

CHINA'S IMPERIAL PRESIDENT

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014

# FOREIGN AFFAIRS



**What  
Have We  
Learned?**

**Lessons From  
Afghanistan & Iraq**

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014 • VOLUME 93 • NUMBER 6 • WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

# FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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# FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Volume 93, Number 6

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Archibald Cary Coolidge, Founding Editor  
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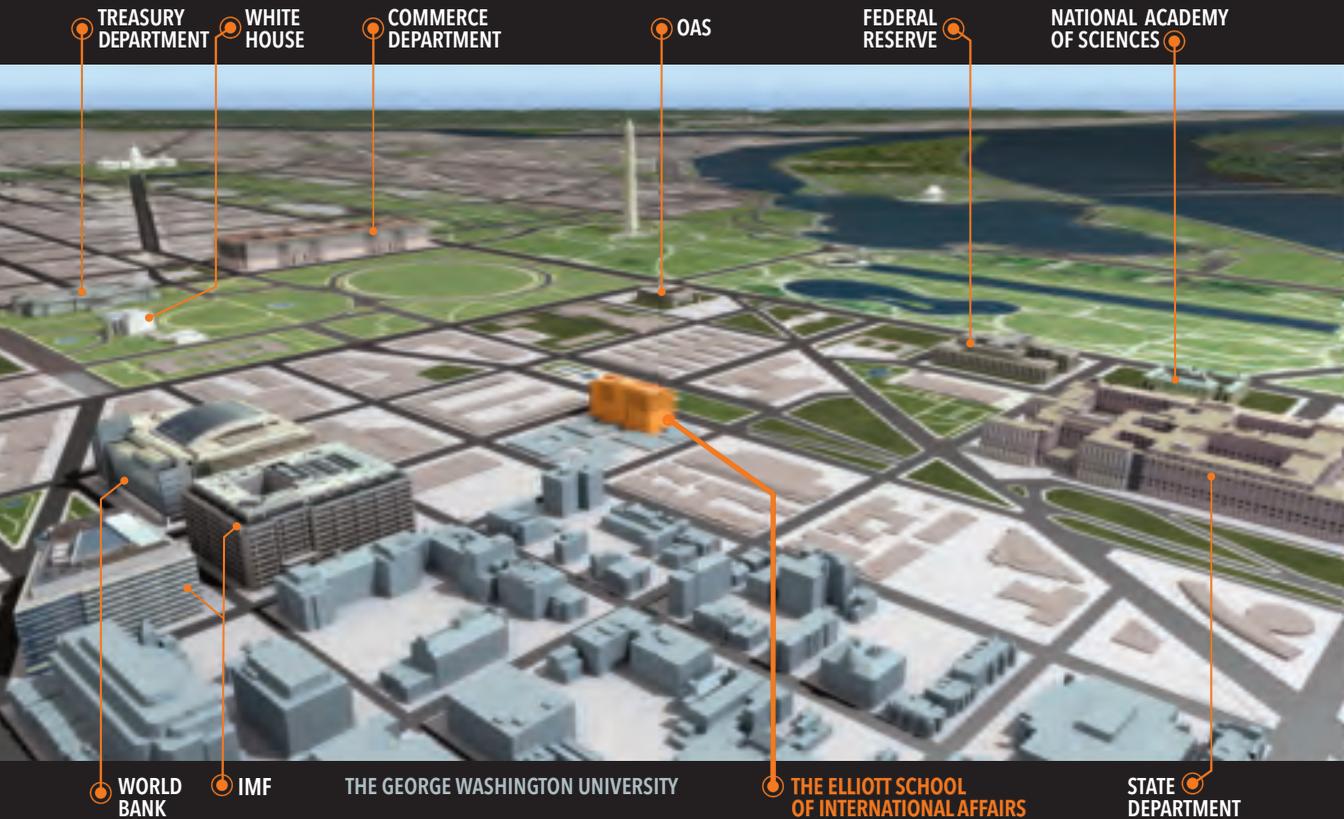
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## CONTRIBUTORS

**RICK BRENNAN** served as a senior adviser to the U.S. military leadership in Iraq from 2006 to 2011, getting a firsthand look at U.S. policy from the Bush administration's surge to the Obama administration's withdrawal. A former U.S. Army officer with a Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles, Brennan is now a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation. In "Withdrawal Symptoms" (page 25), he argues that the mishandling of the U.S. exit from Iraq has contributed to the country's current problems and that similar troubles might surface in Afghanistan if Washington makes the same mistakes.



Now the director for Asia studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, **ELIZABETH ECONOMY** started her career analyzing the Soviet Union before switching to China. Her first book, *The River Runs Black*, sounded the alarm on China's environmental crisis. Her latest, *By All Means Necessary* (co-authored with Michael Levi), examines China's quest for natural resources. In "China's Imperial President" (page 80), she describes how Xi Jinping is expanding his control over all areas of Chinese policy.



**MICHAEL FROMAN** became the U.S. trade representative in June 2013, but he first worked for Barack Obama back in the early 1990s—when Froman was an editor at the *Harvard Law Review* and Obama was its president. Later, Froman served in the Clinton administration at the National Security Council and the Treasury Department. Today, Froman is negotiating two massive trade pacts—one spanning the Atlantic and the other the Pacific. In "The Strategic Logic of Trade" (page 111), he argues that those agreements could vastly expand global trade.



At age 19, **JAMES CUNO** found his way to Paris, where an impromptu visit to the Louvre launched a lifelong passion for museums. After getting his Ph.D. from Harvard (writing his dissertation on nineteenth-century French caricature), he directed the Harvard Art Museums; the Courtauld Institute of Art, in London; and the Art Institute of Chicago. He now heads the J. Paul Getty Trust, which includes the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Foundation. In "Culture War" (page 119), Cuno makes the case for so-called encyclopedic museums, arguing that in addition to housing artifacts, they also spread cosmopolitan ideals.



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# A Hard Education

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## Learning From Afghanistan and Iraq

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*Gideon Rose and  
Jonathan Tepperman*

**A**fter 13 years of war, the loss of many thousands of lives, and the expenditure of trillions of dollars, what has the United States learned? The answer depends on not only who is asking but when. The story of the Iraq war would have different endings, and morals, if told in 2003, 2006, 2011, or 2014, and it will continue to evolve. As for Afghanistan, the narrative there has also shifted over time, and the ending also remains in doubt. Neither disaster has been unmitigated. But few would argue that Washington's approach to either has been a success worth emulating. So the most important question today is what can be learned from the failures.

Two of our authors, Max Boot and Richard Betts, offer starkly different answers. Boot argues that even though Washington is fed up with counterinsurgencies, it will still end up waging more of them down the road, and so should focus on learning how to fight them better. Betts, by contrast, thinks Washington should go in the opposite direction: fighting fewer and more traditional wars

and avoiding getting entangled in the domestic politics of chaotic countries on the strategic periphery.

Rick Brennan, for his part, argues that even the best planning is worthless if not ably executed and updated as conditions change. Iraq's current turmoil, he writes, is the predictable result of the United States' premature exit, and he worries that a similar fate awaits Afghanistan.

As the world grapples with the medieval brutality of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS, meanwhile, many in the United States and Europe have begun panicking at the thought that battle-hardened Western-born jihadists may return to unleash havoc at home. Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro argue that such fears are overblown: as the last decade has shown, the threat of such blowback is often overhyped. Returning jihadists do pose dangers, they explain, but familiar and manageable ones.

Rounding out our package, Peter Tomsen assesses a new crop of books on the war in Afghanistan. These works help explain why, despite all of the West's efforts, that country's future remains up for grabs, and Tomsen, like Brennan, worries that Afghanistan could slide back into full-scale civil war unless it gets serious and sustained help from Washington.

Embarking on the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq more than a decade ago, U.S. officials basked in their power and brimmed with self-confidence. They never dreamed that, all these years later, their humbled successors would still be grappling with the same basic questions of whether and how to secure and stabilize those lands. We can only hope that current and future policymakers can learn from the mistakes and leave a better legacy. 🌍

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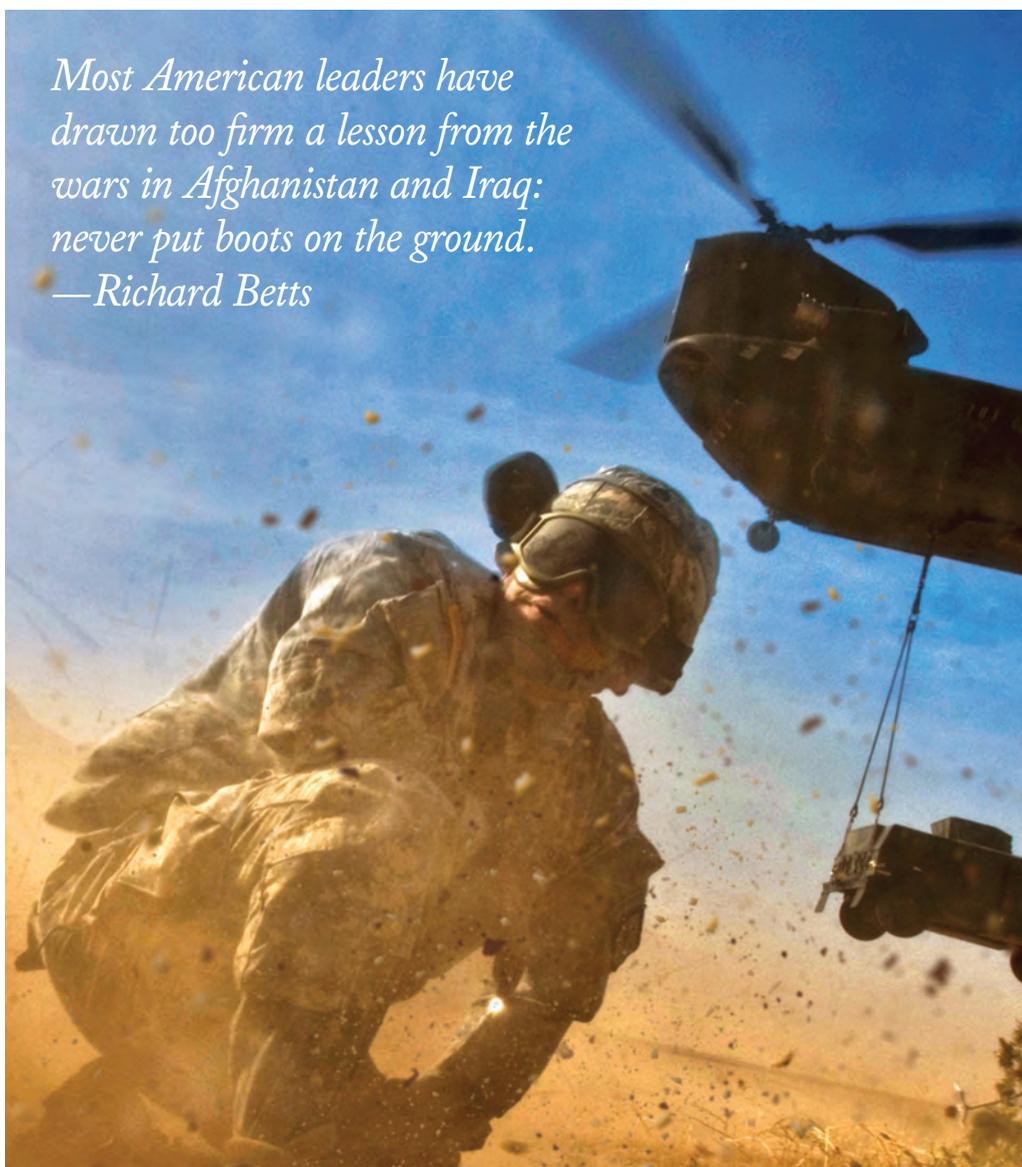
**GIDEON ROSE** is Editor of *Foreign Affairs*.

**JONATHAN TEPPERMAN** is Managing Editor of *Foreign Affairs*.

# LESSONS FROM A DECADE OF WAR

*Most American leaders have drawn too firm a lesson from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: never put boots on the ground.*

*—Richard Betts*



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. MICHAEL R. HOLZWORTH

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# More Small Wars

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## Counterinsurgency Is Here to Stay

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*Max Boot*

**A**lthough the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are far from the costliest the United States has ever fought in terms of either blood or treasure, they have exacted a much greater toll than the relatively bloodless wars Americans had gotten used to fighting in the 1990s. As of this writing, 2,344 U.S. troops have been killed in Afghanistan and 4,486 in Iraq, and tens of thousands more have been injured. The financial costs reach into the trillions of dollars.

Yet despite this investment, the returns look meager. Sunni extremists from the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State, and Shiite extremists beholden to Iran have divided the non-Kurdish parts of Iraq between them. Meanwhile, the Taliban and the Haqqani network remain on the offensive in Afghanistan. Given how poorly things have turned out, it would be tempting to conclude that the United States should simply swear off such irregular conflicts for good.

If only a nation as powerful and vulnerable as the United States had the

option of defining exactly which types of wars it wages. Reality, alas, seldom cooperates. Over the centuries, U.S. presidents of all political persuasions have found it necessary to send troops to fight adversaries ranging from the Barbary pirates to Filipino *insurrectos* to Haitian *cacos* to Vietnamese communists to Somali warlords to Serbian death squads to Taliban guerrillas to al Qaeda terrorists. Unlike traditional armies, these enemies seldom met U.S. forces in the open, which meant that they could not be defeated quickly. To beat such shadowy foes, American troops had to undertake the time-intensive, difficult work of what's now known as counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and nation building.

There is little reason to think the future will prove any different, since conflict within states continues to break out far more frequently than conflict among states. Although the world has not seen a purely conventional war since the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, more than 30 countries—including Colombia, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and Ukraine, to name a few—now find themselves fighting foes that rely on guerrilla or terrorist tactics. One such conflict, the civil war in Syria, has killed over 170,000 people since 2011. Given how many of these conflicts involve U.S. allies or interests, it is wishful thinking to imagine that Washington can stay aloof. Indeed, President Barack Obama himself, who campaigned against the war in Iraq, has been compelled to fight again there because of the threat from ISIS.

Even if the United States does not send substantial numbers of ground troops to another war anytime soon, it

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**MAX BOOT** is Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare From Ancient Times to the Present*. Follow him on Twitter @MaxBoot.

will surely remain involved in helping its allies fight conflicts similar to those in Afghanistan and Iraq, and as has become clear in recent months, it will stay involved in Afghanistan and Iraq, too. Since Washington doesn't have the luxury of simply avoiding insurgencies, then, the best strategy would be to fight them better. Drawn from more than a decade of war, here are ten lessons for how to do so, which U.S. policymakers, soldiers, diplomats, and spies should keep in mind as they try to deal with the chaotic conflicts to come.

### THE BEST-LAID PLANS

The first lesson may sound like a no-brainer, but it has been routinely ignored: plan for what comes after the overthrow of a regime. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the George W. Bush administration failed to adequately prepare for what the military calls "Phase IV," the period after immediate victory—an oversight that allowed law and order to break down in both countries and insurgencies to metastasize. Yet Obama, despite his criticism of Bush's conduct of the Iraq war, repeated the same mistake in Libya. In 2011, U.S. and NATO forces helped rebels topple Muammar al-Qaddafi but then did very little to help the nascent Libyan government establish control of its own territory. As a result, Libya remains riven by militias, which have plunged the country into chaos. Just this past July—almost two years after U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens was killed in Benghazi—the State Department had to evacuate its entire embassy staff from Tripoli after fighting there reached the airport.

This is not a problem confined to Bush or Obama. The United States has

a long tradition of bungling the conclusions to wars, focusing on narrow military objectives while ignoring the political end state that troops are supposed to be fighting for. This inattention made possible the persecution of freed slaves and their white champions in the South after the American Civil War, the eruption of the Philippine insurrection after the Spanish-American War, the rise of the Nazis in Germany and the Communists in Russia after World War I, the invasions of South Korea and South Vietnam after World War II, and the impetus for the Iraq war after the Gulf War. Too often, U.S. officials have assumed that all the United States has to do is get rid of the bad guys and the postwar peace will take care of itself. But it simply isn't so. Generating order out of chaos is one of the hardest tasks any country can attempt, and it requires considerable preparation of the kind that the U.S. military undertook for the occupation of Germany and Japan after 1945—but seldom did before and has seldom done since.

### THINK AGAIN

An equally important lesson is to challenge rosy assumptions during the course of a conflict. Following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the Bush administration opted for the smallest possible footprint in Iraq. The faster U.S. forces pulled out and the more elections Iraqis held, they reasoned, the more likely Iraqis would be to take responsibility for their own problems. This strategy was plausible—and wrong. By the end of 2005, at the latest, Bush; his secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld; and the commander of coalition forces



*Same old story: a U.S. soldier and a Vietcong fighter, South Vietnam, October 1966*

in Iraq, General George Casey, should have known that their strategy was failing. Yet Bush did not reevaluate it until the end of 2006, at the 11th hour, when defeat was imminent. Rumsfeld and Casey never seemed to reevaluate it at all.

The same pathology afflicted U.S. division, brigade, and battalion commanders, who always seemed convinced that they were making progress in their areas of operations. On regular visits to Iraq from 2003 on, I never heard someone giving a brief say the situation was getting worse; commanders invariably painted a picture of challenges that were being overcome. (The usual subtext: “The previous unit in this area really screwed things up, but we’ve got it headed in the right direction.”) It’s not as if alternative assessments were hard to come by: all you had to do was pick up *The New York Times* or *The Washington*

*Post* to find out that Iraq was degenerating into civil war. Many lower-level soldiers even admitted as much privately. But those higher up in the chain of command dismissed bad news as mere data points that failed to capture the hidden progress Iraq was supposedly making.

The Bush administration’s political commitment to the Iraq war was partly to blame, since it blinded decision-makers to evidence that their initiatives were failing. Likewise, generals developed an emotional attachment to the strategies they implemented. The Pentagon’s can-do culture also got in the way. The U.S. military’s greatest virtues—its commitment to following orders, its unwillingness to accept excuses for failure, its insistence on achieving objectives no matter the obstacles—are also its greatest vulnerabilities. They can make it hard for junior soldiers to tell their superiors

uncomfortable truths (or even to think such dangerous thoughts).

The success of the “surge” in Iraq started with the willingness of General David Petraeus, who was named commander of coalition forces in Iraq in early 2007, to acknowledge that the war was in danger of being lost. With an additional 30,000 troops, he put in place a new, and ultimately more successful, strategy that focused on protecting the population. To get an accurate picture of events on the ground, Petraeus bypassed the chain of command and sought information directly from junior soldiers and civilian experts, including reporters and think tankers. The military needs to institutionalize a similar culture of second-guessing (or “red teaming”) and regularly seek outside information in order to escape the tyranny of yes men in the chain of command.

### STRATEGIC STAFFING

The United States also needs to cultivate better strategic thinkers in both the military and the civilian spheres. The country’s best and brightest made mistakes in Afghanistan and Iraq that were just as monumental as the ones famously made by their predecessors in Vietnam. A decade of war exposed the flaws of experienced, highly credentialed civilians, such as Vice President Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld, Paul Bremer (the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq), and Richard Holbrooke (the special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan); of equally experienced and equally credentialed military officers, such as Casey, Tommy Franks, Ricardo Sanchez, John Abizaid, and David McKiernan; and of a few officers turned senior civilians, such as Karl

Eikenberry (the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan).

Petraeus and Ryan Crocker, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq who led the civilian side of the surge in 2007–8, represent two of the very few senior officials to emerge from the wars with their reputations improved. That’s because they exhibited a rare quality in the U.S. military: strategic acumen. Not even General Stanley McChrystal, who achieved legendary status for his success in running the Joint Special Operations Command, was able to make the transition to a theater-level commander in Afghanistan; he was forced to resign in 2010 after his staff made impolitic comments to a *Rolling Stone* reporter.

It’s no coincidence that Petraeus and Crocker also had unusual backgrounds. Unlike most generals, Petraeus did not attend a war college for midcareer studies; he got a Ph.D. in international relations from Princeton instead. Crocker, too, did graduate studies at Princeton. He also spent time as a truck driver, a construction worker, a bartender, a caddy, and a waiter, and he once hitchhiked from Amsterdam to Calcutta. “It nearly killed me but gave me a view of the region that no diplomat will ever get,” he told me. Obviously, the Pentagon cannot mandate that all its future leaders spend time driving taxis, attend Ivy League schools, or travel across Eurasia. But it should encourage up-and-comers to pursue diverse experiences rather than follow a well-trodden path. And it should abandon its practice of promoting officers on the basis of their operational excellence alone and also consider their strategic intelligence.

## TRAINING DAY

Another lesson the Pentagon should take to heart is the importance of training for more than just short conventional operations. The U.S. government ran into trouble in Afghanistan and Iraq in large part because it simply was not set up to do nation building and counterinsurgency. When it became clear after Saddam's downfall in April 2003 that Iraq wouldn't automatically govern itself, the job was given first to the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and then to the Coalition Provisional Authority—both ludicrously ill prepared for the monumental challenges they faced. Whereas military units train for years to take down regimes like Saddam's, their civilian counterparts had at most a few weeks to prepare for the much more difficult task of governing a foreign land.

The situation wasn't much better in Afghanistan. Although a provisional government formed within just weeks after the Taliban's downfall, it enjoyed tenuous authority. President Hamid Karzai was in practice little more than the mayor of Kabul, yet the Bush administration and the U.S. military did not consider it their job to extend his authority. The result was a power vacuum, which was filled by corrupt warlords and a resurgent Taliban. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. military's narrow focus on hunting down insurgents, rather than denying them a *raison d'être*, engendered more support for them because it resulted in the imprisonment or death of so many innocent individuals.

Through trial and error, the U.S. military learned to wage counterinsurgency and build functional states rather than simply conduct firepower-intensive

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operations. Yet there is a real danger it could lose that expertise as it lays off veterans due to budget cuts and returns to its real passion: preparing for conventional wars that never quite arrive. It is not comforting to learn, for example, that in October, the army shuttered the Army Irregular Warfare Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, which was set up in 2006 to reintroduce counterinsurgency into military thinking. Counterinsurgency needs to remain part of the military curriculum, and the Pentagon needs to issue a manual and inaugurate a school dedicated to governance. (A new institute devoted to the subject is just now being developed at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; a full-fledged school should have opened long ago.)

The civilian side is in even worse shape. For all the talk of a “civilian surge” in Afghanistan and Iraq, the State Department and other government agencies could never provide enough skilled personnel in such areas as governance and economic development to complement the military’s efforts; soldiers wound up filling many of the jobs. The problem is that no agency within the U.S. government views nation building as its assignment. The closest any comes is the U.S. Agency for International Development, but it has a nebulous mission and scant resources of its own. It is high time to revamp USAID, making it into an organization focused not on development for its own sake but on state building in countries of strategic concern, from Mali to Pakistan. As part of this shift, USAID should hire some of the soldiers the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps are laying off

who have considerable expertise in nation building.

### **SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

Preparing for nation building also requires the U.S. government to boost its cultural and linguistic skills. The biggest vulnerability for U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq was their lack of local knowledge, a problem made clear by an experience I had in an area southwest of Baghdad in August 2003. I was traveling with a group of marines when an improvised explosive device blew up near our convoy. While the marines searched for the culprit, an Iraqi man approached us and tried to tell us something, but he spoke no English and we spoke no Arabic. The military partially rectified this problem by hiring many interpreters and so-called cultural advisers, who could communicate with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq.

But those countries represent only two battlefields of many in the broader struggle against Islamist extremism. Today, the U.S. government is as deficient in cultural and linguistic knowledge about Iran, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria as it once was about Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States simply doesn’t have many soldiers, diplomats, or intelligence officers who are fluent in such languages as Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, and Urdu, to say nothing of the local dialects spoken throughout much of Africa and South Asia. And it’s not just a question of knowing foreign languages; even more important in many ways is a country’s power structures, customs, and mindsets.

The U.S. Army’s decision in 2012 to create regionally aligned brigades, each one focused on a particular part of the world, counts as a small step in the right direction,

but it's doubtful that most troops will have much time or energy to devote to cultural and language studies, given the countless other tasks they must perform. To make matters worse, the army's policy of non-stop rotations means that soldiers rarely stay in one unit or one region long enough to acquire true expertise.

The military does already have a corps of foreign area officers, who have regional expertise, but they rarely secure important command assignments. The Pentagon needs to mainstream these officers by giving them more credit for their expertise in the promotion and assignment process, and it should permit some of them to stay in hot spots for years, even decades, giving them a chance to gain knowledge and influence. Some of these volunteers should be foreign-born; the Pentagon needs to expand its Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest, or MAVNI, program, which allows immigrants who don't have green cards but do have needed skills to enlist. This initiative has brought in highly qualified soldiers, including Sergeant Saral Shrestha, a Nepalese immigrant whom the army named Soldier of the Year in 2012. But with just 1,500 slots a year (many of which are reserved for technical positions), MAVNI is far too small. The Pentagon should also create an organization dedicated to advising foreign counterparts—arguably the most important mission in the years ahead, but one that today often gets relegated to the lowest-rated officers who have been pulled out of regular combat formations.

#### **THE RIFLEMAN ON THE CORNER**

When facing future counterinsurgencies, the U.S. military also needs to learn that it cannot rely too much on high-tech

firepower and special operations forces. Afghanistan and Iraq laid bare the shortcomings of precision bombing, drone strikes, and commando raids. In Iraq, all these capabilities proved important, but none was sufficient to turn the tide; the situation didn't begin to improve until the U.S. military adopted a population-centric strategy in 2007. The same was true in Afghanistan, where it did not implement a counterinsurgency strategy until 2010. Before then, special operations raids had no lasting impact; new insurgents quickly replaced those captured or killed. Only after U.S. and Afghan forces entered the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar in massive numbers could they secure districts the Taliban had long controlled.

When it comes to enforcing regime change, there is still no replacement for a rifleman on a street corner. Drone strikes and raids can eliminate terrorist leaders, but they cannot uproot entire terrorist organizations. That requires controlling enough terrain to prevent insurgent organizations from regenerating themselves in the way that al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, and the Pakistani Taliban, among others, have after the loss of their leaders.

Yet the U.S. government is once again cutting ground forces and becoming overly reliant on drone strikes and special operations forces. In essence, policymakers are repeating the mistake Rumsfeld made before 9/11, when he openly contemplated cutting two divisions from the army—only now, they are slashing even more combat power. Congress needs to reverse the destructive decline in the number of active-duty soldiers, which, if the most drastic budget cuts take effect, could fall from a peak

of 570,000 in 2011 to as few as 420,000 over the next decade.

In the past decade, even 570,000 troops proved insufficient for coping with two limited conflicts against relatively primitive foes who lacked the high-tech weapons that future adversaries will likely wield. Were the number to drop to 420,000, the army would have trouble fighting even one ground war, given that less than one-third of all troops can be sent to battle at any given time (most of the others are either recovering from deployment or preparing for it). Fighting two wars at a time—once the gold standard of U.S. military strategy—would be utterly impossible. Those who think the United States will never fight another ground war should remember that many people thought the same after World War I—and then after World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War.

### **BASING INSTINCT**

The next lesson may seem to get into the weeds but in fact has high-level ramifications: don't let logistics drive strategy. The U.S. military created a massive logistical footprint in Afghanistan and Iraq, erecting a series of heavily fortified Little Americas that offered troops everything from ice cream to large-screen TVs. These compounds proved staggeringly expensive to resupply. In the summer of 2006, when both conflicts were going strong, U.S. Central Command had more than 3,000 trucks delivering supplies and another 2,400 delivering fuel to its bases, and these convoys had to be protected by either troops or contractors. The military thus became what soldiers sometimes called a "self-licking ice cream cone"—an

organization that fought to sustain itself rather than to achieve a mission.

It is doubtful that senior commanders ever gave much thought to these logistical requirements; they more or less operated on autopilot. Each base commander would bring in a few more amenities to make life better for the troops, a commendable impulse. But in the process, commanders not only created supply-line vulnerabilities but also cut off troops from the populace, neglecting an essential part of any successful counterinsurgency campaign. In the future, the Pentagon should resist the temptation to build up huge bases unless doing so accomplishes the objectives of the war.

### **MANAGING MERCENARIES**

Another specific yet vital lesson is that the U.S. government needs to exercise greater authority over contractors on the battlefield. After its post-Cold War downsizing, the military lacked enough troops to control both Afghanistan and Iraq. So the Pentagon relied heavily on contractors for everything from doing laundry at bases to protecting convoys. Although most were not armed, a significant minority were (16 percent of those in Afghanistan at the end of 2013), and they generated numerous complaints about their alleged abuses. Driving armored black SUVs, contractors frequently careened through towns in Afghanistan and Iraq, forcing civilian cars off the road and sometimes shooting at vehicles that got too close. The most notorious offender was Blackwater, whose employees killed 17 people in Baghdad's Nisour Square in 2007.

Although security contractors usually got the job done, sometimes heroically, the way their job was defined was itself

a problem. The U.S. government hired them to move goods or people from Point A to Point B, no matter the consequences. Unlike troops, who were told to win hearts and minds, contractors had virtual *carte blanche* to achieve their narrow objectives. They were effectively exempt from prosecution under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and even from lesser forms of discipline.

The inevitable result of setting loose all these armed, aggressive men was a series of abuses that harmed U.S. relations with the locals. Both Karzai and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki grew exercised about the contractors' behavior over time and threatened to kick them out. Congress reacted in 2004 by amending U.S. law to allow the prosecution of U.S. contractors by U.S. courts. So far, however, only 12 people have been charged under these statutes, including six Blackwater guards implicated in the Nisour Square shooting. One pled guilty, another had the charges against him dropped, and the remaining four went on trial in federal court in Washington, D.C., in the summer of 2014—a scandalous six years after their indictment.

Continued downsizing will mean that the military won't be able to stop relying on contractors in future conflicts. But it can control them better. One possible model is the way that U.S. commanders exercise authority over foreign troops. Just as the troops from contributing nations plug into a U.S.-led command structure, contractors could, too. In the future, the U.S. government should write its contracts differently. Security firms working for any branch of the U.S. government, including the State Department and USAID, and operating on a battlefield where the

U.S. military is present should fall under the operational control of a senior U.S. military officer who has the power to revoke their contracts and prosecute their employees in case of misdeeds.

### **PLAYING NICE TOGETHER**

Another lesson involves what the military calls "interoperability," the ability of various components to work together smoothly. One of the U.S. government's biggest successes in Afghanistan and Iraq was the improvements it made in getting U.S. forces to cooperate with foreign forces and getting different types of U.S. forces to cooperate with one another.

In particular, special operations and regular forces learned to work hand in hand after years of mutual resentment. During the Gulf War, General Norman Schwarzkopf looked at special operations forces with so much suspicion that he tried to keep them off the battlefield altogether. In the early years of Afghanistan and Iraq, many conventional commanders also complained about special operations forces entering their areas without permission and undertaking operations (such as a raid on an influential sheik) without considering how such actions might destroy carefully nurtured relationships.

Those problems never entirely went away, but by 2007, special operations forces (in particular, the elite members of the Joint Special Operations Command) came to occupy a central place in U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq, and their dealings with regular troops became far more harmonious. Relations between U.S. forces and allied ones also improved, even if Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom

continued to complain about Washington's proclivity to deny them the most sensitive intelligence—yet another area where there is room for improvement.

Some U.S. military commanders developed close relationships with their civilian advisers, but just as often, the relationships were antagonistic and dysfunctional. In the future, the conventional military and its civilian, foreign, and special operations counterparts must train together, which should help smooth their relations in the field.

### THE LONG HAUL

Finally, Washington must recognize that counterinsurgency and nation building take time. In Iraq, the United States had all but won by 2011, when U.S. troops had to leave because Obama failed to negotiate a new status-of-forces agreement, in part because he never made it a priority. Now, ISIS has gained control of a chunk of Syria and Iraq larger than the United Kingdom and declared a caliphate, and violence in Iraq has shot back to its 2008 level. A similar disaster could occur in Afghanistan if the United States pulls out completely in 2016, as Obama has pledged. In any given conflict, Washington needs to make a long-term commitment, as in Kosovo, where U.S. troops have been deployed since 1999. Otherwise, it shouldn't bother to get involved in the first place.

Skeptics argue that a fickle American public will never support long-term deployments of U.S. soldiers, and so serious counterinsurgency campaigns are a nonstarter. In fact, Americans have shown impressive patience with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which explains why the United States has remained involved in those conflicts

far longer than anyone initially imagined possible. The public may not be enthusiastic about these campaigns, but neither has the country seen protests of the scale it did during the Vietnam War.

The only time when either of the two recent wars became a major political issue was in 2006 and 2007, when U.S. fatalities in Iraq reached over 100 a month and the war looked lost. The one thing that the U.S. public won't tolerate is making sacrifices for a losing cause. But after the success of the surge, public opposition waned. Had Obama struck a status-of-forces agreement with Iraq in 2011, he would have faced no serious political obstacle to keeping thousands of troops there. Likewise, no political obstacle prevents him from keeping thousands of troops in Afghanistan past 2014, or even past 2016.

Some of these recommendations call for little more than new policies; others entail major changes in the institutional culture of the military and the broader U.S. government. None will be easy to implement; there will be fierce opposition on Capitol Hill to boosting defense spending or creating a nation-building agency, for example, and fierce opposition in the Pentagon to revising the military's personnel system or emphasizing culture and language as much as traditional war-fighting skills. And even if policy-makers take all these lessons to heart, they can hardly guarantee success in undertakings as grueling and complicated as counterinsurgency and nation building. But refusing to heed these lessons practically guarantees that the United States' future wars will, at best, succeed at a much higher cost than necessary—and, at worse, fail outright. 🌐

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# Pick Your Battles

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## Ending America's Era of Permanent War

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*Richard K. Betts*

**F**or more than a decade now, U.S. soldiers have been laboring under a sad paradox: even though the United States enjoys unprecedented global military dominance that should cow enemies mightily, it has found itself in constant combat for longer than ever before in its history, and without much to show for it. Of the U.S. military actions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, only the first can be counted a success.

Assessing this record is a particularly crucial task now, with U.S. defense policy caught between powerful opposing pressures. Frustration with unending war and with strong fiscal constraints has pushed public opinion sharply toward retrenchment. At the same time, frightening challenges in three critical regions are demanding yet more action: Islamic extremists have seized large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria, Russia has intervened in Ukraine, and China is flexing its muscles in East Asia. Washington faces a choice: Should it leave these endangered areas to their own fates, or double down on intervention to set them right?

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In deciding when to expend blood and treasure abroad, U.S. policymakers should learn from the United States' recent experience of war, but they must take care not to learn the lessons too well. Overconfidence from success can breed failure, and becoming gun-shy from failure can cause paralysis. For example, the U.S. military's stunningly quick, cheap, and sweeping victory in the 1991 Gulf War raised policymakers' expectations about what force could accomplish at low cost, causing them to underprepare and overreach when the United States invaded Iraq a second time. In a similar way, most American leaders have drawn too firm a lesson from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: never put boots on the ground. With the deployment of regular army units effectively ruled out, U.S. policymakers who still want to use force have been driven to options that involve airpower alone. That approach may make sense in places where the United States wants only to nudge a conflict in the right direction. But when the goal is to determine its outcome, airpower alone is insufficient.

Risky as pulling any lessons from recent experience may be, policymakers should start with the following. First, the United States should fight wars less frequently but more decisively, erring, when combat is necessary, on the side of committing too many forces rather than too few. Second, the country should avoid fighting in places where victory depends on controlling the politics of chaotic countries, since local politicians will rarely do what Americans want when that differs from their own aims. And third, Washington should give priority to first-order challenges, focusing its

military planning on fighting wars with great powers and focusing its diplomacy on preventing them.

### **SAY NO TO HALF MEASURES**

The United States' slide into perpetual war has made it clear that presidents should resist the urge to unleash U.S. combat power. Unconventional wars are not easily resolved, and all types of wars tend to require much more effort to win than originally anticipated.

When presidents do decide to use force, however, they should resist the urge to minimize it. Overwhelming force may not guarantee success in a ground war, but underwhelming force invites failure. Although President George H. W. Bush did not make the mistake of using military power indecisively, all his successors have. In 1999, the Clinton administration, in conjunction with NATO, launched air strikes against Yugoslavia, assuming that a few days of bombing would compel Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to allow NATO troops to administer Kosovo. But Milosevic refused, and so the United States and NATO found themselves in a prolonged campaign without an exit strategy. Only narrowly did Washington avert failure: by the time Milosevic conceded, months after the war had begun, the consensus among NATO members for continuing the campaign was on the verge of collapse. In 2003, President George W. Bush's secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, slashed the size of the force that military leaders had initially wanted for invading Iraq, dismissing the estimate of Eric Shinseki, then the army chief of staff, that it would take several hundred thousand troops to secure the country. The ensuing anarchy after

the fall of Baghdad killed any chance of forestalling the Sunni insurgency.

