FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MAY/JUNE 2019 • VOLUME 98 • NUMBER 3 • SEARCHING FOR A STRATEGY

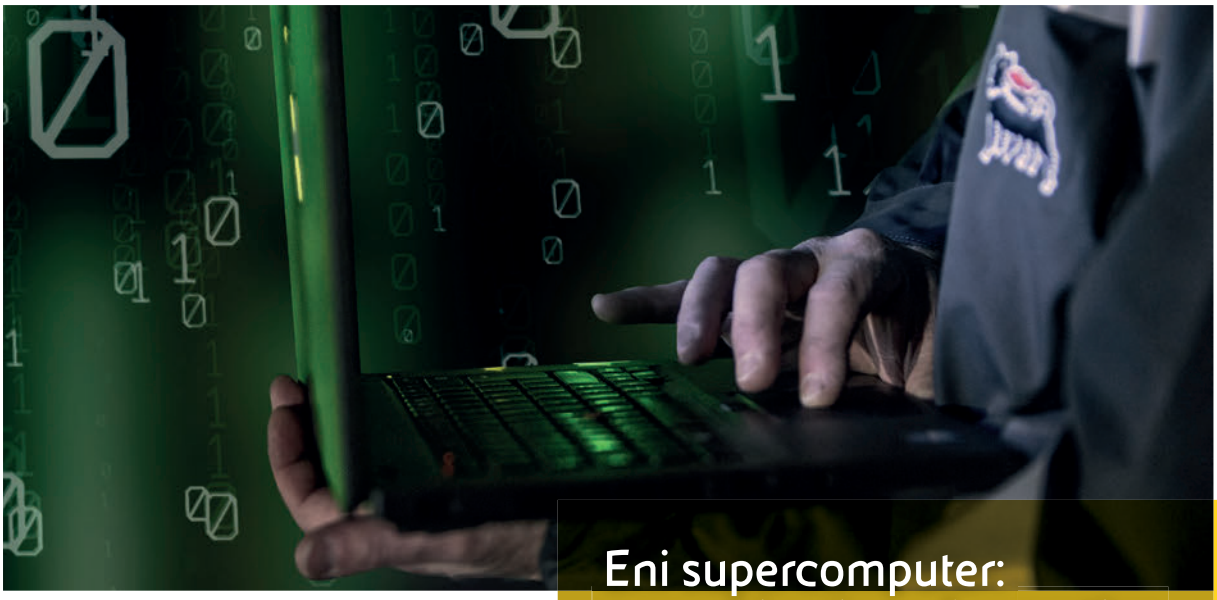
GEORGE PACKER ON AMERICA'S LONG WARS

MAY/JUNE 2019

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SEARCHING FOR A STRATEGY

FOREIGNAFFAIRS.COM



Eni supercomputer: a combination of expertise and computing power.

At Eni's Green Data Center, HPC4 is fully operational. It is one of the world's most powerful supercomputers, capable of performing up to 22.4 million billion mathematical operations per second when combined with existing operational systems. Thanks to the skills of our people and Eni's proprietary algorithms, it makes our day-to-day activities safer, faster and more efficient.

The energy to see
and the energy to do.

eni

DOWNLOAD

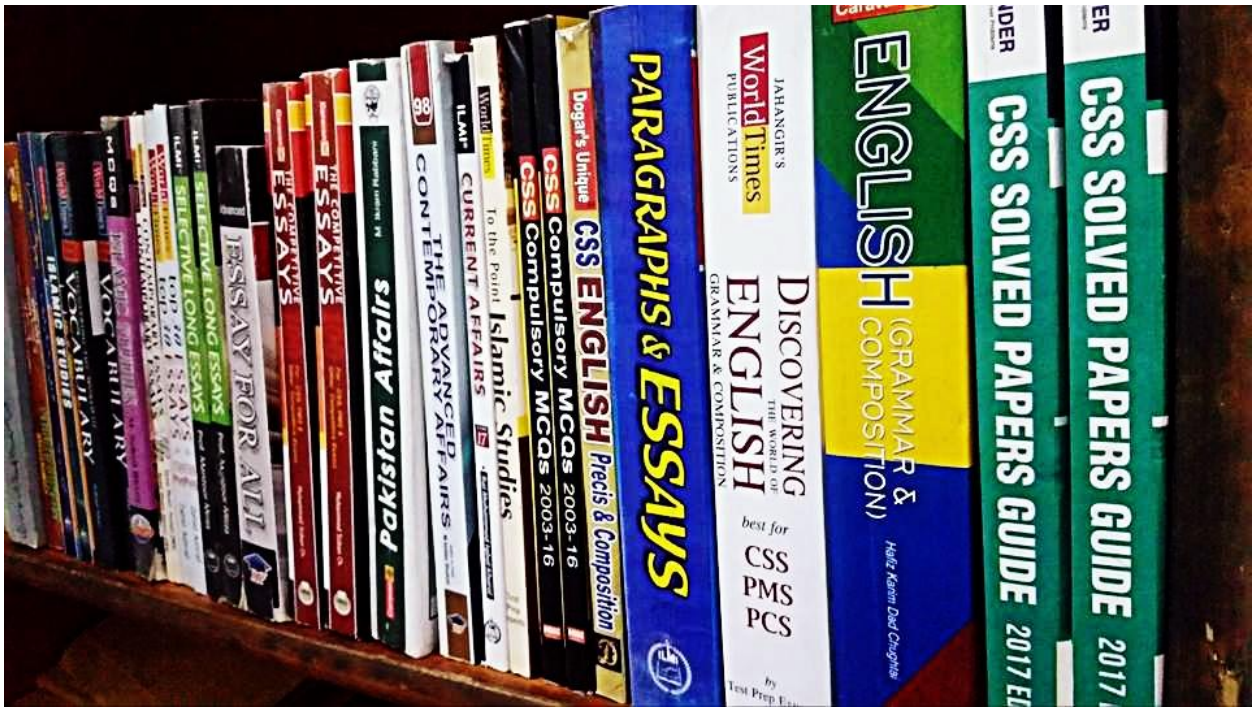
CSS Notes, Books, MCQs, Magazines

WWW.THECSSPOINT.COM

- **Download CSS Notes**
- **Download CSS Books**
- **Download CSS Magazines**
- **Download CSS MCQs**
- **Download CSS Past Papers**

The CSS Point, Pakistan's The Best Online FREE Web source for All CSS Aspirants.

Email: info@thecsspoint.com



BUY CSS / PMS / NTS & GENERAL KNOWLEDGE BOOKS ONLINE **CASH ON DELIVERY** ALL OVER PAKISTAN

Visit Now:

WWW.CSSBOOKS.NET

For Oder & Inquiry

Call/SMS/WhatsApp

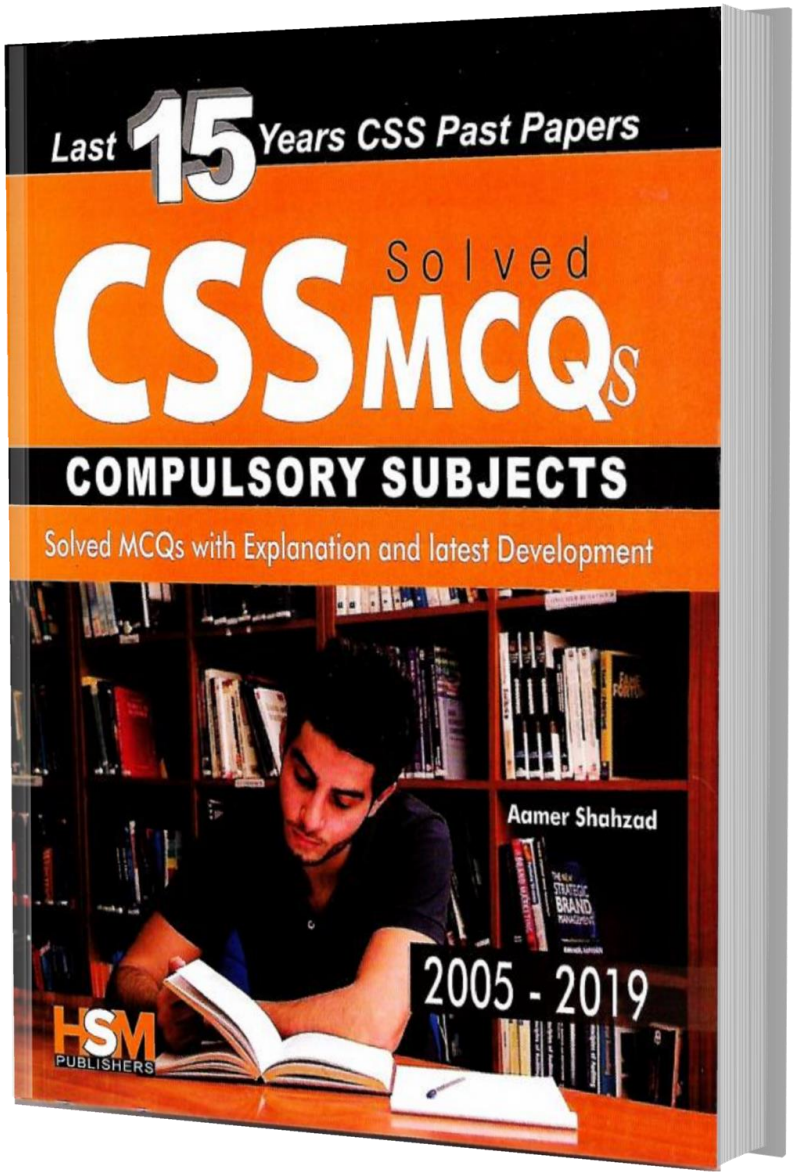
0333 6042057 – 0726 540316

CSS Solved Compulsory MCQs from 2005 to 2019

By HSM Publishers

Latest and Updated Edition

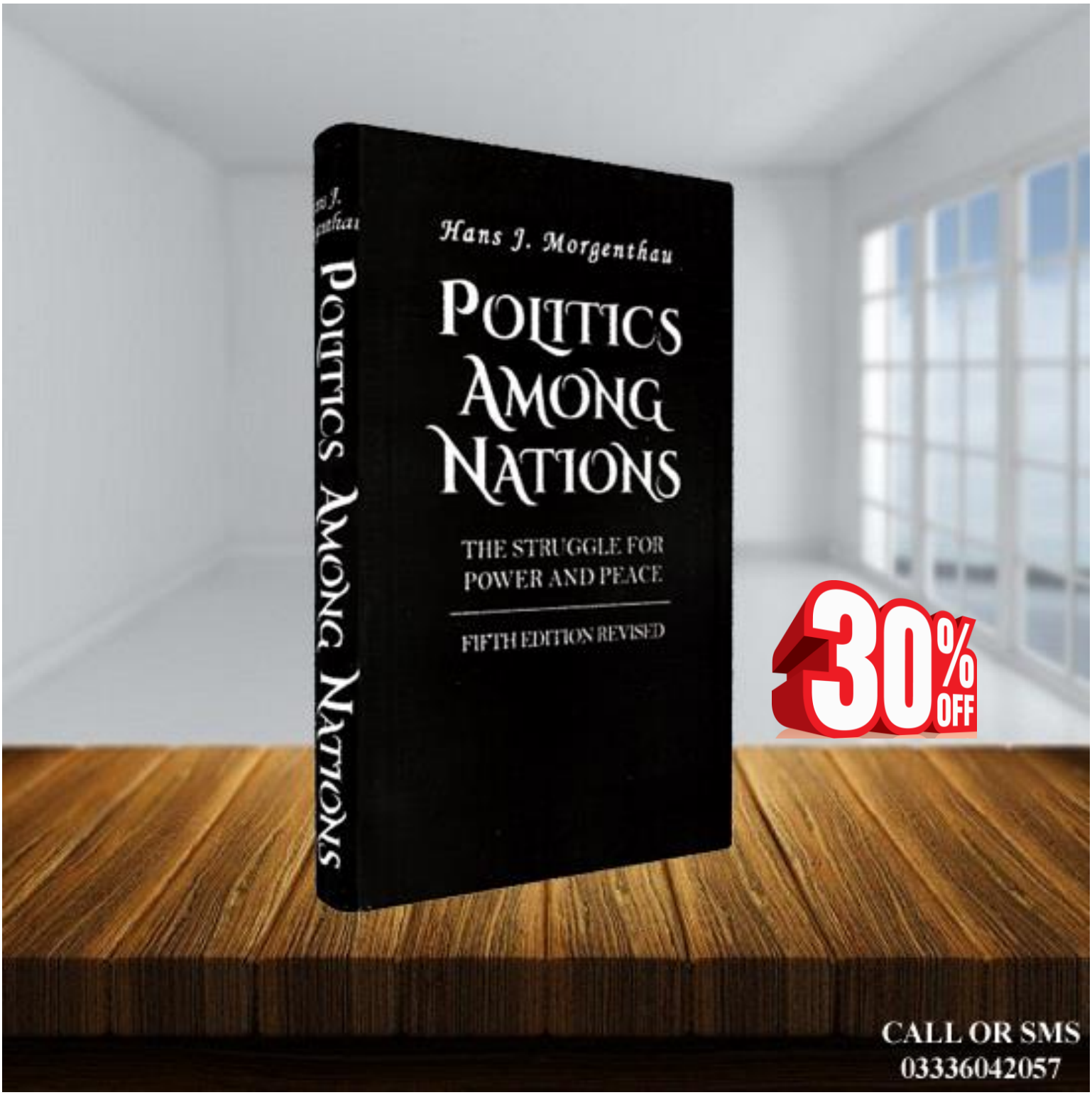
Order Now



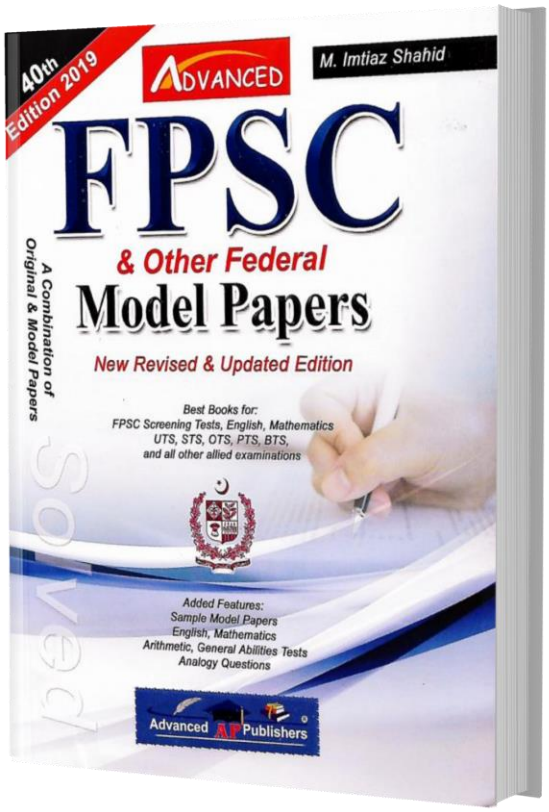
Call/SMS 03336042057

Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power & Peace
By Hans Morgenthau

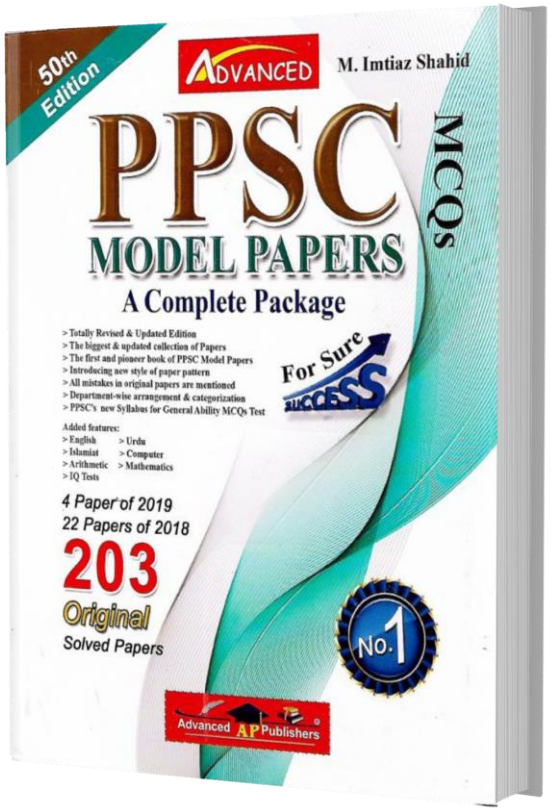
Order Now



FPSC Model Papers 40th Edition



PPSC Model Papers 50th Edition



For Online Order Please Call/SMS 03336042057 – 0726540141

Visit https://cssbooks.net

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Volume 98, Number 3

SEARCHING FOR A STRATEGY

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY THE HEADS OF STATE

May/June 2019

ADVANCING YOUR *CAREER*, ADVANCING OUR *WORLD*

Scripps Pier at UC San Diego

Discover our degrees in International Affairs & Public Policy

The UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy provides analytical training for the next generation of policymakers, using the latest science and technology to solve the world's greatest challenges.

30 YEARS School of GLOBAL POLICY & STRATEGY

gps.ucsd.edu

UC San Diego

ESSAYS

ON FOREIGNAFFAIRS.COM

- **Elizabeth Economy** on the problem with Xi Jinping's China model.
- **Tom Nichols** on U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty.
- **Barnett Rubin** on the best way to end the war in Afghanistan.

Your Opinion, and

Your Views on Issues

Affecting Asia and the World

global-*is*-asian

言
(yán)
1. speech, 2. speak, say.

Global-*is*-Asian is the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy's flagship digital platform focusing on policy issues affecting Asia and the world. Backed by research and grounded in practitioners' experience, our content aims to shape global thinking and steer meaningful conversations on Asian policy issues, especially among policymakers and fellow academics. Do you want your content read by a community with similar interests? Send us an email to ask for more details at **globalisasian@nus.edu.sg**.

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

NUS National University of Singapore

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

"Foreign Affairs . . . *will tolerate wide differences of opinion. Its articles will not represent any consensus of beliefs. What is demanded of them is that they shall be competent and well informed, representing honest opinions seriously held and convincingly expressed. . . . It does not accept responsibility for the views in any articles, signed or unsigned, which appear in its pages. What it does accept is the responsibility for giving them a chance to appear.*"

Archibald Cary Coolidge, Founding Editor
Volume 1, Number 1 • September 1922

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

May/June 2019 · Volume 98, Number 3

Published by the Council on Foreign Relations

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES:
ForeignAffairs.com/services
TELEPHONE:
800-829-5539 U.S./Canada
845-267-2017 All other countries
EMAIL: foreignaffairs@cambeywest.com
MAIL: P.O. Box 324, Congers, NY 10920

Foreign Affairs
58 E. 68th Street, New York, NY 10065
ADVERTISING: Call Edward Walsh at 212-434-9527 or visit www.foreignaffairs.com/advertising
WEB SITE: ForeignAffairs.com
NEWSLETTERS: ForeignAffairs.com/newsletters
FACEBOOK: Facebook.com/ForeignAffairs

Foreign Affairs is a member of the Alliance for Audited Media and the Association of Magazine Media.
GST Number 127686483RT
Canada Post Customer #4015177 Publication #40035310

CONTRIBUTORS

As an undergraduate at Stanford University, **KORI SCHAKE** dreamed of completing a Ph.D. on the revival of the Latin American novel. But swayed by her professor and future boss Condoleezza Rice, she instead became a leading U.S. foreign policy expert, with stints at the Pentagon, the National Security Council, and the State Department. In "Back to Basics" (page 36), Schake, now deputy director general of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, in London, outlines a U.S. foreign policy for a time after President Donald Trump.

One of the United States' leading journalists, **GEORGE PACKER** has written on American politics and foreign policy for three decades. A staff writer at *The Atlantic*, Packer is the author of numerous books, including *The Unwinding*, for which he won the National Book Award in 2013. In "The Longest Wars" (page 46), Packer tells the story of Richard Holbrooke's efforts to end two American wars: the Vietnam War, as a young diplomat, and the war in Afghanistan, as a senior statesman.

In 2013, **BRETT McGURK** became one of the first U.S. officials to warn about the threat from the Islamic State. Then, in 2015, President Barack Obama tapped him to lead the global campaign to defeat it, a post from which he resigned last year over President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria. McGurk argues in "Hard Truths in Syria" (page 69) that Washington must bring its objectives in Syria in line with its means.

Before retiring from the U.S. Foreign Service in 2014, **WILLIAM BURNS** was the highest-ranking career diplomat in the U.S. government. Burns was first posted to Amman, Jordan, and went on to serve in five presidential administrations, including as ambassador to Russia and as deputy secretary of state. Today, he is president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In "The Lost Art of American Diplomacy" (page 98), Burns lays out where American diplomacy went wrong and how it can get back on track.

SEARCHING FOR A STRATEGY

This package has the feel of an intervention—a group attempt to deliver a sobering message to someone in real trouble who refuses to admit it.

Daniel Drezner explains why we are all here. The time has come to face facts. American hegemony is not coming back, at least not in a form recognizable to those who knew it when. (Talleyrand said that only those who came of age before the revolution could understand how sweet life could be.) U.S. hard power is in relative decline, U.S. soft power has taken a huge hit, and from now on, American foreign policy is likely to be a plaything kicked around in the nursery of American domestic politics. So the managers of the empire need to wake up. Things have to change.

Mira Rapp-Hooper and Rebecca Friedman Lissner then offer some tough love. Washington has to abandon its post–Cold War fantasies of liberalism marching inexorably forward to certain global triumph. It should temper its ambitions, lower its sights, and focus on promoting freedom and openness within the international system where it can.

Stephen Walt can't resist gloating. Realists have been warning about overreach for a generation, but nobody listened. Now the warnings seem prescient. And frankly, the loss of hegemony shouldn't be mourned, because it was never the right strategy for the country anyway. Offshore balancing always made more sense than global domination, even when the United States could afford to try the latter. Now it can't, so the choice should be obvious.

Kori Schake closes on a more supportive note. The situation may not be as irreversibly dire as all of this suggests. There's still a chance for the United States to regain its footing, shore up the liberal international order, and get the world back on track. But it's only a chance, and even that has to start with an honest assessment of just how bad things have gotten.

Interventions are never pleasant. But sometimes the message gets through. And the first step is acknowledging the problem.

—Gideon Rose, Editor

ILLUSTRATION BY THE HEADS OF STATE

This Time Is Different

Why U.S. Foreign Policy Will Never Recover

Daniel W. Drezner

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a foreign policy community in possession of great power must be in want of peace of mind. Climate change, the Middle East, terrorism, trade, nonproliferation—there is never a shortage of issues and areas for those who work in international relations to fret about. If you were to flip through the back issues of *Foreign Affairs*, you would find very few essays proclaiming that policymakers had permanently sorted out a problem. Even after the Cold War ended peacefully, these pages were full of heated debate about civilizations clashing.

It is therefore all too easy to dismiss the current angst over U.S. President Donald Trump as the latest hymn from the Church of Perpetual Worry. This is hardly the first time observers have questioned the viability of a U.S.-led global order. The peril to the West was never greater than when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik—until U.S. President Richard Nixon ended the Bretton Woods system. The oil shocks of the 1970s posed a grave threat to the liberal international order—but then came the explosion of the U.S. budget and trade deficits in the 1980s. The perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks seemed like an existential threat to the system—until the 2008 financial crisis. Now there is Trump. It is worth asking, then, whether the current fretting is anything new. For decades, the sky has refused to fall.

But this time really is different. Just when many of the sources of American power are ebbing, many of the guardrails that have kept U.S. foreign policy on track have been worn down. It is tempting to pin this degradation on Trump and his retrograde foreign policy views, but the erosion predated him by a good long while. Shifts in the way Americans debate and conduct foreign policy will make it much more difficult to right the ship in the near future. Foreign policy discourse was the last preserve of bipartisanship, but political polarization has irradiated that marketplace of ideas. Although future presidents will try to restore the classical version of U.S. foreign policy, in all likelihood, it cannot be revived.

The American foundations undergirding the liberal international order are in grave danger, and it is no longer possible to take the pillars of that order for granted. Think of the current moment as a game of Jenga in which multiple pieces have been removed but the tower still stands. As a result, some observers have concluded that the structure remains sturdy. But in fact, it is lacking many important parts and, on closer inspection, is teetering ever so slightly. Like a Jenga tower, the order will continue to stand upright—right until the moment it collapses. Every effort should be made to preserve the liberal international order, but it is also time to

DANIEL W. DREZNER is Professor of International Politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and a regular contributor to *The Washington Post*.

Confidence man: Trump aboard Air Force One in Maryland, October 2018

start thinking about what might come after its end.

The gravity of the problem is dawning on some members of the foreign policy community. Progressives are debating among themselves whether and how they should promote liberal values abroad if they should return to power. Conservatives are agonizing over whether the populist moment represents a permanent shift in the way they should think about U.S. foreign policy. Neither camp is really grappling with the end of equilibrium, however. The question is not what U.S. foreign policy can do after Trump. The question is whether there is any viable grand strategy that can endure past an election cycle.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

In foreign policy, failures garner more attention than successes. During the Cold War, the "loss of China," the rise of the Berlin Wall, the Vietnam War, the energy crisis, and the Iran hostage crisis all overshadowed the persistently effective grand strategy of containment. Only once the Soviet Union broke up peacefully was the United States' Cold War foreign policy viewed as an overarching success. Since then, the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, along with the 2008 financial crisis and the rise of populism, have dominated the discussion. It is all too easy to conclude that the United States' recent foreign policy has been an unmitigated disaster.

At the same time that all these negative developments were taking place, however, underlying trends were moving in a more U.S.-friendly direction. The number of interstate wars and civil wars was falling dramatically, as was every other metric of international violence. Democracy was spreading, liberating masses of people from

PETE MAROVICH / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

tyranny. Globalization was accelerating, slashing extreme poverty. The United States could take a great deal of credit for these gains, because the liberal order it nurtured and expanded had laid the foundations for decades of relative peace and prosperity.

Washington made mistakes, of course, such as invading Iraq and forcing countries to remove restrictions on the flow of capital across their borders. As misguided as these errors were, and as much as they alienated allies in the moment, they did not permanently weaken the United States' position in the world. U.S. soft power suffered in the short term but recovered quickly under the Obama administration. The United States still managed to attract allies, and in the case of the 2011 intervention in Libya, it was NATO allies begging Washington to use force, not vice versa. Today, the United States has more treaty allies than any other country in the world—more, in fact, than any country ever.

The United States was able to weather the occasional misstep in large part because its dominance rested on such sturdy foundations. Its geographic blessings are ample: bountiful natural resources, two large oceans to the east and the west, and two valued partners to the north and the south. The country has been so powerful for so long that many of its capabilities seem to be fundamental constants of the universe rather than happenstance. The United States has had the most powerful military in the world since 1945, and its economy, as measured by purchasing power parity, became the biggest around 1870. Few people writing today about international affairs can remember a time when the United States was not the richest and most powerful country.

Long-term hegemony only further embedded the United States' advantage. In constructing the liberal international order, Washington created an array of multilateral institutions, from the UN Security Council to the World Bank, that privileged it and key allies. Having global rules of the game benefits everyone, but the content of those rules benefited the United States in particular. The Internet began as an outgrowth of a U.S. Department of Defense initiative, providing to the United States an outsize role in its governance. American higher education attracts the best of the best from across the world, as do Silicon Valley and Hollywood, adding billions of dollars to the U.S. economy. An immigrant culture has constantly replenished the country's demographic strength, helping the United States avoid the aging problems that plague parts of Europe and the Pacific Rim.

The United States has also benefited greatly from its financial dominance. The U.S. dollar replaced the British pound sterling as the world's reserve currency 75 years ago, giving the United States the deepest and most liquid capital markets on the globe and enhancing the reach and efficacy of its economic statecraft. In recent decades, Washington's financial might has only grown. Even though the 2008 financial crisis began in the American housing market, the end result was that the United States became more, rather than less, central to global capital markets. U.S. capital markets proved to be deeper, more liquid, and better regulated than anyone else's. And even though many economists once lost sleep over the country's growing budget

deficits, that has turned out to be a non-crisis. Many now argue that the U.S. economy has a higher tolerance for public debt than previously thought.

Diplomatically, all these endowments ensured that regardless of the issue at hand, the United States was always viewed as a reliable leader. Its dense and enduring network of alliances and partnerships signaled that the commitments Washington made were seen as credible. American hegemony bred resentment in some parts of the globe, but even great-power rivals trusted what the United States said in international negotiations.

At the same time as the international system cemented the United States' structural power, the country's domestic politics helped preserve a stable foreign policy. A key dynamic was the push and pull between different schools of thought. An equilibrium was maintained—between those who wanted the country to adopt a more interventionist posture and those who wanted to husband national power, between those who preferred multilateral approaches and those who preferred unilateral ones. When one camp overreached, others would seize on the mistake to call for a course correction. Advocates of restraint invoked the excesses of Iraq to push for retrenchment. Supporters of intervention pointed to the implosion of Syria to argue for a more robust posture.

Thanks to the separation of powers within the U.S. government, no one foreign policy camp could accrue too much influence. When the Nixon White House pursued a strictly realpolitik approach toward the Soviet Union, Congress forced human rights concerns onto the agenda. When the Obama administration was leery of sanctioning Iran's central bank, congressional hawks forced it to take more aggressive action. Time and time again, U.S. foreign policy reverted to the mean. Overreaching was eventually followed by restraint. Buck-passing led to leading. The results of these crosscutting pressures were far from perfect, but they ensured that U.S. foreign policy did not deviate too far from the status quo. Past commitments remained credible into the future.

For decades, these dynamics, global and domestic, kept crises from becoming cataclysmic. U.S. foreign policy kept swinging back into equilibrium. So what has changed? Today, there is no more equilibrium, and the structural pillars of American power are starting to buckle.

THE NEW NORMAL

Despite the remarkable consistency of U.S. foreign policy, behind the scenes, some elements of American power were starting to decline. As measured by purchasing power parity, the United States stopped being the largest economy in the world a few years ago. Its command of the global commons has weakened as China's and Russia's asymmetric capabilities have improved. The accumulation of "forever wars" and low-intensity conflicts has taxed the United States' armed forces.

Outward consistency also masked the dysfunction that was afflicting the domestic checks on U.S. foreign policy. For starters, public opinion has ceased to act as a real constraint on decision-makers. Paradoxically, the very things that have ensured U.S. national security—geographic isolation and overwhelming power—have also led most Americans to not think about foreign policy, and

rationally so. The trend began with the switch to an all-volunteer military, in 1973, which allowed most of the public to stop caring about vital questions of war and peace. The apathy has only grown since the end of the Cold War, and today, poll after poll reveals that Americans rarely, if ever, base their vote on foreign policy considerations.

The marketplace of ideas has broken down, too. The barriers to entry for harebrained foreign policy schemes have fallen away as Americans' trust in experts has eroded. Today, the United States is in the midst of a debate about whether a wall along its southern border should be made of concrete, have see-through slats, or be solar-powered. The ability of experts to kill bad ideas isn't what it used to be. The cognoscenti might believe that their informed opinions can steady the hands of successive administrations, but they are operating in hostile territory.

To be fair, the hostility to foreign policy experts is not without cause. The interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya were massive screwups. Despite what the experts predicted, globalization has not transformed China into a Jeffersonian democracy. The supposedly infallible advice enshrined in the Washington consensus ended up triggering multiple financial crises. Economists and foreign affairs advisers advocated austerity, despite the pain it caused the poor and the middle class, and consistently cried wolf about an increase in interest rates that has yet to come. No wonder both Barack Obama and Trump have taken such pleasure in bashing the Washington establishment.

Institutional checks on the president's foreign policy prerogatives have also deteriorated—primarily because the other branches of government have voluntarily surrendered them. The passage of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which exacerbated the Great Depression, showed that Congress could not responsibly execute its constitutional responsibilities on trade. With the 1934 Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, it delegated many of those powers to the president, marking the beginning of a sustained decline in congressional oversight. More recently, political polarization has rendered Congress a dysfunctional, petulant mess, encouraging successive administrations to enhance the powers of the executive branch. Nor has the judicial branch acted as much of an impediment. The Supreme Court has persistently deferred to the president on matters of national security, as it did in 2018 when it ruled in favor of the Trump administration's travel ban.

Foreign policy analysts largely celebrated this concentration of power in the executive branch, and prior to Trump, their logic seemed solid. They pointed to the public's ignorance of and Congress' lack of interest in international relations. As political gridlock and polarization took hold, elected Democrats and Republicans viewed foreign policy as merely a plaything for the next election. And so most foreign policy elites viewed the president as the last adult in the room.

What they failed to plan for was the election of a president who displays the emotional and intellectual maturity of a toddler. As a candidate, Trump gloried in beating up on foreign policy experts, asserting that he could get better results by relying on his gut. As president, he

has governed mostly by tantrum. He has insulted and bullied U.S. allies. He has launched trade wars that have accomplished little beyond hurting the U.S. economy. He has said that he trusts Russian President Vladimir Putin more than his own intelligence briefers. His administration has withdrawn from an array of multilateral agreements and badmouthed the institutions that remain. The repeated attacks on the EU and NATO represent a bigger strategic mistake than the invasion of Iraq. In multiple instances, his handpicked foreign policy advisers have attempted to lock in decisions before the president can sabotage them with an impulsive tweet. Even when his administration has had the germ of a valid idea, Trump has executed the resulting policy shifts in the most ham-handed manner imaginable.

Most of these foreign policy moves have been controversial, counterproductive, and perfectly legal. The same steps that empowered the president to create foreign policy have permitted Trump to destroy what his predecessors spent decades preserving. The other branches of government endowed the White House with the foreign policy equivalent of a Ferrari; the current occupant has acted like a child playing with a toy car, convinced that he is operating in a land of make-believe.

After Trump, a new president will no doubt try to restore sanity to U.S. foreign policy. Surely, he or she will reverse the travel ban, halt the hostile rhetoric toward long-standing allies, and end the attacks on the world trading system. These patches will miss the deeper problem, however. Political polarization has eroded the notion that presidents need to govern from the center. Trump

has eviscerated that idea. The odds are decent that a left-wing populist will replace the current president, and then an archconservative will replace that president. The weak constraints on the executive branch will only make things worse. Congress has evinced little interest in playing a constructive role when it comes to foreign policy. The public is still checked out on world politics. The combination of worn-down guardrails and presidents emerging from the ends of the political spectrum may well whipsaw U.S. foreign policy between "America first" and a new Second International. The very concept of a consistent, durable grand strategy will not be sustainable.

In that event, only the credulous will consider U.S. commitments credible. Alliances will fray, and other countries will find it easier to flout global norms. All the while, the scars of the Trump administration will linger. The vagaries of the current administration have already forced a mass exodus of senior diplomats from the State Department. That human capital will be difficult to replace. For the past two years, the number of international students who have enrolled in U.S. university degree programs has fallen as nativism has grown louder. It will take a while to convince foreigners that this was a temporary spasm. After the Trump administration withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, it forced SWIFT, the private-sector network that facilitates international financial transactions, to comply with unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran, spurring China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom to create an alternative payment system. That means little right now, but in the long run, both U.S. allies and U.S. rivals will learn to avoid relying on the dollar.

Perhaps most important, the Trump administration has unilaterally surrendered the set of ideals that guided U.S. policymakers for decades. It is entirely proper to debate how much the United States should prioritize the promotion of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law across the world. What should be beyond debate, however, is that it is worthwhile to promote those values overseas and enshrine them at home. Trump's ugly rhetoric makes a mockery of those values. Although a future president might sound better on these issues, both allies and rivals will remember the current moment. The seeds of doubt have been planted, and they will one day sprout.

The factors that give the United States an advantage in the international system—deep capital markets, liberal ideas, world-class higher education—have winner-take-all dynamics. Other actors will be reluctant to switch away from the dollar, Wall Street, democracy, and the Ivy League. These sectors can withstand a few hits. Excessive use of financial statecraft, alliances with overseas populists, or prolonged bouts of anti-immigrant hysteria, however, will force even close allies to start thinking about alternatives. The American advantage in these areas will go bankrupt much like Mike Campbell in *The Sun Also Rises* did: "gradually and then suddenly." Right now, the United States' Jenga tower is still standing. Remove a few more blocks, however, and the wobbling will become noticeable to the unaided eye.

What would collapse look like? The United States would remain a great power, of course, but it would be an

ordinary and less rich one. On an increasing number of issues, U.S. preferences would carry minimal weight, as China and Europe coordinated on a different set of rules. Persistent domestic political polarization would encourage Middle Eastern allies, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, to line up with Republicans and European allies, such as Germany and the United Kingdom, to back Democrats. The continued absence of any coherent grand strategy would leave Latin America vulnerable to a new Great Game as other great powers vied for influence there. Demographic pressures would tax the United States, and the productivity slowdown would make those pressures even worse. Trade blocs would sap global economic growth; reduced interdependence would increase the likelihood of a great-power war. Climate change would be mitigated nationally rather than internationally, leaving almost everyone worse off.

WHAT, ME WORRY?

It would be delightful if, ten years from now, critics mocked this essay's misplaced doom and gloom. The state of U.S. foreign policy seemed dire a decade ago, during the depths of the financial crisis and the war in Iraq. That turned out to be more of a blip than a trend. It remains quite possible now that Trump's successor can repair the damage he has wreaked. And it is worth remembering that for all the flaws in the U.S. foreign policy machine, other great powers are hardly omnipotent. China's and Russia's foreign policy successes have been accompanied by blowback, from pushback against infrastructure projects in Asia to a hostile Ukraine, that will make it harder for those great powers to achieve their revisionist aims.

The trouble with "after Trump" narratives, however, is that the 45th president is as much a symptom of the ills plaguing U.S. foreign policy as he is a cause. Yes, Trump has made things much, much worse. But he also inherited a system stripped of the formal and informal checks on presidential power. That's why the next president will need to do much more than superficial repairs. He or she will need to take the politically inconvenient step of encouraging greater congressional participation in foreign policy, even if the opposing party is in charge. Not every foreign policy initiative needs to be run through the Defense Department. The next president could use the bully pulpit to encourage and embrace more public debate about the United States' role in the world. Restoring the norm of valuing expertise, while still paying tribute to the wisdom of crowds, would not hurt either. Nor would respecting democracy at home while promoting the rule of law abroad.

All these steps will make the political life of the next president more difficult. In most *Foreign Affairs* articles, this is the moment when the writer calls for a leader to exercise the necessary political will to do the right thing. That exhortation always sounded implausible, but now it sounds laughable. One hopes that the Church of Perpetual Worry does not turn into an apocalyptic cult. This time, however, the sky may really be falling.

The Open World

What America Can Achieve After Trump

Mira Rapp-Hooper and Rebecca Friedman Lissner

Since the election of U.S. President Donald Trump in 2016, it has become commonplace to bemoan the fate of the U.S.-led liberal international order—the collection of institutions, rules, and norms that has governed world politics since the end of World War II. Many experts blame Trump for upending an otherwise sound U.S. grand strategy. They hope that once he is gone, the United States will resume the role it has occupied since the fall of the Soviet Union: as the uncontested hegemon ruling benevolently, albeit imperfectly, over a liberalizing world.

It won't. Washington's recent dominance was a historical anomaly that rested on a rare combination of favorable conditions that simply no longer obtain, including a relatively unified public at home and a lack of any serious rivals abroad. American leaders must recognize this truth and adjust their strategy accordingly.

Although the post–Cold War order was never a monolith, it aspired to a form of liberal universalism. U.S. leaders assumed that gradually, the rest of the world would come to accept the basic premises of the liberal order, including democracy, free trade, and the rule of law. And with a level of economic and military power unrivaled in human history, the United States could pursue a foreign policy that sought to preclude the emergence of great-power rivals. By 2008, however, the United States was stumbling. U.S. missteps in the Middle East, followed by the global financial crisis, signaled to would-be competitors that Washington was no longer invulnerable. Today, rival powers such as China and Russia actively participate in the liberal order even as they openly challenge the primacy of liberalism. Technological advances in computing and artificial intelligence (AI) are giving weaker actors the means to compete directly with the United States. And domestic divisions and global rivalries are making international cooperation harder to sustain.

Liberal universalism is no longer on the table. Instead, the United States should make the defense of openness the overarching goal of its global strategy. This will mean preventing the emergence of closed regional spheres of influence, maintaining free access to the global commons of the sea and space, defending political independence, and abandoning democracy promotion for a more tempered strategy of democracy support. Washington should continue to pursue great-power cooperation where possible, through both global institutions such as the UN and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and regulatory regimes such as the one set out in the Paris climate accord. But in domains not already

MIRA RAPP-HOOPER is a Senior Fellow at the Paul Tsai China Center and a Senior Research Scholar at Yale Law School.

REBECCA FRIEDMAN LISSNER is an Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College.

Everything in order: U.S. Navy vessels in the Caribbean Sea, September 2017

JONATHAN DRAKE / REUTERS

governed by international rules, such as AI, biotechnology, and cyberspace, it must prepare to compete with its rivals while working with its allies to establish new rules of the road.

An openness-based strategy would represent a clear departure from the principles of liberal universalism that have guided U.S. strategy since the end of the Cold War. Instead of presuming the eventual triumph of liberalism, it would signal U.S. willingness to live alongside illiberal states and even to accept that they may take a leading role in international institutions. Such a strategy would preserve existing structures of the liberal order while recognizing that they will often fall short; and when they do, it would call on the United States and like-minded partners to create new rules and regimes, even if these lack universal appeal. Harboring no illusions about geopolitical realities, an openness-based strategy would prepare to defend U.S. interests when cooperation proved impossible. But it would define those interests selectively, sharpening the nation's focus and eschewing the unending crusades of liberal universalism.

Rather than wasting its still considerable power on quixotic bids to restore the liberal order or remake the world in its own image, the United States should focus on what it can realistically achieve: keeping the international system open and free.

THE RETURN OF RIVALRY

For nearly three decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States had no significant geopolitical rivals. Today, it has two. The first, Russia, is a revanchist power, but its economic

stagnation renders it more a spoiler than a genuine challenger. With an acute dependency on oil and a projected economic growth rate hovering around two percent, Russia is likely to see its international power decline over the next decade. Yet Russia is far more economically and politically stable today than it was in the 1990s, allowing it to project power far beyond its borders. And Russian President Vladimir Putin has played a bad hand well: he has integrated Russia's significant hybrid warfare, cyberwar, and nuclear capabilities into an asymmetric defense strategy that lets the country punch well above its weight. Moscow will never truly challenge U.S. dominance, but it will disrupt the democratic processes of EU and NATO members and threaten former Soviet states for the foreseeable future.

The United States' second rival, China, is on track to become its only real peer competitor. During the 1990s and the first decade of this century, the United States benefited from Chinese leaders' fixation on economic growth and internal stability at the expense of geopolitical power. But since President Xi Jinping assumed office in 2012, Beijing has explicitly sought to reestablish its regional hegemony in Asia. China is now on track to be the world's largest economy by 2030 in terms of GDP, and China's technology sector already approaches that of the United States in both research-and-development spending and market size. By the early 2020s, China's military power in Asia will rival that of the United States, although the U.S. military will retain considerable global advantages.

Traditional measures of power are only part of the story, thanks to disruptive technologies such as AI. AI is likely to spread quickly but unevenly, and it may encourage escalation by lowering the costs of conflict, as militaries become less dependent on manpower and destruction becomes more precisely targeted. Countries such as China, with its government access to massive citizen databases, state control over media, and lack of privacy rights and other individual freedoms, may create new forms of "digital authoritarianism" that allow them to fully exploit AI for military and political uses. And although the U.S. technology sector is the most advanced in the world, there are signs that the U.S. government may have trouble harnessing it. Silicon Valley's supranational self-image and global business interests make it skeptical of cooperating with the government—late last year, Google withdrew its bid for a $10 billion cloud-computing contract with the Pentagon, citing ethical concerns. Washington's lack of technical expertise, meanwhile, could lead it to regulate Silicon Valley in unproductive ways.

Tension between the U.S. government and the U.S. technology sector is one problem, but domestic polarization is a more fundamental issue. The virtual elimination of any middle ground between Democrats and Republicans means that nearly any issue—including foreign policy initiatives that used to be bipartisan—can get politicized by lawmakers, the media, and the public. This will not only foment dissension on the most consequential foreign policy choices, such as when and where to use military force; it could also generate dramatic foreign policy swings as the presidency passes from one party to the

other, making the United States a persistently unpredictable global actor. And by ensuring that nearly every issue divides along partisan lines, polarization creates domestic fissures that foreign powers can exploit, as Russia did with its hacking and disinformation campaigns in the 2016 presidential election. Taken together, these domestic trends will make it harder for the United States to sustain a consistent global strategy and easier for its rivals to assert themselves.

Although war will remain a threat, renewed great-power competition is more likely to manifest itself in persistent, low-level conflict. Post–World War II international law prohibits aggressive conventional and nuclear war but says nothing about coercion below the threshold of military force. States have always tried to pursue their interests through coercive means short of war, but in recent years, interstate competition has flourished in new domains, such as cyberspace, that largely operate beyond the reach of international law. China and Russia possess devastating conventional and nuclear capabilities, but both wish to avoid a full-scale war. Instead, they will pursue disruptive strategies through subtler means, including hacking, political meddling, and disinformation. Sustained competition of this sort has not been seen since the Cold War, and U.S. strategy will need to prepare for it.

As new forms of conflict emerge, traditional forms of cooperation are unlikely to keep pace. The United States is striking ever-fewer formal international agreements. During the Obama administration, the United States ratified fewer treaties per year than at any time since 1945. In 2012, for the first time since World War II, the United States joined zero treaties, and then it did the same in 2013 and 2015. The international community has similarly stalled in its efforts to pass new multilateral accords. Issues such as digital commerce and cyberconflict remain un- or undergoverned, and their sheer complexity makes it unlikely that new international rules on them will be passed anytime soon.

THE OPEN ROAD

The emerging world order is one in which the United States will face major internal and external constraints. The country will remain tremendously powerful, continuing to dominate the international financial system and maintaining a level of military and economic power enjoyed by few nations in history. Yet its capabilities will be more limited, and the challenges it faces, more diffuse. A shrewd strategy must therefore be discerning in its priorities and guided by clear principles.

Washington's first priority should be to maintain global openness. Rather than attempting to spread liberal economic and political values, that is, the United States should focus on a more modest goal: ensuring that all countries are free to make independent political, economic, and military decisions. Geopolitically, a commitment to openness means that Washington will have to prevent a hegemonic adversary or bloc from controlling Asia, Europe, or both through a closed sphere of influence. If a competitor came to dominate part or all of Eurasia in a manner that displaced the United States, it would pose

a direct threat to U.S. prosperity and national security.

The greatest challenge to openness can be found in the Indo-Pacific, where China will increasingly assume regional leadership. In some respects, this is only natural for a country that has grown in power so much over the last four decades. But accepting Beijing as a regional leader is not the same as accepting a closed Chinese sphere of influence. China, for instance, has already become the dominant trading and development partner for many nations in Southeast Asia; if it were to use the artificial island bases it has built to block freedom of navigation in the South China Sea or attempt to coerce its partners using the leverage it has acquired through its infrastructure investments, a closed sphere would be in the offing. To keep the Indo-Pacific region open, the United States should maintain its military presence in East Asia and credibly commit to defending its treaty allies in the region, including Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea. It must also support regional states' political autonomy by recommitting itself to regional diplomacy and working with multilateral coalitions to ensure that any rules that Beijing seeks to set are transparent and noncoercive.

In Europe, the threat is less severe. Russia is in no position to dominate Europe, nor can it engage in sustained regional peer competition with the United States. Yet Moscow still has formidable military capabilities—particularly its nuclear arsenal—and the country's physical proximity to eastern Europe allows it to exert considerable influence there. It is deeply opposed to the U.S.-led security order in Europe and has demonstrated a high tolerance for risk in pursuit of its core interests. Ultimately, however, Russia lacks the ability to craft a closed sphere of influence. U.S. interests therefore lie in deterring Russia's attempts to play spoiler—something Washington has failed to do since 2016, thanks to the Trump administration's pathological warmth toward Moscow and tense relations with the United States' European allies.

Washington should also prioritize openness in the global commons, particularly the sea and space. Maritime openness, or the ability of ships to pass unrestricted through international waters, is essential to global trade and commerce and thus U.S. national interests. Although China has not blocked commercial shipping near its shores (and is unlikely to do so in the future), it has regularly violated international law by obstructing military freedom of navigation in the South China Sea—something that the United States should refuse to accept. In space, which has become part of the commons thanks to the profusion of satellite technology, maintaining openness requires spacecraft to be allowed to operate unhindered. In 2007, for example, China destroyed one of its own satellites as part of an antisatellite missile test, polluting space with thousands of pieces of debris that continue to threaten commercial, civilian, and military spacecraft. This is precisely the sort of activity that an openness-based strategy should seek to prevent. In newer domains, such as cyberspace, however, there are no existing legal or normative edifices comparable to those governing the sea and space, and the United States

cannot expect others to forge global arrangements that reflect its unilateral preferences. Managing threats in these areas will be more a matter of deterrence than multilateral agreement.

Promoting openness will require a newfound emphasis on political independence as a foundation of U.S. strategy and as an organizing principle of international politics. Political independence is one of the foundational premises of the UN Charter, and most states, even authoritarian ones, claim to value it. Yet revisionist states, such as China and Russia, shroud their grievances in the rhetoric of sovereignty while freely violating the sovereignty of others. In order to credibly promote political independence, the United States will have to forgo efforts at regime change, such as those in 2003 in Iraq and 2011 in Libya, and stop aggressively promoting democracy overseas, as the Trump administration is currently attempting to do with its Iran policy. It should continue to support democracy, but it should do so by providing assistance to democracies when they seek it and working with partners to help them preserve their sovereignty against encroachments by rival powers. This means accepting the lamentable fact that, for now, authoritarianism will reign in Beijing, Moscow, and elsewhere.

Even as U.S. relations with China and Russia become more adversarial, however, it would be a mistake to allow them to become completely zero-sum. The world is not entering a new Cold War pitting liberal democracies against authoritarian regimes: China and Russia are revisionist participants within the existing international order, not enemies standing outside of it.

They share interests with the United States on international challenges such as terrorism, disease, and climate change, and Washington must work hard to capitalize on these opportunities for great-power cooperation. The UN, and the UN Security Council in particular, has a major role to play in enabling such collaboration. Beijing and Moscow are both highly invested in the council's legitimacy, and although it will be paralyzed on the most divisive geopolitical questions, it can serve as a useful coordinating mechanism on issues where great-power interests overlap, especially if it is reformed to include states such as Germany, India, and Japan.

Trade offers another potentially promising avenue for cooperation. China, Russia, and the United States are all members of the WTO. Their membership implies at least notional agreement that principles such as reciprocity and nondiscrimination should govern the international economic order. But currently, China subsidizes domestic industries and promotes state-owned enterprises in violation of those principles. Such policies are antithetical to the operation of an open system. Washington should not expect China to fully reform its economy, but neither should it allow the country to enjoy the benefits of trade while shielding Chinese companies from international competition. Changes to the WTO—for instance, reforming the appellate bodies that regulate disputes among member states—may help the trade regime function more efficiently in areas where significant agreement exists. But given its reliance on consensus, the WTO is unlikely to force Beijing's hand. The United States and its allies should thus be prepared to exert multilateral pressure on China and other rule breakers, including through new agreements that disincentivize unfair trade policies.

THE FUTURE ORDER

In this new environment, it no longer makes sense for the United States to promote the liberal universalism of the post–Cold War international order. The United States need not dominate every corner of the globe in order to pursue its interests, and its strategy should recognize that illiberal great powers will have some influence over world affairs, especially in their own backyards. Washington must avoid convincing rising powers such as China that their only chance at improving their international position is through catastrophic war. Openness, not dominance, should be the goal.

