HOOVER DIGEST

RESEARCH + COMMENTARY ON PUBLIC POLICY

FALL 2024 NO.4

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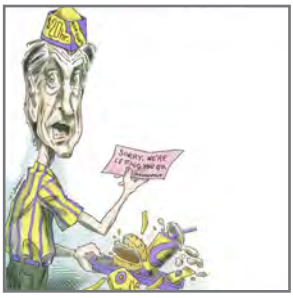
ON THE COVER

Artist Michael Ramus (1917–2005), commissioned to portray one of the US Army's "239 kinds of jobs for women" during World War II, picked a woman repairing a radio in this 1944 poster kept in the Hoover Archives. Similar posters depicted women as cartographers, photographers, weather observers, nurses, and in many other roles—but not combat. As in the Great War, women's work was vital, but, as a prophetic observer remarked in World War I, "for them there is small hope of medals and citations and glittering homecoming parades." **See story, page 216.**

Fall 2024

HOOVER DIGEST



Why Inflation Still Hurts

What matters to consumers, and will always matter, is the sharp change in the cost of living.

By John H. Cochrane

Why, at a time of falling inflation, low unemployment, and relatively high economic growth, do voters appear so unsatisfied with the state of the economy, and in how the administration is handling the economy? Why in particular do voters complain so much about inflation? The International Monetary Fund's Marijn A. Bolhuis and Harvard's Judd N. L. Cramer, Karl Oskar Schulz, and Lawrence H. Summers provide a hint in recent research.

The official inflation measure used to take home prices and mortgage interest payments into account. If it still did, inflation would have peaked at nearly 18 percent in late 2022, about double the current Consumer Price Index measure. In other words, if we measured inflation as the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) did in the 1970s, the recent bout of inflation would have been even higher than the worst of the 1970s! It really is as bad now as it was then.

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The main difference is that the old measure counts the price and interest rate you have to pay to buy a new house as the cost of the house, while the new measure is based on what it costs to rent a house. The new and old methods are the same in the initial run-up of inflation starting in 2021, but then the synthetic old measure shoots up when the Fed raised interest rates, while rents did not rise so quickly.

The change in measurement makes it hard to compare over time. It would be nice to recompute the old data with new and better measurements. But when you can't do that, computing new data with the old measurement is a nice way to compare over time on an even basis. Christina Romer at the University of

[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

California, Berkeley, has investigated changes in employment volatility using this method: unemployment seems less volatile after World War II than it was before 1930, which many economists have attributed to the wonders of Keynesian stabilization policy. But when you construct modern unemployment data using old methods, they look the same, Romer demonstrates.

Bolhuis, Cramer, Schulz, and Summers generalize the idea by adding interest costs to buy cars and other goods to their calculations of the cost

of living. It's almost the same story: if the CPI were to include interest paid on personal debt (such as auto loans and credit-card debt), that would also produce a much higher inflation rate than suggested by the current official measure.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT WAY TO MEASURE?

The new way is closer to right if the question is: what is the change in the cost of living right now for the average person? We tend to jump to answers without stating the question. Stating the question is a good idea.

Most people live in older houses with fixed mortgages, so higher prices and mortgage rates for new houses don't affect them. People who rent are not affected right now by higher house prices. While higher interest rates are a cost to borrowers, and higher house prices a cost to buyers, higher interest rates are a boon to savers and higher house prices a boon to downsizers. Those are a wash, on balance.

But to the average American, the idea that inflation is falling and they are better off because they could rent a house just like theirs for less money is a bit of a head-scratcher, to put it mildly. It's right, economically. The "homeowner" comprises a landlord plus a renter. The rent that the renter half pays is the cost of living. Lower rental income and higher interest or purchase costs for the landlord half are not part of the cost of living, just as all business profits and capital gains and losses are not. Still, explain that to the average voter.

There are a couple of central problems here, with some unresolved economics. The Consumer Price Index is essentially a static concept. It's the cost of buying a typical basket of consumption goods. If you think apples, bananas, and strawberries, that makes sense. But if you think cars, houses, and stocks, all of a sudden it doesn't make that much sense anymore. The world isn't static. The future matters.

What is the change in the cost of living right now for the average person? We tend to jump to answers without stating the question.

The right question might be: how much does it cost me today to buy my lifetime consumption? If rents are low, but house prices and interest costs are high, it's likely that rents will rise in the future. (Really. Chicago Booth's Eugene F. Fama and Dartmouth's Kenneth R. French have provided recent evidence.) Buying a house locks in the right to live there

forever. The cost of a lifetime of housing did go up, though today's rents did not.

Similarly, if stocks go up, that typically does not mean expected future dividends rise, so the cost of saving for retirement has risen. There is a lot of talk of "asset price inflation." Economists (including me) usually sneer about that being a relative price and not the price level—don't use the word *inflation* for car inflation, stock inflation, house inflation, and so forth. Those are individual and usually relative prices. Inflation means the average level of all prices, and a decline in the value of money. Period. But "asset price inflation" isn't necessarily wrong, it's just an answer to a different question. If you want to know the cost of providing for a lifetime of consumption, higher asset prices and lower real interest rates mean that cost has risen.

"It's awfully nice that prices excluding food and energy aren't rising so fast, but I have to eat and buy gas."

The CPI asks a different question, the cost of this year's average (across people) consumption. The Lifetime Consumption Cost Index would be a fun thing to calculate.

In the same vein, we often look at different measures of inflation to try to forecast what properly measured inflation will be in the future. The core-versus-headline inflation argument comes down to this question. Core inflation ignores food and energy. "Well," says the average person, "it's awfully nice that prices excluding food and energy aren't rising so fast, but I have to eat and buy gas."

Is it dishonest to report core? Not if the goal is to forecast what inflation will be in the future. Food and energy prices are volatile. *Volatile* is thought to mean predictable: a rise in price today can reliably forecast a decline in that price in the future. If food and energy prices really are predictable in this way, core is more useful for forecasting future inflation than headline inflation is.

Another example: the BLS looks at the average rent people are currently paying. But rent is sticky. Landlords don't raise the rent on existing houses and apartments nearly as quickly as they raise the rent on new leases. Thus, new rents are, I think, a good forecast of where average rents will be in the future.

I wish this idea were taken to its logical conclusion. The question is: what is headline inflation going to be next year? We should examine carefully and

systematically what the various components such as core actually do in making such a forecast. My sense is that we may be able to reliably forecast the headline CPI by looking at the various components, but such forecasts are going to be less precise than most pundits think. Similarly, higher interest rates and house prices might well make sense as ingredients in forecasting next year's rents and hence next year's inflation.

INFLATION DYNAMICS

Inflation came seemingly from nowhere to most analysts. For some of us, it was perfectly obvious: drop $5 trillion from helicopters, and inflation breaks out. Some economists chalk it up to simple supply and demand, but to me it is central that people do not expect fiscal surpluses to pay back that $5 trillion anytime soon. I note speculatively that inflation really broke out in February 2021, which is plausibly when it became really clear that large deficits would continue.

I think the easing of inflation was also perfectly predictable. A one-time fiscal shock gives a one-time price-level rise. Inflation eases when that is done. The Fed helps, and higher interest rates temporarily lower inflation, but it's not central. (This is the explanation given by the fiscal theory of the price level.)

The puzzle for standard analysis is that inflation eased just as the Fed started raising rates, long before rates exceeded inflation, and with no recession. Adieu, Phillips curve.

Higher interest rates and house prices might figure into next year's rents, and hence, next year's inflation.

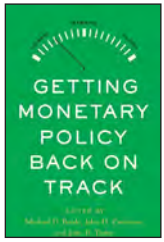
Most estimates say inflation goes up gently for a year or two after a rate rise before falling gently, maybe. Interest rates lower inflation with "long and variable lags." In this context, inflation easing one month after the Fed gently started raising rates is nearly miraculous. Talk shifts to "expectations": somehow, this time a few basis points of short rate showed everyone just how tough the Fed would be, though past rate rises took years to have any effect.

But this difference may simply come down to how we measure inflation. The data on which the standard view developed used the old measure of inflation, in which higher interest rates almost mechanically raise inflation for a while. The more recent event reflects the new measure. Perhaps inflation, measured as it is now, always declined quickly after interest-rate rises. Such a finding would also be wonderful for modern

theory, which predicts an immediate effect and not "long and variable lags."

The bottom line is that much of measured inflation includes things such as imputed home rents, government services, health care, and so on. That's the right thing to do, but don't expect huge precision. The CPI measures the cost of the average consumption basket, but the relative price changes (such as home price relative to rent) affect different people differently, and a lot. It doesn't measure lifetime consumption. It doesn't really measure the value of the dollar, which is what the Fed should be focusing on.

There is a lot of interesting economics to be done in thinking about how to measure inflation. Just make sure to state the question before you jump to the answer. ■



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Stay Home and Save

Why have wages risen so slowly? In part because millions of workers are accepting a different kind of compensation: the ability to work from home.

By Steven J. Davis

The US inflation rate tumbled from June 2022 to June 2023. It was no slide down the Phillips curve of the sort that textbooks attribute to tighter monetary policy. Instead, inflation fell 6 percentage points as unemployment stayed low. It is thus a mistake to credit this episode to the Federal Reserve's departure from low interest rates.

The timing is also wrong for a story that credits the central bank. From March 2022 to July 2023, the Fed raised its policy rate by 5 points. That's a lot of tightening, but Milton Friedman taught us that monetary policy operates with "long and variable lags." For inflation, the lags usually range from nine months to two years.

Key points

» The shift toward working at home had surprisingly benign, even positive, effects on productivity.

» Employers were able to moderate wage growth, recruit in areas with lower living costs, and trim office space.

» The remote-work restraint is now largely over, so expect real wages to return to their usual relationship with productivity and labor-market tightness.

***Steven J. Davis** is the Thomas W. and Susan B. Ford Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and host of the Hoover podcast **Economics, Applied.** He is a senior fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR).*

BALI HIGH: A woman uses her laptop in a café in Bali during Global Work from Home Day. Remote workers save time and money on commutes, and gain flexibility during the workday. [DominikaMiazek—Creative Commons]

Three developments explain the disinflation. The first is the lasting shift to remote work triggered by the pandemic. According to my research, full workdays at home were 28 percent of all paid workdays in June 2023, four times the estimated share for 2019. This shift has had surprisingly benign, even positive, effects on productivity.

The COVID pandemic triggered a lasting increase in remote work.

Most people enjoy remote work because it's convenient. The arrangement allows them to save time and money on commutes, and it affords more flexibility during the workday. On average, Americans value the option to work from home two or three days a week at 8 percent of pay.

Employees initially reaped the benefits of remote work, because their wages reflected pre-pandemic conditions and expectations. Over time, pay adjusted and employers adapted, eventually allowing them to benefit from slower wage growth.

My research quantifies this source of wage-growth moderation. Along with the Atlanta Fed, our team asked hundreds of business executives whether remote work affected their firms' wages. Thirty-eight percent told us their companies had relied on the work-from-home boom to moderate wage-growth pressures in the previous twelve months. Forty-one percent said their firms planned to use remote work to restrain wage growth in the next twelve months. We found that the boom reduced overall wage growth by 2 percentage points from spring 2021 to spring 2023. In all likelihood, the effects extended beyond this interval, because pay adjusts slowly.

Americans value the option to work from home two or three days a week at 8 percent of pay.

Remote work cuts costs in other ways, too. When employees work on site only two days a week, their companies need less space. Fully remote employees need no office space. Remote work also facilitates recruitment from locations with lower living costs and wages.

These observations explain another, otherwise puzzling development: US real wage growth has been tepid since 2021 in the face of low unemployment and historically high job openings. This unusual wage-growth pattern arose partially because more workers accepted "compensation" in the form of more-desirable working arrangements.

The pandemic had other important effects on labor supply. COVID-19 caused more than an estimated 800,000 deaths and millions of hospitalizations in the United States in 2020 and 2021. Fear of the virus, along with social-distancing mandates and public-health warnings, reduced in-person work. This combination also led some working-age Americans to leave the labor force entirely.

In research with Jose Maria Barrero and Nick Bloom, I found that this drag on labor-force participation was concentrated among less-educated and older Americans, who had the most to fear from infection. We also reported that participation began to rebound in the spring of 2022, and perhaps earlier, as public-health worries began to wane. This rebound increased the labor supply, which helped restrain wage growth in 2022 and 2023.

Good policy must finish the job of controlling inflation.

The New York Fed's index of global supply-chain pressures captures the third development. Transport costs and supply bottlenecks eased significantly throughout 2022 and the first half of 2023, reversing disruptions driven by the pandemic and its aftermath. Shipping costs for commodities fell, as did delivery times and backlogs for manufacturing components.

This came at a fortuitous time for the Fed, as it realized the gravity of its inflation problem. It shouldn't bet on more good luck. Social distancing is over. The wage-growth restraint associated with remote work is largely played out, and real wages will return to their usual relationship with productivity and labor-market tightness. Supply-chain conditions are also back to normal.

The lesson? Good policy must finish the job of controlling inflation.

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Global Tax Versus the Facts

Taxes distort economic activity. **A global minimum tax would distort it globally—and stall progress on reducing poverty.**

By Gregory Kearney and Joshua D. Rauh

Last April, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank jointly hosted a weeklong series of meetings in Washington with experts from around the world focused on issues these organizations are prioritizing. In the middle of the week, after existentially necessary sessions on topics like "Is a Feminist Vision on Public Debt Possible?" and "Eighty Years after Bretton Woods: Towards Rights-Based Decolonial, Green, and Gender Just Transformation of the IFA," these globally recognized experts turned their attention toward a subject that has captivated big-government policy makers for more than a decade: global taxation.

This session specifically discussed adopting a "progressive global [tax] agenda in [taxing] the super-rich." Notable attendee and UC-Berkeley economist Gabriel Zucman described the scene on X (formerly Twitter):

Gregory Kearney *is the senior research analyst for the State and Local Governance Initiative at the Hoover Institution.* ***Joshua D. Rauh*** *is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Ormond Family Professor of Finance at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. He leads Hoover's State and Local Governance Initiative.*

> There was palpable "tax the rich" energy in the room. . . . There was an absolutely *packed* room (+ overflow room) for our panel on taxing the super-rich. This is (at long last) emerging as a central topic of international economic discussions.

He then thanked the "incredible leadership" of Brazil—a country known for its staunch commitment to equal economic outcomes—in pushing for the institution of a global minimum tax. Unfortunately for Zucman and his colleagues, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen took some of the wind out of their sails in May, announcing that the United States would not support any global tax on billionaires.

Still, it is worth considering whether any of this would actually be necessary or whether this supposed cure to global inequality could potentially make things much worse.

WORSENING A CRISIS

Somehow, without a complicated, overarching, global tax regime, the world has seemingly done just fine in ameliorating poverty. Over the past forty years, the percentage of people across the world living in extreme poverty (defined by the World Bank as $2.15 per day in real 2017 dollars) has radically declined from almost 44 percent in 1981 to just 9 percent in 2022.

To the extent there has ever been a significant change in trend, the only time there was a substantial uptick in extreme poverty during this period was during the COVID-19 crisis, when countries placed extreme lockdown measures on their populations, causing abrupt halts to commerce and foreign aid. In 2020, Oxfam International warned that a hunger crisis brought on by extensive interventions could be worse than the crisis itself. One year later, the British NGO's concerns proved prescient, as it would report that an additional twenty million people had been pushed into extreme levels of hunger, the number of people living in "famine-like" conditions had increased sixfold, and the people dying from acute hunger had begun outpacing deaths from COVID-19.

No matter how clever a policy agenda is thought to be, chances are massively important variables are being ignored.

There is an underlying lesson from this experiment: no matter how clever policy makers think their sweeping, society-wide agenda might be, chances

are that massively important variables are not being properly factored into their model.

Policy makers would do well to follow the "Chesterton's fence" principle laid out in English writer G. K. Chesterton's 1929 book *The Thing*. That is, before completely upending an established course that has produced a stable society and reliable material returns, one ought to definitively demonstrate with clear evidence that this change would produce better results. While the scope of this hypothetical global tax regime would be completely unprecedented, we do have country-level evidence that is useful to consider in applying this principle of evidence-based policy.

The only uptick in extreme poverty over the past forty years came during COVID, when countries imposed extreme lockdowns.

In the United States, Americans repeatedly hear that inequality has spun out of control, requiring a much more heavy-handed domestic tax regime to rectify these differences and even to save democracy. Policy makers, pundits, and academics often cite the work of Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman (collectively dubbed PSZ). These academics have famously argued that the pre-tax and transfer top 1 percent income share has increased dramatically from about 10 percent in 1960 to over 20 percent by 2020. However, due to data limitations, the authors have had to make numerous assumptions to which their conclusions about changes in income shares are very sensitive.

With this in mind, two other tax economists—Gerald Auten of the US Treasury Department and David Splinter of the Joint Committee on Taxation—found more muted changes. In their analysis, the authors find that the pre-tax top 1 percent income share increased from 10 percent in 1960 to just under 15 percent by 2020. The main difference involves technical estimation assumptions in measuring underreported income across the income distribution. For example, in a recent response to PSZ on this issue, Auten and Splinter show that the other authors' approach to underreported income of nonincorporated ("pass through") businesses increases the top 1 percent share of income by 1.5 percentage points. This is due to PSZ choosing to allocate about 50 percent of the underreported pass-through income to the existing top 1 percent. The problem with this approach is that work published in the *National Tax Journal* by Andrew Johns of the IRS and Joel Slemrod of the University of Michigan finds only 5 percent of underreporting went to the

top 1 percent. In general, it's the businesses reporting negative incomes doing the most underreporting. When including redistribution policies, the authors find virtually no change in the top 1 percent income share.

This work has been peer-reviewed and published in the *Journal of Political Economy,* an equally prestigious venue to those where PSZ's work has appeared. Yet the press has paid much less attention to the government economists than to the UC-Berkeley revolutionaries.

TAXING THE TOP 1 PERCENT

What about progressivity? While the income shares among the top 1 percent may not have changed all that much in the past sixty years, it could still be the case that the United States' tax regime is not particularly progressive. However, this turns out not to be true. When looking at federal taxes, for example, in 2021 the top 1 percent paid 45.8 percent of all taxes, while the entire bottom 50 percent paid just 2.3 percent.

Another often-heard claim is that the rich pay less in tax as a percentage of income. Put another way, these taxpayers could contribute a greater share of total revenues, while theoretically facing a lower average tax rate. Yet, again, this proves to be untrue. When looking at a 2018 breakdown of average tax rate increases across income groups, the Joint Committee on Taxation surmised that the bottom 50 percent of taxpayers had a much lower average tax rate of 6.3 percent relative to that of the top 0.01 percent of taxpayers, who have an average tax rate of 32.9 percent.

Coincidentally, Zucman has recently claimed in the *New York Times* that billionaires are now taxed at a lower rate than average Americans. So, what gives? How can one reconcile the previous paragraphs with that claim by Zucman? Phil Magness of the American Institute for Economic Research does a brilliant job in breaking down just how he manages to get there in a recent thread on X.

By the time taxpayers are literally tapped out, tax increases have already wrought much economic destruction.

First, as Magness notes, Zucman apparently did not always himself believe that this massive convergence in tax rates occurred between the very highest and average income earners. In 2018, Zucman reported that the tax burden of the top 0.001 percent of earners barely changed between 1962 and 2014, decreasing just 4 percentage points from 44 to 40 percent.

Yet, in 2019 (when he was coincidentally advising Elizabeth Warren's presidential campaign), his numbers changed drastically, with his new series showing a massive drop from 54 percent in 1962 to 23.5 percent in 2014. The reason for this massive change was Zucman's treatment of who bears the burden of corporate taxes. In his 2018 analysis, he followed sixty years of established economic research on corporate incidence, and in his 2019 version he decided to completely jettison this approach, changing it in a way that massively understated the tax burden of top earners. He then proceeded to ignore important benefits like the earned-income tax credit from his calculations, which significantly overstated lower-income Americans' tax burden, and voilà, he managed to arrive at his preferred academic destination.

Thanks to capitalism and free markets, far fewer people live in poverty than they did fifty years ago. Nor has inequality exploded.

Proponents of progressive taxation could still argue that this level of progressivity remains insufficient and that there are still many societal problems that require additional funding. There are several problems with approaching policy with this logic.

First, the call for more progressivity assumes that increasing tax rates will increase tax revenues no matter how high tax rates go. Studying California's Proposition 30 measure, which increased the top state tax rate on the richest Californians to 13.3 percent in 2012, Rauh and Shyu (2023) cast doubt on this conclusion. They found that the reactions from high earners to the new tax increase—expressed through either moving out of the state or reporting less income—eroded 55.6 percent of the windfall tax revenues over the first three tax years and over 80 percent by the final year. A persistent high-income earner (i.e., an individual in the top bracket for all years studied) would have reported about 11 percent more taxable income if that taxpayer had faced the pre-legislation marginal tax rate. And now that only the first $10,000 of state and local taxes is deductible against the federal tax, in effect since 2018, high-income Californians actually face an even higher marginal tax rate than at the time of the study. The top of the Laffer curve has likely been reached.

Second, even if there are some tax increases on the high-income people that in some circumstances can increase revenues, the focus on maximizing tax revenues is misguided. Every tax involves some distortion of economic activity, and even just the current tax system has discouraged large amounts of economic activity, a point emphasized by the late Harvard professor and

Reagan economic adviser Martin Feldstein. By the time the government reaches a point where taxpayers are literally tapped out, the increases have already wrought much economic destruction. However, if the government's primary objective was grounded in maximizing prosperity, policy makers and politicians would start by figuring out what economic and political systems would achieve the best long-term productive output of a society, subject to allowances for some redistribution, not simply what income tax rates maximize government revenues.

What is often implied in many of the suggestions from proponents of greater taxation is that countries that are currently economically strong will always be so, and thus the tax base can always be tapped for greater funds for new government projects and initiatives. But this ignores history and the reality that income and wealth are not guaranteed to grow in the areas that currently enjoy the highest relative levels of income and wealth.

On the local level, consider a paper by Hoover's own Lee E. Ohanian and co-authors Simeon Alder and David Lagakos published last year in the *Journal of Political Economy.* The authors find that much of the Rust Belt's poor performance in the postwar era had to do with constant labor stoppages, pushing employers to leave the Rust Belt for other areas of the country.

On the country level, consider the United Kingdom. The most recent report from the Tax Foundation on "international tax competitiveness" ranks the United Kingdom twenty-ninth out of thirty-eight countries studied. Just recently, the country experienced negative per capita GDP growth and has seen its standard of living fall behind many peer countries because of its weak economic performance over the past decade. Last year, researchers from the London School of Economics found that while Britain, the United States, France, and Germany all experienced relatively worse growth rates in the aftermath of the global financial crisis relative to their previous trends, the United States produced 28 percent more value added per hour than Britain, and the French and Germans were 13 percent and 14 percent more productive per hour than their UK counterparts, respectively. According to the authors, half of this outsized slowdown was simply due to a lack of investment in capital and skills.

STUBBORNLY WRONG NARRATIVES

In sum, it is important to remember the wise words of former prime minister Winston Churchill when considering the usefulness of increasing taxation, "I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket trying to lift himself up by the handle."

Despite what you may hear, the narratives around income taxation and inequality pushed in the media are almost all completely wrong. Thanks to capitalism and free markets, far fewer people today live in poverty than they did fifty years ago, and inequality has not actually exploded. In the United States, the wealthy today pay the lion's share of all taxes and substantial redistribution is already under way. While some redistribution arguably can on net be a good thing, too much redistribution will backfire and hurt the very people the government is attempting to help. H

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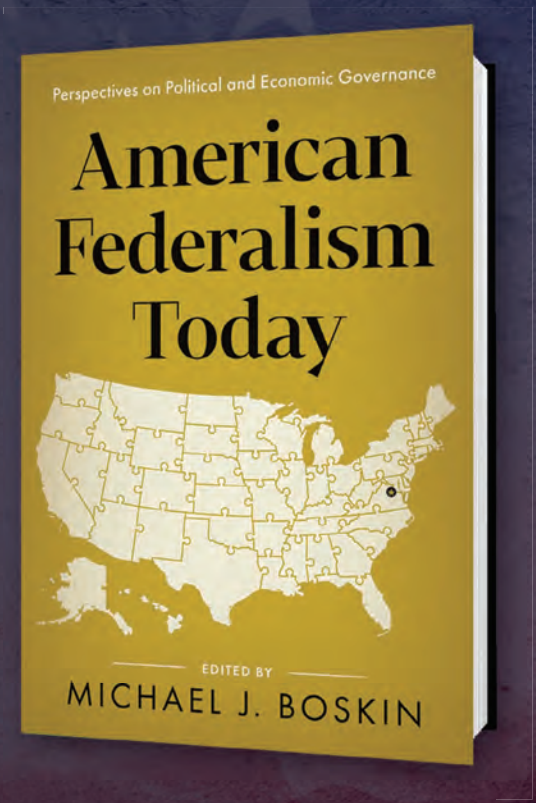
American Federalism Today

Perspectives on Political and Economic Governance

Edited by Michael J. Boskin



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On the "Eighth Day," Strength

How can Israelis flourish again after the agony of October 7? By reasserting their identity as citizens of a state both Jewish and democratic.

By Peter Berkowitz

Israelis from all walks of life believe that the October 7 massacres changed something vital in them and in their country. The horrors of the recent past weigh on citizens' hearts and minds. Daunting ongoing military operations in the south with Iranian-backed Hamas and in the north with Iranian-backed Hezbollah—along with the threat of intensifying fighting in both arenas as well as of battles to come elsewhere in the region amid Israel's multi-front war with Iran—stir anxieties and fray nerves. And, keenly aware of the nation's bitter internal divisions, the resurgence of anti-Semitism in the West, faltering international

Key points

» Israel is both a rights-protecting democracy and a Jewish state.

» Micah Goodman's new book focuses on the resources within the Israeli character and the Jewish tradition for revitalizing the nation.

» The "apocalypse" of October 7 brings a chance for the crystallization of a new majority encompassing elements of right, left, and center.

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support, and deteriorating relations with the United States, Israelis fear for their nation's future.

At the same time, post–October 7 Israelis have demonstrated abiding pride in their country and have exhibited remarkable resilience in the face of mass atrocities the likes of which no nation under assault has ever before witnessed broadcast in real time on its television screens and smartphones. Within days of the jihadists' invasion, more than 300,000 reservists in a country of 9.3 million people reported for duty. Citizens of every description volunteered—to prepare and deliver meals for the swollen military ranks; to care for grieving families whose loved ones had been butchered or kidnapped; to provide mental health and educational services for hundreds of thousands of displaced residents along the southern and northern borders who had been relocated to hotels around the country; and to pick fruits and vegetables in neglected fields and orchards. Israelis discovered after the October 7 savagery a unity of purpose and dedication to the common good of which many in the Jewish state had not known they were still capable.

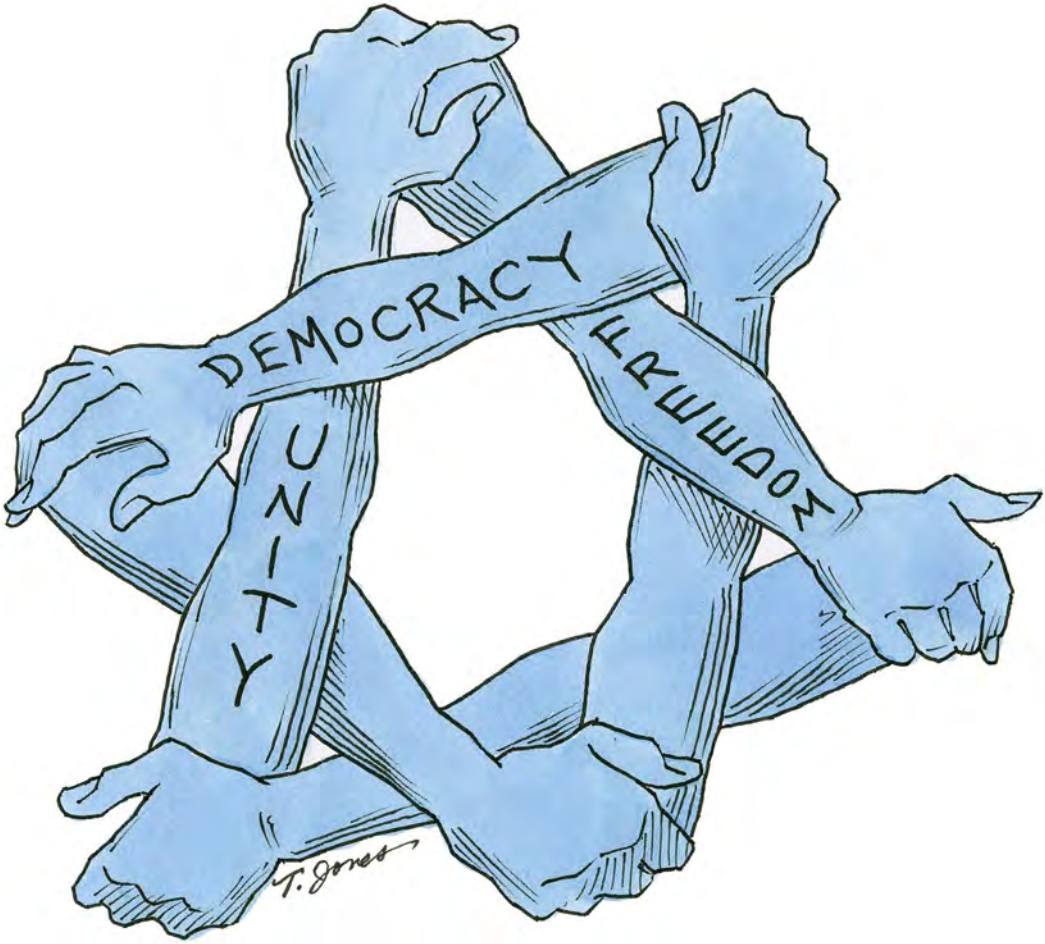
The jihadists inflicted evils of a kind that Jews had suffered during two millennia of exile and dispersion.

Plunged into a war widely seen in the country as posing an existential threat and occupied with countless acts of sacrifice, courage, and devotion, Israelis have had little opportunity to step back to consider the big picture. They have scarcely begun to delve into the origins of their post–October 7 plight or explore the sources of their heroism. Until, that is, the Hebrew-language publication of *The Eighth Day: Israel after October 7,* by Micah Goodman.

Goodman's new book aims to assist fellow Israelis who share his apprehension and perplexity. Extraordinary for its swift composition and publication, multilayered and pinpoint analysis, and wise counsel in a dark hour, the book illuminates the collision of forces that brought the nation to the "apocalypse" of October 7 and brings into focus resources within the Israeli character and the Jewish tradition for revitalizing the Jewish state. Already under way, an English translation will help apprehensive and perplexed friends of Israel around the world to understand better the depths of the Jewish state's distress and the wellsprings of its renewal.

FATAL COMPLACENCY

A fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, Goodman has published six Israeli bestsellers on an impressive range of subjects: Maimonides,



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

Yehuda Halevi, Moses, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the mutual antipathy and the mutual dependence in Israel of the religious and the secular, and the digital revolution and Israeli political polarization. His books display a rare gift for expressing in clear and concise language trenchant distinctions, essential tensions, arresting paradoxes, and sustaining syntheses.

The Eighth Day uses that gift to clarify Israel's "hybrid character," the reclaiming of which, Goodman contends, is crucial not only to the nation's flourishing but to its survival. As memorialized in its Declaration of Independence, Israel was born a Jewish, rights-protecting, and democratic country. And so it must remain, argues Goodman. Rooted in the modern tradition of freedom, which embraces equality of rights under law, self-fulfillment, and the diversity of ways of being human, Israel is also grounded in an ancient

tradition—religious and national—that stresses family, community, and peoplehood.

On October 7, 2023, jihadists stormed across Israel's border with Gaza to inflict evils of a kind that Jews had suffered during two millennia of exile and dispersion—and which Israel's founding was meant to end. The disaster confronted Israelis with a shattering discovery, or rediscovery: notwithstanding the past twenty years of unprecedented growth and prosperity, they live in a dangerous neighborhood in which their existence is fragile and their survival is not guaranteed.

The invasion and the slaughter, according to Goodman, overturned two essential achievements of Zionism: the separation of Jews in time from a past of weakness and persecution, and the separation of Jews in place from homelessness and lack of sovereign control over their homes and land. October 7's devastating implication was that even with political power Jews remain vulnerable to pogroms.

The catastrophe, however, did not refute Zionism. A tragic view of the world, inscribed in biblical faith, was familiar to Zionism's founding fathers. The refounding of their nation to which he summons Israelis represents, for Goodman, a return to and deepening of Zionism.

Goodman finds a key to "Israel's hidden architecture" in the relation between the argument over judicial reform—which quickly deteriorated into an ugly dispute over the shape of the regime and the character of the Jewish state—that roiled the nation from January 4, 2023, to October 6, 2023, and the October 7 outbreak of war. The vehement debate over the proposed judicial-system overhaul weakened Israel by heightening the sense among the contending camps that the goal of politics was to crush the other side. The erosion of Israel's readiness to defend itself put on agonizing display by October 7—the intelligence community failed to provide adequate warning, the security barrier did not impede the terrorists, and troops were elsewhere and took too long to arrive—demonstrated that Israeli political unity is not some distant, discretionary goal but rather the very basis of Jewish perdurance in the Jewish people's ancient homeland.

The catastrophe did not refute Zionism. A tragic view of the world was already familiar to Zionism's founders.

Certainty abetted laxity and disunity. Israel's intelligence community diminished the country's security by treating as settled that Israel had no

cause for concern about a major Hamas attack. Similarly, the contending political camps—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and the opposition—damaged the nation's civic cohesion by deeming their own political priorities as irreproachable and the other side's as irremediable.

A CHANCE TO REBUILD

To arrest the "virus of polarization" and restore unity, argues Goodman, Israelis must embrace "the healing power of doubt." This will involve a reorientation—moral, political, and intellectual—that derives support from the Jewish tradition, classical political philosophy, and the modern tradition of freedom. "The ability of human beings to hold opinions but not too strongly is a condition not only for a flourishing intellectual life," he writes, "but also for a united and durable Israeli life." Learning to recognize the limits of one's own understanding and to appreciate the truth—doubtless partial and incomplete—in others' opinions facilitates and is facilitated by a politics of "wide agreement." Sharing the fundamental belief that Israel must remain Jewish, free, and democratic, for example, enables and is enabled by a robust exchange of opinions about the particulars of law and public policy that harmonizes these sometimes-opposing principles.

The erosion of Israel's readiness to defend itself showed that political unity is no optional goal—but rather, the very basis of Jewish survival.

Such a reorientation would reflect an actual shift in political attitudes in Israel that has not yet translated into a political realignment. For decades, Goodman observes, the chief political battle line—indeed, the identity-defining issue—has been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The right sought to preserve Israeli control over the bulk of Judea and Samaria. The left aspired to make substantial territorial concessions for peace. But since the Second Intifada (2000–2005), the disagreement over Judea and Samaria has faded: many on the right abandoned the dream of exercising sovereignty over most of Judea and Samaria, home today to some 2.5 million to 3 million Palestinians, while many on the left lost confidence that substantial territorial compromise would bring peace.

This reconfiguration of opinions presents an opportunity for a political realignment, the crystallization of a new majority encompassing elements of the right, left, and center that recognizes that preserving Israel's hybrid character as a nation that is both a rights-protecting democracy and a

Jewish state is not a luxury but a necessity. Goodman finds a nonpolitical model for this political realignment in the Israel Defense Forces and particularly in the IDF reservists who unhesitatingly responded to the call of duty on October 7 and have defended the nation since.

To arrest the "virus of polarization" and restore unity, argues Goodman, Israelis must embrace "the healing power of doubt."

The IDF's combination of physical might and inner strength, maintains Goodman, exhibits Israel's hybrid character. The IDF's physical might springs from the modern tradition of freedom, which fosters entrepreneurship and innovation, whose fruits transformed Israel's military into a marvel of high-tech capabilities. IDF troops' inner strength—the disposition of right, left, and center in the regular military as well as in the reserves to put aside political grievances and risk their lives side by side to defend their nation—reflects traditional virtues nourished by the Jewish tradition, which situates individuals within families, communities, and the nation and imposes responsibilities and duties beyond private desire and personal ambition.

Reweaving the competing yet fundamental elements of the national spirit so that, as in the IDF, so too in Israeli social and political life, they operate to unify the nation would represent a vital post–October 7 change. A rewoven unity would mark a bracing victory not only for Israelis but also for the Jewish people and for friends of freedom everywhere. ■

Available from the Hoover Institution Press is ***Israel and the Struggle over the International Laws of War,*** *by Peter Berkowitz. To order, call (800) 888-4741 or visit www.hooverpress.org.*

Bleak October

In recent years, Israeli military leaders shut their eyes to innovation—and stumbled badly. They thought they were Goliath. But as an Israeli strategist says, "we are still only David."

By Eran Ortal

For the first time, Israel is committed not only to the defeat of the enemy's forces but also to the annihilation of its regime. That is one reason the Gaza war is proving to be a long war of attrition. It is the consequence of not only the October 7 catastrophe and a years-long policy of appeasement, but also of the gradual derailment of Israel's defense strategy. What is needed now is a reform aimed at restoring the Israel Defense Forces' decisive battlefield capabilities, without which Israelis face the impossible dilemma of living with further hostilities building up on our borders or a Gaza-like war on a greater scale in Lebanon. As war is making its comeback in history everywhere, the West should take note of Israel's endeavors.

In his book *The Culture of Military Innovation* (Stanford University Press, 2010), Dima Adamsky refers to the Israeli strategic culture as one of tactical excellence and innovation on the one hand and theoretical incapacity on the other. Many of us, including Adamsky himself, saw that culture as changing

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SUNK COSTS: A monument in the Israeli city of Rehovot commemorates Major General Israel Tal, developer of the Merkava (Chariot) tank and creator of the military doctrine that led to Israeli victory in the Six-Day War. On the far side of the monument, flowers are planted. [Creative Commons]

for the better. Unfortunately, the multi-front Gaza war exposed the inadequacies of that change—too little, too late.

The war in Gaza is a showcase for the sharp contrast between the IDF's superb performance in the offensive phase in Gaza and the clear mismanagement of the war at the higher military and political levels. While that gap is apparent to all observers, less obvious are the failings of Israel's three-decade-long strategy that collided with the changing circumstances. Analyzing the war from that perspective does not relieve Israeli leadership of the October 7 disaster, the protracted nature of the war, and the hostage crisis. However, it does enable a deeper look into our strategic position and hopefully provides for better learning and adaptation.

STRATEGIC STUMBLES

By "total war" I do not mean that Israel is engaged in a twentieth-century-style conflict between nations that involves the industrial base, cities, and

population of both sides and the unlimited use of all weapons at hand. In fact, I cannot think of a more bizarre case where a nation, after experiencing an attack such as occurred on October 7, is fighting the enemy on one hand and seeing to the delivery of food, medicine, water, fuel, and even Internet communication to the enemy's population on the other. Needless to say, Hamas's fighting force is the number one beneficiary of that flow of commodities.

Israel is fighting the enemy on one hand and overseeing the delivery of food, medicine, water, and fuel to the enemy's population on the other.

What total war refers to is the contrast between Israel's limited wars of the past and the present one. It is the first war in our history where the aim is not simply to remove the immediate military threat to Israel and end the fighting quickly. Rather, it is a commitment to the annihilation of both the military force and the political regime of the enemy. This is a just and necessary war. Nevertheless, it has dragged Israel into a war of attrition that clearly overwhelms the capacity of the IDF and Israel to sustain military, civilian, and international efforts.

