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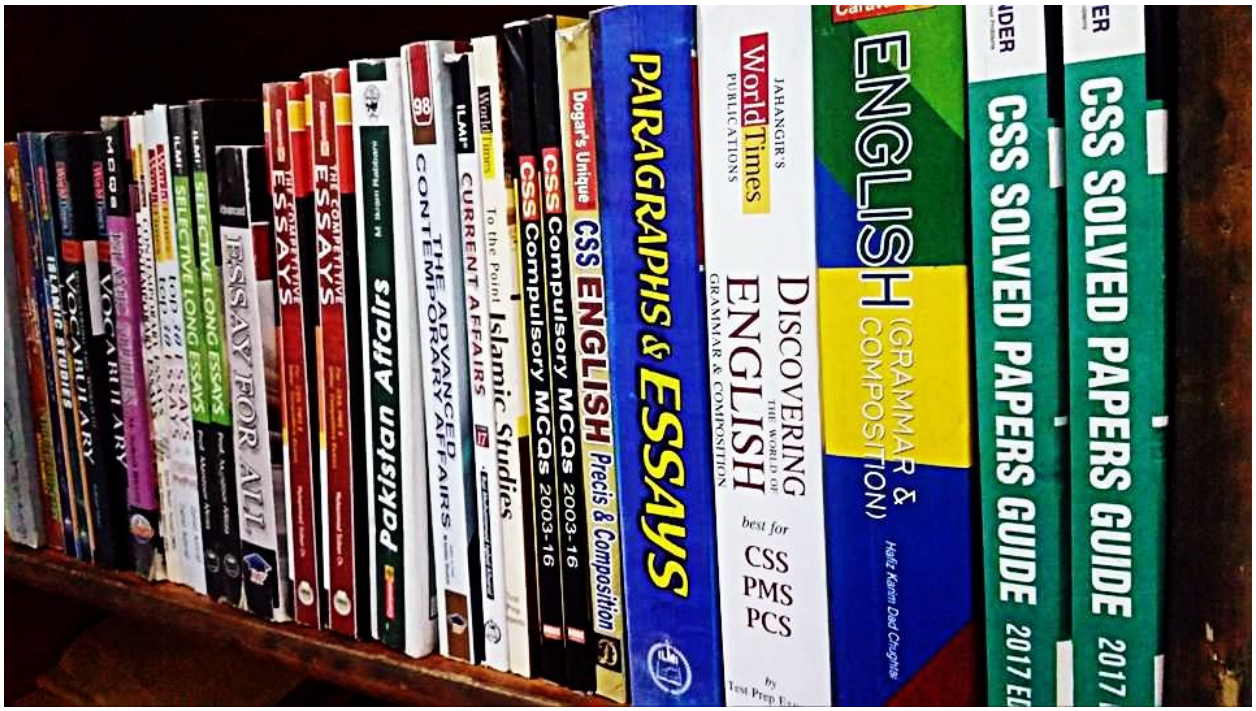

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Volume 101, Number 3

THE WORLD AFTER THE WAR

COVER: KOTRYNA ZUKAUSKAITE

May/June 2022

ESSAYS

ON FOREIGNAFFAIRS.COM

- **Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz** on how Putin could fall.
- **Michael Beckley and Hal Brands** on Russia's invasion and U.S. power.
- **South Korea's next president** on his foreign policy vision.

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

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Archibald Cary Coolidge, Founding Editor
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ANNA REID is a historian and journalist specializing in eastern Europe. She has served as the Kyiv correspondent for *The Economist* and *The Daily Telegraph* and written several books on Russia and Ukraine, including *Borderland: A Journey Through the History of Ukraine*. In "Putin's War on History" (page 54), Reid explores Ukraine's long and complex history and argues that at the heart of Vladimir Putin's attack is a battle over that contested past.

STEPHEN KOTKIN is the author of seminal scholarship on Russia, the Soviet Union, and global history. The first volume in his acclaimed three-volume biography of Joseph Stalin was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; the second won the Council on Foreign Relation's Arthur Ross Book Award. He is a professor at Princeton University and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. In "The Cold War Never Ended" (page 64), he argues that the crisis in Ukraine is the latest phase of a geopolitical struggle that stretches back to World War II—one that the West can win only by being the West.

The dean of American defense strategists, **ANDREW KREPINEVICH** graduated from West Point and served as an officer in the U.S. Army for 21 years, during which time he wrote *The Army and Vietnam*, an influential critique of U.S. counterinsurgency strategy. He has served in the U.S. Department of Defense and was the president of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments from 1995 to 2016. In "The New Nuclear Age" (page 92), he argues that China's aggressive expansion of its nuclear arsenal is upending the balance that has prevented nuclear war for decades—and that this should prompt urgent new thinking about how to avert catastrophe in a dangerous new atomic age.

THE WORLD AFTER THE WAR

As this issue goes to press, the war in Ukraine is far from over. It seems likely to go on for weeks or months or even years, whether as a grinding back-and-forth conflict, an insurgency fighting to overturn an occupation, or a global cataclysm. Yet since the moment the first missiles were fired, it has been clear that the invasion marked the start of a new era—one that will be defined not just by the outcome on the ground in Ukraine but also by the global response. In their resistance to the Russian assault, Ukrainians have powerfully demonstrated what's at stake for them. The rest of the world is still grappling with what's at stake for it.

For Americans, argues Robert Kagan, the war serves as a stark reminder "that they are part of a never-ending power struggle, whether they wish to be or not"—and "that there really are worse things than U.S. hegemony." For the international order, writes Tanisha Fazal, the war threatens the principle that has underpinned stability for decades: "The norm against territorial conquest has been tested in the most threatening and vivid way since the end of World War II." And for Western policymakers, contends Stacie Goddard, the war underscores the value of "institutional realpolitik"—a strategy that, rather than scrapping the existing international system, would deploy it to contain the coordinated yet distinct revisionist challenges mounted by China and Russia.

For Vladimir Putin, the war reflects what Daniel Treisman describes as "an emerging pattern—one that features anti-Western nationalism; angry, self-justifying speeches; and increasingly open uses of force," first at home and then abroad. And for Ukrainians, the war represents an assault on, among much else, their history, with Putin, as Anna Reid explains, "resorting to military force and totalitarian censorship in a vain attempt to make reality closer to the myth."

For all of us, meanwhile, the war has forced a fresh confrontation with risks and threats once dismissed as relics. It turns out, as Stephen Kotkin puts it in his sweeping analysis of geopolitics past and present, that "the West's relatively brief respite from great-power competition with Russia constituted a historical blink of an eye."

—Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, Editor

The war in Ukraine has forced a fresh confrontation with risks and threats once dismissed as relics.

KOTRYNA ZUKAUSKAITE

The Price of Hegemony

Can America Learn to Use Its Power?

Robert Kagan

For years, analysts have debated whether the United States incited Russian President Vladimir Putin's interventions in Ukraine and other neighboring countries or whether Moscow's actions were simply unprovoked aggressions. That conversation has been temporarily muted by the horrors of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. A wave of popular outrage has drowned out those who have long argued that the United States has no vital interests at stake in Ukraine, that it is in Russia's sphere of interest, and that U.S. policies created the feelings of insecurity that have driven Putin to extreme measures. Just as the attack on Pearl Harbor silenced the anti-interventionists and shut down the debate over whether the United States should have entered World War II, Putin's invasion has suspended the 2022 version of Americans' endless argument over their purpose in the world.

That is unfortunate. Although it is obscene to blame the United States for Putin's inhumane attack on Ukraine, to insist that the invasion was entirely unprovoked is misleading. Just as Pearl Harbor was the consequence of U.S. efforts to blunt Japanese expansion on the Asian mainland, and just as the 9/11 attacks were partly a response to the United States' dominant presence in the Middle East after the first Gulf War, so Russian decisions have been a response to the expanding post–Cold War hegemony of the United States and its allies in Europe. Putin alone is to blame for his actions, but the invasion of Ukraine is taking place in a historical and geopolitical context in which the United States has played and still plays the principal role, and Americans must grapple with this fact.

For critics of American power, the best way for the United States to cope is for it to retrench its position in the world, divest itself of overseas obligations that others ought to handle, and serve, at most, as a distant offshore balancer. These critics would grant China and Russia their own regional spheres of interest in East Asia and Europe and focus the United States' attention on defending its borders and improving the well-being of Americans. But there is a core of unrealism to this "realist" prescription: it doesn't reflect the true nature of global power and influence that has characterized most of the post–Cold War era and that still governs the world today. The United States was already the only true global superpower during the Cold War, with its unparalleled wealth and might and its extensive international alliances. The collapse of the Soviet Union only enhanced U.S. global hegemony—and not because Washington eagerly stepped in to fill the vacuum left by

ROBERT KAGAN is Stephen and Barbara Friedman Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and the author of the forthcoming book *The Ghost at the Feast: America and the Collapse of World Order, 1900–1941*.

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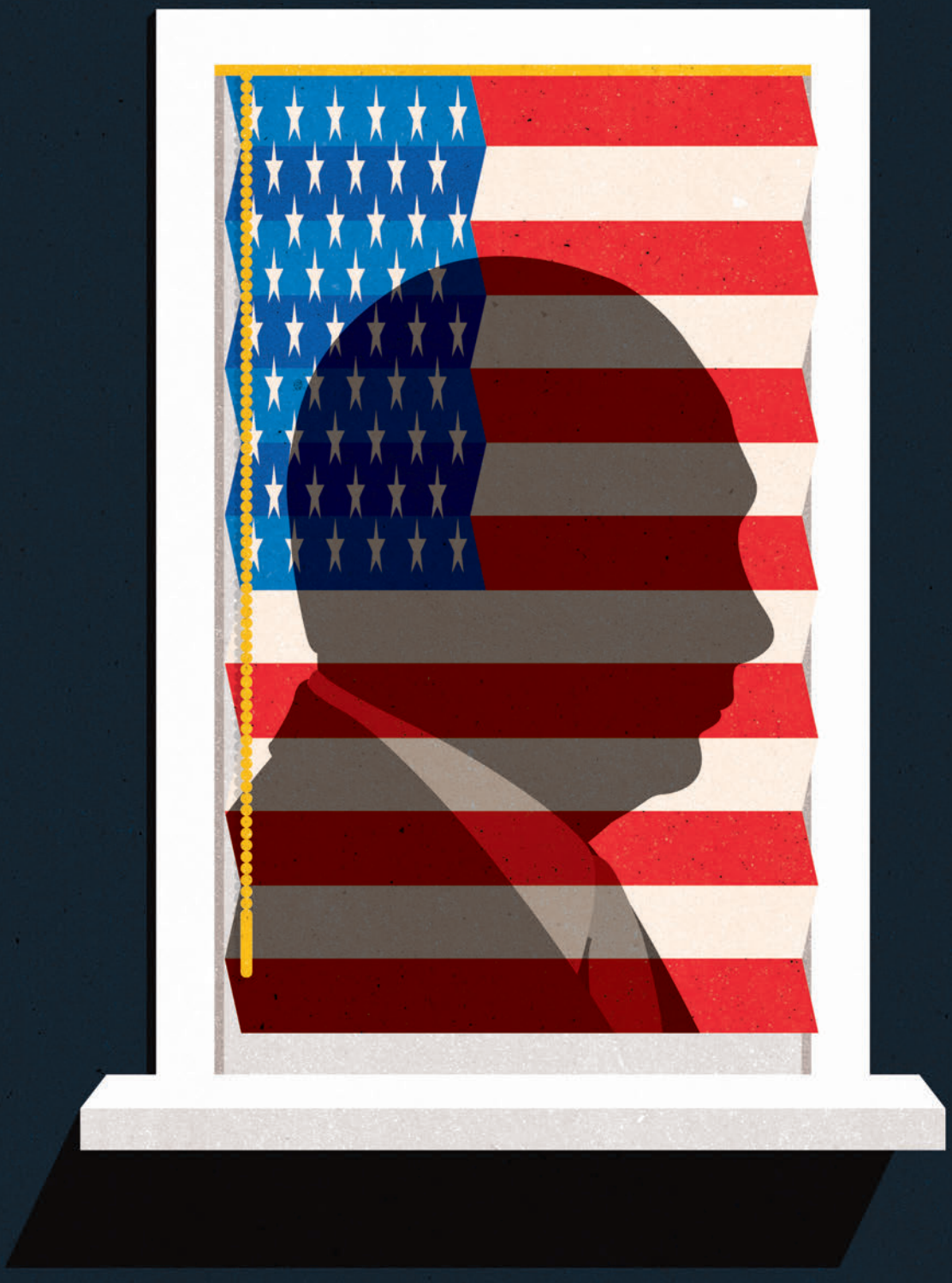

Moscow's weakness. Instead, the collapse expanded U.S. influence because the United States' combination of power and democratic beliefs made the country attractive to those seeking security, prosperity, freedom, and autonomy. The United States is therefore an imposing obstacle to a Russia seeking to regain its lost influence.

What has happened in eastern Europe over the past three decades is a testament to this reality. Washington did not actively aspire to be the region's dominant power. But in the years after the Cold War, eastern Europe's newly liberated countries, including Ukraine, turned to the United States and its European allies because they believed that joining the transatlantic community was the key to independence, democracy, and affluence. Eastern Europeans were looking to escape decades—or, in some cases, centuries—of Russian and Soviet imperialism, and allying with Washington at a moment of Russian weakness afforded them a precious chance to succeed. Even if the United States had rejected their pleas to join NATO and other Western institutions, as critics insist it should have, the former Soviet satellites would have continued to resist Moscow's attempts to corral them back into its sphere of interest, seeking whatever help from the West they could get. And Putin would still have regarded the United States as the main cause of this anti-Russian behavior, simply because the country was strong enough to attract eastern Europeans.

Throughout their history, Americans have tended to be unconscious of the daily impact that U.S. power has on the rest of the world, friends and foes alike. They are generally surprised to find themselves the target of resentment and of the kinds of challenges posed by Putin's Russia and by President Xi Jinping's China. Americans could reduce the severity of these challenges by wielding U.S. influence more consistently and effectively. They failed to do this in the 1920s and 1930s, allowing aggression by Germany, Italy, and Japan to go unchecked until it resulted in a massively destructive world war. They failed to do so in recent years, allowing Putin to seize more and more land until he invaded all of Ukraine. After Putin's latest move, Americans may learn the right lesson. But they will still struggle to understand how Washington should act in the world if they don't examine what happened with Russia, and that requires continuing the debate over the impact of U.S. power.

BY POPULAR DEMAND

So in what way might the United States have provoked Putin? One thing needs to be clear: it was not by threatening the security of Russia. Since the end of the Cold War, the Russians have objectively enjoyed greater security than at any time in recent memory. Russia was invaded three times over the past two centuries, once by France and twice by Germany. During the Cold War, Soviet forces were perpetually ready to battle U.S. and NATO forces in Europe. Yet since the end of the Cold War, Russia has enjoyed unprecedented security on its western flanks, even as NATO has taken in new members to its east. Moscow even welcomed what was in many ways the most significant addition to the alliance: a reunified Germany. When Germany was reunifying at the

end of the Cold War, the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev favored anchoring it in NATO. As he told U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, he believed that the best guarantee of Soviet and Russian security was a Germany "contained within European structures."

Late Soviet and early Russian leaders certainly did not act as if they feared an attack from the West. Soviet and Russian defense spending declined sharply in the late 1980s and through the late 1990s, including by 90 percent between 1992 and 1996. The once formidable Red Army was cut nearly in half, leaving it weaker in relative terms than it had been for almost 400 years. Gorbachev even ordered the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Poland and other Warsaw Pact states, chiefly as a cost-saving measure. It was all part of a larger strategy to ease Cold War tensions so that Moscow might concentrate on economic reform at home. But even Gorbachev would not have sought this holiday from geopolitics had he believed that the United States and the West would take advantage of it.

His judgment was sensible. The United States and its allies had no interest in the independence of the Soviet republics, as U.S. President George H. W. Bush made clear in his 1991 speech in Kyiv, in which he denounced the "suicidal nationalism" of independence-minded Ukrainians (who would declare independence three weeks later). Indeed, for several years after 1989, U.S. policies aimed first to rescue Gorbachev, then to rescue the Soviet Union, and then to rescue Russian President Boris Yeltsin. During the period of transition from Gorbachev's Soviet Union to Yeltsin's Russia—the time of greatest Russian weakness—the Bush administration and then the Clinton administration were reluctant to expand NATO, despite the increasingly urgent appeals of the former Warsaw Pact states. The Clinton administration created the Partnership for Peace, whose vague assurances of solidarity fell well short of a security guarantee for former Warsaw Pact members.

It is easy to see why Washington felt no great compulsion to drive NATO eastward. Few Americans at that time saw the organization as a bulwark against Russian expansion, much less as a means of bringing Russia down. From the U.S. perspective, Russia was already a shell of its former self. The question was whether NATO had any mission at all now that the great adversary against which it was aimed had collapsed—and given just how hopeful the 1990s felt to most Americans and western Europeans. It was thought to be a time of convergence, when both China and Russia were moving ineluctably toward liberalism. Geoeconomics had replaced geopolitics, the nation-state was passing away, the world was "flat," the twenty-first century would be run by the European Union, and Enlightenment ideals were spreading across the planet. For NATO, "out of area or out of business" was the mantra of the day.

But as the West enjoyed its fantasies and Russia struggled to adapt to a new world, the nervous populations lying to the east of Germany—the Balts, the Poles, the Romanians, and the Ukrainians—viewed the end of the Cold War as merely the latest phase in their centuries-old struggle. For them, NATO was not obsolete. They saw what the United States and western Europe took

for granted—the Article 5 collective security guarantee—as the key to escaping a long, bloody, and oppressive past. Much like the French after World War I, who feared the day when a revived Germany would again threaten them, eastern Europeans believed that Russia would eventually resume its centuries-long habit of imperialism and seek to reclaim its traditional influence over their neighborhood. These states wanted to integrate into the free-market capitalism of their richer, Western neighbors, and membership in NATO and the European Union was to them the only path out of a dismal past and into a safer, more democratic, and more prosperous future. It was hardly surprising, then, that when Gorbachev and then Yeltsin loosened the reins in the early 1990s, practically every current, and soon former, Warsaw Pact member and Soviet republic seized the chance to break from the past and shift their allegiance from Moscow to the transatlantic West.

But although this massive change had little to do with U.S. policies, it had much to do with the reality of the United States' post–Cold War hegemony. Many Americans tend to equate hegemony with imperialism, but the two are different. Imperialism is an active effort by one state to force others into its sphere, whereas hegemony is more a condition than a purpose. A militarily, economically, and culturally powerful country exerts influence on other states by its mere presence, the way a larger body in space affects the behavior of smaller bodies through its gravitational pull. Even if the United States was not aggressively expanding its influence in Europe, and certainly not through its military, the collapse of Soviet power enhanced the attractive pull of the United States and its democratic allies. Their prosperity, their freedom, and, yes, their power to protect former Soviet satellites, when combined with the inability of Moscow to provide any of these, dramatically shifted the balance in Europe in favor of Western liberalism to the detriment of Russian autocracy. The growth of U.S. influence and the spread of liberalism were less a policy objective of the United States than the natural consequence of that shift.

Russian leaders could have accommodated themselves to this new reality. Other great powers had adjusted to similar changes. The British had once been lords of the seas, the possessors of a vast global empire, and the center of the financial world. Then they lost it all. But although some were humiliated at being supplanted by the United States, Britons rather quickly adjusted to their new place in the firmament. The French, too, lost a great empire, and Germany and Japan, defeated in war, lost everything except their talent for producing wealth. But they all made the adjustment and were arguably better for it.

There were certainly Russians in the 1990s—Yeltsin's foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, for one—who thought that Russia should make a similar decision. They wished to integrate Russia into the liberal West even at the expense of traditional geopolitical ambitions. But that was not the view that ultimately prevailed in Russia. Unlike the United Kingdom, France, and to some extent Japan, Russia did not have a long history of friendly relations and strategic cooperation with the United

States—quite the contrary. Unlike Germany and Japan, Russia was not militarily defeated, occupied, and reformed in the process. And unlike Germany, which always knew that its economic power was irrepressible and that in the post–World War II order it could at least grow prosperous, Russia never really believed it could become a successful economic powerhouse. Its elites thought that the likeliest consequence of integration would be Russia's demotion to, at best, a second-rank power. Russia would be at peace, and it would still have a chance to prosper. But it would not determine the fate of Europe and the world.

WAR OR PEACE

In the fall of 1940, Japan's foreign minister, Yosuke Matsuoka, posed his country's predicament starkly in a meeting with other senior officials. Japan could seek a return to cooperative relations with the United States and the United Kingdom, he noted, but only on those countries' terms. This meant returning to "little Japan," as the minister of war (and future prime minister), General Hideki Tojo, put it. To Japanese leaders at the time, that seemed intolerable, so much so that they risked a war that most of them believed they were likely to lose. The coming years would prove not only that going to war was a mistake but also that the Japanese would indeed have served their interests better by simply integrating themselves into the liberal order from the beginning, as they did quite successfully after the war.

Putin's Russia has made much the same choice as did imperial Japan, Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany, and

many other dissatisfied powers throughout history, and likely with the same end—eventual defeat. But Putin's choice should hardly have come as a surprise. Washington's protestations of goodwill, the billions of dollars it poured into the Russian economy, the care it took in the early post–Cold War years to avoid dancing on the Soviet Union's grave—all this had no effect, because what Putin wanted could not be granted by the United States. He sought to reverse a defeat that could not be reversed without violent force, but he lacked the wherewithal to wage a successful war. He wanted to restore a Russian sphere of interest in central and eastern Europe that Moscow had lost the power to sustain.

The problem for Putin—and for those in the West who want to cede to both China and Russia their traditional spheres of interest—is that such spheres are not granted to one great power by other great powers; they are not inherited, nor are they created by geography or history or "tradition." They are acquired by economic, political, and military power. They come and go as the distribution of power in the international system fluctuates. The United Kingdom's sphere of interest once covered much of the globe, and France once enjoyed spheres of interest in Southeast Asia and much of Africa and the Middle East. Both lost them, partly due to an unfavorable shift of power at the beginning of the twentieth century, partly because their imperial subjects rebelled, and partly because they willingly traded in their spheres of interest for a stable and prosperous U.S.-dominated peace. Germany's sphere of interest once extended far to the east. Before World War I, some Germans envisioned a vast economic Mitteleuropa, where the people of central and eastern Europe would provide the labor, resources, and markets for German industry. But this German sphere of interest overlapped with Russia's sphere of interest in southeastern Europe, where Slavic populations looked to Moscow for protection against Teutonic expansion. These contested spheres helped produce both world wars, just as the contested spheres in East Asia had helped bring Japan and Russia to blows in 1904.

Russians may believe they have a natural, geographic, and historical claim to a sphere of interest in eastern Europe because they had it throughout much of the past four centuries. And many Chinese feel the same way about East Asia, which they once dominated. But even the Americans learned that claiming a sphere of interest is different from having one. For the first century of the United States' existence, the Monroe Doctrine was a mere assertion—as hollow as it was brazen. It was only toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the country was able to enforce its claim, that the other great powers were grudgingly forced to accept it. After the Cold War, Putin and other Russians may have wanted the West to grant Moscow a sphere of interest in Europe, but such a sphere simply did not reflect the true balance of power after the Soviet Union fell. China may claim the "nine-dash line"—enclosing most of the South China Sea—as marking its sphere of interest, but until Beijing can enforce it, other powers are unlikely to acquiesce.

Some Western analysts nonetheless argued when the Cold War ended, and continue to argue now, that Washington and western Europe should have given in to Russia's demand. But if Moscow could not enforce a sphere, then on what grounds should the West have acceded? Fairness? Justice? Spheres of interest are not about justice, and even if they were, consigning the Poles and other eastern Europeans to subservience to Moscow would have been a dubious justice. They knew what it was like to be under Moscow's sway—the loss of independence, the imposition of rulers willing to take direction from the Kremlin, the squelching of individual liberties. The only way they would have accepted a return to Russia's sphere was if they were compelled to by a combination of Russian pressure and the studied indifference of the West.

In fact, even if the United States had vetoed the accession of Poland and others to NATO, as some suggested at the time that it should have, the Balts, the Czechs, the Hungarians, and the Poles would have done everything they could to integrate themselves into the transatlantic community in every other possible way. They would have worked to join the global economy, to enter other Western-dominated international institutions, and to gain whatever commitment they could to their security—acts that almost certainly would have still antagonized Moscow. Once Putin began taking slices out of Ukraine (there would be no way for him to restore Russia to its previous great-power status without controlling Ukraine), the Poles and others would have come banging on NATO's door. It seems unlikely that the United States and its allies would have continued to say no.

Russia's problem was ultimately not just about its military weakness. Its problem was, and remains, its weakness in all relevant forms of power, including the power of attraction. At least during the Cold War, a communist Soviet Union could claim to offer the path to paradise on earth. Yet afterward, Moscow could provide neither ideology, nor security, nor prosperity, nor independence to its neighbors. It could offer only Russian nationalism and ambition, and eastern Europeans understandably had no interest in sacrificing themselves on that altar. If there was any other choice, Russia's neighbors were bound to take it. And there was: the United States and its strong alliance, merely by existing, merely by being rich and powerful and democratic, offered a very good choice indeed.

Putin may want to see the United States as being behind all his troubles, and he is right that the country's attractive power closed the door to some of his ambitions. But the real sources of his problems are the limitations of Russia itself and the choices that he has made not to accept the consequences of a power struggle that Moscow legitimately lost. Post–Cold War Russia, like Weimar Germany, never suffered an actual military defeat and occupation, an experience that might have produced a transformation of the sort that occurred in post–World War II Germany and Japan. Like the Weimar Republic, Russia was therefore susceptible to its own "stab-in-the-back myth" about how Russian leaders supposedly betrayed the country to the West. But although Russians can cast blame in any number of directions—at Gorbachev, at Yeltsin, and at Washing-

ton—the fact is that Russia enjoyed neither the wealth and power nor the geographic advantages of the United States, and it was therefore never suited to be a global superpower. Moscow's efforts to sustain that position ultimately bankrupted its system financially and ideologically—as may well be happening again.

SOONER OR LATER

Observers used to say that Putin played a bad hand skillfully. It is true that he read the United States and its allies correctly for many years, pushing forward just enough to achieve limited goals without sparking a dangerous reaction from the West, up until this latest invasion. But even so, he had help from the United States and its allies, which played a strong hand poorly. Washington and Europe stood by as Putin increased Russian military capabilities, and they did little as he probed and tested Western resolve, first in Georgia in 2008 and then in Ukraine in 2014. They didn't act when Putin consolidated Russia's position in Belarus or when he established a robust Russian presence in Syria, from which his weapons could reach the southeastern flank of NATO. And if his "special military operation" in Ukraine had gone as planned, with the country subdued in a matter of days, it would have been a triumphant coup, the end of the first stage of Russia's comeback and the beginning of the second. Rather than excoriating him for his inhumane folly, the world would again be talking about Putin's "savvy" and his "genius."

Thankfully, that was not to be. But now that Putin has made his mistakes, the question is whether the United States will continue to make its own mistakes or whether Americans will learn, once again, that it is better to contain aggressive autocracies early, before they have built up a head of steam and the price of stopping them rises. The challenge posed by Russia is neither unusual nor irrational. The rise and fall of nations is the warp and woof of international relations. National trajectories are changed by wars and the resulting establishment of new power structures, by shifts in the global economy that enrich some and impoverish others, and by beliefs and ideologies that lead people to prefer one power over another. If there is any blame to be cast on the United States for what is happening in Ukraine, it is not that Washington deliberately extended its influence in eastern Europe. It is that Washington failed to see that its influence had already increased and to anticipate that actors dissatisfied with the liberal order would look to overturn it.

For the 70-plus years since World War II, the United States has actively worked to keep revisionists at bay. But many Americans hoped that with the end of the Cold War, this task would be finished and that their country could become a "normal" nation with normal—which was to say, limited—global interests. But the global hegemon cannot tiptoe off the stage, as much as it might wish to. It especially cannot retreat when there are still major powers that, because of their history and sense of self, cannot give up old geopolitical ambitions—unless Americans are prepared to live in a world shaped and defined by those ambitions, as it was in the 1930s.

The United States would be better served if it recognized both its position in the world and its true interest in preserving the liberal world order. In the case of Russia, this would have meant doing everything possible to integrate it into the liberal order politically and economically while deterring it from attempting to re-create its regional dominance by military means. The commitment to defend NATO allies was never meant to preclude helping others under attack in Europe, as the United States and its allies did in the case of the Balkans in the 1990s, and the United States and its allies could have resisted military efforts to control or seize land from Georgia and Ukraine. Imagine if the United States and the democratic world had responded in 2008 or 2014 as they have responded to Russia's latest use of force, when Putin's military was even weaker than it has proved to be now, even as they kept extending an outstretched hand in case Moscow wanted to grasp it. The United States ought to be following the same policy toward China: make clear that it is prepared to live with a China that seeks to fulfill its ambitions economically, politically, and culturally but that it will respond effectively to any Chinese military action against its neighbors.

It is true that acting firmly in 2008 or 2014 would have meant risking conflict. But Washington is risking conflict now; Russia's ambitions have created an inherently dangerous situation. It is better for the United States to risk confrontation with belligerent powers when they are in the early stages of ambition and expansion, not after they have already consolidated substantial gains. Russia may possess a fearful nuclear arsenal, but the risk of Moscow using it is not higher now than it would have been in 2008 or 2014, if the West had intervened then. And it has always been extraordinarily small: Putin was never going to obtain his objectives by destroying himself and his country, along with much of the rest of the world. If the United States and its allies—with their combined economic, political, and military power—had collectively resisted Russian expansionism from the beginning, Putin would have found himself constantly unable to invade neighboring countries.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult for democracies to take action to prevent a future crisis. The risks of acting now are always clear and often exaggerated, whereas distant threats are just that: distant and so hard to calculate. It always seems better to hope for the best rather than try to forestall the worst. This common conundrum becomes even more debilitating when Americans and their leaders remain blissfully unconscious of the fact that they are part of a never-ending power struggle, whether they wish to be or not.

But Americans should not lament the role they play in the world. The reason the United States has often found itself entangled in Europe, after all, is because what it offers is genuinely attractive to much of the world—and certainly better when compared with any realistic alternative. If Americans learn anything from Russia's brutalization of Ukraine, it should be that there really are worse things than U.S. hegemony.

The Return of Conquest?

Why the Future of Global Order Hinges on Ukraine

Tanisha M. Fazal

Russian President Vladimir Putin has long declared that Ukraine has never existed as an independent country. The former Soviet republic is "not even a state," he said as early as 2008. In a speech on February 21 of this year, he elaborated, arguing that "modern Ukraine was entirely and fully created by Russia." Days later, he ordered Russian forces to invade Ukraine. As Russian tanks streamed across the Ukrainian border, Putin seemed to be acting on a sinister, long-held goal: to erase Ukraine from the map of the world.

What made Russia's invasion so shocking was its anachronistic nature. For decades, this kind of territorial conquest had seemed to be a thing of the past. It had been more than 30 years since one country had tried to conquer another internationally recognized country outright (when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990). This restraint formed the basis of the international system: borders were, by and large, sacrosanct. Compliance with the norms of state sovereignty—including the notion that a country gets to control what happens in its own territory—has never been perfect. But states have generally tried to observe the sanctity of borders or at least maintain the appearance of doing so. Countries could rest assured that of all the threats they faced, an invasion to redraw their borders was unlikely to be one of them. With a main cause of war largely consigned to history, this particular brand of conflict became less common.

Now, with Russia's invasion, the norm against territorial conquest has been tested in the most threatening and vivid way since the end of World War II. The war in Ukraine is reminiscent of a previous, more violent era. If the global community allows Russia to subsume Ukraine, states may more frequently use force to challenge borders, and wars may break out, former empires may be reinstated, and more countries may be brought to the edge of extinction.

However disturbing Russia's attack may be, the rest of the world can still protect the norm that Moscow has challenged. The global community can use sanctions and international courts to impose costs on Russia for its blatant and illegal aggression. It can press for reforms at the UN so that Security Council members, Russia included, cannot veto a referral to the International Criminal Court and thus hamstring that institution's ability to mete out justice. Such a response will require cooperation and sacrifices, but it is well worth the effort. At stake is one of the bedrock principles of international law: the territorial integrity of states.

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BORDER PATROL

"State death," as I have called the phenomenon, is a state's formal loss of control over foreign policy to another state. In other words, when a country concedes that it can no longer act independently on the world stage, it effectively ceases to be its own state. At the beginning of the era of the modern state, one cause of state death predominated: blunt force trauma. From 1816 to 1945, a state disappeared from the map of the world every three years, on average—a fact all the more alarming given that there were about a third as many states back then as there are now. In that period, about a quarter of all states suffered a violent death at one point or another. Their capitals were sacked by enemy armies, their territory was annexed, and they could no longer act independently on the world stage.

Countries located between rivals were especially susceptible to being taken over. From 1772 to 1795, Poland was carved up by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Poland disappeared from the map of Europe completely for over a century. Paraguay suffered a similar fate in 1870, when it lost a war against Argentina and Brazil. Early in the twentieth century, Japan annexed Korea after a series of peninsular wars with China and Russia.

Besides having an unfortunate location, the lack of strong diplomatic ties with colonial powers was another harbinger of danger for vulnerable states. Trade relations were not enough. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, African and Asian countries that had inked commercial deals with imperial powers such as France and the United Kingdom were more likely to die than countries in Latin America and the Middle East that, having stronger and more formal ties, hosted consulates and embassies from these same colonial powers. There was, in other words, a hierarchy of recognition that signaled which states were seen as legitimate conquests and which were not. The United Kingdom, for example, signed treaties with precolonial Indian states from Sindh to Nagpur to Punjab that many Indian leaders viewed as a recognition of statehood. But the British never took the next step of establishing diplomatic missions in these states—a slight that was often a prelude to invasion.

Slowly but surely, some leaders started pushing back against the practice of conquest. In the early twentieth century, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson emerged as a proponent of territorial integrity. The last of Wilson's Fourteen Points, unveiled as World War I came to a close, referred specifically to protections for states belonging to the League of Nations, which Wilson thought could offer "mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike." To be sure, Wilson's commitment to self-determination was limited to European nations; he favored independence for the Poles but was unresponsive to pleas for support from the Egyptians and the Indians. Moreover, his defense of territorial integrity was made easier by the fact that by the time Wilson became president, the United States had completed its own territorial conquests, including its march west and the accompanying capture of Native American lands; it no longer had clear ambitions to acquire additional territory.

Nonetheless, Wilson did help the norm against territorial conquest take root.

Wilson's successors continued the tradition of opposing territorial grabs. In 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt, for example, expressed strong opposition to Italy's takeover of Ethiopia and was even willing to delay allying with the Soviet Union at the beginning of World War II because Moscow demanded that its subjugation of the Baltic states be recognized as legitimate. Yet Roosevelt's commitment to the norm, like Wilson's, was not absolute; Roosevelt previously was willing, for example, to recognize Germany's conquest of Austria if it would limit war in Europe.

The end of World War II heralded a new era. In the ensuing decades, the practice of territorial conquest did not go completely extinct; witness North Vietnam's takeover of South Vietnam in 1975; Israel's occupation of parts of its neighbors; Argentina's attempt to take over the Falkland Islands; and Iraq's thwarted invasion of Kuwait in 1990. But generally speaking, countries interfered in other states without attempting to redraw their boundaries. And they were especially unlikely to absorb other internationally recognized states wholesale. When the Soviet Union invaded Hungary in 1956, the aim was to prevent the Eastern European country from leaving the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets installed a new, more friendly regime in Budapest but did not lay claim to Hungarian territory. Similarly, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978, it installed a puppet government but did not claim territory beyond a cluster of contested islands in the Gulf of Thailand.

Certain occupations, such as those following the United States' invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, qualify as violent state deaths. But the United States did not have designs on those countries' territory; it sought to topple regimes, but it maintained the integrity of borders. The absence of territorial aims does not make one type of violation of sovereignty better or worse than another, but it does represent an important difference. The maps, by and large, stayed the same.

A NORM TAKES ROOT

Why the sudden drop-off in territorial conquest after World War II? The answer can be found in a powerful force in international relations: norms. As the political scientists Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink have defined the term, a norm is "a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity"—in this case, states. The leaders who developed the norm against territorial conquest recognized that most conflicts, including World War II, were fought over land. Establishing a norm against one state taking another's territory by force was therefore part of a broader project to promote peace. By helping enshrine it in the UN Charter, the United States was determined that the norm would stick. Having emerged from the war much stronger than its allies, the United States viewed enforcing the norm against territorial conquest as a key element of preserving global stability. Newly independent states made similar commitments in the founding documents of regional organizations, such as the Arab League and the Organization of African Unity. Building on earlier attempts to enshrine the concept

of territorial integrity in such treaties as the Covenant of the League of Nations, in 1919, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, in 1928, a bona fide norm emerged.

States and leaders adhere to norms for various reasons. Whereas some norms—say, that against genocide—are grounded in humanitarian concerns, the norm against conquest has more strategic, self-interested roots. Some states honor the norm because they have no territorial ambitions. Others have internalized it so deeply that violating it has become inconceivable. Some—even powerful states—obey it because they know that territorial disputes have been a major cause of wars, and they view the stability of the international system as being in their interest. Still others follow it for fear of punishment if they violate it.

For all its benefits, the norm against territorial conquest has also had unintended consequences. One is the hardening of interstate boundaries in ways that create conditions ripe for state failure and collapse. As the political scientist Boaz Atzili has shown, "border fixity" has freed the leaders of weak states from having to direct their attention to protecting their own borders against external predation. Zaire's dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, was able to focus his efforts on extracting resources for personal gain in part because he did not need a strong military to defend his country's borders. And as the sociologist Ann Hironaka has shown, the norm against territorial conquest also has contributed to the growth of "never-ending wars." Rather than settling differences over political control by attempting to take over territory, opportunistic leaders have intervened in civil wars in weak states to prolong conflict and further weaken unstable governments—as South Africa did in Angola in the 1980s, for example.

It is not an accident that the norm against territorial conquest emerged after World War II. The horrors of that conflict, combined with the dawn of the nuclear age, incentivized the great powers to avoid future wars. The era of bipolarity between the United States and the Soviet Union allowed for both regime change and the preservation of international borders. Globalization also reduced the economic benefits of territorial conquest: increased trade meant that countries could access other states' resources without resorting to force.

Not only were borders secure; statehood itself became an increasingly valuable commodity, in part because the postwar leaders of newly independent countries could be confident that the norm against territorial conquest would hold and their fledgling states would be safe. But it is precisely the citizens of those new states, many of which are located in the post-Soviet space, who are rightly most concerned today about their countries' futures.

A TAXONOMY OF DANGERS

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is shining a light on the precariousness of the norm against territorial conquest. The good news is that the outrage has been swift and broad, with a variety of actors worried that Putin's attack could undermine the stability of borders globally. Even those who did not participate in the drawing of today's national borders have spoken out passionately. "We agreed that we would settle for the borders that we inherited," Martin Kimani, Kenya's ambassador to the UN,

said at a February 22 Security Council meeting. "We chose to follow the rules of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations Charter," he went on, "not because our borders satisfied us, but because we wanted something greater, forged in peace." Leaders of countries from Albania to Argentina have condemned the Russian invasion on similar grounds.

In part, the fate of the norm against territorial conquest depends on the extent to which Putin violates it in Ukraine. If Putin ends up replacing the administration of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and installing a puppet regime in Ukraine, he would be engaging in blatant regime change and dealing a grave blow to the Ukrainian people. But he would not be challenging the norm against territorial conquest per se. The country would be under indirect, rather than direct, Russian control.

Likewise, if Putin attempts to absorb Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk—areas he has long claimed as Russian territory—and the rest of the world acquiesces, it would weaken but not completely overturn the norm guarding a state's territorial integrity, because most of Ukraine would remain intact. Even so, the acceptance of a limited violation of the norm might do more damage in the long run than a rejection of a major violation of it. After all, it is likely that the West's relatively weak response to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea emboldened Putin.

There is reason to fear that Putin's ambitions go well beyond these goals. As his remarks questioning the legitimacy of Ukraine as an independent country suggest, Putin seems interested in much more than merely putting a crony in charge of a former Soviet republic or carving out parts of the country; he may be contemplating redrawing the map of Europe to hark back to imperial Russia. If Russia were to take over the entirety of Ukraine, Putin would drive a stake into the heart of the norm against territorial conquest.

If Putin went that far, then the fate of the norm would depend largely on how the rest of the world reacted. Norms are nourished by enforcement. In 2013, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad clearly violated the norm against the use of chemical weapons (and international law) when he fired sarin-filled rockets at the Damascus suburbs. Even though U.S. President Barack Obama had declared the use of chemical weapons to be a redline, the response to this violation was so tepid that one can be forgiven for asking whether the taboo against chemical weapons still holds.

Fortunately, much of the world's response to the Russian invasion indicates that countries are largely united in their determination to protect the norm. Unprecedented sanctions on Russia, combined with donations of humanitarian aid and weapons for Ukraine, are applying pressure on Putin while offering (admittedly limited) relief to Zelensky. If that international resolve were to ebb, however, countries that neighbor Ukraine, such as Moldova, Poland, and Romania, would rightly become nervous about their sovereignty. Indeed, they already are. It is notable that the international community has not banded together to repel Russia's incursion the way a U.S.-led global alliance turned back Iraq's attempted

annexation of Kuwait. That move not only restored Kuwaiti independence but also reinforced the norm against conquest. (Russia, of course, is far more powerful than Iraq ever was and possesses nuclear weapons to boot.)

At the same time, enforcing the norm against territorial conquest comes with tradeoffs, about which everyone should be clear-eyed. Protecting Ukrainian sovereignty is likely not worth a third world war—especially one that could go nuclear. The world should not pay the ultimate price just to support the norm against territorial conquest. But the bloody costs that come with that choice cannot be ignored. The West is currently walking a difficult line, seeking to respond to Russia's invasion with strength but without escalating the conflict.

To preserve the norm against territorial conquest, the global community should keep up the pressure on Russia, even if Putin's goal is to annex only Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk. The Western alliance, for example, should not fully lift sanctions on Russia until and unless Putin recognizes Ukraine's pre-2014 borders. International jurists should take Ukraine's various suits against Russia seriously, not just in the context of this specific conflict but also with an eye to any precedents their decisions might set. Along these lines, it is worth paying attention to how the accusations that Russia has committed the crime of aggression play out. The fact that Russia, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, can veto a referral for the crime of aggression to the International Criminal Court exposes a troubling vulnerability of the norm against territorial conquest. It is hard to maintain norms when great powers are determined to break them.

If the global community fails to enforce the norm against territorial conquest, the states bordering great powers will face the highest risk of extinction. Among the most concerning aspects of a return to a world of violent state death are the effects invasions have on civilians. Annexationists frequently engage in indiscriminate targeting, similar to what is happening today in the Ukrainian cities of Kharkiv and Mariupol, to quell and even depopulate areas. In other words, the demise of the norm against territorial conquest could see an increase in not only the incidence but also the brutality of war.

Even if the global community does not rally behind the norm in the face of a Russian attempt to reinstate imperial boundaries, hope for Ukraine will not be lost. About half of all the states that died violently since 1816 were later resurrected. An important predictor of resurrection is nationalist resistance to being swallowed up. The extent of the resistance can be difficult for invaders to predict. Putin's expectations certainly seem to have been way off the mark: the widespread and sophisticated Ukrainian resistance strongly suggests that Russia will find it nearly impossible to control Ukraine. Few occupations in history have ended up achieving their long-term political aims.

If the Ukrainians are left to resurrect their own country, the end result will be good for Ukrainians but not particularly encouraging for the norm against territorial conquest. For norms to remain strong, violations must be punished. A resurrected Ukraine might deter future would-be conquerors from attacking the country. But globally,

aspiring invaders would draw a clear lesson: it is possible to get away with territorial conquest.

RECOMMITTING TO BRIGHT LINES

It might be more comforting to believe that once established, a norm is permanent, but norms don't always last forever. Think about how many have slipped away. People no longer settle fights via ritual dueling. Governments rarely issue formal declarations of war; the last time the United States did so was in 1942, even though the country has fought many wars since then. The public assassination of state leaders, which was a regular feature of international politics in Machiavelli's time, was viewed as abhorrent by the seventeenth century (although covert assassinations continued). If the prohibition against territorial conquest ends up in the graveyard of norms, then history will turn backward, and the world will revisit the brutal era of violent state death. This is not to say that the norm ushered in world peace. There have been plenty of wars since 1945. But a certain kind of war—wars between states over unresolved territorial claims—did decline. Should that style of conflict return, civilians around the world will bear the consequences.

Consider the dozens of ongoing territorial disputes today. Armenia and Azerbaijan are engaged in a frozen conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Sudan has challenged its border with Ethiopia in the north and South Sudan in the south. In the East China and South China Seas, China and its neighbors, including Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, disagree over the sovereignty of a series of islands. Taiwan's fate is of particular concern. Putin's arguments about the legitimacy of Ukraine's statehood echo China's claim that Taiwan and China are already one country. If it suddenly seems acceptable to take territory by force, leaders of states with long-unresolved territorial claims could attempt to subsume sovereign nations.

Existing norms and legal structures have helped stop recent territorial conflicts from escalating, offering nonviolent paths to their management and resolution. The International Court of Justice resolved a case between El Salvador and Honduras in 1986, for example. The United Nations and the Organization of American States resolved a brief conflict between Ecuador and Peru in 1998. Several years later, the ICJ resolved a long-standing militarized territorial dispute between Bahrain and Qatar; subsequently, the two states invested in what will be the world's longest bridge. This mediation allowed states to settle their differences without significant bloodshed.

Russia's war in Ukraine is about much more than Russia and Ukraine. Allowing the norm against territorial conquest to wither away would mean taking the lid off territorial disputes around the globe and making millions of civilians more vulnerable to indiscriminate targeting. Right now, the immediate effects of the war are largely contained to Ukraine, Russia, and the countries taking in Ukrainian refugees. But further down the road, if the norm against territorial conquest ends up as another casualty of this war, states would be wise to carefully tend to their borders.

The Outsiders

How the International System Can Still Check China and Russia

Stacie Goddard

In late February, as Russian forces moved into Ukraine, Vladimir Putin declared that his offensive was aimed not just at bringing Russia's neighbor to heel but also at repudiating the U.S.-led liberal international order. "Where the West comes to establish its own order," the Russian president railed, "the result is bloody, unhealed wounds, ulcers of international terrorism and extremism." Moscow would now seek to roll back the expanding order as "a matter of life and death, a matter of our historical future as a people." Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine is only the most recent act in a years-long effort to overturn the existing status quo, one that has featured cyberattacks, assassinations, a war against Georgia, meddling in U.S. elections, military involvement in Syria, and the annexation of Crimea.

As Putin's troops neared Kyiv, many observers kept an eye on China, the other authoritarian power busy rejecting the U.S.-led order. Over the last decade, Beijing has contested territorial norms in the South China Sea and built new international economic institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, to compete with Western-dominated ones, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Beijing and Moscow seem to have joined forces in their effort to undermine the order. Just weeks before Russia's invasion, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Putin promised to place "no limits" on the two countries' cooperation as they seek to redefine norms of democracy, push back against universal definitions of human rights, and secure their "core interests."

It was not supposed to be like this. After the Cold War, the United States relied on a strategy of luring into the order would-be revisionist powers—that is, countries that have both the means and the motivation to challenge the status quo. U.S. leaders argued that by cooperating with China and Russia and incorporating them into international institutions, they could curb those countries' ambitions and perhaps even push them onto a path of progressive liberalization. Both countries joined economic institutions, such as the World Trade Organization; security institutions, such as the nuclear nonproliferation regime; and even human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As U.S. President Bill Clinton's 2000 National Security Strategy argued, although the United States must be "mindful of threats to peace," it should seize "on the desire of both countries to participate in the global economy and global institutions, insisting that both accept the obligations as well as the benefits of integration."

What went wrong? Some blame poor U.S. leadership. After four years of the Trump administration, the argument

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runs, liberal institutions were left rudderless, providing an opening for revisionist powers. The Biden administration's chaotic withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan confirmed that the United States was weakened and in retreat. Others, by contrast, contend that the strategy was futile from the start. According to this view, it was hopelessly optimistic to expect that China and Russia would embrace liberal values and accept the idea that the United States should maintain its position at the top of the international order.

Both of these views are problematic. There is very little Washington could have done to stave off challenges to the liberal order. Historically, integration into international institutions has not restrained countries hoping to challenge the status quo. To the contrary, it has enhanced their ability to mobilize allies, secure leverage over their trading partners, and gain legitimacy for their normative visions. It is not simply that international institutions were unlikely to check China's and Russia's revisionism; their membership in fact assisted their efforts to transform world politics.

On the other hand, it is a mistake to dismiss institutional integration as a complete failure. If judged by the high ambitions set by U.S. policymakers, who thought that incorporating expansionist powers into international institutions would temper their ambitions, then it has not lived up to its promise. But judged by a more reasonable standard, it has succeeded: although institutional integration can't prevent revisionism, it can shape the strategies revisionists use. Although Russia's invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated that countries bent on expansionism will charge ahead regardless, on the whole, international institutions can channel this aggression so that it doesn't devolve into bloodshed. Rather than giving up on institutions, then, Western policymakers should adopt a realistic approach to them. While they may not lead to completely harmonious relations, they can be a potent tool for preventing war.