In addition to departing from liberal universalism, an openness-based strategy would differ from contemporary efforts to transform the liberal international order into a coalition of democratic states united in their opposition to rising authoritarianism. The liberal international relations scholar Michael Mandelbaum has argued that the United States and its democratic allies should adopt a "triple containment" strategy toward its three illiberal rivals, China, Iran, and Russia; the conservative analysts Derek Scissors and Daniel Blumenthal, meanwhile, have exhorted Washington to "begin cutting some of its economic ties with China" in a move toward decoupling. Ostensibly, such efforts aim to prevent the formation of authoritarian spheres of influence; in fact, they would help bring those spheres about. Instead of attempting to prevent its illiberal rivals

from gaining any formalized influence whatsoever, Washington should press them to accept the principles of openness and independence as a condition of continuing to operate within the existing institutions of the old liberal order—and of creating new ones. Preserving the older institutions, including through reforms to the Security Council and the WTO that enhance those institutions' international legitimacy, will be essential to preserving a venue for great-power cooperation.

Accepting that U.S. rivals will have some influence is not the same as ceding the field to them. To defend against traditional forms of aggression, the United States must retain the military strength to deter China from making a violent bid for dominance in Asia and Russia from forcibly upending the status quo in Europe.

Washington should prepare to deter nonmilitary aggression, too, especially in new domains where international laws are weak or nonexistent, such as AI, biotechnology, and cyberspace. It is unlikely that the UN or other global institutions will be able to achieve sufficient consensus to pass new and binding compacts to regulate these domains. In the absence of international law, the actions of the United States and its allies will define the boundaries of acceptable state behavior. Washington will have to work with like-minded states to establish norms that its rivals will not necessarily support, such as Internet governance that relies on public-private cooperation rather than granting all authority to the state. But by generating a partial international consensus, the United States can make it more difficult for antithetical norms to crystallize.

The end of its uncontested primacy will also require the United States to modernize its alliances and adopt a pluralistic approach to international partnerships. At present, U.S. alliances are primarily designed to defend against interstate military conflict. Washington should begin focusing on the full range of strategic contributions allies can make to collective defense, including in areas such as technological expertise, intelligence sharing, resilience planning, and economic statecraft. The United States can also develop transient but expedient partnerships with democratic and nondemocratic states alike, particularly those that fear dominance by assertive regional powers.

The unipolar moment that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union granted the United States tremendous freedom of action and demanded few concessions. For those who harbor nostalgia for post–Cold War U.S. dominance, it is tempting to try to regain it. Unfortunately, the world of the twenty-first century will not afford such luxuries. The United States must accept that although its absolute power remains formidable, its relative power is reduced: it cannot unilaterally dictate outcomes to the world.

This recognition need not—and, indeed, must not—entail the acceptance of closed spheres of influence, emerging either by design or by default. Rather than seeking to transform the world along liberal lines, the United States should prioritize openness and political independence. Such a strategy will preserve essential elements of the liberal international order while preparing for the twenty-first century, in which limited cooperation will persist alongside newly intensified rivalry and conflict.

The End of Hubris

And the New Age of American Restraint

Stephen M. Walt

Today's world presents a seemingly endless array of challenges: a more powerful and assertive China, novel threats from cyberspace, a rising tide of refugees, resurgent xenophobia, persistent strands of violent extremism, climate change, and many more. But the more complex the global environment, the more Washington needs clear thinking about its vital interests and foreign policy priorities. Above all, a successful U.S. grand strategy must identify where the United States should be prepared to wage war, and for what purposes.

For all the talk of how U.S. foreign policy and the country's place in the world will never be the same after the presidency of Donald Trump, the best strategic road map for the United States is a familiar one. Realism—the hard-nosed approach to foreign policy that guided the country throughout most of the twentieth century and drove its rise to great power—remains the best option. A quarter century ago, after the Cold War ended, foreign policy elites abandoned realism in favor of an unrealistic grand strategy—liberal hegemony—that has weakened the country and caused considerable harm at home and abroad. To get back on track, Washington should return to the realism and restraint that served it so well in the past.

If Washington rediscovered realism, the United States would seek to preserve the security and prosperity of the American people and to protect the core value of liberty in the United States. Policymakers would recognize the importance of military strength but also take into account the country's favorable geographic position, and they would counsel restraint in the use of force. The United States would embrace a strategy of "offshore balancing" and abstain from crusades to remake the world in its image, concentrating instead on maintaining the balance of power in a few key regions. Where possible, Washington would encourage foreign powers to take on the primary burden for their own defense, and it would commit to defend only those areas where the United States has vital interests and where its power is still essential. Diplomacy would return to its rightful place, and Americans would promote their values abroad primarily by demonstrating democracy's virtues at home.

STEPHEN M. WALT is Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School and the author of ***The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy***.

IF IT AIN'T BROKE . . .

In the nineteenth century, when the United States was weak, leaders from George Washington to William McKinley mostly avoided foreign entanglements and concentrated on building power domestically, expanding the country's reach across North America and eventually expelling the European great powers from the Western Hemisphere. In the first half of the twentieth century, U.S. presidents such as Wood-

Goodbye to all that: Trump at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, March 2018

JOSHUA ROBERTS / REUTERS

row Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt used the country's newfound strength to restore the balance of power in strategically critical regions outside the Western Hemisphere. But they let other great powers do most of the heavy lifting, and thus the United States emerged relatively unscathed—and stronger than ever—from the world wars that devastated Asia and Europe.

Letting other states shoulder the burden was not possible during the Cold War, so the United States stepped up and led the alliances that contained the Soviet Union. American leaders paid lip service to democracy promotion, human rights, and other idealistic concerns, but U.S. policy was realist at its core. Through the Bretton Woods system and its successors, the United States also helped foster a more open world economy, balancing economic growth against the need for financial stability, national autonomy, and domestic legitimacy. Put simply, for most of U.S. history, American leaders were acutely sensitive to the balance of power, passed the buck when they could, and took on difficult missions when necessary.

But when the Soviet Union collapsed and the United States found itself, as the former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft put it in 1998, "standing alone at the height of power . . . with the rarest opportunity to shape the world," U.S. leaders rejected the realism that had worked well for decades and tried to remake global politics in accordance with American values. A new strategy—liberal hegemony—sought to spread democracy and open markets across the globe. That goal is the common thread linking President Bill Clinton's policy of "engagement and enlargement," President George W. Bush's "freedom agenda," and President Barack Obama's embrace of the Arab revolts of 2010–11 and his declaration that "there is no right more fundamental than the ability to choose your leaders and determine your destiny." Such thinking won broad support from both

political parties, the federal bureaucracies that deal with international affairs, and most of the think tanks, lobbies, and media figures that constitute the foreign policy establishment.

At bottom, liberal hegemony is a highly revisionist strategy. Instead of working to maintain favorable balances of power in a few areas of vital interest, the United States sought to transform regimes all over the world and recruit new members into the economic and security institutions it dominated. The results were dismal: failed wars, financial crises, staggering inequality, frayed alliances, and emboldened adversaries.

HEGEMONIC HUBRIS

When Clinton took office in 1993, the United States was on favorable terms with the world's other major powers, including China and Russia. Democracy was spreading, Iraq was being disarmed, and Iran had no nuclear enrichment capacity. The Oslo Accords seemed to herald an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Washington seemed well positioned to guide that process. The European Union was adding new members and moving toward a common currency, and the U.S. economy was performing well. Americans saw terrorism as a minor problem, and the U.S. military seemed unstoppable. The wind was at the country's back. Life was good.

But those circumstances fueled a dangerous overconfidence among American elites. Convinced that the United States was "the indispensable nation," as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright famously put it in 1998, they believed they had the right, the responsibility, and the wisdom to shape political arrangements in every corner of the world.

That vision turned out to be a hubristic fantasy. Repeated attempts to broker peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians all failed, and the two-state solution sought by three U.S. presidents is no longer a viable option. Al Qaeda attacked the U.S. homeland on September 11, 2001, and Washington responded by launching a global war on terrorism, including invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Those campaigns were costly failures and shattered the U.S. military's aura of invincibility. Much of the Middle East is now embroiled in conflict, and violent extremists operate from Africa to Central Asia and beyond. Meanwhile, India, Pakistan, and North Korea tested and deployed nuclear weapons, and Iran become a latent nuclear weapons state. The collapse of the U.S. housing market in 2008 exposed widespread corruption in the country's financial institutions and triggered the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression—a calamity from which the global economy has yet to fully recover.

In 2014, Russia seized Crimea, and it has interfered in a number of other countries since then—and its relations with the West are now worse than at any time since the Cold War. China's power and ambitions have expanded, and cooperation between Beijing and Moscow has deepened. The eurozone crisis, the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the EU, and energetic populist movements have raised doubts about the EU's future. Democracy is in retreat worldwide; according to Freedom House, 2018 was the 13th consecutive year in which global freedom declined. Illiberal leaders govern in Hungary and Poland, and the Economist Intelligence Unit's annual Democ-

racy Index has downgraded the United States from a "full" to a "flawed" democracy.

The United States was not solely responsible for all these adverse developments, but it played a major role in most of them. And the taproot of many of these failures was Washington's embrace of liberal hegemony. For starters, that strategy expanded U.S. security obligations without providing new resources with which to meet them. The policy of "dual containment," aimed at Iran and Iraq, forced the United States to keep thousands of troops on the Arabian Peninsula, an additional burden that also helped convince Osama bin Laden to strike at the U.S. homeland. NATO expansion committed Washington to defend weak and vulnerable new members, even as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom let their military forces atrophy. Equally important, U.S. efforts to promote democracy, the open-ended expansion of NATO, and the extension of the alliance's mission far beyond its original parameters poisoned relations with Russia. And fear of U.S.-led regime change encouraged several states to pursue a nuclear deterrent—in the case of North Korea, successfully. When the United States did manage to topple a foreign foe, as it did in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, the results were not thriving new democracies but costly occupations, failed states, and hundreds of thousands of dead civilians. It was delusional for U.S. leaders to expect otherwise: creating a functional democracy is a difficult process under the best of circumstances, but trying to do it in fractured societies one barely understands is a fool's errand.

Finally, globalization did not deliver as promised. Opening up markets to trade and investment brought great benefits to lower and middle classes in China, India, and other parts of the developing world. It also further magnified the already staggering wealth of the world's richest one percent. But lower- and middle-class incomes in the United States and Europe remained flat, jobs in some sectors there fled abroad, and the global financial system became much more fragile.

This sorry record is why, in 2016, when Trump called U.S. foreign policy "a complete and total disaster" and blamed out-of-touch and unaccountable elites, many Americans nodded in agreement. They were not isolationists; they simply wanted their government to stop trying to run the world and pay more attention to problems at home. Trump's predecessors seemed to have heard that message, at least when they were running for office. In 1992, Clinton's mantra was "It's the economy, stupid." In 2000, Bush derided Clinton's efforts at "nation building" and called for a foreign policy that was "strong but humble." Obama pledged to end foreign wars and focus on "nation building at home." These expressions of restraint were understandable, as surveys had repeatedly shown that a majority of Americans believed the country was playing the role of global policeman more than it should and doing more than its share to help others. According to the Pew Research Center, in 2013, 80 percent of Americans agreed that "we should not think so much in international terms but concentrate more on our own national problems and building up our strength and prosperity here at home," and

83 percent wanted presidents to focus more on domestic issues than on foreign policy. Clinton, Bush, and Obama all understood what the American people wanted. But they failed to deliver it.

So has Trump. Although his Twitter feed and public statements often question familiar orthodoxies, the United States is still defending wealthy NATO allies, still fighting in Afghanistan, still chasing terrorists across Africa, still giving unconditional support to the same problematic Middle Eastern clients, and still hoping to topple a number of foreign regimes. Trump's style as president is radically different from those of his predecessors, but the substance of his policies is surprisingly similar. The result is the worst of both worlds: Washington is still pursuing a misguided grand strategy, but now with an incompetent vulgarian in the White House.

REALISM IN PRACTICE

Four presidents have now pursued a grand strategy built around the goal of American hegemony, and all four have fared poorly. As the political scientist John Mearsheimer and I have argued previously in these pages, it is time for the United States to return to its traditional approach of offshore balancing. This strategy begins by recognizing that the United States remains the most secure power in modern history. It has thousands of nuclear weapons and powerful conventional forces, and it faces no serious rivals in the Western Hemisphere. The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans still insulate the country from many threats, giving U.S. leaders enormous latitude in choosing where and when to fight.

In addition to working to maintain U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, American policymakers have long sought to prevent other great powers from imitating the United States by dominating their own regions. A peer competitor with no serious rivals nearby would be free to project power around the world—as Washington has for decades. From an American perspective, it is better if the major powers in Eurasia have to keep a wary eye on one another, making it harder for them to interfere near American shores. The United States intervened in the world wars to prevent Wilhelmine Germany, Nazi Germany, and imperial Japan from dominating Europe and Asia. This same principle inspired the Cold War strategy of containment, although in that case, the United States could not pass the buck and had to bear most of the costs itself.

Today, there is no potential regional hegemon in Europe, whose states should gradually take full responsibility for their own defense. The countries of the European Union are home to more than 500 million people and boast a combined annual GDP exceeding $17 trillion, whereas Russia—the main external threat to EU states—has a population of just 144 million and an annual GDP of only $1.6 trillion. Moreover, NATO's European members together annually spend more than three times what Russia does on defense. The idea that the EU (whose roster includes two nuclear-armed powers) lacks the wherewithal to defend itself against a neighbor whose economy is smaller than Italy's is risible.

NATO still has ardent defenders on both sides of the Atlantic, but they are

living in the past. The alliance played an invaluable role in containing the Soviet Union and preventing the return of an aggressive, expansionist Germany. But the Soviet Union is long gone, and Germany is now a liberal democracy firmly committed to the status quo. NATO's leaders have worked overtime to devise new missions since the Berlin Wall came down, but the alliance's attempts at nation building in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Libya have not gone well. Unless NATO's European members decide to back a U.S.-led effort to balance against China (and it is not clear that they will or should), it is time for the United States to gradually disengage from NATO and turn European security over to the Europeans by beginning a coordinated withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Europe, allowing a European officer to serve as NATO's supreme allied commander, and making it clear that the United States will no longer be Europe's first line of defense. Washington should take these steps not with rancor or resentment but with a sense of accomplishment and a commitment to cooperate on issues on which American and European interests align, such as climate change, counterterrorism, and the management of the world economy.

Washington should also return to its traditional approach to the Middle East. To ensure access to the energy supplies on which the world economy depends, the United States has long sought to prevent any country from dominating the oil-rich Persian Gulf. But until the late 1960s, it did so by relying on the United Kingdom. After the British withdrew, Washington relied on regional clients, such as Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. U.S. forces stayed offshore until January 1991, a few months after Saddam Hussein, the leader of Iraq, seized Kuwait. In response, the George H. W. Bush administration assembled a coalition of states that liberated Kuwait, decimated Iraq's military, and restored balance to the region.

Today, Washington's primary goal in the Middle East remains preventing any country from impeding the flow of oil to world markets. The region is now deeply divided along several dimensions, with no state in a position to dominate. Moreover, the oil-producing states depend on revenue from energy exports, which makes all of them eager to sell. Maintaining a regional balance of power should be relatively easy, therefore, especially once the United States ends its counterproductive efforts to remake local politics. U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria would be withdrawn, although the United States might still maintain intelligence-gathering facilities, prepositioned equipment, and basing arrangements in the region as a hedge against the need to return in the future. But as it did from 1945 to 1991, Washington would count on local powers to maintain a regional balance of power in accordance with their own interests.

As an offshore balancer, the United States would establish normal relations with all countries in the region, instead of having "special relationships" with a few states and profoundly hostile relations with others. No country in the Middle East is so virtuous or vital that it deserves unconditional U.S. support, and no country there is so heinous that it must be treated as a pariah. The United States should act as China, India, Japan, Russia, and the EU do, maintain-

ing normal working relationships with all states in the region—including Iran. Among other things, this policy would encourage rival regional powers to compete for U.S. support, instead of taking it for granted. For the moment, Washington should also make it clear that it will reduce its support for local partners if they repeatedly act in ways that undermine U.S. interests or that run contrary to core U.S. values. Should any state threaten to dominate the region from within or without in the future, the United States would help the rest balance against it, calibrating its level of effort and local presence to the magnitude of the danger.

With its relationships with Europe and the Middle East right-sized and rationalized, an offshore-balancing United States could focus primarily on the country that is its only potential peer competitor and the world's only other would-be regional hegemon: China. If China's power continues to grow, it is likely to press its neighbors to distance themselves from Washington and accept China as the dominant power in the Asia-Pacific. Were China to become a regional hegemon in Asia, it would be better positioned to project power around the world and extend its influence into the Western Hemisphere. To counter this possibility, the United States should maintain and deepen its current security ties with Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea and continue to nurture its strategic partnerships with India, Singapore, and Vietnam. Once the United States is no longer subsidizing its wealthy European allies or squandering trillions of dollars on costly quagmires in the greater Middle East, it can more readily afford the military capabilities needed to balance China.

Maintaining an effective Asian coalition will not be easy, however. Washington's Asian allies are separated from one another by water and vast distances, and they are reluctant to jeopardize their commercial ties with China. The relationship between Japan and South Korea has a troubled history that makes close cooperation difficult. Local powers will be tempted to let Washington do most of the work, and sophisticated U.S. leadership will be necessary to hold this coalition together and ensure that each member contributes its fair share. Trump's missteps—abandoning the Trans-Pacific Partnership, starting trade disputes with Japan and South Korea, and indulging in an amateurish flirtation with North Korea—have not helped.

OFFSHORE VENTURE

Defenders of the status quo will no doubt mischaracterize this course of action as a return to isolationism. That is nonsense. As an offshore balancer, the United States would be deeply engaged diplomatically, economically, and, in some areas, militarily. It would still possess the world's mightiest armed forces, even if it spent somewhat less money on them. The United States would continue to work with other countries to address major global issues such as climate change, terrorism, and cyberthreats. But Washington would no longer assume primary responsibility for defending wealthy allies that can defend themselves, no longer subsidize client states whose actions undermine U.S. interests, and no longer try to spread democracy via regime change, covert action, or economic pressure.

Instead, Washington would use its strength primarily to uphold the balance of power in Asia—where a substantial U.S. presence is still needed—and would devote more time, attention, and resources to restoring the foundations of U.S. power at home. By setting an example that others would once again admire and seek to emulate, an offshore-balancing United States would also do a better job of promoting the political values that Americans espouse.

This approach would also involve less reliance on force and coercion and a renewed emphasis on diplomacy. Military power would remain central to U.S. national security, but its use would be as a last resort rather than a first impulse. It is worth remembering that some of Washington's greatest foreign policy achievements—the Marshall Plan, the Bretton Woods system, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, and the peaceful reunification of Germany—were diplomatic victories, not battlefield ones. In recent years, however, both Democratic and Republican administrations have tended to eschew genuine diplomacy and have relied instead on ultimatums and pressure. Convinced they hold all the high cards, too many U.S. officials have come to see even modest concessions to opponents as tantamount to surrender. So they have tried to dictate terms to others and have reached for sanctions or the sword when the target state has refused to comply. But even weak states are reluctant to submit to blackmail, and imposing one-sided agreements on others makes them more likely to cheat or renege as soon as they can. For diplomacy to work, both sides must get some of what they want.

Moreover, offshore balancing requires a sophisticated understanding of regional politics, which only knowledgeable diplomats and area specialists can provide. In particular, creating an effective coalition to check China's ambitions in Asia will be as much a diplomatic task as a military mission, and success would depend on a deep bench of officials who are intimately familiar with the history, languages, cultures, and sensitivities of the region.

A return to offshore balancing should also be accompanied by a major effort to rebuild and professionalize the U.S. diplomatic corps. Ambassadorships should be reserved for qualified diplomats rather than VIPs or campaign donors, and the State Department must develop, refine, and update its diplomatic doctrine—the ways the United States can use noncoercive means of influence—much as the armed services continually refine the military doctrines that guide their conduct in war. The ranks of the Foreign Service should be significantly increased, and as their careers advance, career diplomats should receive the same opportunities for professional education that senior military officers currently enjoy.

OUT WITH THE OLD

Despite the disappointments of the past 25 years, the American foreign policy elite remains convinced that global leadership is their birthright and that Washington must continue trying to force other countries to conform to U.S. dictates. This perspective is an article of faith at almost every foreign policy think tank inside the Beltway and is repeatedly invoked in task-force reports, policy briefs, and op-eds. A similar groupthink pervades the U.S. media, where unrepentant neoconservatives and unchastened

liberal internationalists monopolize the ranks of full-time pundits; proponents of realism, restraint, and nonintervention appear sporadically at best.

The result is that foreign policy debates are heavily skewed in favor of endless intervention. Moving back to a more realist grand strategy will require broadening the parameters of debate and challenging the entrenched interests that have promoted and defended a failed foreign policy.

The clubbiness of the foreign policy establishment has also produced a disturbing lack of accountability. Although the community contains many dedicated, imaginative, and honorable individuals, it is dominated by a highly networked caste of insiders who are reluctant to judge one another lest they be judged themselves. As a result, error-prone officials routinely fail upward and receive new opportunities to repeat past mistakes. Consider the officials responsible for (and the commentators who cheered on) the bungled Middle East peace process, the misguided expansion of NATO, the botched wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the CIA's torture of detainees in the war on terrorism, the National Security Agency's warrantless surveillance of Americans, the disastrous NATO intervention in Libya, and the American machinations in Ukraine that gave Russia a pretext to seize Crimea. None of those officials or commentators has suffered significant professional penalties for his or her mistakes or malfeasance. Indeed, nearly all of them still enjoy prominent positions in government, think tanks, the media, or academia.

No one is infallible, of course, and a desire to hold people accountable could be taken too far. Policymakers often learn from past mistakes and become more effective over time. But when the same people keep making the same errors and neither recognize nor regret them, it is time to look for new people with better ideas.

Despite the stagnation within the foreign policy establishment, the prospects for a more realist, more restrained U.S. foreign policy are better today than they have been in many years. For all his flaws, Trump has made it easier to propose alternatives to liberal hegemony by expressing such disdain for the elite consensus. Younger Americans are more skeptical of their country's imperial pretensions than are their elders, and some new members of Congress seem bent on clawing back some of the control over foreign policy that presidents have amassed over the past 70 years.

Furthermore, powerful structural forces are working against liberal hegemony and in favor of offshore balancing. China's rise and the partial revival of Russian power are forcing the United States to pay closer attention to balance-of-power politics, especially in Asia. The intractable problems of the Middle East will make future presidents reluctant to squander more blood and treasure there—especially in chasing the siren song of democracy promotion. Pressure on the defense budget is unlikely to diminish, especially once the costs of climate change begin to bite, and because trillions of dollars' worth of domestic needs cry out for attention.

For these reasons, the foreign policy elite will eventually rediscover the grand strategy that helped build and sustain American power over most of the nation's history. The precise path remains uncertain, and it will probably take longer to get there than it should. But the destination is clear.

Back to Basics

How to Make Right What Trump Gets Wrong

Kori Schake

U.S. President Donald Trump's sharp-elbowed nationalism, opposition to multilateralism and international institutions, and desire to shift costs onto U.S. allies reflect the American public's understandable weariness with acting as the global order's defender and custodian. Over the last three decades, post–Cold War triumphalism led to hubris and clouded strategic thinking. After the 9/11 attacks, Washington stumbled badly in Afghanistan and Iraq; more recently, Russia has reasserted itself in eastern Europe and the Middle East, and China's economic and military power have significantly expanded. Even among Trump's opponents, these developments have led many to conclude that the only solution is a fundamental rethinking of U.S. strategy.

This is an overreaction. In truth, the pillars of U.S. strategy for the past 70 years—committing to the defense of countries that share U.S. values or interests, expanding trade, upholding rules-based institutions, and fostering liberal values internationally—have achieved remarkable successes and will continue to serve the country well going forward. Although some changes are certainly necessary, the biggest risk now is that the United States will in the process of making those changes scrap what is best about its foreign policy.

In his blunt and often crude way, Trump has proved brilliant at poking holes in pieties and asking pointed questions about long-standing principles. His answers to those questions, however, have been self-defeating at best and dangerous at worst. By revealing what happens when U.S. strategy becomes untethered from the ideas that built the American-led order, Trump's time in office should serve as a wake-up call—but not as a cause for fundamental change. On the contrary: as the costs of an "America first" approach become clear, advocates of a more traditional, global-minded American leadership will get another hearing. They should seize the opportunity by offering a vision of a reformed and updated U.S. foreign policy. But a new vision of the U.S. role in the world should reaffirm some core principles—namely, that the United States can best achieve its objectives through mutually beneficial outcomes that reduce the need for enforcement and encourage like-minded countries to share burdens.

KORI SCHAKE is Deputy Director General of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the author of *Safe Passage: The Transition From British to American Hegemony*. She served on the National Security Council and in the U.S. State Department in the George W. Bush administration.

YOU NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD

For all the panic and self-doubt that the political turmoil of recent years has brought, the current crisis is hardly without precedent. In fact, for most of its history, the United States faced more formidable challenges and had fewer resources than it does today. George Washington would have loved to negotiate a multilateral trade deal from a position of economic strength rather

Making nice: Pompeo at the UN Security Council, New York City, January 2019

CARLO ALLEGRI / REUTERS

than having to bring a fledgling nation into being amid hostility from much stronger states. Abraham Lincoln would have considered banding allies together to counter a rising China an easy day's work compared with passing the 13th Amendment or preventing international recognition of the Confederacy. Franklin Roosevelt would have been right to see managing a glut of capital as less complicated than resuscitating the entire U.S. economy.

The United States has the most propitious geopolitical environment any country could hope for: surrounded by oceans and peaceful, cooperative neighbors. The U.S. economy generates jobs and drives technological innovation. The country's hegemony in the global balance-of-payments system is so secure that investors are indifferent to its indebtedness and Washington can impose sanctions on foreign entities and governments with impunity. The United States is a dominant power that other strong states voluntarily work to support rather than diminish—a historical anomaly. Its military is so capable that its adversaries have to operate on the margins of the conflict spectrum, in the realm of insurgency or information warfare. The country's cultural products are appealing and accessible, and its language serves as the lingua franca for international transactions.

What is more, U.S. domestic politics are not more contentious than in previous eras. "Every single president in American history thought that he was the most maligned person who had ever held the office, suffered the most vitriolic press attacks, and had to deal with the most ferocious partisanship," the historian Ron Chernow has written. Andrew Jackson said that his only regrets as president were that he didn't shoot

Henry Clay or hang John C. Calhoun. The abolitionist Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner was caned nearly to death on the floor of the Senate in 1856. There have been countless attempts to kill a sitting U.S. president, four of them successful.

Yet Americans have persuaded themselves that their present challenges are less comprehensible and their politics more venal than those of eras past. This mindset exaggerates current difficulties and excuses inaction—and it distorts views of the rest of the world, too, as Americans overestimate the complexity and difficulty of the problems the United States faces on the international stage. Foreign policy isn't newly complicated—it has always been—and the United States must simply get on with the tough work of devising strategies to advance its interests.

FROM OVERREACH TO RETREAT

The United States' global standing today is hardly disastrous, but it is still far from ideal. Many of the problems the country faces stem from the fact that in the wake of the Cold War, many American foreign policy elites persuaded themselves that the arc of history bends toward liberal democracy, ignoring ample evidence that, in fact, it bends whichever way people wrench it. This sense of inevitability caused hubris. It dulled leaders' capacity for making careful cost-benefit calculations, and they began to believe that they could dictate outcomes instead of weighing gains and sacrifices in the pursuit of their goals.

When opponents acted, the United States overreacted. Al Qaeda's attacks, for example, succeeded in provoking responses that dramatically diminished the United States' global standing. Invading Iraq, in particular, squandered so many American advantages—moral, institutional, budgetary, and military. Those self-destructive choices cast a long shadow, leading some to question the value of the leadership role that Washington had created for itself. Disillusionment with the war in Iraq stirred broader complaints, as critics of U.S. foreign policy expressed frustration with free-riding allies, questioned the value of free trade, and supported retrenchment. Many of these views are an understandable reaction to U.S. overreach abroad and to rapid economic and social change at home. They had already gained traction prior to Trump's rise; he merely exploited them.

Trump is a powerful critic of existing practices but lacks the competence to deliver better outcomes. Rather than offering a policy corrective, his administration is making matters worse by weakening a beneficial order without building a more advantageous one. Trump uses multilateral summits to insist that sovereignty matters more than agreed rules and practices, rebukes trade and security arrangements as unfair, and considers allies a burden rather than an advantage. He acts as though the United States gains little from the existing order, when in fact it is the biggest beneficiary.

Consider the issue of allied burden sharing. U.S. allies in Europe are among the safest and most prosperous states in the world, yet these countries struggle to take on the responsibility to realize the international outcomes they profess to seek. France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, for example, could each win a war against Iran, yet none of

them has a foreign policy based on that reality. Instead, long-running U.S. complaints about burden sharing have convinced these states that they cannot exert military force and prevail unless the United States fights alongside them.

Asking whether U.S. allies do enough is the wrong question: they don't. The right question is what policies would cause them to do more. The Trump administration believes that if it steps back, they will step forward. In fact, when the United States steps back, its allies step back even further—and its adversaries step forward. If the United States withdraws its forces from Afghanistan, its allies will not ramp up their presence there; they will follow suit and leave. When Trump announced that U.S. forces would be removed from Syria, other members of the coalition against the Islamic State (or ISIS) scrambled for the exit, too.

This dynamic plays into the hands of U.S. adversaries, chief among them Russia and China. Russia is on the decline demographically and economically, but it is far from a failing state. It has excelled at sustaining authoritarians, such as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad; destabilizing eastern Europe; and weaponizing the openness of free societies through covert meddling, as in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Some hope this subversive activity will subside when its chief architect, Russian President Vladimir Putin, leaves office. But there is no telling what will happen as long as he remains in power.

The Chinese Communist Party, for its part, seeks access to markets and technology to power the economic development on which its claim to legitimacy rests, yet Beijing has rejected

Washington's invitation to become a "responsible stakeholder" in the existing order. Instead, it has breached the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS, by building military bases on disputed territory in the South China Sea. It has violated the terms of the World Trade Organization through its forced technology transfers from foreign to domestic companies. And its brand of authoritarian capitalism has become a model to emulate among regimes that desire Western prosperity without the constraints imposed by the rule of law and the economic volatility that comes with genuinely free markets.

Put simply, the United States invites challenges by calling into question its alliance relationships; its allies do the same through their military weakness. In addition, Washington has enfeebled international institutions by flouting the rules it demands that others follow, such as those of UNCLOS, which it has not ratified. U.S. allies, by contrast, have empowered international institutions to a degree not supported by their publics, as the current backlash against an ever-closer union in Europe illustrates. In the meantime, adversaries have been capitalizing on the gap between those two tendencies.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

A more prudent foreign policy would start with two basic concerns, perhaps best summarized by Henry Kissinger in 2016: "What are we trying to achieve, even if we must pursue it alone?" and "What are we trying to prevent, even if we must combat it alone?" U.S. foreign policy, above all, should achieve the political independence and economic prosperity of the United States and prevent the coalescing of forces that could threaten those things.

Independence, however, is not autarky. Acting in concert with others reduces costs by pooling resources. Resilient, rules-based institutions create predictability, incentivize weaker states to share burdens, and offer strong states forums in which their actions can be legitimated. Critics fear that alliances will drag the United States into wars. Historically, however, the reverse has been true: Washington has cajoled others into helping shoulder the burden of wars it has chosen.

U.S. leaders won't find solutions by merely pandering to angry and anxious citizens, as Trump has done. Still, the foreign policy community must become more responsive to the public. The U.S. government at large is a government of amateurs. This means that even the least fit candidate can run for office and win, but it also helps Washington remain in sync with public opinion. Eight thousand political appointees flow in and out of government with each presidential administration, bringing commitment to the president's agenda with them. Civil society has enormous influence on policy formulation. Richard Armitage, during his confirmation hearing to become deputy secretary of state, joked that "foreign policy is not an exotic rite practiced by an ordained priesthood," yet foreign policy has become an elite preserve, undermining the vitality that is needed for sustained public support. The foreign policy establishment needs to work harder to engage the public and open its ranks to more itinerant participation. The government should actively involve civic groups and nongovernmental organiza-

tions in foreign policy, trusting that activity outside the government's direct control can still be in its interest. And Congress needs to claw back some of the powers it has ceded over the years to the executive branch by exercising its authority over the use of military force.

Trump, like President Barack Obama before him, is not wrong to question why the United States embarks on nation-building missions abroad when it should rather being doing so at home. One need only take a train in Germany to see what countries can achieve by investing in infrastructure rather than expeditionary military forces. Nation building at home would soften the effects of globalization and technological innovation on U.S. workers and minimize the political fallout of these economic shifts. Only by addressing voters' justified concerns about their economic future can leaders regain the public's trust.

Officials will also have to show that the government is frugal with the public purse. Too often, the United States doesn't so much devise a strategy as throw money at problems abroad. Especially since the 9/11 attacks, which dramatically lowered the government's risk tolerance, the cost-benefit ratio of U.S. foreign policy has been abysmal. The United States must develop more cost-effective approaches. For instance, rather than countering Russia's threat to NATO by deploying conventional forces in Europe, where Moscow's massive troop strength already gives it a head start, Washington could ramp up its military presence along Russia's Pacific coast and islands at far lower cost. It should also find a less expensive substitute for striking terrorist convoys than the high-end weaponry it currently uses.

DIPLOMACY DONE RIGHT

After Trump, Washington will need to return to its traditional habit of incorporating liberal democratic values into its foreign policy. Transactional relationships are easy to form but just as easy to drop. Alliances bound together by ideological commitment, by contrast, are much less likely to come undone. It is no coincidence that the NATO alliance is robust, whereas the Central Treaty Organization, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, and other regional alliances failed to get an enduring U.S. treaty commitment: shared values bound the transatlantic countries tightly to one another and made extended deterrence credible. Political scientists may extol the benefits of "realism," or a values-neutral, pragmatic approach to advancing U.S. interests, but the public and Congress tend to be more idealistic.

Moreover, U.S. foreign policy will be interpreted as values-driven whether Washington wants it to be or not. As scholars such as Thomas Wright have argued, opponents tend to view any U.S. actions as ideologically motivated. The Russian government, for example, believes that Washington seeks to overthrow it, because, in Moscow's eyes, hostility to Russian power is an unalterable element of American political culture. U.S. policy tweaks are unlikely to disabuse the Russians of this conviction.

To be sure, the United States should avoid strident moralistic grandstanding. Modesty is a winning attribute in a great power, and the United States has too many faults of its own to cast itself as an irreproachable model. Countries will choose their own path and in their own time. Still, Washington can afford to support forces for positive change

abroad. These include the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, Rotary International, religious groups, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and other organizations that tie their aid to good governance. Expanding the State Department's budget to fund and support more of these programs is a much better approach than investing this money in the defense budget.

A more modest foreign policy needs to be accompanied by a more modest posture. The United States has too often touted itself as "the indispensable nation," especially since the end of the Cold War. Even when U.S. allies do the hardest, most dangerous work, as they did during NATO's 2011 intervention in Libya, U.S. leaders tend to declare that success could not have come without American support. It would be wiser for the United States to set its allies up to succeed and then give them the credit for their achievements. The Clinton administration's support for Australia to lead a UN peacekeeping mission in East Timor in 1999 provides a good model. The intervention not only prevented massive bloodshed; it also emboldened Australia to take on a more active regional role, which was very much in the United States' interest. Allies, of course, will not necessarily act exactly as Washington would like—they may lack the capabilities or pursue slightly different interests. But allowing like-minded states to take the lead will conserve U.S. resources and nurture more responsible allies.

The United States should also stop fetishizing its military. When military service was a common experience, Americans understood that they could have a strong, capable force and still treat members of the military as regular citizens. Today, 46 years after the introduction of an all-volunteer service, civilians placate their consciences with token displays of respect—addressing military officers as "Sir," referring to all service members as heroes, and letting them be the first to board airplanes. This reverence has a cost. When politicians venerate military leaders, as Trump has often done, they endanger healthy civil-military relations. Outsize military salaries are crowding out the operational and equipment investments that keep soldiers alive in combat. But no member of Congress wants to "vote against the troops." More and more funding flows to the Department of Defense, while other essential pillars of foreign policy are neglected, with the consequence that the military now carries out many traditionally civilian tasks simply because it has the resources to accomplish them.

For the diplomatic arm of the government to regain its former strength, the State Department will need a major overhaul. At the moment, it is radically understaffed—by a factor of around four. It spends too little on training its work force, and most of the money is spent on language classes taught on a private campus in Washington. Instead, it could recruit those who already speak the necessary languages and specialize in the associated countries or permit diplomats to learn languages in residence at universities all across the country, thus allowing the Foreign Service to grow more connected to U.S. society. Imagine, too, what would be possible with diplomatic programs modeled on Teach for America or the GI Bill. Forgiving student loans for young U.S.

citizens who choose to spend two years serving their country abroad could create countless short-term recruits for diplomatic service and prepare others for careers in international business. Some argue that no amount of money or people could make the State Department as proficient as the Defense Department. That is a testable proposition. Run the experiment for a decade and see, because the militarization of U.S. foreign policy has come at a steep cost in lives and reputation.

Finally, strengthening U.S. diplomacy requires a new look at foreign aid. At the very least, dedicating some three-quarters of total foreign military assistance to Egypt and Israel, as the United States has done in recent years, seems anachronistic—especially when Israel and many of its Arab neighbors have found common cause in opposing Iran and no longer need Washington to prop up the peace with massive amounts of military aid. Washington should shift the bulk of those funds to expand the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which ties assistance to progress on specific governance objectives, such as improving access to health care and women's access to education, with the aim of making countries more self-sustaining over time.

OPENNESS RETURNS

Trump has cast his transactional, "America first" approach as a response to public demands. But support for many of his trademark views is plummeting. According to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs' annual public opinion poll, which was first taken in 2004, record numbers of Americans view trade favorably. As of 2018, 82 percent of respondents agreed that trade benefits the economy (up from just 59 percent in 2016). Eighty-five percent agreed it benefits consumers (compared with 70 percent in 2016), and 67 percent agreed that it is good for job creation in the United States (40 percent thought so in 2016). Congress has also pushed backed on some of Trump's shallow nationalism: a bill in the House of Representatives denying the government funds to withdraw the United States from NATO passed by 357 to 22, and Trump was forced to issue his first veto after both houses of Congress voted to condemn his plan to shift military funds to the construction of a wall on the U.S.-Mexican border.

Still, opposition to the president's erratic policies is not the same as crafting a sustainable foreign policy in the aftermath of his term. Washington doesn't need to reinvent the wheel, but it does need to improve on the things that have worked in the past. Although challengers to the existing order pose dangers, returning to the tried-and-tested principles of U.S. foreign policy provides the most promising and cost-effective approach to managing those threats. The first step down this path is to stop characterizing the United States as hopelessly overburdened and outmaneuvered—and recognize that the United States still possesses the strengths that allowed it to become the world's most powerful country in the first place.


Study with Purpose
The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) develops leaders who seek a deeper understanding of how politics, economics, and international relations drive global change.
Attend an upcoming on-campus or virtual information session to learn more about our degree, non-degree, and summer programs.
sais-jhu.edu/foreignaffairs
SAIS
JOHNS HOPKINS
SCHOOL of ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
› Europe › Washington, DC › China

ESSAYS

Richard Holbrooke was coming to the conclusion that the United States could never win in Vietnam, at least not on terms that Americans would accept.
—George Packer

The Longest Wars

Richard Holbrooke and the Decline of American Power

George Packer

One of the most celebrated diplomats of his generation, Richard Holbrooke helped normalize U.S. relations with China; served as U.S. ambassador to a newly reunified Germany and then to the United Nations; and, most famously, negotiated the 1995 Dayton peace agreement that ended the war in Bosnia. But he began and ended his career struggling with how to resolve two American wars: first in Vietnam, then in Afghanistan.

Richard Holbrooke was six feet one but seemed bigger. He had long skinny limbs and a barrel chest and broad square shoulder bones, on top of which sat his strangely small head and, encased within it, the sleepless brain. His feet were so far from his trunk that, as his body wore down and the blood stopped circulating properly, they swelled up and became marbled red and white like steak. He had special shoes made and carried extra socks in his leather attaché case, sweating through half a dozen pairs a day, stripping them off on long flights and draping them over his seat pocket in first class, or else cramming used socks next to the classified documents in his briefcase. He wrote his book about ending the war in Bosnia—the place in history that he always craved, though it was never enough—with his feet planted in a Brookstone shiatsu foot massager. One morning he showed up late for a meeting in the secretary of state's suite at the Waldorf Astoria in his stocking feet, shirt untucked and fly half zipped, padding around the room and picking grapes off a fruit basket, while Madeleine Albright's furious stare tracked his every move. During a videoconference call from the U.S. mission to the

GEORGE PACKER is a staff writer for *The Atlantic*. This essay is adapted from his new book, *Our Man: Richard Holbrooke and the End of the American Century* (Knopf, 2019).

United Nations, in New York, his feet were propped up on a chair, while down in the White House Situation Room their giant distortion completely filled the wall screen and so disrupted the meeting that President Bill Clinton's national security adviser finally ordered a military aide to turn off the video feed. Holbrooke put his feet up anywhere, in the White House, on other people's desks and coffee tables—for relief, and for advantage.

Near the end, it seemed as if all his troubles were collecting in his feet—atrial fibrillation, marital tension, thwarted ambition, conspiring colleagues, hundreds of thousands of air miles, corrupt foreign leaders, a war that would not yield to the relentless force of his will.

But at the other extreme from his feet, the ice-blue eyes were on perpetual alert. Their light told you that his intelligence was always awake and working. They captured nearly everything and gave almost nothing away. Like one-way mirrors, they looked outward, not inward. No one was quicker to size up a room, an adversary, a newspaper article, a set of variables in a complex situation—even his own imminent death. The ceaseless appraising told of a manic spirit churning somewhere within the low voice and languid limbs. Once, in the 1980s, he was walking down Madison Avenue when an acquaintance passed him and called out, "Hi, Dick." Holbrooke watched the man go by, then turned to his companion: "I wonder what he meant by that." Yes, his curly hair never obeyed the comb, and his suit always looked rumpled, and he couldn't stay off the phone or TV, and he kept losing things, and he ate as much food as fast as he could, once slicing open the tip of his nose on a clamshell and bleeding through a pair of cloth napkins—yes, he was in almost every way a disorderly presence. But his eyes never lost focus.

So much thought, so little inwardness. He could not be alone—he might have had to think about himself. Maybe that was something he couldn't afford to do. Leslie Gelb, Holbrooke's friend of 45 years and recipient of multiple daily phone calls, would butt into a monologue and ask, "What's Obama like?" Holbrooke would give a brilliant analysis of the president. "How do you think you affect Obama?" Holbrooke had nothing to say. Where did it come from, that blind spot behind his eyes that masked his inner life? It was a great advantage over the rest of us, because the propulsion from idea to action was never broken by self-scrutiny. It was also a great vulnerability, and finally, it was fatal.

SOUTH VIETNAM, 1963

In 1963, Holbrooke was a 22-year-old U.S. Foreign Service officer on his first diplomatic posting, to South Vietnam. The State Department detailed Holbrooke to the U.S. Agency for International Development in Saigon and a small, unconventional entity called Rural Affairs. It was an odd place for a young diplomat to land—unheard of, really. Holbrooke and a colleague were going to be the first Foreign Service officers sent into the field as aid workers. The agency would put them out among peasants in Vietcong strongholds where the war was being fought and have them hand out bulgur wheat, cement, fertilizer, and barbed wire. As bachelors, they were considered relatively expendable. It was an early experiment in counterinsurgency.

Within just a couple of months of arriving in Vietnam, Holbrooke had maneuvered his way into running the Rural Affairs operation in the province of Ba Xuyen, down in the Mekong Delta. Ba Xuyen was the end of the earth. It was almost all the way to Ca Mau, and Ca Mau was the terminal point of the Asian continent, "the southernmost province of North Vietnam," the *New York Times* correspondent David Halberstam once called it, because Ca Mau and the lower delta were the heartland of the Vietcong, the communist guerrillas who had been lurking for years among the hamlets and canals and rice paddies and mangrove forests. Ba Xuyen was a province of more than half a million, eight or nine hours' drive from Saigon down Route 4, across the interminable wet flatness of the delta, nothing but flooded paddy fields mile after mile all the way to the horizon—in mid-September, when Holbrooke arrived in the town of Soc Trang, the rice shoots were still golden, not yet the emerald green of the harvest—though more often he would fly, since there was a daily milk run on an Air America Caribou between Tan Son Nhut airport and airstrips around the delta, and driving was risky by day and out of the question after dark.

His room was on the second floor of a clay-colored colonial guesthouse, with a balcony overlooking the town square, across from the provincial headquarters and its tennis court. Next door to the guesthouse was a dance club called the Bungalow, except that the government of South Vietnam had banned dancing in order to protect the honor of Vietnamese women, so the Bungalow was now just a bar where local soldiers could go drink and pick up girls. Holbrooke's neighbors, also newly arrived, were a young Christian couple from Rhode Island, George and Renee McDowell. George was an aggie

with International Voluntary Services—he was introducing local farmers to a strain of enormous watermelons from Georgia. Holbrooke made it known that he wasn't interested. He and McDowell once went to the Soc Trang airstrip to meet some officials visiting from Saigon, and Holbrooke introduced himself: "I'm Richard Holbrooke, the AID man here in Ba Xuyen." He gestured to McDowell, who was three years older. "This is George McDowell, the IVS boy."

Holbrooke's thing was strategic hamlets. There were 324 of them in Ba Xuyen—at least, that was what he arrived believing. When he asked to visit a few of the farther-flung hamlets he was told that it was too dangerous. He went anyway, in his white short-sleeve button-up shirt, with his sunglasses case clipped to the breast pocket, and found that the strategic hamlets consisted of punji sticks stuck in a moat and a barely armed local militia. The Vietcong were overrunning and destroying them at will. There were 3,000 hard-core cadres in the province, according to the intelligence reports. Saigon had permanently conceded half the provincial territory to the guerrillas, who had their own district chiefs, tax collectors, and schools. At night only the towns belonged to the government. Nonetheless, in Saigon and Washington there were 324 strategic hamlets in Ba Xuyen, putting 61 percent of the population under the government's theoretical control.

In Soc Trang the war was very close. The airstrip was often hit by mortar fire. Holbrooke lost 15 pounds in the heat. His room had no air conditioning or fan, no working toilet or shower, and he could never get away from the mosquitoes, so he spent a good deal of time at a compound a block toward the canal that was occupied by Americans from the Military Assistance Advisory Group. They were among the 15,000 U.S. troops supporting the South Vietnamese army, often in combat. The advisers had a small projector and showed movies such as *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* and *Satan Never Sleeps*, for which Holbrooke had a bottomless appetite. On weekends he tried to get back to Saigon.

Holbrooke was a good writer, never better than in his youth. He wrote hundreds of letters. Let him tell it.

> I wish I could tell it all to you—the poorly lit room and bar that I am now sitting in, where the MAAG men sit and wait their tours out; the playmates from *Playboy* on the walls here, somehow very much out of

place; the stacks of old magazines and paperbacks, the other hints of home that the US Army flies into the Vietcong's homeland to make us feel a little less lost; the water everywhere, rising, raining, so that literally this province, even the ground around our building, is under water; the waiting; the ugliness, the cruelty, the tragedy. And in Saigon a regime so totally bankrupt and disgusting it is hard to describe.

There is something different about the Delta. Flying over it begins to give you some idea of the problems. It is completely flat, and ⅔ of it is under water right now. Yet it is the great VC [Vietcong] stronghold, which may be the last to fall. How is it possible? Where can they possibly be? Many are in the marshes and inaccessible swamps of the far south, but the fact is that for most, this day means being sheltered in someone's house and in one of the hamlets right below us.

My job as civilian advisor to the province chief and overseer of the aid program here puts me continually in the position of advocate of plans and projects which would seek to make a reality out of the clichés that everyone pays lip service to. I don't mind this (actually enjoy it) but it is sometimes tiring to try to get the Vietnamese to do something which is, after all, for their own good (or so we think . . .). On the other hand, when I step back just a little to look at everything, it seems to me that the Vietnamese have taken our overbearing presence rather well over the last few years. We arrive here with no knowledge of the country or of the situation and immediately start giving advice, some of which we can really turn almost into orders because of the materials and money and transportation that we fully control. I think that no American would stand for such a deep and continuing interference in our affairs, even if it appeared that survival was at stake. Yet the Vietnamese accept it, and with rather good grace.

At 0500 this morning the news came in that the VC had attacked and possibly overrun the furthest out outpost in the southeastern district of Ba Xuyen. It is a Cambodian post, located just three kilometers from a mangrove forest which forms the point where the lower branch of the Mekong meets the South China Sea. The mangrove forest is a VC haven, as almost all mangrove forests are. The post protects a huge and critical hamlet, also Cambodian, which was originally scheduled to be visited by [Secretary of Defense Robert] McNamara today before the schedule was cut. Anyway, by helicopter we flew out over the area for about an hour, circling at around 1500

feet, and from that height it could be clearly seen that the post had been destroyed. What the situation was on the ground could not yet be known—we did not go any lower, since we were getting shot at from time to time as we moved over the area. We refueled at Soc Trang, and joined an Eagle Flight moving out over the area now. An Eagle is a group of about 6 to 10 choppers, which fly very low over bad areas, hoping to draw fire, after which they pounce. We were above the main force choppers, which carry Vietnamese army. Finally, after the infantry had reached the hamlet and post, we went in.

On the ground was one of the worst sights I ever hope to see. The VC had apparently dug in with recoilless 75mm fire only 50 yards away, and leveled the post before moving a man against it. (Such a weapon is definitely from China—they never were used here by either US, French or VN.) Unlike most posts which fall here, it was apparently not an inside job. This may in part be due to the fact that these were Cambodians, and they are the best fighters around.

The fort was a shambles, of the 31 men in it 10 were dead, as were 7 children and 4 women, who live with their men in these terrible traps. The bodies were being assembled as we came in, and the noise of the women wailing, plus the horrible air and stench that overlay everything, was . . . One sees pictures of people picking their way through the war-torn rubble of Europe and Japan, and we have seen this sort of thing often in the histories of our times, but going in on the ground like this is still something new. One doesn't know quite what his reactions will be. Mine were not as bad as I was afraid they might be; perhaps little by little I have been working up to this anyway. (There have been so many similar to this, and Vietnam is such a cruel country to begin with, but this was the worst I have yet been in immediately afterwards.)

But afterwards it has been harder to put away the pictures of Can Nganh post. In a way, so unreal, since the birds still flew around, and the children in the nearest houses, less than 50 yards away, played games and seemed normal. But there were the women crying over the torn bodies of their husbands, and legs sticking out here and there grotesquely.

I have my doubts, getting deeper and deeper, about our basic approach here. Recent discussions and hints I have got from various sources would indicate that out of the McNamara visits came added weight for the exponents of Victory through Air Power—the Air Force, and the

armed helicopters. I feel that this is a terrible step, both morally and tactically. Of course, it would never do to actually attack policy on moral grounds in the American community here, which is a basically tough and getting tougher community ("War is hell," justifies any horror). However, the decision to fight the VC from the air can be quite easily attacked on the simple grounds of stupidity (or as Talleyrand once said, "Sir, it is worse than a crime, it is a blunder"). The VC, I am convinced, often fire on our planes merely to draw artillery and air destruction down upon hamlets. This may sound amazing, but it is a generally accepted fact, and the reason for it that once we have committed such an act, the VC can make great propaganda hay out of it.

