neoliberal consensus between progressives and libertarians, has focused on a blinkered set of moral concerns.

The second trend responsible for the failing consensus is overreach. In technocratic fantasies, careful regulators fine-tune their policies, asymptotically approaching the ideal formula for delivering the best outcomes. In practice, politicians and their advisers land on ideas that seem to work and then push them ever further. A reduction in too-high marginal tax rates rarely sates the appetite for tax cuts. Few policymakers go partway on liberalizing the cross-border flow of goods, people, and capital and conclude that the time has come to stop. Likewise, issues that have been deemed undeserving of concern do not receive attention at the first sign of trouble; they remain ignored until they no longer can be. Even as risk built up in the United States' deregulated financial system, nothing was done until after the 2008 meltdown.

Policies will tend to experience diminishing returns that eventually turn negative—until the case for changing direction becomes undeniable. Even the best thinking contains within it the seeds of its own undoing, with inevitable excesses driving a necessary cycle of failure and reform. The West, now well into a postwar period filled with extraordinary achievements, can double down on the solutions of 40 or 60 years ago only so many times before going bust. Defusing the hypernationalist tensions of the early twentieth century was wise; proceeding to eviscerate solidarity within the nation-state was not. Requiring pollution controls and considering the environmental im-

pacts of new projects made sense in the 1970s; tightening the ratchet afterward until industrial investments faced prohibitive risks and costs did not. Expanding the pipeline of talented students attending college has always been a worthy aspiration; converting high schools into college-prep academies is not.

The third factor undermining the old economic orthodoxy is its failure to update its own rules. An analogy to sports is instructive. The goal of a professional sports league is to entertain paying customers, but the league does not accomplish this by directing how each player moves around the field to create maximum drama. Instead, it establishes rules and trusts that players competing under those rules will yield an entertaining product. The unpredictability of the outcome is key to the spectators' enjoyment. Likewise, the rules that the government establishes for economic actors are designed to facilitate competition that will redound to the benefit of all. And because those actors are free agents working within a system of rules, rather than performers following a script, they can respond creatively to changing conditions. But no framework of rules is perfect. Designed based on how the game is being played at the time, it works well at first. But the athletes and teams evolve their own strategies in ways that the rule-makers could not have anticipated. When competition fails to yield the desired benefits, the leagues modify the rules—pushing back the three-point line in basketball, lowering the pitcher's mound in baseball, or adding the forward pass in football.

The same thing has happened in the U.S. economy, except that the rule-makers haven't kept up. Businesses and investors exploit ever more obscure opportunities for efficiency, and their most successful strategies tend to diverge from those that produce desirable results for the nation. One such effect is the economy's financialization, which has directed an increasing share of talent, investment, and profits toward firms that excel at speculative transactions rather than productive contributions. Another is the labor market's trend toward workplaces in which many functions are outsourced and many employees are replaced with independent contractors, as firms maximize their flexibility and profit margins by minimizing their attachments and obligations to workers. Surging profitability may signal success for the capitalist, but as Smith recognized in *The Wealth of Nations*, the opposite holds true for capitalism. "The rate of profit does not, like rent and wages, rise with the prosperity, and fall with the declen-

sion, of the society," he wrote. "On the contrary, it is naturally low in rich, and high in poor countries, and it is always highest in the countries which are going fastest to ruin."

A NEW APPROACH

These trends are the product not of too much conservative thinking but of too little. American politics, guided by the neoliberal consensus between progressives and libertarians, has focused on a blinkered set of moral concerns and blindly pursued the unquestioned priorities of personal freedom and consumption. No wonder the prevailing consensus struggles to respond to the problems facing society today. Conservatism, however, is well suited to addressing them. Conservatives have an appreciation for the nation-state, the rules and institutions necessary to well-functioning markets, and the strength of the social fabric. That starting point provides a better foundation for addressing great-power competition with China, monopolies in the technology sector, failing communities, and rising inequality than does the libertarian faith in markets or the progressive reliance on redistribution. Whereas progressives and libertarians both exhibit an inclination to reason from abstract principles toward absolute commitments and thus encourage overreach, the conservative begins by looking at real-world conditions. Burke knew this well. "Circumstances . . . give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing color and discriminating effect," he wrote. "The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind." Accepting the rule book's inherent imperfection and striving to update it over time as conditions change—that is the quintessential conservative approach to policymaking.

A conservative economics would recognize the power and value of markets but insist on analyzing them within their human context rather than as abstract engines of efficiency. For instance, it would recognize the pernicious effects that high levels of economic inequality can have on the social fabric, the functioning of markets, and people's well-being, regardless of absolute material living standards. It would give weight to the value of diffuse and widespread investment, not just the value of agglomeration. It would consider the benefits that locally owned establishments bring to their communities, alongside the benefits that hyperefficient conglomerates can deliver. It would recognize the importance of nonmarket labor performed

within the household and the community, such as caretaking and volunteering, rather than assuming that the higher monetary incomes in a society of two-earner families must indicate progress.

Organized labor should be a conservative priority. The outdated U.S. system is in terminal decline and in desperate need of reform, functioning more as a fundraising arm of the Democratic Party than as an economic force boosting workers' fortunes. Union membership has fallen to six percent of the private-sector workforce. Conservatives will find much to like in the concept of a vibrant labor movement giving workers power in the job market, representation in the workplace, and support in the community. Placing workers on an even footing with firms so they can negotiate their terms of employment boosts family incomes by emphasizing economic agency and self-reliance rather than by resorting to redistribution. It allows them to make tradeoffs tailored to their own preferences rather than depend on government regulation to protect their interests. The union is also the quintessential mediating institution, occupying a role in civil society between atomized individuals, on one hand, and an encroaching state, on the other, a force that can help people transition into the workforce and between jobs, build solidarity among workers and relationships with employers, and even manage portions of the social safety net.

Organized labor should be a conservative priority.

It is time for conservatives to rethink the public education system, too, which has been commandeered for the task of transforming all Americans into college-educated knowledge workers and does it quite poorly. According to data from the Department of Education and the Federal Reserve, barely one in five young Americans goes on from high school to college, completes a degree on time, and then finds a job requiring that degree. A better approach would ensure that schools can meet students where they are and offer them pathways to productive lives in jobs they want and in which they can excel. High schools would teach practical skills and partner with employers to offer workplace experiences. Postsecondary programs would emphasize subsidized employment and on-the-job training. Colleges would not operate as amusement parks that deform the cultural expectations and economic incentives of young people; instead, they would be recognized as one path among many, present prospective students with their real cost and thus represent an attractive option for some but not most.

Conservatives are right to look skeptically at the ability of the government to supplant markets, but they must appreciate both what markets do well and what they will not do on their own and thus embrace the indispensable public role of channeling investment toward long-term national priorities. This was long the American tradition. Indeed, it was a pillar of the "American System" of investment in domestic industry and infrastructure proposed by Alexander Hamilton, championed by Henry Clay, and endorsed by Abraham Lincoln, a plan that helped transform the United States from a colonial backwater into the leading global power. A modern equivalent would sponsor innovation, mandate domestic sourcing in critical supply chains, and discourage the financial speculation that goes by the name "investment" but bears little resemblance to the work of building productive capacity in the real economy.

A conservative coalition built around economic priorities such as these, plus a merely nonradical set of cultural concerns, would attract a broad range of voters. It would attract the core of the existing Republican Party, which, as Trump proved, has much less interest in libertarian platitudes than Beltway strategists assumed. It might equally appeal to a large portion of the Democratic Party that is likewise culturally conservative; many Democratic voters aspire not to escape their families and communities or rely on public benefits but rather to be productive contributors in an economy that has a place for them. Unlike the naive fantasies that presume that a centrism halfway between the parties' existing commitments must surely be ideal, a multiethnic, working-class conservatism could deliver a durable governing majority. It would do so by rediscovering an entirely different set of commitments, one that both parties' elites have neglected for too long.

A Palestinian Reckoning

Time for a New Beginning

Hussein Agha and Ahmad Samih Khalidi

The official Arab-Israeli conflict has ended. Over the past several months, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sudan, and Morocco have normalized relations with Israel. Oman may be on its way to doing so, and Saudi Arabia has taken unprecedented steps in that direction. Other Arab governments maintain important, albeit discreet, ties with Israel, and further moves toward normalization appear to be only a matter of time. Egypt and Jordan have been at peace with Israel for decades.

The one-time pan-Arab call for a united front against Israel "from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf" has given way to normalization across that same expanse. The pace and extent of that shift have undermined the common Arab position reflected in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. Rather than insisting on "land for peace" and offering normalized ties only in return for a full Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, Arab governments have given precedence to self-interest: for Morocco, U.S. recognition of its control over Western Sahara; for Sudan, the removal of U.S. sanctions; for the UAE, access to advanced U.S. arms.

But if the state-to-state conflict has come to an end, Israel's conflict with the Palestinians has not. Redefining "peace" to conform to the needs of Arab governments does not do away with the Palestinians or resolve Israel's Palestinian problem. Thirteen million Palestinians are spread across the Holy Land and in exile. Nearly seven million of them reside in the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. They are going nowhere.

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History does not support the contention that Israel's peace with the Arabs will inevitably open the door to peace with the Palestinians, compelling them to submit to Israeli terms under the pressure of new realities and isolation. The current Palestinian national movement emerged precisely from the sense of defeat, solitude, and abandonment by Arab governments that followed 1948. Dire as Palestinian circumstances may be now, there are no signs of surrender.

For Israel, the wave of normalization means that there is little incentive to make peace with the Palestinians. That will likely result in consolidation of the status quo in the short term. But a new landscape is in the making, shaped by unprecedented Arab dealings with Israel, seething Palestinian frustration, and a drift to the right in Israel, all of which could eventually bring a new dynamic to the seemingly frozen situation. Bereft of effective Arab strategic depth—that is, the willingness of Arab states to lend their backing to the Palestinian cause—the Palestinians must now think hard about how to reorder their struggle, how to address what has brought them to this point, and how to change it.

The Palestinians have been here before. Around ten years after the *nakba* (Arabic for "catastrophe") of 1948, a distraught group of Palestinians disillusioned with the Arab states' lack of seriousness in rallying to their cause decided to take matters into their own hands. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization was born, and it was taken over by Yasir Arafat in 1969. What started with isolated armed operations helped forge the modern Palestinian national movement. The PLO succeeded in bringing Palestinians together, asserting a separate Palestinian political identity, forcing its cause onto the international agenda, and returning some Palestinians to self-rule. But it failed to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to establish an independent and sovereign state, or to develop good governance for Palestinians. The time has come for a new beginning.

THE FAILURE OF PALESTINIAN DIPLOMACY

The Palestinian leadership at first responded to the recent Arab normalizations with Israel with public anger and charges that the Arab states had stabbed the Palestinians in the back. But that initial criticism has abated. It was bound to be hard to sustain, since the PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people, itself recognized Israel in 1988 and embarked on a "peace process" with it three decades ago. The Palestinian leadership has also maintained security coordination

The struggle continues: Palestinians at a rally in Ramallah, November 2009

MUHAMMED MUHEISEN / AP PHOTO

with Israel, undercutting its ability to object when others establish security relationships of their own. Nor can the Palestinians simultaneously insist that their plight is the central Arab cause and that they have the sole right to address it as they see fit. By regularly invoking their national interests and their "independence of will," as repeatedly articulated in their political statements, the Palestinians have left themselves with no defense against those who claim the right to answer to their own sovereign will and forge their own path.

In short, Palestinian diplomacy has failed massively. It takes exceptional talent to transform an almost complete consensus among Arabs and Muslims on the future of Palestine and Jerusalem into just another matter on a packed Arab agenda.

Partly as a consequence, the PLO has lost all credibility as a decision-making or representative body. Its founding principles and its 1968 charter are of a bygone era, and they have been violated and traduced by the Palestinians' own official practice. The PLO's political program, based on the two-state solution, stands on pillars denounced and decried by its own founding document, which rejects the principle of the partition of Palestine on political and moral grounds. The charter has not been formally revised or updated since

1996. Its ethos lingers in its suspended articles, disconnected from practical politics.

The PLO was originally established as a forum for factional representation, but the factions it represents no longer mirror the political forces in Palestinian society. The PLO's quota system, which allocates seats to various Palestinian factions according to their purported size, is an archaic and distorted means of power sharing and decision-making. Many of the factions, such as those formerly sponsored by Arab regimes, are now defunct, but they still keep their seats. Hamas, the effective ruler of Gaza, and other Islamist factions are not represented. The PLO may seek to respond to a strong popular desire for unity, but its language, comportment, and direction are very much of the past. A new Palestinian beginning cannot start with the same faces, beliefs, and mechanisms that have led to today's dead end.

For Israel, the wave of normalizations means that there is little incentive to make peace with the Palestinians.

The PLO's one-time virtue was that it gave the Palestinians a voice, an address, and a forum for a genuine national debate. As the PLO's stature grew, it subsumed its divisions under a nominal national rubric, with factions papering over their differences for the sake of agreement on broader objectives. The organization's leadership was frequently criticized, but its legitimacy was never questioned or challenged. Yet the PLO has not adjusted its form and mission to meet the goal of statehood. In both construction and function, it is beyond reform. The Palestinians need new tools of representation and political action that reflect present realities and future prospects. That could require a new constitutive assembly, with a mission, charter, and political program that speaks to all Palestinians and eschews the stale language of the old PLO, a discourse imbued with the spirit of the mid-twentieth century but with no currency in the twenty-first.

Since it was established by the 1993 Oslo agreements between Israel and the PLO to govern Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has become the true political center of gravity, with the PLO retaining a zombie form—a higher decision-making body in theory, but marginalized in practice. Blurring the line between the PA and the PLO and allowing the PA to take over most of the PLO's functions are actions that have impaired both. The PA should

be relegated to a purely administrative role, freed from the shackles of high politics to manage Palestinians' lives under its control and safeguard their welfare and security. A successor organization to the PLO should serve as the representative and political address of the Palestinians, free from the chores of civil duties and with a mandate to speak and act on behalf of Palestinians everywhere. That was the model envisioned by the Oslo agreements but never practiced. Tension between a new PA and a new PLO is to be expected, but the benefits of clear lines of responsibility justify the challenge.

Another weakness of the Oslo process was that it sidelined the Palestinians who live in the diaspora; for them, even the unlikely prospect of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza does not offer real redress, since it addresses neither their current security and welfare nor their future aspirations. A new Palestinian beginning cannot be based solely on the tunnel vision of a Ramallah-centered worldview. A political program should offer a clear space and voice for those outside the West Bank and Gaza by ensuring their fair representation in Palestinian institutions and by building a new national agenda that recognizes their predicament and reflects their needs. If efforts to end the conflict are to be serious, they have to include the bulk of Palestinians.

PRISONERS OF DISCOURSE

True "independence of will" must begin with a clear position on what is attainable as well as desirable—a revision of Palestinian priorities and goals that goes beyond old slogans. To move forward, a substantial recalibration of Palestinian aspirations is essential. The dream of self-determination via statehood that would compensate for the pain of exile and occupation is distant. The Palestinians cannot remain hostage to the absence of a state, living in permanent limbo while awaiting a salvation that is visibly retreating and may never arrive.

The national movement has understandably given precedence to collective interests, but as a result, basic individual rights—the freedom to think, speak, work, live, move, and prosper—have been relegated to the margins. Palestinian leaders must give much greater consideration to such issues, particularly because the PA's record has hardly offered a seductive model of good government, better life, or greater freedom. Hamas's rule in Gaza (Hamas wrested control after violent confrontations with the PA in June 2007) has had even less appeal, bringing further suffering and impoverishment to, and a con-

tinuous corrosion of the quality of daily life for, the more than two million Gazans. Palestinians in much of the near diaspora, such as those living in Lebanon and Syria, face increasingly harsh conditions, as well. Whatever Israel's responsibility for the Palestinians' plight, the Palestinian leadership must bear its own share of responsibility for its people's safety and welfare.

Defining a new direction will be difficult. "Armed struggle," upheld in the PLO's 1968 charter as the "sole means of liberation," has long been eschewed in favor of diplomacy, and the limitations of force have become increasingly apparent even to Hamas. The PLO laments that nearly three decades of endless negotiations have led nowhere, yet its only recourse has been to seek a return to negotiations in the vain hope that this time it may be different—that some new framework and the passage of time will yield the achievement of previously unachievable goals. This hope has proved elusive, as each credible "peace" formula ends up being a regression, offering less to the Palestinians than the one before.

Since the Palestinians agreed to accept a state on just part of their national soil, the tragedy of Palestinian negotiations has been the total indistinguishability of the Palestinians' talking points and their real positions: there is no daylight between what Palestinian representatives say in public and what they demand at the negotiating table. By contrast, their Israeli counterparts never reveal their real positions, and they align their talking points with changing circumstances. By failing to do the same, the Palestinians have put themselves in a position in which nothing but agreement to all their terms could be acceptable, which has opened them up to charges of inflexibility and intransigence. They appear to be unbending, since every new proposal they issue is nearly the same as the last. Having made their most significant concessions before a final deal, they have little left to give in talks. The Palestinians thus find themselves in a trap from which there is no escape, which makes true negotiations impossible; they are prisoners of their own discourse, reasserting the same points to no end.

The PLO has also repeatedly sought U.S. intervention, yet repeatedly decried the United States' bias even as it pleaded for U.S. pressure on Israel. Palestinian leaders chase after the United States without accepting its policies, waiting for U.S. salvation while rejecting all U.S. plans. Counting on European "initiatives," in the hope that European pressure will alter the U.S. position, has been a waste of valuable diplomatic time and energy. So has repeated anticipation of

positive change from a new U.S. administration or a new Israeli government. Whenever one U.S. president fails to match their expectations, the Palestinians shut down and wait in the hope that the next one will be friendlier. The same applies to Israeli leaders; once a prime minister is tested and found wanting, the wait starts for a successor. The result is a repeated cycle of high hopes and dashed expectations coupled with procrastination and paralysis.

ENDURING DELUSIONS

Palestinian leaders promised their people a path to freedom and empowerment. Yet in the last two decades, they developed a culture of dependency rather than resourcefulness, an expectation of external salvation rather than self-reliance. This sapped their will to build and develop their society and stymied their willingness to explore new thinking.

Palestinians of the post-Oslo generation have lacked valid and viable political outlets, torn between parroting worn-out slogans they no longer believe in and waiting for overseas charity to bail them out. National assertion and independence have given way to nagging, complaining, sulking, and a sense of entitlement, with Palestinian leaders frequently looking to outside powers for succor. This deterioration has undermined and corrupted Palestinian politics, deflated popular action, and encouraged political drift. It has also alienated foreign supporters, who have become exasperated with Palestinian conduct. International backing for the PA now stems less from any conviction in its competence than from the belief that the governing body is the best way to preserve relative quiet in the Holy Land.

The PLO's default position is to appeal to international law, hoping that the international community can or will act on its behalf. That appeal has been one of the more enduring delusions of the Palestinian leadership, ever since the struggle for international recognition replaced the presumption of revolutionary legitimacy and diplomacy took the place of armed struggle. In reality, international law has not been a dependable friend to the Palestinians (from the Balfour Declaration in 1917 to the UN Partition Plan in 1947 to UN Security Council Resolution 242 in 1967, the cornerstone of the peace process). While it has lent the Palestinians a hand by recognizing their claim to territories occupied by Israel after the 1967 war and their right to statehood, and by serving as an increasingly fragile dam against Israeli settlement and annexation policies, international law has made a dif-

ference only when the outside forces that purport to uphold it—especially the permanent members of the UN Security Council—are prepared to in fact do so. There is not much evidence that this is the case today, as illustrated by the absorption of Arab East Jerusalem into Israel, U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights, and now de facto annexation of much of what remains of Palestinian lands. The value of international law is ultimately beholden to the prevailing political environment and the stances of its major sponsors.

The Palestinians' conflict with Israel is not a legal dispute. International law has not helped solve conflicts in Crimea, Cyprus, Kashmir, Kosovo, or Nagorno-Karabakh. It was not international law that compelled Israel to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula, southern Lebanon, or Gaza; it was a combination of power politics and diplomacy. Yet many Palestinians cling to an uninformed misapprehension of international law's potency.

The Palestinians have further weakened their own position by taking a misguided approach to negotiations. They have a history of rejecting proposals and then going back to them in less auspicious circumstances, and at greater cost. Palestinian leaders rejected the 1947 UN Partition Plan for its iniquitous terms, but then accepted partition on significantly less advantageous terms in 1988. They rejected Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat's proposal for Palestinian autonomy in 1977, but then agreed to a more restricted interim authority at Oslo in 1993.

Taking a principled position may be laudable, but subsequent backtracking and the violation of those same principles under duress are bad politics and detrimental to national morale. Instead of accruing credit and strengthening their hand, the Palestinians have squandered current assets with no guarantee of favorable future returns. Current realities may require the Palestinians to go beyond outright rejection and focus on achieving interim gains while exploring new possibilities for advancing their long-term goal of a state of their own. The normalization deals between Israel and Arab countries, for example, might offer opportunities that could be leveraged to Palestinian advantage—such as conditioning Saudi normalization with Israel on Israel's ending its de facto annexation of the West Bank through its settlement expansions.

Another tactic that has proved ineffective is the Palestinians' propensity to threaten Israel with actions that they have no intention of pursuing and are raising merely as a bugaboo to pressure Israel to offer some concession; repeated claims that the PA will end security coop-

eration with Israel, or that it is ready to hand over the keys and return the West Bank to direct Israeli occupation (with all the ensuing material and moral costs), have lost all credibility with Israel and the Palestinian public alike. The threat to resort to a "one-state solution" appears equally vacuous and has the added disadvantage of confirming Israeli concerns about the PLO's commitment to a two-state solution.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

Even with the advent of the Biden administration, a serious new push for negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians seems unlikely unless the two sides can show that this time it will be different. Unfortunately, the PA and the PLO seem to believe that they can return to the old formula, based on UN resolutions and the 1967 lines as the "terms of reference," with sponsorship and endorsement by an international conference.

But other actors see other paths forward. One view holds that sidelining the Palestinians and advancing normalization between Israel and Arab states will push the Palestinians to eventually compromise on their demands for fear of being left behind and denied what remains of their diminishing prospects. Another view hopes that the combined weight of the Arab normalizers could allow for the launching of a more credible and robust diplomatic process that involves the Palestinians and provides them with a stronger bargaining hand. A group that includes, along with the Palestinians, the Gulf Arab states, Egypt, and Jordan would evidently enjoy greater sway with both Israel and the United States than the Palestinians do on their own, the thinking goes. The first view assumes that the Palestinians would join burgeoning regional peace efforts out of desperation; the second, that they would join out of the hope for new opportunities.

Both views may contain a grain of truth. Yet any future negotiations would need to take some hitherto overlooked first principles into account. One of the Oslo accords' most egregious failures was to treat the conflict as a purely bilateral affair that could be solved with a deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians alone. The West Bank's future cannot be determined in isolation from Jordan and Jordanian interests; history, politics, demographics, and geography dictate that the Oslo agenda on security, borders, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem is as vital a concern for Jordan as for Israel and the Palestinians. Similarly, Egypt was the caretaker administration in Gaza for two

decades after 1948, and Gaza's fate—given its history, location, and population—cannot be determined without Cairo's consent.

New Egyptian and Jordanian roles can be effective supplements at a time when the Palestinians on their own have been unable to secure their land from further Israeli encroachment. Jordan's gravitational pull on the West Bank remains strong. West Bankers' tendency to see Amman as their social, political, and economic metropolis has only grown with the withering of the Palestinian national movement. Egypt's sway over Gaza has also persisted, as is evident in Cairo's role as the mediator between Israel and Hamas. Egypt continues to have a strategic and political interest in Gaza, notably as it relates to the security of Sinai.

With Palestinians already a majority in Jordan, significant constituencies there regard attempts to drag Amman into the future of the West Bank as efforts to undermine Hashemite rule. But Jordan has a very limited range of options for dealing with the open sore of an indefinite conflict on its border, which is a threat to its own security and stability. An ever-expanding Israeli presence and chronic Israeli-Palestinian violence will prove more costly if Jordan opts to stay out of efforts to reach a solution. Amman cannot afford to disregard its security responsibilities on the eastern border of a future Palestinian state; it might be more willing to engage if doing so could draw significant moral, political, and financial backing from Arab states normalizing relations with Israel.

Egypt is similarly likely to be reluctant to take on any responsibility for the over two million Palestinians in Gaza, many of whom have Islamist tendencies and a history of activism and resistance. But an open-ended Hamas problem and concerns about security in Sinai may convince Egypt to agree to a role that would allow it more control over events in Gaza. Like Jordan, Egypt cannot shirk its security responsibilities. Cairo has always had a historical interest in the interplay among the Palestinian territories, Jordan, and Israel and in retaining a significant presence in the Levant. Gaza will remain a point of access into that sphere, one that Egypt's aspirations to a regional role do not allow it to ignore.

The Gaza–West Bank divide presents a further impediment to Palestinian aspirations. It has driven a broad transnational movement into the increasingly insular and rival bubbles of Hamas-controlled Gaza and PA-governed Ramallah. The fruitless attempts at reconciliation between Hamas and the PLO have consolidated a schism that has become as problematic as the Israeli-Palestinian divide. Without a genuine reconnection between the two regions, the putative Palestinian entity

will further shrink, and the prospects of containing Hamas will recede. The schism undermines the legitimacy of the entire Palestinian political system, severely compromising the PLO's claim to be the sole Palestinian representative. Despite recurrent calls to hold elections and agree on a common national program, neither Hamas nor Fatah, the two dominant Palestinian political forces, has offered a convincing answer as to how to end the rift. And even if elections do take place, as Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas recently decreed, they will serve only to legitimize an ailing political system, not to facilitate a genuine transfer of power: neither side is prepared to hand over power to the other, making elections little more than a sham.