A strategy of institutional realpolitik would also recognize that for all their coordination, China and Russia are very different types of revisionists. China's assaults have been less violent but in many ways more consequential; where Moscow has relied on strategies of disruption and violence, Beijing has preferred to exert influence through growing networks and its position within international institutions. That is why the one-size-fits-all strategy of the past fell short—and why a new approach is called for. To that end, the United States needs to see international institutions not as a way to transform the fundamental nature of its rivals but as places that can become better forums for communicating preferences, resolving disputes, and establishing clear redlines. That, not lofty plans to change China and Russia or a wholesale abandonment of institutions, should help keep the revisionists in check.

DREAM OF THE '90s

In the 1990s, Western leaders dealt with countries that seemed eager to upend the status quo by ushering them into multilateral institutions. This was a rational extension of post–World War II policy: the United States, after all, had poured considerable resources into multilateral organizations devoted to security and economic development. By the mid-

1990s, it was clear that NATO was going to not only persist but expand. The United States, moreover, was working to transform the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT—a collection of informal processes for managing international trade that emerged in the postwar era—into the far more expansive and powerful World Trade Organization (WTO).

Even then, potential revisionists lurked on the horizon. By the mid-1990s, China had emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing economies. In a 1999 speech, Clinton outlined the challenge of a rising China for American foreign policy, noting that "if it chooses to do so, China could . . . pour much more of its wealth into military might and into traditional great-power geopolitics." In contrast to China, post-Soviet Russia was a declining power, so there was little concern that the country would emerge as a global competitor to the United States. Still, Russia had the potential to become a serious revisionist. Many feared the rise of a Russian nationalist right, one that would reestablish authoritarian government at home and attempt to reassert Russian imperial dominance over the former Soviet states.

U.S. officials turned to multilateral institutions to deal with these incipient threats. These policymakers believed that membership in liberal institutions would make China and Russia more liberal themselves and thus less inclined to buck the existing international order. Clinton's top goal was to help Russia become a consolidated democracy, one firmly embedded in Western institutions. As for China, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright explained the United States' position in 1997: "It is our hope that the trend toward greater economic and social integration of China will have a liberalizing effect on political and human rights practices"—although she also acknowledged that "given the nature of China's government, that progress will be gradual, at best, and is by no means inevitable."

Although recent critics of institutional integration have focused on the failure of international institutions to liberalize China and Russia, this wasn't the only—or even the primary—way integration was supposed to prevent revisionism. Even if the two countries remained illiberal at home, admitting them into existing institutions was supposed to encourage good behavior abroad. Free trade and foreign direct investment would make them rich. Participation in international institutions would grant them status and prestige. And if such carrots were not enough to make China and Russia play by the rules, institutional membership would also provide the United States and its allies with sticks they could use to increase the costs of revisionism. The more Beijing and Moscow came to depend on international institutions for their wealth, power, and influence, the easier it would be to punish them if they decided to break the rules. Integrating them into global financial markets, for example, would not only help unlock economic growth; it could also make the two countries more vulnerable to sanctions.

Finally, institutions were supposed to bind China and Russia more closely to the status quo. When countries join international institutions, their wealth and power become tied to these organizations in ways that are hard to change down the road. This was the logic behind incorporating Germany into Western

security institutions, such as NATO, after World War II. And it was the premise of France's decision to rope Germany into the French economy through the European Coal and Steel Community: in doing so, France ensured that it would retain a voice in German affairs and that any attempt by Germany to increase its power would be channeled through institutional pathways.

THE RETURN OF REVISIONISM

At first, integration seemed to work. The speed and extent of China's entry into international institutions, especially economic ones, during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations were nothing short of astonishing. Throughout the Chinese leader Mao Zedong's rule, the country remained isolated from international institutions, even after joining the UN, where it had inherited Taiwan's seat in 1971. After its opening in 1979, China was still slow to join international organizations. But by 2000, it had become a member of over 50 of them. It signed both the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. In 2001, China entered the WTO with the Clinton administration's enthusiastic support, and despite vocal protest from American protectionists on both the left and the right.

Russia faced a rockier road to integration. Urged on by U.S. economists, Russian President Boris Yeltsin launched a 13-month plan of "shock therapy," designed to rapidly privatize the Russian economy. Instead of economic growth, Russia's economy saw its GDP fall by almost half, and poverty increased from two percent to 40 percent of the population. Former Soviet elites took advantage of their position to monopolize ownership over newly privatized petroleum and gas resources. Talks of bringing Russia into the European security order stalled in 1994, when the United States abandoned its plans for the so-called Partnership for Peace, which would have brought eastern European states and Russia into a security umbrella framework, and chose instead to expand the NATO alliance into eastern Europe.

By the end of the decade, however, Russia seemed to be turning a corner. The country's new president, Vladimir Putin, was no democrat, but he appeared to be introducing legal and economic reforms that could liberalize the country in the long run. To support economic privatization, the United States persuaded the G-7 countries to pledge $28 billion of collective aid for Russia. In 1998, Russia joined the newly created G-8. In 2012, Russia's accession to the WTO concluded after 18 years of negotiations. The 9/11 attacks brought the United States and Russia closer, and the two cooperated on counterterrorism and arms control initiatives.

At first, the optimism of those who favored institutional integration seemed warranted. At the turn of the millennium, both China and Russia appeared eager to act as "responsible stakeholders," as Robert Zoellick put it in 2005, when he served as U.S. deputy secretary of state. Soon, however, concerning signs emerged. By 2009, some political scientists began pointing to China's "artificial-island-building spree" and saber rattling in the South China Sea as harbingers of territorial expansion. In 2013, China launched both the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive program investing in infrastructure projects in the

developing world. China's leaders claimed that these initiatives complemented existing institutions and filled gaps in the current economic order. Many in Washington, however, suspected that China was seeking to construct an alternative economic order devoid of liberal values.

Meanwhile, in 2008, Russia launched its first violent attempt to redraw the borders of the post–Cold War world when its troops invaded two breakaway territories in Georgia. It went further in 2014, invading eastern Ukraine and annexing the Crimean Peninsula. In 2015, against vocal Western opposition, the Russian military intervened in the Syrian civil war to buttress President Bashar al-Assad's fragile regime, providing critical—and often indiscriminate—air support for Syrian government forces, which with this assistance began to retake contested territory.

At the time, advocates of institutional integration dismissed these revisionist moves as insignificant and unsustainable. The political scientist G. John Ikenberry, for example, insisted in these pages in 2014 that despite these transgressions, "Russia and, especially, China are deeply integrated into the world economy and its governing institutions." At most they were "spoilers," he concluded: "They do not have the interests—let alone the ideas, capacities, or allies—to lead them to upend existing global rules and institutions." Policymakers in Washington echoed these confident assessments. In a 2014 speech at West Point, President Barack Obama recognized that "Russia's aggression toward former Soviet states unnerves capitals in Europe, while China's economic rise and military reach worries its neighbors." But he expressed optimism that international institutions would continue to "reduce the need for unilateral American action and increase restraint among other nations."

In hindsight, it is easy to see that this confidence was misplaced. A better understanding of the intersection of international institutions and great-power revisionism might have tempered such expectations. Historically, the constraining effects of international institutions on revisionism have been inconsistent at best. Even when revisionist states were brought into the institutional order, they were still able to pursue their aims. When Prussia launched a war in 1864 that would set the stage for German unification, it was considered a core member of the Concert of Europe, the order established after the Napoleonic Wars to help keep the peace. When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, it was a member in good standing of the League of Nations and the so-called Washington system, which maintained limits on great-power shipbuilding. Both Nazi Germany and fascist Italy were members of the League of Nations when they began their efforts to conquer Europe. In short, history gave the lie to the theory that institutional integration alone could restrain revisionism.

NOT ALL REVISIONISTS

Given the mixed record of institutional integration, it is tempting to dismiss Washington's embrace of this approach as not only futile but also naive. Indeed, this is precisely what the harshest critics of U.S. grand strategy are saying. Bringing China into international institutions, the political scientist John Mearsheimer wrote in these pages in

2021, "may have been the worst strategic blunder any country has made in recent history: there is no comparable example of a great power actively fostering the rise of a peer competitor."

But such criticism overlooks the fact that international institutions change how revisionists choose to disrupt the international order. Institutions may not have eliminated revisionist ambitions, but they have shaped the way China and Russia have pursued their aims. Even with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its past military action in Crimea and Chechnya, the country has embraced force much less than similar states in history; current events are so shocking in part because they have become so rare, a testament at least to some extent to the effects of integration.

Witness how, in the past, a common way to change the status quo was to mount an aggressive attack. Napoleon's France conquered wide swaths of Europe as it sought to obliterate the last vestiges of the eighteenth-century dynastic order. When imperial Japanese leaders decided to break clean of the League of Nations and the Washington system, they relied on brute force to expand their influence and wrest economic resources, first in China and then in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, both France's and Japan's revisionist campaigns brought nothing but disaster for their leaders. With this historical antecedent, it is easy to see why institutionalists of the 1990s believed revisionism was unlikely. Regardless of their ambitions, countries will often decide to content themselves with the existing international order. The costs of major-power wars were staggering in previous centuries; they would be catastrophic in the present day.

But revisionists do not always need to use force to upend the status quo. In fact, the most transformative revisionists engage in rules-based revolutions. These revisionists start out looking like reformers, working within existing institutions to achieve their aims. Over time, however, their "salami slicing" of existing rules and norms can create significant weaknesses in international institutions that undermine the broader institutional order. When Russia sought to expand its influence in the Ottoman Empire after the Greek Revolution of 1821, it used the forums established by the Concert of Europe to push its allies to recognize Russian rights in Ottoman territories. By using available diplomatic resources, Russia slowly fragmented the boundaries of the existing territorial order until it shattered them in the Crimean War, in the mid-nineteenth century.

Prussia provides another example of this approach, with even more transformative results. From 1864 to 1871, it unified the German states under its rule at little cost and with limited use of force. German unification not only upended European boundaries; it also laid the groundwork for the Industrial Revolution in Germany, which would vault the country into the top tier of great powers by the end of the century. Ideologically, Prussia mobilized new forces of German nationalism, ripping apart the conservative foundations of European institutions. Yet Prussia achieved this revolution without sacrificing its position as a core member of European security and economic institutions. In this way, the country undermined the foundations of the European order from both within and without.

To challenge existing institutions, other revisionists created alternative institutional systems to establish their own spheres of influence and attract new supporters to their cause. In the years following World War II, especially after the United States launched the Marshall Plan in 1948, the Soviet Union withdrew from various Western institutions. Joseph Stalin hoped to increase Soviet power not by overtly challenging Western alliances but through political purges in eastern European states. When Moscow would challenge institutions, it would do so either covertly or in areas geographically outside the core of the dominant order.

Looking at the varied historical record of revisionism, three things stand out. First, it is not simply that international institutions fail to restrain revisionists. In fact, membership in international institutions can give countries resources with which to challenge the status quo. Second, how a revisionist decides to challenge those institutions depends on how it is positioned within them. Only revisionists that are members in good standing can use the strategy of working within institutions to advance their ambitions. Finally, contrary to the conventional wisdom, violent revisionism is not the norm in international politics. Indeed, when revisionists unleash military attacks, it is often a last resort. Only when imperial Japan failed to achieve its expansionist aims within existing institutions did it turn to military force. Military aggression is a sign not of strength but of weakness.

LASHING OUT

Russia, of course, has taken the path of military aggression in its war against Ukraine. That brutal attack against democratization and liberalism has demonstrated how—despite their recent declaration of unity—China and Russia are in very different institutional positions and are therefore pursuing distinct revisionist strategies. Putin's Russia may be disruptive in the short term, but it is ultimately too weak to build an alternative institutional order. Although Russia has sought access to liberal international institutions, the country was always a bit player within them. As a result, it could not rely on the existing order to negotiate its demands. Nor does Russia have many resources outside the U.S.-led institutions that make up the dominant liberal order that would allow it to exit the system. For all the talk about Russia building its own sphere of influence, the country has been outflanked by NATO and the European Union in eastern Europe, and China is competing with it for influence in Central Asia.

Lacking the resources to effectively challenge the existing order or build its own, Russia has resorted to disruption and violence. It launches violent military actions against its neighbors and uses political interference, propaganda, and economic coercion—for example, funding right-wing populist parties in Austria and France, banning agricultural imports from the EU, and threatening gas cutoffs—to sow division in Western polities and drive wedges between NATO allies. Far from signaling some grand scheme, Russia's violence is best viewed as a strategy of last resort.

China is different. The good news is that Beijing has little need to use violence, because its participation in the international order has strengthened its ability to challenge the status quo

without resorting to force. The resources provided by membership in institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the WTO, and the UN Security Council have allowed China to expand its global footprint, even though they also constrain Beijing's ambitions. For supporters of the liberal order, however, the bad news is that China has membership in institutions both inside and outside that order, and it is precisely this type of position that allows states to pursue transformative revisionism.

The growing alarm about China's and Russia's revisionism has amplified calls for the United States to abandon its institutionalist strategy and instead embrace traditional realpolitik. The goal is no longer integration; it is deterrence: the United States must ensure that its military and alliances are strong enough to dissuade China and Russia from using force to achieve their aims. This was the stated approach of the Trump administration. Its 2017 National Security Strategy argued that while the United States would still "seek areas of cooperation with competitors," its primary aim would be to "deter and if necessary, defeat aggression against U.S. interests and increase the likelihood of managing competitions without violent conflict."

But turning away from institutional engagement with revisionist powers would be a mistake. Although military instruments remain important, the United States already holds a sizable advantage in military power over all its rivals, and any increased investment would matter only on the margins. And given that no major power today wants to engage in a large-scale conventional or nuclear war, it is doubtful that military power would be the weapon of choice in direct international political rivalries. Revisionists will continue to use force, but only in places where they believe the United States and its allies are unlikely to directly counter their violence. Washington was unable to deter Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but it remains improbable that Putin will directly attack a NATO member. Even in Taiwan, Beijing is not liable to turn to force if it can avoid it. There is no reason to risk escalation with the United States and its Asian allies if economic and diplomatic instruments are just as likely to secure Chinese aims.

BETTER INSIDE THE TENT

Instead of abandoning institutional integration in favor of saber rattling, Washington needs to make better use of institutions to exert its influence and limit that of its rivals. Even the most hardened proponents of realpolitik concede that institutional cooperation is necessary to deal with existential threats such as climate change, nuclear proliferation, and pandemic disease. Ensuring that all the great powers remain firmly integrated in institutions that address these collective dangers—such as the Paris climate accord and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty—should be the goal.

Beyond this, the United States needs to embrace a strategy of institutional realpolitik. To begin with, it should abandon the idea that the purpose of international institutions is to eliminate revisionism or expand liberal global governance. Rather, international institutions are a tool to manage power politics. The most straightforward and significant aim should be to channel revisionist ambitions toward institutional forums

and away from more violent and destructive behavior. International institutions could be designed not to stop competition through power politics but to direct it and make it more predictable by providing channels of communication, forums for negotiation, and clear rules about what counts as appropriate behavior.

In Ukraine, this may seem like too little, too late. But at some point, the war will be over, and it is important to consider what will come next. This is not to advocate another "reset" or a substantive partnership with Russia, which must not be permitted to subjugate its neighbors. The goal, instead, should be to redirect a hostile relationship back into more predictable forums—of the kind that stabilized U.S.-Soviet relations during the Cold War. Some might decry this as tantamount to appeasement. To be clear, the United States and its allies should make such cooperation contingent on Russian acceptance of existing territorial boundaries, including those of Ukraine. The United States should support similar institutions to modify China's actions in the South China Sea. At a minimum, Washington should ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to give it more legitimacy in pushing back against illegal Chinese behavior.

The United States should also try to outflank its rivals by thinking strategically about where revisionists could mobilize support for an alternative and more illiberal international order in the future. This is particularly important in the coming long contest with China, in which Washington, so far, seems to be largely on the defensive. AUKUS, the trilateral security pact with Australia and the United Kingdom; the G-7; and the Five Eyes partnership with Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom are all designed to shore up the United States' security relationships. But Washington remains strangely reluctant to engage in offensive institution building. Biden has yet to reverse his predecessor's decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, whose successor institution, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, established a free-trade zone stretching from Vietnam to Australia and encompassing around 40 percent of global GDP. The United States is also excluded from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a regional free-trade pact that is likely to build stronger ties between China and Southeast Asian countries. Finding a way to interact with these new institutions is critical if Washington wishes to bind itself to its allies and partners in meaningful, credible, and durable ways.

Moreover, China has significantly expanded its footprint in areas that the United States has treated as peripheral. Although originally Chinese officials portrayed the infrastructure projects of the BRI as a complement to the liberal economic order, Beijing has since begun to frame them as steps in building an alternative order, or a "community of common destiny." Reforming international economic institutions to make them more attentive to the needs of aid-recipient countries could help outflank the BRI, which has experienced its own difficulties. For example, the United States could use its own existing institutions—the Millennium Challenge Corporation or the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation—to invest in infrastructure that would

buttress the efforts of the new African Continental Free Trade Area and stymie China's influence.

KEEP THEM CLOSE

Such reforms would not represent a return to the order building of the 1990s. The United States has neither the power nor the will to go back to that approach. Indeed, institutional realpolitik should involve selective retrenchment. Washington should be willing to identify places where it overextended at the height of U.S. primacy. It may make sense to pull back from the globally oriented, hyper-legalized institutional structure of the WTO, which has benefited countries that are not playing by its rules, such as China. Washington should also be willing to let its regional allies and partners take the lead in institution building. Strong regional institutions, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the EU, are critical to halting revisionist projects, even if they sometimes act against the United States' interests.

The next era of great-power competition is already here, but this is not the time to be ramping up military confrontations and shutting down or pulling away from international institutions. U.S. policymakers should reject the false dichotomy that suggests that Washington must choose between realpolitik and institution building. Seeking to reinvigorate international alliances and institutions is not evidence of a lack of imagination or a naive faith in multilateralism. Rather, it is a tried-and-true way to play the game of great-power politics.

Putin Unbound

How Repression at Home Presaged Belligerence Abroad

Daniel Treisman

Before he started massing troops, few expected Vladimir Putin to invade Ukraine, and even once he did, few expected him to behave the way he has. In a shocking act of aggression, the Russian leader sent troops to bomb cities such as Kharkiv and Mariupol and to attack schools, hospitals, and apartment buildings throughout the country, killing hundreds—if not thousands—of civilians. His extreme demands—calling for Ukraine to disarm, formally recognize the loss of Crimea, give up large swaths of territory in the eastern part of the country, and renounce any intention to join NATO—have stunned the world, as has his repeated nuclear saber rattling. Instead of winning over the Ukrainians, Putin has quickly turned the population irrevocably against him. And he has grossly overestimated the strength and speed of his military, which stumbled badly in the early weeks of the war. How could a leader regularly hailed as a skilled tactician, if not a strategic genius, make so many rash and seemingly counterproductive moves?

Viewed purely in foreign policy terms, Putin's invasion makes little sense. There was no prospect of Ukraine joining NATO anytime soon, and Putin could have achieved some of his other objectives, such as securing independence for the self-declared Donbas republics, with a far more limited and less costly intervention. Even if the Russian army were more effective, it would still lack the troops to occupy and subdue a country of more than 40 million people. Poorly planned and with no clear endgame, the whole operation seems almost nihilistic in its violent riskiness.

Seen in light of Putin's evolving style of rule at home, however, the assault on Ukraine fits into an emerging pattern—one that features anti-Western nationalism; angry, self-justifying speeches; and increasingly open uses of force. Starting about four years ago, and even more insistently since the invasion of Ukraine, Putin has been reshaping the system through which he exercises political power. Gone is the soft authoritarian regime of his early years, administered in part by a team of liberal economists and technocrats who favored Russia's integration with the West and sought to attract investors with a show of commitment to the rule of law. Now, Russia is a brutally repressive police state run by a small group of hard-liners who have imposed ever-harsher policies both at home and abroad.

Putin's turn to force in Ukraine reflects the wholesale transformation of his inner circle—and, with it, his view of the world. Deeply disillusioned with the United States and Europe and faced

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with an increasingly restive Russian public, he has jettisoned much of his old approach to governing. Convinced that Western leaders aim to overthrow him, and alarmed by protests that have erupted both in Russia and in surrounding countries, he is less confident than before that he can control Russian society with sophisticated methods. In response, he has retreated to the comforting certainties of a small group of yes men and reactionary security officials, members of the so-called *siloviki*, who see Russia as besieged by foreign forces and view hard power and ruthless social controls as the only way to protect Putin's regime. Repression at home did not cause the Kremlin's embrace of blitzkrieg abroad. But each supports the other. In this environment of insularity and insecurity, war helps justify domestic repression, and the fear of Western influence at home helps justify war.

A CLIMATE OF FEAR

As Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine in late February, the Kremlin was already launching another offensive, aimed at the forward-looking, freethinking part of Russian society that refused to rally behind the official line. Putin's agents quickly closed almost all liberal media outlets—including Ekho Moskvy (Echo of Moscow) and Dozhd (TV Rain)—and restricted access to social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. A new law threatened critics of the war with 15 years in a labor camp. And in just the first two weeks of the invasion, the police detained more than 13,000 antiwar protesters.

All of this seemed like a radical departure from Putin's characteristic methods of soft authoritarianism. In fact, it marked the climax of a four-year-old trend toward harsher state repression. Even before the invasion, almost all genuinely independent politicians had been jailed or forced into exile. Putin's subordinates poisoned the outspoken opposition leader Alexei Navalny in 2020; when he miraculously survived, they imprisoned him on trumped-up charges. They designated Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation an "extremist group" and banned it, prosecuting its members or driving them abroad. Between 2015 and 2022, the number of political prisoners in Russia jumped from 36 to 81, according to the Memorial Human Rights Center. And many more people—from Jehovah's Witnesses to members of banned Muslim groups—were jailed for their religious beliefs.

Civil society has been almost completely destroyed. In late 2021, the Supreme Court of Russia ordered the closure of Memorial, the human rights group founded by the Soviet dissident and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov. Putin publicly accused it of defending international terrorists and of including Nazi collaborators on its list of Stalin's victims. Open Russia, a foundation created by the former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky to promote the rule of law and freedom of the press, was also shuttered, as were many other groups that the Kremlin branded as extremist or undesirable. Many of the few surviving liberal nonprofit organizations, such as the Levada Center, a well-respected independent polling firm, and the Russian chapter of the anticorruption group Transparency International, must now identify themselves as "foreign agents."

Using COVID-19 precautions as a pretext, officials effectively banned all political demonstrations—even one-person pickets. Those defying the restrictions were arrested en masse. Just in the first ten days after Navalny's arrest in early 2021, the police detained more than 17,000 protesters in almost 200 cities, according to official figures. The first six months of 2021 saw more than 14,000 people convicted of violating rules regarding public events, more than six times the annual average over the preceding 15 years. The security services also began acting preemptively. Police officers paid warning visits to hundreds of Navalny supporters, often late at night. To finance this tougher line, the government increased funding for Russia's three main internal security agencies—the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Ministry of the Interior, and the National Guard (also known as Rosgvardia)—by 23 percent between 2018 and 2021.

Antigovernment criticism is scarcely freer on the Internet, where social media posts—and even the mere sharing of posts by other people—have led to prison time. Between January 2019 and June 2021, the Russian authorities requested that Google remove 833,000 items from its platforms—many more than any other country had tried to censor. Russian government requests to YouTube to delete material on that site surged in 2016 and have remained high ever since. In recent years, the Russian media conglomerate Gazprom-Media, which is owned by a close associate of Putin, has sought to lure bloggers to its more easily controllable video-hosting service, Rutube, as well as to its TikTok replica, Yappy.

Even before 2018, repression had been on the rise, ratcheting up after Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, and even more so after Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea. A key moment came in February 2015, when the opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was murdered on a bridge outside the Kremlin, signaling to all the dangers of challenging those in power. The squad of FSB agents who—according to the unwitting confession of one member—smeared the nerve agent Novichok into Navalny's underpants in 2020 may well have targeted other opposition members before then. Startling research by the investigative group Bellingcat suggests that the same operatives could have been involved in the 2015 and 2017 poisonings of the anti-Putin activist Vladimir Kara-Murza.

Still, the greater intensity and brazenness of the Kremlin's repression over the last few years have been remarkable. And polls by the Levada Center indicate that Russians are growing both more cynical and more afraid. Almost half of those surveyed in 2021 who knew about the law requiring many nonprofits to identify themselves as foreign agents thought it had been introduced to pressure independent organizations rather than to protect the population—up from 26 percent in 2016. Similarly, nearly half of respondents who had heard of Memorial in December 2021 thought it was being liquidated for political reasons. Between 2017 and late 2021, the share of respondents who feared "a return to mass repression" increased from 21 percent to 47 percent. By 2021, 84 percent of Russians polled said they would not express opinions about the forthcoming

parliamentary election in a public place. And in focus groups, young people have become afraid to talk about Navalny.

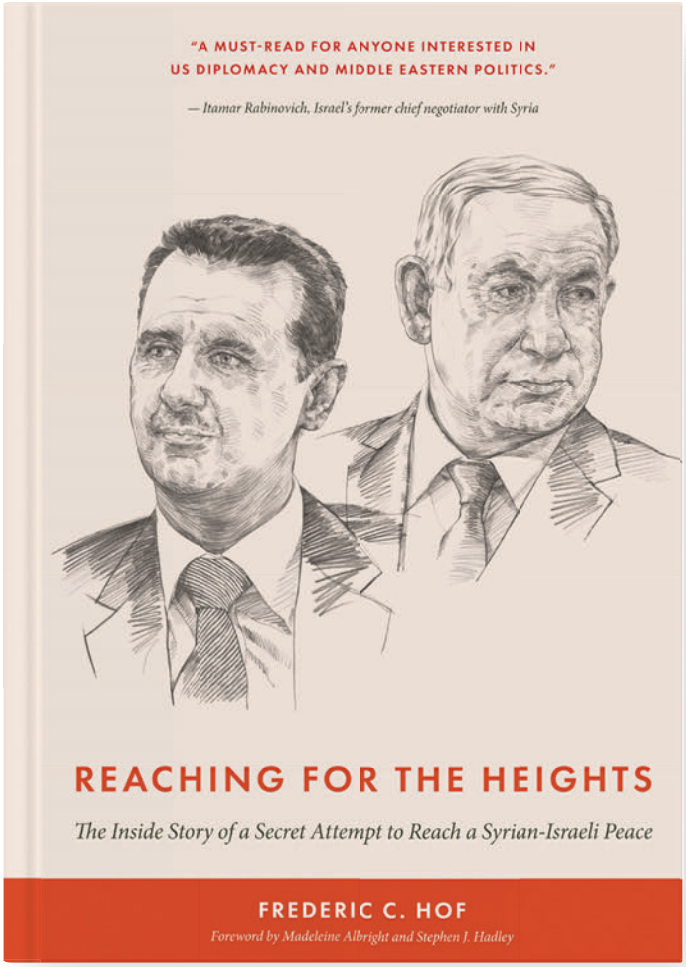
THE SPIN DICTATOR

What explains the Kremlin's scorched-earth strategy? One might think that violent intimidation is just what authoritarian regimes do: the essence of dictatorship is to deter and punish opposition. The twentieth century abounded with brutal leaders. The classic autocrat was a "fear dictator," who controlled the population through harsh repression, often rationalized by an official ideology. Some, such as Syria's Bashar al-Assad and North Korea's Kim Jong Un, remain in power.

Yet in recent decades, another model has been spreading. Lee Kuan Yew's successors in Singapore, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Nursultan Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, and Viktor Orban in Hungary began dressing in business suits rather than military uniforms and cultivated an image of worldliness and competence. Such leaders enjoy high approval ratings, sustained in part by friendly coverage on state-controlled or co-opted media, and they hold carefully managed elections that they almost always win. Instead of executing rivals, they mostly harass them with defamation suits and other charges and fines, while demolishing their reputations on television and online. Like so-called spin doctors in democracies, they manipulate information to build support and discredit rivals—that is why, in our recent book, my co-author, Sergei Guriev, and I call them "spin dictators."

As fear has lost ground to spin, overt repression has become rarer. Politically motivated killings by state agents were common under dictators who came to power in the 1980s; almost two-thirds of those regimes oversaw more than ten such killings per year. But among authoritarian leaders who took office in the first decade of this century, only 28 percent have had rates of politically motivated killings that high. At the same time, fewer recent dictators have jailed large numbers of political prisoners. Indeed, the latest crop of autocrats is not only less overtly violent but also prone to cast their liberal opponents as themselves dangerous revolutionaries or even terrorists.

In his early years in office, Putin exemplified this approach. Except for in Chechnya, where he used force to crush a regime of criminal warlords, Putin mostly employed nonviolent methods to consolidate his power, while preserving the trappings of democracy. Far from banning Memorial, he initially gave it and other human rights organizations grants. As recently as 2017, he denounced "the tragedy of [Stalin's] repressions" and approved a monument to honor the dictator's victims. Rather than jailing Navalny, Putin's prosecutor general intervened after the activist's conviction for embezzlement in 2013—a conviction the European Court of Human Rights called politically motivated—to get him freed on bail with a suspended sentence. (Navalny's brother, Oleg, however, served time on the same charge.) The Kremlin even let Navalny run for mayor of Moscow that year, perhaps underestimating his appeal (he won 27 percent of the vote). He was harassed and imprisoned multiple times for short spells, but the regime worked hard to camouflage its political motives.



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REACHING FOR THE HEIGHTS

The Inside Story of a Secret Attempt to Reach a Syrian-Israeli Peace

BY FREDERIC C. HOF

This important and eye-opening book is an insider's account of secret negotiations to broker a Syria-Israel peace deal—negotiations that came tantalizingly close to success. Ambassador Frederic Hof, who spearheaded the US-mediated discussions in 2009–11, takes readers behind the scenes in Washington, Damascus, and Jerusalem, where President Assad and Prime Minister Netanyahu inched toward a deal to return Israeli-occupied areas of the Golan Heights in exchange for Syria severing military ties with Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas. Hof's candid assessments, refreshing self-criticism, compelling prose, and rich historical detail make this a masterful memoir of an unknown chapter in American diplomacy.

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Where old-style dictators censor comprehensively, Putin began with a softer touch. The Kremlin acquired direct or indirect control of all of the country's major TV networks but tolerated considerable independent journalism so long as its audience remained small. The liberal television channel Dozhd was blocked only after Russia invaded Ukraine in February, and the daily *Novaya Gazeta* continues to publish, although perhaps not for long. Such outlets seemed to pose little danger to the Kremlin-coordinated media, which project distorted visions of reality to both Russia and the outside world. Electronic media, Putin admitted with unusual frankness in October 2014, have turned "news reporting . . . into a formidable weapon that enables public opinion manipulations." Against this history of grudging toleration, the Kremlin's turn to comprehensive censorship since the invasion of Ukraine is striking.

As for the Internet, Putin mostly ignored it at first: in his first two terms, he even resisted efforts by his subordinates to draft intrusive regulations regarding online activity. As late as 2010, he dismissed the Web: "Fifty percent is porn," he scoffed. Only in recent years has the regime sought to achieve a Chinese-style level of control and to criminalize anti-Kremlin posts. Since 2019, Internet providers have had to install equipment that can block, censor, or slow the loading of websites on the Kremlin's orders.

Putin's version of spin dictatorship worked exceedingly well. From September 1999 to March 2020, the president's approval rating never dipped below 60 percent, allowing him to secure successive electoral victories and to marginalize the opposition. (These polls—and almost all the other ones cited here—were conducted by the Levada Center, the independence of which is demonstrated by the authorities' repeated harassment of the firm, including by labeling it a foreign agent.) Putin's popularity was boosted initially by years of rapid economic growth, but his ratings remained high even after the country's economic performance deteriorated during the 2008–9 global financial crisis. State media also helped prolong the enthusiasm sparked by Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, even as Western sanctions and international isolation began to take their toll. Evidence and research from multiple sources have suggested that until around 2018, few Russian respondents were afraid to express critical opinions in polls. The system worked via manipulation rather than fear.

Putin's rule was never a typical case of the new soft authoritarianism in all regards. For example, although the overall level of repression under Putin was no higher than in other spin dictatorships, at least up until the end of 2015, state agents killed more journalists in Russia than were killed under any other such dictators, according to data from the Committee to Protect Journalists. And even before he invaded Ukraine, Putin acted belligerently at times toward Russia's neighbors, in contrast to the usual preference of spin dictators for covert subversion. Still, until this year, he was careful to keep Russian casualties low in overseas operations, using proxy forces and mercenaries whenever possible and obscuring the number of military deaths during Russia's

intervention in Syria. And in almost every other way, he closely followed the spin dictator's playbook.

FROM VELVET GLOVE TO IRON FIST

So why, almost 20 years after first taking office, did Putin switch from spin to fear? Some dictators become more repressive in response to an economic crisis: they worry that widespread discontent may spark political protests and even a revolution. At the same time, poor economic performance reduces government revenue, making it harder to co-opt opponents and leaving repression as the only feasible alternative. Yet economic decline cannot explain Putin's shift. Although Russia's economy has been stagnant over the past decade, the Kremlin hardly lacked the resources to continue buying off elites and manipulating the media. Government revenue averaged 36 percent of GDP in 2018–20, up slightly from 33 percent in 2012–17. In January 2022, the Bank of Russia's gold and currency reserves, valued at over $630 billion, were higher than ever. Other recent economic shocks did not lead to intensified repression: during the global financial crisis, which saw Russian GDP drop by almost eight percent in 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev continued to appeal for public support with a message of modernization and expertise. And recent waves of antigovernment protests—in 2011–12 and 2017—came not during economic crises but at moments of economic recovery. These demonstrations were triggered by electoral fraud and corruption, not economic grievances.

Another possibility is that the turn to repression has been driven by advances in technologies designed to surveil and manage citizens. Led by China, the world's dictators have been developing sophisticated tools of control, from street cameras with facial recognition software to GPS trackers and Internet-monitoring devices. Russia has more closed-circuit cameras per capita than any country except China and the United States, and as of 2020, more than half of those cameras in Moscow used facial recognition technology. Russian police are working on computer programs that can identify people by their gait, tattoos, and other features. Hundreds of citizens who attended pro-Navalny protests in April 2021 were later traced by the police with the help of photo and video materials. Other techniques include slowing down social networks—Russia's federal media regulator, Roskomnadzor, throttled Twitter in the spring of 2021, claiming the company had failed to remove banned content—and scanning posts for information about protests so the police can disrupt them.

Yet the availability of such technology cannot explain Putin's turn to fear, either. The Kremlin could have used these same tools to quietly disable the opposition while preserving a democratic façade. For instance, after discovering activists' plans by secretly monitoring their communications, the police could have preemptively closed intended protest sites for "road work" or detained organizers on unrelated grounds. Used smartly, the new tools could have substituted for mass detentions, police beatings, and terror.

But that is not how they are being used in Russia today. There, high-tech tools do not substitute for harsh repres-

sion; rather, they complement it in a synthesis close to that developed in China. The authorities both preventively detain activists and beat and arrest protesters by the thousands. They openly threaten to track down demonstrators using facial recognition and have sent intimidating emails to hundreds of Navalny's donors and supporters, according to the opposition activist Vladimir Milov.

If economic crisis and new tools do not explain Putin's embrace of tougher repression, then what does? The answer, in part, is that controlling political opposition with sophisticated methods is just getting much harder to do in Russia. Russian society has continued to modernize. Even as the economy struggled in the past decade, Russians were becoming better educated and more connected. And these days, most connect to the Internet via 3G mobile networks, which are fast enough to allow users to play videos on cell phones. Russia has become YouTube's fifth-largest market, with 39 percent of Russian Internet users reporting that they use the app every day. All of this has begun to threaten state TV's overwhelming dominance in news. By 2021, only 42 percent of Russians polled—and less than 20 percent among those under 35—said their main source of information about domestic events was television. Forty-five percent said it was the Internet, whether via social media, blogs, messenger channels, or news sites. The Internet could still include state TV, but the information ecology has clearly changed in recent years.

At the same time, support for liberal values has been growing. When asked which rights and freedoms they consider most important, more and more Russians say freedom of speech (61 percent in 2021, up from 34 percent in 2017), the right to receive information (39 percent, up from 25 percent), and the freedom to hold peaceful demonstrations (26 percent, up from 13 percent), according to Levada Center polls. Violent policing of protests increasingly outrages the public. Asked about the response of law enforcement to demonstrations in Moscow in July 2019, when police officers clubbed participants and arrested hundreds of those challenging the exclusion of opposition candidates from city elections, 41 percent agreed that it was a "harsh, unreasonable use of force," compared with 32 percent who said they believed the police had behaved "adequately." The Kremlin has even found it harder to sustain public hostility toward the West. Before the invasion of Ukraine, positive feelings toward the United States and Europe had been trending up for seven years, exceeding negative attitudes by late 2021.

Together, these developments have rendered the manipulation of information more difficult. The rise of Navalny was both a symptom of these trends and an aggravating factor. His YouTube channel's audience grew from one million subscribers in the spring of 2017 to 3.5 million in the summer of 2020 and then to 6.4 million by early 2022. A number of his videos uncovering corruption within the Russian elite have received more than ten million views, and his exposé of a lavish Black Sea residence said to belong to Putin has been viewed more than 122 million times, with 55 percent of viewers inclined to believe the video's claims, ac-

cording to a Levada Center poll. In September 2020, more than 80 percent of respondents to another poll said they knew about Navalny, and 20 percent said they approved of him—an all-time high that later fell to 14 percent. Of course, far more disapproved, and many were indifferent or refused to answer. But the real point was not Navalny's own popularity but rather the way he was helping erode Putin's.

Putin's ratings plunged after a controversial 2018 reform raising the retirement age from 60 to 65 for men and from 55 to 63 for women finally ended the era of good feelings that had followed his annexation of Crimea in 2014. The president's approval rating, which had hovered around 80 percent since the annexation, sank to just 59 percent in the spring of 2020—the lowest point of his four presidential terms—before stabilizing in the mid-60s. That may still seem high, but as political controls increased, more respondents likely felt nervous about answering a direct question about Putin with a negative response. The responses to other, less sensitive questions suggest a continuing erosion of support. When the Levada Center asked respondents to name politicians they trusted, the proportion mentioning Putin fell from 59 percent in November 2017 to 33 percent in January 2022, with an even more striking drop occurring among the young. When asked for whom they would vote in a presidential election, the proportion specifying Putin decreased from 57 percent in January 2018 to 32 percent in November 2021.

At the same time, the potential for antigovernment protests was rising. In 2018–21, 18 percent of poll respondents,

on average, said they were ready to participate in mass political demonstrations, compared with an average of 11 percent in 2009–17. And major waves of protests broke out in 2017, 2019, and 2021. These were more widespread than the 2011–12 demonstrations, which had been mostly concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Although Russians remained split overall in their attitudes toward these demonstrations, an increasing proportion of respondents—41 percent in 2019, up from 27 percent in 2017—faulted the police for their harsh response. Perhaps most worrying for the Kremlin was an emerging split between young and older Russians: the young have grown more alienated, pro-Western, and supportive of protests.

RISE OF THE HARD-LINERS

These shifts in public opinion clearly presented a challenge for Putin. But there were still multiple ways the Kremlin could have responded. To understand why Putin chose overt repression over manipulation at this point requires a sense of how his regime's internal composition has changed over time.

Putin's initial entourage consisted of three groups: economic experts, most of whom believed in markets and integration with the West; cynical political fixers; and former and current security service and law enforcement operatives, known as the *siloviki*. At first, Putin maintained a balance among these groups and sought advice from all while prioritizing that of the specialists on a given issue. Gradually, over the last two decades, the first two groups have been almost completely eclipsed by the third.

This happened for several reasons. First, Putin lost faith in the vision promoted by the liberal economists. He had started out attentive to their views, appointing the libertarian economist Andrei Illarionov as his economic adviser. But their warnings that expropriating businesses and tolerating corruption would preclude growth and provoke market crises proved exaggerated. Markets turned out to be remarkably forgiving toward those rich in oil. In 2003, Putin's then prime minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, tried to persuade him that arresting businessmen such as the billionaire Mikhail Khodorkovsky would shake investor confidence. Yet in the three years after Khodorkovsky's arrest that year and the seizure of his company, Russian stocks tripled in value, and foreign direct investment inflows quadrupled. "Many things seemed sacrosanct," recalled Putin's early political adviser Gleb Pavlovsky. "But when they were removed, nothing happened."

Over time, Putin not only stopped listening to once trusted economic advisers, such as Anatoly Chubais, Herman Gref, and Alexei Kudrin, but even ceased protecting them from his goons. One of Kudrin's deputies at the Finance Ministry was arrested in 2007. By 2016, Putin was letting the *siloviki* arrest high-ranking officials such as Alexei Ulyukaev, then the economics minister, who is now serving an eight-year sentence in a labor camp for bribery. (He claimed that Putin's close associate Igor Sechin set him up.) For the *siloviki*, the battle was about not just ideas but also money and power, as their various business empires expanded. Those economic technocrats who

remain today, such as Anton Siluanov, the finance minister, and Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, do not lecture Putin about market forces; they just do as they are told.

Putin likewise gradually lost confidence in his political fixers. When demonstrations erupted in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 2011 and 2012, that spelled the end for Vladislav Surkov, Putin's top political aide, who had shaped the contours of his "managed democracy." Later, in 2019, when Sergei Sobyanin, Moscow's mayor, and Sergei Kiriyenko, Putin's first deputy chief of staff, failed to quickly end major demonstrations that broke out in the capital over a city council election, Putin left the political team in place, but he transferred ultimate control over protest management from the civilian experts to the security services. Milov, who was involved in the demonstrations, was struck by how quickly all the different agencies acted in concert, suggesting new direction from the very top. According to the analyst Tatiana Stanovaya, Putin's two most reactionary colleagues, Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of the Security Council, and Alexander Bortnikov, the director of the FSB, had convinced the president that the peaceful demonstrations had, in fact, been organized by foreign forces. From then on, the authorities did not manage the opposition: they criminalized it.

With Putin's economic and political managers marginalized, the *siloviki* jockeyed for position, competing with one another to show toughness and loyalty by crushing the opposition and validating Putin's suspicions about Western sabotage. The most hard-line advocates of state violence had a personal interest in nudging Putin toward harsher and more overt repression, thus making it difficult for him to pivot back to more politically sophisticated approaches. In addition to the *siloviki*, this group of hard-liners includes the leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, who has sent his security forces to seize critics or their family members in other parts of Russia and has made chilling threats against his and Putin's opponents. At times, Kadyrov seems to deliberately overstep boundaries in order to challenge Putin or break some taboo—all while declaring himself to be the president's loyal "foot soldier." When Putin does not restrain or demote his subordinates, this emboldens both them and their rivals.

Events in the outside world also played into the hands of Putin's hard-liners. The crushing of recent protests in Belarus, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Syria, and Venezuela suggested that autocrats who use brutal repression to squelch dissent tend to survive. The West has responded innovatively to human rights violations in Russia, establishing lists of individuals sanctioned for committing abuses. Still, it probably did not escape Putin's attention that Russia was allowed to remain a member of the UN Human Rights Council in 2021, even after Navalny was poisoned and then sent to a labor camp. And Putin's elite Western friends hardly blinked as Russian troops invaded Crimea in 2014 and rounded up dozens of political prisoners. The month after Russia's annexation of the region, former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder celebrated his 70th birthday with Putin in St. Petersburg. And the next year, former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi

joined the Russian president in Crimea to sample the region's wine.

PUTIN'S GAMBLE

Having sidelined his old economic and political advisers, Putin surrounded himself not just with the *siloviki* but with the most extreme among them, men such as Patrushev, who believes the West is engaged in complicated conspiracies to undermine Russia. In 2021, judging by the official announcements on the Kremlin's website, Putin met with his Security Council about twice as often as he did with the government, including the prime minister and other ministers. Less and less concerned with defending his reputation abroad, and impressed by the short-term success of harsh repression at home, he let the enforcers compete for his approval and for control of businesses, with all the state's tools at their disposal.

Of course, this domestic shift did not make Putin's aggression abroad inevitable. But it set the stage for growing belligerence. Replacing political manipulation with harsh tactics at home, changing from spin to fear, Putin opened the door to more violence in the international arena. As Guriev and I document, fear dictators initiate more wars and military disputes, on average, than do spin dictators. Even among the latter, Putin had been unusually conflict-prone. Emboldened by Russia's vast nuclear arsenal and the unstable politics around his country's borders, he had not shied away from confrontation. But the turn to control through fear at home allowed him to shrug off any remaining inhibitions about using force against Russia's neighbors. As long as he was pretending to be a nonviolent democratic leader, violating international law and bombing civilians in another country posed a risk to his support among Russians. Once he stopped pretending and embraced repression, however, there was no longer any need to act the diplomat.

Some see Putin's invasion of Ukraine as a gambit aimed at boosting his popularity, a bid to rekindle the nationalist exhilaration that followed the annexation of Crimea. That explanation seems unlikely. If domestic support were the goal, Putin would have settled for recognizing—and perhaps annexing—the two self-declared Donbas republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, which might have been a reasonably popular move. But polls conducted before the invasion suggested no enthusiasm for a broader war. And had Putin believed that a full-scale invasion would boost his ratings, he would hardly have pretended for so long that Russian "peacekeepers" were intervening surgically only to stop a genocide in the Donbas. More likely, Putin's sense of having effectively repressed domestic opposition is what liberated him to indulge in more grandiose international projects.

Politics in Russia will now take place in the shadow of the war in Ukraine. Wars often rally citizens behind their leader at first. But they also destabilize domestic affairs, shifting opinion and power in unpredictable ways. Polls conducted by Kremlin-connected firms early in the war suggested that many Russians accepted the official narrative that NATO threats or Ukrainian atrocities forced Putin's hand, although obviously polls taken in a harsh dictatorship by pollsters with government ties—in wartime, no less—should be

treated with skepticism. Russian public opinion may well change as information filters through. Russians will learn that their troops have killed thousands of Ukrainians—not just in the east, in order to stop a purported genocide, but all over the country—and they will hear of Russian casualties. After years of living under mild sanctions, they now face wrenching economic disruptions. They will see their leader, who came to power promising stability—and for a long time seemed to provide it—transformed into an architect of instability. Those convinced that the threat from NATO had to be addressed will see the alliance reinvigorated and deploying more weapons along Russia's western border. The new global isolation—with Russia's sports teams and performers boycotted—will prove demoralizing. Even those ultranationalists who favored Putin's war will probably be disappointed by the inevitably messy, bloody, and inconclusive aftermath.

Lacking resources and other tools, Putin will be tempted to ratchet up intimidation even more. But in economically developed, complex societies, where the public has access to communications technology and discontent is widespread, increased repression can backfire, sparking greater resistance. Putin is even more vulnerable because of the highly personal responsibility he took for the invasion, justifying it with a historical essay on the relationship between Russians and Ukrainians published in the summer of 2021 and with an impassioned speech delivered three days before the invasion began. A few hours before that speech was broadcast on state TV, he held a videotaped meeting with his Security Council, possibly to spread accountability to all its members, who obediently expressed support for his decision to recognize the two breakaway republics. But the heavy-handed choreography, with Putin sitting alone at a long table and questioning each member, in fact sent a message of dictatorial direction.

At the same time, as he moves to ever more repression, Putin will become more beholden to the *siloviki*. To retain control over the various agencies and factions of the Russian security state, he will have to continue balancing and pitting them against one another. He will need to move powerful individuals around, skillfully identifying any hints of disloyalty. Purges of the elite, which had already been on the rise, will become even more pronounced.

By attacking the postwar international order and changing his strategy of control at home, Putin has gambled with his own future. Initiating a war that does not go according to plan is a classic mistake that has undermined many authoritarian regimes in the past. The brazenness of Putin's lie—sending forces to attack Kyiv while claiming that they were rescuing genocide victims in the Donbas—could also blow up in his face. The contradiction between his declared goal of uniting Slavic peoples and his method—bombing residential neighborhoods—may be too much for even a skilled propaganda machine to reconcile. Many Russians may instinctively seek to avoid cognitive dissonance by rallying behind their leader. But when that dissonance is too great, the result can be a paradigm shift. With a bureaucracy of repression as well equipped and practiced as that in Russia, Putin may feel reasonably secure, but his task of political survival just got a lot harder.

Putin's War on History

The Thousand-Year Struggle Over Ukraine

Anna Reid

On the evening of February 21, 2022, three days before Russian forces began the largest land invasion on the European continent since World War II, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave an angry televised speech. In it, he expressed familiar grievances about the eastward expansion of NATO, alleged Ukrainian aggression, and the presence of Western missiles on Russia's border. But most of his tirade was devoted to something else: Ukrainian history. "Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us," Putin said. "It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture, and spiritual space." Ukraine's borders, he asserted, have no meaning other than to mark a former administrative division of the Soviet Union: "Modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia."