So, anyway, if by air power we mean to win this war, thousands of Vietnamese will die and the enemy will resist far longer; we will be making a grave mistake and I am not happy about it. Of course the irony of the whole thing is overwhelming, if one is ever stupid enough to stop and think about it. Today, in Vietnam, we are using by far worse weapons and worse—less humane—tactics than the enemy. I have no doubt at all that we kill more civilians than the VC, and with what might generally be admitted are less selective, less "right" tactics. I suppose that we are on the right side in the long run here. There is no doubt in my mind that if we lose here we will be fighting this war in other countries in Latin America and Asia within a few years. But right now, we are fighting wrong, and it hurts. In the short run terms, we really should be on the other side. Take away the ties to Hanoi and Peking and the VC are fighting for the things we should always be fighting for in the world. Instead we continue to defend a class of haves which has not yet shown its real ability to understand that the have-nots must be brought into the nation. Let that be shown, and perhaps there will be an improvement in the situation, not of our making, but to our benefit.

The whole damn thing makes me slightly ill. (Or is it my throat?) This is the most exciting assignment in the world, and I will always be grateful for having it. But I do not think I will be sorry to leave. One friend of mine just got his next assignment: Luxembourg. It seems almost a joke, but it is true. There are such places. I think I am beginning to see war, which goddamn it this really is, in the least glorified of lights. That is when the fight sometimes doesn't even seem worth it, so bloody is the cost. But there is no choice, really, is there?

Counterinsurgency isn't for everyone—it's a sophisticated taste. In Vietnam it attracted the idealists. This attraction wasn't what got

THE FLETCHER SCHOOL
TUFTS UNIVERSITY

"Fletcher's GMAP is the program for mid-careers on the cusp of leadership roles and who cannot leave their jobs. It helps connect the dots between global affairs and public policy."

– **Mohamad Al-Arief,** GMAP 2018
Special Advisor
Ministry of Finance, Indonesia

Global Master of Arts Program (GMAP)

- One-year master's degree in international affairs without interrupting your career
- Hybrid program structure of 3 two-week residencies and 33 weeks of internet-mediated learning
- Diverse cohort of mid-career and senior-level professionals working around the globe in the public, private, and non-profit sectors
- Professional network of 9500 Fletcher alumni (including 1000 GMAP alumni)

GMAP CLASS AT A GLANCE

NON-US STUDENTS:	50%
COUNTRIES REPRESENTED:	20+
AVERAGE AGE:	40

fletcher.tufts.edu/GMAP

fletcher-gmap@tufts.edu • +1.617.627.2429

CLASSES START **JULY 29, 2019**
AND **JANUARY 6, 2020**

Americans into the war. We fell into Vietnam and kept on sinking out of a mistaken belief that the policy of containment required us to stake our security and credibility on not losing another square mile of Asia to communism even though the enemy were nationalists. But counterinsurgency was part of the lure. It was what kept Holbrooke and Americans like him there.

We prefer our wars quick and decisive, concluding with a surrender ceremony, and we like firepower more than we want to admit, while counterinsurgency requires supreme restraint. Its apostles in Vietnam used to say, "The best weapon for killing is a knife. If you can't use a knife, then a gun. The worst weapon is airpower." Counterinsurgency is, according to the experts, 80 percent political. We spend our time on American charts and plans and tasks, as if the solution to another country's internal conflict is to get our own bureaucracy right. And maybe we don't take the politics of other people seriously. It comes down to the power of our belief in ourselves. If we are good—and are we not good?—then we won't need to force other people to do what we want. They will know us by our deeds, and they will want for themselves what we want for them.

There was a *Peanuts* comic strip that circulated among Holbrooke and his friends in Vietnam. Charlie Brown's baseball team has just gotten slaughtered, 184–0. "I don't understand it," Charlie Brown says. "How can we lose when we're so sincere?!"

WASHINGTON, 1967

Years later, Holbrooke would describe an almost inevitable sequence of doubt and disillusionment that took place in the minds of certain Americans in Vietnam. First, they would begin to question official assessments of the war. Then, they would start to question U.S. tactics, and then, the strategy.

By 1967, Holbrooke had entered the fourth and final stage of doubt. He began to question the American commitment in Vietnam. He had returned home and taken a position as a senior aide to Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach. Nine thousand miles away from Vietnam, he could see that the true threat was on the home front, that the war was tearing his country apart. He was coming to the conclusion that the United States could never win, at least not on terms that Americans would accept. But for the few doves in government, that didn't mean, "Let's get the hell out of Vietnam." It meant, "What the hell do we do now?" That was about as far as skepticism could take

someone while he was still inside. The process of disenchantment was excruciatingly slow. Later on, people would backdate their moment of truth, their long-deferred encounter with the glaringly obvious. This was often inadvertent—they honestly couldn't believe that they were so wrong for so many years. And when they finally did begin to lose faith, they kept it to themselves and a few sympathetic friends.

Katzenbach, number two in the State Department, was having his own doubts. He began to meet with a dozen senior people from around the government every Thursday afternoon at five o'clock in his office on the seventh floor. For 90 minutes they would sit in a circle of chairs and have drinks and talk about Vietnam. Katzenbach called it "the Non-Group," because there was no agenda, no paper trail, and no one was allowed to quote anyone to outsiders. The Non-Group became a safe place to explore alternative policies—that was how deep the lying and fear ran throughout the Johnson administration. Secretary of State Dean Rusk knew but never attended so that he wouldn't be tainted by talk of peace. Holbrooke walked uninvited into Katzenbach's office and badgered him so many times that Katzenbach, who found Holbrooke's boyish enthusiasm refreshing, finally agreed to let him join the Non-Group. Holbrooke's neckties were too loud and his manner too flip for some of his colleagues, but he kept quiet unless one of his superiors asked him a question. Thus he was allowed priceless time with senior members of the foreign policy establishment, such as Averell Harriman, Walt Rostow, and McNamara's deputy, Cyrus Vance. Holbrooke was the only one of them with any experience in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, the process of disenchantment was excruciatingly slow.

On the evening of November 1, 11 elder statesmen of the Cold War assembled at the State Department for drinks, dinner, and a briefing on Vietnam. McNamara was there; he had just submitted a long memo to President Lyndon Johnson presenting a bleak view of the war, and he couldn't conceal his gloom. But Rusk remained a good soldier, and the briefing was upbeat—body counts and captured documents showed that the United States was winning. The next morning, the Wise Men filed into the Cabinet Room and, one by one, told Johnson what he wanted to hear—stay the course. The president was greatly reassured.

Katzenbach wasn't. He thought the briefing of the Wise Men had been misleading and their validation of Johnson all wrong. Holbrooke

thought so, too, and he offered to write up a dissenting memo for his boss to give to the president. Government service tends to turn written prose to fog and mud because it's far better to say nothing intelligible than to make a mistake. Not in the case of Holbrooke. In 17 pages, he laid out the strategic problem by turning to history:

> Hanoi uses time the way the Russians used terrain before Napoleon's advance on Moscow, always retreating, losing every battle, but eventually creating conditions in which the enemy can no longer function. For Napoleon it was his long supply lines and the cold Russian winter; Hanoi hopes that for us it will be the mounting dissension, impatience, and frustration caused by a protracted war without fronts or other visible signs of success; a growing need to choose between guns and butter; and an increasing American repugnance at finding, for the first time, their own country cast as "the heavy" with massive fire power brought to bear against a "small Asian nation."

North Vietnam couldn't defeat half a million American troops, but it could drain the American public of the will to go on fighting. So Johnson had two choices. He could turn all of North and South Vietnam along with parts of Cambodia and Laos into a free-fire zone and try to knock out the enemy before dissent at home grew too strong. Or he could win back the center at home, and thus more time—not with patriotic slogans and false hopes, but by reducing the United States' commitment. The first option was unlikely to work, because Hanoi's will to fight was inexhaustible. The second option might work, but it would require several steps.

Johnson should change the United States' objective—from victory over communism to a South Vietnamese government that could survive and deal with an ongoing communist threat. The United States should demand more of the South Vietnamese, militarily and politically. It should look to its own moral values and stop using airpower and artillery that killed large numbers of civilians or turned them into refugees in order to eliminate a few Vietcong: "Too many people are appalled by the brutality of the war. They feel that to fight a war of insurgency with vastly superior fire power is immoral and counter-productive. . . . Some feeling (more abroad than in the United States) is based on a feeling that the United States is calloused where non-whites are concerned." And Johnson should announce a bombing halt over most of North Vietnam, which could lead to negotiations. "Time is the crucial element at this

stage of our involvement in Viet-Nam," Holbrooke concluded. "If we can't speed up the tortoise of demonstrable success in the field we must concentrate on slowing down the hare of dissent at home."

The memo didn't call for unilateral withdrawal, or even negotiated withdrawal. It made an argument for a way to buy more time. The war in Vietnam would go on. But on the spectrum of official opinion, the view was far dovish. In vivid and uncompromising language, the 26-year-old author said that the United States could not win the war. For this reason Katzenbach hesitated to put his name to the memo. But since he agreed with it and thought its analysis brilliant, he finally signed it on November 16. He didn't show the memo to Rusk until a copy had been sent to the White House. When Rusk read it, he told Katzenbach, "I always try to find out what the president thinks before I give my advice." No word came back from the White House. Johnson didn't want to hear it.

WASHINGTON, 2009

Right after taking office in 2009, President Barack Obama had to make a decision on the U.S. military's request to send 17,000 additional combat troops and 4,000 trainers to Afghanistan. According to the Pentagon, the increase was necessary to stave off growing chaos in the south and provide security for the Afghan election in August. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had appointed Holbrooke to a position created especially for him: special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. He would report through her to the president. Obama was already a historic figure, a democratic prince, the John F. Kennedy of a new generation. Holbrooke had worked for every Democratic president since Kennedy. He badly wanted to win the trust of this one.

He thought that the president should approve the troops, not just because of the eroding situation in Afghanistan but to make good on his campaign rhetoric about the need to win in Afghanistan. Holbrooke also thought that the military was trying to squeeze the new president with deceptive numbers and a rushed decision.

He kept thinking about 1965. That was the year when Johnson, after being elected, increased the number of troops in Vietnam from 23,000 to 184,000. The parallels with 2009 and Obama were uncanny.

On February 13, Holbrooke was in Kabul on his first trip to the region since his appointment. In the Situation Room, the president and his advisers were meeting to make a final decision on the troops. Clinton was giving a speech at the Asia Society and had asked Holbrooke

to fill in for her. He sat in a darkened room in the U.S. embassy, connected by secure videoconference to the White House. It was past midnight in Kabul and Holbrooke was tired. When Obama called on him, he began to read from notes he'd written down in a lined copybook.

"Let me speak on Secretary Clinton's behalf, and at her direct instructions, in support of Option 2." This was the option to send 17,000 combat troops in one deployment rather than splitting them up into two tranches. "We do so with reluctance, and mindful of the difficulties entailed in any troop deployment. This is a difficult decision, especially at a time when Afghanistan faces a political and constitutional crisis over its own elections that further complicates your decision. As your first decision to send troops overseas and into combat—as opposed to Iraq—this decision lies at the savage intersection of policy, politics, and history."

The divide between Holbrooke and Obama began with temperament, widened with generation, and ended in outlook.

"Who talks like this?" Obama murmured. He sounded genuinely puzzled. Everyone around the Situation Room table heard him, but Holbrooke, 7,000 miles away, didn't hear and kept going.

"It is in many ways strange to send more American troops into such a potentially chaotic political situation. If we send more troops, of course we deepen our commitment, with no guarantee of success. And the shadow of Vietnam hovers over us."

Obama interrupted him. "Richard, what are you doing? Are you reading something?"

Holbrooke, onscreen, explained that the secretary had wanted to be sure the president heard her views accurately. He continued, "But if we do not send more troops, the chances of both political chaos and Taliban success increase."

"Why are you reading?" Obama insisted.

Holbrooke stopped to explain again. He managed to get through the rest of his notes, which could have been summed up in a couple of lines. But he had lost the president. He didn't understand what he'd done wrong, only that Obama sounded annoyed and ignored him for the rest of the meeting.

Holbrooke regretted reading his notes aloud. He'd done so in order not to ramble on, but it had sounded like a speech or a first draft of

his memoirs. A few younger people seated back against the walls found it exciting to hear this old lion talk about savage intersections, but no one around the table wanted to be addressed like that, and when Obama expressed irritation they could only conclude that Holbrooke was already out of favor with the new president. Which meant that nobody had to worry about him. After the meeting, Obama told his national security adviser, James Jones, that he would tolerate Holbrooke in the Situation Room only if he kept his remarks short, and that he wanted to be in Holbrooke's presence as little as possible.

The heart of the matter was Vietnam. Holbrooke brought it up all the time. He couldn't resist. He passed around copies of a book he'd recently reviewed, *Lessons in Disaster*, about the fatally flawed decisions that led to escalation. He invoked the critical months of 1965 so portentously that Obama once asked him, "Is that the way people used to talk in the Johnson administration?" It wasn't just that Holbrooke was becoming a Vietnam bore, a sodden old vet staggering out of the triple-canopy jungle to grab strangers by the shirtfront and make them listen to his harrowing tale. Obama actually didn't want to hear about Vietnam. He told his young aides that it wasn't relevant, and they agreed: Vietnam was ancient history. Obama was three years old in July 1965.

And what was Obama supposed to do with the analogy? It didn't tell him how many more troops could make a difference in Helmand Province. It told him that his presidency might be destroyed by this war. It was the note of doom in the Situation Room. It turned Holbrooke into a lecturer, condescending to the less experienced man, and that was as intolerable to Obama as flattery. He liked young, smart, ultraloyal staffers. He didn't like big competitive personalities.

The divide between the two men began with temperament, widened with generation, and ended in outlook. Obama—half Kenyan, raised in Indonesia, Pakistani friends in college—saw himself as the first president who understood the United States from the outside in. He grasped the limits to American power and knew that not every problem had an American solution. The Bush administration, and Clinton's before it, had fallen prey to the hubris of a lone superpower. Then came the Iraq war and the economic collapse of 2008, and a reckoning required the country to sober up.

Obama wouldn't say so, but his task was to manage American decline, which meant using power wisely. He embodied—his long slender fingers pressed skeptically against his cheek as he listened from the

head of the table in the Situation Room—the very opposite of the baggy grandiosity that thought the United States could do anything and the craven fear of being called weak for not trying. Obama probably wasn't thinking of the Berlin airlift or the Dayton peace accords, which Holbrooke had negotiated and which had ended the Bosnian war; Obama was thinking of the impulses that had sunk the United States in Vietnam and Iraq. The president and his aides believed these were Holbrooke's impulses too, when in fact he was only saying, "Be careful. It could happen to you." Obama didn't want to hear it—couldn't hear it, because the speaker kept distracting him with theatrics and bombast worthy of Johnson himself. So Obama told Jones, and Jones told Clinton, and Clinton told Holbrooke: stop it with Vietnam.

"They don't think they have anything to learn from Vietnam," she said.

"They're going to make the same mistakes!" Holbrooke replied.

Holbrooke confessed to his friend Gelb that even Clinton wasn't interested.

He tried to stop, but it was impossible. How could he not be haunted? There was nothing new under the sun. Somehow, after a half-century excursion across the heights of American greatness, the country had returned to the exact same place. All the questions in Afghanistan had been the questions in Vietnam. Could the United States transform Afghan society? If not, could Americans still win the war? Did our very effort make it less likely? What leverage did we have? Should we get rid of the Afghan leader? Could we talk our way out?

"It is beyond ironic that 40+ years later we are back in Vietnam," Holbrooke wrote in his diary. "Of course, everything is different—and everything is the same. And somehow, I am back in the middle of it, the only senior official who really lived it. I had not thought much about it for years, now it comes back every day. Every program has its prior incarnation—mostly unsuccessful. . . . I think we must recognize that military success is not possible, + we must seek a negotiation. But with who? The Taliban are not Hanoi, + their alliance with Al Qaeda is a deal-breaker."

Here was the paradox: he knew from Vietnam that what the United States was doing in Afghanistan wouldn't work—but he thought he could do it anyway. And there was something else. If he applied the real lesson of Vietnam—don't—he would be out of a job. And then who would he be?

I'm from America, and I'm here to help: Holbrooke in Pakistan, June 2009

MOHAMMAD SAJJAD / AP

Over time, he learned to save Vietnam for his staff. One day, as he sat through another White House meeting on Afghanistan, listening to another optimistic military briefing, a quote surfaced from the deep past, and he scribbled it down on a scrap of paper and took it back to the office to show his young aides, who of course had no idea where it came from: "How can we lose when we're so sincere?"

In the fall of 2009, Obama faced another decision on troops. His new commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, was asking for 40,000 troops in addition to the earlier 21,000. The latest increase would put the total number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan at more than 100,000. McChrystal had been in Afghanistan since June, traveling around the country, learning the state of the war, and he had come to a conclusion: without a surge, Afghanistan would go into what he called "a death spiral." McChrystal's troop request had leaked, and Obama and his advisers felt boxed in again by the military.

Over ten weeks in the fall of 2009, Obama presided at no fewer than nine sessions of his National Security Council, two or three hours at a time. In his diary, Holbrooke once called the Situation Room "a room that, to me, symbolizes the problem; a windowless below-ground room in which the distance from real knowledge to people is at its very greatest—very high-ranking people who know very little make grand (or

not so grand) decisions, or maybe (as in the Clinton years so often) no decisions at all." There had been an Afghanistan strategy review in the last months of the Bush administration, and there had been another in Obama's first weeks in office, and here they were again, this time a marathon review: a sure sign of a troubled war, like the many fact-finding missions Kennedy had sent to South Vietnam.

The discussion ran up against the fundamental contradictions of the war. Obama knew them as well as anyone. Around and around they went in the Situation Room as the weeks dragged on and Obama, crisp and lawyerly, listened and asked hard questions.

Let's get started.

Why are we in Afghanistan?

Because al Qaeda attacked us from Afghanistan. Our objective is to prevent another attack, and ultimately to destroy al Qaeda.

But al Qaeda is in Pakistan.

If the Taliban take power again in Afghanistan, al Qaeda could regain its safe haven there.

But al Qaeda already has a safe haven in western Pakistan—not to mention in Somalia and Yemen and the African Sahel. Why do we need 100,000 troops and a counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan to go after 100 al Qaeda members in the tribal areas of Pakistan?

Pakistan, our supposed ally, is actually supporting our enemies. The Pakistanis won't stand for American troops on their soil. All we can do is covert ops, intelligence collection, drone strikes in the tribal areas against militants, some of whom are attacking Pakistani targets—even that is very unpopular.

What do we really know about the Taliban? Are we sure they will allow al Qaeda back into Afghanistan?

No, but they refuse to renounce al Qaeda.

Why not do a counterterrorism campaign: drones and a few thousand Special Forces and spies going after the hard-core bad guys?

That's what we've been trying since 2001, and it hasn't worked. Only counterinsurgency will give the Afghan government the breathing space to win the support of the people and gain strength until it can defend itself.

But classic counterinsurgency requires hundreds of thousands of troops.

So we'll limit ourselves to protecting population centers and key lines of communication until the Afghan army gets bigger and better.

NOW AVAILABLE

PART OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY

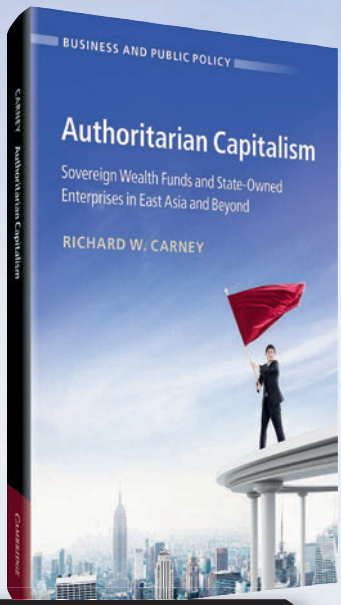
Authoritarian Capitalism

Sovereign Wealth Funds and State-Owned Enterprises in East Asia and Beyond

RICHARD W. CARNEY, *China Europe International Business School*

"Authoritarian Capitalism arrives at a critical historical moment. With the earlier wave of democratization stalled or in reverse, we are forced to revisit the nature of autocracy. Richard Carney takes this work in a new and exciting direction by looking at the foreign economic policies of authoritarian regimes, including how they propagate state-led development models and use their sovereign wealth funds. This is an ambitious contribution that goes beyond economic issues to changing politics in the Asia-Pacific and even questions of liberal and illiberal grand strategies."

Stephan Haggard,
Krause Distinguished Professor, University of California San Diego



Winner of the Masayoshi Ohira Book Prize

'The book offers a fascinating analysis of state ownership of foreign firms especially in Asia.'
Takeo Hoshi, Henri H. and Tomoye Takahashi Senior Fellow in Japanese Studies and Professor of Finance, Stanford University

'Masterful academic work, based on rigorous data analysis and rich case studies of five East Asian countries....'
Sea-Jin Chang, Lim Kim San Chair Professor of Business Administration, National University of Singapore

'A fantastic piece of scholarship!'
Seung Ho Park, Parkland Chair Professor and Director of the Center for Emerging Market Studies, China Europe International Business School

'The book makes a novel and important argument with global implications.'
Krislert Samphantharak, School of Global Policy and Strategy, University of California San Diego

Visit **cambridge.org/Carney** for more information on this title

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

What if the enemy keeps getting bigger and better?

We might need to send more troops in a year or two.

What if our presence makes it bigger and better?

We'll begin to transfer responsibility to the Afghan government in two to three years.

What if the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, wants us to stick around for the fat contracts and the combat brigades while his government continues to prey on the people? Counterinsurgency can only succeed with a reliable partner, and the election did Karzai's legitimacy great harm. What if the Afghan government lacks the ability or will to win the support of the people?

There's no good answer.

And what if the Pakistani military will never change its strategy?

There's no good answer.

Holbrooke sat at the far end of the table, next to General David Petraeus with his four stars, and took notes. Among his notes were private interjections. When McChrystal showed a slide that changed his definition of the American goal from "defeat the Taliban" to "the Taliban-led insurgency no longer poses an existential threat to the government of Afghanistan," without changing the number of troops, Holbrooke wrote: "Wow! Words can be used to mean whatever we want them to mean." Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, proposed joint U.S.-Chinese aid programs in Pakistan: "NONSENSE." Robert Gates, the secretary of defense, argued that civilian aid to Pakistan might cause a backlash against the United States: "THIS IS NONSENSE!" Vice President Joe Biden said that every one of Pakistan's interests was also America's interest: "HUH?"

The analogy for Afghanistan was Vietnam, the war that had been barred from discussion.

Holbrooke kept the caustic skepticism to himself. He no longer gave speeches or read from notes. He complimented the president less often. He spoke very little, and when he did, it was on subjects that were part of his job but peripheral to the main discussion—agriculture and police corruption. He advocated a "civilian surge"—the State Department's plan to recruit more than a thousand American experts and deploy them to Afghanistan's cities and districts. The civilian surge gave Holbrooke a place at the table and credibility with the generals, who were always

complaining that the civilian effort lagged behind. So at the White House he was careful not to say what he really thought—but back at the office, when his adviser on aid, Sepideh Keyvanshad, who did not believe that more was better in Afghanistan, asked him, "Why are we sending all these people? It won't make any difference," Holbrooke shot back, "You don't think I know that?"

In the 1990s, during meetings on the war in Bosnia, Holbrooke had said whatever he believed—hadn't hesitated to contradict his boss, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, or even President Clinton, when he thought they were wrong. Now, in the 47th year of his career, he grew careful. He felt that he didn't have the standing with Obama to go up against the military, least of all the famous general sitting just to his left. He had no supporters in the room except Hillary Clinton, and because he was wounded, and his need for her was existential, he couldn't allow a glimmer of light or a breath of air between them. And she was with the generals. As a result, almost no one knew what Holbrooke thought of the surge. He kept it from his colleagues and his staff.

On Columbus Day weekend, he stayed up one night till four in the morning drafting a nine-page memo for Clinton. He rewrote it several times in the following days, still not satisfied. It goes straight back to the memo he wrote for Johnson in the fall of 1967, the one about Napoleon's Russia campaign. It has the same clarity, the same ice-blue gaze at a difficult reality.

> Like you, I believe in the possibilities of American leadership, and I am not a pessimist by nature. I hope my judgments are wrong. In 1965, over the course of a week, Lyndon Johnson had the same kind of discussions we are having now, but came up with the wrong answers. In 2002–3 George W. Bush never even really consulted his own Secretary of State before committing himself to the Iraq war. Now it is our turn, and Barack Obama deserves credit for having lengthy discussions and listening to everyone before making his decisions. But the parameters of the debate have been defined almost entirely by the military, and I do not believe the full political, regional, and global implications of McChrystal's requests have been adequately discussed.

Holbrooke believed that counterinsurgency would never succeed in Afghanistan. Historically it had worked in colonial wars, where it required a lot of coercion, and in wars where the enemy had no cross-border sanctuary. In Iraq, Petraeus' counterinsurgency strategy had

depended on specific political developments in the Shiite and Sunni communities. The analogy for Afghanistan was none of these. It was Vietnam, the war that had been barred from discussion.

Rather than securing the Afghan population, 100,000 U.S. troops would only confirm the Taliban narrative of an infidel army of occupation supporting a puppet government. Everyone said that this was a political war, but Holbrooke pointed out that the review had ignored politics—the election disaster, the cancer of corruption, Karzai's illegitimacy. The discussions had focused almost entirely on troop numbers—but what kind of government would tens of thousands of new troops be sent to support? "The current government does not have sufficient legitimacy and appeal to motivate hundreds of thousands of Afghans to die for it," he wrote. "While a substantial portion of the Afghan population is strongly motivated to fight the Taliban, their principal motivation is usually ethnic and tribal, not any commitment to the values supposedly represented by the government in Kabul."

He wasn't arguing against sending more troops—not in a memo to Clinton, anyway. (He told Gelb privately that if it were up to him, they'd send just 4,500 advisers, but he couldn't tell Clinton that, not even discreetly.) A U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan would "set off a cycle of uncontrollable events that could seriously damage our most vital interests," he wrote. It was a kind of soft domino theory—not that neighboring governments would topple one after another, but the whole region stretching from the Middle East to India, with nuclear weapons and numerous insurgencies and jihadist groups, would be destabilized. Instead of a way out, Holbrooke was seeking a policy that allowed the United States to stay.

The country didn't want to hear this, and neither did Obama, but Americans needed to be long-distance runners in Afghanistan. That was why Holbrooke kept saying it would be the longest American war. A big surge promised too much, to both Americans and Afghans, and would soon play out in predictable ways, with calls for yet more troops or a rapid departure. A more modest number—Holbrooke settled on 20,000 to 25,000, just one combat brigade and the rest trainers and advisers to the Afghan army—would hold off the Taliban and the American public while giving a new political strategy time to work. "And time, the commodity we need most to succeed, is in the shortest supply." More time—that had been the theme of his Napoleon-in-Russia memo, too.

What would a political strategy look like? That part wasn't clear—solutions for Afghanistan were never as persuasive as critiques. Holbrooke included a brief, vague paragraph on "reintegration and reconciliation"—"the biggest missing piece of our policy." Reintegration meant bringing in low-level Taliban defectors. Reconciliation meant talking to the Taliban leadership. But Clinton didn't want to hear of peace talks, and neither did the military, and neither did the White House. Talking to the enemy—the only way to end the war—was never part of the strategy review.

NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON, 2010

> Yesterday I went to the final performance of the revival of *South Pacific* at Lincoln Center. A fantastic production, which I found immensely moving. Men were crying, myself included. I tried to understand why that show had such an enormous emotional impact on us. For me it was the combination of the beauty of the show and its music, and the capturing in that show of so many moments in American history, the show itself opening in New York at the height of New York's greatness, 1949, the theme—Americans at war in a distant land or islands in the South Pacific—the sense of loss of American optimism and our feeling that we could do anything. The contrast with today—it was very powerful, and I kept thinking of where we were today, our nation, our lack of confidence in our own ability to lead compared to where we were in 1949 when it came out, evoking an era only five years or seven years earlier, when we had gone to the most distant corners of the globe and saved civilization.
>
> ---
>
> Even though the chances of success in any kind of dialogue with the Taliban are very small—I put it at 10 to 20 percent—it would be irresponsible of us not to try given the fact that there's no military solution to the war and given the fact that we are in a harsh spiral right now, a declining relationship with Karzai and at home. The bottom is falling out of this policy as we speak, and everybody knows it. The only way to deal with it, in my view, is to seek a political solution.
>
> Petraeus, on the other hand, believes deeply that classic counterinsurgency is the answer. By classic counterinsurgency he means what he wrote about in his doctrine. I don't believe it will work here any more than it did in other places. They can talk about the Algerian or Moroccan or Malaysian or Philippine models all they want,

but it won't work here because of the sanctuary that is Pakistan, and because of the incompetence of the government, because we don't have enough resources and we don't have enough time, and because the president is going to start drawing down troops next year. Petraeus is gambling that his brilliance—and he's undeniably brilliant—will trigger an outcome which will decimate the enemy, and then they will in effect fade away. Highly unlikely.

When I went up to see [Obama's senior adviser David] Axelrod, I said as I was leaving, "David, I know you don't want to hear this again from me, but the president is the only person in the Administration at a high level who I haven't ever given my views to directly and candidly, and I hope we can correct that." He just nodded. This has been my greatest frustration, though I do not believe that if I saw him I would actually make a difference. At least, however, I would have fulfilled my obligation to him.

The question constantly arises—I ask it of myself, friends ask me—how long do you want to do this? My answer is simple: as long as I can make a difference. We're now embarked on the most difficult period in terms of formulation of policy. Since last year, we're shaping the policy, as I wrote Hillary in my memo last week, in ways that will determine the rest of the course of the war. It's the president's last chance to turn away from the problems that are faced. We are going to try to get them to make one effort at what we call reconciliation. That's really a euphemism for seeing if there's the basis for a political settlement with the odious Taliban. But since a military victory is impossible, we have to make that search.

On December 10, 2010, during a meeting in Clinton's office, Holbrooke suffered a torn aorta. He died three days later, at the age of 69. Negotiations between the United States and the Taliban began the following year, but the war in Afghanistan continues to this day.

Return to Table of Contents

Hard Truths in Syria

America Can't Do More With Less, and It Shouldn't Try

Brett McGurk

Over the last four years, I helped lead the global response to the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS)—an effort that succeeded in destroying an ISIS "caliphate" in the heart of the Middle East that had served as a magnet for foreign jihadists and a base for launching terrorist attacks around the world. Working as a special envoy for U.S. Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump, I helped establish a coalition that was the largest of its kind in history: 75 countries and four international organizations, their cooperation built on a foundation of U.S. leadership and consistency across U.S. administrations. Indeed, the strategy to destroy the ISIS caliphate was developed under Obama and then carried forward, with minor modifications, under Trump; throughout, it focused on enabling local fighters to reclaim their cities from ISIS and then establish the conditions for displaced people to return.

From the outset, the strategy also presumed that the United States would remain active in the region for a period after the caliphate's destruction, including on the ground in northeastern Syria, where today approximately 2,000 U.S. Special Forces hold together a coalition of 60,000 Syrian fighters known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF. But in late December 2018, Trump upended this strategy. Following a phone call with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Trump gave a surprise order to withdraw all U.S. troops from Syria, apparently without considering the consequences. Trump has since modified that order—his plan, as of the writing of this essay, is for approximately 200 U.S. troops to stay in northeastern Syria and for another 200 to remain at al-Tanf, an isolated base in the country's southeast. (The

BRETT McGURK was U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS from October 2015 to December 2018. He is now Frank E. and Arthur W. Payne Distinguished Lecturer at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies.

administration also hopes, likely in vain, that other members of the coalition will replace the withdrawn U.S. forces with forces of their own.) But if anything, this new plan is even riskier: it tasks a small cohort of troops with the same mission as the current U.S. deployment in northeastern Syria, which is ten times as large.

Much remains uncertain about the U.S. withdrawal. But whatever the final troop levels turn out to be, Trump's decision to significantly reduce the American footprint in Syria is unlikely to be reversed. The task now is to determine what should come next—what the United States can do to guard its interests in Syria even as it draws down its military presence over the coming months. The worst thing Washington can do is to pretend that its withdrawal—whether full or partial—does not really matter, or that it is merely a tactical move requiring no change in overall objectives. The strategy that Trump dismantled offered the United States its only real chance to achieve a number of interwoven goals in Syria: preventing an ISIS resurgence, checking the ambitions of Iran and Turkey, and negotiating a favorable postwar settlement with Russia. With U.S. forces leaving Syria, many of these goals are no longer viable.

Washington must now lower its sights. It should focus on protecting only two interests in Syria: preventing ISIS from coming back and stopping Iran from establishing a fortified military presence there that might threaten Israel. Without leverage on the ground, reaching even those outcomes will require painful compromises. But the alternative, in which the United States pretends that nothing has changed, fails to achieve even these modest goals, and further undermines its credibility in the process, is far worse. This is a bitter pill to swallow after the progress of the last four years. But stripped of other options, the United States must swallow it nonetheless.

DEFEATING THE CALIPHATE

In September 2014, ISIS was on the march. The group controlled nearly 40,000 square miles of territory in Iraq and Syria, an area roughly the size of Indiana and home to some eight million people. With over $1 billion per year in revenue, the group used this self-described caliphate as a base to plan and execute terrorist attacks in Europe and urged its sympathizers to do the same in the United States. Closer to home, ISIS murdered, raped, and enslaved those it considered heretics or infidels: Christians, Kurds, Shiites, and Yazidis, and also Sunnis who disagreed with the group's ideology. Despite this brutality—and in part because of

it—the group exerted a powerful pull. Between 2013 and 2017, more than 40,000 people from over 100 countries traveled to Syria to join ISIS and other extremist groups fighting in the Syrian civil war.

I was on the ground in Iraq in the summer of 2014, when ISIS took the city of Mosul and then advanced on Baghdad. Even as the U.S. embassy began evacuating staff in preparation for the worst, American diplomats were getting ready to help the Iraqis fight back. Over the ensuing months, we assembled a broad coalition of governments united in their opposition to ISIS. The coalition's plan was to combine military operations against the group with innovative humanitarian and stabilization initiatives, which would ensure that those displaced by ISIS could obtain basic shelter and return home after the fighting had ended.

The U.S. campaign against ISIS is not—and never was—an "endless war."

From the start, U.S. diplomats made clear that this would not be an open-ended campaign to build nations or reshape the Middle East. The goal was to destroy ISIS and help local people organize their own affairs in the aftermath of the group's defeat. In this, the campaign was a success. Over the next four years, ISIS lost nearly all the territory it once controlled. Most of its leaders were killed. In Iraq, four million civilians have returned to areas once held by ISIS, a rate of return unmatched after any other recent violent conflict. Last year, Iraq held national elections and inaugurated a new government led by capable, pro-Western leaders focused on further uniting the country. In Syria, the SDF fully cleared ISIS out of its territorial havens in the country's northeast, and U.S.-led stabilization programs helped Syrians return to their homes. In Raqqa, ISIS' former capital, 150,000 civilians out of a displaced population of over 200,000 had returned by the end of 2018.

In short, the U.S. campaign against ISIS is not—and never was—an "endless war" of the sort that Trump decried in his February 2019 State of the Union address. It was designed from the beginning to keep the United States out of the kind of expensive entanglements that Trump rightly condemns. Iraqis and Syrians, not Americans, are doing most of the fighting. The coalition, not just Washington, is footing the bill. And unlike the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq, this campaign enjoys widespread domestic and international support.

Toward the end of 2018, the campaign was approaching an inflec-

tion point. The physical caliphate was near defeat, and the coalition was transitioning to a fight against a clandestine ISIS insurgency. Although U.S. policymakers had planned for this transition, there was some debate within the government about how long the United States should stay in Syria, as well as what its ultimate objectives there should be. Some U.S. officials, especially those in the Pentagon, were focused on completing the original mission: the enduring defeat of ISIS. In Syria, this meant destroying the caliphate and then staying for a period to help the SDF secure its territory and deny ISIS the ability to return. Yet others, particularly John Bolton, Trump's national security adviser, believed that U.S. forces should remain in Syria until all Iranian forces left and the country's civil war was resolved. This would have represented a vast expansion of the mission and required an indefinite commitment of U.S. troops, something Trump opposed.

No one in the U.S. government had seriously discussed near-term withdrawal, let alone the idea that Washington could simply declare victory over ISIS and then leave Syria. On December 11, 2018, I stood at the State Department podium and explained the United States' then official policy on Syria: "It would be reckless if we were just to say, well, the physical caliphate is defeated, so we can just leave now." Eight days later, Trump did just that, declaring via Twitter that "we have won against ISIS" and that "our boys, our young women, our men—they're coming back, and they're coming back now." This announcement left the campaign in disarray and Washington's allies in disbelief. U.S. officials, including me, scrambled to explain the abrupt change of course to our partners. After four years of helping to lead the coalition, I found it impossible to effectively carry out my new instructions, and on December 22, I resigned.

BEGINNING OF THE END

By the time Trump made his announcement, ISIS' caliphate was down to its last few towns and Syria was witnessing its lowest levels of violence since the onset of the civil war in 2011. The country was settling into what U.S. officials called "the interim end state," temporarily divided into three zones of great-power influence.

The first and largest zone is controlled by the Syrian state. This zone encompasses about two-thirds of the country's territory, perhaps 70 percent of its population, and most of its major cities, such as Damascus and Aleppo. It receives heavy military and financial support

Divide and Rule
Syria's zones of great-power influence, December 2018

from one great power, Russia, and one regional power, Iran. The second zone is the opposition enclave in northwestern Syria. Much of this zone is now dominated by al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, with Turkish-backed opposition groups controlling the rest. The Turkish military protects a cease-fire line, which Ankara negotiated with Iran and Russia, separating the western edge of the Turkish zone from the areas controlled by the Assad regime.

The third zone is dominated by the SDF and backed by Washington and its allies. Once the heart of the ISIS caliphate, this area comprises nearly one-third of Syria's territory, with significant energy reserves, great agricultural wealth, and a population of nearly four million. France, the United Kingdom, and the United States all have special forces on the ground in this zone, and the broader coalition helps protect its airspace and contributes to stabilization programs. The United States and an allied Syrian opposition group also control al-Tanf, which was formerly an ISIS garrison town.

As violence in Syria plummeted over the course of 2018, the boundaries between these zones solidified, setting the table for great-power

diplomacy. With forces on the ground and influence over one-third of the country, the United States was in a position to play an important role in shaping postwar Syria.

GREAT-POWER DIPLOMACY

A major priority for American diplomats was to reach a settlement with the only other great power in Syria, Russia, about the ultimate disposition of territory in the U.S. zone of influence. Washington had been holding bilateral talks with Moscow on Syria since the beginning of Russia's military intervention, in 2015. Initially, the goal was to prevent accidental clashes between U.S. and Russian forces. Over time, these talks became a forum for Washington to draw clear boundaries delineating areas that would be off-limits to Russian and Syrian forces and to militias backed by Iran. This worked because the United States was willing and able to enforce these boundaries: In May 2017, American jets bombed Iranian-backed militias as they approached a U.S. position near al-Tanf; the following month, U.S. jets shot down a Syrian fighter jet as it crossed into the northeastern zone near a U.S. position. And in February 2018, U.S. forces destroyed a group of Russian mercenaries who were attempting to capture an oil field held by SDF and American troops.

By the fall of 2018, the United States was preparing for intensive negotiations with Russia along two sequential tracks. On the first track, Washington would try to encourage the Russians to compel the Syrian regime to cooperate in the UN-backed peace talks known as "the Geneva process." This process had been in place since 2012, and I had grown skeptical that it would produce results. But for the first time in years, a number of favorable developments—the reduction in violence throughout Syria, the United States' presence on the ground, and the strengthening of the U.S.-Russian diplomatic channel—had combined to give the process a chance for at least some success.

If the Geneva process did not produce a breakthrough, U.S. diplomats had prepared a second track for negotiating directly with the Russians to broker a deal between the SDF and the Syrian regime. This deal would have provided for the partial return of Syrian state services, such as schools and hospitals, to SDF-controlled areas—an inevitability, unless the United States and its allies were willing to midwife a ministate in northeastern Syria—while granting basic political rights to the region's population. U.S. officials referred to this outcome as "the return of the state, not the return of the regime." Any

deal would have also allowed the United States access to airspace and small military facilities in this area in order to maintain pressure on ISIS and prevent the group's resurgence.

Such an arrangement would have met the aspirations of the Syrians who had fought alongside the coalition and ensured their continued safety. It would have also returned basic state services to the northeast, helping the local population and reducing the risk of an insurgency against SDF and U.S. troops. Russia, moreover, was beginning to accept that the U.S. presence in northeastern Syria would remain until the "final defeat" of ISIS—a phrase that appeared in a joint communique from Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in late 2017. Moscow recognized that a stable postwar settlement would require compromises between Damascus and the SDF. By the end of 2018, the contours of an imperfect but acceptable arrangement were beginning to emerge.

CAGING IRAN

The U.S. strategy toward Tehran was more adversarial. Iran's military presence in the Syrian regime's zone of influence is significant; if entrenched, it would constitute a major threat to Israel and Jordan, two vital U.S. allies. Tehran also harbors expansionist ambitions in Syria: its proxy forces have sought to infiltrate the U.S. zone in the northeast, as well as the area surrounding the al-Tanf garrison, which sits on a major roadway between Damascus and Basra, in southern Iraq. They have been deterred only by the presence of U.S. troops and the threat—or, in the case of al-Tanf, the use—of force.

Bolton's declaration that U.S. troops would stay in Syria until all the Iranians left was never realistic. Even with unlimited resources—which Trump was not prepared to commit—the United States could not hope to fully expel the Iranians from Syria. Iran's military partnership with Syria dates back to the early 1980s; Tehran sees the country as one of its most important allies and is willing to pay a high price to preserve its foothold there. Hollow saber rattling serves only to weaken U.S. credibility and distract from more realistic goals: containing Iran's presence in Syria, deterring its threats to Israel, and using diplomacy to drive a wedge between Tehran and Moscow.

In the spring of 2018, Putin publicly stated that Russia wanted to see all foreign military forces (meaning Iranian, Turkish, and U.S. forces) leave Syria after the end of the civil war. U.S. diplomats began to exploit this opening, demanding that Russia prove that it could

remove the Iranians from key areas of the country, such as the region bordering Israel and Jordan. As part of these negotiations, the Russians claimed that they could keep Iranian-supported units at least 50 miles from the Golan Heights and agreed to allow UN peacekeepers to monitor a demilitarized zone there. If the Russians could accomplish this to the satisfaction of the Israelis, Washington said it might be willing to discuss a partial withdrawal from some of its areas.

The United States coordinated its approach with Israel, which in 2017 began launching air strikes against Iranian military assets in Syria that it considered a threat. Washington had no legal authority to target Iranian forces inside Syria except in cases of self-defense, but Israel had every right to deny Iran the ability to use Syrian territory for its missile systems and other offensive technology. The combination of Israeli hard power, American diplomacy, and the U.S. military presence gave Washington a powerful bargaining chip with the Russians. Putin views Russia's relationship with Israel as central to his Middle East strategy. The United States was never going to remove every Iranian from Syria. But by working with the Israelis and leveraging its own influence in Syria, it could have secured a measure of Russian cooperation in deterring Iranian expansionism.

OTTOMAN DREAMS

The U.S. presence in Syria was also critical for managing relations with Turkey, which had been a problematic partner from the outset of the anti-ISIS campaign. In 2014 and 2015, Obama repeatedly asked Erdogan to control the Turkish border with Syria, through which ISIS fighters and materiel flowed freely. Erdogan took no action. In late 2014, Turkey opposed the anti-ISIS coalition's effort to save the predominantly Kurdish city of Kobani, in northern Syria, from a massive ISIS assault that threatened to end in a civilian massacre. Six months later, Turkey refused coalition requests to close border crossings in towns that had become logistical hubs for ISIS, such as Tal Abyad—even after U.S. diplomats had told the Turks that if they did not control their border, defeating ISIS would be impossible.

Faced with Turkey's intransigence, the United States began to partner more closely with the Syrian Kurdish fighters, known as the People's Protection Units (YPG), who had defended Kobani. The YPG struck the first blow against ISIS in Syria, and it soon proved adept at recruiting tens of thousands of Arabs into what would later become the SDF.

Turkey objected to U.S. support of the SDF. Ankara claimed that the group's Kurdish component was controlled by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish separatist group that has fought an on-again, off-again war against Turkey for nearly four decades. (The United States designated the PKK as a terrorist organization in 1997.) Although Washington never found any instances of YPG members crossing the border to fight in Turkey, nor evidence that the PKK had operational control over the SDF or that U.S.-supplied weapons were making their way into Turkey, U.S. policymakers took pains to address Ankara's concerns. The United States limited its military aid to the SDF; as a result, the group's fighters went into combat without body armor or helmets and with only limited antimine equipment. (On one of my visits to Raqqa, I learned that SDF fighters purchased flocks of sheep to detect and ignite ISIS mines.) For months, the United States attempted to placate Erdogan by delaying urgent SDF operations such as the campaign to eject ISIS from the Syrian town of Manbij, which the group was using as a hub to plan and execute attacks in Europe. Washington even sent its best military strategists to Ankara, where they tried to devise a plan to liberate Raqqa with fighters from the Turkish-backed Syrian opposition. In the end, it became clear that a joint plan with Turkey would require as many as 20,000 U.S. troops on the ground. Both Obama and Trump rejected that option, and in May 2017, Trump decided to directly arm the YPG to ensure that it could take Raqqa from ISIS.

American diplomats were able to manage the resulting tensions with Turkey thanks to the U.S. military's presence in Syria. If Turkey said there was a problem on the border, U.S. forces could ensure that the border remained calm and stable. (The United States also repeatedly invited Turkish officials to come into northeastern Syria and see the situation for themselves, which they pointedly refused to do.) When Turkey threatened to attack the Kurds across the border, as it often did, Washington reminded Ankara that U.S. troops were on the ground there, too. And the United States assured Erdogan that it would deter any demonstrated threat to Turkey from Syria. As long as U.S. troops were present, there was no reason for the Turkish military to intervene, and Ankara knew that jeopardizing American lives would carry grave consequences for its relations with Washington.

The withdrawal of U.S. forces, however, removes this deterrent. There is now a risk that Turkey could launch an incursion into northeastern Syria similar to the one it carried out in January 2018 in Afrin,

a Kurdish district in northwestern Syria not protected by U.S. troops. There, the Turkish military, working with its Islamist allies in the Syrian opposition, attacked the YPG, displaced over 150,000 Kurds (nearly half of Afrin's population), and repopulated the province with Arabs and Turkmen from elsewhere in Syria. This operation was not a response to any genuine threat but a product of Erdogan's ambition to extend Turkey's borders, which he feels were unfairly drawn by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. I have sat in meetings with Erdogan and heard him describe the nearly 400 miles between Aleppo and Mosul as a "Turkish security zone," and his actions have backed up his words. In 2016, Turkey deployed its military forces north of Mosul without the permission of the Iraqi government or anyone else; further deployments were blocked only by the presence of U.S. marines. Erdogan would now like to repeat his Afrin operation in the northeast. This would involve sending Turkish forces 20 miles into Syria, removing the YPG (and much of the Kurdish civilian population), and establishing a so-called safe zone.

The U.S. military presence bought time for U.S. diplomats to secure a long-term arrangement that might reasonably satisfy Turkey while deterring Erdogan's grand ambitions and protecting the SDF and its Kurdish fighters. Withdrawing before such an arrangement is in place risks a catastrophe—a Turkish invasion that would lead to massive civilian displacement, fracture the SDF, and create a vacuum in which extremist groups such as ISIS would thrive.

THE ARAB ROAD TO DAMASCUS

The U.S. military presence in Syria was also important for managing Washington's relations with the Arab states. The specter of three former imperial powers—Iran, Russia, and Turkey—determining the fate of Syria, a majority Arab state, has unsurprisingly generated Arab pushback, particularly from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). And with much of the Syrian opposition now either dominated by Islamists or reduced to the status of a Turkish proxy, these states have begun their efforts to return Damascus to the Arab fold.

The United States has opposed its Arab allies' push to normalize ties with Damascus, judging that this would reduce the pressure on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to participate in the Geneva process. As long as U.S. troops were on the ground in Syria and leading a successful campaign against ISIS, American diplomats could speak with authority when asking their Arab partners to refrain from reengaging

How will you change the world?

#1 Master's Program* in International Affairs

Studying in the nation's capital offers unparalleled access to scholars and practitioners actively engaged in developing solutions to complex global problems. When you join Georgetown's extensive alumni community, which spans the globe and includes leaders in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, you are preparing to make a difference.

Join the legacy, change the world.

THEMATIC FOCUSES

- *Master of Science in Foreign Service*
- *Master of Arts in Security Studies*
- *Master of Global Human Development*

REGIONAL FOCUSES

- *Master of Arts in Arab Studies*
- *Master of Arts in Asian Studies*
- *Master of Arts in Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies*
- *Master of Arts in German and European Studies*
- *Master of Arts in Latin American Studies*

SFS | GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
Walsh School of Foreign Service

SFS.GEORGETOWN.EDU

**Ranking according to Foreign Policy Magazine February 2018. IMAGE ATTRIBUTIONS: "Expo Flags" by Cesarexpo, "US Capitol Building" by Citypeek, and "Self-portait" by Cindy Gao.*

Light footprint: U.S. soldiers in Manbij, Syria, November 2018

with Assad: the U.S. presence provided a check against the Iranian and Turkish expansion that the Arab states feared. As recently as December 2018, Washington had assured its Arab allies that U.S. troops would remain on the ground in Syria for a significant period of time. This assurance helped secure large investments from Saudi Arabia and the UAE in support of civilian stabilization efforts in areas once held by ISIS, including the city of Raqqa.

Trump's promised withdrawal has upended this situation. The United States will now struggle to convince its Arab allies that it is a committed player in Syria. And since Iran and Turkey are advancing agendas in Syria that diverge sharply from those of the Arab states, it will be hard for U.S. diplomats to tell their Arab partners not to pursue their own interests as they see fit, including by working with the Syrian regime. (Washington could threaten to sanction the Arab states, but such threats are a sign of weakness when used against friends.) It was no surprise that the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus shortly after Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal. Other Arab states can be expected to follow its lead.

HARD TRUTHS

The U.S. deployment in Syria made it possible for the United States to stand toe to toe with Russia, contain Iran, restrain Turkey, hold the Arab states in line, and, most important, prevent a resurgence of ISIS.

AP IMAGES / ZOE GARBARINO

Trump's initial order to fully withdraw U.S. troops forfeited all those advantages. His recent amendment to that order, which permits 200 troops to remain in the northeast and 200 to remain at al-Tanf in the hope that other coalition troops will eventually make up the balance, could make matters even worse.

Trump's new plan has not halted his original withdrawal order. Over the coming months, the United States will be significantly reducing its troop levels in Syria without knowing whether the coalition will send replacements, which will make planning difficult and increase the risk to those troops that remain. Other coalition forces, moreover, are unlikely to deploy in sufficient numbers. In Iraq, the coalition has 22 contributing military partners. In Syria, it has three: France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The French and British deployments are small and, thanks to domestic political pressures in both countries, won't be increased by much, if at all. To make matters worse, the mission for the 200 U.S. troops in the northeast will apparently be expanded to include not only the defeat of ISIS but also the maintenance of a safe zone in the Turkish border region and the defense of the U.S. zone against Iranian, Russian, or Syrian infiltration. This is too much for 200 troops to accomplish; it would have been difficult even for 2,000. Asking such a small force to pursue such an expansive mission introduces major risks that could be avoided by maintaining the U.S. presence at its current level.

