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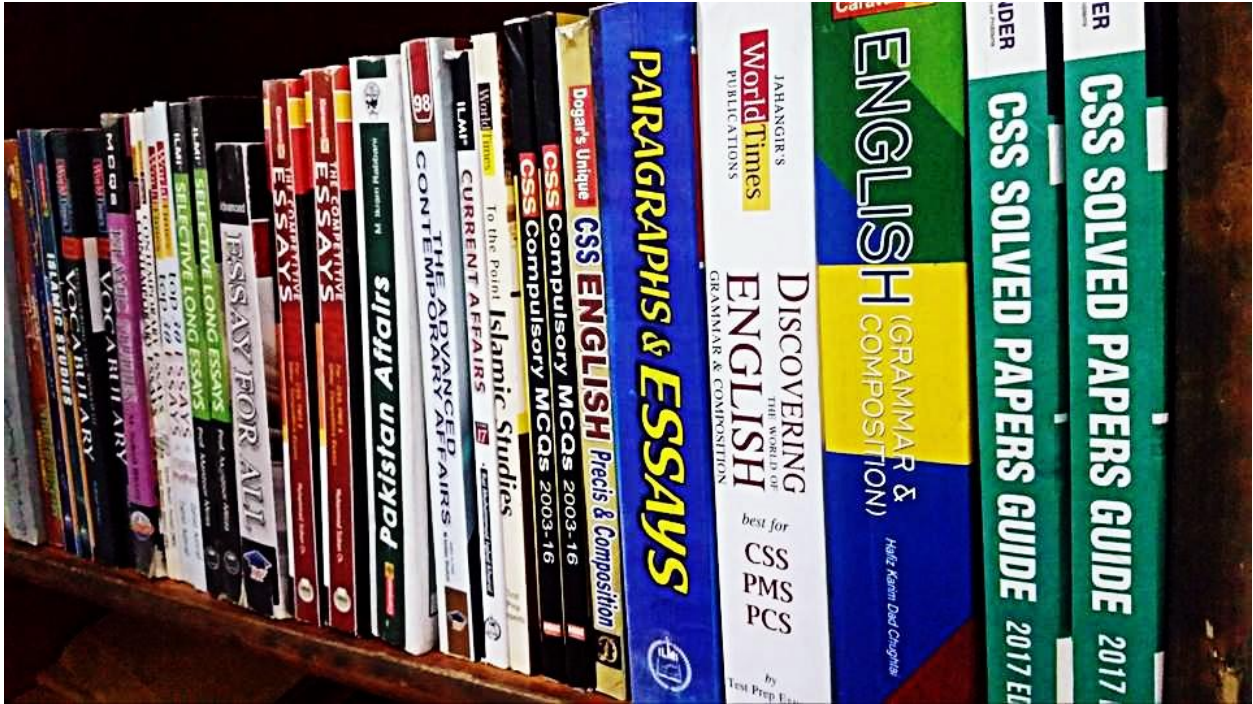
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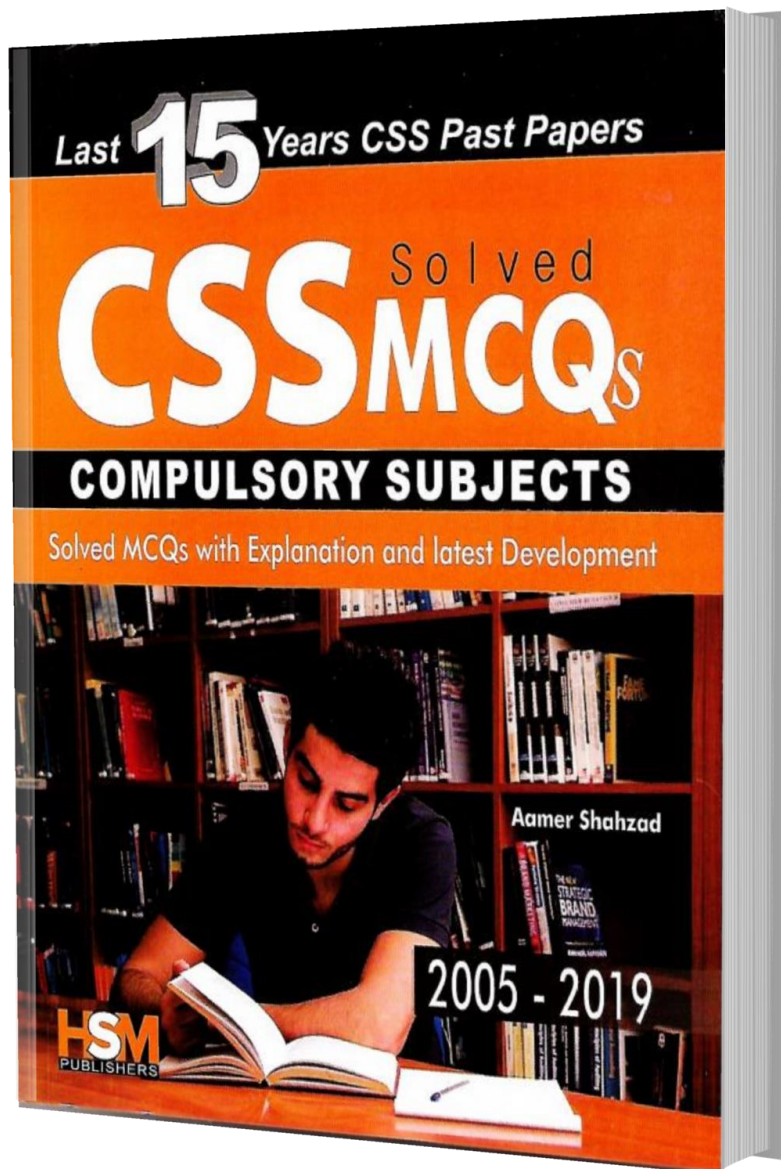
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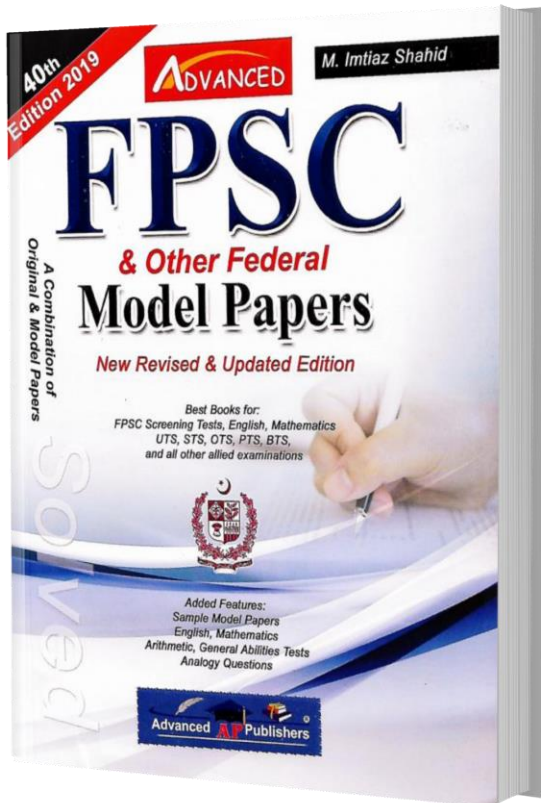
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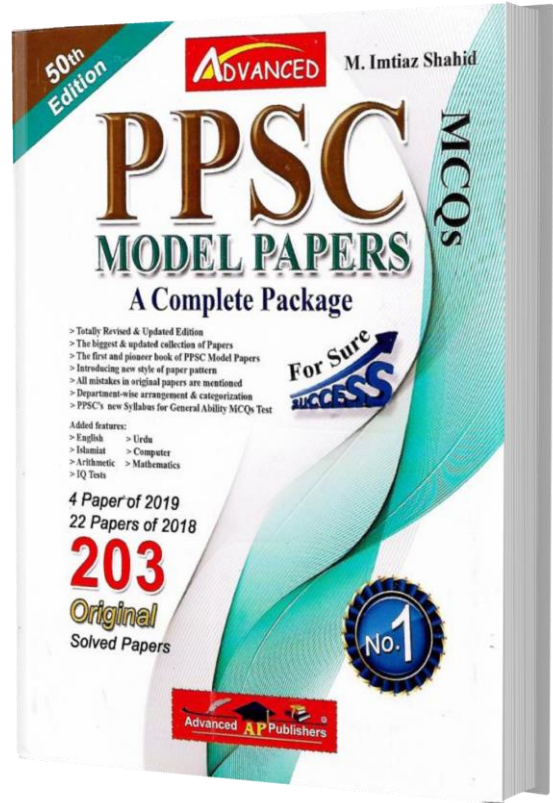


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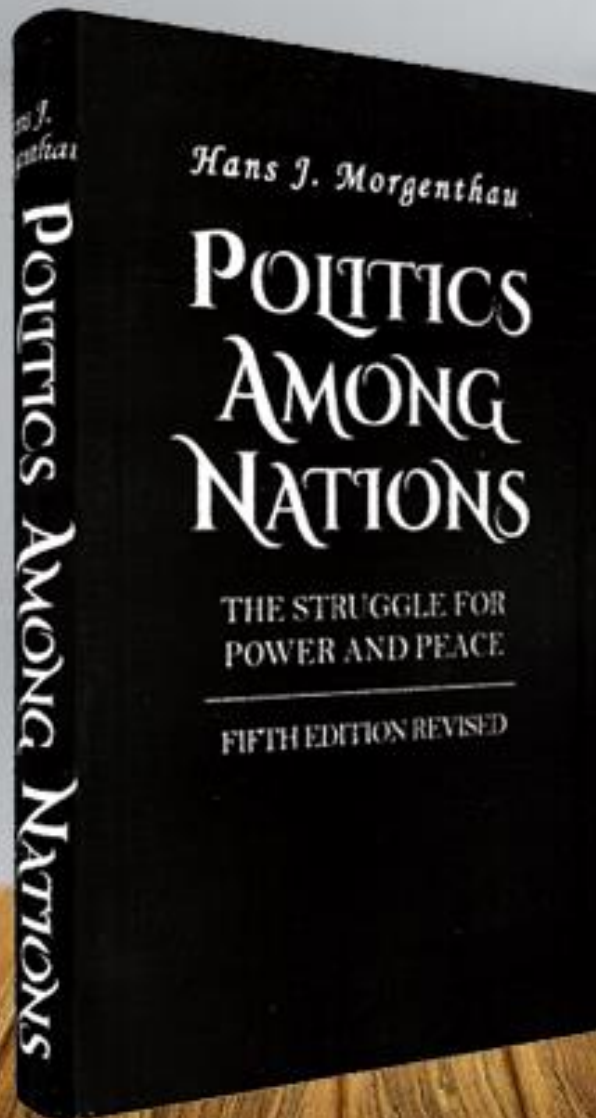
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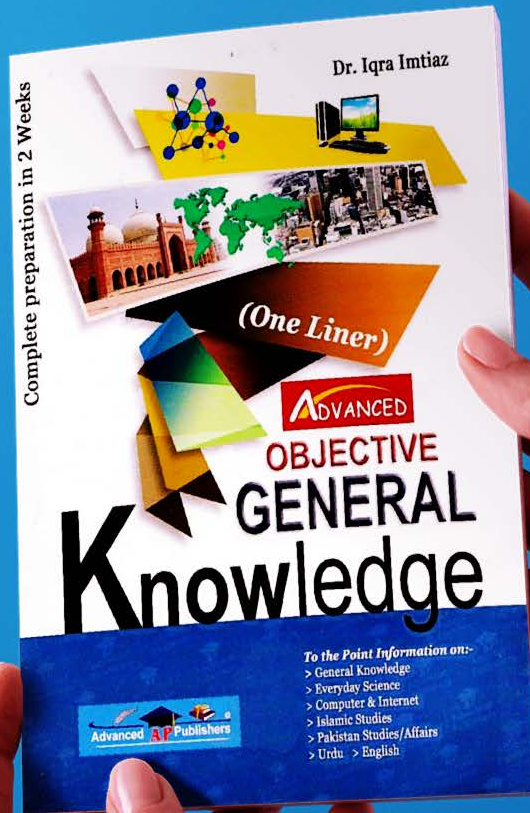
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Led Astray by the Third Way

In “From the War Machine to the Green Dream,” by Peter-Christian Aigner and Michael Brenes [April 1], the authors’ description of the failed efforts to convert military production to civilian work has important lessons for current strategies to promote a Green New Deal. But they skip too lightly over Bill Clinton’s role in this bleak story. As the first post-Cold War president, he had a unique opportunity to begin transforming the world’s most advanced technologies to peaceful uses. But after promising such a conversion in his 1992 campaign, Clinton turned his back on it. When I and others pressed his new administration to fulfill that promise, we were told that government leadership wasn’t needed; the free market would motivate the arms industry to convert. Left on its own, the war machine predictably found new enemies to supplant the Soviet Union. And by Clinton’s fifth year, the military budget was again on the rise. **JEFF FAUX**

Economic Policy Institute
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Walker’s Downfall

John B. Judis is right: The Koch brothers were not responsible for electing Scott Walker as governor of Wisconsin [“What Happened to Wisconsin?,” April 1]. What is not well recognized, though, is that Walker was “unelected” in 2018 because he took Grover Norquist’s “no new taxes” pledge, refused (despite his own party’s pleas) to raise the gas tax, and let the state’s roads fall into disrepair. And then, of course, there was the Foxconn boondoggle.

JIM SEVERANCE
LOGANVILLE, WIS.

Nuclear Insanity

Re Michael T. Klare’s “Making Nuclear Weapons Menacing Again”

[April 8]: North Korea has shown that only one nuclear missile capable of striking a major city is enough to deter an attack. I just don’t have words for the kind of mental illness that these so-called strategic thinkers show. When you have enough nuclear weapons to kill billions of people in the Northern Hemisphere, if not the entire human species, then what do you hope to accomplish in the name of deterrence with more of them? The notion that a massive strike can prevent a response is also delusional. There is no such thing as winning a nuclear war. It’s time to take this power of life or death away from these psychos and get rid of these weapons. If you want deterrence, one Trident submarine will more than accomplish that goal.

MICHAEL ROBERTSON

Making Scammers Pay

Re Katha Pollitt’s “Sailing Into College” [April 8]: There is a strong case for the use of restorative justice here. Rather than send these people to a “Club Fed”-type white-collar prison (or, rather than *just* sending them there), judges should order the rich parents and the people who induced them into this scam to spend an amount of funds equal to the \$25 million accumulated by the scammers to pay college tuition for the thousands—or maybe tens of thousands—of qualified students who might otherwise miss college because they can’t afford to pay their way. **KENNETH BURCH**

Correction

In Eric Alterman’s column “Of Course It’s Propaganda!” [April 1], the last name of *The Baltimore Sun*’s David Zurawik is misspelled as “Zuriwak.” We regret the error.

Comments drawn from our website

letters@thenation.com

Needed: More Democracy

“Democracy is coming to the USA,” Leonard Cohen promised a quarter-century ago. Cohen is gone, but we’re still waiting. It’s easy to blame Republican legislators and conservative jurists, with their voter-suppression schemes and assaults on the Voting Rights Act.

But the right-wing partisans who seek to roll back popular sovereignty are only part of the problem. For too long, Democrats have been too cautious about expanding the franchise—and about fully realizing its potential to transform the governance that extends from it.

The 2016 presidential election offered a reminder of just how much work remains to be done to guarantee the right to vote and, as important, to ensure that the will of the people is reflected in our election results. Donald Trump lost the popular vote by 2.9 million ballots, yet he assumed the presidency after securing the electoral votes of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Trump did not win a majority of the vote in those states, but he got just enough of a plurality to claim an Electoral College “victory” that in most countries would not have been a victory at all. Democrats in positions of power should have made the elimination of the Electoral College a priority long ago—and they should have made it mission-critical after the 2000 election, when Al Gore won the popular vote, only to see George W. Bush surf a dubious “win” in Florida to an Electoral College coronation. But Democrats were slow to respond, seeming to lack a basic sense of what was at stake. Until now.

At a March town-hall meeting in Mississippi, Senator Elizabeth Warren declared, “Every vote matters, and the way we can make that happen is [to] have national voting, and that means [getting] rid of the Electoral College.” The crowd responded with what *The New York Times* described as “one of her longest ovations of the night.”

Warren, who also says that “we need a constitutional amendment that protects the right to vote for every American citizen and to make sure that vote gets counted,” is not the only presidential contender going big on democracy issues. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

is backing an amendment to “abolish the Electoral College” introduced by Senator Brian Schatz, while Senators Kamala Harris, Cory Booker, and Bernie Sanders have signaled their willingness to address the Electoral College’s anti-democratic impact, as have former representative Beto O’Rourke and former housing secretary Julián Castro. Possible presidential contender Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, says: “The Electoral College needs to go, because it’s made our society less and less democratic.” Buttigieg sees that move as part of a democracy agenda that includes ending gerrymandering, extending voting rights, and, probably, amending the Constitution to reverse the damage done by the Supreme Court’s 2010 *Citizens United* decision. (Sanders has already proposed amendments to overturn *Citizens United*, which he decries as “one of the most disastrous decisions in [the Court’s] history.”)



This bolder level of ambition is finding expression in Congress, where Senator Jeff Merkley has been championing amendments and legislative action to guarantee equal representation for every American. In combination with the For the People Act—which John Sarbanes and other House Democrats have advanced to extend voting rights, guard against partisan gerrymandering, and limit the influence of big money in our politics—Merkley and Senator Tom Udall have introduced bills that are designed to create what Merkley refers to as “We the People” democracy. With Udall, he’s proposing a constitutional amendment to abolish the Electoral College and a plan to establish a commission to develop proposals for providing citizens of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the territories of Guam, the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands with full voting representation in Congress.

The latter proposal is vital for a country that

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VOLUME 308, NUMBER 11,
April 22, 2019

The digital version of this issue is available to all subscribers April 4 at TheNation.com.

BY THE NUMBERS



1.2M

Square miles covered by the contested area in the South China Sea

6

Countries with overlapping territorial claims (China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines)

1/3

Amount of total global trade passing through the region, worth \$5.3 trillion

11B

Untapped barrels of oil in the South China Sea

190T

Cubic feet of natural gas in the South China Sea

50%

Percentage of the world's fishing vessels operating there

3K

Acres of new land for military bases created by China's artificial-island building project

—Noah Flora

began with a revolt against colonialism. It is shocking, at this late stage in the American experiment, that roughly 4 million US citizens are denied voting representation in Congress. Merkley knows there will be pushback from Republicans, and perhaps even from some within his own party. But he reminds us that “we need real, equal representation if we want a government that responds to the big issues impacting working families’ lives.”

What Senator Merkley understands is something that must be recognized by every Democrat who seeks the party’s presidential nomination in 2020, and by every progressive who bids for a House or Senate seat. We have entered an era of bold proposals for a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, a doubling of the federal minimum wage, and tuition-free college. But to secure the change sufficient to achieve economic, social, and racial justice, we must also make the structural reforms that will bring full democracy to the United States. JOHN NICHOLS

NATO Turns 70

But is that really a cause for celebration?

On April 4, 1949, representatives of the United States, Canada, and 10 European nations, including the United Kingdom and France, gathered in Washington, DC, to sign the North Atlantic Treaty, a security pact created at the urging of wartime allies Britain and France as a means to—in the words of Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s first secretary general—“keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.”

President Harry Truman pledged that the treaty would serve as a purely defensive measure in the face of Soviet expansion, “against aggression and the fear of aggression—a bulwark which will permit us to get on with the real business of...achieving a fuller and happier life for all our citizens.”

Yet Truman’s hopes remain unfulfilled. At NATO’s 70th-anniversary celebration in Washington in early April, a wide range of anti-war groups staged a series of events aimed at raising public awareness of the true costs of NATO membership and challenging the conventional wisdom that the alliance serves as a pillar of peace and stability. As Joseph Gerson of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament, and Common Security put it, “Too few people in the United States understand how NATO’s expansion to Russia’s borders became the primary cause for the new and very dangerous Cold War or how NATO became an aggressive global alliance.”

How did we get here? In the years following the end of the Cold War, NATO’s mission has been transformed beyond recognition from the defensive alliance that Truman envisioned. The 1990s saw an effort to expand NATO’s mission (“Out of area or out of business” became the mantra of the day) as well as its membership. Despite the well-documented promises made to Soviet leader Mikhail

Gorbachev by Secretary of State James Baker (and many others) during the George H.W. Bush administration that NATO would not expand “one inch eastward,” the Clinton administration, once it assumed office, embarked on a dual strategy that pushed the alliance east and made it a staging ground for US interventions in the Balkans, Africa, and the Greater Middle East.

One of NATO’s first major post-Cold War missions, the 78-day aerial bombing of Serbia in 1999, nearly ended in disaster when NATO Supreme Allied Commander Wesley Clark ordered British Gen. Mike Jackson, the commander of NATO’s troops in Kosovo, to retake the airfield in Pristina, the Kosovar capital, from the Russians—by force, if necessary. Thankfully, Jackson refused.