The Palestinian scene is ripe for a jolt of self-realization and empowerment.

Negotiations would also have to contend with the fundamental disconnect between Israeli and Palestinian political language and understandings of crucial issues. Security is a prime example. The Palestinian view of security is narrow, local, and tactical; the Israeli view is broad, regional, and strategic. When the two sides discuss security issues, they talk on different planes; the Palestinians focus on threats to individuals, whereas Israeli concerns relate to powerful states and organizations.

Abbas, known as Abu Mazen, has tried, unsuccessfully, to address the disconnect. He is the last of the Palestinian founding fathers and also the first significant Palestinian national leader in modern history to openly and unreservedly abjure violence and to commit to diplomacy and peaceful means as the sole path to a resolution of the conflict. Despite their faults, the Oslo accords would not have been possible without his determined stewardship; neither would the relative quiet of the past 15 years. His contribution has not been appropriately valued by either Israel or the United States. In return for his transformation of Palestinian discourse and actions, Abu Mazen collected sweet words, empty promises, and financial crumbs. By failing to reach a deal with him, Israel sacrificed long-term strategic gains for short-term tactical considerations.

For now, Abu Mazen's resolute opposition to violence has been absorbed by the Palestinian majority. Besides Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, no significant Palestinian faction, popular movement, or potential successor espouses "armed struggle" today or calls for its

return. Abu Mazen managed, almost unaided and against formidable odds, to expunge what he considered to be a destructive belief from the mainstream Palestinian political lexicon and from mainstream Palestinian conduct. In the absence of an equitable resolution, Abu Mazen's legacy may yet be questioned and reconsidered by his own people, and its effects may erode over time.

In the process, however, the PA has to many Palestinians come to resemble a subcontractor to Israeli occupation, charged with suppressing militant opposition to Israel in the areas under its control. That image has undermined the PA's credibility and legitimacy and helped nourish a sense of disillusionment with the state-building exercise. The PA leadership made little attempt to explain the rationale behind agreeing to security coordination with Israel, and it got little in return in the way of reciprocity. That security cooperation has also dulled the Israelis' sense of urgency and helped sideline Palestinian core concerns by seemingly giving precedence to protecting Israelis as opposed to Palestinians. The upshot is that Israel has tolerated a strategic threat in return for instant individual safety. As long as there are no Israeli casualties as a result of Palestinian action, Israel can forgo addressing the Palestinian need for a long-term solution that will deliver a more stable and sound security structure for both sides.

Even with adjustments to the approach, it is questionable whether a return to negotiations will produce an end to the conflict. Barring some unforeseen radical shift or traumatic event that compels a compromise that can bridge what has so far been unbridgeable, there is little reason to think that future talks will succeed. The most likely result is an extension of the status quo, with uncertain and unexpected consequences: the slow absorption of Palestinians into the Israeli political orbit, intercommunal violence, new cooperative ventures and exchanges across an obliterated Green Line. Any or all of those could redesign the map and consolidate a one-state reality with no separation between Arabs and Jews in the Holy Land. For some Israelis and Palestinians, this may be a source of comfort; for others, it would be an existential hazard.

THE NEW STRUGGLE

The struggle for an independent state has centered on Palestinian sovereignty as the antidote to decades of dispossession and occupation. But the prospects of securing "hard" sovereignty, based on nineteenth-century notions of the nation-state, with full and complete control

over land, borders, and resources, are remote. There is nothing to suggest that Israel's terms will change to accommodate such Palestinian expectations. Harsh as this conclusion may seem, the Palestinians' choice may be between clinging to the self-defeating chimera of hard sovereignty, thereby compromising any chances of release from their predicament, and adopting softer versions, as in the case of member states of the European Union, that may offer a way out, although at a cost to what they have so far set up as a national prerogative. Under soft sovereignty, border security arrangements would need to be trilateral in both the West Bank (Jordanian, Israeli, and Palestinian) and Gaza (Egyptian, Israeli, and Palestinian). The exact terms of such tradeoffs may be navigable, but the precondition is an adjustment in political discourse that has yet to be embraced by the Palestinian political elite.

It is plain that the Palestinians need a new approach—one founded on a reconsidered strategic vision and recalibrated aspirations. The new way forward must consider a new constitutive assembly that will represent and involve more Palestinians, giving voice to those who have been ignored or marginalized, and prioritize Palestinian welfare and security. It must reorder relations between a new PA and a new PLO and resolve the Gaza–West Bank divide. It must develop new ideas of individual and collective rights, encourage free internal debate and dialogue, and espouse a culture of tolerance. It must recognize that salvation comes from within while reexamining relations with the United States, leveraging the Arab normalization processes to Palestinian advantage, and involving Egypt and Jordan in any new talks. It must redefine the Palestinian notion of sovereignty, review Palestinian views of security, and refrain from shirking responsibility or indulging in threats that are not credible.

This moment is reminiscent of the early days of the PLO. The Palestinian scene is ripe for another jolt of self-realization and empowerment, the nature of which is yet to be determined. But as long as the Palestinians are neither pacified nor fairly accommodated, their cause will continue to burn, and the prospects for genuine peace and stability will remain elusive.

The Innovation Wars

America's Eroding Technological Advantage

Christopher Darby and Sarah Sewall

Since the early days of the Cold War, the United States has led the world in technology. Over the course of the so-called American century, the country conquered space, spearheaded the Internet, and brought the world the iPhone. In recent years, however, China has undertaken an impressive effort to claim the mantle of technological leadership, investing hundreds of billions of dollars in robotics, artificial intelligence, microelectronics, green energy, and much more. Washington has tended to view Beijing's massive technology investments primarily in military terms, but defense capabilities are merely one aspect of great-power competition today—little more than table stakes. Beijing is playing a more sophisticated game, using technological innovation as a way of advancing its goals without having to resort to war. Chinese companies are selling 5G wireless infrastructure around the world, harnessing synthetic biology to bolster food supplies, and racing to build smaller and faster microchips, all in a bid to grow China's power.

In the face of China's technological drive, U.S. policymakers have called for greater government action to protect the United States' lead. Much of the conventional wisdom is sensible: boost R & D spending, ease visa restrictions and develop more domestic talent, and build new partnerships with industry at home and with friends and allies abroad. But the real problem for the United States is much deeper: a flawed understanding of which technologies matter and of how to foster their development. As national security assumes new

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dimensions and great-power competition moves into different domains, the government's thinking and policies have not kept pace. Nor is the private sector on its own likely to meet every technological need that bears on the country's security.

In such an environment, Washington needs to broaden its horizons and support a wider range of technologies. It needs to back not only those technologies that have obvious military applications, such as hypersonic flight, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence, but also those traditionally thought of as civilian in nature, such as microelectronics and biotechnology. Washington also needs to help vital nonmilitary technologies make the transition to commercial success, stepping in with financing where the private sector will not.

AMERICA'S INNOVATION CHALLENGE

In the early decades of the Cold War, the United States spent billions of dollars dramatically expanding its scientific infrastructure. The Atomic Energy Commission, formed in 1946, assumed responsibility for the wartime labs that had pioneered nuclear weapons, such as the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the headquarters of the Manhattan Project, and went on to fund academic research centers, such as the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. The Department of Defense, founded in 1947, was given its own massive research budget, as was the National Science Foundation, established in 1950. After the Soviets launched the Sputnik satellite, in 1957, Washington created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or NASA, to win the space race, as well as what would become the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which was tasked with preventing a future technological surprise. By 1964, research and development accounted for 17 percent of all discretionary federal spending.

Partnering closely with academia and companies, the government funded a large variety of basic research—that is, research without a specific end use in mind. The goal was to build a technological foundation, defined primarily as conventional and nuclear defense capabilities, to ensure the country's security. The research proved astonishingly successful. Government investment spawned cutting-edge capabilities that undergirded the United States' military superiority, from supersonic jets to nuclear-powered submarines to guided missiles. The private sector, for its part, got to capitalize on the underlying intellectual property, turning capabilities into products and products into compa-

nies. GPS-enabled technologies, airbags, lithium batteries, touchscreens, voice recognition—all got their start thanks to government investment.

Yet over time, the government lost its lead in innovation. In 1964, the U.S. government was spending 1.86 percent of GDP on R & D, but by 1994, that share had fallen to 0.83 percent. During that same period, U.S. corporate R & D investment as a percentage of GDP nearly doubled. The numbers tell only half the story. Whereas much of the government's R & D investment was aimed at finding new, game-changing discoveries, corporate R & D was mostly devoted to incremental innovation. The formula for growing revenue, the private sector realized, was to expand on existing products, adding functionality or making something faster, smaller, or more energy efficient. Companies focused on nearer-term technologies with commercial promise, rather than broad areas of inquiry that might take decades to bear fruit.

Over time, the U.S. government lost its lead in innovation.

Increasingly, the most innovative R & D was taking place not in the labs of large corporations but at nimbler, privately funded startups, where venture capital investors were willing to tolerate more risk. Modern venture capital firms—partnerships that invest in early-stage companies—first arose in the 1970s, leading to early successes such as Apple and Microsoft, but it wasn't until the dot-com bubble of the 1990s that this style of investment really took off. If the first phase of R & D outsourcing was from government labs to corporate America, this was the second phase: away from big businesses and toward small startups. Large companies began to spend less on internal R & D and more on what they called "corporate development," or acquiring smaller, venture-backed companies with promising technologies.

The rise of venture capitalism created a great deal of wealth, but it didn't necessarily further U.S. interests. Venture capital firms were judged by their ability to generate outsize returns within a ten-year window. That made them less interested in things such as microelectronics, a capital-intensive sector where profitability arrives in decades more so than years, and more interested in software companies, which need less capital to get going. The problem is that the companies receiving the most venture capital funding have been less likely to pursue national security priorities. When the American venture capital firm Accel hit

the jackpot by investing early in Rovio Entertainment, the Finnish video game company behind the mobile app Angry Birds, it may have been a triumph for the firm, but in no way did it further U.S. interests.

Meanwhile, government funding of research continued its decline relative both to GDP and to R & D spending in the private sector. The Department of Defense retained the single biggest pot of federal research funding, but there was less money overall, and it became more dispersed across various agencies and departments, each pursuing its own priorities in the absence of a national strategy. As the best researchers were lured to the private sector, the government's in-house scientific expertise atrophied. Once close relationships between private companies and Washington also suffered, as the federal government was no longer a major customer for many of the most innovative firms. U.S. agencies were rarely the first to buy advanced technology, and smaller startups generally lacked the lobbyists and lawyers needed to sell it to them anyway.

Globalization also drove a wedge between corporations and the government. The American market came to look less dominant in an international context, with the huge Chinese consumer market exerting a particularly powerful pull. Corporations now had to think of how their actions might look to customers outside the United States. Apple, for example, famously refused to unlock iPhones for the FBI, a decision that probably enhanced its brand internationally.

Further complicating matters, innovation itself was upending the traditional understanding of national security technology. More and more, technology was becoming "dual use," meaning that both the civilian and the military sectors relied on it. That created new vulnerabilities, such as concerns about the security of microelectronic supply chains and telecommunications networks. Yet even though civilian technologies were increasingly relevant for national security, the U.S. government wasn't responsible for them. The private sector was, and it was innovating at a rapid clip with which the government could barely keep pace. Taken together, all these trends have led to a concerning state of affairs: the interests of the private sector and the government are further apart than ever.

THE CHINESE JUGGERNAUT

The changes in American innovation would matter less if the world had remained unipolar. Instead, they occurred alongside the rise of a geopolitical rival. Over the past two decades, China has evolved from

a country that largely steals and imitates technology to one that now also improves and even pioneers it. This is no accident; it is the result of the state's deliberate, long-term focus. China has invested massively in R & D, with its share of global technology spending growing from under five percent in 2000 to over 23 percent in 2020. If current trends continue, China is expected to overtake the United States in such spending by 2025.

Washington has monitored China's technological progress through a military lens.

Central to China's drive has been a strategy of "military-civil fusion," a coordinated effort to ensure cooperation between the private sector and the defense industry. At the national, provincial, and local levels, the state backs the efforts of military organizations, state-owned enterprises, and private companies and entrepreneurs. Support might come in the form of research grants, shared data, government-backed loans, or training programs. It might even be as simple as the provision of land or office space; the government is creating whole new cities dedicated solely to innovation.

China's investment in 5G technology shows how the process works in practice. Equipment for 5G makes up the backbone of a country's cellular network infrastructure, and the Chinese company Huawei has emerged as a world leader in engineering and selling it—offering high-quality products at a lower price than its Finnish and South Korean competitors. The company has been buoyed by massive state support—by *The Wall Street Journal*'s count, some $75 billion in tax breaks, grants, loans, and discounts on land. Huawei has also benefited from China's Belt and Road Initiative, which provides generous loans to countries and Chinese companies to finance infrastructure construction.

Massive state investments in artificial intelligence have also paid off. Chinese researchers now publish more scientific papers in that field than American ones do. Part of this success is the result of funding, but something else plays a big role: access to enormous amounts of data. Beijing has fueled the rise of powerhouse companies that sweep up endless information about their users. These include Alibaba, an e-commerce giant; Tencent, which developed the all-purpose WeChat app; Baidu, which began as a search engine but now offers a

range of online products; DJI, which dominates the consumer drone market; and SenseTime, which provides facial recognition technology for China's video surveillance network and is said to be the world's most valuable artificial intelligence company. As a matter of law, these companies are required to cooperate with the state for intelligence purposes, a broad mandate that is almost certainly used to force companies to share data for many other reasons.

That information increasingly involves people living outside China. Chinese companies have woven a global web of data-gathering apps that collect foreigners' private information about their finances, their search history, their location, and more. Those who make a mobile payment through a Chinese app, for example, could have their personal data routed through Shanghai and added to China's growing trove of knowledge about foreign nationals. Such information no doubt makes it easier for the Chinese government to track, say, an indebted Western bureaucrat who could be convinced to spy for Beijing or a Tibetan activist who has taken refuge abroad.

China's hunger for data extends to some of the most personal information imaginable: our own DNA. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, BGI—a Chinese genome-sequencing company that began as a government-funded research group—has broken ground on some 50 new laboratories abroad designed to help governments test for the virus. China has legitimate reasons to build these labs, but it also has an ugly record of forcibly collecting DNA data from Tibetans and Uighurs as part of its efforts to monitor these minorities. Given that BGI runs China's national library of genomics data, it is conceivable that through BGI testing, foreigners' biological data might end up in that repository.

Indeed, China has shown great interest in biotechnology, even if it has yet to catch up to the United States. Combined with massive computing power and artificial intelligence, innovations in biotechnology could help solve some of humanity's most vexing challenges, from disease and famine to energy production and climate change. Researchers have mastered the gene-editing tool CRISPR, allowing them to grow wheat that resists disease, and have managed to encode video in the DNA of bacteria, raising the possibility of a new, cost-effective method of data storage. Specialists in synthetic biology have invented a new way of producing nylon—with genetically engineered microorganisms instead of petrochemicals. The economic implications of the coming biotechnology revolution are staggering: the McKinsey Global

Institute has estimated the value of biotechnology's many potential applications at up to $4 trillion over the next ten to 20 years.

Like all powerful technologies, however, biotechnology has a dark side. It is not inconceivable, for example, that some malicious actor could create a biological weapon that targeted a specific ethnic group. On controversial questions—such as how much manipulation of the human genome is acceptable—countries will accept different degrees of risk in the name of progress and take different ethical positions. The country that leads biotechnology's development will be the one that most profoundly shapes the norms and standards around its use. And there is reason to worry if that country is China. In 2018, the Chinese scientist He Jiankui genetically engineered the DNA of twin babies, prompting an international uproar. Beijing portrayed him as a rogue researcher and punished him. Yet the Chinese government's disdain for human rights, coupled with its quest for technological supremacy, suggests that it could embrace a lax, even dangerous approach to bioethics.

THINKING BIGGER

Washington has monitored China's technological progress through a military lens, worrying about how it contributes to Chinese defense capabilities. But the challenge is much broader. China's push for technological supremacy is not simply aimed at gaining a battlefield advantage; Beijing is changing the battlefield itself. Although commercial technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotechnology will undoubtedly have military applications, China envisions a world of great-power competition in which no shots need to be fired. Technological supremacy promises the ability to dominate the civilian infrastructure on which others depend, providing enormous influence. That is a major motivation behind Beijing's support for high-tech civilian infrastructure exports. The countries buying Chinese systems may think they are merely receiving electric grids, health-care technology, or online payment systems, but in reality, they may also be placing critical national infrastructure and citizens' data in Beijing's hands. Such exports are China's Trojan horse.

Despite the changing nature of geopolitical competition, the United States still tends to equate security with traditional defense capabilities. Consider microelectronics. They are critical components not only for a range of commercial products but also for virtually every major defense system, from aircraft to warships. Because they

will power advances in artificial intelligence, they will also shape the United States' future economic competitiveness. Yet investment in microelectronics has fallen through the cracks. Neither the private sector nor the government is adequately funding innovation—the former due to the large capital requirements and long time horizons involved and the latter because it has focused more on securing current supplies than on innovating. Although China has had a hard time catching up to the United States in this area, it is only a matter of time before it moves up the microelectronics value chain.

Another casualty of the United States' overly narrow conception of security and innovation is 5G technology. By dominating this market, China has built a global telecommunications network that can serve geopolitical purposes. One fear is that Beijing could help itself to data running on 5G networks. Another is the possibility that China might sabotage or disrupt adversaries' communications networks in a crisis. Most U.S. policymakers failed to predict the threat posed by Chinese 5G infrastructure. It wasn't until 2019 that Washington sounded the alarm about Huawei, but by then, there was little it could do. U.S. companies had never offered an end-to-end wireless network, instead focusing on manufacturing individual components, such as handsets and routers. Nor had any developed its own radio access network, a system for sending signals across network devices that is needed to build an end-to-end 5G system like that offered by Huawei and a few other companies. As a result, the United States found itself in an absurd situation: threatening to end intelligence cooperation if close allies adopted Huawei's 5G technology without having an attractive alternative to offer.

Digital infrastructure may be today's battle, but biotechnology will likely be the next. Unfortunately, it, too, is not considered a priority within the U.S. government. The Department of Defense has understandably shown little interest in it. Part of the explanation for that lies in the fact that the United States, like many other countries, has signed a treaty renouncing biological weapons. Still, biotechnology has other implications for the Pentagon, from changing manufacturing to improving the health of service personnel. More important, any comprehensive assessment of the national interest must recognize biotechnology's implications for ethics, the economy, health, and planetary survival.

Because so many of the gaps in U.S. innovation can be traced back to a narrow view of the national interest and which technologies are

needed to support it, the Biden administration's first step should be to expand that understanding. Officials need to appreciate both the threats and the opportunities of the latest technologies: the havoc that could be wreaked by a paralyzed 5G network or unscrupulous genetic engineering, as well as the benefits that could come from sustainable energy sources and better and more efficient health care.

The Biden administration's second step should be to create a process for aligning government investments with national priorities. Today, federal funding is skewed toward military capabilities. This reflects a political reality: the Pentagon is the rare part of the government that reliably receives bipartisan budgetary support. Fighter jets and missile defense, for example, are well funded, whereas pandemic preparedness and clean energy get short shrift. But setting the right national technological priorities raises questions that can be answered only by making judgments about the full range of national needs. What are the most important problems that technology can help solve? Which technologies have the power to solve only one problem, and which might solve multiple problems? Getting the answers to such questions right requires taking a truly national perspective. The current method doesn't do so.

A properly run process would begin with what national security professionals call a "net assessment"—in this case, an analysis of the state of global technological progress and market trends to give policymakers the information necessary to work from a shared baseline. To be actionable, the process would establish a handful of near- and long-term priorities. A compelling candidate for long-term investment, for instance, might be microelectronics, which are foundations for both military and civilian innovation but have difficulty attracting private investment dollars. Another long-term priority might be biotechnology, given its importance for the economy and the future of humanity. As for short-term priorities, the U.S. government might consider launching an international effort to combat disinformation operations or to promote 5G innovation. Whatever the specific priorities chosen, the important thing is that they be deliberate and clear, guiding the United States' decisions and signaling its aspirations.

A MARKET MINDSET

Supporting those priorities is another matter altogether. The current approach—with the government funding only limited research and the private sector taking care of commercializing the results—isn't work-

ing. Too much government-funded research remains locked in the lab, unable to make the leap to commercial viability. Worse, when it manages to leave U.S. government labs, it often ends up in foreign hands, depriving the United States of taxpayer-financed intellectual property.

The U.S. government will need to take a more active role in helping research make it to the market. Many universities have created offices that focus on commercializing academic research, but most federal research institutions have not. That must change. In the same spirit, the U.S. government should develop so-called sandboxes—public-private research facilities where industry, the academy, and the government can work together. In 2014, Congress did just that when it established Manufacturing USA, a network of facilities that conduct research into advanced manufacturing technologies. A similar initiative for microelectronics has been proposed, and there is no reason not to create additional sandboxes in other areas, too.

The U.S. government could also help with commercialization by building national data sets for research purposes, along with improved privacy protections to reassure the people whose information ends up in them. Such data sets would be particularly useful in accelerating progress in the field of artificial intelligence, which feeds off massive quantities of data—something that only the government and a handful of big technology companies currently possess. Success in synthetic biology, along with wider medical research, will also depend on data. Thus, the U.S. government should increase the quantity and diversity of the data in the National Institutes of Health's genome library and curate and label that information so that it can be used more easily.

All this help with commercialization will be for naught, however, if the startups with the most promising technologies for national security cannot attract enough capital. Some of them run into difficulties at the early and late stages of growth: in the beginning, they have a hard time courting investors willing to make high-risk bets, and later on, when they are ready to expand, they find it difficult to attract investors willing to write large checks. To fill the gaps at both stages, the U.S. government needs its own investment vehicles.

We work at the parent company of In-Q-Tel, which offers a promising model for early-stage investment. Created in 1999 by the CIA, In-Q-Tel is an independent, not-for-profit firm that invests in technology startups that serve the national interest. (One early recipient of In-Q-Tel's investment was Keyhole, which became the platform for

Google Earth.) Now also funded by the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and other U.S. agencies, In-Q-Tel identifies and adapts innovative technologies for its government customers. Compared with a federal agency, a private, not-for-profit firm can more easily attract the investment and technology talent required to make informed investments. There is every reason to take this model and apply it to broader priorities. Even just $100 million to $500 million of early-stage funding per year—a drop in the bucket of the federal budget—could help fill the gap between what the private sector is providing and what the nation needs.

Too much government-funded research remains locked in the lab.

For the later stage, policymakers could draw inspiration from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, the federal agency responsible for investing in development projects abroad, which in 2018 was first authorized to make equity investments. A late-stage investment fund could be structured as an arm of that agency or as a fully independent, not-for-profit private entity funded by the government. Either way, it would provide badly needed capital to companies ready to scale up their operations. Compared with early-stage government support, late-stage government support would have to be greater, in the range of $1 billion to $5 billion annually. To expand the impact of this government investment, both the early- and the late-stage funds should encourage "sidecar" investments, which would allow profit-seeking firms and individuals to join the government in making, and potentially profiting from, technology bets.

Government-sponsored investment funds like these would not only fill critical gaps in private-sector investment; they would also allow taxpayers to share in the success of research their money has funded. Currently, most government funding for technology comes in the form of grants, such as the Small Business Innovation Research grants administered by the Small Business Administration; this is true even of some programs that are billed as investment funds. This means that taxpayers foot the bill for failures but cannot share in the success if a company makes it big. As the economist Mariana Mazzucato has pointed out in these pages, "governments have socialized risks but privatized rewards."

Not-for-profit investment vehicles working on behalf of the government would have another benefit: they would allow the United

States to play offense when it comes to technological competition. For too long, it has played defense. For example, it has banned the export of sensitive technology and restricted foreign investment that might pose a national security risk—even though these actions can harm U.S. businesses and do nothing to promote innovation. Supporting commercialization with government-sponsored equity investment will not be cheap, but some of the upfront costs would likely be regained and could be reinvested. There are also nonmonetary returns: investing in national priorities, including infrastructure that could be exported to U.S. allies, would enhance the United States' soft power.

INNOVATION EVER AFTER

President Joe Biden has pledged to "build back better" and restore the United States' global leadership. On the campaign trial, he laid out promising proposals to promote American innovation. He called for dramatically boosting federal R & D spending, including some $300 billion to be focused on breakthrough technologies to enhance U.S. competitiveness. That is a good start, but he could make this drive far more effective if he first created a rigorous process for identifying top technological priorities. Biden said he supports "a scaled-up version" of the Small Business Innovation Research grants and has backed "infrastructure for educational institutions and partners to expand research." Even greater opportunity lies in filling the gaps in private-sector investment and undertaking a long-overdue expansion of government support for commercialization.