How did Israel corner itself in this dead-end situation?

The most apparent answers will be the direct failures such as the lack of early warning, followed by the devastating collapse of the thinly deployed IDF forces on October 7. On a strategic level, however, the question is this: how did we allow the build-up of the Hamas army on our border? Even the shameful policy of appeasement toward Hamas, a policy as old as Hamas's rule over Gaza (2007), does not provide a complete answer. If we are to learn anything beyond the political blame game that is tearing Israel apart, we should search even further.

Three disruptions threw Israel's traditional defense strategy out of balance. Just as Adamsky described it, while the IDF was relatively quick to adapt tactically, the strategic flaws were overlooked and the more profound military change that was needed was delayed. That is a process that originated in the days of the Israeli-held security zone in south Lebanon in the 1990s.

DAVID BECOMES GOLIATH

In the 1950s, the most basic observation of Israeli strategy and doctrine was that we could not change the nature of the conflict by force. We could not defeat the Arab coalition in the way the Allies defeated Nazi Germany and imperial Japan. So, the small state of Israel devised a modest strategy:

» We will aim only for a military, not a political, defeat of our adversaries.

» To do that, we will concentrate all resources and personnel in a short, decisive war effort that will take the war to the other side to remove the immediate threat.

» We will make all efforts to avoid protracted warfare we cannot sustain.

By the 1990s, circumstances seemed to have profoundly changed. The Soviet Union had just fallen, further weakening its Arab clients, Egypt had withdrawn from the Arab coalition, and the IDF was one of the most modern militaries on the planet, with cutting-edge targeting and airpower precision-strike capabilities.

In the 1950s, strategy and doctrine held that Israel could not change the nature of the conflict by force.

And yet, faced with guerrilla warfare in southern Lebanon, Israel's strategy was disrupted. Protecting the northern border from within southern Lebanon has led to prolonged warfare with new Lebanese factions. Moving the battle to the other side now proved more of a problem than a solution.

A new strategy began to emerge. Never officially put in words or on paper, its preferred principles were simple:

» Israel's advantage lies in airpower.

» Decisive battlefield maneuvering is impractical in the new context. Fortunately, it is also unnecessary.

» Israel is now the Goliath of the equation. Indeed, it is a regional power. We can and should engage in a war of attrition, rather than find a way to remove the emerging threat.

» Guerrillas are inherently less sensitive to airpower. So, Israel's strategy will be one of coercion, aimed at a "responsible state address" such as Lebanon or Syria, hosting or supporting them.

Gradually, three processes took place:

» Airpower coercion became the securing base for the strategic deconfliction strategy practiced with the withdrawal from Lebanon (2000) and disengagement from Gaza (2005).

» The IDF became a formidable targeting machine. Later, other excellent tactical adaptations to the deteriorating situation, like air-defense systems, were achieved. Seen as a thing of the past, ground forces were largely left behind.

» Unaffected by the new strategic theory, the adversaries have grown from small guerrilla entities to full-scale militaries based directly on our borders.

Rather than responding to Israel as a superpower, the other side simply enhanced its ability to inflict damage on our cities and disrupt peace on our borders.

By the early 2000s, Israeli leadership talked about deterrence but was simultaneously deterred itself. The much-discussed air campaign Israel has engaged in in Syria since 2012 serves only to highlight the lack of Israeli willingness to stop the entrenchment and armament of Hamas and Hezbollah in Gaza and Lebanon.

THE BIG DISRUPTIONS

Three major disruptions led to the derailment of Israel's traditional strategy:

» Control over foreign hostile populated areas, like South Lebanon or the Gaza Strip, has proven to drag Israel into undesired prolonged warfare.

» Rockets and missiles have proven to be the ultimate strategic equalizer working against Israel's military superiority. Holding Israeli cities hostage, they have made it possible for the weaker side to deter Israel from decisive operations, allowing the unhindered build-up of forces by Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian Hamas. It also rendered the withdrawal strategy useless, as the rockets were aimed and fired at Israeli civilians from deep within Lebanon and Gaza.

A new strategy relied on airpower. Ground forces seemed consigned to the past.

» As for Iran—we went to bed in the 1990s with some small and isolated guerrillas on our borders. One day we woke up, realizing these were the paws of a huge Iranian tiger. We were thinking of ourselves as a Goliath gradually degrading weaker adversaries, only to learn we are in a war of attrition with a giant via its proxies.

It turns out that our main disruption was not from our adversaries but from within. Shortsighted policy from most Israeli governments helped, but the roots of the deterioration lay in false optimistic assumptions that were not challenged sufficiently: Can airpower really sustain a strategy by itself? And can Israel sustain the strategic competition with Iran while conducting attrition warfare with Iran's growing proxies on its borders?

MIRED IN DISAGREEMENT

We have favored a false theoretical framework, never to become official and truly challenged, and the comfort of doing more and better of the same.

We have made huge tactical improvements but failed to make more profound adjustments to our theories and capabilities. One can make that statement based on the IDF's concept of victory from 2020, when it was given official recognition. That concept was supposed to be a vital first step for a military modernization plan. The plan was aimed at the reconstruction of the traditional defense strategy, with decisive victory on the battlefield at its focal point. A variety of capabilities and organizational changes were planned to target the enemy's distant fire and trajectories by using modernized ground forces as well as air assets.

Israel can't politically engineer its neighborhood, even in the small Gaza Strip.

Israel's strategic and military thinking was stuck between two opposing schools of thought. The first school created a framework of false assumptions that allowed the comfort of kicking the can down the road. The concept of engineering our adversaries' intentions rather than pre-empting their capabilities failed. Reacting against that view, the other school could be labeled "military orthodoxy," denying the change of circumstances altogether. It called for bigger ground forces and a more aggressive approach, with the unpromising prospects of house-to-house fighting to clear the enemy from Lebanon. This was a twentieth-century attrition approach to deal with the twenty-first-century challenge of a dispersed enemy with long-range capability. Policy makers, from all sides of the political map, thought that cure was worse than the disease.

WHERE TO FOCUS

Cornered now into a long total war against the Hamas regime, Israel can hardly sustain the effort needed and has no good solutions for the simultaneous threat from Lebanon. In contrast to its self-image as a regional power, Israel rediscovered its basic limits. As successful, flourishing, and technologically advanced as we grew up to be, we are still only David. Israel is not capable of politically engineering our neighborhood, not even in the small Gaza Strip. Rather than adapting to a new set of military threats within the correct framework of Israeli defense strategy, we have insisted on living in a dream world.

New approaches to Israel's defense may be of great interest to the West, as it is faced with similar military challenges.

From the three disruptions mentioned, the tangible one we can militarily work with is the second: arms fire, missiles, and rockets. Defeat that, and there is no Iranian ring of fire nor an adversary capable of deterring Israel from pre-empting threats.

We can and should come up with an approach that does exactly that. That approach may be of great interest to the West, as it is faced with similar military challenges. The Russian war over Ukraine has come to be a war of attrition dominated by long-range weapons. China's strategy relies on deterring a possible US response for an armed provocation as its ranged A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) missiles are deployed and aimed at any approaching navy and air force assets. If we can contribute valid and substantial ideas and capabilities to face those challenges, it could also facilitate a fresh restart for Israel internationally. ◘

Impossible States

A single state split between Arabs and Israelis would never work. And until there's a peaceful, stable Palestinian society, neither would two separate states.

By Hussain Abdul-Hussain

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is intractable. One binational state is impossible, given that the two sides—Jews and Arabs—have irreconcilable national projects. The two-state scenario has also proven elusive, with Palestinians refusing to recognize Jewish nationhood. Even if they did, Palestinians have not shown any capability of constructing and governing a state of their own—whether a democracy or an autocracy. As long as the prerequisites for peace remain unfulfilled, the status quo will persist: a Palestinian hodgepodge autonomy meshed with Israeli policing and occasional flare-ups of war.

Key points

» Multiethnic nations in the Middle East—Iraq, Syria, Lebanon—have proven to be utter failures.

» Palestinian leaders had no mechanism to debate peace or deliver on whatever they might promise Israel.

» The two Palestinian blocs each blame "the occupation" for their own failure to produce a state.

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The one-state solution, popularized among Arab Americans by the late Columbia University professor Edward Said and endorsed today by protesters on US college campuses, was tried as far back as 1920. Britain assembled three Ottoman provinces into a state it called Palestine, and designed it as a binational homeland for both Arabs and Jews.

But multiethnic nations in the Middle East—Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon—have proven to be utter failures. Palestine is no exception.

The one-state solution was tried as far back as 1920.

Even when America threw its weight behind building a federal Shia-Sunni-Kurdish Iraq, the Shia enlisted Iranian muscle to crush federalism. In Lebanon, the once-thriving Christian and Druze majority has been shrinking over the past half century and has now become an irrelevant minority.

THE ROAD TO DISASTER

It did not take long before the world discovered the impossibility of a binational Arab-Jewish state in Palestine. As early as 1937, the British presented the first partition plan, the Peel Commission Report. At the 1939 London Conference, the Arabs demanded the declaration of "Palestine as a sovereign Arab state" in which the Jews live as a minority. The "Arabs of Palestine" rejected the binational Arab-Jewish state model. Partition became inevitable.

In 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181, which endorsed the two-state solution. Arab states at the United Nations voted against it. The following year, when Israel declared its independence, seven Arab armies invaded the nascent state but lost the war. Jordan kept the West Bank. Egypt took the Gaza Strip. The Arabs called their 1948 military defeat *Nakba,* Arabic for disaster.

The 1948 war included Arab displacement of Jews from the West Bank and East Jerusalem and, in the years that followed, from Arab countries. Israel understood the move as a population swap similar to the 1923 Turkish-Greek swap of two million and the 1947 Indian-Pakistani exchange of seventeen million. Israel thus absorbed 750,000 Jewish immigrants to replace the 750,000 Arabs, who became permanent refugees, passing on this UN status to their descendants.

It was in 1948 that the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194, which called for the return to Israel of those Arabs who wanted to, thus

contradicting Resolution 181, which had partitioned the land into two states, one Jewish and the other Arab.

At its 2002 Beirut Summit, the Arab League endorsed the Arab Peace Initiative, an official acceptance of UNGA 181 and partition, but with a caveat. The initiative also demanded the return of Arabs to Israel, along the lines of UNGA 194, thus ignoring the Jewishness of Israel.

Israel has since found itself standing before two Arab camps: the moderates, who recognized Israel but demanded the return of Arabs to the Jewish state, and the radicals, who rejected the very existence of Israel and called for an Arab Palestine "from the river to the sea," reminiscent of the 1939 Arab demand in London. The moderate Arabs have since been astounded as to why Israel would not take the Arab Peace Initiative, oblivious to the fact that the plan was tantamount to Israel committing suicide.

ARAFAT'S TREACHERY

Israel tried to play ball. Starting in 1993, Israel hoped that the Arab moderates, including Palestinian strongman Yasser Arafat and his Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), could deliver on the two-state solution. For considering two states, the radicals—including Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Hamas, and most Palestinian-Americans—bashed Arafat.

Thus, while Arafat talked peace to Israel, Islamist Hamas launched a suicide bombing campaign that killed dozens of noncombatant Israelis. Reminiscing, in March 2024, Arafat's top aide Yasser Abed Rabbo said that the PLO chief encouraged Hamas's violence, believing that he could use it as leverage to force more concessions from Israel.

Marwan Barghouti commands Palestinian support. But should he sue for peace if released from prison, he would probably lose that popularity.

The Israeli military engaged in a three-year-long campaign that eventually subdued Palestinian violence, known as the second Intifada.

Israel's bet on Arafat to deliver peace thus came to an end, but the Jewish state was not yet done with the two-state solution. Buoyed by President George W. Bush's agenda to spread democracy, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stirred the Palestinians toward an election that saw Mahmoud Abbas succeed Arafat. In 2005, Sharon handed over the Gaza Strip to Abbas and his government and conceded more areas in the West Bank, allowing

Palestinians to govern up to 40 percent of the 1967 territory, the land slated to become Palestine under a two-state solution.

Abbas proved to be as autocratic, corrupt, and incapable as Arafat. In 2007, Abbas lost the Gaza Strip to Hamas in a civil war that saw Hamas kill three hundred and fifty PLO staff and security. The two Palestinian blocs, each commanding the following of around one-third of Palestinians today, have not spoken since or held an election, both blaming "the occupation" for their own failure to produce a state, even if a nonsovereign one.

In 2008, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert promised to concede all of the 1967 territory to Palestinians. The only thing Israel asked was for Palestinians to forgo what they call the "right of return." But, unwilling or unable to rally Palestinian support behind such an Israeli demand, Abbas never responded to Olmert's offer. In 2009, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated the same demand: declare Israel a Jewish state. Abbas refused.

After October 7, Israel will never repeat its 2005 unilateral withdrawal experiment, which turned Gaza into an enemy camp.

In 2012, President Obama asked Palestinians to recognize the Jewishness of Israel. This time, Abbas experimented with Israel's demand and said that when there will be two states, he did not expect to return to his birthplace, Safed, inside Israel. Hamas bashed Abbas for his statement and he promptly walked it back, voicing ever since his wish to return, calling himself a "refugee." Palestinian leaders clearly had no mechanism to debate peace or to deliver on whatever they promise Israel.

WANTED: A FRIENDLY DICTATOR

The model of Palestinian leadership compares to those of neighboring Arab countries Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. Since independence, these countries have lived in one of two states: autocracy or civil war. Since the rise of Islamism in the 1980s, civil wars have been won by Islamist militias, all of them backed and bankrolled by the Islamist regime of Iran, which uses them as tools in its bid to dominate the region.

When dealing with these Arabs, including Palestinians, Israel has had to deal with enemy dictators like Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, and Syria's Assad dynasty, or friendly autocrats like Jordan's Hashemite monarchs and the Egyptian presidents since Anwar Sadat.

FALSE HOPE: In this July 2000 photo at Camp David, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, left, walks with President Bill Clinton alongside Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat, right. The Camp David Summit ended in failure, triggering what became known as the second Intifada. A former Palestinian aide said Arafat encouraged the violence, considering it leverage against Israel. [National Archives]

With militias, Israel has not been as lucky as with friendly autocrats. Militias are Islamists whose ideology—as outlined by Sunni Egyptian Sayyid Qutb and endorsed by Shia Iranian Ruhollah Khomeini—considers the conflict with Israel not as one over national interests but as a zero-sum game that started with the rise of Islam, over fourteen hundred years ago.

In 1993, Israel hoped that Arafat—then PLO chief since 1968—would be the friendly Palestine dictator who could guarantee peace, like his Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts. Arafat proved unable or unwilling to do so. Like him, Abbas, eighty-nine, has been weak and corrupt, and deflects blame for his failure unto Israel.

Among Palestinians today, Marwan Barghouti commands majority support. Barghouti is a former Arafat lieutenant who is serving a life sentence in an Israeli prison for his role in the death of Israelis during the second Intifada. So far, Barghouti's allure has been his animosity toward Israel. Should he sue for peace if released, he would likely lose his popularity.

With the impossibility of a liberal Palestinian democracy, and with no apparent strongman, the chances of creating a Palestinian state are next to nil. And since one of the two states in the two-state solution should be the Palestinian state, and since such a state is nowhere to be found, the two-state solution will remain elusive.

Israel, for its part, would almost certainly concede 1967 territory to a friendly Arab sovereign, Palestinian or otherwise. It could, therefore, hand the West Bank over to Jordan and Gaza to Egypt. But it is most likely that, judging by their 1948–67 experience, neither Amman nor Cairo would want to take back the territory of rowdy and violent Palestinian militias, whose attention might then turn away from Israel and unto their new governments, causing instability, as they did in Jordan in 1970.

As it stands, the Palestinians are unable to stand up a state required for peace with Israel. No Arab country wants to take them or rule their territories. After October 7, Israel will never repeat its 2005 unilateral withdrawal experiment that, instead of leading to a Palestinian state, turned Gaza into an enemy military camp.

For Israel and the Palestinians, the only possible solution in the foreseeable future is more of the same: a makeshift arrangement of Palestinian self-governance meshed with Israeli policing and periodic flareups.

Unless America is willing to go back to state-building and spreading democracy, it will have to wait until Palestinians figure out how to build a state that Israel can make peace with. Israel cannot build a Palestinian state for them. Only Palestinians can, but first, they must listen and learn how. ◘

What Do We Want? Incoherence!

Divestment, the pet cause of anti-Israel protesters, would not affect Israel in any way.

By Kevin A. Hassett

The campus protests of the past academic year died down over the summer. This gave us an opportunity to reflect a little more analytically and a little less emotionally on the position of the protesters. One can't help but begin with the simplest question. What were they hoping to accomplish?

Columbia University, to pick a major target, could not possibly influence Israeli policy toward Gaza. The students, then, must have had some other goal. One, which they clearly accomplished, was to make the campus horribly inhospitable to Jews. While that might have given the most anti-Semitic among them some joy, the truth is that students across a large number of schools continued long negotiations and presented university officials with a set of demands, which, if met, would have presumably induced the students to suspend the protests. So, anti-Semitism for its own sake was probably

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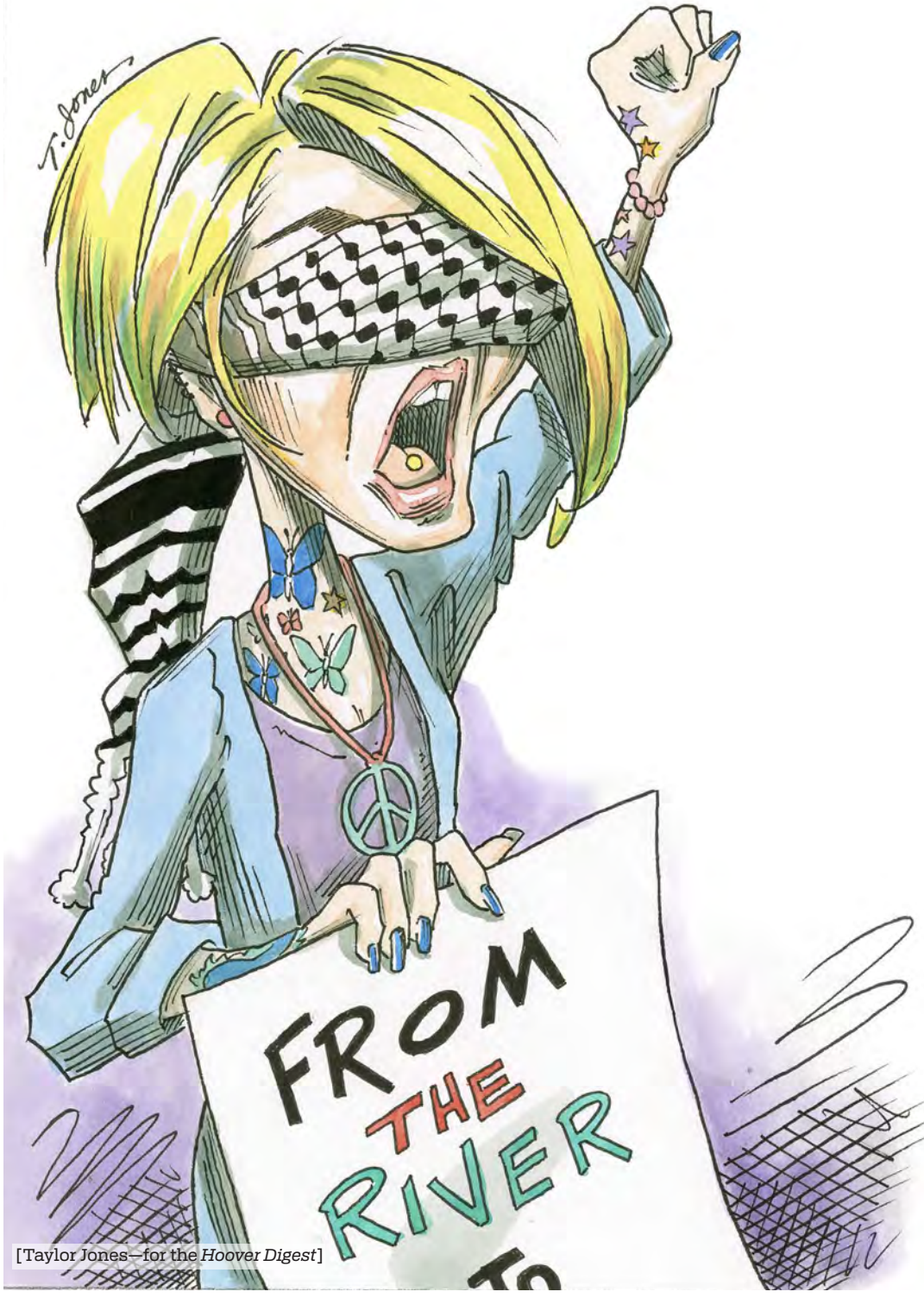

[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

not the only animating factor. Chief among the demands nationwide was that universities "divest" their endowments from Israel and perhaps from oil companies as well. The students appeared to believe that this would benefit the people of Gaza.

One goal of the protesters was to make the campus horribly inhospitable to Jews.

From news coverage at the time, it seemed clear that if universities had agreed to divest, things might well have settled down. But what else would that have accomplished?

First, consider that global capital markets for the most part are efficient, and equity prices are a risk-adjusted expectation of their future free cash flows. If every university in the United States dumped Israeli equities all at once, it would in all likelihood have no effect on the price of Israeli equities or on their future performance—in other words, it would do no harm to Israel—as other buyers would swoop in. Assuming the endowments were also invested in some other equities that were priced in an efficient market, universities' portfolios would be expected to have the same risk-adjusted return going forward. So, the students demanded something that would have had no effect on the situation in Gaza or on their universities, and the universities refused.

On the other hand, perhaps the students believed in the very unlikely possibility that they could persuade a large number of global investors to boycott Israeli equities. In that case, the market price of the equities would drop right away below their expected future profits, and they would therefore be expected to outperform relative to their price. So, an opportunistic Warren Buffett–like investor could swoop in and buy the undervalued stock and make outsized returns. But notice, since only "bad people" who support Israel hold or would be interested in buying Israeli stocks (or oil stocks), the effect of the change would be to take money that should have gone to "good people" and hand it over to "bad people." From the students' perspective, it would achieve the exact opposite of their goal.

If every university dumped Israeli equities all at once, other buyers would swoop in.

The students' final objective, perhaps, beyond proclaiming their own (supposed) virtue and establishing leadership positions for themselves on the campus left, was to "send a message" to Israeli firms that their government's

actions should be opposed. In this case, divestment would be exactly the wrong thing to do. Consider a careful and clever NBER working paper by economist Matthew E. Kahn and his co-authors, who found striking evidence that firms whose equities were purchased by green activist funds reduced their pollution emissions relative to those not targeted. The logical conclusion, then, is that if the activist students wanted to affect the behavior of Israeli firms, they should have advocated that university endowments load up on Israeli equities.

If activist students really wanted to influence Israeli firms, they should advocate that university endowments load up on Israeli equities.

In other words, the major demand of these fools, fanatics, and those who exploit them makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Many employers have announced that they will carefully examine job applicants and disqualify those who participated in the protests. Even abstracting from anti-Semitism, a college student who thinks poorly enough to make divestment his number one issue has no place in a position with any material decision-making responsibility.

If I were a university president, I might have been tempted to divest because the cost of doing so would be equal to the effect: that is, zero. But it would set a bad precedent. One really shouldn't negotiate with terrorists, or their dupes. ◘

The Myth of Accidental Wars

"Leaders start wars when they believe war will pay strategic dividends . . . not because their anger got the better of them."

By Matt Pottinger and Matthew Turpin

> No wars are unintended or "accidental." What is often unintended is the length and bloodiness of the war. Defeat too is unintended.
>
> —Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (1988)

"The only thing worse than a war is an unintentional war," Joe Biden told Xi Jinping more than a dozen years ago when they were both vice presidents. Biden and members of his cabinet have repeated that phrase numerous times in recent years, including in the context of the Taiwan Strait, where US, Taiwanese, and Chinese warplanes and ships are coming closer to one another. "We've prioritized crisis communications and risk-reduction measures with Beijing" to help prevent an "unintended" conflict, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a major policy address about China in May 2022.

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I DARE YOU: A photo released by the Pentagon shows a Chinese fighter jet carrying out a dangerous interception of an aircraft over the South China Sea, approaching as close as forty feet. In recent years, Beijing may be calculating that even a midair or at-sea collision with the US military carries limited downside risk and might persuade Washington—ever fearful of a hypothetical accidental war—to shrink its military operations. [Office of the Secretary of Defense]

Taking care to mitigate the risk of accidents is a reasonable aim. But a military mishap is a good example of something that might serve as a *pretext* for war but not a cause. "Wars have been called accidental or unintentional by many political scientists and a few historians," the Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey wrote in his seminal book *The Causes of War* after carefully examining the origins of nearly every war from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. "It is difficult, however, to find a war which on investigation fits this description."

Western diplomats and journalists reflexively assume that more hotlines and communication channels with Beijing are a key to preventing a mishap from spiraling into war. What they fail to recognize is that if war follows a military mishap, it wouldn't be because of a misunderstanding. Quite the opposite: it would be because Beijing has made a deliberate decision that the time is advantageous to fight a war it has spent decades equipping and rehearsing for. Leaders start wars when they believe war will pay strategic dividends that couldn't be obtained through peaceful means—not because

their anger got the better of them on a particular afternoon or because they couldn't find a working phone number for the White House.

ADVANTAGE: BEIJING

Consider previous military mishaps between the United States and China, such as when an American warplane mistakenly bombed China's embassy in Belgrade in 1999, or when a Chinese fighter pilot mistakenly steered his plane through the propellor of a US EP-3 spy plane in 2001. Those incidents resulted in fatalities and sharply increased bilateral tensions. But they produced no serious possibility of war. The exact same incidents, were they to occur today, would in and of themselves be equally unlikely to cause a war. But Beijing might be more inclined to use either incident as an elaborate excuse for a conflict if it had been aiming to launch one anyway.

Wars start with a promise of strategic benefits that couldn't be obtained through peaceful means.

Beijing understands this better than Washington does and uses Washington's misapprehension to its advantage. That may be why Chinese leaders, in contrast with American ones, rarely mention "accidental" or "unintentional" wars in their official statements, doctrine, and internal propaganda. The only examples we could find of commentators in the People's Republic of China (PRC) using the phrase "accidental war" were in articles pointing out that US leaders are preoccupied with the concept. In their first call after Biden became president, Xi reportedly reintroduced the theme. "I remember during one of our conversations years ago, you told me your father once said, 'The only thing worse than conflict that one intends is a conflict one does not intend,'" Xi said, according to *The Last Politician,* a recent book about the Biden presidency. It is a reasonable bet Xi made the remark with a forked tongue, with the aim of stoking, rather than empathizing with, Biden's anxiety.

Moreover, it is conceivable that Washington's fixation on unintentional conflict and hotlines may have emboldened Beijing to undertake more aggressive behavior, such as increasing its tempo of dangerously close intercepts of US ships and planes in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. In orchestrating these close encounters, Beijing enjoys a psychological advantage over Washington: it knows there is no such thing as an unintentional war. Thus, Beijing may have calculated that even a midair or at-sea collision with the US military carries limited downside risk and appreciable upside potential, since

it might persuade Washington—ever fearful of that mythic accidental war—to reduce its military operations in the Western Pacific.

An argument could be made that Taipei and Washington should be careful to avoid steps that would give Beijing even a pretext for starting a war. But without a clear and common baseline understanding that accidents don't actually cause wars, Taipei and Washington are liable to be so tentative that they signal weakness or otherwise erode deterrence.

"PROVOCATION"

A close cousin of the accidental-war fallacy is the widespread misconception that Taiwan might "provoke" a war by shoring up its national defenses. Beijing shrewdly weaponizes this misconception to dupe some politicians in Taipei, Tokyo, and Washington into second-guessing the wisdom of strengthening deterrence in the Taiwan Strait.

This playbook has been used before by Russia—and with catastrophic consequences. For years, the United States and its allies were too timid to provide defensive weapons to Ukraine, even after Russia first invaded the country in 2014. Washington eventually began providing such assistance in 2017. But it would periodically "freeze" weapons shipments to Ukraine, such as before a Biden-Putin summit in mid-2021, on the apparent assumption that withholding defensive articles might earn Putin's goodwill. Judging by his full-on invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Putin more likely viewed Washington's gestures as signs of weakness.

In a variation on this theme, autocrats in Beijing and Moscow also implicate the mere existence of alliances as "provocative." No doubt Moscow under Putin doesn't like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) any more than his Soviet forebears did. He doesn't like the fact that NATO membership expanded to Russia's doorstep after the Cold War ended three decades ago, either. But it would be a stretch to say that NATO, a defensive organization that has gone to war only once in its history (in response to the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001), provoked Russia to invade Ukraine. History suggests something more like the opposite: that NATO's existence helped maintain peace in Europe, exemplified by the fact that Russia has never attacked a NATO member since the alliance was founded in 1949. When Russia and Ukraine eventually transition from war to

Beijing's campaign to dismantle US alliances appears to be in the service of building an empire.

peace, key NATO countries will probably guarantee some form of security for Ukraine that ensures that the peace holds.

It is true that nations sometimes choose to go to war to prevent a rival from acquiring military capabilities that could pose a grave offensive threat over time. This dynamic fueled Israel's decision in 1981, and Washington's in 2003, to attack Iraq over its suspected development of nuclear weapons. But this is a less credible *casus belli* in cases where the aggressor already enjoys an overwhelming military advantage and faces little prospect of being threatened offensively by the country in question.

When Russia and Ukraine eventually transition from war to peace, NATO will probably guarantee some form of security to ensure the peace holds.

Beijing's goal—unlike Washington's and Taipei's—isn't to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan Strait but to change it. This central fact must be kept in front of mind in any serious policy discussion in or about Taiwan. We must also acknowledge that Beijing's goals are bigger than annexing Taiwan. In much the way Putin has duped some Westerners into believing NATO's mere existence is an act of belligerence, Chinese officials are making a similar case today about US alliances in Asia.

American defense pacts have existed with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia dating back to the 1950s. It is a telling clue that Beijing is much more preoccupied with the "threat" posed by these treaties now, when China is strong, than it was in past decades when it was economically and militarily weak. This suggests Beijing views US alliances less as a threat to China's security than as an obstacle to its regional and global ambitions. Beijing's Global Security Initiative, launched in recent years, appears to be an effort to replace US alliances with a China-led security architecture for Asia.

As with Russia, Beijing's campaign to disintegrate US alliances appears to be in the service of building an empire.

THE "ROGUE GENERAL" MYTH

Another variant of the "accidental war" shibboleth is the idea that rogue military leaders might initiate an external war for their own purposes, à la the character General Jack D. Ripper in the 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove.* Under this popular trope, warmongering military subordinates drag their countries into an overseas conflict against the wishes of their political leadership.

Blainey, in his investigation, found such cases to be rare as a cause of war during the past four centuries. It was true centuries ago that European empires granted generals and admirals a degree of independence in deciding whether to fight when they were far from their capitals. But that was in the days before the telegraph, when communication between a monarch and his squadrons required weeks or months of transit time. A rare exception from the modern era that Blainey cites was the Imperial Japanese Army's decision in September 1931 to capture the city of Mukden (known today as Shenyang), followed by the rest of Manchuria, without receiving authorization from the government in Tokyo. It was a rare case that, in any event, could hardly have been classified as an "accidental" war, writes Blainey.

Among near-equal states, war may become a way to measure which side really was more powerful.

Could Chinese generals today go rogue and launch a war against Taiwan or Japan or the United States against Beijing's wishes? Chinese soldiers swear an oath not to a constitution but to the Chinese Communist Party, giving supreme leader Xi ultimate and unambiguous control of the gun. A ubiquitous new slogan chanted by Chinese soldiers goes as follows: "Obey Chairman Xi's commands, be responsible to Chairman Xi, and put Chairman Xi at ease."

In short, China has one of the most centralized systems of military command and control in the world—so much so that some foreign analysts view the lack of delegated authority as a liability for China during wartime. It seems improbable, then, that a Chinese general would go off the tracks and launch an external war. (Nor, we suspect, would he be likely to resist a command to fight if so ordered by Xi.)

INFLATED OPTIMISM

Western statesmen should, in our view, worry less about potential mishaps or rogue soldiers and concentrate on addressing factors that might increase Xi Jinping's confidence that a war could be quick, relatively low cost, and victorious for Beijing.

World War I, because of its sheer scale and complex origins, is a favorite topic of study for scholars interested in war. Yet an easily overlooked fact about the Great War was that it was preceded by a high degree of optimism by so many of the main participants. True, there were some grim premonitions in the summer of 1914 that a collision between Europe's industrial

giants would be highly destructive. It is also true that some leaders were influenced by their anxiety about longer-term national decline. But European leader after leader—regardless of what side he was on—expressed optimism that the war would be short and victorious for his respective side, Blainey writes.

"If the iron dice are now to be rolled, may God help us," said German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg on August 1, 1914, upon revealing to his federal council that Germany had sent its fateful ultimatum to Russia and France. His use of the phrase "iron dice" signifies he was aware of the ever-present element of chance in war. But he also had conviction that the dice would roll in Germany's favor. He wasn't alone in his optimism. Some German military leaders estimated Germany would mostly or completely defeat France within four to six weeks and have enough forces left over to whip Russia too—regardless of whether Britain entered the war against Germany.

Most British ministers also expected a speedy outcome but with the roles of victors and losers reversed: they were optimistic that Germany would suffer a decisive defeat within months. French leaders were confident that they had learned the lessons of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 and that they could reverse the outcome with even faster mobilization and more élan in the attack. In Russia, the czar was anxious about how a war might turn out, but his war minister, General Vladimir Sukhomlinov, publicly and privately conveyed his belief that Russia could trounce Germany within a few months.

But in 1914, the iron dice would roll quite differently than expected. European leaders had entered the war with deliberate intention. As Blainey's research showed, World War I was no accident, only its consequences were.

Misplaced optimism of a quick and decisive victory precedes wars time and again. So confident in Russian military superiority was Vladimir Putin in February 2022 that he reportedly didn't inform many of his army commanders that they were being sent into war just days before the Ukraine invasion began. Russian battalions on Ukraine's border believed they were participating in a mere exercise and carried only a few days' rations.

Shoring up deterrence in the Taiwan Strait might mean reclaiming the decisive means to win a war—and to advertise those means to Beijing.

Autocracies and democracies alike are prone to such miscalculations. Estimations that "the troops will be home by Christmas" were indulged not only by German and other leaders in 1914, but also by American ones in Korea

in 1950 and again in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s, as they calmly embarked on what would turn out to be multiyear conflicts.

Overweening optimism isn't merely an ironic footnote of history; it is an indicator that war is near—and a sign that deterrence is failing. "Why did nations turn so often to war in the belief that it was a sharp and quick instrument for shaping international affairs when again and again the instrument had proved to be blunt or unpredictable? This recurring optimism is a vital prelude to war," Blainey writes in *The Causes of War*. "Anything which increases that optimism is a cause of war. Anything which dampens that optimism is a cause of peace."

BEWARE OF BALANCE

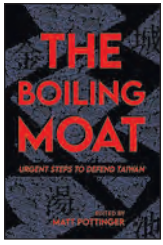
One of Blainey's keenest insights in *The Causes of War* was that a true "balance of power" between rival nations is, contrary to the soothing image the phrase conjures, often a prelude to war. A lopsided balance of power, conversely, often promotes peace. In other words, it is when nations disagree about their relative power—something they're more likely to do when they are closely matched—that conflict often erupts, with war itself serving as the instrument of measurement for deciding which side really was more powerful. That peace has prevailed for so long in the Taiwan Strait owes much to the fact that China was militarily weak through the end of the twentieth century, while the United States enjoyed disproportionate strength in the Western Pacific.

Signs abound now that the People's Republic of China and the United States are more closely matched than ever before. Tabletop exercises that, fifteen years ago, produced overwhelming US victories over Chinese forces now display results that are more ambiguous. The path to shoring up deterrence in the Taiwan Strait, then, would be for the United States and its partners to reclaim decisive means to prevail in war, and to advertise those means to Beijing.

This is the recipe Washington employed to keep the peace during the Cold War. When the conventional forces of the Soviet Union achieved numerical superiority over NATO in the 1950s, Washington doubled down on its advantage in nuclear weapons to "offset" Soviet strength in Europe. In the 1970s, when Soviet nuclear capabilities achieved parity with the United States, Washington embarked on what became known as the "second offset strategy"—this time striving for dominance in conventional arms by leveraging superior technology. The capabilities that resulted—from precision-guided bombs and stealth aircraft to advanced sensors and "star wars"

antiballistic-missile programs—gave the US military an unambiguous advantage over the Soviets despite NATO's numerical inferiority.

Geography affords Taiwan and its defenders an advantage that precludes the need to match the People's Liberation Army ship for ship, warplane for warplane, and rocket for rocket. Taiwan's relative lack of suitable landing beaches, its mountainous coastline, and the hundred-mile-wide Taiwan Strait (something Ukrainians can only envy) are favorable ingredients for cooking up another Cold War–style "offset." By ensuring that Taiwan and the United States—together with allies—have the means to turn the Taiwan Strait into a "boiling moat," deterrence can prevail.



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Dire Strait

The **Taiwan Relations Act** of forty-five years ago proved admirable enough, but it misjudged both China and Taiwan.

By Mike Pompeo and Miles Yu

The Taiwan Relations Act, enacted forty-five years ago, is a pivotal moment in the complex tapestry of international relations, particularly between the United States, Taiwan, and China. This legislation emerged from a bipartisan rebuke of President Jimmy Carter's rapid move to sever official ties with Taiwan in favor of recognizing China. It was a legislative effort to preserve some semblance of diplomatic engagement and support for Taiwan, reflecting deep concerns about the executive branch's unilateral decisions in foreign policy, particularly those influenced by the exigencies of political survival and perceived strategic advantages.

Key points

» The Taiwan Relations Act was a critical congressional check on the executive's foreign policy prerogatives.

» Americans misread Chinese leaders' intentions and operational logic and yielded to unreasonable demands.

» The United States underestimated the leverage and moral authority it held as a beacon of freedom and democracy.

It's time to unpack the multifaceted implications of the Taiwan Relations Act, the lessons learned from its historical

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ALLIES? Lieutenant j.g. Jeffrey Fasoli, gunnery officer on the guided-missile destroyer USS* Mason, *confers with Chinese sailors aboard the destroyer* Harbin *before a 2013 joint anti-piracy exercise in the Gulf of Aden. American engagement with China has failed to take into account Beijing's internal logic.
[Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Rob Aylward—US Navy]

context, and the enduring challenges it presents in the current geopolitical climate.

Historical context and immediate implications are as rich as the act's wisdom and legal craftsmanship.

The Taiwan Relations Act was a direct response to the Carter administration's decision to recognize Beijing as the sole legitimate government of China, effectively sidelining Taiwan, a long-standing ally and strategic partner.

The act served as a critical legislative check on the executive's foreign policy prerogatives, ensuring that any changes in the policy toward Taiwan would require congressional input. It provided Taiwan with a protected

legal status within US domestic jurisdiction, ensured military support for its self-defense, and opposed any nonpeaceful means to alter Taiwan's status. Essentially, it codified the US commitment to Taiwan's security and legal protection in the United States in the absence of formal diplomatic recognition.

The Taiwan Relations Act was a bipartisan rebuke of President Carter's rapid move to sever official ties with Taiwan in favor of recognizing China.

The enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act and the circumstances leading up to it reveal several crucial lessons about US foreign policy and its engagement with China.