To many Western ears, Putin's historical claims sounded bizarre. But they were of more than casual importance. Far from an innovation of the current crisis, Putin's argument that Ukraine has always been one and the same with Russia, and that it has been forcibly colonized by Western forces, has long been a defining part of his worldview. Already during the Maidan popular uprising in Kyiv in 2013–14, Putin claimed that the people leading the huge protests were Western-backed *fashisti* (fascists) trying to tear Ukraine from its historical roots. (In fact, the protests caught the West by surprise, and although they included a far-right fringe, they were no fascist takeover.) And in July 2021, well before the buildup of Russian troops on the Ukrainian border, the Kremlin published a 7,000-word essay under Putin's byline with the title "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." Both Russia and Ukraine, it asserted, have not only common roots in language and faith but also a shared historic destiny. Since its publication, the essay has become part of the required curriculum for all service members in the Russian armed forces, including those fighting in the current war. According to Putin's logic, all divisions between Russia and Ukraine are the work of Western powers. From Poland in the sixteenth century to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the nineteenth century and the Nazis in World War II, they have periodically coerced Ukraine or led it astray. In this reading, Kyiv's pro-Western outlook over the past decade is only the latest form of external interference—this time by the European Union and the United States—aimed at dividing Russia against itself. Ukraine's "forced change of identity," Putin wrote, is "comparable . . . to the use of weapons of mass destruction against us." In Putin's meaning, "us" included Ukrainians. Ukrainians and Ukraine, in other words, aren't just naturally part of Russia; they don't even really exist.

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A variation on the "Ukraine doesn't really exist" theme is the Kremlin's assertion that Ukraine is a foregone failure. According to this view—long echoed in a more sophisticated form by Western commentators—thanks to its geography and political history, Ukraine is forever destined to be riven by internal division or torn apart by more powerful neighbors. This was the core narrative of Putin's propaganda the last time he invaded Ukraine, when he grabbed Crimea and the Donbas following the Maidan protests in Kyiv. Then, Russian state media reported that Ukraine was a failed state taken over by a neo-Nazi junta and that Russian forces were riding to the rescue. The close Putin adviser who directed all this propaganda, the bodyguard turned strategist Vladislav Surkov, reprised the theme in an interview with the *Financial Times* last year. Ukraine, he said, using an odd analogy, was like the "soft tissue" between two bones, which, until it was severed, would rub painfully together. (With Russian journalists, he was more straightforward: the "only method that has historically proved effective in Ukraine," he said, is "coercion into fraternal relations.")

As the extraordinary resilience and unity of the Ukrainian population in the current war have demonstrated, these Russian claims are nonsense. Saying that Ukraine doesn't really exist is as absurd as saying that Ireland doesn't exist because it was long under British rule, or that Norwegians are really Swedes. Although they won statehood only 31 years ago, the Ukrainians have a rich national history going back centuries. The idea that Ukrainians are too weak and divided to stand up for themselves is one they are magnificently disproving on the battlefield. As for the neo-Nazi insult, this is belied by the fact that Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, is Jewish and that in the most recent parliamentary elections, in 2019, Ukraine's far-right party, Svoboda, won less than three percent of the vote. As Putin's imagined Ukraine has increasingly diverged from Ukrainian reality, the myth has become harder to sustain, the contradictions too acute. But rather than adjusting his historical fantasy to bring it closer to the truth, Putin has doubled down, resorting to military force and totalitarian censorship in a vain attempt to make reality closer to the myth. He may now be learning that reality is hard to defy: the wages of bad history are disaster in the present.

GATHERING RUSSIA

Putin's obsession with Ukraine's past can be traced to the trauma of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Until 1991, most of today's Ukraine had been ruled by Russia for 300 years—slightly longer, in other words, than Scotland has been ruled by England. And with a population that is today nearly as large as Spain's, Ukraine was by far the most significant Soviet republic besides Russia itself. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former U.S. national security adviser, famously wrote, "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire." This isn't literally true. Russia today is still a vast multiethnic empire, taking in a 3,000-mile-wide slice of northern Asia and including more than a dozen Asian nationalities, from the 5.3 million Tatars on the Volga River to a few thousand Chukchis on the Bering Strait. But with

the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, Moscow lost its West.

For Putin, Russia's European empire was all-important. Although there has long been an exoticizing streak to Russia's self-image—"Yes, we are Scythians!" the hitherto gentle poet Aleksandr Blok declared after the 1917 revolution—the country has always seen itself as a European, rather than an Asian, power. Its great composers, novelists, and artists have been European in orientation; its historic military triumphs—against Napoleon and Hitler—made it a senior player in Europe's "concert of nations." By pushing Russia back into her gloomy pine forests, away from such ringing old place names as Odessa and Sevastopol, the loss of Ukraine, in particular, injured the Russian sense of self.

At the heart of Russia's Ukraine problem, then, has been a war over history. The first battle is over where the story begins. Conventionally, the story starts with a legend-wrapped leader from the Middle Ages, Volodymyr (or Vladimir in Russian) the Great. A descendent of Norse raiders and traders from Scandinavia, Volodymyr founded the first proto-state in Kyiv toward the end of the tenth century. A loose but very large fiefdom known as Rus, it was centered on Kyiv and covered today's Belarus, northwestern Russia, and most of Ukraine. Volodymyr also gave Rus its spiritual foundations, converting his realm to Orthodox Christianity.

Although Russians and Ukrainians concur on Volodymyr's importance, they disagree over what happened after his kingdom broke up. Through the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it disintegrated into warring princedoms, and in the thirteenth, it was overrun by the Mongols, under Batu Khan. In Russian accounts, the population—and, with it, true Rus culture—fled the violence, heading northeast, to Moscow and Novgorod. Ukrainians, however, argue that Rus culture remained squarely centered on Ukraine and that what emerged in Moscow was a separate and distinct tradition. To Western readers, the argument seems trivial: it is as though the French and the Germans were locked in battle over whether Charlemagne, the ninth-century founder of the Carolingian Empire, belongs to modern France or modern Germany. Ukrainians, however, understand the significance of the Russian claims. One of Kyiv's landmarks is a large nineteenth-century statue of Volodymyr the Great, holding a cross and gazing out over the Dnieper River. When Putin put up his own, even bigger Vladimir the Great outside the Kremlin gates in 2016, Ukrainians rightly saw it not as a homage to a tenth-century king but as a blatant history grab.

In fact, for most of the next seven centuries after Volodymyr's reign, Ukraine was outside Muscovite control. As Mongol rule crumbled through the 1300s, the territory of present-day Ukraine was absorbed by the emergent Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which in turn combined by dynastic marriage with Poland, so that for the next two and a half centuries, Ukraine was ruled from Krakow. Eventually, even Ukraine's faith acquired a Western veneer: in 1596, the Union of Brest-Litovsk created the Greek Catholic, or Uniat, Church—a compromise between Catholic Poles and Orthodox Ukrainians that acknowledged the pope but was Orthodox in ritual and

allowed priests to marry. A politically canny halfway house between the two religions, the union helped Polonize the Ukrainian nobility, part of what Putin sees as a long pattern of the West pulling Ukraine away from its rightful Orthodox home.

It was not until the late seventeenth century that Moscow forcefully entered the picture. A series of uprisings by Ukrainian Cossacks—militarized frontier groups, centered on the lower Dnieper—had weakened the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. Then, following a long war with Poland over Ukraine, expanding Muscovy was finally able to annex Kyiv in 1686. For Ukrainians, it was an "out of the frying pan into the fire" moment: Polish rule was simply swapped for its harsher Muscovite counterpart. But in Putin's telling, it was the beginning of the "gathering of the Russian world," using an archaic phrase that he has resuscitated to justify his war against Ukraine today. Another century later, Poland itself was partitioned among Austria, Prussia, and Russia, with Russia ending up with what is today Belarus and central Ukraine, including Kyiv, and Austria with today's western Ukraine, then known as eastern Galicia, which included Lviv.

STATE OF STRUGGLE

Ukraine's modern national movement began in the 1840s, led by the first great Ukrainian-language writer, Taras Shevchenko. Born into an enserfed peasant family in a village near Kyiv, he exhorted Ukrainians to throw off the Russian yoke and excoriated the many who Russified themselves in order to climb the socioeconomic ladder. (These views earned him ten years in Siberia.) As the century progressed, and especially after Tsar Alexander II's assassination by anarchists in 1881, tsarist rule became more repressive. Hundreds of Ukrainian socialists followed Shevchenko into exile, and Ukrainian-language books and education were banned. At this point, Ukraine's east-west divide turned into an advantage—at least for those living in the western part—because in Austrian-ruled Galicia, Ukrainians were able to adopt the freer civic culture then taking root in Europe. In Lviv, they published their own newspapers and organized reading rooms, cooperatives, credit unions, choirs, and sports clubs—all innovations borrowed from the similarly Austrian-ruled Czechs. Although disadvantaged by a voting system that favored Polish landowners, they were able to form their own political party and sent representatives to Lviv's provincial assembly, to which the typical Ukrainian deputy was not a fiery revolutionary but a pince-nez-wearing, mildly socialist academic or lawyer.

Ukraine's reputation as a land cursed by political geography—part of the "bloodlands" in the title of the historian Timothy Snyder's best-selling book—was earned during the first half of the twentieth century. When the tsarist regime suddenly crumbled in 1917, a Ukrainian parliamentary, or "Rada," government declared itself in Kyiv, but it was swept away only a few months later, first by Bolshevik militias and then by the German army, which occupied Ukraine under the March 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. After the armistice that November ending World War I, Germany withdrew again,

leaving the Red Army, the reactionary Russian White Army, the Polish army, a Ukrainian army under the socialist Rada minister Symon Petlyura, and an assortment of independent warlords to fill the power vacuum. In the chaotic civil war that ensued, the group worst hit was Ukraine's Jews. Scapegoated by all sides, more than 100,000 were killed in 1919, in a series of massacres unmatched since the 1600s. Beaten by the Reds, Petlyura formed a last-ditch alliance with Poland, before fleeing to Paris when Poland and the Soviet Union made a peace that divided Ukraine again, the Russians taking the east and the center, the Poles the west. Two small borderland regions—today's Bukovina and Transcarpathia—went to newly independent Romania and Czechoslovakia, respectively.

Not surprisingly, Petlyura is a hotly contested figure. For Russians, he was just another pogromist warlord. (That viewpoint saturates the Kyiv-bred but ethnic Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The White Guard*, for whose characters Petlyura's army is a frightening mob.) For Ukrainians, conversely, he led their country's first stab at independent statehood, which might have succeeded had the Allies only given him the same diplomatic and military support that they did the Balts and (less successfully) the Armenians, the Azerbaijanis, and the Georgians. To accusations of ethnonationalism, they rejoin that the Rada government printed its banknotes in four languages—Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, and Yiddish—and that the leader of the Ukrainian delegation to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference was a distinguished Jewish lawyer, Arnold Margolin. Petlyura's army rampaged, they concede, but he could not control it, and so did all the others. The controversy played out in 1926 in a Paris courtroom, after Petlyura was assassinated by a Jewish anarchist who claimed to be avenging family members killed by Ukrainian soldiers. The three-week trial was an international sensation, with the defense presenting a devastating dossier of evidence about the pogroms, while the prosecution sought to paint the assassin as a Soviet agent. After only half an hour's deliberation, the jury declared him innocent, and debate over the affair still rages.

BETWEEN STALIN AND HITLER

In fact, the violence and chaos of the Petlyura era were merely a prelude to much greater Ukrainian tragedies in the years that followed. Beginning in 1929, Joseph Stalin launched the Holodomor—literally, "killing by hunger"—a program of forced deportations and food and land requisitioning aimed at the permanent emasculation of Ukraine's rural population as a whole. Rolled out in parallel with a purge of Ukraine's urban intelligentsia, it resulted in the deaths of nearly four million Ukrainians. Covered up for decades, there is no doubt that this extraordinary mass killing was deliberate: the Soviet authorities knew that villagers were dying in great numbers, yet they persisted in food requisitioning and forbade them from leaving the famine areas for the towns. Why Stalin perpetrated the famine is less clear. An estimated three million Kazakhs and Russians also starved to death during these same years, but he chose to hit Ukraine hardest, probably because it

embodied his twin demons in one: the conservative peasantry and a large, assertive non-Russian nationality. Even today, however, there is an ongoing effort by Russia to block international recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide. In his "Historical Unity" essay, Putin refers to the famine only once, in passing, as a "common tragedy." Stalin's name is not mentioned at all.

Less than a decade later, a new round of horror was visited on Ukraine following the signing of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Red Army occupied the Polish-ruled western part of the country—the first time Russia had ever controlled this territory. Two years later, however, the Wehrmacht marched in anyway, and two years after that, the Red Army returned. Both armies deported or arrested the Lviv intelligentsia—a rich mix of Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews—as they arrived and killed political prisoners as they departed. For a few months in 1943, a large ethnonationalist Ukrainian partisan army controlled most of northeastern Ukraine, establishing a primitive administration and its own training camps and military hospitals. Remarkably, small units of this army carried on an assassination and sabotage campaign for years after the war ended, with the last insurgent commander killed in a shootout near Lviv in 1950.

Overall, 5.3 million Ukrainians died during the war years, an astonishing one-sixth of the population. Again, many died of hunger, after Germany began confiscating grain. And again, it was Jews who suffered most. Before the war, they made up a full five percent of Ukraine's population, or some 2.7 million people; after it, only a handful remained. The rest had fled east or lay in unmarked mass graves in the woods or on the edge of cemeteries. (In the fall of 2021, as part of an effort to commemorate these events, Zelensky presided at the opening of a new complex at Babi Yar, or Babyn Yar, the park next to a metro station where nearly 34,000 Kyivan Jews were massacred in September 1941. On the sixth day of Putin's invasion this year, three Russian missiles landed in the park, causing damage to the Jewish cemetery there.)

For the Soviets, and for Putin today, the most important fact about the Ukrainians during the war was not their victimhood but their alleged collaboration with the Nazis. The most controversial Ukrainian figure of the period is Stepan Bandera, the leader of a terrorist organization in Polish-ruled interwar western Ukraine. Having already been sour when the area was under Austrian rule, Polish-Ukrainian relations dramatically worsened with the new government's Polonization drive, in the course of which Ukrainian-language schools were closed, Ukrainian newspapers strictly censored, Ukrainians banned from even the lowliest government jobs, and Ukrainian candidates and voters arbitrarily struck from electoral rolls. The repression radicalized rather than Polonized, so that the largest Ukrainian parliamentary party, the compromise-seeking Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance, was increasingly squeezed out by Bandera's underground nationalists. When the Wehrmacht entered western Ukraine in June 1941, Bandera joined forces with the Germans, organizing two battalions, Nachtigall and Roland,

although he was almost immediately arrested by the Nazis, who found him too hard to control.

Ever since, Russia has used Bandera as a stick with which to beat the Ukrainian national movement. No matter that far more Ukrainians fought in the Red Army than in the Wehrmacht and that Germany was able to recruit tens of thousands of Russian prisoners of war, too. As in Soviet days, a standard epithet for Ukrainians in Russian state media today is *Banderivtsi*—"Banderites"—and Putin revisited the trope in an even odder than usual speech on February 25, the day after the Russian invasion began, in which he called on the Ukrainian army to overthrow the "drug addicts and neo-Nazis" in power in Kyiv.

After the end of World War II, and especially after Stalin's death in 1953, Ukraine enjoyed several decades of relative stability. Compared with the other non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union, the Ukrainians were simultaneously extra repressed and extra privileged, making up the largest single group of political prisoners but also acting as Russia's junior partner in the union. The Politburo was packed with Russians and Ukrainians, and in the non-Slavic republics, the usual pattern was for an ethnic national to be appointed first party secretary, while a Russian or a Ukrainian wielded real power as number two. When the Soviet Union collapsed, in 1991, Ukraine floated to independence without bloodshed, after its own Communist Party leadership decided to cut the tow rope to the sinking mother ship. It is this late-Soviet "little brother" relationship that Putin grew up with—and which he may believe (or have believed) Ukrainians would be ready to return to were it not for the West's interference.

WESTWARD OR BACKWARD

Ukraine's political path in the three decades since independence has accentuated all of Russia's fears. At first, it seemed as if Russia and Ukraine would move on parallel tracks in the post–Cold War era. Both countries were riding the rapids of economic collapse combined with new political freedoms; neither seemed interested in the past. In Ukraine, nobody bothered to take down Kyiv's Lenin statue or rename its streets. Russia's new ruling class, for its part, seemed more interested in making money than in rebuilding an empire. It was easy to imagine the two countries developing along separate but friendly paths: like Canada and the United States or Austria and Germany.

That happy illusion lasted only a few years. The two hinge moments of Ukraine's post–Cold War history were two highly effective and genuinely inspirational displays of people power, both provoked by the Kremlin. In 2004, Putin tried to insert a burly ex-convict and regional political boss from Donetsk, Viktor Yanukovych, into the Ukrainian presidency, an effort that seems to have included having his pro-European electoral rival, Viktor Yushchenko, poisoned. After Yushchenko survived the attack (with his face badly scarred), the vote was blatantly falsified instead. Sporting orange hats and ribbons, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians poured into the streets in protest and stayed there until the electoral commission conceded a rerun, which Yushchenko won.

For Putin, the protests, known as the Orange Revolution, were a plot orchestrated by the West.

In 2010, Yanukovych finally won the presidency, after the pro-European bloc rancorously split. For the next four years, he devoted himself to looting the Ukrainian treasury. But in November 2013, he went a step too far: just as Ukraine was about to ink a long-planned and widely popular trade deal with the European Union, he abruptly canceled it and, under pressure from Putin, announced a partnership with Russia instead. For Ukrainians, as for Putin, this was not just about how best to boost the economy but also about Ukraine's very identity. Instead of heading westward—perhaps even one day joining the European Union—the country was being coerced back into the Russian orbit. Initially, only a few students came out in protest, but public anger grew quickly after they were beaten up by the police, whose upper echelons Yanukovych had packed with Russians. A protest camp on Kyiv's central square, known as the Maidan, turned into a permanent, festival-like city within a city, swelling to a million people on weekends. In January 2014, the police began a violent crackdown, which climaxed with the killing of 94 protesters and 17 police officers. When the crowds still refused to disperse, Yanukovych fled to Moscow, and the contents of his luxurious private compound—Hermès dinner services, chandeliers the size of small cars, a stuffed lion—went on display in Ukraine's National Art Museum. In the power vacuum that followed Yanukovych's flight, Putin invaded first Crimea and then, via thuggish local proxies, the eastern border cities of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The land grab pleased the Russian public, but if Putin intended to pull Ukraine back toward Russia, his actions had the opposite effect. New presidential elections brought in another pro-European, Petro Poroshenko, a Ukrainian oligarch who had made his money in confectionary rather than corruption-ridden mining or metals. Then, in the years that followed, a mass civilian effort supported Ukrainian forces in a low-level but grinding conflict with Russia in and around Donetsk and Luhansk. (Until the Ministry of Defense was reformed, the previously neglected Ukrainian army was literally crowdfunded by direct donations from the public.) Ukrainian support for NATO membership rose sharply, and in June 2014, Ukraine signed a wide-ranging association agreement with the European Union. Most symbolic and popular—or, in Putin's eyes, most cunning—was the EU's 2017 granting to Ukrainians of *bezviz*, visa-free 90-day travel to the whole of the Schengen area. Russians still need visas, which are extortionately expensive and burdensome. The contrast grates: little brother has not only abandoned big brother; he is better traveled now, too.

RUSSIAN BONES, UKRAINIAN SOIL

Ukraine's progress before the invasion should not be overstated. Shady oligarchs pulled strings behind the scenes, and the country was hobbled by pervasive corruption. (Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index puts Ukraine alongside Mexico and Zambia but ranks it as slightly less corrupt than Russia.) But for all of the

country's problems, its history since independence has been one of real changes of power, brought about by real elections, between real candidates, reported by real free media. For Putin, the Ukrainian example had become a direct political threat. What if Russia's own population—and not just the urban intelligentsia—started demanding the same freedoms? In his "Historical Unity" essay, Putin explained away the fact that Ukrainian presidents change as being the result of a "system" set up by "the Western authors of the anti-Russian project." Ukraine's pro-Russian citizens, he wrote, are not vocal because they have been "driven underground," "persecuted for their convictions," or even "killed." Whether he actually believes this is unclear, but it might explain the slightly ad hoc tactics used by the Russian army in the first week of his war on Ukraine. Putin may really have expected his tank battalions to be greeted as liberators.

As during the 2004 Orange Revolution and the 2013–14 Maidan protests, which came to be known as the Revolution of Dignity, Ukraine's fierce self-defense today is a defense of values, not of ethnic identity or of some imagined glorious past. Putin's obsession with history, in contrast, is a weakness. Although earlier in his presidency, banging the "gathering of the Russian world" drum boosted his approval ratings, it has now led him down what may turn out to be a fatal dead end. In terms of square mileage alone, Ukraine is the second-largest country in Europe, after Russia itself. If you placed it over the eastern United States, as *The Washington Post* recently observed, it would stretch "from Missouri to the Atlantic Ocean, and from Ohio to Georgia." Occupying it permanently would be enormously costly in troops and treasure. Moreover, Putin's war has unified Ukrainians as never before. And whether they are speaking Russian or Ukrainian, their sentiment is the same. Already, video clips have gone viral of babushkas telling Russian soldiers that they will leave their bones in Ukrainian soil and of Ukrainian soldiers swearing joyously as they fire bazookas at Russian tanks, all in the purest Russian. The war is likely to go on for a long time, and its final outcome is unknown. History, Putin may be learning, is only a guide when it's the real sort.

The Cold War Never Ended

Ukraine, the China Challenge, and the Revival of the West

Stephen Kotkin

Blood and Ruins: The Last Imperial War, 1931–1945
BY RICHARD OVERY. Viking, 2022, 1,040 pp.

Does anyone have a right to be surprised? A gangster regime in the Kremlin has declared that its security is threatened by a much smaller neighbor—which, the regime claims, is not a truly sovereign country but just a plaything of far more powerful Western states. To make itself more secure, the Kremlin insists, it needs to bite off some of its neighbor's territory. Negotiations between the two sides break down; Moscow invades.

The year was 1939. The regime in the Kremlin was led by Joseph Stalin, and the neighboring country was Finland. Stalin had offered to swap territory with the Finns: he wanted Finnish islands to use as forward military bases in the Baltic Sea, as well as control of most of the Karelian Isthmus, the stretch of land at the southern end of which sat Leningrad. In exchange, he offered an expansive but boggy forest in Soviet Karelia, bordering Finland far to the north of the isthmus. To Stalin's surprise, despite serial modifications of his original demands, the Finns rejected the deal. Finland, a country of around four million people with a small army, spurned the Soviet colossus, an imperial power with 170 million people and the world's largest military force.

The Soviets invaded, but Finnish fighters stalled the poorly planned and executed Soviet attack for months, administering a black eye to the Red Army. Their resistance captured imaginations in the West; British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and other European leaders hailed gallant Finland. But the admiration remained rhetorical: Western powers did not send weapons, let alone intervene militarily. In the end, the Finns kept their honor but lost a grinding war of attrition, ceding more territory than Stalin had initially demanded. Soviet casualties exceeded those of the Finns, and Stalin embarked on a belated top-to-bottom reorganization of the Red Army. Adolf Hitler and the German high command concluded that the Soviet military was not ten feet tall, after all.

Now flash forward. A despot in the Kremlin has once again authorized an invasion of yet another small country, expecting it to be quickly overrun. He has been expounding about how the West is in decline and imagines that although the decadent Americans and their stooges might whine, none of them

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will come to the aid of a small, weak country. But the despot has miscalculated. Encased in an echo chamber, surrounded by sycophants, he has based his strategic calculations on his own propaganda. The West, far from shrinking from the fight, rallies, with the United States decisively in the lead.

The year was 1950. Stalin was still in power, but this time, the small country in question was South Korea, invaded by North Korean forces after he gave the despot in Pyongyang, Kim Il Sung, a green light. To Stalin's surprise, the United States formed an international military coalition, supported by a UN resolution; the Soviets, boycotting the UN Security Council, had failed to exercise their veto. UN forces landed on the southern tip of the Korean Peninsula and drove the North Koreans all the way to the Chinese border. Stalin, aided by Washington's failure to heed its own intelligent reports, effectively managed to shunt his blunder onto the Chinese leader Mao Zedong. China's People's Liberation Army intervened in huge numbers, surprising the U.S. commander, and drove the U.S.-led coalition back to the line that had divided the North and the South before the North's aggression, resulting in a costly stalemate.

And now to the present. Stalin and the Soviet Union are long gone, of course. In their place are Vladimir Putin, a far lesser despot, and Russia, a second-rank, albeit still dangerous, power, which inherited the Soviet Union's doomsday arsenal, UN veto, and animus toward the West. In February, when Putin chose to invade Ukraine, dismissing its sovereignty and disparaging the country as a pawn in the hands of Russia's enemies, he was expecting an international response like the one Stalin witnessed when invading Finland in 1939: noise from the sidelines, disunity, inaction. So far, however, the war in Ukraine has engendered something closer to what happened in South Korea in 1950—although this time, the Europeans were ahead of the Americans. Putin's aggression—and, crucially, the heroism and ingenuity of the Ukrainian people, soldiers and civilians alike, and the resolve and savvy demonstrated by Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky—spurred a dormant West to action. The Ukrainians, like the Finns, have kept their honor. But this time, so has the West.

What these parallels show is not that history repeats itself or rhymes; the point, rather, is that the history made in those earlier eras is still being made today. Eternal Russian imperialism leaps out as the easiest explanation, as if there were some sort of innate cultural proclivity toward aggression. There is not. Conversely, however, it would also be simplistic to see Russia's invasion as a mere reaction to Western imperialism, whether in the form of NATO or its expansion, when the pattern long predates NATO.

These recurring episodes of Russian aggression, for all their differences, reflect the same geopolitical trap, one that Russian rulers have set for themselves again and again. Many Russians view their country as a providential power, with a distinct civilization and a special mission in the world, but Russia's capabilities do not match its aspirations, and so its rulers resort, time and again, to a

hyperconcentration of power in the state in a coercive effort to close the yawning gap with the West. But the drive for a strong state does not work, invariably devolving into personalist rule. The combination of weakness and grandeur, in turn, drives the autocrat to exacerbate the very problem that facilitated his appearance. After 1991, when the gap with the West widened radically, Russia's perpetual geopolitics endured, as I argued in these pages in 2016. It will persist until Russian rulers make the strategic choice to abandon the impossible quest to become a great-power equal of the West and choose instead to live alongside it and focus on Russia's internal development.

All of this explains why the original Cold War's end was a mirage. The events of 1989–91 were consequential, just not as consequential as most observers—myself included—took them to be. During those years, Germany reunified within the transatlantic alliance, and Russian power suffered a sharp temporary reduction—outcomes that, with Moscow's subsequent withdrawal of troops, freed up small eastern European countries to adopt democratic constitutional orders and market economies and join the West in the EU and NATO. Those events transformed the lives of the people in the countries between Germany and Russia and in those two historical frenemies themselves, but they changed the world far less. A reunified Germany largely remained a nonfactor geopolitically, at least until the weeks after the invasion of Ukraine, when Berlin adopted a far more assertive posture, at least for the moment. Parts of eastern Europe, such as Hungary and Poland, which happened to be among the biggest losers in the world wars and their peace settlements, started to show illiberal streaks and in this way confirmed limitations in the EU's framework. Although the radical diminution in the size of the Russian state has mostly held (so far), the collapse of Russian power was hardly permanent, just as it was not after the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. The West's relatively brief respite from great-power competition with Russia constituted a historical blink of an eye.

All the while, the Korean Peninsula remained divided, and China remained communist and continues to insist on its claim to the self-governing democratic island of Taiwan, including the right to forcibly unify it with the mainland. Well beyond Asia, ideologically tinged rivalries and resistance to American power and the West's professed ideals persist. Above all, the potential for nuclear Armageddon, among the Cold War's defining aspects, also persists. To argue that the Cold War ended, in other words, is to reduce that conflict to the existence of the Soviet state.

To be sure, far-reaching structural changes have occurred since 1991, and not just in technology. China had been the junior partner in the anti-Western alternative order; now, Russia is in that position. More broadly, the locus of great-power competition has shifted to the Indo-Pacific, a change that began gradually during the 1970s and quickened in the early years of this century. But the foundations for that shift were laid during World War II and built up during the Cold War.

From a geopolitical standpoint, the historical hinge of the late twentieth century was located less in 1989–91 than in 1979. That was the year that the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping normalized relations with the United States and began the Chinese Communist Party's acquiescence in economic liberalization, which exponentially expanded China's economy and global power. In the same year, political Islam came to power in Iran in a revolution whose influence reverberated beyond that country, thanks partly to the U.S. organization of Islamist resistance to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Around the same time, amid the depths of stagflation and social anomie, the Reagan-Thatcher revolution launched a renewal of the Anglo-American sphere with an emphasis on free markets, which ignited decades of growth and would eventually force the political left back to the center, with the advent of Tony Blair's New Labour in the United Kingdom and Bill Clinton's New Democrats in the United States. This remarkable combination—a market-Leninist China, political Islam in power, and a revived West—reshaped the globe more profoundly than anything since the postwar transformations of Germany and Japan and the consolidation of the U.S.-led West.

The mistaken belief that the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union spurred some fateful foreign policy choices in Washington. Believing that the ideological contest had been settled definitively in their favor, most American policymakers and thinkers shifted away from seeing their country as the bedrock of the West, which is not a geographic location but a concatenation of institutions and values—individual liberty, private property, the rule of law, open markets, political dissent—and which encompasses not only western Europe and North America but also Australia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and many other places, as well. In place of the concept of the West, many American elites embraced a vision of a U.S.-led "liberal international order," which could theoretically integrate the entire world—including societies that did not share Western institutions and values—into a single, globalized whole.

Fever dreams of a limitless liberal order obscured the stubborn persistence of geopolitics. The three ancient civilizations of Eurasia—China, Iran, and Russia—did not suddenly vanish, and by the 1990s, their elites had clearly demonstrated that they had no intention of participating in one-worldism on Western terms. To the contrary, China took advantage of its integration into the global economy without fulfilling its economic obligations, let alone liberalizing its political system. Iran embarked on an ongoing quest to blow up its neighborhood in the name of its own security—unwittingly assisted by the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Russian elites chafed at the absorption into the West of former Soviet satellites and republics, even as many Russian government officials availed themselves of the money-laundering services provided by top Western firms. Eventually, the Kremlin rebuilt the wherewithal to push back. And nearly two decades ago, China and Russia began developing an anti-Western partnership of mutual grievance—in broad daylight.

THE WORLD THE WAR MADE

These events precipitated a debate about whether there should or should not be (or whether there already is) a new cold war, one that primarily pits Washington against Beijing. Such handwringing is beside the point; this conflict is hardly new.

The next iteration of the great global contest is likely to revolve around Asia partly because, to a degree that is underappreciated by many Western observers, the last two did, as well. Correcting that misperception, at least when it comes to World War II, is part of the historian Richard Overy's mission in his latest book, *Blood and Ruins*, which seeks to shift perspectives on the war and the postwar era by calling more attention to Asia. "The Asian war and its consequences," he observes, "were as important to the creation of the post-war world as the defeat of Germany in Europe, arguably more so."

Some of Overy's arguments read like self-admonishments: the Eurocentric chronology dating the onset of World War II to 1939 "is no longer useful"; "the war should be understood as a global event, rather than one confined to the defeat of the European Axis states with the Pacific War as an appendix"; "the conflict needs to be redefined as a number of different kinds of war," including "civil wars fought alongside the major military conflict . . . and 'civilian wars', fought either as wars of liberation against an occupying power (including the Allies) or as wars of civilian self-defence." Less conventional for a scholar of Asian or global history is his principal argument that "the long Second World War was the last imperial war." This contention turns out to clash, however, with his welcome call for greater emphasis on Asia.

Overy sets out his imperialism framework by noting the various major wars before 1914, such as the Sino-Japanese clash of 1894–95, and approvingly quotes Stalin to the effect that a crisis of capitalism "intensified [the] struggle for markets" and that extreme economic nationalism "put war on the order of the day as a means for a new redivision of the world and of spheres of influence." Overy does not dwell on the fact that Stalin himself sought to forcibly divide the world into hierarchical spheres of influence, albeit ones unrelated to market access. And despite his emphasis on imperialism and his call for a spotlight on Asia, his opening chapters furnish a familiarly Hitler-centric picture of interwar diplomacy and the onset of World War II, his chief subject. He does take a run at a kind of revisionism, recasting British appeasement as "containment" combined with deterrence, even though the arms buildup carried out by London was too slow and the supposed containment lacked credibility. He disregards the 1939 nonaggression pact between Hitler and Stalin, as if the Soviet Union was not involved in the outbreak of the war.

In any case, for the millions of Asians caught up in the conflagration, the war had little to do with Hitler or Stalin or British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and everything to do with Japan and its clash with the United States, which Overy relegates to a secondary position in his narrative. He also has difficulty demonstrat-

ing the imperial nature of the belligerent armies. The only country that fielded a large-scale imperial army was the United Kingdom; the British dominions mobilized 2.6 million soldiers, and India 2.7 million more. But they were deployed primarily outside the main theaters.

Overy's book takes flight, however, when it turns to logistics, production, and mechanics. Overy demonstrates, for example, that what today is called "modern warfare" bears little resemblance to the mid-twentieth-century version of industrialized conflict. During World War II, the combatants mostly produced weapons of relative simplicity in prodigious volume, because they had to be operated by the more than 100 million uniformed men and women thrown into combat with comparatively little training. In contrast with many histories of the war, Overy eschews the drama of great tank battles and instead conveys the stupefying loss of nearly all the tanks produced by the combatants. This is a history not of generalship but of unfathomable deprivation, atrocities, and genocide.

It is also a compelling story of organization. Overy illuminates how the sensational initial breakthroughs that the Axis powers achieved had inherent limits—but also how their defeat was not foreordained. "The Axis states all had space rather than time, and it was space that slowed down their advance and brought them to a halt in 1942," he writes, adding that "the Allies were no nearer invading the Japanese, German, or Italian homelands in 1942, but they now had the time and the global reach to work out how to reorganize and improve their military capability so that they were in a position to do so over the last two years of war." The slog to victory meant learning the hard way how to fight better and develop the full means to do so. Overy shows how the Soviets painfully absorbed the lessons of German tank warfare and eventually emulated the Nazis' prowess, revolutionizing standardized tank production despite a massive loss of territory, physical infrastructure, and laborers. The British, meanwhile, underwent their own grind to mimic German air warfare and overhaul their air fleet. Admittedly, Overy is less incisive on how the Americans confronted the most confounding task of all, learning how to fight on oceans, while building out the world's largest and most advanced navy and air force. Still, he rightly concludes that Allied "military establishments became what the organizational theorist Trent Hone has described as 'complex adaptive systems', in which the learning curve"—a term coined in 1936—"could be worked through."

Ultimately, the war was won not predominantly on the eastern front, where the Red Army suffered unfathomable casualties to annihilate the Wehrmacht, but on the seas and in the air. The United Kingdom and the United States deliberately destroyed the ability of Germany and Japan to produce the weapons of war and to transport them to the front. By 1944, only a minority of the war-making potential of Germany and Japan could even be put into battle. The value to Japan of its vast overseas conquests, with their prodigious natural resources, disappeared once U.S. forces wiped

out Japanese merchant shipping. In Germany, even when factories managed to relocate their production (usually belowground), the hasty dispersals introduced higher rates of defects and took workers away from critical manufacturing tasks.

Rather than highlight these Allied achievements, however, Overy emphasizes the costs of the Anglo-American denial strategy. He does note that the Soviet Union did not have the means to engage in systematic economic warfare and that Germany's attempted ocean blockade of the United Kingdom sputtered, a reflection of Germany's failure to invest sufficiently in submarines until it was too late. But "in the end," he concludes, "volume-production and the sharing of military goods proved to be the surer economic contribution to victory." Needless to say, production and destruction were two sides of the same coin. Overy himself highlights the massive investments in air and naval power to control sea-lanes and mount assaults at a distance and demonstrates the degree to which the Axis powers launched the war to preempt the Allies' attempt to deny them access to indispensable raw materials, such as oil and rare metals, which the Axis powers did not control. The leaders of Germany and Japan were mesmerized by the unparalleled resources and interdiction capabilities of the British Empire and the continental United States, as well as the sprawling Soviet Union. They felt compelled to fight a war in order to be able to fight a war.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

Overy's understanding of empire evinces a pronounced political hue. He suggests, for example, that the postwar Soviet occupation of and coercive imposition of clone regimes in eastern Europe did not constitute imperialism and that British imperialism could be equated with Axis conquests and plundering. "As one Japanese official complained," he writes, "why was it regarded as morally acceptable for Britain to dominate India, but not for Japan to dominate China?" But not all domination is alike. The British, for all their perfidy, including misgovernance contributing to the 1943 Bengal famine, did not obliterate India's infrastructure, strafe and shell Indian civilians, coerce millions of Indians into sex slavery, or carry out gruesome scientific experiments on humans—all of which the Japanese did to Asians in China. Overy further implies that the United Kingdom's single-minded aim in 1945 to recover Malaya and Hong Kong differed little from Japan's objective to seize and occupy them; in fact, many Asians who rejected British rule could tell the difference between it and Japan's carnage.

For all his focus on British imperialism, moreover, Overy fails to recount the enormously consequential British recapture of Hong Kong, which the United Kingdom had controlled for a century prior to Japan's seizure of the territory in 1941. In a book purporting to shift the focus to Asia, he might have credibly made the case that in geopolitical terms, Hong Kong's fate was more important than that of, say, Poland. Arguably, with the exception of the Soviet capture of Berlin in May 1945 and the stern telegram that U.S. President Harry Truman sent to Stalin in August of that year warning him not

to invade Hokkaido (one of Japan's four main islands), the physical reoccupation of Hong Kong by the British in 1945 exceeded any other wartime episode in its strategic implications.

When Japan's surrender suddenly appeared imminent in the summer of 1945, surprising Washington, the Truman administration hastily accelerated work on a plan for the handover of Japanese-occupied territories and assigned the acceptance of Japan's surrender of Hong Kong not to the British but to Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist government. The British, however, undertook furious military and political preparations to reclaim Hong Kong for themselves. U.S. officials wanted to satisfy their British allies but also allow Chiang to save face, and so they cleverly suggested that the British could accept the surrender on behalf of the Chinese government. But the British refused that offer, and eventually, Washington acquiesced. Chiang acquiesced as well, dependent as he was on U.S. military and logistical support to reclaim other areas of China. The upshot was that Hong Kong passed from the Japanese back to the British and remained that way even after 1949, when the Communists triumphed over Chiang's Nationalists in the Chinese Civil War but shrank from attempting to expel the British from the strategic southern port.

Had the British acquiesced rather than the Americans and Chiang, history would have played out very differently. As it was, the communist regime in Beijing was able to take extraordinary advantage of something it would not otherwise have possessed: a world-class international financial center governed by the rule of law. During the period of Deng's reforms, British Hong Kong ended up funneling indispensable foreign direct investment into mainland communist China—from Japan and Taiwan, especially.

People often ask why Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, when attempting to reenergize the Soviet economy in the second half of the 1980s, did not follow the successful Chinese approach to reforms. Beyond the immense gulf between a highly urbanized, heavily industrialized country and a predominantly rural, agricultural one, the Soviet Union had no Hong Kong to attract and direct incoming investment according to market, rather than political, considerations. No British Hong Kong, no Chinese miracle.

Hong Kong reverted to Beijing's control only in 1997, under an agreement announced by China and the United Kingdom in 1984. Under the "one country, two systems" arrangement, the Chinese Communist Party agreed to allow Hong Kong to maintain a level of autonomy, democratic rule, and civil liberties, at least until 2047. But Chinese President Xi Jinping has made a mockery of his country's treaty promises. The logic of communist rule has spurred a vicious and self-defeating crackdown on Hong Kong's independent sources of wealth, power, and liberty, all of which has threatened the Communist Party's monopoly on power.

Such instances of Chinese imperialism do not fit easily into Overy's end-of-imperialism story line. And Hong Kong is hardly the only place to have been on the receiving end. After all, communist China inherited the

Qing dynasty's multiethnic empire. In 1950 and 1951, the Communists occupied Tibet, which had been self-governing since 1912. Stalin had supported Muslim separatists in the predominantly Uyghur region of Xinjiang during and after the war, but in 1949, he advised the Chinese Communists to encourage Han settlement there. The goal was to bring Xinjiang's ethnic Chinese population up to 30 percent from five percent so as to foster development and strengthen China's grip. In 2020, according to that year's census, Han Chinese made up 42 percent of Xinjiang's population. A 2018 UN report, whose findings have been corroborated by copious open-source satellite imagery, indicated that Beijing has incarcerated at least one million Uyghurs in "reeducation" and forced-labor camps.

Ethnic tensions were not the only difficulty that faced communist China after its successful military occupation of and legalization of its rule over a swath of what is known as "Inner Asia," a region that spans from Tibet to Turkmenistan. The terrain itself was forbidding: deserts, mountains, and high plateaus. Nor did it offer China anything equivalent to the American West Coast. China has no California. Today, Beijing is trying to acquire something of an ersatz California to gain access to the Indian Ocean via the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea by extending Chinese infrastructure into volatile Pakistan and Myanmar. But this is no substitute for the real thing, a second coast that provides both an immense security moat and an invaluable commercial highway; California represents the fifth-largest economy in the world by GDP. Lacking anything like it is by far China's biggest strategic deficit.

HOW THE WEST WAS ONE

Asia has cast a harsh light on a number of Americans celebrated for their grand statesmanship in Europe and the Soviet Union: the envoy George Marshall and his failed mission to China to reconcile Chiang's Nationalists and Mao's Communists; the diplomat George Kennan and his ignored recommendations to abandon the Nationalists and to launch a U.S. military invasion of Taiwan that would deny it to both the Nationalists and the Communists; Secretary of State Dean Acheson and his exclusion of the Korean Peninsula from the U.S. defense perimeter. Stalin, more than U.S. policymakers, feared the competitive weight of China, which after his death, in 1953, vied for supremacy within the communist bloc (and across what was then called the Third World). Many analysts blame Clinton for naively encouraging communist China's accession to the World Trade Organization without proper conditionality or reciprocity. Fair enough. But one could just as well point the finger at President Jimmy Carter for restoring "most favored nation" status to China, a nonmarket economy with a totalitarian regime.

In truth, the original source of the endemic U.S. fumbling over modern China was President Franklin Roosevelt. The wartime leader had a vague intuition about China's significance in the postwar world he envisioned, but he effectively gave up on China, even as he elevated its status by making it one of the four countries (eventually

five) that wielded veto power at the Security Council in the newly formed United Nations. Churchill was apoplectic over Roosevelt's notion that China should be afforded the role of a great power (a mere "affectation" on Beijing's part, in the British prime minister's view). As Overy recalls, the United States distributed some $800 million in aid to China between 1945 and 1948 (the equivalent of more than $10 billion in today's dollars), trained 16 divisions of the Nationalist government's army and assisted another 20, and provided some 80 percent of Chiang's military equipment, before disengaging from China's civil war. By pursuing his communist and anti-Western convictions, Mao imposed bellicose clarity on the confused bilateral relationship, and although Americans debated the question, "Who lost China?" for decades after, under Mao, China lost the United States. Today, more than 40 years after the two countries normalized relations, Xi risks doing much the same.

Where the world is now, however, is not a place it has ever been. For the first time in history, China and the United States are great powers simultaneously. China had long been the world's preeminent country when the 13 American colonies broke free from the United Kingdom. Over the next nearly two centuries, as the United States ascended to become the world's largest economy and greatest power known to history, China not coincidentally entered a long, dark tunnel of external and especially internal depredations. That ended as the two countries became intertwined in profound ways. That process had less to do with U.S. President Richard Nixon's kowtowing to Mao, aiming at widening the wedge that Beijing had opened with Moscow, than with Deng's historic decision to ditch the Soviets, don a cowboy hat during a 1979 visit to Texas, and hitch China's wagon to the insatiable American consumer market, following the trail that had been so spectacularly blazed by Japan, then South Korea and Taiwan. In the 1990s, Chinese President Jiang Zemin recuperated a vital relationship with a jilted Russia and its military-industrial complex, while retaining China's strategic orientation toward the United States, allowing Beijing to have its cake and eat it, too.

But regimes in Eurasia have a way of reminding the United States and its allies, no matter how deep they have sunk into delusions, about what matters and why. U.S. President Donald Trump exhibited strongman envy and only wanted to cut trade deals, but his presidency spurred a remarkable shift to a hawkish national consensus on China, which has endured the advent of the Biden administration even though many members of President Joe Biden's team served in the all-too-submissive Obama administration. Putin's invasion of Ukraine and Xi's evident complicity, in turn, shook Europe out of its dependence on Russian energy and its trade-above-all complacency about China and its leader. The view is now widespread that Putin cannot be allowed to triumph in Ukraine not only for the sake of Ukraine and Europe but also for the sake of the Asian strategy that the United States is pursuing with its allies. Moscow is now a pariah, and business as usual with Beijing is no

longer tenable. Going forward, nothing is more important than Western unity on both China and Russia. This is where the Biden administration has taken an important step forward, despite its fumbles in the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the rollout of the AUKUS security pact.

In China, the lean toward Russia is not solely Xi's. Chinese nationalists—in the broader public, among experts, and in ruling circles—ardently blame NATO and the United States for the war in Ukraine. They urge China to draw even closer to Russia. These hard-line Chinese want Russia to win, because they want their country to take over Taiwan and believe that the United States will violate any international norm in the pursuit of dominance. Still, some Chinese elites have noted the degree to which Western intelligence agencies have managed to penetrate Putin's regime, the ease with which Russia was severed from the global financial system, and the ways that a despot in a sycophantic echo chamber can miscalculate in shattering fashion. Maybe allowing one man to turn an authoritarian system that was benefiting myriad interest groups into a personalist fiefdom that risks everything isn't such a good idea, after all.

Still, whereas Stalin maneuvered to fob off his Korean War blunder onto Mao and the Chinese rank-and-file cannon fodder, in the war in Ukraine, Xi has so far allowed Putin and Russian soldiers to pay the costs of attempting to accelerate the West's supposed decline and what the Chinese leader repeatedly refers to as "great changes unseen in a century."

In fact, the West has rediscovered its manifold power. Transatlanticism has been pronounced dead again and again, only to be revived again and again, and perhaps never more forcefully than this time. Even the most committed liberal internationalists, including some in the Biden administration, are coming to see that enduring rivalries constitute an ongoing cold war—that the world as it is came into being not in 1989–91 but in the 1940s, when the greatest sphere of influence in history was deliberately formed to counter the Soviet Union and Stalin. It is fundamentally a voluntary sphere of influence that offers mutual prosperity and peace, in contrast to the closed, coercive sphere pursued by Russia in Ukraine and by China in its region and beyond.

Just as decisive are the less tangible qualities that allow the United States to lead not an imaginary liberal international order but rather a non-geographic West. American leaders frequently err, but they can learn from their mistakes. The country has corrective mechanisms in the form of free and fair elections and a dynamic market economy. The United States and its allies have strong institutions, robust civil societies, and independent and free media. These are the advantages afforded by being unashamedly and unabashedly Western—advantages that Americans should never take for granted.

BLOC PARTY

All three of the eruptions that began in 1979 have sputtered. Political Islam long ago revealed its bankruptcy, nowhere more starkly than in Iran. Unable to provide for the development

of its economy or the well-being of its people, the Islamic Republic survives through domestic repression, lies, and the emigration of its opponents. China faces demographic problems and a severe challenge to escape the so-called middle-income trap, on top of the manifest failures and impossible contradictions of its governance system. The Leninist regime in Beijing has ceased to be able to tolerate the now vast private sector, whose dynamism is so vital for economic growth and job creation yet so threatening to the regime's existence. And in the United States and the United Kingdom, the Reagan-Thatcher synthesis ran its course, in part because some of its downsides grew over time, but mostly because its successes altered and partly eliminated the conditions in which it arose and operated. But whereas Islamism and "market-Leninism" cannot foster systems that can reinvent themselves and still remain stable, history indicates that with leadership and vision, a far-reaching renewal of Western rule-of-law systems is possible. What Western countries—regardless of where they are—need now is a new synthesis of substantially expanded opportunity and a national political consensus.

Globally, the West is both envied and resented. In recent decades, Europe and especially the United States have managed to diminish the envy and magnify the resentment, from Latin America to Southeast Asia and lands in between. That dynamic needs to be reversed, but so far, it has only been reinforced by the Western response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which in the short run has put wind in the sails of detractors who seize on the West's interventionist hypocrisy, self-serving approach to international law, and excessive power.

It is seductive to single out Putin and Xi and imagine that individuals rise almost accidentally to the top of major countries and that their removal would solve the geopolitical challenges their regimes pose. Personalities matter, of course, but systems have a way of selecting for certain types of leaders. Eurasian landmass empires are weaker when compared to the modern Anglo-American archetype of surpassing sea power, free trade with other rich nations, and comparatively limited government. The Allies' victory in World War II enabled that model to encompass not just western Europe but part of central Europe, as well—and, over time, the first island chain in East Asia. China, too, became a trading power, free-riding on the security supplied by the U.S. Navy, building its own navy to protect its position only belatedly. Yet it still suffers from some of the debilitations of a Eurasian power: only one coast, for one, which is largely hemmed in, notwithstanding its seizure and conversion into military installations of coral reefs in the South China Sea. Overbearing states and their attempts at coercive modernization are a backhanded compliment that Eurasia pays to the West. Access to the U.S. and European consumer markets, high-end technology transfers, control of the seas, reserve currencies, and secure supplies of energy and rare metals remain decisive. As Overy's book shows, a quest for just that and the formation of self-sufficient blocs underlay the run-up to the

world wars, their character, and their aftermaths. He conflates this with empire and avers that World War II brought the hammer down on the entire epoch of imperialism.