Undeterred by that apocalyptic near-miss, NATO has soldiered on, playing supporting roles in the wars of choice waged by the administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. In the meantime, despite well-founded objections, the alliance has continued to expand eastward, adding 10 member states between 2004 and 2017, with the promise of more to come.

Indeed, on a recent visit to Tbilisi, Georgia, NATO’s current secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, told reporters that the alliance is continuing “to prepare for Georgia’s NATO membership,” and added that it does not accept “that Russia or any other power can decide what members can do.”

Statements like these might be described as myopic at best. At a minimum, they show that transatlantic military and political elites have learned nothing from the Ukraine crisis. Stoltenberg’s comments are as good an example as any of what the political scientist Richard Sakwa has described as “a stance of one-sided geopolitical nihilism.”

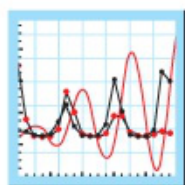
Puzzlingly, NATO is often said to be a vehicle for “Western values.” In March, NATO’s deputy secretary general, the former high-ranking US State Department official Rose Gottemoeller, declared that the alliance “promotes the shared values of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law.” Likewise, Stoltenberg, at a recent speech to the German Marshall Fund in Brussels, averred that NATO has “helped spread freedom and democracy and human rights.... [W]e must continue to work hard every day to uphold those values.”

But what are those values, exactly? Turkey, currently governed by an Islamist authoritarian who has tacitly supported and funded ISIS, has been a member since 1952. The newest NATO member states have seen a disturbing recurrence of neo-Nazi torchlight marches and other events celebrating the wartime exploits of Nazi collaborators in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovakia.

Yet nearly three decades after the end of the first Cold War, NATO’s role is viewed as so sacrosanct by US military, political, and media elites that questioning its policy of eastward expansion—and whether such a policy serves or harms US national-security interests—is now treated

(continued on page 8)

NATO has become “an aggressive global alliance.”



THE SCORE/BRYCE COVERT + MIKE KONCZAL

Paying the Taxman

The Internal Revenue Service isn't easy to love. Politicians from Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) to former senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) have called for abolishing it, and a House bill to do just that currently has 29 Republican co-sponsors.

And yet the IRS plays a vital function in our country. The taxman not only brings in a huge amount of net revenue; he can also ensure that the wealthiest are paying their share.

Despite this, the agency's budget has fallen by \$2 billion since 2010, even as the IRS took on additional work administering the tax portions of the Affordable Care Act and overseeing the rollout of the 2017 Republican tax cut. After reaching a zenith of \$14 billion in 2010, the IRS's budget has been steadily whittled down; it absorbed \$900 million in cuts between 2010 and 2014 alone.

This has left the agency enfeebled. Last year, it had fewer than 10,000 auditors to oversee

enormous benefits. Every dollar spent on its enforcement and modernization saves \$200 for the government. But if the IRS can't do its job, that money is left on the table. Revenue from audits has fallen by about \$10 billion since 2010.

According to ProPublica, which analyzed data from the IRS and other sources, if the agency were pursuing enforcement as aggressively as it did before 2010, it would have collected \$18 billion more in 2017 than it actually did. Since 2011, it's forgone about \$95 billion.

Moreover, all that uncollected money typically sits with those who need it least. The richer someone is, the more likely they are to have misreported their income. And yet audits for the top 1 percent have fallen, from 8 percent in 2011 to just 2.5 percent in 2017, according to ProPublica's analysis. Audits of millionaires recouped only \$1.9 billion in 2018, compared with \$5.1 billion in 2010. That almost certainly means that many very wealthy Americans are unfairly holding on to more of their wealth.

You might think that reversing course and cracking down on the well-to-do would be a priority for the IRS. But Republicans have pressured the agency to do the opposite and instead pursue fraud regarding the earned-income tax credit,

which is claimed by those earning less than \$55,000 a year. EITC audits accounted for more than a third of all audits in 2017. These low-income filers face audit rates surpassed only by those for the country's millionaires.

Our tax system used to mitigate income inequality through higher taxes on the rich. But for that to work again, we can't just have higher rates on paper. Someone has to make sure that the rich actually pay what they owe.

There is hope for the agency: After calling for cuts to the IRS in 2018, President Trump released a 2020 budget that proposes \$11.5 billion in base funding, as well as an additional \$15 billion invested in the agency's enforcement efforts. The budget estimates that spending this money would generate \$47 billion in additional revenue over a decade.

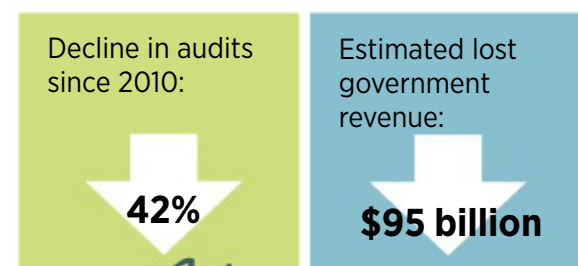
But such budget documents are essentially wish lists that rarely become policy, and Trump's

proposal has so far elicited a tepid response from Republicans. While Congress continues to let the IRS languish, the rich get away with shirking their tax debt, thereby reducing government revenues and exacerbating the pernicious inequality that afflicts our society.

BRYCE COVERT

Cuts to the IRS Hurt Revenue and Benefit the Rich

Since 2010, Congress has slashed the agency's funding by \$2 billion.



The richer someone is, the more likely they are to misreport income.

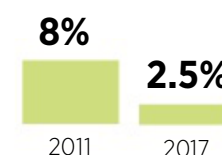
Audits for the wealthiest have fallen, from 8 percent in 2011 to just 2.5 percent in 2017.

the entire country's tax collections—a third less than in 2010. The last time it had such paltry staffing was back in 1953, when both the economy and the population were far smaller.

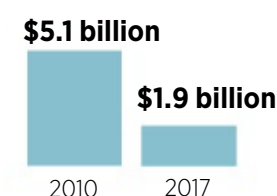
This means the IRS is doing less to make sure that people pay the taxes they owe. From 2010 to 2017, the number of audits dropped by 675,000—a 42 percent decline. New investigations of people who simply don't file their taxes fell from 2.4 million in 2011 to 362,000 in 2017. The IRS has also dropped the ball on making sure that people pay up when they're caught underreporting: These debts expire after 10 years, and the amount that's expired stood at \$8.3 billion in 2017—17 times as much as in 2010.

Reducing or eliminating the IRS is the equivalent of cutting off the country's nose to spite its face. Americans may chafe at paying taxes, but investing in the IRS generates

Audits of the top 1 percent of earners:



Revenue from audits of millionaires:



Sources: ProPublica and Politico analyses of IRS and Congress.gov data. 2019 infographic: Tracy Matsue Loeffelholz

NATION NEWS

Richard Kim Joins Edit Board

The Nation's former executive editor, Richard Kim, will now be joining its editorial board. Kim began his journalism career as an intern at *The Nation* in 1997 and, over the course of two decades, rose to become the magazine's executive editor, shaping *The Nation's* editorial content and leading its digital efforts until November 2018. He became the enterprise director for *HuffPost* in early 2019.

"We're so pleased to welcome Richard to the board," says *Nation* editor and publisher Katrina vanden Heuvel. "He has been a valued, trusted, and brilliant colleague, editor, ally, and great friend. His impeccable judgment and editorial vision have helped guide *The Nation* through some of its most tumultuous and challenging, grim and joyous journalistic (and other) moments."

"I couldn't be more thrilled and honored to join *The Nation's* editorial board," Kim says. "The magazine has played a pivotal role in shaping the American political landscape for more than a century, taking brave stances against the disastrous Iraq War and laying out a vision of what a more inclusive, just, and fair country might look like. At this moment, the nation needs *The Nation*."

Kim joins an editorial board whose members include Deepak Bhargava, Kai Bird, Barbara Ehrenreich, Eric Foner, Greg Grandin, Lani Guinier, Tony Kushner, Toni Morrison, Walter Mosley, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Victor Navasky, Pedro Antonio Noguera, Richard Parker, Elizabeth Pocho-da, Rinku Sen, Zephyr Teachout, and Dorian T. Warren.

Katha Pollitt



Why Women Are Invisible

When it comes to design, the devil's in the details.

It might not astonish you to learn that I keep an ongoing mental file on the annoyances, indignities, and even dangers to which women are subjected in daily life. As a small, five-foot-tall person of a certain age, for example, I seethe each time I struggle into one of the larger New York City taxis. They are high off the ground, and not all of them have those little steps by the door or hanging straps to help you hoist yourself up; plus the sliding doors are heavy and tend to stick.

New York is a city of women, to say nothing of seniors and people of all ages and ethnicities on the smaller side. Whose bright idea was it to order up a line of taxis fit for nimble giants? And while we're on the subject, who replaced normal chairs in restaurants with tall stools that you have to awkwardly wiggle up onto? Why are podiums so high? And why does nobody offer you something to stand on so you can be seen over them?

I know what you're thinking: It's not about sex, it's about height—and you, Katha, just happen to be short. That is true. But hello! Women on average are shorter than men, and once you get down to the really petite, they're mostly women. And yes, I am aware that taxis and seating and podiums are not the most important problems in the world. But as the British writer Caroline Criado-Perez argues, they are symptoms of a much broader affliction. Her brilliant book, *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*, lays out in impressive detail the many ways that human beings are presumed to be male, as well as the wide-reaching effects of this distorted view of humanity.

You might have heard of Criado-Perez when she started a campaign in 2013 to have a woman included in what was supposed to be an all-male lineup of notables featured on British banknotes. She was met with scorn and the online obscenities and threats that all feminists seem to attract when they invade male turf—and what's more manly than money? But it's largely thanks to her that Jane Austen appears on the £10 note today.

Austen, of course, would have known all about the "generic male." From the rules of grammar—"man" means both male and human, "he" means both he and she—to the positioning of kitchen shelves, which are way too high even though a

woman is likely to be making the most use of the kitchen, the male is treated as the default human. It's what Criado-Perez calls "male unless otherwise indicated": Women aren't people; they're a "niche." That means women are seen as the exception, even when they're not. Asked in one study to draw a "beautician," Criado-Perez notes, most people in the group drew a man. A 2015 study showed that when people were asked to draw seemingly genderless words ("user," "participant"), both men and women drew males.

Because male experiences and standards of judgment are taken as neutral, and men tend to be in charge of determining what information is collected and how it is analyzed, data about women is often not disaggregated—or even collected at all. This can have serious consequences. Did you know that, although men are more likely to be involved in a car crash, women are 71 percent more likely to be moderately injured, 47 percent more likely to be

seriously injured, and 17 percent more likely to die in a car crash—and not because women are bad drivers. It all goes back to automobile design, which is built around crash-test dummies based on the "average" male. Only in 2011 did designers start using a female dummy in some tests—and even then only in the passenger seat (how fitting). Car crashes are "the number one cause of fetal death related to maternal trauma," according to Criado-Perez, but seat belts are not designed to accommodate pregnant bellies—or female breasts, for that matter. (Or, I might add, short people: I have to put the shoulder strap behind me, because otherwise it rests on my neck.)

What about health? We all know that women's pains are often not taken seriously, and that specifically female conditions like endometriosis are often misdiagnosed or ignored. In medicine, as in car design, the default human is male. But did you know that heart disease is the most common killer



"Women are not just smaller men," writes Caroline Criado-Perez. But medical research is conducted as if these differences did not exist.



IRAN

Crossroads and Complexities

SEPTEMBER 11–23, 2019

At this pivotal moment in US-Iranian relations, *The Nation* continues to believe in the power of direct person-to-person interaction as an essential way to foster more productive dialogue and to maintain peaceful relations between nations. Join *The Nation* as we seek to understand a country that few Americans have visited. Our carefully crafted program focuses on the cultural richness and magnificent beauty of Iran, providing an opportunity to develop a better sense of the country's future through conversations and engagement with Iranians, and by experiencing the warmth and hospitality of Iranian culture.

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THE
Nation.TRAVELS

of women, and that only one in eight women who have a heart attack report chest pain, which is popularly portrayed as a classic male symptom? Because of this “yentl syndrome,” in which women are misdiagnosed unless their symptoms mimic those of men, heart disease in women is not properly recognized and treated—and that may be why women are more likely than men to die of it.

“Women are not just smaller men,” Criado-Perez writes. Sex differences affect our bodies down to the cellular level. But medical education, as well as research, studies, treatments, and drugs, are designed as if these differences did not exist.

Criado-Perez gamely walks us through a huge variety of examples, many of which are pretty discouraging. Why are cell phones designed for male hands? Why should office heating and cooling be set at the lower temperatures that men, with their higher metabolism, prefer? Because men designed the system as if only men would be affected. And that’s the least of it: Everything about work

is designed around men, beginning with the outmoded assumption that the typical worker is male—and that he has a stay-at-home wife who can run the house and raise the kids so that he need never be distracted from his job.

The good thing about these systems is that we can change them for the better. When urban planners in Sweden looked at their snowplowing schedule, which prioritized cars (mostly used by men to commute), and changed it so pedestrian streets (mostly used by women for short errands) were plowed first, snow- and ice-related injuries fell. Data-driven sexism such as hiring algorithms can also be corrected, but their architects have to recognize there’s a problem. That’s why planners, coders, researchers, and designers all should be given a copy of *Invisible Women* for free. And maybe we should start with NASA, which had to cancel the first all-woman space walk, scheduled for March 29, because the agency only had one woman-sized space suit. Houston, we have a problem! ■

(continued from page 4)

as tantamount to treason.

We are in danger of forgetting that in the run-up to the alliance’s first round of expansion, prominent establishment figures voiced reasonable—indeed, prescient—objections to the ill-fated project. In an open letter to the Clinton administration in June 1997, dozens of high-ranking former

policy-makers and diplomats warned that NATO’s expansion “is neither necessary nor desirable and that this ill-conceived policy can and should be put on hold.”

Writing just after the New Year in 1997, the diplomat and scholar George Kennan predicted that “the Russians will not react wisely and moderately to the decision of NATO to extend its boundaries to the

Russian frontiers.” For Kennan, this decision was “the greatest mistake of the entire post-Cold War period.”

Time has proved the skeptics correct. The policy of NATO expansion is largely responsible for the dangerous deterioration in relations between Russia and the West and lies at the heart of the ongoing Ukraine crisis. The end of the Cold War left the

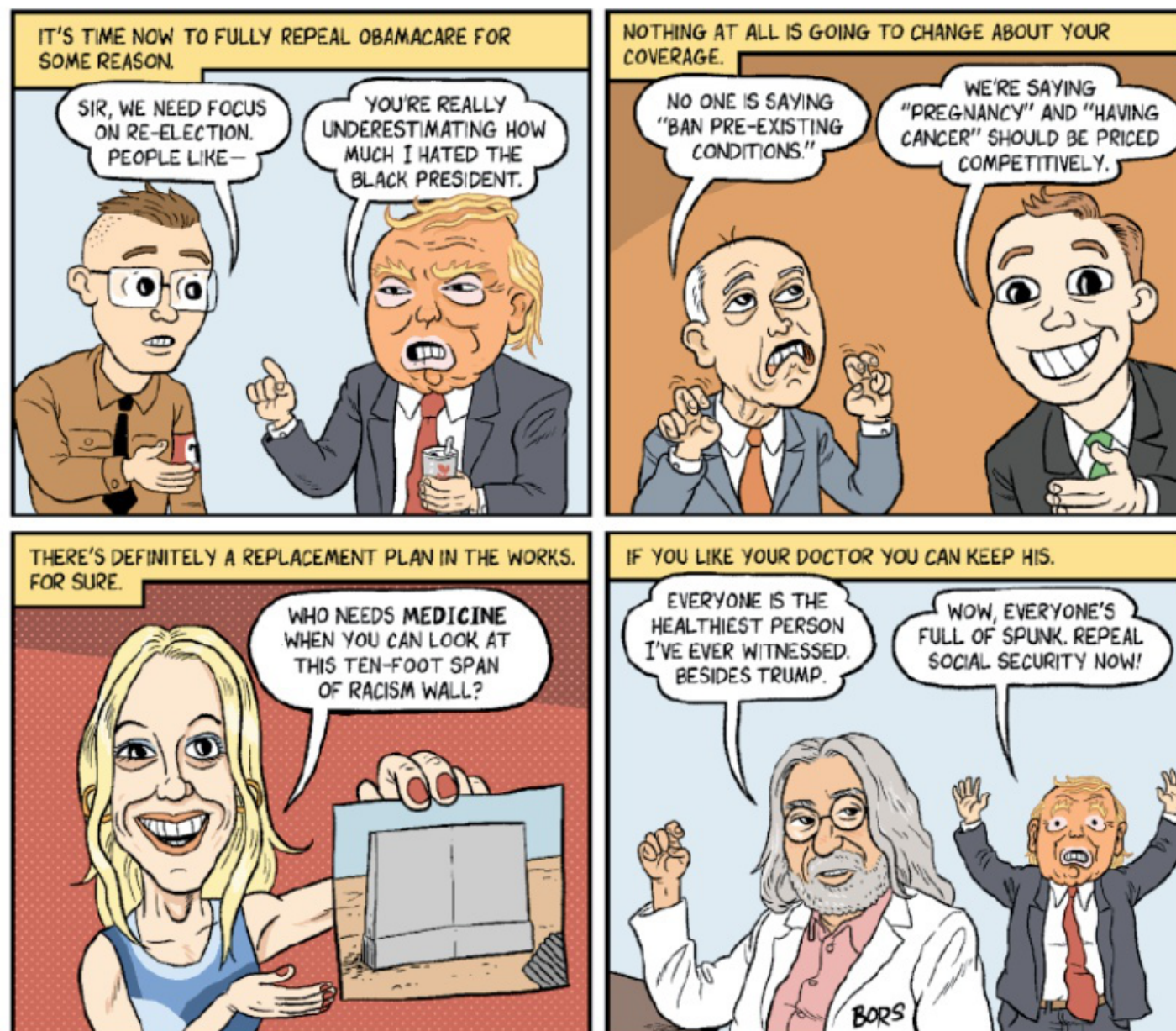
alliance purposeless; expansion has made it untenable. Instead of holding a self-serving, self-justifying 70th-anniversary celebration, NATO should address what has gone so wrong over the past three decades by reexamining its policies of eastward expansion and nondefensive deployment, and it should also seriously consider adopting a “no first use” policy for nuclear weapons.

As for the notion that a military alliance can and should serve as a vehicle for democratic “values”: An alternative approach might be for the United States and our European allies to reinvigorate the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Because its membership is not contingent upon the acceptance of US military leadership and includes important post-Soviet states like Russia and Ukraine, the OSCE is far better suited to promote the interests of a peaceful Europe stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok—a vision shared by leaders as disparate as Gorbachev and Charles de Gaulle.

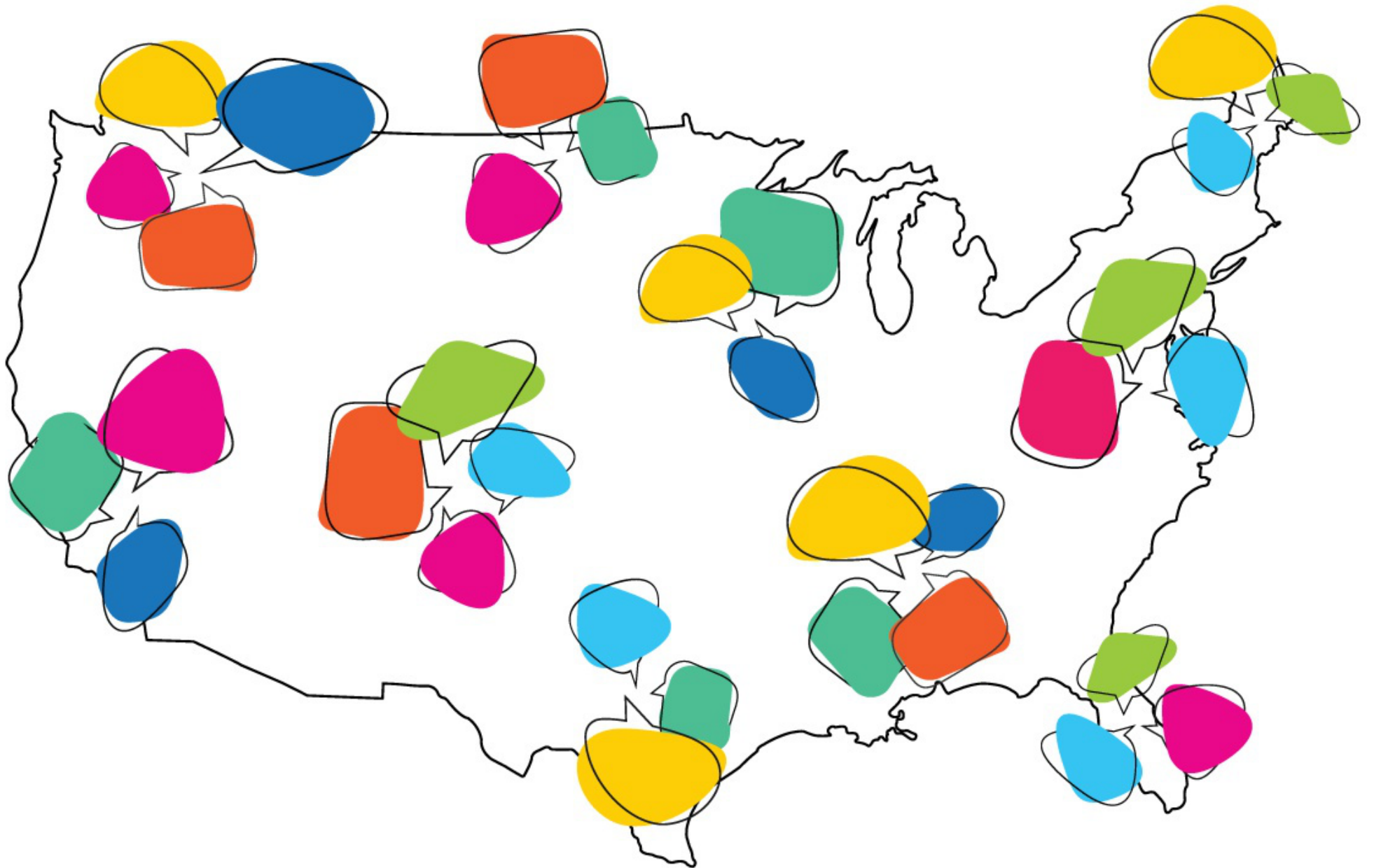
JAMES GARDEN

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TITLE IX

Stepping Backward

Last November, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos unveiled her proposed changes to the Title IX regulations on sexual harassment, a move that provoked widespread outrage. The ACLU wrote: “Under the new policy, schools will likely investigate far fewer complaints, and the Department of Education will hold fewer schools accountable for ensuring campuses are free of sexual harassment and assault.”