On innovation, if the United States opts for just more of the same, its economy, its security, and its citizens' well-being will all suffer. The United States will thus further the end of its global leadership and the unfettered rise of China. Biden has the right instincts. Yet in order to sustain its technological dominance, the country will have to fundamentally reenvision the why and how of innovation. Biden will no doubt be consumed with addressing domestic challenges, but he has spent much of his career promoting the United States' global leadership. By revamping American technological innovation, he could do both.

Opening Up the Order

A More Inclusive International System

Anne-Marie Slaughter and Gordon LaForge

When the world looks back on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, one lesson it will draw is the value of competent national governments—the kind that imposed social-distancing restrictions, delivered clear public health messaging, and implemented testing and contact tracing. It will also, however, recall the importance of the CEOs, philanthropists, epidemiologists, doctors, investors, civic leaders, mayors, and governors who stepped in when national leaders failed.

Early in the pandemic, as the U.S. and Chinese governments cast research into the new coronavirus as a jingoistic imperative, the world's scientists were sharing viral genome sequences and launching hundreds of clinical trials—what *The New York Times* called a "global collaboration unlike any in history." The vaccine race involved transnational networks of researchers, foundations, and businesses, all motivated by different incentives yet working together for a common cause.

Still, with the rise of China, the fraying of the postwar liberal international order, and the drawbridge-up mentality accelerated by the pandemic, realpolitik is back in vogue, leading some to propose recentering international relations on a small group of powerful states. Although it is easy to caricature proposals for a world run by a handful of great powers as the national security establishment pining for a long-gone world of cozy backroom dealing, the idea is not entirely unreasonable. Network science has demonstrated the essential value of both strong and weak ties: small groups to get things done and large ones to maximize the flow of information, innovation, and participation.

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Even if states could create a modern-day version of the nineteenth-century Concert of Europe, however, it would not be enough to tackle the hydra-headed problems of the twenty-first century. Threats such as climate change and pandemics transcend national jurisdictions. In the absence of a true global government, the best bet for guaranteeing the world's security and prosperity is not to limit the liberal order to democracies but to expand it deeper into liberal societies. There, civic, educational, corporate, and scientific actors can work with one another—and with governments—in ways that enhance transparency, accountability, and problem-solving capacity.

Leaders do not face a binary choice between the state and society. Global problem solving is a both/and enterprise. The task is thus to figure out how best to integrate those two worlds. One promising approach would be to identify the many actors working on a specific problem (say, infectious disease) and then connect the most effective participants and help them accomplish clear goals. "We do not need new bureaucracies," UN Secretary-General António Guterres has written. "But we do need a networked multilateralism that links global and regional institutions. We also need an inclusive multilateralism that engages businesses, cities, universities and movements."

It is a dark time for global politics. States are adapting to a world of multiple power centers and complex issues that require coordination at every level of society. Four years of erratic, personality-driven leadership in the United States under President Donald Trump, moreover, have left the liberal order in tatters. To repair it, leaders need to tap the talent and resources outside the state. Humanity cannot afford to go back to a world in which only states matter.

THE CASE FOR EXPANSION

States create international orders to, well, establish order—that is, to fight chaos, solve problems, and govern. The liberal international order is a subset of this idea, a set of institutions, laws, rules, procedures, and practices that shaped international cooperation after World War II. Its purpose was to facilitate collective action by regularizing decision-making processes, developing shared norms, and increasing the reputational costs of reneging on commitments. The institutions that form part of that order—the UN system, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, NATO, and the precursor to the EU, the European Economic Community—served that purpose reasonably well for decades.

But the world cannot successfully address twenty-first-century threats and challenges, such as climate change, pandemic disease, cyberconflict, and inequality, without mobilizing a new set of actors. Existing institutions, although valuable, were built for a world of concentrated power, in which a handful of states called the shots. Today, power is much more diffuse, with nonstate actors strong enough to both create international problems and help solve them. Accordingly, the current order needs to expand not by differentiating between various kinds of states but by making room for new categories of nonstate actors.

If humanity is to survive and thrive, it cannot go back to a world in which only states matter.

Take the response to the pandemic. Unilateral action by national governments was often decisive in curbing the disease. Implementing social restrictions, closing borders, and providing emergency economic relief saved lives. Despite all the criticism they have received, international organizations were also essential. The World Health Organization was the first body to officially report the outbreak of a deadly novel coronavirus; it issued technical guidance on how to detect, test for, and manage COVID-19; and it shipped tests and millions of pieces of protective gear to more than 100 countries.

Also critical, however, were many other actors outside the state. As many governments promulgated false or politically biased information about the new coronavirus and its spread, universities and independent public health experts provided reliable data and actionable models. Philanthropies injected massive amounts of money into the fight; by the end of 2020, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation had donated $1.75 billion to the global COVID-19 response. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, a global vaccine-development partnership of public, private, and civil society organizations, raised $1.3 billion for COVID-19 vaccine candidates, two of which, the Moderna vaccine and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, are already being administered to the public.

Officials below the national level also played a vital role. In the United States, where the federal government's response was indecisive and shambolic, governors convened regional task forces and together procured supplies of ventilators and protective equipment.

Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire philanthropist and former New York City mayor, provided funding and organizational and technical assistance to create a contact-tracing army in the city. Apple and Google partnered to develop tools that could notify smartphone users if they came into contact with people infected by the virus. Serious planning on when and how to reopen the U.S. economy was first done not in the White House but by governors and a CEO task force convened by the nonprofit the Business Roundtable. The first large-scale antibody study to determine the prevalence of the virus in the United States was conducted not by the National Institutes of Health or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention but by California universities, an anti-doping research group, and 10,000 employees and players of Major League Baseball.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic is only one example of how global actors, not states alone, drive solutions to complex problems. Although it would have been preferable had efficient central governments organized a coherent response to the pandemic, the distributed response on the part of others demonstrated just how much problem-solving talent exists outside the state. Moreover, as some countries become more nationalist, parochial, and captured by special interests, opening up the international order to global actors is the best way to reform the order in the absence of a major state-led initiative.

GROWING NETWORKS

The activity of global actors working on a given problem, such as COVID-19, is difficult to map, much less manage. But it is also here to stay. As the scholar Jessica Mathews first noted in *Foreign Affairs* in 1997, powers once reserved for national governments have shifted substantially and inexorably to businesses, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. Later that same year, one of us (Anne-Marie Slaughter) noted, also in these pages, the emerging "disaggregation of the state" into its component executive, legislative, judicial, and subnational parts. Regulators, judges, mayors, and governors were already working together in "government networks" that provided a parallel infrastructure to formal international institutions. This phenomenon has only grown more pronounced in the intervening two decades.

Still, nation-states will not disappear, nor even diminish in importance. Many governments possess political legitimacy that global ac-

tors often lack. Populist leaders have also demonstrated both the capacity to reassert traditional conceptions of sovereignty and the appeal of that strategy to many of their citizens. Trump single-handedly dismantled many of the signature foreign policy achievements of the Obama administration: he withdrew from the Paris climate agreement, torpedoed the Iran nuclear deal, and reversed the opening to Cuba. Autocrats in China, the Philippines, Russia, and Turkey have consolidated power and control, leading observers to bemoan a return to the era of the strongman. Where democracy is retrenching, however, it is often mayors, governors, businesspeople, and civic leaders who offer the strongest resistance. These actors prize and benefit from an open, democratic society.

The geography of global economic power, moreover, is also shifting in favor of nonstate actors. Five giant technology companies—Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft—have a combined market capitalization of roughly $7 trillion, greater than the GDP of every country except China and the United States. Even if governments reined in or broke up those five, scores of other companies would have more economic resources than many states. A similar shift is evident when it comes to security. As 9/11 made clear, some of the most potent national security threats emanate from organizations unaffiliated with any state. Even public service delivery is no longer the sole remit of governments. Since 2000, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, has helped immunize more than 822 million children in the developing world.

This transformation is partly the product of global connectivity. Never before has it been so easy to communicate, organize, and conduct business across national borders. In 1995, 16 million people used the Internet; in 2020, 4.8 billion did. Nearly 1.8 billion people log on to Facebook every day, a population larger than that of any single country. World trade as a percentage of global GDP is double what it was in 1975. According to one estimate, the number of treaties deposited with the UN grew from fewer than 4,500 in 1959 to more than 45,000 50 years later. In 1909, there were 37 international organizations; in 2009, there were nearly 2,000.

MAPPING THE NETWORKED WORLD

The world of global networks is a messy and contested space. International networks committed to ending climate change, promoting human rights, and fighting corruption exist alongside those bent on

perpetrating terrorist attacks or laundering money. But COVID-19 has shown that successfully responding to contemporary challenges requires mobilizing global actors.

One way to marshal these forces is to expand the liberal order down. The goal should be a horizontal and open system that harnesses the power and efficacy of both governments and global actors. The pillars of this order might be called "impact hubs": issue-specific organizations that sit at the center of a set of important actors working on a particular problem—coordinating their collective work toward common, clearly measurable goals and outcomes. A hub could be an existing international or regional organization, a coalition of nongovernmental organizations, or a new secretariat within the UN system specifically created for the purpose.

An expanded liberal order can harness and shape networks from every sector of society.

Gavi is the clearest example of this hub-based approach. The Gates Foundation helped found Gavi in 2000 as an alliance of governments, international organizations, businesses, and nongovernmental organizations. Its small secretariat is charged with a wide array of vaccine-related functions, from research to distribution, all under the eye of a 28-person board of public, private, and civic representatives. The founders of Gavi designed it as a new type of international organization, one that sought to be representative, nimble, and effective all at the same time. The result is far from perfect, but it has enormous advantages. Purely governmental organizations are often paralyzed by politics, and purely private or civic networks are invariably interested in pursuing their own interests.

In most areas of global problem solving, however, the challenge is not too few actors but too many. The goal is to identify the most effective and legitimate organizations in a particular area and link them to a hub that has both the funds and the authority to make a difference. Too much connection can be as bad as too little: the bigger the meeting, the harder it is to reach consensus and take action. Moreover, formal inclusion often means informal exclusion: when nothing gets done in the meeting, lots of action takes place among smaller groups in the lobby.

To avoid that outcome, would-be architects of a new global order should begin by mapping the networked world. A good place to

start would be to look at the actors working on each of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—targets the world has agreed must be met by 2030 to achieve global peace and prosperity. The relevant actors include UN special agencies and affiliates; regional groups such as the European Union and the Organization of American States; corporations such as Coca-Cola, Siemens, and Tata; large philanthropies such as the Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Aga Khan Foundation; and research centers, private institutes, think tanks, and civic and faith groups. Mapping these actors and the connections between them would reveal the most important centers of activity and provide a starting point for figuring out where to locate or support a hub.

HUBS AND SPOKES

With networks mapped, leaders would then need to offer incentives to spur the designation or creation of the hubs. One way to do this would be to use challenges issued by international organizations, philanthropies, or groups of governments. The MacArthur Foundation's 100&Change challenge, for instance, offers a $100 million grant to fund a single proposal that "promises real and measurable progress in solving a critical problem of our time."

A properly designed challenge could encourage the formation of powerful hubs by triggering a natural growth process that network science calls "preferential attachment." In all sorts of networks—biological, social, economic, political—the nodes that already have the most connections attract the greatest number of new connections. Within international relations, the UN is a useful example of this phenomenon. Initiatives and institutions often grow out of the UN because nearly all countries are already a part of its structure and because it has a record of credibility and expertise.

The UN should, however, pursue a more deliberate strategy to ensure that its many programs, commissions, and sub-organizations become problem-solving hubs. The secretary-general could, for example, connect a global network of mayors and governors to the UN Refugee Agency to help with refugee resettlement. Or, to combat climate change, the UN Environment Program could work with the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, a partnership between Bloomberg Philanthropies and the European Union that has brought together more than 7,000 local executives.

For those issues on which actors view the UN as too big, bureaucratic, or divided for effective action, regional organizations, informal groups, or existing public-private coalitions could serve a similar purpose. The point, however, is not simply to create partnerships and coalitions—the world is awash in them already. It is to create a stronger and more participatory order. Over time, the messy spaghetti bowl of global networks could evolve from a distributed structure with no hubs, or countless small hubs, into a more rationalized structure, one that has fewer but bigger hubs.

An effective global order also needs to be judged by its practical results, with clear metrics that incentivize competition and investment. Here, impact hubs offer an enormous opportunity to compare progress across different organizations, alliances, coalitions, and networks. Some organizations are already developing standardized metrics of progress. Impact investing—whereby investors seek not just financial returns but also environmental, social, and governance returns—is an enormous and fast-growing field. Just as traditional investors look to economic indicators such as profit margins, impact investors rely on concrete indicators to guide their choices, such as carbon emissions or school enrollment.

Leaders can and should apply similar metrics to the work of international institutions. Imagine a global impact metrics organization, comparable to the International Organization for Standardization, that rated global impact hubs in terms of the progress they were making toward achieving a particular SDG. However they were organized, reliable metrics would create a uniform way of assessing the actual contributions of different groups and hubs. In challenge competitions, the networks that were measurably more effective would prevail, which would then put them in a position to attract more people, funds, and connections, creating a virtuous circle.

The broader result would be a flexible, ever-changing system, one that would be more responsive and effective than the current order. It could meet the planet's challenges while allowing for important variation at the local and national levels.

A NEW LIBERAL ORDER

As children pore over maps and globes, they learn to see a world neatly divided into geographic containers, brightly colored shapes separated by stark black lines. Later, they come to understand that al-

though those borders are real, guarded by fences, walls, and officials, they are only one way of visualizing the international system. Satellite pictures of the world at night show clusters and ribbons of light, depicting the riotous interconnectedness of humanity in some places and the distant isolation of others.

Both of these images signify something relevant and important. The former portrays the state-based international order—visible, organized, demarcated. The latter illustrates the tangled webs of businesses, civil society organizations, foundations, universities, and other actors—an evolving, complex system that, although harder to conceptualize, is no less important to world affairs. The two exist side by side or, more precisely, on top of each other. The great advantage of the state-based order is that it has the legitimacy of formal pedigree and sovereign representation, even if it is often paralyzed and ineffective at solving important problems. The global order, by contrast, has the potential to be far more participatory, nimble, innovative, and effective. But it can also be shadowy and unaccountable.

If leaders bring together parts of both systems in a more coherent vision of a liberal order, the United States and its allies could build the capacity necessary to meet today's global challenges. An expanded liberal order could harness networks of people, organizations, and resources from every sector of society. The existing institutions of the liberal, state-based order could become impact hubs. The result would be a messy, redundant, and ever-changing system that would never be centrally controlled. But it would be aligned in the service of peace and prosperity.

Democracy on the Defense

Turning Back the Authoritarian Tide

Yascha Mounk

After the Cold War ended, it looked like democracy was on the march. But that confident optimism was misplaced. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that it was naive to expect democracy to spread to all corners of the world. The authoritarian turn of recent years reflects the flaws and failings of democratic systems.

Most analyses of the precarious state of contemporary democracy begin with a similar depiction. They are not altogether incorrect. But they omit an important part of the picture. The story of the last two decades is not just one of democratic weakness; it is also one of authoritarian strength.

Since the 1990s, autocratic regimes have advanced in terms of economic performance and military might. Dictators have learned to use digital tools to oppress opposition movements in sophisticated ways. They have beaten back democratic campaigns that once looked promising, taken hold of countries that seemed to be on the way to becoming more democratic, and vastly increased their international influence. What the world has seen is less a democratic retreat than an authoritarian resurgence. Autocrats, long focused on bare survival, are now on the offensive. The coming decades will feature a long and drawn-out contest between democracy and dictatorship.

The outcome of that contest is not foreordained. To prevail, the United States and its democratic allies need to understand the stakes of this historic moment and work together to protect global democracy in more imaginative and courageous ways than they have in the past. They will also need to solve a dilemma created by the tension between two core objectives: stemming backsliding within their own ranks, on the one hand, and maintaining a unified front against

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authoritarian regimes such as those in China and Russia, on the other. Simply put, it will be hard to oppose antidemocratic governments in countries whose support is crucial to confronting full-throated, increasingly assertive authoritarians. Dealing with that dilemma will require a skillful approach that preserves the possibility of cooperation with countries that have questionable democratic bona fides while reserving close partnerships for genuinely democratic allies. It will also mean abandoning "democracy promotion" in favor of "democracy protection"—seeking, for the most part, to secure, rather than expand, the democratic world.

AUTHORITARIANS ON THE MARCH

Donald Trump's tenure in the White House cast unprecedented doubt on which side the United States would take in the conflict between democracy and dictatorship. Even before 2016, Washington regularly supported autocratic governments when the prospects of finding democratic allies in a strategically important country looked slim. But the past four years marked the first time that a U.S. president seemed to openly favor dictatorships over democracies and boosted autocratic forces within democratic allies.

Trump called the desirability of NATO into question. He repeatedly refused to condemn autocratic attempts to interfere in democratic elections, murder dissidents on foreign soil, or put bounties on the heads of U.S. soldiers. He expressed admiration for dictators including Russia's Vladimir Putin, Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and North Korea's Kim Jong Un even though they and their countries shared little in the way of ideology or geostrategic importance.

Under Trump, the United States also promoted extremist forces within other democratic countries. In an interview with the far-right news outlet Breitbart, Richard Grenell, then the U.S. ambassador to Germany, insinuated that he sought to "empower" populist movements across Europe. Meanwhile, Pete Hoekstra, the U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands, held a private gathering for members of an extremist Dutch political party and its donors at the U.S. embassy. Back home, Trump himself welcomed a series of authoritarian populists to the White House, including Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Put diplomatically, during Trump's tenure in office, the United States ceased to be the so-called leader of the free world. Put more

The autocrats: Xi and Putin in Shanghai, May 2014

bluntly, large parts of the Trump administration effectively defected to the autocratic camp.

On the surface, the moderate leaders of powerful democracies in Europe and elsewhere have little in common with Trump. Little love was lost between him and Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, or Angela Merkel, the German chancellor. But despite those European leaders' putative support for democratic values and their elegant speeches in support of human rights, their actual deeds have repeatedly aided and abetted the forces of autocracy around the world.

When Merkel was struggling to deal with a large inflow of refugees from the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa in 2016, for instance, she spearheaded a deal between the EU and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that cut off one of the main routes for migrants headed to mainland Europe. Even as Erdogan sought to concentrate power in his own hands and was busy jailing more than 100 journalists, the lucrative agreement helped him cement his political standing. Germany and several other European states also pressed ahead with Nord Stream 2, a Russian-built gas pipeline that would secure their

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energy supplies while leaving some central and eastern European democracies immensely vulnerable to pressure from the Kremlin.

The most important service that Merkel and other European leaders provided the autocratic camp, however, was their failure to confront democratic backsliding in neighboring countries such as Hungary and Poland. Over the past decade, governments in both Budapest and Warsaw have rapidly eroded the rule of law, weakened the separation of powers, undermined the free press, and rendered elections deeply unfair. Freedom House, an organization that tracks the status of democratic governance around the world, recently downgraded Hungary to "partly free"—a sad first for a member of the EU.

Even so, Brussels has yet to levy serious sanctions on either Hungary or Poland, and both countries continue to receive billions of euros from the EU. Because the bloc has failed to exercise any effective control over the money's distribution, it has essentially provided the antidemocratic populists who lead the governments in both places with a slush fund to reward their political allies and punish their adversaries.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE?

This shameful period of inaction in the face of the authoritarian resurgence is now, hopefully, coming to an end. In the United States, Joe Biden's victory in last year's presidential election put politicians deeply committed to democratic values back in power. In the EU, the attacks on democracy by some member states have become so blatant that several crusading politicians, including Mark Rutte, the prime minister of the Netherlands, and Sophie in 't Veld and Sergey Lagodinsky, two members of the European Parliament, have forced the bloc to start confronting the authoritarian governments in their midst. But unless democratic leaders recognize the extent of the authoritarian resurgence and the serious threat it poses, their response is likely to be too little, too late.

The EU's attempts to contain autocracy within the bloc is a depressing case study in how halfhearted efforts are likely to fail. In 2020, after years of inaction, the EU finally tried to impose stronger conditions on the funds it disburses across the bloc. A European Commission proposal envisioned a system that would freeze payments to member states if they violated the rule of law in their countries. Poland and Hungary, two likely targets, fought back, threatening to veto an EU

budget that included funding for vital COVID-19 relief efforts. True to form, European leaders quickly caved. In a compromise that was designed to save face but mostly demonstrated how autocratic leaders within the EU are now essentially immune from negative repercussions for their attacks on democracy as long as they give one another political cover, the commission abandoned the measure's core elements.

As a result of the deal, the European Commission still cannot withhold funds when member states take steps to weaken the rule of law. To sanction such states, Brussels instead needs to demonstrate that EU funds are being misspent. In another concession, the commission promised not to bring any rule-of-law proceedings against member states until those that are opposed to what is left of the new rules have a chance to contest their constitutionality in front of the European Court of Justice. This effectively guarantees that Orban and other autocratic leaders will win more unfair elections, remaining in power for years to come. In the end, the failed attempt to discipline Hungary and Poland merely illustrated how much impunity autocratic leaders within the EU now enjoy.

Autocrats, long focused on bare survival, are now on the offensive.

Across the Atlantic, it is too early to assess how effective the new U.S. administration will be in bolstering democracy. Initial statements from Biden and members of his senior foreign policy team suggest that they take the autocratic threat seriously and are keen to restore the United States to its role as the "leader of the free world." A year ago, Biden wrote in these pages that "the triumph of democracy and liberalism over fascism and autocracy created the free world. But this contest does not just define our past. It will define our future, as well." This attitude marks a real shift from the last four years. Under Biden's leadership, the short-term survival of NATO will, thankfully, no longer be in doubt, and countries that depend on the United States for their security will rightly breathe a sigh of relief.

Over the next years, the United States is also more likely to work closely with long-standing democratic allies than with either autocratic states or backsliding democracies. In contrast to Trump, Biden will undoubtedly have better relationships with democratic leaders such as Merkel and South Korean President Moon Jae-in than with autocratic ones such as Erdogan or Sisi. Biden is unlikely to invite

antidemocratic populists such as Orban or Modi to the White House, as Trump did on several occasions. And under Antony Blinken's leadership, the State Department will once again express concern over attacks on human rights and free institutions around the world. Populists and autocrats will have to pay a price for attacks on core democratic values.

Biden and his team have also signaled their intention to convene a high-profile summit of democracies. Although the incoming administration has not released details about the summit's timing or content, the proposal's intention is clear: to reinvigorate democratic countries in their fight against autocratic threats. If done right, the summit could send an important signal about the United States' commitment to democratic values.

All these changes will represent a notable improvement over the Trump administration. But even if they are fully implemented, they likely won't suffice to stem the authoritarian resurgence. The problem is that two of the central goals of these efforts—containing the influence of powerful autocracies and halting backsliding in key democracies—are often in conflict with each other. Any attempt to halt the authoritarian resurgence must simultaneously stop embattled democracies such as India and Poland from joining the ranks of the world's dictatorships and prevent countries such as China and Russia from reshaping the international order. But if Washington wants to contain Russia, it needs to preserve a close relationship with Poland, and if it wants to contain China, it needs to keep India onboard.

This dilemma will make it difficult for the Biden administration to carry out its pro-democracy agenda. When the United States convenes its proposed summit of democracies, for example, it could safely abstain from inviting countries that are rapidly backsliding and have comparatively little geostrategic importance, such as Hungary. But it will be harder to avoid inviting backsliding democracies such as India or Poland, which, because of their size or location, are important allies in the effort to contain the United States' most powerful authoritarian adversaries.

Democracies will never be able to sidestep this predicament entirely. They can, however, be open about the nature of the problem and publicly commit themselves to a consistent strategy. This would require that the leading democratic states clearly distinguish between two levels in their relations with other countries: a lower tier available to countries that share a geostrategic interest in containing

powerful dictatorships, even if they themselves are autocracies or backsliding democracies, and a higher tier for countries that share both democratic values and geostrategic interests.

This strategy would represent a continuation of past foreign policy in recognizing the need to sustain strategic alliances with countries that are less than fully democratic. But it would also represent a marked departure by committing the United States and other powerful democracies to reserving the status of full partner for liberal democracies and downgrading their relationships with other longtime partners if they significantly backslide.

Creating this two-tier structure would provide a modest yet real incentive for governments of countries interested in maintaining a relationship with established democracies to end their attacks on the rule of law. It would also provide pro-democracy activists and movements in those countries with evidence of the international benefits of resisting would-be autocrats. Especially in deeply divided states where pro-democracy forces still have some hope of displacing the government through elections, this policy change might just make the difference between aspiring autocrats' losing power and their holding on to it.

At his proposed summit of democracies, Biden should establish criteria for what would constitute a breach of minimum democratic standards and what costs Washington would impose on countries that failed to live up to them. He should also invite other countries to adopt their own versions of this Biden Doctrine. The more developed democracies pursue this approach, the more powerful its effects will be.

PROTECTING DEMOCRACY

This kind of approach would require policymakers in the United States and Europe to rethink the notion of "democracy promotion." For the most part, that term has been used to describe admirable efforts to bolster democratic movements in autocratic countries or fledgling democracies. But at times, the United States and others have abused it, misapplying it to destructive attempts to impose democracy by force. The deeper problem, however, is that the very idea of democracy promotion rests on the assumption that the future will be more democratic than the past.

In light of the recent authoritarian resurgence, leaders need to stand this assumption on its head. It is certainly possible that some autocracies will democratize over the coming decades, and when such

opportunities arise, developed democracies should do what they can to help. But the primary goal of U.S. and European foreign policy should not be to promote democracy in countries where it does not already exist. Instead, it should be to protect democracy in those countries where it is now seriously at risk.