President Barack Obama made a similar mistake in Afghanistan. In 2009, he ramped up U.S. efforts there, but not as much as his military advisers had recommended. After haggling over the number of additional troops to send, the White House settled on 30,000, rather than the 40,000 that Pentagon leaders had requested. The result was a campaign that had less shock effect than it could have had, took a long time to unfold, and never was able to put simultaneous pressure on all the Taliban's strongholds. Limitation for limitation's sake is false economy. If Obama wanted to minimize the cost of combat in Afghanistan, he should have chosen the high-end option for a troop surge. It's hard to see how that course could have led to anything worse than what the smaller and slower commitment did.

Half measures are naturally tempting for politicians, whose instinct is to find a compromise between the level of military action foreign conflicts require and what skeptics at home will tolerate. They see the military's recommendations to commit massive forces as overly cautious insurance policies, and they overlook the risk that doing less will lead to stalemate rather than success. At least until the troop surge of 2007, four years of war in Iraq had resulted in stalemate, and after more than a dozen years, Afghanistan has still not moved into the win column.

Advocates of the light-footprint approach contend that a massive U.S. presence alienates locals and undermines the purpose of intervention. That's often true, but it does not make the case for light action. First, maximal force must

not be confused with indiscriminate targeting and increased collateral damage; rather, it means engaging the largest possible portion of enemy forces and territory at the same time to deny the enemy the ability to adjust to the pressure. Second, where a large U.S. footprint would indeed be counterproductive, Washington should simply stay out altogether, since there's every reason to believe that a smaller footprint would do no more than stretch out the same costs of full-scale combat on an installment plan while leading to the same end result.

#### **WHEN LESS FORCE WORKS**

Exercising restraint need not mean enshrining the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines—the set of rules about when the United States should go to war put forth by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger in the 1980s and added to by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell in the 1990s. These guidelines advise limiting military intervention to cases in which it is the last resort, enjoys widespread public support, would further a vital national interest, would entail overwhelming force, and meets other restrictive conditions.

Nor does restraint mean neglecting the many tools short of conventional combat that the United States can and should still use: diplomacy, economic aid, covert action, special operations forces, military-training assistance, intelligence sharing, and arms supplies. Few conflicts in the post-Cold War era are worth the cost of massive U.S. military action, even if successful. But when the goal is not to resolve local conflicts decisively but only to boost client governments or eliminate particular plotters, then it may be

appropriate for Washington to undertake limited actions. When they fail, the costs are as limited as the instruments.

Special operations forces, in particular, have assumed a much greater role than they used to have, and they now represent the primary military instrument in the fight against terrorism. They offer a way to act short of putting regular boots on the ground, and, as with airpower, they can be used and then withdrawn without admitting defeat. As a result, some strategists have promoted giving more and more missions to these forces, especially as deployments of regular forces are scaled back. Yet loading too many responsibilities onto special operations forces risks stretching them thin or diluting their quality by expanding their ranks. Moreover, special operations forces cannot function effectively or for very long unless they are supported by local logistical infrastructure for intelligence, supply, and transportation—and this requires visible bases and extra personnel, which end up raising the profile that these forces were supposed to reduce.

With the ground wars in Afghanistan and Iraq having left a bad taste in their mouths, U.S. policymakers might also turn naturally to airpower. Bombing does work better now than it used to, thanks to advances in precision-guided munitions, which allow faraway targets to be destroyed with little risk and low collateral damage. Airpower can serve a purely punitive function, as when U.S. forces bombed Libya in 1986 in retaliation for Muammar al-Qaddafi's attack on a Berlin disco. It can even work to tilt the balance between local forces, something the 2011 U.S. and NATO campaign against Qaddafi succeeded in doing. But the eventual outcome in Libya, with militias

battling for control of the country, has proved terrible. Airpower can destroy things, but it cannot guarantee who will inhabit the presidential palace after the bombs have stopped falling.

Airpower on its own holds little promise for achieving larger strategic ends. Consider the idea of conducting U.S. air strikes on Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Those who advocate that course offer no convincing reason to believe that the temporary benefit of delaying Tehran's development of a nuclear weapon would outweigh the costs of an attack: Iran would probably work even harder to acquire a nuclear arsenal, collaborate more with North Korea, and retaliate against U.S. targets through its terrorist proxies. Air strikes would surely inflame anti-American sentiment among Iranians and the rest of the world's Muslims, aiding the recruitment efforts of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS, or the Islamic State), al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and their ilk. The decisive way to keep Iran from going nuclear—invading and occupying the country—is out of the question. But air strikes represent an indecisive option, and the record of indecisive wars does not recommend that course. Better to dissuade Iran from building a bomb through negotiations and the threat of heightened sanctions, and then shift to nuclear deterrence if that effort fails.

As the political scientist Robert Pape has shown, airpower has worked when it has supported combat on the ground. But used by itself, it doesn't force governments to surrender (with the 1999 campaign in Yugoslavia counting as the one possible exception). In any case, when it comes to defeating shadowy revolutionary movements during civil wars, airpower

on its own can accomplish little beyond attrition around the edges. And messy civil wars are so far the most common challenge in the twenty-first century, and the type of conflict least easily settled by overwhelming conventional military power.

### UNRELIABLE PARTNERS

Military intervention in an unstable country can work if it reinforces the development of a stable political system—but that depends on the aims and actions of the country's politicians. U.S. counterinsurgency strategy has recognized this truth in principle, but not always in practice. Too often, those implementing it have confused administrative accomplishments for political progress and overestimated Washington's ability to guide the politics of a foreign country. The United States has encouraged democratization, only to see it have the perverse effect of empowering venal leaders and dividing, rather than unifying, a country. And U.S. counterinsurgency strategy has not succeeded at getting host governments to mobilize rural populations to actively resist insurgents.

Campaigning in 2000, George W. Bush swore off nation building as a U.S. military mission. As president, however, he launched two wars that turned into the most ambitious nation-building projects the world had seen since the Vietnam War. Despite well over a decade of hard work, both now look like failures. The lessons seem obvious: policymakers shouldn't overestimate the United States' ability to create viable political systems, and they should be wary of launching a counterinsurgency campaign in a country where the government is too weak or corrupt to do the job itself. But these



*Worn out: a U.S. soldier in eastern Afghanistan, April 2009*

lessons are not as straightforward as they sound. After all, the U.S. government never set out to undertake a long campaign in either Afghanistan or Iraq, yet it wound up doing so anyway. Rarely do wars go exactly as planned.

Nowhere has that proved truer than in Iraq. The 2003 invasion was a self-inflicted wound, unnecessary from the start, but its backers in Washington thought it would end in an easy, conclusive victory, like that in 1991. When the conquest spiraled into disaster, policymakers found their strategy floundering as they struggled to democratize the country and as the U.S. Army endeavored to relearn the lore of counterinsurgency it had banished from its consciousness after Vietnam. As in South Vietnam, counterinsurgency in Iraq after the 2007 U.S. troop surge worked well enough to improve security for a while, but the government ultimately proved incapable of generating national unity.

Because democratization unleashed the social divisions that Saddam Hussein's

brutality had suppressed, it enabled bitter political conflict to explode and paralyzed the government. (Both Iraq and Afghanistan held elections that failed to result in the formation of a government.) Tutelage by U.S. proconsuls cannot fix these problems any more easily than U.S. politicians can solve partisan gridlock at home. The fortunes of military intervention too often fall hostage to political intrigues that the United States cannot control.

Hawks counter such a conclusion by arguing that the Obama administration could have solidified the tentative progress Iraq began making after the surge (and averted the onslaught of ISIS) if it had gotten the Iraqi government to agree to a residual U.S. military presence beyond 2011. The problem with this argument is that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki opposed letting U.S. forces remain in Iraq precisely because he was planning to go his own way. And there is no evidence that American exhortation or occupation could have

mended Iraq's fissures. Even if some U.S. troops had stayed, they would likely have exercised little control and yet still been blamed for what went wrong. And any pacifying effect they might have had would likely have disappeared when they did eventually come home.

Unlike the campaign in Iraq, the one in Afghanistan started as a legitimate war of self-defense: the Taliban government refused to extradite al Qaeda leaders after 9/11. But like the Iraq war, the liberation of Afghanistan morphed into something else. When the government in Kabul, which had been installed in 2002 with U.S. help, proved corrupt and incompetent, the Taliban rebounded and the war became a struggle over control of the population.

As part of that struggle, the U.S. military adopted a sequential strategy called "clear, hold, and build." U.S. forces are adept at clearing—regular combat, in other words—but they had to depend on Afghan forces to hold the cleared territory. To hold the territory, the Afghans needed to build a durable, honest, and responsive government that offered an attractive alternative to the Taliban. But the Afghans, under President Hamid Karzai, failed to do this. U.S. soldiers have performed well when it comes to providing village authorities with material assistance, but they simply aren't equipped to enlist villagers in civic organizations, link their demands to effective government programs, or give them an incentive to get off the fence and fight when the Taliban come calling. Foreign soldiers can hardly be expected to succeed at those tasks if the host government fails to do them or, worse, victimizes the locals.

When working with client governments that have their own agendas, outsiders

can rarely reshape political practices in ways that permanently undercut the appeal of rebels. As the military expert Stephen Biddle has argued, U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine has suffered from the illusion that host governments will share the aims of their U.S. supporters. Washington cannot suppress kleptocrats in those governments without walking back the very democratization U.S. intervention was supposed to promote. Not every counterinsurgency campaign is guaranteed to fail, but the most successful ones rely on indigenous, rather than foreign, forces and take some ten to 20 years—longer than even the very patient American public is willing to endure.

Given the obstacles, any attempt to pacify a well-organized rebellion involves making a very risky bet. Even if U.S. policymakers come to recognize this truth, however, the problem will remain, because they rarely enter such entanglements deliberately. More often, political leaders act because they focus on the danger of failing to do something rather than the danger of doing something and failing. Realistically, then, U.S. military leaders will sometimes find themselves saddled with missions they consider wrong-headed. Thus, the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps cannot afford to repeat the mistake they made after Vietnam, when they deliberately did not plan for intervention in messy civil wars. Once extricated from Afghanistan and Iraq, those services will need to retain at least a nucleus of capability for counterinsurgency, in case civilian authorities throw them into such a morass again.

## THE RIGHT PLANS

Looking at the mistakes of the past dozen years, it's easier to draw lessons about

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which military commitments Washington should avoid than which it should embrace. When determining what to plan for militarily, policymakers should ask two main questions. First, how important are the interests at stake? Second, how effective can military power be at protecting these interests?

The answers to those two questions suggest that it's time for the United States to refocus its priorities on planning for conventional interstate wars. The United States' top priority should be the defense of long-standing allies in Europe and Asia. This task became largely passé as the Cold War gave way to a long holiday from great-power conflict, but recent events have ended that holiday. Compared with the chaotic internal wars of the Middle East, the threats in Europe and East Asia are more suited to the application of conventional force. In these regions, the United States' unparalleled conventional strength can act as a powerful deterrent. The United States has a successful record of preparing for and preventing conventional wars, and this should be its focus once again. But that will mean being ready to put plenty of boots on the ground.

Unlike Europe and much of the rest of Asia after the Cold War, the Korean Peninsula never stopped being a uniquely dangerous place, because the regime in Pyongyang has regularly engaged in reckless provocations. Defending South Korea against an attack by North Korea, however, would be as manageable as conventional wars get: the front to cover is short, U.S. and South Korean forces are modern and proficient, and their North Korean counterparts are daunting in number but threadbare in

quality and especially vulnerable to airpower. Although North Korea's nuclear weapons complicate matters, its nascent nuclear stockpile remains too small to counter a U.S. retaliation and thus could not dominate a contest in escalation, which would be the prime concern in wartime. The Kim regime still knows that any use of nuclear weapons would guarantee its demise at Washington's hands. The weapons North Korea possesses can deter the United States and South Korea from invading the North, but they could not enable the North to conquer the South.

If North Korea ever comes to act like just a normally nasty state, the United States could consider withdrawing its ground forces from the peninsula, limiting its presence to air forces that could act immediately, and planning to reintroduce ground forces only in the event of war. This was a bad idea when U.S. President Jimmy Carter proposed it in the 1970s, when the military balance was less favorable for South Korea, but it is a bad idea whose time has almost come. Today, the South grossly outweighs the North in terms of conventional military technology, economic resources, and population, even as it spends only half as much of its GDP on defense as the United States does. Yet the time for the United States to reduce its subsidy for South Korea's security is not quite ripe: the current regime in Pyongyang is so reckless that any scaling back of the U.S. presence might be misperceived as a sign of weakness, increasing the risk of a North Korean miscalculation. So the task on the peninsula remains about the same as it has been for over 60 years.

### **BACK TO THE BIG TIME**

Even before it can get unstuck from the Middle East, the United States needs to deal with even higher priorities than the Korean Peninsula. For a quarter century, Washington had the luxury of concentrating on second- and third-order challenges: rogue states, medium-sized wars, terrorists, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian relief. But the time has come to focus again on first-order dangers. Russia is back, and China is coming. These prospective opponents could not just hurt U.S. allies; they could inflict epochal damage on the United States itself. The main strategic task has therefore become a diplomatic one: find a *modus vivendi* with each country that stops the drift toward collision. If political accommodation fails, however, it will fall to the U.S. military to deter or defend.

In its beginning, the crackup in Ukraine was caused hardly more by Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression than by unthinking Western provocations, including unbridled NATO expansion, the humiliating dismissal of Russia as a great power, and the EU's efforts to convince Kiev to cut its ties to Moscow. That is water over the dam, and Russia's actions in Ukraine have complicated the options for accommodation. But there is no constituency in the West for going to war over Ukraine, and so ratcheting down the new cold war in Europe may require a political compromise that involves more autonomy for eastern Ukraine and a neutral foreign policy for Kiev. That said, Russia's actions have resurrected concern for protecting NATO's own members, especially the new ones. If Russia's probes continue, the pressure to deploy NATO forces in

Poland and the Baltic countries could become irresistible. Then, the conflict with Moscow would sharpen rather than ease.

Fortunately for the West, if the need for deterrence and defense in Europe does become a serious issue again, the mission will be far easier than it was during the Cold War. The balance of both military power and geographic vulnerability, which seemed perilous to NATO back then, now overwhelmingly favors the alliance. No longer can Russian generals dream of a blitzkrieg to the English Channel. Even without the risk of nuclear escalation, Putin should know that attacking a NATO country would be suicidal. The Russian economy is also in no shape to fund a truly serious military buildup.

Although the U.S. Army, faced with a future of diminishing missions, might see a lifeline in revived demands for it to play a greater role in NATO, Washington should let its European allies take care of any needed increase in military capabilities on the continent themselves. Moscow is nowhere near as wild and crazy as Pyongyang, and most NATO allies currently spend less than half of what the United States does on defense relative to GDP. Washington can remain fully committed to the alliance without getting dragged into expensive posturing by critics who whine about U.S. credibility.

China poses a bigger potential threat. The country has made new territorial claims throughout the waters of East Asia, especially to islands over which Japan also asserts ownership. Here, however, shifting the burden to the United States' rich ally in the neighborhood would be a bad choice. For historical reasons, Japan still evokes intense antipa-

thy in China—and also in other countries in the region. If Japan were to step up as a normal great power, the unsettling effect in the region would not be worth whatever money the United States would have saved by reducing its military role there.

U.S. political leaders have not yet made clear choices about exactly what circumstances would warrant a war with China, but U.S. military leaders have been busy thinking about how to conduct such a war. The Pentagon's "air-sea battle" concept is aimed at fighting China, and it emphasizes the advantages of cutting-edge technologies. This is good news for the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force, which would lead a fight against China, but given how astoundingly expensive such high-tech weapons are, it is bad news for budget cutters. Washington should concentrate on defusing the growing conflict with China, but if events raise the priority of deterring Beijing, hopes for cutting defense spending will be frustrated.

The Pentagon's plans also make cyberwarfare a priority, but that poses problems, too. As has all modern society, the U.S. military has become utterly dependent on a complex system of computer networks. Since the world has never seen a great-power war in the information age, however, there has been no test showing what unrecognized vulnerabilities this dependence may conceal—and thus the United States cannot be confident that its superiority in traditional combat power will hold up against innovative cyberattacks. The recent era of long wars against backward enemies can tell policymakers little about how to protect against high-tech surprises.

## TEMPERED AMBITIONS

Choosing a strategy requires making judgments about what objectives are worth risking the lives of American soldiers and foreign civilians. Yet in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. officials underestimated the total costs, in blood and treasure, which kept ballooning after the ventures began. Many of the benefits they anticipated failed to arrive or weren't that valuable to begin with—a particularly grave error, since costs become less acceptable the further the benefits get from promoting strict national security. The most tragic overreach, attacking Iraq in 2003, actually damaged U.S. security by multiplying enemies in the Muslim world. All these miscalculations flowed from the heady ambitions of both Republicans and Democrats who wanted the United States to not just reverse local injustices but also enforce order worldwide, often at the point of a gun. They acted surprised when their seemingly generous objectives were met with fierce pushback.

In the recent era of permanent war, the United States has learned hard lessons about the ambitious use of U.S. military power for secondary purposes. The United States' overbearing military power encouraged civilian leaders to focus more on the desired benefits of military action than on its potential costs. Global primacy still gives the United States more room for maneuver than it had during the Cold War, but as tensions with Russia and China mount, that room becomes less than it was during the past quarter century. Now the United States needs to temper the ambitions unleashed by its post-Cold War dominance, not only in reaction to the setbacks it has experienced in small wars but also to prepare for bigger wars for bigger stakes against bigger powers. 🌐

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# Withdrawal Symptoms

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## The Bungling of the Iraq Exit

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*Rick Brennan*

**I**n a speech at Fort Bragg on December 14, 2011, President Barack Obama declared that the U.S. military would soon depart Iraq, ending one of the longest wars in American history. The United States, Obama said, would leave behind “a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq, with a representative government that was elected by its people.” Four days later, the last U.S. military unit crossed from Iraq into Kuwait, and American armed forces transferred all their responsibilities to either the central government of Iraq, U.S. Central Command, or the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, completing the most complex handoff from military to civilian authorities in U.S. history.

The next day, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki—who since 2006 had sought to enhance his personal interests and those of Shiite religious parties at the expense of Iraq’s Kurds and Sunni Arabs—secured an arrest warrant for Iraq’s Sunni vice president, Tariq al-Hashimi, accusing him of supporting terrorism. A crisis erupted when Hashimi’s Sunni-dominated political bloc boycotted the national unity government that Obama had so

recently touted as inclusive and responsive to the Iraqi people.

That same week, 17 explosions rocked Baghdad, killing at least 65 people and wounding more than 200; al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) later claimed responsibility. With Iranian encouragement, Maliki’s government began to systematically target Sunni elites on the basis of trumped-up charges of terrorism or alleged affiliation with the outlawed Baath Party. Sectarian violence soon erupted, and by May 2013, it had reached levels not seen since the waning days of the civil war that engulfed Iraq in the wake of the 2003 U.S. invasion.

Meanwhile, Maliki firmed up his grip on the Iraqi intelligence and security forces, replacing competent Sunni and Kurdish officers whom he mistrusted with Shiites personally loyal to him. He refused to appoint permanent ministers for defense, the interior, and Iraq’s National Security Council, instead controlling those ministries himself through an extraconstitutional organization called the Office of the Commander in Chief. In April 2012, the Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani warned that Iraq was moving back toward dictatorship—the one thing, he said, that might lead him to seek Kurdish independence.

Obama had declared an end to the war in Iraq, but the Iraqis hadn’t gotten the memo. By mid-2013, the country appeared to be coming apart at the seams—and the worst was yet to come. By the summer of 2014, Maliki’s misrule had hollowed out the country’s security forces and deeply alienated Iraq’s Sunnis, which made it much easier for the Sunni jihadist group the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS, or the Islamic State), the successor to AQI, to cross the border from its strongholds in

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war-torn Syria and capture a number of major Iraqi cities. Isis has wantonly slaughtered religious minorities, Shiites, and any Sunnis who have stood in its way; imposed its brutal version of Islamic law on those unlucky enough to live in the swath of territory the group now holds; and released gruesome videos of militants murdering American and other Western hostages.

By any measure, the course of post-American Iraq has been tragic. But the tragedy is deepened by the fact that almost everything that has happened since 2011 was foreseeable—and, in fact, was foreseen by U.S. military planners and commanders, who years earlier cautioned against the complete withdrawal of the nearly 50,000 U.S. troops that still remained in Iraq in 2011. As a senior civilian adviser to the U.S. military in Iraq from 2006 through the end of 2011, I witnessed Obama and senior members of his national security team fail to reach an agreement with the government of Iraq that would have allowed a residual U.S. force to remain there temporarily, and also fail to establish a strategy for how to leave Iraq in a manner that would secure the gains made there during those years. Iraq, its neighbors, the United States, and the rest of the world are now paying the price of those failures.

Whatever lessons can be learned from that mistake won't be of much help in Obama's current effort to "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIS. But those lessons might be applied directly to the question of how to wind down the United States' even longer-running post-9/11 war, that in Afghanistan. There, Obama still has the chance to avoid making some of the same mistakes and

miscalculations that have come back to haunt him in Iraq and that, if current policies remain unchanged, the United States is poised to commit all over again. To do so, Obama will have to summon the political courage to recognize his earlier errors and try not to repeat them. His administration must undertake a complete reassessment of the NATO mission in Afghanistan and the plan to withdraw all U.S. troops from the country by the end of 2016, long before most experts believe the Afghan government has any chance of maintaining security and stability on its own. At the moment, the final acts of the U.S. war in Afghanistan are following a script remarkably similar to the one that played out in Iraq; Obama must do all he can to arrive at a different ending this time around.

#### **TELL ME HOW THIS ENDS**

Making the decision to go to war requires a profound sense of caution and a tremendous amount of planning. Wars often change countries' internal political and social dynamics and affect both regional and international security. The way a war is fought shapes the postwar security environment. And long before the fighting begins, leaders must consider how it might conclude. As then Major General David Petraeus famously put it in March 2003, as U.S. forces battled their way to Baghdad: "Tell me how this ends."

It soon became clear that the Bush administration and the U.S. military had failed to properly consider that question. Within 42 days of the initial U.S. invasion of Iraq, American forces had achieved all their combat objectives. But the Pentagon had done very little



*This way out: leaving Iraq, December 2011*

planning for postconflict stability and support operations, and U.S. forces were unprepared for the lawlessness that followed the collapse of the Iraqi government. Washington's decisions to pursue a policy of de-Baathification, disband the Iraqi army, and back Shiite politicians with little interest in national reconciliation soon fed a ferocious Sunni insurgency.

Meanwhile, the determination of extremist Shiite militias to exact vengeance for decades of repression at the hands of Sunnis—along with the emergence of a brutal new Sunni jihadist group, AQI—led to extraordinary levels of bloodshed. By 2006, Iraq had descended into a full-blown sectarian civil war. Bush was left with two bad options: withdraw U.S. forces and allow the civil war to rage, or adopt a new strategy to restore basic security in Iraq,

committing whatever resources it would take to get the job done.

Bush opted to double down, embracing a counterinsurgency strategy and a temporary “surge” of 30,000 additional U.S. forces. The additional U.S. troops, diplomats, and funding, along with a number of other factors—including the so-called Sunni Awakening, which saw Sunni tribes turn on AQI—pulled Iraq back from the brink of disintegration. By December 2008, the new U.S. strategy had yielded enough security to make political stability seem like a real possibility. Iraq was still a dangerous and dysfunctional place, but by the time Bush left office, he could credibly claim that the new approach had reversed Iraq's slide into chaos and created the conditions necessary for the country's survival and potential political, social, and economic development.

Still, two major obstacles stood in the way of a more definitive success. First was the sectarian divide. Maliki had failed to take any serious actions leading toward genuine Shiite-Sunni reconciliation. Instead, he used the success of the surge to solidify his power in Baghdad, all the while enjoying Washington's firm support. But he mostly ignored American pleas to govern in a less divisive manner and find ways to bring the Sunni minority into the political process. Maliki had also failed to bridge the Arab-Kurdish divide and instead sought to weaken the Kurdistan Regional Government and its security forces. Finally, Maliki allowed Iran to use Iraqi territory to arm, train, and equip hard-line Iraqi Shiite militias. All of this set the stage for the rapid advance of ISIS this past summer and the potential disintegration of the country.

Second, the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement and an associated security agreement between Iraq and the United States—which allowed U.S. forces to stay in Iraq beyond the end of that year, when the UN resolution that sanctioned their presence would expire—set a timetable for the eventual withdrawal of all U.S. troops, but it failed to conclude with a permanent status-of-forces agreement to govern U.S. military activities. The temporary security agreement stipulated that the United States would withdraw its forces from all population centers by the end of 2009 and from the entire country by the end of 2011. To secure those terms, Washington had to drop its insistence that U.S. forces enjoy complete immunity from Iraqi law. Instead, in somewhat ambiguous terms, the agreement gave

Iraqi authorities legal jurisdiction over cases in which U.S. service members were accused of committing serious, premeditated felonies while off duty and away from U.S. facilities.

In his memoir, *Duty*, published earlier this year, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates revealed that Pentagon lawyers strongly opposed the compromise. But Gates explains that he believed it was worth the risk if it meant that U.S. forces could stay in Iraq past 2008. Commanders in the field were also comfortable with the compromise; after all, since members of the U.S. armed forces are on duty 24 hours a day and are not permitted to leave their bases unless on a mission, there was little chance that an American marine or soldier would ever wind up in the hands of Iraqi authorities.

According to Gates, both Washington and Baghdad believed the 2008 agreement represented an interim step that would be modified before the 2011 withdrawal deadline in ways that would allow some U.S. troops to remain in Iraq to advise and assist their Iraqi counterparts. But in the years that followed, uncertainty about the Obama administration's willingness to leave a residual force in Iraq, the turbulent Iraqi political system, and the sensitive issue of legal immunity for U.S. service members created serious stumbling blocks to developing a longer-term arrangement.

#### **WE CAN'T GO ON, WE'LL GO ON**

Just over a month after taking office in 2009, Obama delivered a major speech at Camp Lejeune reaffirming his campaign pledge to end the U.S. war in Iraq and laying out a timetable for withdrawal consistent with Bush's agreement to pull

all U.S. forces out of Iraq by the end of 2011. At the same time, however, Pentagon officials were telling U.S. military leaders in Iraq that the president remained open to the idea of keeping troops there beyond 2011 for noncombat missions if doing so were necessary to secure the gains made in recent years. As a result, the military had to plan to strictly abide by Bush's 2008 agreement (and thus also fulfill Obama's campaign promise to end the U.S. war) while quietly developing other options just in case the president chose to modify his policy and renegotiate the agreement.

By late 2009, General Raymond Odierno, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, concluded that the goals of U.S. policy in Iraq could not be achieved by the end of 2011. He shared this assessment with officials at U.S. Central Command and the Pentagon and with the staff of the National Security Council. He and his staff also provided candid reports and briefings, classified and unclassified, to members of Congress. Despite the efforts of Odierno and others, however, a large gap had opened up between the strategic goals articulated by the Obama administration and the resources and time the White House was willing to commit to achieving them.

Domestic politics in Iraq also complicated the picture: parliamentary elections were set to take place in March 2010, and the Obama administration decided to postpone discussions with Iraqi officials about keeping any U.S. forces in the country until after a new government had taken shape. But the elections did not prove to be the clarifying moment the administration had

hoped for: instead, they devolved into a divisive legal and political battle that took nine months to resolve. Finally, in November 2010, Iraq's parliament appointed Maliki to a second term as prime minister. But the political fight had fostered animosity and a lack of trust throughout the Iraqi political system, aggravating deep sectarian divisions within the parliament. Soon after forming a government, Maliki broke many of the promises he had made to secure his election. The result was political paralysis, a condition that would later undermine the prospects of resolving the question of a post-2011 U.S. presence in Iraq.

#### **IF YOU LEAVE ME NOW**

In September 2010, as the squabbling continued in Baghdad, I helped a group of U.S. military planners conduct an internal assessment of the political, economic, and security situation in the country. Their report painted a fairly grim picture of a country that had emerged from chaos in 2008 only to find itself extremely vulnerable to many enduring threats and pressures. The assessment noted that most Iraqi leaders continued to pursue their agendas through politics and had resisted a return to violence. But the divisive 2010 elections and Maliki's marginalization of his political opponents and abuse of power raised serious concerns about whether Maliki would place sectarian interests aside and lead an inclusive government. The report warned that in the absence of sectarian reconciliation, Sunni-controlled portions of Iraq and Syria could emerge as a safe haven for terrorists and serve as a breeding ground for a revived Sunni insurgency.

Iraq had made substantial economic progress, but public expectations continued to outpace the central government's ability to deliver essential services and foster economic stability and growth. The Iraqi economy remained overly dependent on oil revenue, the report said, and Baghdad was planning future spending based on unrealistic projections of future growth. Although the oil industry was a major source of funding for the government, and thus financed public-sector employment, it directly employed only two percent of the Iraqi work force, leaving somewhere between 45 and 60 percent of the work force either underemployed or unemployed. The lack of employment created a major source of social discontent and unrest, especially among young men of military age.

The analysis deemed Iraq's security environment to be stable but fragile, a judgment that was broadly shared by both military and civilian leaders in the Pentagon. Although AQI had been all but defeated in Iraq, by the end of 2009, it had established a safe haven in Syria and was beginning to rebuild and rebrand itself. (It is important to note that the military planners, although deeply concerned about AQI, did not anticipate the group's transformation into the jihadist army known today as ISIS—a change that took place between 2012 and 2014 as a result, in part, of the Syrian civil war.)

Meanwhile, Shiite militias—armed, trained, and equipped by Iran—enjoyed strong ties to Iraqi Shiite political parties and constituted a shadow government of sorts that “could one day pose an existential threat to the government of Iraq,” the assessment stated. U.S. military planners also worried about

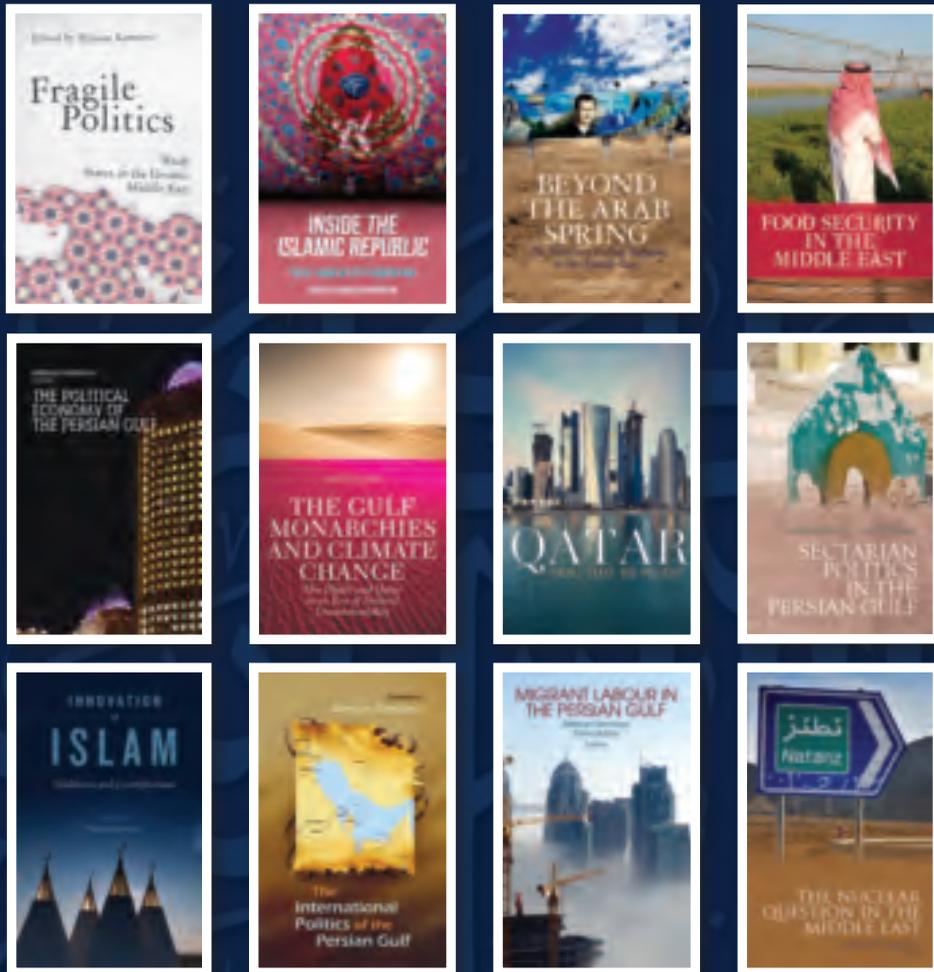
the potential for violence between Arabs and Kurds in the disputed territory that the Kurds consider their historic homeland and where they enjoy a great deal of autonomy; a struggle for control of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk would be the most likely trigger for a conflict.

Even after years of assistance and training from U.S. advisers, the Iraqi government and security forces were hardly prepared to face such threats. Between 2005 and 2011, the U.S. military provided quarterly reports to Congress warning that the Iraqi military suffered from significant shortfalls that would hinder its ability to defend the country against external threats. The Iraqi security forces were plagued by weak intelligence collection, analysis, and sharing; an inability to sustain combat operations; poor maintenance of equipment and weapons; the lack of a well-developed training program, or even a culture of training; poor command and control of its forces; a lack of sufficient intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets; and a very limited ability to conduct counterterrorism operations without direct support from U.S. Special Forces. The Iraqi air force was even worse off. It had no ability to provide lethal support to Iraqi ground forces in combat; it couldn't do much besides transport forces from one air base to another.

All this evidence led U.S. military planners in Iraq to one clear conclusion: if U.S. forces completely withdrew by the end of 2011, it would be very difficult for the Iraqis to maintain the fragile gains made since 2007. Strategic failure had been delayed but was “still possible,” the 2010 internal assessment concluded. In the absence of U.S. forces and concerted political pressure from Washington, the



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central government in Baghdad would become ever more corrupt, sectarian, and acquiescent to Tehran, setting the stage for a revival of the Sunni insurgency, a resurgence of AQI, and the end of the relative stability that the United States had worked so hard to foster.

If that sounds familiar, that is because it is an accurate description of the current situation in Iraq. Put bluntly, U.S. military planners anticipated with eerie accuracy the dreadful state of affairs that exists there today.

### **A MODERATE RISK**

According to numerous reports, including accounts published by former Obama administration officials, U.S. military planners believed that to prevent the disaster they feared would engulf Iraq if the central government had to stand on its own after 2011, a significant number of American forces—around 24,000—would have to remain in Iraq past 2011. The proposed plan called for the military to reassess the situation sometime between 2014 and 2016 to determine whether a continuing presence was necessary to achieve the goals approved by both Bush and Obama. The planners judged that this course presented a “moderate risk” of harm to U.S. forces and of mission failure—a level of uncertainty they deemed acceptable given the importance of the objectives.

The planners were requesting a continued investment in a place that most Americans, including political elites across the ideological spectrum, hoped would never again consume much of Washington’s time, energy, or money. But the planners believed that the wide range of challenges facing Iraq—and the terrible nature

of the worst-case scenario—justified the expense.

For Iraq to sustain the progress made in the security sector, they argued, U.S. forces would need to continue to advise, train, and assist all elements of Iraq’s security forces. The planners also argued that the United States needed to keep its forces in Iraq to demonstrate Washington’s commitment to Baghdad; to help counter what the 2010 assessment described as “Iran’s malign influence”; and to have a moderating effect on Maliki’s sectarian inclinations.

The U.S. military would also need to help Iraq maintain control of its airspace until it was capable of doing so on its own. Since 2003, the United States had protected Iraqi airspace, and the planners believed that U.S. forces should continue to do so with an F-16 squadron stationed at Al Asad Air Base, in Anbar Province. Although U.S. planners considered the Iraqi Special Operations Forces to be high performing by regional standards, they concluded that their counterterrorism missions still required U.S. assistance in intelligence and aviation support, especially for night operations.

U.S. military planners also believed that American forces would have to remain on the border of the Kurdish region to help prevent conflict between the Iraqi security forces and the Kurdish forces known as the Pesh Merga. The planners further noted that al Qaeda militants often traveled through the corridor that runs between the city of Mosul, in northern Iraq, and Diyala Province, in the country’s east. To secure the area, the military planners recommended that U.S. forces continue to work alongside Iraqi and Kurdish forces

to jointly man 22 checkpoints along that route.