Now, a lawsuit in Michigan is bringing the issue a little closer to home for DeVos: Holland Christian High School, her own alma mater, is being sued for allegedly mishandling a student’s sexual-assault case and compromising the complainant’s safety.

The suit relies on many of the same regulations that DeVos is determined to overhaul. According to the current Obama-era guidelines, any school that receives federal funding is required to investigate claims of sexual assault that happened on or off school grounds, and must take steps to protect the complainant during the investigation. If DeVos’s new rules go into effect, these requirements would be lifted, and Holland Christian would become ground zero for a radical step backward in the struggle to end campus sexual assault.

Said Esther Warkov, executive director of Stop Sexual Assault in Schools: “When the US secretary of education’s own alma mater flouts its responsibilities, we begin to understand the pervasive disregard for Title IX compliance that includes the majority of public schools nationwide.”

—Isabel Cristo



Apologies Owed

And we should be suspicious of any candidate who's loath to give one.

Michael Bloomberg is annoyed—with both the Democratic Party and the left in general. The recently Republican former mayor of New York made big headlines in March when he announced, gruffly, that he won’t be running for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination. I didn’t understand why this was news. My Republican uncle won’t be running for it either; I imagine a great many former GOP officeholders will be giving the Democratic primary a pass. But Michael Bloomberg is a billionaire white man, so apparently what he had to say was relevant.

Here’s what Bloomberg argued, at an executive forum where he continued to hold forth on the state of the Democratic Party: We’re being too hard on privileged white men. And as much as I’d like to ignore him, to keep moving with the ever-churning news cycle, Bloomberg’s petulant fit still demands a response, especially since it’s part of a toxic trend among the self-styled “centrists” who hope to make Democrats great again in 2020.

In explaining his decision to stay out of the race, Bloomberg didn’t discuss the many substantive reasons why he’s so wildly unpopular with Democratic voters. (His poll numbers never broke 2 percent.) Instead, he lashed out obliquely at identity politics, offering a mixture of sympathy and derision for the other rich white men who want to be president. Bloomberg wants them to understand that they’ll never get a fair shake, so they should stop with all the apologies. He groused that “Joe Biden went out and apologized for being male, over 50, white.” And he seemed downright sad for the younger “Beto, whatever his name is,” who debased himself even worse than Biden did: “He’s apologized for being born.”

These sorts of outbursts are familiar to those of us who spent 12 years living under Mayor Mike’s rule, with his unabashed contempt of democracy and his ire for anyone who questions elites. He became expert at defending the establishment while passing it off as brave truth-telling and data-driven realism. It seems that this will be his contribution to the 2020 primaries as well.

So let’s talk about the “apology tour,” a term that Bloomberg first encountered on CNN and,

Kai Wright



tellingly, has now latched onto. For starters, I can’t figure out what’s wrong with showing a bit of humility when you’re auditioning for one of the most powerful jobs in the world. You’ve led a charmed life; you’ve got a “sorry” or two to spare. But also, let’s be clear: Apologies and explanations are, in fact, due from the crop of candidates throwing their hats in the ring.

Beto “whatever his name is” O’Rourke is an intriguing politician, to be sure. But he has a thin résumé and has articulated no big ideas; his greatest political achievement was losing a Senate race. Plainly, his meteoric rise in national politics is as

much a result of *who* he is (a white, male Gen Xer with vaguely hip credentials) as it is of what he’s *done*. O’Rourke sounded terrifyingly oblivious to this reality when he declared that he was “born” to run for president. The fact that he later acknowledged as much when challenged on it ought to be considered strong leadership, not weak pandering.

Elizabeth Warren—who actually won her upstart Senate race back in 2012—is more exciting. She has offered perhaps the most detailed set of big ideas so far.

But still, she owes us an explanation for her creepy appropriation of Native American heritage. Likewise, Kamala Harris’s tenacity on the Senate Judiciary Committee is really appealing, as is her potential to make history as a black woman running for president. But if she’s running on the slogan “For the People,” we do need her to acknowledge the way she policed the black people of California as the state’s chief prosecutor.

I could go on in this fashion. I won’t even get started with Biden, who has a lot more to apologize for than being male, over 50, and white.

It’s not that the Democratic candidates all need to march through some sort of parade of contrition. But if you want to lead a party dedicated to reform at this moment in history, we need to know



There’s nothing wrong with showing a bit of humility when you audition for one of the most powerful jobs in the world.

how you'll deal with the sins of the past—starting with your own. These are crucial tests of leadership.

Donald Trump represents nothing so much as America's chickens coming home to roost. We have spent generations papering over and compromising around the fundamental inequities in our democracy, our economy, and our society overall. These inequities are not aberrations; they reflect deliberate choices made throughout our national history to foster white and male supremacy. Those choices are unsustainable for a host of reasons, not least because an ever-growing majority will no longer tolerate them. Our future leaders need to understand all of this, and a good way to begin showing that they do is by

publicly interrogating their own choices.

They also need to understand that there's no going backward, no return to the false peace that gave us Trump. It's plain that a far-right strategy for the coming election will be to stir up intra-left fights, and to weaponize the raw emotions around race and gender in that effort. Already, one troubling revelation after another has emerged from opposition research appearing in right-wing media. So be it. It's further proof of the point: We cannot build a new, better America unless we learn how to deal with the white-male supremacy that built the one we've got. We need candidates that can show us how to do that, both in policy and in their own lives. ■

If you want to lead a party dedicated to reform, voters need to know how you'll deal with the sins of the past.

SNAPSHOT / EMRAH GUREL

Erdogan at a Loss

Supporters of Ekrem Imamoglu, a candidate in Istanbul's mayoral race from the opposition Republican People's Party, gather for a rally on March 29. The election, held on March 31, was the first municipal vote since Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, acquired sweeping executive powers in 2018. Imamoglu proved victorious.

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

ODD REASONING

"Trump to cut millions in aid to 3 Central American countries."
—*The Washington Post*

The surge of migrants comes from countries where Conditions are, to say the least, adverse.
So here's the plan for how we stop this surge:
Cut off our aid, and make conditions worse.



The Nation.

FALLOUT

Worsening US-China relations
could lead to disaster.

JOHN FEFFER



IF YOU IGNORE THE HEADLINES, YOU'D THINK THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA WERE THE BEST OF partners. Americans continue to rely on Chinese-made products in their homes, at their offices, and in their pockets. If you live near a university, you can still bump into one of the 340,000 Chinese studying in the US. You can still take a Beijing-sponsored Chinese-language class at any of the 104 Confucius Institutes in 46 states.

Even if you're not among the 114,000 Americans who work in the 2,400 Chinese-owned companies in this country, your livelihood still depends on China. As America's largest trading partner and the largest foreign holder of US debt, China keeps the American economy afloat. Economically, the two nations are joined at the hip.

But in virtually every other way, China and the United States are drifting apart, and this growing rift could have catastrophic consequences.

"We are at war with China on at least two fronts: technology and trade," says Michael Klare, a military analyst and defense correspondent for *The Nation*. "This is not peacetime in the way we once understood it. So the questions are when, and how, and if this war will enter new realms."

Washington and Beijing are currently battling over who will build the world's next generation of digital infrastructure, with the United States trying to freeze out Chinese telecom giants like Huawei. The United States is afraid that if allies use Chinese technology, it could pose a security risk. Meanwhile, a trade war of escalating tariffs between the world's two largest economies threatens to send global markets into a tailspin.

And in a significant departure from its predecessor's version, the Trump administration's National Security Strategy portrays China as a "revisionist" power that wants to "shape a world antithetical to US values and interests." This document "suggests that wherever China is active, the United States should push back," explains Melanie Hart, a China expert at the Center for American Progress. "Wherever China is developing cooperation with other nations, that adds up to a threat to the United States. The National Security Strategy paints that in dire terms."

Similarly, the foreign-policy elite in the United States has shifted away from compromise. Whereas a lively debate among China watchers once pitted those who favor engagement against those who champion containment—the "panda huggers" versus the "dragon slayers"—the consensus has now moved in a more combative direction.

"I've seen people who were generally positive about US-China relations all shifting a little more hawkish," observes Jennifer Turner, an expert on China and the environment at the Wilson Center. "The general atmosphere in DC is that it's not going well."

This change in elite consensus, which extends to Congress as well, has been extraordinary in its pace and impact. Although it precedes the divisive efforts of the current administration, the more uncompromising stance on China of the expert class has ensured that Trump's China

"We are at war with China on at least two fronts: technology and trade. This is not peacetime in the way we once understood it."

—Michael Klare, military analyst

initiatives have not generated the kind of pushback associated with the president's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal or his cozier relationship with Saudi Arabia.

As in the early stages of a divorce discussion, the two sides are trading accusations across every facet of the relationship: trade, security, human rights, technology. Both sides also recognize how costly this conflict could be. So, for the time being, they have settled into a tense cohabitation punctuated by raised voices and intemperate threats.

Divorce is not inevitable. But with China expected to overtake the United States in total economic output in the next decade—and with bilateral competition sharpening over markets, resources, and geopolitical advantage—Beijing and Washington may yet succumb to irreconcilable differences.

Even if the conflict doesn't devolve into a shooting war, a sharp downturn in US-China relations could mean a global economic crisis, the unraveling of the multilateral order, the failure of the last best effort to stop climate change—or a perfect storm of all three. The two largest economies in the world, with by far the two largest carbon footprints, have different views on how the world should be structured. If they can't reach agreement on trade, the environment, and the global rules of the road, the divorce will tear apart what remains of the international community.

The Trump Effect

THE INITIAL WARMING IN US-CHINA RELATIONS had a very public starting point: the visit by a team of American ping-pong players to China in April 1971, followed by President Richard Nixon's groundbreaking trip the following February. For the next several decades, the United States applied two principles to its relations with Beijing. The US government, the business community, and the NGO sector made various pacific overtures to China. At the same time, the Pentagon consistently attempted to contain China's reach and influence.

The decline of this "conengagement" approach is more difficult to pinpoint. The Obama administration certainly attempted to tweak the model with its "Pacific pivot," an effort to refocus the Pentagon away from the Middle

John Feffer is the director of Foreign Policy in Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies as well as a novelist, journalist, and playwright.



East to East Asia. However, the war in Syria and the rise of ISIS largely prevented this military reorientation. The economic component of the pivot gained greater traction: Obama brokered a free-trade agreement for the region, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), that pointedly excluded China.

After Donald Trump unexpectedly won the 2016 election, he adopted a far more aggressive approach toward China, beginning with his staff. Former top adviser Steve Bannon urged preparations for a coming war between the United States and an “expansionist” China in the South China Sea. “The kinds of people that have taken senior positions on trade and national security are China hawks more eager to confront China,” says Dennis Wilder, who served as the National Security Council’s director for China from 2004 to 2005.

On trade, Trump complained about an undervalued yuan, barriers to entry into Chinese markets, and the theft of intellectual-property rights. But on the third day of his presidency, Trump withdrew from the TPP. Whatever the pluses and minuses of this agreement, US withdrawal provided China an opportunity to further deepen its economic ties in the region.

More often than not, Trump’s obsession with destroying agreements brokered by the Obama administration has brought Washington into conflict with Beijing—over the Iran nuclear deal, for instance, or on climate change. Nonetheless, Trump’s actions on China have elicited a surprising amount of praise from people who don’t ordinarily have anything nice to say about the president. As Thea Lee, the president of the progressive Economic Policy Institute, acknowledges, “The one thing that the tariff actions have shown: Leverage works. They’ve gotten the attention of the Chinese government.” (Though it should be acknowledged that Lee’s recommendations for how to use that leverage—to advocate for stronger labor rights in China to build a middle class—are not exactly the Trump administration’s priorities.)

“Trump is a madman, but I want to give him and his administration their due,” admits Orville Schell, a journalist who has covered China for decades and now directs the Center on US-China Relations at the Asia Society. “We can’t keep playing on an unlevel playing field and take promises that are never delivered on. It’s really China’s turn to respond, and it’s long overdue.”

Lockup: China has placed as many as 1.5 million Uighurs and other Turkic minorities in secretive “reeducation camps” in the Xinjiang region.

“Trump is a madman, but I want to give him and his administration their due. We can’t keep playing on an unlevel playing field.”

—Orville Schell, journalist

Trump is presiding over Washington’s most assertive challenge to China in decades, and it’s a bipartisan confrontation. But what the United States says and does is only part of the story.

The Xi Effect

UNTIL RELATIVELY RECENTLY, CHINA WAS OUTWARDLY content with being a junior partner—or, occasionally, a junior adversary—of the United States. In the 2000s, Chinese officials spoke of the country’s “peaceful rise,” as if it were interested only in getting along by going along.

That has changed with Xi Jinping. The first Chinese president born after the 1949 revolution, Xi has steered the country in a different direction since he took over in 2012. After using an anti-corruption campaign to eliminate his rivals, Xi embarked on a set of reforms that consolidated his power, modernized the military, and re-emphasized state control of the economy. In so doing, he has remade the very concept of leadership—his own in China, and his country’s in the world.

“In terms of the direction that Xi has taken the Chinese government, it is a change—and a pretty dramatic one—from the Deng Xiaoping reform and opening-up policies,” Wilder observes. “And not just reform and opening up, but also keeping the low profile of Deng’s two successors, Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin. Xi is a different kind of leader: He is more autocratic, and he believes in the reassertion of the [Communist] Party into all aspects of Chinese society and life.”

The most striking departure from that previous “low-profile approach” has been China’s greater assertiveness in the South China Sea. Beijing has declared ownership over just about everything that lies beyond the territorial waters of the surrounding countries. This is no minor waterway: One-third of global shipping passes through the South China Sea.

Under Xi, China has begun to build artificial islands there, essentially creating 3,000 new acres of Chinese territory to cement its claims. Other countries have pushed back, particularly the Philippines, which brought suit against China in an international maritime court. In 2016, the UN-created court ruled against China, a decision that Beijing roundly criticized as “destined to come to naught.”

“More than anything, what shifted, at least in terms of expert opinion, was China’s build-out of artificial islands in the South China Sea and the flouting of the permanent court of arbitration about that,” observes Robert Daly, director of the Wilson Center’s Kissinger Institute on China and the United States.

Then too, at the 19th Communist Party Congress in 2017, Xi “took a highly nationalist approach, essentially defining Western influences as the enemy,” says J. Stapleton Roy, a former US ambassador to China. Xi instructed the party “to look into and provide guidance on everything—politics, economics, math, philosophy, think tanks. All of these and more have to have Chinese characteristics.”

Actually, Xi may be even more ambitious: If successful, his efforts would ensure that the whole of the Asia Pacific region has Chinese characteristics. His Belt

FALLOUT?

and Road Initiative is a grand infrastructure program that aspires to reconnect China with the Middle East and Europe via a new Silk Road, along with a maritime program that builds up the capacities of Beijing's littoral neighbors. The project involves some 70 countries and as much as \$1 trillion in funding (though it may not reach that figure for another few years). Xi has also created economic structures, like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, to finance regional growth. These structures could one day serve as the center of an alternative global economy. After all, Chinese development loans already rival those of the World Bank.

At the same time, China's economic miracle, which has pulled an unprecedented number of people out of poverty, is slowing. The country's economic growth has dropped to a low of between 6 and 6.6 percent this year—and it could fall even further. "There's a huge private and public debt of around \$34 trillion," points out sociologist Walden Bello, a human-rights activist and former member of the Philippine Congress. Among other things, the Belt and Road Initiative is a huge gamble aimed at priming the region's economic pump and reinflating Chinese growth.

Xi's greater assertiveness—his "China dream" of a "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation"—has generated a reciprocal response from a number of other countries, but particularly the United States, with Trump's own dream of a national resurgence. In what is perhaps the best-case scenario, two increasingly nationalistic superpowers with immense militaries and overextended economies might be content to maintain their own spheres of influence. But China wants to expand its sphere, and the United States is reluctant to give up either its Pacific presence or its global ambitions.

There is another source of conflict. The United States doesn't just want to box in China; it also wants to change China from within.

Mistaken Assumptions

DURING THE "CONGAGEMENT" years, a basic assumption lurked behind many US analyses of Chinese behavior: By introducing market capitalism and gradually liberalizing its politics and culture, China would become more Western. During the debate over China's accession to the World Trade Organization, then-President Bill Clinton argued that the agreement "will move China in the right direction. It will advance the goals America has worked for in China for the past three decades.... By joining the WTO, China is not simply agreeing to import more of our products; it is agreeing to import one of democracy's most cherished values: economic freedom."

As Kurt Campbell, a former assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pa-



"The Chinese leadership intends for China to be a great power, to command respect, to bury the century of humiliation that they're still quite sensitive to."

—Andrew Bacevich, historian

cific affairs, and Ely Ratner, a former State Department official, put it in an influential essay in *Foreign Affairs* last year: "The assumption that deepening commercial, diplomatic, and cultural ties would transform China's internal development and external behavior has been a bedrock of U.S. strategy. Even those in U.S. policy circles who were skeptical of China's intentions still shared the underlying belief that U.S. power and hegemony could readily mold China to the United States' liking." When China proved to be not quite so pliable, American observers started to question the virtues of engagement.

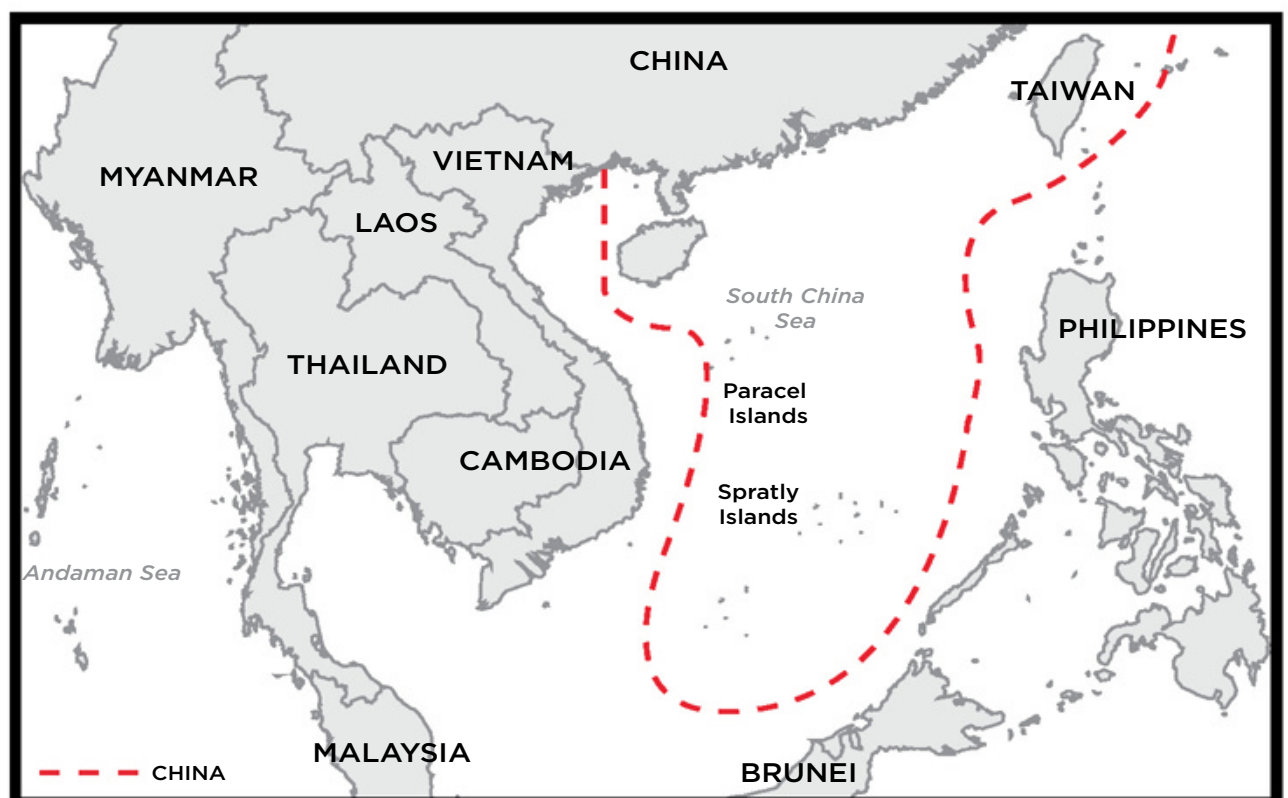
The Chinese, too, held certain basic assumptions about the stability and coherence of US policy, and Trump's erratic conduct has thrown them for a loop. But even before Trump or Xi, the global financial crisis of 2008 was a wake-up call. "They were true believers that we were the masters of the financial universe," Roy says. "They were disillusioned by the international financial crisis."