Just as democracy promotion developed gradually, democracy protection will take time to evolve. But there are some immediate steps that the United States and its allies should take. As Warsaw restricts press freedom, Radio Free Europe should restart its Polish-language broadcast, as it did its Hungarian-language broadcast in 2020. In turn, Voice of America should monitor changes in India that might justify a new Hindi-language program. Organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy should step up their activities in such places—a shift of resources that is increasingly crucial as governments in those countries stifle civil society and crack down on nongovernmental organizations.

To address the threat that resurgent authoritarians pose, the world's democracies need to commit to bold action.

A serious commitment to democracy protection would also mean using diplomatic tools to put pressure on backsliding allies. This would necessarily involve sticks as well as carrots. One potential stick could be the expanded use of targeted sanctions against officials who work to subvert democratic institutions. Another would be to delay or cancel planned initiatives that would boost antidemocratic governments, such as the Pentagon's intention to move thousands of U.S. troops to Poland.

Democracy protection will also require a greater focus on the connection between foreign policy and domestic politics. Of late, commentators and policymakers have begun to emphasize how international issues such as free trade affect domestic politics: unless ordinary citizens believe that the liberal international order will improve their daily lives, they will be unwilling to carry its burdens. But the link is just as strong in the other direction: citizens who lose faith in democratic values or no longer believe in their own political system can hardly be effective advocates for democracy.

Leaders in developed democracies need to take on autocratic challengers in their midst. But they must avoid doing so by illiberal means. This can be a tough line to walk: many democracies, for instance, are

increasingly willing to ban extremist political parties, restrict speech deemed hateful, and censor social media platforms. The efficacy of all these measures is doubtful. What is certain, however, is that budding autocrats often use strikingly similar laws and regulations as cover for concentrating power in their own hands.

The link between foreign and domestic policy is also a reason to stop autocrats abroad from limiting what citizens of democracies can say at home. Over the past several years, China has mounted a concerted campaign to deter citizens, municipalities, and corporations elsewhere from criticizing its human rights record. In Germany, for example, the city of Heidelberg in 2019 removed a Tibetan flag flown outside its city hall after pressure from Chinese diplomats. Following economic threats from the Chinese government that same year, the National Basketball Association criticized Daryl Morey, then the general manager of the Houston Rockets, for supporting pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong.

Although it will likely prove impossible to completely prevent this sort of muzzling, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 might serve as a model for an effective response. That U.S. law creates a major deterrent to engaging in graft by imposing stiff punishments on corporations that pay bribes to foreign officials. A similar deterrent could be created by legislation in the United States and Europe that would prohibit corporations and other organizations from punishing their employees for criticizing the policies of autocratic regimes. By tying the hands of organizations such as Nike, Volkswagen, and the Houston Rockets, such laws would make it far easier for them to resist outside pressure to silence their employees.

REFORM OR PERISH

A final step in heading off the authoritarian resurgence would be to reform two of the liberal international order's foundational institutions: the EU and NATO. The Americans and Europeans who designed those bodies assumed that their own countries would never experience serious democratic backsliding. As a result, neither organization has straightforward means for suspending or expelling a member whose character has fundamentally changed.

This is particularly problematic for the European Union, which requires its members to sacrifice an unusually high degree of sovereignty to join the bloc. Although national politicians sometimes find it hard to explain this to their voters, there are some compelling rea-

sons for the arrangement. On their own, most EU countries are too small to tackle transnational problems such as climate change or significantly influence world politics. Since these countries share a commitment to democracy and the rule of law, giving up a measure of independence enables them to promote their shared values.

According to this same logic, however, the rise of authoritarian leaders within EU states deeply undermines the bloc's legitimacy. It may be rational for citizens in the Netherlands to pool some of their country's sovereignty with that of nearby democracies, such as Greece or Sweden, as their interests are presumably aligned. But it is hard to explain politically or justify morally why rules set in part by would-be dictators in Budapest and Warsaw should bind Dutch citizens. If policymakers in Brussels don't address that contradiction, the EU will face a legitimacy crisis of existential proportions—one that its current institutions are entirely ill equipped to solve.

NATO faces a similar problem. Like the EU, the alliance was founded, as the treaty's preamble makes clear, on a determination "to safeguard . . . the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law." Since the alliance's primary purpose has always been military, however, it has long tolerated some violations of those principles. Portugal, one of NATO's original members, was a dictatorship at the time of the alliance's founding. In the decades after 1952, when Greece and Turkey joined, both countries remained in good standing despite their occasional control by military dictatorships.

The problem that NATO faces today, however, is different. Even when Greece, Portugal, and Turkey were dictatorships, they remained reliable members of the alliance; during the Cold War, they clearly sided with democratic countries such as the United States rather than communist powers such as the Soviet Union. Now, some member states, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, and Turkey, appear to favor China and Russia over the United States. The Turkish military may have even attacked a U.S. commando outpost in Syria in 2019. These internal contradictions are unsustainable. A mutual-defense pact that includes countries willing to fire on another member's troops will quickly lose all credibility. Ejecting a member from NATO, however, is even more difficult than doing so in the EU. Although some lawyers have suggested clever workarounds, the treaty does not explicitly contain any mechanism for suspending or expelling a member state.

In both organizations, fixing these flaws would take enormous political capital, necessitate serious diplomatic pressure, and potentially require a complete legal or organizational reinvention. All of these are good reasons why democratic leaders likely lack the appetite for making the necessary reforms. But without mechanisms to ensure that member states either stay aligned with each organization's missions or exit it, the EU and NATO will drift into dysfunction and irrelevance.

Politicians who are serious about democracy protection must prioritize reforming these institutions, even if doing so leads to serious internal conflict. Member states whose actions are no longer in line with the core mission of the EU or NATO must either change course or accede to rules that make it possible to expel them. If these reforms prove impossible, however, it may be better to refound both organizations on a more sustainable basis than to let them decay.

European leaders are starting to wake up to the threat of democratic backsliding in their midst. A new U.S. administration has pledged to defend democracy against illiberal threats. For this determination to be translated into meaningful action, statesmen and diplomats will need to look beyond the traditional diplomatic playbook. To address the threat that resurgent authoritarians pose, the world's democracies need to commit to bold action. If they do, they will no doubt face an arduous and uncertain journey—one that will cost them political capital and inspire blowback. The alternative, however, is incomparably worse.

The Rate Debate

Rethinking Economics in the Age of Cheap Money

James H. Stock

The past five years of U.S. economic policy have been noisy, as the Trump administration and its allies in Congress pursued a controversial agenda: a trade war with China, a push to repeal the Affordable Care Act, tax cuts that mostly benefited the well-off, and so on. Behind this sound and fury, however, lies a story of quieter but deeper economic changes that will have far-reaching implications. That story revolves around four interconnected developments: the fall in the natural rate of interest, the remarkable decline in the price of renewable energy, the stubborn persistence of inflation below the U.S. Federal Reserve's target of two percent, and the stunningly fast collapse and then partial rebound of the economy during the COVID-19 crisis.

These changes do not necessarily call into question any fundamental principles of traditional economic theory. In fact, in many cases, they confirm the value and validity of certain core concepts. They were largely unexpected, however: taken together, they require economists to rethink some key parts of their models. They also open new dimensions in old debates about taxes and spending. And what is perhaps most consequential, they present new opportunities for policymakers when it comes to the fight against climate change.

ACT NATURALLY

The natural rate of interest, or r^*, is the real interest rate—that is, the actual current interest rate minus expected inflation—that would prevail in an economy enjoying full employment without any government intervention. Savers and investors use r^* to project interest rates over the long run; for example, the expected long-term value of the yield on

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ten-year U.S. Treasury securities is r^* plus the expected long-term rate of inflation. Monetary authorities can hold real interest rates above or below the natural rate for months or years—but not forever, so r^* is the benchmark against which monetary policy is considered tight or loose.

Although r^* is a revealing metric, it is also a problematic one. The economy, after all, is never at full employment without government intervention; the Fed always has its hand on the wheel. And because expected inflation is an estimate, the real rate of interest is impossible to measure directly at any given moment. So gauging r^* is a tricky proposition.

Yet there are still several ways to estimate r^* and to observe its steady decline. The simplest one is to select a relatively long period of time in the past, identify the average interest rate on a low-risk asset during that period, and then subtract actual inflation during that period. Take, for example, 30-year U.S. Treasury bonds. The return on those bonds, minus the rate of inflation, has fallen consistently over the course of the past four decades, from an average of 5.9 percent in the 1980s to 4.7 percent in the 1990s, 2.8 percent in the first decade of this century, and 1.6 percent in the 2010s. More sophisticated estimates of r^* draw on statistical models. Although no single method is determinative, they broadly converge on the finding that r^* has fallen by approximately 1.5 to 2.5 percentage points over the past two decades, and not only in the United States but also in developed countries around the world.

Because this decline occurred over decades, it cannot be attributed to a single business cycle or to monetary policy; explanations must lie elsewhere. Economists disagree about which factors have played the biggest role. Some point to the aging of workforces in developed economies. In the United States, this has occurred as baby boomers have approached retirement age. As they have, their savings have risen, which has had the effect of pushing interest rates down. Others argue that the high savings rate in China has put downward pressure on interest rates around the world. And although the evidence is mixed, some economists cite factors such as the slowing growth rate of productivity (which has dragged down consumption) and the rise in income inequality (which causes the overall savings rate to rise, since the rich command an ever-larger share of income and tend to save a greater portion of their income than the poor do).

Whatever its causes, the decline of r^* has profound implications. One is the increased capacity of developed economies to take on ad-

ditional sovereign debt. The conventional wisdom—dating to the 1960s and earlier, when r^* was much higher than it is today—holds that carrying too high a level of debt is unsustainable for governments because interest payments compound and overwhelm the state's capacity to tax, leading to a debt crisis. What constitutes "too high" has never been made clear, but the historical experience of foreign debt crises, periods of hyperinflation, and defaults provides compelling evidence that some threshold did in fact exist.

The logic of fiscal prudence is turned on its head, however, in a world of low r^*. If the interest rate paid by the government is less than the growth rate of the economy, then debt taken on today can be rolled over in perpetuity—and the burden posed by the interest on that debt becomes a vanishingly small fraction of GDP. Governments can therefore finance current spending with essentially no change in future tax rates. Naturally, this "free money" argument is appealing to politicians across the U.S. political spectrum: those on the right have used it to rationalize making permanent the 2017 income tax cuts; those on the left have used it to justify massive spending proposals under the so-called Green New Deal.

To some economists, including myself, such arguments are unsettling: after all, r^* is less than the growth rate of the economy until suddenly it isn't. To the extent that the decline in r^* is driven by an aging population, that demographic transition will taper off. For example, in the United States, by 2030, all the baby boomers will be at least 65 years old. Additional government borrowing will, all else being equal, place upward pressure on interest rates and on r^*. The lesson from previous fiscal crises is that when markets start to doubt the ability of a government to meet its debt obligations, things can sour quickly, and no one wants to set the stage for a Chinese bailout of an overindebted U.S. government. Experts in public finance have long maintained that Americans should not burden their children with a debt-to-GDP ratio of 100 percent. Although that threshold now seems too low, economists have not yet reached a consensus on what it should be.

WORTH THE COST?

The evidence for a long-term decline in r^* adds a new dimension to arguments about spending and taxes. Those arguments are age-old, and the role of interest rates is a familiar part of the debate. More novel, however, is the question of how the decline of r^* might

Nice work if you can get it: in New York City, March 2020

JOHN MINCHILLO / AP

affect an issue that has come to the forefront of U.S. politics only in more recent years: climate change.

Policies that reduce emissions of greenhouse gases entail taking actions today that governments would not take, at least not with any urgency, absent the risk of future harm from climate change: in other words, they involve incurring costs today to enjoy benefits at some point down the road. To know whether those future benefits will outweigh the present costs, one must first assign dollar values to both and then place those monetized values, which are realized at different dates, on the same footing. This is done by converting future costs and benefits to current-year dollars using an interest rate, which in this context is called a "discount rate." For example, at a five percent annual discount rate, $1 today is equivalent to $1.05 next year. Such a comparison of the present values of costs and benefits is more than merely sound practice: it is required by law for some federal regulations and by presidential order for others. Making such a comparison requires choosing a discount rate, which for long-term societal costs (such as damage from climate change) is conventionally taken to be the long-term real rate of interest—that is, r^*.

In the case of climate policy, the so-called social cost of carbon (SCC) is the present value of the harm done by emitting one metric ton of carbon dioxide. The U.S. government has published estimates of the

SCC since 2010. At the end of the Obama administration, the federal government estimated the SCC to be $51, a value it computed by setting the discount rate to three percent. The Trump administration revised this down to $7 by considering only domestic climate damages, and not global ones, and then further lowered it to just $1 by setting the discount rate to seven percent. The choice of where to set the discount rate matters a great deal: at three percent, it would make economic sense to pay $97 today to avert $1,000 in damages in the year 2100, whereas at seven percent, it would make sense to pay only $5. In this light, the Trump administration's calculations encourage the conclusion that under current U.S. policy, climate change will inflict tremendous global damage—but that it would still be cost-effective just to let future generations deal with the problem.

In some parts of the United States, clean energy sources are now cheaper than dirty ones.

The three percent figure used by the Obama administration comes from a remarkable official document released by the Office of Management and Budget known as "Circular A-4," which was issued in 2003 and which provides detailed, thoughtful guidance to federal agencies on how to conduct cost-benefit analyses. "Circular A-4" arrived at the three percent figure by taking the 30-year average rate of interest on ten-year U.S. Treasury bonds and subtracting the rate of inflation in the consumer price index (CPI). Repeating that calculation today provides a dramatic restatement of the decline in r^*: over the past 30 years, the yield on ten-year Treasuries has averaged 4.3 percent, and CPI inflation has averaged 2.3 percent, putting r^* at 2.0 percent. If this calculation is performed over the past 20 years, the resulting r^* is 1.1 percent—substantially lower than the Obama-era estimate of three percent.

Despite the Trump administration's suspect abandonment of the three percent rate, that number continues to be used as a reference point in some tax rules and policy proposals. But the decline in r^* implies that the three percent discount rate is too high, and by using that too-high factor, economists are underestimating the SCC. If r^* is not three percent but rather two percent, then the SCC is not $51 but actually $125, and it would make economic sense to pay $209 today in order to prevent $1,000 in damages in the year 2100. In other words, in a world of low r^*, many climate policies that might once have ap-

peared inordinately expensive start looking more affordable. A principle of regulatory policy is that costs and benefits should be calculated using the best available science. "Circular A-4" is now nearly two decades old. U.S. President Joe Biden has rightly issued an executive order to update it so that it reflects new economic understanding.

IT'S EASIER BEING GREEN

Climate change policy has been framed as a tradeoff between the benefits of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the costs of those reductions. Economists have encouraged this cost-benefit mindset at many levels, perhaps most prominently by advocating a carbon tax that would make it more costly to pollute. The implicit assumption in that thinking is that polluting will naturally be cheaper than not polluting. But over the past five years, a remarkable development occurred: the cost of green technology fell sharply, and in some parts of the United States, clean energy sources are now cheaper than dirty ones.

From 2014 to 2019, the cost per kilowatt of solar panels fell by around 50 percent. In many parts of the country, building a new wind or solar farm costs less than running an existing coal plant or building a new natural gas plant. The U.S. Energy Information Administration projects that wind and solar farms will soon account for more than three-quarters of newly installed power plant capacity. These installations were supported by federal tax credits and by incentives at the state level. Still, the main driver of their falling costs was not such subsidies but advances in technology and companies simply "learning by doing" in the production and installation of renewable power facilities. Similar cost reductions occurred in electric vehicles. The main driver of the price of these vehicles is the cost of the lithium-ion batteries, which fell, on average, by more than 87 percent between 2010 and 2019. By 2024, in many parts of the United States, an electric vehicle with a 250-mile range will reach price parity with a comparable conventional vehicle.

These dramatic price declines in two key parts of the U.S. energy system are shifting the economics of climate policy: instead of making it more expensive to pollute, policymakers are looking for ways to make it cheaper to be clean. This puts some economists outside their comfort zones: there are no randomized controlled experiments that can tease out the precise causes of these price declines. That said, the available evidence suggests a potent role for policy in driving down costs. Solar energy prices declined because of high demand for solar

panels even at very high prices, thanks in part to government spending through programs such as Germany's Energiewende and the California Solar Initiative, which committed the German and California governments to purchase solar technology even when it was expensive. In the case of declining onshore wind energy prices in the United States, it seems that one important contributor was learning by doing; companies simply have gotten better at installing wind farms—the development of which, it should be noted, was aided by public subsidies. Similar trends are shaping the market for offshore wind energy, which exists thanks only to massive early government commitments, notably by Denmark, to make major purchases.

Of course, there are plenty of examples of such policies not panning out. One study has suggested that although certain initial small grants of up to $150,000 that the U.S. Department of Energy awarded between 1983 and 2013 helped some firms get a start, the second round of funding, with grants up to $1 million, had little effect on those firms' future business prospects. Perennial funding favorites, such as small nuclear reactors and research on nuclear fusion, have made little federally funded progress (although private investment has recently spurred a rash of exciting fusion projects). The federal grant-making process is also conservative, with high political penalties for failure. If a program aimed at developing high-risk technologies doesn't include failures, however, then it isn't taking enough risks. Meanwhile, prioritizing the improvement of technology need not mean abandoning the idea of a carbon tax that would make it more expensive to pollute: policymakers can make future clean technology cheaper while also making it more costly to pollute today.

GRADING ON A CURVE

The drop in green energy prices might have many causes. But explaining it is a relatively easy task compared with accounting for a more fundamental change relating to prices, one that confounds conventional economic thinking: the astonishing stability of low inflation. Economists' main theory of the rate of price inflation is the so-called Phillips curve, named for the economist A. W. Phillips, who introduced the concept in the 1950s. In its original form, the Phillips curve showed an inverse relationship between wage growth and the unemployment rate. Modern versions, applied to prices, link the current rate of inflation to both expected future inflation and a measure

of economic slack, such as the gap between the rate of unemployment and its full-employment value—that is, a measure of the value of unused resources in the economy, such as people who cannot find a job.

The past five years have not been kind to this cornerstone of macroeconomics. From the 1960s through the early 1990s, the U.S. Phillips curve was remarkably stable, with an increase in slack reliably correlating to a reduction in the rate of inflation. Since 2000, however, this correlation has dropped nearly to zero. For example, during the economic expansion of 2018 and 2019, the U.S. unemployment rate stabilized at around 3.5 percent, but the rate of inflation failed to rise. In fact, in 2019, after subtracting out the influence of food and energy prices, inflation fell to just 1.6 percent—its lowest annual rate since 2015, when the unemployment rate stood at 5.3 percent.

The past five years have not been kind to the Phillips curve.

In a marked break from the experience of past economic downturns, the trend of inflation becoming less and less sensitive to economic conditions continued into the COVID-19 recession. During the 1990 recession, for each percentage point increase in the unemployment rate, the core rate of inflation in the United States fell by 0.8 percentage points. In the 2000 recession, that figure was 0.4 percentage points. During the recession that followed the 2008 financial crisis, it was 0.3 percentage points. And in the current pandemic recession, it has been less than 0.1 percentage points.

It is worth noting that the rate of inflation has been unusually hard to measure during the COVID-19 crisis because of shifts in demand, which implies that consumption bundles are changing (toward, say, home office supplies and away from hotel stays) more rapidly than the assumptions that are built into the inflation measures. Moreover, the pandemic has produced both a negative supply shock and a negative demand shock, which are, respectively, inflationary and disinflationary in standard Phillips curve models. Still, the stability of the rate of inflation through periods of historically low unemployment and then through periods of historically high unemployment remains puzzling.

There are plenty of possible explanations for this flattening of the Phillips curve. One is that the prices for many goods and, increasingly, the level of many wages are now set internationally and thus are less sensitive to domestic economic conditions. This is consistent with

the fact that the prices of goods and services that are produced and consumed locally—such as housing rentals, restaurant meals, and hotel rooms—have tended to fall during recent downturns. Another explanation is that the apparent insensitivity of prices to economic conditions reflects the Fed's success in stabilizing prices. But that hypothesis cannot account for why the Fed, the European Central Bank, and the Bank of Japan have not been able to get the rate of inflation up to two percent despite their clear desire to do so.

Macroeconomic dynamics can change far more rapidly than economists have traditionally assumed.

The persistently low rate of inflation, combined with the decline of r^*, has made it harder for central banks to react in customary ways to sharp economic downturns. In the recessions of 1990, 2000, and 2008, the Fed reduced short-term interest rates by an average of roughly five percentage points. During the first three weeks of March 2020, as the COVID-19 crisis began in the United States, the Fed had far less wiggle room, since the core federal funds rate was already at just 1.6 percent. The Fed brought this rate down to essentially zero, but even that did not provide remotely close to the level of support the economy needed. So, as it did following the financial crisis, the Fed purchased long-term assets in order to stabilize asset markets and keep interest rates low, making it easier for companies to borrow and preventing a public health crisis from cascading into a financial crisis.

One reason the Fed had the confidence to go all in on long-term asset purchases is that, as the pandemic took hold, the central bank was just wrapping up a years-long review of its monetary policy framework. The Fed had undertaken the review partly in response to the decline in r^*, which had led Fed economists to conclude that it was highly probable that the federal funds rate would be stuck at zero for extended periods. The review was both evolutionary and revolutionary. It was evolutionary in that the changes it codified, such as calling for long-term asset purchases when necessary and encouraging a willingness to tolerate persistent excursions of inflation over two percent, were consistent with years of research and were broadly understood and accepted by markets. But the review was revolutionary in that it happened at all. The process was transparent and systematic, relied on the best available science, and received input from the broader com-

munity of experts and the general public. Such transparency and public discussion stand in stark contrast to the secrecy and opacity that have historically characterized Fed decision-making. As a result of this process, the Fed has become a stronger institution.

But the Fed could have gone even further. The central bank's new willingness to tolerate extended periods of inflation exceeding two percent has introduced a window for experimentation, which could increase comfort with raising the inflation target. To its credit, the Fed, through its review, has now created a means for publicly discussing this charged issue in a rational and scientific way.

LIFE COMES AT YOU FAST

As the pandemic rages on, it is too soon to know precisely what lessons it will eventually yield. But one is already clear: macroeconomic dynamics can change far more rapidly than economists have traditionally assumed.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the largest monthly increase in the U.S. unemployment rate since 1950 was one percentage point, which occurred in 1953. In April 2020, the rate increased by 10.4 percentage points, then fell by 4.6 percentage points over the following three months. The speed of this spike and retreat was unprecedented; these were changes immensely larger than what recessions typically produce. At a casual level, this might seem unremarkable: after all, schools closed across the country and many businesses shut down. But at the level of economic modeling, the speed of these changes was a dramatic departure and has led to an especially wide range of projections about the recovery. One view is that the post-vaccine recovery will be rapid, as pent-up demand is released and extra savings are spent on vacations, restaurants, and other long-delayed services. A second view is that because of widespread business closures, workers will not have jobs to return to and that, after an initial fast recovery, the usual slow business-cycle dynamics will take over.