### **RUNNING THE NUMBERS**

In January 2011, Gates met with James Jeffrey, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq; Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and General Lloyd Austin, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq. As Gates recounts in his memoir, Austin argued that he would need at least 20,000 troops to remain in Iraq after 2011 for a transitional period that would last between three and five years. Anticipating resistance from the White House to the idea of such a large residual force, Gates directed Austin to prepare options below 20,000 troops. And indeed, in April, Obama directed Austin to develop a plan that would result in a residual force of just 8,000 to 10,000 troops and to identify the missions that a force of that size could realistically accomplish.

In early June, Obama participated in a secure videoconference with Maliki—his first conversation with the Iraqi prime minister in over a year. According to an administration official, Obama conveyed the U.S. desire to maintain a partnership with Iraq but did not discuss any specific force numbers. Meanwhile, Maliki was discussing with other Iraqi leaders the idea of allowing 8,000 to 20,000 U.S. troops to remain in Iraq, according to remarks made in August 2011 by Samir Sumaidaie, Iraq's ambassador to the United States at the time, in an interview with *Foreign Policy*. Most of those leaders understood that Iraq was not yet ready for the U.S. military to totally disengage, but they were determined to avoid any infringement, real or perceived, on the country's

sovereignty. A recurring theme in the discussions between Maliki and U.S. negotiators was the Iraqis' desire for their American "guests" to be subject to Iraqi law—the same issue that had dogged negotiations between Maliki and Bush in 2008.

In August, according to Jeffrey, Obama informed him that he was free to start negotiations with the Iraqis to keep 5,000 U.S. service members in Iraq: 3,500 combat troops who would be stationed on yearlong tours of duty and 1,500 special operations forces who would rotate in and out every four months. This residual force would include support personnel for half a squadron of F-16s that would be stationed at Al Asad Air Base. Obama rejected the military's call for a large-scale presence to continue training the Iraqi army and to secure the Arab-Kurdish border area near Kirkuk. Obama believed that the number of troops he proposed would allow the United States to continue collecting intelligence, cooperating with the Iraqis on counterterrorism, training elements of the Iraqi army, and periodically monitoring the checkpoints established three years earlier in the Kurdish border region.

But Obama also made it clear that his plan would require the Iraqi parliament to formally request that the U.S. military stay in Iraq and to agree to a status-of-forces agreement that would grant legal immunity to all U.S. troops remaining in Iraq beyond 2011. In early September, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns visited Iraq to press Maliki on both those issues. According to a former administration official familiar with what happened during the meeting,

Maliki told Burns that although he could likely persuade Iraq's parliament to request a residual force, anyone who believed that the parliament would approve a status-of-forces agreement that included complete immunity did not understand Iraqi politics. Instead, Maliki proposed signing an executive memorandum granting immunity without the need to gain parliamentary approval. White House lawyers rejected that offer, arguing that for any such agreement to be legally binding, it would have to be formally ratified by the Iraqi parliament.

In early October, as Maliki had predicted, the parliament approved the request for an extended U.S. military presence but declined to grant legal immunity to U.S. military personnel. Later that month, Obama told Maliki that all U.S. troops would leave Iraq by the end of 2011, in fulfillment of the terms of the agreement signed by the Bush administration in 2008.

A number of commentators have concluded that the Obama administration was negotiating in bad faith, making an offer that it knew would be politically toxic in Iraq. Had Obama wanted to maintain a residual force in Iraq, he could have accepted Maliki's compromise proposal. This compromise would have incurred some risk, since Iraqi law clearly required parliamentary approval. However, in the nearly three years since Bush had agreed to a similar compromise, no U.S. service member or civilian official stationed in Iraq had been charged with violating an Iraqi law. It is also worth pointing out that the U.S. military personnel stationed in Iraq today count on a promise of immunity backed only by a

diplomatic note signed by the Iraqi foreign minister—an assurance even less solid than the one Maliki offered (and Obama rejected) in 2011.

### **DEGRADE AND DESTROY**

After Obama announced his decision, U.S. commanders in Iraq conducted what they called a "war termination assessment," to measure the degree to which the military had achieved its objectives. According to military planners who worked on the assessment, the large majority of those goals could best be described as incomplete, and some of them would take many years—even a generation—to achieve. The Iraqi military, for example, was still three to five years away from being able to independently sustain the gains made during the past four years.

Many of the goals remained unfulfilled thanks to Iraq's internal divisions and the poor performance of Iraqi leaders; others were stymied by neighboring countries such as Iran. But the military planners' scorecard made one thing perfectly clear: by 2011, enough information was available to conclude that absent a significant U.S. military presence, within a few years, the situation in Iraq was likely to deteriorate—perhaps irreversibly.

Of course, at that point, few foresaw the significant negative effect that the Syrian civil war would soon have on the security situation in Iraq. However, had a residual U.S. force stayed in Iraq after 2011, the United States would have had far greater insight into the growing threat posed by ISIS and could have helped the Iraqis stop the group from taking so much territory. Instead, ISIS' march

across northern Iraq took Washington almost completely by surprise.

Iraq now presents Obama with no good options—as it did Bush before him. Obama’s plan is for the United States to lead an international coalition to “degrade and ultimately destroy” ISIS. The U.S. military will provide intelligence, a limited number of U.S. advisers, and air support to ground forces that will come from other countries. This plan is unlikely to succeed, not least because it creates few incentives for the other partners in the coalition to accept the costs and risks that the United States is unwilling to take on itself. Unless the United States decides to take more direct action, including the deployment of some U.S. combat troops and special operations forces, the rebooted “coalition of the willing” in Iraq will likely prove to be little more than a coalition of the uncommitted.

## **DÉJÀ VU**

In Afghanistan, meanwhile, the administration still has a chance to avoid a repeat of its Iraq experience. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the appropriate lessons have yet been learned.

For example, there is a growing mismatch between the United States’ objectives in Afghanistan and the resources and time that Washington has given its military forces and diplomats to achieve them. The stated goal of the NATO mission is “to create the conditions whereby the Government of Afghanistan is able to exercise its authority throughout the country, including the development of professional and capable Afghan National Security Forces.” But little evidence exists to

suggest that NATO will be able to achieve that goal by the end of 2016, when all U.S. and NATO forces are scheduled to depart. In fact, a congressionally mandated independent assessment of the Afghan security forces completed in January 2014 by the Center for Naval Analyses identified the same types of capability gaps that existed in the Iraqi security forces in 2011. Most credible estimates suggest that those gaps cannot be filled until at least 2018.

After the planned departure of NATO and U.S. forces in 2016, the security situation in Afghanistan will likely deteriorate and could ultimately pose an existential threat to the government in Kabul. Unless something changes, the disaster that has unfolded in Iraq in recent months is on track to repeat itself—and in a few years, Washington might face yet another wrenching decision about whether to reengage militarily in a combat zone that Americans thought they had left behind for good.

Before heading down that route, the Obama administration should conduct a comprehensive strategic assessment that includes a detailed analysis of how the Afghan security environment will likely develop between 2014 and 2018. Meanwhile, the Pentagon should weigh which of Washington’s objectives in Afghanistan have been achieved and measure the risks of withdrawing U.S. forces before the remaining objectives have been met, developing a new strategy for Afghanistan and the region to mitigate the costs and risks. The United States should lead the same type of strategic review within NATO to determine the extent to which it is necessary and

feasible to maintain a NATO training mission in the country beyond 2016.

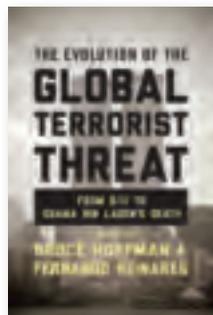
If Obama decides to stick with his current plan to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2016, his administration must develop a clearer strategy for how to maintain the gains made there without U.S. and NATO forces on the ground. At the moment, it is unclear how the United States or its allies intend to help the Afghan government maintain security on its own. The plan to withdraw completely seems blind to the transformational—and almost certainly negative—impact that the exit of U.S. and NATO forces and capabilities will have on Afghanistan's internal political and security dynamics.

Even without pursuing a major strategic overhaul, the administration should at the very least take the crucial step of creating a so-called transitional embassy in Kabul. After U.S. forces withdraw, the U.S. embassy should house a “dual-hatted” chief of security assistance: a military officer who would manage the State Department's role in facilitating arms sales to Afghanistan and also advise, train, and assist Afghan security forces. (In 2011, U.S. military officials recommended creating such a position within the U.S. embassy in Baghdad in the wake of the American withdrawal, but that idea was rejected by the State Department and the White House.) Creating this position would allow some U.S. military infrastructure to remain in place, not only to aid Afghan security forces but also to allow for a more rapid redeployment of U.S. forces should the transition go badly.

In critical respects, Afghanistan today looks quite a lot like Iraq did in 2011. The United States prepares to

withdraw its forces while a weak, divided, corrupt central government sputters and flails. Meanwhile, an extremist insurgent group grows stronger in safe havens across the border in a fractious, unstable state. Just substitute Kabul for Baghdad, the Taliban for ISIS, and Pakistan for Syria, and the pictures line up quite well. And without a dramatic shift in strategy and policy, a few years after U.S. and NATO forces leave Afghanistan, the country will look quite a lot like Iraq does today. The Obama administration must act swiftly, or else it risks losing a second war by once again departing before the job is done. 🌐

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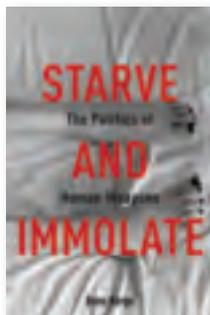


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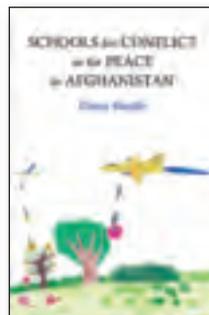


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# Homeward Bound?

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## Don't Hype the Threat of Returning Jihadists

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*Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro*

**O**n May 24, 2014, a man opened fire inside the Jewish Museum in Brussels, quickly killing three people and fatally wounding a fourth before disappearing into the city's streets. The alleged perpetrator, a French citizen named Mehdi Nemmouche, who has since been arrested and charged with murder, had spent the previous year fighting with jihadist opposition groups in Syria. His attack appeared to mark the first time that the Syrian civil war had spilled over into the European Union. Many security officials in Europe and the United States fear that this strike foreshadowed a spate of terrorist attacks that the chaos in Syria—and now Iraq—could trigger.

The Syrian conflict has captured the imaginations and inflamed the passions of Muslims around the world, spurring

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thousands to join the mostly Sunni rebels resisting the Assad regime. The influx of volunteers has bolstered jihadist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State, a militant organization that swept across Syria's border into Iraq this past summer and proclaimed an Islamic caliphate.

Although most foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq come from the Arab world, a sizable contingent hails from the West's large Muslim communities; 19 million Muslims live in the EU, and more than two million call the United States home. Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, about 2,500 people from those places (as well as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) have traveled to Syria to fight, according to the Soufan Group, a U.S. security consulting firm.

Intelligence officials fear that these volunteers might return from the battlefield as terrorists trained to wage jihad against their home countries. Echoing these worries, Charles Farr, the director of the British Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, described the Syrian war this past summer as "a very profound game changer" for the extremist threat to Europe. Similarly, James Comey, the director of the FBI, warned in May that the repercussions from the conflict might be "an order of magnitude worse" than those that followed the turbulence in Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s, which helped spur the formation of al Qaeda. And U.S. President Barack Obama was even more explicit during a prime-time speech to the nation on September 10, warning that "thousands of foreigners—including Europeans and some Americans" have joined ISIS militants and that "trained and battle-

hardened, these fighters could try to return to their home countries and carry out deadly attacks.”

But the threat presented by foreign fighters has been exaggerated, just as it was during several other conflicts in recent years. Over the last decade, the Iraq war in particular prompted similar warnings about a possible backlash that ultimately failed to materialize. In fact, the vast majority of Western Muslims who set out to fight in the Middle East today will not come back as terrorists. Many of them will never go home at all, instead dying in combat or joining new military campaigns elsewhere, or they will return disillusioned and not interested in bringing the violence with them. Even among the rare individuals who do harbor such intentions, most will be less dangerous than they are feared to be because they will attract the attention of authorities before they can strike. It is telling that in the last two years alone, European security officials have disrupted at least five terrorist plots with possible links to Syrian foreign fighters, in locales ranging from Kosovo to the United Kingdom.

Still, the fact that the threat presented by returning Western jihadists will be less apocalyptic than commonly assumed should not lull authorities into complacency. Terrorism is a small-number phenomenon: even a few attackers can unleash horrific violence if they have the training and motivation. Moreover, the extremists' desire to strike the West could well be on the rise, fueled by the U.S. bombing of ISIS targets that began in August 2014. And because many more volunteers have traveled to Syria and Iraq than to any other conflict zone in the past, many more will ultimately come back.

Nevertheless, the danger posed by returning fighters is both familiar and manageable. Several measures could help further reduce it, including efforts to dissuade would-be volunteers from enlisting in the war to begin with and programs to reintegrate those who do into society when they return. Western intelligence agencies should also do more to disrupt common transit routes and track the militants who use them. And to maintain their vigilance, governments must adequately fund and equip their security services. Together, such measures will help prevent the violence in Syria and Iraq from spilling over into the West.

### **THERE AND BACK AGAIN**

Western fighters who travel to faraway war zones generally follow a similar path as they make the transition from idealistic volunteers to seasoned militants. Most of those who begin the journey do not complete it; still, some do, and at each step Western officials can disrupt the progress of the few individuals who go all the way.

The first and most critical moment comes when a Muslim living in Europe or the United States, most often a young man, decides to join a distant military campaign. His motivations usually include a thirst for adventure and a desire to redress local and regional grievances in the Muslim world, rather than animosity toward the West. In Syria, most early volunteers aspired to defend the local population against the brutality of the Assad regime, not to wage global jihad.

This pattern began to change in 2013 as the war took on a sectarian cast; today, religious rivalry drives most of



*What happens in Syria stays in Syria: an ISIS fighter at a military parade, June 2014*

the recruits. The conflict has aggravated Sunni prejudices against Shiite Muslims—old sentiments that heated up during the U.S. war in Iraq and have now acquired new intensity. The ranks of militant Islamist groups in Syria swelled in late 2013 after prominent religious leaders, such as the Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, called on all believers to defend Syrian Sunnis against the Assad regime and its Iranian and Shiite Lebanese allies.

In the summer of 2014, ISIS' stunning battlefield victories lent the organization credibility and enhanced its allure for the small but important Western community of young radicals it seeks to court. The group's calls for an Islamic emirate and its explicitly sectarian rhetoric have further radicalized the conflict. Such messages percolate through social

media sites, including Facebook and Twitter, where jihadists often command large audiences. ISIS, in particular, routinely churns out slick recruitment videos in English.

The second phase of the foreign fighter's path, traveling to the battlefield, has become remarkably easy to accomplish. Whereas reaching many earlier conflict destinations, such as Afghanistan, meant that Western volunteers had to face significant expenses and dangers, physically getting to Syria entails few sacrifices. Recruits can simply travel to Turkey—an easy trip by car, train, or plane requiring no visa for EU and U.S. citizens—and then cross into Syria along its vast and porous border. Social media also helps: ISIS and other radical groups, including one of ISIS' rivals, the Syrian al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, offer

ample online tips on how to contact them, including which Turkish hotels to pick in order to meet their travel facilitators.

The potency of the sectarian message and the cross-border flow of information and people help explain the unprecedented number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq today—greater than for any conflict in recent memory. Leading specialists on the topic, including Thomas Hegghammer of the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment and Peter Neumann, a British expert on radicalization, have estimated that the Syrian war has mobilized more European Islamists than all other foreign wars over the past 20 years combined. The U.S. share of the influx is smaller, but intelligence officials still believe that at least 100 Americans have joined the Syrian war since 2011.

The third step on the newcomer's path is to train and then actually fight on the battlefield. Training not only burnishes the recruit's practical skills; it also imbues him with a sense of solidarity with a larger cause. This experience deepens his indoctrination under the tutelage of sophisticated jihadists: Western security officials fear that a newcomer who might not start out as anti-Western could be manipulated by extremists to change his views, as happened with many fighters who went to Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s. The brutal combat that follows further hardens his resolve.

In the fourth step, the fighter returns home to keep the cycle going. Seasoned by battle, he acquires a new authority among his neighbors and followers on social media—a street cred that allows him to recruit and radicalize others and send them into the fray.

Finally, this veteran militant might decide to carry out a terrorist attack at

home, turning his attention from foreign causes to real or imagined domestic injustices that may include, for example, insults against Islam, his home country's perceived oppression of Sunnis abroad, or the daily discrimination faced by Muslims. Analyzing the history of terrorist plots against the West, Hegghammer has found that when such strikes involved returned jihadists, they were both more likely to succeed and more lethal than attacks staged by homegrown terrorists who had not fought abroad.

### **MORE SMOKE THAN FIRE**

Given how few obstacles preclude Western Muslims from joining faraway battles and returning home as terrorists, it might appear paradoxical that most conflicts in the Middle East have spawned barely any fighters who followed this path from start to finish. Syria and Iraq are likely to produce a similar pattern. True, the Syrian war bears many unique traits that significantly magnify the risk. Yet it is crucial not to exaggerate this threat, as governments and analysts have repeatedly done in the past, and to study historical and present-day intelligence in order to temper the dire predictions.

Iraq's previous war offers the most obvious example. Between 2003 and 2011, dozens of Muslims from Europe and the United States traveled to Iraq to fight Western forces. Some of them supported al Qaeda after it established a local affiliate in 2004 (a group known as al Qaeda in Iraq, which became the precursor to ISIS), and many grew more radicalized during their stay. In 2005, then CIA Director Porter Goss warned the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that "Islamic extremists are exploiting the Iraqi conflict to recruit new anti-U.S. jihadists."

Yet despite such grim predictions, jihadist veterans of Iraq failed to perpetrate successful terrorist acts in the West. A few cases bore indirect evidence of a link to the conflict, including a bungled June 2007 strike on the Glasgow airport; investigators found that the attackers' cell phones contained the numbers of several operatives linked to al Qaeda in Iraq. But even in that case, U.S. officials ultimately judged the plot to be "al Qaeda-related, rather than al Qaeda-directed."

Syria and Iraq today are likely to echo this historical record. For one, many foreign volunteers will die in combat. The ferocity of the fighting in Syria and now Iraq—as the radicals battle the two countries' governments, the Syrian mainstream opposition, and, increasingly, one another—exceeds that of other recent conflicts. Researchers believe that the death toll among foreign volunteers in Syria has already surpassed that of the Iraq war, in which about five percent of all Western fighters are thought to have died. Of those who do survive, many will never return home, fearing arrest or choosing to wage jihad in other foreign lands. One European intelligence official estimated in an interview with us in May 2014 that from ten to 20 percent of foreign combatants have no plans to come back to their former countries of residence. (The official requested to remain anonymous because he was not authorized to discuss sensitive information.)

Furthermore, the Islamist groups active in Syria and Iraq, including ISIS, are not especially interested in attacking Europe or the United States. Instead, they are far more focused on fighting Shiites and local regimes. Many prominent Sunni clerics known for spurring holy warriors to action emphasize the



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importance of first winning such local contests before striking the West.

The case of Moner Mohammad Abusalha, the first American to carry out a suicide bombing in Syria, illustrates this phenomenon. Originally from Florida, Abusalha joined Jabhat al-Nusra after traveling to Syria in late 2013, and his death stirred U.S. officials' fears of a terrorist attack on domestic soil. An American citizen, Abusalha seemed to have been a perfect candidate to strike the United States. But Jabhat al-Nusra ordered him to attack Syrian government forces instead—a choice that clearly demonstrated the group's current priorities. The same logic applied to the British national suspected of killing the American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff this past August and September; even though the journalists' killer could have potentially wreaked havoc in London or elsewhere in Europe, ISIS assigned him a gruesome local task that would make him one of the most wanted men in the world, forever unable to return home.

The U.S. bombing of ISIS positions could change this sense of priorities. As the United States officially enters the fray against ISIS and U.S. involvement in the conflict deepens, the group may shift its priorities to attacking the U.S. homeland, or the West in general, out of revenge or defiance. But for now, ISIS' attention remains focused on its campaign against Syrian and Iraqi government forces.

Infighting among jihadist groups will further thin out the ranks of foreign recruits. Even as its fighters rolled into Iraq earlier this year, ISIS was embroiled in a bitter clash with Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria. Although both organizations follow Salafi jihadist ideology, ISIS rejected

al Qaeda's leadership and aspects of its agenda, which led to a formal break between the two groups in February 2014. The resulting hostilities have already claimed more than 3,000 lives, according to the most conservative estimates, including the lives of four out of the five British volunteers killed in Syria during the first half of this year. Apart from augmenting the death toll, this kind of infighting breeds disillusionment among foreign recruits. European intelligence officials have found that some would-be volunteers often sour on the idea of enlisting when told that they might have to shoot at old neighbors from across the street, not Assad loyalists or the supposed apostates.

Another common reason for disillusionment is the horrors that Western fighters witness in the conflict zones, especially the Muslim-on-Muslim violence roiling Syria and Iraq. Recruits often set out in pursuit of "the T-shirt and the pictures" but come back terrified and even traumatized by what they have seen and experienced, according to the European intelligence official we interviewed.

With very few exceptions, Western Muslims who do return home rarely complete the transition to terrorist, even if they continue to vehemently oppose their countries' policies and values. In fact, the majority go on to lead largely ordinary lives. Hegghammer has found that only one in nine fighters who went abroad between 1990 and 2010 came back interested in attacking at home. The nature of the conflict in which they took part also plays a role. Combatants returning from Syria are likely to pose much less of a threat than veterans of al Qaeda's training facilities



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in Pakistan; because al Qaeda's goals are more explicitly anti-Western than those of ISIS, al Qaeda fighters will account for a larger share of the plots in Europe and the United States.

The few individuals who remain bent on violence after returning from Syria and Iraq will often be easy targets for counterterrorism officials. For one, their heavy reliance on social media will become a double-edged sword. By openly publicizing and bragging about their activities online, these people identify themselves to security services and at times supply valuable intelligence data: their group affiliation, intentions, and associates. Officials can also glean useful information by studying their lists of friends and followers. As the European official explained to us, some potential terrorists remain "totally invisible" to authorities until they set out for Syria or Iraq and expose themselves online.

What's more, former foreign fighters contemplating violence at home could find that their experience in Syria and Iraq has left them ill equipped for the task. Although many learn some guerilla-warfare skills, such as handling small arms, they often lack the knowledge most useful for mounting successful terrorist attacks: how to conduct surveillance, avoid detection, and build a clandestine network. And when they operate in groups—a necessity for executing large-scale strikes—they are even more likely to come to the security services' attention.

Even the sole successful attack in Brussels demonstrated why fighters returning from the Syrian war pose less of a danger than is often supposed. In executing his assault, Nemmouche acted alone, which allowed him to escape authorities' notice but also limited the

damage he was able to cause. And although he had picked up some combat skills in Syria, Nemmouche appeared to lack any knowledge of concealment or evasion. He never got rid of his Kalashnikov rifle following the shooting; instead, he wrapped it in an ISIS flag and boarded a bus on a well-known and well-policed cannabis-smuggling route from Amsterdam to Marseille, leading to his quick arrest.

Finally, foreign fighters may be reluctant to bring violence back home for the simple reason that doing so could endanger their friends and relatives. In an interview with *The New York Times*, a friend of Abdisalan Hussein Ali, a Somali American from Minnesota who blew himself up in a 2011 attack on African Union troops in Mogadishu, recalled a revealing statement Ali had made two years before he left for Somalia. He would never attack the United States, Ali had said, since "my mom could be walking down the street."

## **BREAKING THE CYCLE**

Analyzing each step of the journey taken by Westerners who travel to fight in Syria and Iraq—as well as the factors that prevent them from staging attacks back home—suggests several policy measures that could further reduce the risk. First, Western security services should step up their efforts to dissuade the recruits from volunteering in the first place. One model for how to do this is a government-run program in Denmark that allows officials to seek out and speak with potential recruits in an informal setting, often in conjunction with family members and local community leaders. The goal of such conversations is always to persuade, not coerce.

Because the cooperation of families and communities is so vital to this task, officials are careful to press home the message that the Muslim population is a valued part of the solution, rather than the problem. And if individuals do volunteer and go abroad to fight with militants, governments could take measures to prevent their return; one program proposed by British Prime Minister David Cameron in September intends to accomplish just that by confiscating the passports of suspected radical fighters.

Western governments should also do more to make it harder for would-be jihadists to reach Syria and Iraq through Turkey. Until recently, Ankara's opposition to the Assad regime made Turkey a tacit supporter of fighters streaming across its border. But the rise of ISIS and the looming threat of extremism on Turkey's own soil have made its government more receptive to Western calls to halt the flow. The United States and European countries should use this opportunity to devise a better system for sharing information with Turkish intelligence and police agencies. For a start, Western officials could issue travel alerts for specific individuals and encourage Turkey to bar them from entering the country or crossing into Syria from its territory.

Western security agencies should also do everything they can to sow doubt in the minds of extremist leaders in Syria and Iraq about the true loyalties of Western Muslim volunteers. This could be accomplished by publicizing intelligence, either obtained from former recruits or even falsely generated by officials themselves, about the degree to which Western security services have infiltrated the jihadists' ranks. If extremist

militias come to view foreigners as potential spies or disseminators of corrupting influences, they might assign Western volunteers to noncombat roles, test their allegiances by offering them the one-way ticket of suicide bombings, or even avoid enlisting them altogether.

Western agencies also need to strengthen their currently inconsistent methods of monitoring returnees and identifying individuals who pose the greatest threat, as well as coordinating these efforts among themselves. The most dangerous returnees need to be closely monitored and, if possible, jailed. (Specific charges would vary by country and could include, for example, membership in a prohibited terrorist group.) But pursuing criminal prosecutions of all Western Muslims who fight abroad could backfire. Although it would temporarily neutralize former combatants, it might also alienate them even further—and, in Europe, expose them to the influence of hardened jihadists, who are amply represented in Europe's prison populations. Even the mere threat of jail might make a former fighter feel that he has less to lose and push him toward violence. Indiscriminate prosecution would also turn Muslim communities against the government, making them less likely to identify violent radicals in their midst.

Western governments should instead focus on reintegrating former fighters, despite the political difficulty of spending public resources on people whom many consider terrorists. Some returnees will require psychological counseling and treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder; failing to provide it might make them more dangerous than they otherwise would be. If fear of prosecution

prevents former fighters from seeking counseling and treatment, they will be less able to reintegrate into civilian life and leave their violent pasts behind.

Last, even though the threat from returning jihadists has been overblown, Western governments still need to devote considerable resources to the problem. Keeping track of the vast roster of suspects that the intelligence agencies must maintain under surveillance at any given time will be exceptionally taxing on both budgets and personnel. But because the influx of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq exceeds those of previous conflicts, the number of intelligence and police officials dedicated to the problem should grow in parallel. For government agencies, the challenge often lies not in accessing or gathering information about the returnees but in swiftly processing and analyzing it before reacting.

Western governments should also continue to seek ways to alleviate civilian suffering in Syria and Iraq. Many foreign fighters remain driven by a genuine desire to defend Syrians against the brutality of the Assad regime, even as sectarianism takes increasing sway over rival groups. Encouraging charitable activities, identifying legitimate channels for delivering humanitarian aid, and otherwise helping prevent unnecessary loss of civilian life could go a long way toward stemming the flow of foreigners to the war zone.

As long as the Syrian civil war and the ISIS offensive in Iraq continue, however, some fallout in the West appears inevitable. Terrorism is an unfortunate feature of modern life that cannot be eradicated; it can only be mitigated. Indeed, the Obama administration's decision to intervene

against ISIS makes the group more likely to try to expand its list of immediate targets. Yet it is important to avoid panic and to recognize that both the United States and the EU have fended off the worst outcomes in the past and will likely continue to do so.

Measures to reduce the threat of terrorism can and should be improved. But the standard of success cannot be eliminating risk in its totality. If it is, Western governments are doomed to failure and, worse, to an overreaction that will breed far more dangerous policy mistakes. 🌐

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# The Good War?

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## What Went Wrong in Afghanistan—and How to Make It Right

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*Peter Tomsen*

*War Comes to Garmser: Thirty Years of Conflict on the Afghan Frontier*

BY CARTER MALKASIAN. Oxford University Press, 2013, 352 pp. \$27.95.

*The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001–2014*

BY CARLOTTA GALL. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014, 352 pp. \$28.00.

*No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War Through Afghan Eyes*

BY ANAND GOPAL. Metropolitan Books, 2014, 320 pp. \$27.00.

**I**n the concluding pages of his fascinating memoir, *War Comes to Garmser*, Carter Malkasian, a Pashto-speaking U.S. diplomat who was stationed in a volatile region of Afghanistan in 2009–11, voices a fear shared by many of the Westerners who have participated in the Afghan war during the past 13 years:

The most frustrating thing about leaving Garmser in July 2011 and now watching it from afar is that I

cannot be certain that the [Afghan] government will be able to stand on its own. . . . The British and the Marines had put the government in a better position to survive than it had enjoyed in the past. What they had not done was create a situation in which the government was sure to win future battles against Taliban [fighters] coming out of Pakistan.

Malkasian's frustration is understandable. Over the past 13 years, Afghan President Hamid Karzai's central government and many of the people Karzai has appointed as regional governors have proved inept and corrupt, alienating ordinary Afghans in rural areas, many of whom have come to see the Taliban as the lesser of two evils. Karzai's time as president will soon come to an end, but Karzai is not going quietly. His efforts to manipulate the results of the elections held this past summer to choose his successor—and to ensure that he himself will retain significant influence even once he leaves office—have cast a pall over a democratic transfer of power that might otherwise have helped stabilize the country. The massive fraud that marred the election (and in which Karzai was almost certainly complicit) aided the Taliban's cause and endangered the country's unity by reigniting the same regional and ethnic tensions that fueled the civil war of the 1990s.

The United States also deserves some share of the blame. A cornerstone of contemporary counterinsurgency doctrine is the idea that outside actors must avoid the temptation to take direct control of a friendly country's military and governing responsibilities and should instead build up its institutional capabilities.

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**PETER TOMSEN** served as U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan in 1989–92 and is the author of *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers*.

But the United States ignored that axiom in Afghanistan, making many of the same mistakes that plagued the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. For the past decade, U.S. generals have dominated the military effort against the insurgency. Washington has chosen Afghanistan's leaders. Americans have conceived, planned, financed, and overseen economic projects in which Afghans have played only supporting roles. And yet there has never been a possibility that the United States and its allies could win the war against the Taliban. Only Afghans themselves can do that.

The Bush administration never truly accepted that basic premise. And neither the Bush administration nor the Obama administration fully grasped the true depth of Pakistan's duplicity; the U.S. war in Afghanistan has been, in no small part, a war against Washington's putative partners in Islamabad, who have covertly propped up the Taliban insurgency to suit their own purposes. In late 2009, the Obama administration wisely moved to "Afghanize" the war, putting Afghans in charge of defending their own country by increasing the number of U.S. troops but gradually shifting them to a supporting role, allowing the largely U.S.-financed Afghan security forces, which now boast 340,000 soldiers and police officers, to take the lead in combat operations. Nevertheless, the Obama administration has yet to confront, much less resolve, the dilemma posed by Pakistan's two-faced strategy.

Thanks in part to the flawed policies that have flowed from Washington's misapprehensions, the new Afghan government that emerged from the contested presidential election will face long odds in its effort to hold off the

Taliban and counter Pakistani meddling. For the Afghan state to win its war against the Taliban and the group's patrons in Pakistan, it will need the United States and NATO to sustain their support. Ultimately, however, success in Afghanistan will depend on internal Afghan and geopolitical developments that the United States and its allies cannot control: the ability of moderate Afghan tribal and ethnic groups (who together represent a majority of the country's population) to unite behind a representative, competent, reform-minded leadership; a fundamental shift in Pakistani policy away from destabilizing Afghanistan; and diplomatic cooperation among external powers, including China and India, to restore Afghanistan's classic buffer role in the region.

Malkasian's book and two other recent books on the war in Afghanistan—Carlotta Gall's *The Wrong Enemy* and Anand Gopal's *No Good Men Among the Living*—help reveal why those outcomes remain uncertain, and even unlikely. Taken together, these books explain how it can be that more than 13 years after 9/11, the Afghan war is far from over, even if Washington insists that the U.S. war in Afghanistan will soon come to an end.

#### **EYE OFF THE BALL**

*War Comes to Garmser* primarily deals with Malkasian's experiences applying counterinsurgency doctrine in a violent, remote district in Helmand Province, and it should be required reading for anyone interested in understanding the complex nature of the tribal and village-level politics that have always played a major role in determining the course of events in Afghanistan. But Malkasian also offers an excellent



*Locked and loaded: Taliban fighters in Afghanistan, January 2014*

history of the politics and planning of the U.S.-led war, paying particular attention to strategic failures in the war's early years. Malkasian argues that if the Bush administration had not diverted its attention to the invasion of Iraq, the United States could have focused more on strengthening the Afghan state and could have "built an Afghan army larger than 70,000 soldiers" that would have been able to "handle the Taliban," which were weak and disorganized during the early phases of the U.S.-led invasion. Indeed, in 2002, a Pentagon-led interagency team put forward a detailed proposal along those lines, only to see Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld quash its recommendations.

The consequences of that decision were felt almost immediately. The Taliban regrouped in Pakistan, where the Pakistani army's powerful spy agency,

the Inter-Services Intelligence, readied its Afghan proxies for a counterattack. In 2005, the ISI deployed the revamped Taliban forces to Afghanistan, along with two other proxies, the al Qaeda-linked Haqqani network and the group of militants led by the veteran mujahideen fighter and longtime ISI pawn Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Thousands of fighters crossed the border into Afghanistan and found no Afghan army to resist them—only self-serving warlords paid by the CIA and the U.S. military. By that point, with the Iraq war in full swing, U.S. troops in Afghanistan numbered only 10,800 and were scarcely present along the 1,500-mile Afghan-Pakistani border.

In the years that followed, the Bush and Obama administrations both tried to fill the security vacuum with more U.S. forces, futilely chasing the steadily rising number of Taliban fighters as the group expanded its presence into every

region of Afghanistan. By the end of George W. Bush's tenure, there were roughly 40,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan; Barack Obama's "surge" increased that number to around 100,000 by 2011. In this manner, Washington adopted the same strategy that had failed the Soviet Union during the 1980s: casting the Afghan army in a supporting role in a military effort led by outsiders, rather than playing a supporting role in an Afghan-led campaign.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's military dictator, Pervez Musharraf, granted the United States and NATO the use of supply corridors through his country, cleverly locking the Western alliance into a logistical dependency on Pakistan. This meant that both sides in the war in Afghanistan relied on Pakistan: the ISI oversaw Taliban bases and recruiting networks inside Pakistan, and the Western alliance could not get its supplies to the battlefield without Pakistan's acquiescence.

### KNOW THY ENEMY

The perversity of this situation is well chronicled in Carlotta Gall's superb book, *The Wrong Enemy*. Gall, a reporter for *The New York Times*, spent 13 years covering Afghanistan and Pakistan and has a lifelong connection to the region: her father, Sandy Gall, is a well-known British journalist who himself spent a good portion of his career covering Afghanistan. Her deep knowledge of the region lends authority to the basic argument her book makes about the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, which might sound reductive if it came from a less well-informed source: "Pakistan, not Afghanistan, has been the true enemy."

Gall documents the Pakistani army's double game: public support and private official assurances that Pakistan is allied with the United States and NATO, but clandestine ISI support for radical Islamist terrorism—and not just in Afghanistan. She persuasively rejects the official U.S. claim that no "smoking gun" exists that would prove that high-level Pakistani military officials were aware that Osama bin Laden was living in Pakistan—a stone's throw from the Pakistani equivalent of West Point, no less—for years before U.S. Special Forces killed him there in 2011. Citing an "inside source," Gall writes that

the ISI actually ran a special desk assigned to handle the al Qaeda leader. It was operated independently, headed by an officer who made his own decisions. He did not have to pass things by a superior. . . . What he did was of course wholly deniable by virtually everyone at the ISI. . . . But the top bosses knew about the desk, I was told.

Gall charges that U.S. officials and politicians, when confronted with Pakistani double-dealing, have been "mealy-mouthed, pleading that they [have] no leverage over Pakistan." As for why billions of dollars in unconditional U.S. military and economic aid have not persuaded Islamabad to change course, Gall reasons that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal—and the fear of what might happen to it if the Pakistani security establishment lost power or influence—deters U.S. officials from applying more pressure. Regrettably, however, Gall does not follow up her condemnation of Washington's flawed

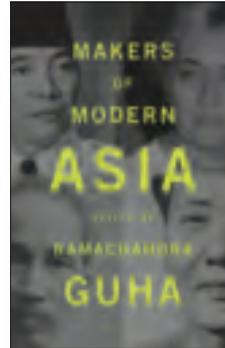
approach to Pakistan with any specific policy recommendations.