But empires come and go; blocs endure. Today's China is arguably pursuing a strategy similar to the one that Nazi Germany and imperial Japan adopted, albeit by all means short of war: to become blockade-proof and sanctions-proof. And now, with Putin having provoked a siege of Russia, Xi will redouble his efforts.

Others will continue to debate whether great-power conflict and security dilemmas are unending. Yet the important point here is not theoretical but historical: the contours of the modern world established by World War II persisted right through the great turn of 1979 and the lesser turn of 1989–91. Whether the world has now reached another greater or lesser turning point depends in large measure on how the war in Ukraine plays out, and on whether the West squanders its rediscovery of itself or consolidates it through renewal.

ESSAYS

NICK IWANYSHYN / REUTERS

A Country of Their Own

Liberalism Needs the Nation

Francis Fukuyama

Liberalism is in peril. The fundamentals of liberal societies are tolerance of difference, respect for individual rights, and the rule of law, and all are under threat as the world suffers what can be called a democratic recession or even a depression. According to Freedom House, political rights and civil liberties around the world have fallen each year for the last 16 years. Liberalism's decline is evident in the growing strength of autocracies such as China and Russia, the erosion of liberal—or nominally liberal—institutions in countries such as Hungary and Turkey, and the backsliding of liberal democracies such as India and the United States.

In each of these cases, nationalism has powered the rise of illiberalism. Illiberal leaders, their parties, and their allies have harnessed nationalist rhetoric in seeking greater control of their societies. They denounce their opponents as out-of-touch elites, effete cosmopolitans, and globalists. They claim to be the authentic representatives of their country and its true guardians. Sometimes, illiberal politicians merely caricature their liberal counterparts as ineffectual and removed from the lives of the people they presume to represent. Often, however, they describe their liberal rivals not simply as political adversaries but as something more sinister: enemies of the people.

The very nature of liberalism makes it susceptible to this line of attack. The most fundamental principle enshrined in liberalism is one of tolerance: the state does not prescribe beliefs, identities, or any other kind of dogma. Ever since its tentative emergence in the seventeenth century as an organizing principle for politics, liberalism deliberately

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lowered the sights of politics to aim not at "the good life" as defined by a particular religion, moral doctrine, or cultural tradition but at the preservation of life itself under conditions in which populations cannot agree on what the good life is. This agnostic nature creates a spiritual vacuum, as individuals go their own ways and experience only a thin sense of community. Liberal political orders do require shared values, such as tolerance, compromise, and deliberation, but these do not foster the strong emotional bonds found in tightly knit religious and ethnonationalist communities. Indeed, liberal societies have often encouraged the aimless pursuit of material self-gratification.

Liberalism's most important selling point remains the pragmatic one that has existed for centuries: its ability to manage diversity in pluralistic societies. Yet there is a limit to the kinds of diversity that liberal societies can handle. If enough people reject liberal principles themselves and seek to restrict the fundamental rights of others, or if citizens resort to violence to get their way, then liberalism alone cannot maintain political order. And if diverse societies move away from liberal principles and try to base their national identities on race, ethnicity, religion, or some other, different substantive vision of the good life, they invite a return to potentially bloody conflict. A world full of such countries will invariably be more fractious, more tumultuous, and more violent.

That is why it is all the more important for liberals not to give up on the idea of the nation. They should recognize that in truth, nothing makes the universalism of liberalism incompatible with a world of nation-states. National identity is malleable, and it can be shaped to reflect liberal aspirations and to instill a sense of community and purpose among a broad public.

For proof of the abiding importance of national identity, look no further than the trouble Russia has run into in attacking Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that Ukraine did not have an identity separate from that of Russia and that the country would collapse immediately once his invasion began. Instead, Ukraine has resisted Russia tenaciously precisely because its citizens are loyal to the idea of an independent, liberal democratic Ukraine and do not want to live in a corrupt dictatorship imposed from without. With their bravery, they have made clear that citizens are willing to die for liberal ideals, but only when those ideals are embedded in a country they can call their own.

LIBERALISM'S SPIRITUAL VACUUM

Liberal societies struggle to present a positive vision of national identity to their citizens. The theory behind liberalism has great difficulties drawing clear boundaries around communities and explaining what is owed to people inside and outside those boundaries. This is because the theory is built on top of a claim of universalism. As asserted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"; further, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." Liberals are theoretically concerned with violations of human rights no matter where in the world they occur. Many liberals dislike the particularistic attachments of nationalists and imagine themselves to be "citizens of the world."

The claim of universalism can be hard to reconcile with the division of the world into nation-states. There is no clear liberal theory, for instance, on how to draw national boundaries, a deficit that has led to intraliberal conflicts over the separatism of regions such as Catalonia, Quebec, and Scotland and disagreements over the proper treatment of immigrants and refugees. Populists, such as former U.S. President Donald Trump, have channeled that tension between the universalist aspirations of liberalism and the narrower claims of nationalism to powerful effect.

Nationalists complain that liberalism has dissolved the bonds of national community and replaced them with a global cosmopolitanism that cares about people in distant countries as much as it cares for fellow citizens. Nineteenth-century nationalists based national identity on biology and believed that national communities were rooted in common ancestry. This continues to be a theme for certain contemporary nationalists, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has defined Hungarian national identity as being based on Magyar ethnicity. Other nationalists, such as the Israeli scholar Yoram Hazony, have sought to revise twentieth-century ethnonationalism by arguing that nations constitute coherent cultural units that allow their members to share thick traditions of food, holidays, language, and the like. The American conservative thinker Patrick Deneen has asserted that liberalism constitutes a form of anticulture that has dissolved all forms of preliberal culture, using the power of the state to insert itself into and control every aspect of private life.

Significantly, Deneen and other conservatives have broken with economic neoliberals and have been vocal in blaming market capitalism for eroding the values of family, community, and tradition. As a result, the twentieth-century categories that defined the political left and right in terms of economic ideology do not fit the present reality neatly, with right-wing groups being willing to countenance the use of state power to regulate both social life and the economy.

There is considerable overlap between nationalists and religious conservatives. Among the traditions that contemporary nationalists want to preserve are religious ones; thus, the Law and Justice party in Poland has been closely aligned with the Polish Catholic Church and has taken on many of the latter's cultural complaints about liberal Europe's support for abortion and same-sex marriage. Similarly, religious conservatives often regard themselves as patriots; this is certainly true for the American evangelicals who formed the core of Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement.

The substantive conservative critique of liberalism—that liberal societies provide no strong common moral core around which community can be built—is true enough. This is indeed a feature of liberalism, not a bug. The question for conservatives is whether there is a realistic way to turn back the clock and reimpose a thicker moral order. Some U.S. conservatives hope to return to an imagined time when virtually everyone in the United States was Christian. But modern societies are far more diverse religiously today than at the time of Europe's religious wars in the sixteenth century. The idea of restoring a shared moral tradition defined by religious belief is a nonstarter. Leaders who hope to effect this kind of restoration, such as Narendra Modi, India's Hindu nationalist prime minister, are inviting oppression and communal violence. Modi knows this all too well: he was chief minister of the western state of Gujarat when it was racked by communal riots in 2002 that left thousands dead, mostly Muslims. Since 2014, when Modi became prime minister, he and his allies have sought to tie Indian national identity to the masts of Hinduism and the Hindi language, a sea change from the secular pluralism of India's liberal founders.

THE INESCAPABLE STATE

Illiberal forces around the world will continue to use appeals to nationalism as a powerful electoral weapon. Liberals may be

tempted to dismiss this rhetoric as jingoistic and crude. But they should not cede the nation to their opponents.

Liberalism, with its universalist pretensions, may sit uneasily alongside seemingly parochial nationalism, but the two can be reconciled. The goals of liberalism are entirely compatible with a world divided into nation-states. All societies need to make use of force, both to preserve internal order and to protect themselves from external enemies. A liberal society does this by creating a powerful state but then constraining the state's power under the rule of law. The state's power is based on a social contract among autonomous individuals who agree to give up some of their rights to do as they please in return for the state's protection. It is legitimized by both the common acceptance of the law and, if it is a liberal democracy, popular elections.

Liberal rights are meaningless if they cannot be enforced by a state, which, according to the German sociologist Max Weber's famous definition, is a legitimate monopoly of force over a defined territory. The territorial jurisdiction of a state necessarily corresponds to the area occupied by the group of individuals who signed on to the social contract. People living outside that jurisdiction must have their rights respected, but not necessarily enforced, by that state.

States with a delimited territorial jurisdiction therefore remain critical political actors, because they are the only ones able to exercise a legitimate use of force. In today's globalized world, power is employed by a wide variety of bodies, from multinational corporations to nonprofit groups to terrorist organizations to supranational bodies such as the European Union and the United Nations. The need for international cooperation in addressing issues such as global warming and pandemics has never been more evident. But it remains the case that one particular form of power, the ability to enforce rules through the threat or the actual use of force, remains under the control of nation-states. Neither the European Union nor the International Air Transport Association deploys its own police or army to enforce the rules it sets. Such organizations still depend on the coercive capacity of the countries that empowered them. To be sure, there is today a large body of international law that in many domains displaces national-level law; think, for example, of the European Union's *acquis communautaire*, which serves as a kind of common law to regulate commerce and settle disputes. But in the end, international law continues to rely on national-level enforcement.

When EU member states disagree on important matters of policy, as they did during the euro crisis of 2010 and the migrant crisis of 2015, the outcome is decided not by European law but by the relative power of the member states. Ultimate power, in other words, continues to be the province of nation-states, which means that the control of power at this level remains critical.

There is thus no necessary contradiction between liberal universalism and the need for nation-states. Although the normative value of human rights may be universal, enforcement power is not; it is a scarce resource that is necessarily applied in a territorially delimited way. A liberal state is perfectly justified in granting different levels of rights to citizens and noncitizens, because it does not have the resources or the writ to protect rights universally. All people within the state's territory are due the equal protection of the law, but only citizens are full participants in the social contract, with special rights and duties, in particular the right to vote.

There is no necessary contradiction between liberal universalism and the need for nation-states.

The fact that states remain the locus of coercive power should inspire caution about proposals to create new supranational bodies and to delegate such power to them. Liberal societies have had several hundred years of experience learning how to constrain power at a national level through rule-of-law and legislative institutions and how to balance power so that its use reflects general interests. They have no idea how to create such institutions at a global level, where, for example, a global court or legislature would be able to constrain the arbitrary decisions of a global executive. The European Union is the product of the most serious effort to do this at a regional level; the result is an awkward system characterized by excessive weakness in some domains (fiscal policy, foreign affairs) and excessive power in others (economic regulation). Europe at least has a certain common history and cultural identity that do not exist at the global level. International institutions such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court continue to rely on states to enforce their writs.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant imagined a condition of "perpetual peace" in which a world populated by liberal states would

regulate international relations through law rather than by resorting to violence. Putin's invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated, unfortunately, that the world has not yet reached this post-historical moment and that raw military power remains the ultimate guarantor of peace for liberal countries. The nation-state is therefore unlikely to disappear as the crucial actor in global politics.

THE GOOD LIFE

The conservative critique of liberalism contains, at its core, a reasonable skepticism of the liberal emphasis on individual autonomy. Liberal societies assume an equality of human dignity, a dignity that is rooted in an individual's ability to make choices. For that reason, they are dedicated to protecting that autonomy as a matter of basic rights. But although autonomy is a fundamental liberal value, it is not the sole human good that automatically trumps all other visions of the good life.

The realm of what is accepted as autonomy has steadily expanded over time, broadening from the choice to obey rules within an existing moral framework to making up those rules for oneself. But respect for autonomy was meant to manage and moderate the competition of deeply held beliefs, not to displace those beliefs in their entirety. Not every human being thinks that maximizing his or her personal autonomy is the most important goal of life or that disrupting every existing form of authority is necessarily a good thing. Many people are happy to limit their freedom of choice by accepting religious and moral frameworks that connect them with other people or by living within inherited cultural traditions. The U.S. Constitution's First Amendment was meant to protect the free exercise of religion, not to protect citizens from religion.

Successful liberal societies have their own culture and their own understanding of the good life, even if that vision may be thinner than those offered by societies bound by a single doctrine. They cannot be neutral with regard to the values that are necessary to sustain themselves as liberal societies. They need to prioritize public-spiritedness, tolerance, open-mindedness, and active engagement in public affairs if they are to cohere. They need to prize innovation, entrepreneurship, and risk-taking if they are to prosper economically. A society of inward-looking individuals interested only in maximizing their personal consumption will not be a society at all.

States are important not just because they are the locus of legitimate power and the instruments for controlling violence. They are also a singular source of community. Liberal universalism on one level flies in the face of the nature of human sociability. People feel the strongest bonds of affection for those closest to them, such as friends and family; as the circle of acquaintance widens, their sense of obligation inevitably attenuates. As human societies have grown larger and more complex over the centuries, the boundaries of solidarity have expanded dramatically from families and villages and tribes to entire countries. But few people love humanity as a whole. For most people around the world, the country remains the largest unit of solidarity to which they feel an instinctive loyalty. Indeed, that loyalty becomes a critical underpinning of the state's legitimacy and thus its ability to govern. In certain societies, a weak national identity can have disastrous consequences, as is evident in some struggling developing countries, such as Myanmar and Nigeria, and in some failed states, such as Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria.

THE CASE FOR LIBERAL NATIONALISM

This argument may seem similar to ones made by Hazony, the conservative Israeli scholar, in his 2018 book, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, in which he advocates a global order based on the sovereignty of nation-states. He makes an important point in warning against the tendency of liberal countries, such as the United States, to go too far in seeking to remake the rest of the world in their own image. But he is wrong in assuming that the existing countries are clearly demarcated cultural units and that a peaceful global order can be built by accepting them as they are. Today's countries are social constructions that are the by-products of historical struggles that often involved conquest, violence, forced assimilation, and the deliberate manipulation of cultural symbols. There are better and worse forms of national identity, and societies can exercise agency in choosing among them.

In particular, if national identity is based on fixed characteristics such as race, ethnicity, or religious heritage, then it becomes a potentially exclusionary category that violates the liberal principle of equal dignity. Although there is no necessary contradiction between the need for national identity and liberal universalism, there is nonetheless a powerful potential point of tension between the two principles. When based on fixed characteristics, national identity

can turn into aggressive and exclusive nationalism, as it did in Europe during the first part of the twentieth century.

For this reason, liberal societies should not formally recognize groups based on fixed identities such as race, ethnicity, or religious heritage. There are times, of course, when this becomes inevitable, and liberal principles fail to apply. In many parts of the world, ethnic or religious groups have occupied the same territory for generations and have their own thick cultural and linguistic traditions. In the Balkans, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, ethnic or religious identity is de facto an essential characteristic for most people, and assimilating them into a broader national culture is highly unrealistic. It is possible to organize a form of liberal politics around several cultural units; India, for example, recognizes multiple national languages and has in the past permitted its states to set their own policies with regard to education and legal systems. Federalism and the concomitant devolution of powers to subnational units are often necessary in such diverse countries. Power can be formally allocated to different groups defined by their cultural identity in a structure that political scientists call "consociationalism." Although this has worked reasonably well in the Netherlands, the practice has been disastrous in places such as Bosnia, Iraq, and Lebanon, where identity groups see themselves locked in a zero-sum struggle. In societies in which cultural groups have not yet hardened into self-regarding units, it is therefore much better to deal with citizens as individuals rather than as members of identity groups.

On the other hand, there are other aspects of national identity that can be adopted voluntarily and therefore shared more broadly, such as literary traditions, historical narratives, and language, food, and sports. Catalonia, Quebec, and Scotland are all regions with distinct historical and cultural traditions, and they all include nationalist partisans seeking complete separation from the country to which they are linked. There is little doubt that these regions would continue to be liberal societies respecting individual rights were they to separate, just as the Czech Republic and Slovakia did after they became separate countries in 1993.

National identity represents obvious dangers but also an opportunity. It is a social construct, and it can be shaped to support, rather than undermine, liberal values. Many countries have historically been molded out of diverse populations that feel a strong sense of

community based on political principles or ideals rather than deterministic group categories. Australia, Canada, France, India, and the United States are all countries that in recent decades have sought to construct national identities based on political principles rather than race, ethnicity, or religion. The United States has gone through a long and painful process of redefining what it means to be an American, progressively removing barriers to citizenship based on class, race, and gender—although this process is still incomplete and has experienced many setbacks. In France, the construction of a national identity began with the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which established an ideal of citizenship based on a common language and culture. In the mid-twentieth century, Australia and Canada were countries with dominant white-majority populations and restrictive laws regarding immigration and citizenship, such as the notorious "White Australia" policy, which kept out immigrants from Asia. Both, however, reconstructed their national identities on nonracial lines after the 1960s and opened themselves up to massive immigration. Today, both countries have larger foreign-born populations than does the United States, with little of the United States' polarization and white backlash.

Nonetheless, the difficulty of forging a common identity in sharply divided democracies should not be underestimated. Most contemporary liberal societies were built on top of historical nations whose understandings of national identity had been forged through illiberal methods. France, Germany, Japan, and South Korea were all nations before they became liberal democracies; the United States, as many have noted, was a state before it became a nation. The process of defining the American nation in liberal political terms has been long, arduous, and periodically violent, and even today that process is being challenged by people on both the left and the right with sharply competing narratives about the country's origins.

Liberalism would be in trouble if people saw it as nothing more than a mechanism for peacefully managing diversity, without a broader sense of national purpose. People who have experienced violence, war, and dictatorship generally long to live in a liberal society, as Europeans did in the period after 1945. But as people get used to a peaceful life under a liberal regime, they tend to take that peace and order for granted and start longing for a politics that will direct them to higher ends. In 1914, Europe had been largely free

of devastating conflict for nearly a century, and masses of people were happy to march off to war despite the enormous material progress that had occurred in the interim.

The world has perhaps arrived at a similar point in human history: it has been free from large-scale interstate war for three-quarters of a century and has, in the meantime, seen a massive increase in global prosperity that has produced equally massive social change. The European Union was created as an antidote to the nationalism that had led to the world wars and in that respect has been successful beyond all hopes. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine augurs more disarray and violence ahead.

At this juncture, two very different futures present themselves. If Putin is successful in undermining Ukrainian independence and democracy, the world will return to an era of aggressive and intolerant nationalism reminiscent of the early twentieth century. The United States will not be immune from this trend, as populists such as Trump aspire to replicate Putin's authoritarian ways. On the other hand, if Putin leads Russia into a debacle of military and economic failure, the chance remains to relearn the liberal lesson that power unconstrained by law leads to national disaster and to revive the ideals of a free and democratic world.

The New Nuclear Age

How China's Growing Nuclear Arsenal Threatens Deterrence

Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr.

In late June 2021, satellite images revealed that China was building 120 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) silos on the edge of the Gobi Desert. This was followed by the revelation a few weeks later that another 110 missile silos were under construction in Hami, in Xinjiang Province. Together with other planned expansions, these sites amount to a dramatic shift in the country's approach to nuclear weapons. For decades, China maintained a relatively small nuclear force, but according to current U.S. intelligence estimates, that arsenal is now on track to nearly quadruple, to 1,000 weapons, by 2030, a number that will put China far above any other nuclear power save Russia and the United States. Nor does it seem likely that Beijing will stop there, given President Xi Jinping's commitment to build a "world class" military by 2049 and his refusal to enter into arms control talks.

It is hard to overstate the significance of this effort. In developing a nuclear arsenal that will soon rival those of Russia and the United States, China is not merely departing from its decades-old status as a minor nuclear state; it is also upending the bipolar nuclear power system. For the 73 years since the Soviet Union's first nuclear test, that bipolar system, for all its flaws and moments of terror, has averted nuclear war. Now, by closing in on parity with the two existing great nuclear powers, China is heralding a paradigm shift to something much less stable: a tripolar nuclear system. In that world, there will be both a greater risk of a nuclear arms race and heightened incentives for states to resort to nuclear weapons in a crisis. With three competing great nuclear powers, many of the features that enhanced stability in the bipolar system will be rendered either moot or far less reliable.

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There is nothing the United States can do to prevent China from joining it and Russia as the world's top nuclear powers, but there are things that U.S. strategists and defense planners can do to mitigate the consequences. For starters, Washington will need to modernize its nuclear deterrent. But it will also need to engage in new ways of thinking about the nuclear balance of power and how, in a far more complex strategic environment, it can maintain deterrence and keep the nuclear peace.

GUNFIGHTERS ON A DUSTY STREET

During the Cold War, both the Soviet Union and the United States were able to focus their nuclear strategies almost entirely on the other. The two superpowers built nuclear arsenals exceeding 20,000 weapons apiece, allowing them to largely discount the arsenals of the minor nuclear states—China, France, Israel, and the United Kingdom—whose stockpiles did not exceed the low hundreds. After the Cold War, Russia and the United States felt comfortable agreeing to reduce their deployed strategic forces to 1,550 nuclear weapons, as they continued to maintain a large advantage over any other nuclear-armed state.

Although the bipolar system did not eliminate the risk of nuclear war, it worked well enough to avoid Armageddon. Two features of the two-power system are parity and mutually assured destruction, or MAD. Ever since they initiated the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, in 1969, both Moscow and Washington have emphasized maintaining parity, or similar-sized arsenals, as a way to enhance deterrence and crisis stability—a situation in which there are strong disincentives to resort to nuclear weapons, even under conditions of great stress. For both powers, establishing nuclear forces that were similar in size and far larger than that of any other nuclear state placed them on an equal footing. This was especially important for the United States, which sought to discourage Soviet attacks not only on itself but also against key allies and security partners, whom Washington had offered to shelter under its "nuclear umbrella" through extended deterrence. Consequently, Washington was keen to avoid creating the perception among these states that its nuclear forces were in any way inferior to Moscow's.

As the Soviet arsenal continued expanding in the Cold War's early period, and especially after the development of thermonuclear weapons, American strategists sought new ways to strengthen deterrence. A key factor in this effort was the concept of assured destruction, according to which the U.S. arsenal needed to be able to absorb

Bombs away: a missile displayed in Beijing, January 2009

DAVID GRAY / REUTERS

a surprise Soviet first strike and still be capable of inflicting a devastating retaliatory, or second-strike, attack that could destroy the Soviet Union as a functioning society. (In 1964, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara estimated that an arsenal needed to be able to conserve 400 weapons to maintain an assured destruction force for a second strike, which he defined as the ability to destroy a quarter of the Soviet Union's population and half its industrial capacity.) Later, strategists devised the term "mutually assured destruction" to describe the situation in which both rivals possessed this ability. This apocalyptic standoff was famously characterized by the physicist Robert Oppenheimer, who led the development of the atomic bomb, as the state of two scorpions trapped in a bottle, each able to kill the other, but only at great risk to its own survival.

Simply maintaining the ability to obliterate the adversary's population centers and industrial infrastructure in retaliation for any nuclear attack did not, however, guarantee that deterrence would hold in every situation. Under what conditions would a rational leader opt to use nuclear weapons in a conflict? The game theorist and Nobel laureate Thomas Schelling pointed out that under certain circumstances, initiating a nuclear war could be seen as a rational act. As Schelling saw it, the two great nuclear powers, instead of resembling scorpions in a bottle, might confront each other as two gunfighters

on the dusty street of a lawless Old West town, where whoever is quicker to draw enjoys an advantage. This situation would obtain when one of the two powers sensed what Schelling called "the fear of being a poor second for not going first." This fear became particularly acute when advances in ballistic missile guidance enabled both the Soviet Union and the United States to execute a "counterforce" nuclear attack on the other's own nuclear arsenal, thereby potentially compromising the efficacy of any second-strike attack.

These fears were accentuated by the advent of missiles with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles, or MIRVs. Since each "vehicle," or nuclear warhead, on such a missile was capable of hitting a different target, there was now the prospect of an attacker using a single missile to destroy several comparably armed enemy missiles in their silos, or of a naval base hosting several ballistic missile submarines, each armed with a dozen or more missiles carrying hundreds of weapons, or of dozens of nuclear-armed bombers at an air base. In military terminology, the attacker could now enjoy a highly favorable "cost-exchange ratio," in which it could destroy dozens of its rival's weapons using only a few of its own, thus significantly altering the state of parity that had existed before the attack.

In certain situations, starting a nuclear war could be a rational act.

In such a contingency, the victim would be left with two unpalatable forms of retaliation. It could use much or most of its small surviving force to launch an attack in kind against the aggressor's arsenal. But the prospects for success would now be slight, as the bulk of the aggressor's nuclear forces would be intact and, along with its air and missile defenses, be standing on full alert. Moreover, such a second strike would also risk leaving the victim with insufficient forces to maintain an assured destruction capability. Alternatively, if the victim chose to conduct a devastating attack on the aggressor's economy and society, it would be an act of suicide, since it would trigger MAD, provoking a corresponding attack on itself from its adversary, which had preserved its own assured destruction force. The victim would therefore be confined to a third option, retaining its surviving nuclear forces to deter an attack on its economy and society. But if it did so, the attacker would enjoy a substantial surplus of nuclear forces to support acts of coercion or further aggression.

The "fear of being a poor second" led both the Soviet Union and the United States to maintain some of their nuclear forces on high alert, known as a "launch on warning" posture. The objective was to increase the risk to the attacker by having vulnerable forces able to launch before they could be destroyed. This approach had its own hazards: at several points during the Cold War, American or Soviet forces came uncomfortably close to launching a nuclear strike when their early warning systems erroneously detected that an attack was underway. Nonetheless, the general stability of the bipolar system did much to help avert a nuclear conflict for nearly 70 years.

THREE SCORPIONS, NOT TWO

China's attainment of great-nuclear-power status will dramatically upset this delicate equilibrium. Until recently, the Chinese government seemed content with a "minimum deterrent" force of only a few hundred weapons. Now, however, it is moving in an entirely different direction. Along with its silo-building spree, it has developed a new ICBM capable of being armed with up to ten MIRVed nuclear warheads. This combination of proliferating launch silos and hydra-headed missiles will enable the Chinese military to expand its land-based arsenal even further, to as many as 3,000 weapons, simply by filling its silos with these missiles. China has also been modernizing its submarine-launched ballistic missile force and its long-range bomber fleet with an eye to fielding a robust triad of nuclear delivery systems—land, sea, and air—a capability that until now only Russia and the United States have possessed.

Addressing nuclear strategy in a tripolar nuclear system brings to mind the challenges associated with the so-called three-body problem in astrophysics. This is the problem of trying to predict the motion of three celestial bodies based on their initial positions and velocities. In a system of two celestial bodies, such a prediction can readily be made. But when there are three, no general solution has yet been identified (except when at least one of the bodies has a gravitational attraction that is miniscule relative to those of the other two). Because the future positions of the three bodies defy an easy solution, a three-body system is described as "chaotic." Similarly, with the emergence of three rival nuclear powers, several key features of the bipolar system will break down, and the "fear of being a poor second" for failing to attack first will likely increase.

To begin with, once China, Russia, and the United States all have large nuclear arsenals, each power will have to work to constrain the be-

havior of not one but two different adversaries. The concept used by the Chinese for deterrence—*weishe*—serves to make the point. It is more expansive than the traditional Western definition of "deterrence," and it includes two different objectives. The first, similar to the Western concept, involves discouraging, or deterring, an opponent from pursuing a particular course of action. But the second objective of *weishe* is to coerce an opponent into pursuing a course of action it would not otherwise undertake. Thus, *weishe* also includes the Western concept of compellence. This suggests that the Chinese have more ambitious goals for their nuclear forces than U.S. policymakers do for their own. It raises the question of how the Chinese Communist Party would use its nuclear capability for coercive purposes. Washington's allies are obvious targets.

During the Cold War, U.S. administrations sought to promote collective defense and discourage proliferation by convincing allies to shelter under the United States' nuclear umbrella. Washington pledged that if Moscow attacked any of them with nuclear weapons, the United States would respond by retaliating with its own. In a tripolar system, however, the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella risks being compromised by Washington's need to hedge against the threat of two major rival nuclear powers. To the extent that the U.S. nuclear guarantee is seen as diminished, key allies such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea might become vulnerable to coercion by China or Russia—or seek nuclear weapons themselves.

This brings us to the problem of parity. In a tripolar system, it is simply not possible for each state to maintain nuclear parity with the combined arsenals of its two rivals. Assume, for example, that China deployed the same size nuclear force as Russia and the United States: 1,550 weapons. At that point, U.S. strategists might rationally conclude that they need to add an additional 1,550 weapons to achieve parity with the combined forces of China and Russia. Meanwhile, Russian strategists would likely want the same. China, having established an arsenal on par with the two great nuclear powers, would not be inclined to forfeit its newly won status—and so a tripolar system risks collapsing into a Red Queen's arms race, in which parity is continuously sought but never achieved.

The same holds for MAD. Imagine that both Russia and the United States had 1,550 deployed nuclear weapons, as per the New START treaty, and that 400 nuclear weapons still constituted an assured destruction force: a U.S. force of 1,550 weapons would be sufficient to

ensure that 400 weapons would survive a surprise Russian attack. In a tripolar system, however, such a residual force would no longer be enough. If, for example, China made a surprise attack on the U.S. arsenal, the United States could use its residual assured destruction force of 400 weapons to retaliate against China, but that would leave it with insufficient forces to counterbalance Russia's arsenal. In order to maintain an assured destruction capability against both China and Russia, the United States would need twice as large a residual force—800 weapons—which would arguably require twice as large an original arsenal. And that assumes that both Beijing and Moscow froze their forces at 1,550 weapons, while Washington doubled its own, to 3,100. To expect either rival power to accept such a situation approaches fantasy.

Of course, this simple thought experiment is merely illustrative. It may be possible, for example, to establish an assured destruction force aboard ballistic missile submarines, which, at present, are very difficult to detect and thus to target. But these submarines will ultimately need to return to base, and so unless they launch their weapons before doing so, those weapons, too, will be vulnerable. Moreover, since the three powers have vastly different populations and geographies, each will have different requirements for establishing the needed assured destruction force against the other two. Russia's population and economic infrastructure are considerably smaller than the United States', and the United States' population is but a small fraction of China's. And so, all other factors being equal, Russia's assured destruction force—which would have to be sufficient to inflict devastating attacks on not one but both of its much bigger rivals—would need to be significantly larger than China's and the United States'. But it seems unlikely that Beijing or Washington would accept a rationale that would justify Moscow's maintaining an arsenal that was significantly larger than its own.

TRIGGER-HAPPY TYRANTS

With three great nuclear powers, deterring a first strike in a crisis situation will also become more challenging. For one thing, strategies for managing the "poor second" problem seem likely to prove elusive. Assume that China, Russia, and the United States had roughly equal arsenals. At first blush, the situation might appear akin to having three scorpions in a bottle, where even a successful attack by one scorpion against another would increase the danger of the attacker's becoming a victim to the third scorpion. If China attacked the United States, for

example, it would deplete some of its arsenal in doing so, thus reducing its ability to deter an attack from Russia. The incentives for any of the three powers to strike first would seem to decrease.

But the "poor second" problem does not concern the choice between, on the one hand, attacking and facing an assured counterattack and, on the other, not attacking and not being attacked at all. Instead, it is driven by the gunfighter's assumption that you must shoot first or get shot. Moreover, now there would be a second adversary with a gun, who could easily take advantage of you if you had dispatched your first rival but were now wounded. Hence, in a crisis situation, if the United States suspected that a Chinese attack on its nuclear arsenal was imminent, not only would it see itself disadvantaged for failing to strike China's arsenal first; it could also reasonably conclude that it was potentially more vulnerable to Russia's arsenal for not doing so. Even if, after withstanding a Chinese attack, the United States were able to retain an assured destruction capability against both China and Russia, the loss of a significant part of its arsenal would leave it far more exposed to coercion or aggression from either. Moreover, the threat posed to the United States by two hostile great nuclear powers might well convince many U.S. allies that the U.S. nuclear umbrella that has long shielded them had sprung fatal leaks.

The quest for parity could lead to an unlimited arms race.

The introduction of a third nuclear power that is, like the Russian Federation, a nondemocratic state could add another element of instability. The war in Ukraine has already demonstrated the risks posed by a leader with unchecked power. Absent a radical shift in the Chinese or the Russian political system, control over the world's largest nuclear arsenals will, in two out of three cases, rest in the hands of a tyrant with little or no need to consult with others. In democratic systems, the deliberations built into government tend to moderate the impulsiveness of a risk-tolerant leader. Yet tyrants may view their personal survival or the survival of their regime as superseding that of the state. As Winston Churchill warned, nuclear deterrence "does not cover the case of lunatics or dictators in the mood of Hitler when he found himself in his final dug-out."

The point is not that nuclear war in a tripolar rivalry among China, Russia, and the United States is inevitable but that maintaining stability in crisis situations will likely be significantly more difficult than it is

now. Although it may seem far-fetched to imagine a great nuclear power choosing to attack a comparably armed adversary, the costs of failing to understand the incentives for such an attack are potentially catastrophic. As McNamara once observed, the United States' "security depends on assuming a worst possible case, and having the ability to cope with it." His views were echoed by the arms control expert Bruce Blair, who declared that deterrence "must remain robust under all conditions, including worst-case scenarios in which massive surprise strikes succeed in comprehensively destroying the opposing strategic forces in their underground silos, submarine pens, and air bases."

AN *N*-BODY PROBLEM?

As China pursues its nuclear ambitions, it may inspire other aspirants to seek larger arsenals of their own. For example, in the face of a much larger Chinese nuclear program, India, its rival, may have an incentive to increase its own nuclear forces significantly, perhaps causing Pakistan to do the same. And with less certainty about extended deterrence, U.S. allies, such as Japan and South Korea, may do likewise. Such developments would make stability even more difficult to achieve. In astrophysics, this situation is called "the *n*-body problem"—trying to predict the movements of an arbitrary number of celestial bodies—and reaching a solution is even more taxing than it is for the three-body problem. With the emergence of a tripolar nuclear system, then, a crucial challenge is how to prevent more states from boosting their arsenals.

Oddly enough, arms control agreements that impose relatively low limits on deployed nuclear weapons, such as the New START treaty, could decrease stability by minimizing the entry barriers for other powers seeking great-nuclear-power status. If, for example, China signed on to the New START treaty, with its limit of 1,550 deployed weapons, the threshold for achieving great-nuclear-power status might seem attainable to India or Pakistan. Nor would second-tier nuclear powers need to match China, Russia, and the United States weapon for weapon. Even if these lesser powers were to increase their arsenals to some 500 weapons or so, they would risk introducing substantially more instability into the system. For example, the United States could be confronted with the challenge of fashioning an effective nuclear deterrent against not only the Chinese and Russian arsenals but also the arsenals of Pakistan, North Korea, or both. To the extent that

these countries are aligned with China, Beijing might even find that its interests are served by aiding them in expanding their arsenals as a way of circumventing its New START limits.

Counterintuitively, one possible way of keeping China's nuclear ambitions from creating an *n*-body problem would be for China, Russia, and the United States to build much larger arsenals. If each maintained a nuclear force level that was closer to that of the Soviet Union or the United States in the Cold War era, perhaps at the original START agreement level of 6,000 deployed weapons, the three states would establish a much higher barrier for other countries seeking to join them.

It's also possible that a new bipolar system could emerge. At present, Russia seems highly unlikely to allow itself to be eclipsed as a nuclear power, as its flaunting of its nuclear capabilities in the Ukraine crisis has demonstrated. But if Russia stays on the path of economic decline relative to China and the United States, that could allow the latter two to move to force levels substantially higher than those currently possessed by Russia, leaving it unable or unwilling to keep pace. In such an outcome, China and the United States would have to navigate their way to a new bipolar equilibrium by first transitioning through a relatively unstable era of three great nuclear powers.

MORE BASKETS FOR MORE EGGS

The issues raised here represent, at best, a modest initial step at identifying the challenges posed by a tripolar nuclear system. Given the uncertainties involved, the United States would be well served by keeping as many options open as possible. To begin with, the Biden administration should follow through on plans to replace the United States' aging triad of nuclear forces, some now over a half century old, with modern missiles, submarines, and bombers. The United States is even now playing catch-up, as both China and Russia have already embarked on broad-based modernization efforts of their own.

Pursuing modernization will ensure that the United States can at least maintain parity with each of its rivals, if not with their combined forces. Although the current U.S. modernization plan is predicated on a bipolar system, it can readily be adapted to address challenges posed by a tripolar one. According to Washington's current program, for example, U.S. production lines for land-based missiles, nuclear ballistic missile submarines, and long-range bombers will still be operating in the mid-2030s. Beijing and Moscow will

have a greater incentive to negotiate limits on their own nuclear forces if they confront a modernized U.S. nuclear deterrent force rather than one facing so-called block obsolescence, when the reliability of entire weapons systems becomes questionable. Warm production lines would enable the United States to expand its forces to a substantially higher level, if need be, in response to Chinese or Russian actions or perhaps to boost the entry barrier so as to preclude lesser nuclear powers from expanding their own arsenals.

There are also steps that all three parties could take to reduce the incentives to attack first in a crisis. The goal should be to ensure that a prospective attacker will have to expend more weapons in attacking than the victim will lose. One way of accomplishing this is to rely more on land-based missile systems armed with single warheads. In the case of silo-based missiles, for example, it is generally accepted that an attacker must expend at least two weapons, and perhaps as many as four, in attacking each silo to ensure success. When an attacker must use two to four times as many weapons to destroy a single one of the victim's weapons, attacking becomes far less appealing. Put simply, the attacker confronts the prospect of depleting its own arsenal in a first strike against its rival, rather than the other way around. The broader the attack, the greater the residual disparity that exists in the targeted state's favor.

Although effective in the case of land-based missiles armed with single warheads, this approach works less well for the other two legs of the nuclear triad. When it comes to submarines, there are, according to current arrangements, many nuclear "eggs" in a handful of submerged "baskets." Submarines' principal contribution to deterrence and stability lies in their ability to avoid detection while on patrol. When in port, however, they are sitting ducks. Their vulnerability could be reduced, if only at the margins, by spreading the number of missiles and weapons among a larger number of submarines and finding ways to keep a higher percentage of them on patrol. Like nuclear-armed submarines, strategic bombers are armed with a clutch of nuclear weapons and are hard to target when airborne but relatively easy to attack while at their bases.

Thanks to its triad modernization program, the United States appears well positioned to mitigate some of these drawbacks. The newest generation of land-based missiles are intended to carry one warhead. The new class of submarines will carry fewer missiles than the subma-

rines they are replacing. Plans for the new bombers call for fielding them in significantly greater numbers than those constituting the current airborne leg's stealthy component. Thus, the opportunity exists to reduce the number of nuclear weapons deployed on any single delivery system and, by doing so, make attacking any of them less rewarding.

The trends in China and Russia are far less encouraging. Both countries have been increasing the number of weapons carried by each of their land-based missiles. The ICBMs that China has already deployed can be armed with as many as ten warheads; one Russian ICBM in development can carry up to 15. Although either missile could be armed with only one warhead, the problem from a U.S. perspective is that Beijing or Moscow could add extra warheads to the same missiles on short notice to rapidly shift the balance of forces, a phenomenon known as "breakout." And since single missiles carrying multiple warheads are attractive targets—because several nuclear weapons can be destroyed with just one—these Chinese and Russian missiles would be most effective when employed in a first strike or in a risky "launch on warning" posture: all the more reason to make the U.S. deterrent as unattractive a target as possible.

DETERRENCE REDEFINED

For well over half a century, we have inhabited a world of two great nuclear powers. Although never quite as stable as it appeared, this bipolar nuclear system nevertheless succeeded in avoiding nuclear weapons' use. But that system is now passing into history, and the tripolar system that will emerge appears, at first blush, as though it will be far more fragile and unpredictable than its bipolar predecessor.

In this precarious new strategic environment, it will be crucial for the United States to anticipate new challenges and respond to them nimbly. This means proceeding with current plans to modernize the country's aging nuclear deterrent. But it will also require sustained intellectual effort from the country's finest strategic thinkers to find ways to mitigate the growing instability. Priority should be given to identifying methods for offsetting the erosion of stabilizing bipolar-era characteristics, such as parity and MAD, and preventing the tripolar system from devolving into an even more chaotic system of multiple major nuclear powers. Above all, it requires rethinking deterrence strategies and addressing the challenges posed by Beijing's *weishe* in ways that enhance, rather than compromise, the United States' security and that of its allies.

A Real Foreign Policy for the Middle Class

How to Help American Workers and Project U.S. Power

Heidi Crebo-Rediker and Douglas Rediker

In February 2021, two weeks after taking office, U.S. President Joe Biden gave a speech outlining his foreign policy vision. Over the course of 20 minutes, the new president detailed many of Washington's overseas interests, including promoting democracy and working with U.S. allies to compete against China. He identified a bevy of international challenges, including cyberattacks, nuclear proliferation, and refugee flows. But when it came time to talk about international economics, Biden pivoted away from looking abroad and instead focused his attention at home. "There's no longer a bright line between foreign and domestic policy," he said. "Every action we take in our conduct abroad, we must take with American working families in mind." Washington, he said, must advance "a foreign policy for the middle class."

That final phrase—"a foreign policy for the middle class"—has become the lens through which the Biden administration has pursued its international economic agenda. On the whole, it means striking a balance between promoting the interests of U.S. working families and pursuing the more strategic and often realpolitik agenda that drives the United States' national security interests, especially confronting the challenges posed by increasing competition with China. It entails

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creating a more pro-union, industrial policy approach to investing in U.S. domestic economic renewal and competitiveness so that Washington can continue to project U.S. power. It requires shoring up national security vulnerabilities in supply chains in a way that benefits workers. And it involves working with allies and like-minded countries, strengthening U.S. multilateral leadership, and addressing the failures of former President Donald Trump's China strategy—in particular by confronting unfair and illegal Chinese economic behavior that hurts American workers, threatens U.S. technological leadership, and undermines international competitiveness.

After over a year in office, Biden's record on striking an appropriate balance between a foreign policy that is focused on workers and one that involves realpolitik is mixed. He succeeded in striking that balance with his supply chain resilience agenda, including efforts to "reshore" and "friend-shore" production in a way that advanced middle-class priorities and brought manufacturing jobs back home. He passed a landmark $1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure and investment act, a large down payment on economic renewal and competitiveness with strengthened "Buy American" policies. He also successfully breathed new life into the United States' relationships with allies in both the Atlantic and the Pacific regions. This meant Biden was well positioned to advance collective opposition to Russian aggression in Ukraine through sanctions and other economic tools and to jointly take on economic competition with China, especially with European partners.

But on addressing other economic and strategic threats posed by China—including its massive subsidization of domestic companies, its theft of U.S. intellectual property, and its habit of forcing U.S. companies to hand over their technology—the Biden administration has fallen short. It is behind in its battle with Beijing over trade, technology, and Asia's economic architecture. The administration's neglect of international financial institutions has allowed China to increasingly gain influence over other countries, undermining U.S. leadership and damaging the United States strategic economic and financial interests around the world.

Biden has, in particular, struggled to craft a coherent trade agenda. Although the president managed to simultaneously help workers and reengage on trade, technology, and economic security with European allies, in the Indo-Pacific, the administration's un-

balanced and sequential approach has deferred crucial multilateral, trade, and investment initiatives at the expense of longer-term U.S. strategic security. During the campaign, Biden argued that Trump's use of tariffs and his trade policy with China left U.S. farmers and workers no closer to getting the level playing field they deserved. Once Biden won, he promised to undertake a comprehensive review of Washington's economic policies toward China and to then launch a comprehensive new strategy for the region. But the administration never finished the review, and it never created a fresh approach. The Trump administration's much-maligned Phase One trade deal—its attempt to correct Chinese economic behavior in exchange for lower tariffs—remains in place, surprisingly unaltered. Major Chinese economic abuses still go unchallenged.

The stakes are now higher, as Indo-Pacific commerce, trade, and investment grow and evolve. China advanced the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which went into effect earlier this year, and even formally applied to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the successor to a trade deal that the United States negotiated in 2015 before withdrawing under Trump. China is arguably well on track to set the digital standards that will dominate Asia for decades. This means U.S. workers may find that the continent's enormous export market is incompatible with the products they are producing, cutting their employers off from billions of potential consumers and making that market captive to China's export machine instead. Ironically, the Biden administration is reluctant to cut trade deals with the region because it is worried that doing so will undermine its ability to win support from domestic workers. But by staying on the sidelines, the United States is both limiting its own workers' opportunities and passing up the chance to lead the Indo-Pacific's economic future.

In recent months, it has become more complicated for the United States to properly align domestic and international economic priorities in Asia. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February forced the Biden administration to rework its domestic and international priorities literally overnight. The emphasis on persuading allies to counter China's economic ambitions and growing influence over trade rules and practices was replaced by the need for a massive collective application of hard economic coercive power against Russia, carried out through unprecedented sanctions and export controls. Before the invasion, U.S.

economic policy was focused on strengthening long-term supply chain resilience to ensure the United States had reliable access to critical raw materials, manufactured products, and pharmaceuticals, which are disproportionately produced in China. After the invasion, Washington shifted to addressing immediate commodity shortfalls and energy vulnerabilities from Russia and Ukraine, including not only oil and gas but also wheat, nickel, palladium, and the other critical materials needed for semiconductors and electronics. Even the administration's bold climate endeavors, designed to help the world move away from fossil fuels, have been given a harsh reality check. The administration has had to confront the risk of demonizing domestic natural gas producers and oil companies, forcing Washington to make a rapid diplomatic about-face in the Middle East and Venezuela to get oil pumping again.

The challenge posed by China has not diminished, and the invasion has not reduced the need to ensure that Biden's international economic policy agenda remains focused on both immediate and longer-term strategic challenges. In fact, China's response to Russia's aggression presents the Biden team with an opportunity. Much of the world is wary of China's failure to condemn, and its possible support for, Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The White House can capitalize on this to try to constrain China's global ambitions, its growing influence, and its threats to the U.S. middle class. The administration's task now is to take advantage of the current turmoil to recraft a global economic system that will both preserve U.S. leadership and help American workers: a real foreign policy for the middle class.

AT HOME IN THE WORLD

Biden's international economic agenda was designed to inextricably link his domestic economic plans and the country's national economic security. Biden promised to invest in domestic supply chains, infrastructure, innovation, research and development, and manufacturing, as well as to rebuild U.S. alliances to jointly advance common economic security interests.

In an effort to insulate the U.S. economy from international threats, the president began his tenure by conducting a strategic review of U.S. supply chain resilience, designed to identify where the United States was least self-sufficient. By June 2021, the administration had cataloged the country's main vulnerabilities, chiefly in semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, batteries, and key minerals and materials with

implications for U.S. defense and commercial resilience. It expanded the review to include six industrial sectors with vulnerabilities, and it then crafted strategies to strengthen each.

The White House followed this up by creating a multiyear action plan, using both public and private investment, to bring manufacturing for certain critical products back to the United States. The federal government reworked its procurement procedures to invest in new battery production and to stockpile critical minerals and metals. It also implemented new "Buy American" provisions, which closed legal loopholes and got the federal government to use more domestic goods in its own procurement. This was all consonant with Biden's worker-centric agenda.

Biden has struggled to craft a coherent trade agenda.

The Trump administration had also tried to reshore domestic manufacturing. But Trump's efforts mostly consisted of haphazard, counterproductive tariffs on friends and competitors alike. This alienated allies and did little to address the trade deficit that he argued was at the root of the United States' economic woes. Biden, by contrast, has worked with allies in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific to build supply chain resilience. He recognized that countries in both regions were themselves at risk of being victims of China's aggressive, weaponized trade policies. Beijing, for example, had issued vindictive trade restrictions on Australia after Canberra called for an independent inquiry into the origins of COVID-19.

Biden's supply chain diplomacy was embedded in the establishment of the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council in June 2021; the council is addressing the United States' and Europe's shared vulnerability in areas such as critical minerals, semiconductors, and battery production. That diplomacy was also on display in October 2021, when, on the sidelines of the G-20 meeting in Rome, the administration hosted a summit on global supply chain resilience with leaders from 14 other countries and the EU, including Canada, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (which is the world's leading source of cobalt, a metal key to the transition to green energy), India, Japan, and South Korea.

Within his first year, Biden also realized one of his most ambitious campaign promises: investing $1 trillion in the country's long-neglected infrastructure. His massive bipartisan Infrastructure

Investment and Jobs Act will improve the United States' transportation systems, strengthen its digital connectivity, boost the country's cybersecurity, and create a greener, more resilient energy grid. These changes may seem largely domestic in nature, but they have implications for foreign policy. Better cybersecurity, for example, will protect the United States from hacking by China, Russia, and nonstate actors. Improved infrastructure will strengthen the U.S. economy's ability to compete with a rising China. And the infrastructure package will create more, better jobs for Americans, especially in underrepresented parts of the country.