First, it highlights the folly of "playing the China card" without fully appreciating the strategic long game of the Chinese Communist Party. The United States' initial engagement with Beijing was driven by a desire to outmaneuver the Soviet Union without adequately considering the Chinese Communist Party's ambitions and its view of the United States as a perennial adversary.

In the end, China outmaneuvered the United States in the great strategic game, and the Communist Party's leaders have proved far more adroit and effective practitioners of playing the America card.

Second, the United States demonstrated a remarkable naiveté regarding the Chinese government's internal dynamics and strategic intentions. The American misreading of Chinese leaders' intentions and the lack of understanding of the Communist Party's operational logic at a time of a fierce power struggle engineered by Deng Xiaoping against his internal political rivals underscored a significant flaw in US diplomatic strategy, which often mistook tactical maneuvers for major policy shifts and strategic wiles.

The engagement with Beijing was driven by a desire to outmaneuver the Soviet Union. It did not adequately consider the Chinese Communist Party's ambitions.

Third, the period marked a crisis of confidence in American political and institutional greatness, exacerbated by internal scandals and policy failures. This crisis influenced the US approach to international relations, leading to a reduction in its global leadership role, a misjudgment of Taiwan's strategic importance, and a gross overestimation of China's strategic and economic

indispensability for the United States, as vigorously promoted by generations of Chinese Communist Party lobbyists in the upper echelons of American society.

Fourth, the United States underestimated the leverage and moral authority it held as a beacon of freedom and democracy, particularly in relation to China's need for legitimacy and fear of internal dissent. This misapprehension led to missed opportunities to leverage American influence and inspirational power over the freedom-loving and repressed Chinese people in negotiations with China.

Washington didn't foresee Taiwan's strategic importance and grossly overestimated China's strategic and economic indispensability.

Finally, the United States failed to recognize China's negotiation strategy, often acquiescing to unreasonable demands of feigned outrage from China's ruling party because of a misperception of China's strategic position and intentions.

It has become imperative to re-evaluate the Taiwan Relations Act in contemporary geopolitics.

While the Taiwan Relations Act has served as a bulwark against precipitous shifts in US-Taiwan relations, the geopolitical landscape has evolved significantly. The rise of China as a global power, its military modernization, assertive foreign policy posture, and above all, Taiwan's remarkable transition to a democratic nation present new challenges.

The Taiwan Relations Act, though foundational, may no longer be sufficient to address the complexities of US-China-Taiwan relations, not least of which is Taiwan's development into a mature and sovereign nation eager for America's help in recognizing its rightful place in the international community.

Taiwan developed into a mature and sovereign nation, eager for US help in recognizing its rightful place in the world.

The United States must reassess its strategy toward Taiwan and China, taking into account the lessons of 1979, to ensure that past misjudgments do not bind it but are instead guided by a clear-eyed understanding of the current strategic environment, and most important, by upholding America's moral obligations to recognize Taiwan diplomatically as a free and independent nation of a proud people with a new birth of sovereignty and nationhood since the enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act forty-five years ago. ◼

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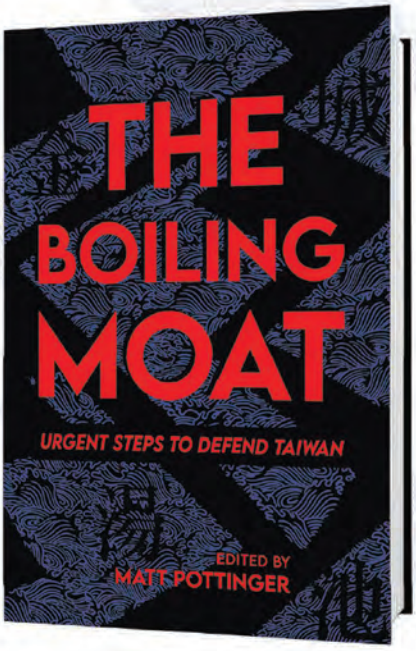
FROM HOOVER INSTITUTION PRESS

THE BOILING MOAT

Urgent Steps to Defend Taiwan

Edited by Matt Pottinger



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—MIKE POMPEO, former US secretary of state and CIA director

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Five Russian Futures

Scenarios of transformation for Vladimir Putin, his people, and his state.

By Stephen Kotkin

Readers seeking odds on Russia's trajectory should consult the betting markets. What Western officials and other decision makers need to do, instead, is to consider a set of scenarios: to extrapolate from current trends in a way that can facilitate contingency planning. Scenarios are about attempting to not be surprised. Needless to note, the world constantly surprises, and something impossible to foresee could occur: the proverbial black swan. Humility is in order. Still, five possible futures for Russia are currently imaginable, and the United States and its allies should bear them in mind.

Over the course of multiple presidential administrations, Washington has learned the hard way that it lacks the levers to transform places such as Russia and, for that matter, China: countries that originated as empires on the Eurasian landmass and celebrate themselves as ancient civilizations that long predate the founding of the United States, let alone the formation of the

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FACE IT: In London, a protest of Russia's invasion of Ukraine depicts Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Washington and its allies run the risk of exaggerating their ability to shape Russia's trajectory. [Alamy]

West. They are not characters out of the playwright George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion,* ripe for conversion from street urchins to refined ladies: that is, from authoritarian, imperialist regimes to responsible stakeholders in the US-dominated international system. Efforts to remake their "personalities" invariably result in mutual recriminations and disillusionment. Leaders such as Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping did not capriciously reverse a hopeful process; in no small measure, they resulted from it. So, Washington and its partners must not exaggerate their ability to shape Russia's trajectory. Instead, they should prepare for whatever unfolds.

RUSSIA AS FRANCE

France is a country with deep-seated bureaucratic and monarchical traditions—and also a fraught revolutionary tradition. Revolutionaries abolished the monarchy only to see it return in the guise of both a king and an emperor

and then disappear again, as republics came and went. France built and lost a vast empire of colonial possessions. For centuries, France's rulers, none more than Napoleon, threatened the country's neighbors.

Today, these traditions live on in many ways. As the French thinker Alexis de Tocqueville shrewdly observed in his 1856 work *The Old Regime and the Revolution,* the revolutionaries' efforts to break definitively with the past ended up unwittingly reinforcing statist structures. Despite the consolidation of a republican system, France's monarchical inheritance endures symbolically in palaces in Versailles and elsewhere, in ubiquitous statues of Bourbon dynasty rulers, and in an inordinately centralized form of rule with immense power and wealth concentrated in Paris. Even shorn of its formal empire, France remains a fiercely proud country, one that many of its citizens and admirers view as a civilization with a lingering sense of a special mission in the world and in Europe, as well as a language spoken far beyond its borders (60 percent of daily French speakers are citizens of elsewhere). But crucially, today's France enjoys the rule of law and no longer threatens its neighbors.

Russia, too, possesses a statist and monarchical tradition that will endure regardless of the nature of any future political system and a fraught revolutionary tradition that has also ceased to be an ongoing venture yet lives on in institutions and memories as a source of inspiration and warning. To be sure, the autocratic Romanovs were even less constrained than the absolutist Bourbons. Russia's revolution was considerably more brutal and destructive than even the French one. Russia's lost empire was contiguous, not overseas, and lasted far longer—indeed, for most of the existence of the modern Russian state. In Russia, Moscow's domination of the rest of the country exceeds even that of Paris in France. Russia's geographical expanse dwarfs France's, enmeshing the country in Europe but also the Caucasus, Central Asia, and East Asia. Very few countries have much in common with Russia. But France has more than perhaps any other.

If Russia were to become like France, that would constitute a high-order achievement

Contemporary France is a great country, although not without its detractors. Some decry what they deem its excessive statism, the high taxes necessary to underwrite uneven services, as well as a broad socialistic ethos. Others find fault with what they perceive as France's great-power pretensions and cultural chauvinism. Still others lament France's difficulty in assimilating immigrants. But it is possible to be disappointed in these or other aspects of the country and still

recognize that it provides the closest thing to a realistic model for a prosperous, peaceful Russia. If Russia were to become like France—a democracy with a rule-of-law system that luxuriated in its absolutist and revolutionary past but no longer threatened its neighbors—that would constitute a high-order achievement.

One might be seduced by the notion that Russia needs its own Charles de Gaulle to help consolidate a liberal order from above, even though no such deus ex machina looms on Russia's immediate horizon. But only hagiographers believe that one man created today's France. Notwithstanding the country's moments of instability, over generations, France developed the impartial, professional institutions—a judiciary, a civil service, a free and open public sphere—of a democratic, republican nation. The problem was not mainly that Boris Yeltsin was no de Gaulle. The problem was that Russia was much further from a stable, Western-style constitutional order in 1991 than France had been three decades earlier.

RUSSIA RETRENCHED

Some Russians might welcome a transformation into a country that resembles France, but others would find that outcome anathema. What the world now sees as Putinism first surfaced in the Russian-language periodicals and volunteer societies of the 1970s: an authoritarian, resentful, mystical nationalism grounded in anti-Westernism, espousing nominally traditional values, and borrowing incoherently from Slavophilism, Eurasianism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. One could imagine an authoritarian nationalist leader who embraces those views and who, like Putin, is unshakable in the belief that the United States is hell-bent on Russia's destruction but who is also profoundly troubled by Russia's cloudy long-term future—and willing to blame Putin for it. That is, someone who appeals to Putin's base but makes the case that the war against Ukraine is damaging Russia.

Nothing, not even kidnapping children from Ukraine, will reverse the loss of the Russian population.

Demography is a special sore point for Russia's blood-and-soil nationalists, not to mention the military brass and many ordinary people. Since 1992, despite considerable immigration, Russia's population has shrunk. Its working-age population peaked in 2006 at around ninety million and stands at less than eighty million today, a calamitous trend. Spending on the war in Ukraine has boosted Russia's defense industrial base, but the limits of the country's diminished labor force

are becoming ever more evident even in that high-priority sector, which has around five million fewer qualified workers than it needs. The proportion of workers who are in the most productive age group—twenty to thirty-nine—will further decline over the next decade. Nothing, not even kidnapping children from Ukraine, for which the International Criminal Court indicted Putin, will reverse the loss of Russians, which the war's exorbitant casualties are compounding.

Productivity gains that might offset these demographic trends are nowhere in sight. Russia ranks nearly last in the world in the scale and speed of automation in production: its robotization is just a microscopic fraction of the world average. Even before the widened war in Ukraine began to eat into the state budget, Russia placed surprisingly low in global rankings of education spending. In the past two years, Putin has willingly forfeited much of the country's economic future when he induced or forced thousands of young tech workers to flee conscription and repression. True, these are people that rabid nationalists claim not to miss, but deep down many know that a great power needs them.

Retrenchment could result from hastening Putin's exit, or it could follow his natural demise. It could also be forced on him.

Given its sprawling Eurasian geography and long-standing ties to many parts of the world, as well as the alchemy of opportunism, Russia is still able to import many indispensable components for its economy despite Western sanctions. Notwithstanding this resourcefulness and despite the public's habituation to the war, Russian elites know the damning statistics. They are aware that as a commodity-exporting country, Russia depends on technology transfers from advanced countries for its long-term development; Putin's invasion of Ukraine has made it harder to use the West as a source, and his symbolic embrace of Hamas's nihilism gratuitously strained Russia's relations with Israel, a major supplier of high-tech goods and services. Russia's elites are physically cut off from the developed world: hideaways in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), however agreeable, cannot replace European villas and boarding schools.

Although a Russian authoritarian regime has once again proved resilient in war, Putin's grave lack of domestic investment and diversification, his furtherance of demographic distress, and his role in the country's descent into technological backwardness could yet compel hard-core nationalists—among them many elites—to admit that Russia is on a self-defeating trajectory.

Retrenchment could result from hastening Putin's exit, or it could follow his natural demise. It could also be forced on him without his removal by meaningful political threats to his rule. However it happened, it would involve mostly tactical moves spurred by a recognition that Russia lacks the means to oppose the West without end, pays an exorbitant price for trying, and risks permanently losing vital European ties in exchange for a humiliating dependence on China.

RUSSIA AS VASSAL

Defiantly pro-Putin Russian elites boast that they have developed an option that is better than the West. The Chinese-Russian bond has surprised many analysts aware of Beijing and Moscow's prickly relations in the past, including the infamous Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, which culminated in a short border war. Although that conflict was formally settled with a border demarcation, Russia remains the sole country that controls territory seized from the Qing Empire in what the Chinese vilify as unfair treaties. That has not stopped China and Russia from bolstering ties, including by conducting large-scale joint military exercises, which have grown in frequency and geographic scope in the past twenty years. The two countries are fully aligned on Russia's grievances regarding NATO expansion and Western meddling in Ukraine, where Chinese support for Russia continues to be crucial.

Nevertheless, societal and cultural relations between the two peoples remain shallow. Russians are culturally European, and few speak Chinese (compared with English). Although some elderly Chinese speak Russian, a legacy of Moscow's erstwhile centrality in the communist world, that number is not large, and the days when Chinese students attended Russian universities in great numbers are a distant memory. Russians are apprehensive of China's power, and many Chinese who hold weakness in contempt ridicule Russia online. Stalwarts of the Chinese Communist Party remain unforgiving of Moscow's destruction of communism across Eurasia and eastern Europe.

And yet the profundity of the personal relationship between Putin and Xi has compensated for these otherwise brittle foundations. The two men have fallen into a bromance, meeting an astonishing forty-two times while in power, publicly lauding each other as "my best friend" (Xi on Putin) and "dear friend" (Putin on Xi). The two kindred souls' authoritarian solidarity is undergirded by an abiding anti-Westernism, especially anti-Americanism. As China, the former junior partner, became the senior partner, the two

autocratic neighbors upgraded relations, announcing a "comprehensive strategic partnership" in 2013. Officially, trade between Russia and China surpassed $230 billion in 2023; adjusting for inflation, it had hovered around $16 billion three decades earlier and stood at just $78 billion as recently as the mid-2010s. The 2023 figure, moreover, does not include tens of billions more in bilateral trade that is disguised using third parties, such as Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and the UAE.

China still buys military aircraft engines from Russia. But otherwise, the dependence goes in the other direction. The Chinese leadership has keenly avoided becoming dependent on Russia for energy or anything else. On the contrary, China is already the global leader in solar and wind power and is working to displace Russia as the top global player in nuclear energy.

Russians are wary of China's power, and many Chinese who hold weakness in contempt ridicule Russia online.

Russia has survived relations with the West for centuries without itself ever becoming Western. Being non-Western, however, does not necessarily mean being anti-Western—unless, of course, one is struggling to protect an illiberal regime in a liberal world order. Russia existed within its post-Soviet borders for two decades before Putin decided the situation was intolerable. Now, having burned bridges with the West and blamed it for the arson, he has little recourse other than to rely on China's good graces.

The great and growing imbalance in the relationship has induced analysts to speak of Russia as China's vassal. But only China decides whether a country becomes its vassal, whereby Beijing dictates Russian policy and even personnel, and assumes the burden of responsibility. A shared commitment to render the world order safe for their respective dictatorships and dominate their regions is driving a de facto vassalage that neither leader fancies.

RUSSIA AS NORTH KOREA

In deepening Russia's dependence on China, Putin or his successor could draw paradoxical inspiration from the experience of North Korea, which in turn could give Xi or his successor pause. During Beijing's intervention to rescue Pyongyang in the Korean War, Mao, employing a proverb, stated that if the lips (North Korea) are gone, the teeth (China) will be cold. This metaphor implies both an act of buffering and a condition of interdependence. Over the years, some Chinese commentators have doubted the value of

WELCOME: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un hosts Russian president Putin during a state visit last June. In one scenario, Russia could become something of a gigantic North Korea: domestically repressive, internationally isolated and transgressive, and armed with nuclear weapons. [Presidential Executive Office of Russia]

propping up North Korea, particularly after the latter's defiant nuclear test in 2006. Faced with UN sanctions, which China joined, North Korea's leadership pressed forward aggressively with its programs for nuclear weapons and missiles, which can reach not just Seoul and Tokyo but also Beijing and Shanghai. Still, China's leadership eventually reaffirmed its backing of Pyongyang, in 2018. Given North Korea's extreme dependence on China for food, fuel, and much else, Beijing would seem to have its leader, Kim Jong Un, in a vise grip.

Yet Pyongyang loyalists sometimes warn that the teeth can bite the lips. As ruling circles in Beijing have discovered time and again, Kim does not always defer to his patrons. In 2017, he had his half-brother, Kim Jong Nam, who was under China's protection abroad, murdered. Kim can get away with defiance because he knows that no matter how much he might incense Beijing, China does not want the regime in Pyongyang to fall. If the North Korean state imploded, the peninsula would be reunited under the aegis of South Korea, a US treaty ally. That would amount to China, at long last, losing the Korean War, which for more than seventy years has remained suspended by an

armistice. A loss of the Korean buffer could complicate Beijing's options and internal timelines regarding its hoped-for absorption of Taiwan, since China would face a more hostile external environment close by. Historically, instability on the Korean Peninsula has tended to spill over into China, and an influx of refugees could destabilize China's northeast and potentially much more. So, Beijing appears to be stuck in a form of reverse dependence with Pyongyang. Xi would not want to find himself in a similar position with Moscow.

Russia and North Korea could scarcely be more different. The former is more than 142 times as large as the latter in territory. North Korea possesses the kind of dynasty that Russia does not, even though each Kim family successor gets rubber-stamped as leader by a party congress. North Korea is also a formal treaty ally of China, Beijing's only such ally in the world, the two having signed a mutual defense pact in 1961. (Some Chinese commentary has suggested China is no longer obliged to come to North Korea's defense in the event of an attack because of Pyongyang's development of nuclear weapons, but the pact has not been repealed.) North Korea faces a rival Korean state in the form of South Korea, making it more akin to East Germany (which of course is long gone) than to Russia.

Despite these and other differences, Russia could become something of a gigantic North Korea: domestically repressive, internationally isolated and transgressive, armed with nuclear weapons, and abjectly dependent on China but still able to buck Beijing.

Since the Prigozhin mutiny in Russia in 2023, Xi has stressed what he calls "the fundamental interest of the two countries and their peoples," implying that the special relationship would outlast the Kremlin's current leadership. In truth, an authoritarian China could hardly afford to lose Russia if that meant ending up with a pro-American Russia on its northern border, a scenario parallel to, yet drastically more threatening than, a pro-American, reunited Korean Peninsula. At a minimum, access to Russian oil and gas, China's partial hedge against a sea blockade, would be at risk. But even if China were gaining little materially from Russia, preventing Russia from turning to the West would remain a topmost national security priority. China would suddenly need to redeploy substantial assets from elsewhere to defend its expansive northern border. And so, China must be prepared to absorb Pyongyang-like behavior from Moscow, too.

RUSSIA IN CHAOS

Putin's regime wields the threat of chaos and the unknown to ward off internal challenges and change. But while keenly sowing chaos abroad, from

Eastern Europe to Central Africa and the Middle East, Russia itself could fall victim to it. The Putin regime has looked more or less stable even under the extreme pressures of large-scale war, and predictions of collapse under far-reaching Western sanctions have not been borne out. But Russian states overseen from St. Petersburg and Moscow, respectively, both disintegrated in the past hundred-odd years, both times unexpectedly yet completely.

There are many plausible hypothetical causes for a breakdown in the near future: a domestic mutiny that spirals out of control, one or more natural catastrophes beyond the authorities' capacity to manage, an accident or intentional sabotage of nuclear facilities, or the accidental or nonaccidental death of a leader. Countries such as Russia with corroded institutions and legitimacy deficits can be susceptible to cascades in a sudden stress test. Chaos could well be the price for a failure to retrench.

Russia existed within its post-Soviet borders for two decades before Putin decided the situation was intolerable.

Even amid anarchy, however, Russia would not dissolve like the Soviet Union. As the KGB's final chief analyst lamented, the Soviet federation resembled a chocolate bar: its collective pieces (the fifteen union republics) were demarcated as if with creases and thus were ready to be broken off. By contrast, the Russian Federation mostly comprises territorial units not based on ethnicity and without quasi-state status. Its constituents that are national in designation mostly do not have titular majorities and are often deeply interior, such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Mari El, and Yakutia. Still, the federation could partly disintegrate in volatile border regions such as the North Caucasus. Kaliningrad—a small Russian province geographically disconnected from the rest of the federation and sandwiched between Lithuania and Poland, more than four hundred miles from Russia proper—could be vulnerable.

Were chaos to engulf Moscow, China could move to retake the expansive lands of the Amur basin that the Romanovs expropriated from the Qing. Japan might forcibly enact its claims to the Northern Territories, which the Russians call the southern Kurils, and Sakhalin Island, both of which Japan once ruled, and possibly part of the Russian Far Eastern mainland, which Japan occupied during the Russian Civil War. The Finns might seek to reclaim the chunk of Karelia they once ruled. Such actions could spark a general unraveling or backfire by provoking a Russian mass mobilization.

Amid chaos, even without major territorial loss, criminal syndicates and cybercriminals could operate with yet more impunity. Nuclear and biological weapons, as well as the scientists who develop them, could scatter—the nightmare that might have accompanied the Soviet collapse but was essentially avoided, partly because many Soviet scientists believed a better Russia might emerge. If there were to be a next time, it's impossible to predict how Russians might weigh their hopes against their anger. Chaos need not mean a doomsday scenario. But it could. Armageddon might have only been postponed, instead of averted.

CONTINENTAL CUL-DE-SAC

One Russian future missing here is the one prevalent among the Putin regime's mouthpieces as well as its extreme-right critics: Moscow as a pole in its version of a multipolar world, bossing around Eurasia and operating as a key arbiter of world affairs. "We need to find ourselves and understand who we are," the Kremlin loyalist Sergei Karaganov mused last year. "We are a great Eurasian power, Northern Eurasia, a liberator of peoples, a guarantor of peace, and the military-political core of the World Majority. This is our manifest destiny." The so-called global South—or as Karaganov rendered it, "the World Majority"—does not exist as a coherent entity, let alone one with Russia as its core. The project of Russia as a self-reliant supercontinent, bestride Europe and Asia, has already failed. The Soviet Union forcibly held not just an inner empire on the Baltic and Black Seas but also an outer empire of satellites, ultimately to no avail.

Russia's world is effectively shrinking despite its occupation of nearly 20 percent of Ukraine. Territorially, it is now farther from the heart of Europe (Kaliningrad excepted) than at any time since the conquests of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. More than three centuries after appearing on the Pacific, moreover, Russia has never succeeded at becoming an Asian power. That was true even when World War II presented it with opportunities to avenge itself against Japan for the defeat Russia suffered at its hands in 1905, to re-establish the czar's position in Chinese Manchuria, and to extend its grasp to part of the Korean Peninsula. Russia will never be culturally at home in Asia, and its already minuscule population east of Lake Baikal has contracted since the Soviet collapse.

Russia's influence in its immediate neighborhood has been diminishing, too. The bulk of non-Russians in the former Soviet borderlands want less and less to do with their former overlord and certainly do not want to be reabsorbed by it. Armenians are embittered, Kazakhs are wary, and Belarusians

are trapped and unhappy about it. Eurasianism and Slavophilism are mostly dead letters: the overwhelming majority of the world's non-Russian Slavs joined or are clamoring to join the European Union and NATO. Without Russia menacing its European neighbors, NATO's reason for being becomes uncertain. But that means Russia could break NATO only by developing into a durable rule-of-law state, precisely what Putin resists with all his being.

There is no basis for Russia to serve as a global focal point, drawing countries toward it. Its economic model offers little inspiration. It can ill afford to serve as a major donor of aid. It is less able to sell weapons—it needs them itself and is even trying to buy back systems it has sold—and has been reduced in some cases to bartering with other pariah states. It has lost its strong position as a provider of satellites. It belongs to a pariah club with Iran and North Korea, exuberantly exchanging weapons, flouting international law, and promising much further trouble. It's not difficult to imagine each betraying the other at the next better opportunity, however, provided they do not unravel first.

The West is more resilient than the "partnerships" of the anti-West. Even many former Soviet partners that refused to condemn Russia over Ukraine, including India and South Africa, do not view Moscow as a developmental partner but as scaffolding for boosting their own sovereignty. Russia's foreign policy delivers at best tactical gains, not strategic ones: no enhanced human capital, no assured access to leading-edge technology, no inward investment and new infrastructure, no improved governance, and no willing mutually obliged treaty allies, which are the keys to building and sustaining modern power. Besides raw materials and political thuggery, the only things Russia exports are talented people.

Besides raw materials and political thuggery, the only things Russia exports are talented people.

Russia has never sustained itself as a great power unless it had close ties to Europe. And for Putin or a successor, it would be a long way back. He undid more than two centuries of Swedish neutrality and three-quarters of a century of Finlandization (whereby Helsinki deferred to Moscow on major foreign policy considerations), prompting both countries to join NATO. Much depends on the evolving disposition of Germany: imagine the fate of Europe, and indeed the world order, if post–World War II Germany had evolved to resemble today's Russia rather than undergone its remarkable transformation. Germany played the role of bridge to Russia, securing

peaceful unification on its terms and lucrative business partnerships. But as things stand, Moscow can no longer cut deals with Berlin to revive its European ties without fundamentally altering its own political behavior, and maybe its political system. Even if Russia did change systemically, moreover, Poland and the Baltic states now stand resolutely in the way of Russian reconciliation with Europe as permanent members of the Western alliance and the EU.

Russia's future forks: one path is a risky drift into a deeper Chinese embrace, the other an against-the-odds return to Europe. Having its cake and eating it, too—enduring as a great power with recaptured economic dynamism, avoiding sweeping concessions to the West or lasting subservience to China, dominating Eurasia, and instituting a world order safe for authoritarianism and predation—would require reversals beyond Russia's ability to engineer. H

Suits of Financial Armor

Supplying weapons isn't the only way we can help Ukraine. We can also make sure the sanctions against Russia really work.

By Michael McFaul

Two years ago, in response to Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, the International Working Group on Russian Sanctions was formed. I serve as coordinator of this group, which in May published its nineteenth working paper, *Action Plan 3.0: Strengthening Sanctions against the Russian Federation.*

Our goal is to provide the world with ideas on sanctions that will reduce the resources of the Russian Federation and thereby hasten the end of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Tragically, Russian leader Vladimir Putin still has the means to continue his war and the brutal occupation of parts of Ukraine. Ukraine has struggled to strengthen its defense capabilities and rebuild its economy, particularly the shattered energy sector. Delays in Western military support and the subsequent deficit in artillery munitions and air-defense missiles, compounded by the inherent challenges in rapidly

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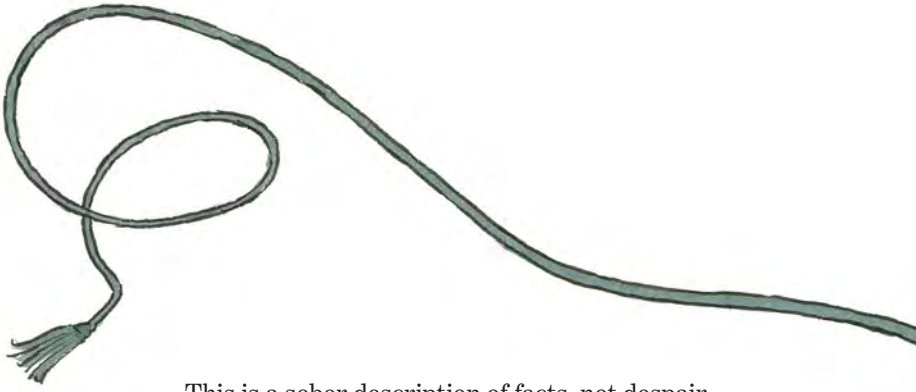
scaling up Ukraine's military production capabilities amid war and inadequate support, have caused Ukraine's army to fight largely on the defensive. In the meantime, Russia has regained its momentum.

But it would be incorrect to say that Ukraine is losing the war. Russia, after all, controls far less Ukrainian territory than it did in 2022. Putin also has not achieved many of the other war aims he has declared on multiple occasions, including the removal of President Volodymyr Zelensky and his government; the "demilitarization of Ukraine"; and "stopping NATO expansion." At the same time, neither has Ukraine achieved its war aims: the liberation of all Ukrainian territory and an end to this conflict. To help Ukraine achieve these objectives, the democratic world must do more by, first and foremost, providing more and better weapons to the Ukrainian armed forces. The $61 billion aid package signed into law by President Joseph Biden in April, coupled with the launch of the four-year, €50 billion European economic support program for Ukraine and pledges to provide more military aid, will provide a new and much-needed surge in Ukraine's economic and military capacities.

In parallel, the international sanctions coalition—around fifty countries—needs to escalate its efforts to ensure the strongest possible advantage for Ukraine in economic and military terms. Significant sanctions have already been imposed on Russia, for which the coalition should be applauded. Sanctions have had a major impact on the Russian economy and have constrained its military and financial capabilities. In particular, the coalition has substantially reduced Russian export markets and revenues. In addition, the Kremlin's inability to access roughly $300 billion in central bank reserves has dramatically limited its policy maneuvers. But more efforts are needed.

Weak implementation of existing sanctions has contributed to Russia's ability to generate higher revenues from oil exports. To evade the price cap, Russia assembled a shadow fleet of aging, poorly maintained, and dubiously insured oil tankers, which has increased oil spill risk for coastal communities globally. Weak implementation has also enabled Russia to bolster its military production. Extensive use of Western components in its military industry, sourced through a network of agents, has allowed Russia to increase missile and drone production. By exploiting loopholes in the sanctions regime and the negligence or complicity of Western companies, Russia has continued to import Western equipment and technology. Despite an extensive sanctions regime and isolation from international financial markets, Russia found additional defense spending and increased its stockpile of weapons by engaging partners like Iran and North Korea. All these have in turn led to increased attacks on Ukraine, creating a critical situation in Ukraine's energy sector.

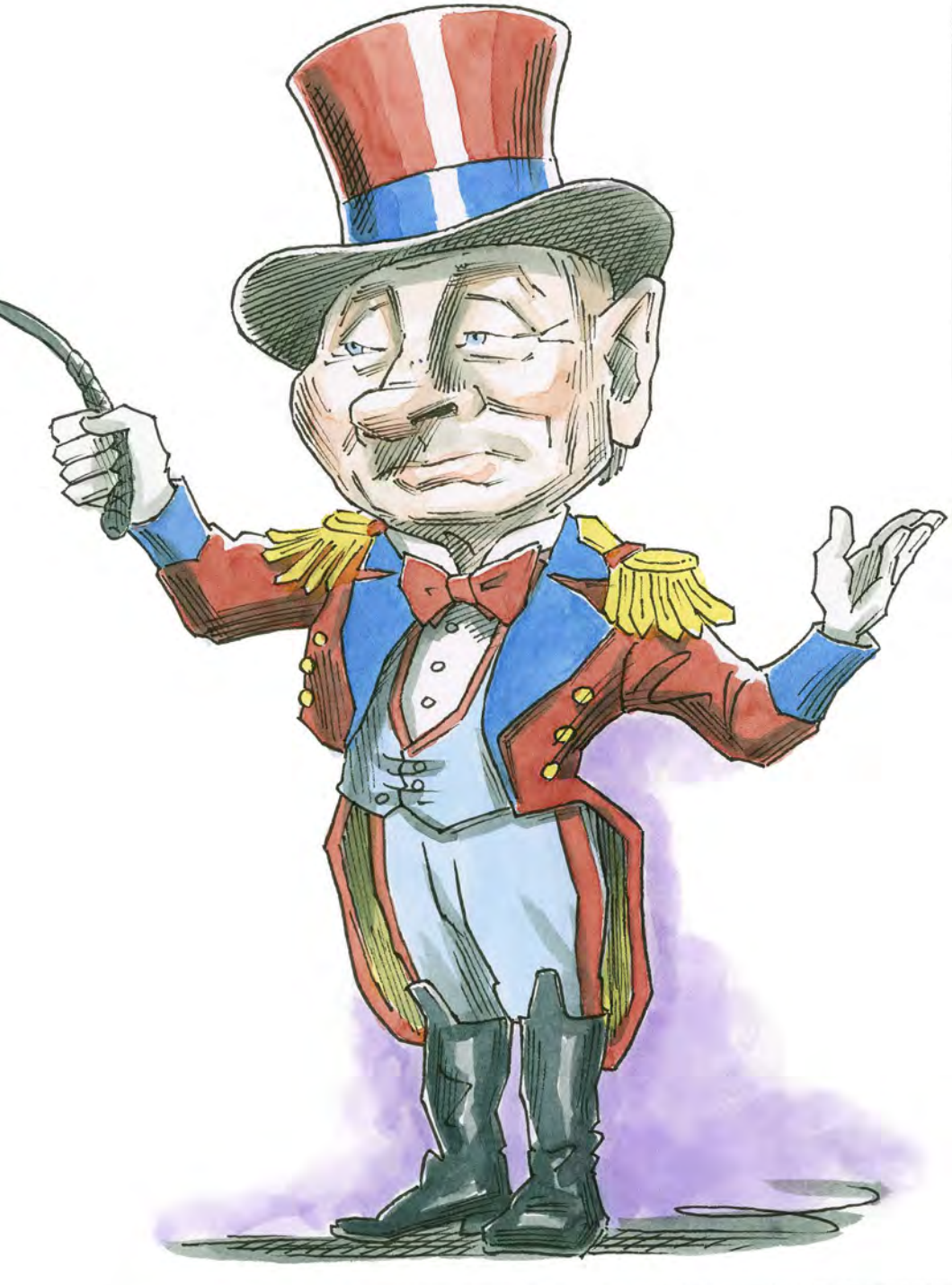


This is a sober description of facts, not despair. The implementation of existing sanctions needs to be more effective, and more sanctions with tougher, longer-term economic implications for Russia should be imposed to help end this war. Specifically, the sanctions coalitions should take the following steps.

» ***Confiscate frozen Russian assets abroad*** to fund military and financial aid for Ukraine for the duration of the war.

» ***Impose new sanctions on Russian exports*** to undermine Russia's ability to fund the war. Specifically, we propose extending sanctions to cover pipeline gas, liquefied natural gas (LNG), nitrogen fertilizers, and metals like nickel; tightening sanctions, including a full embargo on uranium, aluminum, and steel products; imposing

[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]



across-the-board tariffs on all remaining imports from Russia; and enforcing the oil price cap, including through sanctions for using Western maritime services and shipping Russian oil above the oil price cap. Once credible price cap compliance has been achieved, the oil price caps should be lowered by $10 a barrel, meaning a crude-oil price cap of $50 a barrel. Regarding the critical oil and gas sector, we propose restricting Russia's access to Western oil and gas software applications hosted outside Russia and introducing a comprehensive ban on exporting oil and gas technologies and services to Russia.

» ***Introduce import tariffs*** on all remaining Russian exports. The West no longer applies the most-favored-nation tariffs to Russia, and the allowed WTO-bound tariffs are very high.

» ***Strengthen technology bans,*** including tighter restrictions on Russian access to microelectronics, computer numerical control (CNC) machines, software, and components used in the defense sector. We suggest re-creating the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom), which was established by the Western bloc at the outset of the Cold War to impose a technology embargo on Comecon countries.

» ***Tighten financial sanctions*** by further restricting international financial transactions, squeezing liquidity and credit availability, and systematically applying full blocking sanctions on all Russian banks and key financial institutions. Western banks in Russia should no longer be allowed to indulge in war profiteering by offering Russia a loophole in financial sanctions.

» ***Impose more sanctions on Russian companies to reduce their ability to fund military operations,*** especially including key Russian firms in the energy and metals sectors. Specifically, this should include dominant companies in Russia, like Gazprom and Rosneft, vital to Russian government revenues and military operations. Rosatom, the state atomic energy corporation, must also be sanctioned.

» ***Impose more personal sanctions,*** including on all senior figures in the government and private sector who help finance and support Russia's war. Personal sanctions should be coordinated and standardized. Preferably, all major sanctioning jurisdictions—the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland—should coordinate their sanctions. They should also exchange information on why they are sanctioning a particular individual so they can defend their decisions in court.

» ***Prevent lawyers from enabling sanctions evasion.*** Western lawyers help sanctioned individuals gain entry to lucrative Western markets by

masking their identities through complex corporate structures and other tactics. American lawyers are especially attractive to sanctioned clients because of an extremely high level of confidentiality and lack of reporting.

» ***Designate Russia a sponsor of terrorism*** to reinforce the legal and moral costs for countries that continue to trade with the aggressor.

» ***Stop Western companies from doing business with Russia.*** All Western companies should leave Russia for the duration of the war and should face sanctions if they continue to profit from operating in Russia or with Russian entities. This particularly applies to prominent Western companies, like Schlumberger and Raiffeisen, that have undermined the impact of sanctions in critical sectors such as finance and oil.

» ***Strengthen enforcement of existing sanctions.*** This means providing more resources for government agencies responsible for imposing and enforcing sanctions, and sanctioning Western service providers, including law firms that facilitate evasion of sanctions.

» ***Expand secondary sanctions.*** Persons and companies in other countries—such as the UAE, Turkey, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and China—that aid sanctions evasion must be held accountable and be deterred from continuing to supply and support Russia's war.

Until Russia ends its war and withdraws from Ukraine, the default expectation should be that trade between the West and Russia should contract to a residual level, that remaining trade should be tightly controlled to limit Russia's revenues and access to technology, and that Russia should be prevented from using trade as cover for political subversion and disinformation. Sanctions remain an underutilized instrument of an overall strategy to constrain Russia and end this horrific war. ◼

Are We All Soviets Now?

Central control of the economy, a fading military, cynicism, sickness: many Americans see the late USSR in the mirror.

By Niall Ferguson

The witty phrase "late Soviet America" was coined by the Princeton historian Harold James back in 2020. It has only become more apposite since then as the cold war we're in—the second one—heats up.

I first pointed out that we're in Cold War II back in 2018. In articles for the *New York Times* and *National Review,* I tried to show how the People's Republic of China now occupies the space vacated by the Soviet Union when it collapsed in 1991.

This view is less controversial now than it was then. China is clearly not only an ideological rival, firmly committed to Marxism-Leninism and one-party rule. It's also a technological competitor—the only one the United States confronts in fields such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing. It's a military rival, with a navy that is already larger than ours and a nuclear arsenal that is catching up fast. And it's a geopolitical rival, asserting

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itself not only in the Indo-Pacific but also through proxies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

But it only recently struck me that in this new Cold War, we—and not the Chinese—might be the Soviets. It's a bit like that moment when the British comedians David Mitchell and Robert Webb, playing Waffen-SS officers toward the end of World War II, ask the immortal question: "Are we the baddies?"

I imagine two American sailors asking themselves one day—perhaps as their aircraft carrier is sinking beneath their feet somewhere near the Taiwan Strait: are we the Soviets?

PROMISES OF MIRACLES

Yes, I know what you are going to say.

There is a world of difference between the dysfunctional planned economy that Stalin built and bequeathed his heirs, which collapsed as soon as Mikhail Gorbachev tried to reform it, and the dynamic market economy that we Americans take pride in. The Soviet system squandered resources and all but guaranteed shortages of consumer goods. The Soviet health care system was crippled by dilapidated hospitals and chronic shortages of equipment. There was grinding poverty, hunger, and child labor. In America today, such conditions exist only in the bottom quintile of the economic distribution—though the extent to which they do exist is truly appalling. Infant mortality in the late Soviet Union was around 25 per 1,000. The figure for the United States in 2021 was 5.4, but for single mothers in the Mississippi Delta or Appalachia it is 13 per 1,000.

The comparison to the Soviet Union, you might argue, is nevertheless risible.

Take a closer look.

A chronic "soft budget constraint" in the public sector, which was a key weakness of the Soviet system? I see a version of that in the US deficits forecast by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to exceed 5 percent of GDP for the foreseeable future, and to rise inexorably to 8.5 percent by 2054. The insertion of the central government into the investment decision-making process? I see that too, despite the hype around the Biden administration's "industrial policy."