As Jian Yong, director of the Center for Economic Security Studies of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, wrote at the time: "The worsening US subprime crisis puts China's enormous US dollar assets and its opening financial market at tremendous risk. It also makes more Chinese people think about ways to prevent financial crises from spreading across the world amid globalization."

For the Chinese economy to continue growing, in other words, Beijing could no longer safely assume a well-functioning global system. It could no longer sit comfortably in the passenger seat and expect a smooth ride. With its Belt and Road Initiative, its alternative financing structures, its environmental initiatives, and its efforts to become a global leader in technology, China has seized the wheel. More to the point, Beijing is using its newfound power to change the rules of the road.

This emerging Chinese economic alternative, with its emphasis on the role of the state, "is positive as a sort

China's South China Sea Claims



of counterweight to the neoliberal institutions, with all their conditionalities about how countries should develop along Western market lines,” Bello says. “However, these institutions and Chinese lending have also had drawbacks of their own.”

One of those drawbacks are the high rates on some of China’s loans, as Sri Lanka recently discovered. At the end of 2017, unable to repay its various debts, the Sri Lankan government gave Beijing a 99-year lease to the Hambantota port, which was built with Chinese financing. It’s a commercial port, but it could be used for military purposes with Sri Lanka’s consent.

China: Meaner and Greener?

IN THE SECURITY REALM, CHINA INCREASED ITS military spending by double digits for many years, though it has fallen to 7.5 percent for 2019. “Clearly, the Chinese leadership intends for China to be a great power, to command respect, to bury the century of humiliation that they’re still quite sensitive to,” says historian Andrew Bacevich. “But does it follow that they want to take over the world and create a global empire?”

Lyle Goldstein, who teaches at the US Naval War College, challenges the notion of “Chinese aggression.” He says that China might push around smaller countries, but it has generally showed considerable restraint. “If there’s one thing that China has done that’s so horrible over the last 10 years, that has shocked people in the national-security realm, it would be its behavior in the South China Sea,” Goldstein says. “I don’t think it’s so threatening to the United States. I don’t think it’s that threatening to countries like the Philippines and Vietnam. What does it show? Chinese engineering prowess. A concern about their sea lanes. They haven’t killed anyone, resorting for the most part to deploying coast-guard cutters with water cannons. That’s a decent record of moderation for a great power.”



“If you look deeply at Xi’s calls for China to lead reform of the global system, what they are saying is terrifying.”

—Melanie Hart, director of China policy at the Center for American Progress

The one area where China has unquestionably become a leader is on the environment, especially given the steps backward that the Trump administration has taken. “China is becoming much more of a truly global player,” Turner says. “Ten or 15 years ago, at a lot of these environmental conferences, they just said no. At the fisheries conference, they said, ‘No, we need to fish.’ What China wants to do these days is set the norms.”

Barbara Finamore, Asia senior strategic director at the Natural Resources Defense Council, acknowledges that China still has a ways to go to wean itself off dirty energy and “green” its overseas development projects. But China has largely kept to the clean-energy path, she argues, “because it’s in its own self-interest to do so. The reason for its transformation from a climate foot-dragger to an advocate of global climate governance is because it sees action on clean energy and the environment as fundamental to succeeding economically and putting its economy on a sustainable path moving forward.”

Unwilling to wait for the “invisible hand” of the market to allocate resources to clean energy, the Chinese government has, for instance, invested huge sums in solar- and wind-power production. As a result, Chinese companies have cornered the global market on solar-cell production, and China has more wind-power capacity than anywhere else in the world.

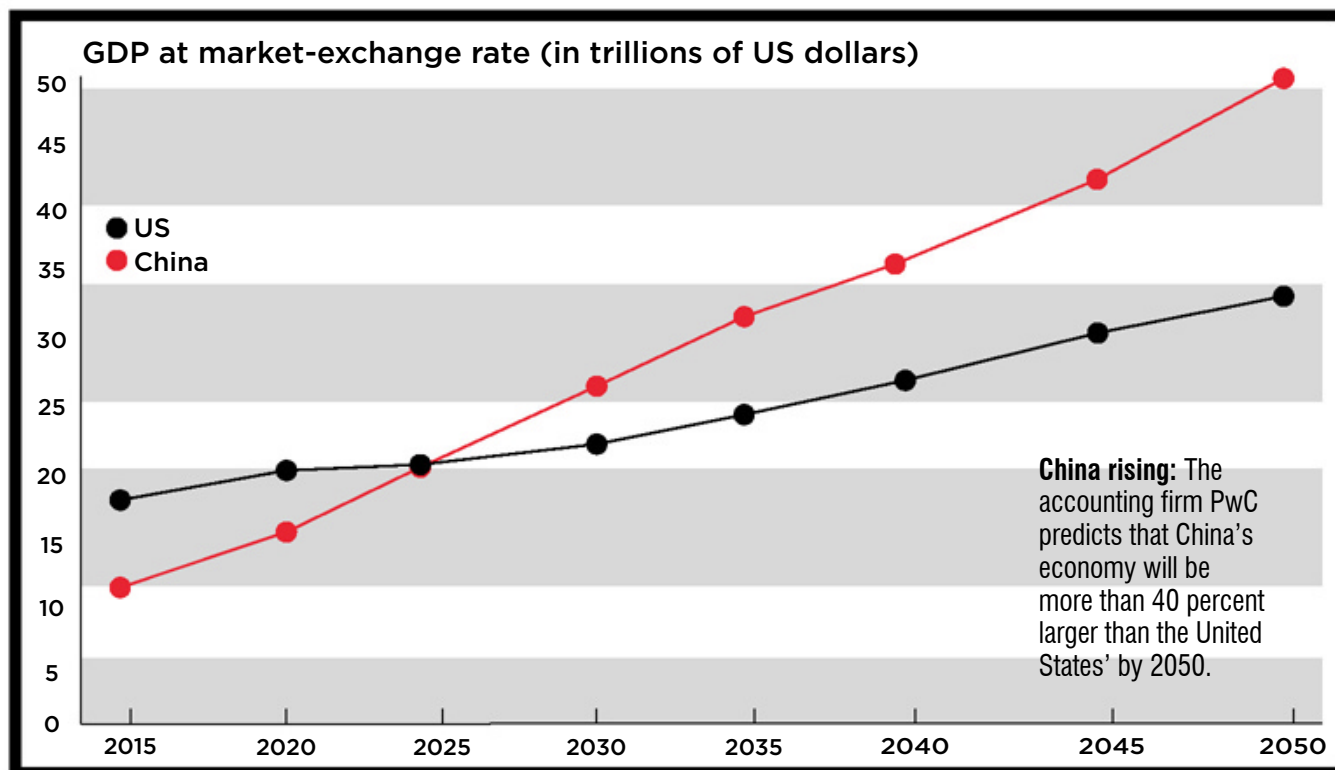
In other realms of global governance, China’s impatience with the rules of the liberal world order has less salutary implications. “If you look deeply at Xi’s calls for China to lead reform of the global system, what they are saying is terrifying,” argues Hart of the Center for American Progress. “They want to make the world system more authoritarian so that China can integrate without facing political concerns.”

Hart points to China’s preference for states to define Internet freedom within their own borders. Similarly, Beijing wants to define what human rights mean inside China and rewrite rather than accede to global laws and

regulations. Beijing is largely deaf to the global outcry over the situation in Xinjiang, where authorities have placed as many as 1.5 million Muslim Uighurs in “reeducation camps” and expanded an intrusive household-surveillance system. “Tibet has served as a brutal testing ground for social control for decades,” says Marin Ping, co-founder of Re:Public, a progressive foreign-policy collective, “and the concentration camps in Xinjiang may constitute the single greatest crime against humanity currently being orchestrated and executed by state actors.”

China is not alone in its insistence on a rather 19th-century understanding of sovereignty, especially in terms of human rights. Donald Trump in the United States, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in

US vs. China GDP



Turkey, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and Vladimir Putin in Russia are all dismissive of the international community's "interference." "China is beginning to feel and act in a way that reflects a sense that things are blowing its way when it comes to this area of human rights," Bello concludes.

How *Should* Washington Respond?

THE UNITED STATES IS NO LONGER THE WORLD'S sole superpower. The anxiety that accompanies Americans' realization of the relative decline of US global influence has produced a number of symptoms: the election of Trump, a preoccupation with borders and immigration, bipartisan support in Congress for greater military spending—and a fixation on China's growing power.

"As liberal-minded Americans despair at what is happening to their own country and its political system, China's rise under Xi's authoritarian grip induces a fear and anxiety that is as much about the United States as it is about China," John Delury, a historian of modern China at Yonsei University, points out by e-mail.

Susan Shirk, former deputy assistant secretary of state during the Clinton administration, warns against inflating these fears and imposing self-defeating restrictions on Chinese people and businesses coming to the United States. "It could lead to an anti-Chinese version of the Red Scare," she notes.

Meanwhile, the United States has launched a potentially budget-busting effort to maintain military supremacy over China (and everyone else on the planet). The Trump administration wants to increase the Pentagon's budget to \$750 billion a year, with much of that focused on China: the nearly 5 percent increase in the Navy's budget, the modernization of the US nuclear force, the resurrection of fighter-jet production. As acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan reminded Pentagon staffers on his first day on the job: "China, China, China."

That way lies insolvency, Klare argues: "Overmatching ISIS will never bankrupt us. Overmatching Russia and China will."

Given this new reality, there are two kinds of options for a progressive rethinking of US-China relations. The minimum approach, which acknowledges that the US government and the foreign-policy community have become leery of large-scale engagement, offers only case-by-case cooperation. "Our policy should be cooperative partnership that engages China on every level as we seek to work with China to solve problems," argues the US Naval War College's Goldstein. "They are a status-quo power that we can work with on various fronts: North Korea, Myanmar, pandemics, Belt and Road, climate change."

That engagement can even extend to difficult issues like human rights. "You do stand on your principles on questions of human rights, but you realize your limitations, since it's not possible for outside states to engineer the situation inside China," says Rajan Menon, who teaches at the City University of New York. "It's a delicate balance between standing up for what progressives



The East is green: With government subsidies, Chinese companies have now cornered the market for solar-cell production worldwide.

believe in, but also guarding against those issues being used for confrontation against China."

This minimum approach falls somewhere between the "congame" strategy of the past and the creation of distinct spheres of influence. It's neither a divorce nor a renewal of the wedding vows; it's more like the Chinese adage of "same bed, different dreams." There's room for cooperation, but also for considerable conflict.

The maximum approach, meanwhile, would be a heavier lift. It requires the United States and China to discuss the underlying tension in their relationship over two different views of global governance. A similar debate took place in 1945 between the capitalist and communist worlds, and it produced the compromises of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, the discussion would cover the balance of state and market in economic development, the tension between national sovereignty and universal human rights, and the restructuring of international institutions to better reflect the new balance of global power. The People's Republic of China, which didn't exist in 1945 but has now graduated to superpower status, expects to play the same role in reshaping the international system that the United States did after World War II.

Instead of engaging China in a conversation about such a transformation—or even just cooperating with it on an ad-hoc basis, as the Obama administration did—the Trump administration is simultaneously challenging Beijing and shrugging off the burdens of global leadership. Such a mixed message is straining the marriage of convenience between Washington and Beijing that has dominated the world order since the end of the Cold War.

Since it touches on the global economy, the environment, military conflict, and the latest technologies, the US-China relationship should be at the front and center of public debate. Yet no one in Washington or among the 2020 presidential candidates is discussing new ways to engage with China. The stakes, however, couldn't be higher: If this marriage dissolves, we can say goodbye to a world order that has come to depend on a measure of US-Chinese amity. ■

"China's rise under Xi's authoritarian grip induces fear that is as much about the United States as it is about China."

—John Delury, historian



WHAT I SAW

AT AN IMMIGRANT-
DETENTION CENTER



**The stories I heard from
the women and children
trapped in our cruel system
will stay with me forever.**

by MARTIN GARBUS

**A prison for
refugees:** Inmates
at the South Texas
Family Residential
Center in Dilley,
May 2015.

facing sexual abuse, rape, violence, and possibly murder in their native countries—would be safer in the United States. In most cases, the events that caused them to leave, just a month or so before I met them, were attempted or successful attacks by predators, mainly on their daughters, either by gangs, the government, members of their own families, or unknown men.

Journalists and politicians are often barred from visiting these immigrant-detention centers. Occasionally, the centers' owners will permit guided visits, but they do everything they can to mislead those who come. I and other lawyers had the benefit of being there day after day.

I spent one week at Dilley in February as a volunteer to help the families with their asylum applications. Nearly every one of the almost 500 people I saw there was sick. There were, at the end of my visit, 15 infants in the center. (Two children had previously died in government custody, though not at Dilley.) The children and their mothers, most of whom had crossed the Rio Grande 10 days before—often bucking strong currents and sand holes—looked for Border Patrol agents so they could be taken into custody and request asylum.

At first, the agents take them, in their wet clothes, to the *hielera*, or “ice box,” a large refrigerated processing center where the asylum seekers have to try to sleep on the concrete floor or sit on concrete benches, shivering under Mylar blankets, prodded and deliberately kept awake by agents all night and day. Often, bathroom breaks are not granted, or not in time, so both women and children soil themselves. This prison-like detention is an attempt to persuade these immigrants to give up before they are even interviewed by an asylum officer. It is also a message to those who are still trying to cross the border.

Mothers told me that only two bologna sandwiches—to be shared over a period of four days between a mother and two children—is standard. Sometimes they missed food for an entire day, and their illnesses were not treated. Originally, the rules limited confinement in the *hielera* to 12 hours, but now it is routine for the families to be kept there for four or five days, sometimes a week.

Next, the detainees are sent to the *perrera*, or “dog-house,” a place where families are put in cages, cyclone fencing between them, as though they are animals. But at least the chain-link cages—dog kennels, really—are warmer, the mothers told me.

When I arrived at 7:30 AM, the legal-visitation trailer was jammed with 50 mothers and children. According to the Dilley Pro Bono Project, about 450 families a week were being processed at that time. There is a miasma; the often-foul air smells of desperation.

When I walked into the detention center, I met the first 30 of the asylum seekers. I saw fear and shock in every face. Two years ago, I had spent several months in

**The women I
met at Dilley
had fled to
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to save their
children.**

WHEN I FIRST STARTED TO WRITE THIS, I was crying. I was flying back from Dilley, Texas, the site of the largest family-detention center in the United States. Only 75 miles from the Texas-Mexico border, the center is actually a prison—an internment camp. During my flight, I could see the faces and hear the voices of the women and children I had just left.

Nearly every woman seeking asylum that I met there came from the Northern Triangle of Central America: Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. They had traveled to the United States not to save their own lives, and not even to save themselves from hopeless poverty or endless physical and sexual abuse, but to save their daughters and sons. The mothers believed their children—who were

the countries where they came from, and that helped me understand, in some small way, these mothers' unspoken determination. They were going to endure as much as they had to for their children. They knew there was no turning back.

I was there to help prepare the mothers for their initial interviews, which can then lead to a full asylum hearing. But first I had to prepare my clients, and perhaps their children, for the intense questioning by the asylum officer, a member of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), whom we had to persuade, through what is called a "credible fear" interview, that they had a justified fear of persecution if they were deported back to their home country. If we were successful, that might qualify them for asylum.

Before my first interview with one mother, who was seated in the large central area with her 12-year-old son, she asked me if I had shoelaces. I looked down and saw that her son was wearing huge, unlaced sneakers that were nearly falling off his feet. "They are mine," she told me. "He lost his crossing the river. He almost drowned." If they were able to remain in the United States, they were planning to go to Chicago, where a church group had sponsored them. "They say it's cold," said the boy. "Do they have sweaters there?" his mother asked. I imagined them struggling to stay warm in the icy Chicago winter.

We spoke a while. The woman told me in an offhand way that her younger son had drowned 10 days ago, as they were crossing the river. She repressed all but a single tear. Her surviving son was impassive.

When I spoke with these women before we went to their credible-fear interviews, I tried to find out if they met the legal requirements for asylum. Most of my clients didn't understand why I was asking the questions I asked, and most of them could not bear to discuss the topics I had to pursue. Nearly all of the women I spoke with told me about the gangs—more powerful than their country's government or police—which prey on anyone who earned an income.

Sofia (as with others in this article, I will not use her real name because of her pending asylum claim), the

We were not allowed to comfort or hug any child, though many were sick and crying. Nor were we allowed to give any food or drink to the hungry detainees, other than paper cups of water.

Follow the money: Immigrants and allies protest outside the New York offices of JPMorgan Chase, which has financed the detention-facility companies GEO Group and CoreCivic, August 2, 2017.

mother of two children, had been supporting herself by buying eggs from a farmer, putting them in the basket of a bicycle, and riding around the neighborhood to sell them. Her father did the same. At first the gangs demanded the equivalent of a dollar a day, then more, and then even more. Finally, Sofia and her father said they could not pay. Sofia's father was killed that day, and she was told that, if she did not pay, her children would be next. Sofia left Honduras that night.

Another woman, Flor—thin and in her 20s, with a toddler daughter—said she had pancreatic cancer. She couldn't get treatment in her Central American country. Flor wanted to reach a sponsor in Minnesota so that her daughter could start a new life. "I want to see my daughter grow up," she told me. I nodded. Flor and I both knew she had less than a year to live.

Elena, a woman of about 30 with two young daughters, was told by the gangs to get money from their father, Gabriel, who had abandoned her and the children years before and was now living in Chicago. But Elena told them she couldn't. An incarcerated member of the gang then e-mailed and phoned Gabriel from jail in Honduras to say that his children would be killed unless he came up with the money. Elena had no idea how they had located him. Gabriel told them he could not pay. The gang member then told Gabriel and Elena that two men would come to see her. Elena didn't believe it. Soon thereafter, two men came to her home and stood silently across the street for two days, making sure she noticed them. They never said a word to her. At night, Elena took her children to a town 60 miles away, where her mother lived. The gang member then called her mother's home from jail. That was last December. Elena immediately took her children and started the 1,500-mile trek to the Texas border. As she described the way that Gabriel had abused her, she looked away from me. The only time Elena made eye contact was when she saw that I had tears, too.

The rules at Dilley were clear: We were not allowed to comfort or hug any child, though many were sick and crying. If I did not follow the rules, not only I, but all of the lawyers with the legal project that had brought us to Dilley, could be evicted. I was allowed only to shake the mother's hand. If she broke down and cried or walked out of the room because she couldn't continue, I was not allowed to touch her.

In another interview, a 2-year-old boy screaming hysterically made my talk with his mother and older sister impossible. The boy was dragging a metal chair around our small meeting room, trying to get me to leave so he could be alone with his mother. I think he sensed that every question I asked her was causing her pain. He wanted a response from me, but there was nothing I could do.

I was not allowed to give any food or drink other than paper cups of water to the very hungry detainees, who watched me leaving the center for both breakfast and dinner. No toys, books, or crayons could be given to the dozens of children in the waiting area. Separated from their mothers, the children had to remain seated and wait for hours in front of a TV screen high on the wall. Some sat crying.



THE DETENTION CENTER IN DILLEY IS RUN BY CoreCivic, a company that contributed \$250,000 to President Trump's inauguration. Another owner of detention centers, the GEO Group, gave \$225,000 to a Trump PAC before the election and an additional \$250,000 to his inauguration. CoreCivic, a flourishing business, has a \$1 billion contract with the DHS. Frequently lost in all the talk about detention centers is the enormous profit that goes to these corporate Trump supporters, who benefit from jailing immigrant mothers and children. Unlike the Dilley facility, many of the other detention centers they operate were never originally intended to house people; one had been an enormous Walmart. South West Key, another owner of detention centers in Texas, has received more than \$1.3 billion in federal grants and contracts in the past eight years.