Biden's domestic economic security policy is not yet finished. To counter China and boost U.S. innovation, manufacturing, and research and development, Congress will need to soon finalize and pass a bipartisan innovation and competitiveness bill. This legislation would mean substantial federal investment in quantum computing, semiconductors, robotics, and artificial intelligence—industries China seeks to dominate. The Russian-Ukrainian war, meanwhile, will subject the world to a variety of critical shortages, including of semiconductor materials; the United States will need plans to address this.

BURYING THE HATCHET

Under Trump, the United States turned its back on its allies and partners. The former president imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from EU countries—arguing that those imports were threats to U.S. national security—and by the end of his term, the United States' closest friends harbored deep misgivings about Washington's intentions. That mistrust posed a significant threat to Biden's economic agenda, including his plans for competing with China. In December 2020, after Biden had won the presidential election but before he took office, the EU announced that it had agreed to a proposed investment deal with China called the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, despite objections from Biden's team. (Although the EU has since indefinitely postponed full approval of the agreement, it did so because of Chinese diplomatic missteps, not because of the incoming Biden administration's request.)

To try to repair this damage, Biden quickly worked to improve the United States' relations with its allies and partners. Within a month of Biden's tenure, the United States was back in the Paris climate accord. Thereafter, Washington helped spearhead a new agreement on carbon

emissions and other climate targets at the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference, known as COP26. In an effort to address COVID-19-related economic shortfalls, particularly in poor countries, the administration agreed to support an allocation of $650 billion in Special Drawing Rights by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). And to level the playing field in global taxation, the White House helped finalize an agreement on global tax reform, including a global minimum corporate tax rate of 15 percent, spearheaded by the G-20 and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

For Biden, the tax agreement—which brought together over 130 countries representing more than 90 percent of the planet's GDP—is a particularly clear example of how his "foreign policy for the middle class" can successfully balance domestic and international objectives. The deal not only reestablished U.S. international engagement and protected U.S. companies from being unfairly taxed in other jurisdictions; it also advanced a key campaign promise to ensure that companies pay their fair share. Although the deal still requires U.S. congressional action and similar government approval in other countries, it nevertheless established the multilateral economic bona fides of the Biden administration.

The United States has also partnered with certain allies to coordinate their approaches to key global technology, economic, and trade issues. The U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, for example, was almost entirely designed to address the challenges posed by China's state-led economic model and counter unfair trade practices that hurt American and European workers. The council is helping the United States and the European Union ensure that they have compatible technology standards and data protection, implement export controls on dual-use technology, and create investment screening protocols to protect against intellectual property and technology theft (which undermines competitiveness and national security).

Then, shortly after the Biden team began its second year in office, recalling the words of former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, events intervened: Russia invaded Ukraine. But nothing better illustrates the success of Biden's work with U.S. allies than what happened before and directly after Russia's invasion. In the lead-up to the war, the Biden team worked with its G-7 and additional European partners to prepare a coordinated menu of escalating coercive economic measures, both to deter an invasion and to prepare a concerted re-

sponse for if a war took place. The United States also ramped up its energy security cooperation in the months leading up to the invasion, as Russia increasingly used gas exports as a coercive weapon against Europe. As a result, immediately after the invasion began, the United States and its allies were able to pull off an unprecedented degree of international coordination, rapidly imposing historically severe economic sanctions and export controls on a major economy.

HELP WANTED

Unlike the Biden administration's determined efforts to rebuild bilateral trust and relationships, its attempts to reestablish leadership in international financial institutions—including the IMF, the World Bank, and regional multilateral development banks—have failed to gain traction. These institutions were expected to play a crucial role in advancing the administration's international agenda, especially given the pressing need to contain the global economic fallout of COVID-19. And at first, the White House made good, supporting the historic Special Drawing Rights issuance to help low- and middle-income countries deal with the economic challenges posed by the pandemic.

Thereafter, however, the administration's efforts stalled. Perhaps because the White House was disproportionately focused on its domestic agenda, it showed little interest in reforming the World Trade Organization, declined to appoint an American to the number two leadership position at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development when given the opportunity last year, and replaced the top U.S.-held position at the IMF—the first deputy managing director—only after the institution's leader was engulfed in a China-related data-rigging scandal. Crucially, Biden neglected to prioritize filling the unprecedented number of vacancies in key posts on the executive boards of international financial institutions and in the U.S. Treasury Department; the people in these posts are supposed to set vital international economic policies. As a result, Washington has struggled to advance its strategic economic interests through key multilateral institutions. It also neglected to promote a major priority of unions: advancing a global, worker-centric perspective within international institutions themselves.

Biden has also been unable to address China's broad refusal to provide debt relief to poor countries. China is now the dominant creditor to developing states around the world, and when COVID-19 made debt repayment more difficult, the IMF and the World Bank proposed a

G-20 "Common Framework" for debt relief, seeking to create a forum in which China could work constructively toward that end with the IMF and the Paris Club, a group of creditor countries that seek solutions to payment problems faced by debtor countries. But the effort largely failed, primarily because China refused to accept meaningful debt forgiveness or, in many cases, to even allow visibility into the nature and terms of its loans. China's investment in countries around the world not only gives Beijing greater influence over the politics and economics of these debtor countries; it also gives it more control over the supply of key commodities and, increasingly, over the development of digital standards in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. With the Biden administration mainly disengaged from leadership at both the IMF and the World Bank, the United States missed the opportunity to use these institutions to push back against China's intransigence. Meanwhile, the failure of Washington to demonstrate real interest in governance at these institutions has contributed to governance and morale issues that currently plague their broader effectiveness.

That's not to say Biden has taken no formal, multilateral steps to try to counter Chinese economic leadership. In June 2021, his administration and the G-7 launched the Build Back Better World initiative, which will use financial support from members of the G-7 to help fund and coordinate infrastructure projects in the developing world. But although worthy of praise, Build Back Better World remains nascent and underfunded, especially compared with China's enormous bilateral lending, estimated to have reached more than $500 billion.

DISAGREEING TO AGREE

The Biden team can count a few trade and investment wins in its first year, including temporarily resolving a 17-year dispute with the EU over subsidies to Airbus and Boeing. It also reached an agreement with the EU over steel and aluminum tariffs that creatively addressed both the United States' and Europe's concerns about Chinese overcapacity by linking the deal to greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, Washington found a union-friendly fix for Vietnam's currency manipulation transgressions.

But the White House has had trade troubles. Indeed, overall, the Biden administration's most glaring international economic policy failure has been its inability to articulate or advance a coherent strategic trade and investment policy in the Indo-Pacific. The Biden administra-

tion has not yet agreed on a new economic approach to its relationship with China, effectively maintaining the Phase One trade deal inherited from Trump. It has made little serious effort to address Washington's underlying grievances with Chinese economic policy. What is most striking is how it has not seriously coordinated with Indo-Pacific countries on an economic strategy, in part because it has avoided even mentioning free-trade or investment agreements. In particular, it has declined to enter into any discussion of reengaging with the CPTPP.

The refusal to talk trade has exposed how failing to properly balance domestic and international interests can undermine longer-term strategic goals. While running for president, Biden promised the United Steelworkers in writing that he would not "enter into any new trade agreements until we've made major investments here at home"—part of his broader campaign to win back swing states and working-class voters. That pledge was both tragic and self-defeating; by foreclosing even the discussion of any new trade agreements, Biden squandered the United States' best opportunity to make the international economic order more friendly to the American middle class and to advance crucial U.S. foreign policy interests. As the most attractive market economy in the world, the United States can use trade negotiations to get countries to change their standards, rules, and norms, in part by promising increased market access. That means there are enormous strategic and economic benefits to at least reentering the debate over whether the United States should join the CPTPP, so as to present an alternative to China's increasing dominance over Asian trade (which is bad for both U.S. workers and U.S. foreign policy). And yet the Biden administration has effectively forbidden any suggestion that joining the CPTPP might, in fact, be the single most significant step the country could take to advance its foreign policy for the middle class.

There are spillover effects. In September 2021, China applied to join the CPTPP. Many of the agreement's existing members, including countries in Latin America, are building better relations with Beijing as a result, preparing for the possibility that China will belong to the CPTPP, with the United States on the outside looking in. The White House knows this isn't good, and it has belatedly tried to craft a new economic engagement strategy for Asia: the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. But it focuses on largely amorphous objectives and consists of aspirational wish lists, mostly devoid of specifics. This initiative is neither a substitute for a free-trade agreement nor a serious

attempt to reassert Washington's influence over trade with, investment in, or the digital future of the Indo-Pacific.

SQUARING THE CIRCLE

After more than a year in office, Biden has advanced many critical international economic policy goals by aligning his administration's foreign policy agenda with the interests of U.S. workers, achieving strategic national security objectives. He laid the groundwork for creating more resilient supply chains and transforming U.S. infrastructure in ways that will help underserved communities and the middle class. He rejoined the global community's effort to transition away from fossil fuels. He repaired U.S. alliances, marshaling the democratic world to collectively respond to Russia after it invaded Ukraine.

Russia's war against Ukraine and its subsequent isolation are likely to provide ample opportunity for the United States to cooperate even more with its allies, as well as a chance for Washington to broaden the circle of countries with which it can find common cause. Russian economic isolation represents a global economic structural shift of significant proportions, one that may lead to further economic and political decoupling, and the United States must be prepared to protect and advance its economic interests in this new paradigm.

China's future role in this world remains uncertain. China's neutrality, if not vaguely pro-Russian position, on the war in Ukraine has given Washington a chance to reassert its global leadership. It must now be willing to recognize these opportunities and find a way to address both more immediate domestic interests and longer-term strategic ones that can pay economic dividends for decades to come. To capitalize on this moment, the United States must be ready to embrace a more ambitious international economic policy that advances its and its allies' standards of fair trade, commerce, and investment, especially in response to China's increasingly aggressive international posture. That means a top priority for the administration must include a renewed focus on articulating a comprehensive economic strategy for China, including a concrete, ambitious trade and investment agenda for the Indo-Pacific.

It won't be easy for the Biden administration to reestablish U.S. economic leadership. Many middle-class Americans continue to blame globalization in general, and trade in particular, for their economic struggles. For Democrats, it does not pay to be seen as the party of

pro-globalization, coastal elites. Biden will therefore need to work hard at explaining that free and fair trade can advance the interests of the middle class, of unions, and of workers. He should follow through on his promise to bring labor and environmental interests to the negotiating table. But cutting off U.S. trade engagement or believing the country has time to defer introducing an Indo-Pacific economic agenda will further cede turf to China—ultimately restricting markets and posing more risks to American workers, not less.

Biden will also need to make good on promises to renew U.S. economic leadership in multilateral financial institutions, rather than letting them lose further credibility. These institutions can amplify U.S. influence, and the White House should make engaging with them a priority. That means it cannot pass up future opportunities to nominate strong, qualified U.S. candidates for traditionally U.S.-held leadership positions at these organizations.

Working with the IMF and the World Bank will be key. Food insecurity, inflation, rising interest rates, and massive levels of debt in low-income countries threaten financial stability, especially in developing markets, and the IMF and the World Bank can help the world manage and mitigate the risks. The White House should exert pressure on the IMF and the World Bank to abide by their own rules on debt sustainability. It must also be prepared to demand that China provide transparency and appropriate debt relief to poor countries that fall into debt distress. It should prioritize initiatives, such as Build Back Better World, that challenge China's lending and investment leadership. This will be particularly important when it comes to helping states with the transition to green energy.

Finally, the Biden administration must manage the economic and political consequences of the war in Ukraine. The invasion has upended many of the underlying assumptions of Biden's proposed foreign policy for the middle class. At the same time, it challenges China's rise, and in that way, it presents an opportunity for Biden to make up for lost time, including by moving past some of the political impediments—such as domestic opposition to joining the CPTPP—that have stood in the way of smart international choices. This opportunity could help Biden, and the United States, secure a win-win: an international economic policy agenda that strikes the appropriate balance between workers' interests at home and the country's strategic interests abroad.

The Return of Statecraft

Back to Basics in the Post-American World

Eliot A. Cohen

For more than 70 years, starting in the middle of World War II, the United States bestrode the world like a colossus. Its economy and military emerged from the war not just unscathed but also supreme. Its institutions of governance—a unified Department of Defense, a system of far-flung military commands, the National Security Council, specialized agencies for international development, and so on—were those of an effective global hegemon. Even when it was locked in a mortal struggle with the alien and hostile ideology of communism, it held most of the winning cards. And as colossi do, it elicited resentment from those not content to live in its shadow.

For anyone who hadn't noticed the growing challenges to American dominance, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in February of this year, should have erased any doubts. International politics had clearly entered a new era, one in which the old forms of predatory state behavior had returned, and the putative global hegemon proved unable to stop it. The colossus could not get its way.

But the United States' relative decline could be seen in many indicators long before the Russian invasion. The U.S. economy now produces under a quarter of global GDP, compared with 40 percent in 1960. The United States' military spending is still enormous, accounting for as much as 40 percent of the world's total, but it no longer generates the same margin of superiority it once did. The United States confronts opponents that are nimbler in adopting new technologies and modes of warfare. Its ideology of free minds and free markets faces challenges not only from foreign models of authoritarian efficiency and ethnonational-

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ism but also from waning confidence in American institutions. A 2021 Pew Research survey found that a healthy majority of the populations of 14 countries, all U.S. allies, held the view that democracy in the United States "used to be a good example but has not been in recent years." The insurrection that swept a mob of jeering, violent vandals into the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, to overturn President Donald Trump's electoral loss dealt a greater blow to the United States' reputation than did the attacks on New York and Washington 20 years earlier.

For the foreseeable future, the United States will remain powerful. Although China's rise means that it may not have the world's largest economy forever, it will certainly have the second-largest and possibly the most dynamic and globally connected one. It has one of the biggest and most experienced militaries on the planet, along with plentiful allies. Above all, the United States has a demonstrated resilience going back to its founding. It has been rent before, suffered grievous economic setbacks, and, time and again, bounced back.

Nonetheless, relative decline is a fact. Historians will dissect why the age of American dominance ended when it did and whether its disappearance might have been delayed or mitigated. The question now, however, is how the United States should adjust to its changing position. The response will have many elements, but the most important is attitudinal. After decades of relying on big strategic ideas that are translated into policy by complex and arduous bureaucratic processes, the U.S. government must return to statecraft. This means an approach that embodies a fine-grained comprehension of the world, the ability to quickly detect and respond to challenges, a penchant for exploiting opportunities as they arise, and, behind all of this, effective institutions for the formulation and conduct of a nimble foreign policy.

In the previous era, the United States was strong enough to get away with less-than-perfect implementation of its big ideas. Its unrivaled power granted it a wide margin of error, enough space so that Washington could get most of what it wanted, no matter what its level of competence. Today, when it is much harder for Washington to call the shots, the problems it faces demand not more abstruse strategies. They require something far earthier: skill.

IDEAS AND THEIR LIMITS

The recommendation to downplay extensive, formal strategizing in favor of deftness, strength, and agility swims against the tendency of

End of an era: evacuating from Kabul, Afghanistan, August 2021

SGT. ISAIAH CAMPBELL / U.S. MARINE CORPS / REUTERS

the time. Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier this year came when a new U.S. grand strategy was supposedly set: focus on the rivalry with China and (more or less) leave Europe and the Middle East to their own devices. The showers of Russian missiles and bombs blew up not only Ukrainian towns but also that scheme. Even before the invasion, intellectuals were advocating the revival of grand strategy—that is, a sweeping concept for the conduct of foreign policy. Author after author has called for a new "X" article, akin to the one written by the diplomat George Kennan in these pages in 1947, which laid out the Cold War grand strategy of containment. Today, some scholars, harking back to Wilsonian idealism, have suggested that the United States should orient its policies around the creation of a new "rules-based international order." Others have proposed "retrenchment," a realpolitik-driven acceptance of decline and a diminished role for the United States on the world stage. There are still other grand strategic variants floating about, but all share a desire to boil down the complexities of foreign policy into a few clear dicta. What matters most, their proponents argue, is having the right intellectual framework; the rest is commentary.

This notion is flawed. It is of course essential to have some organizing ideas about the world—that the United States should pursue both its interests and its ideals, for example, or that it faces chal-

lenges from the rise of competitors and such developments as climate change and state failure. Decision-makers can call such ideas "grand strategy" if they must, but they should not ascribe excessive importance to them, because such general principles offer limited help when it comes to formulating specific policies. Grand strategy relies on simplifications, and yet the world is complex.

So, for that matter, is the United States. For one thing, it is both a status quo and a revisionist power. It seeks to preserve key elements of the world order—the rule of law, the free flow of trade, individual liberty—and yet because of its attachment to these ideals, it opposes and often seeks to transform those regimes that have no such attachment. For another thing, U.S. foreign policy is shaped by a complex blend of ideals and interests that vary by time and place. Just as it aligned with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany, today it backs Saudi Arabia against Iran and Vietnam against China. Idealists who argue that the United States must repudiate any connection with unsavory partners ignore complexity in favor of dogmatic simplification.

Grand strategy relies on simplifications, and yet the world is complex.

Also guilty of this charge are the retrenchers, who dismiss all consideration of values in foreign policy. Countries that brutalize their populations, assassinate dissidents, subvert legitimate governments, and indulge in paranoid fantasies about external enemies are obviously more dangerous than other states. In the nineteenth century, the United States and the United Kingdom found themselves on opposite sides of various territorial disputes, but each side never considered the other as dangerous as both did the totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century.

Grand strategy abstracts policy from the contingency of personalities and unforeseeable events. The doctrine of containment, for instance, offered no particular guidance on how to manage the crises in Berlin and Cuba or the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Yet the study of history reveals the overwhelming importance of unpredictable characters and events. U.S. policy toward China must contend with the personality of Chinese President Xi Jinping, whose methods and aims go well beyond those of his immediate predecessors. An unforeseen global pandemic has caused the United States to look either patheti-

cally weak (because it failed to stop the spread of the disease and vaccinate enough of its population) or remarkably strong (if its looser approach allows it to open its economy faster than China opens its own). And foreign leaders can take everyone by surprise. To adapt the former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson's adage about boxing, that everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth, one might say that everybody has a grand strategy until Russia invades Ukraine.

THE PROBLEM WITH STRATEGY

Ideas matter, but they do not matter as much as intellectuals and politicians think they do. What matters far more is statecraft, which is about sensing, adjusting, exploiting, and doing rather than planning and theorizing. It is the skill of a judo player who may have plans but whose most important characteristic is agility. It is what the philosopher Isaiah Berlin called "understanding rather than knowledge," an ability to "tell what fits with what: what can be done in given circumstances and what cannot, what means will work in what situations and how far."

A focus on statecraft rather than grand strategy is particularly urgent given the speed and unpredictability of today's challenges. The United States is set to face confrontations with three opponents—China, Iran, and Russia—in the near future. Each is a revisionist power that wishes to acquire new possessions or recover old ones in its immediate neighborhood. Each fears long-term demographic decline and economic stagnation. Each has cultivated a style of warfare—hybrid or "gray zone"—that involves sophisticated tools, including proxies, cyberwarfare, low-cost technologies, selective repression, and even murder. Each is ruled by an aging leader who may wish to see major accomplishments within the next few years before he passes from the scene. Each is ready to cooperate, on a purely transactional basis, with the others. And each is threatened, not superficially but existentially, by the notion of free politics, the rule of law, and respect for individual liberties. All of this is a recipe for sudden, possibly stupid, and most definitely dangerous decisions that no grand strategist can predict. Look no further than Russian President Vladimir Putin's foolhardy invasion of Ukraine.

Adding to the complication is the possibility that a crisis in one area may rebound in another. The chaos on NATO's border, for instance, could strip U.S. resources away from Asia, and indeed, it

has already turned the United States' attention back to the old cockpit of Cold War struggles. Some of the larger forces at work—climate change, democratic decay, Islamist terrorism—will present further opportunities for unpredictable crises. The United States' goal should be to cope with this chaotic reality rather than provide an architecture for global politics.

Too often, however, Washington has incompetently executed its foreign policy, rendering any aspirations of grand strategy meaningless. The best example is the calamitous U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021. On grand strategic grounds, one might have argued the case either way: cut U.S. losses and avoid the distractions of Afghanistan to focus on more important interests in East Asia or, alternatively, sustain a low-cost engagement in the country to maintain credibility and undermine radical Islamist movements in South Asia. Like most decisions in foreign policy, there were good arguments on both sides. What resulted, however, was an appalling failure of statecraft, and that is what really mattered.

Too often, Washington has incompetently executed its foreign policy.

The chaotic withdrawal left behind tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Afghans who had worked with U.S. troops. It led to humiliating images of ragtag Islamists defeating the world's sole superpower. And it dented the popularity of a president seeking to restore American prestige. It didn't have to be this way: the pullout could have been scheduled for the end of the fighting season, the State Department could have prepared in advance special visas for Afghans who had worked with the United States, a larger temporary force could have been left to retain control of the country's largest air base, and U.S. allies could have been forewarned so that they wouldn't have to scramble to secure their nationals.

The debacle of the withdrawal from Afghanistan was but one of a number of self-inflicted wounds in recent years. In 2003, the George W. Bush administration invaded Iraq with no serious plan for the occupation that followed. In 2012, President Barack Obama declared that Syria's use of chemical weapons would constitute a redline—and then never followed through when the country's dictator, Bashar al-Assad, crossed that very line. The Trump administration, for its part, not only dismissed the importance of values in

foreign policy; the president practically reveled in his relationship with Putin and (according to former National Security Adviser John Bolton) set the stage for what would have been a catastrophic exit from NATO. Even the inauguration of the AUKUS security partnership, with Australia and the United Kingdom—a moment that represented a long-term success in U.S. foreign policy—was marred by the Biden administration's inept handling of a key ally, France, which was left humiliated by the unexpected cancellation of a major Australian-French submarine program.

None of this is to say that U.S. policymakers shouldn't hold some core ideas—namely, that the United States should be prepared to play an active role abroad, that it has an interest in the free flow of goods and ideas, and that it favors democracy over dictatorship. U.S. policymakers in the twentieth century correctly concluded that the aggressive proclivities of revisionist dictatorships would ultimately impinge on the United States and that regimes that were repressive at home were more likely to use force abroad and toward malevolent ends. That connection has not yet been broken. Still, a basic understanding of the need to be actively engaged in the world on the basis of both values and interests provides only the most limited guidance for the conduct of policy. That is especially true at a time when the United States is not in a position to create a new world order (as it was in the 1940s) or benignly manage an existing one (as it was after the Cold War). After World War II, big new ideas were indeed required for the world order that only the United States, with its unmatched and untouched economy, could create. Today, the United States, crowded by aggressive autocracies, sliding democracies, and unpredictable global phenomena, simply cannot come up with schemes comparable to those of the immediate postwar period. Instead, it has to turn to statecraft.

RECOVERING STATECRAFT

One element of a renewed commitment to statecraft should be a pronounced tilt in policy and intellectual circles toward empiricism over generalization. Accurately judging the environment is no small task. Over the last two decades, for example, U.S. policymakers failed to recognize the speed with which China would rise and the threat that it could pose to the United States' world position, even though the Chinese were hardly hiding their ambitions. Washington dismissed Beijing's military buildup and did little to counter its aggressive naval

tactics in the South China Sea. The Obama and Trump administrations alike failed to secure congressional passage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the proposed trade bloc that would have helped balance China. In missing the China threat, policymakers let a priori beliefs—the kind that characterize most grand strategic thinking—get in the way of good political judgment. They adhered to a theory of development that saw global economic integration as leading to political liberalization, a hypothesis that in the case of China proved utterly false.

Understanding the environment means constantly searching for linkages. Many U.S. analysts have made the mistake of treating the rise of a revanchist Russia, for example, as a matter of discrete rather than linked episodes. Moscow's military incursions into Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 were treated as separate problems rather than a reflection of a new and dangerous course in Russian policy, one that could not be met with the Obama administration's "reset" of U.S.-Russian relations or with Trump's personal connection to Putin. The result: for more than a decade, the United States failed to develop and deploy the military power that it needed to deter Russian aggression.

U.S. decisions on Afghanistan, Syria, and other trouble spots were similarly treated as local and separable, with little apparent awareness that they would have global repercussions. It was surely no accident that Russia's annexation of Crimea followed less than a year after the Obama administration failed to enforce its supposed redline on Syria's use of chemical weapons. Nor was it likely a coincidence that Russia invaded Ukraine following the United States' humiliating scuttle from Afghanistan.

Statecraft also entails speed. Acting swiftly is a matter not of doctrine but of mindset, culture, and preparation. In his posthumously published memoir about the fall of France in 1940, the historian and Resistance martyr Marc Bloch made a damning observation: "From the beginning to the end of the war, the metronome at headquarters was always set at too slow a beat." The problem lay not in France's grand strategy but in its sluggish decision-making apparatus. Therein lies another challenge for the United States in today's world—its temptation to follow the dictum supposedly put forward by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "The Americans can always be trusted to do the right thing, once all other possibilities have been exhausted." But in a world that is spinning faster and faster, the United States may no longer have the luxury of exhausting all other possibilities before doing the right thing.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF COMPETENCE

Improving American statecraft should begin with an audit of the institutions that formulate and implement policy. Of all the constituent parts of the U.S. national security establishment, only one has truly engaged in harsh self-scrutiny: the U.S. Marine Corps, which after two decades of counterinsurgency warfare reoriented itself toward expeditionary warfare in the Indo-Pacific. It is not at all clear that other branches of the armed forces have done anything close, to say nothing of the government's intelligence, international aid, and public diplomacy agencies. The failures in Afghanistan and Iraq reflected not only particular policy choices but also institutional pathologies that prevented the development of competent local forces and flooded those countries with economic aid that was as often counterproductive as it was useful. Expensive development projects, for example, facilitated corruption and siphoned off English-speaking Afghans from teaching and government work but did little to build a reliable army and police force. Yet there is very little evidence that the United States' national security institutions are interested in painful introspection or reform.

A comprehensive institutional audit would suggest not only the reform, or even the abolition, of some organizations but also the revival of old ones or the creation of new ones. Since the dominant mode of war today is hybrid conflict, the United States needs to be much better at playing offense. To that end, it might revive the U.S. Information Agency, which spread pro-American propaganda during the Cold War before being dismantled in the late 1990s. Or it might mobilize civilian cyber-militias that could undermine hostile governments by wielding the most powerful weapon of all, the truth. The impromptu mustering of anti-Russian hackers by the Ukrainian government after Russia's invasion is one example. The United States should also make advocacy for civil liberties both a matter of principle and a tool to weaken opponents. Russians, for example, should be bombarded with messages exposing the lies their regime feeds them, the truth regarding the human and economic losses they have experienced in and because of the war in Ukraine, and the calamitous consequences of becoming a Chinese vassal state excluded from the West.

In some cases, the problem is one not of institutions but of mindset—namely, the inability of leaders to deal with multiple crises simultaneously. There is no reason the United States cannot deal with more than one threat at a time; after all, it successfully fought

in two very different theaters during World War II. But doing so requires the discipline that a generation of leaders showed in calmly dividing their time and energy among multiple problems, rather than burning themselves and their staffs out on one issue at a time in an atmosphere of continual crisis. The picture of Obama's entire team crowded in the Situation Room to follow the raid that killed Osama bin Laden in 2011, an operation they could do nothing to influence once it began, contrasts sharply with the behavior of American leaders the evening before D-Day. President Franklin Roosevelt watched movies, and General Dwight Eisenhower read a Western novel. According to a *New York Times* profile, during the withdrawal from Afghanistan, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan was getting only two hours of sleep a night—a troubling sign of a lack of decision-making discipline.

Some of the improvements needed are mundane indeed. More than one might think, sound foreign-policy making rests on the basics of bureaucratic behavior: clear and concise memorandums, crisply run meetings, well-disseminated conclusions, succinct and unambiguous guidance from above. Good process does not guarantee good policy, but it increases the odds of it. With that in mind, the U.S. government should pay renewed attention to the training and career management of security professionals. There are plenty of young people who wish to serve in government, but professional schools of international affairs often fail to prepare them for their actual duties.

It is long past time for Washington to invest heavily in professional education and development. Offering well-designed short courses at universities and even creating a state-run academy for foreign policy professionals from across government would cost a tiny fraction of the U.S. national security budget but could yield disproportionate results. The curriculum should focus on the mechanics of effective policymaking, as opposed to the mix of social science, current affairs, and business school organization theory that characterizes much of higher education in the field in the United States.

Restoring procedural competence also requires repairing the broken personnel system. The process for appointing people to top State Department and Pentagon posts has long been an abomination, and the problem is getting worse. A year into Joe Biden's presidency, according to *The Washington Post,* the administration had vetted, nomi-

nated, and obtained Senate confirmation for just one-third of the 800 or so positions the newspaper was tracking. Some of the critical posts left vacant included the ambassadorships to South Korea and Ukraine, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, and assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs. The White House and Congress, which share responsibility for these delays, need to accelerate the processing of political appointees. Their ranks should be thinned, too. Although political appointees bring fresh perspectives and a commitment to the president's agenda, the United States could have half as many of them and still fill the upper echelons of government with a much higher proportion of noncareer officials than its peers have. As painful as both Democrats and Republicans might find it, a bipartisan push to reduce the number of political appointees and accelerate their processing would pay more dividends than any new national security document.

More than one might think, sound foreign-policy making rests on the basics of bureaucratic behavior.

Statecraft also involves substantive choices—such as the persistent effort to divide one's enemies. During the Washington Naval Conference of 1921–22, the United States maneuvered the negotiations so as to rupture the Anglo-Japanese alliance, possibly the most threatening foreign relationship at the time. In the 1960s and 1970s, it exploited the Sino-Soviet split to weaken the communist world. Today, Washington needs to drive a wedge between China and Russia—a task that will be difficult, given the anti-American and antidemocratic preoccupations of both countries' leaders, but not unthinkable in the long term. Although Beijing and Moscow are deeply wary of efforts to pry them apart, they do have different foreign policy goals: where Russia seeks to break the international order, China seeks to bend it. Surely, the United States can find ways to play to Russian fears of Chinese dynamism, on the one hand, and to Chinese contempt for Russian bungling, on the other. The point is not to divide China and Russia in the near term, which is not feasible, but to maximize the points of friction in their relationship.

Intelligent opportunism is particularly valuable in an age of informal alliances and covert relationships. Washington has tended to downplay such ties, thinking of Afghanistan as a Taliban problem when it was also

a Pakistan problem, for example, or thinking of Iraq as an al Qaeda problem instead of an Iran problem, too. The solution begins with openly and unflinchingly identifying these connections. Again, there are opportunities to divide the opposition: for instance, Washington should reinforce the simmering competition between Russia and Turkey for influence in Central Asia by tilting toward Azerbaijan (Turkey's client) in the conflict over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Finally, U.S. statecraft must include a domestic component. For decades, U.S. foreign policy elites got used to making decisions without giving much thought to public opinion. They opened trade with China, for example, not worrying about the gutting of American industrial jobs that resulted. Today, they talk about abstract goals, such as "extended deterrence," that make sense in Washington but will never enjoy the support of the American people. Americans have no particular reason to trust the experts who conduct foreign policy and little idea of what their leaders have signed them up for and why. Politicians have to explicitly connect developments in crisis areas to U.S. interests—clearly laying out, for example, how an independent Taiwan reflects American values (self-determination and liberty) and serves American interests (keeping one of the world's most productive economies out of Chinese hands).

The 2022 crisis in Ukraine is a prime example of the need to substitute statecraft for grand strategy. The Biden administration, like its predecessor, correctly judged China to be the United States' prime competitor. Putin's decision to invade Ukraine was an unexpected jolt. What was called for was a quick and adroit reaction—and to its credit, the Biden administration was not only nimble but also cunning in its well-timed release of intelligence in the weeks before the invasion to undermine Russia's attempts to lay the groundwork for its actions and divide Europe.

The crisis did not, of course, end there. A dangerous period looms in which Moscow will test Western resolve. It may, for example, claim a right to protect Russian speakers in the Baltic states or insist on the dismantling of NATO in eastern Europe. Worse, it might test the alliance's commitment to collective defense by lobbing a missile or two at transshipment points for arms bound for Ukraine. To meet such threats, the United States will need not grand strategy but steadiness in confronting Russia, ingenuity in supplying Ukraine and frontline NATO allies while shutting down the Russian economy, and subtlety in guiding European rearmament.

THE CASE FOR PRAGMATISM

The United States is unique by virtue of many things—its values-based national identity, its massive size, its favorable geographic position, its overwhelming power, and its quarter-millennium history as a flawed but successful democracy. Today, however, it is entering a period of challenges for which grand strategy, with its penchant for grand simplifications, will not be very helpful. The country must navigate its way through a difficult world, manage crises, and incrementally do good where it can and confront evil where it must.

The United States' foreign policy future will not echo the trumpet call of President John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address to "bear any burden, meet any hardship." Rather, the United States should follow the guidance, at once principled and pragmatic, that President Theodore Roosevelt offered in his 1905 inaugural address: "Much has been given us, and much will rightfully be expected from us. We have duties to others and duties to ourselves; and we can shirk neither. We have become a great nation, forced by the fact of its greatness into relations with the other nations of the earth, and we must behave as beseems a people with such responsibilities."

Roosevelt, who made a careful study of foreign policy throughout his career and took care to explain it to Americans beyond the cosmopolitan cities of the Northeast, was a shrewd practitioner. As assistant secretary of the navy and later as president, he helped revitalize both the army and the navy, making them fit for the needs of an emerging world power. In 1905, he seized the opportunity to broker a peace between Japan and Russia in a way that would benefit the United States. He anticipated the issues at stake in World War I long before most Americans did and advocated an earlier U.S. intervention that might well have shortened the conflict. He balanced ideals and interests. He was relentlessly curious about the world in which he operated, reading in foreign languages and traveling widely. He operated in an era in which the United States was powerful but hardly predominant and in which multiple forces were at work. His pragmatism, informed by principle, was not grand strategy. But it worked.

The Middle East Abhors a Vacuum

America's Exit and the Coming Contest for Military Supremacy

Kenneth M. Pollack

It seems fantastical, but observers may soon look back on the late twentieth century as a period of relative stability in the Middle East. Although there was no shortage of conflict and mayhem, the violence rarely led to dramatic change. No states were conquered and eliminated outright. Dictators came and went, but borders and even regimes changed little. After 1973, most of the major countries in the region stopped fighting one another directly, opting for terrorism and insurgency—strategies of the weak—over conventional attacks. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi took longer to learn. Indeed, Saddam never really learned at all. But they were the exceptions that proved the rule.

What underlay this overlooked stability was a skewed military balance that proved nearly impervious to change. There might have been chaos on the upper floors, but the foundation of Middle Eastern security remained rock solid. At one end of the spectrum, the United States was all-powerful, able to defeat any foe if it was willing to apply sufficient strength. Close behind was Israel, whose astonishing military competence and access to U.S. weaponry gave it a similar ability to use force with great latitude. At the other end of the spectrum were the Arab states, incapable of waging modern war effectively even against one another. Iran and Turkey fell in between, but far closer to the weaker than the stronger.

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Given these disparities, only the United States and Israel used force regularly against external foes. Since both were staunch defenders of the status quo, they tended to act to preserve the existing order rather than remake it. Here, too, the exceptions proved the rule. Israel used force to try to transform Lebanon in 1982 and paid for it with 18 years of fruitless guerrilla warfare. The United States did the same in Iraq in 2003 and earned a similar fate.

As a result, the Middle East has not seen a major conventional interstate war in over 30 years. The one partial aberration was the 2006 Lebanon war, in which Israel fought Hezbollah, the de facto governing entity of Lebanon. Yet that, too, was an exception proving the rule. Neither side wanted war. Both stumbled into it and were so traumatized by the results that they have not repeated their mistakes since.

All of that has begun to change. In recent years, the rigid chrysalis of the Middle Eastern military balance has started to crack, releasing a swarm of twenty-first-century Furies that threaten to remake the region's landscape. As new military and civilian technologies emerge, and as the United States contemplates a smaller role in the region's internal affairs, Middle Eastern states are finding it increasingly difficult to know who holds the strategic upper hand. By convincing governments that they might triumph with the aid of new and untested weapons, the emergence of information-age warfare is threatening to rend the geopolitical laws that have ruled the Middle East for nearly half a century.

THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE

Warfare is ever changing. Humanity eagerly and endlessly seeks new ways to kill itself, and no war is just like its predecessors. But at times, the changes can be profound. Typically, they are greatest in the wake of a vast economic transformation, because the most important military technological changes flow largely from nonmilitary technological developments. Railroads, the telegraph, radio, airplanes, internal combustion engines, the secrets of the atom—all were initially pursued for civilian purposes. Once discovered or invented, they were then quickly applied to war-making, and the changes they wrought were transformative.

Just as the Industrial Revolution utterly reshaped warfighting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so the information revolution is doing so today. And just as it took nearly a century for militaries around the world to understand what mature industrial-age warfare looked like—how to fight it properly and therefore how to accurately

Military imbalance: security forces in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, August 2018

forecast relative military capabilities—so, too, are militaries today trying to figure out how wars will be fought in the information age. There are new technologies emerging, but no one yet knows which will become dominant in warfare and which will prove marginal.

In war, profound technological changes often follow a similar three-stage path, as the military expert Jay Mischo and I have surmised. A new technology starts out as little more than a novelty. Think of the first aircraft employed in World War I. Early planes were essentially flimsy oddities flown for reconnaissance. But then pilots started bringing guns with them to shoot at enemy aviators and, soon, bombs to drop on enemy troops. Although none of this had a decisive impact on the fighting on the ground, many saw the potential.

That potential leads to the next stage, when the new military technology is often seen as a silver bullet for an existing problem. As World War I ground on, for instance, airpower began to promise ways to strike directly at the enemy's homeland, its industrial base, its population, and even its government. After the war, the Italian general and military theorist Giulio Douhet took this concept to its logical (if impractical) conclusion. He proposed that airpower could entirely bypass the carnage of ground warfare, enabling quick and decisive victories with minimal bloodshed—at least for the side with the biggest and best air force.

ASMAA WAGUIH / REDUX

Ultimately, some new technologies prove to be so valuable that they lead to their own realms of combat, typically with military services specifically dedicated to their prosecution. Airplanes, submarines, and mechanized vehicles all reached this third stage during the industrial age. States needed dedicated air forces (even when attached to ground or naval surface forces) to wage constant aerial operations. Air warfare became its own realm of combat, but it also interacted routinely with ground and naval warfare, intelligence collection, logistical capabilities, production power, and command and control. An advantage in the air could translate into advantages in other aspects of warfare—but other aspects of combat could also threaten a military's ability to prosecute air operations. By the early days of World War II, airpower was simultaneously critical in its own right and vulnerable to operations in all the other fields.

In recent years, the rigid chrysalis of the Middle Eastern military balance has started to crack.

Right now, no one knows which innovations of the information revolution might scale all three stages and lead to the development of new critical fields of warfare. Cybertechnology seems to be the most likely candidate, despite the limited benefits that Russia derived from it during the initial stages of its invasion of Ukraine. It is easy to imagine mature information warfare involving a constant battle among cyberwarriors as they seek to smash their counterparts and protect themselves, vying for dominance in cyberspace. Simultaneously, cyber-soldiers would look to attack enemy kinetic forces, logistics, production, transportation, and command and control. They would likely be vulnerable to attack by kinetic units, as well. Just as air warfare did, moreover, cyberwarfare might render certain older aspects of conflict less effective or even obsolete. Just as airpower eventually killed off the great men-of-war that had ruled the waves for millennia, so cyberweapons might strip other weapons or tactics of their utility. As with air warfare, all of this would take place simultaneously and continuously and interact with all the other elements of military power. Although this seems to be a likely scenario for cyberwarfare, it is still too soon to say for sure.

The advent of cyberwarfare is not the only technological change threatening to revolutionize warfare. During the industrial age,

conflict was defined by mechanical platforms: tanks, warships, aircraft, and so on. That conception persists. Whenever analysts want to assess the military strength of a state or size up two sides in a war, they immediately count their platforms. How many tanks do they have, and what kind? How many planes? How many of each type of ship? As the political scientist Barry Posen once put it during a class session decades ago, after the Industrial Revolution, armies went from arming the man to manning the arms. So it was that the arms came to matter more than the men.

But industrial-age military platforms were difficult to employ, difficult to integrate into joint operations, difficult to repair and maintain, and difficult to produce. Personnel had to be extremely proficient with the machines of war and the complex tactics that emerged to use these weapons to greatest effect. The difficulties in employing such tools and conducting optimal military operations created significant divergences in the effectiveness of various armed forces. Some militaries—such as Germany's in the early twentieth century and the United States' and Israel's in its latter half—were superb at it. Plenty of other militaries could never get it right: those of the Arab states least of all, for a variety of political, economic, and cultural reasons. By the twilight of that era, most sides understood those differences well.

Today, new munitions are increasingly compromising the importance of military platforms themselves. During the industrial age, most machines of war spat inert projectiles—bullets, bombs, shrapnel—the dumbest of dumb weapons. Even torpedoes and missiles were barely guided for most of this period. Such unsophisticated technology placed a premium on employing the platforms themselves to the greatest effect, since it was the platforms that maneuvered, cooperated, and aimed, in effect doing 99 percent of the work. More and more, smart munitions—and, increasingly, AI-enhanced brilliant munitions—are doing all of that themselves. The world has now had smart munitions for nearly five decades, and they are increasingly becoming the dominant machines on any battlefield.

The F-35 fifth-generation fighter jet is one example of this trend. The F-35 is a pig of a dogfighter. But criticizing the F-35 for its poor dogfighting skills is like criticizing the M-16 rifle because it is terrible with a bayonet. Anyone who plans to mount a bayonet charge with M-16s has no business commanding infantry in the modern era. It would

be wasting the remarkable capabilities of that rifle in an old-fashioned manner of fighting, just as dogfighting would waste the remarkable capabilities of the F-35 in an old-fashioned manner of fighting. Instead, the F-35 is a mobile delivery and guidance system for its munitions. The jet has an array of sophisticated sensors, communications systems capable of linking up with a bewildering array of other sensors (and shooters), and the stealth and electronic warfare capabilities needed to penetrate current air defenses. But it is not an industrial-age fighter designed for complex maneuvering to deliver lethal ordnance. Instead, the aircraft's munitions can largely find their own way to a target once the F-35 gets them in range.

The F-35's combination of capabilities represents another wave of future war: brilliant sensors wedded to equally brilliant long-range munitions operated through brilliant battle-management programs, all boosted by artificial intelligence. In such a world, the platforms will do very little. The munitions will do all the maneuvering and killing, guided by information straight from the sensors and ultimately directed by battle-management programs able to keep track of far more information than any human could. Together, these tools might soon instantly identify targets and threats, assign weapons to destroy them, and launch the weapons: rinse and repeat.

DRONE WARS

The F-35 and similarly complex weapons are extremely expensive. Some Middle Eastern countries are wealthy enough, committed enough to their own defense, and friendly enough with the United States to acquire them. Israel's F-35s are already operational. The United Arab Emirates will get them next, and the Saudis will probably get them eventually. Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan, however, are much less likely to obtain them at all. But these less wealthy and well-connected states can still get drones.

Drones are fast emerging as a vital component of information-age warfare. Many are cheap: souped-up children's toys wielding death in perverse ways. Because they are unmanned, drones are attractive to countries reluctant to sacrifice their citizens in war. Moreover, drones are themselves the ultimate information-warfare munition. Many possess considerable range, built-in sensors, stealth capabilities, and the ability to conduct precision strikes. Many cheap drones can evade detection by vastly more expensive technologies, including traditional

early warning and air defense radars. They are also difficult to destroy by similarly costly air defense weapons and are precise enough to inflict painful damage on vulnerable targets.

Although drones are hardly omnipotent, there is tremendous potential to improve their autonomous capabilities to match and perhaps outpace future countermeasures, possibly indefinitely. Many countries are working on microdrones that can more easily evade detection, drone swarms designed to overpower defenses, and swarms of microdrones that could do both. Countries are also working hard at overcoming one key vulnerability of drones, their need for some form of guidance from an operator on the ground. Sophisticated command-and-control systems and autonomous drones guided by artificial intelligence could eliminate that liability, albeit at the risk of algorithms wreaking unintended havoc. Fears of collateral damage might constrain a state committed to public morality or a status quo power looking to avoid unintentional escalation. But such concerns could just as easily be meaningless to nihilistic terrorist groups or to a state engaged in an existential struggle or fighting for worthwhile gains.

For 75 years, the Middle East has been the world's great weapons laboratory. All the major arms-makers have tested their latest killing machines in the region's wars, from the Soviets in Egypt to the Americans in Iraq to the Russians in Syria. Drones are no different. From the shockingly cheap to the wildly expensive, they increasingly dominate Middle Eastern wars—and they are upending the region's military balance.

Turkey, for instance, used to have a military that experts considered to be something of a joke. Although Ankara liked to brag about its military's prowess, in recent years, its forces had demonstrated little real capability against Kurdish rebels or Islamic State (or ISIS) fighters. Then the Turks discovered drones. Today, as a result, they have regained much of their Ottoman glory. In 2020, the Libyan renegade strongman Khalifa Haftar besieged Tripoli, the capital of Libya, and it seemed only a matter of time before he would take the city. Then, Ankara deployed an army of advisers and drones that enabled Libya's central government to smash his forces and force him into political negotiations. That same year, the Syrian regime launched a major offensive against the opposition stronghold of Idlib, employing an armored force rebuilt with Iranian and Russian assistance. Here, too, a flock of Turkish drones descended on Syrian columns as they rolled north—shattering them like rickety antiques. Finally, later in

2020, another fleet of Turkish drones enabled Azerbaijan to rout Armenian ground forces in their latest round of fighting over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Turks are not the only ones taking advantage of drones. Iran has also embraced them, providing them—along with advisers, training, and guidance—to its various allies and proxies across the Middle East. In September 2019, Iran struck the vast Saudi oil processing center at Abqaiq with roughly two dozen drones and three cruise missiles. The drones evaded the extensive air defenses around the site and managed to take nearly half of Saudi Arabia's oil production offline for several weeks.

Since then, Iran's allies and proxies have repeatedly struck U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria with drones and waged a constant air campaign against Saudi Arabia, mostly (but not entirely) carried out by the Houthis from Yemen. Such attacks have been remarkably effective. To understand why the Saudis grudgingly agreed to direct talks with the Iranians in Baghdad in May 2021, after years of diplomatic stonewalling, remember that in April 2021, the kingdom was attacked 84 times by drones, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles launched by the Houthis and other Iranian proxies. It is also worth noting that the Saudis agreed to the talks only after first trying and failing to buy Turkish drones. Beginning in January and February 2022, the United Arab Emirates has been subject to its own periodic hail of drone and missile attacks, launched by the Houthis in Yemen and the Hashd al-Shaabi, a collection of militias, in Iraq—groups linked only by their mutual dependence on Iran.

Twenty years ago, Iran and Turkey were too weak to use force against their neighbors. They could barely fight their own internal Baluchi and Kurdish oppositionists. Today, they are projecting power across the Middle East to great effect. Turkey has stalemated the Libyan and Syrian civil wars. Iran has waged perhaps the first truly effective coercive air campaign in history against Saudi Arabia, forcing Riyadh to a bargaining table it never meant to sit at. The Emiratis have faced the same situation and are not only making preemptive concessions to the Iranians in the short term but also doing everything they can to build a drone army of their own for the long term.

EXIT AMERICA

Changes in military technology aren't the only factor reshaping the military balance in the Middle East. For nearly five centuries, an ex-

ternal great power has always functioned as the region's hegemon and ultimate security guarantor. The Ottoman Turks conquered much of the Middle East in the mid-sixteenth century and ruled over it for nearly 400 years. When the Ottomans fell in World War I, the British took over and played the same role for roughly the next 50 years, until they abandoned their imperial commitments east of Suez in 1968. Reluctantly but eventually, the United States took over and shouldered the burden for the next half century.

The rise of new technology and a retreating hegemon are a combustible combination.

Starting under U.S. President Barack Obama, the United States began to shirk this role, steadily disengaging from the region even as his administration insisted it was doing no such thing. Under President Donald Trump, the United States' exit became both more blatant and more shambolic, as the country abandoned some regional allies and egged on others—often flip-flopping from one to the other indiscriminately. President Joe Biden's team, for its part, keeps telling the United States' friends in the Middle East that the president does not want to disengage any further and would even like to reengage in some ways. Nevertheless, the thousand other demands on Washington's time, energy, and resources are making all of that moot. Biden might like to reengage, but he has little ability to do so.

The American exit from the Middle East has created a security vacuum. The most violent, aggressive, disruptive forces are all rushing to fill the void—led by Iran and its allies. From their low points in 2010 and 2015, following the American troop surge in Iraq and the near collapse of their Syrian ally, Tehran and its rogues' gallery of friends—the Assad regime in Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip, and a murder of Shiite militias from Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Syria—have built themselves back up by exploiting the region's civil wars and their own skills in unconventional warfare. This strategy was straight out of the Iranian general Qasem Soleimani's brilliant playbook—send in the militias in lieu of the regulars—and it has expanded Iranian influence throughout Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen.