### “WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS IS THIS?”

Although Gall reports on a wide swath of society in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, her most important sources are insiders and officials in Washington, Islamabad, and Kabul. And although Malkasian’s book focuses heavily on the Afghans in rural Helmand Province, Malkasian was a U.S. official during his time there, and his analysis reflects that position. In that respect, Anand Gopal’s *No Good Men Among the Living* offers an interesting alternative to those two accounts. Gopal focuses more on the stories of Afghans contending with the shifting currents of the brutal war—including Taliban leaders and fighters in militant-controlled areas, to whom Gopal, a correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Christian Science Monitor*, managed to gain access.

Just as Malkasian and Gall do, Gopal emphasizes the importance of Pakistani influence on the Taliban. One of the main characters he profiles is a Taliban commander named Akbar Gul. At one point, Gul was summoned to Pakistan for a meeting with an ISI officer to resolve a dispute between Gul and another Taliban leader. When the ISI man, in his “perfectly tailored” *shakwar kameez*, demands that Gul justify his actions, the Taliban commander chafes at the Pakistani’s arrogance: “Who was he, hundreds of miles from the battlefield, to question him?” In an ironic parallel to Washington’s exasperation with the Pakistanis, Gul complains to the ISI officer about Islamabad’s two faces: “Why do you help America? You take their money and work with them, then you work with us as

# Harvard

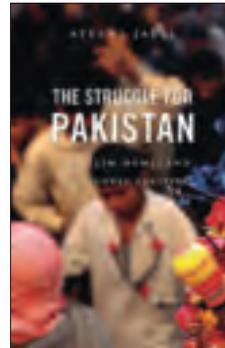


### *Makers of Modern Asia*

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### *The Struggle for Pakistan*

*A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*

**Ayesha Jalal**

“Most countries have armies, but in Pakistan the army has a country ... The warriors in charge take the lion’s share of public spending. Figures are opaque, but Jalal ...

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### *Overreach*

*Delusions of Regime Change in Iraq*

**Michael MacDonald**

“MacDonald methodically dissects the top ten reasons most often used to explain why the war was a failure, and in the process shows each to be self-serving, inadequate, misleading—or all of the above. He does the

same for explanations of why we went to war in the first place.” —Scott Beauchamp, *Bookforum* | \$29.95 cloth

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well. What kind of business is this?" That outburst notwithstanding, the ISI ruled in Gul's favor—but not without making it clear who called the shots.

Unlike Malkasian and Gall, Gopal does not depict Pakistan as the primary spoiler in Afghanistan. And he rejects the conventional wisdom that the Afghan war went astray only because Washington took its eye off the ball by shifting its attention to Iraq. He puts forward a different hypothesis:

Following the Taliban's collapse, al-Qaeda had fled the country. . . . By April 2002, the group could no longer be found in Kandahar—or anywhere else in Afghanistan. The Taliban, meanwhile, had ceased to exist. . . . The terrorists had all decamped or abandoned the cause, yet U.S. special forces were on Afghan soil with a clear political mandate: defeat terrorism.

This, Gopal claims, presented Washington with a puzzle: "How do you fight a war without an adversary?" The answer, he writes, was supplied by Afghan warlords who saw an opportunity to consolidate their power with the unwitting assistance of the Americans—and to get rich in the process. Such men "would create enemies where there were none," feeding false intelligence to the Americans, who paid good money for it. The result was counterproductive U.S. and NATO operations that alienated and divided ordinary Afghans: ideal conditions for the Taliban and other militants to exploit after they had regrouped in Pakistan and crossed back into Afghanistan in 2005.

There is merit to Gopal's thesis that the U.S. partnership with unpopular

warlords helped open the way for the Taliban's return. But Gopal errs in concluding that the Taliban had "ceased to exist" in Afghanistan after the group's leaders fled back to their former Pakistani sanctuaries following the U.S.-led invasion. Thousands of Taliban foot soldiers, along with scores of midlevel leaders and commanders, had merely gravitated back to the protection of clans and tribes in Afghan villages and mountains, ready to fight another day. And although Washington's embrace of warlords helped the Taliban win public support after regrouping, the militants would not have been able to return to Afghanistan in force without Pakistan's assistance.

#### **FRAGILE GAINS**

The U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, for all its mistakes, reversed the slide into chaos, extremist tyranny, and terrorist incubation that had begun with the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and hastened after the Taliban took power in 1996. Over the past decade, the U.S. coalition, coordinating with the Afghans and other players in the international community, has provided the space and time necessary for the resuscitation of Afghan state institutions that had been all but destroyed during the Soviet occupation and the Taliban's rule. And the enthusiastic voter turnout in the two rounds of presidential balloting this past summer dramatically demonstrated popular support for democracy and opposition to the return of the Pakistan-backed Taliban.

Although some outside observers warn that Afghanistan is becoming a "failed state," most Afghans believe

that their country is back on its feet again as an independent member of the international community. The Afghan media, with its hundreds of private television and radio outlets, are as free and lively as any in the region. Afghan civil society has made considerable strides, especially in the area of women's rights. More than a third of those who voted in the presidential elections were women. Nearly 40 percent of the children in Afghan schools are female. Over a quarter of Afghan parliamentary members are women, compared with just 20 percent in the U.S. Senate and 18 percent in the U.S. House of Representatives. And the latest class to graduate from the Afghan National Police's officer-training academy included 51 women.

Such progress would not have been possible without the U.S.-led intervention. Securing the gains, however, will rely almost entirely on the newly formed Afghan government. The early twentieth century offers the country's new leaders a useful model to draw on. Before the communist era, which began in 1978, Afghanistan enjoyed four decades of stability and slow but steady modernization. The country owed its progress largely to a unique relationship between the central government and traditional tribal structures in the regions. The government in Kabul did not possess a monopoly of power in the country but shared it with moderate tribal groups and clerics in rural areas. The government provided services such as schools, clinics, and roads to the regions, whose tribal elders administered their communities according to ancient codes and customs, maintained security, and participated in parliamentary conclaves in Kabul.

The new central government will have to decide whether and how to restore that kind of equilibrium. Some Afghans advocate the creation of a more parliamentary form of government, with a prime minister at the head of a decentralized state that devolves real, if limited, authority to elected provincial and district governors. Others believe that the status quo, with power rigidly centralized in Kabul, will remain necessary as long as the insurgency continues. The parliamentary option seems more prudent, given the Karzai regime's failure to provide either security or economic benefits to most Afghans, despite receiving many billions of dollars in foreign assistance.

The next Afghan president will also have to cope with warlords whose power usually rests more on guns and money than on tribal or religious authority. Some of them have been integrated into the government structure, but most still control territory and drug-trafficking routes and sometimes collude with the Taliban. Degrading their strength will take time and a mixture of pressure and incentives. Afghans will also be watching closely for signs that the new government intends to remove, rather than tolerate, the many corrupt officials who became a fixture of the Karzai era.

#### **HIGH PRESSURE, HIGH STAKES**

By the end of 2014, almost 10,000 U.S. troops are slated to remain in Afghanistan, advising the Afghan security forces and assisting them with counterterrorism missions. But according to current U.S. policy, all those troops will be gone by the end of 2016. The fear of many Afghans and outside observers, myself included, is that once the last U.S.

soldiers and marines have left Kabul, Afghanistan will again vanish from Washington's agenda. Without sustained economic and military assistance, the fragile Afghan state might not hold together, and the country could descend into full-scale civil war.

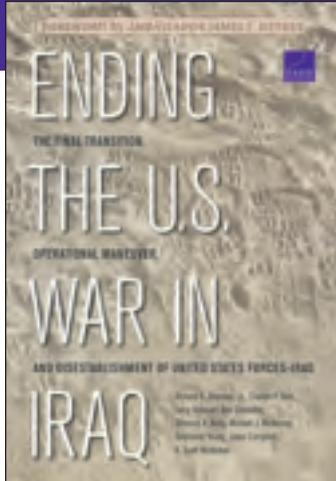
To avoid that calamity, Washington needs to invest in Afghanistan for the long term, even if there aren't any U.S. combat forces in the country. In 2012, the United States and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement that called for ten years of "close cooperation concerning defense and security"; Obama, and whoever succeeds him in the White House, must make good on that commitment by providing long-term assistance and training to Afghan army and police forces.

Washington must also take three crucial steps to increase the pressure on Islamabad to cease its support for restoring a radical Islamist government in Afghanistan. First, the United States should designate the Afghan Taliban as a foreign terrorist organization, which would result in financial sanctions against banks and other institutions in Pakistan that the group relies on for funding. Then, Washington should make clear that U.S. military aid to Pakistan will end if Islamabad does not shut down the ISI's terrorist proxies. Finally, Washington should warn Islamabad that if Pakistan continues its support for extremists in Afghanistan, the United States might designate Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism—a move that would produce severe economic, political, and diplomatic consequences for Pakistan.

In an ironic echo, just as Iraq distracted U.S. attention from Afghanistan in 2003, so today the emergence of the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, known as ISIS, has pushed Afghanistan off front pages and lower down the list of urgent priorities in Washington. But the rise of ISIS only underscores the importance of Afghanistan, which is one battleground where the United States and its allies could secure the defeat of Sunni extremism and help tip the balance in the Muslim world's multidecade struggle between the moderate majority and the extremist fringe. 🌐

# The road to transition

The drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq offers lessons for the impending departure from Afghanistan



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**Ending the U.S. war in Iraq** was a complex undertaking that posed daunting challenges for U.S. government policymakers, not least because the military was engaged in political and economic functions, not just security-related activities, across Iraq.

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*Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces-Iraq*

Richard R. Brennan, Jr., Charles P. Ries, et al.

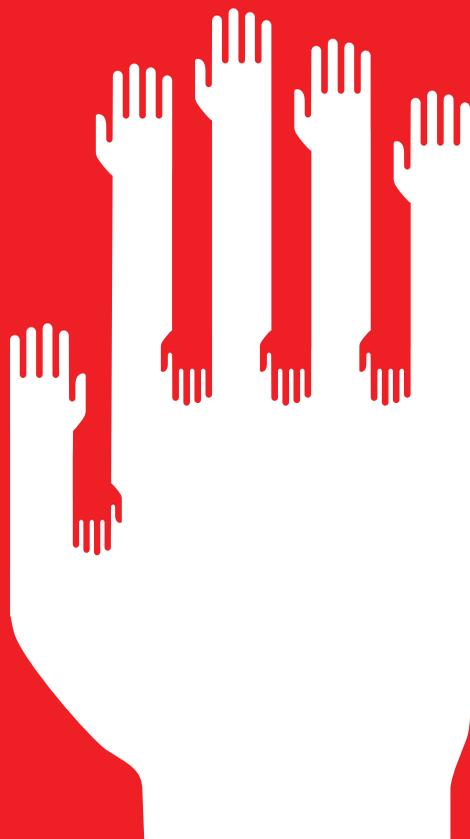
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# ESSAYS



*Within the Chinese leadership, Xi has moved quickly to become not first among equals but simply first.*

*— Elizabeth Economy*

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# Opening Indonesia

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## A Conversation With Joko Widodo

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**O**n July 9, nearly 135 million Indonesians went to some 480,000 polling stations and picked a new president—just the third to be directly elected in the country’s history. (Indonesia overthrew its longtime dictator, Suharto, in 1998, but his initial successors were chosen by the legislature.) Their choice: Joko Widodo, known universally as Jokowi. A former small-town mayor from central Java, Jokowi first burst onto the national scene when he was elected governor of Jakarta in 2012. A populist and technocrat, Jokowi is neither rich nor wellborn; he dresses simply, is a self-professed metalhead with a special fondness for Metallica, and worked in the family furniture business before entering politics. His wild popularity and rapid ascent—from provincial unknown to the leader of the world’s third-largest democracy—have drawn comparisons to another president who spent part of his middle-class childhood in Indonesia: Barack Obama. But high expectations can be a curse as well as a blessing, and Jokowi faces huge challenges: endemic corruption, a once-promising economy that has gone into a tailspin, and a lingering threat of Islamic extremism. In mid-September, he met with *Foreign Affairs* managing editor Jonathan Tepperman at his Jakarta residence for his first interview with an English-language publication since his election.

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This interview has been edited and condensed.

**You just got through a very difficult campaign. The result was much closer than initially predicted, and there were a lot of rumors spread about you during the race: that you were Jewish, a Christian, ethnic Chinese, a communist, an American agent, etc. Then your opponent disputed the results. Has all that made this diverse country even more divided, and how can you reunite it?**

It’s true, yes, that the campaign was very ugly, very passionate. But this is normal in democracies, and I’m sure that the people here will now come together again. Maybe the elite can show the people how. I recently met with our competitor Hatta Rajasa [the opposing vice-presidential candidate], and people know that we are good friends. It’s good to show people that after campaigning, we are friendly. It’s also like that with Prabowo Subianto [the opposing presidential candidate].

**When you form your cabinet, will you also bring people from different parties together to show national unity?**

I’m willing to work with all parties to reform Indonesia.

**In your previous two jobs, as mayor of Solo [also called Surakarta] and then governor of Jakarta, part of the key to your success was your use of *blusukans*: daily trips outside the office to meet with common people and hear their problems. Can you continue to use such personal**



*Jokowi in Jakarta, August 2014*

**politics as president of 250 million people spread across 13,000 islands?**

In Solo and Jakarta, I always went to the people every day. I stayed in the office only one or two hours, where I signed, signed, signed. After that, I went to the market, I went to the riverbanks, I went to the slums, I went to the *kampung* [villages]. I asked people what they need, what they want. I can also do this for Indonesia. And we can use “e-*blusukan*,” via Skype or teleconference. But for me, it’s very important to face the people directly.

**That’s something most presidents find difficult, as they get surrounded by advisers and security.**

But I have already tried. I’m sure I can manage.

**You’re the first Indonesian president with no ties to the Suharto regime. You represent a new generation. What does that say about Indonesia and about the kind of president you’ll be?**

The fact that someone like me could become president shows that our democracy is maturing. We have a lively and independent media. We used social media in our campaign and had more than 3,000 groups of volunteers. This is a new political system. We are taking a human-centric approach to win the trust of the people.

**Will the fact that you never had any stars on your shoulders or were married to the daughter of Suharto [as Prabowo, an ex-general, was] allow you more freedom?**

That’s right. For me, democracy must deliver a better life for the people.

**Have previous Indonesian governments not done a good job at that?**

No. They had the budget, but in my opinion, they didn’t have the system to deliver it to the people. But we, for example, used a [smart-card] system in Solo and Jakarta to deliver support directly to the people. Now I want to develop an Indonesian smart card.

**That would deliver health-care and education subsidies directly to the people, without giving officials a chance to steal money along the way?**

Right. From the budget, we send funds directly to the people. It’s very simple.

**Indonesia has a great many advantages, from enormous natural resources to a young population. For most of the last decade, it was one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, but starting a few years ago, the economy began a sharp decline. What went wrong, and how will you address it?**

I think of how to win the trust not only of the people but also of investors. If we have good trust, I think the economy is not a problem. [In the past,] we have always made promises [to investors], but in fact there was no delivery.

**Many foreign companies feel like they’ve been unfairly discriminated against in legal and criminal prosecutions. That’s done a lot to damage investor confidence here. So has the fact that regulations aren’t applied and enforced in a predictable way.**

I met the other day with investors from the U.S., from Russia, from Japan, from [South] Korea. They asked about democratic reform and business permits. They asked about land-acquisition problems. And I have experience there. When I was

the mayor of Solo and governor of Jakarta, we had what we called a one-stop service office. In the past, when you asked for a business permit, they sometimes delivered it in six months, sometimes one year, sometimes two years. But now the maximum is around 30, 35 days.

**So will you do that on a national level?**

Yes. We will copy it and bring the process to regions [throughout Indonesia]. Because we already have the system here, we can ask local governors and mayors to copy it.

**That will make the bureaucratic side better. But what will you do to give confidence to foreign investors that they will be treated more fairly here?**

I can invite them to the offices and show them that this is how to get a business permit, that it's very easy, like this, like this, like this.

**Won't Indonesia's devolution of power to its many regions make this more difficult?**

No, because 85 percent of their budgets come from the central government. So for me, it's very easy.

**Can you control how that money is spent?**

Yes. We can use e-budgeting, e-audits. Already in Jakarta, we use an [electronic] task-management system. So it's very easy to control. We can check the money that goes in and the money that goes out.

**Fuel subsidies eat up a huge amount of the government budget. You recently met with the outgoing president [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono] to press him on the issue, but he refused to raise prices. How do you plan to deal with the problem?**

We currently spend around \$30 billion

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a year on fuel subsidies. Next year, the total for all subsidies will be around \$43 billion; that represents around 20 percent of the [total budget]. I want to cut subsidies gradually over three years and to focus funds on productive activities: infrastructure that will help farmers, like irrigation, and fertilizer, or fuel for fishermen.

We also want to concentrate on railway infrastructure and deep-sea ports. It's very important, because when we have sea transportation and a railway—not only in Java but also in Sumatra, in Kalimantan, in Sulawesi, in Papua—I'm sure the cost of the transportation will decrease here. Now it's more than 15 percent of the cost of doing business, whereas normally it is less than seven percent. So here it's double.

**How much do you plan to invest in such projects?**

We want to concentrate on seaports and railways. If we can, we will use our national budget. But if not, I will seek investors, especially for the ports. Many investors are very interested in this project.

**What will you do to ensure that cutting fuel subsidies doesn't hurt poor people?**

We will create what we call an Indonesian smart card that can be used for education, and [help them in other ways].

**What will you do to combat the threat of political Islam and to preserve Indonesia's reputation for tolerance?**

Indonesia is the world's third-largest democracy. And we also have the world's largest Muslim population. This demonstrates that democracy and Islam are not incompatible. Terrorism is not associated with any religion.

**But there are forces in Indonesia, including the Prosperous Justice Party and groups like the Islamic Defenders Front, that push for a much more aggressive, Saudi-style Islam. What will you do to ensure that the country stays moderate?**

To deal with radicalism and extremism, we need to deal with economic inequality. This is what I learned from my experience in Solo and then in Jakarta. And I think if our government does more to empower the people, then I'm sure that we can decrease radicalism and extremism. This is what the people here want.

**Will you bring the Islamic parties into your government?**

We will talk to everyone.

**Can Indonesia serve as a model for other Muslim countries struggling with such problems?**

Yes. We have good experience. Here we combine the military approach with the soft approach. We have programs to inform people that this is right and this is wrong.

**You're talking about education on the true nature of Islam?**

Education for students, yes, but dialogue with the people is also very important.

**Indonesia has been very successful in combating terrorism over the last decade. But ISIS [the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham] has recently attracted several hundred Indonesians to go and fight in Syria and Iraq. What is the state of the terrorist threat in Indonesia today, and what is your plan for dealing with it?**

We must work closely with moderate Islamic organizations. And I will look to

balance the prevention side with the law enforcement side of counterterrorism. We have more than 20 years' experience with this problem.

**And how serious is the threat of terrorism today?**

I think it's more or less declining.

**Corruption is one of the hardest problems for any government to address, but it's a particularly big problem here. How will you succeed in fighting it?**

I will continue to support the work and maintain the independence of our Corruption Eradication Commission. But first and more important, we need to introduce bureaucratic reforms and consistently monitor the problem. We must check consistently, every day, every week, every month, because this can change our bureaucratic culture.

For example, in Jakarta, we have a new system for when you want to get an ID card here. Before, it took two weeks, three weeks; now, only one day. And my objective is only one hour. Step by step. As for building permits, before it sometimes took six months, eight months, two years. Now, I gave my bureaucracy here the goal of only two weeks, using an online system. You can ask for the permit from your office, from your house. And we can copy this system in other provinces.

**What are your top foreign policy priorities? For example, you talked during your campaign about opening an Indonesian embassy in Palestine, and you traveled to Saudi Arabia for a haj just a few days before the election. Do you plan to get more involved in the Middle East? You've also talked about**

**turning Indonesia into "a great maritime nation."**

Indonesia will remain open for business, and foreign participation is especially welcome in sectors such as infrastructure, industry, and manufacturing. I will also push initiatives to strengthen our competitiveness in the global market. And there are five or six million Indonesians working abroad; we also need to increase protection for them.

**Many of your neighbors are seeking a greater U.S. military, economic, and diplomatic relationship to balance the rise of China. Does Indonesia want a greater U.S. presence here?**

Both China and the U.S. are close friends of Indonesia, and we welcome their interest in our region. Indonesia is open. We will work with all major powers through strategic partnerships. As for the South China Sea problem, I think we can play the role of an honest broker.

**What is the most important thing you want outsiders to know about your new government and Indonesia?**

We're open. We're open to all countries for investment. And when I talk about developing Indonesia into a great maritime nation, it is not just about defense only, but it's also about trade, tourism, fishing, and transportation. So that means that now we need investors from all countries to build our infrastructure, to build our economy. For me, economic growth is very important, to give our people jobs and a better life. 🌐

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# The Mission for Manila

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## A Conversation With Benigno Aquino III

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**I**n the last four years, Benigno Aquino III—generally known by his nickname Noynoy—has turned the Philippines from one of Asia’s underperformers into one of its economic stars. Aquino is a scion of the Philippines’ most beloved political dynasty; his father, the opposition leader Benigno Aquino, Jr., was assassinated by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1983, and his mother, Corazon Aquino, won the country’s first democratic election after the dictator’s fall. Thanks to an aggressive anticorruption campaign and sound, conservative macroeconomic policies, Aquino has racked up a long list of accomplishments since his 2010 election. In 2012 and 2013, the economy grew by 6.8 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively; inflation dropped; the stock market soared; and for the first time in its history, the country scored an investment-grade rating from the three main credit-rating agencies. This year, however, Aquino started to stumble, with corruption scandals and legal and political battles eroding his once-stratospheric approval rating. In late September, Aquino met with *Foreign Affairs* managing editor Jonathan Tepperman in New York to discuss the challenges he and his country face.

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This interview has been edited and condensed.

**Over the course of your presidency, the Philippines has become one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. How have you done it?**

I’ll borrow a phrase: “Good governance is good economics.” What does that mean? Under my predecessor, all decisions were based on political considerations: Does this keep my powers? Does this strengthen my position? [Former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo] was my economics professor in college. But had I proposed then some of the things that she did when she was president, she probably would have flunked me. She was doing things that didn’t make sense. When she [took office], she inherited a debt of about 12 billion pesos; by the time she left office, it was 277 billion pesos. And there also must have been moneymaking ventures among certain closely affiliated personnel; we’re still in the process of proving that.

What did we change? Now when you come into the country, the routes are clear. We try to shield you from some regulatory risk. And fiscal responsibility is our mantra. They said at the outset that I was refusing to spend anything. But all that was left to us to run the government for about six months was 100 billion [pesos] out of a 1.5 trillion peso budget—a very small percentage. The fiscal space we’ve earned now gives us the wherewithal to embark on a lot of social programs, investments in our people. We have tripled the budgets for education,



*The president in  
Malaysia, February 2014*

health, and conditional cash transfers. And the people are now empowered.

**Your presidential term ends in June 2016. What are your top priorities in the time you have left?**

Well, when I am asked, “How do we ensure that [our current success] is not a temporary aberration?” I say, “If our people really feel a difference in their lives, and they are the ones who can give the mandate, then they will insist that we continue all of these things that led to all of these successes.” So the priority has to be, how can we make this [progress] felt by the greatest majority in the time remaining? How do we accelerate what has been happening now, so that people get used to the idea that this is the new normal, this is what we are entitled to, and this is what they should be demanding as a baseline from anybody else.

**And how do you do that?**

Well, for instance, the conditional cash-transfer program used to only require that you keep your children in school at the elementary level. We expanded it to the secondary level starting this year. And we’ve increased the number of families participating, from 800,000 when we started to 4.1 million today.

**But how do you ensure that politics and other variables, which have caused so many problems in the Philippines in the past and doomed every temporary upswing, don’t return again?**

Well, part of it is we’re going after people if there is evidence they are engaging in corrupt practices. There has to be punishment if you commit transgressions against the people, and that is how we hope to demonstrate that no one is above the law.

We have to abide by all of the rules, the rules that are established for everybody. We impeached the chief justice of the Supreme Court, primarily because he hid 98 percent of his assets. The guy who was supposed to be the primary defender of the constitution was the first one who was not following the rules. He was convicted, and he’s still facing charges on income tax evasion, amongst others, and probably for unexplained wealth.

**What has made your anticorruption campaign successful while many other countries still struggle with the problem?**

Well, it’s still a struggle for us. People have been doing it for decades upon decades, and they still think they can get away with it. But I’m very persistent. I’ve been called hardheaded, obstinate, unreasonable, etc. But at the end of the day, it’s like cupping water with your hands. You cannot open them and hope that the water will still be there. Eventually, it will all drain out. So as much as possible, you say it’s either right or it’s wrong. It cannot be wrong today and right tomorrow. Hopefully, [each prosecution] will impart the lesson to our people that, again, this is the new norm.

**How do you respond to critics who have complained that you’ve used your anticorruption campaign to target the opposition?**

We have not spared anybody. The only question here is, is there evidence or is there not? If the evidence we have on hand is shallow, and we file a case [against someone], then he will get off scot-free. And if we later get better evidence, he cannot be charged again because of double jeopardy. So if we filed charges left and right and couldn’t support them, then

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**Recent polls have shown that perceptions of corruption in the business sector are going back up again. Last year, 45 percent of executives surveyed said it was widespread; this year, it was 56 percent. You personally have faced criticism for the misappropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars by an enormous number of former and current legislators. Is corruption making a comeback? And how will you ensure that it doesn't?**

I am not privy to this particular survey that you are citing, but it might be possible that now that we are actually enumerating and uncovering all of these nefarious deeds, many people think that there's more corruption.

The [other charges you mention] have to deal with the period from 2007 to 2009, when I was not president; I was a member of the opposition. As a member of the opposition, we were not given some of the Priority Development Assistance funds [that were the source of the scandal]. Used correctly, you know, [such funds] can produce many positive changes. Unfortunately, some quarters have abused them, diverting funds to fake nongovernmental organizations producing spurious results. That has to be corrected.

**What are you doing to ensure that those abuses don't continue?**

Number one, we charge those that abuse [the system]. Number two, the funding system has been changed by a recent ruling of the Supreme Court. I'll start complying with the Supreme Court's instructions.

**You criticized the Supreme Court after it ruled that your use of another fund, the Disbursement Acceleration Program, was unconstitutional because you did not consult with Congress first. After that ruling, you said that you thought the court had too much power. What do you see as the court's proper role, and what do you plan to do about it?**

One retired Supreme Court justice recently said, "Our expertise is in the law. What expertise can we claim as far as politics or economics are concerned? But we are being tasked to rule just on one aspect and not consider the net results."

**Would you like to change your country's institutional structure so that the Supreme Court can't intervene in areas where it has no expertise?**

It's not a question of not intervening, but rather exercising power with restraint, as opposed to exercising it at every given opportunity.

**Would you like to see a constitutional amendment limiting the court's powers?**

We are asking our legal luminaries to come up with a common position that we will consider.

**The current constitution also limits the president to a single term, but you've suggested that you'd like to amend that portion of it to allow you to run again. Many Filipinos worry that might lead to the re-creation of the imperial presidency that caused so many abuses in the past. Why is it so important that you get a second term?**

I never said I wanted a second term. But for instance, our partners in the peace process with the Bangsamoro say, "Sir, so long as you're there, we're confident this

thing will happen. If you're no longer there, we will worry about the new people that we'll have to talk to." I've been asked by so many quarters, "How do we continue the transformation that's happening now [under a different president]?" A lot of people say, "We don't like this candidate; we don't like that candidate. Why don't you continue? We're confident in you."

Now, that has to be balanced with a fundamental precept my parents taught me, which is that a measure of success is your ability to train your successor. There has to be that infusion of new blood.

**Does that mean you haven't decided whether or not you want to run again?**

I'm just listening to everybody's opinion. At the end of the day, I think what is expected of me is to generate a consensus about how we can continue the transformation that is happening. Personally, I'd like to be on the sidelines. But I have to be able to generate a consensus that propels the person most likely to continue what we're doing into office.

**But if you do decide to run again, there has to be a constitutional change, which presumably would need to start soon. Do you plan to start pushing for that?**

I am hoping to finish all the dialogue soon. After that, I will call every aspect of the broad coalition that brought me into office into a meeting and say, "This is the route we're going to take." But I have to listen to all of them.

**The reason the constitution limits presidents to one term is to prevent the abuses of the Marcos era from ever happening again. Your mother was the president who oversaw the creation of this post-Marcos constitution in the first**

**place. How do you think she would feel about an attempt to change it?**

I think there's a marked difference between that period and now. Having said that, I believe a lot of benefits can accrue from a one-term limit. I am not concerned about getting reelected. I can make the unpopular but necessary decision. Your focus from day one is on your legacy rather than political considerations.

And what is the legacy? I want to be able to step down from office and say, "Every promise I made, we accomplished." But I am not the type of guy who says, "I am the only one who has all the answers." That would be totally wrong.

**Back in February, you compared China's territorial claims in the South China Sea to Hitler's seizure of the Sudetenland and called on the world to say, "Enough is enough."**

There might be more tensions now. But let me pull in the context [of my original remark]. During a lunch at an ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] summit, the leader of another ASEAN country was sitting next to me, and he said, "They're a big country, and we're small. This is the reality of the world. They can be very generous." The idea was to give in to what they wanted. My response was, "Isn't that the same as what [people said about] Hitler? He said, 'We need "living space." I want a third of Czechoslovakia.' And the Czechs were not even consulted."

In this situation, obviously I cannot say, "Please take a portion of the Philippines." And nobody will stand up for our rights unless we stand up for our rights. This is not a problem just for us. You know, the tensions are spreading. It used to be China, Vietnam, and the

Philippines. Now we have reports that even nonclaimant countries to the features in the South China Sea are getting embroiled. So we're asking, can we not have an ASEAN code of conduct that would manage the disputes among all of the parties claiming features in the South China Sea? It's not just for our benefit. I think it benefits everybody to have airtight obligations, so we don't have all of the competing theories [over how to establish ownership].

**In April, your government signed an agreement to boost the U.S. military presence in the Philippines. Do you feel that Washington is doing enough to help you in your dispute with China?**

We're very comfortable with the position that says [the United States] is not going to take positions on individual claims. And we appreciate [Washington's] comments that the resolution [of claims] has to be peaceful, with no threats or intimidation or use of force.

**Would you like to see a larger U.S. military presence in the region? Would that help convince China to play by the rules?**

I have to leave that up to people who are more competent in military matters than I am.

**Are you worried that the renewed U.S. focus on the Middle East will distract the United States from engaging more in Asia?**

I think President Obama, like myself, is a multitasker. Without getting cross-eyed, you have to focus on everything at the same time. And [the United States has] enough built-in structures, institutions, and mechanisms that [ensure] appropriate focus will be maintained.

**When Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took moves recently to amend the Japanese constitution to allow his country to do more for its own defense, you were one of the few Asian leaders not to criticize him, and even to suggest that such moves were legitimate, despite Japan's troubled history in the region. Does that mean you're interested in building stronger relations with other countries in your neighborhood to deal with the China threat?**

Not specifically to deal with the China threat, but to deal with all of the issues that the world is facing right now. Let's start with the Middle East. Japan was part of the peacekeeping force, I understand, in the Golan Heights. Their constitution is so restrictive, they tell us, that they had to be protected by another country when they were attacked. In a convoy of allied ships, if other ships in the convoy are attacked, they cannot interfere; only when they are themselves attacked can they respond. So what's the value of having them in a coalition when you cannot count on them? They are now trying to correct that situation. They are a large economy; they are a strong voice on so many things. They should also have the wherewithal to be able to contribute completely and in concert with the rest of the world.

**But why, given how nervous the South Koreans, for example, get when the Japanese talk about enhancing their defense capabilities, are you more comfortable with the idea?**

I guess because of the behavior the Japanese exhibited in the Philippines after World War II. The same thing goes for America, for that matter. We have a saying in our country: "You

cannot get to where you want to go without looking at where you came from.” We have two strategic partners who have demonstrated real friendship to us over quite a number of decades, especially after the war, and that’s the United States and Japan.

**You’re close to setting up a new autonomous Muslim region in the south, made possible by a peace agreement you negotiated with one of the largest rebel groups there in 2012. How were you able to make this happen, and what are the lessons for other countries struggling with similar issues?**

It was a very big challenge, because you had belligerents sitting across from each other at the negotiating table. And there was a great absence of trust because of atrocities that each had committed against the other. So we were at loggerheads until I asked if they would be willing to meet with me [personally]. And that’s what happened. And I really tried to put myself in their shoes, and I think they put themselves in my shoes also. I said, “Ask of me that which I can provide, and it’s done. Ask of me that which is impossible, and there is no way I can give it to you.” And we proceeded from there. Step by step, we moved on to the details of the various agreements, and we finally got a sense of what is attainable. And we both agreed that the endpoint was desirable from all perspectives.

So I met with honorable, trustworthy individuals who wanted to put an end to the violence, and we were also prompted by our respective constituencies to really strive for this. At the end, they stated, “Sir, so as long as you’re here, since we trust you, we’re open.”

**So personal contact and trust, those were the secrets?**

Yes. And I guess they’ve seen the track record of my own family, and how we shared the same struggles, perhaps differing only in details.

**What is your message to outside investors who are nervous about the recent slowdown in the overall economy and some of the recent snags in the anticorruption drive? What do you think is the most important thing foreigners still don’t understand about the Philippines?**

Regarding the economy, we’ve gone from 5.7 [percent GDP growth] to 6.4 in the last two quarters, so we’re on an upward trajectory. It’s down from 7.2 [in 2013], but if investors are looking at the figures only on a quarter-by-quarter basis, they might be too timid. I wonder what business can be [run] quarter to quarter.

As for snags on corruption, we’re a democracy. There’s protection for the rights of everyone, which means a very lengthy [judicial] process, which we’re trying to correct. Speedy trials are what is wanted. What’s the phrase? “Justice delayed is justice denied.” We want to eliminate that as a condition in the country.

The main message is that the Philippines is strategically located and blessed with the greatest resource: its people, who are hard-working, very loyal, and very adaptive. We are now in a period where the potential which the Philippines has always had has been unlocked. We have had 6.3 percent growth over the past four years. So you can join us now—or a few years from now say, “I missed the opportunity that was presented.” 🌐

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# The Unraveling

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## How to Respond to a Disordered World

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*Richard N. Haass*

**I**n his classic *The Anarchical Society*, the scholar Hedley Bull argued that there was a perennial tension in the world between forces of order and forces of disorder, with the details of the balance between them defining each era's particular character. Sources of order include actors committed to existing international rules and arrangements and to a process for modifying them; sources of disorder include actors who reject those rules and arrangements in principle and feel free to ignore or undermine them. The balance can also be affected by global trends, to varying degrees beyond the control of governments, that create the context for actors' choices. These days, the balance between order and disorder is shifting toward the latter. Some of the reasons are structural, but some are the result of bad choices made by important players—and at least some of those can and should be corrected.

The chief cauldron of contemporary disorder is the Middle East. For all the comparisons that have been made to World War I or the Cold War, what is taking place in the region today most resembles the Thirty Years' War, three decades of conflict that ravaged much of Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century. As with Europe back then, in coming years, the Middle East is likely to be filled with mostly weak states unable to police large swaths of their territories, militias and terrorist groups acting with increasing sway, and both civil war and interstate strife. Sectarian and communal identities will be more powerful than national ones. Fueled by vast supplies of natural resources, powerful local actors will continue to meddle in neighboring countries' internal affairs, and major outside actors will remain unable or unwilling to stabilize the region.

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There is also renewed instability on the periphery of Europe. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia appears to have given up on the proposition of significant integration into the current European and global orders and chosen instead to fashion an alternative future based on special ties with immediate neighbors and clients. The crisis in Ukraine may be the most pronounced, but not the last, manifestation of what could well be a project of Russian or, rather, Soviet restoration.

In Asia, the problem is less current instability than the growing potential for it. There, most states are neither weak nor crumbling, but strong and getting stronger. The mix of several countries with robust identities, dynamic economies, rising military budgets, bitter historical memories, and unresolved territorial disputes yields a recipe for classic geopolitical maneuvering and possibly armed conflict. Adding to the challenges in this stretch of the world are a brittle North Korea and a turbulent Pakistan, both with nuclear weapons (and one with some of the world's most dangerous terrorists). Either could be the source of a local or global crisis, resulting from reckless action or state collapse.