The United States will fail if it continues to pursue grand objectives in Syria.

The best thing that Trump could do would be to reverse his withdrawal order. But if he does not, the United States cannot pretend that by leaving a handful of troops in Syria, it can avoid the need to rethink its strategy. Washington must accept some hard truths. The first is that Assad is not going anywhere. He is a mass murderer and a war criminal, but at this late stage, there is no chance that the United States or anyone else will unseat him. Washington does not need to accept Assad's rule or engage with his regime, but it should no longer drain U.S. credibility and prestige by insisting that he must go—or that he must reform his own regime out of existence in Geneva. And although the United States can continue to pressure Damascus with sanctions, the economic pain it can inflict pales in comparison to what the regime has already suffered. Since 2011, Syria has seen the steepest GDP collapse of any country since Germany and Japan at the end of World War II. Washington should use

targeted sanctions to pursue more limited goals, such as ensuring that Syrian refugees can return from Jordan and Lebanon and that the UN is allowed to operate throughout the country, including in the SDF-controlled areas of the northeast. Using sanctions in pursuit of unachievable aims, such as the removal of Assad, will only create black markets that benefit extremists and increase the suffering of ordinary Syrians.

A second, related truth is that the Arab states will now reengage with Damascus. Resistance to this trend from Washington will only frustrate the Arab states and encourage them to conduct their diplomacy behind Washington's back. A better approach would be for the United States to work with its Arab partners to craft a realistic agenda for dealing with Damascus—for instance, by encouraging the Arab states to condition their renewed relations with Syria on confidence-building measures from the Assad regime, such as a general amnesty for military-age males who fled the country or joined opposition groups and now want to return to regime-controlled territory. Limited, conditional Arab openings to Damascus might also begin to dilute Iran and Russia's monopoly of influence in Syria.

The United States must also accept that Turkey, although a treaty ally, is not an effective partner. U.S. diplomats continue to hope that by working with Turkey on Syria, they can break Ankara's drift toward authoritarianism and a foreign policy that works against U.S. interests. They cannot. Turkey was a problematic ally well before any disagreement over Syria. Over the past decade, Ankara has helped Iran avoid U.S. sanctions, held U.S. citizens hostage, and used migration as a tool to blackmail Europe. More recently, it has begun to purchase Russian antiaircraft systems over the objections of NATO and has actively supported—along with China, Iran, and Russia—President Nicolás Maduro's authoritarian regime in Venezuela. Turkey wants U.S. support for its project to extend its territory 20 miles into northeastern Syria, even as it refuses to do anything about al Qaeda's entrenchment in northwestern Syria. Washington should have no part of this cynical agenda. It should make clear to Ankara that a Turkish attack on the SDF—even after the U.S. withdrawal—will carry serious consequences for the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

Finally, the United States must recognize that Russia is now the main power broker in Syria. Washington has no relations with Damascus or Tehran, so it will have to work with Moscow to get anything done. Russia and the United States have some overlapping

interests in Syria: both want the country to retain its territorial integrity and deny a safe haven to ISIS and al Qaeda, and both have close ties with Israel. The Syrian crisis cannot be resolved without direct engagement between Moscow and Washington, and the United States should isolate the Syrian problem from other aspects of its troubled and adversarial relationship with Russia.

BACK TO REALITY

Given these hard truths, the United States will fail if it continues to pursue grand objectives in Syria. Instead, Washington should realign its ends with its newly limited means. It must focus now on two interests: denying Iran a fortified military presence that might threaten Israel and preventing a resurgence of ISIS.

Denying Iran a fortified military presence is a far more modest aim than the ones stated by Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Before Trump issued his withdrawal order, Bolton had declared that U.S. forces would stay in Syria "so long as the Iranian menace continues throughout the Middle East." Speaking to an audience in Cairo this past January, Pompeo declared that the United States would "expel every last Iranian boot" from Syria—this shortly after Trump had ordered every last American boot to leave. These were not realistic objectives before Trump's withdrawal decision, and they ring even more hollow afterward.

What the United States can and should do instead is lend diplomatic support to Israel as its military denies Iran the ability to use Syria as a staging ground for missile strikes against Israel. This is a goal shared by Russia, which is anxious to preserve good relations with the Israeli government and wants to prevent Syria from becoming a battleground between Israel and Iran. The aim of forestalling Iranian military entrenchment in Syria could serve as the basis for trilateral diplomacy among Israel, Russia, and the United States. If pursued smartly, such diplomacy could also begin to drive a wedge between Russia and Iran over Syria.

It will be more difficult for the United States to prevent a resurgence of ISIS. The SDF now controls the former caliphate's territory, but its resources are meager. It confronts a hostile Turkey to the north, an adversarial Iran and Syrian regime to the south, and a restless population of millions in the area it controls. The SDF is also holding thousands of hardened ISIS prisoners, including over 1,000 foreign fighters, who, if released, could become the nucleus for a revived ISIS.

American military forces, with positions across northeastern Syria and unique capabilities in intelligence and logistics, serve as an essential support for the SDF and allow it to operate as a cohesive force. If the United States withdraws—or reduces its military presence to a shell of the current one—its ability to support the SDF will atrophy, leaving the group more exposed in the outer reaches of its territory. A reduction in U.S. support will also increase the risk that the SDF's multiple ethnic and regional components will begin to fracture or find new allies—Iran and the regime for some, Turkey for others. And although ISIS is weakened, it is still a ruthless and disciplined actor. It will rapidly move to fill any vacuum left in Syria's northeast.

As the United States leaves, the SDF will need a new benefactor that can help it maintain its ability to hold northeastern Syria and protect it from Iran and Turkey. Unfortunately, the only viable candidate for this role is Russia. Moscow can offer the SDF a measure of military and diplomatic support and help the group strike a deal with the regime that would incorporate the SDF into the Syrian army and secure political rights for the population in northeastern Syria. The SDF has already offered to become a branch of the Syrian army in exchange for some political recognition of its local councils. Such an outcome is unappetizing. But it is likely the only way to preserve stability in the northeast while keeping ISIS on the back foot. Such an arrangement would not be unprecedented: former anti-regime opposition groups have been reorganized under a Russian-commanded Fifth Corps, now operating in southern Syria. For these fighters, and the Arab states that backed them, this was a better option than military defeat or subjugation by Iran. (Syria is the land of bad options.) The United States can still help shape a deal along these lines, but it should do so soon, as its influence will only diminish over the coming months.

These revised goals are modest. They reflect the unavoidable fact that Trump forfeited U.S. leadership at a decisive moment in the campaign, to the benefit of Iran, Russia, and Turkey. American policymakers will have to accept that U.S. influence in Syria is on the wane and rethink their objectives accordingly. The best way to salvage the situation is for U.S. leaders to realign their ends, ways, and means with a focus on what really matters to Washington—preventing Syria from becoming a staging ground for attacks against the United States or its allies. This is an important and achievable goal. The main obstacle to its realization is denial.

Return to Table of Contents

Spies, Lies, and Algorithms

Why U.S. Intelligence Agencies Must Adapt or Fail

Amy Zegart and Michael Morell

For U.S. intelligence agencies, the twenty-first century began with a shock, when 19 al Qaeda operatives hijacked four planes and perpetrated the deadliest attack ever on U.S. soil. In the wake of the attack, the intelligence community mobilized with one overriding goal: preventing another 9/11. The CIA, the National Security Agency, and the 15 other components of the U.S. intelligence community restructured, reformed, and retooled. Congress appropriated billions of dollars to support the transformation.

That effort paid off. In the nearly two decades that U.S. intelligence agencies have been focused on fighting terrorists, they have foiled numerous plots to attack the U.S. homeland, tracked down Osama bin Laden, helped eliminate the Islamic State's caliphate, and found terrorists hiding everywhere from Afghan caves to Brussels apartment complexes. This has arguably been one of the most successful periods in the history of American intelligence.

But today, confronted with new threats that go well beyond terrorism, U.S. intelligence agencies face another moment of reckoning. From biotechnology and nanotechnology to quantum computing and artificial intelligence (AI), rapid technological change is giving U.S. adversaries new capabilities and eroding traditional U.S. intelligence advantages. The U.S. intelligence community must adapt to these shifts or risk failure as the nation's first line of defense.

Although U.S. intelligence agencies have taken initial steps in the right direction, they are not moving fast enough. In fact, the first intelligence breakdown of this new era has already come: the failure to

AMY ZEGART is a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies.

MICHAEL MORELL is former Deputy Director and Acting Director of the CIA. He is currently Global Chair of the Geopolitical Risk Practice at Beacon Global Strategies.

quickly identify and fully grasp the magnitude of Russia's use of social media to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. That breakdown should serve as a wake-up call. The trends it reflects warrant a wholesale reimagining of how the intelligence community operates. Getting there will require capitalizing on the United States' unique strengths, making tough organizational changes, and rebuilding trust with U.S. technology companies.

A WARNING SIGN

Russia's multifaceted "active measures" campaign ahead of the 2016 election was designed to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, sow divisions in American society, and boost public support for one presidential candidate over another. Much of this effort did not go undetected for long. Almost immediately, U.S. intelligence agencies noticed Russian cyberattacks against the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign, the sharing of stolen information with platforms such as WikiLeaks, and attempts to penetrate state and local voting systems. Pointing to these events, intelligence officials warned President Barack Obama well before the election that the United States was under attack.

Yet the intelligence agencies missed Russia's most important tool: the weaponization of social media. Studies commissioned by the Senate Intelligence Committee and Special Counsel Robert Mueller's indictment of a Russian "troll farm" show that the social media operation designed to undermine the U.S. electoral process may have begun as early as 2012 and was well under way by 2014. But although U.S. intelligence officials knew that Russia had used social media as a propaganda tool against its own citizens and its neighbors, particularly Ukraine, it took them at least two years to realize that similar efforts were being made in the United States. This lapse deprived the president of valuable time to fully understand Moscow's intentions and develop policy options before the election ever began.

In October 2016, one month before the election, James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, and Jeh Johnson, the secretary of homeland security, took the unusual step of issuing a public statement about Russia's interference in the election. Even then, the full extent of the Russian effort eluded U.S. intelligence; the statement did not mention social media at all. Johnson later stated that Russia's social media operation "was something . . . that we were just beginning to

Cracking the code: at CIA headquarters, Langley, Virginia, June 2010

DREW ANGERER / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

see." Likewise, Clapper wrote in his memoir that "in the summer of 2015, it would never have occurred to us that low-level Russian intelligence operatives might be posing as Americans on social media." Indeed, the intelligence community did not understand the magnitude of the attack, which reached more than 120 million U.S. citizens, until well after the election. The Senate Intelligence Committee noted in 2018 that its own bipartisan investigation "exposed a far more extensive Russian effort to manipulate social media outlets to sow discord and to interfere in the 2016 election and American society" than the U.S. intelligence community had found even as late as 2017.

It was with good reason that the intelligence agencies did not have their collection systems trained on social media content within the United States, but Russia's social media attack was carried out by Russian nationals operating on Russian soil. They were assisted by several Russian intelligence operatives sent to the United States in 2014, with the express goal of studying how to make Moscow's social media campaign more effective. Whether the Kremlin tipped the balance in a close presidential race will never be known. What is clear, however, is that Russia's nefarious use of social media went undetected by U.S. intelligence for too long and that this failure is just a preview of what lies ahead if the intelligence community doesn't adapt to today's rapid technological breakthroughs.

INDISPENSABLE INTEL

Intelligence has always been an essential part of warfare and statecraft. "Know the enemy," the Chinese military strategist Sun-tzu instructed around 500 BC. On the battlefield, good intelligence helps save lives and win wars by pinpointing hostile forces, anticipating their next moves, and understanding the adversary's intentions, plans, and capabilities. Off the battlefield, intelligence helps leaders make better decisions by preventing miscalculations and providing timely insights into threats and opportunities. In 1962, for example, intelligence collected by U-2 spy planes gave President John F. Kennedy the time and evidence he needed to compel the Soviet Union to remove nuclear weapons from Cuba without sparking a nuclear war. Of course, intelligence can also be wrong—sometimes disastrously so, as with assessments of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction programs before the Iraq war. Intelligence is, by nature, an uncertain business that involves piecing together fragments of information about adversaries who are intent on denial and deception.

But the enduring value of intelligence comes from a fundamental reality: government leaders make better decisions when they have better information. And U.S. intelligence agencies have long been able to deliver better information than other sources. Using both human agents and technical methods, they collect secret information that U.S. adversaries are trying to hide. They combine those secrets with data from other parts of the government and open-source information gleaned from news reports, unclassified foreign government documents, and public statements, to name but a few sources. They tailor their analysis to the specific needs of policymakers and deliver it without opinion, partisanship, or a policy agenda.

These capabilities are in high demand today. But new threats and new technologies are making intelligence collection and analysis far more challenging than at any time since the early days of the Cold War. Recent annual threat assessments from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence paint a head-spinning picture of global dangers: rising great-power competition, particularly from China and Russia; growing nuclear arsenals in North Korea and along the Indian-Pakistani border; a chaotic Middle East breeding extremism; an eroding international order; and autocrats on the march from Europe to Asia. Climate change is displacing thousands, compounding existing instability. Even fighting isn't what it used to be, with

"gray zone" conflicts and "little green men" blurring the line between war and peace.

At the same time, U.S. intelligence agencies are facing new challenges generated by breakthrough technologies. In 2007, the word "cyber" did not appear once in the annual intelligence threat assessment. In 2009, it was buried on page 38 of the 45-page document, just below a section on drug trafficking in West Africa. Yet by 2012, barely three years later, then Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta warned that a "cyber–Pearl Harbor" could devastate the United States' critical infrastructure without warning. Today, an assortment of malign actors perpetrate millions of cyberattacks around the world every day. Cybercrime now generates more revenue than the global illicit drug trade.

The combination of new technologies and the rising number, complexity, and velocity of threats means more danger for the United States—and greater demands on its intelligence agencies. Consider, for example, the emerging realm of U.S. offensive cyber-operations. In the physical world, many military targets are buildings that do not move, so target lists and operational plans have shelf lives. Planners can be sure that a bomb of sufficient yield will reduce to rubble any building in the blast radius, no matter how many windows it has or whether the walls are made of concrete or wood. Not so in cyberspace, where the targets are machines or systems that change constantly, in seconds. Even tiny modifications to a target (such as the installation of a simple patch) can render a cyberweapon against it completely useless, and the ever-shifting landscape makes it difficult to predict an attack's collateral damage. As a result, target lists require real-time updating to stay useful. In this world, intelligence is more than just a contributor. As Chris Inglis, former deputy director of the National Security Agency, recently wrote, intelligence is "an essential predicate" for effective action.

OPEN SECRETS

Advances in technology tend to be a double-edged sword for intelligence. Almost any technological development can make adversaries more capable and undermine existing defenses. At the same time, it can allow intelligence agencies to do their job better and faster. AI, for instance, can both improve analysis and make enemies' information warfare nearly impossible to detect. Commercial encryption services protect the communications of U.S. citizens and policymakers but

also enable terrorists to coordinate clandestinely. Technologies such as AI, facial recognition, and biometrics can help agencies catch wanted people, but they also make traditional clandestine operations difficult.

The explosion of open-source information—the result of connecting ever more smart devices to the Internet—offers perhaps the best unclassified example of the promise and perils of new technology. Over half of the world's population is now online. By some estimates, more people will have cell phones than access to running water next year. This connectivity is turning normal citizens into knowing or unwitting intelligence collectors. Cell phones can videotape events and even record seismic activities, such as underground nuclear tests, in real time. Surveillance cameras capture much of what takes place in cities around the world. Social media, search engines, and online retail platforms expose a great deal of information about users. For analysts, this is a treasure-trove of information. Secrets still matter, but open-source information is becoming more ubiquitous and potentially valuable—both to the United States and to its adversaries.

Open-source information offers access to areas that secret sources can have a hard time penetrating.

Open-source information even offers access to areas that secret sources can have a hard time penetrating. When Russia invaded eastern Ukraine in 2014, the most compelling evidence came from time-stamped photos taken by Russian soldiers and posted on social media, showing tank transporters and Ukrainian highway signs in the background. Likewise, social media captured how Russia's sophisticated SA-11 air defense system was moved into eastern Ukraine just before the shootdown of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 and later transported back to Russia. Social media has become such a valuable resource that consoles at U.S. Strategic Command's underground nuclear command center now display Twitter alongside classified information feeds.

At the same time, easy access to data and technologies is leveling the intelligence playing field at the United States' expense. More countries, including U.S. adversaries such as Iran and North Korea, as well as nonstate actors, can now collect intelligence worldwide at little cost. Anyone with an Internet connection can see images on Google Maps, track events on Twitter, and mine the Web with facial recognition software. When U.S. Navy SEALs raided bin Laden's

compound in Pakistan in 2011, the Pakistani military did not detect the operation—but a local information technology consultant named Sohaib Athar did. As U.S. forces were landing, Athar started tweeting about hearing unusual noises. "Helicopter hovering above Abbottabad at 1AM (is a rare event)," he wrote. Athar continued unwittingly live-tweeting the raid, even reporting that an explosion shook his windows. It is easy to imagine how similar incidents could put future U.S. operations at risk.

Commercial satellites, meanwhile, now offer low-cost eyes in the sky for anyone who wants them. Until about a decade ago, the United States and Russia dominated the space market with a handful of large spy satellites that were each the size of a bus, cost billions apiece to design and launch, used highly advanced technology, and produced classified information. China has now joined that elite group. But plummeting launch costs, enhanced commercial optics, and miniaturization are spreading space technology even further. In the past five years, the number of countries owning and operating satellites has doubled, and the annual number of launches has increased by 400 percent. In December 2018, the aerospace company SpaceX launched a rocket containing 64 small satellites from 17 countries. Inexpensive satellites roughly the size of a shoebox offer imagery and analysis to paying customers worldwide. Although no match for U.S. government capabilities, these satellites are getting better day by day.

THE DECEPTION REVOLUTION

The U.S. intelligence community must figure out how to harness the open-source revolution and an array of other technologies faster and better than American adversaries. At the same time, it must balance this effort with its constitutional and ethical obligations to safeguard privacy and civil liberties.

This is easier said than done. Consider, once again, the case of open-source data. In the Middle Ages, when paper was a sign of wealth and books were locked up in monasteries, knowledge was valuable and creating it was costly. Now, creating content is so cheap that, by some estimates, the amount of data stored on earth doubles every two years, meaning that humankind will produce as much data in the next 24 months as it has throughout its entire history so far. Intelligence agencies have always had to find needles in haystacks. Today, the haystacks are growing exponentially.

A large number of private-sector companies are delivering "social listening" and other solutions that take advantage of open-source information and are able to quickly assess it. The CIA-affiliated venture-capital firm In-Q-Tel has nurtured many promising technology start-ups with seed money. But getting any technological innovations to take root inside the intelligence agencies has been a challenge, thanks to embedded contractors with their own financial incentives, bespoke and aging information technology systems, and sclerotic, risk-averse acquisition policies that make it exceptionally difficult for commercial companies, especially start-ups, to work with the government.

To stay relevant, intelligence analysts are forced to move faster—sometimes at the expense of digging deeper.

Collecting and processing all the data is only half the battle. More information is of little use unless analysts can assess what information is credible and what isn't. Credibility, enough of a challenge when it comes to secret intelligence, is an even bigger problem in the open-source world. Bloggers, citizen reporters, and other online content providers operate with different incentives that put a premium on being quick and provocative rather than correct and rigorous. As a result, the risk of error is significant.

Add to this the growing challenge of timeliness. In the era of Google, when information from anyone about anything is just a swipe or a click away, open-source content increasingly flows right into the hands of policymakers without vetting or analysis. This raises the risk that policymakers will make premature judgments instead of waiting for slower-moving intelligence assessments that carefully consider source credibility and offer alternative interpretations of breaking developments. To stay relevant in this environment, intelligence analysts are forced to move faster—sometimes at the expense of digging deeper. Competition with open sources also may exacerbate pressures for analysts to produce short-term intelligence assessments rather than longer-term, over-the-horizon analysis, something that is already in short supply.

Separating the true from the spurious will only become more difficult. AI is giving rise to a deception revolution. Russian disinformation ahead of the 2016 election pales in comparison to what will soon be possible with the help of deepfakes—digitally manipulated audio

or video material designed to be as realistic as possible. Already, commercial and academic researchers have created remarkably lifelike photographs of nonexistent people. Teams at Stanford University and the University of Washington have each used AI and lip-synching technology to generate deepfake videos of Barack Obama saying sentences he never actually uttered. As with other technologies, access to simplified deepfake code is spreading rapidly. Some programs are easy enough that high schoolers with no background in computer science can use them to generate convincing forgeries. Even the high-end computing power needed for more sophisticated deepfakes can now be acquired at relatively low cost.

It does not take much to realize the manipulative potential of this technology. Imagine watching a seemingly real video that depicts a foreign leader discussing plans to build a clandestine nuclear weapons program or a presidential candidate molesting a child just days before an election. Their denials could easily be dismissed because the evidence seems incontrovertible—after all, seeing has always been believing.

Intelligence agencies will face the Herculean task of exposing deepfakes. And unlike other forgeries, such as doctored images, deepfakes are uniquely hard to detect, thanks to an AI technique invented by a Google engineer in 2014. Known as "generative adversarial networks," the approach pits two computer algorithms against each other, one generating images while the other attempts to spot fakes. Because the algorithms learn by competing with each other, any deepfake detectors are unlikely to work for long before being outsmarted. Deception has always been part of espionage and warfare, but not with this level of precision, reach, and speed.

GETTING THE STRATEGY RIGHT

The U.S. intelligence community has taken some important steps to adapt to this rapidly changing technological landscape. In 2015, then CIA Director John Brennan created a new directorate focused on digital innovation and overhauled the CIA's structure, in part to bring digital specialists and open-source intelligence officers closer together with the CIA's traditional collectors and analysts. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency has started an AI initiative to accelerate and improve imagery analysis. The CIA, the National Security Agency, and other agencies have moved to the cloud, creating a "big-data fusion environ-

ment" that enables analysts to query large quantities of data faster and more effectively. Many other improvements remain classified.

These are promising efforts, but individual fixes are not enough. The intelligence community needs a comprehensive strategy to regain and sustain the nation's intelligence advantage in a new technological era. The 2019 National Intelligence Strategy falls far short of this goal, striking a decidedly complacent tone and containing vague exhortations to "increase integration and coordination," "better leverage partnerships," and "increase transparency while protecting national security information." Innovation is relegated to just half a page.

A national intelligence strategy for the new technology age should begin by identifying the United States' distinctive strengths and how they can be used to secure long-term advantage. Much of today's foreign policy discussion focuses on the United States' weaknesses, painting a picture of a nation that is isolated, vulnerable, and outmatched by ruthless and efficient autocrats. A new intelligence strategy should flip the script. Rather than succumbing to authoritarian envy, the starting point should be recognizing what the United States has that none of its competitors can match and how these capabilities can compensate for any vulnerabilities.

The United States surpasses its adversaries on a number of fronts. A broad array of alliances—including the Five Eyes intelligence partnership, with Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom—extends the United States' global reach and capabilities. An ethnically diverse population offers a natural edge in collecting human intelligence around the world. The United States' open society and democratic values have long encouraged the free flow of ideas and helped persuade foreign nations and individuals to join its cause. And the United States' innovation ecosystem continues to serve as an unrivaled incubator of breakthrough technologies.

Leveraging these strengths, however, will require a broad-based, intelligence-community-wide effort with input from technology companies, civil society, and academia. A blue-ribbon commission, instituted and overseen by Congress, could drive this change. It is impossible to predict what insights and initiatives this process would yield, but several areas of focus are already apparent.

On the organizational front, open-source intelligence deserves its own agency. Currently, its collection runs through the CIA's Open Source Enterprise, but this setup is akin to keeping the air force within

the army, hobbling a new mission by putting it inside a bureaucracy that naturally favors other priorities. Secrets still reign supreme in the CIA, relegating open-source information to second-class status. Open-source intelligence will never get the focus and funding it requires as long as it sits inside the CIA or any other existing agency.

Human capital will be just as essential. The current employment system in the intelligence agencies was designed for a different time, when intelligence officers spent their entire careers in the government. Today, at some agencies, many first-rate employees walk out the door after just a few years, taking their expertise and training with them, never to return. Many more never even walk in, owing to a slow and bureaucratic recruitment process. Technological expertise is particularly hard to attract and retain. And the intelligence agencies need to create more ambassadors, not just lifers—bringing young and midcareer technologists in and out of the government to improve relationships, understanding, and trust between the U.S. technology industry and the intelligence community.

Indeed, bridging the divide between the technology industry and the intelligence community is a national security imperative. For major technology companies such as Apple, Facebook, Google, and others, the surveillance programs revealed by the former defense contractor Edward Snowden in 2013 created a deep and abiding trust deficit. Twitter won't do business with intelligence agencies out of concerns about how its information will be used. A senior executive at a major technology company and a former senior executive at another leading technology firm told one of the authors that they consider U.S. intelligence agencies adversaries that, similar to Chinese government operatives, must be kept out of their systems.

The intelligence community, for its part, is more and more concerned about the willingness of U.S. technology companies to sell their products and services to foreign clients who do not share the United States' democratic principles or national interests. Google, which has some of the most sophisticated AI capabilities in the world, has said that it will not work with the Pentagon on any AI projects that could be used in making weapons, but it is considering helping the Chinese government develop a better-censored search engine. Russia's highly touted deep-learning project iPavlov uses hardware from NVIDIA, a cutting-edge California-based chip company. "We sell those to everyone," NVIDIA's vice president for business development recently said publicly. Managing this clash of commercial incentives,

privacy, and national interests requires a better working relationship between the U.S. intelligence community and Silicon Valley.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

For all that needs to change, even more important is what should not. The first priority of any transformation effort should be to do no harm to the intelligence community's most valuable asset: its commitment to objectivity, no matter the policy or political consequences. This principle explains why generations of policymakers have trusted the intelligence community's work—not trust in the sense that the intelligence is always correct (it is not) but trust in the sense that there is no ulterior motive, policy agenda, or partisan view driving it.

This core principle is being tested by a president who publicly disparages his intelligence officers and disagrees openly with their agencies' assessments. Such behavior puts pressure on the intelligence community to "call it" the president's way rather than going where the evidence leads. So far, under Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, the intelligence community is holding firm to its ethos. But the risks are high. The U.S. intelligence community can develop the best strategy for intelligence in a new technological era, but if it ever loses its reputation for objectivity, nonpartisanship, and professionalism, it will lose its value to the nation.

The Lost Art of American Diplomacy

Can the State Department Be Saved?

William J. Burns

Diplomacy may be one of the world's oldest professions, but it's also one of the most misunderstood. It's mostly a quiet endeavor, less swaggering than unrelenting, oftentimes operating in back channels, out of sight and out of mind. U.S. President Donald Trump's disdain for professional diplomacy and its practitioners—along with his penchant for improvisational flirtations with authoritarian leaders such as North Korea's Kim Jong Un—has put an unaccustomed spotlight on the profession. It has also underscored the significance of its renewal.

The neglect and distortion of American diplomacy is not a purely Trumpian invention. It has been an episodic feature of the United States' approach to the world since the end of the Cold War. The Trump administration, however, has made the problem infinitely worse. There is never a good time for diplomatic malpractice, but the administration's unilateral diplomatic disarmament is spectacularly mistimed, unfolding precisely at a moment when American diplomacy matters more than ever to American interests. The United States is no longer the only big kid on the geopolitical block, and no longer able get everything it wants on its own, or by force alone.

Although the era of singular U.S. dominance on the world stage is over, the United States still has a better hand to play than any of its rivals. The country has a window of opportunity to lock in its role as the world's pivotal power, the one best placed to shape a changing interna-

WILLIAM J. BURNS is President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the author of *The Back Channel: A Memoir of American Diplomacy and the Case for Its Renewal* (Random House, 2019), from which portions of this essay are adapted. He was a career diplomat in the U.S. State Department for 33 years, serving as U.S. Deputy Secretary of State from 2011 to 2014.

tional landscape before others shape it first. If the United States is to seize that opportunity and safeguard its interests and values, it will have to rebuild American diplomacy and make it the tool of first resort, backed up by economic and military leverage and the power of example.

ANOTHER ERA

I remember clearly the moment I saw American diplomacy and power at their peak. It was the fall of 1991, and I—less than a decade into my career—was seated behind Secretary of State James Baker at the opening of the Madrid peace conference, a gathering convened by the George H. W. Bush administration in a bid to make progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Around a huge table in the Spanish royal palace sat a collection of international leaders and, for the first time, representatives of Israel, the Palestinians, and key Arab states. They were united less by a shared conviction about Israeli-Palestinian peace than by a shared respect for U.S. influence. After all, the United States had just triumphed in the Cold War, overseen the reunification of Germany, and handed Saddam Hussein a spectacular defeat in Iraq.

On that day in Madrid, global currents all seemed to run toward a period of prolonged U.S. dominance. The liberal order that the United States had built and led after World War II would, we hoped, draw into its embrace the former Soviet empire, as well as the postcolonial world for which both sides had competed. Russia was flat on its back, China was still turned inward, and the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia faced few regional threats and even fewer economic rivals. Globalization was gathering steam, with the United States taking the lead in promoting greater openness in trade and investment. The promise of the information revolution was tantalizing, as was that of remarkable medical and scientific breakthroughs. The fact that an era of human progress was unfolding only reinforced the sense that the nascent Pax Americana would become permanent.

The triumphalism of that heady era was nevertheless tempered by some sober realizations. As I wrote in a transition memorandum for incoming Secretary of State Warren Christopher at the beginning of 1993, "alongside the globalization of the world economy, the international political system is tilting schizophrenically toward greater fragmentation." Victory in the Cold War had stimulated a surge of democratic optimism, but "it has not ended history or brought us to the brink of ideological conformity." Democracies that failed to pro-

duce economic and political results would falter. And while it was true that for the first time in half a century, the United States didn't have a global military adversary, it was "entirely conceivable that a return to authoritarianism in Russia or an aggressively hostile China could revive such a global threat."

The question, then, was not whether the United States should seize the unipolar moment but how and to what end. Should the United States use its unmatched strength to extend its global dominance? Or, rather than unilaterally draw the contours of a new world order, should it lead with diplomacy to shape an order in which old rivals had a place and emerging powers had a stake? Bush and Baker chose the second option, harnessing the United States' extraordinary leverage to shape the new post–Cold War order. They combined humility, an ambitious sense of the possibilities of American leadership, and diplomatic skill at a moment when their country enjoyed unparalleled influence.

DIPLOMATIC DRIFT

It proved difficult, however, to sustain a steady commitment to diplomacy. Successive secretaries of state and their diplomats worked hard and enjoyed notable successes, but resources grew scarce, and other priorities loomed. Lulled into complacency by a seemingly more benign international landscape, the United States sought to cash in on the post–Cold War peace dividend. It let its diplomatic muscles atrophy. Baker opened a dozen new embassies in the former Soviet Union without asking Congress for more money, and budget pressures during the tenure of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright froze intake into the Foreign Service. Between 1985 and 2000, the U.S. government's foreign affairs budget shrank by nearly half. Then, shocked by 9/11, Washington emphasized force over diplomacy even more than it already had, and it stumbled into the colossal unforced error of the Iraq war. Officials told themselves they were practicing "coercive diplomacy," but the result was long on coercion and short on diplomacy.

Early on, the Trump administration inflicted its brand of ideological contempt and stubborn incompetence on the State Department.

Throughout the long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. diplomats preoccupied themselves with social engineering and nation building,

The good old days: George H. W. Bush with Helmut Kohl and James Baker, 1990

AP IMAGES / SUSAN BIDDLE

tasks that were beyond the capacity of the United States (or any other foreign power, for that matter). Stabilization, counterinsurgency, countering violent extremism, and all the other murky concepts that sprang up in this era sometimes distorted the core mission of U.S. diplomacy: to cajole, persuade, browbeat, threaten, and nudge other governments and political leaders so that they pursue policies consistent with U.S. interests. The State Department often seemed to be trying to replicate the role of the nineteenth-century British Colonial Service.

During his two terms in office, President Barack Obama sought to reverse these trends, reasserting the importance of diplomacy in American statecraft. Backed up by economic and military leverage, and the multiplier effect of alliances and coalitions, Obama's diplomacy produced substantial results, including the opening to Cuba, the Iran nuclear deal, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the Paris climate accord.

Even so, the dependence on military instruments proved hard to break. The number of drone strikes and special operations grew exponentially, often highly successful in narrow military terms, but complicating political relationships and inadvertently causing civilian casualties and fueling terrorist recruitment. On the rugged playing fields of Washington's bureaucratic politics, the State Department too often found itself pushed to the sidelines: assistant secretaries responsible for critical regions would be squeezed out of meetings in the

Situation Room, where the back benches were filled with National Security Council staffers. The Obama administration's commitment to diplomacy was increasingly held hostage to poisonous partisanship at home. Members of Congress waged caustic fights over the State Department's budget and held grandstanding spectacles, such as the heavily politicized hearings over the attacks that killed four Americans in Benghazi, Libya.

As the Arab Spring turned into an Arab Winter, the United States got sucked back into the Middle Eastern morass, and Obama's long-term effort to rebalance the country's strategy and tools fell victim to constant short-term challenges. It became increasingly difficult for the president to escape his inheritance: a burgeoning array of problems much less susceptible to the application of U.S. power in a world in which there was relatively less of that power to apply.

UNILATERAL DIPLOMATIC DISARMAMENT

Then came Trump. He entered office with a powerful conviction, untethered to history, that the United States had been held hostage by the very order it created. The country was Gulliver, and it was past time to break the bonds of the Lilliputians. Alliances were millstones, multilateral arrangements were constraints rather than sources of leverage, and the United Nations and other international bodies were distractions, if not altogether irrelevant. Trump's "America first" sloganeering stirred a nasty brew of unilateralism, mercantilism, and unreconstructed nationalism. In just two years, his administration has diminished the United States' influence, hollowed out the power of its ideas, and deepened divisions among its people about the country's global role.

Turning the enlightened self-interest that animated so much of U.S. foreign policy for 70 years on its head, the Trump administration has used muscular posturing and fact-free assertions to mask a pattern of retreat. In rapid succession, it abandoned the Paris climate accord, the Iran nuclear deal, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and a slew of other international commitments. There have been glimmers of real possibility, including overdue efforts to get NATO allies to spend more on defense and attempts to improve the terms of trade with rivals such as China. Career diplomats have continued to do impressive work in hard places around the world. But the broader pattern is deeply troubling, with disruption seeming to be its own end and little

apparent thought given to what comes after. Taken as a whole, Trump's approach is more than an impulse; it is a distinct and Hobbesian worldview. But it is far less than anything resembling a strategy.

Early on, the Trump administration inflicted its brand of ideological contempt and stubborn incompetence on the State Department, which it saw as a den of recalcitrants working for the so-called deep state. The White House embraced the biggest budget cuts in the modern history of the department, seeking to slash its funding by one-third. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson reduced the Foreign Service's intake by well over 50 percent and drove out many of the State Department's most capable senior and midlevel officers in the course of a terminally flawed "redesign." Key ambassadorships overseas and senior roles in Washington went unfilled. What were already unacceptably gradual trend lines toward greater gender and racial diversity began moving in reverse. Most pernicious of all was the practice of blacklisting individual officers simply because they worked on controversial issues during the Obama administration, such as the Iran nuclear deal, plunging morale to its lowest level in decades. And Tillerson's successor, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, has managed adeptly his relationship with the president but has had less success repairing the structural damage.

Standing alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin at their July 2018 summit in Helsinki, Trump asserted that he was an advocate of "the proud tradition of bold American diplomacy." But Trump's view of diplomacy is narcissistic, not institutional. When dictators such as Putin see his compulsive need for attention and flattery, his attacks against his predecessors and his political opponents, and his habit of winging it in high-level encounters, they see weakness and manipulability.

TOOL OF FIRST RESORT

For all the injuries the United States has inflicted on itself in recent years, it still has an opportunity to help shape a new and more durable international order. No longer the dominant player that it was after the Cold War, the United States nevertheless remains the world's pivotal power. It spends more every year on defense than the next seven countries combined. It has more allies and potential partners than any of its peers or rivals. Its economy, despite risks of overheating and gross inequalities, remains the biggest, most adaptable, and most innovative in the world. Energy, once a vulnerability, now offers consid-

erable advantages, with technology having unlocked vast natural gas resources and advances in clean and renewable energy accelerating. The task now is to use these advantages, and what remains of the historic window of U.S. preeminence, to update the international order to reflect new realities. That, in turn, will require recovering the lost art of diplomacy.

This endeavor must start with reinvesting in the fundamentals of the craft: smart policy judgment, language skills, and a feel for the foreign countries where diplomats serve and the domestic priorities they represent. George Kennan described his fellow diplomats as "gardeners," painstakingly nurturing partners and possibilities, always alert to the need to weed out problems. Such a prosaic description may not fit well on a recruitment poster, but it still rings true today. Diplomats are translators of the world to Washington and of Washington to the world. They are early warning radars for troubles and opportunities and builders and fixers of relations. All these tasks demand a nuanced grasp of history and culture, a hard-nosed facility in negotiations, and the capacity to translate U.S. interests in ways that allow other governments to see those interests as consistent with their own—or at least in ways that drive home the costs of alternative courses. That will require modestly expanding the Foreign Service so that, like the military, the diplomatic corps can dedicate time and personnel to training, without sacrificing readiness and performance.

Reaffirming the foundations of American diplomacy is necessary but not sufficient to make it effective for a new and demanding era. The State Department will also have to adapt in ways it never before has, making sure that it is positioned to tackle the consequential tests of tomorrow and not just the policy fads of today. It can begin by taking a cue from the U.S. military's introspective bent. The Pentagon has long embraced the value of case studies and after-action reports, and it has formalized a culture of professional education. Career diplomats, by contrast, have tended to pride themselves more on their ability to adjust quickly to shifting circumstances than on paying systematic attention to lessons learned and long-term thinking.

As part of a post-Trump reinvention of diplomacy, then, the State Department ought to place a new emphasis on the craft, rediscovering diplomatic history, sharpening negotiation skills, and making the lessons of negotiations—both successful and unsuccessful—accessible to practitioners. That means fully realizing the potential of new initia-

tives such as the Foreign Service Institute's Center for the Study of the Conduct of Diplomacy, where diplomats examine recent case studies.

The U.S. government will also have to update its diplomatic capacity when it comes to the issues that matter to twenty-first-century foreign policy—particularly technology, economics, energy, and the climate. My generation and its predecessor had plenty of specialists in nuclear arms control and conventional energy issues; missile throw-weights and oil-pricing mechanisms were not alien concepts. During my last few years in government, however, I spent too much time sitting in meetings on the seventh floor of the State Department and in the White House Situation Room with smart, dedicated colleagues, all of us collectively faking it on the intricacies of cyberwarfare or the geopolitics of data.

The pace of advances in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and synthetic biology will only increase in the years ahead, outstripping the ability of states and societies to devise ways to maximize their benefits, minimize their downsides, and create workable international rules of the road. To address these threats, the State Department will have to take the lead—just as it did during the nuclear age—building legal and normative frameworks and ensuring that every new officer is versed in these complex issues.

It will also have to bring in new talent. In the coming years, the State Department will face stiff competition from the Pentagon, the CIA, and the National Security Agency, not to mention the private sector, as it seeks to attract and retain a cadre of technologists. The department, like the executive branch in general, will have to become more flexible and creative in order to attract tech talent. It should create temporary postings and launch a specialized midlevel hiring program to fill critical knowledge gaps. New fellowships can help leverage the tried-and-true tactic of using prestige as a recruiting tool, but more dramatic changes to compensation and hiring practices will be necessary to build up and retain in-house expertise.

Renewing American diplomacy will be impossible without a new domestic compact.

The State Department will also have to become more dexterous. Individual U.S. diplomats can be remarkably innovative and entrepreneurial. As an institution, however, the State Department is rarely accused of being too agile or too full of initiative. Diplomats have to

apply their gardening skills to their own messy plot of ground and do some serious institutional weeding.

The State Department's personnel system is far too rigid and anachronistic. The evaluation process is wholly incapable of providing honest feedback or incentives for improved performance. Promotion is too slow, tours of duty too inflexible, and mechanisms to facilitate the careers of working parents outdated. The department's internal deliberative process is just as lumbering and conservative, with too many layers of approval and authority.

During my final months as deputy secretary of state, I received a half-page memo on a mundane policy issue—with a page and a half of clearances attached to it. Every imaginable office in the department had reviewed the memo, including a few whose possible interest in the matter severely strained my imagination. A serious effort at reducing the number of layers in the department, one that pushed responsibility downward in Washington and outward to ambassadors in the field, could markedly improve the workings of a bureaucracy that too often gets in its own way.

AN OPPORTUNITY, NOT AN ELEGY

No matter what reforms the State Department undertakes, renewing American diplomacy will be impossible without a new domestic compact—a broadly shared sense of the United States' purpose in the world and of the relationship between leadership abroad and middle-class interests at home. Trump's three immediate predecessors all began their terms with a focus on "nation building at home" and a determination to limit overseas commitments. Yet each had trouble, some more than others, marrying words with deeds, and they ended up taking on more and more global responsibilities with little obvious benefit. Most Americans understand instinctively the connection between disciplined American leadership abroad and the well-being of their own society; they just doubt the capacity of the Washington establishment, across party lines, to practice that style of leadership.

The starting point for reversing this trend is candor—from the president on down—about the purpose and limits of the United States' international engagement. Another ingredient is making the case more effectively that leadership abroad produces beneficial results at home. When the State Department plays a valuable role in nailing down big overseas commercial deals, it rarely highlights the role of diplomacy in

creating thousands of jobs in cities and towns across the United States. There are growing opportunities for diplomats to work closely with governors and mayors across the country, many of whom are increasingly active in promoting overseas trade and investment. Policymakers have to do a better job of showing that smart diplomacy begins at home, in a strong political and economic system, and ends there, too—in better jobs, more prosperity, a healthier climate, and greater security.

The next administration will have a brief window of possibility to undertake imaginative transformations that can move the State Department into the twenty-first century and reorient American diplomacy toward the most pressing challenges. Trump's disregard for diplomacy has done substantial damage, but it also underscores the urgency of a serious effort at renewal, on a competitive and often unforgiving international landscape.

What I learned time and again throughout my long career is that diplomacy is one of the United States' biggest assets and best-kept secrets. However battered and belittled in the age of Trump, it has never been a more necessary tool of first resort for American influence. It will take a generation to reverse the underinvestment, overreach, and flailing that have beset American diplomacy in recent decades, not to mention the active sabotage of recent years. But its rebirth is crucial to a new strategy for a new century—one that is full of great peril and even greater promise for America.

The New German Question

What Happens When Europe Comes Apart?

Robert Kagan

Many have been lamenting the dark path that Europe and the transatlantic relationship are currently on, but there hasn't been much discussion of where that path leads. European weakness and division, a strategic "decoupling" from the United States, the fraying of the European Union, "after Europe," "the end of Europe"—these are the grim scenarios, but there is a comforting vagueness to them. They suggest failed dreams, not nightmares. Yet the failure of the European project, if it occurs, could be a nightmare, and not only for Europe. It will, among other things, bring back what used to be known as "the German question."

The German question produced the Europe of today, as well as the transatlantic relationship of the past seven-plus decades. Germany's unification in 1871 created a new nation in the heart of Europe that was too large, too populous, too rich, and too powerful to be effectively balanced by the other European powers, including the United Kingdom. The breakdown of the European balance of power helped produce two world wars and brought more than ten million U.S. soldiers across the Atlantic to fight and die in those wars. Americans and Europeans established NATO after World War II at least as much to settle the German problem as to meet the Soviet challenge, a fact now forgotten by today's realists—to "keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down," as Lord Ismay, the alliance's first secretary-general, put it. This was also the purpose of the series of integrative European institutions, beginning with the European Steel and Coal Community, that eventually became the European Union. As the diplomat George

ROBERT KAGAN is Stephen and Barbara Friedman Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and the author of *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World*.

Kennan put it, some form of European unification was "the only conceivable solution for the problem of Germany's relation to the rest of Europe," and that unification could occur only under the umbrella of a U.S. security commitment.

And it worked. Today, it is impossible to imagine Germany returning to any version of its complicated past. The Germans have become arguably the most liberal and pacific people in the world, everyone's choice to take on the now unclaimed mantle of "leader of the free world." Many on both sides of the Atlantic want to see more assertiveness from Germany, not less, in the global economy, in diplomacy, and even militarily. As Radoslaw Sikorski, then Poland's foreign minister, noted in 2011, "I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity." It was a remarkable thing for a Polish leader to say, and it rested on the widespread assumption that what the Germans have done in transforming themselves can never be undone.

Is that true? Is this the only conceivable Germany? With the order that made today's Germany possible now under attack, including by the United States, the world is about to find out. History suggests it may not like the answer.

ESCAPING THE PAST

As a historical matter, Germany, in its relatively brief time as a nation, has been one of the most unpredictable and inconsistent players on the international scene. It achieved unification through a series of wars in the 1860s and 1870s. Otto von Bismarck then forged it into a nation, by "blood and iron," as he put it, turning it into the peaceful "satiated power" of the next two decades. Then, from the 1890s through World War I, under Kaiser Wilhelm II, it became the ambitious German empire, with dreams of *Mitteleuropa*, a Germanized sphere of influence stretching all the way to Russia—and visions, in the words of Bernhard von Bülow, who was then Germany's foreign minister, of a "place in the sun." After the war, Germany became the cautious revisionist power of the Weimar years, only to emerge as the conqueror of Europe under Hitler in the 1930s, and then collapse into a defeated, divided state. Even during the Cold War, West Germany vacillated between the pro-Western idealism of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the realist *Ostpolitik* of Chancellor Willy Brandt. The country's domestic politics were no less turbulent and unpredictable, at least until the late 1940s. Scholars have long mused about Germany's

Sonderweg, the unique and troubled path the nation took to modern democracy, by way of failed liberal revolution, hereditary monarchy, authoritarianism, frail democracy, and, finally, totalitarianism, all in the first seven decades of its existence.

This turbulent history was a product not just of the German character, however. Circumstances played a big part, including simple geography. Germany was a powerful nation in the center of a contested continent, flanked on the east and the west by large and fearful powers and therefore always at risk of a two-front war. Germany rarely felt secure, and when it did seek security by increasing its power, it only hastened its own encirclement. Germany's internal politics were also continually affected by the waves of autocracy, democracy, fascism, and communism that swept back and forth across Europe. The novelist Thomas Mann once suggested that the question was not so much one of national character but one of external events. "There are not two Germanys, a good one and a bad one," he wrote. "Wicked Germany is merely good Germany gone astray, good Germany in misfortune, in guilt, and ruin."

It was not a foregone conclusion that democracy would take deep root in German soil.

The democratic and peace-loving Germany everyone knows and loves today grew up in the particular circumstances of the U.S.-dominated liberal international order established after World War II. The Germans transformed themselves over the postwar decades, but there were four aspects of that order, in particular, that provided the most conducive circumstances in which that evolution could take place.

The first was the U.S. commitment to European security. This guarantee put an end to the vicious cycle that had destabilized Europe and produced three major wars in seven decades (beginning with the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71). By protecting France, the United Kingdom, and West Germany's other neighbors, the United States made it possible for all to welcome West Germany's postwar recovery and to reintegrate Germans fully into the European and the world economy. The commitment also eliminated the need for costly arms buildups on all sides, thereby allowing all the European powers, including West Germany, to focus more on enhancing the prosperity and social well-being of their citizens, which in turn produced much greater political stability. West Germany had to give up normal geo-

Über alles*: Alternative for Germany supporters at a rally in Berlin, May 2014*

political ambitions, exchanging them for geoeconomic ambitions, but it was not unreasonable to believe that this was more a favor than a constraint. As U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes put it in 1946, "freedom from militarism" would give the German people the chance "to apply their great energies and abilities to the works of peace."

The second element of the new order was the liberal, free-trading international economic system that the United States established. The German economy had always relied heavily on exports, and in the nineteenth century, the competition for foreign markets was a driving force behind German expansionism. In the new global economy, a nonmilitaristic West Germany could flourish without threatening others. To the contrary, West Germany's export-driven economic miracle of the 1950s made the country both an engine of global economic growth and an anchor of prosperity and democratic stability in Europe.

The United States not only tolerated the economic success of West Germany and the rest of Western Europe but welcomed it, even when it came at the expense of American industry. From 1950 to 1970, industrial production in Western Europe expanded at an average rate of 7.1 percent per year, overall GDP rose by 5.5 percent per year, and per capita GDP rose by 4.4 percent per year, exceeding U.S. growth in the same period. By the mid-1960s, both West Germany and Japan had pulled ahead of the United States in a number of key industries, from

THOMAS PETER / REUTERS

automobiles to steel to consumer electronics. Americans accepted this competition not because they were unusually selfless but because they regarded healthy European and Japanese economies as vital pillars of the stable world they sought to uphold. The great lesson of the first half of the twentieth century was that economic nationalism was destabilizing. Both the global free-trade system and such institutions as the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community were designed to check it.

One effect of this favorable environment was that West Germany remained rooted in the liberal West. Although some leading Germans advocated adopting a more independent posture during the Cold War, either as a bridge between the East and the West or as a neutral country, the benefits that West Germans gained from integration in the American-dominated order kept them firmly planted in it. Temptations to pursue a normal, independent foreign policy were tempered not only by economic interest but also by the relatively benign environment in which West Germans could live their lives, so different from what they had known in the past.

There was an ideological component, as well. German economic success in a benign liberal world order strengthened German democracy. It was not a foregone conclusion that democracy would take deep root in German soil, even after the calamity of World War II. Certainly, no one in the late 1930s would have regarded Germany as being on a path toward liberal democracy. Even during the Weimar period, only a minority of Germans felt a deep attachment to the democratic parties and institutions of the fragile republic. They were easily dismantled in 1930, with the declaration of a state of emergency, even before Hitler's accession to power three years later. Nor had there been much resistance to Nazi rule during the war, until the final months. The disastrous defeat, and the suffering and humiliation that followed, damaged the reputation of authoritarianism and militarism, but this need not have translated into support for democratic government. The U.S. occupation precluded a return to authoritarianism and militarism, but there was no guarantee that Germans would embrace what seemed to many the imposition of a conquerer.

Yet they did, and the environment had a lot to do with it. In Soviet-occupied East Germany, Nazism gave way only to a different form of totalitarianism. But West Germany by the 1960s was deeply embedded in the liberal world, enjoying the security and prosperity of a demili-

tarized society, and the great majority of citizens became democrats in spirit as well as in form.

It helped that West Germany lived in a Europe and a world where democracy seemed to be the way of the future, especially from the mid-1970s onward. This was the third key factor that helped anchor Germany in the liberal order. The European and global environment was very different from the one in which Weimar democracy had failed, Nazism had thrived, and Germany had embarked on a course of aggression. In the 1930s, European democracy was an endangered species; fascism was ascendant everywhere and seemed to be a more efficient and effective model of government and society. In the postwar era, by contrast, the increasing strength and prosperity of the democracies not only provided mutual reinforcement but also produced a sense of shared European and transatlantic values—something that had not existed prior to 1945. This feeling came into full bloom after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the founding of the European Union in 1993. The explosion of democracy across the continent, the idea of a Europe "whole and free," as U.S. President George H. W. Bush put it, helped create a new European identity that Germans could embrace. And they did, at significant sacrifice to their independence. The pooling of sovereignty that membership in the new pan-European institution entailed, especially the replacement of the deutsche mark with the euro, and the further constraint that NATO membership imposed on German independence, would hardly have been possible had the Germans not felt bound by common ideals to the rest of Europe and the United States.