Follow the money: The more immigrants that Trump stacks up at the border, the more need there will be for big detention centers. There is no reason for these immigrants to be held in such facilities other than racism and the profit of the detention-center owners and investors.

What can we do to change this? Activism is key. JPMorgan Chase has been a major funder of CoreCivic, so in the summer of 2018, demonstrators stood outside the home of Jamie Dimon, the bank's chairman and CEO, demanding that it stop funding these camps—and this March, JPMorgan announced that it would.

There's been progress in the courts too, but it's tenu-

There is no reason for immigrants to be held in such facilities other than racism and the profit of the detention-center owners and investors.

ous. One step that the Trump administration took to stop migrants from seeking asylum was increasing the difficulty of getting past the credible-fear interview. On March 7, shortly after I left Texas, the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that immigration authorities can no longer immediately deport asylum seekers who fail these initial screenings, potentially allowing thousands of migrants a year to get a second chance at asylum. At its "historical core," the 48-page unanimous opinion stated, "the writ of habeas corpus has served as a means of reviewing the legality of executive detention, and it is in that context that its protections have been strongest."

The opinion not only extends constitutional habeas-corpus guarantees to those applying for asylum; it also allows these people to seek a hearing in federal court before being summarily deported—though the court did not specify what standards must be used to evaluate such petitions. The Ninth Circuit Court's ruling conflicts with an earlier opinion in the Third Circuit, which held that immigrants whose asylum requests were rejected were not entitled to go to federal court to stop summary deportation. The government has not yet appealed the Ninth Circuit's decision. The conflict will eventually be settled by the Roberts Supreme Court, but probably not until later this year or in 2020. I am pessimistic. ■

Martin Garbus, a trial lawyer who represented Cesar Chavez, Daniel Ellsberg, and Nelson Mandela, is the author of the forthcoming book North of Havana.



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FIGHTING FOR LIFE ON DEATH ROW

by LAUREN GILL



For 30 years, Project Hope has been working to abolish capital punishment. What makes it unusual is that it's run by men on Alabama's death row.



The Project Hope board and sub-board in 2017, including Anthony Tyson (bottom, second from right), Anthony Boyd (bottom, right), and Bart Johnson (top, center).

IT WAS EARLY ON A SEPTEMBER MORNING IN 1993 WHEN POLICE IN MORGAN COUNTY, ALABAMA, DRAGGED Gary Drinkard through his car window and threw him to the ground. Minutes before, he'd been sitting in his kitchen with his half-sister, discussing a newspaper article about the murder of a local junkyard dealer named Dalton Pace. A wire taped between her legs recorded the conversation, feeding it to the officers stationed outside.

The police told Drinkard, who had served time for robbery but was working hard to turn his life around, that he was being charged with Pace's murder. Two weeks earlier, the 62-year-old had been found shot dead, with \$2,000 missing from his pants pocket. As Drinkard sat in the Morgan County jail, one of his attorneys assured him that there was no evidence tying him to the crime, and that he would be out in no time.

Neither of Drinkard's court-appointed attorneys was a criminal lawyer, and neither had tried a capital-murder case. Each received a scant \$1,000 from the state to mount Drinkard's defense.

Drinkard said he'd been at home at the time of the murder—and that a painful back injury would have made committing the crime impossible. His lawyers, however, failed to prepare a key witness and to call in a physician to testify about the back injury. When Drinkard's case went to trial, he was sentenced to death. That was in 1995.

"I lose everything," Drinkard, now 63, said 25 years later, still speaking of the verdict in the present tense. "I lose the dream home, lose the family—I mean, it was a bitch."

Drinkard told his wife to find another man. She thought he didn't love her, but that wasn't true; he wanted her to find someone to help take care of their three children.

A COUPLE OF MONTHS AFTER HE ARRIVED ON death row at the William C. Holman Correctional Facility, Drinkard met Darrell Grayson, who offered him coffee, cigarettes, and an invitation. Each Wednesday, Grayson and a group of other death-row inmates would meet in the prison's law library and work on a plan to raise awareness about inequity in the criminal-justice system. Dubbed Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty, it was—and remains—the nation's only anti-death-penalty organization run by death-row prisoners.

When Drinkard arrived at Holman, the organization was just six years old. It had been formed in 1989, after Cornelius Singleton, an intellectually disabled man who had been convicted of killing a nun—but who many believe was innocent—begged two death-row inmates for help. Over the next few months, they put together a five-man committee that outlined the group's purpose: They would educate the public—the people responsible for deciding their fates—on the realities of the death penalty in Alabama. In a "death belt" state infamous for its dedication to capital punishment, this was a crucial mission.

In the 30 years since, Project Hope's members have come and gone. Singleton was executed in 1992, Grayson in 2007, and Drinkard won his freedom in 2001. But Project Hope continues, its mission now expanded to include providing legal guidance and emotional support as well as advocacy. The nonprofit is currently composed of 15 men, as well as an advisory board of outside supporters; its mighty executive

director, Esther Brown, now 85, is a former psychiatric social worker whom one member referred to as "the most loyal person I've ever known."

Project Hope meets at Holman but says that it represents all 176 people on Alabama's three death rows, sending its newsletter to the men—and a handful of women—held at the two other prisons that house people awaiting execution. Hidden from the rest of the world, these men and women have reached the end point of a system that

seems to have been designed to snare people who are poor, of color, or intellectually disabled. Adequate legal representation is rare; prosecutorial misconduct is rampant. In 2016, Alabama had the highest number of death-row inmates per capita in the United States. Today, half of those men are black, despite making up just a quarter of Alabama's population. And in the sixth-poorest state in the country, all of Project Hope's members are impoverished. This fundamental inequity is the axis

around which so much of the group's work spins.

"There are no rich people on death row," wrote Anthony Tyson, the organization's chairman, in a letter. (The Alabama Department of Corrections refused to allow in-person interviews with Project Hope's members, citing a state law prohibiting the press from meeting face-to-face with death-row prisoners.) "If you fit the bill they're looking for and you are broke, then you receive the death penalty."

SINCE THE ORGANIZATION'S INCEPTION, HOLMAN'S wardens have allowed Project Hope to exist, so long as its members abide by one clear rule: They may not discuss prison conditions. Instead, during the weekly Wednesday meetings, members talk about current death-penalty news, which they learn from articles sent in by one of the advisory-board members. Lately, that news has been focused on legislative efforts to abolish the death penalty in states like New Hampshire, Nevada, and

"There are no rich people on death row. If you fit the bill they're looking for and you are broke, then you receive the death penalty."

—Anthony Tyson

Colorado. The men are hopeful that, with each new state that abandons the practice, the moral tide will shift, drawing the states that still have capital punishment—some 30 in all (though four have recently instituted moratoriums)—into the anti-death-penalty column. They’ve also been working on a long-term project that aims to show the racial disparities of the death penalty in states across the country.

At 10 AM on these Wednesdays, the group’s six board members phone Brown, who has been the face of Project Hope for the past 19 years, with duties that include representing it at speaking events and conferences, writing grant proposals, maintaining the website, and keeping the books. (The organization raises roughly \$3,000 annually.) Brown pays for the weekly meeting calls (and the yearly Christmas party) out of her pocket. During the calls, the men speak with her on topics that, in addition to death-penalty news, can vary from family and friends to the day’s lunch.

Sitting in a floral-patterned armchair in her home in southeast Alabama last July, Brown listened as the organization’s sergeant at arms, Anthony Boyd, or “Ant,” led a conversation about the ways that spending money on education instead of the death penalty could transform a broken system. “If you pay teachers what they’re worth, there will be less crime and more scholars, but they want to spend money taking lives,” he said.

Tyson, the group’s chairman, knows the state’s priorities are elsewhere. “There’s two things never going out of business in Alabama,” he said: “corrections and funeral homes.”

When vice chairman Bart Johnson took the phone, Brown chastised him for calling her “ma’am.” “I’m Esther—I don’t want this ‘ma’am’ thing,” she joked. Each 15-minute phone conversation ends with “I love you.”

The rest of the meeting takes place among the men and runs until 1:30 PM. Some of them stick around for Tyson’s law class or “enlightenment group,” which educates the men on how to navigate the state and federal appellate processes. For most of them, a key component is learning how to advocate for themselves, including with their attorneys. “Our lawyers need us to remind them of things,” Tyson says. “We are not their top case or their only case. So we have to be *our* case.”

Over the past 11 years, two of Tyson’s students, Montez Spradley and William Ziegler, have been freed, and several have gotten their sentences reduced to life. Tyson doesn’t attribute the victories to his class, but instead to the teamwork between his newly legal-savvy students and their attorneys. At the end of the year, Ty-

son administers an exam to his students. Anyone who gets a perfect score can choose any item they want from the commissary. Since taking over the group in 2007, he has paid up twice.

While anyone on death row can join Project Hope, there are rules: Members must act respectfully, and they are required to contribute to the quarterly newsletter *On Wings of Hope*, which is written by the men on typewriters at Holman and then sent to Brown, who adds her own content and takes it to the printer. The newsletter is distributed to about 1,300 subscribers.

In its most recent issue, Brown—who was diagnosed with a brain tumor late last year—announced that she would be stepping down from her duties. “I would like to be remembered as someone who was incredibly fortunate,” she wrote in a piece titled “Thank You!” “I always received what I gave many times over. I was never a victim, but did whatever I did because it expressed me and rewarded me.”

Over the past 11 years, two of Tyson’s students, Montez Spradley and William Ziegler, have been freed, and several have gotten their sentences reduced to life.

WHEN HE WAS ASKED BY DARRELL GRAYSON to join Project Hope, Drinkard—who had once been a supporter of the death penalty—wasn’t sure that the group would achieve much. Still, he decided to join. He devoured the law class and quickly earned a reputation as something of a legal scholar. He penned letters to politicians and local leaders, urging them to support a moratorium on the death penalty in Alabama. And, over time, he drew closer to the men in Project Hope. “You met people from everywhere, from every different form, and you were all brothers. You were all there for the same reason: to be killed by the state,” he said.

Despite the kinship, Drinkard sometimes thought of suicide. He was overwhelmed by the hopelessness of facing death for a crime he didn’t commit. And when it came time for his friends to die, as inevitably happened, the scent of their flesh burning in the electric chair haunted him. After Alabama executed his best friend, Brian Baldwin, in 1999, Drinkard nearly jumped on a guard he’d heard laughing about packing cotton up Baldwin’s rectum, a standard practice in executions back then.

It was at times like these that Drinkard would write poems for the Project Hope newsletter, like the one titled “Living Tomb,” which begins: “When oh when, will our nation see / They are likely to be next, sitting beside me?”

Still, death row was a lot less violent than the rest of the prison, Drinkard said. During the nearly six years he was there, he never witnessed a fight. But in the general population, there was a fight or a stabbing once a week.

Keeping hope alive: Left to right, Esther Brown with former Illinois governor George Ryan and the mother of Cornelius Singleton; Montez Spradley, who was freed in 2015; Gary Drinkard; Anthony Boyd.



Drinkard attributed this relative calm to Project Hope. Timothy Stidham, a former Holman corrections officer who oversaw death row from 2015 to 2016, agreed: “They’re a great support group for each other. They do a lot of good things for ’em, I will say that.”

For Tyson, who has spent 20 of his 46 years at Holman, the group’s legacy runs deeper still. “I really feel that this was one of the greatest things that could have been offered for a person in this situation,” he wrote. “A lot of us really didn’t start living until we got here. So, we don’t call it death row... we call it life row.”

ONE OF THE WAYS THAT PROJECT HOPE HAS MANAGED this shift is by helping keep people alive, quite literally. It’s a feat the group accomplishes not only by providing emotional support for its members, but also by offering legal resources and guidance.

Shortly after they arrive at Holman, Project Hope’s members advise new prisoners to contact the Equal Justice Initiative, the nonprofit legal organization run by Bryan Stevenson, to ask for help obtaining an appellate attorney. It’s a critical task, as Alabama was the only state in the country that didn’t provide counsel for post-conviction proceedings until 2017—and, even now, the quality of the representation remains uncertain. The group also serves a broader advocacy role. When, in June 2018, the state announced that prisoners had three days to decide whether they’d like to die by lethal injection or nitrogen gas—an experimental method that kills through asphyxiation and was cooked up by the state as an alternative to lethal injection—Project Hope spread the word for everyone to contact their attorneys.

These are vital interventions into a system designed to hasten people toward their deaths. In Alabama, the list of circumstances that qualify someone for the death penalty is long; there is no statewide public defender’s office outfitted with the necessary resources to successfully try a capital-murder case (instead, individual attorneys must rely on elected judges to approve funds for experts and investigators); and in 2017, the state made it even more difficult for death-row inmates to fight their convictions by passing the so-called Fair Justice Act, which requires death-row prisoners to file post-conviction claims on issues like ineffective assistance of counsel or new evidence within a year of their direct appeal. While its supporters championed the legislation as a way to speed up “frivolous appeals,” critics say the likelihood of wrongful executions will increase without the opportunity for at-

torneys to take their time reviewing their clients’ cases.

But perhaps the most egregious feature of Alabama’s death-penalty regime is the anemic trial representation it provides for poor defendants. This remains as appalling as it was throughout much of the South back in the 1970s and ’80s, says Robert Dunham, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center. “I think Alabama represents much of what is wrong with the death penalty throughout the United States,” Dunham adds. There are few standards in place to assure the quality of the attorneys assigned to cases, and the pay is paltry. Until 1999, attorneys received \$1,000 to build their case (\$20 an hour for out-of-court work and \$40 for in-court work). Today, they are paid \$70 an hour for out-of-court work, while there is no longer a cap for the trial; direct appeals are now capped at \$2,500.

Data shows that hiring an attorney, as opposed to going with the state’s court-appointed representative, is the difference between those who receive the death penalty and those who don’t. Yet paying for an experienced lawyer is not an option in most cases. A 2009 study by criminologist Scott Phillips assessed the outcomes of trials in which defendants were charged with capital murder in Harris County, Texas, between 1992 and 1999. Harris County

is known as the “capital of capital punishment,” yet the standards for appointment to represent capital cases far exceed those in Alabama: Attorneys must be approved by their peers and pass a capital certification exam, and the lead counsel must have tried at least two capital cases before being assigned. Phillips found that people who hired attorneys were never sentenced to death, despite being charged with crimes just as heinous as the indigent defendants’.

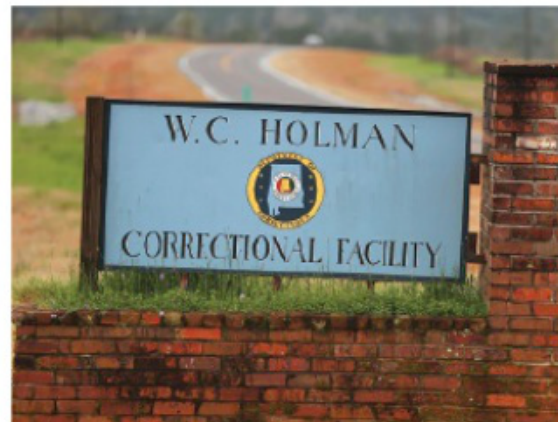
On the day before and day of the execution, the group’s members protest in the yard, asking all inmates to wear their visiting whites and abstain from sports.

SINCE 1973, 165 PEOPLE—OR ONE OUT OF every 10 people executed—have been exonerated. These exonerations, coupled with the growing concerns around lethal injection,

have helped shift support away from the death penalty, with an increasing number of states opting to put executions on hold. But despite this evolving consensus, for most men in Project Hope, the story still ends in a sterile room, lashed to a gurney, awaiting an injection. (The state has used lethal injection as its primary method of execution since 2002, prior to which it used an electric chair, ghoulishly known as “Yellow Mama.”)

In the week leading up to an execution, Project Hope members say they make themselves available to listen to the condemned. They promise the man they will make calls to friends, family, or an attorney if anything goes wrong—and, as they all know, much can go wrong. Just last year, Doyle Lee Hamm, who was suffering from ad-

From left to right: Doyle Lee Hamm, who survived a botched execution attempt in 2018; Domineque Ray, who was executed in February; Darrell Grayson, who was executed in 2007.



vanced lymphatic cancer, bled profusely as executioners spent two and a half hours trying unsuccessfully to find a vein.

On the day before and day of the execution, the group's members protest in the yard, asking all inmates to wear their visiting whites and abstain from sports. A vigil is held, during which the men share memories of the man scheduled to be executed. When a board member is executed, the group holds an election. The higher someone advances in the organization, the closer they are to death.

"Executions are never easy," wrote Anthony Boyd, Project Hope's sergeant at arms, in a letter after the execution of Domineque Ray this past February. Ray was left to die alone after the Supreme Court determined that it was constitutional for Alabama to ban his imam from the death chamber. "You worry for the person going through it all," Boyd continued; "you worry about losing one of your own, and it makes you think about how it could be for you personally, if something doesn't get done on your behalf."

FOR DRINKARD, IT WAS LUCK AND PERSISTENCE THAT ULTIMATELY led to his exoneration. While in prison, he wrote to attorneys asking them to represent him on his appeals. His letters caught the eye of the well-known Alabama death-penalty attorney Richard Jaffe, who told him it would cost \$250,000 to represent him—money that Drinkard did not have. In a stroke of luck, Jaffe convinced the local judge to appoint him to the case. Drinkard says his work with Project Hope prepared him to advocate for himself and work more closely with his new lawyers: "I knew what the lawyers should do the second time, where I actually didn't know the first time."

The Alabama Supreme Court ordered a new trial on the basis that his first trial had been tainted by prosecutorial misconduct. Drinkard was exonerated in 2001 after his defense team presented evidence proving that he had never confessed to the murder on that static-ridden tape recorded in 1993 and called witnesses to prove he was indeed at home. After nearly six years on death row, Drinkard was freed.

Still, almost 18 years later, he remembers death row vividly: the hot air suffocating his cell, the sound of his friends beating against the bars during executions, and the times he felt overpowered by hate. "I hated the system because they lied, and there was nobody out there willing to prove the lies, nobody would listen, and that's the *worst* feeling you can have—when nobody will listen."

Like those who were exonerated before him, Drinkard never received compensation from Alabama for his time on death row, and he survives on Social Security disability insurance, having been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. He studied respiratory therapy after getting out of prison, but no one would hire him because of his murder conviction, which he could not get expunged.

And so, though free, Drinkard says that his living room in the north Alabama backcountry, furnished with a pair of brown recliners, a leather couch, and a flat-screen television, is his new version of death row. In this version, it's easier to get people to listen. He travels the world, trying to change minds about the death penalty. In October, he went to Paris to talk to high-school students, and in February, he traveled to Wyoming to speak in support of a bill to repeal the death penalty. As always, he mentioned Project Hope. It was only natural—they were family, he said.

"Most of them admitted what they did wrong, [but] there were a couple of innocents that actually died," he continued. "But the public don't care. The public's mentality in the South is, 'Kill 'em all and God will sort 'em out.'" ■

Lauren Gill is a journalist covering criminal justice. Her work has appeared in Rolling Stone, The Appeal, ProPublica, and other outlets.

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Books & the Arts.



AGE OF HOBBSBAWM

Eric Hobsbawm's 20th century

by DAVID MARCUS

In the last weeks of 1954, Eric Hobsbawm and a small group of British historians set out on a goodwill trip to Moscow. It was a strange time to be visiting the Soviet Union, even stranger for a communist eager to see the achievements of actually existing socialism. Stalin had died the year before, and his corpse lay embalmed in a glass box in Red Square. After a vicious power struggle, Khrushchev had gained control of the government, but intrigue abounded. Beria, the longtime head of the security services, had been tried and executed in

secret. Molotov and Malenkov, stalwarts of the old regime, were on their way out. Tens of thousands of prisoners, released after Stalin's death, were returning from the gulag with horror stories of starvation and torture.

At first, nothing seemed amiss to Hobsbawm and his traveling companions. On their arrival in Moscow, they surveyed the city's elaborate subway system, before being whisked to Leningrad in the sleek overnight cars of the Red Arrow. Returning to the capital after a matinee performance of *Swan Lake*, they

rang in the New Year with the country's leading scientists over canapés and champagne. But as the historians settled in, they began to suspect something was wrong. The intellectuals they met were tight-lipped and wary of private conversations. The group's minds from the Soviet Academy of Sciences appeared almost entirely cut off from Western scholarship. When the historians wandered outside the city center, they found outer Moscow gray and patched over. On one derelict street, they spotted a group of "middle-aged women, presumably war

widows, hauling stones and clearing rubble.” “As intellectual VIPs,” Hobsbawm later observed, “we almost certainly were treated to more culture...as well as an embarrassing share of products and privileges in a visibly impoverished country.... It was not a good advertisement for communism.”

On his return to England, Hobsbawm was treated to an even worse set of revelations. Early in 1956, Khrushchev gave his speech outlining Stalin’s brutal reign of terror. In the summer, Polish workers went on strike in the industrial town of Poznan, launching a wave of protests against the Soviet-imposed government, and then were gunned down by the army. In the fall, after a revolution in Hungary led the country to leave the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev sent in the tanks. Thousands were killed, the prime minister deposed, and the country forced back into the Soviet fold.