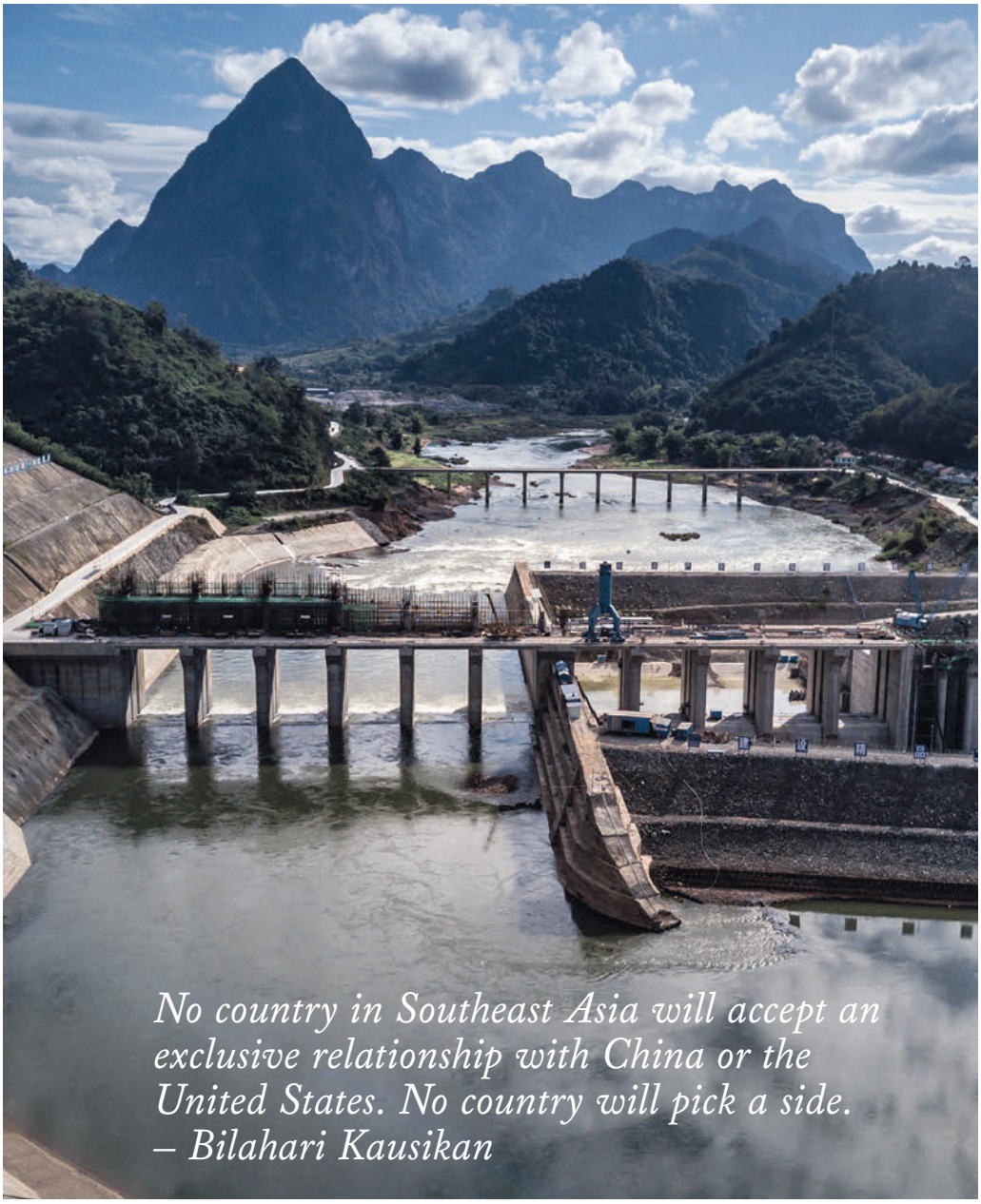
Although such dramatic changes call for a rethinking of some basic concepts, much of economic theory has fared quite well over the past five years. Take, for example, the concept of externalities. Public interest in doing something about climate change has sharply increased, from consumers choosing "green" options, to corporations purchasing carbon offsets for their employees' travel, to a growing preference among investors for funds that pursue social and environmental goals alongside profits, to the Congressional Budget Office including cli-

mate damages in its long-term GDP forecasts. But carbon remains unpriced, and so the carbon externality persists. And although U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide have fallen because of the shift from coal to natural gas and renewables (and most recently because of the pandemic recession), the rate of the reduction has not been nearly fast enough. Because carbon is unpriced, carbon pollution will remain a problem that markets left alone will not solve.

The COVID-19 crisis has presented another example of externalities. Wearing a mask reduces your risk of contracting the virus, so that benefit of mask wearing is internalized. But it also provides a benefit to others by protecting them from you if you are infected, and because that benefit does not accrue to you directly, that benefit is not internalized. This is a classic externality: one person's decision not to wear a mask affects the welfare of others. Economic theory suggests multiple ways for officials address this, such as making it costly not to wear a mask by fining those who refuse, making it pay to wear a mask by requiring it in places of business, and reducing the potential social costs of wearing a mask by casting it as a patriotic duty or as an act of compassion. Oddly, and tragically, policymakers have rarely pursued such solutions—often because they have denied that the contagion externality exists in the first place, an eerie echo of the way that many of the same policymakers deny the existence of climate externalities.

Another principle of traditional economic theory that has fared well is the importance of well-functioning institutions as the basis for a well-functioning economy. COVID-19 has revealed that U.S. public health institutions are not up to the task of responding to a pandemic. The institutional breakdown resulted from a combination of chronic underfunding and a presidential administration instinctively averse to science and expertise. Economists have invested heavily in ensuring the intellectual integrity and independence of the Federal Reserve, which has operated admirably and effectively in the crisis. They would do the country a service by turning their attention to the job of making other institutions just as resilient.

REVIEWS & RESPONSES



No country in Southeast Asia will accept an exclusive relationship with China or the United States. No country will pick a side.
– Bilahari Kausikan

SERGEY PONOMAREV / THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Arena

Southeast Asia in the Age of Great-Power Rivalry

Bilahari Kausikan

Under Beijing's Shadow: Southeast Asia's China Challenge
BY MURRAY HIEBERT. Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, 608 pp.

In the Dragon's Shadow: Southeast Asia in the Chinese Century
BY SEBASTIAN STRANGIO. Yale University Press, 2020, 360 pp.

Where Great Powers Meet: America and China in Southeast Asia
BY DAVID SHAMBAUGH. Oxford University Press, 2020, 352 pp.

When I served as a Singaporean diplomat, I once asked a Vietnamese counterpart what an impending leadership change in Hanoi meant for his country's relations with China. "Every Vietnamese leader," he replied, "must get along with China, every Vietnamese leader must stand up to China, and if you can't do both at the same time, you don't deserve to be leader."

As U.S. President Joe Biden begins his term in office, his team should heed those words. Southeast Asia is the epicenter of the competition between China and the United States. To different degrees and in their own ways, every country in the region has adopted that approach to China—and to the United States, too.

Southeast Asia has always been a strategic crossroads, where the interests of great powers intersect and sometimes collide. It is naturally a multipolar region, never under the sway of any single external power, except for in the brief period of Japanese occupation during World War II. Today's competition between China and the United States is just another phase of a centuries-old dynamic that has embedded the instinct to simultaneously hedge, balance, and bandwagon in the region's political DNA.

Americans seem to find this difficult to grasp. There is a strong tendency to view the region in binary terms: if the region is not "free," it is "red"; if democracy is not advancing, it must be in retreat; if the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) does not embrace the United States, it is in danger of being captured by China. This simplistic attitude has led to several policy failures, including, most disastrously, the Vietnam War.

Three outstanding books offer timely correctives to this misguided view through country-by-country accounts of the ambivalence and unease with which Southeast Asians view China's role in the region. Murray Hiebert's masterly and monumental *Under Beijing's Shadow* is the most detailed and nuanced of the three. Like Hiebert, Sebastian Strangio focuses on China's relations with countries in the region in *In the Dragon's Shadow*, whereas David Shambaugh frames *Where Great Powers Meet* around the theme of U.S.-Chinese competition.

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China's size and economic weight no doubt stoke anxieties among its Southeast Asian neighbors, worries that have been accentuated by the aggressive foreign policy of President Xi Jinping. But those concerns must be weighed against the necessity of maintaining political and economic ties with Asia's biggest power. No country in Southeast Asia will accept an exclusive relationship with China or the United States or any other power. No country will pick a side.

NOT FOR A MESS OF POTTAGE

Many outside observers often assume—perhaps unconsciously but still insultingly—that the countries in the region are all so irredeemably corrupt, terminally naive, or simple-minded that they would sell their national interests for a mess of pottage. The authors of these books don't make that mistake. Economic ties are not to be lightly disregarded, but no ASEAN member structures its relations with China solely on the basis of trade and investments. Nationalism remains a potent political force.

Hiebert is particularly adept at exposing the undercurrents, which he aptly describes as "the complex cocktail of hope and anxiety," "anticipation and uneasiness," that lies beneath the surface of China's relations with its smaller southern neighbors. This is true even with countries highly dependent on China, such as Cambodia and Laos. Among the strongest sections of Hiebert's book are those in which he examines these countries, exposing the complexity of attitudes toward China and how small nations can still exercise agency despite their dependence on Beijing. For instance, he notes how the leaders of Laos—an "underpopulated and heavily indebted" country—spent five years wrangling with China over a railway project to secure terms "that they could live with."

I happened to be in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, in early 2016, when the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party held its Tenth National Congress. A friend—a party member—told me that some senior people would be dismissed for being too pro-China. I was skeptical. But two Politburo members, President and General Secretary Choummaly Sayasone and Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad, were indeed sacked.

Laos has real institutions—most important among them a Leninist-style vanguard party, whose interests are paramount—and although it is hemmed in by China and does not have much room to maneuver, it uses those institutions as best it can. Cambodia, by contrast, is what Shambaugh calls the only "full-blown Chinese client state" in ASEAN, a description that Hiebert echoes. Unlike in Laos, the leadership in Cambodia is almost totally personalist: Prime Minister Hun Sen has described support for China as "Cambodia's political choice," and his choices are the only ones that matter in Cambodia.

Still, not everyone in Cambodia is brimming with enthusiasm about Hun Sen's subservience to China. In January 2018, the governor of Preah Sihanouk wrote a letter to the Interior Ministry complaining of how Chinese investment had led to a surge in crime and caused "insecurity in the province." It is a biological inevitability that Hun Sen's personalist leadership must end. Cambodia's status as a Chinese client state may prove to be only a phase.

These books make clear that China has serious liabilities in Southeast

Asia—although not necessarily the ones identified by observers in the West. Some Western analysts, for example, tend to view warily Beijing's cultivation of Chinese diaspora communities, seeing these minorities as a potential fifth column. Xi has claimed the support of "all Chinese" for his version of "the Chinese dream," arousing suspicions about China's intentions.

But all three books demonstrate that in Southeast Asia, where the relationships between ethnic Chinese and indigenous populations are often fraught with underlying tensions, the Chinese diaspora is not at all an obvious advantage for Beijing. The authors recognize that there is no simple correlation between ethnicity and influence. The mere presence of ethnic Chinese communities in Southeast Asian countries doesn't necessarily serve China's interests.

In 2018, during the Malaysian general election, the Chinese ambassador openly campaigned for the leader of the ruling coalition's ethnic Chinese party, breaking a fundamental norm of diplomatic conduct: noninterference. The ruling coalition lost, and its successor promptly renegotiated several economic projects backed by China. During a visit to China later that year, Mahathir Mohamad, the new Malaysian prime minister (he had previously served as prime minister from 1981 to 2003), pointedly warned that Chinese actions in the region might resemble a "new version of colonialism."

Western observers tend to see China's actions in the South China Sea, where it has steadily encroached on the maritime borders of its neighbors, as the clearest example of Beijing's expansive ambitions. As Hiebert and Strangio make clear, however, in Southeast Asia, there is as much anxiety about China's activities in another body of water: the Mekong River, which runs through five of the ten ASEAN member states and does not receive enough attention from international relations specialists.

Strangio reminds readers that "China's economic and political influence flows down the Mekong River into Southeast Asia" and that China's "valve-like control" of the river's upper reaches "gives Beijing considerable control" over its southward flow. China's dam-building projects on the upper Mekong are already reducing the flow of water downriver.

The Cambodian and Laotian economies still largely rely on subsistence agriculture. Leaders in Cambodia and Laos may not care too much about what China does in the South China Sea, but they will have to think hard about an issue that potentially poses an existential threat to the livelihoods of their own people. If China's actions on the Mekong do not make Phnom Penh and Vientiane rethink how they conduct their relations with China, then other ASEAN members should reconsider the organization's relationship with them.

MANAGING MISTRUST

Some readers might be surprised by the suggestion that in an area in the shadow of a major power, a regional multilateral organization wields real influence. But ASEAN does. None of these books deals adequately with the organization. Shambaugh's is the only one that devotes a chapter to it. This is not surprising.

Few scholars really understand how ASEAN works. Its fundamental purpose is not to solve problems but to manage mistrust and differences among its

members and stabilize a region where even civility in relations is not to be taken for granted, thus minimizing the opportunities for great-power interference.

Even some ASEAN leaders do not seem to understand this. In July 2012, when Cambodia was serving as the chair of the organization, ASEAN for the first time failed to agree on a foreign ministers' joint communiqué. Hor Namhong, the Cambodian foreign minister, refused to accept any compromise on language regarding the South China Sea, insisting that there should be no mention of the issue at all. He clearly did so at China's behest; Fu Ying, China's vice foreign minister, barely bothered to conceal her hovering presence at a meeting she had no business attending.

Only a week later, however, Marty Natalegawa, then the foreign minister of Indonesia, persuaded Cambodia to join ASEAN's consensus on the South China Sea. The text of the statement was largely taken from previously agreed-on documents, and in some instances, the final language was stronger than the compromises Cambodia had rejected just the previous week. Phnom Penh's haphazard attempt to please Beijing proved to be singularly clumsy and ultimately only a waste of time. Fu's bosses in Beijing cannot have been too pleased to have China's heavy hand blatantly exposed to no purpose. And ever since, Cambodia has not been quite as foolishly intransigent on discussions of the South China Sea.

No country needs to allow Beijing to define its national interests in order to maintain a close relationship with China. With the limited exception of Cambodia, no ASEAN member sees a need to neatly align its interests across different domains with any single major power. The diplomacy of ASEAN and its members is naturally promiscuous, not monogamous.

Shambaugh claims that "ASEAN states are already conditioned not to criticize China publicly or directly." But ASEAN states do not publicly criticize the United States or any other major power, either. They don't publicly criticize others not because they are "conditioned" by anyone but because public criticism forecloses options and reduces the room for diplomacy.

Small countries can maneuver only in the interstices between the relationships of major powers. The essential purpose of ASEAN-led forums such as the annual East Asia Summit, which brings together ASEAN member states with the likes of Australia, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States, is to maximize those interstitial spaces, deepening the region's natural multipolarity.

THE AMERICAN COUNTERWEIGHT

Some external powers, of course, matter more than others. Absent the United States, no combination of other powers can balance China. Not every ASEAN member will say so in public, but most members seem to recognize this fact.

At the end of the 1980s, Philippine domestic politics and a natural disaster compelled U.S. forces to vacate Subic Bay and Clark Air Base. In 1990, Singapore, which had long backed a U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia, concluded a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, with Washington that allowed some U.S. forces to use Singaporean facilities. At the time, several ASEAN members loudly and vehemently criticized the deal. But

there was nary a whisper when Singapore signed an agreement regarding greater defense and security cooperation with the United States in 2005 or when the 1990 MOU was renewed in 2019.

That change of attitude reflects the region's growing disquiet with Chinese behavior, which all three books document. Chinese policy often provokes opposition. For instance, both Hiebert and Strangio explore in detail the Myitsone dam project in Myanmar. As Strangio notes, from the moment Myanmar signed an agreement for the dam with a Chinese state-owned firm in 2006, "opposition was nearly universal." The project was suspended in 2011, but, as Hiebert writes, as late as 2019, "the Chinese ambassador's ham-fisted and tone-deaf lobbying [to revive the project] prompted renewed protests against the dam in cities across the country."

A great merit of Shambaugh's book is its detailed analysis of how China's growing footprint in Southeast Asia has not led to a reduction of economic or security relations with the United States. In some cases, relations with the United States have even expanded. Unlike many other scholars, Shambaugh understands that Southeast Asian countries do not see the choices available to them in binary, zero-sum terms.

Shambaugh is, however, only partly correct when he concludes that "Southeast Asia never had better relations with the United States, and vice versa," than it did during the Obama era. It was comforting to hear an American president speak about making Asia the central concern of U.S. foreign policy. It was flattering when President Barack Obama made time to attend ASEAN meetings. His 2012 visit to Myanmar, meant to encourage its authoritarian regime's incipient liberalization, was a bold stroke. The crafting of the Trans-Pacific Partnership was a major achievement in a region where trade is strategy.

But soft power, which Obama had in abundance, is inadequate without the exercise of hard power—and Obama had little stomach for that. In 2012, his administration brokered a deal between Beijing and Manila regarding Scarborough Shoal, in the South China Sea. When China reneged on the terms of the deal by refusing to remove its ships from the disputed area, Washington did nothing. In 2015, Xi promised Obama that China would not militarize the South China Sea. But when Beijing did so by deploying naval and coast-guard assets to intimidate ASEAN claimant states in 2016, the United States again did nothing. Obama's failure several years before, in 2013, to enforce a redline on Syria's use of chemical weapons had undermined the credibility of U.S. power—and China took notice.

U.S. President Donald Trump's rejection of the Trans-Pacific Partnership on assuming office in 2017 was a slap in the face to U.S. friends and allies. But not everything he did was necessarily wrong. However incoherently and crudely, Trump seemed to instinctively understand the importance of demonstrating hard power. When he bombed Syria in 2017 while at dinner with Xi, he did much to restore the credibility of American might by showing his willingness to use force.

Trump also explicitly rejected China's claims in the South China Sea and empowered the U.S. Seventh Fleet to conduct freedom-of-navigation operations to challenge them. Freedom

of navigation is a right, and other countries do not need China's permission to exercise it. By contrast, during Obama's second term, the Pentagon and the National Security Council sparred loudly over the wisdom of such operations, undermining their intended effect.

Because he was Obama's vice president, Biden cannot distance himself easily from what happened on Obama's watch. Friend and foe alike will scrutinize Biden's every move for any sign of weakness. He will likely fine-tune U.S. policy, but not fundamentally shift direction, on China and trade. His administration will make and communicate policy with more coherence and consideration for friends and allies than did Trump's. The atmospherics of U.S. diplomacy will improve after the bluster and chaos of the Trump years. All of this will be welcome. But it will be for naught if U.S. foreign policy lapses back into Obama's reluctance to use hard power.

Biden should be cautious about promoting American values in response to Trump's indifference to them. Such values are not necessarily a strategic asset in Southeast Asia, where they are not shared by all. "Democracy" is a protean term, "human rights" is subject to many interpretations, and Southeast Asia generally places more emphasis on the rights of the community than on those of the individual.

The United States has not deployed forces on the mainland of Southeast Asia since the end of the Vietnam War. As an offshore balancer, the United States will always find it difficult to determine just how it should position itself: too forceful a stance against China will evoke fears of entanglement in the region; too passive a stance will elicit fears of abandonment. This cannot be helped. But Biden must avoid Obama's mistake of thinking that the United States needs to de-emphasize competition to secure Beijing's cooperation on issues such as climate change. As any undergraduate student of international relations should know, cooperation is not a favor one state bestows on another. If it is in its interest, Beijing will cooperate. States can and do compete and cooperate simultaneously. That understanding is fundamentally what Southeast Asia expects of the United States.

The Stories China Tells

The New Historical Memory Reshaping Chinese Nationalism

Jessica Chen Weiss

China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism
BY RANA MITTER. Harvard University Press, 2020, 336 pp.

On September 3, 2015, a procession of Chinese missile launchers and more than 12,000 soldiers paraded through Tiananmen Square, in Beijing, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. Some 850,000 civilians were deployed to patrol Beijing; in parts of the city, business, traffic, and all wireless communications were shut down. But lest anyone get the wrong impression, President Xi Jinping delivered an address meant to assuage those alarmed by all the firepower and manpower on display. "No matter how much stronger it may become, China will never seek hegemony or expansion," he assured his audience, which included a few dozen world leaders.

In fact, Xi argued, China had played an important part in defeating fascism in the twentieth century, and China was now helping maintain the international order in the twenty-first. Employing the terms that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses to describe World War II, Xi hailed China's commitment to "uphold the outcomes of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Antifascist War" and called on all countries to respect "the international order and system underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, build a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation, and advance the noble cause of global peace and development."

Under Xi, the CCP has tried to project an image of seeking peace through strength, neither picking fights nor shying away from confrontation. In recent years, however, China's increasingly assertive and often abrasive conduct has undercut its attempt to claim international leadership. Xi's appeals to the past represent one way to offset this inherent tension.

But China's interest in commemorating World War II began much earlier, in the 1980s. The chaos and trauma of the Mao-era famine and the Cultural Revolution had left scars on the national psyche and had laid bare the flaws of Marxism-Leninism as a governing philosophy. When Deng Xiaoping took the helm after Mao Zedong's death in 1976, the CCP stifled the flames of class struggle and stoked capitalist fervor and consumerism instead. Yet even as the party adapted its ideology, its search for popular legitimacy remained tethered to nationalism and became increasingly rooted in China's role in World War II, which Chinese leaders routinely held up as

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evidence of the party's defense of the Chinese people in the face of foreign aggression and humiliation.

In his insightful new book, the historian Rana Mitter opens a window into the legacy of China's experience of World War II, showing how historical memory lives on in the present and contributes to the constant evolution of Chinese nationalism. In this deft, textured work of intellectual history, he introduces readers to the scholars, filmmakers, and propagandists who have sought to redefine China's experience of the war. And he shows how their efforts reflect Xi's interest in portraying China as a defender of the postwar international order: a leader present at the creation in 1945, rather than a latecomer who gained a seat at the UN only during the height of the Cold War.

As historical revisionism goes, this is relatively benign, Mitter notes. And in some ways, the motivations behind it are understandable: China's contributions to the war against fascism are rarely acknowledged in the West. Yet Mitter does not shy away from exposing some of the political fictions that the CCP imposes on China's past—to the detriment of its attempt to craft a persuasive narrative about China's future.

AN EMPTY IDEOLOGY

Under Xi, China has displayed a growing appetite for global leadership. Xi has stated that "China will firmly uphold the international system" as "a founding member of the United Nations and the first country to put its signature on the UN Charter." As Mitter notes, Xi conveniently elides that it was Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalist leader, and not Chiang's Communist rival, Mao, who sat next to U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the 1943 Cairo conference, which laid the groundwork for the postwar order. It was the Chinese Nationalists, not their Communist enemies, who helped establish the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In playing up China's role in creating the postwar order, the CCP sometimes overstates its case. But just making the case at all marks an important shift in Chinese nationalism, which has often cast China not as a victor but as a victim, especially of Japanese aggression and imperialism. By presenting China as a key wartime partner of the Allies and a co-founder of the postwar order, the Chinese leadership seeks to suggest "that China plays a similarly cooperative role in today's international community," writes Mitter. The intended message is that China is more interested in reshaping existing institutions from within than in scrapping them altogether.

This form of historical revisionism has another benefit: it deflects attention from the ideological distance that China has traveled since the postwar years. Until Mao's death, China was no champion of liberal internationalism; it was a proponent of global communist revolution. Beijing's new emphasis on what Mitter calls the shared "moral agenda" of defeating fascism conveniently glosses over one reason China can claim to uphold today's world order: the CCP has largely abandoned its founding ideology. In China today, "the ideological cupboard is relatively bare," Mitter sharply observes. Under Xi, he

Founding fathers? At the Cairo conference, 1943

writes, China is "still having a hard time defining its economic and security vision as anything other than an increasingly authoritarian not-America."

Mitter's assessment that China is a "postsocialist state in reality if not in name" is a refreshingly sober alternative to the Trump administration's hyperbolic assertions that the CCP was seeking to bring about a "socialist international order" and a "globe-spanning universal society." Those accusations relied on the fact that official Chinese rhetoric still uses phrases and concepts rooted in Marxism-Leninism. As Mitter's book shows, such language should not be taken at face value: Chinese scholars and officials often use ideological catch phrases to provide political cover for dissent. In order to challenge conventional narratives, Chinese historians and propagandists have dutifully parroted the "political shibboleths" of their era, including the "direction of Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism." But "between the political bromides," Mitter writes, "the scholars placed a depth-charge under the CCP's traditional historiography." Marxist thought remains politically correct in China today, but Marxist arguments are sometimes used in surprising ways. For example, Jie Dalei, a scholar of international relations in Beijing, recently drew on Marxist principles to argue that "China's rise is first and foremost an economic success story" and that China should use economic diplomacy to avoid "ideological conflict with the United States."

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

AT WAR WITH ITSELF

One of the strengths of Mitter's book is that it illuminates how different voices within China have looked to history to unearth new truths about the country's identity and trajectory—not all of them favorable to the CCP. Compared with traditional approaches to telling the history of the World War II era, these revisionist currents reveal less about China's adversaries than about China itself. Mitter writes that "much of the discussion of the war in the public sphere is not really about Japan at all; it is about China and what it thinks about its own identity today, rather than in 1937 or 1945." The country, he argues "is not so much in conflict with the Japanese as with itself, over issues that include economic inequality and ethnic tensions."

Along these lines, Mitter relates how in recent years, Chinese historians have begun to draw attention to the 1942 famine in Henan Province, which killed three million people, one of many chapters in recent Chinese history that require "humor and a large helping of amnesia" to face, in the words of the Chinese novelist Liu Zhenyun. Nationalist policies contributed to that famine, making references to it a relatively safe way for Chinese novelists, filmmakers, and bloggers to present veiled critiques of the Communists' Great Leap Forward, a disastrous experiment in communal industry and agriculture that produced a famine in which at least 30 million Chinese starved to death.

Since the 1980s, revisionist histories of the World War II era have encouraged a more sympathetic view of the Nationalists, many of whom were persecuted by the CCP after the Nationalist leadership fled to Taiwan in 1949. Mitter follows the

writings and travails of Chinese officials, scholars, and filmmakers who have navigated state censorship and resistance from cultural conservatives to bring to light long-ignored stories of the Nationalists' contributions to the war, including those of soldiers who fought against the invading Japanese army only to be hounded and marginalized under Communist rule. In recent years, such stories have become part of the official narrative. State-approved films, museums, and the 2015 military parade have all incorporated the Nationalist war effort—making sure, of course, to portray it as having taken place under CCP leadership. Mitter aptly describes this as an "uneasy balance between allowing a more inclusive history and trying not to damage the myths of the CCP's history."

One is left wondering why the CCP has policed history strictly at some times but not at others. Mitter hints at some international factors driving the CCP's "grudging relaxation of interpretations of the war," including its interest in cultivating ties with Taiwan and in reminding Japan of its unsettled wartime past. Ultimately, however, a lack of clarity on this question may simply reflect the reality that under the CCP's rule, the shifting boundaries of what is permissible are rarely easy to discern.

ITS OWN WORST ENEMY

The CCP faces an uphill battle in selling its newly revised version of China's World War II history to audiences outside China. Part of the problem lies in Western historiography and prejudice, Mitter writes: China's role in the war has been neglected for so long in Western countries that few people in those places have an interest in learning more. Mitter has tried to correct that in this book, building on the scholarship of his previous and also excellent work *Forgotten Ally*.