If the Germany of today is a product of the liberal world order, it is time to think about what might happen when the order unravels.

This new Europe was, among other things, an answer to the nationalism and tribalism that had contributed so much to the wars and atrocities of the continent's past. The fourth element of the new order that made it possible for Germany both to escape its past and to contribute to the peace and stability of Europe was the suppression of nationalist passions and ambitions by transnational institutions such as NATO and the EU. These prevented a return of the old competitions in which Germany had invariably been a leading player. German nationalism was hardly the only European nationalism that seemed

historically inseparable from anti-Semitism and other forms of tribal hatred, but no other nationalism had played such a destructive role in Europe's bloody past. A Europe in which nationalism was suppressed was a Europe in which German nationalism was suppressed. Germany's leading role in fostering this common European, antinationalist vision played a big role in creating mutual trust on the continent.

These four elements—the U.S. security guarantee, the international free-trade regime, the democratic wave, and the suppression of nationalism—have together kept the old German question buried deep under the soil. There was nothing inevitable about them, however, and they are not necessarily permanent. They reflect a certain configuration of power in the world, a global balance in which the liberal democracies have been ascendant and the strategic competitions of the past have been suppressed by the dominant liberal superpower. It has been an unusual set of circumstances, abnormal and ahistorical. And so has Germany's part in it.

A NORMAL STATE

Even before this liberal world order began to unravel, it was always a question how long Germany would be willing to remain an abnormal nation, denying itself normal geopolitical ambitions, normal selfish interests, and normal nationalist pride. A similar question has been front and center for years in Japan, the other power whose destiny was transformed by defeat in war and then resurrection in the U.S.-dominated liberal world order. Many Japanese are tired of apologizing for their past, tired of suppressing their nationalist pride, tired of subordinating their foreign policy independence. In Japan, it may be that the only thing holding this desire for normalcy in check has been the country's continuing strategic dependence on the United States to help it manage the challenge of a rising China. How long would Japan restrain its nationalist urges were American support to become unreliable?

The Germans have found themselves in the opposite situation. With some exceptions on the fringe, Germans remain highly conscious of their past, wary of resurrecting any hint of nationalism, and more than willing to tolerate limits to their independence—even as others urge them to lead. At the same time, unlike Japan, Germany since the end of the Cold War has not needed the United States' protection. Germans' commitment to NATO in recent years has not been a matter of strategic necessity; rather, it stems from their continuing

Diverse voices. Common purpose.

Climate change. Political unrest. Rising inequality. Today's global challenges are more urgent than ever, and tackling them requires fresh ideas and new approaches. At Heller, we arm students with the cutting-edge theoretical skills and on-the-ground experience they need to tackle tough challenges, so they have exactly what it takes to make meaningful global impact.

Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution and Coexistence

Master of Arts in Sustainable International Development

Master of Science in Global Health Policy and Management

Social Impact MBA

Master of Public Policy

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Policy

Learn more at heller.brandeis.edu

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

The Heller School

FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

desire to remain unthreateningly anchored in Europe. They have sought to reassure their neighbors, but perhaps even more, they want to reassure themselves. They still harbor fears of old demons and take some comfort in the constraints they have voluntarily accepted.

But shackles that are voluntarily accepted can also be thrown off. As generations pass, demons are forgotten and constraints chafe. How long before new generations of Germans seek nothing more than a return to normalcy?

Over the past quarter century, Germany's neighbors, and Germans themselves, have watched attentively for any signs of such a shift in German attitudes. The anxiety with which the British and the French greeted German reunification in 1990 showed that, at least in their eyes, even 45 years after World War II, the German question had not been entirely put to rest. That anxiety was eased when the United States reconfirmed its commitment to European security, even with the Soviet threat gone, and when a reunified Germany agreed to remain part of NATO. It was further dampened when Germany committed to being part of the new European Union and the eurozone.

Even in that benign setting, however, there was no escaping a return to the German question, at least in its economic dimension. As the scholar Hans Kundnani observed in his fine 2015 analysis, *The Paradox of German Power*, the old imbalance that destabilized Europe after the unification of Germany in 1871 returned after Germany's reunification and the establishment of the eurozone. Germany once again became the dominant force in Europe. Central Europe became Germany's supply chain and effectively part of "the greater German economy," a twenty-first-century realization of *Mitteleuropa*. The rest of Europe became Germany's export market.

When the eurozone crisis hit in 2009, a new vicious cycle set in. Germany's economic dominance allowed it to impose its preferred anti-debt policies on the rest of Europe, making Berlin the target of anger among Greeks, Italians, and others who had once blamed the EU bureaucracy in Brussels for their hardships. Germans were angry, too, resentful at bankrolling other people's profligate ways. Outside Germany, there was talk of an anti-German "common front," and inside Germany, there was a sense of victimhood and a revival of old fears of encirclement by the "weak economies." It was, as Kundnani suggested, a "geo-economic version of the conflicts within Europe that followed unification in 1871."

But at least it was only economic. The disputes were among allies and partners, all democracies, all part of the common European project. As a geopolitical matter, therefore, the situation was "benign"—or so it could still seem in January 2015, when Kundnani published his book.

Four years on, there is less cause for reassurance. Things have again changed. Each of the four elements of the postwar order that have contained the German question is now up in the air. Nationalism is on the rise across Europe; democracy is receding in some parts of the continent and is under pressure everywhere; the international free-trade regime is under attack, chiefly by the United States; and the American security guarantee has been cast in doubt by the U.S president himself. Given Europe's history, and Germany's, might not these changing circumstances once again bring about a change in the behavior of Europeans, including the Germans?

AFTER ORDER

If the Germany of today is a product of the liberal world order, it is time to think about what might happen when the order unravels. Consider the Europe in which Germans now live. To their east, the once democratic governments of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have entered varying stages of descent into illiberalism and authoritarianism. To the south, Italy is governed by nationalist and populist movements with a questionable commitment to liberalism and even less allegiance to the eurozone's economic discipline. To the west, an increasingly troubled and resentful France is one election away from a nationalist electoral victory that will hit Europe like an earthquake. It will also drive a final nail into the coffin of the Franco-German partnership around which European peace was built 70 years ago.

Then there is the United Kingdom's departure from Europe. In 2016, as the vote on Brexit approached, Prime Minister David Cameron asked, "Can we be so sure that peace and stability on our continent are assured beyond any shadow of doubt?" It was the right question, for Brexit will indeed contribute to Europe's destabilization by exacerbating the imbalance of power and leaving an already weakened France alone to face a powerful but increasingly isolated Germany. It is also another victory for nationalism, another blow to the institutions that were established to address the German question and to keep Germany moored in the liberal world.

In the coming years, Germans may find themselves living in a largely renationalized Europe, with blood-and-soil parties of one type or another in charge of all the major powers. Could the Germans under those circumstances resist a return to a nationalism of their own? Would German politicians not face pressures, even more than they already do, to look out for German interests in a Europe and a world where all the others were surely looking out for their own? Even today, a right-wing nationalist party, Alternative for Germany, holds the third-largest number of seats in the Bundestag. The party is guided by ideologues who are tired of the *Schuldkult* (cult of guilt) and blame the influx of foreigners on German politicians they call, as one party leader did, "puppets of the victor powers of the Second World War." There is no reason why a party espousing a more mainstream, less offensive version of such sentiments might not find its way into power at some point. As the historian Timothy Garton Ash has observed, a "cultural struggle for Germany's future" is already under way.

American policy seems bent on creating the perfect European storm.

Nor can one assume that in a world of increasing political and economic nationalism, European countries will continue to disavow military power as a tool of international influence. Even today, Europeans acknowledge that their postmodern experiment of moving beyond military power has left them disarmed in a world that never shared their optimistic, Kantian perspective. Europeans still cling to the hope that global security will be preserved largely without them and that they can avoid the painful spending choices they would have to make if they became responsible for their own defense. It is fanciful to imagine that they will never be forced in that direction, however. Fifteen years ago, most Europeans were comfortable playing Venus to the United States' Mars and criticized Americans for their archaic reliance on hard power. But Europe was able to become Venus thanks to historical circumstances—not least the relatively peaceful liberal order created and sustained by the United States. With Russia more willing to use force to accomplish its objectives and the United States retreating from its foreign commitments, that world is vanishing. Setting aside the possibility that human nature can be permanently transformed, there is nothing to stop Europeans from returning to the power politics that dominated their continent for millennia. And if

the rest of Europe ends up following that path, it will be hard for even the most liberal Germany not to join it—if only in self-defense.

There has always been something ironic about the American complaint that Europeans don't spend enough on defense. They don't because the world seems relatively peaceful and secure to them. When the world is no longer peaceful and secure, they probably will rearm, but not in ways that will benefit Americans.

THE GATHERING STORM

If one were devising a formula to drive Europe and Germany back to some new version of their past, one could hardly do a better job than what U.S. President Donald Trump is doing now. Overtly hostile to the EU, the Trump administration is encouraging the renationalization of Europe, as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo did in Brussels at the end of 2018, when he gave a speech touting the virtues of the nation-state. In the European struggle that has pitted liberals against illiberals and internationalists against nationalists, the Trump administration has placed its thumb on the scales in favor of the two latter groups. It has criticized the leaders of the European center-right and center-left, from German Chancellor Angela Merkel to French President Emmanuel Macron to British Prime Minister Theresa May, while embracing the leaders of the populist illiberal right, from Viktor Orban in Hungary to Marine Le Pen in France to Matteo Salvini in Italy to Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Poland. It was in Germany, of all places, where the U.S. ambassador, Richard Grenell, expressed in an interview the desire to "empower" Europe's "conservatives," by which he did not mean the traditional German right-of-center party of Merkel.

Besides encouraging right-wing nationalism and the dissolution of pan-European institutions, the Trump administration has turned against the global free-trade regime that undergirds European and German political stability. The president himself has specifically targeted Germany, complaining of its large trade surplus and threatening a tariff war against German automobiles in addition to the tariffs already imposed on European steel and aluminum. Imagine what the effects of even greater pressure and confrontation might be: a downturn in the German economy and, with it, the return of resentful nationalism and political instability. Now imagine that Greece, Italy, and other weak European economies were teetering and in need of further German bailouts that might not be forthcoming. The result would be

the reemergence of the economic nationalism and bitter divisions of the past. Add to this the growing doubts about the U.S. security guarantee that Trump has deliberately fanned, along with his demands for increased defense spending in Germany and the rest of Europe. American policy seems bent on creating the perfect European storm.

Whether this storm will descend in five years or ten or 20, who can say? But things change quickly. In 1925, Germany was disarmed, a functioning, if unstable, democracy, working with its neighbors to establish a stable peace. French and German leaders reached a historic pact in Locarno, Switzerland. The U.S. economy was roaring, and the world economy was in relatively good health, or so it seemed. A decade later, Europe and the world were descending into hell.

Today, it may well be that the German people and their neighbors in Europe can be counted on to save the world from this fate. Perhaps the Germans have been transformed forever and nothing can undo or alter this transformation, not even the breakdown of Europe all around them. But perhaps even these liberal and pacific Germans are not immune to the larger forces that shape history and over which they have little control. And so one can't help but wonder how long the calm will last if the United States and the world continue along their present course.

Across Germany, there are still thousands of unexploded bombs dropped by the Allies during World War II. One blew up in Göttingen a few years ago, killing the three men trying to defuse it. Think of Europe today as an unexploded bomb, its detonator intact and functional, its explosives still live. If this is an apt analogy, then Trump is a child with a hammer, gleefully and heedlessly pounding away. What could go wrong?

WHAT IT TAKES

Shifting dynamics between global powers, the rise of new and dangerous political ideologies, and the evolution of technology into a threat against our everyday lives, are all contributing to governments, countries, and society at large undergoing dramatic and far-reaching transformations. While each issue that arises poses its own dilemma, they all are undeniably intertwined. It is the global professional with the insight and understanding of the complex factors at play, who will be of greatest value.

Whether you are currently working or seek to pursue a career in government, the private sector or an NGO, the NYU School of Professional Studies **Center for Global Affairs** offers degree programs that prepare you for the pressing issues we face. Our interdisciplinary approach uniquely positions you to problem-solve in innovative ways.

Study with leading international experts in the heart of NYC, while benefiting from Global Field Intensives, guest lecturers, and the deep experience of faculty members who have made these issues their life's work. Gain the **NYU** education that sets you apart and gives you what it takes to succeed now and in the years to come.

CENTER FOR GLOBAL AFFAIRS

APPLY sps.nyu.edu/applygrad

ATTEND AN INFO. SESSION
June 13, 2019 • 6:00 - 8:00 pm
7 East 12th Street, New York, NY
RSVP **sps.nyu.edu/graduate-events12d**

LEARN MORE
sps.nyu.edu/cga01 • 212-998-7100

REQUEST INFO. sps.nyu.edu/gradinfo12d

(NEW) MS IN GLOBAL SECURITY, CONFLICT, AND CYBERCRIME
Designed to prepare professionals for cyber-related roles in government, the private sector, and NGOs. Explores cyber issues—disinformation, espionage, and terrorists' use of emerging technologies and media—through an interdisciplinary lens.

MS IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS with concentrations in: Environment/Energy Policy • Global Economy • Global Gender Studies • Human Rights and International Law • International Development and Humanitarian Assistance • International Relations/Global Futures Peacebuilding • Transnational Security

DOMESTIC APPLICATION DEADLINE:
FALL Semester 2019 - Final: July 1, 2019

NYU | SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

The New Revolution in Military Affairs

War's Sci-Fi Future

Christian Brose

In 1898, a Polish banker and self-taught military expert named Jan Bloch published *The Future of War*, the culmination of his long obsession with the impact of modern technology on warfare. Bloch foresaw with stunning prescience how smokeless gunpowder, improved rifles, and other emerging technologies would overturn contemporary thinking about the character and conduct of war. (Bloch also got one major thing wrong: he thought the sheer carnage of modern combat would be so horrific that war would "become impossible.")

What Bloch anticipated has come to be known as a "revolution in military affairs"—the emergence of technologies so disruptive that they overtake existing military concepts and capabilities and necessitate a rethinking of how, with what, and by whom war is waged. Such a revolution is unfolding today. Artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, ubiquitous sensors, advanced manufacturing, and quantum science will transform warfare as radically as the technologies that consumed Bloch. And yet the U.S. government's thinking about how to employ these new technologies is not keeping pace with their development.

This is especially troubling because Washington has been voicing the same need for change, and failing to deliver it, ever since officials at the U.S. Department of Defense first warned of a coming "military-technical revolution," in 1992. That purported revolution had its origins in what Soviet military planners termed "the reconnaissance-strike complex" in the 1980s, and since then, it has been called "network-

CHRISTIAN BROSE is Head of Strategy at Anduril Strategies, a Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the author of a forthcoming book on the future of warfare. He was formerly Staff Director of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. This article is adapted from a paper presented to the Aspen Strategy Group in August 2018.

centric warfare" during the 1990s, "transformation" by U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in these pages in 2002, and "the third offset strategy" by Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work in 2014. But the basic idea has remained the same: emerging technologies will enable new battle networks of sensors and shooters to rapidly accelerate the process of detecting, targeting, and striking threats, what the military calls the "kill chain."

The idea of a future military revolution became discredited amid nearly two decades of war after 2001 and has been further damaged by reductions in defense spending since 2011. But along the way, the United States has also squandered hundreds of billions of dollars trying to modernize in the wrong ways. Instead of thinking systematically about buying faster, more effective kill chains that could be built now, Washington poured money into newer versions of old military platforms and prayed for technological miracles to come (which often became acquisition debacles when those miracles did not materialize). The result is that U.S. battle networks are not nearly as fast or effective as they have appeared while the United States has been fighting lesser opponents for almost three decades.

Yet if ever there were a time to get serious about the coming revolution in military affairs, it is now. There is an emerging consensus that the United States' top defense-planning priority should be contending with great powers with advanced militaries, primarily China, and that new technologies, once intriguing but speculative, are now both real and essential to future military advantage. Senior military leaders and defense experts are also starting to agree, albeit belatedly, that when it comes to these threats, the United States is falling dangerously behind.

This reality demands more than a revolution in technology; it requires a revolution in thinking. And that thinking must focus more on how the U.S. military fights than with what it fights. The problem is not insufficient spending on defense; it is that the U.S. military is being countered by rivals with superior strategies. The United States, in other words, is playing a losing game. The question, accordingly, is not how new technologies can improve the U.S. military's ability to do what it already does but how they can enable it to operate in new ways. If American defense officials do not answer that question, there will still be a revolution in military affairs. But it will primarily benefit others.

It is still possible for the United States to adapt and succeed, but the scale of change required is enormous. The traditional model of

U.S. military power is being disrupted, the way Blockbuster's business model was amid the rise of Amazon and Netflix. A military made up of small numbers of large, expensive, heavily manned, and hard-to-replace systems will not survive on future battlefields, where swarms of intelligent machines will deliver violence at a greater volume and higher velocity than ever before. Success will require a different kind of military, one built around large numbers of small, inexpensive, expendable, and highly autonomous systems. The United States has the money, human capital, and technology to assemble that kind of military. The question is whether it has the imagination and the resolve.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES, OLD PROBLEMS

Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies will change the way war is fought, but they will not change its nature. Whether it involves longbows or source code, war will always be violent, politically motivated, and composed of the same three elemental functions that new recruits learn in basic training: move, shoot, and communicate.

Movement in warfare entails hiding and seeking (attackers try to evade detection; defenders try to detect them) and penetrating and repelling (attackers try to enter opponents' space; defenders try to deny them access). But in a world that is becoming one giant sensor, hiding and penetrating—never easy in warfare—will be far more difficult, if not impossible. The amount of data generated by networked devices, the so-called Internet of Things, is on pace to triple between 2016 and 2021. More significant, the proliferation of low-cost, commercial sensors that can detect more things more clearly over greater distances is already providing more real-time global surveillance than has existed at any time in history. This is especially true in space. In the past, the high costs of launching satellites required them to be large, expensive, and designed to orbit for decades. But as access to space gets cheaper, satellites are becoming more like mobile phones—mass-produced devices that are used for a few years and then replaced. Commercial space companies are already fielding hundreds of small, cheap satellites. Soon, there will be thousands of such satellites, providing an unblinking eye over the entire world. Stealth technology is living on borrowed time.

On top of all of that, quantum sensors—which use the bizarre properties of subatomic particles, such as their ability to be in two different places at once—will eventually be able detect disruptions in the environment, such as the displacement of air around aircraft or water around

The competition: a CH-7 drone on display in Zhuhai, China, November 2018

AP IMAGES / SHAN HE / IMAGINECHINA

submarines. Quantum sensors will likely be the first usable application of quantum science, and this technology is still many years off. But once quantum sensors are fielded, there will be nowhere to hide.

The future of movement will also be characterized by a return of mass to the battlefield, after many decades in which the trend was moving in the opposite direction—toward an emphasis on quality over quantity—as technology is enabling more systems to get in motion and stay in motion in more places. Ubiquitous sensors will generate exponentially greater quantities of data, which in turn will drive both the development and the deployment of artificial intelligence. As machines become more autonomous, militaries will be able to field more of them in smaller sizes and at lower costs. New developments in power generation and storage and in hypersonic propulsion will allow these smaller systems to travel farther and faster than ever. Where once there was one destroyer, for example, the near future could see dozens of autonomous vessels that are similar to missile barges, ready to strike as targets emerge.

Technology will also transform how those systems remain in motion. Logistics—the ability to supply forces with food, fuel, and replacements—has traditionally been the limiting factor in war. But

autonomous militaries will need less fuel and no food. Advanced manufacturing methods, such as 3-D printing, will reduce the need for vast, risky, and expensive military logistics networks by enabling the production of complicated goods at the point of demand quickly, cheaply, and easily.

In an even more profound change, space will emerge as its own domain of maneuver warfare. So far, the near impossibility of refueling spacecraft has largely limited them to orbiting the earth. But as it becomes feasible to not just refuel spacecraft midflight but also build and service satellites in space, process data in orbit, and capture resources and energy in space for use in space (for example, by using vast solar arrays or mining asteroids), space operations will become less dependent on earth. Spacecraft will be able to maneuver and fight, and the first orbital weapons could enter the battlefield. The technology to do much of this exists already.

THE MILITARIES OF TOMORROW

Technology will also radically alter how militaries shoot, both literally and figuratively. Cyberattacks, communication jamming, electronic warfare, and other attacks on a system's software will become as important as those that target a system's hardware, if not more so. The rate of fire, or how fast weapons can shoot, will accelerate rapidly thanks to new technologies such as lasers, high-powered microwaves, and other directed-energy weapons. But what will really increase the rate of fire are intelligent systems that will radically reduce the time between when targets can be identified and when they can be attacked. A harbinger of this much nastier future battlefield has played out in Ukraine since 2014, where Russia has shortened to mere minutes the time between when their spotter drones first detect Ukrainian forces and when their precision rocket artillery wipes those forces off the map.

The militaries of the future will also be able to shoot farther than those of today. Eventually, hypersonic munitions (weapons that travel at more than five times the speed of sound) and space-based weapons will be able to strike targets anywhere in the world nearly instantly. Militaries will be able to attack domains once assumed to be sanctuaries, such as space and logistics networks. There will be no rear areas or safe havens anymore. Swarms of autonomous systems will not only be able to find targets everywhere; they will also be able to shoot them accurately. The ability to have both quantity and quality in military

systems will have devastating effects, especially as technology makes lethal payloads smaller.

Finally, the way militaries communicate will change drastically. Traditional communications networks—hub-and-spoke structures with vulnerable single points of failure—will not survive. Instead, technology will push vital communications functions to the edge of the network. Every autonomous system will be able to process and make sense of the information it gathers on its own, without relying on a command hub. This will enable the creation of radically distributed networks that are resilient and reconfigurable.

Technology is also inverting the current paradigm of command and control. Today, even a supposedly unmanned system requires dozens of people to operate it remotely, maintain it, and process the data it collects. But as systems become more autonomous, one person will be able to operate larger numbers of them singlehandedly. The opening ceremonies of the 2018 Winter Olympics, in South Korea, offered a preview of this technology when 1,218 autonomous drones equipped with lights collaborated to form intricate pictures in the night sky over Pyeongchang. Now imagine similar autonomous systems being used, for example, to overwhelm an aircraft carrier and render it inoperable.

The militaries that embrace and adapt to these technologies will dominate those that do not.

Further afield, other technologies will change military communications. Information networks based on 5G technology will be capable of moving vastly larger amounts of data at significantly faster speeds. Similarly, the same quantum science that will improve military sensors will transform communications and computing. Quantum computing—the ability to use the abnormal properties of subatomic particles to exponentially increase processing power—will make possible encryption methods that could be unbreakable, as well as give militaries the power to process volumes of data and solve classes of problems that exceed the capacity of classical computers. More incredible still, so-called brain-computer interface technology is already enabling human beings to control complicated systems, such as robotic prosthetics and even unmanned aircraft, with their neural signals. Put simply, it is becoming possible for a human operator to control multiple drones simply by thinking of what they want those systems to do.

Put together, all these technologies will displace decades-old, even centuries-old, assumptions about how militaries operate. The militaries that embrace and adapt to these technologies will dominate those that do not. In that regard, the U.S. military is in big trouble.

A LOSING GAME

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States' approach to projecting military force against regional powers has rested on a series of assumptions about how conflicts will unfold. The U.S. military assumes that its forces will be able to move unimpeded into forward positions and that it will be able to commence hostilities at a time of its choosing. It assumes that its forces will operate in permissive environments—that adversaries will be unable to contest its freedom of movement in any domain. It assumes that any quantitative advantage that an adversary may possess will be overcome by its own superior ability to evade detection, penetrate enemy defenses, and strike targets. And it assumes that U.S. forces will suffer few losses in combat.

These assumptions have led to a force built around relatively small numbers of large, expensive, and hard-to-replace systems that are optimized for moving undetected close to their targets, shooting a limited number of times but with extreme precision, and communicating with impunity. Think stealth aircraft flying right into downtown Belgrade or Baghdad. What's more, systems such as these depend on communications, logistics, and satellite networks that are almost entirely defenseless, because they were designed under the premise that no adversary would ever be able to attack them.

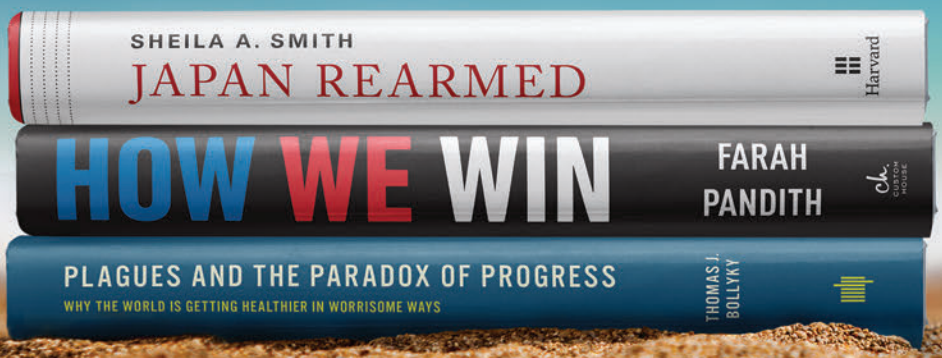
This military enterprise and its underlying suppositions are being called into question. For the past two decades, while the United States has focused on fighting wars in the Middle East, its competitors—especially China, but also Russia—have been dissecting its way of war and developing so-called anti-access/area-denial (or A2/AD) capabilities to detect U.S. systems in every domain and overwhelm them with large salvos of precision fire. Put simply, U.S. rivals are fielding large quantities of multimillion-dollar weapons to destroy the United States' multibillion-dollar military systems.

China has also begun work on megaprojects designed to position it as the world leader in artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies. This undertaking is not exclusively military in its focus, but every one of these advanced-technology megaprojects has military

STAY SHARP THIS SUMMER

Turn your phone off but keep your brain on with these foreign policy reads from the Council on Foreign Relations.

From Japan's rising military to worrisome shifts in global health, explore the world from your beach chair.



COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS

cfr.org/books

applications and benefits the People's Liberation Army under the doctrine of "military-civil fusion." Whereas the U.S. military still largely treats its data like engine exhaust—a useless byproduct—China is moving with authoritarian zeal to stockpile its data like oil, so that it can power the autonomous and intelligent military systems it sees as critical to dominance in future warfare.

The United States' position, already dire, is rapidly deteriorating. As a 2017 report from the RAND Corporation concluded, "U.S. forces could, under plausible assumptions, lose the next war they are called upon to fight." That same year, General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sounded the alarm in stark terms: "In just a few years, if we do not change the trajectory, we will lose our qualitative and quantitative competitive advantage."

The greatest danger for the United States is the erosion of conventional deterrence. If leaders in Beijing or Moscow think that they might win a war against the United States, they will run greater risks and press their advantage. They will take actions that steadily undermine the United States' commitments to its allies by casting doubt on whether Washington would really send its military to defend the Baltics, the Philippines, Taiwan, or even Japan or South Korea. They will try to get their way through any means necessary, from coercive diplomacy and economic extortion to meddling in the domestic affairs of other countries. And they will steadily harden their spheres of influence, turning them into areas ever more hospitable to authoritarian ideology, surveillance states, and crony capitalism. In other words, they will try, as the military strategist Sun-tzu recommended, to "win without fighting."

THE FUTURE IS HERE

The United States is still betting that by incrementally upgrading its traditional military systems, it can remain dominant for decades to come. This approach might buy time, but it will not allow the U.S. military to regain superiority over its rivals. Doubling down on the status quo is exactly what Washington's competitors want it to do: if the U.S. government spends more money in the same ways and on the same things, it will simply build more targets for its competitors while bankrupting itself.

It's time to think differently, and U.S. defense planners should start by adopting more realistic assumptions. They should assume that U.S. forces will fight in highly contested environments against

technologically advanced opponents, that they will be unlikely to avoid detection in any domain, and that they will lose large numbers of military systems in combat. Washington must also banish the idea that the goal of military modernization is simply to replace the military platforms it has relied on for decades, such as fighter jets and aircraft carriers, with better versions of the same things. It must focus instead on how to buy systems that can be combined into networks or kill chains to achieve particular military outcomes, such as air superiority or control of the seas. Finally, the old belief that software merely supports hardware must be inverted: future militaries will be distinguished by the quality of their software, especially their artificial intelligence.

Washington must banish the idea that the goal of military modernization is simply to replace the military platforms it has relied on for decades.

What would a military built on those assumptions look like? First, it would have large quantities of smaller systems: swarms of intelligent machines that distribute sensing, movement, shooting, and communications away from vulnerable single points of failure and out to the edges of vast, dispersed networks. Such an approach would impose costs on competitors, as they would no longer be able to concentrate on a few big targets and would instead need to target many things over larger spaces.

Second, those systems would be cheap and expendable, which would make it easier to endure large-scale losses in combat. If it takes the United States' competitors more time and money to destroy U.S. systems than it does for the United States to replace those systems, the United States will win over time.

Finally, these systems would be unmanned and autonomous to the extent that is ethically acceptable. Keeping humans alive, safe, and comfortable inside machines is expensive—and no one wants to pay the ultimate price of lost human life. Autonomous systems are cheaper to field and cheaper to lose. They can also free humans from doing work that machines can do better, such as processing raw sensor data or allocating tasks among military systems. Liberating people from such work will prove crucial for managing the volume and velocity of the modern battlefield, but also for enabling people to focus more energy on making moral decisions about the intended outcomes of

warfare. In this way, greater autonomy can not only enhance military effectiveness; it can also allow more humans to pay more attention to the ethics of war than ever before.

Building this kind of military is not only desirable; it is becoming technologically feasible. The U.S. military already has a number of programs in development aimed at just such a future force, from low-cost autonomous aircraft to unmanned underwater vehicles that could compose an artificially intelligent network of systems that is more resilient and capable than traditional military programs. For now, none of these systems is as capable as legacy programs such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter or the Virginia-class submarine, but they also carry a small fraction of the costs. The goal should be not to buy more individual platforms but to buy faster kill chains. The money currently invested in one legacy system could buy dozens of autonomous systems that add up to a superior capability.

The purpose of this kind of military—one that relies heavily on swarms of thousands of small, low-cost, autonomous systems that can dominate all domains—would not be to provoke war. It would be to deter it, by demonstrating that the United States can destroy any force its competitors put onto the battlefield in any domain, replenish its combat losses faster and cheaper than they can, and sustain a fight until it wins by attrition. The purpose of preparing for war will remain to never have to fight one.

A FAILURE OF IMAGINATION

Military modernization of this kind will not happen all at once. Autonomous systems may rely on legacy systems, including aircraft carriers, for some time to come. But even this will require significant changes to how traditional systems are configured and operated. Some leaders in Congress and the executive branch want to embrace these changes, which is encouraging. But if this transition fails—and the odds of that are unsettlingly high—it will likely fail for reasons other than the ethical opposition that is the focus of current debates, which seeks to "ban killer robots" or ensure that commercial technology companies do nothing to benefit the U.S. military.

There are serious ethical concerns. The military use of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence requires sober debate, but that debate should not be reduced to a binary decision between human and machine control. If framed clearly, many of the technological and

moral questions facing policymakers can be answered within the confines of existing law and practice. For example, the legal concept of "areas of active hostilities," in which the threshold for using violence is reduced in limited geographic areas, could provide useful answers to the moral dilemmas posed by lethal autonomous weapons.

The real challenge facing policymakers is how to imbue intelligent machines with human intent, and that is not a new problem. And although this new technology will present ethical dilemmas, it will also help resolve them. Autonomous systems will enable humans to spend less time on menial problems and more time on moral ones. Intelligent machines will likely become more capable of differentiating between, say, tanks and other vehicles, than a scared 19-year-old is. Americans will naturally be apprehensive about trusting machines to perform what have traditionally been human tasks. But the greater danger right now is that Americans will move too slowly and not be trusting enough, especially as China and Russia are proceeding with fewer ethical concerns than the United States. Unless Washington is willing to unilaterally cede that advantage to its rivals, it cannot allow itself to become paralyzed by the wrong questions.

If the United States fails to take advantage of the new revolution in military affairs, it will be less for ethical reasons and more as a result of the risk-averse, status quo mentality that pervades its domestic institutions. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates explained why in his memoir, *Duty*:

> The military departments develop their budgets on a five-year basis, and most procurement programs take many years—if not decades—from decision to delivery. As a result, budgets and programs are locked in for years at a time, and all of the bureaucratic wiles of each military department are dedicated to keeping those programs intact and funded. They are joined in those efforts by the companies that build the equipment, the Washington lobbyists that those companies hire, and the members of Congress in whose states or districts those factories are located. Any threats to those long-term programs are not welcome.

This is what Senator John McCain, a Republican from Arizona, once called "the military-industrial-congressional complex," and its entire livelihood depends on developing, producing, acquiring, operating, and maintaining traditional defense systems in traditional ways.

Some in this complex may seem welcoming to advanced technologies now because they still don't view them as threats. For a transitional period, advanced technologies will indeed support, rather than replace, traditional systems. But as the backers of traditional systems come to see intelligent machines as substitutes for those systems, they will resist change. Bureaucrats who derive power from their mastery of the current system are loath to alter it. Military pilots and ship drivers are no more eager to lose their jobs to intelligent machines than factory workers are. Defense companies that make billions selling traditional systems are as welcoming of disruptions to their business model as the taxi cab industry has been of Uber and Lyft. And as all this resistance inevitably translates into disgruntled constituents, members of Congress will have enormous incentives to stymie change.

Overcoming these obstacles will require leadership at the highest levels of government to set clear priorities, drive change in resistant institutions, remake their incentive structures, and recast their cultures. That may be too much to expect, especially amid Washington's current political turmoil. There are many capable, well-intentioned leaders in the Pentagon, Congress, and the private sector who know that the U.S. defense program needs to change. But too often, the leaders who understand the problem the best lack the power to address it at the scale required, while those with the most power either don't understand the problem or don't know what to do about it.

This points to a broader problem: a fundamental lack of imagination. U.S. leaders simply do not believe that the United States could be displaced as the world's preeminent military power, not in the distant future but very soon. They do not have the vision or the sense of urgency needed to alter the status quo. If that attitude prevails, change could come not from a concerted plan but as a result of a catastrophic failure, such as an American defeat in a major war. By then, however, it will probably be too late to alter course. The revolution in military affairs will have been not a trend that the United States used to deter war and buttress peace but a cause of the United States' destruction.

Return to Table of Contents

Killer Apps

The Real Dangers of an AI Arms Race

Paul Scharre

The nation that leads in the development of artificial intelligence will, Russian President Vladimir Putin proclaimed in 2017, "become the ruler of the world." That view has become commonplace in global capitals. Already, more than a dozen governments have announced national AI initiatives. In 2017, China set a goal of becoming the global leader in AI by 2030. Earlier this year, the White House released the American AI Initiative, and the U.S. Department of Defense rolled out an AI strategy.

But the emerging narrative of an "AI arms race" reflects a mistaken view of the risks from AI—and introduces significant new risks as a result. For each country, the real danger is not that it will fall behind its competitors in AI but that the perception of a race will prompt everyone to rush to deploy unsafe AI systems. In their desire to win, countries risk endangering themselves just as much as their opponents.

AI promises to bring both enormous benefits, in everything from health care to transportation, and huge risks. But those risks aren't something out of science fiction; there's no need to fear a robot uprising. The real threat will come from humans.

Right now, AI systems are powerful but unreliable. Many of them are vulnerable to sophisticated attacks or fail when used outside the environment in which they were trained. Governments want their systems to work properly, but competition brings pressure to cut corners. Even if other countries aren't on the brink of major AI breakthroughs, the perception that they're rushing ahead could push others to do the same. And if a government deployed an untested AI weapons

PAUL SCHARRE is a Senior Fellow and Director of the Technology and National Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. He is the author of *Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War*.

system or relied on a faulty AI system to launch cyberattacks, the result could be disaster for everyone involved.

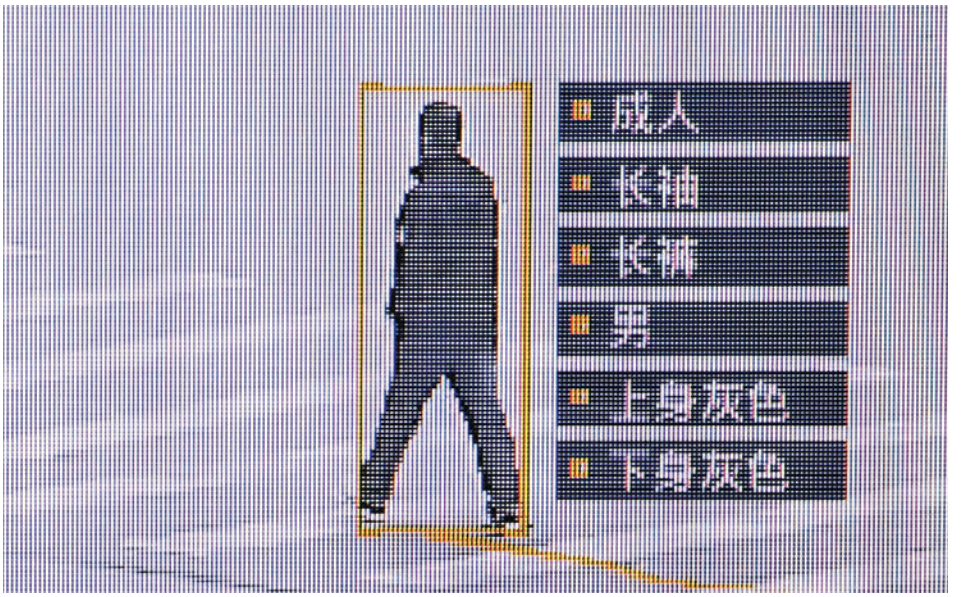
Policymakers should learn from the history of computer networks and make security a leading factor in AI design from the beginning. They should also ratchet down the rhetoric about an AI arms race and look for opportunities to cooperate with other countries to reduce the risks from AI. A race to the bottom on AI safety is a race no one would win.

THE AIS HAVE IT

The most straightforward kind of AI system performs tasks by following a series of rules set in advance by humans. These "expert systems," as they are known, have been around for decades. They are now so ubiquitous that we hardly stop to think of the technology behind airplane autopilots or tax-preparation software as AI. But in the past few years, advances in data collection, computer processing power, and algorithm design have allowed researchers to make big progress with a more flexible AI method: machine learning.

In machine learning, a programmer doesn't write the rules; the machine picks them up by analyzing the data it is given. Feed an algorithm thousands of labeled photos of objects, and it will learn to associate the patterns in the images with the names of the objects. The current AI boom began in 2012, when researchers made a breakthrough using a machine-learning technique called "deep learning," which relies on deep neural networks. Neural networks are an AI technique loosely inspired by biological neurons, the cells that communicate with other cells by sending and receiving electrical impulses. An artificial neural network starts out as a blank slate; it doesn't know anything. The system learns by adjusting the strength of the connections between neurons, strengthening certain pathways for right answers and weakening the connections for wrong answers. A deep neural network—the type responsible for deep learning—is a neural network with many layers of artificial neurons between the input and output layers. The extra layers allow for more variability in the strengths of different pathways and thus help the AI cope with a wider variety of circumstances.

How exactly the system learns depends on which machine-learning algorithm and what kind of data the developers use. Many approaches use data that are already labeled (known as "supervised learning"), but machines can also learn from data that are not labeled ("unsupervised



Seeing like a state: a SenseTime surveillance software demo in Beijing, October 2017

learning") or directly from the environment ("reinforcement learning"). Machines can also train on synthetic, computer-generated data. The autonomous car company Waymo has driven its cars for over ten million miles on public roads, but the company clocks ten million miles every day in computer simulations, allowing it to test its algorithms on billions of miles of synthetic data.

Since the deep-learning breakthrough in 2012, researchers have created AI systems that can match or exceed the best human performance in recognizing faces, identifying objects, transcribing speech, and playing complex games, including the Chinese board game go and the real-time computer game StarCraft. Deep learning has started to outstrip older, rules-based AI systems, too. In 2018, a deep-learning algorithm beat the reigning chess computer program after spending just four hours playing millions of games against itself on a massive supercomputer without any human training data or hand-coded rules to guide its behavior.

Researchers are now applying AI to a host of real-world problems, from diagnosing skin cancers to driving cars to improving energy efficiency. According to an estimate by the consulting firm McKinsey, almost half of all the tasks people are paid to perform in the United States could be automated with existing technology (although less than five percent of jobs could be eliminated entirely). AI tools are also becoming more widely available. Large organizations are the most

THOMAS PETER / REUTERS

likely to make major breakthroughs, thanks to their ability to amass large data sets and huge quantities of computing power. But many of the resulting AI tools are available online for anyone to use. Free programming courses teach people how to make their own AI systems, and trained neural networks are free to download. Accessibility will spur innovation, but putting powerful AI tools into the hands of anyone who wants them will also help those who set out to do harm.

AUTOCRATIC INTELLIGENCE

Harm from AI misuse isn't hypothetical; it's already here. Bots are regularly used to manipulate social media, amplifying some messages and suppressing others. Deepfakes, AI-generated fake videos, have been used in so-called revenge porn attacks, in which a person's face is digitally grafted onto the body of a pornographic actor.

These examples are only the start. Political campaigns will use AI-powered data analytics to target individuals with political propaganda tailored just for them. Companies will use the same analytics to design manipulative advertising. Digital thieves will use AI tools to create more effective phishing attacks. Bots will be able to convincingly impersonate humans online and over the phone by cloning a person's voice with just a minute of audio. Any interaction that isn't in person will become suspect. Security specialists have shown that it's possible to hack into autonomous cars, disabling the steering and brakes. Just one person could conceivably hijack an entire fleet of vehicles with a few keystrokes, creating a traffic jam or launching a terrorist attack.

AI's power as a tool of repression is even more frightening. Authoritarian governments could use deepfakes to discredit dissidents, facial recognition to enable round-the-clock mass surveillance, and predictive analytics to identify potential troublemakers. China has already started down the road toward digital authoritarianism. It has begun a massive repression campaign against the Muslim Uighur population in Xinjiang Province. Many of the tools the government is using there are low tech, but it has also begun to use data analytics, facial recognition systems, and predictive policing (the use of data to predict criminal activity). Vast networks of surveillance cameras are linked up to algorithms that can detect anomalous public behavior, from improperly parked vehicles to people running where they are not allowed. The Chinese company Yuntian Lifei Technology boasts that its intelligent video surveillance system has been deployed in nearly 80

Chinese cities and has identified some 6,000 incidents related to "social governance." Some of the ways in which Chinese authorities now use AI seem trivial, such as tracking how much toilet paper people use in public restrooms. Their proposed future uses are more sinister, such as monitoring patterns of electricity use for signs of suspicious activity.

China is not just building a techno-dystopian surveillance state at home; it has also begun exporting its technology. In 2018, Zimbabwe signed a deal with the Chinese company CloudWalk Technology to create a national database of faces and install facial recognition surveillance systems at airports, railway stations, and bus stops. There's more than money at stake in the deal. Zimbabwe has agreed to let CloudWalk send data on millions of faces back to China, helping the company improve its facial recognition systems for people with dark skin. China also plans to sell surveillance technology in Malaysia, Mongolia, and Singapore.

China is exporting its authoritarian laws and policies, too. According to Freedom House, China has held training sessions with government officials and members of the media from over 30 countries on methods to monitor and control public opinion. Three countries—Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam—passed restrictive media and cybersecurity laws soon after engaging with China.

WHAT AI WILL DO

Whichever country takes the lead on AI will use it to gain economic and military advantages over its competitors. By 2030, AI is projected to add between $13 trillion and $15 trillion to the global economy. AI could also accelerate the rate of scientific discovery. In 2019, an artificial neural network significantly outperformed existing approaches in synthetic protein folding, a key task in biological research.

AI is also set to revolutionize warfare. It will likely prove most useful in improving soldiers' situational awareness on the battlefield and commanders' ability to make decisions and communicate orders. AI systems can process more information than humans, and they can do it more quickly, making them valuable tools for assessing chaotic battles in real time. On the battlefield itself, machines can move faster and with greater precision and coordination than people. In the recent AI-versus-human StarCraft match, the AI system, AlphaStar, displayed superhuman abilities in rapidly processing large amounts of information, coordinating its units, and moving them quickly and precisely.

In the real world, these advantages will allow AI systems to manage swarms of robots far more effectively than humans could by controlling them manually. Humans will retain their advantages in higher-level strategy, but AI will dominate on the ground.

Washington's rush to develop AI is driven by a fear of falling behind China, which is already a global powerhouse in AI. The Chinese technology giants Alibaba, Baidu, and Tencent rank right alongside Amazon, Google, and Microsoft as leading AI companies. Five of the ten AI startups with the most funding last year were Chinese. Ten years ago, China's goal of becoming the global leader in AI by 2030 would have seemed fanciful; today, it's a real possibility.

Equally alarming for U.S. policymakers is the sharp divide between Washington and Silicon Valley over the military use of AI. Employees at Google and Microsoft have objected to their companies' contracts with the Pentagon, leading Google to discontinue work on a project using AI to analyze video footage. China's authoritarian regime doesn't permit this kind of open dissent. Its model of "military-civil fusion" means that Chinese technology innovations will translate more easily into military gains. Even if the United States keeps the lead in AI, it could lose its military advantage. The logical response to the threat of another country winning the AI race is to double down on one's own investments in AI. The problem is that AI technology poses risks not just to those who lose the race but also to those who win it.

THE ONLY WINNING MOVE IS NOT TO PLAY

Today's AI technologies are powerful but unreliable. Rules-based systems cannot deal with circumstances their programmers did not anticipate. Learning systems are limited by the data on which they were trained. AI failures have already led to tragedy. Advanced autopilot features in cars, although they perform well in some circumstances, have driven cars without warning into trucks, concrete barriers, and parked cars. In the wrong situation, AI systems go from supersmart to superdumb in an instant. When an enemy is trying to manipulate and hack an AI system, the risks are even greater.

Even when they don't break down completely, learning systems sometimes learn to achieve their goals in the wrong way. In a research paper last year, a group of 52 AI researchers recounted dozens of times when AI systems showed surprising behavior. An algorithm learning to walk in a simulated environment discovered it could move fastest

by repeatedly falling over. A Tetris-playing bot learned to pause the game before the last brick fell, so that it would never lose. One program deleted the files containing the answers against which it was being evaluated, causing it to be awarded a perfect score. As the researchers wrote, "It is often functionally simpler for evolution to exploit loopholes in the quantitative measure than it is to achieve the actual desired outcome." Surprise seems to be a standard feature of learning systems.

In the wrong situation, AI systems go from supersmart to superdumb in an instant.

Machine-learning systems are only ever as good as their training data. If the data don't represent the system's operating environment well, the system can fail in the real world. In 2018, for example, researchers at the MIT Media Lab showed that three leading facial recognition systems were far worse at classifying dark-skinned faces than they were at classifying light-skinned ones.

When they fail, machine-learning systems are also often frustratingly opaque. For rules-based systems, researchers can always explain the machine's behavior, even if they can't always predict it. For deep-learning systems, however, researchers are often unable to understand why a machine did what it did. Ali Rahimi, an AI researcher at Google, has argued that much like medieval alchemists, who discovered modern glassmaking techniques but did not understand the chemistry or physics behind their breakthroughs, modern machine-learning engineers can achieve powerful results but lack the underlying science to explain them.

Every failing of an AI system also presents a vulnerability that can be exploited. In some cases, attackers can poison the training data. In 2016, Microsoft created a chatbot called Tay and gave it a Twitter account. Other users began tweeting offensive messages at it, and within 24 hours, Tay had begun parroting their racist and anti-Semitic language. In that case, the source of the bad data was obvious. But not all data-poisoning attacks are so visible. Some can be buried within the training data in a way that is undetectable to humans but still manipulates the machine.

Even if the creators of a deep-learning system protect its data sources, the system can still be tricked using what are known as "adversarial examples," in which an attacker feeds the system an input that is carefully tailored to get the machine to make a mistake. A neural network classifying satellite images might be tricked into identifying a

subtly altered picture of a hospital as a military airfield or vice versa. The change in the image can be so small that the picture looks normal to a human but still fools the AI. Adversarial examples can even be placed in physical objects. In one case, researchers created a plastic turtle with subtle swirls embedded in the shell that made an object identification system think it was a rifle. In another, researchers placed a handful of small white and black squares on a stop sign, causing a neural network to classify it as a 45-mile-per-hour speed-limit sign. To make matters worse, attackers can develop these kinds of deceptive images and objects without access to the training data or the underlying algorithm of the system they are trying to defeat, and researchers have struggled to find effective defenses against the threat. Unlike with cybersecurity vulnerabilities, which can often be patched once they are uncovered, there is no known way of fully inoculating algorithms against these attacks.

Governments already have plenty of experience testing military, cyber-, and surveillance tools, but no testing method can guarantee that complex systems won't experience glitches once they're out in the real world. The first time F-22 fighter jets crossed the International Date Line, their computers crashed and the aircraft were nearly stranded over the Pacific Ocean.

Testing AI systems often takes even more time and money than testing traditional military hardware. Their complexity, which makes them more capable, also creates more opportunities for unexpected glitches. Imagine that a government develops an AI system that can hack into its adversaries' computer networks while avoiding detection. The first government to deploy such a system would gain a huge advantage over its competitors. Worried that an adversary was developing a similar tool, the government might feel compelled to cut testing short and deploy the system early. This dynamic has already played out in other industries, such as self-driving cars. The consequences of accidents caused by national security AI tools could be far worse.

A world of widespread, unprotected AI systems isn't just a possibility; it's the default setting.

AI wouldn't be the first case of governments relying on a powerful but unsafe technology. That's exactly what happened with computers, which play critical roles in everything from trading stocks to guiding

missiles even though they suffer from enormous vulnerabilities. In 2018, investigators at the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that U.S. weapons systems were riddled with cybersecurity loopholes that could be exploited with "relatively simple tools and techniques." Even worse, Defense Department program managers didn't know about the problems and dismissed the GAO's findings, claiming the tests were not realistic. Computer security vulnerabilities aren't limited to government-run systems. Company after company has suffered major data breaches. Digital security is already too often an afterthought. A world of widespread, unprotected AI systems isn't just a possibility; it's the default setting.

SAFETY FIRST

Urgent threats require urgent responses. One of the most important ways policymakers can deal with the dangers of AI is to boost funding for AI safety research. Companies are spending billions of dollars finding commercial applications for AI, but the U.S. government can play a valuable role in funding basic AI research, as it has since the field's early days. The AI Next initiative, a program run by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency that is set to spend $2 billion over the next five years, is aimed at tackling many of the limitations of narrow AI systems. Expanding on this effort, the White House should increase the funding going to AI safety research as part of its new American AI Initiative, and it should ask Congress for additional money for R & D and safety research.

When it comes to applying AI to national security, government agencies will have to reconsider their traditional approaches to testing new systems. Verifying that a system meets its design specifications isn't enough. Testers also need to ensure that it will continue to function properly in the real world when an adversary is trying to defeat it. In some cases, they can use computer simulations to tease out bugs, as manufacturers now do for autonomous cars. On top of that, the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security and the intelligence community should create red teams—groups that act as attackers to test a system's defenses—to ferret out vulnerabilities in AI systems so that developers can fix them before the systems go live.