Some contemporary challenges to order are global, a reflection of dangerous aspects of globalization that include cross-border flows of terrorists, viruses (both physical and virtual), and greenhouse gas emissions. With few institutional mechanisms available for stanching or managing them, such flows hold the potential to disrupt and degrade the quality of the system as a whole. And the rise of populism amid economic stagnation and increasing inequality makes improving global governance even more challenging.

The principles informing international order are also in contention. Some consensus exists about the unacceptability of acquiring territory by force, and it was such agreement that undergirded the broad coalition supporting the reversal of Saddam Hussein's attempt to absorb Kuwait into Iraq in 1990. But the consensus had frayed enough over the succeeding generation to allow Russia to escape similar universal condemnation after its taking of Crimea last spring, and it is anyone's guess how much of the world would respond to an attempt by China to muscle in on contested airspace, seas, or territory. International agreement on sovereignty breaks down even more when it comes to the question of the right of outsiders to intervene when a government attacks its own citizens or otherwise fails to meet

its sovereign obligations. A decade after UN approval, the concept of “the responsibility to protect” no longer enjoys broad support, and there is no shared agreement on what constitutes legitimate involvement in the affairs of other countries.

To be sure, there are forces of order at work as well. There has been no great-power war for many decades, and there is no significant prospect of one in the near future. China and the United States cooperate on some occasions and compete on others, but even in the latter case, the competition is bounded. Interdependence is real, and both countries have a great deal invested (literally and figuratively) in the other, making any major and prolonged rupture in the relationship a worrisome possibility for both.

Russia, too, is constrained by interdependence, although less so than China given its energy-concentrated economy and more modest levels of external trade and investment. That means sanctions have a chance of influencing its behavior over time. Putin’s foreign policy

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*The post–Cold War order is unraveling, and while not perfect, it will be missed.*

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may be revanchist, but Russia’s hard- and soft-power resources are both limited. Russia no longer represents anything that appeals to anyone other than ethnic Russians, and as a result, the geopolitical troubles it can cause

will remain on Europe’s periphery, without touching the continent’s core. Indeed, the critical elements of Europe’s transformation over the past 70 years—the democratization of Germany, Franco-German reconciliation, economic integration—are so robust that they can reasonably be taken for granted. Europe’s parochialism and military weakness may make the region a poor partner for the United States in global affairs, but the continent itself is no longer a security problem, which is a huge advance on the past.

It would also be wrong to look at the Asia-Pacific and assume the worst. The region has been experiencing unprecedented economic growth for decades and has managed it peacefully. Here, too, economic interdependence acts as a brake on conflict. And there is still time for diplomacy and creative policymaking to create institutional shock absorbers that can help reduce the risk of confrontation stemming from surging nationalism and spiraling distrust.

The global economy, meanwhile, has stabilized in the aftermath of the financial crisis, and new regulations have been put in place to

reduce the odds and scale of future crises. U.S. and European growth rates are still below historical norms, but what is holding the United States and Europe back is not the residue of the crisis so much as various policies that restrict robust growth.

North America could once again become the world's economic engine, given its stable, prosperous, and open economy; its 470 million people; and its emerging energy self-sufficiency. Latin America is, for the most part, at peace. Mexico is a far more stable and successful country than it was a decade ago, as is Colombia. Questions hovering over the futures of such countries as Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Venezuela do not alter the fundamental narrative of a region heading in the right direction. And Africa, too, has a growing number of countries in which better governance and economic performance are becoming the norm rather than the exception.

Traditional analytic approaches have little to offer in making sense of these seemingly contradictory trends. One conventional route, for example, would be to frame the international dynamic as one of rising and falling powers, pitting China's advance against the United States' decline. But this exaggerates the United States' weaknesses and underestimates China's. For all its problems, the United States is well positioned to thrive in the twenty-first century, whereas China faces a multitude of challenges, including slowing growth, rampant corruption, an aging population, environmental degradation, and wary neighbors. And no other country is even close to having the necessary mix of capacity and commitment to be a challenger to the United States for global preeminence.

U.S. President Barack Obama was recently quoted as brushing off concerns that things are falling apart, noting that "the world has always been messy" and that what is going on today "is not something that is comparable to the challenges we faced during the Cold War." Such sanguinity is misplaced, however, as today's world is messier, thanks to the emergence of a greater number of meaningful actors and the lack of overlapping interests or mechanisms to constrain the capacity or moderate the behavior of the most radical ones.

Indeed, with U.S. hegemony waning but no successor waiting to pick up the baton, the likeliest future is one in which the current international system gives way to a disorderly one with a larger number of power centers acting with increasing autonomy, paying less heed to U.S. interests and preferences. This will cause new problems even as

it makes existing ones more difficult to solve. In short, the post–Cold War order is unraveling, and while not perfect, it will be missed.

### **THE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM**

Just why have things begun to unravel? For various reasons, some structural, others volitional. In the Middle East, for example, order has been undermined by a tradition of top-heavy, often corrupt, and illegitimate governments; minimal civil society; the curse of abundant energy resources (which often retard economic and political reform); poor educational systems; and various religion-related problems, such as sectarian division, fights between moderates and radicals, and the lack of a clear and widely accepted line between religious and secular spheres. But outside actions have added to the problems, from poorly drawn national borders to recent interventions.

With more than a decade of hindsight, the decision of the United States to oust Saddam and remake Iraq looks even more mistaken than it did at the time. It is not just that the articulated reason for the war—ridding Saddam of weapons of mass destruction—was shown to be faulty. What looms even larger in retrospect is the fact that removing Saddam and empowering Iraq's Shiite majority shifted the country from balancing Iranian strategic ambitions to serving them, in the process exacerbating frictions between Sunni and Shiite Muslims within the country and the region at large.

Nor did regime change have better results in two other countries where it was achieved. In Egypt, the American call for President Hosni Mubarak to leave office contributed to the polarization of the society. Subsequent events demonstrated that Egypt was not yet ready for a democratic transition, and U.S. withdrawal of support from a longtime friend and ally raised questions elsewhere (most notably in other Arab capitals) about the dependability of Washington's commitments. In Libya, meanwhile, the removal of Muammar al-Qaddafi by a combined U.S. and European effort helped create a failed state, one increasingly dominated by militias and terrorists. The uncertain necessity of the intervention itself was compounded by the lack of effective follow-up, and the entire exercise—coming as it did a few years after Qaddafi had been induced to give up his unconventional weapons programs—probably increased the perceived value of nuclear weapons and reduced the likelihood of getting other states to follow Qaddafi's example.



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In Syria, the United States expressed support for the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad and then did little to bring it about. Obama went on to make a bad situation worse by articulating a set of redlines involving Syrian use of chemical munitions and then failing to act even when those lines were clearly crossed. This demoralized what opposition there was, forfeited a rare opportunity to weaken the government and change the momentum of the civil war, and helped usher in a context in which the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), which has declared itself the Islamic State, could flourish. The gap between rhetoric and action also further contributed to perceptions of American unreliability.

In Asia, too, the chief criticism that can be levied against U.S. policy is one of omission. As structural trends have increased the risks of traditional interstate conflict, Washington has failed to move in a determined fashion to stabilize the situation—not raising the U.S. military's presence in the region significantly in order to reassure allies and ward off challengers, doing little to build domestic support for a regional trade pact, and pursuing insufficiently active or sustained consultations to shape the thinking and actions of local leaders.

With regard to Russia, both internal and external factors have contributed to the deterioration of the situation. Putin himself chose to consolidate his political and economic power and adopt a foreign policy that increasingly characterizes Russia as an opponent of an international order defined and led by the United States. But U.S. and Western policy have not always encouraged more constructive choices on his part. Disregarding Winston Churchill's famous dictum about how to treat a beaten enemy, the West displayed little magnanimity in the aftermath of its victory in the Cold War. NATO enlargement was seen by many Russians as a humiliation, a betrayal, or both. More could have been made of the Partnership for Peace, a program designed to foster better relations between Russia and the alliance. Alternatively, Russia could have been asked to join NATO, an outcome that would have made little military difference, as NATO has become less of an alliance in the classic sense than a standing pool of potential contributors to "coalitions of the willing." Arms control, one of the few domains in which Russia could lay claim to still being a great power, was shunted to the side as unilateralism and minimalist treaties became the norm. Russian policy might have evolved the way it has anyway, even if the United States

and the West overall had been more generous and welcoming, but Western policy increased the odds of such an outcome.

As for global governance, international accords are often hard to come by for many reasons. The sheer number of states makes consensus difficult or impossible. So, too, do divergent national interests. As a result, attempts to construct new global arrangements to foster trade and frustrate climate change have foundered. Sometimes countries just disagree on what is to be done and what they are prepared to sacrifice to achieve a goal, or they are reluctant to support an initiative for fear of setting a precedent that could be used against them later. There is thus decidedly less of an “international community” than the frequent use of the phrase would suggest.

Once again, however, in recent years, developments in and actions by the United States have contributed to the problem. The post–Cold War order was premised on U.S. primacy, which was a function of not just U.S. power but also U.S. influence, reflecting a willingness on the part of others to accept the United States’ lead. This influence has suffered from what is generally perceived as a series of failures or errors, including lax economic regulation that contributed to the financial crisis, overly aggressive national security policies that trampled international norms, and domestic administrative incompetence and political dysfunction.

Order has unraveled, in short, thanks to a confluence of three trends. Power in the world has diffused across a greater number and range of actors. Respect for the American economic and political model has diminished. And specific U.S. policy choices, especially in the Middle East, have raised doubts about American judgment and the reliability of the United States’ threats and promises. The net result is that while the United States’ absolute strength remains considerable, American influence has diminished.

### **WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**

Left unattended, the current world turbulence is unlikely to fade away or resolve itself. Bad could become worse all too easily should the United States prove unwilling or unable to make wiser and more constructive choices. Nor is there a single solution to the problem, as the nature of the challenges varies from region to region and issue to issue. In fact, there is no solution of any sort to a situation that can at best be managed, not resolved.

But there are steps that can and should be taken. In the Middle East, the United States could do worse than to adopt the Hippocratic oath and try above all to do no further harm. The gap between U.S. ambitions and U.S. actions needs to be narrowed, and it will normally make more sense to reduce the former than increase the latter. The unfortunate reality is that democratic transformations of other societies are often beyond the means of outsiders to achieve. Not all societies are equally well positioned to become democratic at any given moment. Structural prerequisites may not be in place; an adverse political culture can pose obstacles. Truly liberal democracies may make for better international citizens, but helping countries get to that point is more difficult than often recognized—and

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*U.S. policies, especially in the Middle East, have raised doubts about the reliability of Washington's threats and promises.*

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the attempts often riskier, as immature or incomplete democracies can be hijacked by demagoguery or nationalism. Promoting order among states—shaping their foreign policies more than their internal politics—is an ambitious enough goal for U.S. policy to pursue.

But if attempts at regime change should be jettisoned, so, too, should calendar-based commitments. U.S. interests in Iraq were not well served by the inability to arrange for the ongoing presence of a residual U.S. force there, one that might have dampened the feuding of Iraqi factions and provided much-needed training for Iraqi security forces. The same holds for Afghanistan, where all U.S. forces are due to exit by the end of 2016. Such decisions should be linked to interests and conditions rather than timelines. Doing too little can be just as costly and risky as doing too much.

Other things outsiders could usefully do in the region include promoting and supporting civil society, helping refugees and displaced people, countering terrorism and militancy, and working to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (such as by trying to place a meaningful ceiling on the Iranian nuclear program). Degrading ISIS will require regular applications of U.S. airpower against targets inside both Iraq and Syria, along with coordinated efforts with countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey to stem the flow of recruits and dollars. There are several potential partners on the ground in Iraq, but fewer in Syria—where action

against ISIS must be undertaken in the midst of a civil war. Unfortunately, the struggle against ISIS and similar groups is likely to be difficult, expensive, and long.

In Asia, the prescription is considerably simpler: implement existing policy assiduously. The Obama administration's "pivot," or "rebalance," to Asia was supposed to involve regular high-level diplomatic engagement to address and calm the region's all-too-numerous disputes; an increased U.S. air and naval presence in the region; and the building of domestic and international support for a regional trade pact. All these actions can and should be higher administration priorities, as should a special attempt to explore the conditions under which China might be prepared to reconsider its commitment to a divided Korean Peninsula.

With Russia and Ukraine, what is required is a mixture of efforts designed to shore up Ukraine economically and militarily, strengthen NATO, and sanction Russia. At the same time, Russia should also be offered a diplomatic exit, one that would include assurances that Ukraine would not become a member of NATO anytime soon or enter into exclusive ties with the EU. Reducing European energy dependence on Russia should also be a priority—something that will necessarily take a long time but should be started now. In dealing with Russia and other powers, meanwhile, Washington should generally eschew attempts at linkage, trying to condition cooperation in one area on cooperation in another. Cooperation of any sort anywhere is too difficult to achieve these days to jeopardize it by overreaching.

At the global level, the goal of U.S. policy should still be integration, trying to bring others into arrangements to manage global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, proliferation, trade, public health, and maintaining a secure and open commons. Where these arrangements can be global, so much the better, but where they cannot, they should be regional or selective, involving those actors with significant interests and capacity and that share some degree of policy consensus.

The United States also needs to put its domestic house in order, both to increase Americans' living standards and to generate the resources needed to sustain an active global role. A stagnant and unequal society will be unlikely to trust its government or favor robust efforts abroad. This need not mean gutting defense budgets, however; to the contrary, there is a strong case to be made that U.S.

defense spending needs to be increased somewhat. The good news is that the United States can afford both guns and butter, so long as resources are allocated appropriately and efficiently. Another reason to get things right at home is to reduce American vulnerability. U.S. energy security has improved dramatically in recent years, thanks to the oil and gas revolutions, but the same cannot be said about other problems, such as the country's aging public infrastructure, its inadequate immigration policy, and its long-term public finances.

As has recently been noted in these pages, American political dysfunction is increasing rather than decreasing, thanks to weakened parties, powerful interest groups, political finance rules, and demographic changes. Those who suggest that the country is only a budget deal away from comity are as mistaken as those who suggest that the country is only one crisis away from restored national unity. The world can see this, and see as well that a majority of the American public has grown skeptical of global involvement, let alone leadership. Such an attitude should hardly be surprising given the persistence of economic difficulties and the poor track record of recent U.S. interventions abroad. But it is up to the president to persuade a war-weary American society that the world still matters—for better and for worse—and that an active foreign policy can and should be pursued without undermining domestic well-being.

In fact, sensible foreign and domestic policies are mutually reinforcing: a stable world is good for the home front, and a successful home front provides the resources needed for American global leadership. Selling this case will be difficult, but one way to make it easier is to advance a foreign policy that tries to reorder the world rather than remake it. But even if this is done, it will not be enough to prevent the further erosion of order, which results as much from a wider distribution of power and a decentralization of decision-making as it does from how the United States is perceived and acts. The question is not whether the world will continue to unravel but how fast and how far. 🌐

# Brazil: The Knowledge Economy

## Investing in World-Class Research and Innovation



Divulgação GE Brasil

GE healthcare factory in Contagem ( Minas Gerais)

### Joining Forces: Public-Private Partnerships

In emerging economies, the innovation revolution is alive among start-ups and multinationals, making these countries fertile sources for creativity and disruptive business models. A new report from the business school INSEAD and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) argues that “Latin American businesses are redefining global business” by developing new business models.

As countries strive to increase their international competitiveness, several governments are creating stimulus policies to strengthen national companies’ innovation capacity. In Brazil, academic and business communities have reached a consensus on the vital role of private enterprise. A combination of government policies and business strategies is central to the creation of an environment conducive to innovation. Recently, the Brazilian government has made significant efforts to join forces with the private sector, and new opportunities to create the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs have emerged.

The growing number of national and multinational companies that engage in research and development (R&D) and innovation in Brazil is remarkable: between 2012 and the first half of 2014, more than twenty major international corporations began to develop research in Brazil. This trend could benefit the region’s economic development, create new markets, and expand global commerce. The return of industrial policies since 2000, has given innovation a strong role in the Brazilian government’s program and policy agenda, offering new strategies to foment innovation, as observed by the Minister of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade, Mauro Borges. “The Brazilian government has played a

key role in developing innovation by implementing several measures, such as workforce training programmes [the number of Masters and Doctors quadrupled from 1998 to 2012], by giving incentives to strengthen the relation between research centers and the private sector, and also by providing fiscal incentives for R&D, such is the case of the Good and IT Laws [‘Lei do Bem’ and ‘Lei da Informática’] by which the value of the tax waiver reached R\$7 billion in 2012.”

Several initiatives are underway to forge a partnership between productive, academic, and research sectors. EMBRAPPII, the Brazilian Corporation for Research and Industrial Innovation, is worth mentioning. The project arose from discussions caused by the Business Mobilisation for Innovation (Mobilização Empresarial pela Inovação – MEI), led by the National Industrial Confederation (Confederação Nacional da Indústria – CNI), which meets periodically to discuss public policies to foster innovation, with the participation of the Federal Government and academic representatives. The model was created to promote business cooperation projects and national research institutions in the pre-competition phase, proof of concept and technological scale-up that enable the development of innovative business. Its main goal is to support Brazilian companies in developing high-skill, strategic products and technologies that can enhance their competitiveness in the national and international markets. “On top of this we are also improving the legal framework. The project is currently being analysed at the parliament,” Minister Borges said.

Though firms are the principal engines of innovation and policymaking is “still grounded in economic considerations,” countries with the most dynamic economies are those that have de-

veloped a “national system of innovation” where the increased number of actors—companies, governmental institutions and research centers—fluidly interact within a cohesive network. FINEP, the Brazilian Innovation Agency, has understood this principle. “The plan Inova Empresa launched in March 2013 by the government with a R\$32.9 billion endowment, is the most ambitious innovation plan ever launched in Brazil,” stated FINEP president Glauco Arbx. Designed to help increase economic productivity, the plan aims to build higher level technology policies and encourages strong articulation of ministries, agencies, and other institutions. To date, R\$98.6 billion have been allocated to launch innovation projects in the following fields: Energy, Oil & Gas, Health Complex, Complex Aerospace and Defense, IT, Telecommunications, Social and Environmental Sustainability and Agriculture. As of July 2014, FINEP and BNDES (The National Economic Development Bank), raised R\$18.55 billion. “Despite the great progress we still have much to do,” Arbx contended. “The aim is to reach the amount of R\$50 billion per year to support innovation over the next five years.”

### Opportunities: Attracting Multinational Giants

Meanwhile, major multinational firms are stepping up investment in sizeable R&D facilities in Brazil. In 2011, IBM opened facilities in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, followed by the Swedish-Brazilian Centre of Research and Innovation (CISB) with a US\$50 million initial investment, bringing together over forty partners from the public, academic, and industrial sectors. That same year, EMC began constructing an R&D center at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

technology park that aims to marry big data with Brazil's booming oil and gas industry. Siemens opened its eighth R&D center in Brazil in 2012, and DuPont opened its seventh in 2014. Cisco also jumped on the bandwagon and announced plans to open an innovation center in Rio.

As Sergio Borger, IBM's Senior Manager of Engagement Systems and Insight, explains, "Brazil was chosen to host the Innovation Laboratory because of the business opportunities that it offers and the strategic importance given by the government to create an innovation culture. The country has many professional talents, is rich in natural resources and presents many challenges, such as logistics, infrastructure and health, conducive to develop new solutions. It must be said that IBM's labs activities in Brazil are globally driven, and for instance our Research Center for Natural Resources, one of our four areas of research, is a world reference." IBM announced that the company was selected by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI) to develop a first-of-its-kind technology that would allow organizations to manage cloud resources more efficiently and in real time. The system, which IBM will develop in conjunction with Brazilian and foreign universities, will optimize testing for a dynamic self-management software solution that will balance specialized and traditional resources dynamically according to businesses' demands, in real time.

General Electric (GE) has also invested heavily in Brazil to accelerate technology partnerships with Brazilian companies across multiple industries. The company is about to inaugurate its fifth Global Research Center in Rio, which will receive a R\$500 million investment and serve as GE's new R&D hub on the continent, focused on producing innovations applicable in areas such as intelligent and integration systems, bioenergy, offshore and submarine systems for the oil and gas sector, renewable energy, aviation, and railways. According to Reinaldo Garcia, president and CEO for Latin America, "with the active work of the private sector and academia towards creating a more favorable environment for R&D the country wins as it leverages best its potential to become a hub for exports of reverse innovation." Accordingly, the technology developed to solve local challenges can be exported to other countries with similar demands, including developed nations. "A good example of reverse innovation is the generation of electricity at commercial scale from sugar cane ethanol."

Indeed, Brazil's well-established renewable energy industry is a global reference. Almost 50 percent of Brazil's total energy consumption is currently derived from alternative sources. The country is dedicated to expanding green energy sources: the government aims to increase its consumption at least 10 percent by 2020. Beyond promoting a more sustainable energy sourcing, the government

also seeks to diversify renewable resources as hydroelectric power fuels 80 percent of the country's electricity. In this direction, Boeing, Embraer, and the São Paulo State Research Foundation (FAPESP) have announced plans to collaborate on long-term aviation biofuels related research and development, a move that represents another major step toward creating a sustainable aviation biofuels industry in Brazil. Azul, GOL, TAM, and Trip airlines will be strategic advisors in the program.

The objective is to create a sustainable aviation biofuels research center in São José dos Campos, São Paulo, to drive a long-term research agenda for the development of aviation biofuels technology in Brazil. The center's mission will be to bridge the technical, commercial, and sustainability gaps to enable the creation of a new fuel supply chain. As Antonini Puppim-Macedo, director of research collaboration at Boeing Research and Technology Brazil, points out, "through the Biofuels Brazilian Platform, Brazil has the potential to become the leading force in creating and supplying biofuels to the world aviation sector and help diminish its dependence on fossil fuels, hence improving energy security and at the same time offering new opportunities for Brazil's economic growth."

The most visible example of Brazil's strides in innovation, research, and development is Embraer, the third largest commercial jet producer in the world (by units sold). The company's collaborative business model uses the global supply chain to source components, and invites suppliers to participate as partners in projects, mitigating the risks associated with product development. Embrapa, an agricultural research agency, is another case: the company imported soybeans from Asia and cattle from India to Brazil, and adapted the goods to suit the harsh conditions of the Brazilian cerrado, or savannah. Petrobras, the world's deep-water oil exploration and production expert, is pushing ever deeper into the ocean in search of reserves. In its Lula field, it is drilling seven kilometers below the Atlantic's surface. At its Cenpes research center near Rio's Technological Park, it has 227 laboratories using seismic technology to evaluate deep-water fields to the materials required to resist the corrosive chemicals and high temperatures of the oil deposits.

### Challenges and Prospects for The Future

Knowledge about Brazil is limited; the country must focus on building and promoting its image. "There are other significant industries in Brazil, such as IT. With a population of over two-hundred million people, Brazil is a huge end-user market for semiconductors and chips. A fast expanding, one-hundred million-strong middle class, avid for new technology and with increased purchasing power, has created a dynamic market for consumer electronics, mobile phones, computers and vehicles. We have a huge knowledge in this sector, which also enters the

segment of games, but Brazil does not export much and production is more focused to meet the domestic demand. We still have the healthcare industry, machines and services and other fields that look to the future, such as wind and solar, which are also booming in the country, as well as biotechnology," said Mauricio Borges, president of the Brazilian Agency for the Promotion of Exports and Investments at Apex-Brasil. "We have already mapped a series of investment opportunities, identifying best places to invest according to the production chain and we help foreigners with the interpretation of Brazilian laws, which can be hard sometimes." The agency strives to promote Brazilian products and services abroad and attract foreign investment to strategic sectors of the country's economy and recently signed an agreement with FINEP aimed to increase the productivity of the domestic industry by encouraging innovation. "Investment in R&D is important. We see that businesses that are investing in technological development can remain or have greater participation in the international market" Borges added.

The intensity of public incentives, still below the desired level, is one of the elements that contribute to Brazilian executives having a negative perception about the environment for innovation in Brazil. The effectiveness of intellectual property protection, the potential for partnerships with universities for research projects and the ability of universities in preparing innovative leaders are other points that still needs to improve. "Innovating involves risks and few businessmen in Brazil are ready to accept the challenge and become pioneers. However, much has been done and the country has improved with the promotion via FINEP and BNDES, the emergence of EMBRAPA and public support to researchers and scholarships abroad. We are on track, but the speed is still low," comments Bernardo Gradin, President of GranBio, who invests to make cellulosic sugar the most competitive and sustainable source of carbon for the manufacture of biofuels, biochemicals, and biomaterials, with a plan that involves the production of one billion litres of second-generation ethanol and one million tonnes of sugar for biochemicals in the next ten years.

"Among the priorities of investment in innovation should be less bureaucracy and bottlenecks that block the creation of a favourable environment for growth of the country in research environment," Reinaldo Garcia added. "It is important to note, however, that Brazil is also named as one of the countries with the greatest potential in the world in innovation." The latest edition of the Global Innovation Barometer, a survey conducted annually by GE which polls thirty-two hundred executives based in twenty-six countries, reveals a greater impetus to identify ways to break paradigms, following new trends and creating new policies and processes—helping to make companies more prepared and adapted to unexpected changes in the market.

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# China's Imperial President

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## Xi Jinping Tightens His Grip

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*Elizabeth C. Economy*

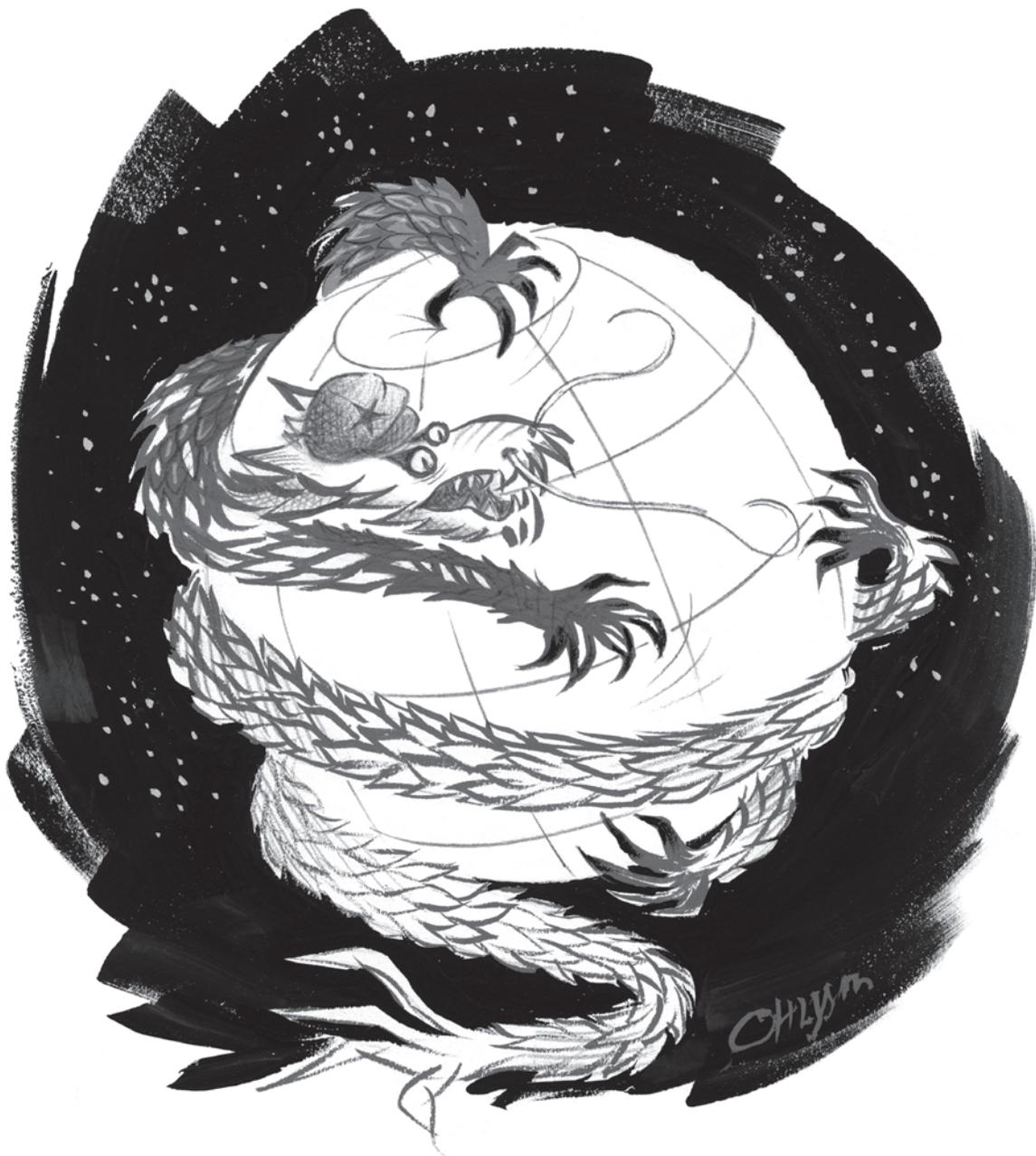
Chinese President Xi Jinping has articulated a simple but powerful vision: the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It is a patriotic call to arms, drawing inspiration from the glories of China's imperial past and the ideals of its socialist present to promote political unity at home and influence abroad. After just two years in office, Xi has advanced himself as a transformative leader, adopting an agenda that proposes to reform, if not revolutionize, political and economic relations not only within China but also with the rest of the world.

Underlying Xi's vision is a growing sense of urgency. Xi assumed power at a moment when China, despite its economic success, was politically adrift. The Chinese Communist Party, plagued by corruption and lacking a compelling ideology, had lost credibility among the public, and social unrest was on the rise. The Chinese economy, still growing at an impressive clip, had begun to show signs of strain and uncertainty. And on the international front, despite its position as a global economic power, China was punching well below its weight. Beijing had failed to respond effectively to the crises in Libya and Syria and had stood by as political change rocked two of its closest partners, Myanmar (also known as Burma) and North Korea. To many observers, it appeared as though China had no overarching foreign policy strategy.

Xi has reacted to this sense of malaise with a power grab—for himself, for the Communist Party, and for China. He has rejected the communist tradition of collective leadership, instead establishing himself as the paramount leader within a tightly centralized political system.

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At home, his proposed economic reforms will bolster the role of the market but nonetheless allow the state to retain significant control. Abroad, Xi has sought to elevate China by expanding trade and investment, creating new international institutions, and strengthening the military. His vision contains an implicit fear: that an open door to Western political and economic ideas will undermine the power of the Chinese state.

If successful, Xi's reforms could yield a corruption-free, politically cohesive, and economically powerful one-party state with global reach:

a Singapore on steroids. But there is no guarantee that the reforms will be as transformative as Xi hopes. His policies have created deep pockets of domestic discontent and provoked an international backlash. To silence dissent, Xi has launched a political crackdown, alienating many of the talented and resourceful Chinese citizens his reforms are intended to encourage. His tentative economic steps have raised questions about the country's prospects for continued growth. And his winner-take-all mentality has undermined his efforts to become a global leader.

The United States and the rest of the world cannot afford to wait and see how his reforms play out. The United States should be ready to embrace some of Xi's initiatives as opportunities for international collaboration while treating others as worrisome trends that must be stopped before they are solidified.

### **A DOMESTIC CRACKDOWN**

Xi's vision for a rejuvenated China rests above all on his ability to realize his particular brand of political reform: consolidating personal power by creating new institutions, silencing political opposition, and legitimizing his leadership and the Communist Party's power in the eyes of the Chinese people. Since taking office, Xi has moved quickly to amass political power and to become, within the Chinese leadership, not first among equals but simply first. He serves as head of the Communist Party and the Central Military Commission, the two traditional pillars of Chinese party leadership, as well as the head of leading groups on the economy, military reform, cybersecurity, Taiwan, and foreign affairs and a commission on national security. Unlike previous presidents, who have let their premiers act as the state's authority on the economy, Xi has assumed that role for himself. He has also taken a highly personal command of the Chinese military: this past spring, he received public proclamations of allegiance from 53 senior military officials. According to one former general, such pledges have been made only three times previously in Chinese history.

In his bid to consolidate power, Xi has also sought to eliminate alternative political voices, particularly on China's once lively Internet. The government has detained, arrested, or publicly humiliated popular bloggers such as the billionaire businessmen Pan Shiyi and Charles Xue. Such commentators, with tens of millions of followers on social media, used to routinely discuss issues ranging from environmental

pollution to censorship to child trafficking. Although they have not been completely silenced, they no longer stray into sensitive political territory. Indeed, Pan, a central figure in the campaign to force the Chinese government to improve Beijing's air quality, was compelled to criticize himself on national television in 2013. Afterward, he took to Weibo, a popular Chinese microblogging service, to warn a fellow real estate billionaire against criticizing the government's program of economic reform: "Careful, or you might be arrested."

Under Xi, Beijing has also issued a raft of new Internet regulations. One law threatens punishment of up to three years in prison for posting anything that the authorities consider to be a "rumor," if the post is either read by more than 5,000 people or forwarded over 500 times. Under these stringent new laws, Chinese citizens have been arrested for posting theories about the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. Over one four-month period, Beijing suspended, deleted, or sanctioned more than 100,000 accounts on Weibo for violating one of the seven broadly defined "bottom lines" that represent the limits of permissible expression. These restrictions produced a 70 percent drop in posts on Weibo from March 2012 to December 2013, according to a study of 1.6 million Weibo users commissioned by *The Telegraph*. And when Chinese netizens found alternative ways of communicating, for example, by using the group instant-messaging platform WeChat, government censors followed them. In August 2014, Beijing issued new instant-messaging regulations that required users to register with their real names, restricted the sharing of political news, and enforced a code of conduct. Unsurprisingly, in its 2013 ranking of Internet freedom around the world, the U.S.-based nonprofit Freedom House ranked China 58 out of 60 countries—tied with Cuba. Only Iran ranked lower.

In his efforts to promote ideological unity, Xi has also labeled ideas from abroad that challenge China's political system as unpatriotic and even dangerous. Along these lines, Beijing has banned academic research and teaching on seven topics: universal values, civil society, citizens' rights, freedom of the press, mistakes made by the Communist Party, the privileges of capitalism, and the independence of the judiciary. This

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*Xi has made a power grab—for himself, for the Communist Party, and for China.*

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past summer, a party official publicly attacked the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a government research institution, for having been “infiltrated by foreign forces.” This attack was met with mockery among prominent Chinese intellectuals outside the academy, including the economist Mao Yushi, the law professor He Weifang, and the writer Liu Yiming. Still, the accusations will likely have a chilling effect on scholarly research and international collaboration.

This crackdown might undermine the very political cohesiveness Xi seeks. Residents of Hong Kong and Macao, who have traditionally enjoyed more political freedom than those on the mainland, have watched Xi’s moves with growing unease; many have called for democratic reform. In raucously democratic Taiwan, Xi’s repressive tendencies are unlikely to help promote reunification with the mainland. And in the ethnically divided region of Xinjiang, Beijing’s restrictive political and cultural policies have resulted in violent protests.

Even within China’s political and economic upper class, many have expressed concern over Xi’s political tightening and are seeking a foothold overseas. According to the China-based *Hurun Report*, 85 percent of those with assets of more than \$1 million want their children to be educated abroad, and more than 65 percent of Chinese citizens with assets of \$1.6 million or more have emigrated or plan to do so. The flight of China’s elites has become not only a political embarrassment but also a significant setback for Beijing’s efforts to lure back home top scientists and scholars who have moved abroad in past decades.

### **A MORAL AUTHORITY?**

The centerpiece of Xi’s political reforms is his effort to restore the moral authority of the Communist Party. He has argued that failing to address the party’s endemic corruption could lead to the demise of not only the party but also the Chinese state. Under the close supervision of Wang Qishan, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, tackling official corruption has become Xi’s signature issue. Previous Chinese leaders have carried out anticorruption campaigns, but Xi has brought new energy and seriousness to the cause: limiting funds for official banquets, cars, and meals; pursuing well-known figures in the media, the government, the military, and the private sector; and dramatically increasing the number of corruption cases brought for official review. In 2013, the party punished more than 182,000 officials for corruption, 50,000 more than the annual average for the previous

five years. Two scandals that broke this past spring indicate the scale of the campaign. In the first, federal authorities arrested a lieutenant general in the Chinese military for selling hundreds of positions in the armed forces, sometimes for extraordinary sums; the price to become a major general, for example, reached \$4.8 million. In the second, Beijing began investigating more than 500 members of the regional government in Hunan Province for participating in an \$18 million vote-buying ring.

Xi's anticorruption crusade represents just one part of his larger plan to reclaim the Communist Party's moral authority. He has also announced reforms that address some of Chinese society's most pressing concerns. With Xi at the helm, the Chinese leadership has launched a campaign to improve the country's air quality; reformed the one-child policy; revised the *hukou* system of residency permits, which ties a citizen's housing, health care, and education to his official residence and tends to favor urban over rural residents; and shut down the system of "reeducation through labor" camps, which allowed the government to detain people without cause. The government has also announced plans to make the legal system more transparent and to rid it of meddling by local officials.