Iran's burgeoning sway and the United States' unseemly retreat have panicked U.S. allies in the region. It has driven some to band

together in previously unimaginable ways. Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates, for instance, have joined Egypt and Jordan in burying the hatchet with Israel by signing the Abraham Accords. Saudi Arabia seems likely to follow, albeit perhaps not until King Salman passes. These countries' former hatred of the Jewish state has given way to a pragmatic appreciation for the country's military might and willingness to use it against Iran. Many have celebrated this newfound amity as the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Even setting aside the unresolved misery of the Palestinians, however, such a perspective overlooks the fact that this is a war coalition in the making, and its ultimate purpose is belligerent, not pacific. Meanwhile, Qatar, Turkey, and half of Libya have banded together out of mutual sympathy for the Muslim Brotherhood—a bizarre platypus of a military alliance with little to strategically bind them.

In the wake of the United States' long goodbye, the states of the region are brawling more often, and most expect that to become the new normal. The Saudis and the Emiratis, for instance, intervened in the Yemeni civil war in 2015 to prevent the expansion of Iranian influence. Although their intervention caused the very threat they sought to preclude, they took action explicitly because the United States was doing nothing about Iran's regional gains and did so only after repeatedly imploring the Obama administration to act instead of them. Israel has struck Iranian targets in Syria hundreds of times over the past decade and has recently turned its attention to Iranian-allied militias in Iraq. Iran and Israel are engaged in a cyberwar that has now escalated to include Iranian attacks on Israeli hospitals and Israeli attacks on Iranian gas stations. Turkish forces are fighting Russian and Emirati proxies in Libya and the Syrian regime and Iranian forces in Syria.

Terrorism, Washington's longtime preoccupation in the Middle East, is also gradually becoming a secondary problem. That's because terrorism is the strategy of the weak, and the transformation of warfare in the region has allowed states that were once weak to engage in more conventional military operations. That is a worrisome development for both the United States and the Middle East.

The United States' withdrawal, therefore, appears to be unleashing a predictable struggle among Middle Eastern states over which will take the United States' place at the region's head. Some are willing to fight hard to win that crown, and others are willing to fight just as hard to prevent someone else—or anyone—from claiming it. Even if

all fail, the process will be gory and destabilizing. It may also singe neighboring regions, if not burn them to the ground.

THE FOG OF WAR

The rise of new technology and a retreating hegemon are a combustible combination. Wars, after all, tend to be more common when people cannot accurately assess the military balance. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the Middle East since World War II. For 25 years, from 1948 to 1973, the Arab states believed themselves to be stronger than they were. Five wars with Israel thoroughly disabused them of that notion. Afterward, none of them ever tried to directly challenge Israel again. Indeed, for most Arab states, their defeats were so crushing—and the political repercussions so threatening—that they largely stopped trying to use conventional military power as a tool of foreign policy altogether.

The Iran-Iraq War offers another example of this dynamic. During the conflict, the Iranians developed capabilities that allowed them to win a series of battles against Iraq in 1981–82. But Tehran misunderstood the limits of these capabilities and so tried for six more years to conquer Iraq itself, only to be defeated by a somewhat reformed Iraqi military on the ground and by U.S. naval power at sea. That taught the Iranians how weak they truly were. Iran then switched to gambits that minimized the likelihood of provoking a U.S. conventional military response. Although the country never gave up the ambition of its first supreme leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, to dominate the region, it did give up the notion it could do so with conventional military power. Instead, it shifted to subversion, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and other indirect and unconventional means of attack.

In Iraq, Saddam, for his part, was the exception who proved the rule. Saddam attacked Kuwait in 1990 even though he thought that the United States might very well fight on its behalf. But as has become clear from the taped conversations and documents collected after the fall of Baghdad in 2003, Saddam was a deeply delusional leader who regularly distorted reality to suit his designs. Members of his inner circle warned him not to fight the United States, but he dismissed their warnings because he believed the Iraqi military to be stronger than the U.S. military. It required a leader as delusional as Saddam to think that an Arab state could take on the United States. No one else was that foolish.

In the past decade, all these strategic certainties began to crumble. They are crumbling in part because it is not clear who or what—if anything—the United States will actually defend in the Middle East. If the United States would not respond militarily to a blatant Iranian attack on Abqaiq, the beating heart of Gulf oil production and therefore of the global economy, what will it respond militarily to? That is a major new uncertainty in the Middle Eastern strategic situation.

The certainties of the old Middle Eastern military balance are also crumbling because of the transformations in military technology. Inevitably, as new tools of warfare take hold, some countries will be better able to employ them than others. At the moment, at least in the Middle East, Iran and Turkey have made the most of these changes—regaining military clout they lost centuries ago. But analysts and leaders simply don't know which countries will end up winning and which losing as these seminal changes redistribute power across the Middle East. It was not obvious, for instance, that Sweden would become a military force in the seventeenth century or Prussia in the eighteenth, or that both powers would decline so precipitously when they did.

In the early twentieth century, moreover, it seemed that the United Kingdom would be the great winner of the military transformation occasioned by the Industrial Revolution. It led the revolution and was responsible for most of its transformative innovations. It likewise invented many of the key war-making tools of the era: the steam engine, the submarine, the tank, the big-gun battleship, the locomotive, the machine gun, the aircraft carrier, radar, sonar, and the jet engine, to name only a few. Yet the United Kingdom fell from arguably the most powerful preindustrial military power to a middling power during the industrial age. Its fall was as much the result of an inability to employ those weapons effectively as it was from sheer economic decline.

The moral of that story is that outside observers simply do not know which countries (or nonstate actors) will prove most able to wage twenty-first-century war. Until analysts, commanders, and leaders have seen the audit of battle, they probably won't know. Peacetime drills, training, exercises, and even doctrine and education can reveal only so much. Until states fight, it is impossible to know whose prewar preparations were the most effective and who best understood what new technologies made possible. It is always important to keep in mind that in May 1940, virtually the entire global

expert military community believed that France had the better army—and had better learned the lessons of World War I—than Germany. Only the audit of battle revealed the reverse to be true.

That lesson is likely to be even more important today. In the industrial era, planners could count each side's tanks, planes, and warships—no matter how hard governments tried to hide them. It's virtually impossible to gauge militaries' capacities to wage information-age warfare. As the military analyst Rachel Kramer has observed, opacity is the sine qua non of cyberwar, making it nearly impossible to know either side's true strength until one has won and the other has lost. In cyberspace, if a state knows that its opponent has found a vulnerability, it patches the hole, and the opponent's edge is gone. Transparency is death, and stealth is all that matters. All of this makes it even harder to know who is weak, who is strong, and by how much.

VIOLENT UNCERTAINTY

From 1948 to 1973, the Arab states did not understand their own weakness, and the Israelis had not yet found their true strength. The Iranians developed some unexpected new capabilities during the early years of the Iran-Iraq War that frightened their neighbors (and the United States) but then overestimated just how capable their forces actually were. From beginning to end, Saddam exaggerated Iraq's military capabilities. In every case, these misunderstandings bred more, worse, and longer conflicts. By contrast, as the region's true military balance came into focus, the number and severity of the Middle East's wars receded. As the Athenians once warned the Melians, the strong do as they like, while the weak suffer what they must. Fair or not, it is an effective way to keep the peace.

Today, there are far more questions than answers about warfare. The lack of certainty will give heart to those hoping to use violence to change their circumstances. It may convince the weak that they are strong and may weaken the strong in ways that will invite unforeseen challenges. The more that the fog of war settles on a region, the more that region is likely to experience the horrors of war. The clear understanding of the Middle East's military balance that once underlay its relative stability is disintegrating before the winds of new technological and strategic change. And so everyone should brace themselves for a hurricane of future conflict in a region that needs no more.

Rebels Without a Cause

The New Face of African Warfare

Jason K. Stearns

On August 1, 2018, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo declared an outbreak of Ebola in the country's war-torn northeast. It was Congo's tenth recorded outbreak of the deadly hemorrhagic fever, but the first in an active conflict zone. Determined to avoid a repeat of the West African Ebola epidemic in 2014, when outside help was too little, too late, donors threw caution to the wind and pumped more than $700 million into northeastern Congo to fight the disease over the next 20 months. To protect their staff members, the World Health Organization and its partners put both Congolese security forces and local militia members on their payrolls. This created perverse incentives: although the combatants had reason to refrain from attacking aid workers, they also had an interest in prolonging the epidemic so they could keep profiting from it. Between August 2018 and June 2020, when the Ebola epidemic was finally declared over, some militiamen and members of the government security forces stoked violence and instability so that the disease would continue to spread and the international aid agencies would continue to pay them. A well-meaning effort to contain the disease ended up doing the exact opposite.

This is the face of many African conflicts today. Whereas most armed groups on the continent once aimed to topple governments or secede and found new countries, those who take up arms these days are more likely to do so as a means of bargaining over resources. Some government officials in Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, and elsewhere have sought to prolong and even instigate conflicts, so long as they did

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not threaten their survival, and rebel groups in these and other countries have often challenged governments as a way of extracting payouts and other concessions. Although battles for state power haven't disappeared altogether—the Ethiopian civil war is one such conflict—war in many African countries has become an economic bargaining tool, a way of life, and even a mode of governance.

This fundamental change in the nature of conflict on the continent presents a quandary for outside actors, including the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations, which often partner with African governments to fight terrorism or stem migration. If some African governments are not genuinely committed to stability or, even worse, are actively fueling instability, foreign partners risk becoming complicit in the violence by supporting them without demanding better governance and accountability in return. It is therefore time for a new approach. Instead of bolstering regimes that are too often part of the problem, Washington, Brussels, and other external actors should work more closely with civil society and democratic movements on the continent to promote democratic reform. Only by changing the character of African states can they hope to change the character of conflict in Africa.

THE CHANGING FACE OF WAR

The nature of war in Africa has changed dramatically over the past 60 years. In the 1960s and 1970s, most of the region's conflicts were power struggles among the elites of newly independent countries, as was the case in Congo and Nigeria, or struggles between liberation movements and the last vestiges of colonialism, as in the remaining Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique and in the white settler colonies of Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. For all these insurgencies, the goal was to control the state—either the central state or a secessionist one—and to gain freedom. Throughout this period, belligerents were egged on and exploited by rival powers in the Cold War. The United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba all sent weapons, military advisers, and money to countries across the continent, making the wars there more brutal and intractable. They also exported their ideologies, fueling conflicts between movements for African socialism and governments that had thrown in their lot with the United States.

The end of the Cold War unleashed new forces on the continent. Authoritarian governments, some of which had lost their external pa-

Making a killing: rebel fighters near Sake, North Kivu, Congo, November 2012

GORAN TOMASEVIC / REUTERS

trons, began to open up, both economically and politically. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pushed many countries to privatize and deregulate large parts of their economies in exchange for loans, and political leaders and civil society movements led a wave of democratic reforms. Within the span of about a decade in the 1980s and 1990s, the continent went from largely autocratic to mostly practicing some form of democracy.

These changes ushered in two new and seemingly contradictory trends: African conflicts became more frequent, but they also became more peripheral and less directly threatening to governments. In the past decade, the number of armed groups in Congo has doubled, to around 120. There are probably over 40 such groups in South Sudan, 20 in Libya, and at least several dozen in Nigeria. For the most part, however, these insurgents have no realistic chance of toppling the government; rather, they aim to bargain with it through violence. Gone are the days of bloody, all-out civil wars, such as those that occurred in Ethiopia and Rwanda in the 1990s. Africa has entered an age of grinding low-level conflict and instability.

This does not mean that the conflicts have become less destructive; they have just become less visible and sensational. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of people forcibly displaced by conflict nearly tripled, even as the number of people killed fell. Large parts of rural Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan are now controlled

by armed groups. In other words, a growing number of smaller, more fragmented conflicts are affecting larger geographic areas, especially on the peripheries of states. The World Bank predicts that if current trends continue, by 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor will live in countries affected by high levels of violence, a majority of them in Africa.

War has become an economic bargaining tool, a way of life, and even a mode of governance.

As the nature of African conflicts has shifted, so, too, have the interests and motivations of the belligerents. Today's armed actors aren't liberation fighters in the tradition of Mozambique's Samora Machel and Guinea-Bissau's Amílcar Cabral. They aren't "reform insurgents," epitomized by Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda, who sought to seize power in order to transform their countries. They aren't even warlords in the mold of Liberia's Charles Taylor, who despite his reputation for depravity aimed to capture the state. The armed groups wreaking havoc in Africa today defy these categories. They run the gamut from Islamist insurgents in East Africa and the Sahel to disgruntled army officers in South Sudan to organized gangs of bandits in northeastern Nigeria.

Despite what some of them might claim, few of these groups genuinely aim to overthrow the government or secede. Rather, they seek to extract resources from the state and local residents, involve themselves in local governance, and offer young men—rebellion is usually extremely masculine—a means of survival and dignity. In some cases, insurgents have developed symbiotic relationships with the governments they nominally oppose. In Congo, for example, a rebel commander named Laurent Nkunda told me in 2008 that his group received information and ammunition from a high-ranking Congolese general. "The government is our main logistician," he said. A disgusted soldier in the Congolese army concurred. "We are being killed by our own bullets, with complicity of our own commanders," he told me.

This symbiosis between rebels and governments does not imply a grand conspiracy to perpetuate conflict. Rather, violence has become systemic, transcending the intentions of any individual actor. Countries such as Congo are so weak and fragmented that leaders are hard-pressed to exercise centralized control over them. After all, im-

posing discipline and accountability within the security forces comes at a risk, especially on a continent with a history of military coups. Backing armed groups, by contrast, can be a safer bet, one that also provides lucrative business opportunities.

The jihadi insurgencies that have spread like wildfire across Africa in recent years might seem like the exception to the rule. Whereas very few rebellions framed their objectives in religious terms in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, a majority of the conflicts on the continent today involve insurgents linked in some way to al Qaeda or the Islamic State (also known as ISIS). Such groups often claim they are trying to establish their own sovereign caliphates. But although many tax people in the areas they control and regulate daily life—as al Shabab does in Somalia, for instance—most no longer view state power as the prize. Instead of genuinely trying to overthrow the central government, they use violence as a means of controlling their troops, signaling their importance, and recruiting new funders and combatants.

Another factor driving the use of violence as a bargaining tool is that most of Africa's insurgencies are repeat civil wars. That is, practically every civil conflict on the continent is playing out on top of the ruins of—and, more important, on top of the social networks, worldviews, and grievances associated with—previous episodes of violence. This has created entire social classes invested in conflict and has made armed mobilization a practical and accepted means of conducting politics. Armed conflict has become an occupation, or a métier, as the French political scientist Marielle Debos has observed of fighters in Chad.

CONFLICT AND CONVIVIALITY

Perhaps nowhere better exemplifies the new face of African conflict than Congo. Between 1996 and 2003, the country fought two large-scale wars, the second of which involved armies from nine different countries in the region and is sometimes referred to as the African World War. In 2003, the warring parties agreed to a peace deal that created a transitional government, which in turn drafted a new constitution and, in 2006, held Congo's first democratic elections in 46 years. But the peace deal did not end the conflict. Instead, it marked the beginning of a more amorphous and fragmented phase of the war. Although the fighting is mostly confined to the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu, as of 2021, there were more than 5.6 million internally displaced people in eastern Congo—more than at any time in recorded history.

A host of factors explain how the conflict metastasized as it did. The 2003 peace deal marginalized one of the most powerful belligerents, the Congolese Rally for Democracy, a faction of which went back to war. The process of demobilizing fighters and reforming the army created few alternative livelihoods for former combatants and sidelined many formerly powerful commanders, breeding resentment and spawning a multitude of new armed groups led by army defectors. And the rush to elections in 2006 and 2011 incentivized politicians to ally with armed groups that held sway over voters in certain areas and could intimidate opponents. Elections also created losers, some of whom resorted to violence.

All these problems were exacerbated by the Congolese government's cynical attitude toward the mounting insecurity. Huddled in the capital, Kinshasa, President Joseph Kabila and his close advisers were more concerned about managing their fledgling national army, newly created out of a patchwork of former belligerents, than about the ragtag armed groups sprouting up 1,000 miles to the east. Palace intrigue and fear of a coup dominated their thinking, so they saw greater risk in trying to impose discipline on the security forces than in allowing patronage and racketeering networks to proliferate. Instead of trying to create a politically neutral and meritocratic army, they forged independent—and sometimes competing—networks of loyal officers to extract rents and protect themselves against coups.

This governing tactic not only maintained the war economy, in which a narrow elite of politicians, military commanders, rebels, and entrepreneurs had prospered for more than two decades, but actually expanded it. For these elites, as well as for tens of thousands of combatants, the end of violence would have meant the end of their livelihoods—and of their sense of dignity. In peacetime, police and army officers struggle to survive on their meager salaries. But when sent to the front, they can make bonuses worth many times their official wages. Although their base salaries peaked at around $150 per month, military officers told me in 2014 that they often received conflict bonuses of up to $1,000 a month. Adding to the allure, soldiers deployed in wartime have many more opportunities for pillage, extortion, and embezzlement. "To make money, you have to fight," one Congolese colonel told me. This cynicism has filtered down into popular sayings: Congolese refer to rebels who stir up trouble so that the government must negotiate with them as "pyromaniac firefighters."

Nigeria also exemplifies the new normal in African conflict. The country is beset by a violent Islamist insurgency in the northeast, rampant banditry in the northwest, conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in the middle of the country, long-standing militia activity in the Niger Delta, and widespread criminality everywhere in between. In 2021, according to the nonprofit Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, the country had 9,691 conflict fatalities, the most in Africa. And just as in Congo, although many members of the security forces and the government are committed to pacifying the country, many others either benefit from the violence or have little incentive to clamp down on it. In the country's north, the Nigerian security forces have either failed to quell the violence or actively fueled it by stealing operational funds and in some cases supporting militias. In one northwestern state, Zamfara, a government committee found that five emirs and 33 district heads had been complicit in attacks by bandits between 2011 and 2019. When it is not directly stoking the violence, the Nigerian government often does little to stop it. Over the last decade, various government entities have established at least 22 commissions of inquiry, panels, and fact-finding missions related to the violence in the northeast of the country alone. Almost none of their recommendations have been implemented.

The reason for this insouciance is clear: insecurity has become a racket. Millions of dollars have gone missing from public funds set up to support military operations and humanitarian efforts, allegedly embezzled by government and military officials. In 2020, the governor of Borno, the state worst hit by conflict with Islamist insurgents, claimed that security officials were sabotaging the fight against Boko Haram for their own profit. The sums at stake are colossal. In 2016, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo claimed that the previous government had stolen around $15 billion in state funds through fraudulent arms procurement deals alone.

The dynamic can also be found in South Sudan, which achieved independence from Sudan in 2011. By then, the rebel movement turned government of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, once an ideologically driven and popularly supported organization, had devolved into an unstable coalition of military entrepreneurs with separate bases of power held together by racketeering, ethnic loyalty, and the threat of violence. This government, which was almost entirely financed through oil revenue, fatefully decided in 2012 to shut off the

pipelines to Sudan in order to negotiate better terms with its northern neighbor. The gambit failed, leading to a catastrophic decline in revenue and dissolving the financial glue that held the SPLM together.

Factions led by President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar had already been quarreling over resources and over old grudges from the civil war. But the sudden loss of revenue pushed them into open conflict. Abraham Kuol Nyuon, a former SPLM fighter, succinctly explained what happened in an interview with the *Financial Times* in 2021: "When we became independent, there was a cake in front of us and some said they were the ones who would eat it alone. . . . Other people said 'if you are going to eat it, it is better we fight over it.'" In other words, South Sudan's leaders could not work out how to share the spoils of independence. And so barely two years after it had come into being, the country succumbed to bloody civil war, as the SPLM splintered into two main groups and several minor ones, all of which recruited mostly along ethnic lines and were led by military strongmen.

From 2013 until 2018, when a peace deal brought Kiir and Machar back under the same roof, military leaders used violence as a means of bargaining among themselves. Kiir and Machar were the main belligerents in this struggle, but a host of local strongmen also raised smaller rebel factions to challenge and negotiate with the central government. The result was a patchwork of patronage networks linking government officials to militias and local power brokers—all of them using violence to bolster their stature and obtain resources.

In June 2020, the Small Arms Survey made a quixotic attempt to map the main alliances and rivalries among South Sudanese elites. What the organization produced was a riotous collage of overlapping arrows. In the end, almost all the armed actors were connected to all the others—evidence, it seems, for the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe's observation that "the postcolonial mode of domination is a regime that involves not just control but conviviality."

SEEDS OF DESTRUCTION

Conflict in Africa has many causes: weak and illegitimate states inherited at independence, illogical borders drawn in colonial times, and economies heavily dependent on natural resources. But most of these factors haven't changed for decades, whereas the nature of the violence has. To understand the rise of conflict as a

bargaining tool and of the perverse symbiosis between many governments and the rebel groups that oppose them, one must look to the rapid liberalization of economic and political systems that occurred at the end of and after the Cold War.

Economic liberalization began in Africa in the 1980s, driven by the dismal economic performance of many countries and pressure from the World Bank, the IMF, and business elites. Privatization and deregulation eventually boosted innovation and competitiveness, but they also created new sources of profit for armed groups and made it easier for them to recruit. While average incomes finally began to grow around 2002, producing a strong new African middle class, the number of poor people on the continent has also risen. Sub-Saharan Africa is now home to over half of the world's extreme poor: 490 million people as of 2021, up from 284 million in 1990.

Nigeria's experience with economic liberalization in the mid-1980s showed how dangerous these economic shifts could be. Faced with enormous debts, falling oil revenues, and a general economic crisis, the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida decided in 1986 to implement an IMF program that devalued the currency, cut spending on social services and subsidies, and privatized state-run companies. As a result, average incomes plummeted, and many people had to drop out of school and could no longer afford to see a doctor. Although Nigeria's economic fortunes eventually improved, the initial shock of the reforms undermined the legitimacy of the Nigerian state and accentuated divisions within society as politicians resorted to ethnic and religious appeals to shore up their own legitimacy. Liberalization also created opportunities for graft and illicit business, giving rise to petroleum smuggling, commercial and financial fraud, and the drug trade. As in all illegal markets, those who wielded violence enjoyed an additional advantage.

Economic liberalization also created a population of willing foot soldiers for armed groups. By concentrating agricultural capital and land in the hands of a small elite, the IMF-led reforms devastated rural peasants and widened the economic disparities between urban and rural areas. Cities beckoned more than ever, promising consumerism and opportunity but delivering mainly sprawling slums. Left behind in the Nigerian countryside were large numbers of subsistence farmers with shrinking farms and dwindling economic prospects. As was the case elsewhere in Africa, these marginalized rural dwellers joined armed

groups in disproportionate numbers, pointing to a related shift in the nature of conflict on the continent: whereas previous rebellions had recruited from both urban and rural populations, bridging the two, many recent insurgencies—in the Central African Republic, Congo, South Sudan, and Sudan, for instance—have been largely composed of rural fighters operating mainly in the countryside. Concerned primarily with extracting resources from the state rather than seizing control of it, these movements have little intention of taking over large cities. Armed rebellion has thus become geographically peripheral at the same time as it has become economically and politically central.

Africa has entered an age of grinding low-level conflict and instability.

But it was not just economic liberalization that set the stage for a new kind of war; it was political liberalization, as well. After the end of the Cold War, multiparty democracy was introduced across most of Africa. This political opening had many benefits. It drew would-be insurgents away from the battlefield and into electoral politics. It redirected resources away from armed groups and toward political parties and elections. And it changed norms across the continent. In 2002, the African Union formally obligated its members to reject unconstitutional changes of government. This political transition brought encouraging reforms in some countries, such as Ghana and Malawi, but in many others, it remained incomplete, producing regimes that blended authoritarianism and patronage politics with some form of electoral competition—what some have called "illiberal democracies" or "hybrid political orders."

From the Congo to Kenya to Nigeria, political elites used the electoral system to bolster their legitimacy and divide their opponents, but they have also often resorted to backing armed groups in order to enhance their status, intimidate their rivals, or extract resources. Since the outcome of competitive elections suddenly determined how public patronage would be shared, elites now had enormous incentives to manipulate the electoral process and capture the political system. In Mali, for instance, a country once hailed as a standard-bearer for democracy on the continent, the political system was eventually hijacked by national elites and regional "big men," fueling subsequent cycles of insurgency. Once in office, political leaders in dysfunctional and weak electoral democracies were incentivized to use conflict and ethnicity to

pit their opponents against one another and stay in power. This was the playbook of Mobutu Sese Seko in what was then called Zaire (now Congo) in the 1990s, and it has been that of various political leaders in Kenya and of President Paul Biya in Cameroon.

It should come as no surprise that a wave of incomplete democratization that invited corruption and ethnic strife delivered little in the way of accountability and oversight. In Congo, almost a third of parliamentarians do not even bother show up to vote. The government has never audited the security services, despite repeated allegations of corruption and the poor performance of the military. Part of the problem is that elected officials often feel no obligation to their constituencies. Many political leaders I interviewed in Kinshasa displayed little knowledge of or interest in the conflict in the eastern part of the country. "Those people have always been at war. Nothing we can do will change that," one member of Parliament from Kinshasa told me. "When I campaign in my constituency in Kinshasa, no one ever asks me about violence in the eastern Congo," another told me. The situation is similar in Nigeria. According to a 2017 Gallup poll, only nine percent of voters said that addressing violence should be the government's top priority.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Violence as a lifestyle and a bargaining strategy is not unique to Africa. An equally perverse symbiosis between the government and insurgents can be found in Mexico, where the per capita homicide rate is at least as high as that of Congo or Nigeria. There, too, economic liberalization and democratization have played a role in escalating violence. As the researchers Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley have shown, for 71 years under the single-party rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, Mexico's government managed and profited from the drug trade without inviting anywhere close to the current level of bloodshed. When Mexico transitioned to democracy in 2000, however, this centralized management of the drug trade broke down. Feuds between different cartels broke out, even as most of them maintained ties to the state. Similar networks linking political and economic elites to criminal gangs and militias can be found in other Central American countries, as well as in some of Brazil's major cities.

What sets African conflicts apart is the degree to which foreign donors and diplomats have unwittingly become complicit in the violence.

Warring elites in Somalia and South Sudan have regularly used peace processes as vehicles for extracting rents from international donors. Congo provides another cautionary tale. To cement the 2003 peace deal, donors helped rewrite the country's mining, tax, and investment codes in order to improve transparency and attract foreign companies. Their hope was to create a middle class that could one day hold the government accountable. Instead, they opened the way for an enormous influx of foreign capital, much of which Congolese elites were able to siphon off despite the new laws. Estimates of the amount stolen in just a few of these deals range from $1.3 billion to $5.5 billion. Documents leaked from a Gabonese bank showed that members of Kabila's family embezzled at least $138 million in state funds between 2010 and 2020. In addition to helping the Congolese people hold their government accountable, in other words, foreign donors helped build a system that drained the Congolese state of much of its revenue.

Africa's international partners have an even worse record when it comes to situations in which their national security interests are on the line. In order to fight terrorism and stem migration, for instance, the United States and various European countries have routinely backed African security forces more intent on protecting their own privileges than on securing their populations. The United States provided $118 million in military aid to Uganda in 2019, for instance, even though Museveni's authoritarian government frequently uses force against its own citizens. France was even bolder, deploying its own military to Chad in 2008 and 2019 to help defeat rebels trying to oust the country's authoritarian president, Idriss Déby, a key French ally in the Sahel. And the United States and European states are not the only sources of such funding. In 2019, Burundi's government received $13 million from the United Nations, or roughly 20 percent of its total military budget, in exchange for sending peacekeepers to the Central African Republic.

To avoid inadvertently reinforcing the very conflict dynamics they seek to combat, the United States, European countries, and the United Nations need not disengage from Africa or abandon the promotion of democracy. Rather, they should help strengthen and deepen the reforms initiated across the continent in the 1990s. Doing so would reinforce Africa's greatest political strength: its vibrant—and, yes, noisy and messy—pluralism. The demand for democracy in Africa is still strong. When polled, seven out of ten Africans reject autocratic rule and express support for electing their leaders.

Yet Washington has been inconsistent about backing democratic movements in Africa, wavering in its support for North African protesters during the Arab Spring and bolstering autocratic regimes in Chad, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda at the expense of democratic reform. Despite credible reports of fraud in Congo's 2018 presidential election, the Trump administration didn't just accept Félix Tshisekedi's supposed victory; it celebrated it. When I asked a senior U.S. official about this reaction, he said, "It was the best result we could hope for."

France has maintained a similar posture toward the Sahel, often appearing more concerned with shoring up its alliances there to stem migration across the Mediterranean than with promoting democracy. After Déby's unexpected death in 2021, for instance, French President Emmanuel Macron pointedly sat next to the late Chadian strongman's son Mahamat at the funeral, visibly demonstrating Paris's support for dynastic succession over a transition to democracy. "France will not let anybody put into question or threaten today or tomorrow Chad's stability and integrity," Macron declared to the gathered mourners.

But the tradeoff between security and democracy is a false one. Many of the same autocratic governments that Western governments prop up in the name of stability rule through weakness and insecurity. They tolerate and even invite conflict in order to pry aid from Western donors and facilitate their illicit business. Sending more aid to these governments makes little sense if the ruling elites can simply siphon billions of dollars from public coffers. According to the United Nations, capital flight from Africa exceeds aid to the continent by around $40 billion each year—a good chunk of which can likely be explained by corrupt elites squirreling away money abroad.

The United States and its European partners should start by reforming the international financial system that allows for and even encourages such behavior, doing away with tax havens and provisions for banking secrecy. But they should also push for even deeper structural transformations in Africa itself: free markets have produced growth and opportunities for a narrow elite there, but they have also driven the bulk of the population into precariousness. Almost every country that has made the jump from low- to middle-income status has done so thanks to significant state intervention in its domestic industries. African countries are no different. To trade with other states on a more equal basis, not just as sources of raw

materials, they will need to build up their domestic industries, which will require technology transfers, investment in education, and tax barriers to protect local companies.

Most important of all, the United States and its European partners must match their rhetoric on democracy with action. This will require taking a strong stance in defense of free elections and civil liberties, a stance that may be harder to maintain as hawkish Western officials increasingly come to see African politics through the lens of geopolitical competition with China or as an arena for counterterrorism operations. It will also require greater financial support for African democratic institutions—civil society organizations, election commissions, media outlets, independent auditing bodies, and parliaments—as well as for universities, which are the incubators of innovation and activism. The vast majority of U.S. foreign aid currently goes to health care, humanitarian aid, and economic development. Much of that is money well spent, but as a share of its economy, the United States spends a third of what France, Germany, and the United Kingdom spend on foreign aid and a quarter of what Norway and Sweden spend. It could do much more.

The Biden administration has taken a different rhetorical approach to Africa than its predecessor. On Antony Blinken's first trip to the continent as secretary of state, in November 2021, he said the United States would place a greater emphasis on democracy. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has proposed getting rid of tax havens by instituting a global minimum tax on corporations. Macron has also promised to improve France's relationship with the continent, including by creating a foundation to support democracy and by returning African art currently held in French museums. But such cosmetic changes are unlikely to alter the pattern of conflict that has taken root in Africa over the last three decades. Once entrenched, patterns of conflict tend to last.

A Force for the Future

A High-Reward, Low-Risk Approach to AI Military Innovation

Michael C. Horowitz, Lauren Kahn, and Laura Resnick Samotin

Gunpowder. The combustion engine. The airplane. These are just some of the technologies that have forever changed the face of warfare. Now, the world is experiencing another transformation that could redefine military strength: the development of artificial intelligence (AI).

Merging AI with warfare may sound like science fiction, but AI is at the center of nearly all advances in defense technology today. It will shape how militaries recruit and train soldiers, how they deploy forces, and how they fight. China, Germany, Israel, and the United States have all used AI to create real-time visualizations of active battlefields. Russia has deployed AI to make deepfake videos and spread disinformation about its invasion of Ukraine. As the Russian-Ukrainian war continues, both parties could use algorithms to analyze large swaths of open-source data coming from social media and the battlefield, allowing them to better calibrate their attacks.

The United States is the world's preeminent technological powerhouse, and in theory, the rise of AI presents the U.S. military with huge opportunities. But as of now, it is posing risks. Leading militar-

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ies often grow overconfident in their ability to win future wars, and there are signs that the U.S. Department of Defense could be falling victim to complacency. Although senior U.S. defense leaders have spent decades talking up the importance of emerging technologies, including AI and autonomous systems, action on the ground has been painfully slow. For example, the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Navy joined forces starting in 2003 to create the X-45 and X-47A prototypes: semiautonomous, stealthy uncrewed aircraft capable of conducting surveillance and military strikes. But many military leaders viewed them as threats to the F-35 fighter jet, and the air force dropped out of the program. The navy then funded an even more impressive prototype, the X-47B, able to fly as precisely as human-piloted craft. But the navy, too, saw the prototypes as threats to crewed planes and eventually backed away, instead moving forward with an unarmed, uncrewed aircraft with far more limited capabilities.

The United States' slow action stands in stark contrast to the behavior of China, Washington's most powerful geopolitical rival. Over the last few years, China has invested roughly the same amount as the United States has in AI research and development, but it is more aggressively integrating the technology into its military strategy, planning, and systems—potentially to defeat the United States in a future war. It has developed an advanced, semiautonomous weaponized drone that it is integrating into its forces—unlike how Washington dropped the X-45, the X-47A, and the X-47B. Russia is also developing AI-enabled military technology that could threaten opposing forces and critical infrastructure (so far absent from its campaign against Ukraine). Unless Washington does more to integrate AI into its military, it may find itself outgunned.

But although falling behind on AI could jeopardize U.S. power, speeding ahead is not without risks. There are analysts and developers who fear that AI advancements could lead to serious accidents, including algorithmic malfunctions that could cause civilian casualties on the battlefield. There are experts who have even suggested that incorporating machine intelligence into nuclear command and control could make nuclear accidents more likely. This is unlikely—most nuclear powers seem to recognize the danger of mixing AI with launch systems—and right now, Washington's biggest concern should be that it is moving too slowly. But some of the world's leading researchers believe that the Defense Department is ignoring safety and reliability issues associated

with AI, and the Pentagon must take their concerns seriously. Successfully capitalizing on AI requires the U.S. military to innovate at a pace that is both safe and fast, a task far easier said than done.

The Biden administration is taking positive steps toward this goal. It created the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Task Force, which is charged with spreading access to research tools that will help promote AI innovation for both the military and the overall economy. It has also created the position of chief digital and artificial intelligence officer in the Department of Defense; that officer will be tasked with ensuring that the Pentagon scales up and expedites its AI efforts.

But if the White House wants to move with responsible speed, it must take further measures. Washington will need to focus on making sure researchers have access to better—and more—Department of Defense data, which will fuel effective algorithms. The Pentagon must reorganize itself so that its agencies can easily collaborate and share their findings. It should also create incentives to attract more STEM talent, and it must make sure its personnel know they won't be penalized if their experiments fail. At the same time, the Department of Defense should run successful projects through a gauntlet of rigorous safety testing before it implements them. That way, the United States can rapidly develop a panoply of new AI tools without worrying that they will create needless danger.

FIRST-MOVER ADVANTAGE

Technological innovation has long been critical to the United States' military success. During the American Civil War, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln used the North's impressive telegraph system to communicate with his generals, coordinate strategy, and move troops, helping the Union defeat the Confederacy. In the early 1990s, Washington deployed new, precision-guided munitions in the Persian Gulf War to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

But history shows that military innovation is not simply the process of creating and using new technology. Instead, it entails reworking how states recruit troops, organize their militaries, plan operations, and strategize. In the 1920s and 1930s, for instance, France and Germany both developed tanks, trucks, and airpower. During World War II, Germany used the combined potential of these innovations (along with the radio) to carry out its infamous blitzkriegs: aggressive

offensive strikes that quickly overwhelmed its enemies. France, by contrast, invested most of its resources in the Maginot Line, a series of forts along the French-German border. French leaders believed they had created an impenetrable boundary that would hold off any attempted German invasion. Instead, the Nazis simply maneuvered around the line by going through Belgium and the Ardennes forest. With its best units concentrated elsewhere, poor communication, and outdated plans for how to fight, France swiftly fell.

It is not a coincidence that France didn't gamble with new military systems. France was a World War I victor, and leading military powers often forgo innovation and resist disruptive change. In 1918, the British navy invented the first aircraft carrier, but the world's then dominant sea power treated these ships mostly as spotters for its traditional battleships rather than as mobile bases for conducting offensives. Japan, by contrast, used its aircraft carriers to bring attack planes directly to its fights. As a result, the British navy struggled against the Japanese in the Pacific, and ultimately, Japan had to be pushed back by another rising power: the United States. Before and throughout World War II, the U.S. Navy experimented with new technology, including aircraft carriers, in ways that helped it become the decisive force in the Atlantic and the Pacific.

But today, the United States risks being more like the United Kingdom—or even France. The Defense Department appears to be biased in favor of tried-and-true capabilities over new tools, and its pace of innovation has slowed: the time it takes to move new technology from the lab and to the battlefield went from roughly five years, on average, in the early 1960s to a decade or more today. Sometimes, the Pentagon has seemingly dragged its feet on AI and autonomous systems because it fears that adopting those technologies could require disruptive changes that would threaten existing, successful parts of the armed forces, as the story of the X-45, the X-47A, and the X-47B clearly illustrates. Some projects have struggled to even make it off the drawing board. Multiple experiments have shown that Loyal Wingman, an uncrewed aircraft that employs AI, can help aircraft groups better coordinate their attacks. But the U.S. military has yet to seriously implement this technology, even though it has existed for years. It's no wonder that the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence concluded in 2021, in its final report, that the United States "is not prepared to defend or compete in the AI era."

If the United States fails to develop effective AI, it could find itself at the mercy of increasingly sophisticated adversaries. China, for example, is already employing AI to war-game a future conflict over Taiwan. Beijing plans to use AI in combination with cyberweapons, electronic warfare, and robotics to make an amphibious assault on Taiwan more likely to succeed. It is investing in AI-enabled systems to track undersea vehicles and U.S. Navy ships and to develop the ability to launch swarm attacks with low-cost, high-volume aircraft. If the United States lacks advanced AI capabilities, it will find itself inevitably moving at a slower pace—and would therefore be less able to help Taiwan fend off an invasion.

RISKY BUSINESS

Given the stakes, the defense establishment is right to worry about Washington's torpid pace of defense innovation. But outside the government, many analysts have the opposite fear: if the military moves too quickly as it develops AI weaponry, the world could experience deadly—and perhaps even catastrophic—accidents.

It doesn't take an expert to see the risks of AI: killer robots have been a staple of pop culture for decades. But science fiction isn't the best indicator of the actual dangers. Fully autonomous, Terminator-style weapons systems would require high-level machine intelligence, which even optimistic forecasts suggest is more than half a century away. One group of analysts made a movie about "Slaughterbots," swarms of autonomous systems that could kill on a mass scale. But any government or nonstate actor looking to wreak that level of havoc could accomplish the same task more reliably, and cheaply, using traditional weapons. Instead, the danger of AI stems from deploying algorithmic systems, both on and off the battlefield, in a manner that can lead to accidents, malfunctions, or even unintended escalation. Algorithms are designed to be fast and decisive, which can cause mistakes in situations that call for careful (if quick) consideration. For example, in 2003, an MIM-104 Patriot surface-to-air missile's automated system misidentified a friendly aircraft as an adversary, and human operators did not correct it, leading to the death by friendly fire of a U.S. F-18 pilot. Research shows that the more cognitively demanding and stressful a situation is, the more likely people are to defer to AI judgments. That means that in a battlefield environment where many military systems are automated, these kinds of accidents could multiply.

Humans, of course, make fatal errors as well, and trusting AI may not seem inherently to be a mistake. But people can be overconfident about the accuracy of machines. In reality, even very good AI algorithms could potentially be more accident-prone than humans. People are capable of considering nuance and context when they are making decisions, whereas AI algorithms are trained to render clear verdicts and work under specific sets of circumstances. If entrusted to launch missiles or employ air defense systems outside their normal operating parameters, AI systems might destructively malfunction and launch unintended strikes. It could then be difficult for the attacking country to convince its opponent that the strikes were a mistake. Depending on the size and scale of the error, the ultimate outcome could be a ballooning conflict.

This has frightening implications. AI-enabled machines are unlikely to ever be given the power to actually launch nuclear attacks, but algorithms could eventually make recommendations to policymakers about whether to launch a weapon in response to an alert from an early warning air defense system. If AI gave the green light, the soldiers supervising and double-checking these machines might not be able to adequately examine their outputs and monitor the machines for potential errors in the input data, especially if the situation was moving extremely quickly. The result could be the inverse of an infamous 1983 incident in which a Soviet air force lieutenant arguably saved the world when, correctly suspecting a false alarm, he decided to override a nuclear launch directive from an automated warning system. That system had mistaken light reflecting off of clouds for an inbound ballistic missile.

FAST, NOT LOOSE

The United States, then, faces dueling risks from AI. If it moves too slowly, Washington could be overtaken by its competitors, jeopardizing national security. But if it moves too fast, it may compromise on safety and build AI systems that breed deadly accidents. Although the former is a larger risk than the latter, it is critical that the United States take safety concerns seriously. To be effective, AI must be safe and reliable.

So how can Washington find a sort of Goldilocks zone for innovation? It can start by thinking of technological development in terms of three phases: invention, incubation, and implementation. Different speeds are appropriate for each one. There is little harm from

moving quickly in the first two phases, and the U.S. military should swiftly develop and experiment with new technologies and operational concepts. But it will need to thoroughly address safety and reliability concerns during implementation.

To strike this balance, the U.S. military will need to make sure its personnel get a better handle on all of the Department of Defense's data. That includes open-source content available on the Internet, such as satellite imagery, and intelligence on adversaries and their military capabilities. It also includes data on the effectiveness, composition, and capabilities of the U.S. military's own tools.

The Department of Defense already has many units that collect such data, but each unit's information is siloed and stored in different ways. To more effectively adopt AI, the Pentagon will need to build on its ongoing efforts to create a common data infrastructure. The department is taking an important step by integrating its data and AI responsibilities under the aegis of the chief digital and artificial intelligence officer. But this reorganization will not succeed unless the new official has the authority to overcome bureaucratic barriers to AI adoption in both the military services and other parts of the Pentagon.

Giving researchers better data will also help ensure that every algorithm undergoes rigorous safety testing. Examiners, for example, could deliberately feed a wide range of complex or outright incorrect information into an AI system to see if it creates a faulty output—such as a directive to strike a friendly aircraft. This testing will help create a baseline idea of how reliable and accurate AI systems are, establishing a margin of error that eventual operators can keep in mind. This will help humans know when to question what machines tell them, even in high-pressure scenarios.

Manufacturing innovative and secure AI will also require a tighter connection between the Department of Defense's Research and Engineering arm and the rest of the Pentagon. In theory, Research and Engineering is in charge of the department's technological innovation. But according to a report by Melissa Flagg and Jack Corrigan at the Center for Security and Emerging Technology, the Pentagon's innovation efforts are disorganized, taking place across at least 28 organizations within the broader department. These efforts would all benefit from more coordination, something the Research and Engineering arm can provide. One recent reason for optimism is that Research and Engineering recently created the Rapid Defense

Experimentation Reserve, an initiative that will allow the department to more quickly create prototypes and experiment with emerging technologies in high-need areas across the military, which should increase coordination and speed up adoption.

But the Pentagon can't spur more effective innovation solely through structural reforms. It will need the right people, as well. The United States is fortunate to have a highly trained and educated military, yet it requires even more STEM talent if it is going to win the wars of the future. That means the Department of Defense must hire more personnel who study AI. It also means the Pentagon should offer coding and data analytics courses for existing staff and give extra cash or more time off to employees who enroll—just as it does for personnel who study foreign languages.

As part of its overhaul, the Defense Department will also need to change its culture so that it is not, as Michèle Flournoy, former undersecretary of defense for policy, described it in these pages last year, too "risk averse." Currently, department officials often slow-walk or avoid risky initiatives to avoid the reputational damage that accompanies failure, burying promising projects in the process. This is completely backward: trial and error is integral to innovation. Senior leaders in the Pentagon should reward program managers and researchers for the overall number of experiments and operational concepts they test rather than the percentage that are successful.

Even unsuccessful investments can prove strategically useful. The Chinese military pays close attention to U.S. military capabilities and planning, allowing the United States to potentially disrupt Beijing's own planning by selectively revealing prototypes, including ones that did not pan out. China might respond by chasing sometimes flawed U.S. systems, while being uncertain about what the United States will actually deploy or develop next. If the U.S. military wants to remain the world's strongest, it must continue making its adversaries follow it around.

It will also need to develop ways to effectively use whatever technologies it does decide to deploy. Military power is ultimately more about people and organizations than widgets or tools, and history shows that even the most successful militaries need to incorporate new capabilities into their plans if they want to win on the battlefield. As conventional warfare makes an unfortunate comeback, the United States will need to adapt and restructure its military for the future—rather than resting on its laurels.

Single-Market Power

How Europe Surpassed America in the Quest for Economic Integration

Matthias Matthijs and Craig Parsons

Which has a more complete single market, the United States or the European Union? Conventional wisdom suggests an obvious answer: the United States. Since 1789, the American federation has pursued its founding mission to guarantee the free flow of interstate commerce. Although many of today's American progressives want to copy heavy-handed European models of regulation and social welfare, they confront well-organized free marketeers and business interests determined to defend the United States' system of open capitalism.

Across the Atlantic, Europe's much newer "single-market project" was conceived in envious imitation of the dynamic American economy. Although Brussels has removed many barriers between the EU's member states, observers still see parallels to the United States as aspirational. As *The Economist* put it in 2019, "In theory, . . . the EU's 500m citizens live in a single economic zone much like America, with nothing to impede the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital," but in reality, Europe's single market is "creaking," "incomplete," and in some ways "actively going backwards." Brexit, rumbling Euroskepticism on the continent, and the reintroduction of border controls during the COVID-19 pandemic have seemed to confirm this dismal image. The war in Ukraine could mark a shift—rallying EU members to new levels of cooperation on energy and defense—but the EU's single-market aspirations still face an uphill climb.

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What both sides of the Atlantic need to know is that the conventional wisdom is misleading. The United States does enjoy higher flows of interstate commerce and mobility than the EU, but not because it ever completed anything remotely close to Europe's barrier-removing project. Far from inhabiting a single economic zone today, Americans retain many costly interstate barriers that Europeans have either removed or reduced across their famous "four freedoms": the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people. Relatively greater cultural and institutional homogeneity and norms of mobility encourage Americans to trade and move across states despite such barriers, not because of their absence.

Europe's project of legislating regulatory openness, meanwhile, has gone further than most people understand. Despite the EU's aggressive reduction of interstate barriers, however, the union's heterogeneous citizens still move and trade across borders in comparatively modest numbers. As a result, the economic gains from this project are bought at a relatively high political price. EU member states have given up regulatory discretion and policy levers that U.S. states retain, and in return, they have gotten cross-border opportunities that appeal to a relatively small portion of their electorates. EU policies have restricted the room for national-level democratic choices even though there are far more diverse populations across EU member states than across U.S. states.

Understanding the realities of the world's two largest single markets reveals problems and opportunities on both sides of the Atlantic. The United States' combination of dense internal flows and taken-for-granted interstate barriers suggests potential gains, both economically and simply in terms of good governance, from adopting some EU-inspired rules. For EU member states, the comparison to the United States should encourage celebration of their achievements and absolution from the elusive goal of complete regulatory harmony. Recognizing a finish line for the single-market agenda will put their Union on a more stable political footing. A clearer understanding of both regulatory arenas can also facilitate transatlantic cooperation—something that has taken on increased urgency in light of Russian President Vladimir Putin's military invasion of Ukraine and other authoritarian states' challenges to the liberal international order.

RULES OF THE ROAD

A single market is a system of regulations that facilitates trade and mobility across jurisdictions—across state lines in the United States and between member countries in the EU. Of course, the actual economic

flows across jurisdictions can be helped or hindered by such factors as culture, geography, language, and technology—variables that are distinct from the regulations that make the market a single space of exchange. Those who overlook this distinction assume that the United States' higher flows of people and products must mean the country has more open rules for interstate exchange than the EU does.

To see how wrong that view is, first consider the legal principles for interstate exchange in both places. The U.S. Constitution's Commerce Clause assigned Congress authority over interstate commerce. The Supreme Court then interpreted that clause as implying that state-level regulation cannot unduly burden interstate commerce—but with considerable wiggle room. The legal standard today bars "purposeful discrimination," meaning that state regulation cannot disadvantage out-of-state actors unless—a big unless—it serves some plausible public purpose. In the 1970s, the Court also carved out a "market participant exception" to the Commerce Clause. When state governments participate in markets rather than regulating them—for example, by spending on public contracts or giving out subsidies—they may favor their residents.

The Court of Justice of the European Union, the arbiter of all EU law, has developed stricter principles for open trade. Starting in the 1970s, it gradually elaborated its interpretation of the EU's treaties that national measures may not "hinder or make less attractive" cross-border market access. The court also established the principle of "mutual recognition" (also known as "country-of-origin regulation"), whereby goods or services legally sold in one member state may be sold elsewhere without meeting further requirements. Member states may contravene these principles for a long list of reasons, but the court strikes down regulations that it judges to have avoidable "hindering" effects. This is a far more demanding standard than asking if they purposefully make interstate commerce more difficult.