Our military is simultaneously expensive and unequal to the task.

Economists keep promising us a productivity miracle from information technology, most recently artificial intelligence. But the annual average

[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

growth rate of productivity in the US nonfarm business sector has been stuck at just 1.5 percent since 2007, only marginally better than the dismal years 1973–80. The US economy might be the envy of the rest of the world today, but recall how American experts overrated the Soviet economy in the 1970s and 1980s.

And yet, you insist, the Soviet Union was a sick man more than it was a superpower, whereas the United States has no equal in the realm of military technology and firepower.

Actually, no.

We have a military that is simultaneously expensive and unequal to the tasks it confronts, as Senator Roger Wicker's newly published report makes clear. As I read Wicker's report—*21st Century Peace Through Strength: A*

Generational Investment in the US Military—I kept thinking of what successive Soviet leaders said until the bitter end: that the Red Army was the biggest and therefore most lethal military in the world.

On paper, it was. But paper was what the Soviet bear turned out to be made of. It could not even win a war in Afghanistan, despite ten years of death and destruction. (Now, why does that sound familiar?)

On paper, the US defense budget does indeed exceed those of all the other members of NATO put together. But what does that defense budget actually buy us? As Wicker argues, not nearly enough to contend with the "coalition against democracy" that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea have been aggressively building.

In Wicker's words, "America's military has a lack of modern equipment, a paucity of training and maintenance funding, and a massive infrastructure backlog. . . . It is stretched too thin and outfitted too poorly to meet all the missions assigned to it at a reasonable level of risk. Our adversaries recognize this, and it makes them more adventurous and aggressive."

And the federal government will almost certainly spend more on debt service than on defense this year.

COUNTRIES FOR OLD MEN

It gets worse.

According to the CBO, the share of GDP going on interest payments on the federal debt will be double what we spend on national security by 2041, thanks partly to the fact that the rising cost of the debt will squeeze defense spending down from 3 percent of GDP this year to a projected 2.3 percent in thirty years' time. This decline makes no sense at a time when the threats posed by the new Chinese-led axis are manifestly growing.

Gerontocratic leadership was a hallmark of late Soviet leadership. By current US standards, the later Soviet leaders were not even old men.

Even more striking to me are the political, social, and cultural resemblances I detect between the United States and the USSR. Gerontocratic leadership was one of the hallmarks of late Soviet leadership, personified by the senility of Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko.

But by current American standards, the later Soviet leaders were not old men. Brezhnev was seventy-five when he died in 1982, but he had suffered his

first major stroke seven years before. Andropov was only sixty-eight when he succeeded Brezhnev, but he suffered total kidney failure just a few months after taking over. Chernenko was seventy-two when he came to power, already a hopeless invalid, suffering from emphysema, heart failure, bronchitis, pleurisy, and pneumonia.

It is a reflection of the quality of health care enjoyed by their American counterparts today that they are both older and healthier. Nevertheless, Joe Biden (81) and Donald Trump (78) are hardly men in the first flush of youth and vitality, as events have made cringe-inducingly clear. The former cannot distinguish between his two Hispanic cabinet secretaries, Alejandro Mayorkas and Xavier Becerra. The latter muddles up Nikki Haley and Nancy Pelosi.

One notable feature of late Soviet life was total public cynicism about nearly all institutions.

Another notable feature of late Soviet life was total public cynicism about nearly all institutions. Leon Aron's brilliant book *Roads to the Temple* shows just how wretched life in the 1980s had become. In the great "return to truth" unleashed by Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, Soviet citizens were able to pour forth their discontents in letters to a suddenly free press. Some of what they wrote about was specific to the Soviet context—in particular, the revelations about the realities of Soviet history, especially the crimes of the Stalin era. But to reread Russians' complaints about their lives in the 1980s is to come across more than a few eerie foreshadowings of the American present.

In a 1990 letter to *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, for example, a reader decried the "ghastly and tragic . . . loss of morality by a huge number of people living within the borders of the USSR." Symptoms of moral debility included apathy and hypocrisy, cynicism, servility, and snitching. The entire country, the reader wrote, was suffocating in a "miasma of bare-faced and ceaseless public lies and demagoguery." By July 1988, 44 percent of people polled by *Moskovskiye Novosti* felt that theirs was an "unjust society."

Look at recent Gallup surveys of American opinion and one finds a similar disillusionment. The share of the public that has confidence in the Supreme Court, the banks, public schools, the presidency, large technology companies, and organized labor is somewhere between 25 percent and 27 percent. For newspapers, the criminal-justice system, television news, big business,

and Congress, it's below 20 percent. For Congress, it's 8 percent. Average confidence in major institutions is roughly half what it was in 1979.

SICKNESS

It is now well known that younger Americans are suffering an epidemic of mental ill health—blamed by Jonathan Haidt and others on smartphones and social media—while older Americans are succumbing to "deaths of despair," a phrase made famous by Anne Case and Angus Deaton. And while Case and Deaton focused on the surge in deaths of despair among white, middle-aged Americans—their work became the social-science complement to J. D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy*—more recent research shows that African-Americans have caught up with their white contemporaries when it comes to overdose deaths. In 2022 alone, more Americans died of fentanyl overdoses than were killed in three major wars: Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

The recent data on American mortality are shocking. Life expectancy has declined in the past decade in a way we do not see in comparable developed countries. The main explanations, according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, are a striking increase in deaths due to drug overdoses, alcohol abuse, and suicide, and a rise in various diseases associated with obesity. To be precise, between 1990 and 2017 drugs and alcohol were responsible for more than 1.3 million deaths among the working-age population (aged twenty-five to sixty-four). Suicide accounted for 569,099 deaths—again of working-age Americans—over the same period. Metabolic and cardiac causes of death such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and coronary heart disease also surged in tandem with obesity.

Soviet society was rife with apathy, hypocrisy, cynicism, servility, and snitching.

This reversal of life expectancy simply isn't happening in other developed countries.

Peter Sterling and Michael L. Platt argue in a recent paper that this is because West European countries, along with the United Kingdom and Australia, do more to "provide communal assistance at every stage [of life], thus facilitating diverse paths forward and protecting individuals and families from despair." In the United States, by contrast, "Every symptom of despair has been defined as a disorder or dysregulation within the individual. This incorrectly frames the problem, forcing individuals to grapple on their own,"

they write. “It also emphasizes treatment by pharmacology, providing innumerable drugs for anxiety, depression, anger, psychosis, and obesity, plus new drugs to treat addictions to the old drugs.”

The mass self-destruction of Americans captured in the phrase “deaths of despair” for years has been ringing a faint bell in my head. Then I remembered where I had seen it before: in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. While male life expectancy improved in all Western countries in the late twentieth century, in the Soviet Union it began to decline after 1965, rallied briefly in the mid-1980s, and then fell off a cliff in the early 1990s, slumping again after the 1998 financial crisis. The death rate among Russian men aged thirty-five to forty-four, for example, more than doubled between 1989 and 1994.

Has Xi Jinping figured out how to maneuver us into being the new Soviets?

The explanation is as clear as Stolichnaya. In July 1994, two Russian scholars, Alexander Nemtsov and Vladimir Shkolnikov, published an article in the national daily newspaper *Izvestia* with the memorable title “To Live or to Drink?” Nemtsov and Shkolnikov demonstrated (in the words of a recent review article) “an almost perfect negative linear relationship between these two indicators.” All they were missing was a sequel—“To Live or to Smoke?”—as lung cancer was the other big reason Soviet men died young. A culture of binge drinking and chain smoking was facilitated by the dirt-cheap prices of cigarettes under the Soviet regime and the dirt-cheap prices of alcohol after the collapse of communism.

The statistics are as shocking as the scenes I remember witnessing in Moscow and St. Petersburg in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which made even my native Glasgow seem abstemious. An analysis of 25,000 autopsies conducted in Siberia in 1990–2004 showed that 21 percent of adult male deaths due to cardiovascular disease involved lethal or near-lethal levels of ethanol in the blood. Smoking accounted for a staggering 26 percent of all male deaths in Russia in 2001. Suicides among men fifty to fifty-four reached 140 per 100,000 population in 1994—compared with 39.2 per 100,000 for non-Hispanic American men aged forty-five to fifty-four in 2015. In other words, Case and Deaton’s deaths of despair are a kind of pale imitation of the Russian version twenty to forty years ago.

Of course, the two health care systems look superficially quite different. The Soviet system was just under-resourced. At the heart of the American health care disaster, by contrast, is a huge mismatch between

expenditure—which is internationally unrivaled relative to GDP—and outcomes, which are terrible. But, like the Soviet system as a whole, the US health care system has evolved so that a whole bunch of vested interests can extract rents. The bloated, dysfunctional bureaucracy, brilliantly parodied by *South Park* in a recent episode—is great for the *nomenklatura,* lousy for the proles.

FED ON FALSEHOODS

Meanwhile, as in the late Soviet Union, the hillbillies—actually the working class and a goodly slice of the middle class, too—drink and drug themselves to death even as the political and cultural elite double down on a bizarre ideology that no one really believes in.

In the Soviet Union, the great lies were that the party and the state existed to serve the interests of the workers and peasants, and that the United States and its allies were imperialists little better than the Nazis had been in "the great Patriotic War." The truth was that the *nomenklatura* (i.e., the elite members) of the Communist Party had rapidly formed a new class with its own often hereditary privileges, consigning the workers and peasants to poverty and servitude, while Stalin, who had started World War II on the same side as Hitler, utterly failed to foresee the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, and then became the most brutal imperialist in his own right.

The equivalent falsehoods in late Soviet America are that the institutions controlled by the (Democratic) Party—the federal bureaucracy, the universities, the major foundations, and most of the big corporations—are devoted to advancing hitherto marginalized racial and sexual minorities, and that the principal goals of US foreign policy are to combat climate change and (as Jake Sullivan puts it) to help other countries defend themselves "without sending US troops to war."

In reality, policies to promote "diversity, equity, and inclusion" do nothing to help poor minorities. Instead, the sole beneficiaries appear to be a horde of apparatchik DEI "officers." In the meantime, these initiatives are clearly undermining educational standards, even at elite medical schools, and encouraging the mutilation of thousands of teenagers in the name of "gender-affirming surgery."

As for the current direction of US foreign policy, it is not so much to help other countries defend themselves as to egg on others to fight our adversaries as proxies without supplying them with sufficient weaponry to stand much chance of winning. This strategy—most visible in Ukraine—makes some sense for the

United States, which discovered in the "global war on terror" that its much-vaunted military could not defeat even the ragtag Taliban after twenty years of effort. But believing American blandishments may ultimately doom Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan to follow South Vietnam and Afghanistan into oblivion.

As for climate change, the world is now awash in Chinese electric vehicles, batteries, and solar cells, all mass-produced with the help of state subsidies and coal-burning power stations. At least we tried to resist the Soviet strategy of unleashing Marxism-Leninism on the Third World, the human cost of which was almost incalculable. Our policy elite's preoccupation with climate change has resulted in utter strategic incoherence by comparison. The fact is that China has been responsible for three-quarters of the 34 percent increase in carbon dioxide emissions since Greta Thunberg's birth (2003), and two-thirds of the 48 percent increase in coal consumption.

To see the extent of the gulf that now separates the American *nomenklatura* from the workers and peasants, consider the findings of a Rasmussen poll from September 2023 that sought to distinguish the attitudes of the Ivy Leaguers from those of ordinary Americans. The poll defined the former as "those having a postgraduate degree, a household income of more than $150,000 annually, living in a ZIP code with more than ten thousand people per square mile," and having attended "Ivy League schools or other elite private schools, including Northwestern, Duke, Stanford, and the University of Chicago."

Asked if they would favor "rationing of gas, meat, and electricity" to fight climate change, 89 percent of Ivy Leaguers said yes, as against 28 percent of regular people. Asked if they would personally pay $500 more in taxes and higher costs to fight climate change, 75 percent of the Ivy Leaguers said yes, versus 25 percent of everyone else.

"Teachers should decide what students are taught, as opposed to parents" was a statement with which 71 percent of the Ivy Leaguers agreed, nearly double the share of average citizens.

"Does the United States provide too much individual freedom?" More than half of Ivy Leaguers said yes; just 15 percent of ordinary mortals did.

The elite were roughly twice as fond as everyone else of members of Congress, journalists, union leaders, and lawyers. Perhaps unsurprising, 88 percent of the Ivy Leaguers said their personal finances were improving, as opposed to one in five of the general population.

LOOKING WITHIN

A bogus ideology that hardly anyone really believes in, but everyone has to parrot unless they want to be labeled dissidents—sorry, I mean

deplorables? Check. A population that no longer regards patriotism, religion, having children, or community involvement as important? Check. How about a massive disaster that lays bare the incompetence and mendacity that pervades every level of government? For Chernobyl, read COVID. And, while I make no claims to legal expertise, I think I recognize Soviet justice when I see—in a New York courtroom—the legal system being abused in the hope not just of imprisoning but also of discrediting the leader of the political opposition.

The question that haunts me is: What if China has learned the lessons of Cold War I better than we have? I fear that Xi Jinping has not only understood that, at all costs, he must avoid the fate of his Soviet counterparts; he has also, more profoundly, understood that we can be maneuvered into being the Soviets ourselves.

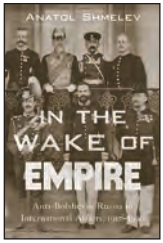
And what better way to achieve that than to "quarantine" an island not too far from his coastline and then defy us to send a naval expedition to run the blockade, with the obvious risk of starting World War III? The worst thing about the approaching Taiwan semiconductor crisis is that, compared with the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the roles will be reversed. Kamala Harris or Trump gets to be Khrushchev; XJP gets to be JFK. (Just watch him prepping the narrative, telling European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that Washington is trying to goad Beijing into attacking Taiwan.)

We can tell ourselves that our many contemporary pathologies are the results of outside forces waging a multidecade campaign of subversion. They have undoubtedly tried, just as the CIA tried its best to subvert Soviet rule in the Cold War. Yet we also need to contemplate the possibility that we have done this to ourselves—just as the Soviets did many of the same things to themselves.

It was a common liberal worry during the Cold War that we might end up becoming as ruthless, secretive, and unaccountable as the Soviets because of the exigencies of the nuclear arms race. Little did anyone suspect that we would end up becoming as degenerate as the Soviets, and tacitly give up on winning the cold war now under way.

I still cling to the hope that we can avoid losing Cold War II—that the economic, demographic, and social pathologies that afflict all one-party communist regimes will ultimately doom Xi's "China Dream." But the higher the toll rises of deaths of despair—and the wider the gap grows between America's *nomenklatura* and everyone else—the less confident I feel that our own homegrown pathologies will be slower-acting.

Are we the Soviets? Look around you. ◼



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Subversion, Submission

Islamist terrorism may have failed, but Islamist politics are proving remarkably—and alarmingly—successful. How the jihadists got good at the long game.

By Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Islamists are playing the long game. Through the process of conversion or missionary work and the gradual Islamization of institutions, the Islamist is committed to the transformation of Western society. How long does he hope it will take him to get sharia established in Europe and North America? The answer to this question differs from one Islamist to the next.

In the past, Islamists sought to physically and psychologically harm the West through acts of terrorism. They beheaded civilians, attacked crowds of people, and in their most visible act, flew planes full of passengers into

Key points

» High levels of immigration allowed Islamists to establish beachheads within Western societies, with no pressure to assimilate.

» Disaffected young people are gradually Islamized in their communities and through technology.

» Islamists cloak themselves in the language of civil rights movements, wielding the law against their new hosts.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali *is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and the founder of the AHA Foundation. Her latest book is* ***Prey: Immigration, Islam, and the Erosion of Women's Rights*** *(Harper, 2021).*

buildings, hoping to strike fear into the heart of Western democracy. These attacks continue to have a huge impact on the psyche of the West. Countries like the United Kingdom and the United States sacrificed significant personal liberties for a degree of security, liberties which they have yet to recuperate.

It is important to recognize that by and large this trade-off of liberty for security has worked. The United States resolved to never let something like the September 11 attacks happen again, and so far, they haven't. Western omnipresence in the Middle East combined with pervasive surveillance networks at home ensured that Islamist terrorists never came anywhere close. Though smaller attacks persisted for some time, the threat of Islamic terrorism has mostly faded into the background, along with some of the fear. In the 2016 presidential election, terrorism was the second-biggest concern for Americans, only 4 percentage points behind the economy. In 2024, Islamic terrorism doesn't even register in polling.

Islamists have learned to favor domestic subversion.

It would be a mistake to say we defeated Muslim terrorists, however. Given the sustained and withering military operations the West inflicted upon them, I think it is more realistic to say that the Islamists who argued for gradualism and the methods of subversion defeated those who sought to fast-track the imposition of Islamic law on the West through jihad or coercion. In other words, the prevailing Islamists have simply altered their methods in favor of domestic subversion.

GRADUALISM

What 9/11 made clear is that the terrorists successfully built up a massive network of operators within the United States who were hard at work gradually radicalizing vulnerable targets. What is most interesting about this form of subversion is that it no longer requires direct contact between a source and a target. The perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombing, for example, had no clear links to a terrorist cell but were radicalized by osmosis, including through their mosque and through Islamist social media.

These agents of radicalization are now telling their audiences to work within and through the system. Convert one person at a time; bring sharia law to one community at a time. Win one election at a time. Change and capture one institution at a time; and do so legally, without firing a shot. Large, spectacular attacks weren't the most efficient way. Perhaps this is.

Islamists have successfully implanted themselves within mosques, activist groups, educational institutions, and social media such that they can flood the environment with pro-Islamist content. The effect has been to gradually subvert Americans and immigrants alike to support Islamist political objectives. The most obvious example is the seismic shift in public opinion on Israel among the youngest generations. No other issue in our time has seen so big a shift so quickly.

The rise and spread of political Islam must be seen within the bigger picture of Western decline. Islamist ideas can flourish only in a society too feeble to defend itself. Islamists have been able to exploit several assets to their advantage. The first is time. Like the Soviets, Islamists have learned that the attention span of American democracy is very short. We suffer from the myth that our domestic problems can be resolved in the next election with a reshuffling of the White House. Subversives know that weakening a nation is a generational prospect.

IDEOLOGICAL SEDUCTION

The second asset is discontented demographics: the swaths of disaffected people, mostly young men, who are ripe for radicalization. These can be either the domestic population who feel largely alienated from their communities, or immigrants from developing countries who struggle to assimilate. The friction these groups feel with the rest of the society makes them prime candidates. In rich societies with welfare states, immigrants are put in the position where they are dependent on welfare and lack an incentive to participate in the economy. Simultaneously, it is becoming more difficult to bring in families, so the immigrant population is heavily skewed toward young men. In Canada, for example, the population ratio between men and women ages twenty-five to forty-four is widening, fueled entirely by immigration. In the twenty- to twenty-four-year-old bracket, there are now one hundred and ten men for every hundred women, a disparity approaching China's own much-reported male surplus.

Americans and immigrants alike have been subverted to support Islamist political objectives. The most obvious example is public opinion on Israel.

Whereas the alienated domestic population might find meaning in wokeness or other para-religious movements, young immigrant men—alienated, angry, idle, and bored—enter the mosques and become radicalized. Sometimes these

disparate groups interact, such as when "Queers for Palestine" marched to the tune of "from the river to the sea." The Islamist knows very well that such wokeism is a pointless pseudo-religion. Many converts to Islam first went woke and, when predictably they came out spiritually and morally empty, the Islamist was there inviting them into the warm embrace of the Muslim Umma.

Leaders in open societies have overlooked the fact that the advanced economies of the West have little to no socioeconomic or cultural mechanisms for assimilating large numbers of immigrant men with barely a high school diploma and who come from developing or broken societies. These regions of the world, often tribal, do not have the same institutions, culture, or morals of the West. It is irresponsible to assume that all immigrants to the West will fully adapt to our way of life because they come here voluntarily. True, that was the case when large numbers of people fled European wars and economic stagnation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a matter of one or two generations, they were fully assimilated. Even though it took a little longer, the same can be said about immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and even parts of Africa.

Islamism has fueled the stunning recent rise in anti-Semitism.

It is obvious, however, that immigrant groups who are predominantly Muslim struggle to fit in. Even when they flourish economically, as they have done in America, they are confronted with cultural differences between Islam and the West. Of course, many Muslims do manage to find a way of balancing their faith with their citizenship. But a growing number of American, British, French, and other Western Muslims turn to the Islamists instead.

WEAPONS OF TECHNOLOGY

The Islamists' third asset is technological. They have deployed the techniques of subversion here with much success. The earliest example was the use of communications and social media to isolate and radicalize individuals, often for violent terrorist action. With the rise of mass social media consumption on sites like TikTok, Islamists have been able to inspire large numbers of young TikTokers to flirt with Islamism. At the same time, we also see the stunning resurgence of anti-Semitism among the same population and the compulsory urge to attribute everything wrong in the world to Western action, and particularly the United States. Recently, *The Free Press* obtained video of activists at a Teamsters Union headquarters in Chicago being taught to chant "death to Israel" and "death to America" in Farsi. Yes, in Farsi.

It is important to call out what is happening on social media: it is reinforcing indoctrination that has happened at school or in the mosque. Maybe these young people do not understand what they are saying or that they are being used. Maybe they go along with whatever they are told to believe because it is exciting, or maybe it gives them a sense of belonging to a movement that fights for justice. Few of them can properly articulate how what is going on in Gaza constitutes a genocide, as my friend Douglas Murray recently teased out of a news anchor. Technology provides the most effective means for priming the masses yet devised, and we are rapidly losing the next generation to this subversion.

The fourth and final asset, paradoxically, is Western constitutional and legal frameworks. Islamists have been able to wield legal institutions against their enemies. All they have to do in many cases is claim "Islamophobia," and any obstacles clear themselves away. The fear of a discrimination lawsuit is enough to send nearly any person or organization running for the hills. For example, American universities are terrified of reprimanding Muslim students who antagonize other students and faculty. For example, pro-Palestine protesters disrupted a graduation dinner for UC-Berkeley law students hosted in the home of Dean Erwin Chemerinsky and his wife, Professor Catherine Fisk. Chemerinsky and Fisk are progressives, but those credentials seemed not to override the fact that they are Jewish. Anyone who knows even the most basic facts about the First Amendment knows that it doesn't cover screaming at people in their own homes. Nonetheless, the Bay Area chapter of the Palestinian Youth Movement went so far as to call Fisk's attempt to remove protesters "assault," and credited it to "Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian racism, and religious discrimination." All action is justified under the principles of subversion.

Countries like the United States have no sweeping legacy of secularism, instead granting maximal deference to religious freedom.

UC-Berkeley hasn't announced any disciplinary measures against the students yet—though it opened a civil rights investigation into the *professor*.

THE LONG MARCH

France has embarked on an effort to insulate its legal structures from subversive Islamist influence. French President Emmanuel Macron, for example, recently announced an "uncompromising" campaign to ban the

abaya—the black full-body dress worn by Muslim women—in schools across the country. This move is part and parcel of a broader campaign to tamp down on the Islamist threat within the country and promote assimilation.

In 2017, France enacted a sweeping anti-terrorism law that allows police to shut down mosques or other places of worship if preachers are found to be promoting radicalism. And in 2011, France also banned the *niqab* face covering, the first ban of its type in Europe. These actions fit into the language of France's existing concept of *laïcité,* otherwise known as the constitutional principle of secularism in the public square. Countries like the United States have no sweeping legacy of secularism, instead granting maximal deference to the principles of religious freedom. However, even in France, I fear this effort is too little, too late. Islamization through demographic change will outpace any top-down campaigns to halt it.

In sum, we can see the outlines of the Islamist strategy for subversion. Absurdly high levels of open immigration have allowed Islamists to establish beachheads within Western societies with almost no filtering from immigration authorities. The conditions in the host country are such that assimilation can be avoided, while disaffected young men are gradually Islamized in their communities and through technology. The same process occurs for the young domestic population, which is indoctrinated through similar channels. Islamists infiltrate every institution and organization, cloaking themselves in the language and legacy of historic civil rights movements. Whenever they are confronted with objections to their activities, they are able to effectively wield the law against the host country.

A German politician acquired a criminal record for mentioning government-produced facts about immigrants.

I fear the window to address the Islamist threat is closing. Many European countries are moving in a direction that would make vocal dissent either highly discouraged or formally outlawed. Most of Europe now has some system of censorship. Scotland, a land known internationally for its free spirit, recently joined these ranks, enacting a hate-crime law that aims to tackle "hatred and prejudice," two notoriously unclear and ambiguous concepts. In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has introduced what journalist Matt Taibbi has described as a "blueprint for dystopia in a horrific speech bill." This so-called Online Harms Act would allow administrative panels, not

judges bound by rules of evidence, to fine or imprison citizens for Internet posts they made in the past—in some cases, for life.

In Germany, Marie-Thérèse Kaiser, a politician in the Alternative for Germany Party, cited the government's own statistics in an argument against resettling yet more Afghan nationals in Germany. Afghans in Germany commit rape at very high rates. Along with other migrants from places like Turkey and Syria, they commit half of gang rapes—despite being collectively only 14 percent of the population. Kaiser did not invent these numbers; they are the government's own. Yet, under German hate-speech laws, she has now been twice found guilty and fined thousands of euros. It boggles the mind that someone can get a criminal record in Germany for citing government-produced facts.

In the United States, these efforts remain a more distant threat for the moment. Still, the direction of travel is unmistakable: the Islamists are here, and they are winning. ◼

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Victory at Sea

In World War II, the merchant fleet served as the backbone of American sea power. Today, as China's fleets surge ahead, the United States must restore its sealift capacity.

By Gary Roughead

Alternative historical fiction is a popular genre in America, where readers explore possibilities such as Napoleon deciding not to invade Russia or a Confederate victory in the Civil War, pondering the hypothetical impact on world history. In honor of National Maritime Day, which this year fell on May 22, let's consider what would have happened if the United States had fought the Second World War without a strong Merchant Marine and the tens of thousands of courageous mariners who delivered crucial supplies, troops, and weapons across dangerous waters.

It's clear: we would have lost the war or failed to achieve a decisive victory.

During World War II, an estimated 250,000 mariners served, and nearly 10,000 gave their lives, resulting in a higher per capita casualty rate than any of the armed services. More than seven hundred Merchant Marine ships were sunk by enemy attacks, and hundreds of mariners were held as prisoners of war.

President Roosevelt recognized the indispensable role of the Merchant Marine, which he considered the "fourth arm of defense." As we observe current global instability and brutal Eurasian conflicts, who will be the visionary

Gary Roughead *(US Navy, Ret.) is the Robert and Marion Oster Distinguished Military Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a former chief of naval operations.*

leader and advocate who ensures the readiness of our Merchant Marine for the challenges ahead? Its current state is far from adequate.

Unlike admirals and generals, media commentators who freely opine on strategy and theory may neglect or casually assume away the hard reality of logistics. Lately, the strategists have not fared well in deterring conflicts, and the logistic shortcomings in Ukraine and the Middle East are glaring. While those deficiencies are apparent, they pale in comparison to a potential war in the Pacific.

A war in the Western Pacific would be a vastly different game from the one Americans have known.

Policy makers properly acknowledge China as the pacing threat, but too few seriously consider the critical importance of logistics and the availability of highly trained and militarily obligated maritime personnel. Decades of war in the Middle East have conditioned us to the luxury of uncontested sea and airspace. We enjoyed large support bases close to combat operations. Our fleet had uninterrupted access to intact and secure port facilities. Even as we flow supplies to Ukraine, it's along Europe's modern road and highway systems.

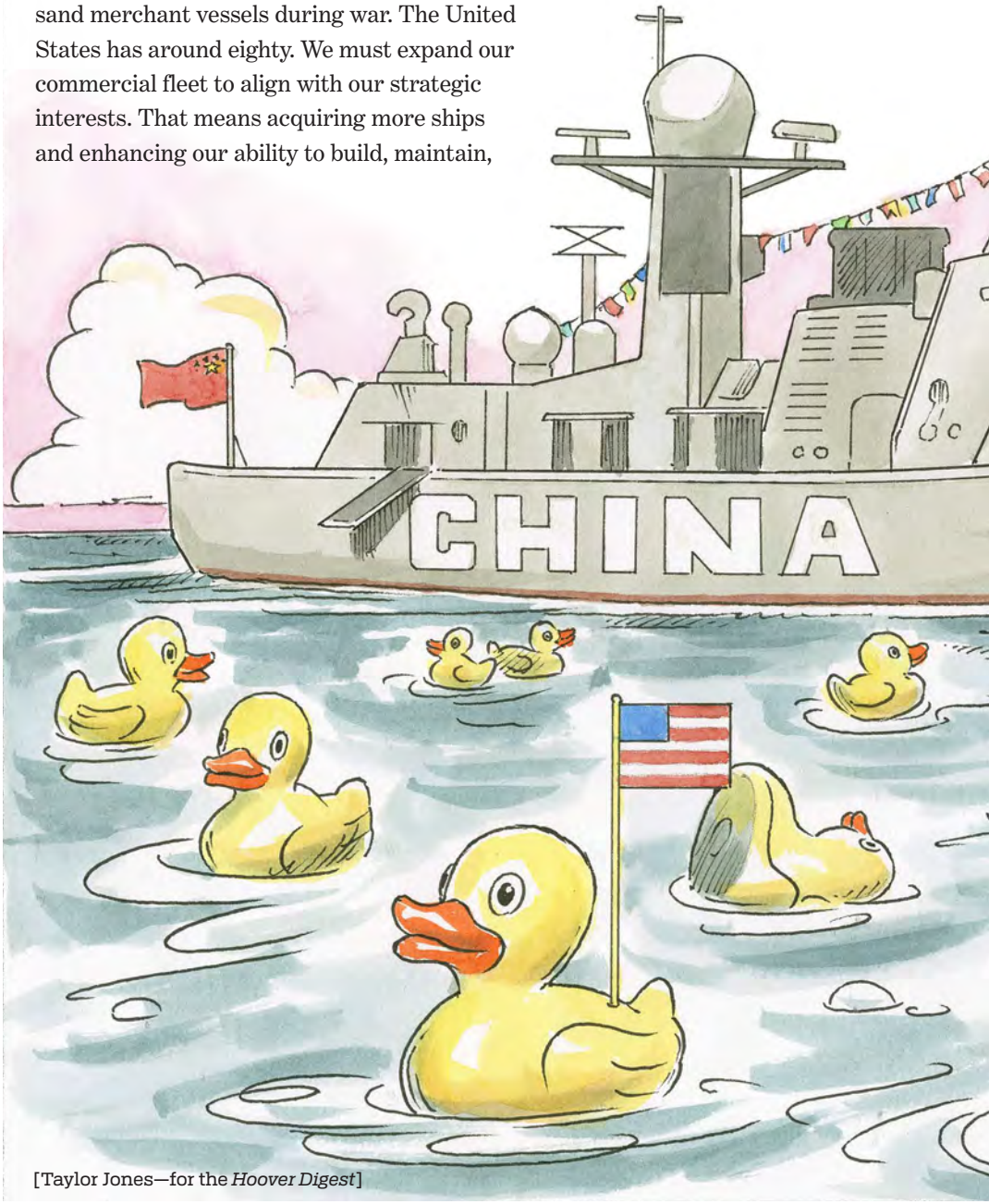
A war in the Western Pacific is a vastly different game, one difficult for Americans with a faded understanding of past conflicts to comprehend. Our Merchant Marine will operate in vast contested waters. The potential ship and human loss will be staggering. Instead of moving supplies short distances on well-established road systems, our mariners will face a six-thousand-mile journey across the Pacific, scores of enemy submarines, and barrages of missiles far in excess of the sporadic Red Sea attacks. If the war is over Taiwan, in addition to military supplies, sealift will be vital to the survival of that democracy, delivering fuel and food through a formidable gauntlet.

Our pool of mariners is aging, and fewer young men and women are pursuing maritime careers. Ships, too, are lacking.

The People's Liberation Army knows that sealift is key to our success. While many debate the vulnerability of our aircraft carriers, they gloss over the problem that our combat power will be short-lived without robust sealift and persistent combat logistics in a war at sea.

Regrettably, we are no longer a true maritime nation; we are now a naval nation.

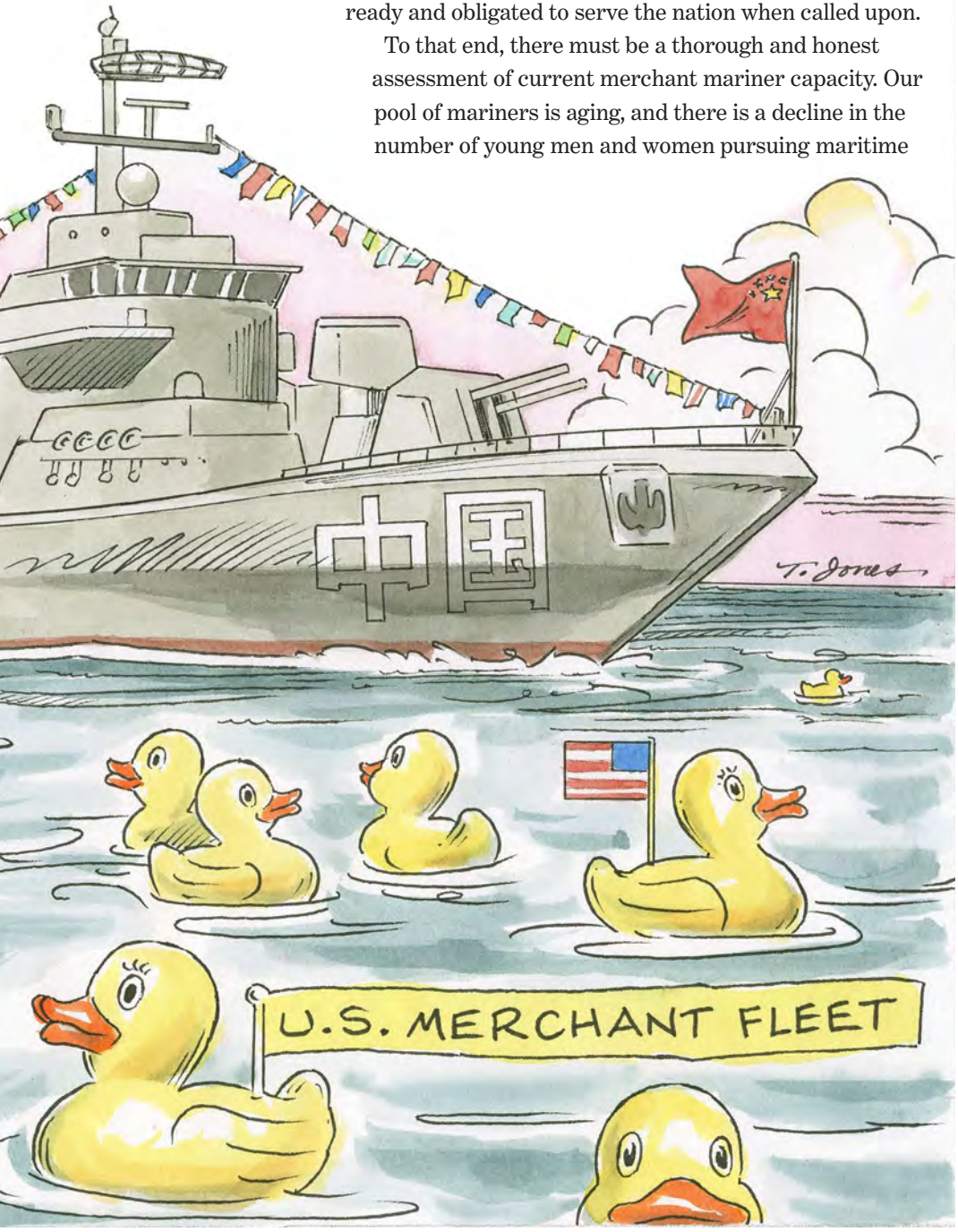
China, now a bona fide maritime nation, has made significant investments in its merchant fleet and can call on over five thousand merchant vessels during war. The United States has around eighty. We must expand our commercial fleet to align with our strategic interests. That means acquiring more ships and enhancing our ability to build, maintain,



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

and quickly repair them. Above all, we cannot prevail without a significant number of Merchant Marine officers who are ready and obligated to serve the nation when called upon.

To that end, there must be a thorough and honest assessment of current merchant mariner capacity. Our pool of mariners is aging, and there is a decline in the number of young men and women pursuing maritime



careers. Building more ships will make a difference, but so will greater focus, effort, and coherence by the administrations and Congress on the logistical realities of our time.

The outdated facilities of the US Merchant Marine Academy discourage the brightest individuals from enrolling.

Atop the list should be the US Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) at Kings Point, New York. As a former commandant of the US Naval Academy, I know that Kings Point must receive sufficient investment for programs and facilities that reflect its significance, placing it on par with the other federal service academies. Its infrastructure hasn't been upgraded since President Roosevelt established it during World War II. The outdated facilities discourage the brightest individuals from enrolling.

Like Annapolis, USMMA, which produces more than 80 percent of our Strategic Sealift Officer Force, requires careful, thoughtful, and continuous attention. Like our other service academies, it is not just a college; it is an institution vital to our national security.

Let us remember the extraordinary contributions and sacrifices of our merchant mariners, past and present, the "fourth branch" of our citizens who go in harm's way. Beyond remembering, it's time to give them what's needed to deliver victory as they have so admirably and valiantly done before.

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Paperwork Broadsides

Studies, studies, everywhere—but not a drop of action. Washington needs to stop issuing reports and start rebuilding our defenses.

By Nadia Schadlow

With conflicts raging in the Middle East and Europe, the US defense industrial base remains in the news. To address looming shortfalls in manufacturing capacity, earlier this year the Defense Department published its National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS). It identifies an urgent need for an "industrial ecosystem" to ensure America's competitive advantage over its adversaries.

The problem? Little in the strategy is new. The document says the right things: the United States needs to reduce its supply-chain vulnerabilities, develop its workforce, and improve cybersecurity. But these problems have been identified for

Key points

» Problems with America's defense industrial base have been identified for decades.

» Washington should aggregate past studies, figure out why they failed, and exploit existing tools before demanding new ones.

» Research initiatives must assign accountability—starting with unity of command. Leadership shapes a culture.

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years. It's another example of what has become a mind-numbing cycle of far too many studies coming out of the Pentagon and the US government as a whole—with little progress on implementation.

Washington is facing a crisis of repetition. It's a bipartisan crisis, one in which recommendations are made, only for a new administration or leader to start over, looking for "fresh ideas" without considering existing recommendations or why past efforts failed. It's a waste of taxpayer dollars and the energy of well-meaning, intelligent people who should be focused on fixing the issues, rather than describing them again and again.

Unless Washington takes this crisis seriously, the cycle will continue. The good news is that a few relatively straightforward measures could make a difference. There is nothing "structural" about the crisis. Policy makers should start from the premise that their idea is not necessarily new and recognize past efforts to solve a particular problem. Second, they should assume that there are recurring obstacles that have blocked progress and focus on removing or reducing those obstacles. Finally, policy makers should understand where the responsibility for implementation rests and ensure that authorities exist to do what needs to be done.

ENDLESS EMERGENCIES

It's hard to pick one example to illustrate this crisis of repetition because there are many. In the national security arena alone, one could point to persistent concerns about America's weak critical infrastructure or the ongoing cybersecurity problems across the federal government. Domestically, there's everything from bad infrastructure to bad schools.