For a growing number of Hobsbawm’s close friends—Christopher Hill, E.P. Thompson, Raphael Samuel, Rodney Hilton—enough was enough: Enraged by Soviet actions and by the British Communist Party’s refusal to denounce them, they broke with communism once and for all. Hobsbawm, however, held on. He, too, was horrified by the events in Hungary and by the brutality documented in Khrushchev’s speech, and he publicly lamented how communist parties on both sides of the Iron Curtain had “dropped what measure of democracy [they] might originally have contained.” But as more and more of his comrades jumped ship, Hobsbawm remained—and for another 40 years. Only after the Soviet Union’s collapse did he let his party membership lapse, and even then he insisted that the “dream of the October Revolution is still there somewhere inside me.” Citing one of Bertolt Brecht’s poems—“We, who wanted to prepare the ground for kindness / Could not be kind ourselves”—he explained: “Hardness was forced upon the revolutionaries.”

Hobsbawm was one of the 20th century’s most important historians. Arguably, he was its most important in the English language. His epic series on the making of the modern world—*The Age of Revolution*, *The Age of Capital*, *The Age of Empire*, and *The Age of Extremes*—introduced millions of readers to the history of the 19th and 20th centuries. His research on banditry, nationalism, and the “invention” of tradition helped inspire entire fields of British and American historiography. His prose was lean and elegant, uncluttered by the theoretical fads of the day. His

Eric Hobsbawm

A Life in History

By Richard J. Evans

Oxford University Press. 800 pp. \$39.95

historical judgment was infused with the keen insights and irony of a historian who seemed to “know everything.” Yet part of Hobsbawm’s enigma is that, while he wrote with such an acute sensitivity about the modern age’s contradictions and tragic reversals, he never seemed to fully come to terms with those that bedeviled his own convictions. “Why,” Perry Anderson once mused, “did he stay to the bitter end?”

Richard Evans’s new biography, *Eric Hobsbawm: A Life in History*, offers some clues to this puzzle while also making the case that this might not be the right question to ask. Compellingly narrated and meticulously researched—among other things, Evans draws from a half-century of MI5 surveillance reports—the book provides a more nuanced portrait of Hobsbawm’s political and intellectual development, revealing that Hobsbawm was a far more ambivalent communist and a far more pragmatic socialist than either his critics or his champions recognized.

Haunted by the ghosts of 1930s sectarianism, Hobsbawm campaigned for the Labour Party throughout the second half of the 20th century—and not just its radical factions. After the ordeals of 1956, he participated in an effort to democratize the British Communist Party and, when that failed, he abandoned nearly all party activities. Finding succor in the politics of Latin America and Western Europe, he spent much of his later years championing those practical socialists willing to build coalitions with liberals and organized labor. For Hobsbawm, a popular front was more than a defensive strategy; it was the very basis upon which egalitarian change could occur.

Eric Hobsbawm was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1917, just five months before the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia and a year and a half before World War I ended. His father came from London’s working-class East End and his mother from a well-to-do Austrian-Jewish family. The two had met in Alexandria’s colonial district, got married and honeymooned in Switzerland, and then set up a comfortable Victorian home in the city, complete with a nanny for Eric. By all accounts, their time in the city was a pleasant one. Eric’s father worked in the telegraph services, and his mother began

her career as a novelist and translator. The period was also short-lived: In 1919, an anti-colonial rebellion broke out, and the Hobsbawms left for his mother’s Vienna, never to return.

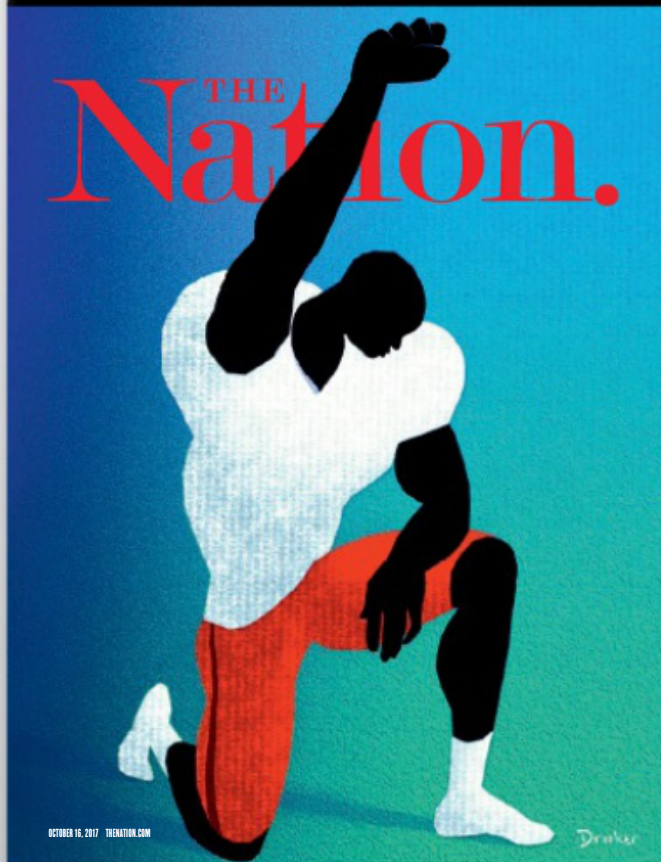
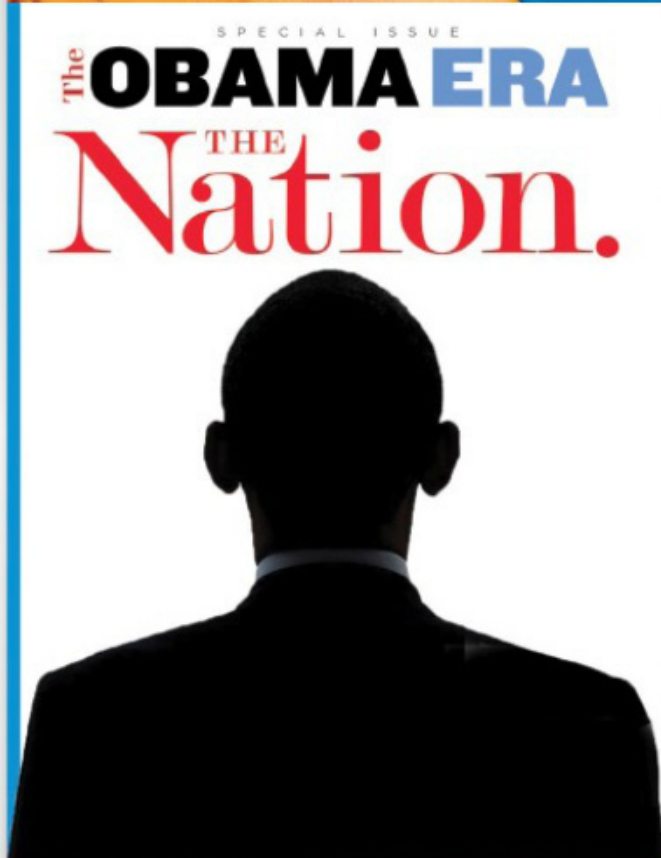
There, in the twilight world of a formerly grand metropole, Eric and soon a younger sister grew up. Street fighting and threatened coups were everyday events. So was economic hardship: No one—not even his mother’s haute family—had any money, and the Hobsbawms struggled to make ends meet. Things only got worse after 1929. Returning home from a wasted day in search of money to earn or borrow, Eric’s father died of a heart attack. Soon after, his mother fell ill and died. At the ages of 14 and 10, Eric and his sister had become orphans.

From then on, the Hobsbawm siblings lived a peripatetic and threadbare life, and in a world that was about to buckle under the weight of economic devastation and an ascendant fascism. “We were on the *Titanic*,” Hobsbawm later recalled, “and everyone knew it was hitting the iceberg.”

After months of moving between relatives, the pair ended up in Berlin, where an uncle took them in. In Berlin, where “the world was visibly breaking down,” Hobsbawm became a communist. The choice was easy: In a city teetering between two revolutions—one fascist, the other socialist—what else would he choose? Some of his Jewish peers had found hope in a third alternative: the quest for a Jewish state. But having already passed through two countries ravaged by nationalism, and now caught in a third, Hobsbawm had concluded that the only revolution for him was that of worldwide liberation.

Largely unsupervised, Hobsbawm threw himself into a flurry of agitation. He slid leaflets under apartment doors and joined in the massive citywide marches. He dodged brownshirts on street cars and hid a banned mimeograph under his bed. He was troubled by his fellow communists’ sectarian stance toward the social democrats, later observing that it “bordered on political insanity.” But he maintained party discipline. Above all else, Hobsbawm had found a new family. “We belonged together,” he recalled.

In 1933, the Hobsbawm siblings were forced to move once again—this time to London. A British citizen and a native English speaker, Hobsbawm found the move more of a homecoming than an exile, and he immediately took to the country. An avid cyclist, he spent holidays biking through the hilly countryside. (“If physical mobility is an essential condition of freedom,”



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he later noted, “the bicycle has probably been the greatest single device for achieving what Marx called the full realization of the possibilities of being human...since Gutenberg.”) He grew close to his London relatives, in particular an uncle who was a local Labour councillor, and he “gulped down” as much English poetry and fiction as he could find.

Within three years, Hobsbawm won a place at King’s College, Cambridge. Overjoyed by the news, he marked the occasion in his diary with a parodic self-portrait:

Eric John Ernest Hobsbaum, a tall, angular, dangling, ugly, fair-haired fellow of eighteen and a half.... Some people find him extremely disagreeable, others likeable, yet others (the majority) just ridiculous. He wants to be a revolutionary but, so far, shows no talent for organization. He wants to be a writer, but [is] without energy.... He is vain and conceited. He is a coward. He loves nature deeply. And he forgets the German language.

He even allowed himself a little bit of optimism: “Perhaps, just maybe, I shall live a less ‘second-hand’ life?”

Enrolling in 1936, Hobsbawm found Cambridge to be at once parochial and exhilarating. It was full of cloistered quads, lawns that one couldn’t cross, and the lazy and half-literate children of England’s ruling class. To his surprise, it also turned out to have “the reddest and most radical generation in the history of the university.” With fascists threatening to overrun Europe, one had to take sides—even at a distant college campus.

Helping lead the Communist Party’s student branch, Hobsbawm joined the university’s “nursery of revolution” set up in a suite of rooms just below Ludwig Wittgenstein’s. With the bitter memories of sectarian Berlin still fresh in his mind, he worked hard to broaden the branch’s activities and forge alliances with socialists, liberals, and other left-wing factions on campus. “We had,” he recalled, “only one set of enemies—fascism and those who (like the British government) did not want to resist it.”

Hobsbawm also thrived socially and intellectually. At the center of red Cambridge, he quickly gained a reputation among students and faculty as the “freshman in King’s who knows about everything.” He discovered an affinity for history and was particularly taken by the world-spanning work of Marc Bloch and the

French *Annales* school. By his third year, he was the editor of *Granta*, then Cambridge’s leading student magazine; was elected to the Apostles, where he dined with the likes of E.M. Forster; and won a postgraduate fellowship to study the history of colonial North Africa.

Hobsbawm’s swift advancement through the ranks of England’s intellectual and socialist elite, however, was cut short by World War II. The year he graduated, Germany invaded Poland, and he was conscripted into the British Army. He had hoped he might enlist his fluency in German and French in the struggle against fascism, and he lobbied for an intelligence appointment. But the British military had other plans: Putting him under surveillance for his communist activities, the army relegated him to an inland sappers’ unit and then to an education division. “I had neither a ‘good war’ nor a ‘bad war,’” Hobsbawm later observed, “but an empty war.”

His war years did, however, give him the opportunity to develop an interest in popular history. Assembling courses for the army’s mostly working-class conscripts, Hobsbawm discovered the pleasures of teaching and writing for a general audience. Impressed by his fellow soldiers’ organic “sense of class, comradeship, and mutual help,” he changed his area of specialization and embarked on a study of British labor. Passed over for a series of posts at Cambridge—likely because of his communist affiliations—he continued to develop his interest in popular working-class history after the war. In 1947, he joined the faculty of London’s Birkbeck College, a night school for working adults. He remained there for nearly the rest of his life.

Despite having found gainful employment, Hobsbawm’s postwar years were bleak. During the war, he had married a fellow communist, a young woman studying at the London School of Economics. But after his return from the army, their marriage fell apart. His first two books—one on the history of wage work, the other on the Fabians—were rejected by publishers for being too radical. The British security services did not lessen their surveillance of him after the war; they increased it. He suspected his college adviser, M.M.

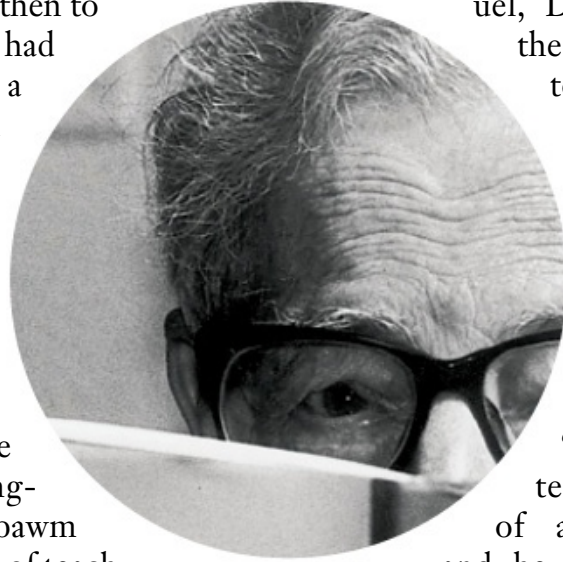
Postan, of sabotaging his job applications with “poisoned-arrow” recommendations.

The sectarian direction of the Communist Party after the war also proved dispiriting. No longer galvanized by wartime emergencies, the party’s leadership abandoned its popular-front stance and began to wage an active campaign against Labour to split votes. “What do we expect to get out of the contest,” Hobsbawm wrote in an angry letter to the *Daily Worker*, “except the chance of making individual attacks on the leader of the Labour Party?”

Hobsbawm did discover new circles of friends, though, which helped lift his spirits: Falling in with a group of dissenting communist historians—Christopher Hill, E.P. Thompson, Dorothy Thompson, Rodney Hilton, Raphael Samuel, Dona Torr—he founded the Communist Party Historians Group and the journal *Past & Present* with the aim of helping popularize working-class history. Spending time in London’s West End jazz clubs, he also found solace and comradeship with its “quasi-underground international freemasonry” of avant-garde musicians, and he began writing a series of pseudonymous music columns for *The New Statesman*.

Hobsbawm’s time with these two groups also inspired his first two published books, which, given his meteoric rise among England’s intellectual elite before the war, came at the rather late age of 42. In 1959, he published *The Jazz Scene*, a wide-ranging social and cultural history of the musical form. The same year, he also published *Primitive Rebels*, a considerable work of sociological and historical inquiry that examined those forms of working-class resistance—Andalusian anarchism, Italian banditry, British Ludism—long ignored by historians on the left.

Neither book made Hobsbawm a household name, nor did either bring him large sums of money. But both did help him hit his stride as a historian and an intellectual, opening him up to new worlds of working-class and radical life. Together with the other books produced by the Historians Group—Christopher Hill’s *The World Turned Upside Down*, E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*, Dorothy Thompson’s *The Chartists—Primitive Rebels* also helped to revolutionize how



English history was studied on both sides of the Atlantic.

Upon its initial publication, *Primitive Rebels* must have seemed like an odd book for a Cambridge PhD to write, even one with admittedly radical commitments. The study of history at that time was divided mostly along two lines: political histories that mapped the rise and fall of nations and empires through the elites—kings, prime ministers, generals—who led them; and economic histories that examined the institutions and competing interest groups that defined a particular nation's or empire's commercial system. Marxist historians, as well as the liberal ones, divided along these lines: The few Marxists writing at the time were studying either the revolutionary vanguards who sought to transform society by seizing the state, or the larger economic forces that helped lay the foundations of modern capitalism.

Primitive Rebels attempted something altogether different: As in *The Jazz Scene*, its protagonists were people on the margins, displaced by modernity. They were primitive not because they lacked sophistication or coordination—Hobsbawm was careful to show the opposite—but because they did not conform with how most socialists and liberals understood modern politics. His rebels did not want to seize the state; they mostly wanted to sustain their ways of life below it. They were the Spanish farmers forming agricultural collectives, the English journeymen smashing spinning frames, the Sicilian peasants taking up arms in self-defense.

The politics of *Primitive Rebels* may have been hard to decipher at first, given its departure from Marxist as well as liberal historiography. But as with the rest of the Historians Group's work, it stemmed from a desire to recover those sites of working-class agency that took place below the titanic clash between elites and competing economic structures. No longer convinced that a disciplined party was the only way forward, he and his peers wanted to retrieve from the annals of history those traditions of resistance that fell outside the purview of the socialist left, whether in its revolutionary and Bolshevik variety or its reformist and Fabian one.

1956 was at the center of this project. The growing bureaucratization of communist and social-democratic states after World War II had driven Hobsbawm and the Historians Group into the archives in search of more democratic forms of radicalism, and the postwar collapse of the popular

front spurred them even further. But it was the traumas of 1956—Khrushchev's speech, Poznan, Hungary, Britain's involvement in the Suez Crisis—that catalyzed their sense of mission: Neither North Atlantic social democracy nor Soviet-bloc communism appeared faithful to the left's ideals. Out of a usable past, they hoped, might come a more egalitarian present, hence the name of their journal: *Past & Present*.

A key strength of Evans's biography is that he shows how much this was the case for Hobsbawm as well as for those who left the party. After Khrushchev's speech, Hobsbawm co-authored an angry letter denouncing the British Communist Party for its "uncritical endorsement of all Soviet policies and views." In the wake of the Hungarian uprising's violent suppression, he signed a public statement decrying the slavish "support given by the Executive Committee of the Communist Party to Soviet action in Hungary." Refusing to be disciplined, he helped launch a campaign to reform the British party from within, insisting that "the test of inner-party democracy is, whether policy and leadership can be modified *from below*." When that failed, he tried to have the party's leadership ousted and then abandoned nearly all formal party activities. "Hungary proved the last straw for E[ric]," one Historians Group member reported in a letter intercepted by British security services. Hobsbawm had become an "opportunist" and a "dangerous character," complained another. Even MI5 began to take note of "HOBSBAWM's own shaky party affiliations."

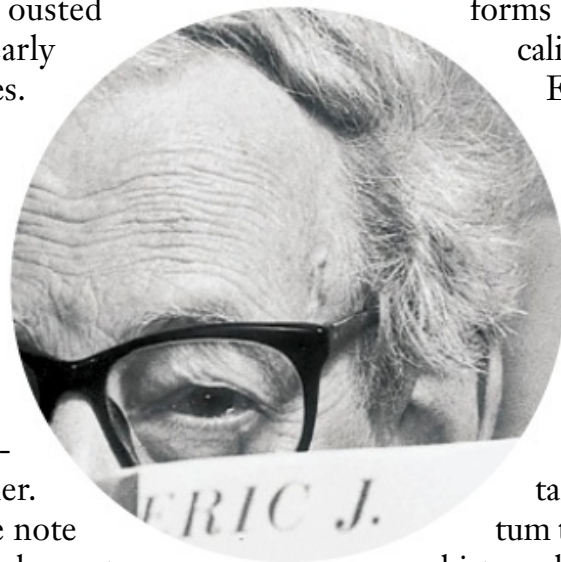
A strange game of chicken ensued after 1956. At times, Hobsbawm wanted the party to throw him out. At others, the party wanted him to throw himself out. Over the years, Hobsbawm gave different answers for why he remained: loyalty to a cause he'd been dedicated to since he was a teenager; solidarity with those rank-and-file communists who had sacrificed so much; revulsion at the ex-party members who had become Cold War hawks. He also confessed a more personal reason—pride. "It would have been easy to slip out quietly," he later admitted. "But I could prove myself to myself by succeeding as a known communist—whatever 'success' meant.... I do not defend this form of egoism, but neither can I deny its force."

No matter the reasons for his public resoluteness, Hobsbawm's experiences as a communist in the first half of the 20th century dramatically reshaped his political and intellectual activities in the second half. In a blistering essay published several years before both men died, Tony Judt insisted that this was for the worse: Hobsbawm's near-lifelong affiliation with communism had "provincialized" him as an intellectual and narrowed the scope of his insights as a historian. While Hobsbawm "can acknowledge his mistakes readily enough..." Judt argued, "he doesn't seem to understand why he made them." Paying closer attention to Hobsbawm's political and intellectual development after 1956, Evans's biography makes a compelling case that the opposite was true: Hobsbawm's bitter years as a communist in the first half of his life only helped him become a better historian and a more practical socialist in the second half.