But foreign countries and their citizens hardly pose the biggest obstacle to China's quest to use history to burnish its legitimacy: the CCP itself is the main barrier. Even when the party allows a more thorough investigation of the wartime past, it still ruthlessly suppresses narratives—whether about Hong Kong, Tibet, or Xinjiang—that challenge its increasingly ethnonationalist definition of who and what belongs to China. And as filmmakers navigate the party's limited tolerance for ambiguity, the result is often big-budget films that emphasize the scale and horror of World War II without the kind of nuance that would humanize its victims and perpetrators. For many Western critics, these films provide too much "loud spectacle and cheap sentiment," writes Mitter, describing the critical responses to Zhang Yimou's *Flowers of War*, which chronicles Japan's brutal occupation of Nanjing, and Feng Xiaogang's *Back to 1942*, which recounts the Henan famine.

Even more important is the simple fact that China's growing authoritarianism is at odds with the dominant postwar narrative in Europe and the United States that explains why the war was fought: to save democracy from fascism. As an increasingly dictatorial party-state, the CCP obviously cannot embrace that version of history or find an easy way to insert China into it. As Mitter perceptively observes, "keeping the world safe for consumerist authoritarianism is hardly a very attractive offer in the twenty-first century," especially for the leading

democracies that continue to put the fight for freedom at the center of their own national ethos. Indeed, the CCP's growing surveillance state and brutal "reeducation" and internment camps in Xinjiang have led many outside observers to accuse Xi of reviving fascism.

There is also some risk in Beijing's strategy of recasting China's history in order to influence perceptions of its present and potential future role in the world. The more China portrays itself as a defender of the postwar order, the more it might spur a sense among Chinese citizens that their country is entitled to more influence and an ever more central role in international affairs in the decades to come. The rest of the world, however, might not play along. And should China encounter concerted, unified opposition to its global ambitions, the CCP—and the world—might have to contend with a growing sense of grievance, disappointment, and resentment among the Chinese people.

This dynamic goes beyond Beijing's efforts to recast history, of course. Over the past four years, China positioned itself as a defender of international institutions and agreements threatened by the Trump administration, from the World Health Organization to the Paris climate accord. At the same time, however, Beijing has tried to diminish the role of universal values in the international order, instead elevating economic development and state security over individual political rights.

For China's neighbors and rivals, the CCP's mixture of cooperation and confrontation defines the "China challenge": how to work with Beijing on controlling the COVID-19 pandemic, slowing climate change, and preventing nuclear proliferation while also parrying the effects of China's growing authoritarianism and pugilistic nationalism. Beijing's attempt to recast the history of World War II might help them do so. Without endorsing the CCP's version of history or excusing Beijing's aggression abroad and abuses at home, leaders in Washington and elsewhere could more explicitly acknowledge China's contributions to ending World War II and creating the existing order. Doing so might mitigate the growing sense among Chinese citizens that the United States and its partners will never allow China to play a leading role on the world stage. That recognition could in turn help Washington press the CCP to pull back on its campaign to intimidate and punish its critics abroad. An agreement of that kind would not solve many of the problems plaguing relations between the United States and China. But it is precisely the kind of carefully finessed arrangement that Washington and Beijing will have to get much better at crafting if they are to achieve anything resembling peaceful coexistence.

Market Value

Can Capitalism Serve Democracy?

Binyamin Appelbaum

Freedom From the Market: America's Fight to Liberate Itself From the Grip of the Invisible Hand
BY MIKE KONCZAL. New Press, 2021, 256 pp.

It has become a matter of general agreement among citizens of the richest country on earth that things are not going so well. The United States in its 245th year is an ailing nation—socially, politically, and economically. In the recent presidential election, one political party promised to "make America great again—again." The other rallied supporters to "build back better." Nobody talked about "morning in America" or anything similarly sunny. Everyone can see that it is dark outside.

During the country's last national funk, in the 1970s, Americans latched on to the idea that the market would set them free. The result was an era of religious reverence for property rights and markets in everything, as a solution not just to the country's economic problems but to its social and political problems, too. People were reclassified as a form of capital and told to invest in themselves. Pollution was reconceived as a tradable good. Spending money was declared to be a form of free speech.

The evangelists of free exchange insisted that unregulated capitalism and liberal democracy were symbiotic. A half century later, it is getting harder to find people who still think that is true. There is an ineluctable tension between property and democracy: political freedom is, among other things, the dangerous idea that the polity gets to define property rights. Maintaining a market economy and a liberal democracy requires a careful balancing act. And it is clear that Americans of all political persuasions are losing interest in forging the necessary compromises.

On the right, there is a growing willingness to sacrifice democracy. As the historian Quinn Slobodian pointed out in his 2018 book, *Globalists*, defenders of property rights are not opponents of government involvement in the economy; rather, they have sought, with considerable success, to encase property in a fortress of laws expressly designed to limit the power of the polity. This defense of privilege is understandably infuriating to the many Americans who lack the economic security to provide for their families or the opportunity to pursue their dreams. It fuels the reflexive hostility toward the market that increasingly colors policy debates among liberals.

In his new book, *Freedom From the Market*, Mike Konczal, the director of the Progressive Thought Program at the Roosevelt Institute, a think tank focused on economic inequality, goes beyond arguments in favor of regulating markets or establishing new government programs to redistribute income. "This book," he writes, "argues that true

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freedom requires keeping us free from the market." In his account, the market economy isn't an engine of broad prosperity, and it certainly isn't complementary to political freedom. "Market dependence," he declares, "is a profound state of unfreedom."

Konczal provides a compelling account of the problems with markets. But his indictment misses the ways in which the expansion of the market economy has often produced precisely the kinds of changes he seeks. For all the skepticism of the market on the left, it remains an important tool.

PRECONDITIONS FOR FREEDOM

The progressive conception of freedom is the product of several centuries of trial and error. First came the assertion that people are entitled to freedom from various forms of oppression. That is the kind of freedom that was enshrined in the Bill of Rights. But equality before the law isn't worth much without the ability to participate in writing those laws, so next came the assertion that freedom requires universal suffrage. But participation isn't worth much unless people can participate as equals. As U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed in 1944, "We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence."

The problem with relying on a market economy to deliver economic security and independence is encapsulated in an old joke: "Ah yes, like the Ritz Hotel, open to rich and poor alike"—that is, although everyone may be allowed to buy what he needs, not everyone can afford to do so. One proposed corrective enjoying a moment in the spotlight is the idea that the government should give people money, perhaps in the form of a universal basic income. But giving people money is not the same thing as ensuring that people have health care. Another corrective is to provide services deemed essential. Public schools are a notable example.

Konczal is a partisan of the second approach. He wants the government to endow all Americans with the basics necessary to participate fully in a modern democratic society, a list that includes health care, a college education, and broadband Internet. He argues that the government must do the job because the market won't. "The distribution of goods in a market economy doesn't match what we need to live free lives," he writes.

Many policy books present theoretical arguments lightly studded with anecdotes. One gets the feeling that the baker begrudged each chocolate chip he put into the pound cake. Konczal's book is tastier. He built a name for himself as a blogger in the years after the 2008 financial crisis, and he knows how to narrate. His book is a retelling of U.S. history as a long struggle to limit the role of the market. "For two centuries," he writes, "Americans have been fighting for freedom from the market." The people have won some victories: food stamps for children, unemployment benefits for workers, Medicare for the elderly. Lately, however, the war hasn't been going so well. Increasingly, the quality of life is determined by the ability to pay—for health insurance, education, housing. The wealthy live well, and the poor struggle. A major obstacle, in Konczal's view, is that Americans have been taught to equate markets with freedom and to regard government as a

constraint on markets and freedom. "Battles for the future of our country and society are not won on arguments about market failures, on the balance sheets of accounts, or on narrowly tailored, incremental solutions," he writes in his conclusion. "They are won on arguments about freedom." To win, progressives need to reclaim the banner of freedom.

NO ESCAPING THE MARKET

Although Konczal's commitment to a broader and more muscular definition of freedom is admirable, he ultimately misjudges the relationship between markets and freedom. Reading Konczal's book, one is often struck that the Americans he portrays were fighting not to escape from the market but to participate in it more fully. They saw government not as an alternative to the market but as a means of shaping it.

In one chapter, set during World War II, Konczal tells of the creation of almost three dozen daycare centers in Richmond, California, to tend to the children of women employed in the city's sprawling shipyards. Families that used the centers, or the more than 3,100 other wartime daycare facilities that opened across the United States, paid only a nominal fee. The government covered the balance. Konczal describes this as an instance of Americans successfully escaping the tyranny of market forces: the government provided mothers with a service otherwise unavailable or unaffordable. But the government acted so women could work—and it did so by paying other women to work in the daycare centers.

Opponents of the daycare program were the ones who sought to preserve a space outside the market. They argued that mothers should remain in the home—at least those who couldn't afford childcare without a government subsidy. After the war, they successfully forced the closure of the federally subsidized daycare centers. In 1954, when Congress introduced a tax deduction for childcare expenses, it was initially restricted to women who could demonstrate that they needed paid work. Konczal is right to argue that childcare should be readily available in the United States today. But public support for childcare is not just a matter of providing people with the freedom to participate fully in society or in democracy. It also affords the freedom to participate in the market economy.

The freedom to participate in the market can also strengthen democracy. Konczal opens his narrative with one of the formative episodes in the creation of the modern United States: the redistribution of western lands. He recounts the ferment on the densely populated Eastern Seaboard that produced the Homestead Act, the legislation that allowed Americans to claim enough land for a family farm. "Are you an American citizen?" brayed Horace Greeley's *New-York Daily Tribune*. "Then you are a joint-owner of the public lands. Why not take enough of your property to provide yourself a home? Why not vote yourself a farm?" Americans did just that: the polity established rules for the distribution of common property. According to Konczal, more than 46 million Americans are descended from the homesteaders who claimed pieces of the land.

Konczal argues that the Homestead Act reflected "an unapologetic demand to keep something away from the market." In fact, it was the means by which much of the continent was commodified. The United States took land occupied by

New to market: homesteaders in Custer County, Nebraska, 1889

Native Americans and redefined it as private property for white Americans. Many proponents and beneficiaries of the Homestead Act envisioned yeomanry as an alternative to wage labor, but not as an escape from the market economy: corn, wheat, and other cash crops predominated from the outset. The Homestead Act should be seen as a lesson in the power of government to construct markets, and in the lasting consequences of its choices. Millions of smallholders gained a footing in the market economy, giving greater substance to the egalitarian rhetoric of the country's founders. At the same time, the exclusion of Native Americans from their lands, and of Black people from land ownership, still weighs on American society and American democracy.

CAPITALISM IN THE SERVICE OF DEMOCRACY

The appeal of free-market rhetoric rests partly in its simplicity: the government should protect economic freedom, narrowly defined as property rights, and facilitate free exchange. Progressives have struggled to articulate an alternative. What should Americans want instead?

One powerful idea is to invert the subordination of political freedom to economic freedom. In the philosopher Debra Satz's formulation, "Democratic societies depend on the ability of their citizens to operate as equals." Therefore, where "markets undermine or block egalitarian relationships between people, there is a case for market regulation, even when such markets are otherwise efficient." Most market activities

wouldn't be affected by such a principle. Satz also notes, importantly, that some kinds of market activities serve to strengthen democracy.

In 1905, the Supreme Court, in *Lochner v. New York,* struck down a state law that said bakers could not work more than ten hours a day or 60 hours a week. The majority held that the law interfered with the freedom of workers and employers to make voluntary arrangements. In a famous dissent, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., pointed out that the status quo was an artificial construct. Every market has rules; it is just a question of what those rules should be. "Holmes was pointing out that a truly neutral market was a lie," Konczal writes. By barring New York from acting, the Court wasn't preserving the purity of markets. It was siding with employers. It already allowed various forms of interference, such as bankruptcy and limited shareholder liability. "The only time the courts would call foul was when laws provided better protections for workers."

Konczal describes the rise of the labor movement and its eventual success in the long battles to restrict the workday and the workweek as an example of the antimarket tendency in American life. Workers, he writes, "wanted a space and time free from the marketplace." There is another way to portray the same story, however. Union leaders and activists are justly celebrated as "the people who brought you the weekend." But the value of the weekend is that it follows the workweek. Americans already enjoyed the freedom to refrain from working. What they wanted was the freedom to work and then to go home at the end of the workday and stay home on Saturday. They wanted to place capitalism in the service of freedom.

The Trump years provided Americans with a brutal lesson in the importance of public policy. The dawn of a new administration offers a chance to act on that lesson. Americans need government help to obtain an education, to care for themselves and for family members, to pursue economic opportunities. But progressives will squander the moment if they frame those goals as a fight against markets. What Americans need is a fuller measure of freedom—the freedom to participate in democratic society and in the marketplace.

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Recent Books

Political and Legal

G. John Ikenberry

Intentions in Great Power Politics: Uncertainty and the Roots of Conflict
BY SEBASTIAN ROSATO. Yale University Press, 2021, 376 pp.

One of the oldest insights in the study of international relations is that peaceful relations among great powers hinge on trust. In this engaging book, Rosato surveys great-power relations across the modern era and concludes that it is mistrust—not trust—that is deeply rooted and ubiquitous. His key claim is that a state can build trust only when it has credible knowledge of another state's true intentions and that, even under the best of circumstances, acquiring such knowledge is difficult. Obviously, mistrust is famously a defining feature of great-power politics: think, for instance, of Anglo-German and Franco-German relations in the decades before World War I. But Rosato concludes that even in more favorable situations (such as relations between the United Kingdom and the United States at the turn of the twentieth century), leaders were never able to acquire "first hand information" of the other state's true intentions. Rosato's argument verges on a simple truism: there are inherent epistemological limits on what a state can know for sure about another state. His theory yields a "depressing prediction" regarding U.S.-Chinese relations, which he sees as burdened with cultural, ideological, and institutional barriers to understanding each other's intentions.

After Democracy: Imagining Our Political Future
BY ZIZI PAPACHARISSI. Yale University Press, 2021, 176 pp.

Liberal democracy has fallen on hard times, besieged by populist and authoritarian challengers. In this fascinating, if

It is with sadness that we note the recent passing of RICHARD COOPER, who had been the magazine's regular reviewer of books on economics since 1993. For decades, Cooper taught international economics, first at Yale and later at Harvard, training three generations of the best minds in the field. Cooper was not only a scholar but also a practitioner, serving in a number of high-level government positions during his long career, including as U.S. undersecretary of state for economic affairs. We were honored to publish him for so many years, and we will miss his insight, his concision, and his wisdom.

We are lucky to have as his replacement BARRY EICHENGREEN, whose first set of reviews appear in this issue. Eichengreen is the George C. Pardee and Helen N. Pardee professor of economics and political science at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has taught since 1987. He is also a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research and a research fellow at the Centre for Economic Policy Research. His books include *The Populist Temptation: Economic Grievance and Political Reaction in the Modern Era* and *Hall of Mirrors: The Great Depression, the Great Recession, and the Uses—and Misuses—of History*.

slightly meandering, rumination on the future of democracy, Papacharissi sees glimmers of hope amid growing obstacles. From its ancient roots in classical Greece, government "by the people" has repeatedly been in crisis, faced extinction, and enjoyed moments of rebirth. Papacharissi is particularly interested in the impact on citizens of the information revolution and Internet-based communication platforms. Social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter appear to provide a "public space" for conversations, but not a "public sphere" in which citizens can engage with one another as members of a political community. The book is organized as a sort of travelogue, studded with interviews with people from a variety of countries. Across diverse political settings, these interviewees emphasize that they value democracy not just as a framework for the protection of rights but also as a way of reconciling differences and preserving the greater good of the country. Papacharissi distills his conversations into an agenda for the repair of the liberal democratic way of life: invest more in civic education, reduce economic inequality, and foster a more public interest media environment that prizes the truth.

Grand Transitions: How the Modern World Was Made
BY VACLAV SMIL. Oxford University Press, 2021, 384 pp.

Smil offers a sweeping account of the deep material forces that have shaped the modern world. He argues that the centuries-long move of humanity from traditional agricultural societies into a more complex, globe-spanning industrial civilization has been driven by five "grand transitions"—in population, agriculture, energy, economics, and the environment. Smil has an eye for interesting details, but he is better at showing the interconnections, turning points, and pathways of societal change than in pinpointing cause and effect. Nevertheless, he tells a remarkable story of the human capacity to innovate, build, and integrate societies across vast distances. He worries, however, that economic inequality and the rapid degradation of the environment will overwhelm the human talent for adaptation.

The Frontlines of Peace: An Insider's Guide to Changing the World
BY SEVERINE AUTESSERRE. Oxford University Press, 2021, 240 pp.

Through memoir and reportage, Autesserre tells the story of international peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations through her own eyes and those of aid workers and victims of violence. Drawn from several decades of experience in war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kosovo, Autesserre paints a harrowing portrait of nongovernmental organizations, diplomats, and peacekeepers struggling to resolve conflicts. Along the way, she sharply critiques the top-down, outsider-led approach to international peacemaking, or what she calls "Peace, Inc.," in which UN and Western diplomats run the show. Autesserre argues that in these sorts of operations, outside peacekeepers and aid officials tend to interact primarily with national-level political and military leaders and rarely venture into the local conflict zones or come equipped with in-depth knowledge

of the history, politics, and culture of the countries they seek to help. Autesserre calls her preferred alternative "Peaceworld," a bottom-up approach in which aid workers immerse themselves in local areas and build ties to grassroots organizations. The book's evocative and often moving stories all illustrate her core insight: that "peace communities" are built at the local level, neighborhood by neighborhood.

Ideology and International Institutions
BY ERIK VOETEN. Princeton University Press, 2021, 224 pp.

In this impressive book, Voeten argues that although multilateral bodies such as the World Trade Organization may appear to be "neutral" and "universalistic," they more often than not reflect the values and ideological orientations of their most powerful sponsors. The U.S.-led postwar multilateral system provided a framework for an open and rules-based global economy, but it also privileged the classical liberal values of private property, individual rights, and limited government. The collapse of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War era of ideological contestation, but Voeten sees U.S.-style liberalism facing a new challenge from an upsurge in nationalism, Islamism, populism, authoritarianism, and state-led capitalism. The book's primary contribution is how it identifies the ideological elements of interstate bargaining over multilateral rules and institutions. Voeten concedes that many of the political disputes that take place in multilateral forums are old-fashioned parochial struggles over the distribution of economic gains. He argues that in the absence of a dominant coalition of like-minded states committed to a shared vision of international order, multilateral institutions will increasingly be shaped by short-term transactional politics.

Economic, Social, and Environmental

Barry Eichengreen

The Great Demographic Reversal: Ageing Societies, Waning Inequality, and an Inflation Revival
BY CHARLES GOODHART AND MANOJ PRADHAN. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 260 pp.

In this thought-provoking book, Goodhart and Pradhan seek to explain the rising inequality, stagnant wages, and disinflationary pressures of recent years. They describe how the integration into the world economy of China and other emerging markets, with their initially young populations, added billions of workers to the global labor force. In the advanced economies, this disadvantaged less skilled workers, reduced the power of workers and labor unions, and increased inequality. In addition, a flood of new supply into global markets, together with China's high savings, put a lid on global inflation. But as populations now age, including in China, and as the high savings rates of more elderly populations come down, the same dynamics will run in reverse. This will make for falling inequality, rising wages, and higher inflation. Perhaps, as the authors argue, demography is destiny. Still, one wonders

whether politicians might also have something to say about what happens to the distribution of wealth and income and whether central banks will really be powerless to shape the course of inflation.

The Double X Economy: The Epic Potential of Women's Empowerment
BY LINDA SCOTT. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020, 384 pp.

Scott has crafted an impassioned account of the personal and societal costs of denying economic opportunity to women. The book is part synthesis of scholarship and part polemic—not a bad thing when one is addressing a wide audience. Her analysis is informed by fieldwork in Ghana, South Africa, and Uganda and also by reams of data from international institutions and nongovernmental organizations. Scott documents the costs, in terms of equity but also in terms of economic development and growth, of gender gaps in education, pay, and access to finance, shedding light on the societal origins of these disparities. She shows how simple interventions in developing countries—providing sanitary pads to encourage school attendance by young women, for instance—can make a difference. As for why such interventions are not more extensive, Scott points to patriarchal societies that deny women a seat at the decision-making table. She applies the same critique to advanced countries and to the economics profession itself, which she indicts for its limited attention to issues of gender inequality.

The Mismeasure of Progress: Economic Growth and Its Critics
BY STEPHEN J. MACEKURA. University of Chicago Press, 2020, 320 pp.

Gross national product is a familiar measure of the size of an economy, and the change in GNP is a familiar measure of the rate of economic growth. But decisions about what to include in GNP and how to value those components turn on how economic activity is conceptualized by the social scientists and statisticians responsible for constructing the measure. Macekura traces the genesis and trajectory of the idea over the course of the twentieth century. He shows how the invention of GNP encouraged a focus on aggregate economic growth as the objective of economic policy and describes the long line of skeptics who have criticized GNP for neglecting nonmarket work, ignoring the distribution of income, failing to account for resource depletion and environmental degradation, and focusing on output rather than human welfare or happiness. The reader comes away persuaded that GNP, although an imperfect summary indicator of the state of an economy, plays an outsize role in contemporary conceptions of economic policy and performance.

Angrynomics
BY ERIC LONERGAN AND MARK BLYTH. Agenda, 2020, 192 pp.

Framed as a dialogue between a hedge fund manager (Lonergan) and a political scientist (Blyth), this equally entertaining and rigorous book locates the roots of today's angry, antiestablishment politics

in macroeconomic and financial instability, technological change, and rising inequality, which together have created a sense of economic exclusion and insecurity. But despite emphasizing the economic origins of political movements, the authors build less than one might expect on the extensive scholarly literature on economic populism and give short shrift to explanations that focus on culture and identity politics. The book is strongest when it offers novel policies for stabilizing the economy and for addressing stagnation and insecurity, including two-tier interest rates (one at which the central bank lends, and another that it pays on deposits or reserves), cash transfers to households ("helicopter money"), and a national wealth fund to tackle inequality.

Military, Scientific, and Technological

Lawrence D. Freedman

Eagle Down: The Last Special Forces Fighting the Forever War
BY JESSICA DONATI. PublicAffairs, 2021, 320 pp.

Almost two decades after the 9/11 attacks, U.S. Special Forces are still fighting in Afghanistan and trying to keep the Taliban at bay. This long war consists of numerous small engagements, barely noticed back home unless the casualties are unusually heavy or the government in Kabul loses control of some vital city. Covering the fighting since 2015, Donati captures the chaos and arbitrariness of the war: soldiers die as they enter a supposedly friendly Afghan base, are maimed stepping on mines, try to keep wounded colleagues alive as they wait for an evacuation helicopter to arrive, and inadvertently call in an airstrike on a hospital, killing doctors and patients. Donati speaks with military wives who recall the moment they heard about the death of their partner and with veterans trying to make their way in civilian life. Her vivid, uncompromising reporting presents U.S. politicians and senior military commanders as disconnected from the reality of the war as they flounder in search of a satisfactory way out of it.

Adaptation Under Fire: How Militaries Change in Wartime
BY DAVID BARNO AND NORA BENSAHEL. Oxford University Press, 2020, 440 pp.

U.S. armed forces are commonly described as inflexible, too easily caught out by the unexpected features of a conflict. Barno and Bensahel trace the factors that enable more nimble adaptability: technology, shrewd leadership, and sound doctrine. They examine how these factors have helped account for U.S. military successes and failures in operations dating back to World War II. U.S. armed forces adapted well in learning to work with the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan in 2001 and with tribal coalitions during the so-called Anbar Awakening in Iraq in 2005. Then, however, General David McKiernan in Afghanistan and General George Casey in Iraq struggled to adjust their tactics to conditions on the ground and so failed to stem the tide of violence.

The authors warn of the coming radical changes in the strategic environment, including increasing tension with China, and argue that the U.S. military has to transform the way it goes about its business, resisting doctrinal rigidity and organizational inertia and finding new kinds of leaders. This is a thoughtful and informed analysis, even though it has quite a narrow focus on land forces and doesn't consider the political contexts of U.S. military operations, especially in conflicts in which the United States has had to work closely with local forces.

Behind the Enigma: The Authorised History of GCHQ, Britain's Secret Cyber-Intelligence Agency
BY JOHN FERRIS. Bloomsbury, 2020, 848 pp.

Given that until recently the British government refused to acknowledge the existence of its World War II–era code-breaking organization, this informative official history of the Government Communications Headquarters, or GCHQ, one of the United Kingdom's leading intelligence agencies, is remarkable. Ferris's narrative takes on the breaking of the Nazi's Enigma code at Bletchley Park during World War II and the efforts to replicate that achievement during the Cold War. GCHQ now plays a major role in all areas of cybersecurity. Its activities, along with those of the U.S. National Security Agency, were compromised when a former NSA contractor, Edward Snowden, revealed them in 2013. Ferris's account avoids sensationalism. It provides a careful judgment of Bletchley Park's impact, points to how signals intelligence during the Cold War usefully illuminated the lower levels of the Soviet system, and shows GCHQ's operational importance to the conduct of colonial and postcolonial conflicts, including the 1982 Falklands War.