But let's point out America's continued vulnerability on outside powers for critical minerals. It's now well known that critical minerals are necessary for everything from consumer products to spaceships and virtually all weapon systems in the US arsenal. Yet the United States lacks domestic production of many of these minerals and remains reliant on imports for more than 50 percent of them. This latest defense base industrial strategy discusses the need to stockpile such materials and avoid supply chain bottlenecks and disruptions.

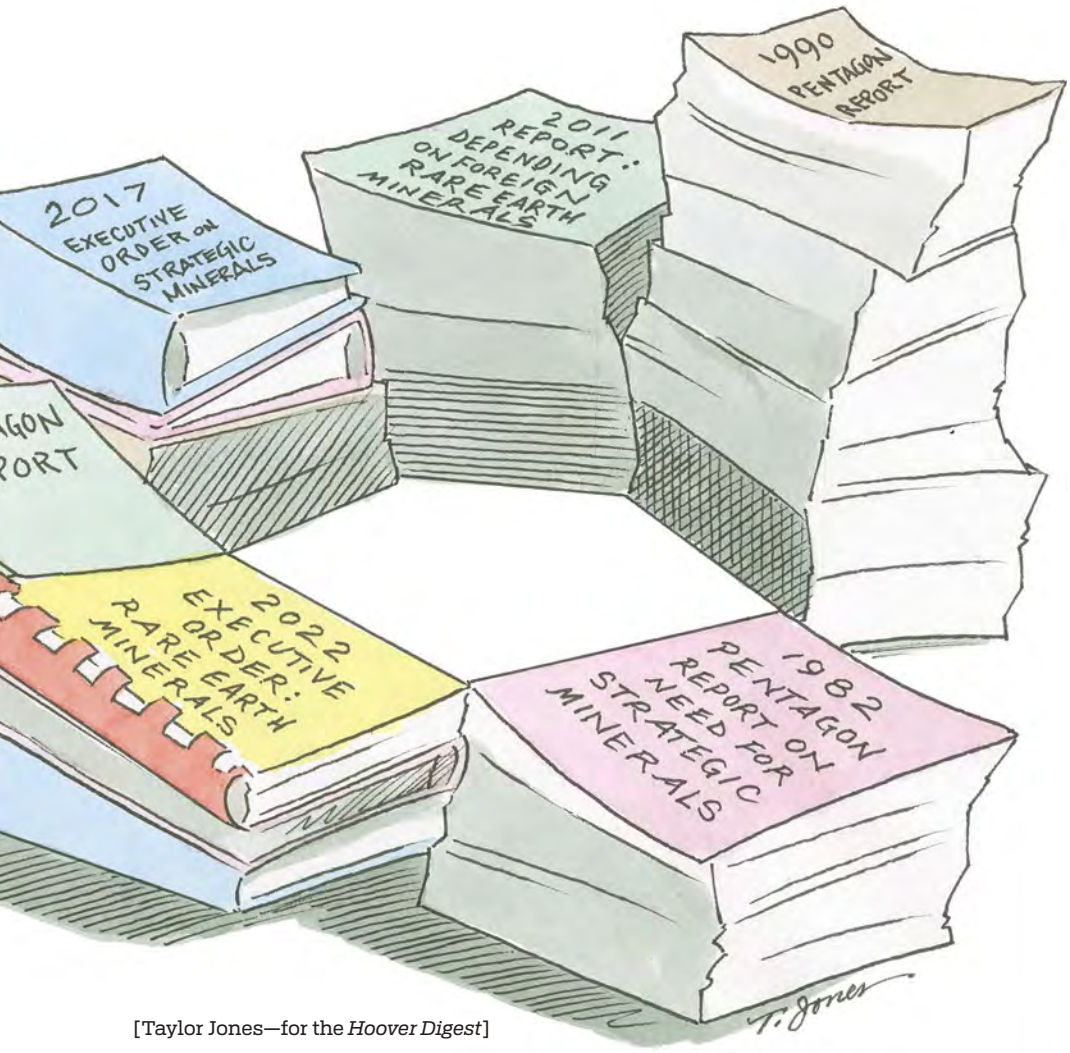
The problem: similar recommendations have been made for more than four decades.

In 1980, Congress highlighted deficiencies in supplies of certain critical materials that would affect the ability to supply essential military, industrial, and civilian items. It passed the National Materials and Minerals Policy,

Research, and Development Act of 1980 so that "ad hoc measures" would be replaced by more formal approaches to these troubling vulnerabilities.

Subsequently, the Department of Defense and other government agencies expressed concern that the United States imported over half of its supplies of strategically important materials, with the situation "expected to become worse over the next two decades." That was in 1982.

In the early 1990s, the department assessed that the United States was "almost entirely dependent on foreign countries for strategic and critical materials such as columbium, manganese, platinum, cobalt, and chromium." At the time, the State Department and Defense argued about the reliability



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

NEW GEAR: Pfc. Edgar Langle, a Marine infantryman, operates an experimental robot at Camp Pendleton. Reports issuing from the Department of Defense often promote ideas that have been promoted long before—and have run aground on bureaucracy. [Lance Cpl. Julien Rodarte—US Marine Corps]

of foreign suppliers. As the decade progressed, various government reports continued to express concern about US "dependence on foreign sources for critical defense materials."

In 2011, the Defense Department produced a report on its dependence on rare earth minerals, with congressional voices calling the problem a "crisis." From 2013 to 2017, legislation and various Pentagon studies continued to highlight risks in mineral supply chains, problems with single sources of supply, and the need to establish robust domestic sources.

In its first year, the Trump administration issued an executive order "to ensure secure and reliable supplies of critical minerals." It explained that the United States was "heavily reliant on imports" of mineral commodities that were vital to American security and economic prosperity. A later executive order called our dependence on critical minerals a "national emergency" and directed the development of a strategy to prioritize a domestic supply chain.

Then the Biden White House issued an executive order to examine key supply chains, with a particular focus on critical and rare minerals. Studies

followed. A February 2022 Department of Defense report, *Securing Defense-Critical Supply Chains,* described US vulnerabilities vis-à-vis critical minerals.

That's forty-four years of policy makers across the White House, Congress, and Pentagon all agreeing there is a problem—yet the only solution seems to be more reports. This would be comedic if it weren't so serious. The United States no longer has the luxury of recycling recommendations. It is time for a fundamental shift from diagnosing problems and making recommendations to rolling out solutions.

CONQUER THE PAPERWORK

Four steps could help Washington break this damaging cycle.

First, aggregate what's already been done. Before officials start an initiative, they should recognize that it is unlikely to be truly new. They should start by collating past recommendations on the topic instead of starting from scratch. This is not glamorous work, but it's necessary. For example, before issuing a new executive order, the White House should spend time examining past ones on the subject and consider if its own recommendations differ substantially. If not, ask why past recommendations were ignored or not implemented. Every president since George H. W. Bush has issued at least one executive order on the need to protect America's critical infrastructure—every one. Yet virtually all of them contain the same set of recommendations. And the United States continues to be vulnerable.

Related to this, a second step is to assess why past recommendations failed to achieve goals and to identify the specific underlying obstacles that prevent progress. For example, permitting regulations add years to the opening of any new mineral-processing facility. Thus, it makes little sense to promise that the United States will conduct more mineral processing at home unless concomitant attention is paid to streamlining those regulations.

Recommendations appear, only for a new administration or leader to start over, looking for "fresh ideas."

Third, policy officials should research existing legislative authorities in order to understand what tools they have before seeking new ones if there are gaps. Bureaucrats are often risk averse and don't take actions within these authorities to accelerate progress, even though they are allowed to. Clear guidance by policy leaders to use these authorities is important.

Finally, assign accountability. As one congressional defense staffer told me recently, "Half the time we are doing back and forth with DoD just trying

to get them to say who owns what." Reports should assign specific offices with implementation of specific steps. The emphasis should be on unity of command: give a leader authority, responsibility, and resources. This is the approach that enabled General Leslie Groves to complete the Manhattan Project in four years.

As long ago as 1980, Congress highlighted deficiencies in supplies of certain critical materials affecting essential military, industrial, and civilian needs.

Both Congress and the executive branch often mistake report writing for action. Of course, studies have roles to play. They reveal policy viewpoints and shifts. They describe problems and keep the public and policy communities aware of developments. The Department of Defense's China Military Power report is one example.

But we need to focus on what prevents measures from being taken. There are no structural obstacles that prevent leaders from adopting these four steps. Rather, politics, culture, and the fundamentally boring nature of some of the tasks have conspired to impede action.

Leadership could help remedy at least the first two problems. Politics creates obstacles to building on previous work. Partisanship leads to an unwillingness to consider that a previous administration of the other party might have been right or had good ideas. Not every policy has to be defined in opposition to its predecessor. There are some areas, particularly in the national security domain, where there are shared interests.

Every president since George H. W. Bush has issued at least one executive order about protecting critical infrastructure. Most offer the same recommendations.

Similarly in Congress, it is often hard to support the other party's attempt to implement one of your own ideas. Thus, the tendency to start from scratch.

Culture also matters. Most government organizations suffer from a risk-averse culture. This has been cited time and time again. There is a reluctance to stick your neck out to do something for which you can be held accountable. Sometimes leaders break this pattern: Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks took responsibility to deliver thousands of autonomous systems relevant to the China region within eighteen to twenty-four months. Those are specific metrics for

which she will either pass or fail, but it's a rare stance. Leadership can shape a culture.

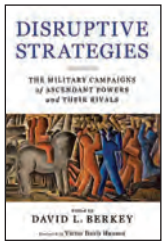
Finally, the challenge of identifying obstacles to implementation is hard—and frankly, not necessarily interesting. It involves detective work: asking questions, knowing processes across government, and understanding funding streams. It requires persistence and takes time. It's a lot less exciting than coming up with purportedly new ideas.

Washington doesn't have a generation to wait.

Congress could help drive some of these changes. Instead of requiring the same report year after year, Congress should focus on assessments of why past recommendations have not been implemented. Those assessments should be aggregated, and congressional staff could work with the executive branch to help identify obstacles.

If new administrations commit to starting with the right question—"what has been done before and why did those efforts fail?"—they can help break this crisis of repetition. The National Defense Industrial Strategy aims to "catalyze generational rather than incremental change," but revisionist powers like China have mobilized their industries to support military modernization on a vast scale.

Washington doesn't have a generation to wait. The sooner policy makers stop repeating analyses and focus on overcoming obstacles to implementation, the sooner the United States will be ready to outcompete its rivals. ◼



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Batteries Included

The complex, costly future of electrical distribution belongs to **smart grids.**

By Michael Spence

Many of us take electricity for granted. We flip a switch and expect the light to turn on. But the capacity and resilience of power systems—generation, transmission, and distribution—are not guaranteed, and if these systems fail, it's lights out for the entire economy.

I recently participated in a meeting of the Power and Energy Society (PES), which operates under the aegis of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. The mood at the event—attended by more than thirteen thousand industry professionals from around the world, plus hundreds of companies exhibiting advanced equipment and systems—was upbeat and energetic.

But, despite the prevailing "can-do spirit," everyone at that meeting knew that the power sector is confronting tremendous challenges, beginning with the growing frequency of extreme weather events. Firms are now working to devise innovative ways to restore power more quickly after outages and are investing in infrastructure that will increase resilience to shocks. This

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FUTURE SHOCKS: An impending surge in demand for electricity, along with a global turn to renewable sources of energy, points to a transformation not only of power generation but also of transmission, distribution, and storage. [Newscom]

includes efforts to minimize the risk that the system itself will cause or exacerbate a shock, such as a forest fire.

Compounding the challenge, the power sector must make progress on the green transition. That means reducing its greenhouse-gas emissions while maintaining a stable power supply for the economy. Since renewables work differently from fossil fuels, this implies a transformation not only of power generation but also of transmission and distribution, including storage.

The power sector must maintain a stable supply for the economy even as it reduces greenhouse-gas emissions.

Meanwhile, demand for electricity is set to surge, owing to factors like electric-vehicle adoption and the rapid growth of data centers and cloud-computing systems. The power needs of artificial-intelligence (AI) systems, in particular, are expected to grow exponentially in the coming years.

According to one estimate, the AI sector will be consuming 85 to 135 terawatt hours per year—about as much as the Netherlands—by 2027.

To meet these challenges, all three components of the power system need to be integrated in so-called smart grids, which are managed by digital systems and, increasingly, AI. But developing smart grids is no small feat. For one thing, they require a host of devices and systems, such as residential smart meters and distributed energy resource management systems (DERMS), which are needed to manage multiple flexible and fluctuating energy sources and integrate them into power networks. And, because they are built on digital foundations, effective cybersecurity systems are essential to support stability and resilience.

Demand for electricity is set to surge, especially to meet the growth of artificial-intelligence systems.

None of this will come cheap. The International Energy Agency estimates that if the world economy is to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, annual investment in smart grids will need to double—from $300 billion to $600 billion—globally through 2030. This represents a significant share of the estimated $4 trillion to $6 trillion that will be needed annually to finance the overall energy transition. But, so far, the required investment has not been forthcoming. Even in advanced economies, the smart-grid funding gap exceeds $100 billion.

Meeting all these challenges will require coordinated action across what are often highly complex systems. The United States is a case in point. America's roughly three thousand electric utilities operate in various combinations of generation, transmission, and distribution, as well as playing a market-making role as intermediaries between generation and distribution. Each state has its own regulators, and local distribution can be regulated at the municipal level. America's nuclear infrastructure is managed at the federal level, by the Department of Energy, which also funds research and, under the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, finances investment in the power sector. And the Environmental Protection Agency plays a major role in setting the direction and pace of the energy transition.

Other entities oversee the country's three major grid regions and the interconnections among them. For example, the not-for-profit North American Electric Reliability Corporation is responsible for six regional entities that together cover all the interconnected power systems of Canada and the contiguous United States, as well as a portion of Mexico.

Achieving the necessary transformation of power systems will require us to figure out how to finance the relevant investments, who will ultimately pay for them, and how a complex, technologically sophisticated, and rapidly evolving smart-grid system can be coordinated.

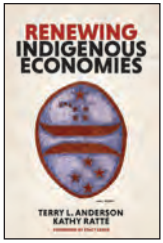
It is difficult to imagine how investment could be mobilized at the scale necessary without the financing power of national governments. This is especially true in the United States, where there is no shared carbon price to level the playing field. It is thus good news that President Biden's administration announced a range of initiatives and investments designed to support and accelerate structural change in the power sector.

It's difficult to imagine how broad investment could be mobilized without the financing power of national governments.

As for who should pay, the answer is complicated. In principle, investments that reduce costs or augment service quality and stability should be reflected in tariffs. The problem is that the investments that improve service quality must be spread across multiple entities that own different assets in the grid. Highly decentralized regulatory structures would make coordinating all these tariff changes and transfers unwieldy at best.

When it comes to investments that advance the green energy transition—including the global public good of emissions reduction—we know who should not pay: local communities. In fact, the implementation of local-level charges to finance such investments is bound to lead to inefficiencies and underinvestment. It would also be unfair: there is no good reason why consumers in areas with problematic legacy systems should pay more. If they are asked to, they are likely to resist.

A better approach would be to use an expanded federal industrial policy not only to help finance and especially to coordinate long-term investments in the power sector, but also to guide the development of a complex, interconnected smart-grid system. This system needs a banker and an architect working with firms, regulators, investors, researchers, and industry organizations like the PES to carry out a complex, fair, and efficient structural transformation. National governments need to be involved in filling both roles. ■



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Freedom from Fear?

The climate "crisis" is yielding to climate fatigue. And as panic fades, realistic and informed views are taking its place.

By Steven E. Koonin

The 2015 Paris Agreement aspired to "reduce the risks and impacts of climate change" by eliminating greenhouse-gas emissions in the latter half of this century. The centerpiece of the strategy was a global transition to low-emission energy systems.

After nearly a decade, it's time to ask how that energy transition is progressing and how it might fare in the future. A useful framework for that assessment is the "issue-attention cycle" described in 1972 by Brookings Institution economist Anthony Downs. The five phases of that cycle mark the rise, peak, and decline in public salience of major

Key points

» The public's attention to problems goes through phases of rise, peak, and decline.

» Around thirty-five years ago, a fervor to "solve" what was dubbed "climate change" took hold.

» The real challenges have long been clear to the few who understood demographics, economics, and energy.

» Retreats from aggressive green goals are already under way.

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CHILL: Christoph Gebald and Jan Wurzbacher, co-CEOs and co-founders of a company called Climeworks, stand with equipment at Climeworks Orca, a carbon capture plant in Iceland. US and European governments are trying to spark an energy transition by encouraging particular "clean" technologies, many of them costly and unproven. [© 2024 Climeworks AG]

environmental (and other) problems. It's spooky to see how closely the energy transition has so far followed Downs's description.

During Phase I, the issue of "global warming" bubbled among climate scientists through the 1980s with little public attention. Phase II began about thirty-five years ago when the issue—eventually rebranded "climate change"—burst into public consciousness, with global media coverage growing tenfold over the past two decades. Those years were marked by a fervor for doing something to "solve" the problem.

The significant global emissions reductions envisioned in Paris in 2015 are a fantasy.

But the significant global emissions reductions envisioned in Paris are now a fantasy. Emissions grew to an all-time high in 2023, with consumption of coal, oil, and natural gas each near record levels, driven in large part by the energy needs of the developing world. Despite global renewable-energy investment of almost $12 trillion in the nine years ending in 2023, fossil fuels continue to provide

about 80 percent of the world's energy. The latest United Nations emissions report projects that emissions in 2030 will be almost twice as high as a level compatible with the Paris aspiration.

The challenges in reducing emissions have long been evident to the few who cared to understand demographics, economics, and energy technologies. As more people have come to appreciate those factors, there are signs that the "climate crisis" has entered Downs's Phase III, when ambitious goals collide with techno-economic realities.

In Europe, consumers are rebelling against measures to reduce emissions (fiascos of home heating requirements had electoral consequences in the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands), and industry is decamping in search of cheaper energy. Despite generous subsidies, US deployment of low-emission technologies can't meet near-term goals, let alone the projected surge in electricity demand owing to data centers, artificial intelligence, and electric vehicles. "Green" investments aren't yielding competitive financial returns, and the annual cost of a thirty-year decarbonization effort, estimated to be upward of 5 percent of the global economy, weighs on national budgets. Simultaneously, the scientific rationale for the transition is weakening as expectations of future warming are moderating.

Today, ambitious goals collide with techno-economic realities.

What could revive this flagging transition? Perhaps connections between human influences on climate and the disastrous effects of more frequent severe weather. But despite claims to the contrary, the United Nations finds such connections haven't emerged for most types of weather extremes. The complexity of climate science makes it unlikely that will happen anytime soon. The transition could also be reinvigorated by the development and deployment of reliable, cost-competitive low-emission energy systems. But there are fundamental reasons why energy systems change slowly.

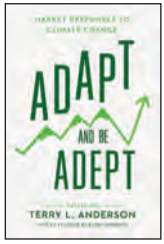
The energy transition's purported climate benefits are distant, vague, and uncertain, while the costs and disruption of rapid decarbonization are immediate and substantial. The world has many more urgent needs, including providing reliable and affordable energy to all. It's therefore likely that Downs's Phase IV will begin as "climate fatigue" sets in, "climate action" fades into the background, and public attention shifts to a different perceived threat (such as artificial intelligence). This would be followed by the long twilight of Phase V,

when the issue of decarbonization flares sporadically, but the associated regulations and institutions endure, such as carbon pricing, border adjustments, and clean power standards.

US and European governments are trying to induce an energy transition by building or expanding organizations and programs favoring particular "clean" technologies, including wind and solar generation, carbon capture, hydrogen production, and vehicle electrification. Promoting technological innovation is a worthy endeavor, but such efforts face serious challenges as costs and disruptions grow without tangible progress in reducing local, let alone global, emissions. Retreats from aggressive goals are already under way in Europe, with clear signs of mandate fatigue. The climbdown will be slower in the United States, where subsidies create constituencies that make it more difficult to reverse course.

The costs and disruption of rapid decarbonization are immediate and heavy. Benefits are vague and uncertain.

We should welcome, not bemoan, the energy transition's passage through the issue-attention cycle. It means that today's ineffective, inefficient, and ill-considered climate-mitigation strategies will be abandoned, making room for a more thoughtful and informed approach to responsibly providing for the world's energy needs.



Crossed Wires

The electric-car tax credit may be a boon to Chinese miners, but it's **a lousy deal for American taxpayers.**

By Oliver McPherson-Smith

The Inflation Reduction Act's consumer tax credit for electric vehicles (EVs) is a fiscal blowout and a gift to Chinese mineral companies. If that isn't bad enough, it also swindles American taxpayers into paying up to $821 per ton of avoided emissions, which is several multiples above the Biden administration's own estimates of the cost of carbon. At that staggering price, the scheme is a spectacularly inefficient way to reduce emissions.

Through the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, taxpayers subsidize the purchase of new electric vehicles by up to $7,500. But how many tons of carbon emissions does that actually stop from reaching the atmosphere? Compared to a conventional vehicle, the International Energy Agency estimates that using an EV avoids the equivalent of around 22.24 tons of carbon dioxide across its lifecycle. This means that the EV tax credit costs around $337 to avoid each ton of carbon emissions.

However, the true cost is actually higher because proper accounting should exclude EV consumers who would buy electric vehicles regardless of the tax credit. Because the tax credit doesn't sway those consumers, the associated avoided emissions shouldn't be attributed to the credit. The credit has the

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same $7,500 value, but the scheme is actually avoiding fewer carbon emissions, so the price per ton is higher.

According to a 2021 study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, 70 percent of consumers who claimed the federal EV tax credit would have bought an electric car even in its absence, which would imply a $1,123 per ton implicit cost of carbon. Since then, the Inflation Reduction Act introduced new conditions on the tax credit, including limits on eligibility for high-income buyers. Even if one generously assumes that the remaining pool of very motivated buyers is only half the size—meaning only 35 percent would purchase an EV without it—then the implicit cost of carbon is still $519 per ton.

Seventy percent of consumers who claimed the federal EV tax credit would have bought an electric car even without it.

The federal splurge on carbon gets a further boost thanks to President Biden's onerous fuel-efficiency standards. Mandating higher fuel efficiency means that a shift from a conventional vehicle to an EV has less of an effect in terms of avoided emissions. In May 2022, the Department of Transportation mandated that new cars on the roads in 2026 be 33 percent more fuel-efficient than under the 2021 standards. When consumers choose EVs over these more efficient gas-fueled vehicles, the implicit price of carbon within the EV credit jumps to $775. As the Biden administration progressively ratchets these efficiency standards higher, so too goes the implicit price on carbon. By 2031, federal taxpayers will be paying the equivalent of $821 for each ton of carbon the EV tax credit prevents from reaching the atmosphere.

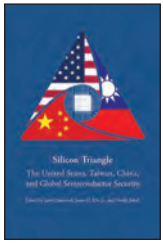
Frittering away more than $800 for a ton of carbon is a ripoff that not even the most unscrupulous used-car salesman could dream up. Compare this figure to recent estimates of the "social cost of carbon," which the federal government uses to quantify the impact of emissions when making regulatory decisions. While the Trump administration estimated it to be between $1 to $7 per ton, the Biden administration blew the roof off in 2023 by raising that cost to $190. That progressive overstatement now looks like a steal.

By 2031, taxpayers will be paying the equivalent of $821 for each ton of carbon that the EV tax credit prevents from reaching the atmosphere.

Even within the Inflation Reduction Act's tax-and-spend circus, the EV tax credit is a spectacularly wasteful way to reduce carbon emissions. For example, the natural-gas tax, which solely punishes the oil and gas industry under a thin guise of environmentalism, levies a fee equivalent to $36 per ton of carbon. Meanwhile, the tax credit for vacuuming emissions out of the air is worth up to $180 per ton. These dramatically different prices, even within a single act of Congress, underscore the practical futility of calculating an efficient price on carbon for a carbon tax or tariff.

The Inflation Reduction Act is the largest single climate spending spree in human history.

Progressives like to measure the success of their policies by how much taxpayer money they can burn through, and the White House periodically reminds taxpayers that the Inflation Reduction Act is the largest single climate spending spree in human history. What they don't mention is that the American public is being ripped off at the car lot with a climate lemon of a tax credit.



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Teaching Bad

Are **bad teachers** really schools' biggest problem? Or are bad incentives?

By Michael J. Petrilli

Tim Daly has done the education field a great service with his walk down memory lane, published in April on his Substack, *The Education Daly,* about the flawed Obama-era effort to reform teacher evaluations. It's all the more impressive because Tim himself was a central figure in the movement (along with Arne Duncan, Michelle Rhee, Tom Kane, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, among others). It's never easy to acknowledge the failure of something you played a big role in creating. For instance, I still refuse to accept that Common Core was a failure. (Note: it wasn't.)

As Tim explains, the impulse behind fixing teacher evaluations was sound. A key goal was to finally make it feasible to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom. Unfortunately, broken teacher evaluation systems were just one tiny part of the problem rather than the problem itself. The issue of bad teachers is the proverbial Gordian knot, and pulling on a single thread won't untie it.

Indeed, if we want to get serious about ridding our schools of bad teachers, we must attack many difficult issues all at once: low teacher pay, which creates the appearance, if not the reality, of teacher shortages; state laws and collective-bargaining agreements that mandate extreme due-process rights for tenured teachers; pension systems that raise the stakes dramatically for

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the removal of teachers near the end of their careers; and yes, the teacher evaluations themselves.

In my view, we should have recognized early on that reforming all of this was politically impossible, at least via federal policy. (Washington, DC, and Dallas came closest—two exceptions out of fourteen thousand districts that prove the rule.) Therefore, we should have focused on the much more achievable aim of improving the feedback teachers receive about their instructional practice, rather than trying to build high-stakes, formal evaluation systems that would inevitably do little good.

After all, why would a principal give a negative review to a teacher she knew she was stuck with? It was no surprise, then, when after all the efforts and all the fights, almost all the teachers in the country still receive positive evaluations from their principals. Little changed, except that attitudes against testing became even more negative and widespread.

The bad-teacher problem hasn't gone away. The question for today is whether that's fated to be our permanent lot, or whether another run at the issue could be more successful. My view is that the Gordian knot remains unbreakable, at least for experienced teachers. But I believe we could make significant progress on weeding out bad teachers in their first few years of service, before they get tenure protections or come anywhere close to a pension payout.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

It's worth pausing to ponder whether bad teachers really are a problem. The unions would certainly argue that the vast majority of teachers are committed professionals who chose a public-spirited but poorly paid career because of their interest in helping kids. I agree entirely! But any field is going to have high performers and low performers, probably in the rough shape of a bell curve. Any decent organization frets about how to move that curve to the right, including by asking the lowest performers to find another line of work. It's hardly teacher-bashing to try to do so in K–12 education.

Our lowest-performing teachers cause significant deterioration for the students unlucky enough to be assigned to them.

Not that it's easy in any field. Few managers enjoy firing people, especially people they work alongside and have come to know well. In the for-profit world, there are strong organizational incentives not to let bad performance

fester. But even then, managers need structures and nudges to get them to pull the trigger or an economic downturn to force the issue. Firing people is hard.

Yet it's really important that we do so, especially in schools. Partly that's because of the evidence demonstrating that our lowest-performing teachers cause significant deterioration for the students unlucky enough to be assigned to them. Especially since such students are more likely to be low-income kids and members of minority groups, given the inequitable distribution of effective teachers in many of our schools.

Teachers' defined-benefit pension plans create a very strong incentive to be a lifer—even if you're burned out and miserable.

It's also the case that low performers are a huge morale problem for high performers. That's surely true in any line of work, but especially in schools. If I teach fourth grade, the quality of my school's third-grade teachers has a direct impact on how well-prepared my students will be, and thus on what I can accomplish with them. So it is from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

PENSIONS AND PROTECTIONS

The bad news about bad teachers is that it's probably politically impossible to remove them from the profession, at least if they already have tenure and many years of experience. Here's why.

First, it would mean rolling back due-process protections in place in all but a handful of states so that it does not take years and thousands of dollars to remove a teacher from the classroom. Needless to say, the unions are going to fight such changes tooth and nail. But perhaps in red states, and especially red districts within red states, progress on this front is doable.

But next on the list of challenges is the teacher pension system. Almost every teacher in America still participates in an old-fashioned defined-benefit plan, meaning that teachers get a big payoff if they stick it out for twenty-five or thirty years, and almost nothing if they leave before retirement age. That creates a very strong incentive to be a lifer even if you are burned out and miserable. And for principals, that means knowing that, if you fire burned-out and miserable veteran teachers, not only must they find new livelihoods, but they will also lose hundreds of thousands of dollars in pension wealth.

Given that most principals are nice people who don't like to fire colleagues they've worked with for years, you can imagine that this is going to be hard for them to do. You can also understand why the unions will protect these pension policies to the death. Indeed, Michigan was one of the few states that had switched a generation ago to a defined-contribution plan, akin to a 401(k), and one of the first things the teachers' unions fought for once the Democrats gained trifecta control in the state in 2022 was to go back to a defined-benefit plan as the default. (They won that fight just a few months ago.)

A completely different approach, more common overseas, is to pay teachers well but keep the rest of the staff lean and mean.

Finally, there's the challenge of teacher shortages, or at least the perception thereof. Principals are loath to let go of bad teachers because they aren't sure they'll be able to replace them with someone better. A bird in the hand and all that.

Any labor economist will tell you that the best way to address a shortage is to pay people more. And in a sane world, we would indeed have a system where we paid teachers dramatically higher salaries and found the money by dramatically reducing the number of noninstructional staff and administrators in our school systems. But that is another Gordian knot of its own!

Briefly: one reason we have so many nonteaching adults in our schools is to compensate for the middling quality of our teachers. We have embraced a system whereby we pay teachers relatively low salaries, which attracts mediocre candidates (on average), and then we hire coaches, instructional aides, and myriad other personnel to try to help those mediocre teachers do a better job with their students.

A completely different approach, more common overseas, is to pay teachers well but keep the rest of the staffing system lean and mean. That means larger class sizes, yes, but also fewer noninstructional personnel, fewer administrators, and in general fewer teacher-helpers.

So how do we get from here to there? Honestly, I have no idea.

ONE SOLVABLE PROBLEM

So, if it's impossible to do much about ineffective teachers with tenure and lots of experience, what about weeding out bad teachers before they get such

protections and come anywhere close to a pension payoff? Here is where there is some good news, which is that every school district in America could make good use of its tenure approval process today, and it would face far less opposition from the teachers' unions or anyone else. After all, Michael Bloomberg and Joel Klein were able to institute the practice of denying tenure to a majority of teachers on their first try, and that was in New York City with the United Federation of Teachers! If you can do it there, you can do it anywhere.

I'm not saying it's easy. Denying someone tenure still needs to be done fairly and objectively. That would be a good place to use the kind of teacher evaluation systems that we see in leading states and cities, such as Tennessee and the District of Columbia—the type that Tim Daly and his compatriots spent so many years building.

And you still must deal with the "nice principal" problem. Perhaps tenure approval should be something managed at the district level, with a committee of sorts, more like how it works in higher education.

Maybe it would also help if the number of tenured positions were limited. You make it so that principals or district administrators have no choice but to deny tenure to the least effective rookie teachers. Make it a forced choice. And perhaps you could then distribute tenured positions equitably to schools throughout a district, with high-poverty schools getting more than low-poverty ones. Make it an equity play, too.

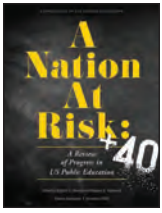
Yes, we will still face the teacher shortage problem, though the end of ESSER funding—which temporarily allowed districts to hire lots more teachers—and the sharp decline in student enrollment in most districts will take care of that, at least in the short term. We won't need, and won't have the money for, as many teachers as we have in recent years.

Focus on weeding out the bad rookies before they get too much experience in the classroom.

No doubt, some teachers would receive tenure who would later become burned out and be relatively ineffective. But the research evidence indicates that we can usually tell within the first few years if someone is likely to be a strong teacher. We won't get this perfect every time, but we should have many fewer ineffectual teachers if we take this approach.

Unless you are willing to try unraveling the entire Gordian knot—and have the political will and political strategy to succeed—forget about bad veteran teachers and focus on weeding out the bad rookie ones before they get too

much experience in the classroom. It won't solve everything, but it will make our schools better. Take the win!



*Download **A Nation at Risk +40: A Review of Progress in US Public Education,** edited by Stephen L. Bowen and Margaret E. Raymond, by visiting Hoover Institution Press (www.hooverpress.org).*

Teach Our Children Well

Americans have drifted far from our founding values. Civic education could bring us back.

By David Davenport

Many people say we need to undertake strong measures to strengthen or even save American democracy. If so, the single most important thing we could do is to require more and better teaching of civic education and American history.

The state of civic education in America is perilously low, but the stakes are incredibly high. One need only look at the latest "Nation's Report Card" testing, which shows that only 23 percent of eighth-graders are proficient or better in civics and a mere 14 percent in US history, to see the depth of the problem. Not all states even require civics courses anymore, and many provide precious little: a single semester course in high school, which is too little, too late. Civics and history are usually taught with boring or even biased textbooks with an emphasis on memorizing dates and events rather than creating good citizens. As developmental psychologist and Hoover fellow William Damon has written, "Civics is one of the 'peripheral' subjects de-emphasized by the single-minded focus on basic skills during the recent heyday of the narrow curriculum."

***David Davenport** is a research fellow (emeritus) at the Hoover Institution and a senior fellow at the Ashbrook Center.*

A Civics Checklist

Teachers and administrators are indispensable to civic education. They should embrace it as a top educational priority—seeking to develop informed patriots in American schools who are knowledgeable about the country's history, government, and principles, and who will build on their knowledge in every grade. Students should graduate knowing that America was founded on principles of freedom and that its history is the story of our struggle to live up to those principles.

But state legislators and state and local school boards are even more critically important to a revival of civic education. These state and local authorities ultimately decide what schools are required to do about education, including civics. Here is an action list for these policy makers:

Require More Coursework

» Establish a robust set of civic education requirements spanning from kindergarten through high school. Civic education should be part of the curriculum in every grade.

» Require teaching of American history and government throughout the elementary and middle school years. In high school, require a total of at least three years of American history and government, including at least one semester of study on the American founding (the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, and so on).

Provide More Teacher Education

» Require and pay for teachers to take coursework or professional development seminars in the most important documents of American history and government.

» Provide teacher education to match any new civic education requirements.

» Review university course requirements and state certification standards for US history and civics to ensure that teachers are receiving a proper content education.

—David Davenport

MORE AND BETTER

Improving civic education boils down to two ideas: *more* and *better*. The need for *more* civic education is both obvious and a goal around which people with different points of view could rally. We need *more* civic education at home. We need *more* in elementary and middle school, where history and civics have too often given way to other subjects. We need *more* than just a single one-semester government course in high school.

Second, we need *better* civic education. We understand there will be arguments about the exact content of civic education, and political agendas are likely to raise their heads. Still, it is possible to reach some agreement on what educational approaches will lead to the best possible teaching.

THE FAMILY

In his farewell speech, President Reagan chose to emphasize the importance of citizenship and civics. He spoke of the need for "an informed patriotism" among America's citizens, noting that "all great change in America begins at the dinner table." Reagan felt it was vital for the future that parents share with their kids "what it means to be an American."

How to do this? Let us count the ways. Simply talking about America and its stories is one important way. In most families, kids are happy when parents read to them but even happier when they tell stories. Reading stories to children about America and some of its heroes and holidays is another great way to introduce them to civic education. Even discussing current events at their level can be a valuable connection to civics and history. Taking children along on civic and political outings—whether to vote or to a rally—can help them see the importance of this in the family. Summer field trips can easily include teachable moments by visits to national parks, monuments, battlefields, and the like. Since values are better caught than taught, modeling educated citizenship for children is itself a crucial role for parents.

Civics and history are usually taught from boring or even biased textbooks. They emphasize memorizing dates, not creating good citizens.

IN THE EARLY GRADES

As noted above, civics has been all but lost in the elementary school curriculum. As in the family and home, however, the early grades are the time to plant the roots of civic interest and importance. The right model is a layer cake approach to the teaching of civic education: we start in kindergarten with a base layer that is age-appropriate, and we build on that in every grade as students are able to understand and handle more. Young children love stories, and this is a great way to begin their civic education with compelling stories about America and its heroes.

Since the middle school curriculum is generally less prescribed than high school, it would seem to be a good opportunity to do more with civic

education. A few states have decided to add a civic education course to the middle school curriculum. Florida was an early adopter of a one-semester course, and it has seen improvement in its civics test scores. Alabama and Indiana have such courses in middle school, and New Jersey added such a requirement beginning in the fall of 2022. A new civics bee is creating excitement about the subject among middle school students.

HIGH SCHOOL

It's difficult to believe that not every state requires at least a one-semester high school course in civic education. That would seem to be the absolute minimum a state should do, and yet, we are still several states short of 100 percent—a gap that simply must be closed. Beyond that bare minimum, however, there are a couple of other ways to increase the emphasis on civic education in high school. One would be to require a full year of government and civics, not just a single semester. Such a course would need to include attention to the primary documents and texts of the American founding, especially since many states do not require a high school history course on the founding.

Since values are better caught than taught, parents should model educated citizenship.

Another way to increase the emphasis on civic education in high schools is through testing. At a minimum, states should require the NAEP tests on US history and government, now administered only in the eighth grade, in the twelfth grade as well. Other tests may also prove helpful. For example, a number of states have begun requiring that students pass the civics portion of the same test that immigrants seeking citizenship must take.

A BETTER CURRICULUM

People will differ on how to improve civic education. Although the philosophical and political minefields are perilous, there are ways people can agree on that would make the teaching of civic education better. For example, civic education should be an "all hands on deck" project, not just a school curriculum. Civic education needs to be embraced and encouraged in families and civic associations and by government and other leaders in our society. It needs to be understood as a high priority for the nation, embraced and encouraged by everyone. The layer cake approach to civics curriculum is reasonable and objective.

Another path to better civic education is to pay heed to the pedagogical questions. Like most subjects, civic education is best introduced with the

"what" questions that are so basic to understanding everything else. Then, as students grow older and have stronger powers of reasoning, the "how" questions become more pertinent. Finally, a good civic education prompts students to ask and think about "why" our democratic republic works as it does. Reducing civic education to memorizing a bunch of dates and events shoots way too low on the educational quality target. Although addressing the deeper "why" questions requires a base of civic knowledge, those are the questions that excite and motivate students to become better citizens—which is, after all, the real goal of civic education.

Using primary documents to teach civics and history leads to better civic education. Textbooks can lead to political controversy over what to include and exclude. They tend to stay with the lower-level "what" or "how" questions without really addressing the "why." They also risk the problem of presentism: by bringing the past to us rather than making us go to the past, we continue to wear our twenty-first-century glasses to understand the people and issues of a different time. Far better is to ask students to remove those glasses and travel back in time to read important speeches, debates, laws, and documents and study events of the time. This approach to teaching history and government creates far more excitement as students learn and debate the issues of that time. And, most important, it invites students to draw their own conclusions—not those of a textbook author or teacher.

Civics needs to be understood as a high priority for the nation, embraced and encouraged by everyone.

Another valuable way to get to better civic education, of course, is to provide better education for those teachers. Since teachers are the heart of the learning enterprise, their ability and knowledge is a highly leveraged place to invest. Teachers in history and civics often have not had the opportunity to be as well prepared and credentialed in their subject as they would like and need.

ENGAGEMENT AND TRUST

I close with bad news and good news about civic education in America. The bad news is that the current state of civic education is poor—in fact, alarming. With other subjects pushing civic education out of the curriculum, very little civics is taught in the elementary and middle school years, and the typical one-semester course in high school is too little, too late. The same is true of US history. Test scores confirm that students are not even "proficient" in their understanding of US history, government, and civics.