Despite the impressive pace and scope of Xi's reform initiatives, it remains unclear whether they represent the beginning of longer-term change, or if they are merely superficial measures designed to buy the short-term goodwill of the people. Either way, some of his reforms have provoked fierce opposition. According to the *Financial Times*, former Chinese leaders Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao have both warned Xi to rein in his anticorruption campaign, and Xi himself has conceded that his efforts have met with significant resistance. The campaign has also incurred real economic costs. According to a report by Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Chinese GDP could fall this year by as much as 1.5 percentage points as a result of declining sales of luxury goods and services, as officials are increasingly concerned that lavish parties, political favor-buying, and expensive purchases will invite unwanted attention. (Of course, many Chinese are still buying; they are just doing so abroad.) And even those who support the goal of fighting corruption have questioned Xi's methods. Premier Li Keqiang, for example, called for greater transparency and public accountability in the government's anticorruption campaign in early 2014; his remarks, however, were quickly deleted from websites.

Xi's stance on corruption may also pose a risk to his personal and political standing: his family ranks among the wealthiest of the Chinese leadership, and according to *The New York Times*, Xi has told relatives to shed their assets, reducing his vulnerability to attack. Moreover, he has resisted calls for greater transparency, arresting activists who have pushed for officials to reveal their assets and punishing Western media outlets that have investigated Chinese leaders.

### **KEEPING CONTROL**

As Xi strives to consolidate political control and restore the Communist Party's legitimacy, he must also find ways to stir more growth in China's economy. Broadly speaking, his objectives include transforming China from the world's manufacturing center to its innovation hub, rebalancing the Chinese economy by prioritizing consumption over investment, and expanding the space for private enterprise. Xi's plans include both institutional and policy reforms. He has slated the tax system, for example, for a significant overhaul: local revenues will come from a broad range of taxes instead of primarily from land sales, which led to corruption and social unrest. In addition, the central government, which traditionally has received roughly half the national tax revenue while paying for just one-third of the expenditures for social welfare, will increase the funding it provides for social services, relieving some of the burden on local governments. Scores of additional policy initiatives are also in trial phases, including encouraging private investment in state-owned enterprises and lowering the compensation of their executives, establishing private banks to direct capital to small and medium-sized businesses, and shortening the length of time it takes for new businesses to secure administrative approvals.

Yet as details of Xi's economic plan unfold, it has become clear that despite his emphasis on the free market, the state will retain control over much of the economy. Reforming the way in which state-owned enterprises are governed will not undermine the dominant role of the Communist Party in these companies' decision-making; Xi has kept in place significant barriers to foreign investment; and even as the government pledges a shift away from investment-led growth, its stimulus efforts continue, contributing to growing levels of local debt. Indeed, according to the *Global Times*, a Chinese newspaper, the increase in the value of outstanding nonperforming loans in the first six months of 2014 exceeded the value of new nonperforming loans for all of 2013.

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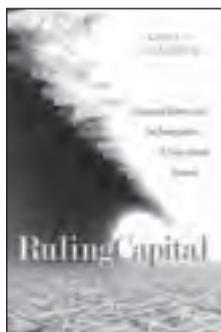
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Moreover, Xi has infused his economic agenda with the same nationalist—even xenophobic—sentiment that permeates his political agenda. His aggressive anticorruption and antimonopoly campaigns have targeted multinational corporations making products that include powdered milk, medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, and auto parts. In July 2013, in fact, China's National Development and Reform Commission brought together representatives from 30 multinational companies in an attempt to force them to admit to wrongdoing. At times, Beijing appears to be deliberately undermining foreign goods and service providers: the state-controlled media pay a great deal of attention to alleged wrongdoing at multinational companies while remaining relatively quiet about similar problems at Chinese firms.

Like his anticorruption campaign, Xi's investigation of foreign companies raises questions about the underlying intent. In a widely publicized debate broadcast by Chinese state television between the head of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China and an official from the National Development and Reform Commission, the European official forced his Chinese counterpart to defend the seeming disparities between the Chinese government's treatment of foreign and domestic companies. Eventually, the Chinese official appeared to yield, saying that China's antimonopoly procedure was a procedure "with Chinese characteristics."

The early promise of Xi's overhaul thus remains unrealized. A 31-page scorecard of Chinese economic reform, published in June 2014 by the U.S.-China Business Council, contains dozens of unfulfilled mandates. It deems just three of Xi's policy initiatives successes: reducing the time it takes to register new businesses, allowing multinational corporations to use Chinese currency to expand their business, and reforming the *hukou* system. Tackling deeper reforms, however, may require a jolt to the system, such as the collapse of the housing market. For now, Xi may well be his own worst enemy: calls for market dominance are no match for his desire to retain economic control.

## **WAKING THE LION**

Xi's efforts to transform politics and economics at home have been matched by equally dramatic moves to establish China as a global power. The roots of Xi's foreign policy, however, predate his presidency. The Chinese leadership began publicly discussing China's rise

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*Treating China as a foe feeds Xi's anti-Western narrative, undermining those in China pushing for moderation.*

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as a world power in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, when many Chinese analysts argued that the United States had begun an inevitable decline that would leave room for China at the top of the global pecking order. In a speech in Paris in March 2014, Xi recalled Napoleon's ruminations on China: "Napoleon said that China is a sleeping lion, and when she wakes, the world will shake." The Chinese lion, Xi assured his audience, "has already awakened, but this is a peaceful, pleasant, and civilized lion." Yet some of Xi's actions belie his comforting words. He has replaced the decades-old mantra of the former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping—"Hide brightness, cherish obscurity"—with a far more expansive and muscular foreign policy.

For Xi, all roads lead to Beijing, figuratively and literally. He has revived the ancient concept of the Silk Road—which connected the Chinese empire to Central Asia, the Middle East, and even Europe—by proposing a vast network of railroads, pipelines, highways, and canals to follow the contours of the old route. The infrastructure, which Xi expects Chinese banks and companies to finance and build, would allow for more trade between China and much of the rest of the world. Beijing has also considered building a roughly 8,100-mile high-speed intercontinental railroad that would connect China to Canada, Russia, and the United States through the Bering Strait. Even the Arctic has become China's backyard: Chinese scholars describe their country as a "near-Arctic" state.

Along with new infrastructure, Xi also wants to establish new institutions to support China's position as a regional and global leader. He has helped create a new development bank, operated by the BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—to challenge the primacy of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. And he has advanced the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which could enable China to become the leading financier of regional development. These two efforts signal Xi's desire to capitalize on frustrations with the United States' unwillingness to make international economic organizations more representative of developing countries.

Xi has also promoted new regional security initiatives. In addition to the already existing Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a Chinese-led security institution that includes Russia and four Central Asian states, Xi wants to build a new Asia-Pacific security structure that would exclude the United States. Speaking at a conference in May 2014, Xi underscored the point: “It is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia, and uphold the security of Asia.”

Xi's predilection for a muscular regional policy became evident well before his presidency. In 2010, Xi chaired the leading group responsible for the country's South China Sea policy, which broadened its definition of China's core interests to include its expansive claims to maritime territory in the South China Sea. Since then, he has used everything from the Chinese navy to fishing boats to try to secure these claims—claims disputed by other nations bordering the sea. In May 2014, conflict between China and Vietnam erupted when the China National Petroleum Corporation moved an oil rig into a disputed area in the South China Sea; tensions remained high until China withdrew the rig in mid-July. To help enforce China's claims to the East China Sea, Xi has declared an “air defense identification zone” over part of it, overlapping with those established by Japan and South Korea. He has also announced regional fishing regulations. None of China's neighbors has recognized any of these steps as legitimate. But Beijing has even redrawn the map of China embossed on Chinese passports to incorporate areas under dispute with India, as well as with countries in Southeast Asia, provoking a political firestorm.

These maneuvers have stoked nationalist sentiments at home and equally virulent nationalism abroad. New, similarly nationalist leaders in India and Japan have expressed concern over Xi's policies and taken measures to raise their countries' own security profiles. Indeed, during his campaign for the Indian prime ministership in early 2014, Narendra Modi criticized China's expansionist tendencies, and he and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have since upgraded their countries' defense and security ties. Several new regional security efforts are under way that exclude Beijing (as well as Washington). For example, India has been training some Southeast Asian navies, including those of Myanmar and Vietnam, and many of the region's militaries—including those of Australia, India, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, and South Korea—have planned joint defense exercises.

## **A VIGOROUS RESPONSE**

For the United States and much of the rest of the world, the awakening of Xi's China provokes two different reactions: excitement, on the one hand, about what a stronger, less corrupt China could achieve, and significant concern, on the other hand, over the challenges an authoritarian, militaristic China might pose to the U.S.-backed liberal order.

On the plus side, Beijing's plans for a new Silk Road hinge on political stability in the Middle East; that might provide Beijing with an incentive to work with Washington to secure peace in the region. Similarly, Chinese companies' growing interest in investing abroad might give Washington greater leverage as it pushes forward a bilateral investment treaty with Beijing. The United States should also encourage China's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a major regional free-trade agreement under negotiation. Just as China's negotiations to join the World Trade Organization in the 1990s prompted Chinese economic reformers to advance change at home, negotiations to join the TPP might do the same today.

In addition, although China already has a significant stake in the international system, the United States must work to keep China in the fold. For example, the U.S. Congress should ratify proposed changes to the International Monetary Fund's internal voting system that would grant China and other developing countries a larger say in the fund's management and thereby reduce Beijing's determination to establish competing groups.

On the minus side, Xi's nationalist rhetoric and assertive military posture pose a direct challenge to U.S. interests in the region and call for a vigorous response. Washington's "rebalance," or "pivot," to Asia represents more than simply a response to China's more assertive behavior. It also reflects the United States' most closely held foreign policy values: freedom of the seas, the air, and space; free trade; the rule of law; and basic human rights. Without a strong pivot, the United States' role as a regional power will diminish, and Washington will be denied the benefits of deeper engagement with many of the world's most dynamic economies. The United States should therefore back up the pivot with a strong military presence in the Asia-Pacific to deter or counter Chinese aggression; reach consensus and then ratify the TPP; and bolster U.S. programs that support democratic institutions and civil society in such places as Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, where democracy is nascent but growing.

At the same time, Washington should realize that Xi may not be successful in transforming China in precisely the ways he has articulated. He has set out his vision, but pressures from both inside and outside China will shape the country's path forward in unexpected ways. Some commodity-rich countries have balked at dealing with Chinese firms, troubled by their weak record of social responsibility, which has forced Beijing to explore new ways of doing business. China's neighbors, alarmed by Beijing's swagger, have begun to form new security relationships. Even prominent foreign policy experts within China, such as Peking University's Wang Jisi and the retired ambassador Wu Jianmin, have expressed reservations over the tenor of Xi's foreign policy.

Finally, although little in Xi's domestic or foreign policy appears to welcome deeper engagement with the United States, Washington should resist framing its relationship with China as a competition. Treating China as a competitor or foe merely feeds Xi's anti-Western narrative, undermines those in China pushing for moderation, and does little to advance bilateral cooperation and much to diminish the stature of the United States. Instead, the White House should pay particular attention to the evolution of Xi's policies, taking advantage of those that could strengthen its relationship with China and pushing back against those that undermine U.S. interests. In the face of uncertainty over China's future, U.S. policymakers must remain flexible and fleet-footed. 🌐

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# Normal Countries

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## The East 25 Years After Communism

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*Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman*

**T**wenty-five years after the Berlin Wall came down, a sense of missed opportunity hangs over the countries that once lay to its east. Back then, hopes ran high amid the euphoria that greeted the sudden implosion of communism. From Bratislava to Ulaanbaatar, democracy and prosperity seemed to be just around the corner.

Today, the mood is more somber. With a few exceptions, such as Estonia and Poland, the postcommunist countries are seen as failures, their economies peopled by struggling pensioners and strutting oligarchs, their politics marred by ballot stuffing and emerging dictators. From the former Yugoslavia to Chechnya and now eastern Ukraine, wars have punctured the 40-plus years of cold peace on the European continent, leaving behind enclaves of smoldering violence. To many observers, Russian President Vladimir Putin's autocratic grip and aggressive geopolitics symbolize a more general democratic decay spreading from the east. "The worst thing about communism," quipped the Polish newspaper editor and anticommunist dissident Adam Michnik, "is what comes after."

An anniversary is a good moment to take stock. Much has changed since the postcommunist countries—the 15 successor states of the Soviet Union, the 14 formerly communist states of eastern Europe, and the former Soviet satellite Mongolia—shook off Marxist tyrannies a generation ago. Not every change has been for the better. But writing off postcommunist reforms as a failure would be a mistake, and one with

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Full sources and data for this essay are available at [www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/treisman/Pages/shortpieces.html](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/treisman/Pages/shortpieces.html).

implications far beyond the region. Some observers, struck by China's rise and shocked by the global financial crisis, have recently cast authoritarian state capitalism as a vibrant alternative to the dysfunctions of liberal democracy. The erroneous belief that market reform has flopped in eastern Europe reinforces this delusion.

The truth is that the prevailing gloomy narrative about the post-communist world is mostly wrong. Media images aside, life has improved dramatically across the former Eastern bloc. Since their transition, the postcommunist countries have grown rapidly; today, their citizens live richer, longer, and happier lives. In most ways, these states now look just like any others at similar levels of economic development. They have become normal countries—and, in some ways, better than normal.

Although they, on average, resemble their peers, the transition states have become far more diverse. Shedding the Moscow-imposed model, they have yielded to the gravitational pull of their nearest non-communist neighbors: the countries of central Europe have become more European; those of Central Asia, more Asian. In the years to come, their paths will likely continue to reflect the competition between the same two forces: the global dynamic of modernization and the tug of geography.

## **MARKET MAKERS**

To understand how much the postcommunist countries have changed, recall how they started out. Politically, all were authoritarian states governed by a ruling party. Each had propagandists to tell people what to think, secret police to detect dissidence, and prison camps to house regime critics. All staged farcical elections in which the party won more than 95 percent of the vote. With the exceptions of Yugoslavia and post-1960 Albania, each took orders from Moscow, which sent tanks to Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 to crush popular uprisings.

All the communist-bloc countries had centrally controlled economies. Most or all property belonged to the state, and prices were set by planners rather than markets. Heavy industry dominated as services languished. In the Soviet Union, the military consumed up to 25 percent of GDP in the late 1980s, compared with under six percent in the United States. By 1986, Soviet factories had produced a stock of 45,000 nuclear warheads.

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*The prevailing gloomy narrative about the postcommunist transition is mostly wrong.*

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Satisfying consumers was not a priority. To get an apartment in the 1980s, applicants in Bulgaria had to wait up to 20 years, and those in Poland, up to 30 years; a quarter of the people filling the Soviet waiting lists were already pensioners. Car buyers in East Germany had to place their orders 15 years in advance. In Romania, the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu put all citizens on a low-calorie diet in the early 1980s to save money for repaying the country's foreign debt. He limited lighting to one 40-watt bulb per room, heating in public buildings to 57 degrees Fahrenheit, and television programming to two tedious hours a day.

The communist countries could claim some achievements. With just eight percent of the world's population, the Soviet Union and other Eastern-bloc countries won 48 percent of the medals at the 1988 Seoul Olympics and boasted 53 of the world's 100 top chess players that year. Education and literacy rates were high.

Yet in its waning years, communism had few defenders. To Vaclav Havel, the Czech Republic's dissident turned president, the system was a "monstrously huge, noisy, and stinking machine." Years after leaving power, Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet president, characterized the economy he once oversaw as "voracious" and "resource-squandering."

And then, unexpectedly, the system collapsed. New leaders elected across the former communist bloc found their economies in crisis. In 1989, inflation hit 640 percent in Poland and 2,700 percent in Yugoslavia. By 1991, when the Soviet Union disintegrated, its output was falling by 15 percent a year.

All the postcommunist governments enacted reforms—designed to deregulate prices, unleash trade, balance budgets, cut inflation, create competition, privatize state enterprises, and construct social welfare programs—although some pursued them with greater speed and vigor than others. These reforms reshaped their economies. Abandoning central planning, the postcommunist countries became, on the whole, more market friendly than the rest of the world. By 2011, they averaged 7.0 on the index of economic freedom compiled annually by the Fraser Institute, a Canadian research group, compared with the global mean of 6.8. The most fully reformed of the pack, Estonia, ranked right between Denmark and the United States.

In most places, state-owned industrial dinosaurs gave way to private firms, which began to account for a greater share of GDP. The median share of private-sector output in the postcommunist countries now stands at 70 percent. Heavy industry shrank, and, on average, services grew from 36 percent to 58 percent of national output between 1990 and 2012. In no other region of the world has international trade expanded as fast, with the average volume of imports and exports together soaring from 75 percent to 114 percent of GDP. After decades spent trading largely with one another, the postcommunist states swiftly reoriented themselves toward foreign markets in Europe and elsewhere. By 2012, the share of exports they sent to the EU had grown—to a median value of 69 percent for the eastern European countries and 47 percent for the former Soviet republics.

In short, the countries have transformed their militarized, over-industrialized, and state-dominated systems into service-oriented market economies based on private ownership and integrated into global commercial networks. No longer distorted to fit Marxist blueprints, their economic institutions, trade, and regulatory environments today look much like those of other countries at similar income levels.

These changes notwithstanding, observers often blame postcommunist reforms for poor economic performance in the transition states. Two common charges are that the reforms were fundamentally misconceived and that they were implemented in too radical a fashion. Such criticism raises two questions: first, whether the states' economic performance has indeed been poor, and second, whether more radical strategies resulted in worse outcomes than more gradual approaches. The short answer to both questions is no.

## **UP THE LADDER**

A logical starting point in assessing a country's economic performance is its national income, but any comparison that uses Soviet-era figures must be taken with a grain of salt. For various reasons, much of the output that communist-era accountants recorded was worth far less than they claimed. Factories overreported production in order to win bonuses, inflating GDP figures by as much as five percent. Many goods they did produce were of such poor quality that consumers refused to buy them. Governments launched huge construction projects that were never completed (but still counted as investment spending, augmenting GDP values) and sustained massive defense outlays of highly questionable

value. Very little of the countries' official national incomes ended up in citizens' pockets. In 1990, for instance, household consumption in most noncommunist countries represented more than 60 percent of GDP. But in Russia, this measure stood at less than one-third of GDP, and in Azerbaijan, it fell below one-quarter.

Much of the economic slump recorded in the early years of the postcommunist transition—half of it, by some estimates—reflected cuts in fictitious output or worthless investments. But even if the official figures are taken at face value, the picture they reveal is brighter

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*The postcommunist states have become normal countries—and, in some ways, better than normal.*

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than is generally assumed. Despite the initial contraction, the median postcommunist country in terms of growth (Uzbekistan) expanded slightly faster between 1990 and 2011 than the median country elsewhere in the world (Norway). Whereas Norway's GDP per capita grew by 45 percent

between these years, Uzbekistan's rose by 47 percent. Bosnia, where national income increased by more than 450 percent, had the world's third-highest growth rate over that period. Albania came in 16th, expanding by 134 percent, and Poland placed 20th, at 119 percent. All three outpaced such traditional growth engines as Hong Kong and Singapore.

The rise in consumption was equally dramatic. From 1990 to 2011, household consumption per capita in the postcommunist countries grew, on average, by 88 percent, compared with an average increase of 56 percent elsewhere in the world. In Poland, household consumption grew by 146 percent, a rise that equaled South Korea's. In Russia, the level increased by more than 100 percent.

Regular people saw significant improvements in their living standards. Car ownership, a good gauge of disposable income, rose in the postcommunist space even as GDP fell in the early transition years. Between 1993 and 2011, the average number of passenger cars climbed from one for every ten people to one for every four. In Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia, there are now more cars per person than in the United Kingdom.

In information technology, as well, eastern Europe has surged ahead, evolving from a backwater to an overachiever. By 2013, the region's cell-phone subscriptions per person, at 1.24, had overtaken the rate in



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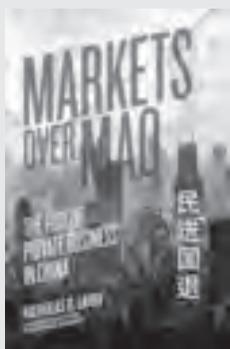
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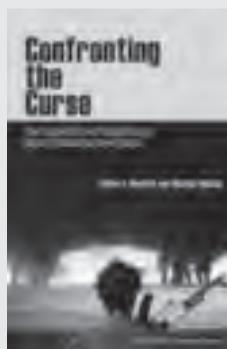


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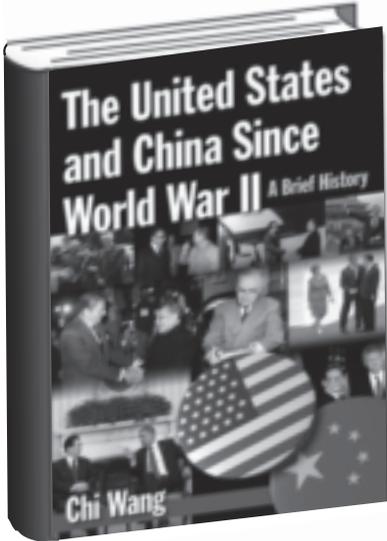



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the West. The postcommunist world now boasts a higher percentage of Internet users—54 percent of the population in the average country—than any other region except North America and western Europe.

The citizens of the postcommunist states also travel more than ever before; they made almost 170 million foreign tourist trips in 2012. And back home, they occupy larger apartments: since 1991, living space per person has expanded by 99 percent in the Czech Republic, 85 percent in Armenia, and 39 percent in Russia. Thanks to mass housing-privatization programs, rates of homeownership have surged to some of the highest worldwide. People have been eating better, too. In seven of the nine former Soviet republics that publish relevant statistics, consumption of fruits and vegetables has shot up. Ukrainians, for instance, ate 58 percent more vegetables and 47 percent more fruit in 2011 than they did 20 years earlier. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia experienced what medical researchers described in 2008 in the *European Journal of Epidemiology* as “probably the most rapid decrease in coronary heart disease ever observed” after consumers began substituting vegetable oils for animal fats.

When it comes to social mobility, statistics contradict the stereotype of societies split between oligarchs and beggars. University enrollment rates, already high, climbed even further after 1989, rising by an average of 33 percent by 2012. Also by 2012, in the postcommunist countries, the average share of secondary-school graduates who chose to continue their studies was higher than the corresponding percentage in Switzerland. Although the rates of both poverty and income inequality often increased early in the transition, these rates are now lower in the postcommunist states than in other economies with comparable income levels.

Governments are also doing more to ensure that citizens breathe cleaner air. Communism left behind a forest of smokestacks, but since 1990, the 11 postcommunist countries that joined the EU have slashed their emissions of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur oxides by more than half. Even as their economies grew, 12 post-Soviet republics cut the release of harmful pollutants from stationary sources into the atmosphere by an average of 66 percent between 1991 and 2012.

And despite the frequent accounts of soaring mortality amid the stress of transition, the region’s demographic trends are far from bleak.

On average, life expectancy in the postcommunist states rose from 69 years in 1990 to 73 years in 2012. Even in Russia, long portrayed as a demographic disaster zone, life expectancy now stands at slightly over 70 years—higher than it has ever been. Infant mortality, already low, fell faster in the postcommunist countries in percentage terms than in any other region between 1990 and 2012. Average alcohol consumption inched downward, too, from 2.1 gallons of pure alcohol a year in 1990 to 2.0 gallons in 2010. There have been exceptions: drinking rates rose in Russia and the Baltic states. But even Russia's 2010 average of 2.9 gallons was lower than that of Austria, France, Germany, or Ireland.

Important as such advances in living standards are, the most fundamental transformation in the former Eastern bloc was political. The citizens of most of the transition states live under governments that are more free and open today than at any point in their history. Even against the backdrop of democracy's global resurgence in recent decades, the extent of political change in the former Eastern bloc is remarkable.

A few numbers tell the story. Using the most common measure of political regimes, the Polity index, compiled by the Center for Systemic Peace, we placed countries on a scale from zero (for pure dictatorships) to 100 (for the strongest form of democracy). In 1988, the Eastern-bloc states ranked between five (Albania) and 40 (Hungary), averaging a score of 20, which was close to the ratings of Egypt and Iran. Given their levels of economic development, the communist countries stood out as abnormally authoritarian. After the revolutions of 1989–91, the regional average shot up, reaching a score of 76 in 2013. Today, the average postcommunist country is exactly as free as one would expect it to be, given its income. Six receive the top score, on par with Germany and the United States.

## **HEADING HIGHER**

The postcommunist countries today are far from perfect. But most of their deficiencies are typical of states at similar stages of economic development. On several counts, they perform better than their incomes would predict, and in the few cases where they lag behind, they are almost always headed in the right direction.

Take graft. The region routinely scores poorly on indexes measuring perceived corruption. This performance is not surprising given that



*The new normal: voting in Veresegyhaz, Hungary, April 2014*

such gauges are constructed in part from surveys of international businesspeople, who are likely to be influenced by the region's seamy image in the global media. But the rates of bribery reported by citizens of the postcommunist countries on anonymous surveys paint a different picture. These rates, although high, are typical for countries at similar income levels. Polls conducted between 2010 and 2013 by the watchdog group Transparency International showed that fewer people reported paying bribes in the average postcommunist state (23 percent) than in other countries (28 percent).

When it comes to armed conflict, too, the region does not differ from other places with comparable development levels. Notwithstanding the wars in the former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and now Ukraine, the postcommunist countries were no more likely than similarly developed states to experience conflicts or civil wars during the past 25 years. Nor did they report higher rates of deaths in wars or guerrilla violence, either in absolute numbers or per capita. And although the Ukrainian conflict is too recent to be included in these calculations, it is unlikely to significantly alter these results, unless the hostilities there spiral out of control.

Behind these data stands the region's dramatic demilitarization: whereas the Soviet Union's defense expenditure once reached 25 percent of GDP, none of its successor states, including Russia, spends more than five percent today. Even as their alliance disintegrated, the former Warsaw Pact states managed to shed one million troops.

Inflation and unemployment are two other cases in point. In the 1990s, most of the postcommunist countries suffered years of rising prices and joblessness. Still, by 2012, inflation had stabilized almost everywhere; the median inflation rate in the postcommunist economies actually dropped below the global median. And although unemployment remains several percentage points higher in the transition countries than in comparable states, it has declined since its peak level around 2000.

Recent years have also seen improvements in another area in which the postcommunist states have trailed the rest of the world: their citizens' happiness. According to the latest round of the World Values Survey, conducted in 2010–14, the region is catching up here, too. On average, 81 percent of people polled in the postcommunist countries reported being either "very" or "quite" happy, compared with 84 percent worldwide. For their income levels, these countries are no longer particularly depressed—even though their residents do express unusual dissatisfaction with their jobs, governments, and educational and health-care systems. Suicide rates, still relatively high, have fallen substantially since the end of communism.

## **RULES OF ATTRACTION**

This study of averages obscures the vast variation that has emerged since the demise of Moscow-imposed uniformity. Today, the contrast between diverse postcommunist states is striking. Poland has blossomed into a free-market democracy whose income has more than doubled since 1990; Tajikistan remains a war-scarred and overwhelmingly poor dictatorship, headed by the same leader for more than 20 years.

One recurring explanation for the divergence of economic outcomes is that in some countries officials undermined performance by pursuing reforms too aggressively. According to this logic, a slower, more methodical approach enabled other countries to accomplish more successful transitions. "Gradualist policies lead to less pain in the short run, greater social and political stability, and faster growth in the long [run]," the economist Joseph Stiglitz argued in his 2002 book *Globalization and Its Discontents*. "In the race between the tortoise and the hare, it appears that the tortoise has won again." This explanation appealed to those in the former Soviet bloc who saw their privileges threatened by liberalization and to those in the West who distrusted market forces. But it was wrong: by the mid-1990s, countries that

had embraced reforms wholeheartedly were outperforming those that had delayed them.

A simple look at the data supports this conclusion. To measure the pace of reform, we drew on indicators developed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, adjusting them to assign each country an annual score between zero and 100, based on how closely it resembled a free-market economy. We labeled those that rose more than 40 points in their first three years of transition “radical reformers.” Nine states met this benchmark: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia. We called countries whose scores rose by 25 to 40 points “gradual reformers,” and those with a rise of less than 25 points “slow reformers.”

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*In Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia, there are now more cars per person than in the United Kingdom.*

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Comparing the economic performance of these three groups reveals that quicker and more thorough reforms entailed less, not more, economic pain. To be fair, at the outset of their transition, many countries in the radical group did experience a slightly greater fall in output than the gradual reformers did. But after three years, the radicals surged ahead, far outpacing the gradualists. Meanwhile, slow reformers fared the worst and continue to trail behind the other two groups today.

The gradual reformers eventually caught up to the radical reformers, but not before suffering many years of costly underperformance. Compared with those countries that eagerly embraced free markets, the gradualists took longer to recover their previous levels of household consumption and to stabilize inflation. And insofar as one can tell from the available statistics, unemployment hit the slow reformers, such as Armenia and Macedonia, harder than the rest of the transition states. Altogether, there is no evidence that a gradual approach reduced the pain of transition. All signs point in the opposite direction: it was the hares, not the tortoises, who won. Many of the tortoises eventually caught up, but only after a more grueling trek.

Apart from this variation, another striking pattern leaps out from any map of the region. Old predictions that all the transition countries would come to resemble Western states never panned out. The countries have indeed been converging, but toward a different target: their

neighbors. In numerous ways, the postcommunist states have become more like the noncommunist countries nearest their borders.

The Baltic states have drawn closer to Finland, and the Caucasus countries have moved toward Iran and Turkey. The Central Asian states have grown more similar to Afghanistan and Iran. The central European countries have approached Austria and Germany, but with the occasional tug from neighbors to their east. There are a few exceptions to this pattern—most notably Belarus, which has become far more authoritarian than nearby noncommunist states. But in most cases, having escaped Moscow, the former Soviet satellites sped outward, merging into their local environments.

The characteristics of each state's nearest noncommunist neighbors in 1990 offer powerful hints about how that state would evolve thereafter. Taking into account the starting point of every country, the more wealthy, democratic, and economically liberal its noncommunist neighbors were, the more wealthy, democratic, and economically liberal it would ultimately become. This convergence manifested itself in more subtle ways as well—for instance, in rates of college enrollment, levels of alcohol consumption, and even life expectancy. Sometimes, neighbors directly influenced the countries' development prospects, as when Islamist militants attacked Tajikistan from across the Afghan border or when German companies set up manufacturing plants in the Czech Republic. But a more important driver of convergence was probably underlying cultural features that predated both communism and current national boundaries.

## **GREAT EXPECTATIONS**

Ten years ago, we argued in this magazine that Russia had become “a normal country,” whose economic and political flaws mirrored those of other states at similar levels of development. We speculated that its growth would continue, modernizing its society along the way. This prediction came true: Russia's GDP per capita has increased another 39 percent since 2004, and its Internet penetration has quadrupled, overtaking that of Greece.

Turning to politics, we outlined two possible scenarios. The first posited “increased democratic competition and the emergence of a more vigorous civil society.” The second foresaw a “slide toward an authoritarian regime that [would] be managed by security-service professionals under the fig leaf of formal democratic procedures.”

Our guess was that Russia would chart a course lying somewhere between those two extremes—a conjecture that turned out to be far too optimistic. In the end, Russia's president chose the second option.

Putin's authoritarian turn clearly makes Russia more dangerous. But it does not, thus far, make the country politically abnormal. In fact, on a plot of different states' Polity scores against their incomes, Russia still deviates only slightly from the overall pattern. For a country with Russia's national income, the predicted Polity score in 2013 was 76 on the 100-point scale. Russia's actual score was 70, on par with Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

If Russia grows even richer without liberalizing politically, it will indeed become anomalous. Only three groups of countries are wealthier than it is today: developed democracies, oil-rich dictatorships (mostly in the Persian Gulf), and commercial city-states such as Singapore and Macao. Russia obviously cannot become a city-state, and it does not possess enough natural resources to become an Arabian-style dictatorship. (Its annual income from oil and gas amounts to about \$3,000 per citizen, compared with \$34,000 for Kuwait.) So it will apparently have to choose between experiencing stagnation and pursuing economic development in tandem with greater democratization. At present, the Kremlin seems committed to the first option, but its preferences could change with time.

Yet Russia's growing authoritarianism should not distract from the remarkable progress in the postcommunist region as a whole. Twenty-five years ago, the countries of the Eastern bloc represented an alternative civilization. To imagine them quickly converging with the global mainstream required a certain chutzpah. Yet that is exactly what they have done. The transition has had its disappointments. But overall, the changes since 1989 have been an outstanding success.

It is time to rethink the misperception of this period. Market reforms, attempts to build democracy, and struggles against corruption did not fail, although they remain incomplete. The claim that a gradual path of economic reform would have been more effective and less painful is contradicted by the evidence. The postcommunist transition does not reveal the inadequacy of liberal capitalism or the dysfunctions of democracy. Rather, it demonstrates the superiority and continuing promise of both. 🌐

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# The End of the Military-Industrial Complex

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## How the Pentagon Is Adapting to Globalization

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*William J. Lynn III*

In late 2013, Google announced that it had acquired Boston Dynamics, an engineering and robotics company best known for creating BigDog, a four-legged robot that can accompany soldiers into rough terrain. Much of the resulting hype focused on the Internet giant and when it might start making various types of robots. What was good news for Google, however, represented a major loss for the U.S. Department of Defense. Although Google agreed to honor Boston Dynamics' existing defense commitments, including its contracts with the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Marine Corps, the company indicated that it might not pursue any additional work for the military. In practice, this means that the Department of Defense could lose its edge in the emerging field of autonomous robotics, which once fell almost exclusively under its domain.

It came as no surprise that Google had the money to buy Boston Dynamics; the technology star's growth potential and investments in research and development (R & D) far exceed those of any defense enterprise. Its market value, nearly \$400 billion, is more than double that of General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon put together. And with the \$60 billion it has on hand, Google could buy all the outstanding shares of any one of them.

Google may not need defense contracts, but the Pentagon needs more and better relationships with companies like Google. Only the private sector can provide the kind of cutting-edge technology that

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**WILLIAM J. LYNN III** is former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense and CEO of Finmeccanica North America and DRS Technologies.

has given U.S. troops a distinct advantage for the past 70 years. And beyond courting commercial companies, the Pentagon must also adapt to an increasingly global defense industry, since critical defense technologies are no longer the sole province of U.S.-based companies.

Consider, for example, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, an aircraft developed, financed, and tested by nine countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Like Google's acquisition of Boston Dynamics, the development of the F-35 poses both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, Washington needs international and commercial partnerships to sustain its weapons development program, the largest in history. According to a 2012 study by the consulting firm Booz & Company (now Strategy&), more than one-third of what the Pentagon spends on procurement and services goes to nontraditional companies such as Apple and Dell. On the other hand, the Defense Department's outdated procurement process makes it difficult for new companies to enter the U.S. market. The Pentagon cannot afford to keep in place such barriers to entry, especially when the U.S. military relies so heavily on nontraditional suppliers to gain an edge over its potential adversaries.

Taken together, commercialization and globalization—coupled with a decline in U.S. defense spending—have ushered in a new era for the U.S. defense industry. In the past, the industry has adapted well to change, allowing the United States to maintain its military dominance. In weathering the current transition, however, the Pentagon is off to a slow start.

## **IN THE BEGINNING**

Over the past two centuries, the U.S. defense industry experienced three distinct eras. In the first, which lasted from 1787 to 1941, the sector consisted largely of government-owned arsenals and shipyards, supplemented by commercial industry only in times of actual conflict (during World War I, for example).

The sheer scale of World War II and its abundance of new wartime technologies, however, required a dramatic change. In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt established the War Production Board, a federal agency tasked with conscripting the largest U.S. industrial enterprises, most notably those in the automobile industry, into wartime service. At the start of the twentieth century, defense spending had averaged

roughly one percent of GDP, growing to just three percent in the 1930s. During World War II, however, defense spending skyrocketed, to roughly 40 percent of GDP, and defense became the country's largest industry. As a result, the United States overwhelmed its adversaries with its industrial capacity and power.

After the war ended, Washington did not dismantle the defense industry it had developed. Instead, the large, diversified industrial

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*The Pentagon needs more  
and better relationships  
with companies like Google.*

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conglomerates that had produced defense equipment during the war, including Boeing and General Motors, maintained their defense divisions. These companies, joined in later years by AT&T, General Electric, and IBM,

passed technology fluidly between markets. Backed financially by the Pentagon and benefiting from long production runs, they created technologies ranging from drones to night-vision goggles, some of which eventually trickled down into citizens' daily lives. Today, for example, most cars come with GPS, and few Americans could live without the Internet—innovations both initially funded by the Pentagon.