Government officials should also tone down their rhetoric about an AI arms race, since such talk could easily become self-fulfilling. At a conference in 2018, Michael Griffin, the chief Pentagon official for

research and engineering, said, "There might be an artificial intelligence arms race, but we're not yet in it." Militaries are certainly going to adopt AI, but Griffin's statement was missing any concern for—or even awareness of—the risks that come with it. Talk of an arms race encourages adversaries to cut corners on safety. Government officials should emphasize not only the value of AI but also the importance of guaranteeing reliability and security.

Finally, the United States should look for ways to work with other countries, even hostile ones, to ensure AI safety. International cooperation on new technologies has a mixed record, but countries have sometimes succeeded in working together to avoid mutual harm. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union worked together to limit certain types of delivery systems for nuclear warheads that both sides agreed were particularly destabilizing. The United States also encouraged other countries to adopt safety measures to prevent the unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. Today, the United States should work with both allies and adversaries to boost international funding on AI safety. It should also begin discussions with China and Russia over whether some applications of AI pose unacceptable risks of escalation or loss of control and what countries can do jointly to improve safety. The biggest danger for the United States in an AI race is not losing but creating a world in which no one wins.

In the nineteenth century, industrialization brought tremendous economic growth, but it also handed militaries the tank, the machine gun, and mustard gas. The invention of nuclear weapons posed an even more profound risk, one with which policymakers are still grappling. Computers revolutionized how people work, learn, and communicate, but they also made previously isolated systems vulnerable to cyberattacks.

AI will match those changes. Most of its effects will be positive. It will boost economic growth, help diagnose and cure diseases, reduce automobile accidents, and improve people's daily lives in thousands of ways, large and small. Like any new technology, however, AI also has a darker side. Facing up to the risks now is the only way to make sure humanity realizes the promise of AI, not the peril.

Return to Table of Contents

All the King's Consultants

The Perils of Advising Authoritarians

Calvert W. Jones

"Does a Lebanese kid from Harvard know more about the streets of Riyadh than I do?" a Saudi business developer asked me in 2016, bemoaning the scores of highly paid foreign consultants whispering into the ears of his country's leaders. The phenomenon isn't unique to Saudi Arabia, and neither are the complaints. "All their eyes are on our money," an Emirati adviser said in an interview. "Too many strategies, not enough getting done."

Experts play valuable and highly visible roles advising leaders in wealthy liberal democracies and international institutions. But far less is known about what they do—and to what effect—for authoritarian regimes and developing countries. That's a problem, because autocratic leaders from China to Saudi Arabia increasingly rely on experts, especially from top consulting firms, universities, and think tanks in the West. In 2017, the consulting market in the Gulf monarchies topped $2.8 billion, with Saudi Arabia accounting for almost half of that amount, according to Source Global Research. Experts and the institutions they work for have sometimes appeared unprepared to handle the potential pitfalls of operating in authoritarian contexts. In recent months, experts who assist regimes associated with human rights violations, corruption, and other wrongdoing—and often charge hefty fees—have provoked growing public criticism, both in the United States, where many are based, and in the countries where they operate.

Consider McKinsey, a global leader in management consulting. The firm, among others in the sector, has come under scrutiny for its work with governments and government-owned enterprises of questionable reputation. Last October, the firm released a statement saying

CALVERT W. JONES is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, College Park. This essay is adapted from her article "Adviser to the King: Experts, Rationalization, and Legitimacy," *World Politics*, January 2019.

it was "horrified" that a report it had produced on social media usage in Saudi Arabia may have been used by the regime in Riyadh to target political dissidents. A few months earlier, in South Africa, the firm had become embroiled in a major political corruption scandal, in the wake of which it admitted to overcharging the state-owned power company Eskom and failing to properly vet one of its partners. McKinsey eventually agreed to repay the South African government the equivalent of $74 million. In a public statement, it apologized to the people of South Africa. "We were not careful enough about who we associated with," the firm acknowledged, and "did not understand fully the agendas at play."

This is valuable self-reflection and sets a productive example, because whenever experts work with authoritarian regimes or in countries where endemic corruption has eroded the rule of law, they are navigating perilous ground. In principle, experts seek to rationalize governmental decision-making and enhance legitimacy, and the evidence suggests that they often achieve those goals in open political environments. But do they succeed on either count under authoritarian conditions? Should they even try?

To shed light on such questions, I spent 19 months between 2009 and 2017 conducting field research in the Middle East, focusing on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other Gulf monarchies where foreign experts work closely with rulers on almost all aspects of governance. I interviewed scores of advisers from major consulting firms and universities and dozens of ruling elites (including one ruling monarch). Sitting in on palace meetings, I observed how experts behave in their interactions with authoritarian ruling elites, many of whom—regardless of Western stereotypes—care about the welfare of their citizens, not least for reasons of self-preservation. I also collected qualitative and experimental data on how citizens in such countries view experts and the reforms in which they are involved. I found that expert consultants sometimes help regimes govern better, but their efficacy and influence wane over time, especially as they become less willing to speak candidly about the obstacles to progress. What is more, working with expert advisers generally does not enhance the legitimacy of an autocratic regime—in fact, quite the reverse.

These findings matter for foreign policy debates in Washington and other Western capitals, where policymakers are grappling with how to respond to the rising tide of authoritarian rule around the

world. One might argue that the assistance that autocrats in places such as China and Saudi Arabia receive from Western experts cuts against U.S. interests—especially when that assistance helps authoritarian regimes repress dissent and violate human rights. But such regimes have remained remarkably persistent despite predictions of their impending collapse for a variety of reasons, including resource wealth and economic growth produced by globalization. Expert assistance does not matter more than those larger factors: if Western experts all withdrew from China and Saudi Arabia, those regimes would not suddenly collapse.

The fact that experts do not help prop up authoritarian regimes quite as much as their critics might think does not mean that their work has no strategic implications. Those implications, however, might be counterintuitive—even ironic. If, as my research suggests, international experts can inadvertently undermine the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes, their advice may wind up contributing to developments that even their fiercest critics would cheer.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER—FOR A WHILE

One might expect experts who advise authoritarian regimes to be simple yes men, telling their clients whatever they wish to hear. The truth is more complicated. Certainly, some experts are not as principled as others. In the resource-rich Gulf region, many consultants are aggressive marketers, touting one-size-fits-all solutions in what one interviewee described as a "feeding frenzy" of experts vying for contracts. Others specialize in the less savory areas of authoritarian governance, such as security and surveillance, a trend that has rightly provoked a strong backlash both within the countries in which they consult and internationally.

Most experts, however, seem genuinely interested in making a positive difference in areas such as education, infrastructure, and economic management. They do not feel especially implicated in autocratic wrongdoing. In fact, they see themselves as helping kindle valuable change from within. And they often do—at least at the beginning, when they study policy challenges, gather information, and identify potential solutions. In this early stage, experts are well positioned to exercise a rationalizing influence over authoritarian ruling elites, who may be surprisingly unaware of problems, having been shielded from reality by their own lieutenants. For example, in the educational sector,

experts collect valuable data, including at the local level, and share startlingly candid reports with ruling elites. Indeed, an adviser and consultant with many years of experience working in Bahrain described an early McKinsey report on the educational system there as "quite thorough, revealing things that were very embarrassing [to the regime]."

Experts are generally willing to speak truth to power at this early point. But problems develop as decision-making advances and experts are asked to evaluate different potential courses of action. Over time, experts learn and then adapt to incentives, rooted in the authoritarian political context, to alter or limit their advice. First, despite initial assurances to the contrary, they realize that they can be easily fired, with very little opportunity for redress. Foreign experts can be swiftly deported or politely asked to leave, and local ones can be demoted with virtually no explanation. Second, experts begin to more clearly perceive the atmosphere of intense rivalry in which they operate and get drawn into palace intrigues. The Bahrain-based adviser described it as a game of musical chairs: "First it's the prime minister, next it's the crown prince, and then it's the minister of education," all competing in the educational reform sector, each with his own rival team of experts. Finally, experts find themselves cast as convenient scapegoats when reforms falter. In Qatar, for instance, a top education expert with the RAND Corporation emphasized that "as soon as things went awry, what we were doing was [dismissed as] 'the RAND reform,' even though it was clearly the emir [who] chose it."

Over time, experts adapt to incentives, rooted in the authoritarian political context, to alter or limit their advice.

Over time, experts grow less and less willing to speak truth to power, at least in a clear way. The atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity to which they become accustomed ultimately leads them to worry more about their status. Many say that a smart survival strategy is not to lie but to say very little. As the Saudi business developer explained: "[Experts] say their opinion on day one, and then they are told, 'No, we want to do it this way,' and then they will keep quiet and do what they are told. They know that someone else will come and take their place if they don't."

The result is that the quality of the advice experts give tends to decline. At some point, they can even start to make things worse.

With top experts at their side, ruling elites easily become overconfident, especially about their ability to fast-track the changes they want at minimal cost. They come to believe in state-building shortcuts, and consultants find themselves bargaining over time frames. A top education adviser in the UAE explained: "The plan I'd written was to reform all the schools in seven years." But "by the time I got back [from vacation], [the minister of education] had reduced it to five years, and by the second day, Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid had reduced the reform to three years." Ultimately, the education adviser went along with the revised schedule, despite doubts about its feasibility. The Saudi business developer described the general pattern as follows:

> [Ruling elites] are trying to find a miracle solution. They sit there and basically say, "How can we reduce [energy] consumption without raising prices [which would involve political costs]?" And you'll say again, "It can't be done," and then they say, "Well, what solution have you seen being applied in other countries," and you say, "Raise prices," and they say, "But we can't." And then this conversation can go on for an hour, and then His Excellency or whatever will say, "You have to find me a solution. You're a consultant—you've done this before."

These patterns are ultimately cyclical. When ruling elites are disappointed by a lack of progress, they tend to blame the particular experts involved. So they recruit a new team of experts, or else move on to other projects as other ruling elites take over the effort to tackle the same reform problems, often with the same disappointing results. Little learning from the past tends to survive because of weak institutional review processes and a lack of communication across reform efforts.

DEVILS KNOWN AND UNKNOWN

In spite of these common setbacks, autocrats still tend to see experts as necessary to provide fresh thinking on reforms and to build support for them. Many see their own state bureaucracies as holding outdated and overly politicized perspectives—which may be true, although this state of affairs tends to arise because ruling elites often hand out good government jobs to regime loyalists without much regard to merit. Many authoritarian elites realize that bringing in outside experts can ruffle feathers in the short term, but they tend to think it demonstrates to the people how seriously they take problems. As one of the UAE's ruling monarchs explained, Gulf rulers must prove

they are "not like Hosni Mubarak," the former Egyptian president whom many Egyptians saw as unresponsive to their needs and who was ousted after an uprising in 2011.

Yet it is far from clear how experts influence public support in authoritarian regimes. To gather more systematic evidence, I ran three experiments in Kuwait testing the effects of expert involvement and the conditions under which experts are more or less likely to encourage popular buy-in for reform and development projects. In the first experiment, 281 Kuwaitis were asked to imagine that their country's leaders were launching a major reform to improve either education or infrastructure (by random assignment). They read a mock newspaper article describing the reform and the likely benefits to come, such as much-needed traffic reduction. The subjects were also randomly assigned to an "experts" or a "no experts" condition. So about half read that a team of top international experts would be assisting with the reform, and the experts' credentials and extensive experience elsewhere were described. For the rest of the subjects, experts were not mentioned as playing any role in the reform effort.

The results were revealing. Far from conferring legitimacy, the involvement of experts was associated with a significant drop in legitimacy. Subjects who read that experts were involved were less likely to support the reform, compared with subjects in the "no experts" condition. The delegitimizing effect of experts was also apparent regardless of the type of reform. One might expect that experts in more technical areas of governance, such as infrastructure, would inspire greater public confidence, but the results did not support that hypothesis. Moreover, subjects who reacted negatively to the expert-led reform also demonstrated a more general feeling of unease about their own country in the form of diminished patriotism.

The second experiment tested whether the nationality of the experts mattered for legitimacy. Subjects were randomly assigned to read news stories about expert-advised infrastructure reform; the stories read by each group were identical except that the experts were described as American, Chinese, or Kuwaiti. Strikingly, when American experts were said to be involved, the subjects expressed significantly lower support for the reform compared with when experts of the other two nationalities were mentioned—and this in Kuwait, a country whose population is often viewed as more pro-American than others nearby, due to the U.S. role in responding to Iraq's invasion of the

country in 1990. However, support for the reform did not differ significantly whether Chinese or Kuwaiti experts were featured, and the subjects indicated that they saw the Chinese experts as more capable than the Americans and the Kuwaitis. Although this finding may be disappointing for American consultants, it's not necessarily evidence of profound anti-Americanism, let alone a new love for Chinese experts. Most likely, it reflects Kuwaitis' longer experience with American (and British) experts, which includes their frustration with the lack of progress on various reforms. Chinese experts—with whom citizens at this point would be less familiar—may simply be "the devil you don't know."

The third experiment varied the length of time the subjects were told the experts had spent in the country. One group read in the article that the international experts had "arrived yesterday," and the other, that they had been "living and working in Kuwait for ten years." Aside from that difference, the news stories were identical. The results were clear: long-term experts were associated with far greater legitimacy than short-term ones. Subjects were more supportive of the reform, more confident that the reform would succeed, and more confident about the experts themselves when they were described as having been in the country long term.

This raises a dilemma, because the longer experts stay on the scene, the more likely they are to be drawn into authoritarian incentive structures that undermine their ability to help improve governance. So those who possess the most local knowledge after years in a country and who might be otherwise best suited to advise rulers may also be the least effective. The rationalization of policy may come at the expense of legitimacy, and vice versa.

CONSULTANT, ADVISE THYSELF

This experimental evidence raises doubts about the ability of experts to rationalize and legitimize authoritarian rule. It's not as if experts never have positive effects in such contexts—far from it. But the challenges are more significant than many might realize, especially for those consultants working directly with ruling elites at high levels of government.

Of course, part of the problem is authoritarianism itself, and there isn't much (short of regime change) to be done about that. But there are a few ways in which experts might avoid pitfalls: by focusing their efforts on the fact-finding stage of problem solving, for instance, and by showing a greater willingness to walk away if leaders ignore

their proposed solutions. To rebuild public trust and legitimacy, experts should spend more time in the country getting to know the local context—albeit while staying alert to the risk of perverse incentives the longer they stay.

Even if expert consultants can do better, some might argue that they should simply avoid working with nondemocratic regimes, especially those associated with human rights abuses. Sanctions already prohibit such collaboration in some cases. Yet regimes are rarely all good or all bad, and expertise may be especially useful in closed political contexts, including to help avert the disastrous potential consequences of bad policies: mass-transit accidents, famine, environmental degradation, and so on. Furthermore, expert consultants probably do not prop up authoritarian regimes quite as much as some critics believe: indeed, my research suggests that international experts can actually undermine legitimacy, potentially reducing domestic support for autocrats and weakening their regimes.

International experts can undermine the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes, potentially reducing their domestic support.

The ethics of expert involvement with such regimes are therefore complex, resembling what national security theorists describe as "the dual-use dilemma," which arises when something may be used to benefit humanity but also to harm it. Rulers might use expert advice to improve people's lives, but they may also use it to clamp down on dissent, restrict individual freedom, and commit larger human rights abuses. Experts may not always fully grasp these risks. Take, for example, a public statement that McKinsey issued late last year in response to critical coverage of its work with repressive and corrupt regimes published by *The New York Times*. McKinsey cited the positive change it has helped bring about around the world and argued that "like many other major corporations, including our competitors, we seek to navigate a changing geopolitical environment, but we do not support or engage in political activities." The problem is that expert assistance—even if not intended as such—may end up being highly political. Indeed, it is extremely difficult to prevent assistance and advice that one gives to a government from influencing "political activities," since, in a fundamental sense, everything a government does is by definition a political activity.

It may be helpful to think about these risks as existing on a continuum. On one end are the high risks that come from giving autocrats advice on sectors that are closely associated with the coercive power of authoritarian regimes, such as internal security and surveillance. On the other end are the lower risks associated with advising on sectors such as education, trash collection, and road safety. Experts may be better off focusing on the latter, although it is important to realize that even these sectors are not immune to ethical dilemmas. For example, consultants may work with education ministries to improve how students learn marketable skills in public schools, only to realize that authoritarian elites are also using schools for indoctrination.

To navigate this difficult terrain, expert consultants need to develop stronger guidelines for engagement with (and disengagement from) such governments. Michael Posner, director of the Center for Business and Human Rights at the NYU Stern School of Business, recommends that consultants establish clear guidelines for when to decline to work with a government, how to react when a government client asks for help on a matter that violates fundamental rights, and when to disengage from existing but inappropriate government contracts. These are essential starting points. But the dual-use dilemma adds an extra layer of complexity. In murky political contexts, it is difficult for experts to know how their expertise will ultimately be used.

That deeper problem isn't easy to solve, but research on dual-use dilemmas in other areas suggests that transparency and information sharing can help. The expert community should push harder for both when it comes to their work under authoritarianism. Although their competition with one another can be a hindrance, experts need to share their experiences among themselves more routinely, aiming to build a stronger knowledge base concerning government clients, particular sectors, and how expertise has been used on a case-by-case basis.

Although authoritarian regimes themselves are not known for their transparency, the institutions in liberal democracies where many international experts are based—consulting firms, government aid agencies, universities, and nongovernmental organizations such as think tanks and foundations—could be significantly more transparent about what they do in such political contexts and the outcomes they achieve. Researchers have tools to measure the effectiveness of

many kinds of interventions in governance and society, but to use them, they must have a clearer picture of what experts are doing. It isn't sufficient for organizations to conduct such research on themselves, because of inherent conflicts of interest.

Leaders enlisting outside experts is hardly a new phenomenon. But the depth of expert involvement with authoritarian regimes is growing, along with the range of areas in which such experts consult. Organizations that provide expert advice should reveal more about the clients they take on, the work they do, and the outcomes they achieve, as well as the obstacles they encounter. If they did, they could continue to apply their expertise—and to profit, in the case of private-sector consultants—while also maximizing their potential to make a positive difference for people who live under such regimes.

Return to Table of Contents

The Dark Side of Sunlight

How Transparency Helps Lobbyists and Hurts the Public

James D'Angelo and Brent Ranalli

The U.S. Congress is broken. Legislators prioritize political posturing and self-aggrandizement over the actual business of legislation. They have caused two costly and pointless shutdowns of the federal government in the past two years alone. Despite his campaign promises, President Donald Trump has not, in fact, drained the swamp. The Republicans' 2017 tax reform bill set off a frenzy of lobbying, and in the 2018 midterm elections, total campaign spending broke the $5 billion mark for the first time. The only lawmakers who buck the party line tend to be those who have already announced their retirement—and even then, they dissent only rarely and with trepidation. No wonder 76 percent of Americans, according to a Gallup poll, disapprove of Congress.

This dysfunction started well before the Trump presidency. It has been growing for decades, despite promise after promise and proposal after proposal to reverse it. Many explanations have been offered, from the rise of partisan media to the growth of gerrymandering to the explosion of corporate money. But one of the most important causes is usually overlooked: transparency. Something usually seen as an antidote to corruption and bad government, it turns out, is leading to both.

The problem began in 1970, when a group of liberal Democrats in the House of Representatives spearheaded the passage of new rules known as "sunshine reforms." Advertised as measures that would make legislators more accountable to their constituents, these changes increased the number of votes that were recorded and allowed members of the public to attend previously off-limits committee meetings.

JAMES D'ANGELO is Founder of the Congressional Research Institute.

BRENT RANALLI is a Research Scholar at the Ronin Institute and a Senior Fellow at the Congressional Research Institute.

But the reforms backfired. By diminishing secrecy, they opened up the legislative process to a host of actors—corporations, special interests, foreign governments, members of the executive branch—that pay far greater attention to the thousands of votes taken each session than the public does. The reforms also deprived members of Congress of the privacy they once relied on to forge compromises with political opponents behind closed doors, and they encouraged them to bring useless amendments to the floor for the sole purpose of political theater.

Fifty years on, the results of this experiment in transparency are in. When lawmakers are treated like minors in need of constant supervision, it is special interests that benefit, since they are the ones doing the supervising. And when politicians are given every incentive to play to their base, politics grows more partisan and dysfunctional. In order for Congress to better serve the public, it has to be allowed to do more of its work out of public view.

THE DEATH OF SECRECY

The idea of open government enjoys nearly universal support. Almost every modern president has paid lip service to it. (Even the famously paranoid Richard Nixon said, "When information which properly belongs to the public is systematically withheld by those in power, the people soon become ignorant of their own affairs, distrustful of those who manage them, and—eventually—incapable of determining their own destinies.") From former Republican Speaker of the House Paul Ryan to Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, from the liberal activist Ralph Nader to the anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist, all agree that when it comes to transparency, more is better.

It was not always this way. It used to be that secrecy was seen as essential to good government, especially when it came to crafting legislation. Terrified of outside pressures, the framers of the U.S. Constitution worked in strict privacy, boarding up the windows of Independence Hall and stationing armed sentinels at the door. As Alexander Hamilton later explained, "Had the deliberations been open while going on, the clamors of faction would have prevented any satisfactory result." James Madison concurred, claiming, "No Constitution would ever have been adopted by the convention if the debates had been public." The Founding Fathers even wrote opacity into the Constitution, permitting legislators to withhold publication of the parts of proceedings that "may in their Judgment require Secrecy."

One of the first acts of the U.S. House of Representatives was to establish the Committee of the Whole, a grouping that encompasses all representatives but operates under less formal rules than the House in full session, with no record kept of individual members' votes. Much of the House's most important business, such as debating and amending the legislation that comes out of the various standing committees—Ways and Means, Foreign Affairs, and so on—took place in the Committee of the Whole (and still does). The standing committees, meanwhile, in both the House and the Senate, normally marked up bills behind closed doors, and the most powerful ones did all their business that way. As a result, as the scholar George Kennedy has explained, "Virtually all the meetings at which bills were actually written or voted on were closed to the public."

For 180 years, secrecy suited legislators well. It gave them the cover they needed to say no to petitioners and shut down wasteful programs, the ambiguity they needed to keep multiple constituencies happy, and the privacy they needed to maintain a working decorum. But by the late 1960s, liberals in the House of Representatives started to sour on secrecy. Although they represented a majority among the ruling Democrats, they lacked power. That lay in the hands of committee chairs, who, because they were assigned their positions on the basis of seniority, were nearly all conservative Democrats from safe districts in the South. These chairs worked hand in glove with the Republican minority to quash liberal initiatives, and given their complete control of their committees' agendas, they were not to be crossed openly. And so the liberal caucus, known as the Democratic Study Group, orchestrated a backdoor attack on the power of the committee chairs by tacking several transparency-related amendments onto a bill intended to modernize Congress, the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970.

"The reform of longest-lasting significance," the scholar David King has pointed out, "provided that House votes in the Committee of the Whole be recorded on request." In the past, liberals had often not bothered to show up for votes in the Committee of the Whole, fatalistically accepting that the conservative chairs would fend off liberal amendments; now, because they could be recorded, the votes would count toward attendance statistics, which would encourage the liberals to turn up and show their strength. Recorded voting would also free up liberal Democrats to vote against their own chairs with-

out fear of retribution. "Sorry, I can't help you on this one," a member could credibly say; "my constituents are watching."

Recorded votes would also allow outside groups—labor unions, public interest nonprofits, environmental organizations—to enforce greater discipline. The AFL-CIO, for example, would be able to not just collect commitments from members on an upcoming vote but also, for the first time in history, reliably verify that they had voted as promised. Recorded votes would make it easier for the party itself to enforce discipline, too. Party leaders could use the additional data about how members voted as the basis for doling out rewards and punishments. Lawmakers who toed the party line would get campaign cash and plum committee assignments—even desirable parking spots. Those who didn't might have their pet legislation put on hold.

Special interests today thrive on transparency.

The reforms also provided for greater transparency in the standing committees, which is where most of the real business of legislation takes place. Votes taken in committee would be recorded, and the doors of committee rooms would be open by default, even during markup sessions. Pointing to the greater scrutiny they would receive from their constituents, liberal representatives could more easily defy the conservative chairs.

The liberals couched their amendments as good-government reforms, organizing a media blitz lambasting secrecy in Congress. But they also quietly courted their lobbyist allies, meeting with groups that represented workers, farmers, and teachers to show how, by being in the room when key decisions were made, they might benefit from transparency. Thanks in part to the support of these lobbies, the transparency amendments were adopted, and the Legislative Reorganization Act passed handily.

The gambit paid off immediately. For years, liberals had been trying to defund the supersonic transport program, an aerospace venture that they considered a boondoggle, but it was only in 1971 that they succeeded. In a hotly contested vote in the Committee of the Whole, the liberal caucus managed to generate a high turnout and rally environmental groups to apply pressure. The same year, they succeeded in forcing the House to finally take a direct vote on the Vietnam War, something the more hawkish leaders of both parties had tried to avoid for years. And over the next few years, Congress passed major legislation on campaign finance, environmental pollution, employee benefits, and consumer protection. (These wins were aided by the uptick

in liberal lobbying in the Senate, which had followed the House's lead in opening up committee meetings.)

The liberals who pioneered transparency had a playbook that worked well: representatives of interest groups would sit in the committee room during a markup session, and if a member required a nudge to keep a piece of legislation on track, the groups could apply corrective pressure by mobilizing a deluge of letters and phone calls from supporters in the member's home district. The lobbyists, in other words, no longer had to wait in the lobby. But what the transparency advocates failed to appreciate was that the same measures would empower other lobbies, too—including those with much deeper pockets.

THE LOBBYIST INVASION

The 1970s was the decade when corporate lobbying in Washington became turbocharged. Membership in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce more than doubled, and its budget more than tripled. Between 1971 and 1982, the number of firms with registered lobbyists in Washington grew from 175 to 2,445. Between 1968 and 1978, the number of companies with public affairs offices in Washington grew fivefold, and those offices expanded rapidly. General Motors' operation there, for example, grew from a staff of three to a staff of 28.

A number of factors may have contributed to the explosion of corporate lobbying. An onslaught of environmental and consumer regulations in the late 1960s and early 1970s provoked an antiregulatory backlash, and the authorization of political action committees in 1974 encouraged business to take sides in elections. But the most compelling explanation is the revolution in transparency that unfolded at the same time. Before the sunshine reforms, lobbyists could rarely tell for sure whether their targets were voting as intended. That lack of assurance proved crucial to keeping special interests on the back foot. During the deliberations that led to the Tax Reform Act of 1969, for example, members of Congress approved all kinds of special giveaways in open session, but when the conference committee met behind closed doors to draft the final language, it quietly stripped the pork away, dashing the hopes of scores of special interest groups. As the political scientist Lester Milbrath had noted in the early 1960s, "A lobbyist who thinks about using bribery . . . has no assurance that the bribed officials will stay bought."

Transparency changed that. After the liberals' winning streak in the early 1970s, the business lobby caught on to how the game was

played and began playing it for even higher stakes. The Chamber of Commerce, for example, took a page straight from the playbook of liberal groups and sent staffers to sit in on committee meetings to follow what legislators said and did, and it activated a grass-roots network of businesspeople to bombard those who stepped out of line with letters and phone calls. The result was that although Congress underwent no major shift in its ideological composition, by around 1977, it had stopped passing liberal legislation and started doing the bidding of big business. Members voted to cut taxes and weaken air pollution standards. They shot down plans to restrict television advertising aimed at children and defeated bills that would have strengthened labor unions and created a federal consumer protection agency.

Other special interests took advantage of the open-door policy, too. Boutique lobbying firms sprang up to secure subsidies for clients that had previously steered clear of politics, such as universities and hospitals. Israel, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and other countries upped their efforts to shape U.S. policy on foreign aid, military sales, trade, and tariffs. By 1985, foreign governments and businesses accounted for more spending on lobbying in Washington than the 7,200 domestic lobbyists registered with Congress.

That same year, when Congress announced that it would begin work on a bipartisan tax reform bill, lobbyists flooded the Capitol to preserve their loopholes. Committee rooms were packed; lines stretched around the block. The bill attracted so much special interest attention that some took to jokingly calling it "the Lobbyists' Relief Act of 1986." Besieged committee chairs realized they would never be able to repeal giveaways with lobbyists breathing down members' necks, so they risked public outcry and closed the committee room doors, forcing the lobbyists back into the lobbies. The strategy worked: the Tax Reform Act of 1986 simplified the tax code and eliminated $60 billion annually in loopholes. "When we're in the sunshine, as soon as we vote, every trade association in the country gets out their mailgrams and their phone calls in twelve hours, and complains about the members' votes," explained Bob Packwood, the Oregon Republican who chaired the Senate Finance Committee at the time. "But when we're in the back room, the senators can vote their conscience."

Special interests today thrive on transparency. Although the media prefer to focus on the influence of money, lobbyists derive most of their power from their ability to closely track how legislators vote.

Consider the National Rifle Association. While it does contribute to members' campaigns, the NRA's real influence comes from the threat of "taking out" friendly legislators who step out of line. This is the tactic it employed with Debra Maggart, a Republican in the Tennessee House of Representatives and a lifetime NRA member who in 2012 dared to oppose a bill that would have allowed people to leave guns unattended in parked cars. The NRA entered the fray, releasing an onslaught of ads against her during a primary race, and successfully unseated her. A public execution like this sends a clear message to every legislator in the NRA's orbit: do what we say or else.

In the presence of an audience, legislators tend to grandstand and take hard-line positions.

It's a winning strategy. In 2013, as the Senate considered a gun control bill in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, the NRA sent a seemingly innocuous letter to each senator noting that the organization might "make an exception to [its] standard policy of not 'scoring' procedural votes"—an announcement that surely sent panic into members worried about their standing with the NRA. Even though the measures in the bill enjoyed the support of a majority of Americans, the legislation failed. The key factor was not money but intimidation. And the NRA's ability to issue a credible threat depends entirely on its ability to see precisely how legislators vote.

Would legislators vote differently if they were not under a microscope? One natural experiment occurred in the Florida Senate in 2018, when the legislature was debating a two-year moratorium on the sale, delivery, and transfer of AR-15-style rifles. When the legislature held a voice vote—in which individual members' positions are not recorded—the bill passed. But when, for procedural reasons, the vote was repeated as a recorded roll-call vote, it failed.

THE DEATH OF BIPARTISANSHIP

At the same time that Congress has been under assault from moneyed interests from the outside, it has been beset by growing political polarization from within. In both the House and the Senate, study after study has found, the ideological gulf between the voting patterns of Democrats and Republicans is growing and growing. As with lobbying, multiple factors appear to be behind the trend, but the sunshine reforms have played an important role. For one thing, they have made it easier for

party leaders to keep their members in line, just as the liberal reformers had intended. Tip O'Neill, the Massachusetts Democrat who served as Speaker of the House from 1977 to 1987, owed a good deal of his power to the detailed records he kept of how his rank and file were voting, which he wielded to discourage members from straying from the party line. Republicans have done the same. In 2003, as the House considered an overhaul to Medicare, the party's leadership issued threats against disobedient Republicans who saw the bill as a giveaway to pharmaceutical and insurance companies. Leaders told one representative that they would make sure his son would lose the election to succeed him; another member was reduced to tears by the arm-twisting. In 2012, John Boehner used his power as Speaker to strip four fellow Republicans of important committee posts on the basis of their voting records, warning everyone else, "We're watching all your votes." And during the debate over whether to repeal Obamacare, Trump threatened to campaign against individual Republican senators for their stands on procedural votes.

The rise of special interest groups has also widened partisan divisions in Congress, as those groups themselves have increasingly self-sorted. Groups representing trial lawyers and environmentalists, for example, almost exclusively support Democrats, while those representing businesses and gun owners have thrown their lot in with Republicans. As a result, interest groups, empowered by transparency, pressure members to follow the party line. Thanks to the surge in recorded voting, these groups are also able to score members of Congress on increasingly arcane votes, producing seemingly scientific (but often disingenuous) metrics of how legislators have performed on a given issue. Such ratings often resonate with voters, and the mere announcement that a specific vote will be scored can be enough to induce extreme caution among lawmakers.

Transparency has exacerbated partisanship in other ways, too. Legislators tend to be more civil and collegial when meeting in private and more willing to engage in the give-and-take that can lead to win-win solutions. In the presence of an audience, by contrast, they tend to grandstand and take hard-line positions. In the words of Robert Luce, a twentieth-century Republican congressman from Massachusetts who wrote a manual on legislative procedure, "Behind closed doors compromise is possible; before spectators it is difficult."

The appearance of television cameras in Congress made this problem even worse. Authorized by the Legislative Reorganization Act,

cameras were introduced at full scale in the House in 1979 and in the Senate in 1986. Television made it possible in the 1980s for a group of radical Republicans led by Newt Gingrich, a scrappy young representative from Georgia, to turn House proceedings into a circus. During regular sessions, he and his allies played to the cameras by disrupting normal business with repeated demands to debate constitutional amendments on school prayer and abortion. After hours, they would deliver fiery speeches to an empty chamber. Since protocol called for the camera to remain tightly focused on whoever had the floor, it seemed as if opponents had been cowed into silence. (O'Neill eventually got his revenge by instructing the camera operator to pan and show the empty chamber, but the stunt set off a miniature scandal, known as "Camscam," that netted Gingrich even more attention.) Gingrich's spectacles made him a household name, and they showed that degrading the comity of the House made for both good television and good politics.

JUST FOR SHOW

Another important outcome of the sunshine reforms was the rise of so-called show votes, or messaging votes. These votes, often on amendments to unrelated bills, are designed not as constructive efforts to improve legislation but as pieces of political theater. Sometimes, the goal is simply to make certain members look good to their constituents. At other times, it is to force rival legislators to take a stand on a difficult issue or entrap them into a vote that will serve as fodder for negative campaign ads that make extreme claims about a candidate's voting record. Frequently employed for partisan purposes, these votes also give rise to unique forms of legislative dysfunction.

As with lobbying and partisanship, the surge in show votes dates precisely to the rise in transparency. With legislators more frequently voting publicly, the temptation to pin them down, on the record, proved irresistible. As the congressional scholar Donald Ritchie has written, Jesse Helms, a conservative Republican senator from North Carolina, "pioneered the tactic of repeatedly proposing controversial amendments and demanding roll-call votes, even though his side would likely lose." Soon, other members joined in, demanding repeated recorded votes on hot-button issues, such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and school prayer. The number of these weaponized amendments skyrocketed, gumming up the legislative process.

The introduction of electronic voting in the House in 1973—another measure authorized by the Legislative Reorganization Act—only made matters worse. Instead of lining up for a head count or responding to a roll call, legislators now had only to press a button. Many more votes could be packed into a day. By the late 1970s, the volume of recorded votes had grown so outrageous that many of the same liberals who had championed recorded votes in the Committee of the Whole were scrambling for ways to discourage their use.

If excessive transparency is at the root of Congress' problems, the simple solution is to roll it back.

With so many votes to be taken, no legislator could credibly claim to understand more than a fraction of what he or she was voting on. Before the transparency reforms, Congress passed around 2,000 pages of legislation per year; now it churns out more than 7,000. Furthermore, much of the language is written by special interests looking to hide their tracks. As Jack Abramoff, the disgraced former lobbyist, once explained in an interview, "What we did was we crafted language that was so obscure, so confusing, so uninformative, but so precise." In other words, reforms intended to foster transparency have instead resulted in legislation so opaque that no one can comprehend it.

BRINGING BACK SECRECY

If excessive transparency is at the root of Congress' problems, the simple solution is to roll it back. A law that restored something like the status quo ante would quickly bring back some of the balance between openness and privacy that was lost with the sunshine reforms. Committee markup sessions would be conducted behind closed doors (even as committee hearings remained open). The Committee of the Whole would go back to unrecorded votes, and standing committees would stop recording how individual members voted. Final votes on all legislation would still be on the record, just as they always have been. Television cameras might not be removed entirely, but their use could be limited to final votes and the speeches and debates surrounding them.

Congress could also go a step further. For votes in committee and on amendments, it could adopt a secret ballot, in which the positions taken by members would not only be unrecorded but also be hidden from everyone present. When it comes to the chief complaint of the

liberals behind the sunshine reforms—the near-dictatorial power of committee chairs—what allowed the chairs to coerce their junior colleagues was the ability to see those legislators' votes. A secret ballot would have solved that problem. In other words, had the reformers pushed for less transparency, rather than more, they would likely have done much more for their cause.

A legislative secret ballot is not such a radical idea. The ancient Athenians made extensive use of it, as did French parliaments in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the Italian parliament still does under some circumstances. Indeed, members of Congress themselves regularly use a secret ballot when meeting in their party caucuses. Just as the introduction of the secret ballot in popular elections in the late nineteenth century put an end to widespread bribery and voter intimidation—gone were the orgies of free beer and sandwiches—it could achieve the same effect in Congress. In fact, in the age of ubiquitous cell phone cameras, a secret ballot might be the only way to keep an unrecorded vote truly unrecorded.

These reforms would allay the lobbying, partisanship, gridlock, and soaring campaign costs that have crippled a once proud institution. Lobbyists would lose leverage, and their clients would stop injecting so much cash into the legislative process. Senators and representatives would once again feel free to reach across the aisle, hammer out compromises, and dig in to the actual work of writing and debating bills. Amendments could no longer be weaponized, putting an end to show votes and freeing up vast amounts of time. Congress could regain its purpose.

Critics might argue that something would be lost—namely, the ease with which constituents can hold democratically elected leaders accountable. After all, what better way is there for a voter to evaluate a candidate than by looking at his or her voting record? But study after study has shown that citizens simply do not follow congressional actions. (Two months after the Senate confirmed him to the Supreme Court, a Pew Research Center poll found that only 45 percent of Americans knew who Neil Gorsuch was.) The public didn't pay attention to Congress before the transparency reforms—when the number of votes and hearings was more manageable—and it certainly doesn't now that Congress' total output of legislation, transcripts, and other essential documents often exceeds one million pages per year. And if Congress went back to its pre-1970 levels of secrecy, citizens would

still have ample data on which to judge their representatives. Before the sunshine reforms, people could attend hearings, watch congressional debates, read bills under consideration, and see what positions members took on all final votes.

Others might argue that as nice as it might be to go back to the way things were, it's just too late. In the good old days, special interests didn't have such a death grip on American democracy; now that they do, perhaps secrecy would only empower them. But on the occasions when Congress has reverted to secrecy since 1970, the tactic has succeeded in producing public-spirited legislation. Consider not just the 1986 tax reforms but also the 1990 amendments that strengthened the Clean Air Act, which took shape in private meetings of senators from both parties and White House representatives, and the 2015 legislation that set Medicare on a sustainable footing, which was hatched in closed-door meetings between Democratic and Republican leaders in the House at a time when they were at each other's throats publicly.

Others might contend that the real problem is too little transparency in campaign fundraising. But the evidence suggests otherwise. For one thing, it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between the campaign donations a legislator receives and the way he or she votes. Although researchers have found some correlation between receiving money from a group and voting the way that group prefers, it is important to note that special interests are likely to give to lawmakers who are already friendly to their cause, and instances of naked quid pro quos are rare. For another thing, it's worth pointing out that the rise in campaign spending correlates closely with the rise in congressional transparency. Indeed, donors appear to be interested in supporting only the campaigns of members of Congress whose legislative actions they can track. If the goal is to reduce the amount of money in politics, then restoring legislative secrecy may well be the best way to accomplish it.

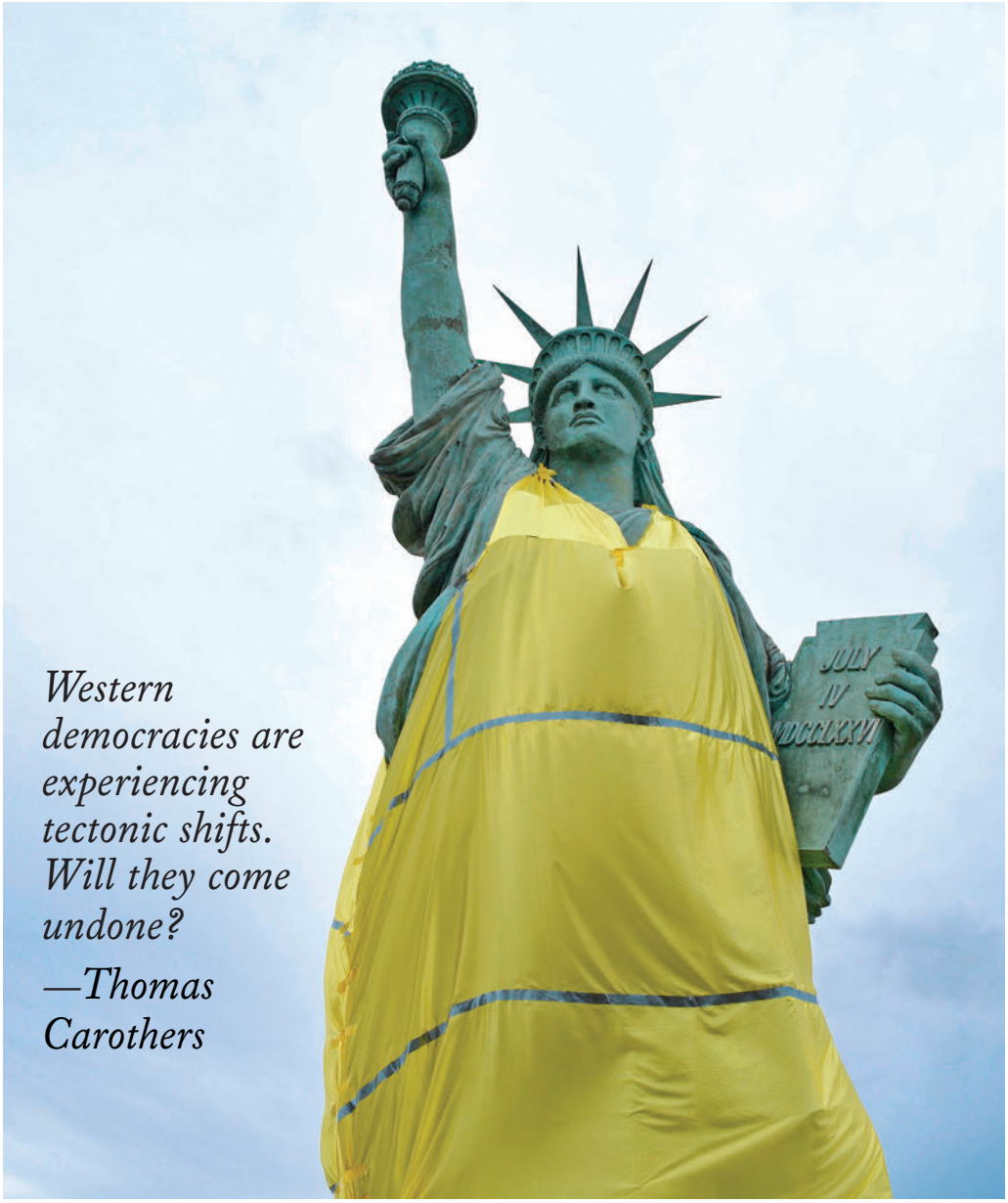
Admittedly, the politics of returning to secrecy are tough. There is probably a good deal of pent-up demand for greater secrecy among legislators, many of whom must regret having cast certain ballots simply to avoid an onslaught of negative ads or the wrath of a powerful donor. But the politician who argues against transparency risks being seen as having something to hide. That's why the effort might best be led by civil society groups.

For the time being, however, the status quo prevails, and Congress is unlikely to restore secrecy anytime soon. Usually, what gets in the

way of bold policy proposals is a fear of the unknown: potential downsides tend to loom larger than potential upsides, and the safest course is to do nothing. But in the case of rolling back transparency, the end state is not some unknown future. It is a return to a system that was envisioned by the Founding Fathers and that, for close to two centuries, functioned far better than the system that replaced it.

"Sunlight," the future Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis wrote in 1913, "is said to be the best of disinfectants." Brandeis was speaking of big banks, not Congress, but his adage came to be adopted by those pushing for less secrecy in politics. More than a century later, the true nature of transparency has become clear. Endless sunshine—without some occasional shade—kills what it is meant to nourish.

REVIEWS & RESPONSES



Western democracies are experiencing tectonic shifts. Will they come undone?

—Thomas Carothers

AP IMAGES / ABACA PRESS / SIPA USA

A Good Democracy Is Hard to Find

Why Progress Takes So Long and Falls Apart So Easily

Thomas Carothers

Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancien Régime to the Present Day
BY SHERI BERMAN. Oxford University Press, 2019, 544 pp.

Democracy's global travails continue to mount. What looked as recently as a decade ago to be real democratic progress in countries as diverse as Brazil, Hungary, South Africa, and Turkey has been either reversed by illiberal strongmen or unsettled by revelations of systemic corruption. Some of the most stirring recent political openings, such as those in Egypt and Myanmar, have slammed shut. The United States and several longstanding democracies in western Europe are struggling with serious democratic challenges, especially the rise of illiberal populist forces. And the two most significant nondemocratic powers, China and Russia, are strutting on the global stage.

Faced with this dispiriting state of affairs, worried observers fret over three basic questions: Why is this democratic recession happening? How bad is it? And where is it heading?

This is the backdrop for the political scientist Sheri Berman's substantial new history of democracy in Europe. Synthesizing several decades of scholarship, Berman throws long and deep, aiming both to illuminate the causes and significance of Europe's current democratic woes and to set realistic expectations about democracy's chances in the many countries that have tried in recent decades to slip authoritarianism's grip. Readers will come away from Berman's account with useful insights on the vital question of why democracy sometimes succeeds but often does not. But it does not explicitly grapple with a further crucial question: As events push Western democracy into uncharted waters, how much can democracy's past reveal about its future?

THE LONG ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

Berman starts her story in the seventeenth century and follows it through the defining events of modern European political history. She focuses on the large western European democracies—France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom—with two chapters on eastern Europe to round out the account. (The smaller countries of western Europe and those of northern Europe are largely absent.) The longitudinal sweep of her narrative is daunting. She tours the French Revolution, the revolutions of 1848, the battle over the Corn Laws, German and Italian unification, the rise and fall of fascism, the Spanish Civil War, the Marshall Plan, the postwar successes of western Europe, and the failures of communism. In doing so, she manages to convey the essential

THOMAS CAROTHERS is Senior Vice President for Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

elements without getting lost in the details, analyzing political actors and their doings while keeping a constant eye on underlying economic and societal trends. Her analysis mostly persuades, although it rarely surprises, conforming as it does to conventional accounts.

Berman's central argument is that countries usually achieve liberal democracy only after a long series of setbacks, conflicts, and failures. France offers a case in point. After the early glory of the French Revolution, the country followed an exceptionally bumpy path. A long slog of successive troubled republics consolidated into liberal democracy only after World War II. Germany had to endure its own punishing odyssey before solidifying as a remarkably stable and productive democracy. Berman accounts for the United Kingdom's exceptionally smooth transition from aristocracy to democracy by pointing to the willingness of the country's landowning elites to cede power peacefully, albeit slowly and grudgingly.

As Berman makes clear, the combination of free and fair elections, the rule of law, and widespread respect for democratic institutions that is today termed "liberal democracy" is a recent and rare achievement. From the late eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, European democratic strivings usually produced illiberal or electoral democracies, such as the short-lived Second French Republic (which lasted from 1848 to 1852), in which large numbers of citizens were disenfranchised or governments offered only weak protections for political and civil liberties. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century that liberal democracy became common. Berman pushes hard on this point and insists on the careful use of the term "liberal democracy," emphasizing that it does not apply to the earlier phases of European democratic life. American analysts would do well to adopt this conceptual rigor, given their habit of blithely applying the same term, "democracy," to the system of governance maintained by the United States today and to the one that the country maintained in the nineteenth century, which excluded women, African Americans, and other groups from full citizenship.

If liberal democracy is recent and exceptional, what makes it possible? Despite popular fascination with political leaders, the process that produces liberal democracy is not, in Berman's view, principally the work of great men and women. It is more fundamentally the result of deep economic and societal transformations. In order for liberal democracy to emerge, countries have had to forge national unity and break up—or grow out of—strong concentrations of economic power. War often served as the handmaiden of national unity in Europe. Many of the necessary economic transformations were also violent, given the reluctance of landed elites to relinquish power.

Liberal democratic regimes, Berman concludes, are most likely to succeed when they are built on national unity and a strong state. She points to Italy to illustrate how difficult it is to make liberal democracy work in the absence of these conditions. This analysis would seem to support a "development first, democracy later" prescription, urging democratic activists to hold off until others have built a capable state and bridged communal divides. Yet Berman adds nuance to that simplistic story by noting that coercive state building by

dictators often goes only so far and that "some of the most striking advances in state- and nation-building in European history occurred only *after* dictatorships were overthrown."

WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG

Berman's history covers an enormous amount of ground. Yet although the book is billed as an account running up "to the present day," it barely touches on events after the early 1990s. Berman's detailed exploration of western Europe runs out of steam in the 1980s. Her analysis of eastern Europe gets to 1989 and its immediate aftermath, but hardly any further. In the concluding chapter, she mentions some recent events, but only sketchily, devoting little more than a few paragraphs to all that has happened since the early 1990s. It would have been useful to bring the narrative up to date with a thorough analysis of crucial developments such as the enlargement of the European Union, the 2008 financial crisis, the eurozone debt crisis, the rise of populism, the migration crisis, and Brexit.

By giving short shrift to those subjects, Berman isn't able to persuasively answer the question of why European liberal democracy has fallen on hard times. Liberal democracy's success in western Europe, she argues, rested on three factors: the role of the United States in constructing an economic and military order that promoted peace and prosperity in Europe; the successful advance of European integration; and the construction of social democratic systems that avoided economic crises, kept inequality low, and narrowed social divisions.

The trouble began in the 1970s, she contends, when all three pillars of this foundation started to crumble. First came U.S. President Richard Nixon's decision to leave the gold standard, a move that brought "an end to the postwar–Bretton Woods monetary system" and "reflected a decline in the United States' willingness or ability to shoulder the burdens of hegemonic leadership." That decline, Berman argues, accelerated in the past two years, as U.S. President Donald Trump has undermined the United States' basic commitment to the postwar order. European integration, meanwhile, went off track in the 1970s with the decision by European leaders "to move forward with monetary cooperation and eventually integration" while neglecting to develop regional political institutions. And Europe's economic difficulties during that decade opened the door to neoliberalism, which over the next several decades generated "slow and inequitable growth" and eventually contributed to the financial crisis of 2008, fueling right-wing populism.

After Berman's careful analysis of the previous several hundred years, this rather hasty explanation of Europe's current democratic woes feels inadequate. Nixon's unilateral abandonment of the Bretton Woods system certainly shocked many allies in Europe. But Berman neglects to mention that Nixon's administration also pioneered new kinds of multilateral engagement, starting with what would become the G-7, a forum dedicated to coordinating economic policy among the world's major industrialized democracies. Certainly, Trump's skepticism of the United States' international security commitments has contributed to a hostile environment for European democracy. But none of the seven U.S.

presidents between Nixon and Trump backed away from the basic postwar economic and military commitments that undergirded democratic consolidation in Europe. Indeed, their steady adherence to those obligations is precisely what has made Trump's approach so jarring.

And although Berman is correct to observe that the EU's move toward technocracy has fueled a backlash against Brussels, this problem has tarnished the legitimacy of the EU more than it has that of liberal democracy. Berman suggests that the EU's growing unpopularity over the past decade has fueled "the nationalism and populism that threaten liberal democracy in Europe today." Yet in many troubled European democracies, the EU is more a convenient punching bag than a driver of populism itself.