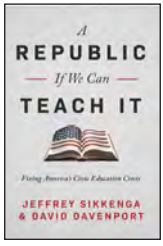
But the good news is that we don't have to sit back and wait for a miracle cure. We don't need to wait for the gridlocked federal government to impose some kind of one-size-fits-all fix. We will not need to depend on a billionaire to rescue civic education by investing tons of money in it.

Rather, improving civic education depends on many small and medium steps by a wide variety of people, not a big fix by a few. As Reagan said, it begins with parents at home—reading great books about the American story and its characters, taking their kids to visit historic sites, and talking about national holidays and their purpose. Community civic associations of all kinds can reinforce that message.

Then in schools, beginning in kindergarten, we start to build the layer cake of civic knowledge and interest. States should develop goals and standards for introducing age-appropriate subjects and materials in elementary school right on through middle school or junior high school. In high school, every state should have a one-semester course in civic education at a bare minimum, but a full-year course in civics along with three years of US history—including the American founding—should be the goal. The key questions in high school, based on the work that has already been done in earlier grades, should be the "why" questions. The use of primary documents in teaching in high school should be emphasized. Once again, the NAEP test should be required in twelfth grade; other tests, including perhaps the citizenship test, could supplement that.

If we can do those things, we will be well on our way to improved civic education and, more than that, better prepared citizens—even, as Reagan put it, informed patriots. It is worth doing for its own sake, but such a movement will also improve our republic with greater engagement, trust, and understanding for the challenges we face. More and better civic education will not fix all our nation's problems, but it has the possibility to greatly improve this experiment in self-government that we love and wish to see sustained. ◼

***Special to the* Hoover Digest.**



The Parents Strike Back

Teachers' unions vilified the families who opposed COVID school closures. In response, parents set out to do the job the teachers refused to do.

By Corey A. DeAngelis

Not a single state had universal school choice before 2021. In the past three years, eleven states have enacted it. This is a monumental achievement—and more victories for America's children are imminent. School choice advocates are grateful to the power-hungry teachers' unions, which overplayed their hand and sparked a parent revolution.

The teachers' unions–induced school closures during the COVID pandemic harmed students academically, mentally, and emotionally, with virtually no reduction in overall coronavirus transmission or child mortality. Parents were understandably furious at the public schools that had broken faith with them during their time of need, and they weren't going to just sit there and take it.

How did the unions respond to efforts to exert more control? By attacking parents. No, it wasn't the virus that needed to be defeated. It was you, mom and dad.

Corey A. DeAngelis *is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a senior fellow at the American Federation for Children. He is the author of* ***The Parent Revolution: Rescuing Your Kids from the Radicals Ruining Our Schools*** *(Center Street, 2024), from which this excerpt is adapted.*

The unions publicly smeared parents who had the temerity to suggest that schools should do their jobs. In Chicago, home of the nation's third-largest public school system, the local union took to Twitter to demonize those who favored reopening schools: "The push to reopen schools is rooted in sexism, racism, and misogyny," tweeted the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) on December 6, 2020.

A few months later, a union member in California named Damian Harmony would say "hold my beer" to the CTU by smearing parents who wanted schools reopened for their supposed "cynical, pearl-clutching, faux-urgency, ableist, structurally white-supremacist hysteria." That same month, United Teachers Los Angeles called California's school reopening plan "a recipe for propagating structural racism," while its president, Cecily "There's No Such Thing as Learning Loss" Myart-Cruz, accused "white, wealthy parents" of "driving the push behind a rushed return."

Unions denied it, but massive learning loss has been unquestionably documented. It's significantly worse among black students.

I'm old enough to remember when the term "white supremacist" referred to those—such as neo-Nazis and members of the Ku Klux Klan—who believed that the white race is superior to other races. Now the unions and their allies were smearing parents as "white supremacists" for the horrible thought crime of wanting their children to go to school.

SMEARS AND FEARS

The smear became a running theme. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, the local union voted to reject the school reopening plan as it endorsed a letter by the Educators of Color Coalition, which claimed that the reopening plan was "rooted in white supremacy norms, values, and culture."

Likewise, one hundred and forty members of the Pasco Association of Educators in Washington state claimed in January 2021 that the "culture of white supremacy and white privilege can be seen in our very own community in regards to the decision to reopen schools in a hybrid format, despite rising cases and community spread." The *Washington Post* even ran a blog post by a union member in New Haven, Connecticut, lambasting the supposed "racist effects of school reopening" and claiming that a "comorbidity is white supremacy."

Not to be outdone, a member of the Chicago Teachers Union, Mike Friedberg, penned an article asking: "Will we let 'nice white parents' kill black and

brown families?" In his telling, it was "white privileged parents" who wanted schools open while "black and Latine" parents wanted them closed. The reality was that although white parents were, on average, more likely to be ready to return to in-person instruction before minority parents, significant portions of families across the racial and ethnic spectrum wanted in-person instruction.

When the Chicago school district conducted a survey of parents in March 2021, more than four in ten wanted to return to in-person instruction. Although the survey did not identify the race or ethnicity of respondents, about three in ten students who returned that month for in-person instruction were at majority black and majority Latino campuses.

Ironically, the Friedberg article spent several paragraphs claiming that "remote learning is not a lost cause" and that the "'learning loss' argument is incredibly flawed." Not only has massive learning loss been unquestionably documented, but it's also significantly worse among black students.

According to McKinsey, by the end of the 2020–21 academic school year, students "in majority-black schools ended the school year six months behind in both math and reading, while students in majority-white schools ended up just four months behind in math and three months behind in reading." If any policy had racist results, it was the union-pushed school closures and remote learning—which really should be called remotely learning—not parent-backed school reopenings.

The California Teachers Association (CTA) even stooped to spying on parents, conducting what amounts to opposition research, just as political candidates do on their opponents. A public-records request uncovered e-mails from a union employee asking a public school principal for information about "the ideological leaning of groups that are funding the reopen lawsuits." She noted that she had heard the principal had "lots of information regarding the Parents Association."

Where parents saw an opportunity, the unions saw a threat. What if the kids who left their public schools never came back?

When another union employee in the e-mail exchange realized that they had accidentally used the principal's work e-mail, they went into damage-control mode, asking him to "delete and disregard" the messages. One union employee was more sanguine, however. "I don't think there will be an issue," she wrote, "unless someone does a record request for his work e-mail."

The hypocrisy of the unions knows no bounds. In March 2021, while the CTA was still fighting tooth and nail to keep schools closed while spying on parents who wanted them open, the president of the Berkeley Federation of Teachers, Matt Meyer, was caught on camera taking his own kid to an in-person private preschool.

THE MICROSCHOOLS ENDURE

The unions even did opposition research on parents trying new ways of educating their children during the lockdowns. When the unions closed the schools, groups like Prenda helped parents open new "microschools" in their or other parents' homes, church basements, and anywhere they could find space. Rather than embracing the idea, the unions sought to sabotage it.

State legislators saw through the unions' absurd, self-serving arguments.

Prenda was founded in 2018 by Kelly Smith, an MIT grad who was inspired by his kids' experience at an afternoon coding club to create a network of small schools (typically five to ten students each) where learning is self-directed with the assistance of online tools and an in-person "guide." While schools were closed during the pandemic, Prenda received a surge in interest from parents—especially those who wanted the benefits of in-person instruction while limiting their children's potential exposure. Prenda began 2020 with about one thousand students at one hundred microschools and ended the year with four times that.

Where parents saw an opportunity, the unions saw a threat. Prenda's rapid growth sent the unions into a panic. What if the kids who left their public schools liked Prenda better? What if they never came back?

The National Education Association hatched a plan: scare parents away from trying Prenda in the first place. To do that, they wrote up two "opposition reports" (their words), one on microschools generally and one on Prenda specifically. The first one warned union members and their allies: "The opposition report has documented widespread support for microschools."

The report identified more than twenty additional microschool networks and related organizations, and recommended that their staff and allies familiarize themselves with a list of anti-microschool talking points the NEA had developed, such as that the microschools "do not guarantee students or educators the same civil rights protections that are required in public schools," their staff are "not required to be credentialed," and their students

"are not held accountable to state standards of learning." Of course, none of these issues topped parental concerns about schools being closed.

The second opposition report focused on Prenda specifically and included personal information about Kelly Smith, including his home address and a picture of his house. The report also raised concerns about the "safety" of Prenda and other microschool students who might be exposed to guns, drugs, and unfenced swimming pools.

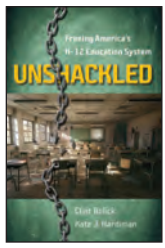
Union-backed groups like Save Our Schools Arizona used these talking points to lobby the legislature to regulate Prenda and other microschools. Fortunately, state legislators saw through their absurd and self-serving arguments, and microschools continued to flourish.

It was particularly ironic for the unions to argue that using parents' homes for microschooling was unsafe while the unions were simultaneously arguing that students were not safe at school during the pandemic. Apparently, they weren't safe anywhere.

Friedberg had claimed he supported keeping schools closed because he did "not want to risk my students' lives, their families' lives, or my own life." He may well have been sincere in his fears, but not all his colleagues were. Some, like CTU executive board and area vice president Sarah Chambers, seemed to have other motivations for working remotely.

How remotely? Thousands of miles, apparently, as she was tweeting from poolside at a resort in Puerto Rico. "Spending the last day of 2020 poolside," Chambers wrote from her @sarah4justice Instagram account alongside a selfie of herself lounging by the pool, adding: "We have the whole pool to ourselves."

These are just some of the egregious union actions that awakened a sleeping giant. For far too long in K–12 education, the only special interests represented were the employees—the adults—in the system. But now, America's kids finally have a union of their own: their parents. ◘



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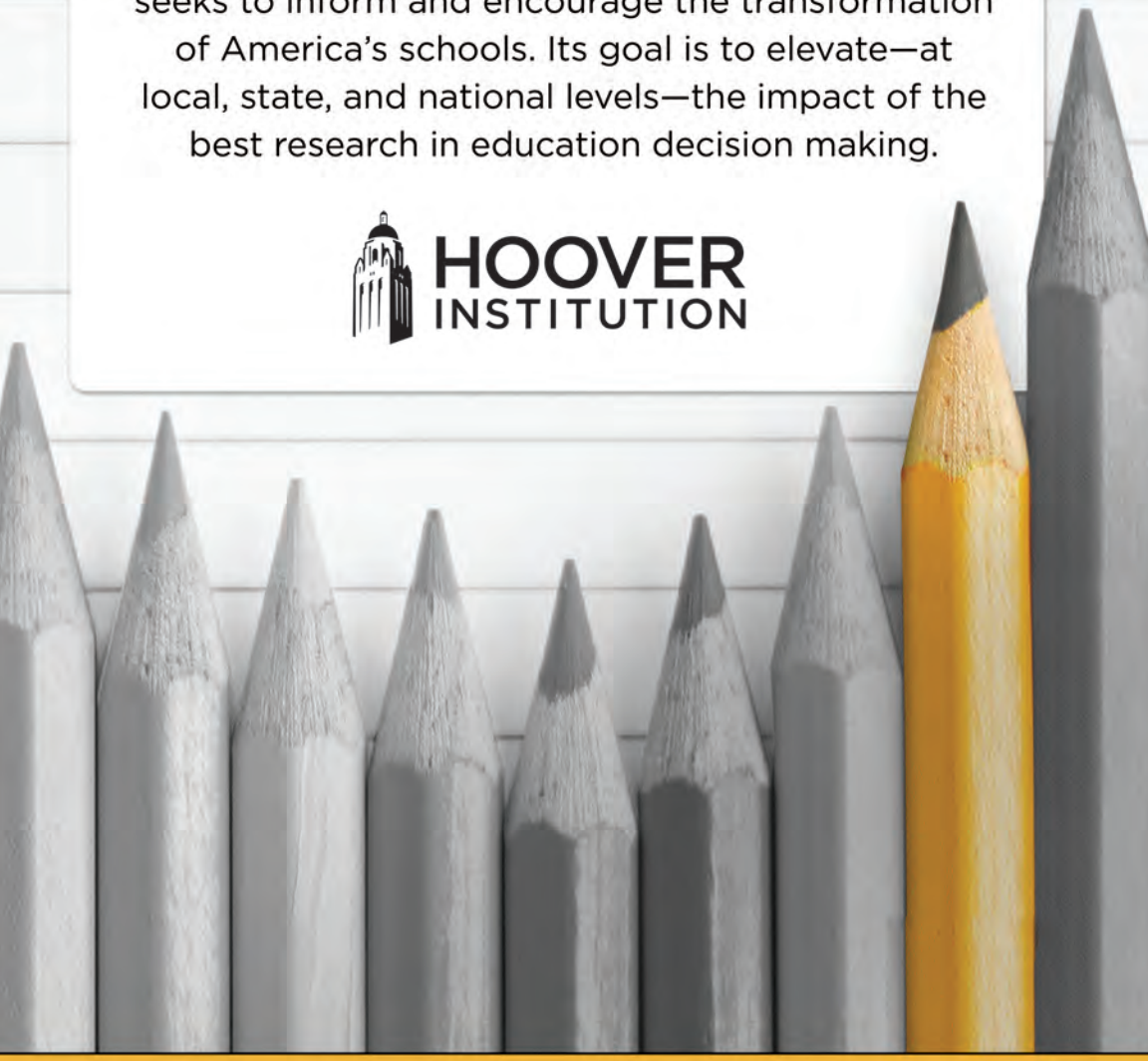

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Unhappy Meals

California's highly selective law dictating fast-food wages has already taken a big bite out of entry-level jobs. And that's just the appetizer.

By Lee E. Ohanian

Last spring, Rubio's Coastal Grill announced it was closing 48 of its 115 California restaurants because of high operating costs in the state (in June, Rubio's filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection). I estimate that the 48 closures destroyed about 1,250 jobs, since the average Rubio's restaurant employs about 26 workers.

What happened? California fast-food restaurant operating costs rose substantially on April 1, when the state's new fast-food law took effect. The law, Assembly Bill 1228, increased the minimum wage for fast-food workers in the state to $20 per hour. This is 25 percent higher than the $16-per-hour minimum wage that applies to all other California workers. Rubio's job losses followed as many as 10,000 others in the industry that occurred even before the law took effect.

California's new law puts fast-food restaurants at a severe disadvantage compared with businesses in every other industry in the state. There is no rationale for levying a more severe regulation on a single industry. And state lawmakers couldn't have picked a worse industry to single out. Around 60 percent of fast-food workers are twenty-four years old or younger,

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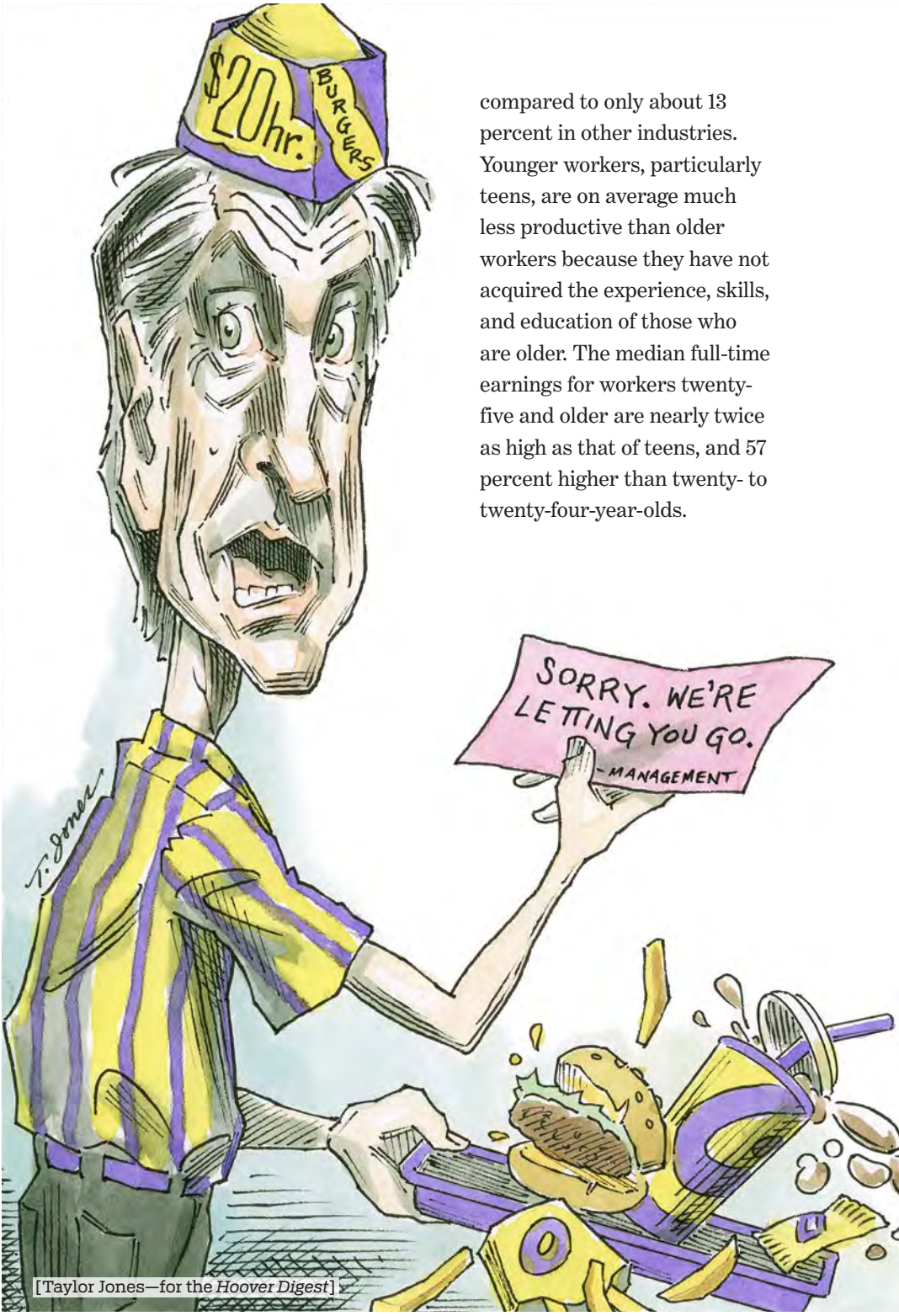
compared to only about 13 percent in other industries. Younger workers, particularly teens, are on average much less productive than older workers because they have not acquired the experience, skills, and education of those who are older. The median full-time earnings for workers twenty-five and older are nearly twice as high as that of teens, and 57 percent higher than twenty- to twenty-four-year-olds.



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

This means that requiring fast-food restaurants to pay a $20 hourly minimum wage creates a substantial gap between the value produced by their young workers and how much these workers cost their employers. And these costs are not just wages and benefits but also the substantial training and recruiting costs incurred by employers. Young workers require significant training, since they often have very little, if any, work experience. And turnover of fast-food industry workers is exceptionally high—as high as 150 percent per year—which means businesses are constantly recruiting, hiring, and training new workers.

There's no rationale for levying a more severe regulation on a single industry.

California's $20 minimum wage is leading to job losses, fewer hours for those workers who retain their jobs, restaurant closings, and higher fast-food prices. This was entirely predictable because fast-food industry profit margins are low, typically in the 5–8 percent range. And if a business is not covering its costs, including paying a competitive return to investors, the business closes. This, of course, is bad news for everyone but particularly for young workers, who chronically have a much harder time finding a job than older workers do. In April, the unemployment rate for teens was 11.7 percent, compared to 3.9 percent for all workers.

Some, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the economics of running a business, do not understand this reality. This includes many California legislators. In 2020, only one out of four Democratic state lawmakers had any private sector experience. Legislators take credit for raising wages within the industry and speak of "holding billion-dollar corporations accountable," but they never cite the job losses, reduced hours, fewer opportunities, or higher prices that negatively affect consumers because of the new law. Nor do they acknowledge that roughly two-thirds of fast-food restaurants are owned and operated as small businesses run by a single franchisee.

Young workers chronically have a much harder time finding a job than older workers do.

Fast-food prices rose 10 percent in the first month after the law took effect, but there is of course a limit to how much prices can rise before they significantly affect consumer demand. As one McDonald's franchisee noted in response to the $20 minimum wage, "I can't charge $20 for a Happy Meal." Since 2019, fast-food prices nationwide have increased

41 percent, which is leading many consumers to now view fast food as a luxury rather than—in its traditional role in household budgets—an affordable and quick meal.

Ralph Rubio started his namesake chain with a single taco stand in his hometown of San Diego after eating fish tacos in Mexico during a college trip in the 1970s. He then expanded his restaurants throughout California and in other states. Rubio not only created thousands of jobs but he also gave back to his community, including opening a restaurant on the campus of Monarch School in San Diego, which enrolls homeless and at-risk youths. The "Cabo Café" gave students valuable work and entrepreneurial experience, and all profits were rebated back to the school to support various programs.

Roughly two-thirds of fast-food restaurants are owned and operated as small businesses run by a single franchisee.

Ralph Rubio risked his family's capital to bring his culinary dream to life and has contributed much more to California than he ever took. Now, California is penalizing his success and destroying nearly half of Rubio's restaurants in the state. As economists like to say, there is no such thing as a free lunch. And the cost of California's new fast-food minimum wage law is raising breakfast, lunch, and dinner prices substantially, is reducing opportunities, and will create additional damage over time. It is perhaps the worst California law of 2023. ▪

Read* California on Your Mind,** ***the online Hoover Institution journal that probes the politics and economics of the Golden State (www.hoover.org/publications/californiaonyourmind).

The End of Everything

In his new book, celebrated Hoover historian Victor Davis Hanson explores the deaths of entire civilizations—calamities of a kind that can, he assures us, happen again.

By Peter Robinson

***Peter Robinson,* Uncommon Knowledge:** It may not happen often, but sometimes, entire civilizations die in a single day. Victor Davis Hanson is a classicist and military historian who has published more than two dozen major works of history, including *A War Like No Other,* his classic work on the Peloponnesian War. His newest book is *The End of Everything: How Wars Descend into Annihilation.*

Victor, there are four case studies in your new book: the destruction of Thebes by Alexander the Great, the obliteration of Carthage by the Romans, the defeat of Constantinople by the Turks, and the destruction of the Aztecs by Cortés. All those happened a while ago. Why write this book now?

Victor Davis Hanson: I've been curious, most of my career, why these civilizations were not just defeated but annihilated. And there were others.

Victor Davis Hanson *is the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, leads Hoover's Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict, and is co-chairman of the Hoover History Lab.* ***Peter Robinson*** *is the editor of the* ***Hoover Digest,*** *the host of* ***Uncommon Knowledge with Peter Robinson,*** *and the Murdoch Distinguished Policy Fellow at the Hoover Institution.*

***LOST TIME:** Hoover senior fellow Victor Davis Hanson was curious about civilizations in the distant past that came to abrupt, and violent, ends. In his new book,* **The End of Everything: How Wars Descend into Annihilation,** *"I was wondering if there was a typology, a repeating pattern," he says. "And I found that there was."* [Eric Draper]

There's a wide array in the ancient world: the island of Milos, towns in the Peloponnesian War. I was wondering if there was a typology, a repeating pattern. And I found that there was, both on the part of the attacker and the defender, a certain mindset, in those situations that we think could not happen today because we're supposedly in a postmodern moral world.

Robinson: We're more advanced than they were, Victor.

Hanson: That's what we think. And in the epilogue, I did a survey of countries that are very vulnerable as described, either in the nature and intent of their enemies, or the neighborhood in which they reside, or their size, or their limits. For example, there are only twelve million Greeks in the world. They have a bad neighborhood, and they have been existentially threatened by the Turks, especially the present government. Israel is another example.

The Kurds are an example. The Armenians are still another example. All of them have had a history where at times people thought they would be gone, because that was the intent. And yet today, when somebody threatens to wipe somebody out, either with nuclear weapons or with conventional weapons, we discount that. It can't happen.

Robinson: And the argument is: take that possibility seriously, because every so often it really does happen.

The End of Everything presents almost three hundred pages of your usual approach, which is meticulous, thorough, and engrossing historical writing. My feeling as I went through the book is that every one of these cases is fascinating and surprising in some way. Thebes, for instance. I'm quoting you: "In 335 BC, the Thebans not only revolted against the Macedonian occupation of Greece but defiantly dared Alexander the Great to take the legendary city—that is, to take Thebes itself. He did just that." Who were the Macedonians? And who is this brilliant figure who arises as a very young man, Alexander the Great?

"Today, when somebody threatens to wipe somebody out, either with nuclear weapons or with conventional weapons, we discount that."

Hanson: Well for twenty years prior to 335, Philip II of Macedon, Alexander's father, had taken a backwater area that was deprecated by Greeks as uncivilized and had forged an imperial power. He was a hostage at Thebes himself when he was a young man, and he learned from the great master Epaminondas about Greek military tactics. He lengthened the sarissa, a pike or spear. He innovated and improved on Greek phalanx warfare, fighting in column. Philip came from the north and conquered at the Battle of Chaeronea three years before this. He destroyed Greek freedom. And he had an agenda: we're going to unite and take Persia and pay them back for a century of slights, and get rich in the process.

But the Greeks revolted in 335. Philip was assassinated and his son Alexander, who had been at the Battle of Chaeronea and had been spectacular in defeating the Thebans, took over. They didn't take him seriously. Who's going to take over from Philip II? He was a genius, and he's got bastard children here and concubines there, and there's this one guy named Alexander. Thebes was legendary, the home of Oedipus and Antigone. It was the fountain of Greek mythology and under Epaminondas, a Pythagorean enlightened society. It was the moral leader.

Alexander says, "If you revolt, we're going to come down." He eliminates his enemies and starts to march. The Athenians are egging on the Thebans, saying, "Don't worry, we'll come." The Spartans are going to come too. Both are in decline. When Alexander arrives, the Thebans mock him; they think they can replay the Battle of Chaeronea, only this time they'd win. But they have no idea who he is. They don't know what he's intending. Had they studied his career, they would have seen he's a killer and he's a genius and he's about ready to conquer the Persian Empire. And he needs to have a solid home front and he means business and he doesn't play by the rules. The rules of Greek warfare, except for the Peloponnese, were: you don't destroy your enemy. Even Athens, as it lost the Peloponnesian War, wasn't destroyed.

"Had they studied his career, they would have seen he's a killer and he's a genius and he's about ready to conquer the Persian Empire."

Alexander pulls up with this huge army. You can't get two hundred miles from the north in ten days. You can if you're Alexander.

Robinson: Is it fair to say he's a little bit like Napoleon?

Hanson: Yes.

Robinson: He's shocking.

Hanson: The quickness of Caesar and Napoleon, the audacity of Danton. The Spartans and the Athenians dissipate.

The defenders think, these are the seven gates of Thebes, the magnificent walls of Thebes. We've only been broached once since the Persian War. We can endure, we're on the defensive, we've got this wonderful army . . . and they're defeated.

Robinson: But not just defeated.

Hanson: No. They think they can negotiate. Alexander says, "I'm going to kill every single person that's over the age of sixteen. I'm going to enslave every woman and child. But I will save the descendants of Pindar, the poet, his house, and maybe some religious shrines." So, he levels the city down to the foundations and there are no more Thebans. Later, the Macedonians will take the site and bring in other people, other Greeks.

But there are no longer any Thebans. They have been there for two millennia. They're gone.

UNSTOPPABLE: A detail from the* Battle of Issus Mosaic, *found in the ruins of Pompeii, shows Alexander the Great defeating the forces of Darius III of Persia. "They didn't take him seriously," Hanson says of Alexander. "Who's going to take over from Philip II? He was a genius . . . and Thebes was legendary, the home of Oedipus and Antigone." [Wikimedia Commons]

Robinson: They have their own culture, their own history, recognized as such by the entire Greek-speaking world. And it just ends.

Hanson: After Alexander's death, some two decades later, they think it would be good propaganda to refound Thebes and they call it Thebes, which is the modern city today, but it's not the same culture.

Robinson: By the way, what effect did that event have? Did it shock all the other Greek city-states into submission?

"There are no longer any Thebans. They have been there for two millennia. They're gone."

Hanson: Yes, they could not believe it. They completely folded.

Robinson: So, he got the stable home base he wanted, which permitted him to advance.

Hanson: Yes. And it became, even among the Macedonians, shameful that Alexander had destroyed this legacy city, the fountain, as I said, of Greek

MEMENTO MORI: The ruins of Carthage rest along the shores of the Mediterranean in modern Tunisia. "Rome, unfortunately, was in an expansionary mood," Hanson says. "It had consolidated Spain and Italy. It had consolidated much of Greece and soon would conquer all of Greece and Macedon. It also had Cato the Elder, who legendarily added 'Carthage must be destroyed' to the end of every speech." [© Ad Meskens—Wikimedia Commons]

mythology and of Epaminondas, the great liberator, and the Pythagoreans there—they regretted it later. But at the time, nobody came to the Thebans' aid. They were confident. They didn't think anybody would ever do that.

CARTHAGE POSED NO THREAT

Robinson: May I set up the Third Punic War here? I'm quoting *The End of Everything:* "After the first two Punic Wars, there was no call at Rome to level a defeated Carthage, and yet Rome attacked Carthage again." Why?

Hanson: They had paid off their indemnity early. And at this time, North Africa was the most fertile part of the Mediterranean, much more fertile than the southern shores of Europe. Rome had sent a delegation to Carthage three years earlier to inspect what was going on and determine how they

had paid off the fine. The delegates were astounded. The city had some five hundred thousand, six hundred thousand people in it. It was booming, it was lush. The countryside was lush. Carthage was confident.

Robinson: And they had one of the great ports of the ancient world.

Hanson: Yes, the port was about twenty miles from modern Tunis. Carthage was starting to rival Rome again and yet the city professed no bellicosity at all. They told Rome, "We have no problem with you."

Robinson: We've learned our lesson.

Hanson: We're just a mercantile city. They were refashioning themselves from an imperial power to something like Singapore or Hong Kong.

But Rome, unfortunately, was in an expansionary mood. It had consolidated Spain and Italy. It had consolidated much of Greece and soon would conquer all of Greece and Macedon. It also had Cato the Elder, who legendarily added "Carthage must be destroyed" to the end of every speech. After the inspectors came back from Carthage, they said, "These people are insidious. They may not have Hannibal, but they're going to rival us again."

They decided to present Carthage with a series of demands that could not possibly be met and still be autonomous. Rome landed an army and said to Carthage, "You're going to move your city at least fifteen miles from the ocean. You're not going to be a sea power. You're going to destroy this ancient city, and then you're going to have to move, lock, stock, and barrel. And by the way, we want all of your arms. We want your famous elephants, your siegecraft, your armor, everything."

"People who have not been defeated or are accustomed to a position of superiority culturally or militarily, they think they're invulnerable forever."

Then, after two years of losing—they've lost probably twenty thousand or thirty thousand soldiers—Rome brings out this obscurity, Scipio Aemilianus. He is the adopted grand-nephew of Scipio Africanus, the famous one. He's a philosopher like Alexander the Great, a man of letters. He's also a friend of Polybius, the great historian, just as Alexander was the student of Aristotle. Rome lets him take command. He has discipline. The Roman forces build a counter wall against the famous walls of Carthage, and over the next year, he turns out to be an authentic military genius. He cuts off the city, the corridor

to it, and all the allies supplying Carthage. Carthage refuses to surrender, but it still has hope that he's a man of principle and will negotiate with them and give them terms. But he is a killer. He does not give them terms, and he systematically breaks, for the only time in history, the great walls of Carthage. Over a two-week period, he systematically kills every single person. The descriptions are horrific.

"Nobody takes seriously that the Chinese would be crazy enough to go across the strait and try to take Taiwan. They say they can do it."

I don't think it's accurate to say Romans sowed the ground with salt, as the myth goes, but they did declare it an inhospitable place and it was sacrosanct to even get near it. Carthage had a very rich agriculture and agronomy literature. It's gone.

DETERRENCE

Robinson: In your book, you touch on a number of themes relevant to us today. One is the capacity of the doomed for self-delusion. The Thebans failed to grasp the military revolution that's taking place under Philip, even though they have some intelligence and reasons to question their own judgment of Alexander's ability. The Carthaginians failed to grasp the change in Roman power and determination over two centuries. The Byzantines cannot bring themselves to imagine that a city that has lasted a thousand years could fall, let alone fall in a day. I'm quoting you: "The gullibility and indeed ignorance of contemporary leaders about the intent, hatred, ruthlessness, and capability of their enemies are not surprising, given unchanging human nature." At the beginning of the program, you talked about the plight of the Greeks and threats against Israel. What are Americans to make of this?

Hanson: I think we should take these lessons very seriously, from the point of both the attacker and the attacked. At the end of the book, I give a kind of common-denominator blueprint. People who have not been defeated or are accustomed to a position of superiority culturally or militarily, they think they're invulnerable forever. They're not aware of insidious decline. The walls look as stout as ever and the people are the same, so they think. Nobody's ever going to get through the walls. We've been here a thousand years. So, there's an unreality, and then they have no idea who they're facing.

Robinson: Do we have any idea what's in the mind of Xi Jinping, of Vladimir Putin?

Hanson: We have no idea. George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama—they all thought Xi was so impressed with Western civilization. He's globalizing, he's changed his economy. Yes, he's rough around the edges, but our leisure, our affluence, and globalization will acculturate him, and China will take its place among the family of nations.

Robinson: Because of course they want to be like us.

Hanson: That is exactly what the Byzantines said about the Ottomans, what people said about Alexander, what they said at Carthage. So, when Putin says I'm going to use nuclear weapons if I lose, we say this is crazy. They would never do that. We never say, well if I was going to lose and be humiliated . . . or if I wanted Ukraine, the breadbasket of the old Soviet Union, and ports on the Black Sea and a window right under Europe, I'd be willing to do a lot of stuff for it. We need to understand what the attacker is capable of.

Robinson: What are the lessons of *The End of Everything* for Americans as we face trouble, military challenges on three fronts?

Hanson: If we would look at ourselves dispassionately, we would say the following. We've never had the military admit to us that it is short forty thousand troops and they don't know where to get them at a time when the American population has never been larger. We have had a porous border before, but we have never had no border at all. It has ceased to exist. We've never had a period in American history where our elites say that crime is not crime. We're a multiracial society, and we're the only successful multiracial democracy. We know that it depends on relegating tribal affiliations to the general idea of being an American, but we are regressing into tribalism.

In the Ukraine conflict, it's above seven hundred thousand wounded, missing, or killed—Russians and Ukrainians—and it's headed to Somme territory. Nobody has any idea how to stop this. Russia is not going to be able to take all of Ukraine, and Ukraine is not going to be able to get back the Donbass or Crimea.

"Reagan said that the degree to which we are safe is the degree to which we help our friends and tell our enemies to be careful."

Nobody takes seriously that the Chinese would be crazy enough to go across the strait and try to take Taiwan. They say they can do it.

My point is, never have we been faced with such existential challenges in the postwar period. And at a period when we are so weak . . . when you look at crime, debt, the border, our universities—the engine that drove American culture and power and technology—they're all in crisis.

Robinson: So, we're like the Thebans. We're not the same people.

Hanson: We're not the same people, but maybe we have it in us.

Robinson: Let me cite, if I may, a quotation from Clausewitz, who saw the Napoleonic Wars as a young Prussian officer and meditated on military theory the rest of his life. This has always bothered me. "If one side uses force without compunction, that side will force the other to follow suit. Even the most civilized of peoples can be fired with passionate hatred of each other. The thesis must be repeated. War is an act of force and there is no logical limit to the application of that force." Thebes wiped out. Carthage leveled. Constantinople, civilization blotted out. And now we have nuclear weapons.

I'm desperate to end on an upbeat note if I can find one anywhere. Should we take encouragement from the long period of the Cold War? When we had nuclear weapons but managed to defeat Soviet communism without any use of them, without a major war, without a major confrontation . . . should we be cheered by that? Or are we doomed?

Hanson: No, we're not doomed. We need to learn from wise men like Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, even to an extent Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and the rest of them. And in a period of doubt where people had questioned their so-called Neanderthal approach to human nature—they believed that deterrence, and not dialogue or the United Nations, kept the peace—along came Ronald Reagan. And Reagan said that the degree to which we are safe is the degree to which we help our friends and tell our enemies to be careful, because we will defend ourselves and we're going to have the capability to do it. Deterrence, deterrence, deterrence, which is just a Latin word that means to scare somebody off from doing something stupid. And if you don't believe in deterrence, then, as Vegetius said, if you want peace, prepare for war. If you want war, prepare for peace.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

"Get Serious, Very Fast"

Correspondent and writer Douglas Murray reports on the agonies of Israel and Ukraine—and the dangers that now face Britain, Europe, and the United States. "Something is going to happen. I don't know what. But something is going to happen."

By Peter Robinson

***Peter Robinson,* Uncommon Knowledge:** We're filming today in Fiesole, Italy. Educated at Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford, Douglas Murray is a journalist based in New York. His books include the bestsellers *The Strange Death of Europe* and *The Madness of Crowds.* Earlier this year, he spent a month in Ukraine and six months in Israel.

Six months in Israel, let's begin there. What surprised you most?

Douglas Murray: I suppose two things stand out. I got to Israel as soon as I could after the atrocities of October 7. About the terrorists, I would say that although I've covered quite a lot of conflicts and seen quite a lot of human evil, what the Hamas terrorists did on October 7 was a level of depravity which shocked me. And I think that apart from the sheer physical violence

Douglas Murray *is an author, political commentator, and associate editor of* ***The Spectator.*** *His latest book is* ***The War on the West*** *(Broadside Books, 2022).* ***Peter Robinson*** *is the editor of the* ***Hoover Digest,*** *the host of* ***Uncommon Knowledge with Peter Robinson,*** *and the Murdoch Distinguished Policy Fellow at the Hoover Institution.*

PREPARE: "I refute the idea that a war started by an enemy like Hamas can be responded to up to a certain level of casualties," says Douglas Murray. "I don't think it's something Britain or America has been expected to abide by in our past. I don't think it's something we're expected to abide by in our present."
[Douglas Murray]

of barbarism, the rapes, the cutting off people's heads with a cleaver, and so on, aside from that, the thing that struck me is that they were proud of what they were doing. They were high on evil.

The second thing is the remarkable response of the Israeli public. Israel isn't like Britain or America. Its threats are awfully close. The first responders, the people caught up in it that day, were not just victims; a lot of them were extraordinary heroes. I'm thinking of people who dropped everything, drove south, picked up some guns, and fought for the next forty-eight hours. A friend of mine left a farewell message to his wife and his two children on the way south because he was sure he wouldn't survive. And he saved a lot of lives. People of all ages, and indeed all backgrounds. The Muslim doctor I've spoken to who was personally held as a human shield by Hamas. The country is filled, in my view, with remarkable people.

I've been in Gaza a fair amount and seen the response of the Israel Defense Forces in the attempt to get back the hostages and to capture or kill all the

heads of Hamas. And I've watched the world lose sympathy with Israel . . . but they lost sympathy from about day one.

Robinson: I want to come back to that. You've answered the question about the moral calculus over and over again, but I must ask the question because it is a mandatory question. If the Israelis lost 1,200 people, what is the number at which they really may not pursue the war any further? It feels, in the response to Israel, that this is the international response, with the ICC, the International Criminal Court, naming charges against Benny Gantz and Prime Minister Netanyahu for atrocities. I don't know what the figures actually are because the press, oddly enough, seems to be giving us only Hamas-laundered numbers. But it's thousands of people who have been killed in Gaza who are civilians rather than Hamas.

"What the Hamas terrorists did on October 7 was a level of depravity which shocked me. . . . They were high on evil."