The contrasts between U.S. and EU legal principles have been magnified by the behavior of their respective legislatures. Congress has rarely used its Commerce Clause powers to promote interstate openness. Sector-specific legislation does so in transport, telecommunications, and parts of finance, but most federal regulation privileges such goals as food and drug safety, environmental stewardship, and worker and consumer protection. Typically, such laws set regulatory floors above which states may add further requirements, which means that U.S. states can maintain disparate rules for out-of-state actors more freely than EU

Nowhere to go: trucks waiting at the German-Polish border, March 2020

countries can. Meanwhile, the EU's institutions have labored much more systematically to legislate openness. Across goods, services, capital, and people—from toys to pharmacists to securities brokers to temp workers—EU legislation aspires to a unified approach: general rules of mutual recognition, with harmonized rules in areas in which member countries balked at mutual-recognition solutions.

THEORY, MEET PRACTICE

How do these legal and legislative differences operate on the ground? Take markets for goods. Implementation of the EU's openness rules remains a work in progress—and always will. The European Commission struggles to keep up with evolving products and changes in its members' regulations. It also wrestles with "gold-plating"—when member countries add stricter requirements as they transpose EU directives into national law, much as American states add requirements above federal floors. That said, similar issues typically play out in more pro-openness ways in the EU than in the United States. For example, when Austria passed strong animal-welfare laws in 2004, EU rules required that they apply only to Austrian producers, not to incoming products (such as eggs) that meet common EU standards. By contrast, California's 2018 animal-welfare law

STEFAN BONESS / VISUM / REDUX

keeps eggs from many states out of its market. Similar comparisons arise even in sectors with relatively strong U.S. federal statutes, such as chemicals, drugs, and toys. Occasionally, the United States achieves systematic rules through "the California effect," whereby big-state requirements effectively become national standards, but this has been rare outside the classic example of auto emissions. Some goods in American markets lack any coordinated rules: elevator manufacturers tailor different models to varying state or even local standards. The same models are marketable across the EU thanks to its 1995 Lifts Directive.

In services, EU and U.S. arrangements are almost mirror images. The EU has established default rules of openness, with exceptions for certain sectors and ongoing struggles of implementation, whereas U.S. service providers confront legally separate jurisdictions with some exceptional areas of openness. EU directives for professional qualifications and services define baseline "harmonized" requirements for sensitive professions, such as doctors and architects, and otherwise stipulate that practitioners meet their home country's regulations. Special deals preserve more national autonomy in certain sectors—especially in energy, transport, and telecommunications—and implementation of harmonized requirements is far from seamless, but there is a drive to improve it. By 2023, for example, each EU member state must offer a "single digital gateway," an online portal through which workers moving from one country to another can complete 21 important administrative procedures, including asking for recognition of out-of-state qualifications.

In the United States, federal legislation sets largely nationalized rules for transport and telecommunications, but in nearly every other field, service providers must meet each state's requirements. Professionals seeking another state's license must pay fees, retest, or repeat training, even when their home state's requirements are nearly identical. For example, an experienced plumber from Georgia must pass a seven-hour exam to practice in Florida. Interstate compacts offer multistate licenses for a few professions, such as nurses, and private professional associations often reduce fragmentation by selling test-based certifications, but in both cases, states endorse these solutions in a patchwork way. Several recent state laws promise "universal recognition" of out-of-state licenses, but some of these apply only to residents, so they still exclude those offering services across borders. Arizona, for example, will now recognize a psychologist's California license if she moves to the state, but not if she wishes to see patients in Phoenix from a home base in San Francisco.

Telemedicine offers a timely example of these messy arrangements. The pandemic pushed most states to authorize virtual visits across state lines on an emergency basis, but these measures are now lapsing. Only 14 of the 50 states have authorized cross-state telemedicine permanently. It has been allowed across the EU since the early years of this century.

In the movement of capital, the U.S. federal government plays a much bigger role in governing state-level markets, but here, too, the EU has taken comparatively direct steps to facilitate openness. American federal actors enjoy far greater fiscal resources than their EU counterparts and use them to fund federal deposit insurance that substantially homogenizes the conditions for banking across the United States. U.S. federal agencies also oversee nationally chartered banks and exempt them from most state laws. But for holding companies, state-chartered banks, securities firms, and insurance, varying state rules still create a maze of reporting and regulatory requirements. Even though the same kinds of rules are even more varied across Europe's national financial systems, the EU has created a set of "financial passports" to facilitate EU-wide operations across them. Banks, securities brokers, and insurance companies that meet a set of harmonized rules for their activities may operate across the single market while respecting their home countries' additional requirements and oversight.

For the movement of people, the comparison is also mixed, but even in this area—the most politically sensitive of the "four freedoms"—Europe's system does more than the American one to facilitate openness. The U.S. Supreme Court established a "right to travel" that requires states to allow migration and to extend residency benefits to new arrivals (with some exceptions, notably in-state university tuition). This means that U.S. citizens can freely choose their residency and right away gain most related privileges but must also immediately meet their new state's requirements for licensing, working conditions, and so on. In the EU, member states have more discretion over residency but less over mobility tied to work. Member states may make residency that lasts longer than three months conditional on work, study, or resources. If they have a work contract, however, workers may be posted for up to 18 months in another country while mainly meeting their home country's regulatory requirements.

All told, the transatlantic comparison is unmistakable: in the regulation of interstate exchange, the EU has a more complete single market than the United States. Why, then, is the United States' interstate trade estimated to be three to four times as high as the EU's and its interstate mobility (depending on the measure) estimated to be ten to 20 times as great? The

answer is clearly not that American barriers are costless or that Europe's single market has made no difference. It is easy to get American firms to testify about their costs from duplicative requirements, and a barrage of econometric studies have shown that EU rules have reduced similar costs in Europe. A telling example plays out in higher education. U.S. public universities typically charge out-of-state students roughly triple the tuition of in-state students, whereas in Europe, single-market rules ban differential tuition for EU citizens. Nonetheless, Americans pursue out-of-state degrees at almost 50 times the rate of Europeans. In this sector and others, the observable pattern is that U.S. interstate flows are not easily deterred by regulatory barriers, while European flows are not easily incentivized.

The answer to this puzzle is not rocket science. It lies in U.S. homogeneity and EU heterogeneity below the level of regulation of interstate exchange. The United States' shared English language makes a big difference, as do parallel dynamics of cultural identity and the well-documented (although diminishing) American tradition of mobility. Wealthier young Americans and their parents pay out-of-state tuition because it is normal to go away for college. European mobility is comparatively low even within countries. Probably as important, but hard to disentangle from culture, is institutional familiarity. Rules and practices for life and work across American states are much more homogeneous than those across Europe. It may be costly for an Idahoan professional to get licensed in Florida, but the Florida job is familiar in a way that no Italian job is for an Irish newcomer. Of course, the EU's profound heterogeneity is ultimately the justification for its extraordinary single-market project. But the conventional wisdom about the European Union imitating an imagined United States has obscured important lessons for economic governance on both sides of the Atlantic.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

This portrayal of the American market as fragmented, sometimes protectionist, and often just poorly governed suggests overlooked opportunities for economic renewal. Americans' apparent insensitivity to interstate barriers already provides some of the overall macroeconomic fluidity that Europeans envy, but EU-style steps could still reduce ill-justified costs borne by mobile citizens and enhance U.S. economic dynamism. Given the social conditions favoring mobility in the American internal market, its impediments are mainly regulatory in nature, so regulatory reforms are actually more likely to produce results there than in the European market.

Pursuing such gains in the United States would look different from Europe's project but would confront no major constitutional problems. Whereas the poorly resourced EU institutions mainly act through legislative requirements that resource-rich member states must enact, the Supreme Court has prohibited similar federal impositions on states. Still, if Washington cannot require states to, say, maintain single digital gateways, it could pay them to do so. It routinely incentivizes state action in this way, but it has almost never used funding specifically to encourage market openness. More significant, although the Supreme Court may not consider itself empowered to require states to mutually recognize licenses or eschew discriminatory procurement, there is little question that Congress can. The United States' relative homogeneity means that such steps could presumably deliver benefits with fewer implementation challenges than in the EU. For example, compared to in the EU, where national educational systems are very different, in the 31 U.S. states that require out-of-state teachers to take additional training to enter a classroom (unless the teacher is a military spouse), teacher training overall is much less varied. Federal-led coordination would not need to be heavy-handed to make life easier for teachers pursuing careers around the country.

It should be possible to identify opportunities for better single-market governance without threatening the norms and merits of the American system. There is low-hanging fruit in areas where federal coordination could encourage a fairer and more open national economy. Potential gains stand out in licensing, where federal support for state-run single digital gateways could facilitate interstate mobility and business operations. This would effectively incentivize a broadening of the bipartisan legislation currently moving through Congress that would require states to recognize licenses of military spouses. An initiative for nondiscrimination in procurement could draw on lessons not only from the EU's experience but also from similar moves that Australia and Canada made in recent decades—both through federal-level proposals to which their respective provinces unanimously agreed. Congressional studies of interstate regulatory issues, like those perennially funded by the EU, could kick off this new policy agenda.

It should be surprising that this discussion is not already happening in the United States, given visible interstate barriers and a plausible federal mandate to address them. The reason is that both political parties have blind spots on these issues. Republicans see themselves as the party of free markets, but their core coalition since Ronald Reagan's presidency

has combined pro-market discourse with states' rights resistance to federal authority. Republicans have been reluctant to consider federal regulatory action, even for the original commerce-facilitating goals of the federation. Democrats' lack of interest in internal-market openness is less surprising, but also not preordained. To address concerns about poverty, racial discrimination, the environment, or monopolistic business practices, they have usually tried to impose regulatory floors on conservative states while encouraging progressive states to set higher standards. That strategy makes sense in a diverse federation but generates costs that fall disproportionately on those with less economic power. Big corporations have the deep pockets and staffing to operate across fragmented jurisdictions. It is small entrepreneurs and itinerant workers whose options are most constrained by a maze of rules and fees.

Progressives need not sacrifice the "California effect" strategy on key issues to recognize that removing some interstate barriers would help economic underdogs the most. President Joe Biden's Democratic administration could portray this agenda in practical terms of economic opportunity and fair competition, much as the European Commission has done. Republicans could support it as a return to the free-enterprise ideals on which the country was founded.

WHERE IS THE FINISH LINE?

To better understand the European Union's prospects, one must begin by marveling at the immense achievement of its single market. It has established stronger rules for internal openness than any other polity in history. Implementation remains challenging, given more diverse and powerful subunits than those in any federal state, but the project's progress has been surprisingly steady. Even through a decade of crises in the 2010s—sovereign debt woes, a refugee influx, democratic backsliding, Brexit, a rise in anti-EU populism—steps toward a more complete single market kept coming. Among the innovations in this difficult decade were the single digital gateways, an EU-wide e-procurement system, and the European Labour Authority, which coordinates national policies and enforcement on labor mobility.

Yet these achievements are simultaneously taken for granted and minimized, leading otherwise well-informed people to hold two wrong views about the single market's likely trajectory. Most widespread, as seen in *The Economist*'s 2019 characterization, is the idea that the single market is woefully incomplete and losing ground. This discourse is partly instrumental,

since it helps justify the EU's ongoing agenda, but it is also rooted in a sincere belief in the "bicycle theory" of European integration: without continued forward movement, it will crash. The other common presumption is that if the bicycle stays upright and the market reaches completion, Europe will converge on American-style geographic and economic fluidity. This expectation is most common among ardent Europhiles who long for such an outcome but is shared by Euroskeptics who fear the same scenario.

These views respectively discount and exaggerate what the single market can do. National resistance to EU openness has increased since the 1990s, but the prevailing sense of backsliding is more a reflection of how far the project has come than of a deep new rejection of it. The extraordinary level of openness that the EU came to demand by 2005 or so, while also incorporating new members from central and eastern Europe, understandably kicked up a populist backlash. Brexit is the strongest pushback so far, but the process of the United Kingdom's departure from the union played out so disastrously that it ended up reinforcing support for the single market. Mainstream politicians across Europe rallied to defend the "indivisibility of the four freedoms" against British hopes for retaining more selective access to the single market. Euroskeptics such as France's Marine Le Pen felt compelled to downgrade their calls for national "exits" to more run-of-the-mill criticisms of the EU's current trajectory. COVID-19 brought a new host of border-closing pressures, but once the pandemic finally wanes, the single-market agenda will continue to roll forward. Its momentum will likely receive a boost from renewed ambitions for European unity in response to Russia's military aggression in Ukraine.

Europeans should consider carefully how they want the single market to evolve, however, because American-style fluidity is neither a plausible nor a clearly desirable goal for the EU. Europe's population is less inclined to flow across interstate borders, and so the removal of each marginal interstate regulatory barrier produces less economic fluidity—and with decreasing returns once the largest barriers have been removed. National heterogeneity also raises the political costs of pursuing higher flows. In practical terms, the more that jurisdictions are institutionally different, the harder it is to cross the last mile (or kilometer) to a single regulatory space.

The advice for Europe, then, is roughly the reverse of that for the United States. Whereas Americans should start a conversation about removing their least justified interstate barriers, Europeans should discuss a completion scenario for the single market. This new phase should be presented as a celebration of Europe's achievements, not a renunciation of the project.

It could be inaugurated by studies that combine the traditional focus of EU-funded research on "the costs of non-Europe"—highlighting remaining barriers and potential gains from removing them—with newly frank attempts to identify when and where those costs should be accepted in the name of democracy and flexible policymaking at lower levels.

The key political shift will be to replace the goal of an ever more single market with a more selective prioritization of the remaining tasks. The shift could begin simply with a political recalibration in the European Commission. But given the strength of the single market's legal principles and the duty of courts to enforce them, further consolidation of a finish line might also require some reworking of directives, not just a selective focus in their implementation. This might roughly follow the precedent of the 2018 revision of the Posted Workers Directive, which strengthened member states' authority to apply minimum wages and some regulations to incoming workers.

Celebrating a finish line for the single market should also strengthen the case that the EU needs stronger tools of fiscal solidarity and joint investment to manage the asymmetric shocks that inevitably arise in such a diverse space. The EU took a historic step in this direction in the summer of 2020, creating the 800 billion euro "Next Generation EU" fund to both respond to the economic damage from COVID-19 and promote investment in green and digital transitions. Newly progressive governing coalitions in Germany and the Netherlands—led, respectively, by Olaf Scholz and Mark Rutte—have tempered those countries' long-standing veto of more permanent instruments of fiscal solidarity. A quest for more EU strategic autonomy, including through higher defense spending and energy independence from Russia, could justify further jointly financed EU initiatives. Implementing those measures alongside newly balanced goals for the single market would better align the European project with its motto: "Unity in diversity."

STRONGER TOGETHER

Clearer thinking about regulation for a single market holds significant promise for American and European politics even though these issues are not the most pressing ones on either continent. If Americans hope to mend their broken politics, they must find policy agendas with bipartisan appeal as commonsense good governance. As Europeans are galvanized by the tragedy in Ukraine to move beyond their decade of crises, they must find ways to signal that the EU can address big problems while re-

specting national diversity. By celebrating the European single market as both finite and robust, the EU can build trust that it will balance collective goals and national heterogeneity even as it develops new budgetary powers and cooperates more closely on energy and defense.

Better mutual understanding of American and European internal-market governance also holds promise for transatlantic cooperation and shared global regulatory influence. If the world's two largest single markets recalibrated their respective internal projects and aligned more effectively in terms of good practice and regulatory rule setting, they would not only foster their own economies' dynamism but also offer a formidable alternative to China's growing influence. Renewed ambitions are evident in this space: the two sides recently took steps to revive transatlantic trade in steel and aluminum, including indicating an intention to negotiate a global agreement on carbon intensity and global overcapacity, and they created the EU-U.S. Trade and Technology Council to address climate change and clean technology, data governance, export controls, investment screening, and secure supply chains.

But as a top EU official in Washington, D.C., once remarked to one of us, EU-U.S. interactions in regulatory politics run into friction between Europeans who "tend to think in terms of rules" for leveling the commercial playing field and Americans who "focus on new tools" to nudge actors in desired directions. This is especially true in how the two sides deal with an increasingly assertive China: while Europe has not given up hopes of getting Beijing to abide by the rules of the liberal international order, the United States is continuing to employ trade and financial sanctions to coerce China into behaving more like a predictable market economy. To press China to take a more cooperative stance, however, the United States itself will need to follow an agreed set of international rules, and the EU would benefit from developing more American-style tools in dealing with direct challenges of unfair competition.

If both sides recognize how much they can learn from each other's governance structures, the United States could end up being more prosperous by imitating certain EU-style rules, and the EU could rest on more stable political foundations by adopting some U.S.-style institutional tools. Restoring a sense of stability and predictability in the transatlantic economy would be a welcome change, and it would allow the United States and Europe to jointly face the pressing challenges coming from a revanchist Russia and an authoritarian China.

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

WSAM ALMOKDAD / REUTERS

What War Is Still Good For

Why States Fight

Bridget L. Coggins

Why We Fight: The Roots of War and the Paths to Peace
BY CHRISTOPHER BLATTMAN.
Viking, 2022, 400 pp.

It is not a good time to publish a book about war that begins, as Christopher Blattman's *Why We Fight* does, by belaboring just how improbable armed conflict is—even between enemies, even when they engage in brinkmanship—because of the many incentives to avoid it. That isn't to say Blattman is wrong to argue that war is relatively rare and that most conflicts that have the potential to turn violent are resolved peacefully. War is indeed "in the error term," as the political scientist Erik Gartzke memorably put it: the factors social scientists have identified for explaining war don't actually predict it very well, because something random and intangible divides rivals that have reason to use force from those that actually do so. And most don't.

Rather, it is a bad time to dwell on war's rarity because, as Russia's bloody invasion of Ukraine has underscored, it only takes one to end thousands of lives and upend millions more. Those who fear war don't do so irrationally out of erroneous judgments about its probability. They do so because war is horrible and it is only natural to fear horrible things, even if they happen infrequently. It is of little comfort to Ukrainians to know that their plight is uncommon.

In Blattman's defense, his objective in framing peace as the rule is to explain the exception. *Why We Fight* seeks to answer the question of why rival powers occasionally fail to settle their differences peacefully and instead resort to war. Despite its title, however, the book offers no real theory of war. Rather, it identifies five forces, mostly culled from the literature on bargaining and social choice theory, that create a kind of taxonomy for failed bargaining between rivals: the inability to enforce or monitor compliance with an agreement, uncertainty about intentions or resolve, unchecked or unlimited interests, misperceptions or miscommunications, and motives for fighting that are intangible, such as nationalism. Blattman offers these forces, one per chapter in the first half of the book, without suggesting how they might go together or when their presence is sufficient to predict war. He simply claims that in a "fragile" society, "the five forces have eliminated most of the room for two enemies to find a compromise."

Why We Fight is more successful as an introduction to the bargaining model of war, which seeks to explain conflict as a complex bargaining interaction. A development economist and professor of conflict studies at the University of Chicago, Blattman deftly translates knotty ideas from game theory and

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social choice theory for a lay audience, weaving in colorful anecdotes from his own life and travels. Parts of the book are compelling, in particular his account of postconflict development work he did together with his partner. But by focusing on abstract forces, Blattman largely neglects the main protagonists in war—sovereign states, the international system, and the leaders who make life-and-death decisions. Ultimately, it is the incentives, norms, and culture of these actors that explain why we fight.

WHAT IS WAR?

Part of the problem with Blattman's book stems from his imprecise definition of war. Unlike most political scientists, who define war according to strict criteria, including a minimum threshold for battle-related deaths, Blattman defines it as "any kind of prolonged, violent struggle between groups." Such wars need not kill or injure people or even be politically motivated. They can cause mostly property damage or involve violence used entirely for private ends. Gang warfare within prisons fits his definition, but the Cold War doesn't.

In political science, definitions are not so much true or false, right or wrong, but more or less useful. They limit scope and add precision. They help make arguments transparent and falsifiable. But Blattman's definition of war isn't just too ambiguous to be useful; it trivializes war to such an extent that it actively muddies the waters.

Blattman describes as wars all manner of things that cannot be seriously considered such. He cites, for instance, soccer hooliganism of the kind the author Bill Buford describes in *Among the Thugs*, his horrifying account of riotous football fans in the United Kingdom. But as violent and destructive as these fanatics were, they were not engaged in an actual war. Some hooligans did ultimately commit war crimes in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, but that is not what Blattman argues. Instead, he seems to claim that hooliganism itself is war.

A narrower definition holds that wars are violent armed contests within or between countries over who will govern. In a world of sovereign states, control of the national government is the ultimate prize in war. Political scientists tend to be very precise about how many fatalities such struggles must produce, over what time frame, in order to qualify as wars. According to one commonly accepted definition of civil war, for instance, one or more armed actors must kill at least 1,000 people over the course of a year while attempting to take or retain control of part or all of a country, and there must be substantial losses on more than one side. For an interstate war, two or more countries must clash violently, again causing at least 1,000 deaths in a single year. Political scientists and historians disagree on the specifics, but they largely agree that war is distinct from other kinds of political violence, as are its causes. Russia didn't invade Ukraine for the same reason that gangs terrorize communities in Colombia. Nor is a viable policy response to gang violence, or an effective approach to managing it, going to help end the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Blattman's overly inclusive definition of war leads him to conflate it with "state fragility," a term that is more

common in policy circles than in scholarly ones but in neither place means war. Fragile, less developed places, such as Colombia or Liberia, may be more prone to political violence than stable, wealthy ones. They are not, however, in a state of war already.

Blattman's taxonomy also fails to explain why some fragile countries collapse into war and some do not (in part because it fails to distinguish between the condition of fragility and that of war). To have advanced a real theory of war, he would have had to examine a single fragile case and detail how each of the drivers in his taxonomy interacted there to prevent successful bargains and thereby lead to violence. He might have also shown how expensive, time-consuming development efforts failed to prevent conflict in a fragile place that has lapsed into war. Instead, he offers a jumble of factors that do not meld into a coherent story of how war begins or might be ended.

TEN COMMANDMENTS

In the second half of the book, after laying out his five forces that drive conflict and fragility, Blattman turns to the characteristics that make "stable and successful societies" better able to strike bargains for peace. Outside active war zones, the development economist is on firmer ground, since observational studies are more feasible in such settings, and so the experimental methods of economists are better able to determine which stabilization and development techniques work and which don't. The secrets of successful societies are interdependence, checks and balances, the enforcement of rules, and interventions such as peacekeeping missions and sanctions. Each counteracts at least one of the forces that cause bargaining failures, generating resilience. Blattman likens them to preventive medicine.

At times, however, even this part of his analysis is flawed and ahistorical. For example, in attempting to refute the theory, most closely associated with the sociologist Charles Tilly, that war between European powers led to the creation of the modern state, he cites the irrelevant examples of Botswana and South Korea. "Warfare doesn't play an obvious role in their success," he writes of these "growth miracles of the twentieth century." Setting aside the fact that Tilly's theory pertains to state building, not economic growth, it is hard to understand why Blattman would cite a country that is still technically at war with the North as an example of a state forged by peace. Not only were South Korea's institutions formed and transformed by military interventions, occupations, and experiences of war, but two of its early governments were military dictatorships.

Having offered no theory of war, the book would have been ambitious to suggest paths to peace or even ways to achieve the characteristics of the stable, resilient societies set out as models. *Why We Fight* wisely avoids doing so. In lieu of solutions, it offers ten "commandments"—principles by which individuals who want to help generate more bargains short of war should operate. They are the following: differentiate simple problems from "wicked" ones, that is, ones with complex causes that are difficult to disentangle; don't worship grand plans or best practices; don't forget that policymaking is political; "honor thy

margins," or work incrementally; practice structured trial and error by tinkering with many potential solutions; learn from failure; be patient; expect less; be accountable; and "find your margin," or zero in on the small piece of the world where you can tinker to good effect. These commandments might help aid and development workers do a better job. None of them, however, will help Ukrainians resist Russian aggression or help the United States and its allies resolve the crisis.

In the relatively more predictable fragile societies and postconflict settings where Blattman has done much of his work, moreover, his most useful advice is already well heeded. Nongovernmental organizations and governments are no longer using cookie-cutter development planning. The World Bank has fundamentally changed its approach to fragile states, trading strict economic principles for broader ones that take into account security and equity. Even the U.S. State Department's Stabilization Assistance Review, which in 2018 assessed the lessons learned from previous U.S. interventions, concluded that small pilot programs are often more effective than grand schemes at first. And the Global Fragility Act, passed in the U.S. Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support in 2019, sets out an ambitious strategy for a more humble, cooperative, and local approach to U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance. But most of this, too, is not really about war. It is about social and economic development.

A CULTURE OF CONFLICT

In order to understand war—much less prevent or end it—one must pay much more attention to the state itself. States are fundamentally different from the gangs and firms that Blattman presents as belligerents in his book. They have sovereign authority and so have very different incentives than other actors in the international system. These incentives—to secure the territory claimed by a distinct political community and defend interests that extend beyond that territory—explain why states go to war with one another and why rebel groups go to war with a state in order to seize it or create a new one via secession. They also help explain why states make alliances that eventually drag them into war and why citizens willingly take up arms to defend their country.

But the incentive structure created by the international system of sovereign states does not fully account for why humans fight. War is both an institution and a culture, and as such it is a product of human decisions. As the political scientist John Mueller has argued, the most obvious way to prevent war is to change the culture of violence among states—that is, change leaders' minds about when it is appropriate to wage war against other countries, foreign populations, or even their own citizens. Dueling was once culturally acceptable but is now obsolete. War might one day be a similar anachronism, although Blattman's framework—in which war is the natural result of a breakdown in bargaining—doesn't allow for this possibility. For such an enduring cultural institution to fall by the wayside, however, its perpetrators must come to see it as grotesque, immoral, and unnecessary—not just rare and improbable.

Out of Africa

The Real Roots of the Modern World

Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò

Born in Blackness: Africa, Africans, and the Making of the Modern World, 1471 to the Second World War
BY HOWARD FRENCH. Liveright, 2021, 512 pp.

Africa remains poorly understood by the rest of the world and frequently distorted in global conversations, whether in the work of African and Africanist scholars, the reporting of journalists, or the missives of aid workers. They tend to see Africa as exceptional, defined by its difference. An asymmetry shapes the way people—Africans and non-Africans alike—describe the continent. For instance, Belgium (with its perennial tensions between French speakers and Flemish speakers), Canada (home to a sometimes rancorous Québécois separatism), and Russia (where many ethnic minorities are uneasily parceled into republics) are seen as multinational federations, but the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Nigeria are sites of so-called nation building, where motley tribes need to be forged into nations. What counts as federalism elsewhere becomes tribalism in Africa.

Africa even as a geographic concept remains fraught. The continent is often divided between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, a distinction that traces back to the nineteenth century and is rooted in racist beliefs about the differences between the groups in the predominantly Arab northern areas and those in what was then called "Black Africa." The German philosopher Georg Hegel, for instance, dubbed the northern part of the continent "European Africa" to yoke the cultural legacy of Egypt to Europe while denying that Africa was ever a part of the movement of history. The continued use of this distinction maintains the unjustified bifurcation of the continent in the global imagination.

Africa also manages to exist outside of time. It is the only continent whose history intellectuals are content to reduce to just three periods: a long precolonial period, a relatively short colonial period, and the ongoing postcolonial period. As a result, the sweep of African history pivots around the late-nineteenth-century European conquest of much of the continent. Compare this understanding of the African past to its European equivalents. Scholars break up European history into a plethora of periods, from classical antiquity to the so-called Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and so on. No one deigns to periodize Europe's history simply in terms of colonialism. Africa, on the other hand, is the land that time forgot, dragged into the march of history only through its encounter with Europe.

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An undeniable consequence of this way of thinking is the near-total erasure of Africa; its social, political, and cultural life; its intellectual contributions; and the biographies of its thinkers from the annals of global history. The challenge of retrieving Africa from this mute presence motivates *Born in Blackness*, the latest book by the writer and journalist Howard French. He combines the investigative and descriptive tools of a seasoned, much-traveled reporter with the scholarly credentials of an academic working within archives. The book explores the complex relations between Africans and Europeans in the centuries before the imposition of formal colonialism at the end of the nineteenth century, rejecting much of the received wisdom about this period. In so doing, French aims for a bigger target than merely illuminating Africa's past: he demonstrates in this magisterial synthesis that Africa was never marginal to global events; rather, it is the place where the modern world came into being.

AFRICA AT THE CENTER

Africa plays only a limited role in the conventional story of the creation of the modern world. The need to find alternative trade routes to Asia propelled the European voyages of discovery in the fifteenth century and onward. Europeans found the Americas by accident, and the evolution of the modern age unfolds from there: the genocide of native peoples, the expansion of settler colonization, the development of the transatlantic slave trade, the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution it spawned, and the imperialism that turned Europe into a global economic power. Events in Africa don't fit into this narrative until the growth of the slave trade, and then the continent appears only silently, as a source for bodies that were put to work for the creation of stupendous wealth.

French seeks to upend this story. Africa was not merely an arena of European domination or a sideshow in the drama of emerging maritime empires and global networks but rather the center of a more complicated story. "The first impetus for the Age of Discovery was not Europe's yearning for ties with Asia, as so many of us have been taught in grade school," French writes, "but rather its centuries-old desire to forge trading ties with legendarily rich Black societies hidden away somewhere in the heart of 'darkest' West Africa." Portuguese and Spanish expeditions sailed along the West African coast in the fifteenth century, searching for gold. In so doing, they exploded some of the myths that had discouraged exploration, reaching the Cape of Good Hope in 1488. Both Christopher Columbus and Bartolomeu Dias, to mention just two of Iberia's most famous sailors, relied on the knowledge and skills accumulated in these voyages to mount their journeys to the Americas.

French reminds readers that Africa was never isolated from the rest of the world, and indeed it appeared vividly in the European imagination as a place of great riches. Its legend was fanned by the extraordinary (and profligate) pilgrimage of Mansa Musa, the Malian king who traveled to Mecca in 1324 in a gold-laden caravan of 60,000 people, dispensing largess at every stop along the way. (He apparently left so much wealth in Cairo that its traders had to

contend with the ensuing inflation for over a decade.) The Portuguese struck gold in Elmina, on the southern coast of modern Ghana, in 1471 and within a decade had constructed the fort there that still stands today.

French draws on fascinating material from numerous archives across the globe. For instance, he highlights the extraordinary finding of a catechism published in the Bantu language of Kimbundu in Lima in the seventeenth century, a measure of the active role played by Africans in the conquest and transformation of Latin America and, moreover, a sign of the "creolization"—the mingling of cultures and identities and the creation of new ones—that he takes to be one of the pillars of the modern world. The detail he includes is often revelatory, such as the account of how Portuguese sailors made their way east along the African coast and dealt with complex political formations, such as the kingdoms of Benin and Kongo. French's careful evocation of such episodes renders all the more glaring their absence from the conventional historical narrative.

The dynamics of these interactions between Africans and their European trading partners reveal many errors in dominant modes of thinking, including the notion that Africans were principally victims in these encounters—a view popularized by proponents of decolonization who imagine that Africa's relations with Europe were forever enmeshed in subordination. Quite to the contrary, French argues that European visitors to African states, big or small, often engaged with their African hosts as equals and respected their sovereignty, including in the period that gave rise to the transatlantic slave trade. This kind of nuance and historical grain can be hard to see thanks to the stilted conceptions of African history that consign all that happened before the late nineteenth century to a single, undifferentiated period in which nothing of real interest occurred.

FROM SLAVE MARKETS TO CAFÉS

Africa did not just spark Europe's "Age of Exploration"—a curiously benign term for voyages that led to genocide, conquest, and enslavement. French makes a more ambitious claim still: historians can find in these early European interactions with Africa the foundations of the modern world. Modernity was "born in blackness." French shows that almost all the institutions and practices emblematic of the modern economy, the sources of the wealth of Europe and North America, and the emergence of original cultural forms so essential to modern life—in areas as diverse as religion, music, philosophy, and food—are all traceable to antecedents in Africa and the early relations between Africans and Europeans.

For example, the Portuguese used the island of São Tomé from around the beginning of the sixteenth century to develop the prototype of the plantation economy that later spread across the Americas. It was an uninhabited island that became a base for slave-raiding expeditions into the interior of West Africa. Portugal then used the island as a dumping ground for convicts and other undesirables, including Jews, who joined African slaves in working on new sugar plantations. São Tomé would subsequently become a slave market that supplied

Horror story: a cell once used to hold enslaved Africans, Elmina Castle, Ghana, November 2015

labor to the gold mines of Elmina and, later, to the Americas. The economic model that produced the wealth of the leading countries of the modern age in western Europe and the Americas was built on the extreme exploitation of African labor, first in Africa, after which it "soon spread to the New World, with all of the grotesque inhumanity inherent to it."

Elsewhere, the exploitation of Black labor enabled the development of cultural forms that remain pervasive and powerful today. Slavery produced not just the material basis of the wealth of the modern age; it also was integral to the production of coffee and sugar. According to French, the first coffee shop in western Europe opened its doors in 1650 in Oxford. "The availability of hot, sweetened, stimulating drinks" attracted people to cafés across Europe and helped build a culture of conversation and debate that would eventually lead to "the modern public sphere."

There is no doubt that this is a game-changing book. But it does make some unfortunate omissions. French's principal motivation is to restore African agency and the part the continent played to narratives of the origins of modernity. So it is surprising, and even ironic, that he does not draw from the intellectual contributions of African thinkers to the very debate about modernity that he is exploring. Outside of the potentates whom he makes into standard-bearers of African agency, French skips over how African intellectuals responded to European conquest and colonization. The irony is deeper still given the core role of West Africa, including modern Ghana, in producing some of the most important philosophical and political responses to modernity, such as the Constitution of the

MELANIE STETSON FREEMAN / THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Fante Confederacy, promulgated in 1871, which ranks as one of the earliest efforts at liberal constitution-making outside Europe and the United States. The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia deserves serious attention, given its almost wholesale adoption of the founding principles of the Constitution of the United States—embraced as an indictment of the original country's failure to live up to its ideals when it came to its Black citizens.

French could have also explored the nineteenth-century writings of the Sierra Leonean writer James Africanus Beale Horton, the Liberian thinker Edward Wilmot Blyden, and the Black American priest Alexander Crummell, all of whom sought to reform and remodel African societies and indicted European colonialists for their hypocrisy in denying Africans the fundamental tenet of the age: the prerogative of human beings to be the authors of their own lives and not be ruled without consent. Their writings made bold, universal claims and demonstrate how modernity was created not just by Europeans but by Africans, too.

The greatest contribution of French's book is how it underlines that very point. Some of the modern world's foundations may lie in the European Renaissance and the Reformation, but that world did not simply emerge out of whole cloth from Europe. For instance, it took the Haitian Revolution, which culminated in the eviction of the French from Haiti in 1804, to make clear that the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity were truly universal ones and not bounded by race. Africans and the African diaspora were not bystanders but essential agents in the making of the modern world.

In recent years, a growing number of politicians and others in Europe and North America (often on the anti-immigrant right) have reprised the old rhetoric of the nineteenth century in praising the supposedly exceptional virtues of "Western civilization" and demeaning the cultures of other places. They see modernity as the rightful preserve of their societies, while casting Africa as traditional or even "backward." In their own way, antiracist theorists of decolonization also see the world in binary terms: Africans were permanent victims of the rapaciousness of Europeans, and they remain so. French offers a very different view: centuries of interactions between Africans and Europeans have shown that modernity belongs to no particular culture; it is a human inheritance. His book doesn't so much reframe African history as it seeks to reframe global history and how people imagine their place in the world.

Deep Takes

Does a Better Future Lie in the Prehistoric Past?

Walter Scheidel

The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity
BY DAVID GRAEBER AND DAVID WENGROW. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021, 704 pp.

Just how new can a new history of humanity hope to be? Scholars have long agreed on the overall contours of human social evolution. For most of their existence, humans were few in number, lived in small groups, and spent much of their time foraging and hunting. Once the climate stabilized after the end of the last Ice Age, around 12,000 years ago, novel ways of feeding and organizing humanity finally became possible, from farming and herding to cities and states. People, domesticated crops, and livestock multiplied and were drawn into an ever-tighter symbiosis. Before long, social hierarchies and structures of control proliferated. Kings, priests, and scribes learned how to lord it over the masses. Such early civilizations laid the foundations for the world today.

The Dawn of Everything, a recent bid to rewrite human history from the late anthropologist David Graeber and the archaeologist David Wengrow, does not dispute the outlines of this story. Instead, the authors sift the grain of the past to offer a tantalizing tale of complexity and hope. Graeber and Wengrow argue that the emergence of hierarchical societies and freedom-quashing states was not inevitable. People have long cherished their freedoms and experimented with a wide variety of social and political arrangements. The book trawls the depths of human history, meandering from Neolithic Ukraine to the Sumerians of Mesopotamia to the Harappan civilization of the Indus River basin to the Olmec, Yurok, and Wyandot peoples of the Americas and on even to the European Enlightenment. The pathways of history, the authors insist, were actually rather tangled, full of twists and forks and detours. The world may now consist of deeply unequal societies and states that can exert once unimaginable degrees of control over their citizens, but it didn't have to be this way—and maybe it doesn't have to be this way in the future.

The authors imagine that once properly appreciated, the richness of the human experience and the contingency of historical outcomes will inspire people in the present to reconsider their own options. After the great financial crisis of 2008, the battered masses failed to shake up the late-capitalist order and forge a more righteous path. That came as a disappointment to Graeber, an anticapitalist scholar with anarchist sympathies, known for his spirited critiques of debt and "bullshit jobs." A seasoned activist, he was involved in the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011,

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which eventually fizzled out after months of grabbing headlines.

But if Graeber couldn't maintain an occupation of the present, perhaps the past would make a more obliging subject. He set out to show that grassroots democracy—the freedom for people to associate, deliberate, and decide how to lead their lives—had long been common around the world before uncompromising bureaucrats came on the scene to snuff it out. And better still, rediscovering those buried traditions could inspire people today to give it another try, armed with the knowledge that civilization and popular self-determination had once thrived side by side.

Graeber joined forces with Wengrow, a well-known archaeologist of the ancient Middle East, to get the ball rolling. They completed their project only days before Graeber's untimely death in September 2020, just as it was becoming clear that the revolution had once again been postponed. Central banks, scientific breakthroughs, and Zoom were taming the effects of COVID-19, which hopeful pundits had initially talked up as a possible catalyst for progressive political transformation. What remained, just as it did after the 2008 financial crash, was a lingering craving for change, or at least for an uplifting vision of a better world. Graeber and Wengrow seek to address that desire with a seductive story in which human agency rules supreme. In the process, they sideline powerful material drivers of social change—such as ecology, demographics, and technology—to offer readers a welcome escape from modern anxieties about global warming, immigration, and job-stealing robots. Materialistic explanations of the past might interfere with their goals, since such interpretations might persuade people that they are pinned down by forces and circumstances beyond their control. Self-styled myth busters, Graeber and Wengrow eagerly lay the foundations for a new, more upbeat myth, one of ancient human self-determination ready to break free once again. The result is a dizzying mix of subtle feints, playful conjectures, and strategic silences, far less revolutionary than promised, yet strewn with snares for inexpert and unwary readers.

CITIES WITHOUT KINGS

Conventional narratives of human social evolution tend to skip over the many thousands of years that separated Ice Age hunter-gatherers from the first literate civilizations, such as Egypt in the time of its glamorous pharaohs and mighty pyramids. The authors seek to train attention on this neglected period of human history—a worthy goal. They contend that prehistoric foragers were not simply ancestral versions of the tiny bands that hang on today in remote corners of the planet. Back when everyone hunted and gathered, the world's prime real estate was theirs for the taking. Feasting on the abundant game, seafood, and wild plants of the early Holocene, they were free to come together in large collectives and also free to disperse. Hunter-gatherers didn't just drift through the centuries; they left their mark. Seasonal gatherings enabled them to tackle grand projects. Eleven thousand years ago, for instance, foragers quarried and hauled huge stone pillars to erect ceremonial structures at Gobekli Tepe, in present-day Turkey.

Cradle of civilization: pyramids in Teotihuacán, Mexico, February 2021

TOYA SARNO JORDAN / REUTERS

This flexibility to shift between different lifestyles and group sizes survived long after people began to cultivate crops in different parts of the globe, anywhere from 12,000 to 5,000 years ago. For millennia, foragers experimented with food production without fully submitting to its harsh strictures, stepping in and out of agriculture in lives of "play farming," as Graeber and Wengrow somewhat patronizingly put it. Modest human populations and easy access to wild resources allowed these societies to keep viable exit options open until ongoing population growth made abandoning agriculture impossible.

Graeber and Wengrow conclude that the simplistic models of social evolution that draw a straight line from forager bands to tribes and chiefdoms to ever-larger states are too crude to be of much value. With impressive élan, they delve into "what happens if we accord significance to the 5,000 years in which cereal domestication did not lead to the emergence of pampered aristocracies, standing armies, or debt peonage, rather than just the 5,000 years in which it did." For instance, the rise of cities didn't necessarily augur the emergence of rigid hierarchies and institutions of social control. In around 7,000 BC, thousands of people lived in densely packed housing in one of the earliest known large communities, Catalhuyuk (also in present-day Turkey). Curiously, scholars have not found any evidence of ruling elites at the site or of the practice of agriculture.

Later urban centers that relied on cultivated crops did not automatically come with the conventional package of kings, priests, and bureaucrats. Some did just fine without monarchs, most notably the enigmatic Indus Valley civilization, which stretched over much of modern-day Pakistan and northwestern India in the second millennium BC, and Teotihuacán, a grand metropolis of a whopping 100,000 residents in central Mexico

that flourished during the first five centuries AD. In both cases, archaeologists have found little evidence of kingship or social stratification, and commoners seemed to enjoy high-quality housing. Autocracy may have spread far and wide, but it was never universal. Forms of representative governance persisted in many parts of the world. In 1519, Hernán Cortés's conquistadors chanced on Tlaxcala, in central Mexico, a republic run by a council that convened popular assemblies to deliberate about public affairs. Graeber and Wengrow rightly insist that the Americas before the arrival of Christopher Columbus deserve the attention of historians; the pre-Columbian New World should not be consigned to anthropologists and archaeologists alone.

More broadly, the authors are at their best when they question the scholarly and popular fixation with monumental splendor and powerful states. Even if the art produced by the Mayas in the "post-classic" era, after AD 900, was less sophisticated than that of the "classic" period, which stretched from the third to the ninth century, would anyone, they ask, prefer to live under a ruler of the classic era, "who, for all his patronage of fine arts, counted tearing the hearts out of living human bodies among his most significant accomplishments?" Everybody needs a periodic reminder that the societies whose works yielded the fanciest museum exhibits and the most spectacular tourist sites were not always the most appealing.

MAKING A RULE OUT OF EXCEPTIONS

The range of the authors' curiosity makes the book very much worth reading. But quicksand lurks underneath. Graeber and Wengrow are unhappy about the course of history: "There is no doubt that something has gone terribly wrong with the world," they write. Fully aware of how historical outcomes converged over time toward growing state power and social inequality, they nevertheless prefer to dwell on cherry-picked cases that, it seems, bucked the trend. They don't resolve the resulting tension between individual examples and the overall direction of human development, granting the exceptions far more significance than the rule.

That habit, in turn, makes it needlessly difficult to explain historical transitions. They warn against assuming that advanced forager societies were always poised to embrace agriculture. That may be—but if none of them had ever crossed that threshold, there would never have been any farmers at all. Making light of the connection between an early adoption of farming and the subsequent emergence of large-scale societies and states, they fail to note that the latter invariably appeared in areas blessed with the most useful food crops, including the Middle East, northern China, Mexico, and Peru. The spread of nutritious crops that grew on a predictable schedule and could be taxed and stored by landlords and rulers facilitated state formation and strengthened hierarchies. Even though this nexus could not be any clearer, Graeber and Wengrow dismiss it as "so broad as to have very little explanatory power."

The few cases of early cities without documented autocracies that Graeber and Wengrow find are so poorly known that they can hardly be said to add up to

a "surprisingly common pattern" of communities scaling up without elite control. But in the absence of systematic and reliable evidence, anything goes. Six thousand years ago, early grain farmers set up large oblong settlements in western Ukraine. Scholars have no idea what belief systems motivated these farmers. No matter: in some present-day Basque communities, people picture their social relations in circular terms, as a loop of connections among equals. Suddenly, Graeber and Wengrow draft those faraway Basque villagers in their effort to reconstruct the mentalities of the ancient site builders and even cite them as "proof" that "highly egalitarian organization" was possible back in the Neolithic age.

For reasons they never quite explain, Graeber and Wengrow spend a large chunk of their book inveighing against the concept of the state, which they are determined to banish from ancient history. For them, statehood implies sweeping ambitions and capabilities that are commonly associated with modern states, such as a claim to a monopoly on violence. Apparently, if early kingdoms did not measure up to modern nation-states, they should not count as states at all. Yet that is a nonissue entirely of the authors' own making, caused by their insistence on an anachronistically maximalist definition of the state that is not normally applied to premodern societies. Several generations of scholarship on how to establish the key attributes of early states fall by the wayside.

With equal confidence, the authors declare that "seeking the origins of the state is little more than chasing a phantasm." Never mind that they themselves are doing exactly that: they

channel the ghost of the German sociologist Max Weber when they explore the interplay of three different sources of social power (control over violence, control over information, and charismatic politics) in the emergence of stronger political systems. Yet they leave readers in the dark about the factors behind the gradual but inexorable growth of hierarchy, which include easily taxable crops, the struggle over resources fueled by population growth, and, in some cases, mounted warfare. Except for a belated and somewhat grudging acknowledgment of the anthropologist James Scott's 2017 book, *Against the Grain*, relevant scholarship is ignored rather than rejected, as if it did not exist.

Graeber and Wengrow claim that this snubbing of alternative viewpoints is necessary to avoid overburdening their readers. True, big global history is not for pedants and must be selective to remain accessible. But that does not mean that entire schools of thought can simply be swept under the rug. The authors always find the time to beat up straw men, whether it is unnamed "social scientists" who are never right or popularizers such as Jared Diamond, Steven Pinker, and Yuval Harari, who are miscast as representatives of mainstream historical thinking. They boast impishly of taking "the toys back from the children" when dispatching their rivals, a claim that speaks for itself.

Yet no amount of rhetorical posturing can conceal the fatal weakness of their approach. Even as Graeber and Wengrow keep asking how the human species became "stuck" in a hierarchical way of life, they don't seem to realize that their aggressive antimaterialism makes it much harder for them to answer their own question. After all, if the innate human desire to live in free and more equal arrangements was such a strong historical force, why had "lords and kings and would-be world emperors . . . popped up almost everywhere" long before the age of European colonization?

A GOOD YARN

Stymied by this inconvenient conundrum, Graeber and Wengrow beat a tactical retreat to a much narrower question: Did history necessarily have to turn out the way it did? For the most part, they don't put up much of a fight, obliquely conceding that the Old World was probably doomed to hierarchies and thuggish autocrats with the advent of grain cultivation and the appearance of early states. In the Americas, too, the Aztecs and the Incas established grimly oppressive and violent empires.

In the authors' telling, northern America (present-day Canada and the United States) held out the only real alternative. Cereal farming made just limited inroads and became even less popular after the demise of Cahokia, a massive settlement established in the eleventh century outside present-day St. Louis. The center of a precocious grain-based state run by a powerful elite that kept its people on a tight leash and orchestrated intimidating atrocities, Cahokia crashed spectacularly in the fourteenth century.

Graeber and Wengrow spin a good yarn from this. They imagine that in a deliberate "backlash" against the Cahokian model, some indigenous societies not only turned away from farming and state building but also

developed powerful concepts of freedom and equality, which, transmitted by Iroquois interlocutors to European colonizers, inspired Enlightenment discourses on those themes.

Historians of ideas will have their say about this web of conjectures. In any event, it does not actually support the notion that northern America somehow broke the familiar mold of social evolution. The region's low population densities had always made it relatively easy for societies to abandon farming and turn to foraging and hunting. Those populations shrank even further as Old World diseases and settlers wreaked havoc from the sixteenth century on. In other parts of the world, thousands of years had passed between the onset of crop domestication and the emergence of states. From that perspective, precolonial North America, where farming had begun rather late and maize had been an even later import, was not obviously lagging behind. That part of the world was unpromising terrain for conventional forms of state formation, and so the failure of such processes is not particularly remarkable. And before long, European conquest snuffed out whatever the next chapter of the story might have been. All in all, there simply isn't any reason to assume that the collapse of Cahokia had somehow opened up an alternative path for human development—unless readers follow Graeber and Wengrow in elevating ideas and free choice as the principal drivers of historical change and discarding everything else as background noise.

If their approach fails to yield convincing explanations of history, does it at least serve their second goal, to inspire activism today? Can their reimagining of the dawn of today's flawed societies help foster new, better ones? Graeber and Wengrow think so, but for no good reason.

The further foragers, gardeners, and herders have receded into the past, the less relevant their experiences have become. People today have little to learn from ancestors who, roaming a lost world of wide open spaces and abundant wildlife, were able to dodge bullies and walk away from drudgery whenever they chose. Those ancestors did not inhabit a planet of eight billion people bound together by unprecedented interdependencies, a world that needs to keep running just to stay in place. Today, people shouldn't have to fall back on ancient "play farmers" and kingless cities to envision a better future: if they want to change the world, they have to build on what it has become, not on what it might once have been.