Berman's sweeping claim that the turn to neoliberalism in the 1970s is to blame for Europe's slow growth, economic dislocations, and rising inequality is equally unpersuasive. As Berman acknowledges, growth was already slowing in the 1970s. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's economic medicine in the 1980s was unquestionably a harsh tonic, but it did counter the slow growth that social democracy had ended up delivering the decade before. It would also be difficult to blame neoliberalism for the economic travails France has faced in the past four decades, given that most economists would say the theory has never been seriously put into practice there, at least not until the current administration of President Emmanuel Macron. The same can be said of Italy. It is true that the financial crisis, which hit Europe hard, was a product of a global capitalist system

that had been heavily influenced by neoliberal ideas and policies. But Europe's failure to maintain the economic performance it achieved in the first three decades after World War II into the next three decades and beyond has far more complex causes than those suggested by Berman's simple narrative of a transition from social democracy to neoliberalism.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

Berman repeatedly emphasizes the importance of looking at the present through the lens of the past. There's considerable value in her account, not just with regard to Western democracy but also for adding perspective to the many attempted democratic transitions in developing countries that are hitting hard times. The rockiness of Europe's long road to democracy shows that it should have been possible to predict the troubles encountered by democracy's so-called third wave, which began in 1974 and spread across a wide swath of countries in Latin America, Asia, eastern Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa. That is especially true considering that recent democratic transitions have occurred mostly in countries with weak states, concentrated economic power, and combustible communal divisions.

But how much does the historical record help in predicting the future? Western democracies are experiencing tectonic shifts. Will they come undone, despite having enjoyed an almost unbroken 50-year run of stability? Here, history offers only a limited guide.

Broadly speaking, European and other Western democracies were built on the back of two centuries of remarkable economic growth, albeit with major shocks along the way. Now, the West is in for a protracted, possibly indefinite, period of slow growth or even stagnation. It's not clear whether the liberal democratic consensus can withstand the inevitable public anger and alienation that will result. The toxic political fallout of the financial crisis does not bode well.

New technologies are also battering democracy. Past communications breakthroughs, such as radio and television, had major effects on democracy, but they at least tended be spaced out, giving democracy time to adapt. The problems raised by the current wave of technological change—the loss of authority on the part of traditional media gatekeepers, the vulnerability of all information to manipulation, the new capacities for total surveillance—are hitting liberal democracy all at once. And they are just the start of what will be even more revolutionary developments, as machine learning and other disruptive technologies take off.

The wider world is changing, too. The influence of the West is declining relative to that of non-Western countries, many of them nondemocratic. Liberal democracy consolidated just as Western power reached its zenith. In the decades ahead, Western countries will face greater constraints on action outside their borders, and other countries will infringe more on their internal affairs. That is certain to unsettle liberal democratic governments. And global trends including climate change and migration will tug even harder at the fabric of liberal democracy.

Understanding democracy's past is vital to understanding democracy's present. But democracy's future remains mostly unfathomable.

Return to Table of Contents

A World Safe for Capital

How Neoliberalism Shaped the International System

Stephen Wertheim

Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism
BY QUINN SLOBODIAN. Harvard University Press, 2018, 400 pp.

The historian Quinn Slobodian has written a book that is likely to upset enthusiasts of the "liberal world order." In *Globalists*, he tells the story of how a small set of intellectuals in central Europe laid the foundations of institutions such as the European Union and the World Trade Organization (WTO), commonly held up today as bulwarks of liberal democracy. Slobodian reveals that these thinkers, who called themselves "neoliberals," sought to do more than counter fascism and communism, as the conventional wisdom holds. They also wanted to suppress the power of democratic publics. Ordinary people, organized as citizens and workers, posed a grave threat to the neoliberals' supreme goal: a global economy integrated by the flow of capital.

The main characters in this tale are the intellectuals who orbited the famous economists Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises in the years after World War I. Slobodian dubs this group "the Geneva School" because, between the world wars, they gathered in the Swiss capital in order to formulate their project. Hayek and Mises, who both hailed from Austria-Hungary, are more commonly known as the foremost exponents of "Austrian economics," a school of thought that prizes the freedom of markets from state intervention. Slobodian shows how the two thinkers led a network of politically influential economists in Vienna but also places them in the context of a continent-wide and, eventually, transatlantic movement, incubated in Geneva's League of Nations. As the Depression struck, the league became the place where experts decided that "the world problem," as a group of experts convened by the league put it in 1931, "should be studied on a world basis." Hayek, Mises, and their acolytes constructed models and assembled statistics to represent the new entity called "the world economy." By 1938, some members of the cohort began to describe themselves as neoliberals, seeing their mission as adapting liberalism so that it could survive the inhospitable environs of the twentieth century.

The Geneva neoliberals, Slobodian shows, were seized with a persistent problem: how to insulate property rights from mass democracy. This problem was evident from the moment Europe descended into war in 1914, and it only intensified as empires collapsed and nation-states proliferated. Each new nation-state meant a new claim of popular sovereignty, empowering the many to expropriate the property of the few. And each new nation-state erected a new set of borders, impeding

STEPHEN WERTHEIM is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Columbia University.

the movement of capital, goods, and labor. Where political nationalism began, it seemed, economic nationalism was never far behind. "'The mines for the miners' and 'Papua for the Papuans' are analytically similar slogans," the British economist Lionel Robbins observed, unhappily, in 1937.

With the forces of history arrayed against them, the Geneva neoliberals devised a solution. It was not enough to let markets work their magic, since democratic publics had begun to sour on laissez-faire capitalism. So in addition to unfettering markets, the neoliberals sought to design institutions that would shelter property from the grasping hands of the mobilized masses and newly formed states. "Laissez-faire—yes," the German neoliberal economist Wilhelm Röpke wrote in 1942, "but within a framework laid down by a permanent and clear-sighted market police."

How, though, to create a police force that would protect and serve international capital rather than national economies? Here Slobodian makes a groundbreaking contribution. Unlike standard accounts, which cast neoliberals as champions of markets against governments and states, Slobodian argues that neoliberals embraced governance—chiefly at the global level. By going above national borders, they neutralized politics within those borders, so that democratic governments could not obstruct the security and mobility of property. Gradually, despite encountering resistance at every turn, they helped build a world order guided by the principle of "capital first." For Slobodian, their success casts a disturbing light on many of the international rules and institutions that make up today's global order—but also shows how different people, with a different program, could change them.

POWERS TO SAY NO

Although the thinkers influenced by Hayek and Mises are the main characters in Slobodian's story, two more familiar figures lurk in the background: Vladimir Lenin and Woodrow Wilson. The Bolshevik revolutionary and the American president represented, in the eyes of the Geneva School neoliberals, the two main threats to capital: labor militancy (Lenin) and the principle of national self-determination, at least for white people (Wilson). In World War I, those two forces brought down the Habsburg empire of Hayek's and Mises' youth, a catastrophe that unmade their world. Habsburg rule had created an economic unity out of multiple nationalities and nested sovereignties. For Mises, born to Jewish parents in present-day Lviv, Ukraine, the empire's cosmopolitan harmony was bound up with the way it integrated the economies of its constituent communities. Now the war unleashed egoisms of all kinds. As Mises complained in 1927, "Even countries with only a few million inhabitants, like Hungary and Czechoslovakia, are attempting, by means of a high tariff policy and prohibitions on imports, to make themselves independent of the rest of the world."

During the 1920s, the neoliberals made their mark by carrying out cutting-edge research into business cycles. Working for associations such as the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, they focused on how economies function, seeking to make economic activity visible through indexes and charts. Gottfried Haberler, a Mises protégé,

Market maker: Friedrich Hayek in London, July 1983

PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

convened study groups at the League of Nations that attempted to demonstrate how business cycles in one country depended on those in every other. But as the Great Depression pushed more economists to follow the lead of John Maynard Keynes and develop models of the national economy (all the better to plan it), the Geneva School economists had a change of heart. They began to argue that economic activity was not so quantifiable and perceptible after all but actually "sublime and ineffable," Slobodian writes. Retreating from statistics and graphs, the neoliberals took up a different task: to establish frameworks under which capital, goods, and services (people came a distant fourth) could traverse the globe, with property owners assured of maintaining their rights.

In order to combat national economic planning, they turned to global institutional design. By the eve of World War II, the neoliberals had set out to re-create something like the Habsburg model and project it onto as vast an area as possible. It was this reactionary impulse—to undo the disintegration of imperial orders—that distinguished the neoliberals from classical liberals, such as John Stuart Mill, who imagined that the world would march toward a future of ever-closer integration. Classical liberals put their faith in historical progress; neoliberals, ironically, hoped to recover a past idyll. But they were innovative all the

same. Perhaps they could even improve on the Habsburg legacy. Whereas the empire had demanded the allegiance of its subjects, flying flags that could be saluted but also torn down, Hayek theorized a system of rules without politics. What remained invisible would not inspire loyalty, yet neither would it provoke resistance.

Events, however, failed to cooperate. World War II delivered victories for communism in eastern Europe and social democracy in the West, set off a wave of decolonization in Asia, and produced the Bretton Woods system of capital controls. Out of desperation, the neoliberals thought big. They dreamed up schemes for strong supranational federations imbued with what Hayek called "powers to say no" to states tempted to impede the circulation of money and downgrade the influence of foreign investors and bondholders. To be sure, the neoliberals hardly favored a world government; that would merely magnify the problems they saw at the state level. Rather, they sought a patchwork of rules-based institutions that would constrict nation-states without being accountable to any public. In the neoliberal vision, Slobodian writes, ordinary people would experience the economy as they did the weather, as a sphere "outside of direct human control."

By the late 1940s, this approach had yielded some gains. The neoliberals, led by the Polish American economist Michael Angelo Heilperin, rallied international business representatives to block the International Trade Organization proposed by the new UN Economic and Social Council. The organization's charter, the economist warned the businesspeople, was a "dangerous document": it enshrined the national protection of infant industries through tariffs, and it operated on a one-nation, one-vote principle, unlike the hierarchical International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Heilperin advised Lee Bristol, the president of the pharmaceutical giant Bristol-Myers, to lobby Congress to kill the charter, and by 1950, the International Trade Organization was dead.

In its place, the neoliberals cheered on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which 23 countries signed in Geneva in 1947. The GATT required states to reduce tariffs and other barriers to trade and locked in those reductions through its "most favored nation" principle, which limits the extent to which countries can treat their trading partners differently. The neoliberals didn't have much direct influence on the GATT, Slobodian concedes. But they saw in it a basis for the future.

THE NEOLIBERAL TRIUMPH

In the 1950s, the neoliberals began to win big, starting in their home continent. In the United States, President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal had sought to protect four freedoms: the freedom of speech and expression, the freedom to worship in one's own way, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear. The European Union, which began to take shape in the late 1940s and 1950s, sought to secure four rather different freedoms: the freedom of capital, goods, services, and labor. These freedoms would be achieved by setting economic rule-making above the authority of formally sovereign member states. At first, the Geneva neoliberals were divided over the Treaty of Rome, which

established Europe's common market in 1957. Slobodian shows how older neoliberals initially resisted "bloc Europe" because it hoisted protective barriers against most of the outside world. Haberler issued a report under the auspices of the GATT that blasted European integration for discriminating against others, and he won support from 15 states in the global South.

But younger, more pragmatic neoliberals thought differently. From inside the West German economics ministry, Ernst-Joachim Mestmäcker worked to make sure the European common market would eliminate the power of nation-states to impinge on trade. In the incipient European Union, he saw a model of multilayered governance and a concrete step toward the reign of capital across the globe. Neoliberals such as Mestmäcker valued the EU precisely for what critics would later dub its "democratic deficit." Anonymous technocrats would implement rules from above; below, states would keep order and pursue agendas that would not reduce the EU's prerogatives.
In the 1960s, Mestmäcker, citing Hayek, supported the European Court of Justice as it established the supremacy of European over national law. The neoliberals had made an ironic discovery: the best way to integrate global capital was to keep political integration perpetually partial. In this way, nation-states would lack the authority to deviate from the preordained rules, and international political organizations would lack the will to do so.

A highlight of *Globalists* is the attention it lavishes on neoliberals' encounter with the developing world. Slobodian gives the North-South axis priority over

the East-West divisions of the Cold War—as some neoliberals did themselves. One of the reasons the EU initially troubled older neoliberals was that it let some of postcolonial Africa into its magic circle, bestowing on former European colonies access to the common market and a development fund. Haberler, among others, preferred to consign the entire global South to what he saw as its proper role in the global division of labor: producing basic commodities. In 1979, Haberler, by then the first resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, professed to be alarmed less by communism and Western protectionism than by demands from leaders in the Third World. A group of 77 states, rallying at the UN, was calling for the creation of a "new international economic order." Having achieved independence from their former colonial masters, these states were now embracing everything that the neoliberals opposed: rapid industrialization, national sovereignty over natural resources, regulation of multinational corporations, and redistributive justice on a global scale. The Group of 77 failed to achieve its vision, due to conflicts among its members and creative diplomacy by wealthy countries. But its specter spurred the neoliberals to regroup and press for a new international economic order along the lines they preferred.

In the 1980s, neoliberals devised new ways to contain economic nationalism. Disciples of Hayek, such as Ernst-Ulrich Petersmann, Frieder Roessler, and Jan Tumlir, sought to expand and institutionalize the GATT into a kind of European Union for the world. In the legalistic EU, crowned by the European Court of Justice, they saw a model for how to force countries to respect and carry out decisions made by a supranational entity that lacked an army. They scored a victory in 1995 with the establishment of the WTO, whose Dispute Settlement Body and Appellate Body adjudicate not only the "at the border" issues once covered by the GATT but also services, intellectual property, and a range of standards that intrude "beyond the border." Although Slobodian says little about the negotiations that directly produced the WTO, he shows the deep debt paid to Hayek by influential theorists such as Petersmann, a pioneer of the field of international economic law.

In Slobodian's telling, neoliberalism finally triumphed in the 1980s and 1990s with the creation of the WTO, as well as the proliferation of agreements that protected the rights of foreign investors and the tightening of "structural adjustment" criteria for International Monetary Fund and World Bank assistance to developing countries. On these issues, Slobodian's Geneva School of early neoliberals converged with Anglo-American groups and figures to whom the term "neoliberal" is more conventionally applied: the Chicago School of the economist Milton Friedman, the Virginia School of the economist James Buchanan, and the thinkers and policymakers behind the political revolutions of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. By the turn of the century, as Slobodian writes, the rules and institutions pushed for by the neoliberals meant that countries in the global South, although formally independent, would find it nearly impossible to overcome their "subjection to the forces of the world market." The point applies to rich countries as well.

Despite his sweeping story, Slobodian avoids the reductive approach of some leftist critiques that depict neoliberal ascendance as a shadowy menace pervading every nook and cranny of human society. In fact, he highlights how neoliberalism's victories have consistently generated backlashes. The WTO appeared to realize the neoliberals' quest to protect global capitalism against pressures from below. Yet in 1999, just four years after the organization came into being, its annual meeting was shut down by massive protests in Seattle—the very kind of democratic resistance that the neoliberal project was supposed to discourage. The act of creating a formal body such as the WTO had rendered all too obvious just how little power publics exercised in crucial economic decision-making. The WTO ignored Hayek's warning that the global economy should always remain invisible and anonymous, so as not to draw the gaze of the masses.

A WAY OUT?

Globalists is intellectual history at its best. By reconstructing how neoliberals themselves conceived of their project over time, Slobodian convincingly rebuts the prevailing view, taken by exponents and critics alike, that neoliberalism merely seeks to free markets from the shackles of the state. In reality, neoliberals clearly wish to harness state power in circumscribed ways. Slobodian reveals, for example, that Mises welcomed the Austrian state's deadly repression of a general strike in 1927. "Friday's putsch has cleansed the atmosphere like a thunderstorm," Mises wrote to a friend. Five decades later, Hayek paid a visit to the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and expressed his preference for "a liberal dictator to a democratic government lacking liberalism"; neoliberal Chilean economists who had been trained at the University of Chicago also helped the Pinochet regime use the tools of authoritarian power to enact market reforms. Slobodian puts these episodes in context. He establishes that, all along, neoliberals have targeted the collective power of citizens more profoundly than they have targeted the coercive apparatus of states. Their goal, Slobodian concludes, has been "not to liberate markets but to encase them": to shelter global capitalism from a hostile world.

A weakness of Slobodian's book follows from its strength. Hewing closely to the ideas of his protagonists, Slobodian struggles to demonstrate exactly how they influenced particular international rules and institutions. Readers may wonder just how strong a connection exists between the intellectuals he profiles and the developments he credits them with shaping. Moreover, because he focuses on one source of inspiration for international bodies, some may read into *Globalists* an attack on global governance as a whole. In *The American Historical Review*, for example, the historian Jennifer Burns complained that Slobodian tars the entire international order as a neoliberal plot. "By not weaving in the voices of contrasting intellectuals or narrating the founding moments of the most important supranational institutions," she writes, "Slobodian conveys a misleading picture of why so many policymakers and elites embraced global institutions in the twentieth century." This is a weighty charge, especially coming at a time when existing institutions are under assault

by nationalists from the left and the right. Does Slobodian support their cause by impugning the very project of global governance as a handmaiden of capital?

Not quite. In fact, Slobodian's story reveals the limits of the neoliberals' power as much as their strength. As he shows, the neoliberals were on the defensive for most of the twentieth century. It was their adversaries who controlled the most powerful countries and set up the UN, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank to secure social welfare around the world. The neoliberals constantly battled against, around, and within these institutions. Only after the 1970s did the neoliberals ascend and remake the global order—and only partially, never completely. For opponents of neoliberalism today, the lesson to draw is hardly to exalt the nation above the globe. It's just the opposite: to take the fight to the international level and either win power in existing institutions or establish new ones. The neoliberals did so at the end of the twentieth century, and social democrats and socialists could do the same in the twenty-first.

At the same time, Slobodian's account makes clear the difficulty of bringing popular power to bear at the international level. The neoliberals triumphed for a reason: by the 1970s, global governance had become an elite preserve, where well-placed intellectuals could mount a takeover. Although Slobodian doesn't say so, whatever potential existed for mass mobilization on the international level was probably snuffed out when the leaders who designed the international institutions confined participation in them to the executives of national governments rather than representatives chosen by parliaments or elected directly by publics. The latter possibilities were entertained during and shortly after World War I, when a number of citizens' groups advocated European or worldwide bodies that would be subject to democratic control. But the architects of the League of Nations and the UN chose to empower heads of governments, such as themselves. Requiring national leaders to represent their entire publics to the world, international institutions offered little opportunity for publics to take responsibility for international affairs and form allegiances across national borders. There was never a chance that mobilized publics would ever get a hearing in the halls of the United Nations, much less the WTO. In this sense, the neoliberal globalists owe an ironic debt to their nationalist rivals for containing mass democracy.

Many advocates of international cooperation today make a grave mistake when they lump all norms, laws, and institutions together into a single "liberal world order" that must be defended, all or nothing. Their populist and nationalist opponents make the same error in seeking to tear down "globalism." What Slobodian's history shows is that the contemporary order emerged from contestation and struggle, that it has changed profoundly over time, and that at the very least its origins are more complex than those usually presented by its defenders and its detractors. The meaningful question has never been whether to have world order or not; it is what the terms will be and who will set them. In 2019, that question remains open ended, much as it was in 1919. The only certainty is that those who retreat within the nation do so at their peril.

Return to Table of Contents

The Real Killer

Fighting the Scourge of Everyday Violence

Thomas Abt

A Savage Order: How the World's Deadliest Countries Can Forge a Path to Security
BY RACHEL KLEINFELD. Pantheon, 2018, 496 pp.

These are dangerous times: war in Syria and Yemen, bloody repression in Venezuela, ethnic cleansing in Myanmar. Yet by some measures, the world is safer than ever before. The rate of violent death has been falling, albeit unevenly, for decades, even centuries. Fewer people are killed on the battlefield, on the streets, and in homes. Led by the psychologist Steven Pinker, who has collected reams of evidence demonstrating that humanity has slowly but surely grown more peaceable, a new group of thinkers is urging policymakers and the public to consider not just what the world is doing wrong in terms of violence but also what it is doing right.

Rachel Kleinfeld is one such thinker, and her new book, *A Savage Order*, is to some extent an extension of Pinker's work. Kleinfeld sets out to "study success" by examining regions where murderous violence has fallen. She also draws on her own research and experience promoting security and human rights to extract lessons for policymakers looking to pacify violent societies. Kleinfeld claims to have developed a "blueprint for action," but that is an overstatement: her conclusions are too general to serve as a concrete guide for policymaking. Yet she does offer valuable insights into why some governments allow violence to fester and what societies can do to end it. As Kleinfeld shows, some countries have managed to cut crime and save lives. Others can and should learn from them.

THOMAS ABT is a Senior Research Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School. Previously, he served as Deputy Secretary for Public Safety for the State of New York. He is the author of the forthcoming book *Bleeding Out: The Devastating Consequences of Urban Violence—and a Bold New Plan for Peace in the Streets*.

WHEN THE STATE FUELS VIOLENCE

Kleinfeld begins with an important observation: most violence takes place in everyday situations, not on the battlefield. Each year, individual attackers, organized criminal groups, and state security services kill four times as many people as do all the current wars put together. Leaders should continue working to prevent war, but most progress in promoting peace will depend on controlling the more mundane forms of brutality.

That progress has to start in the most violent countries, such as Brazil, which suffers from an annual national homicide rate (over 30 per 100,000 citizens) that is 15 times as high as that of Belgium or Canada. Scholars often attribute the violence in such states to the weakness of their governments, pointing to incompetent police forces, inadequate bureaucracies, and a lack of government control over large geographic areas. But Kleinfeld points out

that although some violent states have governments that are weak or fragile in the conventional sense, others are stable enough to tackle violence—if they so chose. This distinction matters because it acknowledges that keeping the peace is fundamentally a matter of governance. Kleinfeld does away with the idea that violence is the product of culture, religion, or poverty and persuasively argues that domestic peace begins with a state monopoly on the use of force.

Kleinfeld's work thus provides some much-needed accountability for governments that fail to protect their people. In most cases, the problem is not that governments are weak; it is that they are complicit, deliberately supporting criminal groups for the sake of both power and enrichment. In Bangladesh, Jamaica, and Nigeria, for example, political parties hire criminal gangs to herd their voters to the polls during elections and scare away the opposition, then protect the gangs between campaigns. Yet it's worth noting that governments are rarely uniformly corrupt: criminal organizations may capture local or regional authorities but not federal ones, and the level of corruption often varies from place to place.

Kleinfeld's indictment of complicit governments leads her to another observation: governments and societies descend into violence and escape it together. When governments cripple their police and security services in order to exert control over them, they wind up normalizing everyday violence. Disputes among family members, friends, neighbors, and business associates turn bloody more easily. People resort to vigilantism to solve problems that the state will not. The resulting low-level violence often outpaces more organized criminality. For instance, even in Latin American countries where gang and drug violence run rampant, the majority of homicides still happen on weekend nights, often triggered by petty, alcohol-fueled disputes.

This kind of violence stems not just from the inadequacy of the security services but also from the perceived illegitimacy of the government and the criminal justice system. In poor communities, many residents quite reasonably believe that the police and other officials are unable or unwilling to help them. As a result, they refuse to report crimes, testify in court, or serve as jurors. What is more dangerous, some resort to violence to solve mundane disputes. (Sociologists often refer to this phenomenon as "legal cynicism.") The more cynical people and communities are, the more violent they are likely to be.

GETTING OUT

Successful state transitions out of violence often depend on what Kleinfeld calls "dirty deals" between governments and violent groups. She deserves credit for stating publicly what many will only whisper behind closed doors: pragmatic leaders must sometimes make morally questionable tradeoffs to gain temporary truces. The "Medellín miracle" in Colombia—a massive decline in violence over the last two and a half decades in what had been the world's most dangerous city—is often described as a triumph of so-called social urbanism. Commentators usually point to investments in infrastructure and services for neglected neighborhoods, such as rapid and reliable public transit and new libraries and

Thug life: Gang members in the Rocinha favela, Rio de Janeiro, 2007

Q. SAKAMAKI / REDUX

parks. But Kleinfeld reveals that much of the city's progress depended on hidden agreements, such as the one brokered in 2003 between the government and the paramilitary boss Diego Murillo Bejarano, known as Don Berna. In return for keeping the peace among Medellín's many cartels, gangs, and other criminal groups, the government promised Don Berna and his fellow paramilitaries short prison sentences and protection from deportation to the United States, where they were wanted on drug and gang charges.

Although Medellín offers a success story, Kleinfeld is careful to note that such methods are fraught with risk. Deals can set dangerous precedents. In 2012, political leaders in El Salvador secretly reached a truce with the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs that resulted in a dramatic drop in homicides. Three years later, however, the truce had failed, and murder rates skyrocketed. The gangs' leaders, confident that the authorities would bargain with them as they had in the past, ordered the killing of bus drivers in San Salvador to force the government back to the negotiating table.

Where leaders cannot bargain for peace, they may employ aggressive measures, including the use of military force, anti-racketeering and asset forfeiture laws, and electronic surveillance, to take back territory, purge corrupt officials, and break up criminal conspiracies. Tough military and law enforcement tactics, like dirty deals, come with risks, especially when they violate human and civil rights. State authority taken to extremes easily leads to abuse: many leaders begin as reformers but wind up turning into the kind of authoritarians they once opposed.

At their best, dirty deals and tough tactics buy the government time to

implement democratic reforms, which leads to Kleinfeld's final observation: lasting peace requires a new political settlement. Once the deals have been struck, governments must secure broad support for an agenda of reform that reasserts the rule of law and brings power back to the people. This finding, although undoubtedly true, is the least useful in the book. Deep reforms always require political support; the harder question is how to win it. Here, the book offers little concrete guidance. Kleinfeld also argues that "the middle class is the fulcrum of change" and that violence declines when "the people with enough voice and power to change the system mobilize." But that description is equally true of elites, and many reform movements have depended in significant part on the support of business and government leaders. Mobilization by the middle class is necessary, but not sufficient, to spur and sustain reform.

WHAT WORKS

Kleinfeld's candor in describing the challenges of reforming corrupt and violent states is refreshing. The public in these places needs to be better informed about the potential risks and rewards of these tradeoffs if they are to empower their leaders to make difficult decisions and to hold them accountable for the results.

Kleinfeld presents her findings as authoritative, but in reality, they are merely persuasive. Most of them are based on observation and experience, not hard evidence. She is not to blame for this: there is little rigorous research addressing the intersection of crime, conflict, and governance. Kleinfeld does mention technocratic, evidence-informed policies that can improve social and economic welfare, but she doesn't spend much time examining them; her book focuses on how to create the conditions under which such policies are possible. Frustratingly, that kind of change remains more an art than a science.

There are, however, specific actions that policymakers in poorer countries can take that would set the stage for more targeted interventions. First and foremost, to curb lethal violence, policymakers should focus their efforts specifically on such violence and abandon the false hope of addressing it indirectly via poverty, corruption, or other forms of crime. In fact, basic improvements in security make every other strategy to improve social and economic welfare more likely to succeed. In the United States, for instance, violence underpins concentrated urban poverty, locking into place poor schools, health care, and housing. This is true to an even greater extent in countries suffering from far higher levels of deadly crime.

The single most important and reliable measure of violence is homicide. Other crimes often go unreported, but the authorities know about most murders, because they usually produce an undeniable piece of physical evidence: a body. Homicide rates also serve as a useful indicator for other violent offenses, as they tend to rise and fall in unison over the long run. Governments, accordingly, need to ruthlessly zero in on homicide rates if they are to cut violence.

The best way to stop homicides is to work from the bottom up, improving everyday safety for the poor and working classes. Today, in many Latin American countries, such as Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, the authorities bring less

than ten percent of killers to justice. Latin American leaders should focus on ending that impunity and abandon the failed "kingpin strategy," which emphasizes targeting only the heads of criminal organizations. Fighting organized crime is important, but it should not justify neglecting the daily slaughter caused by disorganized crime.

Policymakers in developing countries can also learn from evidence-based programs that have reduced violence in rich countries such as the United States. "Focused deterrence," which engages violent offenders with offers of assistance along with threats of punishment, has reduced shootings and killings in neighborhoods of Boston, New Orleans, Oakland, and elsewhere. "Hot spots policing," which concentrates police resources on the specific addresses, city blocks, and streets with the highest crime rates, has led to significant improvements in Los Angeles, New York City, and Philadelphia. Local governments have cut crime and antisocial behavior by offering cognitive behavioral therapy to people who are at risk of reoffending. A group of approaches known as "multidimensional juvenile therapy," which works to fix a wide range of problems in the lives of adolescent offenders, has been shown to consistently reduce criminal behavior and recidivism among young people. Drug treatment programs and drug courts, which deal only with drug offenders and focus on rehabilitation, have cut recidivism among people with substance abuse problems. And finally, alcohol restrictions, such as limits on the kinds of stores that can sell alcohol and the hours during which they can sell it, make fights and assaults on weekends and in the evenings less likely. Dozens of rigorous studies have shown that these approaches work in high-income countries. Many low- and middle-income countries are now experimenting with the same strategies (although some of these may not be as successful as they were in high-income countries without careful adaptation to local circumstances).

As important as specific evidence-based programs are, policymakers need to pair them with wider reforms. One of the most important institutional investments a state can make is to build systems that produce detailed and reliable crime data and research. Without the right information, governments will simply be thrashing about in the dark.

States suffering from high rates of homicidal violence compete with nonstate actors to gain control over society. Little by little, governments must increase their capacity and legitimacy, creating distance between them and their competitors. This race is a marathon, not a sprint. Outside actors—other countries, international organizations, philanthropic foundations—can do the most good by helping and pressuring these governments to make the long-term investments and reforms necessary to win the race. Yet as Kleinfeld demonstrates, countries marred by murder and mayhem must ultimately take responsibility for the problem themselves. In the end, only they can solve it.

Commitment Issues

Where Should the U.S. Withdrawal From the Middle East Stop?

Don't Pull Back

Robert Satloff

Mara Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes ("America's Middle East Purgatory," January/February 2019) argue that because the Middle East matters less to the United States than it did 20 years ago, the region should receive less attention and fewer resources. "Heavy U.S. involvement in the Middle East over the past two decades has been painful and ugly," they conclude. "But it is the devil we know," they continue, "and so U.S. policymakers have grown accustomed to the costs associated with it. Pulling back, however, is the devil we don't know, and so everyone instinctively resists this position."

In fact, pulling back is a devil we know all too well. As Karlin and Wittes acknowledge, U.S. President Donald Trump and his predecessor, Barack Obama, "seem to share the view that the United States is too involved in the region and should devote fewer resources and less time to it."

Washington's declining enthusiasm for the Middle East is reflected most clearly in the shrinking U.S. troop presence there. Today, there are only 35,000 American soldiers in the entire region—a fraction of the approximately 500,000 that U.S. President George H. W. Bush sent to the Gulf in 1991 or the nearly 285,000 that U.S. President George W. Bush sent to the Middle East in 2003. The size of the troop presence is inversely proportional to the political turmoil it is triggering. Trump's decision to withdraw about 2,000 troops from Syria reportedly led U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis to resign from his position, the first resignation on principle by a senior member of the cabinet in 40 years. And unlike the exponentially larger numbers of troops deployed for the two wars against Iraq, the U.S. troops in the region today are charged with defeating a terrorist group that has actually killed U.S. citizens.

Indeed, the United States is already well into executing the pullback that Karlin and Wittes fear American leaders will resist. This should be cause for concern, because the authors are wrong about something else, too: that the Middle East matters so much less than it once did that the United States can be indifferent about what happens there. In fact, contrary to what Karlin and Wittes claim, the potential for state-on-state conflict in the Middle East is higher today than at any point in the last two decades. Israel's attacks against the Iranian forward presence in Syria, for example, are ominous signs of a potential war between Israel and Iran. And in the event of a conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, if Hezbollah inflicted mass casualties on Israel, there is a good chance that Israel would extend its retaliation beyond Lebanon to the terrorist group's masters in Tehran. Karlin and Wittes also

argue that because the United States is now the world's top oil producer, energy security has decreased as a driver of U.S. policy. But Washington still has an interest in a stable global oil market, given its allies' reliance on Gulf energy, and in the security of the energy-producing countries.

Moreover, the argument that the United States should shift some of the resources it currently expends in the Middle East toward Asia fails to account for the fact that the Middle East has always been a theater for great-power competition. It would be naive to think that Washington can insist that China and Russia compete with the United States only where it wants (in Asia and Europe) and to believe that these countries will not try to fill the vacuum that a U.S. departure from the Middle East would create—especially when Russia has already reemerged as a power broker in the heart of the region for the first time in 50 years. Nor can one assume that the United States would be able to easily reestablish its dominance in the region once it pulled out. Regaining physical access to abandoned ports, bases, and airfields would be difficult; regaining the trust and confidence of Washington's forsaken partners, even more so.

But the biggest mistake Karlin and Wittes make is that they ignore the Middle East's tendency to export insecurity. They suggest that Washington should treat the Middle East with the same insouciance it displayed toward Africa during the Cold War: a policy they say may have had terrible consequences for Africans but was tolerable for U.S. interests. But Africa never excelled in exporting its insecurity the way the Middle East does. From jihadists flying airplanes into American buildings and decapitating American prisoners to refugees streaming across the borders of the United States' European allies, the Middle East has been a persistent source of threats to vital U.S. interests. Such insecurity can be met with only one of two responses: either Washington can work with local partners to mitigate problems before they leave the Middle East, or it can try to wall itself off from these problems. I vote for trying to do the former, using many of the tools that Karlin and Wittes reject as "the Goldilocks approach," such as a balanced mix of military engagement and vigorous diplomacy.

A close inspection of their argument reveals that Karlin and Wittes seem to want it that way, too. Look at their long list of what still matters in the region—those interests for which the United States should be willing to continue investing blood and treasure. It includes "sustaining freedom of navigation" through the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el Mandeb Strait, and the Suez Canal; fighting terrorism and preventing new threats from emerging; limiting the spread of the Middle East's problems to other regions; and countering Iran's "bad behavior." Flesh out what it would take to achieve those objectives—the attention from the U.S. administration, the military deployments, the diplomatic effort—and one is left with a rather substantial agenda. And that's before accounting for the United States' heavy commitments to Israel, which the authors largely omit from their analysis.

"The Middle East is obviously an issue that has plagued the region for centuries," Obama once said. In this mangled

response to a question about Egypt's and Israel's human rights records, the president inadvertently captured the frustration he and many other American leaders have felt toward the region. By urging the United States to leave its Middle East purgatory, Karlin and Wittes have elevated that misspoken line to policy prescription. But in reality, the Middle East is just another part of the world where the United States has flawed allies, vicious adversaries, and enduring interests. It will not be able to escape from that reality anytime soon, as appealing as that prospect may be.

ROBERT SATLOFF is Executive Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

We Need to Talk About Israel

Ian S. Lustick

Mara Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes argue that the United States' tendency to overcommit to Middle Eastern partners has created "a moral hazard," prompting them "to act in risky and aggressive ways" while feeling "safe in the knowledge that the United States is invested in the stability of their regimes." As evidence of their claim that much of the chaos in the Middle East can be traced to this effect, Karlin and Wittes cite the perverse incentives that caused leaders in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to adopt destabilizing policies toward Libya, Qatar, Yemen, and the Palestinian territories. But they neglect to mention the best example of this dynamic: Israel.

The economic and military aid the United States has provided to Israel, and the political and diplomatic protections it affords that country, have, by any measure, far exceeded anything it has given to the Arab states mentioned in the article. The United States has delivered more than $134 billion in direct economic and military aid to Israel, and it recently pledged another $38 billion to be delivered over the next decade—immense sums, especially considering Israel's relatively small population and high standard of living. And since 1967, the United States has vetoed 41 UN Security Council resolutions criticizing Israel (accounting for 77 percent of all its vetoes during that period).

These policies have emboldened Israeli governments to engage in undesirable behavior in just the way Karlin and Wittes describe Arab states acting in response to overly generous, no-strings-attached support from the United States. The consequences of the cocoon of immunity that successive U.S. administrations have spun around Israeli governments include Israel's defiant nuclear posture, its ruthless and violent policies toward the two million inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, its refusal to negotiate constructively with the Palestinians or respond to the decades-old Arab peace initiative, its support for Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and its efforts to drag the United States into a war with Iran. What is more fundamental, by reducing the incentives for restraint, Washington's virtually unconditional support has undermined moderate Israeli politicians and empowered belligerent ones. Why vote for moderates when their willingness to compromise never seems to be required, and when their predictions of a confrontation between the United States and Israel never come true?

By omitting Israel from their analysis (with the exception of one sentence wisely advising against further diplomatic efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), Karlin and Wittes ignore the most consequential alliance the United States has in the Middle East. Concern about the domestic political sensitivity of the question of U.S.-Israeli relations is precisely what explains why U.S. support for Israel has been so free of conditions and mechanisms of accountability. It is also the reason the authors' advice—that U.S. Middle East policy be determined by core U.S. interests instead of the whims of overconfident Middle Eastern leaders—is even more important when applied to Israel. Bellicose Arab allies embroil Washington in needless quarrels abroad, but coddled and overconfident Israeli leaders also whipsaw U.S. presidents at home and thereby hugely complicate the pursuit of U.S. interests.

The problems posed by unconditional U.S. support for Israel are glaringly apparent when it comes to Iran. Karlin and Wittes advise the U.S. government to abandon Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's announced policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran in favor of returning to the nuclear deal. Such advice treats the issue as if it could be addressed independent of the pressure that Israel, and the Israel lobby, put on U.S. politicians and policymakers to prevent the agreement, scuttle it after it was signed, and then adopt an all-out strategy of regime change against Iran—including military action—a call that Israeli leaders have been making regularly for the last 15 years. Indeed, a major obstacle to dealing comprehensively with Iran's nuclear threat is that doing so would ultimately mean transforming the Middle East into

a nuclear-weapons-free zone, a proposal that Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states have already made. But this would require Israel to acknowledge and dismantle its large nuclear arsenal, something the United States has refused to advocate.

According to Karlin and Wittes, curbing Iran's "bad behavior" remains a priority for the United States. They recommend doing so in coordination with regional allies. Although they note the difficulties that aggressive Saudi policies toward Qatar pose for an effective alliance in the Gulf against Iran, they ignore the need to distinguish U.S. interests from Israeli policies and actions in Syria, Lebanon, and the Golan Heights. The United States is so closely associated with Israel that no tough but restrained policy toward Iran will be sustainable so long as Israel is launching hundreds of air strikes against Iranian targets in Syria, sparring with Iran's Hezbollah allies in Lebanon, and taking every opportunity it can to drive Washington to undertake regime change in Tehran.

The authors also contend that combating terrorism remains a priority, but here again the relationship with Israel gets in the way: nothing makes it easier for the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) or al Qaeda to recruit terrorists than U.S. support for a state that blockades the Gaza Strip, shoots and gases Palestinian protesters, and takes Arab land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to construct settlements. Anti-Zionist, anti-Israel, and anti-Semitic appeals are prominent in the propaganda of these groups not because their leaders necessarily care about the issue but because they know that many of the people they are trying to recruit do.

Karlin and Wittes refer in passing to "recalcitrant domestic politics" in Israel (and among the Palestinians) to advocate an end to U.S. efforts to rescue "the fairy-dusted prospect" of successful peace negotiations. I agree. Improving Israeli-Palestinian relations is not about establishing a separate state in some of the territory Israel rules—the two-state solution. It is—as Karlin and Wittes say is true for all U.S. partners in the Middle East—about building regimes that are "transparent, responsive, accountable, and participatory."

In Israel, that will be achieved not by negotiating an impossible separation of Jews and Palestinians but by democratizing the state that dominates, even if it does not directly govern, all who live between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Working to improve this one-state reality will require that the United States shift its focus, for example, from where Israel constructs housing to whether that housing is available to all who need it, whether Jewish or Arab. The United States often invokes democratic values to justify its special relationship with Israel, but it rarely applies them. Changing that would mean insisting that all who live under Israel's power enjoy civil and political rights and equal protection under the same laws.

Neither U.S. President Donald Trump nor his successor is likely to be able to overcome the United States' own recalcitrant domestic politics when it comes to Israel. But the sound advice offered by Karlin and Wittes—to end extravagant and open-ended commitments to allies in the Middle East in order to reduce reckless behavior and U.S. exposure to its consequences—will never be followed if

U.S. profligacy toward Israel is treated as unmentionable.

IAN S. LUSTICK is Bess W. Heyman Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of the forthcoming book *Paradigm Lost: From Two-State Solution to One-State Reality*.

Karlin and Wittes Reply

Our article outlined the growing and profound opportunity costs of the United States' decision to continue wallowing in purgatory in the Middle East and sketched a sustainable path forward for U.S. policy. We wish to add three points in response to Robert Satloff and Ian Lustick.

First, there is a wide space between the overwhelming resources and attention the United States has devoted to the Middle East over the past two decades and what Satloff decries as being "indifferent." As we argued, continued U.S. involvement is crucial for protecting U.S. national security, and ignoring the region is a recipe for disaster. But the Middle East does matter less to U.S. national security than China and Russia, great-power competitors whose visions of international order directly collide with that of the United States and whose militaries present a serious challenge to American power. If the United States cannot credibly compete with China and Russia to defend regional security and order in Asia and Europe, respectively, then its ability to contest their influence in the Middle East will not make up for that failure.

Matching the United States' ambitions in the Middle East to its interests and capabilities cannot be done wholesale. Rather, it requires a clear-eyed assessment of what the region's turmoil, the recalcitrance of the United States' partners, and the United States' own priorities enable it to do, and what they do not. Satloff invokes the half million U.S. troops President George H. W. Bush sent to fight the Persian Gulf War and the more than a quarter million that President George W. Bush sent to wage the Iraq war, but those anomalies are unhelpful in deciding which U.S. military posture will be sustainable or effective in responding to today's and tomorrow's threats. And contrary to what Satloff writes, Secretary of Defense James Mattis did not resign over President Donald Trump's decision to pull troops out of Syria. As his resignation letter made clear, he left because of the president's wanton disregard for U.S. allies and partners—evident in his decision to leave Syria, which blind-sided the European allies fighting there alongside the United States.

Second, the region's disorder limits how much the United States can shape its trajectory, no matter how much it invests. Both friendly and adversarial governments in the Middle East are preoccupied with regional rivalries and what they view as existential challenges from their enemies. Satloff writes that the potential for state-on-state conflict is at its highest in decades, but tensions were certainly higher in the period between 2007 and 2012, when Israel and the United States considered using military force to delay Iran from developing nuclear weapons. We agree with Satloff that the region's ability to "export insecurity" is a genuine concern. Managing that threat, however, does not require an unlimited commitment. With a proper staff and a functioning policy process, the U.S.

government has proved capable, and will again be so, of resolving conflicts in the region with far less cost and effort than it has spent fighting them in recent years. The House of Representatives' recent vote to force Trump to end U.S. involvement in the war in Yemen demonstrates that taking a harder line with U.S. partners in the region, especially in the Gulf, can advance, rather than undermine, U.S. interests. By establishing the limits of U.S. support, this approach can do more than unbounded commitments to deter destabilizing or escalatory behavior and tamp down regional conflicts. And although the current moment offers few opportunities for U.S.-led democracy-promotion efforts to gain traction with governments in the region, Washington can and should continue to advocate human rights, support civil society, and articulate to rulers its view that accountable governance, rather than repression, is the key to lasting stability.

Finally, all of the United States' major relationships in the Middle East deserve a keen eye. But we vehemently disagree with Lustick's argument that Israel is the most destabilizing and least helpful of the United States' partners. When polls show that three-quarters of Americans across the political spectrum see Israel as a strategic asset, and defense cooperation has yielded benefits such as qualitative leaps in missile defense, one does not need the nefarious influence of a moneyed "Israel lobby" to account for the depth and breadth of the U.S.-Israeli partnership.

That is not to say that Israel's actions do not deserve scrutiny from Washington. Like other U.S. partners, Israel looks at regional turmoil and sees not only dire threats but also opportunities for expanded influence and economic gain; like others, it seeks to enlist greater U.S. support on its side of regional arguments and is unlikely to subordinate its own preferences to those of Washington when making choices about what it views as existential threats. As it pursues Chinese infrastructure investment and sells weapons to Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam or surveillance technology to repressive Gulf governments, Israel should be mindful of U.S. interests and concerns.

It is Washington's job to be active and forthright about protecting those interests, and it has proved eminently capable of doing so. From President Ronald Reagan selling Airborne Warning and Control Systems to Saudi Arabia in 1982, to the various types of U.S. civilian support for Israel that Congress has legislated may not be used outside the June 1967 borders, to Barack Obama negotiating the Iran nuclear deal and Congress allowing it to stand, the United States' elected leaders have repeatedly advanced policies that are contrary to Israeli preferences. Overall, the United States' partnership with Israel stands out as more mutually beneficial and more strongly rooted in public and political support than any of the others it has in the region.

The Middle East is not, as Satloff writes, "just another part of the world where the United States has flawed allies, vicious adversaries, and enduring interests." Washington can do better than choosing between abandoning its interests there and making a boundless commitment to reordering the region on behalf of partners whose goals and means do not fully align with its own.

Return to Table of Contents

Recent Books

Political and Legal

G. John Ikenberry

Why Nationalism
BY YAEL TAMIR. Princeton University Press, 2019, 224 pp.

Nationalism has returned to the world stage, wrapped in the nativistic and xenophobic rallying cries of populist and authoritarian demagogues. But as Tamir argues in this important book, nationalism has another, more civic-minded side. For Tamir, this enlightened nationalism provides the societal glue that makes social democracy possible. Tamir retells the history of nationalism, emphasizing its more progressive contributions. In the nineteenth century, nationalism gave the world the modern nation-state, which then provided its citizens with rights. Later, nationalism proved a potent force in the struggle for self-determination and the end of empire. Tamir traces the Western liberal disenchantment with nationalism to the horrors of Nazism, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and world war. The postwar rebirth of Europe was premised on overcoming nationalism. After the Cold War, the worldwide spread of economic and political liberalism seemed to confirm that it was globalism, not nationalism, that generated progress. Tamir argues that this view is no longer sustainable, as globalism is now fueling reactionary nationalism. The challenge for defenders of liberalism and social democracy is not to oppose nationalism but to recover its we-are-all-in-it-together sensibility.

The Globalization Backlash
BY COLIN CROUCH. Polity, 2018, 120 pp.

Today's nationalist backlash is coming from both the right and the left. The right attacks immigration as a threat to identity and community, and the left believes global capitalism is undermining labor and the welfare state. Crouch does not dismiss these critiques, but he argues that in both cases, the cure will be worse than the disease. At home, a reactionary nationalism based on a left-right coalition would make no one happy—and most people poorer. Abroad, antiglobalism would usher in a dangerous era of world politics driven by zero-sum competition. Globalization's most striking accomplishment is the economic rise of non-Western societies: since 1990, a billion people outside the advanced economies have emerged from poverty. Trade has also promoted social and cultural exchange and learning. Crouch concludes that had the world not globalized, it would be far poorer, illegal immigration would be higher, and international relations would be more hostile. Crouch's bottom line is that there can be no return to a pre-globalized era. The only path forward is for countries to jointly manage the flows of goods, capital, and people.

Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts
BY JOSHUA R. ITZKOWITZ SHIFRINSON. Cornell University Press, 2018, 276 pp.

When great powers are on the rise, they have to decide how they will treat their declining peers. In the decades before 1914, Germany tried to supplant the United Kingdom as Europe's leading power, whereas Russia allied itself with a weakened France. The United States attempted to prop up the United Kingdom's great-power status after World War II but sought to weaken the Soviet Union as it crumbled in the 1980s. In this book, Shifrinson provides an elegant theory to explain these variations. A rising state tries to weaken its fading rival only if it concludes that the declining state will not be useful in checking other rival states and lacks the ability to strike back. Before 1914, for example, Germany improved its ties with a declining Austria-Hungary so as not to be bereft of allies as it faced the Triple Entente. Today, a rising China might not seek to weaken a declining United States if Washington can help Beijing restrain other great powers, such as Japan and Russia, or if the United States still poses a significant military threat.

Versailles 1919: A Centennial Perspective
BY ALAN SHARP. University of Chicago Press, 2018, 320 pp.

The Allied peacemakers at Versailles—Georges Clemenceau, David Lloyd George, and Woodrow Wilson—have never recovered from history's judgment that in ending one world war, they sowed the seeds of the next. Under the Treaty of Versailles, the French did not get the security guarantees they wanted, the Germans were humiliated, the Americans spurned the League of Nations, and outside the West, nationalist movements for self-determination were thwarted. Sharp, however, offers a more sympathetic judgment of Versailles. World War I had set in motion vast forces that were almost too much for diplomats to manage: the collapse of four empires, the implosion of the European great-power order, the Anglo-American power transition, the rise of revolutionary Russia, and the spread of new ideas about self-determination. Sharp argues that the treatment of Germany—a "tough peace" that lacked an enforcement mechanism and undermined Germany's fragile democracy—was doomed to fail. But the League of Nations, he says, opened up a new era of social and economic cooperation and laid the foundation for the UN. A century after Versailles, self-determination has triumphed, but many of the dilemmas faced by the peacemakers of 1919 remain.

Peace Works: America's Unifying Role in a Turbulent World
BY FREDERICK D. BARTON. Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, 312 pp.

Part memoir and part scholarly study, this book provides one of the most thoughtful reflections yet on U.S. interventionism and peacemaking since the end of the Cold War. Drawing on his years as a diplomat, Barton argues that although the United States has stumbled badly in humanitarian interventions, it should not abandon the task

but rather go about it in new ways, working with local groups and staying in the background. Barton draws specific lessons from several recent U.S. interventions. In Bosnia, the United States created incentives for people to collaborate by supporting local institutions that cut across ethnic divides. In Rwanda, after the genocide, aid to women in the countryside encouraged small steps toward peace. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the lesson was to direct economic assistance to local civic leaders who had the trust of the wider public. In the future, states will continue to fail or collapse into civil war, and ethnic violence will continue to sprawl across poor regions of the world. Barton's message to American decision-makers is to be humble and patient and to stay as close as possible to the people at the bottom of society.

Economic, Social, and Environmental

Richard N. Cooper

Keeping At It: The Quest for Sound Money and Good Government
BY PAUL A. VOLCKER WITH CHRISTINE HARPER. PublicAffairs, 2018, 304 pp.

This frugal and charming autobiography is filled with illuminating stories from Volcker's seven decades of public service. Volcker recounts the role he played in abandoning the last vestiges of the gold standard, his struggle with inflation as chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve, the time he spent dealing with the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath, and his examination of the UN's oil-for-food program in Iraq. Following his father, who served for two decades as the city manager of Teaneck, New Jersey, Volcker has spent his life in public service. His career has been characterized by his extraordinary integrity—a term not now associated with either politicians or bankers. Volcker's final reflections emphasize three public virtues: price stability, sound finance, and good governance. The necessary condition for the last, stressed by Alexander Hamilton, is not just sound policies but also wise management by well-trained, nonpartisan, experienced professionals. The book concludes with a plea to young Americans to devote themselves to public service.

Blaming Immigrants: Nationalism and the Economics of Global Movement
BY NEERAJ KAUSHAL. Columbia University Press, 2019, 232 pp.

Although immigration dominates the headlines, public beliefs about immigrants, as recorded in polls, often differ wildly from the facts. This timely and informative book lays out those discrepancies and discusses why they persist. Global migration, Kaushal argues, does not present a crisis, whatever populist politicians claim. As she points out, "the number of immigrants as a proportion of world population has not budged for over a century." Many people, she argues, blame immigrants for unrelated problems. In the United States, for example, people usually imagine that foreigners carry out most

terrorist attacks, and President Donald Trump has raised fears of terrorists crossing the border from Mexico. Yet native-born Americans, not immigrants, are responsible for a large majority of the attacks on U.S. soil, and none of the perpetrators has come from Mexico.