Beginning with *Primitive Rebels*, Hobsbawm's social histories—*Labouring Men*, *Bandits*, *Captain Swing*, *Worlds of Labour*—were driven by a newfound purpose: He wanted to save those forms of unconventional radicalism not only from what E.P. Thompson called the "enormous condescension of posterity," but from the enormous condescension of party apparatchiks. After 1956, he also found his Marxism swiftly outpacing his communism. Discovering Gramsci and taking to heart Marx's dictum that "men make their own

history, but they...do not make it in the circumstances of their choosing," he began to see the struggle for human emancipation as far more multifarious than Lenin and the Bolsheviks had allowed. Instead of a zero-sum game between communism and capitalism, egalitarian politics rested on a continuum: Everything from America's welfare state to Western Europe's social democracies to Yugoslavia's third camp could fit into the broad sweep of human progress. "Were we right in believing that there was only one way, that there was one railroad that alone led forward?" he asked in a 1978 interview. "The answer is *no*. There were all sorts of other things happening that we should have taken note of."

Hobsbawm's epic trilogy on the "long nineteenth century"—*The Age of Revolu-*



tion, *The Age of Capital*, and *The Age of Empire*—magnified this insight across the entirety of a century. The profound failures of the October Revolution and the Western communist parties were only echoes of a larger pattern of progress and reaction that shaped all of modern history. The “dual revolutions”—French and industrial—that opened the long century overturned the stifling hierarchies of the ancien régime, but they then imposed their own forms of domination. The formation of constitutional democracies in the 1860s and ’70s liberated millions from the grip of absolutism, but self-government in Europe was then subsidized by the brutal colonization of much of the rest of the world. Every right turn appeared to be followed by a wrong one.

This is what made Hobsbawm’s narrative so monumental: His *Age of* series was his *War and Peace*. Narrated from on high and synthesizing vast tracts of research, each volume was infused with a novelist’s eye for the paradoxical and disorderly nature of human progress. The century that began with the bright light of emancipation had concluded in the darkness of empire and world war. The era’s industrialists and imperialists were to blame, but so too, Hobsbawm insisted, were the revolutionaries who opened the age with a fury of sectarian violence and the liberals and social democrats who helped close it by banging the drums of continental war.

This insight also changed Hobsbawm as a political actor, opening him to a far wider array of egalitarian movements and causes. In the early 1960s, he took part in the Trafalgar Square sit-downs against nuclear arms and in the late 1960s, he found himself caught up in the Paris protests, which, after some initial skepticism, he heralded for their “revolutionary potentialities.” He only visited the Soviet Union once more as an official guest after his first trip, but he traveled frequently to Latin America, establishing close ties with socialist intellectuals and politicians throughout the region, including, among others, future Brazilian President Lula da Silva. When, in 1970, Allende’s Popular Unity government came to power in Chile on a rising tide of left-wing collaboration, Hobsbawm celebrated it as “a thrilling prospect.”

Where local communist parties proved willing to open up, Hobsbawm lent them his name and energy, meeting frequently with a new generation of Italian communists seeking to break from their party’s sectarianism. In those countries where socialists

and social democrats were making headway, Hobsbawm also proved ecumenical, finding in the coalitions of France’s François Mitterrand and Spain’s Felipe González the possible beginnings of a new popular front.

At home, too, Hobsbawm championed a popular-front politics, finding common cause with Labour’s Michael Foot and then, to the frustration of many of his socialist comrades, with Neil Kinnock, who was moving Labour to the right. “Unity of all progressive and democratic forces was needed,” he had come to believe, “if Thatcher’s conservative revolution was to be stopped.”

Hobsbawm still retained some of the blinkered limitations of an early 20th-century Marxist: He was frustratingly indifferent to the feminist activism that burst onto the scene in the 1960s and ’70s, and, in his later historical work—especially on the “short twentieth century”—he had a tendency to focus more on the tectonic collisions happening at the top of history at the expense of those everyday struggles happening below. There also was the ever-present danger that his popular-front politics might cast too wide of a net in its pursuit of power, allying with those on the left who were more than willing to abandon their party’s traditional egalitarian programs.

But the bitter lessons gleaned from Hobsbawm’s years as a militant had nonetheless left a profound mark: For Hobsbawm, the left would only succeed if it found a way to transcend its ideological differences and build large multitendency movements. “The popular front strategy,” he explained in an article from 1985, “was more than a temporary defensive tactic.... It was also a carefully considered strategy of advancing to socialism.”

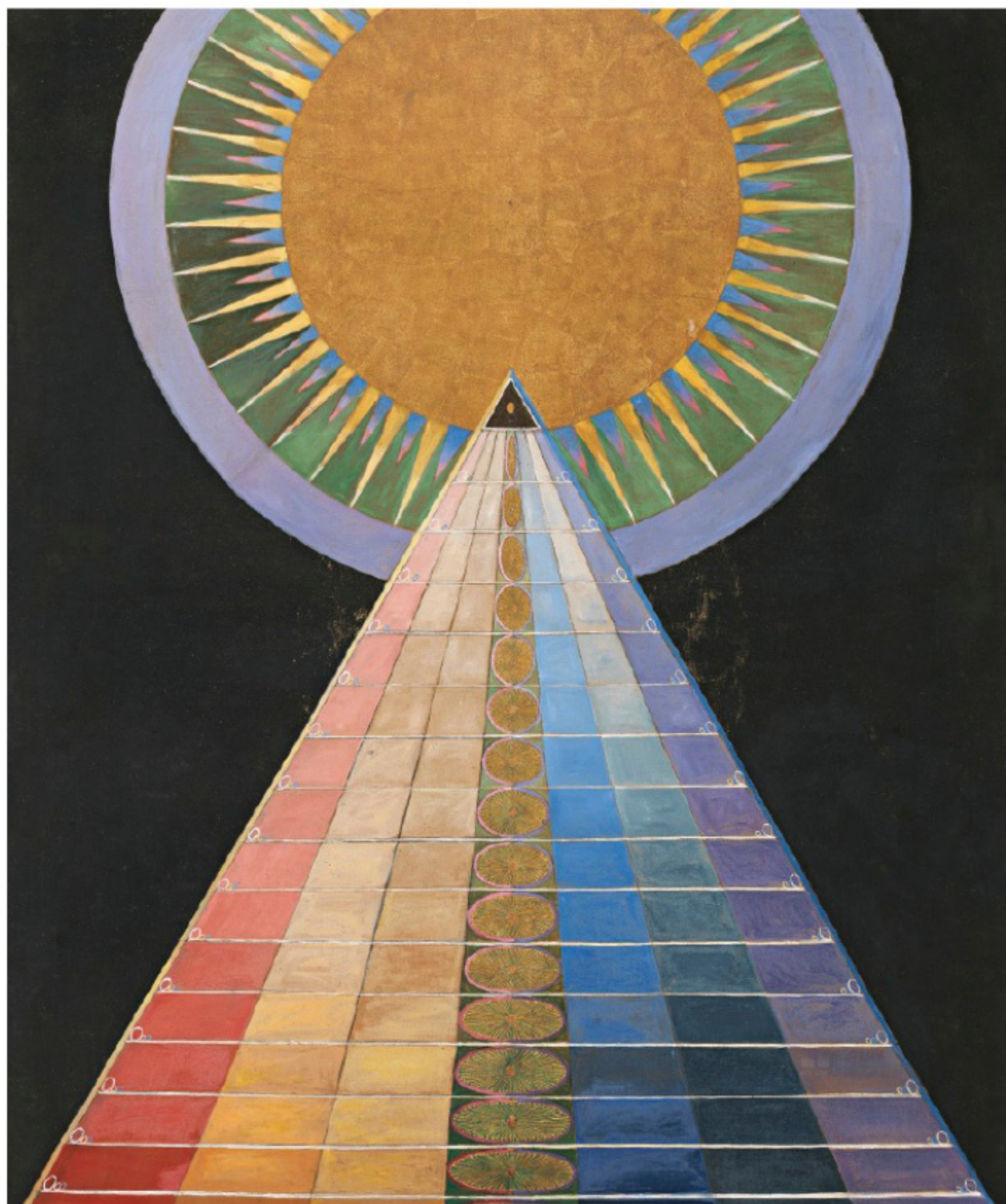
Writing about Keynes, Hobsbawm once observed that the economist had found himself forced to radicalize his liberalism in the wake of capitalism’s early-20th-century failures. The same could be said of Hobsbawm: Faced with the failures of early-20th-century communism, Hobsbawm found himself forced to liberalize his socialism. This was, he insisted, what Marx would also have done—“to recognize the novel situation in which we find ourselves...and to formulate not only what we would want to do, but what can be done.”

Like the dialectical swings between progress and reaction that inaugurated the modern world and that continued to transform it in the centuries that followed, Hobsbawm’s own biography can be divided into two separate and opposing movements: From 1917 to 1957, he lived

an itinerant, scattered, and often sectarian life; from 1957 until his death in 2012, his politics and life both began to gain a centripetal force. After years of not publishing, he brought out a new book almost every other year until he died—more than 30 in all. His *Age of* series was translated into dozens of languages, and his social and economic histories were central to the transformation of English-language historiography. He married again, this time happily. He had children, purchased a house, and summered in Wales. He became a near celebrity in many parts of Latin America, South Asia, and Western Europe. Having played a marginal role as a communist militant in the first half of the 20th century, he reinvented himself as a globe-trotting intellectual and “guerrilla historian” in the second half, happily lending his support to those on the left building broad-based movements and coalitions.

Hobsbawm tended to characterize his own “short twentieth century” as a catastrophic age divided between the extremes of a socialism that had gone terribly awry and a capitalism that seemed permanently entrenched. “Never did the pattern of progress or continuous change appear less plausible,” he asserted in the concluding pages of *The Age of Empire*. But one of the considerable achievements of Evans’s new biography is that it helps us tell a different story—both about Hobsbawm’s life and about the century he lived in. Rather than an era defined only by wasted ideals and sectarian extremes, the Age of Hobsbawm was also shaped by a surprising number of moral and political advances. Whether in the North Atlantic or the decolonized world, the long middle third of the century saw new popular fronts arise in pursuit of more democratic and egalitarian societies. Women, embattled minorities, colonized peoples, immigrants, and disenfranchised workers all over the globe won new freedoms for themselves, and many of their achievements still stand today.

Hobsbawm often lamented that the agitations of his primitive rebels did not leave behind any lasting institutions for the present. But the unconventional radicals of the 20th century—Hobsbawm included—did leave a mark, giving the left an image of a wide-ranging egalitarianism with which to challenge the reigning inequalities and injustices of its day. The popular fronts that it inspires will certainly not look like those of the past. They will face new challenges, and they will be forced to make history in their own way. But then again, none of us gets to act in the circumstances of our choosing. ■



ALTAR PIECES

The art of af Klint, Warhol, and Nauman

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

Whom is an artwork for, and where does it belong? Every modern or contemporary artist has either had to answer these questions, or else accept the ready-made answer that our culture offers: Just do your work and let the invisible hand of the market sort out its fate.

Hilma af Klint was among the few who rejected that idea. She thought her work was for people who didn't yet exist, and that it belonged in a temple—where, as we all know, money changers have no place. It's hard to think of any artist more determined

to take the eventual fate of her art into her own hands than this Swedish painter, whose work is now on view at New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Curated by Tracey Bashkoff, with assistance from David Horowitz, the exhibition, "Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future," is the first comprehensive presentation of the artist's work in the United States.

Af Klint's response to the lack of an adequate social or institutional place for her art, and to the chimerical nature of its potential public, was a nearly complete renunciation of the public sphere. Born

in 1862, she graduated with honors from Stockholm's Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1887 as a highly competent realist painter, according to the conventional standards of her day, as several early works on view at the Guggenheim demonstrate. Looking at her landscape paintings and portraits of the 1880s and '90s, it's easy to imagine af Klint achieving success as the practitioner of a solid and sensitive naturalism, enlivened by some hints from the Impressionists—certainly not the kind of renown enjoyed by her flashier Swedish contemporary Anders Zorn, whose flattering portraits and delectable nudes were coveted around the world, but a solid career nonetheless.

That's not how it went. The late 19th century was the heyday of spiritualism; like so many others, af Klint was hungry for a word from the beyond. In 1896, she started a series of weekly séances with four friends, all women artists, where she began receiving messages in the form of writing and images. Such was af Klint's talent at this occult task that the "higher ones" commissioned her to produce a series of "Paintings for the Temple," which would become her most important project—nearly 200 works, whose production occupied her from 1906 to 1915. The temple that the paintings were meant to adorn was never built, needless to say, and the artist, convinced that her work would not soon be understood, left instructions that it was not to be exhibited until at least 20 years after her death. That happened after a streetcar accident in 1944. If her works had emerged on an earlier schedule, they would have been an ideal match for the work of the American painter Alfred Jensen, who in the late 1950s began producing diagrammatic paintings based on esoteric systems like the Mayan calendar, Goethe's color theory, and the I Ching. But no such luck: Her paintings went almost unseen until 1986, five years after Jensen's death, when they finally emerged in the important revisionist exhibition "The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985," curated by Maurice Tuchman for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

The works that af Klint began producing under the tutelage of the spirits in 1906 bear no resemblance to anything accepted as art in Europe up to that time. It's commonly said that she anticipated the wave of abstraction that suddenly welled up across Europe and the United States around 1912—much of it by artists who had also been influenced to some degree by Theosophy and spiritualism. And

it's easy to understand why one would think so: The flatness of her paintings, their eschewal of illusionistic three-dimensional space, recalls the works that Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich would soon be making, and the simple geometrical figures she often used—circles, spirals, stylized botanical forms, and other curvilinear shapes—are also compatible with those used by the more famous abstractionists, who were mostly about a decade younger than she. But I can't quite think of af Klint's art as being abstract in the same sense. It's more like an expanded form of writing or, as she believed, "a language of symbols that has already existed forever and that has now been given to humanity by the creative spirits." Her works share as much with Goethe's color-theory diagrams, and more generally the kinds of diagrams that often illustrate esoteric and occult texts, as they do with modernist abstraction.

What exactly her diagrams illustrate is at once obvious and elusive. They are all about the union of opposites—dark and light, up and down, material and spiritual, etc.—and the soul's winding path toward enlightenment. But the details are obscure. Helen Molesworth puts it well in the catalog for the Guggenheim exhibition: "Her pictures are like a set of instructions that then need other instructions." But I'm not sure I want that second user's manual. Sometimes the works' specific meanings were better known to the higher powers than to the artist herself, who at first considered herself little more than their amanuensis, only eventually taking a more conscious control of their production. In any case, I can better appreciate her work apart from the belief system that generated it, which is not an unusual situation: When I admire a Madonna and child by Bellini, I'm not concerned with ideas about the Trinity or the Virgin Birth, notions as alien to me as anything in Theosophy.

The beauty of af Klint's paintings comes from the delicacy and concentration with which they've been realized. One thing her belief system gave her was an ability to keep her ego out of the way of her art; there's a kind of blunt, unfussy anonymity to her touch that carries conviction. Still, as fascinating and radical as af Klint's paintings are, they are also limited by her conception of them as essentially illustrational. They

lack body. Color, for her, was less a corporeal entity than an idea. And yet, af Klint's diagrams were more than just that; they were paintings conceived for permanent display in a temple, where the wisdom they embody would presumably be given ritual form. In the three "altarpieces" meant as a kind of culmination, to be seen at the center of the temple's highest level, it's undeniable that she achieved an appropriate grandeur. Their physical expansiveness lets the color spread and vibrate. The works are inspiring—and the moment you let yourself be inspired, even the Guggenheim can become a provisional temple.

Af Klint may not have succeeded in building her temple, but she did manage to keep her art out of the clutches of the market. Her works all belong to a foundation that has said they will never be sold. Nothing sounds more unlike Andy Warhol, the guy who once mused that "being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art." By now, Warhol's image and style are so ubiquitous that it's easy to wonder whether we need another exhibition of his work; it's like hearing a song you've heard a hundred times before. But still, there it is, at the Whitney Museum of American Art: "Andy Warhol—From A to B and Back Again," curated by Donna De Salvo, whose knowledge of Warhol's oeuvre is second to none. And it's a good reminder that there's always more to see: more of Warhol, and more in him, too.

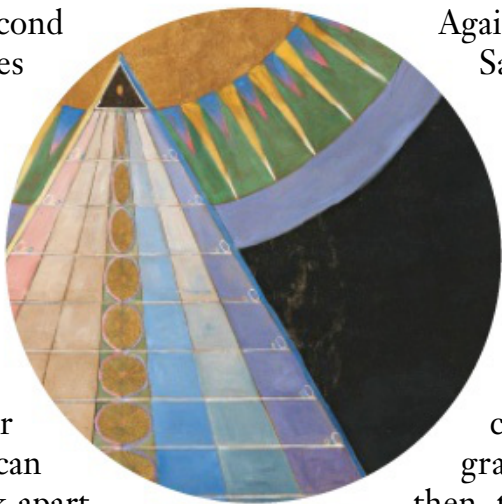
As with af Klint, Warhol's early efforts give little clue of his mature art. After graduating from what was then the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh in 1949, Warhol moved to New York and pursued a highly successful career as a commercial illustrator. With a charmingly whimsical drawing style—an unlikely cross between Jean Cocteau and Ben Shahn—he became the king of shoe advertising. He also did more personal work and occasionally showed it in galleries, under titles like "Fifteen Drawings Based on the Writings of Truman Capote." None of it had anything to do with the big, blustery abstract paintings that were the going thing in the 1950s, or with the cooler, more enigmatic kind of art that began cropping up later in the decade with the work of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. In fact,

Warhol hardly painted at all in those days. Drawing was his forte, and he knew it.

What made him realize, apparently quite suddenly, that, if he really wanted to be an artist and not an illustrator, he had to do everything differently? Who knows, but at the start of the '60s, he suddenly began painting on a big scale, using imagery taken from mass culture. Pop art was born. Warhol wasn't the only one doing it, but he was among the first. It was his use of a technique then more associated with commercial art—silk-screen printing—that gave his work its true impetus, allowing for a greater directness in the use of found imagery and lending itself to the repetition of images, both within a work (e.g., *Green Coca-Cola Bottles*, 1962) and from piece to piece (the innumerable Marilyns, Last Suppers, flowers, and electric chairs). Sometimes, the distinction between a single work and a series becomes almost arbitrary, as in the 32 canvases of *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962).

First downplaying his exquisite draftsmanship, Warhol then turned painting inside out by his innovative method of printing on canvas. The critics hated it, but collectors like the taxi mogul Robert Scull were hooked. Yet painting alone, however technically innovative, could not satisfy Warhol, who was soon making films—and later television—as well as sculptures like the famous Brillo boxes; in 1968, he also published *a: A Novel*, transcribed from taped conversations. It was once he'd found success as a painter that he discovered that "I don't really believe in painting anymore."

But Warhol didn't really need belief (unlike af Klint), and most of his best paintings date from the period after he'd supposedly lost the faith—that is, the 1970s. And yet, after having "retired" from painting for several years, he articulated his return to it in 1971 precisely in terms of belief: His new subject, thanks to the announcement of Nixon's trip to China, would be the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party—not, of course, as an ideological construct, but as a sort of fashion icon—and even "Mao would be really nutty not to believe in it." (Meanwhile, the American president's own unlovely face appears in Warhol's art only in a screen-printed campaign poster saying VOTE MCGOVERN.) The gigantic Mao at the Whitney, borrowed from the Art Institute of Chicago, shows Warhol using his silk-screened photographic imagery in a different way than he had in the '60s: The familiar portrait from the *Little Red Book* becomes the armature for bravura



brushwork (not in the mold of the Abstract Expressionists, but rather evoking society portraitists like John Singer Sargent or, for that matter, Anders Zorn) and brilliant color. The 1970s were a great period for Warhol; his “Skulls” series (1976) and the quasi-abstract *Shadows* paintings (1978–79) are probably the pinnacle of his work as a painter, surpassing the more famous works of 1962 to ’66, the ones that made history as the quintessence of Pop.

But to the extent that there’s a single takeaway from the Whitney’s survey—which, with more than 350 works, is massive, yet still inevitably partial—it’s not the self-evident superiority of certain series—and within any series, certain pieces—over others. There’s plenty of work that would simply be dull if it weren’t recognizably “Warhol.” The portraits filling the museum’s ground floor don’t look that much better than what you might do at home with your own photos and an online “Andy Warhol Pop-art effect filter”; among the few that stand out are precisely those that eschew the random-color, Warhol-studio effect—for instance, a 1986 Peter Halley, not colorized, in which the young painter’s face is doubled to lend him a line of four staring eyes. A more beautiful and less tiring show could have been put together with a more stringent exercise of connoisseurship, however subjective. But such an exhibition would have left out what might be the most important thing about Warhol’s approach to art making: his sheer will to productivity.

When Warhol named his studio the Factory, he wasn’t kidding. No ordinary studio could have produced, as Warhol’s did, 199 Mao paintings in five different sizes in less than two years. But since there’s just one such painting on view here, what’s more striking is not how many variations Warhol could spin out of the same idea, but how many different ideas he was willing to try out—how many different media he used, how many different kinds of imagery he cycled through. In 1982, the artist and critic Thomas Lawson noted “an awful desperation in [Warhol’s] search for new images, and in his reuse of old ones.” In any case, this productivity could not have been based on any great economic rationale; during Warhol’s lifetime, the sheer profusion of his work must have depressed the potential price of any individual piece.