This second era—the one marked by the emergence of what President Dwight Eisenhower famously called “the military-industrial complex”—ended with the Cold War, when the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union contributed to a rapid decline in U.S. military spending. In 1993, the Department of Defense invited industry leaders to the Pentagon for a “last supper,” at which then Deputy Secretary of Defense William Perry urged them to consolidate in light of the shrinking budget. So began the third era, in which the industry shifted from diversified conglomerates, which could tap into their large reservoirs of commercial technology, to the handful of companies that focus exclusively on defense and still dominate the industry today. From 1992 to 1997, a total of \$55 billion in industry mergers took place. With few exceptions, the large conglomerates moved out of the industry, selling off their defense operations. At the same time, the new cadre of defense-only firms began selling off their commercial operations and acquiring smaller defense companies, thinning the ranks of midtier defense suppliers.

Despite changing norms and shrinking budgets, the Defense Department has moved from era to era without incident. Through each transformation, the Pentagon protected key technologies and continued

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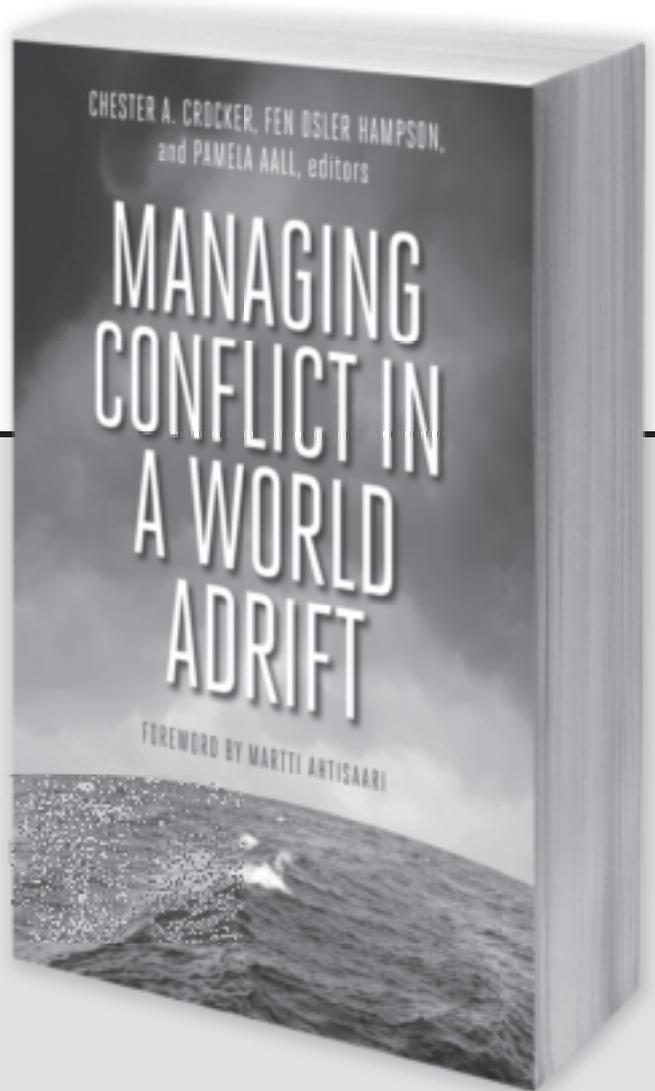
## MANAGING CONFLICT IN A WORLD ADrift

EDITED BY

CHESTER A. CROCKER  
FEN OSLER HAMPSON  
and PAMELA AALL

Foreword by Martti Ahtisaari

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to support the U.S. military. Today, however, pressures from commercialization and globalization have exposed serious fault lines in the industry's structure. If the United States does not adapt now to the fourth era, its defense industry will soon see its strength wither away.

### **PLAYING CATCH-UP**

For more than a decade, U.S. defense companies have been lagging further and further behind large commercial companies in technology investment. Although the Pentagon historically exported many technologies to the commercial sector, it is now a net importer. Indeed, next-generation commercial technology has leapt far ahead of what the defense industry can produce in areas spanning 3-D printing, cloud computing, cybersecurity, nanotechnology, robotics, and more. In addition, commercial information technology dominates national security today as much as it does the private sector. Soldiers now use smartphones to gather real-time surveillance from drones and send messages to fellow soldiers.

Keeping up with commercial innovations will be difficult, if not impossible. The combined R & D budgets of five of the largest U.S. defense contractors (about \$4 billion, according to the research firm Capital Alpha Partners) amount to less than half of what companies such as Microsoft or Toyota spend on R & D in a single year. Taken together, these five U.S. defense titans do not even rank among the top 20 individual industrial investors worldwide. Instead of funding R & D, defense companies have been returning the overwhelming majority of their available cash to shareholders in the form of dividends and stock buybacks. As a result, from 2000 to 2012, company-funded R & D spending at the top U.S. defense firms dropped from 3.5 percent to roughly two percent of sales, according to Capital Alpha Partners. The leading commercial companies, by contrast, invest an average of eight percent of their revenue in R & D.

Of course, the defense market is different from commercial markets in that the customer—the Pentagon—funds much of the R & D. But this budget has fallen as well. Defense companies are therefore reluctant to invest their own cash in research that, because of uncertainty in the Pentagon's budget, may never yield viable products.

The Defense Department should be courting commercial companies, many of which will not seek out defense contracts themselves. Instead, the Pentagon has made it so difficult to bid on defense contracts that

many companies shy away, finding the process unfamiliar and daunting. Some also avoid bidding because they have little interest in complying with what they see as unnecessary Pentagon requirements. For example, a number of software developers have refused defense work because they fear they would have to relinquish the intellectual property rights to whatever they produce. Others are driven away by the U.S. government's elaborate regulations for the acquisition of weapons. Audit and oversight regulations, for example, require companies to establish new and costly accounting systems, beyond what they need for their commercial business. This added expense is hard to justify for programs that often take a decade or longer to transition from development to production.

Officials have discussed overhauling the Pentagon's Byzantine procurement system for decades and have instituted modest reforms, including relying more on independent cost estimates and weapons testing. But the gains have not kept pace with the rapid technological and industrial change in the commercial sector. Future reforms should move beyond improving costs and timeliness to lowering barriers to entry for commercial companies. The Pentagon can attract companies such as Google by loosening its stringent intellectual property rules, streamlining its audit and accounting requirements, and shortening development cycles. Sticking to the status quo will only put further distance between Washington and Silicon Valley.

### **MOVING BEYOND BORDERS**

As technological innovations have grown more commercial, they have also become more global. In the private sector, a single product—the iPhone, for example—often contains technology from a worldwide network of suppliers. Similarly, some weapons systems, such as the F-35, now owe their existence to international collaboration. But the U.S. defense industry has not taken advantage of this shift, in part because some government officials fear that globalization will take jobs away from U.S. citizens and compromise critical defense technologies. These fears are shortsighted. A more global U.S. defense industry will be larger and stronger, and it will give the United States more, not less, access to leading technologies.

For comparison, consider the trajectory of the U.S. automobile industry. Japanese car companies began opening manufacturing plants in the United States in the 1980s; today, the number of auto plants operated by foreign companies on U.S. soil almost equals the number



*New dog, new tricks: a military robot in Hawaii, July 2014*

run by American automakers. Honda now exports more cars from the United States than it imports from Japan. And the definition of what constitutes an American or a foreign car has become blurred, creating an industry in which foreign manufacturers employ thousands of Americans and U.S. companies see robust sales overseas. Honda and Toyota, for example, now produce seven of the ten models with the highest percentage of U.S.-made parts, and the South Carolina BMW factory has become the largest exporter of American-made cars.

The U.S. defense industry has not opened itself up to globalization in quite the same way. On the battlefield, the U.S. military fights alongside its allies, with troops training together and sharing intelligence. But the Defense Department still often ignores technologies and products made overseas—sometimes at significant cost to the American taxpayer. In the early years of this century, for example, the Pentagon sought to develop a new artillery system, called “the Crusader,” rather than adapt a robust German design that met most, if not all, U.S. requirements. The Defense Department ended up canceling the program in 2002 when the unit costs became unaffordable, wasting \$2 billion and leaving the U.S. Army to rely on upgrades to a much older artillery model. To benefit from the investments and innovations of its allies, the Pentagon must be open to foreign sources for technology and design. The United States no longer has to be the source of all advances in military technology, and in fact, bringing foreign companies into the fold will help distribute the burden of development costs, as it did with the F-35.

U.S. MARINE CORPS / SGT. SARAH DIETZ

## **ADAPT TO SURVIVE**

For all the changes outside the U.S. defense industry, there remains a glaring one within it: the shrinking defense budget. The drawdowns in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the global economic crisis, have contributed to a roughly 20 percent decline in U.S. defense spending over the past five years.

A spending decline alone would not drive a structural change in the industry; when combined with the commercialization and globalization of defense technology, however, change appears inescapable. That change will include a consolidation of the industry and a concurrent drop in competition among suppliers. Indeed, competition for defense contracts has reached a historic low, making it difficult for the Pentagon to get the best value for taxpayers' money. Where the Pentagon once employed two or three competing companies for major weapons programs, it now often struggles to afford contracts with more than one supplier. As a result, in 2012, both the navy and the air force awarded more than half their contracts without any competition at all.

If the Pentagon makes it easier for commercial and foreign companies to enter the industry, it will go a long way toward increasing competition. For example, BAE Systems, a British defense company that has become one of the Pentagon's largest suppliers, has already provided needed diversity in the field of combat vehicles. Similarly, in the search for a new airborne tanker, the European aircraft manufacturing company Airbus has offered a viable alternative to Boeing. Increased competition will ensure that the Pentagon receives the best technology at the lowest price and will allow the United States to demonstrate the openness of its market at a time when declining budgets have already sent U.S. defense companies seeking sales overseas.

As officials in Washington weigh reforms, there is little time to lose. In both the defense industry and the world at large, the pace of change has accelerated. The first era of the U.S. defense industry lasted more than 150 years, the second nearly 50, and the third just 20. The Pentagon must take a more active role in recruiting outside companies, keeping in mind that their futures are inextricably intertwined. The United States has the opportunity to look beyond its borders to turn this fourth era to its advantage. Since World War II, the country's technological advantages have protected its national security. To maintain that advantage, the United States must adapt to—and ultimately embrace—the trends that will come to define its future. 🌐



## ISLAND OF INNOVATION

Occupying a total area of only 36,000 square kilometers and with a population of 23.4 million, Taiwan wields more influence on the global economy than countries around the world with more natural resources and manpower.

“Taiwan is very important and indispensable in the global supply chain, especially for certain industries,” said Taiwanese Foreign Minister David Lin.

Taiwan’s electronics and semiconductor sectors have contributed to its role as a known contributor to the global information technology industry. The country has emerged as a leader, innovating in biotechnology, green energy, and aerospace.

Institutions such as the Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI) and the Metal Industries and Research Development Center (MIRDC) have consistently supported the government in its goal to maintain Taiwan’s edge in industry.

With 97 percent of Taiwanese industry composed of small and medium enterprises (SME), the government has helped local companies move up the supply chain from second-tier and third-tier suppliers to tier-1 suppliers.

“We helped Taiwan transform from a labor-intensive into a technology-intensive economy. We shouldered very strong responsibilities of Taiwanese industry,” ITRI Chairman Ching-Yen Tsay explained.

2014 marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act, the cornerstone of relations with the United States. Accordingly, Taiwan is pursuing ways to enhance economic ties with its third-largest trade partner and biggest source of foreign direct investment, country-wise.

“The relationship between the United States and Taiwan



Foreign Minister David Lin of Taiwan

is comprehensive, durable, and mutually beneficial. We feel and see that this is a strong basis for the United States and Taiwan relations to enter into the next era,” said Minister Lin.

“The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement talks should be the stepping stone for bilateral investment agreements. That is still the goal we are pursuing. We are also hoping that Taiwan will participate in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations for closer regional economic integration,” Lin added.

The foreign minister believes that Taiwan’s inclusion in the TPP negotiations will strengthen the Taiwanese and global economies alike.

“It is very important for Taiwan to establish its value globally. We cannot deny the economic relations and political factors between Taiwan and China. For that reason, Taiwan needs to strengthen its relationship with other countries, especially with a country like the United States. At the same time, this also fits America’s interest in

the Asia-Pacific region,” said Anita Chen, Managing Director of Park Strategies, which advises local and foreign clients on investment opportunities in the region.

Though the two countries share the same interests in seeing more prosperity and security in the Asia-Pacific, Taiwan can play an important role in the United States’ so-called pivot to Asia.

Taiwan’s role in global policymaking is understated, but international companies have taken note of its strengths in business, notably Taiwanese companies’ improved links to mainland China.

“We have a similar cultural background to China, but we also have a very similar background to the Western countries. If you want to do business with the Chinese, it’s very important for you to understand their market. Taiwan can be the gateway to mainland China,” Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications Men-Feng Wu proposed.

Although Taiwan’s size might be seen as a weakness, the island’s manageable scale is in fact an advantage. Its smaller market has acted as an accurate, low-risk testing ground for companies wanting to enter the massive mainland market.

Aside from being a bridge to China, Taiwan’s location on the eastern edge of East Asia makes the island an ideal hub of a regional market with more than one billion people.

“The project for the Taiwan International Airport was just completed last year. We have six major harbors and a number of which were developed into free trade zones. The ‘distance advantage’ is short to Shanghai, Tokyo, and Seoul. Taiwan can be a very important hub for the Asia-Pacific rim,” Deputy Minister Wu said.

Through its new infrastructure and ethos of innovation, as well as its vital contribution to the global supply chain, Taiwan will gain prominence in the future.

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# Mastering Adaptability for Growth

When Tim Cook launched a new line of iPhones in September, business reporters, tech geeks, and Apple fanatics listened intently as the Chief Executive Officer of the world's most valuable company outlined an extensive list of innovations made to the highly coveted smart phone.

In Taiwan, the iPhone launch – available via live stream for the first time – was watched just as closely because a number of Taiwanese companies make components for many of Apple's gadgets.

In fact, record-setting pre-sale orders for the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus are expected to boost Taiwan's technology-related export as the phones are rolled out around the globe.

Taiwan's Ministry of Finance reported that, as of the second quarter of 2014, technology-related exports had already exceeded 9 billion dollars, driven mostly by semiconductor sales.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation already reported sales of over 6 billion dollars to Apple.

Meanwhile, Taiwan's ASE Group, the world's largest provider of independent semiconductor manufacturing services, has been highly successful in servicing this important sector.

Taiwan's credibility in the global technology market is grounded in the government's efforts to empower its universities and businesses to act as centers of research and development. The Industrial Tech-

nology Research Institute was at the heart of this program.

"From the beginning, our purpose was clear. Through science, research and technology, we would lead Taiwan's industry by transformation and upgrading. We helped Taiwan transform from a labor-intensive to a technology-intensive economy. If you look at the developments over the past forty years, that has been the contribution of ITRI," ITRI Chairman Dr. Ching-Yen Tsay noted.

## Next in line?

Though Taiwan's semiconductor industry is one of its most celebrated, the country has nurtured other sectors, particularly biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and green energy solutions, all of which have benefitted from significant investment in research and development.

"For biotech, there are only a few countries worldwide where you can list a company. One is the United States and the other one is Taiwan. Right now, we feel that Taiwan is the best place for us," ASLAN Pharmaceuticals President and Chief Executive Officer Carl Firth explained.

"For small- and medium-sized biotech companies less familiar with Asia, Taiwan is a good place to start. You have a country that has a rich history of drug manufacturing and drug development doing high quality work. From here, companies can reach out to other parts of Asia using Taiwan as a platform," Firth added.

For many years, Taiwan has been a springboard for many of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies to mainland China and the rest of Asia.

"Taiwan can provide very good quality clinical trials. The expertise in clinical trial protocols is very good. That is why the top five worldwide pharmaceutical companies choose Taiwan as their clinical trial center," said Development Center for Biotechnology Chairman Dr. Johnsee Lee, who also serves as honorary Chairman of the Taiwan Bio Industry Association.

The growth of Taiwan's biotech sectors has prompted companies on both sides of the Pacific to aggressively pursue partnerships.

"Unlike in the past, Taiwan is now more well-known in the United States, especially for health care. International companies recognize the level of opportunities that exist within Taiwan, particularly in its healthcare system. There is a tremendous opportunity not only for American businesses to expand into Taiwan, but also for Taiwanese companies to invest and thrive in the United States," said General Biologicals Corporation Chairman T.C. Lin.

"We are actively looking to expand operations in the United States via acquisitions. This can greatly benefit, in particular, our molecular diagnostics division," added Lin, whose company is marking its thirtieth anniversary this year.

Taiwanese medical device

manufacturers are also poised to benefit from growing health care ties.

"The United States consumes most of the world's resources in medical products. 55 percent of our business is generated there," said Apex Biotechnology Corporation Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Thomas Shen. Apex Biotech is Taiwan's leading exporter of blood glucose systems strips.

Taiwan also has a laudable level of awareness of environmental issues. According to a recent study by the Taiwan Institute for Sustainable Energy, nearly 91 percent of Taiwanese are aware of the effects of climate change.

That consciousness has sparked the development of a fast-growing clean energy industry. One such company, Topper Sun, developed rooftop, stand-alone solar tracking systems as part of its total solutions package, considered among the most efficient in the field.

"We are very proud that our product has one the highest efficiency ratings of Mono (monocrystalline silicon cells) with its current efficiency reaching 19.7 percent through the traditional process," said Topper Sun Chairman Summer Luo.

"Our Solar Tracker was launched in the market last year and received very positive feedback. We are currently looking for distribution channels in the US that we can partner with," Luo added.



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Taiwan also contributes to the global supply chain for wind turbines. According to the Metal Industries Research Development Center, Taiwan is among the top ten suppliers of key sub-systems and materials to large wind turbines manufacturers around the world.

In 2013, the industry's output reached around \$270.68 million, 90 percent of which represented exports.

"MIRDC is currently working closely with U.S. research institutions in metal material, vehicle chassis, medical devices, and the testing and certification field," said MIRDC President Dr. Ho-Chung Fu.

As Taiwan develops its international role, its economic reach is expanding to new up-and-coming sectors, such as aerospace.

"In Taiwan, the scope of aviation industry continues to expand and production values have grown from 2.4 billion dollars in 2011 to 2.8 billion dollars in 2013," said Aerospace Industrial Development Corporation President Butch Hsu.

### Backbone of development

Taiwan's path to global prominence in science and technology is a by-product of decades of investment in higher education. The Taiwanese government invests more than 400 million dollars annually in higher education.

According to the World Economic Forum 2012 Global Competitiveness Report, Taiwan ranked ninth in Higher Education and Training, and fourteenth out of one-hundred and thirty-three countries in Innovation.

As of 2012, Taiwan had more than 160 universities and colleges and its student population had exceeded 1.3 million.

As the country aims to make its educational system more international, the country's top universities attracted, nearly 50,000 foreign students, according to the Ministry of Education.

"In terms of the growth rate for international students, we are number one among the top-tier universities. In terms of the percentage of degree-

seeking international students, we are number one as well," said National Cheng Kung University Executive Vice-President Dr. Huey-Jen Su.

Beyond student and faculty exchanges, Taiwan has also bolstered its efforts to enhance institutional links with other universities and corporations.

"This university is eager to partner with foreign and local companies. We are already doing a lot of research with foreign companies. I would like to set up more research laboratories with local and international companies to enhance our core competitiveness," Taipei Tech President Dr. Leehter Yao said.

Kaohsiung Medical University, the country's first private university, has also developed its international relationships.

"KMU values the significance of international exchange and cooperation in developing students' global perspectives," KMU President Dr. Ching-Kuan Liu noted.

Looking forward, Taiwan's universities are adjusting their plans to adapt to the changing

needs of business and industry. National Chiao Tung University, already considered a leader in science and engineering, is consolidating its reputation in health care.

"We have a special program called BioICT, which combines biology, biomedicine, information, communication, and technology. Basically it combines our strengths in engineering to contribute to healthcare. Traditionally, Taiwan is very good at high quality manufacturing but we are also in need of change. This year, we are making a change to make our university more comprehensive," explained NCTU Vice-President Dr. Han-Ping Shieh.

"There are many start-ups and venture capitalists in Silicon Valley, and we'd like to be recognized by them. We hope that they notice our research and hope that our students have the opportunity to go there and have internships and come back with their what they have learned. Joint cooperation is what we are looking forward to," Shieh added.



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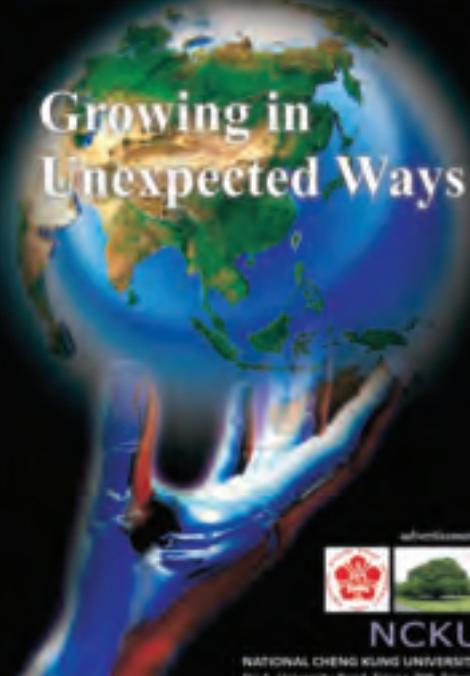
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# Building for the Future

As Taiwan pursues broader regional economic integration, the country's leaders have taken significant steps to ensure that the island can handle the expected growth. Infrastructure development is central to those plans.

Early this year, the Ministry of Finance unveiled a massive 6.6 billion dollar infra-

structure development package that aims to bring Taiwan closer to its objective of becoming a regional trade and logistics hub.

Tasked with upgrading the country's road and transport network, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC) has identified ways to improve Taiwan's

railways, mass rapid transit, roads, highways, airports and seaports, as well as telecommunications and tourism-related infrastructure.

As it stands, Taiwan already boasts a highly advanced road and rail network, which includes a mass rapid transit system in the two largest cities, Taipei and Kaoshiung, with plans for a third system in another city to begin operations in 2017.

The immensely efficient High Speed Rail (HSR) system, which carried 268 million passengers in 2014, has eight stations and will add another four by the end of 2015.

Six major harbors, the airports, and a growing number of free trade zones make up an efficiently planned engine for economic growth.

Today, each major city on the island is reachable within 3.5 hours from each other.

As far as international connectivity is concerned, Taiwan continues to push forward.

"We have many projects to enhance our capabilities to handle the overseas freight transportation," said MOTC Deputy Minister Wu Meng-Feng.

Taiwan International Ports Corporation President Lee Tai-Hsin shares a similar position: "We can be an excellent trans-shipment partner in bridging the United States and mainland China."

Amid a thaw in cross-strait relations, tourism in Taiwan has also experienced record-breaking success.

According to MOTC statistics, 4.82 million tourists traveled to Taiwan as of the third quarter of 2014, up 26.7 percent and the highest figure on record. Air transportation also posted record arrivals, with more than twenty-six million travelers passing through Taiwan's airports as of last August, the highest level in fifteen years.

In anticipation of this upward trend, Taiwan's legislative body recently approved the urban plan for Taiwan's flagship megaproject, the Taoyuan Aerotropolis, which stands as the centerpiece of the island's aim to be a global leader in transportation and logistics.

"In many ways, the destiny of Taoyuan will also determine the destiny of Taiwan," said Taoyuan Mayor Wu Chih-Yang.



Asia's next hub: Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport

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Aside from providing visitors with that all-important first impression of the country, major international airports serve as a fair indicator of economic health. In the case of Taoyuan International Airport in Taipei, it becomes very clear that Taiwan remains a dynamic center of business.

Situated an average of only two and a half hours by plane from any major city in East Asia – closer than any other major airport in the region – the Taiwanese capital's airport has seen its air traffic soar. To date, Taoyuan International Airport serves 164 destinations worldwide, including 48 destinations in mainland China.

"The airport is doing very well in terms of passengers and the number of cargo this year. Traffic growth in half a year has increased double-digits by 13 percent, said Taoyuan International Airport Corporation Presi-

dent and CEO David H.J. Fei.

With a growing economy and improving cross-strait relations, Taipei attracted 8.03 million visitors in 2013, a sharp increase from the 3.85 million tourists it welcomed in 2008. And the upward trend is expected to continue over the next few years.

Among its achievements, Taoyuan International Airport was among those that received the Airports Council International's annual Airport Service Quality Awards last year and was ranked the third-best airport in the world in its size category (between 25 and 40 million passengers).

According to officials, Taoyuan airport can currently accommodate 32 million passengers. By the end of the year, officials predict that passenger traffic to reach 34 million, which underlines the

urgent need for expansion, a priority of its leadership.

"Taoyuan airport has to pave the way for its future through expansion to give passengers a comfortable area, free showers, a buffet area, and even a sleeping area. This is something that is urgent to this airport," explained Fei.

As Taiwan unveils its massive Aerotropolis flagship project, Taoyuan International Airport has become a vital component of this ambitious vision. Plans have been unveiled for the construction of a third terminal, a multi-functional building, as well as additional roadways and rail links.

Taiwan's aerotropolis project presents an opportunity for international involvement and collaboration.

"T3 and the multi-functional building, which will

serve a very important purpose, will create a so-called cluster for industries. For example, an international business branch can be set up here as a service center or a regional logistic center to enhance their competitiveness," said Fei.

In addition, Taoyuan International Airport is undergoing a major upgrade as it transforms itself into a smart and green facility and introduces a variety of important airport management systems, many of which come from the United States.

Given the long list of infrastructure upgrades, Taoyuan International Airport is looking to seek more partnerships with international investors.

"We may be an underestimated market for overseas investors, but Taoyuan Airport has strong potential in the near future. Our attractiveness and far-sighted views will surely grab attention around the world," said Fei.

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The Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI), founded in 1973, was the main driving force of Taiwan's economic growth as it shifted from a labor-intensive economy into a value-added, technology-driven one.

Over the past 41 years, ITRI has been fostering the development of industries, including semiconductors, personal computers and displays, LED, machine tools, bicycles, and their key components.

At the early stage, ITRI targeted the burgeoning semiconductor sector and forged its first collaboration with Radio Corporation of America in 1976. That partnership eventually led to spin-off groups, such as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company and United Microelectronics Corporation, which today remain global leaders in the industry.

In a bid to stay competitive, ITRI keeps forming ties with partners from all over the world, including top U.S. concerns like Corning, Intel, Applied Materials, and Stanford University. Meanwhile, ITRI also supports Taiwan's entrepreneurs and capitalizes on their technical know-how.

Moving forward, ITRI looks towards the United States as an essential partner for collaborative projects.

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# The Strategic Logic of Trade

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## New Rules of the Road for the Global Market

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*Michael Froman*

**F**or much of the twentieth century, leaders and policymakers around the world viewed the strategic importance of trade, and of international economic policy more generally, largely through the lens of military strength. They believed that the role of a strong economy was to act as an enabler, supporting a strong military, which they saw as the best way to project power and influence. But in recent decades, leaders have come to see the economic clout that trade produces as more than merely a purse for military prowess: they now understand prosperity to be a principal means by which countries measure and exercise power.

The strategic importance of trade is not new, but it has grown in recent years and strongly reinforces the economic case for expanding trade. Over 40 years ago, the economist Thomas Schelling observed, “Broadly defined to include investment, shipping, tourism, and the management of enterprises, trade is what most of international relations are about. For that reason trade policy is national security policy.” In a world where markets can have as much influence as militaries, any tension between the United States’ national security priorities and its economic goals is more apparent than real. Still, in considering new trade agreements, Washington must first and foremost evaluate their economic merits. Trade deals must promote U.S. economic growth, support jobs, and strengthen the middle class.

Trade’s contribution to the U.S. economy has never been more significant than it is today. Trade supports higher-paying jobs, spurs economic growth, and enhances the competitiveness of the U.S. economy. Last year, the United States exported a record \$2.3 trillion in goods and services, which in turn supported around 11.3 million American jobs. Over the last

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**MICHAEL FROMAN** is the U.S. Trade Representative.

five years, the increase in U.S. exports has accounted for nearly a third of total U.S. economic growth and, during the past four years, has supported 1.6 million additional jobs. Better yet, those jobs typically pay somewhere between 13 and 18 percent more than jobs unrelated to exports.

Moreover, trade plays a major role in attracting investors and manufacturers to the United States. The country offers a massive market, strong rule of law, a skilled work force with an entrepreneurial culture, and increasingly abundant sources of affordable energy. The Obama administration's trade policy seeks to make the United States even more attractive to investors by positioning the country at the center of a web of agreements that will provide unfettered access to nearly two-thirds of the global economy. As a result, the United States is already enjoying increased investment, attracting manufacturing jobs, and establishing itself as the world's production platform of choice. Companies of all sizes once again want to make things in the United States and export them all over the world.

For nearly seven decades, the global trading system has accomplished the goals of its lead architects, including U.S. statesmen such as Dean Acheson and George Marshall. It has brought jobs to American shores and peace and prosperity to countries around the world. But no one should take that system for granted. In recent years, tectonic shifts, such as economic globalization, technological change, and the rise of emerging economies, have reshaped the international landscape. As President Barack Obama remarked earlier this year, "Just as the world has changed, this architecture must change as well."

To help achieve that change, the Obama administration's trade agenda focuses on three strategic objectives: establishing and enforcing rules of the road, strengthening U.S. partnerships with other countries, and spurring broad-based economic development. Each of these objectives serves the overarching goals of revitalizing the global trading system, allowing the United States to continue to play a leading role in it, and ensuring that it reflects both American interests and American values.

## **RULES OF THE ROAD**

With some of the most innovative companies and productive workers in the world, the United States can compete in the global marketplace and win—if the playing field is level. The Obama administration has made enforcement of the rules governing trade a top priority, and every time the administration has brought a dispute before the World

Trade Organization and the WTO has made a decision, the United States has won. Preventing China from restricting access to rare-earth minerals and stopping Argentina from wrongly restricting imports of agricultural products—to cite just two examples—not only benefits U.S. workers, farmers, and businesses but also reinforces the rules-based trading system itself.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership presents an unprecedented opportunity to update the rules of the road. An ambitious and comprehensive trade agreement that the United States is currently negotiating with 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the TPP represents a main pillar of the Obama administration's broader strategy of rebalancing toward Asia. Taken together, the parties negotiating the TPP represent nearly 40 percent of the world's GDP and account for roughly a third of all global trade.

This agreement would level the playing field of international trade by establishing the strongest environmental and labor standards of any trade agreement in U.S. history. For example, the United States is pressing other countries to address forced labor and child labor and to maintain acceptable working conditions.

The United States has also broken new ground with proposals that would address illicit wildlife trafficking, illegal logging, and subsidies that contribute to dangerous overfishing. Rules limiting such activities would help ensure that

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*The United States can compete in the global marketplace and win—if the playing field is level.*

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trade remains sustainable and that its benefits are broadly shared. The TPP countries are also working to ensure fair competition between private firms and state-owned enterprises that receive subsidies or other preferences. And Washington is pushing to protect unrestricted access to the Internet and the free flow of data so that small and medium-sized businesses around the world will be able to access global markets efficiently.

As the need for new rules has grown, so, too, has the difficulty of reaching agreement on the details. Emerging economies such as China and India have pressed for a stronger voice in international matters, but they have been reluctant to take on responsibilities commensurate with their increasing role in the global economy. Earlier this year, for example, a handful of countries led by India blocked the implementation of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement, which seeks to eliminate red tape in border and customs disputes and therefore contribute significantly to economic activity, especially in developing countries. In this

and other areas, the United States will continue to press ahead, working with those countries willing to adopt stronger rules and, in doing so, hopefully giving new momentum to the WTO's multilateral efforts.

### **STRENGTHENING PARTNERS**

Trade has played a leading role in many of the most important chapters of U.S. history, often as a tool for strengthening international partnerships and alliances. The best-known example of this occurred in the wake of World War II, when the United States provided more access to Western European countries and Japan than it received from them, in an attempt to speed their reconstruction and solidify their integration into an open, rules-based international order.

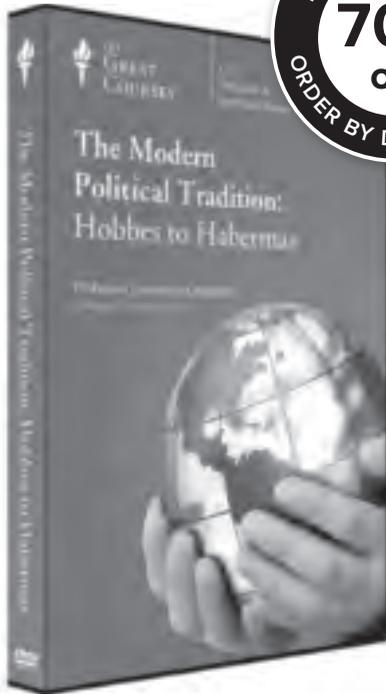
Trade also serves as an effective way to send signals to allies and rivals. Signaling was the primary motivation behind the United Kingdom's push for the trade agreement it signed with the United States in 1938, just before the outbreak of World War II. The British gained little economically, but the deal bolstered the appearance of Anglo-American solidarity. Similarly, signaling was as important as economics to the United States' first-ever free-trade agreement, which was concluded with Israel in 1985. If anyone doubts the strategic importance of trade, consider Russia's reaction during the past year to the prospect of Ukraine deepening its trade ties with the West.

The global trading system also provides avenues for peaceful competition and mechanisms for resolving grievances that might otherwise escalate. Over time, the habits of cooperation shaped through trade can reduce misperceptions, build trust, and increase cooperation between states on other issues—creating “an atmosphere congenial to the preservation of peace,” as U.S. President Harry Truman put it in 1947, while making the case for the creation of an early international trade organization.

Given recent developments in Asia and Europe—tensions over the East China and South China seas, the crisis in Ukraine—the strategic implications of U.S. trade policy have rarely been clearer. For many of the countries that would be party to the TPP, the economic benefits of the agreement are further sweetened by expectations that the United States will become more deeply embedded in the region. And just as completing the TPP would underscore Washington's commitment to development and stability in Asia during a time of flux, finalizing the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) would send an unmistakable signal to the world about the strength of the U.S.-



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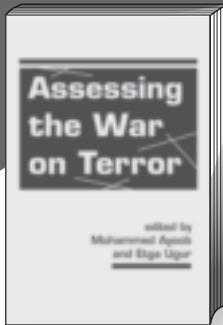
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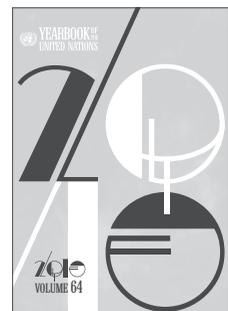
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The economic ties between the United States and its European trading partners are substantial: \$1 trillion in trade each year, \$4 trillion in investments, and jobs for 13 million American and European workers whose employment depends on transatlantic trade and investment. T-TIP aims to strengthen those already robust ties by better aligning the regulations and standards that the United States and European countries impose on firms—without compromising the environmental safeguards or health and safety measures that protect consumers on both sides of the Atlantic. From an economic perspective, T-TIP presents an enormous opportunity to increase trade, potentially grow the economies of the United States and its European partners by hundreds of billions of dollars, and support hundreds of thousands of additional jobs. And many in Europe believe that T-TIP will not only spur much-needed economic growth but also support efforts to reform European energy policies and create greater energy security.

### **KEEP ON GROWING**

U.S. trade policy aims not only to update the global economic architecture but also to expand it. In the postwar era, the United States has been a leader in providing market access to developing countries. More people now benefit from the global trading system than at any time in history. Unfortunately, however, what then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said at the beginning of this century still remains true: “The main losers in today’s very unequal world are not those who are too much exposed to globalization. They are those who have been left out.” The world’s poorest countries still face significant challenges, but by encouraging good governance and sustainable growth, U.S. trade policy can help alleviate poverty and promote stability.

Trade cannot solve every development challenge, but it is a necessary part of any successful and sustainable development strategy. Trade fuels faster growth, stimulates investment, and promotes competition, which results in more jobs and more income for the poor. Growth and investment, in turn, make it easier for developing countries to finance antipoverty programs and improve public services. This virtuous cycle depends on a number of factors, such as strong institutions, the rule of law, sufficient infrastructure, and quality health care and education.

Foreign assistance plays a critical role in many of these areas as well, but over time, truly sustainable growth requires trade and investment.