Dark Commerce: How a New Illicit Economy Is Threatening Our Future
BY LOUISE I. SHELLEY. Princeton University Press, 2018, 376 pp.

Shelley comprehensively documents the growth and evolution of illicit commerce and the history of efforts to fight it. So far, the robbers have mostly outpaced the cops. The volume of illicit trade—in drugs, in smuggled goods, in human beings—has expanded rapidly over the last three decades as the Internet has made anonymous communication easier, although some of the increase is due to greater awareness and new laws and regulations that sweep up more activities. Most of the wrongdoers are propelled by greed, but some are also driven by a lack of legal ways to make a living. Reducing illicit trade, Shelley concludes, will take more than passing new laws. It will mean restructuring the financial and corporate worlds to improve accountability and transparency and curb destructive environmental practices.

The Future of Capitalism: Facing the New Anxieties
BY PAUL COLLIER. HarperCollins, 2018, 256 pp.

Collier is unhappy with the direction that societies have taken, especially the United Kingdom and the United States. People have lost their sense of obligation to fellow citizens and place too much emphasis on the individual. Collier suggests that widening social divisions—between booming cities and backwaters, between well-paid workers and those who are falling behind—have made individualism unsustainable. Drawing on extensive research, he suggests several policies, such as representing the public interest on company boards, that might narrow the gaps. The book is especially interesting on education, covering both preschool and adult learning. Collier concludes that a revived communitarian national identity can counter the trend toward shallow individualism.

Industrial Policy and the World Trade Organization: Between Legal Constraints and Flexibilities
BY SHERZOD SHADIKHODJAEV. Cambridge University Press, 2018, 330 pp.

Many governments want not only to grow their economies but also to influence how they are structured. To do so, they pursue industrial policies. Yet international organizations place limits on the extent to which governments can meddle in economic affairs. This informative book describes what forms of industrial policy are consistent with the rules of the World Trade Organization. The book is densely written and thick with legal terminology, but it is valuable as an authoritative reference work. In addition to analyzing WTO policies, Shadikhodjaev provides a useful catalog of areas where the WTO's rules are ambiguous and suggests how they might be clarified and improved.

Military, Scientific, and Technological

Lawrence D. Freedman

Disrupt and Deny: Spies, Special Forces, and the Secret Pursuit of British Foreign Policy
BY RORY CORMAC. Oxford University Press, 2018, 416 pp.

Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics
BY AUSTIN CARSON. Princeton University Press, 2018, 344 pp.

Policymakers are often tempted to use covert operations as a way of limiting risks. If plans go wrong, leaders suppose they can deny responsibility, avoiding retaliation and escalation. Yet in order to stay secret, covert operations are often too small to make a real difference. In his history of British covert operations since 1945, Cormac covers a wide range of activities by British spies and special forces, including training saboteurs in Albania, working to undermine the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland, acting with U.S. forces to overthrow the government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in Iran, and dealing with insurgents in Oman. Cormac's history shows more misses than hits, and he demonstrates that even some apparent successes, such as the Iranian coup, backfired in the long run. He suggests that over the last 75 years, the United Kingdom's covert efforts were largely about compensating for, or masking, the country's declining power. In particular, the British were eager to demonstrate to the United States that they could still contribute to joint overseas endeavors.

Carson picks up on a striking feature of covert operations: they are often remarkably transparent, especially to the enemy. In an intriguing analysis, he focuses on instances when both sides of a confrontation appeared to collude in sustaining the fiction that nothing happened. This has occurred even in major operations, including Nazi Germany's intervention in the Spanish Civil War; Soviet air missions in the Korean War; Chinese, Soviet, and U.S. operations in Vietnam; and the CIA's missions in Afghanistan. Carson argues that it often suits both sides to maintain the pretense that nothing has happened in order to prevent a conflict escalating. Governments do not dispute their enemies' denials, even when those denials are implausible, because to do so would lead the public back home to demand retaliation. Carson makes a convincing case, although he somewhat overdoes the theory. The book would have been more interesting if he had used the space devoted to theoretical considerations to explore other examples of this trend, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Israel's nuclear weapons program, both of which he mentions but does not examine in detail.

The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder
BY SEAN MCFATE. William Morrow, 2019, 336 pp.

McFate demonstrates a lively and provocative way to think about modern warfare in a book laced with examples

from the history of conflict as well as his own career as a soldier in the U.S. Army and a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. Most starkly, he insists that "conventional war is dead," while lesser war and peace exist side by side, and that much greater power conflict takes place in a gray zone between the two. McFate does a good job conveying the messiness of contemporary warfare, describing a shift from wars between states to wars within states. Great powers pursue their interests by using whatever nonmilitary tools are available, from social media to trade, and try to avoid serious fighting. Nonstate actors, on the other hand, use whatever weapons they can lay their hands on. At times, McFate overstates for effect. For example, dismisses high-end conventional capabilities too readily: along with nuclear weapons, such military options—even when they are not used—help explain why great powers are wary about embarking on major wars.

Atlas of World War II: History's Greatest Conflict Revealed Through Rare Wartime Maps and New Cartography
BY STEPHEN G. HYSLOP. National Geographic, 2018, 256 pp.

This splendid book is largely based on artifacts and maps collected by Kenneth Rendell for his Massachusetts-based International Museum of World War II. The archival material is backed up by over 100 new maps illuminating many of the most important battles and campaigns of the war, along with an illustrated history of the campaigns, the people involved, and their kit. The new cartographic work is excellent but the stars of the book are the high-quality reproductions of maps first produced as part of the war effort. These include the Allied invasion plan for Sicily in 1943, a table map used by the British Fighter Command during the Blitz, and playing cards with backs that could be peeled off to reveal escape maps printed on tissue paper. The book also features presentations on the organization of Moscow's defense in August 1941, a situation map from Nazi General Erwin Rommel's North African campaign, and Japanese maps covering the first stages of Japan's December 1941 offensive.

Underestimated Second Edition: Our Not So Peaceful Nuclear Future
BY HENRY D. SOKOLSKI. Strategic Studies Institute, 2018, 169 pp.

Double Jeopardy: Combating Nuclear Terror and Climate Change
BY DANIEL B. PONEMAN. MIT Press, 2019, 288 pp.

Both of these books address the risks of nuclear terrorism and proliferation. Sokolski's slim, urgent volume describes different attitudes to the spread of nuclear weapons and outlines a largely geopolitical approach to reducing the likelihood of proliferation. He recommends more dialogue among China, Russia, and the United States; suggests that nuclear powers should deploy their weapons in ways that reduce the risks of inadvertent escalation; and counsels those powers to update the safeguards surrounding exports of civil nuclear reactors.

Poneman has even higher ambitions. He says that there are two existential threats to human existence: climate

change and nuclear proliferation and terrorism. The first, he argues, requires a greater investment in nuclear energy to reduce humanity's dependence on carbon fuels—but this, he notes, risks aggravating the second threat. So his recommendations address both these threats together. He proposes shifting to lower-carbon energy sources, including nuclear power, fully implementing the Paris climate agreement, and, among other nonproliferation moves, eliminating the North Korean nuclear threat. It's a daunting list.

Ukraine and the Art of Strategy
BY LAWRENCE FREEDMAN. Oxford University Press, 2019, 248 pp.

The crisis in Ukraine has proved a watershed moment for Russia's relations with the West. It also is an important case study on the use of force to achieve political objectives. Freedman presents a brief history of the conflict and analyzes it in the context of strategic theory. He calls into question the idea that Russian President Vladimir Putin is a strategic genius, noting that Russia is in a far less advantageous position today than it was before the invasion of Crimea in February 2014. After the Maidan revolution in Kiev that month, Freedman writes, "Putin could have waited to see how events unfolded," but he instead chose to act without considering the long-term consequences. The invasion then set in motion a series of events that left Russia stuck in a conflict in the Donbas and alienated from the rest of Ukraine. Freedman's judgment that the "biggest failures were Russian," however, might be premature: Moscow seems to be playing a long game, betting that both Ukraine's will to fight and the West's interest in Ukraine will fade as the war drags on.

SAMUEL CHARAP

The United States

Walter Russell Mead

The Case for Trump
BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON. Basic Books, 2019, 400 pp.

Hanson claims to present a case for U.S. President Donald Trump, but his carefully hedged apologia offers no real defense of the president's ethics, learning, rhetoric, or character. What separates Hanson from the majority of commentators is less his assessment of Trump's personality than his analysis of the American situation before Trump's election. For Hanson, the United States in 2016 was locked into an accelerating decline that only desperate measures could reverse. Hanson compares Trump to such figures as Pike Bishop in Sam Peckinpah's film *The Wild Bunch* and Ethan Edwards in John Ford's *The Searchers*. A good man would not have the skills needed for a dirty job; Hanson's Trump is a tragic antihero who will be rejected by the respectable people he saved once his work is done. Few of the president's critics will be convinced by *The Case for Trump*; they will, however, profit from reading a book in which one of red America's most articulate exponents explains a worldview that elected a president and that continues to animate millions of Americans.

The Back Channel: A Memoir of American Diplomacy and the Case for Its Renewal
BY WILLIAM J. BURNS. Random House, 2019, 512 pp.

Few American diplomats have had as distinguished and varied a career as has Burns. His lucid and panoramic memoir draws a sharp contrast between what he sees as the peak of U.S. diplomatic success during the George H. W. Bush administration and the more confused and discouraging scenes of recent years. Back then, the triumphal conclusion of the Cold War, the extraordinary success of U.S. military force and diplomacy in the Persian Gulf War, and the hope of a future of peaceful democratic progress gave the United States a prestige and influence that no nation can command today. The book describes the serial failures by Democratic and Republican presidents that, in Burns' judgment, contributed to the United States' current distress. A final, forward-looking chapter offers Burns' thoughts about rebuilding U.S. diplomacy. His suggestions, including pruning back what he sees as an overgrown National Security Council and building public support for diplomacy, deserve careful attention.

Finding My Voice: My Journey to the West Wing and the Path Forward
BY VALERIE JARRETT. Viking, 2019, 320 pp.

As U.S. President Barack Obama's longtime personal friend and a close adviser during his presidential administration, Jarrett had an unrivaled perspective on Obama's years in power. Like most political memoirs, *Finding My Voice* is not a literary classic, but readers nostalgic for the Obama era will enjoy Jarrett's account of a consequential presidency. At her best, Jarrett reminds readers that Obama, like Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush before him, possessed a human decency that dignified both the man and the office. Jarrett recalls how after meeting with a group of African American teenagers enrolled in a Becoming a Man program in Chicago, Obama kept in touch with the young men and invited them to the White House. Since the visit was scheduled to take place near Father's Day, the young men decided to give the president a Father's Day card. One of them told Obama: "I've never signed a Father's Day card before." "Me neither," responded the leader of the free world.

Clear and Present Safety: The World Has Never Been Better and Why That Matters To Americans
BY MICHAEL A. COHEN AND MICAH ZENKO. Yale University Press, 2019, 272 pp.

Cohen and Zenko give a new meaning to President Franklin Roosevelt's Depression-era slogan that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Whether one looks at terrorists, rival great powers, or any other prominent threat from beyond U.S. borders, the authors maintain, the United States has little or nothing to worry about. Noncommunicable diseases kill many times as many Americans as foreign terrorists do, for example. Americans would be better off if they worried less about relatively weak enemies abroad and spent more money fighting cancer and heart disease at home. Cohen and Zenko

argue that Americans' priorities are so misplaced because of a "Threat-Industrial Complex" that hypes international dangers. *Clear and Present Safety* makes some effective points about the costs of ill-considered war, and as memories of World War II and the Cold War recede, it is possible that Cohen and Zenko's reasoning will appeal to new generations of policymakers. Yet readers who can recall the consequences of the United States' turn inward in the 1920s and 1930s will find Cohen and Zenko's proposals disturbing; history suggests that the only foreign policy costlier and riskier than one that pursues global engagement is one that shuns it.

The Lessons of Tragedy: Statecraft and World Order
BY HAL BRANDS AND CHARLES EDEL. Yale University Press, 2019, 216 pp.

Brands and Edel belong to a new generation of American foreign policy thinkers and practitioners. Most of this generation begins its analysis with the failure of the United States to create the stable, peaceful, and democratic world order that presidents from George H. W. Bush to Barack Obama tried to build. Many react to that failure by embracing some form of retrenchment. Brands and Edel, in contrast, worry about what the world would look like if the United States pulls back. For them, U.S. foreign policy should be less about building utopia than about preventing disaster. World order is a fragile thing, human nature is as flawed as it has always been, and the abyss is never far away. China, Iran, and Russia, they argue, are not merely geopolitical nuisances. They are attacking the values and institutions of open societies with all the tools of the information age. Unless met with resolute American power guided by wise strategies, they will return the world to an age of catastrophic war. This is an unfashionable message, but Brands and Edel have a lot of history on their side. Having squandered so many of the opportunities presented by the end of the Cold War, the United States must now contend with a harsher world, under a darkening sky.

Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

Of Privacy and Power: The Transatlantic Struggle Over Freedom and Security
BY HENRY FARRELL AND ABRAHAM NEWMAN. Princeton University Press, 2019, 248 pp.

Globalization means that the domestic policies of one country can influence the welfare of other countries. This interdependence affects an ever-widening range of regulatory matters in areas such as environmental protection, macroeconomic policy, and individual rights. As compared to the security conflicts and tariff disputes of centuries past, today's regulatory fights mobilize a broader range of domestic bureaucracies, civil society groups, and other political actors—some with the ability to form political alliances across borders. In this brief book, two scholars examine a recent series of such disputes

between the United States and its European partners over coordinating transnational flows of information about airline passengers, bank accounts, and commercial transactions. In general, the United States sought more access to data for the government and private firms, whereas the EU favored more individual protections. The authors show that negotiations over these issues, both within and across nations, tend to be complex and fraught, not least because they pit intense commercial and security interests against deep-seated norms of individual privacy. When it is expedient, groups representing these interests have mobilized internationally. The book shows government officials, NGOs and legislators reaching across borders in this way. Yet it remains unclear what effect transnational activity had on the ultimate policies Europe and the United States chose, which generally have tracked relative power and interests.

The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War
BY MICHAEL COTEY MORGAN. Princeton University Press, 2019, 424 pp.

In 1975, the Helsinki Final Act—an accord among the United States, the Soviet Union, and virtually every European country—formalized the era's East-West détente. This book represents perhaps the most richly documented account of the negotiations, which are best remembered for enshrining a strongly Western conception of human rights but also sketched out a far broader code of conduct for East-West relations, including the mutual recognition of stable borders. Most of the participants hoped the agreement would stabilize and legitimate the status quo and thus tone down the Cold War, although a few Western countries hoped the document might ultimately help bring down the Soviet bloc. Morgan endorses the widespread belief that the agreement was decisive in ending the Cold War. This is odd, because his own evidence belies such a claim. The accord was nonbinding, and efforts by Western diplomats to promote human rights soon collapsed into diplomatic acrimony. In the early 1980s, the Soviets and their henchmen handily crushed opposition groups in Eastern Europe. Only the atrophy of the Soviet system and the eventual entry into office of Mikhail Gorbachev—neither caused by the Helsinki agreement—eventually put an end to the Cold War.

The Academy of Fisticuffs: Political Economy and Commercial Society in Enlightenment Italy
BY SOPHUS A. REINERT. Harvard University Press, 2018, 688 pp.

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment marked a decisive historical turning point: from that moment on, a distinctively modern conviction spread that durable progress toward peace, tolerance, and welfare was feasible. Previous political and social theorists tended to believe instead that self-interest inclined individuals to commit acts of unspeakable evil against one another—a fate only intermittently softened by virtuous leaders or altruistic religious beliefs. Most people think of the Enlightenment as centered in France, Scotland, and perhaps Germany. In this erudite and engaging intellectual

history, Reinert makes the case for the critical role played by a pioneering group of Italian political economists who gathered in the cafés of Milan, notably Cesare Beccaria and the brothers Pietro and Allessandro Verri. They studied the socializing impact of commerce and espoused the inalienable rights of man not to suffer cruel punishment—just as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Adam Smith, and Immanuel Kant did elsewhere. This suggests not just that the Enlightenment was more widespread than many think but also that the twin processes of market globalization and state formation already at work in that era made it inevitable—although in this case, as in France, large doses of caffeine helped.

The Responsive Union: National Elections and European Governance
BY CHRISTINA J. SCHNEIDER.
Cambridge University Press, 2019, 360 pp.

Nearly all commentators, even staunch federalists, echo the Euroskeptical charge that the European Union is a distant institution populated by unaccountable technocrats and double-dealing politicians. Most social scientists go along with this story as well, arguing that almost all European issues are too obscure and complex to generate sustained and meaningful popular attention and engagement. This important book turns the conventional wisdom on its head with a simple yet profound observation: in reality, the EU responds to the democratic demands of its citizens. The governments of member states, constantly worried that the public could suddenly notice and mobilize around an EU issue, habitually stake out strong negotiating positions that appear to defend clear social interests. Schneider also reveals a narrower phenomenon: governments delay EU decisions that might trigger unfavorable outcomes until after national elections—and their counterparts in other capitals generally play along. One might conclude that European governments collude to fool all the people all the time by pushing unpopular policies only when their citizens aren't looking. In the end, Schneider remains ambivalent about how much the public controls EU policy and about the prospects for meaningful democratic reform in Europe.

Governing Europe in a Globalizing World: Neoliberalism and Its Alternatives Following the 1973 Crisis
BY LAURENT WARZOULET.
Routledge, 2018, 274 pp.

The two decades following the oil crisis of 1973 were a decisive period in the history of the EU. During that time, governments launched the Single European Act, harmonized regulations, promoted financial and monetary integration, and suppressed traditional industrial policies—a combination of policies often described as "neoliberal." Now, historians with access to primary documents can explain in detail how and why this happened. Although Warzoulet is sometimes tempted to exaggerate the range of potential choices governments faced, in the end, his book proposes some clear answers. Governments freed up markets because they had little choice: the major alternatives, notably the protection and subsidization of national champions, had

proved costly and ineffective. Leaders turned to the EU to coordinate the shift not because European idealists persuaded them to do so but because it seemed the optimal way to commit one another to collective liberalization: the EU was large enough to be effective without being as diverse and unwieldy as global institutions. Yet the result was not uniformly neoliberal. Policies such as regulatory protection, social welfare provision, and state support for agriculture and other declining sectors remained essential elements of a distinctively balanced European model.

Ctrl-Alt-Delete: How Politics and the Media Crashed Our Democracy
BY TOM BALDWIN. Hurst, 2018, 320 pp.

Baldwin has worked as a Washington-based political reporter, a top London newspaper editor, and the communications director for the British Labour Party. In this book, he traces the politicization of print and TV journalism, the rise of web-based scandalmongers, the ever more sophisticated big-data techniques that election campaigns use, and the recent exploitation of all the new technologies involved to undermine democracy by nefarious forces, from domestic extremists in the United States and Europe to Russian President Vladimir Putin. His basic argument is hardly controversial: digital technology has changed how people analyze, manipulate, and understand politics. Yet he does show how deep-seated the problem is. These trends have been building for decades. The fact that those who contributed to them, or sought to combat them, often had little idea what they were doing—or what the long-term consequences would be—does not bode well for Baldwin's concluding proposal to rescue democracy through a "soft reboot" of digital technology. Nonetheless, Baldwin's journalistic personality—curious, garrulous, and ironic—shines through the many amusing anecdotes about how things got to be this way.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

Deported Americans: Life After Deportation to Mexico
BY BETH CALDWELL. Duke University Press, 2019, 248 pp.

The Migrant Passage: Clandestine Journeys From Central America
BY NOELLE KATERI BRIGDEN. Cornell University Press, 2018, 264 pp.

During the Obama administration, nearly three million people were deported from the United States, a large majority of them to Mexico. As a result, nearly half a million deportees who grew up in the United States, many identifying as Americans, now live in Mexico, where they have struggled to adapt. Drawing on heart-rending interviews with deportees, Caldwell argues that "deportation is particularly cruel for functional Americans. It not only undermines family connections, career paths, and other attachments, but also strikes at the core of people's identities." Caldwell

finds shock, trauma, shame, resentment, loneliness, and rejection among her interviewees, even as some eventually succeed in new ventures. She reminds readers that before the U.S. Congress reformed the immigration system in 1996, courts could allow immigrants to remain based on such mitigating factors as their family ties, how long they had lived in the United States, and their employment history. Caldwell decries the inconsistencies between the legal definition of citizenship and people's experiences of rootedness. She argues that citizenship should be based on a person's cultural associations rather than on national boundaries.

Brigden catalogs the immense suffering of poverty-stricken Central Americans who try to cross Mexico in search of better lives in the United States. Drawing on hundreds of interviews, Brigden recounts tales of wanton violence, torture, rape, kidnapping, and extortion. Empowered by states that make immigration illegal and risky, organized gangs, drug cartels, corrupt police and immigration authorities, and random opportunists prey on desperate migrants. In Brigden's impassioned drama, the migrants appear as abused and vulnerable victims but also as agents challenging state sovereignty and improvising survival strategies. (To avoid detection, Central Americans crossing Mexico learn to impersonate local accents.) Bridgen also tells the stories of the Good Samaritans, churches, and safe houses that help migrants along the way. Her vivid descriptions of the treacherous road northward help explain why migrants seek safety in numbers by forming caravans.

The Longest Line on the Map: The United States, the Pan-American Highway, and the Quest to Link the Americas
BY ERIC RUTKOW. Scribner, 2019, 448 pp.

U.S. President Donald Trump wants to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border. Several of his predecessors sought to foster inter-American harmony by building roads instead. The result was the Pan-American Highway, whose 19,000 miles link Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of South America. As Rutkow shows in this history of the highway, the various justifications for building the road included promoting automobile exports, fortifying antifascist defenses during the 1930s and 1940s, and advancing economic and social development in Latin America. Rutkow does an excellent job linking the domestic politics and economies of the countries along the highway to the international diplomacy that made it possible. Well-known American leaders, including Henry Clay, Andrew Carnegie, and George Marshall, have colorful cameos. As Rutkow shows, some Latin American countries, most notably Argentina, saw the project as a Trojan horse for U.S. imperialism. Unfortunately, Rutkow does not examine this history in detail, as his coverage of South America is far less complete than his impressive research on Mexico and Central America.

Homicidal Ecologies: Illicit Economies and Complicit States in Latin America
BY DEBORAH YASHAR. Cambridge University Press, 2018, 250 pp.

The return of democracy is sometimes blamed for the alarming rise in violence

in many Latin American countries. According to that view, democracies too often loosen moral constraints and give excessive protections to criminals. Yashar rejects that theory and points to three other explanations for the violence. First, many governments have found it next to impossible to clean up weak or corrupt military and police forces, which are often in bed with criminal organizations. Second, criminality, especially the drug trade, creates highly lucrative business opportunities without legal channels for settling disputes, compelling criminals to resort to deadly force. Finally, competition among criminal organizations (and between them and state agencies) over turf or trade routes generally results in bloodshed. Yashar illustrates her arguments with studies of post-civil-war El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. She attributes Nicaragua's relatively low levels of crime to the root-and-branch reconstruction of the security forces after the 1979 revolution and to the adoption of community-based policing. Unfortunately, her field research dates from 2007, before President Daniel Ortega repoliticized the security forces, which last year dutifully fired on peaceful protesters, killing hundreds.

Cuban Foreign Policy: Transformation Under Raúl Castro
EDITED BY H. MICHAEL ERISMAN AND JOHN M. KIRK. Rowman Littlefield, 2018, 314 pp.

This collection of essays by scholars who are generally sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution struggles to decide whether the foreign policies of Raúl Castro, who served as president of Cuba from 2008 to 2018, represented essential continuity or a major break with those of his older brother and predecessor, Fidel. Raúl Castro certainly succeeded in diversifying Cuba's international commercial relations, although the chronic weakness of the country's domestic economy prevented the island from fully capitalizing on his shrewd diplomacy. In a strategic failure, Castro did not adequately prepare Cuba's energy sector for the collapse of the country's close ally Venezuela. Cuba now faces a much less friendly external environment than it did a mere two years ago, when the contributions to this volume were written. In both the United States and Latin America, governments have come to power that are hostile or indifferent toward Havana. The volume's chapters on China and Russia suggest that neither power is likely to step full force into the breach. In retrospect, the decade of Raúl Castro's rule appears as a fleeting golden era for Cuban foreign policy.

Middle East

John Waterbury

Armies of Sand: The Past, Present, and Future of Arab Military Effectiveness
BY KENNETH M. POLLACK. Oxford University Press, 2019, 696 pp.

Arab militaries have always performed poorly. Pollack, who has studied them for nearly two decades, exhaustively explores four explanations for their ineffectiveness: their reliance on Soviet military doc-

trine, the politicization of the officer corps, the economic underdevelopment of Arab societies, and Arab culture. All are important, but only the last has real explanatory power. By comparing Arab militaries with non-Arab ones from countries at similar levels of development, Pollack is able to sort out what matters. His careful and sensitive analysis points to patriarchy, group loyalty, obedience, and the fear of failure—all characteristics reenforced by the Arab educational system—as the leading explanations. His fascinating tour begins in 1948 and considers a long series of engagements involving conventional and guerrilla forces. Despite the book's length, it misses a few cases, including the Algerian War of Independence, from 1954 to 1962, which pitted the National Liberation Front against the French, and the Sudanese military's long struggle with southern rebels, which culminated in South Sudan's independence in 2011. His argument is well supported, but his analysis of the effects of education before 1967 does not hold water, as so few Arab recruits had formal schooling in that period. Still, the book will make for painful reading among Arab military professionals.

Inside Tunisia's al-Nahda: Between Politics and Preaching
BY RORY MCCARTHY. Cambridge University Press, 2018, 248 pp.

McCarthy travels to Tunisia's heartland, the Sousse region, to understand the mindset of devotees of the country's major Islamic movement, al Nahda (or Ennahda). The group, led by Rached Ghannouchi, bears much resemblance to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, but McCarthy, who spent two years interviewing members, brings out the major differences. The most important is that after al Nahda's founding in the 1970s, the group never had time to build up the kind of welfare and educational infrastructure that the Muslim Brotherhood did. As a result, when President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali crushed al Nahda after it did unexpectedly well in the election of 1989, the group did not have a network to fall back on. What its members did have, as McCarthy masterfully depicts, were the binding experiences of prison and torture, followed by isolation and police surveillance after they were released. In 2016, al Nahda took the radical step of abandoning its mission of religious transformation, known as *dawa* in Arabic, in order to become an exclusively political party. Liberals applauded the move, but Salafi Islamists saw it as a betrayal. McCarthy shows that many members of al Nahda agreed.

Cold War in the Islamic World: Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Struggle for Supremacy
BY DILIP HIRO. Hurst, 2018, 432 pp.

Hiro leaves no stone unturned in this account of Middle Eastern conflicts revolving around the Iranian-Saudi rivalry. Although he does not bring much new to the table, he treats the subject deeply and thoroughly. Hiro's most controversial and important argument is that Iran's nuclear program was directed mainly at Iraq, not Israel. Once Iran learned, after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, that Iraq's nuclear program had been mothballed, Iran shut down its own, a fact reported

in a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate in 2007. Therefore, Hiro concludes, Iran has little reason to revive its program. As for the Saudis, Hiro finds few redeeming features in Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto ruler of the kingdom, whose agenda Hiro sees as tantamount to "a totalitarian regime in the making." When MBS, as he is known, accedes to the Saudi throne, he will probably have half a century in which to indulge his anti-Iranian impulses.

Revisiting the Arab Uprisings: The Politics of a Revolutionary Moment
EDITED BY STÉPHANE LACROIX AND JEAN-PIERRE FILIU. Hurst, 2018, 288 pp.

This collection of essays on the 2011 Arab uprisings ranges from overviews of the process of writing constitutions to fine-grained explorations of transitional justice. Three chapters exploring efforts to address past abuses, by Kora Andrieu, Frédéric Vairel, and Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron, portray the results as an act of political fragmentation in Tunisia, a well-rehearsed drama in Morocco, and a farce in Egypt, respectively. Filiu, meanwhile, examines what he calls the "modern Mamlouks" in Algeria, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, referring to the Middle East's praetorian slave dynasties of the Middle Ages. He describes a bleak landscape but nonetheless wagers that those countries will liberalize, placing his hopes on "popular steadfastness." Steven Cook and Tarek Masoud each compare the military establishments in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Turkey. It would be useful to compare these militaries with those of Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, all of which are monarchies. It is hard not to conclude that these experiments in liberalization, save, perhaps, Tunisia's, have landed the countries back on square one, with the important caveat, noted by Marc Lynch, that the Mamlouks now have digital media to play with.

Blind Spot: America and the Palestinians, From Balfour to Trump
BY KHALED ELGINDY. Brookings Institution Press, 2019, 333 pp.

Elgindy, a former adviser to the Palestinian leadership on negotiations with Israel, presents a balanced and thorough interpretation of more than a century of U.S. policy on Palestinian issues. He identifies two U.S. blind spots: the huge power imbalance between Israel and the Palestinians and the U.S. assumption that the Palestinians will have to make most of the concessions. American policy has varied over the years, but on one issue it has remained largely constant: the denial of any right of return to Palestinian refugees. Although the United States supported a UN resolution in 1948 affirming that right and another in 1967 urging a just settlement for the refugee problem, Washington has never given more than tepid support to the return of even token numbers of refugees. U.S. acquiescence to the Israeli settlements in territories Israel captured during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war has followed a similar trajectory. First seen as illegal, settlements are now embraced by most American politicians as something akin to a God-given right for Israelis. In this respect, President Donald Trump is merely building on the founda-

tions laid by presidents of both parties before him, including Barack Obama.

Asia and Pacific

Andrew J. Nathan

Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power
BY SHEILA A. SMITH. Harvard University Press, 2019, 352 pp.

Washington's relationship with Tokyo is generally considered the most important of the United States' 70-odd alliances. In this intimately knowledgeable book, Smith shows how that alliance looks to the Japanese: increasingly unreliable. Japan has done much to keep the United States committed to its defense: raising its defense budget, upgrading equipment and training, and deploying troops overseas as part of UN missions and U.S.-led coalitions. It has also strengthened its forces' independent ability to fend off air and maritime probes from China and Russia and potential missile attacks from North Korea. But as threats from all three neighbors intensify, the Japanese are less and less sure that the United States will defend them in a crisis. Some Japanese policymakers now argue that the country must develop a self-reliant defense, to be used if and when U.S. credibility deflates completely. Given Japan's geography, however, the only effective defense would be deterrence, which would breach the ban on offensive capabilities contained in the country's "peace constitution." The Japanese public is not yet willing to make that leap, but opinion is shifting.

Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven: Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement
BY MING-SHO HO. Temple University Press, 2019, 288 pp.

In 2014, large protest movements erupted in two of China's claimed territories: the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan, which opposed trade liberalization with the mainland, and the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, which denounced the special administrative region's rigged electoral system. Ho's penetrating, theoretically informed study shows how these movements built on networks created in previous protest episodes and analyzes how the protesters interacted with the authorities. The Sunflower Movement gave impetus to the election of the opposition candidate Tsai Ing-wen in Taiwan's 2016 presidential election. But the Umbrella Movement, even though it lasted 79 days, was ultimately crushed, leaving the territory's pro-democracy parties weakened. Together, the protests showed how pressure from Beijing can strengthen local identities, a dynamic also evident in Tibet and Xinjiang. Ho suggests that similar resistance may emerge elsewhere if China pushes too hard.

Active Defense: China's Military Strategy Since 1949
BY M. TAYLOR FRAVEL. Princeton University Press, 2019, 396 pp.

This is the first book to provide a comprehensive history of China's military doctrine as it has evolved since

the founding of the People's Republic. Fravel shows that this doctrine has changed a remarkable nine times—a reflection of how difficult China's military situation was when, as a developing country, it sought to defend a large and exposed territory from fearsome rivals, including India, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Fravel highlights the most consequential changes of strategy and explains how they came about in response to shifts in other countries' fighting capabilities, and at moments when China's turbulent domestic politics were calm enough to let military leaders rethink the country's defense challenges. The most recent strategic guidelines, however, reflect a new situation: rising Chinese power. Issued in 2014, they call for "winning local informatized wars"—in other words, being prepared to beat the United States in a high-tech military conflict in the South China Sea or over Taiwan.

A People's Constitution: The Everyday Life of Law in the Indian Republic
BY ROHIT DE. Princeton University Press, 2018, 312 pp.

"All sorts of people," an Indian official complained soon after independence, have been taking cases to the Supreme Court, "citing provisions … relating to what are termed fundamental rights." This book recounts how the Indian Constitution—a foreign-inflected document written in English—worked its way into the consciousness of ordinary Indians, generating a stream of litigation even more robust than that based on the U.S. Constitution. Religious minorities, members of lower castes, and others pushed to protect their traditional rights. The court blocked the government when it tried to prohibit alcohol, modified the government's ban on cow slaughter, allowed it to take certain measures but not others to control commodity prices, and used procedural grounds to sidestep a challenge to the government's suppression of prostitution. In telling these stories, De illuminates a diverse, litigious society seeking to solve issues through its laws. The Supreme Court remains one of India's most powerful institutions, implementing a constitution that places heavy emphasis on citizens' rights.

Pakistan Adrift: Navigating Troubled Waters
BY ASAD DURRANI. Oxford University Press, 2018, 288 pp.

From 1988 to 1991, Durrani, a three-star general, served short terms as the director of Pakistan's military intelligence and the director of the country's intelligence agency. In this sardonic insider account, he portrays Pakistani politics as a formless scrum in which the army, the president, the prime minister, feudally organized political parties, the U.S. ambassador, and the Saudi intelligence chief lobby and scheme with no institutional limits and no one in charge. Durrani's account is cynical and persuasive. He contends that every major Pakistani policy decision—except developing nuclear weapons—has been a mistake, including creating a crisis in the Kargil area of contested Kashmir in 1999, knuckling under to U.S. demands after the 9/11 attacks, sending troops to quash resis-

tance in tribal areas, and, above all, trusting the United States. He is just as hard on other countries, however—arguing, for example, that U.S. goals in Afghanistan are doomed to failure because the American presence strengthens, rather than weakens, the Taliban and weakens, rather than strengthens, the client regime in Kabul.

The Great Firewall of China: How to Build and Control an Alternative Version of the Internet
BY JAMES GRIFFITHS. Zed Books, 2019, 288 pp.

Controlling the Internet was supposed to be as hopeless as nailing Jell-O to the wall, as U.S. President Bill Clinton said, but in this vividly reported narrative, Griffiths tells exactly when and how China achieved it. Chinese dissidents, the U.S. government, and Internet giants went up against the Chinese state—and lost. Software built to help Chinese users leap over the Great Firewall to reach foreign websites has been checkmated. Facebook, Google, and others surrendered to Chinese censorship demands in order to access the Chinese market. And China's homegrown tech giants, which are loyal to the regime, seized control of the market. Beijing outspent its challengers in order to field cutting-edge censorship technology, often purchased from American suppliers. Now it is exporting both its technology and its ideology of cyber-sovereignty to other countries. Griffiths condemns the "moral failing" of Silicon Valley firms and despairs that "the censors are on the advance."

Taiwan's Former Nuclear Weapons Program: Nuclear Weapons On-Demand
BY DAVID ALBRIGHT AND ANDREA STRICKER. Institute for Science and International Security, 2018, 255 pp.

Taiwan has come close to developing nuclear weapons on two occasions, in 1977 and again in 1988, despite constant pledges to the United States that it was doing no such thing. Only the most persistent surveillance and intense pressure from Washington ended the program. The nonproliferation experts Albright and Stricker offer the most complete version yet told of this little-known story, based partly on the recollections of a high-ranking CIA informant inside the program. A key lesson is that nuclear enrichment programs are seldom for truly peaceful purposes, as their developers often claim. Even after pledges of nonproliferation and acceptance of inspection regimes, the temptation to cheat remains strong so long as enrichment and R & D facilities are still in place. The authors believe that Taiwan is more secure without nuclear weapons than it would have been with them. But the opposite argument will never lose its appeal—in Taiwan or, for that matter, in Japan, Saudi Arabia, or South Korea—so long as American allies have a shred of doubt about the reliability of the U.S. commitment to defend them against nuclear-armed rivals.

Africa

Nicolas van de Walle

Distant Justice: The Impact of the International Criminal Court on African Politics
BY PHIL CLARK. Cambridge University Press, 2018, 392 pp.

The International Criminal Court's mandate to investigate and prosecute people for genocide and crimes against humanity has made the institution deeply contentious in Africa. Clark focuses on the ICC's work in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but his analysis applies more broadly. He argues that the ICC is a Western-dominated organization that often intervenes in Africa without giving enough deference to national institutions and with little understanding of local politics—much like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The ICC keeps its headquarters outside Africa and employs few staffers on the continent, a decision it justifies by the need to remain impartial in local political disputes. But the result, Clark explains, has been that the ICC engages little with local African communities and decision-makers, even as it has become ensnared in African politics. Clark argues that a more effective ICC could do a lot of good in Africa. He's right—but to get there, the ICC will have to listen to his compelling criticisms.

Secessionism in African Politics: Aspiration, Grievance, Performance, Disenchantment
EDITED BY MAREIKE SCHOMERUS, PIERRE ENGELBERT, AND LOTJE DE VRIES. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 501 pp.

This collection of essays examines 14 secessionist attempts in Africa. Some are fairly well known—South Sudan's split from Sudan, for instance, or the emergence of a de facto state of Somaliland within Somalia. But the contributors also analyze several less well-known cases, including that of the island of Anjouan, which declared independence from the Comoros in 1997 only to rejoin in 2002, and the emergence of a secessionist movement in the Caprivi region, in northeastern Namibia. No two cases are the same, but secessionist demands usually originate in some combination of a desire to escape economic or political marginalization, historical grievances, and unhappiness with institutional arrangements. Most intriguing, some movements start as gambits to gain attention from the national government and foreign powers. Discontent with the national borders inherited from colonialism has been a constant of postcolonial African politics, even if those tensions have led to secession in only two cases, Eritrea and South Sudan.

Electoral Politics and Africa's Urban Transition: Class and Ethnicity in Ghana
BY NOAH L. NATHAN. Cambridge University Press, 2019, 363 pp.

Most observers of electoral politics in poor countries argue that higher incomes would create an urban middle class that would then eschew the parochial considerations of poor rural voters and demand universalistic policies to improve the general welfare. Nathan's careful deconstruction of electoral politics in Accra, Ghana's increasingly prosperous capital, shows one instance in which the theory does not hold. Middle-class Ghanaians continue to vote for politicians who follow a logic of ethnic favoritism and clientelism, promising rewards to their bases of support. He argues that the low capacity of the Ghanaian state, the huge unmet demand for state resources, and the presence in Accra of many poor recent migrants from the countryside all push politicians to continue their successful past strategies.

The Colonial Politics of Global Health: France and the United Nations in Postwar Africa
BY JESSICA LYNNE PEARSON. Harvard University Press, 2018, 278 pp.

The United Nations and its associated organizations were formed at a time when the European colonial empires were still largely intact, if under fire. After the UN's founding, the imperial powers started to incorporate economic development objectives into their colonial policies to help legitimate their rule. As Pearson's probing account makes clear, this quickly put them at odds with the UN's fledgling development architecture. Focusing on the area of public health, Pearson shows that France sought to reap the benefits of the World Health Organization's operations in Africa, even as it pursued its own health-care policies in its colonies. France's efforts, Pearson argues, succeeded in maintaining French influence over UN policies in West Africa even

after the country's former colonies had won their independence.

Apartheid Guns and Money: A Tale of Profit
BY HENNIE VAN VUUREN. Hurst, 2018, 448 pp.

In 1977, the United Nations imposed an arms embargo on the white-minority regime in South Africa. The embargo was later followed by sanctions on trade, investment, and lending. The regime responded by creating a sophisticated network of organizations and agents around the world that it used to keep weapons and crucial economic goods, such as oil, flowing. In this impressive but sprawling account, van Vuuren draws on archival material and interviews to reveal how the South African government got around the sanctions and how France, the United Kingdom, and the United States subverted the rules. Throughout the 1980s, South Africa used friendly banks in Europe to maintain lines of credit to finance the acquisition of weapons and military technology worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Secrecy, restrictions on the South African press, intense diplomacy, connections with foreign intelligence services, and lobbying abroad ensured the success of South Africa's illicit global network until the end of the Cold War.

Electoral Politics in Africa Since 1990: Continuity in Change
BY JAIMIE BLECK AND NICOLAS VAN DE WALLE. Cambridge University Press, 2018, 352 pp.

In this magisterial study, Bleck and van de Walle analyze elections in sub-Saharan Africa over the last quarter century. They show that there has been a high degree of electoral continuity since the transition to multiparty politics in the early 1990s. The authors attribute this tendency to two factors: the persistence of presidential systems, and the "liability of newness," meaning most African countries' limited experience of multiparty politics, which benefits incumbents at the expense of opposition parties. One of the volume's major contributions is to put African elections in comparative perspective. Bleck and van de Walle's focus on the "normality" of African elections, alongside their more unusual characteristics, offers a useful corrective to the dominant narrative of Africa's unique electoral politics. The book also convincingly rebuts accounts of democratic backsliding and overly optimistic views of democratic consolidation. It shows that, in reality, there has been relatively little change since the democratic transitions of the early 1990s.

DOMINIKA KOTER

Return to Table of Contents

Letters to the Editor

WAR AND PEACEKEEPING

To the Editor:

As the leader of a group whose goal is to educate U.S. policymakers and the public about the many ways UN peacekeeping missions serve U.S. interests, I read Séverine Autesserre's critique of the UN's approach closely ("The Crisis of Peacekeeping," January/February 2019). I have a far more optimistic view of the UN's record.

Autesserre cautions against pushing "for quick elections as a way to consolidate the peace" and uses Angola in 1992 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo more recently as examples of the failures resulting from this approach. But for every Congo there is a Liberia, or a Sierra Leone, or a Côte d'Ivoire—countries that have successfully made the transition to democracy, however fragile. As Autesserre herself notes, one study has shown that deploying UN peacekeepers reduces civilian killings. Indeed, decades of research have made clear that deploying UN peacekeepers significantly decreases the likelihood that a country will witness a revival of armed conflict. As the scholar Steven Pinker put it when asked whether peacekeeping missions lessen the chance of civil war, "The answer from the statistical studies is: absolutely, they work massively."

Having traveled to the locations of ten UN peacekeeping operations, I also know intimately that they are engaging in exactly the kind of "bottom-up peace-building efforts" that Autesserre finds lacking. In Mali, I visited a farm near the city of Gao where UN peacekeepers have installed an irrigation system, turning formerly arid acres into a green oasis. There, young people learn to farm, an alternative to joining the extremist groups that surround the area, and families grow food for themselves and for local markets. Other UN agencies, particularly the World Food Program, are also taking a bottom-up approach in Mali. The WFP works in more than 40 communities throughout Mali, partnering with local people who determine themselves what their most critical needs are. Working together with the people, the WFP helps build the projects the communities have identified as essential.

But what struck me most about Autesserre's article was that some of her criticisms have also been made by UN Secretary-General António Guterres. In fact, they form the basis of his reform plan, Action for Peacekeeping, which has been endorsed by 151 member states. Autesserre writes that "UN peacekeepers often fail to meet their most basic objectives"; after the secretary-general suggested "re-centering" peacekeeping on more realistic expectations, member states agreed to "commit to clear, focused, sequenced, prioritized and achievable mandates." She also claims that the UN "has a cookie-cutter approach that begins with international best practices and tries to apply them to a local situation"; Guterres' reform plan commits member states "to support tailored, context-specific peacekeeping approaches to protecting civilians." She

argues that "empowering average citizens" is one path to peace; Guterres' plan addresses this point directly, pledging "the inclusion and engagement of civil society and all segments of the local population in peacekeeping mandate implementation."

Although I disagree with her assessment of the UN's track record, Autesserre is right on several points. Peacekeeping surely is one of the hardest jobs in the world. The ratio between the number of peacekeepers and the size of the population or territory they oversee is often wildly out of whack. Finally, we agree that peacekeeping is imperfect, in need of improvement, and invaluable. That is the driving force behind the UN's efforts to reform it.

PETER YEO
President, Better World Campaign

Autesserre replies:

I agree with Peter Yeo that UN peacekeeping missions serve U.S. interests (as well as the interests of other countries) and that the UN itself is an essential tool in the search for a better world. But Yeo's argument rests on several mischaracterizations and misconceptions.

The research on peacekeeping is hardly as unanimously positive as Yeo argues. There is in fact a huge debate among experts about the track record of peacekeeping missions. Estimates of the rate of failure vary by the source from 15 percent to 75 percent; it all depends on the definitions of "peace" and "success" that the researchers use.

As far as elections go, the scholarly literature shows that countries transitioning from autocracy to democracy

are more prone to war than either established democracies or established dictatorships. Statistically speaking, promoting democracy in places recovering from conflict increases the risk that they will return to violence, rather than helping them on the road to stability.

In terms of Guterres' reform plan, it is just that: a declaration of intention, of the kind that has already been seen many times over the past few years. (For instance, the report that the UN's High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations released in 2015 made the same points.) What matters is not what leaders say but whether their pledges are actually implemented. And as of now, all these plans remain in the realm of declarations, talks, reports—good intentions, but not real actions on the ground.

There are indeed plenty of examples of the kind of bottom-up peace efforts that I advocate in my article, but they remain rare within UN peacekeeping missions. A case in point: of the two examples that Yeo gives, one is actually implemented by the WFP—a UN development agency, but not a peacekeeping body. In fact, the vast majority of the successful bottom-up peace initiatives that I've found, and that I am analyzing in my forthcoming book *On the Frontlines of Peace*, are led by non-UN groups.

It is true that certain peacekeepers do try to support grass-roots efforts—in eastern Congo and in the Central African Republic, for instance. Some of them, there and elsewhere, also challenge the common idea that outsiders know best and try to put local actors in the driver's seat. But such people remain a minority both among UN peacekeepers as a whole and within their own missions. Worse, the peacekeepers who do try to implement locally led initiatives face countless impediments from their colleagues and superiors, who argue that the UN's only legitimate role is to interact with national governments and elites, building peace from the top down.

FOR THE RECORD

An article by Jill Lepore ("A New Americanism," March/April 2019) misidentified the U.S. president who began building the liberal international order after World War II. It was Harry Truman, not Franklin Roosevelt.

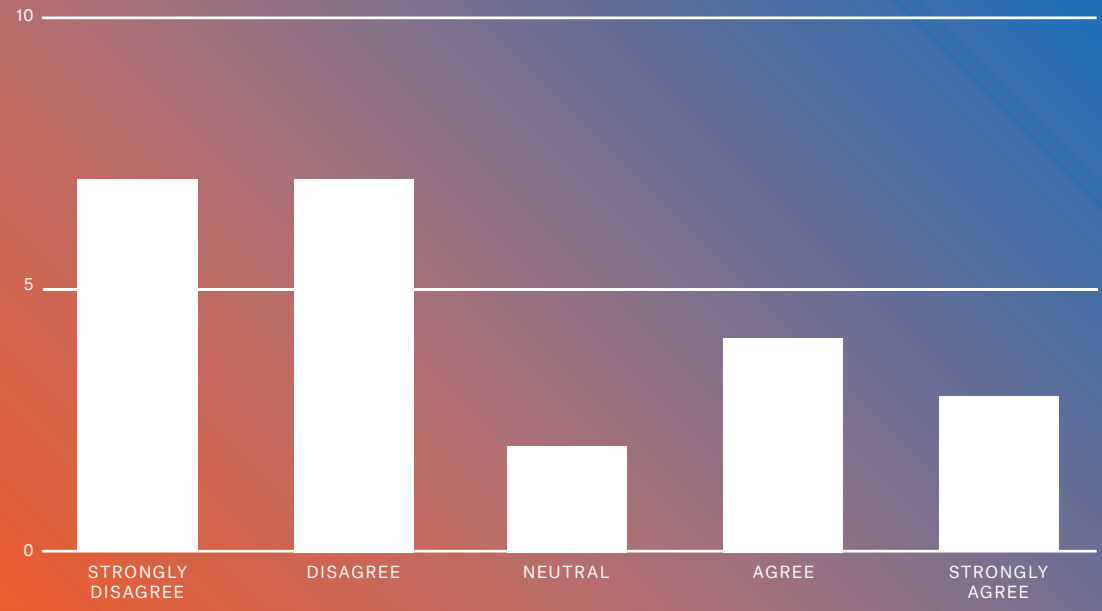
An article by Henri Barkey ("The Kurdish Awakening," March/April 2019) gave the wrong date for the election in which the Kurdish-dominated Peoples' Democratic Party won 102 municipalities. The elections took place in March 2014, not July 2016.

Foreign Affairs (ISSN 00157120), May/June 2019, Volume 98, Number 3. 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.

Do Deficits Not Matter?

Foreign Affairs Brain Trust

We asked dozens of experts whether they agreed or disagreed that Washington shouldn't worry about the budget deficit. The results from those who responded are below.



STRONGLY DISAGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 10

Douglas Holtz-Eakin

President, American Action Forum, and former Director, Congressional Budget Office

"To say one should not worry about the budget deficit is to say one should not care about the scope, scale, and financing of government. That is silly."

STRONGLY AGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 10

Stephanie Kelton

Professor of Economics and Public Policy, Stony Brook University

"Without evidence of an accelerating inflation risk, I see no reason to worry about the size of the deficit."

See the full responses at ForeignAffairs.com/USBudgetDeficit

NORWICH UNIVERSITY™
Online

1819
Norwich becomes the nation's first private military college.

1887
First Commandant and Professor of Military Science and Tactics assigned to Norwich by the United States government.

1916
Norwich made a Senior Division, Cavalry Unit, of the Reserve Officer Training Corps.

1987
Norwich founds the nation's first Peace Corps Preparatory Program.

2003
Online Master of Arts in Diplomacy program launched
Learn to navigate international economics, law, and the cultural complexities that define diplomacy in the 21st century.

2015
Online Master of Arts in International Relations program launched
Learn to examine real-world issues through a global lens to develop clear perspectives on international issues, global leadership and conflict resolution.

OUR LEGACY STARTED IN 1819.
YOURS STARTS NOW.

Graduate in as few as 18 months | No GRE | 15:1 student to faculty ratio

graduate.norwich.edu/ForeignAffairs

Norwich is an equal opportunity employer.

STARR

INSURANCE COMPANIES

1919 Cornelius Vander Starr founded American Asiatic Underwriters in Shanghai.

1927 American Asiatic Underwriters opened its headquarters at 17 The Bund, Shanghai.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

1967 Starr's Maurice R. "Hank" Greenberg established AIG.

Greenberg streamlined operations to form American International Group, Inc. (AIG) as an umbrella organization for many of Starr's enterprises.

1969 Greenberg took AIG public with a market value of $300 million.

1989 Greenberg met with Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader of the People's Republic of China.

1990 Greenberg met with Zhu Rongji, former mayor of Shanghai and Premier of the People's Republic of China.

1992 Greenberg secured the first foreign life insurance license in China.

2018 Greenberg was awarded the China Reform Friendship Medal by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Why does this matter? Because no other global insurance company shares our long history and comprehensive experience in China, an especially complex business market. Starr is the leading name in the insurance industry with the right knowledge and relationships to help companies succeed there. **Period.**

2019 Happy 100th Anniversary to Starr Insurance Companies.

PROPERTY / CASUALTY / ACCIDENT / AVIATION / MARINE **STARRCOMPANIES.COM**