Diagnosing Dissent: Hysterics, Deserters, and Conscientious Objectors in Germany During World War One
BY REBECCA AYAKO BENNETTE. Cornell University Press, 2020, 240 pp.

German veterans of World War I were treated callously when they exhibited symptoms of shell shock, labeled "war tremblers" or branded as hysterics and cowards. Some psychiatrists described forms of conscientious objection—defying conscription and refusing to fight on ethical grounds—as a medical pathology. All of this foreshadowed the later practices of the Nazis. Drawing from meticulous research into patient records, Bennette complicates this picture. She shows that many psychiatrists were actually more sympathetic than previously imagined to those patients suffering from the trauma of their time on the front. Her investigations also reveal that many more Germans were conscientious objectors than had been assumed. Although they could be harsh and dismissive, many psychiatrists provided a space in which traumatized veterans and dissidents could express themselves.

Ho Chi Minh Trail, 1964–1973: Steel Tiger, Barrel Roll, and the Secret Air War in Vietnam and Laos
BY PETER A. DAVIES. Osprey, 2020, 96 pp.

The publisher Osprey's short books on particular military campaigns can be invaluable for students of contemporary

warfare. They feature matter-of-fact descriptions, burnished with plentiful illustrations and maps. The Ho Chi Minh Trail, which helped supply North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces during the Vietnam War, certainly deserves a volume of its own. The trail was a logistical marvel, dipping in and out of Cambodia and Laos, running more than 12,000 miles over mountains and through jungles, and employing over 100,000 workers. The route sustained North Vietnam's war effort and was kept open despite numerous bids to shut it down. Davies outlines the various U.S. attempts—including airstrikes and the employment of sensors and physical barriers—to stop the North Vietnamese from using the trail. He concentrates on the actions of the U.S. Air Force, neglecting the contribution of U.S. Navy and Marine flyers. Despite the military and technological prowess of the Americans, the North Vietnamese were sufficiently resourceful to keep their supplies moving.

The United States

Jessica T. Mathews

A Promised Land
BY BARACK OBAMA. Crown, 2020, 768 pp.

Obama is a gifted writer. His prose is lean, supple, graphic, and lively. In a dozen words, he can snap a memorable picture of a political interlocutor or a foreign leader. He set out to recount what happened during his presidency, elucidate the subtleties of policy debates, and convey "what it's like to *be* the president of the United States." Although he has succeeded in each, these multiple ambitions mean that what was intended to be a single-volume, 500-page memoir ended up being 700 pages and only covering the first 30 months of his presidency. The book's length is also the result of thoughtful but unfinished conversations he holds with himself on nearly every subject. Phrases such as "To this day I wonder . . . whether I should have been bolder" appear on page after page. Obama began writing only a month after the end of his eight-year tenure as president. Had he taken longer to digest the experience, more of these open-ended reflections might have reached conclusions. Perhaps that will come in the next installment, which may also address some of the odd omissions in this volume, such as the nuclear policy issues to which he devoted so much effort while in office.

The American Crisis: What Went Wrong. How We Recover.
BY THE WRITERS OF *THE ATLANTIC*. Simon & Schuster, 2020, 576 pp.

This collection of some of the best recent writing in *The Atlantic* delays discussion of U.S. President Donald Trump and Trumpism until the second half of the book. It begins with considerations of the destabilizing forces that have grown in recent decades: widening economic inequality, declining social mobility, structural racism, and a fractured healthcare system still impervious to full reform. The next set of essays turn to politics, parsing the roles of individuals (such as former Republican House

Speaker Newt Gingrich and the former Trump aide Paul Manafort) and broader sources of political dysfunction, including voter suppression, gerrymandering, expanded presidential powers, and social media. The collection of pieces on Trump, his family, his advisers, and his policies includes great reporting and gripping insights, especially in the shortest piece in the book, "The Cruelty Is the Point," by Adam Serwer, which was originally published in 2018 but is equally applicable to the emotions let loose in the attack on the U.S. Capitol in January. The last section, weak only by comparison to what precedes it, turns to the future, not so much with policy recommendations as with reminders of the "tools still at our disposal—values, outlooks, attitudes, instincts." This volume is a superb resource in helping Americans understand how they have arrived where they are now.

The Ten Year War: Obamacare and the Unfinished Crusade for Universal Coverage
BY JONATHAN COHN. St. Martin's Press, 2021, 416 pp.

The "ten year war" of the title refers to the decade from U.S. President Barack Obama's election in 2008 to the defeat of the House Republican majority in 2018, in which no political issue was more decisive than the Affordable Care Act, the most important piece of legislation in the country in half a century. Cohn recognizes that the law is "highly flawed, distressingly compromised, [and] woefully incomplete," but he nonetheless credits the act with representing a major step toward establishing affordable health care as a universal right, as it is in every other developed country. Unrelenting Republican determination to repeal the law and replace it with an undefined alternative has prevented legislators from correcting the inevitable defects in a massive new government program, leaving the law weaker than it should be. Cohn traces the debate over the ACA as it unfolded in think tanks, lobbyist offices, legislative committees, and the Oval Office with impressive clarity and in an engaging, highly readable narrative that makes arcane issues accessible. His own bias in favor of universal coverage is explicit, but he treats fairly the philosophical and economic arguments of the opposing view. This valuable history will help inform the continuing battle for an efficient, equitable, and affordable U.S. health-care system.

America in the World: A History of U.S. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy
BY ROBERT B. ZOELLICK. Twelve, 2020, 560 pp.

In approaching his ambitious subject, Zoellick combines a practitioner's wisdom, gleaned from half a dozen jobs in senior government posts, with scholarly research and deep knowledge of how Washington works. The book is not quite what the title promises, instead offering a highly selective retelling of notable incidents in U.S. diplomacy. The rationale for what Zoellick includes and omits is not always clear. His chapters on the pathbreaking contributions of three secretaries of state—Elihu Root, who served under President Theodore Roosevelt and championed international law, Charles Evans Hughes, who served in the 1920s and secured agreements on arms control, and Cordell Hull, who served under President Franklin Roo-

sevelt and helped lay the groundwork for the postwar liberal order—are particularly interesting, as is his treatment of the science administrator Vannevar Bush, whose work under Roosevelt during World War II laid the foundation for later U.S. preeminence in science and technology. But in most cases, the important subject areas these discussions open up do not reappear. Dismissive of doctrines, Zoellick points instead to five enduring "traditions" that should guide U.S. policymakers: the need for U.S. dominance in North America, the importance of trade and technology to national security and the economy, the value of alliances, the influence of public opinion and Congress on policymaking, and Washington's special leadership role in the world.

Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present
BY RUTH BEN-GHIAT. Norton, 2020, 384 pp.

The protagonists of this illuminating study of authoritarian rulers range from early-twentieth-century fascists such as Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, to postcolonial strongmen in Iraq, Libya, and Uganda, to modern autocrats who rode elections into office in Brazil, Hungary, the Philippines, Russia, Turkey, and, yes, the United States. It is disturbing how comfortably U.S. President Donald Trump fits into this lineup. From his dark inauguration speech to his wild attempts to overturn the 2020 presidential election, much of Trump's behavior—including his inability to conceive of his own failure—makes perfect sense according to Ben-Ghiat's authoritarian playbook. Her closing warning that "strongmen do not vanish with their exits from power, but . . . remain as traces within the body of their people" could not be more timely.

Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

Quo vadis Hungaria? (Where Is Hungary Heading?): Foreign Policy Dilemmas and Strategic Vision
BY ISTVAN SZENT-IVANYI. TRANSLATED BY ANDY CLARK. Republikon Intezet, 2020, 180 pp.

Szent-Ivanyi, a Hungarian opposition politician and top diplomat, delivers a devastating critique of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's approach to foreign policy. He claims that Orban has sold Hungary out to authoritarians such as Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Chinese President Xi Jinping. The author blasts this turn as "a completely wrong direction," inconsistent with Hungarian identity and long-term interests, and advocates a restoration of "the unequivocal western orientation of our homeland." He clearly demonstrates how Orban and his allies cynically use nationalist ideology to promote one-off economic and political deals that provide some short-term benefit to Hungary but will harm it in the long run. He hints that such deals also aid Orban's personal electoral fortunes and line the pockets of his corrupt associates. A transactional foreign policy of this kind, the book contends, is condemned to be "incoherent,

confusing, and unsuccessful"—as some might see Orban's recent surrender to the Council of the EU on legal disputes. Although such insider critiques of one's country's foreign policy are commonplace in the United Kingdom and the United States, this sophisticated account is a pathbreaking exception in central Europe and worthy of a wide readership.

Remaking One Nation: The Future of Conservatism
BY NICK TIMOTHY. Polity Press, 2020, 224 pp.

Timothy, the top political adviser to former British Prime Minister Theresa May, pleads for a reorientation of the British Conservative Party toward a new centrist ideology. The fundamental problem facing the Tories—much like what their Republican cousins across the pond are facing—is the unpopularity of the neoliberal agenda of lower taxes and economic deregulation that the party has espoused since the election of Margaret Thatcher 40 years ago. The consequent rise in inequality, social exclusion, regional blight, environmental degradation, substandard schooling, and rocky race relations has bred cynicism about government. Tory evangelizing about Brexit and nationalist identity politics generated some blue-collar support in national elections in 2019, but what now? Timothy seems sure about what the Tories should oppose: he lambasts stereotypical liberal "elites" who combine free-market economics with pro-immigrant identity politics. Yet he struggles to find an alternative. He proposes a new "communitarian" capitalism, combining a traditionally left-wing agenda of higher taxes, stricter regulation, and worker co-management of firms with stricter controls on immigration and a general (if vague) respect for "the ethnic and cultural identities of white Britons." How current Conservatives would accept and enact this odd mix remains a mystery.

A Velvet Empire: French Informal Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century
BY DAVID TODD. Princeton University Press, 2021, 368 pp.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, European imperial powers preferred to control certain colonial territories by indirect means: they sought to co-opt local economic and cultural elites rather than establish full territorial control. This strategy of "informal imperialism" required far fewer resources than direct rule and allowed the imperialists to focus on economic exploitation rather than governance. The more formal "scramble for Africa" in the 1880s only intensified when imperial powers began bumping up against one another. British informal imperialism is well studied, but Todd examines its less well-known French counterpart, which took shape especially in North Africa. Whereas London enjoyed unmatched competitiveness in cotton textiles, ironwork, transport, and financial services, Paris dominated in luxury goods such as silk and velvet, women's couture and cosmetics, home furnishings, and fine food and drink. The French also took advantage of their strong legal services sector and state-supported banks. The luxury trade was profitable enough that, contrary to what one often reads, neither France nor the United Kingdom was willing to risk war with the other late in the nineteenth century in an attempt to

extend its possessions—leaving open the question of why governments established formal colonies at all.

Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music
BY ALEX ROSS. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020, 784 pp.

Richard Wagner was Europe's most influential artist of the nineteenth century. His virulent anti-Semitism and Adolf Hitler's obsessive love for his operas have led many to treat him simply as a bombastic proto-Nazi—a view that Ross, a music critic at *The New Yorker*, challenges. Wagner, he observes, was in fact the most left-wing and antimilitaristic of the great composers. Exiled from Germany for nearly two decades after he manned the revolutionary barricades of 1848 as an anarchist, he produced a string of operas that belie his typical association with right-wing politics, including his four-opera *Ring* cycle, a socialist morality play about the triumph of love over power, and his final work, *Parsifal*, a thinly disguised meditation on Buddhism. Ross focuses especially on the transformative impact that Wagnerian opera had not just on musicians but also on generations of leading painters, poets, theater directors, choreographers, philosophers, classicists, psychologists, and filmmakers—not to mention feminists, environmentalists, gay rights activists, Zionists, African American intellectuals, and elected politicians—most of whom were on the left. Wagner's art allowed them all to unlock their own creativity because his operas let each listener take away something different and profound.

Scandinavian Noir: In Pursuit of a Mystery
BY WENDY LESSER. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020, 288 pp.

One of Europe's oddest cultural exports in recent decades has been "Scandinavian noir" crime fiction. Lesser, a bicoastal American writer and critic who has followed these novels, TV shows, and movies since the 1980s, uses them (and a trip to Scandinavia) as a bridge to understanding contemporary Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Readers undeterred by self-consciously ironic narrators who describe themselves in the third person may find this frothy mix of travelogue, literary criticism, and autobiography engaging. Spoiler alert: in the end, the book's premise explodes. Fictional Scandinavian detectives closely resemble their counterparts anywhere else. Overwhelmingly male, they resist dull middle-class lives, chafe under stifling bureaucracies, feel alienated in cities full of strangers, express ambivalence about strong women, drink too much, and fail to vanquish the evil rot at the core of society. Their real-world counterparts are nothing like this. Instead, the author encounters enlightened and fair-minded professionals—many of them women—working closely with social workers to employ international best practices in societies where the rate of violent crime is a fraction of that in an average American city.

Hitler: Downfall, 1939–1945
BY VOLKER ULLRICH. TRANSLATED BY JEFFERSON CHASE. Knopf, 2020, 848 pp.

Few figures have been more thoroughly debated and dissected than Adolf Hitler. Today, one can only hope to retell his tale in clear prose, striking a proper balance between argument and narrative while citing the most vivid evidence. Ullrich, a German journalist, does this as well as any. In his account, Hitler was above all a high-stakes gambler convinced that those with the strongest political will were destined to prevail—or to die trying. This conviction was at once a strength and an inherent flaw. No matter how much Hitler won, he continued to take greater risks in a quest for world domination. It is easy to mistake such obsessive evil for insanity. And it is true that Hitler, like many politicians, was at times overconfident, holding dubious views about the world around him and firing those who told him differently. But he was also a tactical genius who trusted his own gut instincts. He knew exactly what he was risking and why—and came dangerously close to succeeding. In the end, he was willing to die for his beliefs—staging his own demise in the manner he thought most likely to serve as a heroic inspiration to future generations. Fortunately, that final effort failed utterly.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

Barrio America: How Latino Immigrants Saved the American City
BY A. K. SANDOVAL-STRAUSZ. Basic Books, 2019, 416 pp.

Sandoval-Strausz, a historian, offers a timely antidote to the toxic rhetoric in the United States that characterizes Latino immigrants as criminals and welfare scroungers. He frames Latino history in the country as a narrative of renewal and striving. As white Americans began to flee U.S. cities in the 1960s, purposeful Mexican immigrants moved into vacant houses and opened small businesses in abandoned storefronts. New community organizations rose up that enriched American civic life. Latino urban culture transformed cityscapes with populous plazas and dynamic street life. Contrary to stereotypes prevalent in the media and political discourse, crime rates in immigrant neighborhoods have been lower than in comparable white neighborhoods. Sandoval-Strausz shows how immigrants repeatedly encountered virulent nativism; nevertheless, Latinos did not suffer the degree of discrimination that Black Americans had to face, most notably in access to home mortgages. The author laments that second-generation Latinos often abandon their distinct cultures, choosing, for example, to live a suburban lifestyle dependent on cars rather than staying in more walkable—and sociable—urban neigh-

borhoods. The book also includes a smart overview of national immigration legislation and its often unintended consequences.

The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country From Corporate Greed
BY ROBIN BROAD AND JOHN CAVANAGH. Beacon Press, 2021, 211 pp.

In this gripping page-turner, Broad and Cavanagh narrate the uplifting story of how a global coalition of environmental activists, labor unions, and religious leaders blocked a Canadian firm from opening a gold mine that threatened fragile watersheds in rural El Salvador. In 2017, this coalition persuaded El Salvador's legislature to unanimously pass a bill banning metallic mining—the world's first such countrywide ban. El Salvador persuaded the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes to rule against the mining firm's bid to open operations in the country. Broad and Cavanagh offer a practical David-versus-Goliath playbook for those who would mobilize both domestic and international forces to halt corporate abuses and to place the long-term welfare of communities above short-term financial gain. The authors trace stirring portraits of a diverse cast of courageous leaders who fought together to protect their corner of the planet.

The Costs of Inequality in Latin America: Lessons and Warnings for the Rest of the World
BY DIEGO SÁNCHEZ-ANCOCHEA. I.B. Tauris, 2020, 216 pp.

Sánchez-Ancochea contends that many of Latin America's woes spring from its gaping economic inequality. He writes for a general audience, drawing primarily on country-by-country case studies rather than bombarding readers with data. Some broad trends leap out. Oligarchic business owners have few incentives to invest or innovate, so their firms cannot compete in global markets; smaller firms, meanwhile, suffer from a lack of access to credit. Wealthy Latin Americans evade taxes and abandon public schools, leaving the poorly educated masses to labor in low-productivity jobs. Corruption among elites also discredits democratic systems. These outcomes fuel destructive, polarizing forms of populism that further undermine democratic institutions. As the book's subtitle warns, Latin America's illnesses could spread to other places, where inequalities of wealth and income are becoming more apparent. Although such claims appear plausible, Sánchez-Ancochea does not adequately explain the causal relationship between inequality and these negative political outcomes, and he avoids historical examples that might refute his ideological predilections. On the brighter side, the author cites positive examples of strong social movements and allied progressive political parties that have helped make societies more equal, even though shortsighted interventions or resurgent reactionaries have too often eroded those gains.

Going Viral: COVID-19 and the Accelerated Transformation of Jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean
BY GUILLERMO BEYLIS, ROBERTO FATTAL JAEF, MICHAEL MORRIS, ASHWINI REKHA SEBASTIAN, AND RISHABH SINHA. World Bank, 2020, 109 pp.

This study is a reminder of the abiding difficulty of predicting how technological innovations will affect the future shape of the workforce. The World Bank economists who wrote this report lament the "premature deindustrialization" of Latin America, where industrial employment as a share of total jobs declined before economies reached maturity. Meanwhile, the rapidly expanding service sector—a very broad grouping that includes the financial, accounting, retail trade, communications, sports and entertainment, hospitality, and tourism industries—is generally less productive than the manufacturing sector and offers workers lower wages and few benefits. The authors' central policy recommendations target the region's Achilles' heel: the enduring deficits in quality education and training for all age groups. The authors do point to some grounds for optimism, however. Jobs offshored from advanced economies are expanding (rather than hollowing out) positions for middle-skilled workers in places such as Mexico and the countries of Central America. And the emergence of digital platforms could empower Latin American workers to market their competitive skills and innovative products worldwide.

Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Republics

Maria Lipman

1837: Russia's Quiet Revolution
BY PAUL W. WERTH. Oxford University Press, 2021, 240 pp.

In Werth's view, 1837 was a pivotal year in Russian history, witnessing major developments in technology, art, and intellectual life that then unfolded over time and marked Russia's entry into the modern age. The year began with a symbolic and literal bang: in January, the great poet Aleksandr Pushkin was fatally wounded in a duel. After his death, Pushkin became a symbol of Russian national identity, still commonly referred to as "our everything" in both official and popular parlance. Elsewhere, Russia's first railroad opened. Tsar Nicholas I issued a decree allowing the publication of provincial newspapers, which played an important role in the subsequent growth and consolidation of the intelligentsia across the vast empire. The philosopher Pyotr Chaadayev wrote *Apology of a Madman*, which, along with his earlier, highly controversial work, set the terms of an essential (and ongoing) debate about whether Russia should strive to emulate Europe or follow its own path. Werth combines solid historical research with a lively and occasionally playful style that makes his book an entertaining read.

Substate Dictatorship: Networks, Loyalty, and Institutional Change in the Soviet Union
BY YORAM GORLIZKI AND OLEG KHLEVNIUK. Yale University Press, 2020, 464 pp.

In the second half of Joseph Stalin's rule, Gorlizki and Khlevniuk write, the Soviet leader became a "surprisingly disciplined delegator." He still presided over a regime built on fear and repression, but concerns about efficiency pushed him to accord his regional party leaders greater authority. In their rigorous academic study based on a vast collection of archival documents and memoirs, the authors trace the evolution of those territorial leaders from the late 1940s to the 1970s. This choice of time frame is unusual, as it cuts across Stalin's death, the removal of his successor Nikita Khrushchev, and the early years of Leonid Brezhnev's rule. To the authors, however, those three decades are united by one "outstanding feature": the gradual decline in acts of repression against members of the communist leadership. Stalin controlled local leaders through an array of institutional measures and occasional purges. Khrushchev also exercised tight controls, such as through political marginalization, but mostly dispensed with overt repression. The system opened up further under Brezhnev, who relied more on co-optation than exclusion, began to recruit regional leaders locally, and avoided the "unjustified turnover of cadres." The territorial party leaders in Stalin's time were "substate dictators," who built their own fiercely coercive systems of administration. Under Brezhnev, they became "party governors," who maintained standards of decorum in everyday conduct.

The Things of Life: Materiality in Late Soviet Russia
BY ALEXEY GOLUBEV. Cornell University Press, 2020, 240 pp.

Comradely Objects: Design and Material Culture in Soviet Russia, 1960s–80s
BY YULIA KARPOVA. Manchester University Press, 2020, 248 pp.

Two books explore the meaning and impact of material objects in the Soviet Union. Golubev's intriguing work closely follows a recent academic trend that focuses on how objects facilitate historical change. He delves into the significance of a number of everyday things and spaces, including scale models, the TV set, bodybuilders' dumbbells, and apartment building stairwells and basements, tracing their influence on Soviet attitudes and social practices. The scale models of ships and planes that children would build in youth centers emphasized the historical continuity of Russian and Soviet technological breakthroughs, implicitly undermining the official narrative of the Bolshevik Revolution's radical break from the prerevolutionary era. Iron weights were a key element in shaping what Soviet bodybuilders imagined to be the proper Soviet body and character. Although bodybuilding was not officially sanctioned until the late 1980s, bodybuilders sought to discipline, often by force, alternative, "non-Soviet" collections of youths, such as hippies or punks. At times, the author drifts away from his focus on materiality. In the chapter about the TV set, for instance, he dwells more on the social context of TV viewing and on specific TV shows than on the TV set itself as a material object.

Karpova's research into Soviet objects goes beyond the study of material culture and makes a great contribution to late Soviet intellectual history. After Stalin's death, the political thaw and the partial opening to the West resurrected debates, abandoned after the 1920s, about ways to make Soviet commodities a strong alternative to capitalist ones. Karpova's meticulous analysis includes grand projects, such as the construction and furnishing of the Palace of Pioneers in Moscow, a youth center she describes as iconic and emblematic of Khrushchev-era Soviet modernism; the 1960s design of everyday items, such as alarm clocks, refrigerators, and kitchenware; and the shift away from practical functionality toward objects charged with symbolic meaning. Intense artistic and philosophical debates accompanied the evolution of Soviet design. Karpova chronicles the transition from the functionalism of the Khrushchev era, which praised basic interiors and useful objects, to the more florid "neodecorativism" of the late 1960s, which emphasized a diversity of tastes and spirituality, and, later still, to a conceptual move away from objects and toward integrated and balanced environments in which objects and materials were well organized.

Tales From Russian Folklore
BY ALEXANDER AFANASYEV. TRANSLATED BY STEPHEN PIMENOFF. Alma Classics, 2020, 320 pp.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the ethnographer Afanasyev published around 600 Russian folktales—the world's largest academic collection of such texts. In Russia, these tales have long been considered classics of children's literature. Most of the texts selected for this volume are tales of wonder that contain remnants of pagan beliefs, such as nature spirits, miraculous transformations, returns from the dead, and poor but fearless heroes who must undergo many trials before winning the hearts of beautiful princesses. These tales don't always offer easy morals. The seemingly weak and silly may turn out to be the smartest and luckiest. Humility and hard work are commonly rewarded, but sometimes even laziness is a winning strategy; Emelya the Fool, for instance, owes his success to lying on the stove all day. The translator also includes animal tales, in which the wolf is strong but stupid, the hare is cowardly, and the cunning fox easily outsmarts everybody. A third type of stories, household tales, often show wily peasants or soldiers outwitting landlords or priests. Such impiety led the tsar's censors to ban many of Afanasyev's tales. Unfortunately, those censored tales don't appear in this volume.

Middle East

Lisa Anderson

Street Sounds: Listening to Everyday Life in Modern Egypt
BY ZIAD FAHMY. Stanford University Press, 2020, 312 pp.

Everyone who has ever been to Cairo notices the city's cacophony. This book is the story of that din. Working in the relatively new discipline of sensory history, Fahmy

presents a fascinating account of the accumulation of sounds in Egypt. In the late nineteenth century, older notes—the call to prayer issuing from mosques, the slap of sandals on pavements, the clack of dominoes and backgammon tiles on café tables, the yelling of peddlers hawking their wares—began to jostle with the noises of mechanical and electrified devices. Readers may be put off by the academic jargon (the author urges the abandonment of an "ocular-centric" view of the world), but wonderfully evocative descriptions and anecdotes leaven the book. Donkey carts clank, and bicycles whistle; loud jubilation and anguish mark weddings and funerals. The advent of electricity extended social hours and gave rise to a raucous nightlife that still spills onto the streets of Cairo. Radios and televisions would eventually blare from open windows and sidewalk cafés, as railway and tram whistles pierced the air. Finally, the flourish of the ubiquitous car horn punctuates the commotion, perfecting what residents know as "the Cairo Opera."

Graveyard of the Clerics: Everyday Activism in Saudi Arabia
BY PASCAL MENORET. Stanford University Press, 2020, 264 pp.