Recent Books

Political and Legal

G. John Ikenberry

Degenerations of Democracy
BY CRAIG CALHOUN, DILIP PARAMESHWAR GAONKAR, AND CHARLES TAYLOR. Harvard University Press, 2022, 368 pp.

Many scholars have traced the crisis of Western liberal democracy to the rise of authoritarian and populist leaders. Three distinguished theorists argue that the problems run deeper. They say that liberal societies are witnessing the long-term erosion, or "degeneration," of their cultural and moral foundations. Wealth inequality and economic stagnation have exacerbated political divisions, but the bigger problem is the fraying of the civic solidarity that knits citizens together across lines of difference. The authors pay particular attention to the experience of disempowerment. Citizens no longer feel that they are participants in a political system thanks to the breakdown of social institutions such as trade unions, churches, youth sports leagues, and social service associations. The authors stress the importance of a shared identity to generate "social inclusion." This works as a sort of invisible glue without which inherent dysfunctions and divisions in society become more apparent. The authors argue that the key to reversing the degeneration is to think of democracy as a centuries-old political project. It survived in earlier eras through political movements and coalitions that made societies more inclusive and responsive to human welfare, and it must do so again.

Good International Citizenship: The Case for Decency
BY GARETH EVANS. Monash University Publishing, 2022, 96 pp.

In this inspiring and deeply reasoned book, Evans makes the case for a foreign policy that binds the interests of one's country to the well-being of the wider world. Building on ideas first advanced during his years as Australia's foreign minister, from 1988 to 1996, Evans argues that a state's "good international citizenship" can be pursued in four general ways: through the generosity of its foreign aid, through its responses to human rights violations, through its reactions to genocide and its aftermath, and through its contributions to addressing existential global dangers, such as global warming and nuclear war. He is most eloquent in making the case that states should see good international citizenship as both a moral imperative and a hardheaded calculation of the national interest. A state's enlightened foreign policy would facilitate global problem solving, encourage reciprocity, and help generate soft power. Reflecting on Australia's foreign policy record, Evans offers a mixed assessment. Australian leaders have laudably pursued "value issues"—offering relief in natural disasters and extending humanitarian assistance. But these isolated acts of charity are insufficient;

ultimately, states must understand good citizenship in the international community as integral to their self-interest and national security.

The Wrecking of the Liberal World Order
BY VITTORIO EMANUELE PARSI. TRANSLATED BY MALVINA PARSI. Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, 325 pp.

Parsi, one of Italy's leading scholars of international relations, delivers a sweeping account of the rise and decline of the liberal world order. He argues that the Western-led postwar order was a great accomplishment, built around a compromise between political realism and the transformative aspirations of liberalism, balancing the interests of capital and labor through the institutions of the welfare state and the regulation of economic interdependence. But beginning in the 1980s, these complex balances and compromises all started to unravel. The Western liberal order was slowly replaced by a "neoliberal global order." The decline of American leadership, reflected in the foreign policy of former U.S. President Donald Trump, compounded the problem, as has the rise of China and Russia as revisionist great powers seeking to roll back the frontiers of the liberal international order. For Parsi, however, the greatest danger lies in the fraying social fabric of Western liberal societies. The tableau of discontent is familiar: rampant economic inequality and technologically driven social dislocation have fueled a politics of nationalist and populist backlash. Parsi hopes that a new generation of liberal-minded thinkers will reimagine and rebuild the liberal order, beginning with a new social pact around fairer and more inclusive democratic systems.

The Architects of International Relations: Building a Discipline, Designing the World, 1914–1940
BY JAN STOCKMAN. Cambridge University Press, 2022, 280 pp.

In this fascinating work of intellectual history, Stockman challenges the conventional origin story of the contemporary era in the study of international relations, which holds that in the 1950s, a new generation of realists seized the discipline from the grasp of older idealists. Instead, he sees the origins of today's international relations in the tangled aftermath of World War I, when professors, politicians, journalists, activists, and philanthropists promoted research and education about war and the interdependence of countries. The book illuminates a remarkably large and sprawling transnational cast of characters, including women and internationalist thinkers outside the Anglo-American world, who were mostly not idealists but pragmatic problem solvers. Stockman argues that the founders of the field were "activist intellectuals" who believed that the worldwide spread of democracy would create new opportunities for citizens to debate and shape foreign policy and global institutions. Women, many of whom were teachers, journalists, and social workers, were part of this growing international community of thinkers. The Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace played supporting roles. Peace studies programs emerged in Europe. The League of Nations provided venues for problem-oriented internationalism to flourish. And the field was born at the intersection of academia and diplomacy.

Westphalia From Below: Humanitarian Intervention and the Myth of 1648
BY THOMAS PEAK. Hurst, 2021, 292 pp.

In standard accounts, the Peace of Westphalia, concluded in 1648, was the founding moment of the modern system of nation-states, establishing sovereignty as an absolute right and the principle of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of other countries. That conventional view insists that the imperatives of humanitarian intervention and "the responsibility to protect" did not arise until hundreds of years later, in the last decades of the twentieth century, as a challenge to Westphalian norms. Peak questions this notion in this provocative book by examining the intellectual and humanistic culture of seventeenth-century Europe as it emerged from the chaos and violence of the Thirty Years' War. The Westphalian settlement, in Peak's view, wasn't just an agreement among rulers to leave one another alone inside their own borders. It also captured a deeper aspiration felt by people coming out of the war: that such an order was intended to restore a sense of dignity and shared humanity in the wake of chaos. Peak shows how writers and artists in mid-seventeenth-century Europe broadly shared concerns about human dignity and desired order, justice, and social renewal. The reader, however, is left to search for explicit connections between the humanistic sensibilities of specific historical figures and the principles and architecture of the Westphalian settlement.

Economic, Social, and Environmental

Barry Eichengreen

Restarting the Future: How to Fix the Intangible Economy
BY JONATHAN HASKEL AND STIAN WESTLAKE. Princeton University Press, 2022, 320 pp.

Most of the cost of an iPhone derives not from the materials and labor used in assembling it but from the ideas, or intellectual property, underlying its fabrication. The importance of such intangible inputs, as epitomized by smartphones, is an increasingly prevalent characteristic of the modern economy, but one accompanied by a disturbing slowdown in the growth of productivity. In this thought-provoking book, Haskel and Westlake attribute this slowdown—along with other economic problems, including rising inequality and the mushrooming of monopolies—to a mismatch between institutions and policies that were created for the era of tangible capital, on the one hand, and the needs of the intangible economy, on the other. The authors' proposals for resolving this conflict are wide-ranging. They suggest changes in financial regulations to permit insurance companies and pension funds to invest in high-risk intangible assets, so as to finance and thereby encourage their development. They also recommend that governments alter patent protections to prevent firms with intellectual property from having to expend resources in fighting patent thieves.

The Wall and the Bridge: Fear and Opportunity in Disruption's Wake
BY GLEN HUBBARD. Yale University Press, 2022, 248 pp.

Hubbard uses the metaphor of walls and bridges to distinguish between public policies that seek to prevent economic change (such as import tariffs) and those that compensate people negatively affected by such changes (such as trade adjustment assistance for workers in the United States). The author celebrates the rising living standards and productivity growth made possible by the operation of markets and attributes support for the populist policies that hinder market dynamism, such as tariffs, to the inadequacy of compensation programs. He recommends strengthening existing compensation and adjustment mechanisms, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, and creating new ones, including community-college block grants and "Personal Reemployment Accounts" to support retraining workers in the wake of long-term job losses. Hubbard may be overly optimistic, however, about the ability of politicians to agree on such measures. He fails to explain why, if the case for them is so strong, compensation and adjustment programs have been chronically underfunded in the United States.

Foxconned: Imaginary Jobs, Bulldozed Homes, and the Sacking of Local Government
BY LAWRENCE TABAK. University of Chicago Press, 2021, 280 pp.

Governments in the United States and elsewhere are increasingly trying to encourage companies to "reshore" manufacturing production from places where it was offshored. Tabak's engaging study of efforts in Wisconsin to attract the Taiwanese contract manufacturer Foxconn provides a cautionary tale. Such efforts inevitably involve an information asymmetry: manufacturing firms know more about their true employment and production plans than the governments seeking to attract them. Firms are able to play competing jurisdictions off against each other to obtain tax breaks and other commercial concessions. All too often, this combination of circumstances makes for bad public policy. Tabak's book also contains two disturbing observations. First, officials can arrive at a distorted view of their constituents' interests owing to their preoccupation with free-market ideology and their obsession with manufacturing jobs. Second, the power of eminent domain, which enables governments to convert private property to public use, can work against the public interest when employing it requires subsidizing private manufacturing firms.

Growth for Good: Reshaping Capitalism to Save Humanity From Climate Catastrophe
BY ALESSIO TERZI. Harvard University Press, 2022, 368 pp.

Terzi thoughtfully engages with the "degrowth movement," whose followers argue that societies must transition away from economic growth in order to avoid climate catastrophe and address other ills of the market system, notably pervasive and growing inequality. Although he acknowledges the urgent need to attend to climate change and income inequality, he makes the case that only the resources made available by an expanding market economy will

suffice to address these problems. Containing climate change requires extensive investments on multiple fronts. But rather than being viewed as a cost to be borne, the needed projects should be seen as strategic investments with the capacity to boost growth in both the short and the long run. Firms and governments should move in this direction sooner rather than later (if only they can figure out how to work together), because the returns on green investments will be greatest for the first movers in developing and producing new clean technologies. Unavoidably, the turn away from fossil fuels will leave behind carbon-intensive sectors and their workers, amplifying concerns about inequality and creating resistance to the green transition. Governments will have to address simultaneously the two challenges of greening the economy and curbing excessive inequality for either to be successfully met.

The Illusion of Control: Why Financial Crises Happen, and What We Can (and Can't) Do About It
BY JON DANIELSSON. Yale University Press, 2022, 288 pp.

"Not another book about financial crises!" one is tempted to exclaim. Fortunately, this is an exceptionally provocative and original addition to an ample literature. Drawing on the historical record, Danielsson explains why regulators have not been more successful at limiting financial instability. They tend to focus excessively on exogenous risks (shocks coming from outside the financial system) while neglecting endogenous risks—the destabilizing responses of the participants in financial markets to those same exogenous shocks and, no less, to regulatory action. Having been encouraged in the wake of past crises to develop numerical measures of financial risks, regulators tend to place excessive confidence in the accuracy of those numbers, which are better at predicting the last crisis than the next one, given the ever-changing nature of the financial system. Regulators think of financial institutions and their activities as falling into various separate silos, and each regulator tends to care deeply about his or her particular silo, without considering the interconnectedness of the larger system. The author concludes that a more diverse financial system is likely to be more stable, for the same reasons that greater biodiversity in ecosystems, species, and individuals leads to greater systemic stability.

Military, Scientific, and Technological

Lawrence D. Freedman

The Insurgent's Dilemma: A Struggle to Prevail
BY DAVID H. UCKO. Hurst, 2022, 328 pp.

The recent Western experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq have shaped how experts think about insurgencies, which has led to a degree of fatalism about the possibility of defeating them. In this thoughtful history, Ucko offers a healthy corrective to this view, noting that insurgencies,

such as those waged by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and the so-called Islamic State (or ISIS) in Iraq and Syria, often fail. With an impressive range of examples, he explores strategies used by insurgent groups from the colonial era to the digital age. Few insurgents have the power to confront a state directly, and those who rush into military action often falter. Ucko identifies three alternative approaches that offer better prospects for success. "Localized" insurgencies involve carving out a sphere of influence in a particular rural or urban area, as happened with the Jaish al-Mahdi militia in Baghdad's Sadr City. "Infiltrative" insurgents, such as Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland, use legitimate political pathways to subvert the state while denying any connection to violence. And "ideational" insurgents create compelling narratives to generate momentum—for example, right-wing white supremacists in the United States. Ucko also discusses ways to combat and defeat these sorts of insurgencies.

The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War
BY MARK GALEOTTI. Yale University Press, 2022, 248 pp.

Galeotti, an expert on all things Russian, would no doubt accept that his analysis of how relatively bloodless forms of conflict are supplanting interstate war may seem dated after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Yet this is still a valuable and accessible guide to the insidious methods adopted regularly by the Russians and others to wage war by more covert means. The use of espionage, propaganda, bribery, counterfeiting, and extortion, often developed in collaboration with criminals, is hardly new. Galeotti provides historical precedents, including from Renaissance Italy, and reflects on how the Internet, social media, and the interconnectedness of modern societies have provided new opportunities to manipulate all aspects of everyday life. Unlike other writers on this topic, Galeotti is not in awe of these techniques: they often achieve far less than intended and can backfire on the perpetrators. With greater vigilance, Western democracies can not only fend off this subtle form of warfare but also turn it against their adversaries.

Seeking the Bomb: Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation
BY VIPIN NARANG. Princeton University Press, 2022, 400 pp.

Studies of nuclear proliferation tend to focus on the fateful decisions to acquire these deadly weapons and the motivations behind their acquisition. In this important contribution, Narang asks a different question. How do potential proliferators go about pursuing a nuclear option, and under what conditions do they succeed? He identifies four different strategies. The early nuclear weapons states were the big powers that had the resources to build the weapons on their own and so could "sprint" to the nuclear finishing line. The hedgers, by contrast, moved more cautiously in developing a nuclear option, not necessarily overtly pursuing it. Examples of this group include U.S. allies such as Japan and South Korea, which for now do not want to jeopardize their relations with Washington by getting the bomb. There are potentially many countries in this

category, especially in the Middle East, owing to concern about Iran's nuclear program. Others, such as Israel and North Korea, were able to get the bomb because allies sheltered them from the full risks of their pursuit of the weapon. The last group consists of countries that tried in secret to acquire or develop nuclear weapons in the hope that they wouldn't get caught. But that path can be very tricky, as Iran, Libya, and Syria have discovered, and can lead to trouble.

Wars of Revelation: The Transformative Effects of Military Intervention on Grand Strategy
BY REBECCA LISSNER. Oxford University Press, 2021, 240 pp.

After the disruptions and shocks of big wars, great powers must reorient their grand strategies to accommodate new international systems. Through war, alliances are forged and broken, great powers expand and contract, and new norms emerge for state practice. Lissner shows, in this well-researched and lucidly argued account, how even the less cataclysmic conflicts that followed World War II led to adjustments in grand strategy. The originality of her approach lies in her interest in what great powers learn about themselves and reveal to others during these smaller wars, which are often militarily and diplomatically demanding even when they are not waged against other great powers. She shows how the U.S. wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf led to major revisions of U.S. grand strategy. Indeed, each of these interventions challenged the assumptions of the previous war. Thanks to its intervention in Korea in the 1950s, the United States became much more of a global power and expanded its military capabilities and alliances. Thanks to the Vietnam War, the United States queried its rigid adherence to the containment of communism and Soviet influence. Thanks to the Persian Gulf War, the United States saw how it could take the lead in the post–Cold War world.

On Operations: Operational Art and Military Disciplines
BY B. A. FRIEDMAN. Naval Institute Press, 2021, 256 pp.

Having written a well-received book on military tactics, the U.S. Marine Corps reservist Friedman turns a critical eye to military operations. He argues against the "ruinous" Pentagon view that identifies an "operational level" of war between strategy and tactics. Separating the two leaves the objectives to the strategists and the detail of fighting to the tacticians, yet the real challenge is to bring the two together so that political purpose can infuse all military action. Friedman prefers the term "operational art," which blends the logistical and wider strategic aspects of military planning. In separate chapters, he considers the six discrete disciplines that need to be marshaled when fighting wars—administration, information, coordination, fire support, logistics, and command and control—and uses a range of historical case studies, from the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805 to the Battle of Britain in 1940, to show how these disciplines are deployed. This is a book for the military professional yet one of interest to anyone curious as to why some operations succeed while others falter.

Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

Greater: Britain After the Storm
BY PENNY MORDAUNT AND CHRIS LEWIS. Biteback Publishing, 2021, 352 pp.

A former public relations professional, Mordaunt is now a rising cabinet minister in the United Kingdom's Conservative government. She and her co-author call on British politicians to set forth a "clear well-executed national plan" that they promise will quell public polarization and dissatisfaction. Yet the plan they promote is internally contradictory and ducks tough tradeoffs. The government should do more, they say, but since it is hopelessly inefficient, tasks should be offloaded to private charities. Powerful business and financial firms are hollowing out the state, but economic growth requires low taxes and light regulation. Brexit is a triumph for traditional British democracy, and tighter alliances with English-speaking peoples (mostly the Americans) would solve many problems, yet relations with the United Kingdom's largest trading partner, the EU, receive not a word. Such inconsistencies are papered over with enthusiastic praise of what Mordaunt believes to be the eternally courageous, generous, resourceful, and self-effacing virtues of the British people. Despite the book's chipper optimism, a deeper cultural conflict simmers below the surface. When Mordaunt extols the success of former U.S. President Donald Trump's electoral appeal to middle America, hints at crafting a version of his agenda for the United Kingdom, and speaks of "empowering the silent majority," she offers a glimpse of an ominous possible future for the Conservative Party.

The Newspaper Axis: Six Press Barons Who Enabled Hitler
BY KATHRYN S. OLMSTED. Yale University Press, 2022, 328 pp.

Western democracies ignored the threat from Adolf Hitler and appeased him in the 1930s for many reasons. In this timely book, Olmsted focuses on the role played by the six most powerful media moguls in the United Kingdom and the United States, whose newspapers together reached a majority of their countries' readers every day. All dismissed the fascist threat and called for appeasement, and some unashamedly embraced fascism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. Moreover, they spread a polemic, sensationalistic, and personalist style of news writing that often crossed the line into outright untruth—a power in which they reveled. In the United Kingdom, Lord Beaverbrook, who boasted that he ran newspapers "purely for the purpose of making propaganda," called for isolation and appeasement. Lord Rothermere, who founded several British tabloids, praised Nazi Germany and fascist Italy as the "best run" countries in Europe, while secretly writing Hitler to encourage him to invade more countries. In the United States, William Randolph Hearst whitewashed Hitler's actions, except when he criticized Nazi Germany for allying "with the yellow peril,"

a racist way of describing Japan. Other leading U.S. publishers accused President Franklin Roosevelt of imperiling the U.S. Constitution and his Jewish advisers of running a foreign-directed conspiracy. This book reminds readers that nationalist press outlets that disseminate fake news, praise foreign autocrats, and practice dog-whistle politics are nothing new.

Nazi Billionaires: The Dark History of Germany's Wealthiest Dynasties
BY DAVID DE JONG. Mariner Books, 2022, 400 pp.

Many German businesspeople supported the rise of Hitler, exploited forced labor during World War II, thrived in a Cold War West Germany that needed their skills and wealth, and passed on that wealth to new generations that prosper in Germany today. These include the owners of firms such as BMW, Daimler (then Daimler-Benz), IG Farben, Siemens, and ThyssenKrupp (formerly Krupp). De Jong, a journalist who specializes in such topics, provides a readable overview of this trajectory. Importantly, he underlines the decisive facilitating role that business interests often play in bringing populist authoritarians to power. Yet he seems unconcerned with this. Instead, he frames the book as a sensational and original investigation that shows that the Germans have not fully reckoned with their past. Nothing could be further from the truth. For three-quarters of a century, Germans have been debating the abiding prominence of private businesses that thrived under the Nazis and persisted in postwar Germany. These very companies have sponsored independent academic histories of their past. German high schools and universities teach this history routinely. Older generations of owners have been replaced by younger generations whose members support modern Germany's relatively moderate, even pacific, foreign policy. If only the elites of other countries had so fully internalized the grim lessons of their history.

The Normans: Power, Conquest, and Culture in 11th-Century Europe
BY JUDITH A. GREEN. Yale University Press, 2022, 368 pp.

One thousand years ago, the Normans enjoyed a brief moment of ascendancy. In that time, they emerged from their duchy in northern France to lead a remarkably successful crusade to the Holy Land, establish a kingdom in Sicily and southern Italy that left some of the great religious monuments of the era, and, of course, conquer the British Isles. Legends abound of their exploits, which has given rise to a historical reputation of them as a master race of uniquely skilled warriors descended from the Vikings and favored by God. This book argues that they were, instead, lucky opportunists who took advantage of transient geopolitical power vacuums. The Roman Catholic Church was on the rise, military technology was changing, monarchs and bureaucrats were forging modern state administrations, and nobles were reviving large-scale architectural projects. It was a moment when a small and ruthless band of well-commanded fighters with siege technology and powerful ecclesiastical connections

could make a mark—and the Normans were at the right place at the right time to benefit. Yet their triumph would be short-lived: within a century, larger European states and empires would copy their innovations and reconquer most of their lands.

Trading With the Enemy: Britain, France, and the 18th-Century Quest for a Peaceful World Order
BY JOHN SHOVLIN. Yale University Press, 2021, 416 pp.

For generations, scholars have portrayed seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe as dominated by protectionism and warfare driven by the mercantilist policies of avaricious monarchs competing for global hegemony. Shovlin, a historian, seeks to turn this conventional wisdom on its head—at least as regards France and Great Britain. He acknowledges the carnage of the War of the Spanish Succession, the War of the Polish Succession, the Seven Years' War, the American Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and other conflicts. Yet he sees this period as also giving rise to global capitalism and the first flush of an alternative school of thought about global economic competition. He looks to figures such as the Scottish philosopher David Hume, the French philosophes and physiocrats, officials working for the British and French East India Companies, political economists such as Adam Smith, and some farsighted merchants and diplomats. Underlying their thinking lay trends that would eventually become irresistible, including the reform of domestic public finance, the growth of global capital markets, and the Industrial Revolution. The British and French states began to adopt free trade and capital movements for self-interested reasons—setting the stage for the well-known transformations of the nineteenth century.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

"Our Hemisphere"? The United States in Latin America, From 1776 to the Twenty-first Century
BY BRITTA H. CRANDALL AND RUSSELL C. CRANDALL. Yale University Press, 2021, 504 pp.

Crandall and Crandall briskly sketch 42 episodes of U.S. policy toward Latin America, ranging from the diverse reactions to the Haitian Revolution and the uprisings in South America led by Simón Bolívar in the early nineteenth century to contemporary efforts to bolster the region's democratic reformers. The authors assiduously refuse to impose a formal theoretical framework or to accept simple explanations for U.S. actions. Rather, they find that a complex mixture of altruism, realpolitik, and the spillover of domestic politics lay behind Washington's conduct, which was also shaped by the differing agendas and ambitions of individual presidents and diplomats. Far from being an all-powerful hegemon, the United States repeatedly fell well short of its goals. Some apparently successful U.S. interventions (such as in Guatemala in 1954) backfired over time, but the authors do find enduring success

stories. "The general commitment to the republican, democratic principles that first fired the wave of independence movements in the hemisphere has persisted through times of abeyance," they claim optimistically. Responding to facile criticisms of U.S. policies, the authors reasonably question whether there were ever better, more workable alternatives. Still, the authors' preference for balanced, nuanced assessments will frustrate some readers who might want more definitive judgments.

Things Are Never So Bad That They Can't Get Worse: Inside the Collapse of Venezuela BY WILLIAM NEUMAN. St. Martin's Press, 2022, 352 pp.

Neuman, a former *New York Times* correspondent in Venezuela, draws on his wealth of personal contacts to script this unrelentingly depressing requiem. Formerly an oil-rich, functioning democracy with a prosperous middle class, Venezuela today struggles with steep currency devaluations, severe shortages of food and medicines, debilitating power outages, and crippling urban crime. This is a cautionary tale of how unscrupulous authoritarian populists, drunk on ideology but driven primarily by the lust for power and its pecuniary rewards, can catastrophically ruin an economy and shred the social fabric of a country. Trapped in a polarized polity rife with vitriol, paranoia, and conspiracy theories, some of Neuman's interviewees remain blindly loyal to their tormentors, many have fled into exile, and most simply struggle to survive from day to day. U.S. politicians come off poorly in this well-sourced account. Neuman reveals a Trump administration shockingly ill informed and reckless, its disastrous improvisations writing a distressingly dark chapter in inter-American relations.

Education and the Future of Latin America BY ALEJANDRO TOLEDO MANRIQUE. Lynne Rienner, 2021, 246 pp.

Analysts often blame the poor quality and uneven distribution of educational opportunities in Latin America for the region's lackluster economic performance and enduring social inequalities. To investigate this correlation, Toledo, a scholar of education policy who served as president of Peru from 2001 to 2006, meticulously reviews the statistical evidence and professional literature to offer well-reasoned assessments of past reform efforts and cogent policy recommendations. He finds that access to education has expanded dramatically at all levels, even if the quality of education still requires substantial improvement. Toledo argues for big boosts in public investment, especially in poorer neighborhoods, as well as better salaries and training for teachers. But he also underscores that governments have to directly address poverty itself—characterized by inadequate nutrition, community violence, and resource-deprived households—if lower-income youth are to advance in large numbers. Toledo has an indigenous background and proposes that multiculturalism, mutual tolerance, and respect for others should be inculcated in schools. To realize such wide-reaching reforms, Toledo calls for visionary political leadership to build broad-based coalitions supported by the mobilization of concerned citizens.

Encanto
DIRECTED BY JARED BUSH AND BYRON HOWARD WITH CHARISE CASTRO SMITH. Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2021, 109 mins.

This blockbuster animated family musical takes place in an idyllic, rural, premodern Colombia. But the original soundtrack, by Lin-Manuel Miranda (including the hit song "We Don't Talk About Bruno"), and the characters' personal drama are decidedly contemporary. An ultrastrict matriarch rules over the multigenerational Madrigal family; the movie begins with the destruction of her town and the murder of her husband, violence that leaves her forever traumatized and fearful for her family. As displaced people, the Madrigals attribute their eventual triumphs to magical gifts. But their individual superpowers—extraordinary strength, the power to make flowers bloom, the ability to see the future, and so on—also suffocate their personal creativity. The resulting frustrations generate intrafamilial fractures, only resolved (spoiler alert!) when the matriarch recognizes that family ties built on love and community are more durable than those anchored in trepidation and isolation. To add notes of authenticity, Disney injects local flavors of Colombian cuisine, vibrant tapestries, and a racially diverse panoply of characters; the megastar Carlos Vives sings a celebratory ode to his native land and, by extension, to Latin America as a whole. If only the troubled region could enjoy some more Disney endings.

Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Republics

Maria Lipman

Brezhnev: The Making of a Statesman
BY SUSANNE SCHATTENBERG. I.B. Tauris, 2021, 512 pp.

Schattenberg suspects that her biography of Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet Union's leader from 1964 to 1982, may be read as an apologia. Indeed, on too many occasions, she tends to give Brezhnev the benefit of the doubt. Her forgiving view is not always convincing. As a young functionary under Joseph Stalin, Brezhnev may have participated in the deportations of peasants and the brutal program of collectivization—as well as in the purges of his colleagues—but the author insists that "he simply fulfilled the tasks he was given" and did not show excessive zeal, as if that caveat would make him less complicit in these acts. Brezhnev discontinued the de-Stalinization policies pursued by his predecessor, Nikita Khrushchev, but Schattenberg claims that Brezhnev was only trying to appease hard-liners and that his reputation as an enabler of a creeping re-Stalinization of the Soviet Union is not deserved. The author admits that Brezhnev bears responsibility for the persecution of dissidents but emphasizes that he delegated this "dirty work" to the KGB and was not personally invested in repressing them. She repeatedly expresses sympathy for Brezhnev's ill health (caused apparently by working too much) and brushes

aside as a myth the notion that Brezhnev turned the Soviet Union into a bristling superpower. Brezhnev's Soviet Union held half the world under its sway, but Schattenberg sees his true legacy as the pursuit of peaceful coexistence and disarmament.

Memory Crash: The Politics of History in and Around Ukraine, 1980s–2010s
BY GEORGIY KASIANOV. Central European University Press, 2022, 420 pp.

Kasianov's nuanced and impartial chronicle of the politics of history in Ukraine considers two competing versions of that country's national history: a "Soviet nostalgic" one that stressed continuity with the Soviet period and a nationalist one that emphasized Ukraine's suffering at the hands of the Soviet government. This competition of historical memories became a grave obstacle to building a unified nation in Ukraine, where the different perceptions of the past sometimes worked to draw dividing lines between the country's regions. The competition evolved into a confrontation and, after the uprising that unseated the Russian-backed president Viktor Yanukovych in 2014, gave rise to a forceful campaign to eradicate traces of the Soviet past, including the dismantling of Soviet monuments, the renaming of cities and towns, and the adoption of memory laws mandating "correct" assessments of historical events. The radical rejection of the Soviet past further alienated those constituencies that did not accept the Ukrainian ethnonationalist narrative and its heroes. The deepening divisions within Ukraine and repeated political crises made the country more vulnerable to Russia's 2014 incursion, when Russia annexed Crimea and stoked a separatist insurgency in the eastern Donbas region. "The war over the past," Kasianov writes, "can easily become the ideological basis for a real war."

God Save the USSR: Soviet Muslims and the Second World War
BY JEFF EDEN. Oxford University Press, 2021, 272 pp.

During World War II, the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin backed away from a policy of ruthlessly suppressing religion and adopted a more tolerant approach. Based on newly available sources in many languages, including Persian, Tatar, and Uzbek, Eden's innovative study explores the dynamics of Muslim life in this period. One of Stalin's goals was to inculcate patriotism among Muslim communities, whose sense of belonging to Soviet society remained tenuous. The new permissiveness included reopening mosques and empowering those Muslim leaders who had survived the prewar purges, while keeping religious life under tight state control. Religious leaders endorsed by the state presented the fight against Hitler as a holy war, blending Islamic devotion with Soviet patriotism. At the same time, the religious resurgence that the state's tolerance unleashed thwarted the government's attempts to keep devotional life within desired limits. Eden demonstrates the close connections between the world of state-sanctioned "official" Islam and that of "unofficial" Islam. He points to the resilience of grassroots religious prac-

tices that survived the violent prewar campaign of atheism, among other factors, to explain the government's failure to prevent the spread of unofficial Islamic activities. Moreover, officials entrusted with overseeing religious life often lacked a clear understanding of what the policy of "controlled permissiveness" entailed.

Stalin's Library: A Dictator and His Books BY GEOFFREY ROBERTS. Yale University Press, 2022, 272 pp.

Roberts portrays Joseph Stalin, the mastermind and implementer of mass terror in the Soviet Union, as a voracious reader and meticulous editor. Based mostly on secondary sources, this book examines Stalin's intellectual pursuits in the context of major episodes in Soviet history. The dictator's personal collection of about 25,000 volumes was dispersed among various libraries after his death. Roberts traces the fate of those books and puts special focus on some 400 of them that bear Stalin's personal markings. For instance, Stalin's marginalia show how his view of Leon Trotsky evolved from admiration to vicious criticism. His annotations in the works of the Marxist philosopher Karl Kautsky include words such as "swine," "liar," and "fool." Stalin's main interests included history, Marxist revolutionary thought, and diplomacy. In fiction, his tastes were "conservative and conventional." Stalin advised publishers, met with authors to discuss their work, and edited their drafts; he closely engaged in compiling a history textbook for schools and actively interfered in the ideological supervision of Soviet literature and film. Roberts characterizes Stalin as a dogmatic Marxist, yet Roberts's own book contains examples of Stalin's deviations from Marxist teachings. For instance, Stalin believed that the class struggle intensified under socialism, a view that clashed with Marxist theory but provided a rationale for new waves of repression.

Middle East

Lisa Anderson

Fixing Stories: Local Newsmaking and International Media in Turkey and Syria BY NOAH AMIR ARJOMAND. Cambridge University Press, 2022, 288 pp.

In this subtle and reflective book, Arjomand, a sociologist and sometime journalist, draws on both social theory and his own experience as a young Iranian American reporter and local fixer in Turkey over the last decade to examine the production of international news. He explores the tension between what is deemed newsworthy in foreign capitals and what matters to local residents and considers how journalists must navigate between the two. Arjomand's principal focus, however, is the murky world of the fixer: the insider who translates, finds local sources, and otherwise assists foreign journalists. The fixer operates across multiple commitments, balancing political loyalties, career aspirations, and allegiances to friends and family, often shaping the stories

that reporters file and that Western audiences read. Fixers usually toil in obscurity, unacknowledged by the media outlets whose work they make possible. Some of them chafe against this anonymity, but sometimes it works for them: they forgo the credit because they can't afford the blame should local authorities take umbrage at a story. Arjomand uses novelistic techniques—composite characters in carefully composed circumstances—to both protect his sources and convey a complex and fascinating world with wit, intelligence, and sympathy.

Paradoxes of Care: Children and Global Medical Aid in Egypt
BY RANIA KASSAB SWEIS. Stanford University Press, 2021, 208 pp.

In its detailed ethnography of three nongovernmental organizations dedicated to providing medical care and health services to Egyptian children—street kids in Cairo, young girls in rural areas, and children at risk of abuse or in detention all over the country—Sweis illuminates both the global humanitarian industry and the lives of children in Egypt. Many of the employees of the organizations, both foreign and Egyptian, know full well that their day-to-day interventions are little more than stopgap measures; they are unable to cure the social ills they see around them and instead settle for alleviating individual suffering. In doing so, as Sweis reveals, they find that the humanitarian conception of such children as innocent, vulnerable, endangered, and deprived of a "universal youthfulness" is tested; the children these health workers treat are often far more knowing, sturdy, and self-confident than the adults around them. At least as important as creating mobile medical clinics or offering classes on healthy lifestyles, Sweis suggests, is addressing the poverty that devastates parents and children alike.

Jordan and America: An Enduring Friendship
BY BRUCE RIEDEL. Brookings Institution Press, 2021, 234 pp.

For all its importance as the Middle East's keystone—the stone in the otherwise unsteady edifice that secures the other stones in place—Jordan does not get much attention. As Riedel shows, this is in part because many of its neighbors resent being held in place at all and have been eyeing the small desert territory covetously ever since its establishment in the 1920s. At various times, Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Syria have claimed part or all of the kingdom's territory as their own or as the rightful home of Palestine, whose people make up a majority of the country's citizens. Riedel draws on his decades of experience in the CIA to lend color to his rehearsal of U.S. policy toward a monarchy that has served as a usually reliable ally, an occasionally useful scapegoat, and a consistent source of good and unheeded advice. Riedel's genial account is sometimes surprisingly credulous; characterizing Jordan's dependence on the United States as an "enduring friendship" seems charitable to all concerned, but he evidently enjoyed his own special relationships with the Hashemite kings, and this book is an appreciative salute.

Mohammed bin Salman: The Icarus of Saudi Arabia?
BY DAVID B. OTTAWAY. Lynne Rienner, 2021, 232 pp.

Ottaway puts his decades of reporting on Saudi Arabia for *The Washington Post* to good use in sketching this portrait of the polarizing Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, who is widely known as MBS. Characterizing the 36-year-old as both a reflection and an advocate of change in the kingdom, Ottaway concedes that he did not anticipate MBS's meteoric rise. Even more perplexing has been MBS's apparent consolidation of personal power in a system long thought to be governed by painstaking consensus building within the royal family and lubricated by the generous distribution of the country's oil wealth among its princes. As his book's subtitle suggests, Ottaway suspects that MBS may be overreaching, especially in having ordered the brutal murder of the dissident Saudi journalist and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi, but he admits that the prince has yet to pay any discernible price for his impulsiveness and brutality. Ottaway concludes by measuring MBS against a number of other ruthless Middle Eastern reformers, including Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and the last shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. But perhaps the most useful analog is one Ottaway does not cite: Muammar al-Qaddafi, the handsome young modernizer who overthrew the king of Libya in 1969. Ottaway's discussion, particularly of the economy that powers the kingdom and empowers its rulers, is nonetheless brisk and useful.

Striking From the Margins: State, Religion, and Devolution of Authority in the Middle East
EDITED BY AZIZ AL-AZMEH, NADIA AL-BAGDADI, HAROUT AKDEDIAN, AND HARITH HASAN. Saqi Books, 2021, 352 pp.

This volume is the product of a twofold endeavor: the editors want to shed light on once marginalized actors who are becoming increasingly important as state authority in the Middle East erodes, and they hope to bring novel, sometimes overlooked perspectives to the conventional analysis of politics in the region. The simultaneous efforts to uncover the often obscured margins of politics and analysis are complicated, ambitious, and not entirely successful. An intimidatingly erudite introduction marshals Arab and European social theory to illuminate contemporary states, sects, and social movements. Later sections are more accessible, including a number of individual contributions that provide provocative and revealing analysis on issues as varied as the causes and consequences of Arab civil wars, the regional reach of private Gulf business conglomerates, the evolution of religious and sectarian affiliations in war-torn Iraq and Syria, and the role of external actors such as Russia and Turkey in the region. The contributors bring fresh outlooks to some of the most compelling questions of the moment.

Asia and Pacific

Andrew J. Nathan

Infiltrating Society: The Thai Military's Internal Security Affairs
BY PUANGTHONG PAWAKAPAN. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021, 182 pp.

It takes not just skill but also courage for a Thailand-based scholar to explain so clearly how the military has penetrated society in an effort to foster support for its conservative, royalist policies. Pawakapan traces the military's "civil affairs projects" back to its counterinsurgency campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s against the Communist Party of Thailand. With the support of the revered king, Bhumibol Adulyadej, these efforts expanded even after the communist insurgency faded, justified by the theory that social and economic development were part of the military's security mission. Road, water, forestry, and electric power projects, as well as vocational programs, were linked with military-sponsored mass organizations that carried out political surveillance, security patrols, royalist indoctrination, and occasional vigilante operations. Around the turn of the century, the palace and the army faced new threats—the rise of a populist movement that put Thaksin Shinawatra into office as prime minister in 2001 and the impending accession to the throne of the widely disliked crown prince, Maha Vajiralongkorn. (The army evicted Thaksin from office in a 2006 coup, and Vajiralongkorn became king in 2016.) The army reinvigorated its efforts to control Thai society through its associated mass organizations in a bid to protect the status quo. But Pawakapan doubts the military has actually succeeded in generating much popular support for a corrupt and inequitable system.

When the Iron Bird Flies: China's Secret War in Tibet
BY JIANGLIN LI. Stanford University Press, 2022, 576 pp.

Starting in the mid-1950s, the newly established Chinese communist government sent work teams to the Tibetan Plateau to attack religious and tribal leaders, redistribute land and livestock, and force farmers and herders into cooperatives. The teams faced resistance from farmers, herders, traders, and monks, who took up homemade muskets, rifles, knives, and spears to defend their traditional ways of life. The People's Liberation Army responded by sending troops from seven of its 12 battle-hardened regional commands. The details of the ensuing war, which lasted from 1956 to 1962, have long been a closely held secret. Li draws on interviews with exiled Tibetans and on classified Chinese-language sources to describe battle after battle and the enormous destruction and loss of civilian life that the PLA caused. The "iron bird" of the title refers to bombers used to kill groups of herdspeople fleeing with their sheep and yaks and to obliterate monasteries where civilians ran for protection. The story is all the more heartbreaking for the clinical tone of Li's reporting.

Retrofitting Leninism: Participation Without Democracy in China
BY DIMITAR D. GUEORGUIEV. Oxford University Press, 2021, 256 pp.

Gueorguiev offers perhaps the most thoughtful of a number of recent path-breaking studies that describe the many ways Chinese citizens participate in politics within the limits set by the authoritarian regime. The government has opened websites for citizen complaints, petitions, tips about corruption, and comments on pending legislation. The authorities decide whether and when to respond with services, investigations into corruption, or revisions to draft legislation. Delegates to local people's congresses are allowed to submit policy suggestions, which government agencies take more or less seriously depending in part on how many delegates add their signatures. Other modern authoritarian regimes have introduced similar practices, often taking advantage of digital technology. Gueorguiev argues that channels such as these help the regime fine-tune its policies and increase its legitimacy, while defusing dissent and preventing citizens from banding together against the authorities.

Americans in China: Encounters With the People's Republic
BY TERRY LAUTZ. Oxford University Press, 2022, 344 pp.

Americans' encounters with China frequently produce a common narrative arc that bends from meeting to engagement to frustration, settling finally on a tenacious commitment to the relationship grounded in affection, curiosity, and hope. Lautz tells ten different versions of the story in readable, fully rounded portraits of U.S. politicians, diplomats, scholars, journalists, lawyers, and others who have devoted their lives to work involving China. These include the anticommunist Cold Warrior Walter Judd, the diplomat J. Stapleton Roy, the scholar Elizabeth Perry, the lawyer and human rights activist Jerome Cohen, the businesswoman Shirley Young, and the journalist Melinda Liu. There is something both hopeful and cautionary in these accounts, at a time when relations between the United States and China are at their lowest ebb in decades.

City on the Edge: Hong Kong Under Chinese Rule
BY HO-FUNG HUNG. Cambridge University Press, 2022, 316 pp.

A Hong Kong native and distinguished sociologist, Hung offers a penetrating analysis of the city's evolution from a politically neutral commercial gateway to China to a political community resisting mainland control. Over decades as a "super special free-trade zone" and a "cultural supermarket," the city developed a distinctive way of life. Chinese authorities came to view this as a threat after many Hong Kong people—including some members of the Chinese Communist Party—supported the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing. From the 1990s on, mainland-linked financial elites increased their grip on the city's economy and allied with local political elites to ensure loyalty to Beijing's policies. Hung traces the parallel evolution of Beijing's determination to make Hong Kong's people accept assimilation into China and the local development of a proud, separate iden-

tity. The two forces clashed in a series of mass demonstrations in the 2010s, which ended with Beijing's imposition of a draconian national security law in 2020. Hung insists that the struggle for the future of Hong Kong has not ended. But his analysis of how Hong Kong arrived at this bleak state is so persuasive that it doesn't leave the reader with much hope.

The Tiger Leading the Dragon: How Taiwan Propelled China's Economic Rise
BY SHELLEY RIGGER. Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, 236 pp.

After Taiwan's labor costs rose in the 1980s and the island's first democratically elected president lifted the ban on travel to China, many entrepreneurs moved their manufacturing operations to the mainland. They found a warm welcome from a Chinese government that was eager to foster its own export sector. Rigger insightfully relates the good and bad mainland experiences of various businesses, from umbrella manufacturers and bicycle makers to high-tech enterprises such as Foxconn, which produces most of the world's iPhones; the computer maker Acer; and the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, which makes crucial high-end computer chips. She entertainingly describes how some Taiwanese firms created new markets in China for coffee, noodles, and bridal photos. The transfer of capital, technology, management skills, and international business connections helped the Taiwanese economy and contributed to a thaw in cross-strait relations but also strengthened China's economy and its ability to put pressure on Taiwan. More recently, as mainland labor costs have risen and Taiwanese firms have faced tougher competition from mainland firms, many Taiwanese are moving their manufacturing operations elsewhere, some of them back to Taiwan itself.

All Roads Lead North: China, Nepal, and the Contest for the Himalayas
BY AMISH RAJ MULMI. Hurst, 2021, 328 pp.

Like many Nepalis, Mulmi resents the Indian assumption that his country owes deference to its southern neighbor because of cultural and trade ties. In a book that is part travelogue, part history, and part foreign policy analysis, he argues that China has long been a good neighbor to Nepal, allowing trade along the two countries' Himalayan border, providing no-strings-attached aid for projects that diminished Nepal's reliance on India, and building a road between Lhasa and Kathmandu to deepen relations between the countries. More recently, Nepal has signed on to China's Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese President Xi Jinping has paid a state visit to Kathmandu, Chinese tourists and businesspeople have arrived in great numbers, and Nepalis have gained hope that China will construct a railway between Lhasa and Kathmandu. In return for Chinese support, Nepal sends Tibetans who cross into Nepal without permission back to the Chinese side and forbids resident Tibetans to mount anti-Chinese demonstrations. Nepalis view China as a better economic model and a richer source of funds than India. Mulmi warns that "India's insecurities over losing its influence and primacy in Nepal and South Asia to China are well founded."

Africa

Nicolas van de Walle

Until We Have Won Our Liberty: South Africa After Apartheid
BY EVAN LIEBERMAN. Princeton University Press, 2022, 344 pp.

Recent accounts of South Africa since the end of apartheid have rarely been flattering, focusing typically on the country's slow economic growth, widening social inequality, and corruption. With a mixture of sober social science analysis and engaging personal travelogue, Lieberman defends the country's record, particularly its ability to sustain for several decades a dynamic democracy with free and fair elections, a vibrant press, and an independent judiciary. He also ably documents South Africa's achievements in improving education, housing, and public health, showing that, over the last 25 years, the country has mostly matched or surpassed the accomplishments of comparable upper-middle-income countries. Lieberman acknowledges the growing discontent among South Africans and notes that the white minority tends to be much more critical of the government than Black South Africans, even though the former's position of relative privilege has largely been protected by the post-apartheid order. He writes lucidly about the economic and political shortcomings on which other accounts focus, but he makes an eloquent case for the remarkable progress South Africa has made in the wake of apartheid's brutal legacy.

The Eyes of the World: Mining the Digital Age in the Eastern DR Congo
BY JAMES H. SMITH. University of Chicago Press, 2022, 360 pp.

Roadblock Politics: The Origins of Violence in Central Africa
BY PEER SCHOUTEN. Cambridge University Press, 2022, 256 pp.

These two excellent ethnographic works probe the persistent civil conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Many recent investigations of contemporary civil wars in Africa have fixated on the role of mineral resources in motivating and financing combatant forces. Smith studies the mining and selling of so-called blood minerals, such as coltan, tin, and tungsten, but his account focuses on communities of artisanal miners, their practices, and their own complex understanding of the world in which they operate. Accusations by nongovernmental organizations that these minerals have sustained and exacerbated violence have led to measures such as the provision in the United States' Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 that sought to ban resources from mining activities linked to local militias and warlords from global trading networks. Although the law did force the more egregious warlords out of the mining business, Smith argues convincingly that the next effect of this legislation was to close down the artisanal operations that benefited thousands of miners and their families and to allow big private companies, often in league with Congolese state actors, to take over the mines. Smith's book is sometimes

repetitive, but it is chock-full of fascinating details on the people and communities that have lived off mining in the chaos of the wars in Congo.

Anyone who has driven across the countryside in West Africa or central Africa has probably been stopped at roadblocks tended by armed men seeking some kind of payment. In his strikingly original study, Schouten rarely mentions blood minerals but dwells instead on the thousands of roadblocks that exist in eastern Congo. Schouten shows how local community leaders, rebel forces, and state security actors seek to gain power and resources from controlling the road networks that cut through the thick forests of this area. The presence of such roadblocks in the Central African Republic, too, suggests they are a wider sociopolitical phenomenon in tropical Africa, and in fact, Schouten links them to older precolonial and colonial practices in the region that sought to regulate populations and their commercial activities. Not only are local populations and merchants that use these roads obliged to pay tolls, but so are international nongovernmental organizations and the local agents of major multinationals, such as the beer company Heineken. The result, Schouten shows in this authoritative analysis, is the collection of substantial and quite reliable revenues by the forces that control the roadblocks, which profoundly fuels long-standing conflicts and hampers efforts at institution building in central Africa.

African Peacekeeping
BY JONATHAN FISHER AND NINA WILÉN. Cambridge University Press, 2022, 272 pp.

Much has been published on international peacekeeping in Africa but very little on the role of African soldiers in peacekeeping operations there. Fisher and Wilén point out that three of the top ten and ten of the top 20 country contributors to UN peacekeeping operations around the world in 2021 were African. An insistence on "African solutions to African problems" in the 1990s led to a greater role for African troops in peacekeeping on the continent, typically subsidized by Western powers increasingly unwilling to put their own troops in harm's way. The authors say little about the actual peacekeeping operations in which African troops have been involved and focus instead on how this involvement has shaped state building and Africa's international relations. Fisher and Wilén argue compellingly that peacekeeping is attractive to many African states because it provides resources to the military, allows greater political control over the officer corps, and offers significant diplomatic dividends. An interesting historical chapter draws a parallel between the European colonial practice of shuttling African troops from colony to colony to quell instability and African peacekeeping missions today: that colonial legacy has "embed[ded] a distinctly undemocratic and unaccountable culture" in contemporary African militaries.

African Interventions: State Militaries, Foreign Powers, and Rebel Forces
BY EMIZET F. KISANGANI AND JEFFREY PICKERING. Cambridge University Press, 2022, 292 pp.

Kisangani and Pickering provide a comprehensive review of interstate conflict in Africa since many countries there achieved independence in the twentieth century. They argue that this conflict can be divided into three broad categories. First, governments have waged war to divert attention from the various economic and political challenges facing them, such as when Eritrea attacked Ethiopia in 1998. Second, governments have started wars to pursue rebel forces in a neighboring country's territory. For instance, in 1996, the Rwandan army invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo to root out various Rwandan Hutu militias that had sought sanctuary in Congo after the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Finally, a third category of conflict consists of wars that have been motivated by what the authors call "national role conceptualization," in which powerful states from outside Africa have assumed a military role on the continent. The authors place interventions by colonial powers in this category, as well as those of the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War.

FOR THE RECORD

Due to an editing error, the response "Can Sanctions Be Smart?" (March/April 2022) incorrectly identified FinCEN as the U.S. Treasury Department's foreign intelligence unit. It is the department's financial intelligence unit.

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