Murray: Well, the first thing is, I refute the idea that a war started by an enemy like Hamas can be responded to up to a certain level of casualties. I don't think it's something Britain or America has been expected to abide by in our past. I don't think it's something we're expected to abide by in our present. Not many years ago, when we helped to flatten most of Mosul in order to get Islamic State out, the French, British, and American forces involved did not worry about the number of casualties, and nobody counted the casualties. We do not know to this day how many people were killed in Mosul and northern Iraq and the borders of Syria to get ISIS. We simply wanted to get them because they'd carried out the Bataclan massacre [in Paris, November 2015] and much more.

Only Israel seems to be expected to act by this strange standard of what's often called "proportionality." I like to think I shot down that idea at the beginning of the war, when a journalist asked me about that before Israel had even done anything. I said, "If you believe in this idea of proportionality, it means that the IDF should be allowed to go into Gaza and kill precisely the number of children that Hamas killed, and rape precisely the number of women that Hamas raped. Would that be acceptable?" No. Would the Israelis abide by such a grotesque idea? Of course not. What then is the acceptable calculus? As you say, most of the international media have been relying on Hamas's figures. There's a reason for that, by the way, which is that no Western media are in Gaza.

Robinson: So, let's come to that. The reporting runs from thin to biased to nonexistent. I think back to the Iraq War. When we went into Iraq, John Burns, the great journalist, wrote for the *New York Times*. He was on the ground. He was writing; it was military reporting. You understood. Any reader of the *Times* understood the objectives, the progress week by week. No such journalism exists. Why?

Murray: There are only two ways to be in Gaza. One is to be embedded with the IDF, as I've been, and the other is to have permission of Hamas. Hamas are not very good hosts. And they're untrustworthy hosts. So, most of the Western media rely on journalists who are Gazans, all of whom are operating under Hamas restrictions at best, and most of whom are going to be Hamas supporters. And Hamas, as a result, has got out its figures. It came out with this figure of thirty thousand [casualties] some months ago. They produced no evidence for it, but the world just repeated this figure. That figure, by the way, was then halved. Better figures came out from a range of sources.

The reporting, as I've seen too many times now, is so ignorant because people repeat what Hamas has said within seconds. Near the beginning of the conflict, there was a place called the Shifa. It's sometimes called the Shifa Hospital, but it should be better known as the Shifa Hamas Command Headquarters. We know from video footage that they took some of the hostages there on October 7, and they didn't take them to the Shifa Hospital to treat them. The Shifa had a rocket land in its car park some months ago. Hamas immediately announced that it was an Israeli rocket that had hit the hospital and killed five hundred people. Note, by the way, that the Israelis took months to work out the exact number of their casualties from October 7 because it's extremely hard. I've been to the morgues. I've seen the bodies and the charred remains. It takes a long time to work out who's dead in a burned-out house. Magically, Hamas can do it like *that* and come up with a round figure. But after the world has said that the Israelis fired a rocket at a hospital and killed five hundred people, after some time, sure as anything, we discover it was an Islamic Jihad rocket fired from inside Gaza that landed in the car park of the Shifa compound, and it may have killed some people, but not five hundred.

"Only Israel seems to be expected to act by this strange standard of what's often called 'proportionality.'"

This is the day in, day out reality of reporting on that conflict. Just before we sat down here, there was outrage around the world because of a claim

that the Israelis have been indiscriminately bombing a tent encampment of Palestinians. Now that this lie has gone around the world, we discover what happened was that Hamas had fired rockets from between the tents, aimed at Tel Aviv. The Israelis located the launch pads and fired back. And it seems what happened was a cache of Hamas arms exploded, a secondary explosion. Now, whose fault is that? All of these deaths are, in my mind, very clearly the fault of Hamas.

"Hamas are not very good hosts. And they're untrustworthy hosts."

There is a cost to starting a war. And there is no law of war that I know of that says you're allowed to start a war and massacre civilians in their homes, and then, when you start to lose the war you started, say this is unfair. We would accept this under no other situation, in no other circumstances. But it's the Jews. So, it's different.

LESSONS FOR RADICALS

Robinson: On to American campuses, where we hear pro-Palestine "from the river to the sea" chants. Demonstrations and encampments on one elite campus after another. What on earth is going on?

Murray: The people at encampments, they're for Hamas. Even I, with my often-jaded glance at the disintegration of thought in the West, was slightly surprised at the speed with which adults on American campuses were able to rush straight into the arms of Hamas. But I would put out this question. I suspect you'd agree with me, Peter, that the women in particular protesting on these campuses, probably a few years ago were holding up signs that said, "believe all women." Do you remember?

Robinson: I remember that.

Murray: Wow. "Believe all women" turns out to have a border. It turns out to have an exception—a subclause. The subclause is: *except Jewish women*. Maybe ten years ago, Chibok schoolgirls were stolen from northern Nigeria, where I've also been. And Hollywood celebrities, students, Michelle Obama, were demanding, "Bring back our girls." Tell me where the demonstration has been anywhere in America, from the campuses to Hollywood, to bring back our Jewish children. There's a reason there is no such hashtag. Jews don't count. Not in the eyes of these perverted minds on American campuses. Now, they don't know that they're bigots, and they may not know that they're

racists, but we've been here before, many times. A lot of people don't mean to be evil. They don't mean to support evil, but they do support evil. And that's what the students at Columbia and endless numbers of other universities across America have been doing.

Robinson: What is the intellectual transmission belt here? How do you go from the senior members of faculties on the great universities today—people who trained in the 1960s—how do you go from anti–Vietnam War to pro-Hamas? What is the intellectual progression?

Murray: There's an intellectual explanation; there's also an obvious moral one. The intellectual one is that a lot of these people think their job is to educate students into becoming radicals.

Robinson: All right.

Murray: Now, I would like clearing out American academia to such an extent that the job market would be unavailable to them in the future. A lot of these people have nothing to add. They've never had anything to add. They teach grievance studies. And I always hoped, like a lot of people of my inclination, that the graduates would discover that there were no jobs for them after learning how to be bitter and stupid at the cost of about sixty thousand bucks a year. But the faculty encouraged them with the idea that first of all, their opinions matter, and second, that they're informed. I will say this as strongly as I can. These students are narcissists of the worst kind because they're not just narcissists but they're ignoramus narcissists. Who thinks that the Israeli war cabinet, after a massacre of its people, should alter its war policy because of a bunch of ignoramuses at Columbia who've never seen a war and never lost someone in a war? Why would any government alter its war plan and get its generals to stop its war to return its hostages because of some students at Berkeley? It's preposterous.

"There's a reason there is no such hashtag. Jews don't count."

So, there's the narcissism and the ignorance, but the evil thing is that instead of being some banal peacenik saying something like "why can't they just have peace?"—that's brilliant insight, brilliant. No Israeli ever thought of that—instead of that, they actually run all the way to supporting evil.

But we've seen this before, Peter. We saw this in the Sixties. We saw it in the Seventies. There were previous generations in Germany, across Europe,

and in America who had one idea of what not to be: don't be a Nazi. And it's not a bad place to start. These people even now often call themselves anti-Nazis, anti-fascists. Well, in the Seventies and Sixties, a lot of the people who oriented themselves that way found themselves supporting, for instance, the PLO, the PLA, the PFLP, even when they were hijacking planes. And some of the people whose one orientation had been "don't let's be Nazis, don't let's do what our parents did in Germany" ended up separating Jews from non-Jews on hijacked planes.

So, these students at American campuses who believe they're anti-fascist, this is their one idea. And they behave as if it's an extraordinary idea available only to them. When they decide that in order to be anti-Nazi and anti-oppressor and anti–white colonialist they support or cover for or try to ignore the rape and massacre of Jews, *they're* the Nazis.

"It wouldn't be the first time in Russian history that the people in power haven't cared how many of their own citizens they killed."

UKRAINE'S AGONY

Robinson: Let's shift to Ukraine. I'm as far away from Ukraine as can be. You were there. It's very hard to see how to get Russia out of the roughly one-sixth to one-fifth of the country that it has taken. And every day the war continues, even with American armaments. More and more of Ukraine gets smashed, but Russia continues to live, more or less, as it was before the war.

Murray: It wouldn't be the first time in Russian history that the people in power haven't cared how many of their own citizens they killed.

Robinson: That is true. But even at that, even at squandering, they still have that much larger a population. They can afford to get ground down at a faster rate than the Ukrainians because they can replace their numbers.

Murray: It's the same plan Stalin had.

Robinson: Shouldn't Ukraine simply cut the best deal it can right now? It worked out all right over time to be South Korea. You take the bit of the country that you can.

Murray: I keep out of giving advice like that, because they've got, of course, more skin in the game than I do.

Robinson: But they rely on American aid—which raises another question about why Europe hasn't stepped up more. America has some role to play here. But what is your judgment?

Murray: I find it painful because I was with the Ukrainian army when they retook Kherson from the Russians.

Robinson: The morale was soaring. They surprised the world.

Murray: I really did think then, if they can keep pushing like this, I might get to Mariupol, and so on. The spring offensive last year did not work.

Many of my Ukrainian friends say it's not going to stop until they get everything back. Nevertheless, I pretty much agree with you that at some point there will have to be a negotiation. But the thing the Ukrainians understand better than either of us is that it's not clear that any new carve-up that was agreed to would be agreed to for very long. We don't know with 100 percent certainty how much land Vladimir Putin wants to take. He has said he wants all of Ukraine. So, would West and East Ukraine remain West and East Germany, or North and South Korea? Or would Putin settle there and then move on and on?

"If you want to live a good life, either you fight for it, or you expect somebody else to."

Russia is on a war footing like in the 1940s. It has turned its economy onto a wartime footing, which means it can do what it wants for as long as it wants. And the Europeans, I'm afraid we are, to an extent, like the kids in Berkeley. We can no longer fathom the idea of war.

GOOD LIVES

Robinson: The last time we recorded a program, just the two of us, I closed with a question. I'm going to repeat the question. How does one lead a good life?

Murray: I've changed a bit in the past six months, and some of my viewers and readers have noticed it. I've changed because of what I've seen in Israel, and the response specifically of young Israelis. When the moment of test and trial came for that generation, as it did on October 7, they stepped up. Magnificent. I've seen them up close, I've seen them in the field. I've seen people who've just lost their comrades, and they go straight from the battlefield to a funeral and straight back to the battlefield. These are remarkable young men and women.

Now they understand something very important. Life isn't just given to you. Life is something you have to fight for. You have to fight for the right to be at the club in Tel Aviv, or somebody else has to fight for you. If you want to live a good life, either you fight for it, or you expect somebody else to. I believe very strongly today that people in America, Europe, Britain, the rest of the West, are going to have to get serious very fast because something is going to happen. I don't know what. But something is going to happen in my lifetime that is going to bring the kind of reality that the people of Israel saw on October 7 to the people of America, the people of Europe, the people of Britain. And we should prepare for that; we should prepare a generation for that. We've got to tell them that the age of grievance is over. It will be over with an age of heroism and courage.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

"I Had to Tell It All"

Glenn Loury on his traumatic past, his "struggle for self-command," and the new memoir in which he tells the story.

By Russ Roberts

***Russ Roberts,* EconTalk:** My guest is economist and author Glenn Loury. Our topic for today is his memoir, *Late Admissions: Confessions of a Black Conservative.* This is an incredible book; I couldn't put it down. It's an extraordinarily interesting book about what it means to be a human being, a man, a black man, a husband, a father, as well as an economist and social critic at the highest levels. Along with Glenn's very eventful career as an economic theorist, we get a great deal of information about his infidelities, his drug use, his arrests, and his journey as an observer of race issues in America. I've never read anything quite like it.

Why did you write this book with the degree of revelation you chose to share about your personal failings?

Glenn Loury: Well, I thought it was time to come clean with myself, with my children. I thought there was no point in playing about such a project. The

Glenn Loury *was a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is the Merton P. Stoltz Professor of the Social Sciences and professor of economics at Brown University and the host of a podcast,* ***The Glenn Show. Russ Roberts*** *is the John and Jean De Nault Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, host of the podcast* ***EconTalk****, and the president of Shalem College in Jerusalem.*

LOOK BACK: Brown University professor Glenn Loury says of his memoir,* Late Admissions: Confessions of a Black Conservative, *that "the book couldn't be a pose. It couldn't be a brand-enhancing advert. It had to come from the soul." [Brown University]

book couldn't be a pose. It couldn't be a brand-enhancing advert. It had to come from the soul. I say in the preface that I had to tell it all. If I didn't tell it all, nothing I said would really be credible. I didn't want to be lying to myself. One of the ideas that I played with in the book is the contrast between the cover story that one tells others and one tells oneself about the most difficult and the darkest corners of one's life. The cover story and the real story.

I went through a Christian conversion in my late thirties and early forties, and I went through a wrenching recovery from drug addiction. In that place in my life, I learned that if I didn't come clean with myself, I wouldn't get better. I wouldn't be able to solve the problem of self-command.

Roberts: That metaphor—the cover story and the real story—is very haunting and powerful. I loved it. The cover story is the story without all the details, and by leaving out some of the details, we allow a narrative to emerge that protects ourself from our self. It protects ourself from others. It protects ourself from judgment. But, time and time again in this book, you give us both the cover story and the real story. You talk about the full-color version

of what was happening to you at the time, both in your head and around you—your actions, what you told yourself that was true, what you told yourself that wasn't true. And now you're looking back on it.

It's a very powerful way to think about the challenge you mention of self-command. I'm almost seventy, and I feel very similarly to you that that project is a huge part of what it means to be a fully realized human being. It's taken you a while—it's taken *me* a while—but the book shows a great deal of progress without being self-congratulatory. Is that a fair assessment?

Loury: It's a beautiful assessment. It really is gratifying to hear you say it. It's what I was trying to achieve. Evan Goldstein in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* wrote about the book: "Is it self-revelation or is it self-sabotage?" A good friend of mine whom I've known since grad school, Ronald Ferguson, took me aside at my son's wedding and he said, "God, I don't know if I like this guy that is being revealed to me in this book." And my response to him was, "I'm not sure I like him either, but I'm not that guy."

"I learned that if I didn't come clean with myself, I wouldn't get better."

What's the difference between me and that guy? I see that guy for what he was and see myself in him, but I'm not that guy. That guy couldn't have told himself the truth about his life.

So, I'm throwing myself on the mercy of the court here a little bit. I'm saying: "Warts and all, here he is. He's struggling. He's trying to be better. He's trying to be honest. Can't you see him? Can you see him trying to be straight? The guy who can tell that story in that way, maybe he's not such a bad guy after all. Maybe he's not so different from me." I'm asking the reader to think when I lay it bare like that. You can see him in his low points, but you can also see him struggle to pull himself up and stand up straight with his shoulders back. So, it's a bid to offer something to my readers that will stick to the ribs, something sturdy, something human.

FROM THE SOUTH SIDE TO HARVARD

Roberts: At the age of seventeen, you fathered a child and you soon found yourself married with two children. But shortly after that, you find yourself an undergraduate at Northwestern and then in graduate school at MIT, one of the most demanding programs in economics in the country. It's a dizzying

ascent from the challenges of your childhood and then marriage and fatherhood at a very young age. Talk about that transition and how you coped with it mentally. It's an extraordinary part of this book.

Loury: Well, I was born in 1948 on the South Side of Chicago to a close-knit family. My mother and father divorced when I was four or five. I had one sibling, a sister. I was raised by a single mom—a wonderful, sweet, gentle, kind, giving woman, but not the most organized, responsible, diligent parent. She had a wild streak. Her name was Gloria, but her brother called her Go-Go, because she was always on the go. She and my father split up, and she remarried. That marriage didn't last very long. We moved a lot. By the time I got to the fifth grade, I had been enrolled in five different schools.

"I see that guy for what he was and see myself in him, but I'm not that guy. That guy couldn't have told himself the truth about his life."

Her sister, my Aunt Eloise, was just the opposite in terms of the degree of command over her life and responsible, organized living. Eloise was a matronly, ambitious, churchgoing woman, who owned a nice-sized house. Today it wouldn't seem much to me, but at the time, it was a mansion: six bedrooms, a beautiful living room with a piano. Eloise was a woman who would not sit by idly and watch her sister and her sister's children be dragged around from apartment to apartment. She saw to it that a small two-bedroom unit was created in her large house, and when I was ten or eleven we moved in. I spent my most formative years in that house, in that little apartment.

My aunt and her husband, my Uncle Mooney, were working-class/middle-class people. He was a barber and hustler, a small businessman. He'd buy and sell things. He did what he needed to do to make a living. Most of it was legal. He sold a little bit of cannabis out of the back of his barber shop. He knew the Italian guys who would hijack trucks. So, when there was a truckload of suits that had gone missing, a half dozen of them might end up in my uncle's barber shop in the back that he'd resell. They were businesspeople. My Uncle Mooney didn't believe in working for the white man. He didn't believe in banks.

This was my domestic situation.

Roberts: Somehow you end up at MIT for graduate school at a time when MIT is arguably the best program in the country. What was that like to walk

the halls of MIT, to have Robert Solow and Paul Samuelson and other great minds as your professors, given your background? How did you relate to that program given your upbringing as a black kid from the South Side of Chicago?

Loury: I just turned twenty-four when I arrived at MIT, and I was blown away. I was intimidated at first, but I got in the classroom and I did pretty well. I was near the top of my class of students at MIT from day one. I flourished. A black kid, yeah, and there weren't so many of us, although MIT did have outreach to try to bring in African-American students to their PhD program. In the year I was admitted, 1972, there were three of us African-Americans.

Would I have been admitted without affirmative action? I'd like to think so. I had an outstanding record at Northwestern, but it is MIT; and it was arguably the best department in the world, and a lot of really good applicants didn't get admitted, so I don't know. But I got there and I did well.

Roberts: So, you come out of MIT: you are a world-class mathematical economist. You're an economic theorist of the highest order. You publish a series of articles in the very best economics journals, and your career just takes off. And a few years after you've left MIT, you get tenure at Harvard. You're thirty-four years old and you're at the peak of your profession. You've achieved what many people would say is the pinnacle, but it doesn't go so well.

You have a conversation with Thomas Schelling, one of your Harvard colleagues, and you confess your unease that you're not living up to the standards that you've set for yourself or what your colleagues expect of you. And to your chagrin, he laughs in your face. Which is not what you were expecting. Why did he laugh?

Loury: Yeah, it was definitely not what I was expecting. He said, "You think you're the only one? This place is full of neurotics, hiding behind their secretaries, fearful of the dreaded question: what have you done for me lately? See, we're all a bunch of neurotics around here who can't stop looking over our shoulders, fearful that they're going to get us. They're going to find out we're frauds. Just relax and do your work."

I get to Harvard as professor of economics and of Afro-American studies; I was jointly appointed. I was the first black to be a tenured member of the economics department at Harvard, and I was also a member of the small and struggling, but ultimately successful, Afro-American studies program.

But I was not successful. I was straddling these two different realms, and I was fearful that I wasn't going to be able to continue to produce the kind of work that merited the appointment that I had in economics. And I had a crisis of confidence. That's what led me to go to Tom and bare my soul. The economics department at Harvard wasn't unkind or unwelcoming, but it also wasn't warm and fuzzy. Everybody was busy and taking care of their own business. I guess I did OK at it, but I couldn't quite find my way. And I panicked. I choked. I fell into a psychological black hole. This is one of these cover-story and real-story things because I could have used as a cover story: "Oh, the economics department, they're cold. They didn't make any place for me. They were unsupportive." But the real story is that I was so unsure of myself, so fearful of failing, that I lost my way and I couldn't find anything to work on that I thought was worthy. I was under a lot of stress and in distress. I was drowning. I didn't know how or whom to ask for help.

DOUBLE LIFE

Roberts: You end up becoming a rather acclaimed social critic. You wrote about inequality, as a technical economist but also from a much broader perspective, in your popular writing in these early years of your career. You gain fame, applause, and an audience. In many ways, it's a seductive career path with a lot more noise to it, and you find yourself spending more time in that world. At the same time, you're struggling to keep your personal life in order.

Talk about some of the challenges you faced in the evenings when you went in search of . . . your roots. In many ways, you never leave the South Side, you carry it with you, and you're constantly trying to navigate your identity as a former resident of that part of town and a black man with this very ethereal academic game at the highest level. And you struggle to reconcile those two.

Loury: I grew up in a pretty decent neighborhood in Chicago, where there was low-density housing, green lawns in front, and so on. But the kid down the block from me died of a heroin overdose at eighteen. Another kid who I was friendly with in Little League bled out on his mother's basement floor from a gunshot wound that went untended when he was fooling around with a gun. Another kid who bullied me ended up with a life sentence for shooting a cop while trying to get away from a robbery. Not a stone's throw away were neighborhoods where there were streetwalkers and open-air drug sales going on, where the gangs were ruling the nest.

This was a world that I was more than casually acquainted with. It was, in a way, my world. Yeah, I was precocious and bright and relatively well-off because my aunt and uncle were prosperous, all things considered. I never knew a day when I was hungry. I didn't go to bed fearful, hearing gunshots echoing in the surrounding neighborhood. But the housing projects were places that I visited frequently. That world—the ghetto—was a part of my life.

So, I invite the reader of my book to consider this juxtaposition. As you say, I was a rarefied specialist in a technical field at a high level, with an interest in the problem of persisting racial disparity. On the one hand was my personal life and the social milieu from which I emerged—a world, a way of being in the world, which I took to be authentically black. I thought of myself as earthier, as more grounded—frankly, as blacker—than a lot of black people.

"A professor by day and inner-city bad boy by night . . . it practically destroys me. But I make my way through it."

And part of that blackness had to do with my ability to negotiate my way around the grittiest neighborhoods of the inner city and to be able to hold my own there. Being able to walk the walk and talk the talk in the vernacular and in the rhythm that was characteristic of that social location. I thought of that as blackness in some essential way. I'm not defending that thought. With decades of retrospect, I can see the deep problems with that kind of thinking. But that is the cast of mind that I brought with me to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1982 when I took up the position at Harvard.

Soon enough, I find myself seeking a similar kind of social experience in the inner-city neighborhoods of Boston. I found myself going and hanging out. I made friends. I had enjoyed cannabis from my late adolescence as a part of my upbringing in Chicago and my social life, and I could find it there. I enjoyed the excitement of going into a bar and taking a seat somewhere, having a drink, watching who's coming in and out and seeing what the action might be, and maybe picking somebody up and having a few hours of "illicit fun," and coming back to tell the tale.

It ended up getting the better of me.

Roberts: A good chunk of the book is about this double life of respectable Harvard faculty member teaching by day, and at night, the hustler, frequenter of bars, smoker of weed and eventually user of cocaine, and it comes crashing down. What goes wrong?

Loury: One of them is an incident involving my mistress. We got into a very raucous fight, and I had to face criminal charges resulting from that altercation. This becomes public at a time when I'm up for a position in the Reagan administration as undersecretary—second in command—in the Department of Education. I'm going to be nominated for that position, and then this scandal breaks. I withdraw from the position. I retreat to my wife, who has stuck with me, notwithstanding the outrageous abuse of our marriage, which my now public affair reflects.

And I'm forlorn. I'm depressed. I've moved from the economics department at Harvard to the Kennedy School of Government. It's the final resolution of the dilemma that I posed for myself by choking as an economic theorist when I first got to Harvard. I'm at the Kennedy School when all this happens.

"There was an enemy within Glenn Loury and there was an enemy within the black community. And I wanted to play on the relationship between those things."

So, I'm kind of in the doghouse. I'm depressed. And I'm finding solace, if that's what you want to call it, in this double life, which does lead in the fullness of time to freebasing cocaine—crack cocaine—which I become addicted to. I end up getting caught and arrested again, the second time within a calendar year, now in possession of a controlled substance.

It would appear that my life is spiraling out of control. My wife, Linda, doesn't know what to say or do. She is distraught beyond any consolation. But she hangs in there. I end up in an outpatient treatment program, which I blow off and I relapse. I end up in an inpatient program at McLean Psychiatric Hospital. I spent five or six weeks there, came out, and quickly relapsed again. I had to go back into the inpatient program for the remainder of my sixty days of insurance coverage paying for hospitalization.

And I do stop using. I live in a halfway house for five months. Just before I go in, Linda becomes pregnant with our first child, Glenn II. I come out at Thanksgiving of 1988. Glenn is born in January of 1989. I'm drug free. Harvard has stuck by me.

I find religion as part of my recovery process. I've become a born-again Christian. I'm fervent about it, and absolutely sincere in my belief that my life has been restored, that Christ has lifted me out of the gutter and into a dignified way of living, that he has blessed me with a woman who has, beyond any justification, blessed me with a young family.

I pull myself upright and get back to my job at the Kennedy School. But, yeah, from 1985–88, I'm living a double life. I'm a professor by day and inner-city bad boy by night … it practically destroys me. But I make my way through it.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

Roberts: In many ways, your book is a story of extraordinary resilience. The honesty of it and the details which we're not covering here are really quite thought-provoking.

"The facts were enough to get mad about, but I also liked the way the anger made me feel.... And now I can see that for the destructive force that it can be."

I think one of the original titles for your book was *The Enemy Within,* and that's a play on words. The enemy within the black community is that despite the Civil Rights Act and efforts of affirmative action, there still remained a cultural challenge that the black community had to take its own responsibility for. And at the same time, the enemy within is the personal demons that are haunting you; your imperfect behavior.

Your social critique of American society is constantly struggling with your own personal behavior. I think part of your brokenness is your inability to reconcile those—at least when you were at the beginning of your role as a conservative critic. Reflect on that.

Loury: That was very well said. That's right, I was calling the book *The Enemy Within.* That was my title, and my idea was what you just encapsulated, that there was an enemy within Glenn Loury and there was an enemy within the black community. And I wanted to play on the relationship between those things.

You started this interview by asking me why I was so candid and honest. As you remind me of "the enemy within" and the double meaning of that phrase, it stimulates me to think about moral leadership. I want to say that we, black people, especially those of us who are at the margins of society, have a responsibility to take control of our lives and raise our children, to build up our communities, to develop our social capital, to affirm the ways of living that are most consistent with realizing the potential of opportunity in this society. I feel like I can't lie about my own life and have that be my message at the same time.

Roberts: I want to share a thought that I had reading your book. One might conclude from your journey in the policy space that you are a contrarian more than a "conservative"—that you are constantly pushing back against the received wisdom of the day, whatever it is.

But I think you're nuanced. And I think nuance is difficult; nuance doesn't sell. You're a serious academic, in that you're pursuing the truth. And when people pursue it carelessly, you judge them accordingly. And that gets you in trouble.

Contrarianism is a mindless opposition to the fads of the day. But I think it sells you short. I think you are more of a nuanced thinker who is reacting to the simplicity of the narratives of the day, and inevitably, that makes you very unpopular with those folks who are selling a less nuanced but often popular narrative. Do you think that's an accurate description of who you are in 2024?

"Got to make the best of it that we can, one day at a time. The game never ends."

Loury: Yes, I do. And I appreciate it, because I hadn't quite ever put it to myself that way. Another person who is going to be reviewing this book said to me, "You're a guy who, if you're in a club, you're going to be on the outer fringes of whoever it is that's in that club because you like to be critical." But I much prefer the formulation you offer, which is that I have extremely high standards of rigor in my thinking, or for any movement or program of which I would be a part.

Roberts: Anger runs through your book, especially in your younger years. You write: "I fought the enemy within, but in truth, he was no intruder, no stranger. I cannot disavow his actions any more than I would deny my own because his actions are my actions. I am that enemy within."

I'm struck after finishing your book and talking to you today that there's a placid contentment to you and your life that was not there when you were younger. This is an eternal human challenge. It's the challenge of growing up and being a fully flourishing adult in a very hard world. You recount so powerfully and sadly the anger and the lack of self-control in your life. Are you less angry? Are you more placid? Do you have more self-control?

Loury: I like to think so. My wife, Linda—the economist who stuck with me through thick and thin, the mother of Glenn and Nehemiah—passed away

from breast cancer in 2011. I remarried in 2017 to a wonderful woman from Texas. Her name is LaJuan. We don't have the same politics or the same background exactly. Hers was less secure economically and less supportive than mine. She's from the rough side of the tracks. She's an autodidact. She's a fervent advocate of socialism, and I'm a neoliberal economist. I think markets do a pretty good job of solving the problem of resource allocation, and I'm suspicious about programs.

But we love one another. I do not have to win the argument with her. It's OK to disagree. I can change the subject or bite my tongue if necessary in order not to ruin a wonderful evening with a nice dinner and a bottle of wine.

I wasn't always like that. There's a point in the book where I say about my crusade against incarceration, when I'm giving speeches all over the world, that those speeches were fueled by anger. The facts were enough to get mad about, but I also liked the way the anger made me feel. I liked the feeling. And now I can see that for the destructive force that it can be.

As I say in the book, the game never ends. And this metaphor of the game—the strategic encounter between decision makers, sometimes within the same person, who have, to some degree, conflicting objectives and behave in ways that are mutually influencing—that's a central theme for me. And I take that theme within. I see that as an eternal struggle. Unless you intervene with some deus ex machina, unless you fall into the game, the power of Christ that transcends human foibles and that you kind of put your faith in—and I'm unable to do that today—we're just on our own here. Got to make the best of it that we can, one day at a time. The game never ends. ◘

Frontiers in Flames

Unrest, turmoil, repeated violence—borderlands such as Ukraine have been always thus. How great powers have managed disruptive states in zones of tumult.

By Jakub Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell

In 2017, we wrote a book arguing that the United States faced simultaneous tests from Russia, China, and Iran. We argued that these tests, or "probes," were occurring at the outer perimeter of US power—the "unquiet frontier," as we called it. Front-line allies, such as Poland, Israel, and Taiwan, we wrote, were tempting targets for the United States' adversaries because of their vulnerable geography and great distance from the US homeland.

Key points

» The strength of a great power is shaped by events on the frontier, where agendas collide and violence is endemic.

» A comforting, but false, view held that old-fashioned wars of conquest no longer happen.

» Well-armed, motivated frontier states are the "first responders." Giving them weapons, even very powerful ones, is a good investment.

» Strategic ubiquity is an illusion, a calculated bluff.

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Seven years later, this frontier is more than unquiet—it is in flames. On the European frontier, the largest war since 1945 is in its third year. On the Middle Eastern frontier, Iran is using its network of proxies to wage an undeclared war against the United States and Israel. On the Asia-Pacific frontier, China is accumulating military assets to cross the Taiwan Strait.

These developments may be sobering to a generation in the West expecting the world to become an ever-expanding zone of peace.

Collectively, these moves suggest that the United States' rivals are not only probing the firmness of the frontier adjacent to them but also anticipating a dramatic opportunity to upset the wider order that has underwritten Western security and well-being for decades. The frontier—and with it, the entire game board—is in crisis.

All of this may be sobering to a generation in the West expecting the world to become an ever-expanding zone of peace. But there's nothing new about it. Historically, the strength of a great power and the political order it embodies have been shaped by events on the frontier more than events in the relatively safer confines of the imperial interior. Rome's great crises began on the banks of the Rhine, Danube, and Tigris. The British Empire's moments of truth were in Natal, the Hindu Kush, and the Sudetenland.

Then, as now, moments of violent upheaval naturally prompt debates about the character of geopolitical change and the right strategies to cope with it. How should a great power manage a lengthy and distant frontier under attack? While the United States is unique in the sheer scale of military and economic power it possesses, the question is no easier than it was for past empires; US power, like theirs, has limits. It is limited in quantity, by geographic distance, by domestic concerns, and by Americans' own, often fickle, political will. The United States' predicament, in other words, is not new.

While the debate rages about how to handle what's happening in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia, it may be worth pausing to consider the situation from a historical perspective. Short of abandoning the frontier outposts under pressure from predatory powers, great powers in the past tended to follow five basic principles for managing an unquiet frontier.

FIVE PRINCIPLES

First, the frontier is a violent place where war is always possible. By definition, the frontier is a zone of competition among rivals. It is an object coveted

in its own right for its strategic location, but it is also the place where colliding agendas—between powers seeking to maintain the geopolitical status quo and those seeking to revise it—inevitably play out. While it is possible to mitigate the clash through negotiations, trade, or bribes, a frontier separates powers that have deep conflicts of interests grounded in history, civilizational contrasts, or ideological differences. As a result, violence is never too far below the surface.

This may sound obvious, but it's worth stating up front because it runs counter to a Western conceit that lasted until the very eve of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine: namely, that old-fashioned wars of conquest don't happen nowadays, even in historically fraught locations, because of the civilizing effects of liberal institutions or globalization—or the deterrent effect of all-powerful military technology. That's not true and probably won't ever be true. Violence is endemic to the frontier, and the current wars and threats in Ukraine, the Middle East, and East Asia should have surprised no one. A realistic strategy to manage violence along the frontier begins by recognizing that fact, as well as its corollary: that preserving the status quo requires an unsleeping vigilance in these distant places. No international institutions or sets of rules will prevent the United States' rivals from seeking to expand their control over key regions in Eurasia, where Washington has vital economic and political partners.

Second, well-armed and motivated frontier states are the best deterrent on the frontier. What the inhabitants of the frontier have in common with the distant power is a desire to not see the frontier fall into the hands of a nearby bully. The distant power's motivation is to prevent the rival from accumulating a bigger power base. But the frontier state's motivation is much, much greater and more personal: ensuring its own survival. It has the most to lose if the frontier breaks and disgorges Scythian hordes.

Rome's great crises began on the banks of the Rhine, Danube, and Tigris. Britain's were in Natal, the Hindu Kush, and the Sudetenland.

This greater motivation makes frontier states the most effective source of resistance to threats against the frontier. They are the first responders, and their determination is the foundational bloc of a stable frontier. Local resolve trumps United Nations resolutions. From the standpoint of their great-power patron, it is also a very good thing to work with the momentum of locals' desire to resist—whether it takes the form of Ukraine's struggle to not be absorbed into a new Russian empire,

Israeli defiance of Iranian plans for regional dominance, or Taiwan's effort not to be subsumed under the Chinese Communist Party's rule. Countries at the frontier are a source of amply motivated, effective, and legitimate resistance to their own enemies; without that resistance, the superpower patron would have to venture much more of its own blood and treasure. There may, of course, be many differences between the front-line state and its faraway patron, but at least on this core strategic point—that the frontier should not be breached—their interests naturally converge.

Preserving the status quo requires unsleeping vigilance in these distant places.

Third, preclusive defense is the preferred strategy. Preclusive defense actively guards a frontier by positioning sufficient forces to repulse an initial attack and conduct local counteroffensives. Treating a frontier as a flexible line, with the option of pulling back when under pressure, is tempting, especially when military resources are scarce or unavailable. But the cost of sacrificing space for time—defense in depth—is much higher than it may appear because front-line allies will peel away. If the ally thinks it is expendable—that its territory and people are the space to be given to the enemy in a tactic to gain time to arrest the attack elsewhere—that ally will lose the resolve to defend the frontier. Alone, with no outside help, the choice for a frontier state becomes one between accepting a change in the status quo and resisting at high cost with a low probability of success. Some, such as Ukraine, may choose the latter, but it is not a given that this is the most common path. In fact, the heavy costs incurred by Ukraine may plausibly dissuade others, such as Taiwan, from following its example. When a front-line ally wobbles and falls under the rival's control, the distant patron loses its ability to shape the regional dynamics. This is especially dangerous when the patron is a maritime power that has no depth to give: Such a power either keeps a port or thin littoral or is fully expelled from the region with no chance of a cost-free return.

The value of frontier allies is that they create the potential for striking beyond the frontier line, on the territory of the predator state itself. The very potential for such attacks strengthens deterrence because the frontier state's strong motivation for self-defense lends credibility to its threats. That requires it to be capable of inflicting heavy costs on—or launching punitive raids against—the nearby predator state. Thus, paradoxically, the stability of a frontier is helped by the local ability to escalate. Such escalation is kept in check by the fact that the front-line state is the first to bear the brunt of the

rival's response, establishing powerful incentives to strike only as required for the operational purpose of keeping the frontier stable. In other words, a small frontier state, even if well armed, is unlikely to ever march on the capital of the rival.

Ukraine's ability to strike Russian military targets deep in occupied Crimea or immediately beyond the border would weaken Russia's offensive actions—and if a cease-fire ever occurred, this continued ability would reinforce deterrence. Similarly, Taiwan could more effectively deter China if it had the capability and clear will to strike not just the immediately attacking forces but also Chinese ports. In brief, deterrence is much stronger when the defender is not just holding the fortress but has the ability to strike an attacker's encampments. Giving weapons, even very powerful ones, to the frontier state is a good investment.

Fourth, the reputation acquired or lost on one frontier matters on another. Predator states watch how their rival great power handles other, often distant frontiers to gauge the level of its power and the competence of its leadership. Reputation is particularly important for a maritime power, whose core challenge is the length of the frontier it has to manage combined with its distance from the homeland. Given naturally finite means, it is difficult to maintain substantial and perpetual presence in any and all directions. Strategic ubiquity is an illusion, a calculated bluff predicated on reputation.

What follows from this is that it pays to stop aggression at the frontier early when and where it happens first. How the initial fires are dealt with will have a big bearing on whether they spread into a wider system crisis. Ignoring the early ones in hopes of keeping powder dry for later ones is dangerous, and the best strategy is to decisively sequence the frontiers. Today, that means using Russian President Vladimir Putin's attack as an opportunity to impose a strategic defeat on Russia, the weaker of the United States' two main rivals, before the stronger of the two, China, is ready to move against Taiwan. Washington should not attempt to shift priorities midstream.

Paradoxically, the stability of a frontier is helped by the local ability to escalate.

Fifth, once breached or abandoned, a frontier is costly to stabilize. As defense is cheaper than offense, so is maintaining a frontier versus restoring the status quo ante. In the most dramatic case, when the great power is pushed out from (or leaves) a front-line region, re-entry is extremely difficult for both military

and political reasons. Militarily, trenches and fortifications—and in today's high-tech environment, an array of anti-access and area-denial weapons—impose high casualties on the attacking side. Politically, abandoned front-line locals will likely make different calculations: facing their nearby enemies as their security patron leaves, they may decide that their least bad choice is to cozy up to their enemies. Re-entry for the great power that has left becomes thus a costly and solitary effort with limited indigenous support.

If the United States abandoned Ukraine, Israel, or Taiwan today and these places fell under a rival's sphere of influence, it is unlikely that this could be reversed in our lifetimes without a much steeper cost in blood and treasure than if Washington had simply helped them to defend themselves adequately in the first place.

ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST

In all these cases, the point is that bolstering the frontier is not an act of charity for a great power like the United States today. Instead, it is an act of enlightened self-interest that, if undertaken with energy and forethought, offers a cost-effective way of securing the homeland itself. The United States has a long tradition of thinking in very practical terms about unquiet frontiers, on both its own continent and the Eurasian rimlands. These were and are the regions where the noble and pacifying tools of institutions and laws, the calculations of merchants, and the impartiality of judges have a tenuous effect. Ultimately, how these frontiers are ordered is the product of a firm hold exercised through violence or threat thereof. That reality has not changed, and the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East are testaments to the frontier's eternally ferocious nature.

The reputation acquired or lost on one frontier matters on another. Predator states notice.

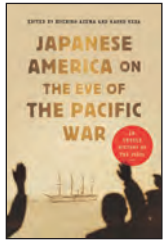
In the current situation, history suggests that the United States' best bet is to prevent its rivals' probes on the frontier from becoming a wider, systemwide run on the bank. Whether the first probe succeeds or fails matters disproportionately for determining whether a sequence of probes occurs. While Asia matters most for the United States strategically, defeating ongoing aggression on the European and Middle Eastern frontiers—if that can still be done—remains the optimal strategy. The best way to do that is to provide weapons to Ukraine and Israel, including weapons that Washington might not normally be comfortable dispersing. Doing that, in turn, will require a serious effort to

strengthen the US defense industrial base, which will be needed in the long confrontation with China as well.