Only later did his prices skyrocket. The Factory was less a real place than a guiding myth, the embodiment of an obsession with producing relentlessly, and to hell with where it would end up afterward.

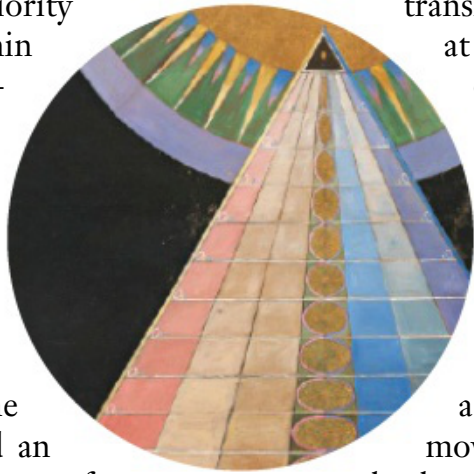
This could well be the great either/or of modern art: Warhol’s determined plunge into the glare of publicity and his total identification with the time, versus af Klint’s withdrawal of her art from the uncomprehending eyes of her contemporaries, her resolve to hold out for the future. One of the most interesting things about Bruce Nauman, whose intransigence emerges in work that at times seems to methodically frustrate the viewer’s interest, is that he appears to simultaneously accept and reject Warhol’s and af Klint’s positions. From his studio in the desert—in 1979, after working in California for more than a decade, the Indiana native moved to Pecos, New Mexico—he keeps his distance but exhibits regularly, withdrawing and participating at the same time. A comprehensive selection of his work from circa 1964 to the present was recently exhibited in New York City at the Museum of Modern Art and at MoMA PS1. Titled “Bruce Nauman: Disappearing Acts,” the show, curated by a team led by Kathy Halbreich, was previously mounted at the Schaulager in Basel, Switzerland.

Nauman’s harsh and desolate worldview, often compared to Samuel Beckett’s for its bleak humor, places hope in no future and imagines no temple. Like Warhol, Nauman seems to have tried almost every medium (the show includes sculptures, drawings, photographs, films, videos, sound works, neon signs, and architectural installations), and his mythic place is the point of production: the studio. But unlike Warhol’s Factory, which was as much a social milieu as it was a site of positively Stakhanovite productivity, a place where everyone and everything of interest would eventually turn up to be incorporated into the artist’s work, Nauman’s idea of the studio has little room for other people. His essential relation is to the studio itself: Being alone there, he once reflected, “raised the fundamental question of what an artist does when left alone in the studio.” (It’s important to note that the artist is not simply alone but “left alone”; the phrase is an ambiguous one, implying that Nauman is both unbothered and aban-

doned.) His conclusion: “Whatever I was doing in the studio must be art,” including just drinking coffee and pacing the floor, wondering what to do.

But perhaps his most revelatory intuition about the studio is that, once it has been established, the artist becomes optional; it’s like a machine that keeps operating even in his absence. *Mapping the Studio II (Fat Chance John Cage)* is a seven-channel video installation from 2001, which Nauman made by setting up cameras to surveil the studio overnight. Not much more happens than the occasional mouse scurrying by. The grainy, blown-up footage has been colorized, giving the whole thing an eerily dreamlike, watery atmosphere; it’s as if the image of the studio has come to stand in for the artist’s unconscious, where something is always stirring, even in an apparent vacancy. I think the work’s subtitle refers to something that Cage is supposed to have told the painter Philip Guston once: “When you start working, everybody is in your studio—the past, your friends, enemies, the art world, and above all, your own ideas—all are there. But as you continue painting, they start leaving, one by one, and you are left completely alone. Then, if you’re lucky, even you leave.” Yet still, the mice will keep scurrying around. Nauman found a way to put the critters to work.

At five hours and 45 minutes in length, *Mapping the Studio* would be quite an endurance test for anyone willing to take it on. A lot of Nauman’s films and videos are like that. They seem to keep asking how much you’re willing to take—how much inaction, as in this case, or how much headache-inducing agitation, as in the 1987 video installation *Clown Torture*. A sound piece from 1968 has Nauman’s voice repeatedly commanding, “Get out of my mind, get out of this room.” And chances are you’ll get out of that room pretty quick; but what’s the likelihood that the idea of someone experiencing his art is ever going to escape the artist’s attention? In philosophy, what’s called the “problem of other minds” has to do with justifying the belief that other people possess consciousness. Nauman seems to have a different kind of problem: Other minds are too much on his own. It’s as though he’d prefer to be a solipsist but can’t because he needs to demonstrate his solipsism to others in order to believe in it. What a peculiar strain of artistic individualism—one that needs a public in order to tell them to get lost. Whether art’s place is in a temple, a factory, or a studio, it’s all in someone’s mind. ■





VISION QUEST

Jordan Peele's hall of mirrors

by **NAMWALI SERPELL**

Imagine two parallel lines, like the number 11. Now tilt them until they converge at their base, like the letter V. This movement—like a pair of scissors opening and closing—is the valve at the heart of Jordan Peele's new movie, *Us*. There are symmetries and splits, parallels and intersections, echoes and reflections. And, of course, there are doubles. Sometimes, they stand across from you and stare. Sometimes they reach out to you and grasp. It's hard to say which is more terrifying.

The film opens with a shot of a TV playing a portentous foreshadowing: a

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Cal 11 news clip from 1986 about Hands Across America, a publicity campaign in which 6.5 million people held hands in a human chain across the country to raise money to fight poverty. Right as it ends, we see reflected in the screen the face of a little black girl watching it. Adelaide goes out with her parents—sniping, unhappy—to the Santa Cruz boardwalk, with its creepy, Lynchian intensity: bright lights, clown colors, roller-coaster shrieks, weirdo bystanders. She slips off to the beach and walks into an amusement hall called “Shaman's Vision Quest” (tagline: “Find Yourself”). She bounces around the house of mirrors like a pinball, doubling across the screen, until finally we notice that, although she is still moving, her reflection

has stopped. She turns to face the back of her head in the mirror. The girl in the glass turns, tilts her head, and smiles. It is a slick and shivery sequence.

After the opening credits, a satisfyingly slow zoom out from a grid of caged rabbits, the film skips to the present day. The Wilson family—an adult Adelaide (Lupita Nyong'o), her husband, Gabe (Winston Duke), their daughter, Zora (Shahadi Wright Joseph), and their son, Jason (Evan Alex)—are taking a vacation to Santa Cruz. They go to the beach to meet up with their friends, a white family comprising a pair of louche parents (Kitty, played by Elisabeth Moss; and Josh, by Tim Heidecker) and a pair of indistinguishable teenage daughters. There's some gentle satire about the black middle class (“It's a dope song. Don't do drugs,” Gabe schools his kids about “I Got 5 on It”) and the white middle class (“It's Vodka o'clock,” Kitty drawls). Along the way, Peele builds the usual suspense: a jump scare, a spider, long shadows, a scarecrow, a bloody hand, a poor imitation of a kid's creepy drawing, and Adelaide's PTSD flashbacks of her traumatic childhood incident.

This is all mild, tropey stuff. The real action begins that night at the house, with a chilling line: “There's a family in our driveway,” Jason says. This troop of four, dressed in scarlet jumpsuits and bearing gold scissors, comes inside—with a key, a smash, a tumble—and settles across from the family. A tall lunk of a bearded man, a quickstepping woman with natural hair, a thin smiling girl, a doglike boy in a white mask. Who are they? Jason answers with perfect simplicity: “It's us.”

The doubles are deftly done. They're played by the same actors, each split resemblance gaining a rough edge through the slightest deviations, like a rip in a paper doll. Gabe is an amiable lout, his double a lumbering brute. Zora is a track star; her double moves double-time. Jason keeps trying to work a finger-flasher toy; his double is a pyromaniac whose mask conceals burn scars. And Adelaide—in an extraordinary turn by Nyong'o—is herself, but skewed: a dancer, a mother. When her double recounts the origin story of “the Tethered,” surprisingly early in the film, the words are less creepy than Nyong'o's voice, which scrapes and whistles and skips like a record. During the film's climax, a dueling dance between doubles, the very movements of her body raised the hair on my arms.

Why is doubling so uncanny? Freud argued that the uncanny often draws on the familiar, the homely, the comforting. (Dolls and stuffed animals are a good example, as a dismembered toy rabbit in *Us* attests.) This suggests that it marks the fearful “return of the repressed”—of all that is childlike, naive, or primitive in us. We can call this the psychological explanation. Jung’s theory was that doubling freaks us out because it eludes reason. The relationships between some recurrences—repeatedly seeing the number 11, for instance, as Adelaide does in the film—cannot be explained via cause and effect. These “acausal” phenomena—like déjà vu, synchronicity, or a preponderance of coincidences—suggest that there is some secret order or meaning that we just don’t have access to. This is the supernatural or metaphysical explanation. More recently, we’ve seen many works of art look to scientific mechanisms—robotics and cloning—in order to evoke the “uncanny valley,” which maps the degree to which a humanoid object can resemble us before it starts to skeeve us out. There are many different explanations for why near-resemblance spooks us, most of which have to do with biologically adaptive responses to stimuli.

In every case, the uncanny involves an element of mystery. Peele could have left the cause of the doubling in *Us* mysterious by omitting any explanation for it at all. Instead, he offers several competing ones. The Tethered are shadow beings, mirror reflections come to life, “two bodies, one soul,” an underground tunnel world of doubles who drowsily, manically synchronize the actions of those on the surface above. They might be products of Adelaide’s psychic schism—hence, PTSD. They might be clones wandering around an abandoned lab—hence, rabbits. There are plausibility problems with all of these ideas. What happens to your double if you get in a car? Where did they get their fly red jumpsuits and sharp gold scissors? If Adelaide’s double is a clone, then are the children she says she birthed the clones or the siblings of Jason and Zora? And that’s only at the level of plot.

When it comes to what it all means, the possibilities redouble just as endlessly, and a little fruitlessly. Take the cast of characters. Two families: one black, with a boy and a girl, as if reflections of their parents; and one white, with a pair of girls. These doubles could symbolize divisions between genders, races, generations, social classes, physical abilities. They map onto binaries like human vs. animal, muteness vs. speech, sanity vs. insanity, normal vs. deviant, and, of course, since it’s a film, image vs. reality. Kitty’s double ap-

plies pink lipstick to her loony smile, and you almost see Moss’s *Mad Men* character, Peggy, hovering in the mirror.

Doubling tends to redouble across scale—it’s a kind of fractal law of the Gothic. It seems inevitable that the psychic split at the start of the film would open up to an internal family drama, then a neighborhood rivalry, and eventually a national crisis. Of the many answers Adelaide’s double gives to the question “What are you?,” the most incongruous one is: “We are Americans.” At SXSW, Peele said the doubles represent Americans’ fear of outsiders: “We’re in a time where we fear the other.... Maybe the evil, it’s us.” This feels somewhat generic, in both senses of the word.

Personally, the interpretation I’d select from the option menu would be class, which seems to be the clearest through line between the film’s story, visual tropes, comic gags, and genre gimmicks. When the doubles first appear in the driveway, there’s a pitch-perfect sequence in which Gabe systematically steps up his blackness to try and scare them off. I thought the visual nods to the American carceral system—cages, handcuffs, cops, jumpsuits—were building toward a unified critique. But as if bucking the weight foisted upon his directorial debut, *Get Out*, Peele seems to be teasing us with political allegories rather than leading us toward any one in particular.

Peele has been insisting for some time that *Us* is a just horror movie. It’s no coincidence that the family of heroes bears the surname Wilson, likely a reference to Edgar Allan Poe’s doppelgänger tale, “William Wilson.” Poe’s hero meets his hoarse-voiced double as a boy, only to be haunted by him throughout his adult life until the bitter end—of a sword. *Us* includes several visual horror allusions—to *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Cape Fear*, *Black Swan*—and even a nod to the importance of the car keys in *Get Out*. Peele, who will be spearheading the new *Twilight Zone* for CBS, has said that the original series’ episode “Mirror Image,” from 1960, inspired the film.

But Alfred Hitchcock is the presiding artistic influence. When you analyze *Us* visually, you see mirroring across vertical and horizontal axes, manipulations of depth and surface, parallels and forks, layers and scrims and slices. At one point, we encounter an escalator in an unexpected place, bathed in golden light (the 21st-century version of a social ladder?). The foreshortened perspective from above turns the handrails into a great big V that smoothly swallows the parallel grooves of the stairs. Adelaide Wilson, our Alice in

Wonderland, steps onto it and descends underground, where rabbits and horrors and red queens abound.

As with Hitchcock, *Us* is replete with symbolic representation, the screen crammed to the edges with Easter eggs. Every detail could be significant. And again, as with (some) Hitchcock, you feel as though the pleasures available here are more cerebral than emotional. Depicting the uncanny and enacting it are different projects. Hearing Kitty’s daughters say the same thing at the same time, then chant, “Jinx. Double jinx. Triple jinx. Black out,” is fun, but doesn’t quite give you the eerie giddiness that you felt playing that game as a kid. And it’s not easy for a movie to make you feel the terror of seeing your own face on another person. The Wilsons’ eyes may widen with fear as they each meet their respective double, but we’re just watching a bunch of twins on-screen. The uncanniness of doubling is a universal yet private feeling: Only your personal doppelgänger gives you the heebies.

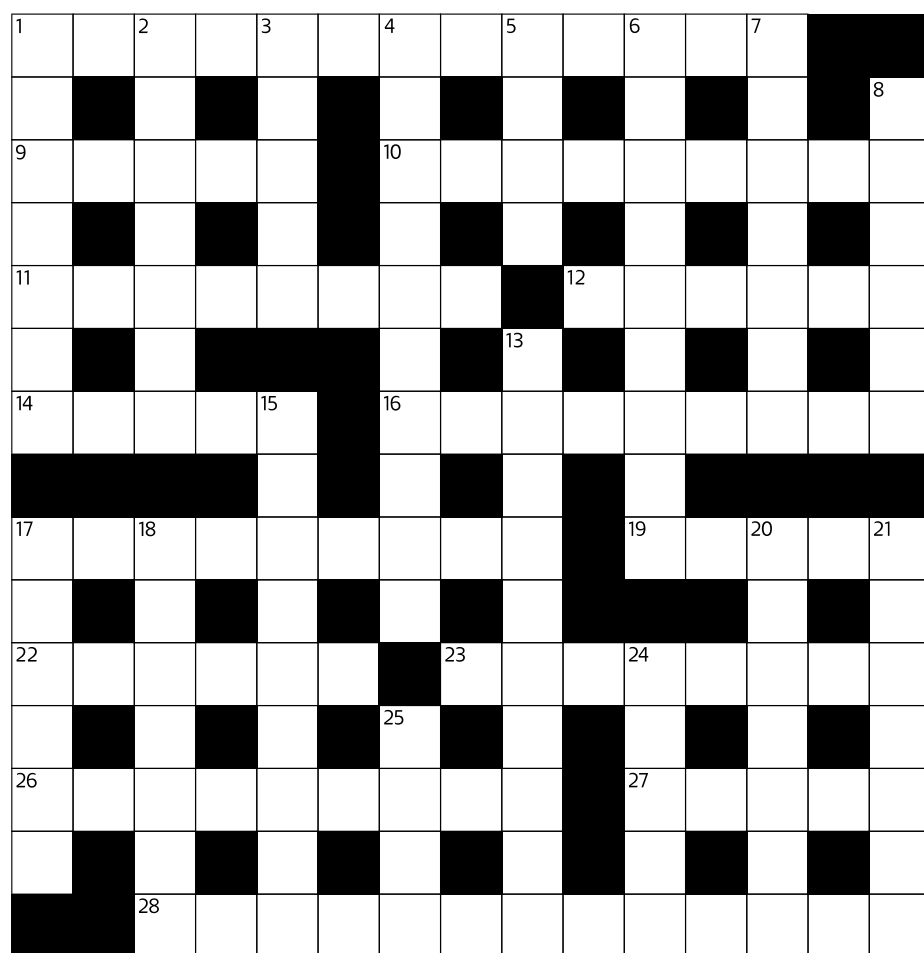
Us does its genre job: It makes you gasp, jump, and wince. But the terror is ultimately tamed by its intricate design. Doubling makes the film into a machine of correspondences, too countless and too hermeneutically sealed for you to feel truly thrown into the wilds of, say, “the sunken place.” There are so many coincidences that you come to expect them. Given all this symmetry, the only real possibility for surprise is reversal—and I guessed that final twist, not while watching the film but while watching the trailer.

The doubles’ final show is likened both to a demonstration and to “fucked-up performance art.” Only the second comparison feels apt. Contrary to Peele’s protestations, his sophomore effort seems, like many conceptual works, to be more interested in its own form than in our feelings, more interested in art practice than in political praxis. It’s fitting that the film opens with a little girl turning to face herself. There’s neither genuine cathartic horror nor profound human depth to the doubling in *Us*.

There is, however, great humor to be found in its repetitions—the mechanical encrusted on the living, the callbacks to jokes earlier in the dialogue. And like a little engine, like a trick toy, the frenetic clip of doubling in *Us* sparks an uncanny energy that follows you out of the theater. You start to see things—reflections, resemblances, recurrences. It’s as though the doubling shudders beyond the film, such that even that familiar line at the end of the final credits comes to seem ominous: “Any similarity to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.” ■

Puzzle No. 3495

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

- 1 Actress putting lettuce in canned stew (7,6)
 9 Phosphorus and others make up part of a flower (5)
 10 TV personality with eccentric tie is a loner (9)
 11 All-out laughter fills manger (8)
 12 Walked or bicycled past street (6)
 14 Device for measuring sounds in reverse—some of them are great (5)
 16 Top leader in election after large and small victory (9)
 17 Deceive with second half of enigma, after some grass (9)
 19 Deserves and gets an education (though not Introduction to Logic) (5)
 22 Fight to fix a bunch of records (3,3)
 23 A kind of medicine changing true to false? Like hell! (8)
 26 Popular healer greeting North America and part of Asia (9)
 27 General Taylor, familiarly, adopts a hint of tacky ostentation (5)

- 28 One way to destroy evidence: arrange R-shaped fragments as needed (5,8)

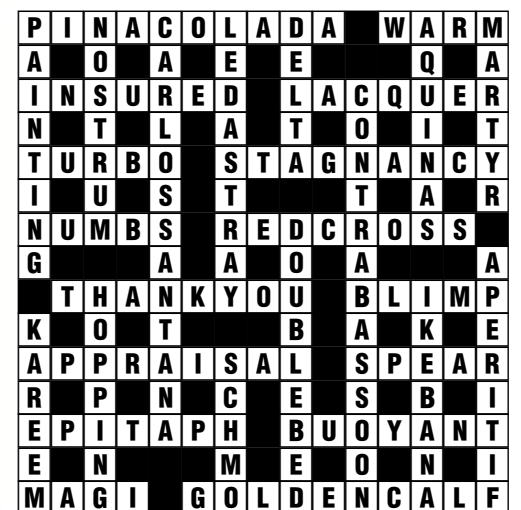
DOWN

- 1 For example, Sacramento (California) head of legislature accepts bread from abroad (7)
 2 Geek almost kidnaps couple at KCBS, for instance (7)
 3 Big, looming housing (home) up north (5)
 4 Try to convert former senator Bayh to make grand replacement for face of Central American nation (10)
 5 Engrave the middle of rough drawings (4)
 6 Ads get too garbled for discernment (4,5)
 7 Backward electric current delivered outside Iowa for African 1D (7)
 8 Note stain surrounding rear of chickadee in flight (3-3)
 13 Below nurse, aide finally breaking into zombie state (10)
 15 Broadcast summary (with start slightly delayed) that covers a naked person (6,3)
 17 Reel weight on container (6)
 18 Confused fool getting back to front after 10:09 (5,2)
 20 Paul, suppressing desire for the most part, went on a rampage (3,4)
 21 Lets loose with almost nothing to get soda (7)
 24 Football player in university leaving corrupt league (5)
 25 Harshly speak up for one such as Trump (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3494

ACROSS 1 PIN A COLA + DA
 6 W + ARM 9 IN + S[o]U[r] + RED
 10 "lacker" 12 hidden
 13 STAG + NANCY 14 NUMB[er]S
 15 R + ED + CROSS 18 T(HANKY)OU
 (out anag.) 20 BL + IMP 23 APP +
 RAISA + L 25 S + PEAR 26 E(PIT)APH
 (heap anag.) 27 B(U)OY + A[u]NT
 28 initial letters (&lit.)
 29 G + OLDEN + CALF

DOWN 1 PAIN T[h]ING 2 NO(S)T RUM
 3 CAR(LOSS)ANT + ANA
 4 LEDA'S TRAY 5 DEL (rev.) + TA
 7 AQUI + NAS (rev.) 8 M(ARTY)R
 11 CONTRABA(SSOO)N[d] (so + so anag.)
 16 DO + U + BLE(B)ED
 17 APERIT (anag.) + IF 19 [c]HOPPING
 21 hidden 22 K(AR)EEM (rev.)
 24 S[at]CHMO



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