Typically, the smallest unit on the organizational chart of the Muslim Brotherhood is called a "family," a close-knit group of a dozen or so adherents. Menoret reveals that in Saudi Arabia, however, there is a smaller unit still: the "car," a group of four or five men who get together to drive around and debate piety and politics. In this fascinating account, Menoret shows that this famously despotic country has seen quite a lot of "everyday activism," and he links much of that activism's organization and ideology to the modernist urban planning of the last 50 years. Authorities decanted the populations of crowded cities into vast, new suburban housing tracts with modern conveniences, long straight streets, and wide sidewalks (unused, of course, in the hot local climate), in the hope that suburban living would depoliticize the citizenry. Instead, these suburbs have served to accentuate the alienation of generations of young people who have found it difficult to socialize and develop social networks outside their families. For several decades, Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, worked to fill the void, providing afterschool and summer camp programs. Today, government repression has restricted even these modest efforts at social mobilization, leaving the profoundly alienated youth of the kingdom with few places to turn.

Embodying Geopolitics: Generations of Women's Activism in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon
BY NICOLA PRATT. University of California Press, 2020, 328 pp.

In an era when they are increasingly in positions of power around the world, women leaders seem conspicuously absent in the Middle East. But as Pratt shows, at least some of the failure to see powerful women in the region is in the eye of the beholder: Western preconceptions often make women invisible. (A personal example: when I was appointed president of the American University in Cairo, the U.S. press announced that I was the first female university president in Egypt. In fact, I

was the third.) This volume, based on interviews with over 100 women activists in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, traces the involvement of women in political mobilization over the last 70 years. It is a compelling portrait of women working inside, outside, and against systems of power, often at considerable cost to their personal safety and security. Pratt ends on a pessimistic note, recounting the failures of the uprisings of the so-called Arab Spring to produce genuine change. Since her focus is on activists, this concern is understandable, but women in government also merit attention: in 2020, women held a quarter of Egypt's cabinet posts, on par with the United Kingdom and more than in the United States.

Citizenship and Its Discontents: The Struggle for Rights, Pluralism, and Inclusion in the Middle East
EDITED BY THANASSIS CAMBANIS AND MICHAEL WAHID HANNA.
Century Foundation, 2019, 480 pp.

In this sobering edited volume, Cambanis and Hanna showcase a broad spectrum of academics, analysts, and activists in serious and provocative reflection on the disheartening results of the so-called Arab Spring. Many of the contributors were participants in the movements across the Arab world that called for "bread, freedom, and social justice"; disappointment in their failure leaps out from virtually every page. Nor are the political theorists and historians sanguine about the future; for them, the recent movements were merely episodes in long-standing struggles. Less predictably bleak are the remarkable variety and inventiveness of what the editors call "experiments in practice" during and after the uprisings. For instance, a lawyer who advised governments in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen offers candid reflections on post-uprising constitutional reform. The founder of Egypt's most important independent news outlet perceptively explores journalism in the face of censorship. And a senior adviser to an Egyptian presidential candidate discusses the debilitating consequences of political stereotypes. The many contributions of this volume reveal that the fertile political debate sparked by the uprisings continues today.

The Sultan's Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging
BY ALMA RACHEL HECKMAN.
Stanford University Press, 2020, 344 pp.

Observers often imagine personal political identities in the Middle East as ancient, inevitable, and immutable. But the twentieth-century history of Morocco's Jewish Communists is a compelling testament to the contingency of such affiliations. Heckman focuses on the careers of five prominent members of the Moroccan Jewish community from the days of the French protectorate, in the early twentieth century, to the end of the reign of Hassan II, in 1999. These men had various allegiances and ties, including Muslim and Spanish in-laws; Algerian-born comrades; and deep attachments to the Jewish community, Moroccan nationalism, and international communism. And over the course of their lives, they dealt with dramatic changes in the political terrain, negotiating the patronage of the royal

court, the contempt of French colonial authorities, Vichy anti-Semitism, Zionist campaigning, and monarchical despotism after independence in 1956. Fluid and flexible political affiliations congealed into more fixed, confined identities later in the century. At the end of their lives, after most Moroccan Jews had emigrated to Israel and communism had been all but vanquished, these erstwhile agitators and activists were, as Heckman puts it, "commodified" and ceremoniously trotted out to visitors as putative evidence of Moroccan enlightenment and tolerance.

Asia and Pacific

Andrew J. Nathan

China's Gilded Age: The Paradox of Economic Boom and Vast Corruption
BY YUEN YUEN ANG. Cambridge University Press, 2020, 266 pp.

Economists often claim that corruption hurts an economy, but it frequently accompanies fast growth, as it did during the American Gilded Age and in China after the death of Mao Zedong. In a book that combines deep insight into how the Chinese system works with innovative research, Ang resolves the paradox by distinguishing between three kinds of corruption that are bad for growth and the one kind that is good. Prominent officials and ordinary bureaucrats stealing directly from the public coffers are two patterns that are bad for growth; so are the payoffs that low-level public servants demand in exchange for routine actions such as granting licenses or providing medical care. The one good kind is what Ang labels "access money," large bribes or favors given to high-level officials in exchange for land, contracts, or credit. These payoffs push the economy forward at a fast pace, although they also create longer-term problems, including inequality, debt, and excessive risk-taking. China has curtailed the bad kinds of corruption since the 1990s by routinizing payment and accounting methods, prosecuting officials who steal public funds, and rewarding officials for economic growth through fringe benefits paid out of slush funds, so they don't have to steal to share the benefits of prosperity. But access corruption has persisted, sustained by the pressure Beijing puts on local leaders to promote growth any way they can.

The War on the Uyghurs: China's Internal Campaign Against a Muslim Minority
BY SEAN R. ROBERTS. Princeton University Press, 2020, 328 pp.

Roberts, a leading expert on the predominantly Muslim Uighur minority in China, reports that the frighteningly effective Chinese campaign to eliminate Uighur culture that started with mass internments in 2017 has entered a new phase, with the transfer of much of the rural Uighur population into factory labor both in the western region of Xinjiang and throughout the country. The government is also sending Uighur children to Chinese-language boarding schools, destroying mosques and Muslim shrines, banning religious and cultural practices, and imprisoning

members of the Uighur cultural elite. These developments cap a long history of settler colonialism dating back to the mid-eighteenth century. In the 1980s, Chinese leaders considered integrating Xinjiang by tolerating its cultural diversity. But that path was soon abandoned, and after 2001, Beijing used Washington's declaration of a "war on terror" to justify repression in the region. Harsh Chinese policies have provoked some reactive violence from Uighurs and have driven what is estimated to be tens of thousands of them to join jihadis in Syria. Roberts provides fascinating new details on that relatively marginal phenomenon, revealing that organized Uighur militancy is almost entirely illusory. Beijing's policy of repressive assimilation has now reached such an intense stage that Roberts labels it "cultural genocide."

The Belt Road and Beyond: State-Mobilized Globalization in China, 1998–2018
BY MIN YE. Cambridge University Press, 2020, 240 pp.

Rivers of Iron: Railroads and Chinese Power in Southeast Asia
BY DAVID M. LAMPTON, SELINA HO, AND CHENG-CHWEE KUIK. University of California Press, 2020, 336 pp.

Two books explore different dimensions of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's vast infrastructure and investment project. Ye compares the BRI, which started in 2013, with two previous programs: the Western Development Program, which was initiated in 1999 and directed funds and expertise from China's coastal provinces to the interior, and the Go Global policy, an initiative started in 2000 that encouraged Chinese investment overseas. She discerns a common pattern. When a leader faces a national economic slowdown, he announces a program that is both "ambitious and ambiguous" in order to mobilize enterprises and government entities to invest more boldly. State-owned enterprises, ministries, and local governments scramble to fit what they are already doing or want to do under the new initiative's umbrella and to secure authorizations, incentives, and financing. In this context, she says, "almost anybody was allowed to do almost anything." The central government's initiatives have led in each case to a burst of activity that strengthened subnational entities while diminishing the ability of Beijing to control these disparate actors. Despite their messiness, the programs succeeded in their ultimate goal: they kept the Chinese economy humming along and, in so doing, deepened China's integration into the global economy.

Lampton and his colleagues study the surge of Chinese investment from the other end, as they examine Chinese railway projects in seven countries in Southeast Asia. Beijing has grandly envisioned what will be the Pan-Asia Railway Network, which it plans to have run from Kunming, in China, through Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia, to Singapore, with branches reaching into Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. This vision has not been—and will not be—easy to implement. Southeast Asian politicians, ministries, and interest groups disagree about financing, Chinese dominance, and the distribution of harms and benefits along the rail lines. These struggles often lead to the suspension or renegotiation of projects even after construction has

started. Although the effort is fragmented, the authors believe the network will ultimately be built, that it will spur revolutionary growth in Southeast Asia, and that it will tie the region ever more closely to China.

Revolution Goes East: Imperial Japan and Soviet Communism
BY TATIANA LINKHOEVA. Cornell University Press, 2020, 300 pp.

Arbiters of Patriotism: Right-Wing Scholars in Imperial Japan
BY JOHN PERSON. University of Hawaii Press, 2020, 226 pp.

Pearl Harbor: Japan's Attack and America's Entry Into World War II
BY TAKUMA MELBER. TRANSLATED BY NICK SOMERS. Polity Press, 2020, 200 pp.

Three new books delve into how Japanese politicians, military officers, and academics navigated the tumultuous transformations of the interwar period: their country's rapid modernization, the revolution in Russia, the rise of Asian communist and anticolonial movements, and the efforts of American and European imperial powers to contain Japanese influence in Asia. Linkhoeva explores the many ways in which Japanese thinkers of the 1920s understood the Russian Revolution. Labor leaders and leftist social scientists adopted Marxism as a framework to analyze industrialized Japan's newly emerging class system. Anarchists emulated the tactics of Russian radicals to engage in assassinations and other acts of violence. Members of the new Japanese Communist Party debated whether Japan could make a direct transition to communism or had to first pass through a stage of bourgeois democracy. A group of self-labeled "national socialists" saw Russia's experience as an example of state-led national strengthening that Japan should follow. Some among the government and military elites saw the new Soviet regime as a potential ally in expelling American and European powers from Asia, whereas others perceived Soviet communism as a threat to stability at home and to the empire abroad. When the Diet adopted universal manhood suffrage in 1925, it also passed a law, grounded in loyalty to the emperor, that criminalized any leftist attempt to alter the "national polity."

Person picks up the story in the 1930s with a philosophy professor and magazine publisher named Muneki Minoda, who attacked Marxist and liberal academics for not accepting the absolute primacy of the emperor and the complete subordination of the individual to the nation. Person probes the diverse roots in contemporary German and Buddhist philosophy of Minoda's mystical theory of "Japanism," which made the philosopher "the most feared right-wing polemicist of the 1930s." Many of the scholars he targeted were physically assaulted by radical nationalists; others were fired, resigned, or went silent. Minoda's polemics contributed to the ascension of a fanatical nationalism that blocked discussion of any foreign policy option other than war. Because of rising right-wing violence against government officials deemed insufficiently patriotic, the authorities brought Minoda and other radical nationalists under police surveillance and eventually forced his magazine out of business.

Melber offers a fresh, dramatic account of events in 1941, when Japan headed into a war with the United States that

most Japanese policymakers knew their country was not likely to win. Up to two days before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese ambassador to the United States, Kichisaburo Nomura, was trying to explain to U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull why the U.S. embargo on oil exports to Japan would provoke an unnecessary war. The chief of staff of Japan's navy warned Emperor Hirohito that a protracted conflict offered no guarantee of victory. The official in charge of the attack, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, had long argued that Japan would lose a war with the better-resourced United States. But when the cabinet decided on war, Yamamoto developed a brilliant attack plan and executed it nearly flawlessly, in maneuvers that Melber describes in engrossing detail. Readers know how the story ends, but Melber's just-the-facts narrative re-creates the tension of the events as they were lived.

Africa

Nicolas van de Walle

These Are Not Gentle People: Two Dead Men. Forty Suspects. The Trial That Broke a Small South African Town
BY ANDREW HARDING. MacLehose Press, 2020, 288 pp.

This disturbing narrative relates the 2016 deaths of two Black laborers at the hands of several dozen white farmers and the flawed, three-year trial that subsequently took place in a small town an hour and a half from Johannesburg. Harding is an unintrusive narrator and allows the rich cast of characters to tell their own versions of the story. The details of their accounts accumulate inexorably into a searing indictment of contemporary South Africa. The casual racism of the farmers and the miserable precariousness of their Black employees are depressingly familiar, as are the divisions and resentments between Black and white communities three decades after the end of apartheid. The only thing that seems to unite South Africans is pessimism about the future. Harding's story also delivers a devastating verdict on the country's institutions. The leading South African political parties lurked in the background of the trial, eager to score points from the proceedings with populist demagoguery. No one involved in the case trusted the police or the justice system to do the right thing. And incompetence permeated all state agencies: the assaulted laborers were allowed to die after waiting for hours without treatment, an indignity compounded by the fact that the coroner, the lawyers, and the judge consistently confused the identities of the two victims during the trial.

African Europeans: An Untold History
BY OLIVETTE OTELE. Basic Books, 2021, 304 pp.

In a sweeping history extending from the classical world to the twentieth century, Otele masterfully analyzes the changing relationship between Africa and Europe through the lives of individual Africans who in some manner dealt with Europeans. She shows that notions of race and racial difference were relatively fluid until the seventeenth

century. In the Mediterranean world, in particular, religious difference was often more of a dividing line than skin color, and Africans rose to prominent positions in Europe. Otele describes the careers of men such as Lucius Septimius Severus, a second-century Roman emperor from Libya, and Alessandro de' Medici, probably the son of an African servant in the powerful Medici household in Florence, who became the duke of that Italian city in 1531. Otele argues convincingly that the hardening of racist European views about Africans was the inevitable result of the Atlantic slave trade and the subsequent colonial occupation of the continent. But even in this more recent hate-filled period, Otele finds examples of Africans or people of African descent who achieved prominence in Europe against the odds.

Political Violence in Kenya: Land, Elections, and Claim-Making
BY KATHLEEN KLAUS. Cambridge University Press, 2020, 372 pp.

Political violence has ebbed and flowed throughout Kenya's postcolonial history, often taking place around elections. And some regions of the country have proved much more violent than others. Klaus's superb study presents an overarching explanation for these outbreaks of bloodshed in the country. Other theories of political violence in Kenya have focused on weak institutions and the grievances of citizens but remain vague about the actual mechanisms that precipitate carnage. Klaus's extensive fieldwork has allowed her to illuminate the underpinnings of this violence. She argues that specific ethnic groups have unequal access to land and to property rights and develop the sense of being wronged by other groups. Local elites exploit these resentments for their own particular political ends, often leading to explosive violence. Curiously, her study shows that violence is more likely where unequal access is in fact not particularly high but where a local patron with political ambitions can stoke people's dissatisfaction with the electoral process.

The Delusion of Knowledge Transfer: The Impact of Foreign Aid Experts on Policymaking in South Africa and Tanzania
BY SUSANNE KOCH AND PETER WEINGART. Saint Philip Street Press, 2020, 396 pp.

The use of foreign experts to provide technical assistance and "knowledge transfer" to low-income countries has long been criticized as an ineffective form of foreign aid. Based on careful case studies in South Africa and Tanzania, Koch and Weingart examine the recent record. Their critique is pretty withering even as they accept that these experts—engineers, economists, agronomists, and public policy analysts—harbor good intentions. Foreign experts struggle to help poorer countries build local capacities; worse still, expert advice tends to advance the agendas of big donors at the expense of domestic control over policy. In a sharp chapter on the education sector in Tanzania, the authors show that the interests of donors often superseded those of Tanzanians themselves. Disappointingly, they propose no specific reforms beyond vague suggestions to devote more funding to capacity building, albeit without foreign experts. Their exhaustive analysis offers no evidence that such aid would be more effective.

What Britain Did to Nigeria: A Short History of Conquest and Rule
BY MAX SIOLLUN. Hurst, 2021, 408 pp.

In this readable history of British colonialism in Nigeria, Siollun traces a broad arc from the first links between British explorers and various West African precolonial states, in the sixteenth century, to Nigerian independence, in 1960, sketching a series of fascinating episodes and characters along the way. Several excellent chapters cover the growth of British economic interests in the area during the nineteenth century, notably through the efforts of the mercantile National African Company. This increasing involvement in the region would lead to the establishment of two separate British protectorates, one in the south and one in the north, in 1900 and 1903, respectively. Siollun's evenhanded assessment of the roughly 60 years of colonial rule that followed is also absorbing, particularly his description of Nigerian resistance to the various injustices and humiliations inflicted by the British. Siollun concludes with what he calls "the mistake of 1914": his view that the British resolution to join their northern and southern protectorates into one poorly integrated colony constitutes the single most consequential decision of colonial rule in Nigeria. Ever since, the north-south divide has dominated the politics of independent Nigeria.

FOR THE RECORD

The article "The Crisis Opportunity" (January/February 2021) misstated the month in which the number of unemployed Americans who were temporarily laid off had fallen to nearly three million. It was October 2020, not September.

Foreign Affairs (ISSN 00157120), March/April 2021, Volume 100, Number 2. Published six times annually (January, March, May, July, September, November) at 58 East 68th Street, New York, NY 10065. Print subscriptions: U.S., $54.95; Canada, $66.95; other countries via air, $89.95 per year. Canadian Publication Mail–Mail # 1572121. Periodicals postage paid in New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Foreign Affairs*, P.O. Box 324, Congers, NY 10920. From time to time, we permit certain carefully screened companies to send our subscribers information about products or services that we believe will be of interest. If you prefer not to receive such information, please contact us at the Congers, NY, address indicated above.

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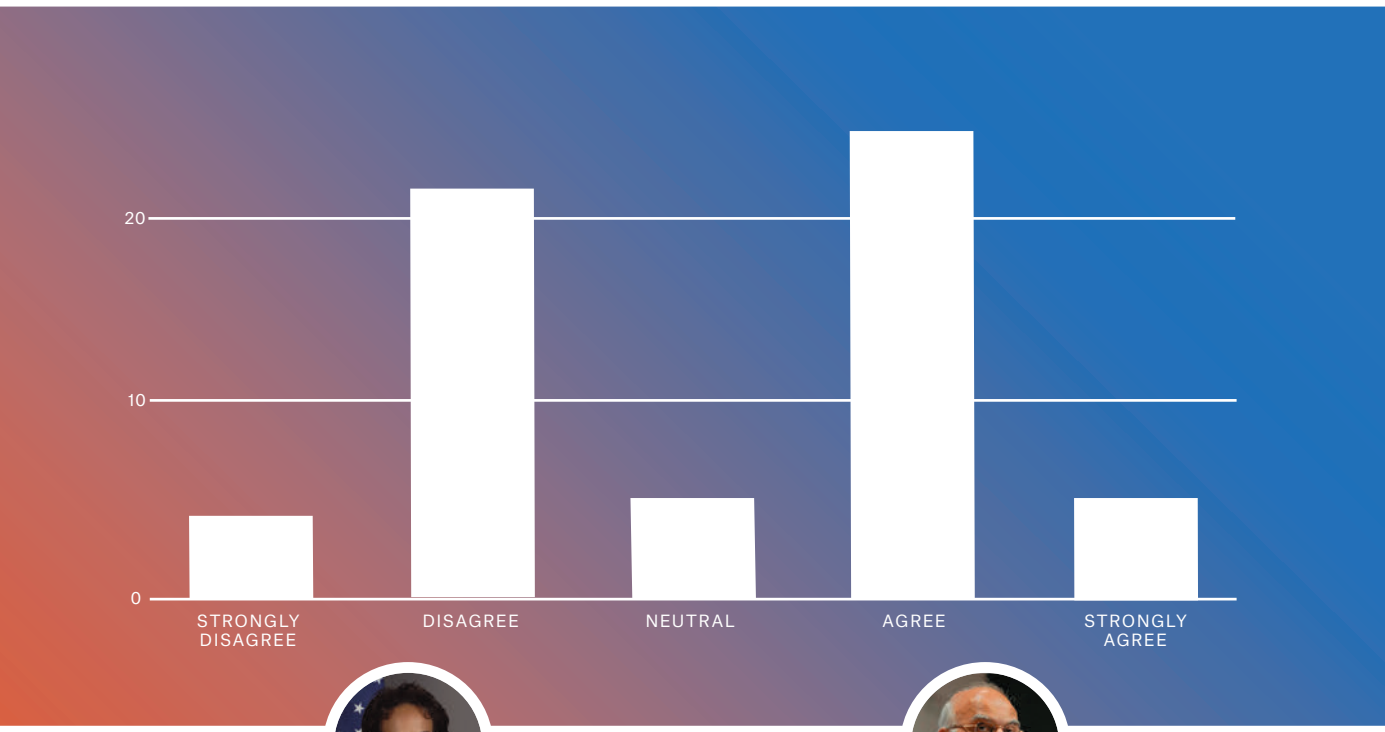

DISAGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 9

Bisa Williams

Former U.S. Ambassador to Niger

"Few things are irrevocable. The Biden administration will be challenged to articulate and practice a domestic and foreign policy that truly reflect the ideals upon which the nation was founded. Some governments might rebuff our efforts, but America's appeal has always been among the common people. If we meet the challenge of this moment, I don't expect that to change."

AGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 8

Shivshankar Menon

Visiting Professor, Ashoka University, and former Indian National Security Adviser

"Trump has changed U.S. foreign policy because the world now sees the United States differently, and because the world has gotten used to a less predictable and engaged America. The United States will therefore have to behave differently abroad."

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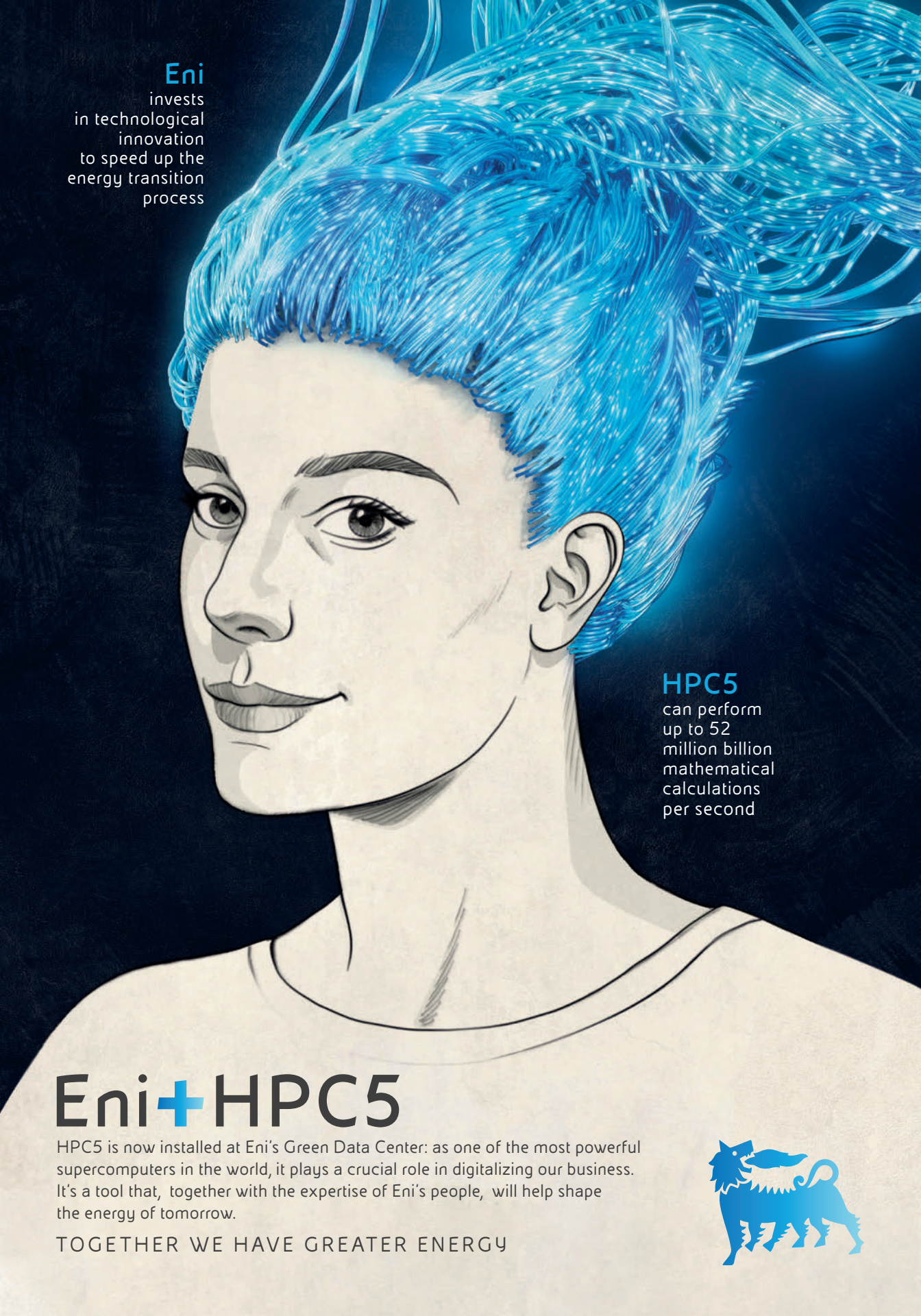
SCHOLARS + PRACTITIONERS: (top row) Arne Westad, Asha Rangappa, John Kerry, Harry Thomas; (bottom row) Emma Sky, Stan McChrystal, Frances Rosenbluth, Sigrídur Benediktsdottir



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