What the United States does on these distant frontiers is, of course, of secondary importance if the more immediate frontier—the national border—is broken. When we wrote *The Unquiet Frontier,* we did not expect that the US southern border would become so unstable, not to mention becoming so at the same time as geopolitical rivals amp up the level of violence in Eurasia. Fixing the border is thus not just a domestic priority but a foreign-policy prerequisite: the distant frontier will be abandoned sooner or later if the national border becomes a locus of instability.

If the United States abandoned Ukraine, Israel, or Taiwan to aggressors, it is unlikely this could be reversed in our lifetimes.

It is not too late. Even though US rivals have improved their position in recent years, advancing their control and building up their arms stores, Americans still have an opportunity to conserve a modicum of international order and security. It's better to stop predator states at the far frontier by backing the efforts of motivated locals than attempting to do so after these places are lost. And it's easier to keep things stable than to bring back stability after it's lost. And that begins, and ends, at the frontier. ■



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Return to Watergate

The story of the Nixon presidency and its downfall seems fixed in amber. After fifty years, it's time to explore new research and write new histories.

By Luke A. Nichter

For a young historian starting out twenty years ago, there were few subjects more politically incorrect than challenging the conventional wisdom that the corrupt administration of Richard Nixon had to go, or that the national media performed admirably in their coverage of a challenging and fast-paced story, or that, while it was traumatic for the nation, Nixon's resignation in August 1974 showed the system worked—a phrase repeated many times since. I am inclined to challenge much of this conventional wisdom, in large part because this is the moment to do so given the passage of time and the new perspectives we have of both Watergate—the initial break-in took place on June 17, 1972—and the broader time period.

Today, we lack anything close to a definitive historic account of Nixon, or the Nixon White House years, or Watergate, or the Church Committee, or other intelligence investigations and reforms. If the chaos of the 1960s elected Richard Nixon, and the overreaction of the 1970s elected Ronald Reagan, what links their presidencies are the events of the 1970s—which are

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[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

usually overlooked as some inconsequential interregnum trapped between a disorderly decade and the dawn of a new era.

I've been studying Nixon's tapes—and those of his predecessors, going back to FDR's installation in the White House of an RCA continuous film machine in 1940—for about twenty years. But I started with Nixon's, at first to simply have fresh material for my dissertation, but then more broadly as I realized no one had mined them for anything close to their full historical value. To demonstrate how massive these five thousand hours of presidential recordings are, even after twenty years of work I have manually transcribed perhaps only 10 percent of them—incidentally, more than anyone else, as far as I know. At my rate of transcription, about forty double-spaced pages per hour of tape, fully transcribed they might yield two hundred thousand pages of transcripts. There remain about five hundred unrestricted hours of Nixon tapes today in a kind of archival purgatory with no clear timetable for release.

Too often, what passes for the history of that time period is not seriously researched. When it comes to Watergate, I can't say it any better than historian and Hoover fellow Niall Ferguson has said it to me. Fifty years is often a sufficient passage of time for revisionism to reshape our understanding of even the most complex and controversial subjects. By then, usually everyone has left the scene, the records are all or mostly all open, members of a younger generation demand a fresh history written for them, and we are in a proper frame of mind for a reconsideration of what we thought we knew.

Not so with Watergate. The history we have today is remarkably similar to what journalists wrote in the 1970s. The question for us is: *Why? What makes Watergate different? Why does Watergate seem to be an exception to the usual process of historical inquiry?*

RADICAL TIMES

Let me offer a few data points. Of the four great landslides of the twentieth century—FDR over Alf Landon in 1936, LBJ over Barry Goldwater in 1964, Nixon over George McGovern in 1972, and Ronald Reagan over Walter Mondale in 1984—Nixon's victory in 1972 by several measures was the most decisive. His national political map was redder than Reagan's: 60.7 percent of the popular vote, versus 58.8 percent. Nixon won forty-nine states to FDR's forty-eight. And in the Electoral College, Nixon won 96.7 percent of all electoral votes versus LBJ's 90.3 percent in 1964. (Even Vladimir Putin won only 87 percent of votes in his latest re-election.) But even more remarkable than Nixon's victory in 1972 was the swiftness of his decline. I know of nothing like it in modern US history. Polls showed a decisive reversal of the election

WELL MET: President Nixon greets Premier Pierre Trudeau during an April 1972 visit to the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa. Nixon's re-election later that year was, by some measures, the greatest landslide of the twentieth century. Even more remarkable was the swiftness of his decline. [Byron E. Schumaker—National Archives]

result in fewer than six months. Mere partisanship or the typical political ebbs and flows do not fully explain such a reversal.

Consider, too, how different this era was. When the House of Representatives initiated impeachment proceedings against Nixon in fall 1973, the nation had not seen such a process in over a century, when President Andrew Johnson was impeached for violating the Tenure of Office Act. How quaint the previous effort must have seemed after the experience of the 1960s. Unlike with Andrew Johnson, who was impeached in the House but acquitted in the Senate, the narrative regarding Richard Nixon was that he was uniquely criminal and must be removed from office. This narrative was not inevitable but constructed, for there was no true historical precedent.

Fifty years is often enough time for revisionism to reshape our understanding of even the most complex and controversial subjects.

Journalists covering Watergate became celebrities, no longer simply reporting the news but starring in their own coverage, thanks to the innovation of anonymous sources. The term Watergate itself, especially its suffix "-gate," became synonymous with sleaze and scandal. The special prosecutor was viewed as impartial. Judges didn't seem interested in politics. Senator Sam Ervin, chairman of the most significant congressional investigation, was portrayed as a simple country lawyer and constitutional expert pursuing the truth.

The narrative that Nixon was unique was so effectively constructed, deployed, and reinforced that many of the 61 percent who supported him in 1972 became convinced by it in less than six months—or did not have the inclination or ability to challenge it—and even those who worked for Nixon came to doubt the president they worked for, or at least to raise serious questions. It is clear to me that some of these former officials were not able to resolve their concerns by the end of their lives.

Unlike with Andrew Johnson, the constructed narrative regarding Nixon was that he was uniquely criminal and must be removed from office.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW?

Nixon was probably the most investigated politician in US history, although it's possible he no longer holds that record. Journalists who had made their

IN THE ROOM: President Nixon and Henry Kissinger meet in the Oval Office in 1972. The Nixon White House generated five thousand hours of tape recordings, of which perhaps 10 percent have ever been transcribed. [National Archives]

FAREWELL, BUT NOT ADIEU: Framed in the doorway of the presidential helicopter, Nixon and his family leave the White House for the last time on August 9, 1974, turning over the presidency to Gerald Ford. When the House of Representatives initiated impeachment proceedings against Nixon the previous fall, the nation had not seen such a process in over a century. [National Archives]

names, careers, and fortunes writing about Watergate relished the story—but only the 1974 version, as I came to learn. The millions of pages of records that have been opened for research in the thirty years that followed, as well as about two thousand hours of Nixon tapes, were of no great consequence for those recognized as experts. New records and new context were inconvenient, and were either ignored or folded into conclusions established decades before.

Nixon was probably the most investigated politician in US history, although it's possible he no longer holds that record.

Today, I challenge my students to consider certain questions when thinking about any historical subject: How do we know something is true? What context do we need? How do we deal with incomplete or conflicting evidence? I knew of no scholar working on the Nixon period interested in rigorously re-examining Watergate. Among other things, it would have been a career killer.

Recently, it dawned on me that for the first time in my life, Richard Nixon was no longer the number one political villain in US history. I saw that as a major shift that presented an opportunity for a fresh look at the entire Nixon period. The irrational Nixon critics—going back to the Alger Hiss era—are dwindling in number as they fade from the scene, and those who replace them have other things on their minds these days.

Let's consider the hypothesis that there was a kind of Nixon derangement syndrome—not only in predictable places like his political opposition, but also among the establishment in his own party, cultural elites of all kinds, and especially the national media. And let's consider that their derangement has left its mark on the history we have today. Nixon wasn't chased from office by Democrats alone but also by Republicans, some of whom had never accepted him since Dwight Eisenhower and Nixon steamrolled their favorite candidate, "Mr. Republican" Robert Taft, in 1952. The Watergate era suggests that Nixon was not excessively partisan; he was not partisan enough. I assume presidents since Nixon who have faced the threat of impeachment and removal from office figured out how important it is to take care of thirty-four votes on their side in the Senate, sufficient to block the two-thirds majority required for removal from office. Nixon, however, was wholly

Let's consider the hypothesis that there was a kind of Nixon derangement syndrome.

ELDER STATESMAN: Former president Nixon visits the congressional office of Michigan Representative William Broomfield in 1992, where Nixon's presidential portrait is among those displayed on the wall. Nixon died less than two years later, at age eighty-one. [Maureen Keating—Library of Congress]

unprepared and almost naïve about the combat he faced. His 1972 landslide didn't make him all-powerful: power began to drain from him the moment it was over, because everyone knew he would never appear on another ballot. Nixon was an easy target, and always has been.

Even on the Republican side of the aisle, there was a joke during Nixon's 1960 campaign for the presidency that if he wanted to pay a visit to his running mate, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., someone like Nixon would not have been permitted to use the front door at Lodge's estate in Beverly, Massachusetts. And I'm not aware that Nixon ever did visit him there.

No matter where one is situated on the political spectrum, you've seen it done to your side.

Even today, with all that we've learned since, the temptation is too great to treat Nixon as something other than what he was: a serious politician

respected by serious politicians. At the Reagan Library some few months ago to look at some newly open 1984 campaign records, I overheard a conversation between a docent and a museum visitor. Discussing Nixon, the docent, presumably responding in a way consistent with their training, said, "Richard Nixon did some good things, but also some really bad things." I almost wanted to ask: *Do docents say the same thing about Ronald Reagan?* Is the same not true of all political leaders, and, if we are honest, even ourselves? Nixon wasn't despised by his worst critics because he was what they said he was. He was despised because he was effective.

If the guiltiest person deserves the fairest trial, we were deprived of the critical context needed to judge Nixon.

Only since Nixon's death in April 1994 have we gradually acquired the perspectives needed to re-examine Watergate—as a result of the impeachment of Bill Clinton and more recently Donald Trump, and an even more visceral political era that itself is beginning to make the Watergate era quaint, as Watergate did for Andrew Johnson's era. No matter where one is situated on the political spectrum, you've seen it done to your side.

We now know that some of the investigators who accused Nixon of improper conduct engaged in improper conduct to get Nixon. Today, we question the validity and even the constitutionality of special prosecutors. We understand that judges are human and can be influenced by fame and politics. The media landscape today is very different and includes many more perspectives. We understand that impeachment is a political process, without the usual safeguards of criminal or civil proceedings—which can also be manipulated. We understand that one of the reasons grand juries operate in secrecy is because it makes it difficult for us to hold them accountable.

For the Watergate narrative to hold in 1973 and 1974—that Nixon was a uniquely criminal figure who should be removed from office—we could not be permitted to learn about the misdeeds of others until Nixon was gone. If the guiltiest person deserves the fairest trial, we were deprived of the critical context needed to judge Nixon—not just the 61 percent who supported him in 1972, only to abandon him six months into his second term of office, and those who worked for him who later questioned their decision to do so, but all Americans. The system did not work, and the process of historical inquiry has not worked. ◘

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Documenting Communism

The secret Soviet archives represent one of Hoover's most valuable collections. Library & Archives director emeritus Charles G. Palm describes the feat of exquisite personal diplomacy—from Palo Alto to the Kremlin itself—that enabled Hoover to obtain them.

By Jonathan Movroydis

Jonathan Movroydis: Before the Soviet Union fell, what was the scope of Hoover's Russia collection?

Charles G. Palm: It began with a Hoover historian named Frank Golder, who went to revolutionary Russia in 1921, along with the American Relief Administration staff, which had been organized by Herbert Hoover to provide famine relief to Russia. He went along with the ARA, as it was called, to gather up materials about Russia—not only revolutionary Russia but also czarist Russia. He gathered up everything he could: all kinds of special materials, diaries, letters, reports, leaflets, pamphlets, the usual types of materials that make up the Hoover Archives. One collection that was especially noteworthy consisted of all the internal reports produced by various departments of the new revolutionary government. We now have all of those.

Subsequently, we continued to acquire materials on Russia, and I'll mention two collections in particular. One is the records of the Paris office branch

Charles G. Palm *is the deputy director (emeritus) of the Hoover Institution and author of* ***Documenting Communism: The Hoover Project to Microfilm and Publish the Soviet Archives*** *(Hoover Institution Press, 2024).* ***Jonathan Movroydis*** *is the senior product manager for the Hoover Institution.*

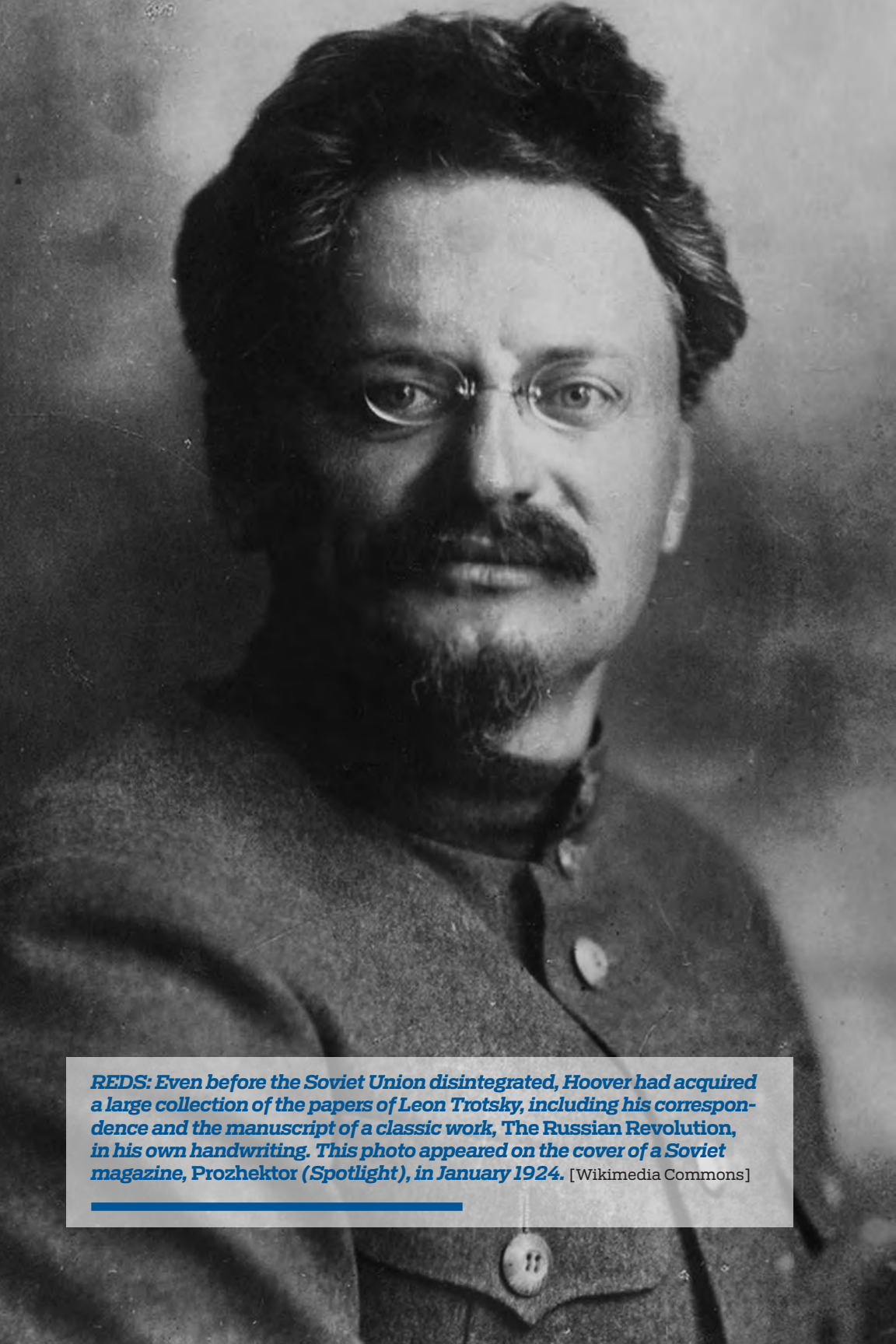
PRESERVED: Hoover Institution Deputy Director Charles Palm and archivist Judith Fortson examine a shipment of microfilm in 1995, the fruit of a partnership with like-minded archivists in the USSR. The fall of the Soviet Union would give Hoover a chance to secure millions of pages of documents. [Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

of the Okhrana, the secret police of Czar Nicholas II, whose job was to protect the czar from all these revolutionaries trying to overthrow his regime. Since the most dangerous revolutionaries were in Europe outside of Russia, they set up an Okhrana office in the Paris embassy, and the agents' job was to go around and track these people. In doing that, they accumulated all kinds of materials, including agents' reports and photographs of revolutionaries. They intercepted Lenin's mail, copied it, and put the mail back in the post. Our collection has many intercepted letters of Lenin, plus all the agents' reports as well as photographs and other records that police departments around Europe shared with the Okhrana.

The story of the acquisition is also quite interesting. When the Soviet Union was recognized by the French government in 1924, France was obligated to turn over that Russian embassy building to the Bolsheviks. The officials of the provisional government, who held on to that building, did not want to turn over the files to their enemies, so they secretly boxed them up and sent them to the Hoover Institution.

OPEN SESAME: In 1957, Hoover Director C. Easton Rothwell, Assistant Director Witold Sworakowski, and reference librarian Marina Tinkoff open the first crates of the czarist secret-police collection. The Okhrana materials were secretly stored for more than thirty years before their debut that year.
[Bob Campbell—*San Francisco Chronicle*/Polaris Images]

The man who arranged that, General Nikolai Golovin, had been a general in the czar's army and was a collecting agent for Hoover. He contacted the American Embassy to facilitate this. With the help of Herbert Hoover, then



REDS: Even before the Soviet Union disintegrated, Hoover had acquired a large collection of the papers of Leon Trotsky, including his correspondence and the manuscript of a classic work,* The Russian Revolution, *in his own handwriting. This photo appeared on the cover of a Soviet magazine,* Prozhektor *(Spotlight), in January 1924. [Wikimedia Commons]

secretary of commerce, he had them all shipped out via US diplomatic pouch, evading the French customs.

The Russian provisional ambassador, Vasily Maklakov, told the French government that he had burned everything. Instead, the files came to Hoover secretly. The condition of the gift was that we not reveal the existence of the records until Maklakov died. He did not want to get run over by a bus. When Maklakov died in 1957, some thirty years later, these archives were opened up. This fascinating story was told in full by Hoover fellow Bert Patenaude in the *Hoover Digest* in summer 2021.

"The condition of the gift was that we not reveal the existence of the records until Maklakov died. He did not want to get run over by a bus."

Movroydis: How did the Soviets react?

Palm: They wanted it all returned. That did not happen. The records eventually did return as a part of this project I describe in *Documenting Communism*—not the originals, but microfilmed copies.

Another collection I want to mention was that of Boris Nicolaevsky. He was himself a Russian Communist, but part of the Menshevik branch, who were less radical. In the 1920s, Stalin executed a lot of the Mensheviks, and those who didn't get executed emigrated. Nicolaevsky went to Germany, and he spent the rest of his life collecting materials about the revolution, including the papers of many of his Menshevik comrades. Hoover purchased this collection in the 1960s. It's about four hundred boxes of materials on the Russian Communist Party and its leaders, including a large section of Leon Trotsky's papers, including his correspondence, and, quite interestingly, the manuscript of Trotsky's classic work, *The Russian Revolution,* in his own handwriting.

"In one sense, we were lucky. In another sense, we took advantage of the luck that was presented to us."

And so, by the 1990s, when my project began, Hoover's Russian collection was one of the most renowned collections in the world outside of Russia.

A LONG-AWAITED OPENING

Movroydis: The fall of the Soviet Union gave Hoover a chance to acquire ten million pages of Soviet documents. How did this opportunity arise?

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PASSPORT

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

I, the undersigned, Secretary of State of the United States of America, hereby request all whom it may concern to permit

Ralph A. Lutz

a citizen of the United States, safely and freely to pass and in case of need to give him all lawful Aid and Protection.

This passport is valid for use only in the following countries and for objects specified, unless amended.

All Countries — Study and travel

NAME OF COUNTRY — OBJECT OF VISIT

The bearer is accompanied by

Given under my hand and the seal of the Department of State at the City of Washington, the 17th day of May in the year 1924 and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and forty-eighth.

Charles E. Hughes

SEAL

This is to certify that the attached photograph bears the signature and is a likeness of the person to whom this passport was issued. In witness whereof the seal of the Department of State is impressed upon the photograph.

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

Age 37 years
Height 5 ft 8½ in
Forehead medium
Eyes gray
Nose straight
Distinguishing marks
Place of birth Circleville, Ohio
Date of birth May 18, 1886
Occupation professor

Mouth medium
Chin regular
Hair brown
Complexion ruddy
Face round

Ralph A. Lutz
SIGNATURE OF BEARER

PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER

No. 418724

Palm: In one sense, we were lucky. In another sense, we took advantage of the luck that was presented to us. The first bit of luck came in May of 1991, three months before the coup that precipitated the collapse of the Soviet Union. I had learned that Boris Yeltsin's archivist, Rudolf G. Pikhoia, was visiting the United States. At that time, Yeltsin represented the reformed democratic forces in Russia. He was speaker of the Supreme Soviet, the parliament of the Russian Republic, which was one of the fifteen republics that made up the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev was still in power. I thought that it would be interesting to bring Yeltsin's archivist to Hoover, so I extended an invitation and he came. We made friends instantly.

"Suddenly, there was a great desire and impetus to open up Russia to the West and to the values of the West. This meant transparency."

He was very much unlike the Soviet archival officials we had dealt with in the past. He was expansive; he was interesting. He was reform-minded. He was an academic. He was not a Soviet official, and he was interested in doing some things with us. So, we proposed some modest projects. One would be a joint exhibit, and another was a project to create some cataloging records of his materials and enter these descriptions into our bibliographical database. A third one was to do some exchanges of materials. At that time, he didn't control very many interesting archives.

All the Soviet party archives, and all of the Soviet Union government archives, were still under control of Soviet archivists and were very much closed to everybody. But we thought it might be useful someday to have that contact, and so we made it. Well, three months later, everything suddenly changed.

The hard-liners in the Soviet government staged a coup against Gorbachev, and the Yeltsin people, to their great credit, showed bravery and resisted, occupying the Russian Republic parliament building. And our new friend Pikhoia was in that building at the time of the coup, along with a couple hundred resisters. There were tanks in the streets. The coup leaders tried to

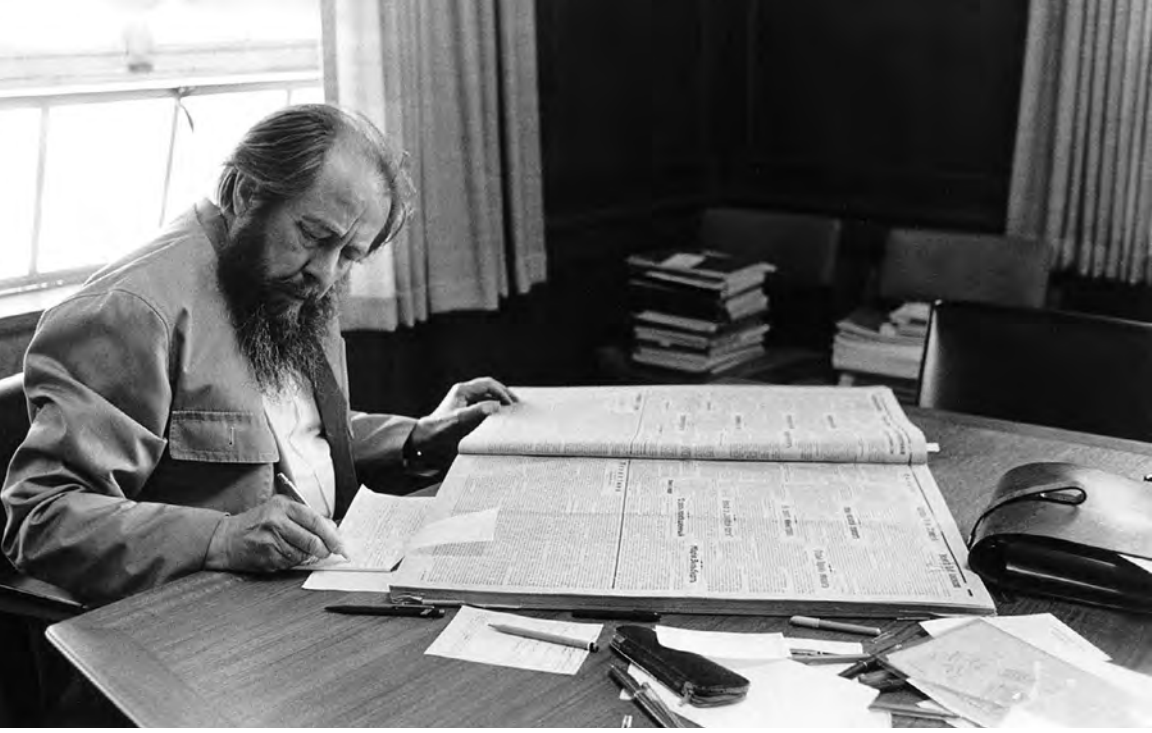
IN PURSUIT: Ralph Lutz (facing page), chairman of the Hoover Library's board of directors in 1925–43, was among the collectors scouring postwar Europe for significant records and helping to build Hoover's extensive Russia holdings. [Hoover Institution Library & Archives]


Boumoff
Paris

***PURGED: After its initial acquisitions in the 1990s, Hoover was able to copy a vast trove of records connected to the Gulag, the Soviet Union's system of forced-labor camps. Russian poet Osip Mandelstam (1891–1938), shown above, was among the 1.7 million people who died in the Gulag. Hoover archivists collaborated with their Russian counterparts to produce a seven-volume work titled* The History of Stalin's Gulag.** [Wikimedia Commons]

dispose of Yeltsin, but the soldiers would not fire on him. The coup collapsed, and Yeltsin eventually took over the government. He immediately assigned Pikhoia the task of seizing the Communist Party headquarters and all its archives. By acting quickly, they saved countless documents from certain destruction. Then, once he had gained full control of the government, he put Pikhoia in charge of all the Soviet archives. Not just the party archives, but the records of the State. All of a sudden, Pikhoia was the man to see in Moscow for Soviet archives.

LAST ONE OUT: Vasily Maklakov (facing page) was the key to the rescue of the Okhrana archives and the diplomatic papers of imperial Russia's embassy in Paris. When France recognized the Soviet Union in 1924, Maklakov hid the Okhrana files instead of destroying them or turning them over to the Soviet government. [Boris I. Nicolaevsky collection—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]



THE MISSION: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, author of* The Gulag Archipelago, *famously visited Hoover's Russian collections during a 1975 visit. He immersed himself in the archives for several days, remarking, "I look forward to utilizing your special collections and library materials for the rest of my life." Hundreds of scholars have mined Hoover's materials in a quest to understand and describe the Soviet system. [Chuck Painter—Stanford News Service]

Why did the Yeltsin government want to open up and publish these archives? There were several motivations. First, Yeltsin's political enemies were now the old Soviet establishment and the old Soviet Communist Party. They were his opposition. So why not open up their archives? Another motivation was that suddenly there was a great desire and impetus to open up Russia to the West and to the values of the West. This meant transparency, facing your history and dealing with your history, as tragic as it might be, and becoming a free nation. They were truly interested and committed to becoming more of a democratic and freedom-loving country.

Of course, every archivist wants to take steps to preserve the materials in his or her custody. This was a third motivation. The accepted method for preserving records on paper at that time was to microfilm them. Microfilm, if you do it right and store the microfilm properly, will last several hundred years. Paper, especially paper that's full of acid, won't last a hundred years.

You look at newspapers: they all crumble apart. You have to take steps to preserve your collection, and the Russians were interested in doing that. One of the benefits of our project was to give them a preservation microfilm copy of their records.

Movroydis: There were other big institutions, as well as international archives, interested in the newly opened Soviet archives. How did the Hoover Institution prevail?

Palm: Every major competitor of ours, including publishers, was interested in getting into these records. The records constituted one of the most important collections of secret records in the world, and they were just now being opened. The competition came down to Hoover and the Library of Congress, which had a partnership with a microfilm publisher named Research Publications International, a subsidiary of the Thomson Corporation (now Thomson Reuters), a giant media company. A large corporation allied with a major federal repository—the Library of Congress—against little old Hoover Institution and its handful of donors. So, why did Pikhoia pick us?

First, we have had a very strong reputation as one of the major repositories of Russian materials outside Russia. Our collections on Russia are stronger than those of any other institution in the United States, with the possible exception of Harvard or Columbia. A second factor, I think, was the way we went about the competition. When I went to Moscow in November 1991, after the coup, I did not immediately propose a large, expansive program that would have scared them away. What I started with was two smaller projects that would directly and immediately benefit them. One was the joint exhibit we talked about earlier, which would bring some of their archivists out to California. Who can turn down a trip to California? The other was the digital project, which would get them computer equipment. They were very interested in getting computers, which they didn't have. They could see this was a direct and immediate benefit to them and wouldn't cost them anything or expose them to public criticism. It was a way to break the ice and get them comfortable with us.

"What I started with was two smaller projects that would directly and immediately benefit them. . . . Who can turn down a trip to California?"

Then I invited Pikhoia to the Hoover Institution Board of Overseers meeting that was going to be held in Washington in January 1992. I put him on our

program as a speaker, along with the likes of General Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, and members of Congress. I wanted him to come see Hoover in action. It also gave me an opportunity to introduce him to some of our major donors, and for our donors and overseers to meet him. This project could not have been successful without Pikhoia liking us and our board liking him.

"One of the first questions I got from a Russian journalist was, how much did I bribe Pikhoia to get him to sign our agreement?"

Toward the end of that meeting, I proposed a major copying project, not a small one. And because of the early efforts, he trusted me. He trusted Hoover. I also had a chance to raise some money for the project at that meeting: I was quickly able to raise $3 million in pledges. Pikhoia saw that we had the resources to undertake a major project, and that we had the political clout to protect it if needed.

The third factor, as we were going over the package we were offering to them, I saved till the last: in return for all of the microfilm reels of archives that they were going to produce for us, we would give them microfilm copies of all of our Russian collection. That transformed a project between unequals—between the "rich" Hoover Institution and the "needy" Russian government—into one of equals. Equal exchange, one reel from them, one reel from us. Moreover, it was an offer no other competitor could match. At that point, Pikhoia reached across the table and shook my hand.

MORE INVALUABLE FINDS

Movroydis: Were there political forces on the Russian side who wanted to see this project stopped?

Palm: Well, when we concluded the agreement in April 1992, all the political forces were on our side. Yeltsin was strongly in power. Obviously, the old residue of the Communist Party didn't like what we were doing. Pikhoia and Yeltsin had seized their archives and now were opening them up to the world. We had some immediate media pushback. For example, when we announced this project, one of the first questions I got from a Russian journalist was, how much did I bribe Pikhoia to get him to sign our agreement? That was the attitude of those who didn't like to see rich Americans coming into their country and taking advantage of the situation, as they saw it. Now, of course, we didn't bribe anybody and nobody asked us for a bribe.

Opposition was not a serious problem until December 1995, when the Yeltsin government, after a year or so of difficult economic and political setbacks, lost the Duma election. The resurging Communist Party won a plurality of seats, so obviously that was a threat to the Yeltsin government and to Pikhoia. Within his organization, which included dozens of repositories and many administrators, some resentment had built up against him, and those who resented him used this political weakness against him. The next month, I got a letter from Pikhoia telling me that he had to end the project, saying he no longer could protect it within his own organization, in the government, or among the broader Russian public. I went to Moscow to try to create some possibilities for the future. I knew we probably were facing the end of the agreement, but I wanted to end it on a friendly note, not a note of enmity.

When I met Pikhoia and his colleagues in Moscow, I proposed that Hoover would let them keep their equipment, that we would continue to pay royalties, and that we would meet our promise of giving them microfilm copies of Hoover's collection. All they had to do was join us in a press release announcing the end of the project on friendly terms, mutually agreeable terms, and their intention to start a new negotiation. This we did. Sadly, Pikhoia resigned shortly afterward. I knew we had probably lost him. He was an excellent partner and was committed to the project, and he protected it during those early years.

"We were in Russia twelve years—1992 to 2004. We microfilmed ten million pages onto 11,817 reels of microfilm, a massive amount of material."

Shortly after that difficult January meeting, our luck changed. In June, Yeltsin won re-election as president of Russia. The second bit of good luck was that one of the repositories—three had participated in the first part of this agreement—was friendly to us. It was headed by Sergei Mironenko, who was in charge of the repository that held the records of the Gulag, which clearly were of interest to us. Negotiations took place with him and his repository, and we eventually concluded an agreement. It led to the microfilming of three million pages of Gulag materials. These records were very, very important, particularly for two reasons. The first is that they covered practically the whole expanse of the Soviet Union from 1918 to 1960. The second is that the Gulag was "the quintessential expression of Soviet communism," as Anne Applebaum has described it in her history. So, even though

the first agreement came to an end, we were able to conclude a new one and continued filming all the way to the end.

We were in Russia twelve years—1992 to 2004. We microfilmed ten million pages onto 11,817 reels of microfilm, a massive amount of material. If you stacked up ten million pages, it would be the height of six and a half Washington monuments.

Movroydis: How have scholars used this collection and what do you think is its legacy at the Hoover Institution?

Palm: Hundreds of scholars have come here and worked on many different subjects. As I expected, the collection supports research into the nature of the communist system. The publications include several by Paul Gregory, a Hoover research fellow. Paul came to Hoover especially to work on this collection, and he has organized teams of young scholars to go through it and examine the Soviet system. Several books have come from that effort. Other interesting work has been done by an emeritus professor at the University of Warwick, Mark Harrison, who has published research into the Soviet police state. His most recent book, *Secret Leviathan,* shows how secrecy within the Soviet organization was detrimental to how it functioned. That was another study of the system as a system. There have been many others, including that of Anne Applebaum, who used Hoover materials for her Pulitzer Prize–winning book on the Gulag. In addition to the microfilms of the Gulag archives, the State Archive of the Russian Federation and Hoover published a seven-volume work titled *The History of Stalin's Gulag,* with forewords by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and another Hoover fellow, the late Robert Conquest. Solzhenitsyn, author of *The Gulag Archipelago,* had previously immersed himself in the Hoover archives for several days in 1975, remarking, "I look forward to utilizing your special collections and library materials for the rest of my life."

One scholar, no longer with us, who I think would be especially pleased by what we did was Merle Fainsod, author of a classic 1953 work called *How Russia Is Ruled* (revised, 1963), precisely the kind of work that I was interested in finding documentation for. He had access to émigré and published materials, but he lacked access to the records themselves. Scholars have been arguing about Fainsod's analysis of the Soviet system from the time he published his book until today. Now we have the records that can verify, or not, the theories he set forth.

Movroydis: Do you feel personal satisfaction from leading this project?

Palm: When I first saw the long rows of steel shelving holding the Soviet archives back in 1991, I realized that we were in a position to fulfill the mission set forth by Herbert Hoover. One of the fundamental aspects of that mission was to document the ideologies, including communism, that threatened and menaced democratic values. In the project we undertook in Russia during the 1990s, I think we were able to accomplish the mission that he had set for us. ◘

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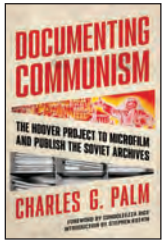

New from the Hoover Institution Press is ***Documenting Communism: The Hoover Project to Microfilm and Publish the Soviet Archives,*** *by Charles G. Palm. To order, call (800) 888-4741 or visit www.hooverpress.org.*

On the Cover

Artist Michael Ramus (1917–2005), commissioned to portray one of the US Army's "239 kinds of jobs for women" during World War II, chose to depict a woman repairing a radio in 1944. On her uniform is the insignia of the Army Service Forces, a vast organization that was one of three autonomous components of the wartime Army. Similar posters depicted women as cartographers, photographers, telegraphers, and weather observers, and in many other roles—but not combat. As in the Great War, women's work was vital, but in a prophetic remark from the World War I era, when women also were recruited for war work, "for them there is small hope of medals and citations and glittering homecoming parades."

According to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, "More than six million women took wartime jobs in factories, three million volunteered with the Red Cross, and over 200,000 served in the military." As the museum points out, those were not just Rosie the Riveters and file clerks. Women "drove trucks, repaired airplanes, worked as laboratory technicians, rigged parachutes, served as radio operators, analyzed photographs, flew military aircraft across the country, test-flew newly repaired planes, and even trained anti-aircraft artillery gunners by acting as flying targets." A teenage Marilyn Monroe did her part, building target drones in Burbank.

As a Khan Academy course mentions, "Others worked as chemists and engineers, developing weapons for the war. This included thousands of women who were recruited to work on the Manhattan Project, developing the atomic bomb." But women's work was not men's work; a sort of official femininity remained in force. "Keeping American women looking their best was believed to be important for morale," Khan points out.

Another well-known poster of the times shows a solemn WAVES officer—neat coif, polished nails—listening to Morse signals under a banner that says, "It's a woman's war, too."

Many women were in fact told the opposite. They faced discrimination, harassment, and the reality that their jobs would go away when the war ended and the men came home. At the same time, they benefited from the

adventure, skills, and independence gained in industry and the military—not to mention the pay. Millions had never earned wages before.

In 1945 and after, great numbers of women did return to civilian life, both willingly and unwillingly. At the same time, economic growth drew many into peacetime work, though they struggled for equal pay and respect, and in some fields, still do.

The military took its own steps: the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, greater roles and authority in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, a 1967 presidential decree saying women could be generals and admirals, another in 1972 allowing them to command units including men. Eventually they were fighter pilots and combat troops, and then there would be no retreat. As the National World War II Museum points out, "women are the fastest-growing veteran group, numbering two million nationwide."

—Charles Lindsey

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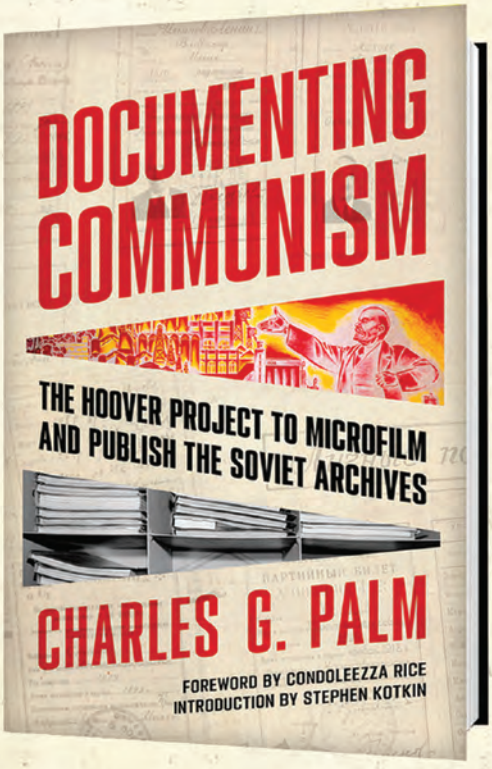
DOCUMENTING COMMUNISM

The Hoover Project to Microfilm and Publish the Soviet Archives

by Charles G. Palm



A memoir of the project to microfilm and publish ten million pages of Soviet Archives, bringing worldwide access to a Russian history that had been closed for nearly a century.

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