The link between trade and development has never been stronger than in recent decades. Between 1991 and 2011, developing countries' share of world trade doubled and nearly one billion people escaped poverty. Some of the countries that were most engaged in trade, including many in Asia, saw the greatest progress in development, whereas countries that remained largely closed, including many in the Middle East and North Africa, generally saw substantially less progress. In the mid-1990s, foreign direct investment in developing countries surpassed the amount they received in foreign aid. And last year, for the first time in history, the value of trade between developing countries exceeded that between developing and developed countries.

Trade-led development serves U.S. interests by growing markets for U.S. exports and by preventing conflict. It is also an important expression of American values. U.S. trade policy supports greater competition, more participation in the market, and more rigorous labor and environmental standards. In doing so, U.S. trade policy advances broader definitions of international security, including human security and environmental security.

The United States' commitment to promoting development through trade is at the heart of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which has opened U.S. markets to a wide array of African exports, including textiles, apparel, horticultural goods, and processed agricultural products. Adopted near the end of the Clinton administration, AGOA has become the cornerstone of U.S. trade policy with sub-Saharan Africa. From 2001 to 2013, U.S. imports covered by AGOA more than tripled, including a nearly fourfold increase in non-oil imports. During the same period, the amount of U.S. direct investment in sub-Saharan countries nearly quadrupled.

AGOA has supported hundreds of thousands of jobs in sub-Saharan Africa, creating economic opportunities that otherwise might not exist. The United States has benefited from the stability that has accompanied this increased prosperity, as well as from the market opportunities AGOA has created for U.S. firms. Since 2001, U.S. exports to the region have more than tripled, and last year, those exports supported nearly 120,000 American jobs. Africa—home to the world's fastest-growing middle classes and several of the world's fastest-growing economies—will likely continue to rise, economically and geopolitically, in the coming years. Still, there is much more to be done. The Obama administration has proposed not just

renewing AGOA but also updating it to reflect changes within Africa and between African countries and their trading partners. Doing so would send a strong message to the world that the United States is deeply committed to Africa and to promoting broad-based development through trade.

## **BUYING IN TO TRADE**

The Obama administration's three strategic trade objectives—establishing and enforcing rules of the road, strengthening partnerships, and promoting development—all serve the greater goal of revitalizing the international economic architecture. Establishing and enforcing rules of the road will ensure that tomorrow's global trading system is consistent with American values and interests. Strengthening the United States' partnerships and alliances with other countries will protect that system and lay the foundation for pursuing broader mutual interests. Promoting broad-based, inclusive development will expand that system so that its benefits are both greater and more widely shared.

The economic foundation of the Obama administration's trade agenda is sound, and the strategic stakes of following through with it could not be higher. Given the current constraints on fiscal and monetary policies, there is no better source of growth than trade. As tensions rise in Asia and on the periphery of Europe, the strategic merits of the TPP and T-TIP become even clearer.

At the same time, Washington faces unprecedented constraints in crafting trade policy. The United States no longer holds as dominant a position in the global economy as it did at the end of World War II, and it must build trade coalitions willing to work toward consensus positions. Meanwhile, the economic struggles facing many Americans have fostered a sense of insecurity and skepticism about the benefits of trade.

Such concerns are legitimate, but too often they reflect a conflation of the impact of technological change and economic globalization with the effects of trade agreements. To help address these worries and better engage Congress, the public, and other stakeholders, the Obama administration has worked to make its trade agenda the most transparent in U.S. history, closely discussing trade issues and negotiations with small-business owners, nongovernmental organizations, and labor unions and holding more than 1,400 congressional briefings on the TPP alone. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative consults with congressional committees on every proposal the United States makes during trade negotiations, and any member of Congress can review the negotiating texts.

These efforts have given unprecedented weight to public input and congressional oversight. Congress' involvement could be further enhanced and institutionalized by the passage of trade promotion authority, which would allow Congress to guide trade policy by laying out the United States' negotiating objectives, defining how the executive branch must consult with Congress about trade agreements, and detailing the legislative procedures that will guide Congress' consideration of trade agreements. At the same time, by ensuring that Congress will consider trade agreements as they have been negotiated by the executive branch, trade promotion authority would give U.S. trading partners the necessary confidence to put their best and final offers on the table. Trade promotion authority has a long, bipartisan history—stretching back to President Franklin Roosevelt and the U.S. Congress during the New Deal era—of ensuring congressional oversight while also strengthening the United States' hand at the international bargaining table.

### **CHOOSE OR LOSE**

Trade initiatives such as the TPP, T-TIP, and AGOA give Americans a chance to shape the global economy, rather than just be shaped by it. Increasingly, the rules-based, open trading system is competing with state-directed, mercantilist models. The United States is not alone in working to define the rules of the road in the Asia-Pacific, for example, and not all of the United States' competitors share Washington's commitment to raising labor and environmental standards, enforcing intellectual property rights, ensuring that state-owned enterprises compete fairly with private firms, and maintaining a free and open Internet. Failing to deliver on the Obama administration's agenda would mean missing an opportunity to create safer workplaces, a better environment, and healthier and more open societies. The failure to lead could spill into other domains as others filled the gap.

There is no doubt that it is in the interests of American workers, farmers, and ranchers; manufacturers and service providers; entrepreneurs and inventors for the United States to actively shape the global trading system and promote a race to the top, rather than engage in a race to the bottom. If the United States wants to strengthen its economic power and extend its strategic influence during uncertain times, Washington must make a decision: either lead on global trade or be left on the sidelines. There really is no choice. 🌐

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# Culture War

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## The Case Against Repatriating Museum Artifacts

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*James Cuno*

**I**n December 2007, the Italian government opened an exhibition in Rome of 69 artifacts that four major U.S. museums had agreed to return to Italy on the grounds that they had been illegally excavated and exported from the country. Leading nearly 200 journalists through the exhibition, Francesco Rutelli, Italy's then cultural minister, proclaimed, "The odyssey of these objects, which started with their brutal removal from the bowels of the earth, didn't end on the shelf of some American museum. With nostalgia, they have returned. These beautiful pieces have reconquered their souls." Rutelli was not just anthropomorphizing ancient artifacts by giving them souls. By insisting that they were the property of Italy and important to its national identity, he was also giving them citizenship.

Rutelli has hardly been the only government official to insist that artifacts belong to the places from which they originally came. In 2011, the German government agreed to return to Turkey a 3,000-year-old sphinx that German archaeologists had excavated from central Anatolia in the early twentieth century. Afterward, the Turkish minister of culture, Ertugrul Gunay, declared that "each and every antiquity in any part of the world should eventually go back to its homeland."

Such claims on the national identity of antiquities are at the root of many states' cultural property laws, which in the last few decades have been used by governments to reclaim objects from museums and other collections abroad. Despite UNESCO's declaration that "no culture is a hermetically sealed entity," governments are increasingly making claims of ownership of cultural property on the basis of self-proclaimed

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**JAMES CUNO** is President and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust. He is the author of *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum* and *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle Over Our Ancient Heritage*.

and fixed state-based identities. Many use ancient cultural objects to affirm continuity with a glorious and powerful past as a way of burnishing their modern political image—Egypt with the Pharaonic era, Iran with ancient Persia, Italy with the Roman Empire. These arguments amount to protectionist claims on culture. Rather than acknowledge that culture is in a state of constant flux, modern governments present it as standing still, in order to use cultural objects to promote their own states' national identities.

In the battle over cultural heritage, repatriation claims based strictly on national origin are more than just denials of cultural exchange: they are also arguments against the promise of encyclopedic museums—a category that includes the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York; the British Museum, in London; and the Louvre, in Paris. By presenting the artifacts of one time and one culture next to those of other times and cultures, encyclopedic museums encourage curiosity about the world and its many peoples. They also promote a cosmopolitan worldview, as opposed to a nationalist concept of cultural identity. In an era of globalization that is nonetheless marked by resurgent nationalism and sectarianism, antiquities and their history should not be used to stoke such narrow identities. Instead, they should express the guiding principles of the world's great museums: pluralism, diversity, and the idea that culture shouldn't stop at borders—and nor, for that matter, should the cosmopolitan ideals represented by encyclopedic museums. Rather than acquiesce to frivolous, if stubborn, calls for repatriation, often accompanied by threats of cultural embargoes, encyclopedic museums should encourage the development of mutually beneficial relationships with museums everywhere in the world that share their cosmopolitan vision. Cultural property should be recognized for what it is: the legacy of humankind and not of the modern nation-state, subject to the political agenda of its current ruling elite.

### **LESSONS FROM THE LOUVRE**

I first visited an encyclopedic museum more than 40 years ago. Walking through the Louvre as a young, traveling student, drawn to different things that caught my eye, I came across an alabaster bust of a praying figure from the ancient Near East. It was an armless torso with a head, a long, flowing beard, and one eye inlaid with shell and another just an empty hole. An inscription carved into the statue revealed that it was



dedicated to a goddess on behalf of a Mesopotamian king by his vassal Eshpum more than 4,000 years ago.

The small figure was wholly foreign to me, yet I was captivated. I imagined that I was looking at the statue as its original owner must have done—and then, not just its original owner but everyone since who had seen, admired, and protected it until it came into the museum where it has been preserved for centuries for all to see. I sensed that I was but one person in a long line of admirers attracted to the figure's magic, all the way back to Eshpum.

This is the power and promise of encyclopedic museums. By preserving and presenting examples of the world's cultures, they offer their visitors the world in all its rich diversity. And in doing so, they protect and advance the idea of openness and integration in a changing world. Over the last three decades, more people have

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*Museums encourage curiosity and promote a cosmopolitan worldview.*

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moved across or within national borders than at any point in human history, straining the very contiguity and definition of nation-states, which are now less politically defined and territorially circumscribed than ever

before. But all too often, as a result, governments seek fixed national cultures to shore up their hold on their states' identities. They focus on what the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (citing Sigmund Freud's "narcissism of small differences") called "new incentives for cultural purification as more nations lose the illusion of a national economic sovereignty or well being." This kind of promotion of cultural purity, borne of uncertainty, can produce dangerous, often violent xenophobia.

Appadurai was expanding on the ideas of the literary critic and theorist Edward Said, who also examined the formation of national cultural identities. In an essay published in 2000, Said concluded that "the notion of an exclusionary civilization . . . is an impossible one." Instead, he insisted that the more important question is whether "we want to work for civilizations that are separate or whether we should be taking the more integrative, but perhaps more difficult, path, which is to try to see them as making one vast whole whose exact contours are impossible for one person to grasp, but whose certain existence we can intuit and feel." This principle is exactly what encyclopedic museums encourage: understanding the intertwined nature of different cultures that are more similar than they are different, the result of centuries of contact through trade, pilgrimage, and conquest.

Yet this history allows critics to see encyclopedic museums as imperial instruments and contemporary agents of historical imbalances of power by which stronger nations continue to enrich themselves at the expense of weaker ones. But such a view fails to account for the complexity of empire. "Partly because of empire," Said wrote, "all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous,

extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic.” That applies not just to European imperialism; it goes as far back as the Mongol and Mughal empires and the empires of ancient Greece and Egypt. If one goes looking for evidence of empire in the collections of encyclopedic museums, one could find it everywhere. Empire is a fact of history, and history is on display in encyclopedic collections.

### **RETURN TO SENDER?**

If the small alabaster sculpture I first encountered in the Louvre years ago were discovered today, it would almost certainly be claimed by Iran as national property. A French archaeological delegation excavated it in Susa, the modern Iranian city of Shush, at the turn of the twentieth century. At that time, in an arrangement with the Persian government, the French team had rights to all the objects it excavated, provided that it compensated the government for any gold or silver. The country’s 1930 Conservation of Antiquities Act changed those terms: if the state discovered excavated objects directly, it could appropriate them all; if foreign excavators discovered them, the state could choose up to ten objects of value and divide the rest equally with the foreign excavating team.

In 1972, new legislation outlawed such divisions and gave the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research authority over all excavations in the country. In 1985, the government established the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization and charged it with surveying, registering, and conserving all archaeological sites and artifacts in the country. In 1998, the government went even further, passing a law that gave the organization the authority to take “necessary measures to identify and restitute Iran’s cultural properties, at national and international levels.”

Egypt, Italy, Turkey, and many other states made similar legal arrangements with archaeologists a century or more ago—instituting the practice of *partage*, or the sharing of finds—and then experienced similar evolutions in their cultural property laws. These modern laws have often asserted living relationships between modern nation-states and the ancient civilizations that long preceded them. In 1971, for example, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran’s last shah, held an opulent celebration in the ancient city of Persepolis to commemorate the anniversary of the founding, 2,500 years earlier, of the Persian monarchy by Cyrus the Great, explicitly identifying his own decadent reign with the glories of that ancient empire.

More than half of the 192 member nations of the UN have laws that either grant the state ownership of ancient objects found within their borders or restrict their export without state approval. Most of these laws were passed after 1970, the year UNESCO adopted a convention against the illicit trade of archaeological artifacts. Two

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*Countries that claim historical objects are not protecting their cultural heritages.*

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of the most contentious ongoing repatriation claims involve objects removed from Greece and Egypt, respectively, long before 1970: the Parthenon Marbles (also known as the Elgin Marbles), a collection of Greek sculptures and architectural pieces that a British ambassador ac-

quired and shipped to London between 1801 and 1812 and that now reside in the British Museum, and the bust of Nefertiti, which was brought to Berlin after it was discovered by German archaeologists in 1912 and is now held by Berlin's Neues Museum.

The marbles were removed from the Parthenon and other buildings in Athens' Acropolis complex with the permission of the reigning Ottoman authorities and have been on display in the British Museum since 1817. Greece didn't pass a law governing antiquities and ancient objects until 1834. When it achieved its independence from the Ottomans, in 1829, Greece made the Acropolis its national symbol, then removed all non-Athenian additions to the citadel's buildings, including remnants of a Byzantine church, an Orthodox and Roman Catholic cathedral, and a mosque. (The German architect in charge of the project pledged that "all the remains of barbarity will be removed.") Still, the Greek government has persistently claimed that the marbles' return would "restore the unity" of the Parthenon.

The bust of Nefertiti has been in Berlin since 1913, when Egypt, although nominally a province of the Ottoman Empire, was effectively ruled by the British. Egyptian governments have petitioned Germany for the bust's return since the 1920s. Germany has always refused, claiming that the bust was legally removed as part of a division of finds between the German excavating team and Egyptian officials. In December 2009, the director of Berlin's Egyptian Museum (the collection of which is part of the Neues Museum) presented historical documents, including a protocol signed by the German excavator and the Egyptian Antiquities Service, authorizing the bust's removal.



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Egyptian authorities alleged that the excavator misrepresented the bust's importance in the protocol to deceive the Egyptian authorities and get it out of Egypt—a charge the German government and museum authorities have consistently denied.

In these and other disputes, the UNESCO convention of 1970 has encouraged countries' calls for repatriation. But the convention does not override national cultural heritage regulations that predate 1970, nor is it itself a law. It is a binding agreement among its 115 signatory countries to regulate the trade in antiquities and prevent their looting and illicit trade. Adherence to the terms of the convention was lax in its early years, as museums and individual collectors acquired antiquities without careful consideration of their proper legal status or provenance.

A major shift occurred in 2008, when the Association of Art Museum Directors decided to bring its acquisition policies in line with the UNESCO charter. Nearly 200 directors of leading museums in the United States, Canada, and Mexico agreed that museums “should not normally acquire archaeological materials and ancient art without provenance demonstrating that the object was out of its country of modern discovery prior to or legally exported therefrom after November 17, 1970.”

The decision was largely a response to scandals involving stolen antiquities, which provide a powerful argument for repatriation. In the late 1990s, Swiss and Italian police raided the Geneva warehouse of Giacomo Medici, an Italian art dealer, and found photographs and documents revealing his extensive involvement in the illegal sale of antiquities. A number of U.S. museums that had acquired objects through Medici were implicated. In fact, it was the Medici scandal that eventually led the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and the Princeton University Art Museum to send those 69 objects back to Rome in 2007.

### **CLAIM GAME**

Although the UNESCO convention has helped crack down on the illegal trade in antiquities and led to the rightful repatriation of illicitly acquired art, it has also inspired many governments to make combative and sometimes dubious claims for restitution. As Zahi Hawass, Egypt's then long-serving antiquities minister, said in 2010, “We will make life miserable for museums that refuse to repatriate.”

And states are not alone in these efforts. UNESCO, despite what it says about cultural fluidity, has joined with nation-states to assist in the repatriation of cultural objects on the grounds that they represent countries' exclusive national heritages. Its repatriation and restitution committee has a broad mandate to facilitate bilateral negotiations for the return of "any cultural property" that a state deems to have "fundamental significance from the point of view of the spiritual values and cultural heritage of [its] people." Claims can apply to any object that was taken out of a country through "colonial or foreign occupation or as a result of illicit appropriation." The International Council of Museums, a nongovernmental organization with formal relations with UNESCO and the UN's Economic and Social Council, has a similarly all-embracing directive. The council instructs any museum with an object in its collection that is subject to a repatriation claim to "take prompt and responsible steps to cooperate in its return."

But individual countries alone determine when something is part of their cultural heritage: there is no international institution with the authority to make that determination. A national government or state-backed entity can even declare a preceding state's or regime's self-proclaimed national cultural property idolatrous and destroy it, and there is nothing any other country or any international agency can do to stop it. In 2001, UNESCO tried in vain to prevent the Taliban from demolishing the Bamiyan Buddhas, two monumental sixth-century statues carved into a cliff in central Afghanistan. Not even a meeting between UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and representatives of the Taliban leader could spare the statues.

Since that notorious attack, threats to the world's cultural heritage have only become more common. UNESCO lists sites where what it calls "emergency actions" to protect cultural heritage are needed; the list currently includes places in Egypt, Haiti, Iraq, Libya, Mali, and Syria where cultural property is threatened by either armed conflict or, in the case of Haiti, natural disaster. These actions, led by UNESCO, assess and document the extent and severity of the damage to, for example, the Roman-era ruins of the ancient desert city of Palmyra, in Syria, and Aleppo's Old City, both designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites and both damaged in 2012 in fighting between the Syrian army and rebels in the ongoing Syrian civil war, and Egypt's Museum of Islamic Art, in Cairo, which was damaged in a bombing claimed by Islamist militants in January.

## **SPREAD THE WEALTH**

Contrary to their stated intent, countries that make political claims on historical objects are not helping protect their cultural heritages. Since the rise in cultural property laws, many such objects have become concentrated in a few places. Insurance companies know this is a bad idea. Political instability and natural disasters can threaten cultural property anywhere—whether it's the more than 4,000 medieval manuscripts destroyed by Islamist militants in Mali in 2013 or the galleries and art collections in New York City damaged by flooding during Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Allowing the world's museums to share cultural property through loans or acquisitions would reduce some of these risks.

Governments and international agencies that value the protection of cultural property and the principle of cultural diversity should speak out in favor of a robust program of exchange among museums around the world. They should also discourage frivolous restitution claims from individual governments and promote the responsible sharing of collections from encyclopedic museums with museums in places that themselves have no encyclopedic museums. Given the political sensitivities of many governments, this is most likely to happen through loans of cultural objects rather than through their acquisition.

Unfortunately, not every museum sees the value in lending. There are risks with it, to be sure: the possibility of damage during transportation or from changes in environmental conditions, not to mention political instability. But over the long term, these risks can be mitigated through measures to increase the ability of smaller museums to properly care for objects of great value.

For encyclopedic museums to fulfill their promise of cultural exchange, they should be established everywhere in the world where they do not now exist. And existing encyclopedic museums should aid in their development. Already, there are laudable examples of how great museums in wealthy countries can foster a more comprehensive kind of cosmopolitanism. The British Museum established a program in 2008 to promote partnerships with institutions in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. In addition to loaning collections and exhibitions from British museums, it focused on training: in conservation, curating, and archiving. In all, some 29 countries were involved. The program was supported by the British government's Department

for Culture, Media, and Sport. But after three years, the British government cut the program's funding. The partnerships continue on a smaller scale supported by grant funding, including from the Getty Foundation.

This process of exchange and cooperation should build trust among museums and national authorities. It will be a long, slow process, but if successful, it would lay the foundation for a greater understanding of the values represented by the encyclopedic museum: openness, tolerance, and inquiry about the world, along with the recognition that culture exists independent of nationalism. These ideas can flourish everywhere, not only in the United States and Europe but wherever there is a spirit of inquiry about the world's rich and diverse history—and venerable or new museums to foster that interest—from Marrakech to Nairobi, Abu Dhabi to Mumbai, Shanghai to Mexico City. Examples of how such collaboration has worked include two recent exhibitions at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, in Mumbai: *The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning*, organized by the British Museum, and *Flemish Masterpieces From Antwerp*, organized in collaboration with the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp. Potential future collaboration could involve, perhaps, Chinese or Kenyan curators arranging an exhibition drawn entirely from the diverse collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the J. Paul Getty Museum, to be shown, respectively, at the Palace Museum, in Beijing, or at the Nairobi Gallery, in Nairobi.

But this more open future mostly depends on individual governments' setting aside their nationalist claims and encouraging among their citizens a cosmopolitan view of the world's many different cultures. Then, perhaps, more young students will have the experience I had in the Louvre some 40 years ago: a powerful and ancient object will enlarge their world, forever provoking curiosity about another time and place. 🌐

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# Promises to Keep

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## Crafting Better Development Goals

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*Bjorn Lomborg*

**T**he United Nations has always had lots of targets, goals, and declarations. You probably didn't know, for example, that 2014 is the International Year of Family Farming and the International Year of Crystallography—or that you are currently living through the Decade of Action for Road Safety. Such initiatives often reflect good intentions but rarely prove consequential. Between 1950 and 2000, at least 12 UN resolutions called for some form of universal education. In 1961, the so-called Addis Ababa Plan pledged that primary schooling in Africa would be “universal, compulsory and free” within two decades. Twenty years later, nearly half of all African children were still out of school. Countless other efforts promised equally lofty achievements, from gender equality to world peace, that never materialized.

But in 2000, something remarkable happened: the UN channeled its noblest aspirations into something more concrete. One hundred heads of state and 47 heads of government—the largest meeting of world leaders in history—descended on New York for the UN Millennium Summit and embraced a short list of ambitious challenges that later became known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The objectives—to reduce poverty, fight disease, get kids in school, and so on—essentially boiled down to nine specific, verifiable targets, subject to a hard deadline: December 31, 2015.

In the years since, governments, international institutions, and private foundations have backed the goals with billions of dollars, and much has improved. The promise to halve the proportion of the world's hungry is a case in point. In 1990, the baseline year for all the targets, almost

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24 percent of those living in the developing world were starving. By 2012, that figure had fallen to roughly 15 percent. If current trends hold, it will reach 12.2 percent by the end of 2015, just shy of the goal.

With the deadline nearing, discussion is now turning to what happens next. Some, including the philanthropist Bill Gates, favor keeping the focus on the current goals—essentially launching MDG II. Many others want to tackle a larger number of issues. A dizzying array of high-level panels, working groups, and researchers are already busy pumping out reams of competing recommendations. According to one online tracker, those efforts have resulted in over 1,400 proposed targets.

Having 1,400 targets is like having none at all, and so governments need to make some hard choices, deciding which targets will offer the greatest returns on investment. Of course, economics alone should not determine the world's top development aims over the next decade and a half. But ignoring costs doesn't make difficult choices disappear; it makes them less clear. Without common points of reference, the goals would likely skew toward causes with the greatest public relations value: the cutest animals, the most viral videos, the flashiest celebrity endorsers. And the world would risk wasting a monumental opportunity, as the next set of targets could influence how donors spend an estimated \$2.5 trillion in aid over the next 15 years.

## **GOALKEEPERS**

Whereas a long and inclusive process is now under way to determine the new goals, the original MDGs were drafted by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and a close circle of aides, with little public deliberation or government participation. Annan and his staff also waited until after world leaders had signed off on the proposed list to hash out the details, working behind closed doors with technocrats at the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the World Bank. That explains why the end result was so short and sweet: just eight goals and 18 specific targets.

Over time, funders pared down the targets even further by essentially ignoring nine of them. This made perfect sense. Whereas the promise to halve the proportion of people living in poverty by the end of 2015 was clearly a worthy global goal, others were decidedly less so. Target 8C, for example, bowed to a special interest by imploring the world to “address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.” (Why not also consider the needs

of, say, mountainous or low-lying countries?) Target 1B, calling for “full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people,” was inherently problematic. Every government, after all, already works to increase employment levels. Moreover, full employment is not actually desirable: labor markets need enough churn to allow people to switch jobs.

At the same time, there were also some notable gaps. For instance, the MDGs sidestepped the world’s biggest environmental challenge: indoor air pollution. Almost three billion people cook and keep warm by

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*Having 1,400 development targets is like having no targets at all.*

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burning twigs and dung, creating fumes that lead to one out of every 13 deaths globally. Donors could prevent many of these fatalities by expanding access to electricity, which would power basic stoves and heaters while fueling productivity in

agriculture and industry. Another issue the MDGs skirted was free trade, which is possibly the best means of pulling people out of poverty. World Bank models suggest that a global free-trade agreement, if passed today, could add \$5 trillion to the world’s GDP by 2020, \$3 trillion of which would go to developing countries. And by the close of this century, such a deal could increase global GDP by more than \$100 trillion, with most of the gains accruing outside developed nations.

Yet when it comes to the nine priorities that received the bulk of the funding, the progress has been spectacular. Take poverty: 43 percent of people in the developing world lived on less than \$1.25 per day in 1990. By 2010, five years ahead of schedule, the world had met its goal of reducing that share by half. Today, the poverty rate is on track to reach 15 percent by the end of 2015. Or consider drinking water: in 1990, around 30 percent of people in the developing world lacked access to a reliable source of clean water. In 2008, the world reached its goal of halving that proportion, to 15 percent; by the end of 2015, the share will likely fall to 11 percent. Meanwhile, maternal, child, and infant mortality rates in the developing world have plunged by nearly 50 percent since 1990. Then, 12 million children died annually before reaching their fifth birthdays. Today, fewer than seven million do.

Some goals remain out of reach. It’s safe to say that universal education will not be in place by the end of 2015. But that’s hardly a surprise. Promises to deliver 100 percent of anything should always invite suspicion. And even if such a goal were achievable, it would carry

a prohibitive cost. Still, nearly nine out of ten students now complete primary school in the developing world, up from less than eight in 1990.

To be sure, some level of improvement in these areas would likely have occurred anyway. Although the number of people living in poverty took a significant dive after the goals were launched, much of the decline owes to China's furious economic growth, not international aid efforts. And well before the Millennium Summit, access to clean drinking water had been slowly and steadily expanding. (As the destitute grow less poor, one of the first things they seek out is clean water.) In other cases, the MDGs clearly played an outsize role. The goals directed international aid dollars toward education and health care, boosting primary school enrollment and reducing child and maternal mortality rates. Global spending on vaccines has tripled since 2000; they now save between two and three million children in developing countries annually.

Perhaps most important, the goals helped galvanize public support for international development more broadly. Freed from the demands of Cold War competition, the world's rich countries substantially reduced their foreign aid budgets in the 1990s. With the introduction of the MDGs, governments embraced a renewed interest in development, reflected by a two-thirds increase in global giving. Today, however, governments are tightening their budgets even as the demand for assistance increases. So with such high expectations surrounding the next round of goals, donors will still have to squeeze the greatest possible gains out of every available dollar.

## **TO-DO LIST**

Over the next year, governments, international institutions, and non-governmental organizations will perform a complex dance to draw up the successors to the MDGs, with the new goals running from 2016 to 2030. Unfortunately, the most recent of several prominent efforts to draw up a new list, run by the UN's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, has buried itself in a giant pile of targets, as every nation and interest group lobbies for its favorite projects. The group includes representatives from 70 countries; by the middle of 2014, they had come up with a dizzying 212 targets. Although the participants recognized that a dramatic reduction was needed, no nation wanted to relinquish its favorites, opting to combine multiple targets instead. But the exercise was largely superficial: the

# A Report Card for Development Goals

## PHENOMENAL

### Tobacco Control

“Strengthen implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries as appropriate.”

### Early Education

“By 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.”

### Reproductive Health

“By 2030 ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.”

### Financial Services

“Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, particularly in developing countries, to financial services including affordable credit and their integration into value chains and markets.”

## GOOD

### Exports

“Increase significantly the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the LDC [less developed country] share of global exports by 2020.”

### Child Labor

“Take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, eradicate forced labour, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms including recruitment and use of child soldiers.”

### Gender Equality

“Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.”

### Climate Hazards

“Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.”

The Millennium Development Goals are set to expire at the end of 2015, and governments are debating what should come next. The UN's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, one of the most prominent forums for determining the new objectives, has come up with hundreds of proposed targets. To help policymakers choose among them, Bjorn Lomborg asked 32 economists to rate their potential for good. Here's a selection.

## FAIR

### Drinking Water

"By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all."

### Energy Efficiency

"Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030."

### Local Fisheries

"Provide access of small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets."

### Traffic Accidents

"By 2020 halve global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents."

### Poverty

"By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions."

## POOR

### Social Services

"Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable."

### Sustainable Tourism

"By 2030 devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products."

### Renewable Energy

"Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2030."

### Full Employment

"By 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities."

group excised 43 targets but only 20 words, bringing the total word count to 4,369. Compare that to the nine most important MDG targets, which fired up the world's imagination with just 139 words.

The proposed targets range from the ambitious (eliminate tuberculosis and malaria) to the peripheral ("promote sustainable tourism") to the impossible (provide affordable housing for all). In essence, they promise virtually everything to everyone. For example, after guaranteeing free preschool, primary, and secondary education every-

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*Donors must squeeze the greatest possible gains out of every available dollar.*

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where, they also pledge that "all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."

The original MDGs worked precisely because they were limited in scope. If the next goals are going to have any chance at success, the UN needs to concentrate on where dollars can do the most good, parting with most of the currently proposed targets and sharpening those that remain. To that end, my think tank, the Copenhagen Consensus Center, has launched a project to determine which proposed targets are most likely to do the greatest good and categorize them accordingly. Together with top economists, the center has tested this approach on the Open Working Group's various draft lists. Simultaneously, we are collaborating with an even larger group of experts to produce thousands of pages of peer-reviewed research about the effectiveness of 50 of the most prominent targets. The results will be published throughout the fall and winter of 2014. Then, in early 2015, three Nobel laureates will evaluate all the research to create an authoritative ranking.

To distinguish among various targets, we use a basic color scheme. We highlight the very best targets in dark green—those that will do more than 15 times as much economic, social, and environmental good as they cost. We color those that will bring between five and 15 times as much benefit in light green and paint the mediocre ones yellow. And we make red those that will cost more than they yield in benefits. These simple categories are meant to help the world's busy decision-makers

focus on picking the most effective targets. In our assessment of the Open Working Group's final list, we identified 13 dark green goals and nine red ones. Some of the results were intuitive and others were provocative. Taken together, they drove home a critical message: not all targets are equally worthwhile.

We highlighted fighting malaria, for example, in dark green. The costs are small because the solutions—supplying artemisinin-based combination treatments, bed nets, and indoor bug spray—are simple, established, and cheap. (Preventing one malarial death costs only \$1,000.) The benefits, meanwhile, are large, because combating the disease not only saves lives but also improves societal productivity. Another phenomenal goal was removing fossil fuel subsidies. In such developing countries as Libya and Venezuela, gasoline sells at less than \$1 per gallon, providing an unnecessary privilege to those who can afford cars. Shrinking these subsidies would help relieve strained government budgets while reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. The political ramifications of taking away any sort of entitlement are always treacherous, but identifying subsidies in a high-profile list of global goals could help leaders justify the cuts.

An unnerving outcome was that tackling HIV/AIDS came out yellow. Because the necessary drugs are relatively expensive and the treatment is lifelong, the price tag for preventing a single HIV fatality totals roughly \$10,000—as much as it costs to save ten people from dying of malaria. Another popular goal, to “increase substantially” the share of the world's energy consumption from renewable sources, ended up red. Although solar panels can power cell phones and light bulbs, the world's three billion poor people still need fossil fuels to run refrigerators and stoves, and carbon-based energy sources remain the cheapest means of fueling large-scale economic growth. The International Energy Agency estimates that increasing the share of renewable energy from 13 percent today to just 18 percent by 2035 would cost over \$240 billion in annual subsidies until 2030—likely more than the world's total development budget in 2030. What's more, the resulting reduction in greenhouse gas emissions would probably amount to less than six percent, lowering temperatures by two one-hundredths of a degree Fahrenheit. Also, the shift would come at the expense of overall access to electricity. According to a 2014 study by the Center for Global Development, a \$10 billion investment in renewable energy in Africa could bring 20 million people out of darkness, whereas an equivalent

investment in natural gas could connect 90 million people to the electricity grid. In other words, prioritizing renewable energy risks leaving nearly three out of four people in darkness who could have been given light.

Such red items underscore why economic data provide such crucial information. Imagine sitting in a high-class restaurant with a menu that lacks descriptions or prices. You would not know whether the caviar cost \$20 or \$2,000, or if it would be enough to feed just you or your entire party. Unless your expense account was exceptionally generous, you would probably hesitate to order. Similarly, donors need a menu of targets with prices and portion sizes. That said, money is not the only important consideration; just because champagne is expensive doesn't mean it isn't worth paying for. But you also need to know how much money will be left over to spend on dessert.

In November 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will face the unenviable task of deciding what to order off several lengthy menus, including the one drawn up by the Open Working Group. Understandably, he may be reluctant to dispense with goals agreed to by over 70 countries. He also knows that any wish list that is substantially longer than the MDGs will have little chance of emulating their success. Now is the time for Ban to muster the courage to act decisively and depart from his typical caution: with his term ending in late 2016, the new goals could represent his most significant legacy. Moreover, shedding all but the most effective targets would make the new package of goals far more palatable to the wealthiest countries, whose increasingly anxious taxpayers will be footing much of the bill.

Ranking the targets according to their likely effectiveness represents an obvious first step toward a sharper, shorter list of goals. Yet politics will still shape the final outcome. Leaders in developing countries will be understandably reluctant to cut fossil fuel subsidies, for instance, fearing social unrest, and politicians in wealthy countries will not be keen to back off costly but popular investments in renewable energy. Policymakers everywhere will not be eager to steer funding away from combating HIV/AIDS to fight malaria. But if dispassionate analysis can help just one great target replace a bad one, the impact could be enormous, redirecting tens of billions of dollars toward a goal that will bring about many times as much good for each dollar spent—a result ultimately worth hundreds of billions. When trillions of dollars are at stake, even small adjustments can make a world of difference. 🌍

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# Misrule of the Few

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## How the Oligarchs Ruined Greece

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*Pavlos Eleftheriadis*

Just a few years ago, Greece came perilously close to defaulting on its debts and exiting the eurozone. Today, thanks to the largest sovereign bailout in history, the country's economy is showing new signs of life. In exchange for promises that Athens would enact aggressive austerity measures, the so-called troika—the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund—provided tens of billions of dollars in emergency loans. From the perspective of many global investors and European officials, those policies have paid off. Excluding a one-off expenditure to recapitalize its banks, Greece's budget shortfall totaled roughly two percent last year, down from nearly 16 percent in 2009. Last year, the country ran a current account surplus for the first time in over three decades. And this past April, Greece returned to the international debt markets it had been locked out of for four years, issuing \$4 billion in five-year government bonds at a relatively low yield—only 4.95 percent. (Demand exceeded \$26 billion.) In August, Moody's Investors Service upgraded the country's credit rating by two notches.

Yet the recent comeback masks deep structural problems. To tidy its books, Athens levied crippling taxes on the middle class and made sharp cuts to government salaries, pensions, and health-care coverage. While ordinary citizens suffered under the weight of austerity, the government stalled on meaningful reforms: the Greek economy remains one of the least open in Europe and consequently one of the least competitive. It is also one of the most unequal.

Greece has failed to address such problems because the country's elites have a vested interest in keeping things as they are. Since the early 1990s, a handful of wealthy families—an oligarchy in all but

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name—has dominated Greek politics. These elites have preserved their positions through control of the media and through old-fashioned favoritism, sharing the spoils of power with the country's politicians. Greek legislators, in turn, have held on to power by rewarding a small number of professional associations and public-sector unions that support the status quo. Even as European lenders have put the country's finances under a microscope, this arrangement has held.

The fundamental problem facing Greece is not economic growth but political inequality. To the benefit of a favored few, cumbersome regulations and dysfunctional institutions remain largely unchanged, even as the country's infrastructure crumbles, poverty increases, and corruption persists. Greek society also faces new dangers. Overall unemployment stands at 27 percent, and youth unemployment exceeds 50 percent, providing an ideal recruiting ground for extremist groups on both the left and the right. Meanwhile, the oligarchs are still profiting at the expense of the country—and the rest of Europe.

### **THIS IS GREECE**

Among the many economic crises that have troubled the eurozone, Greece's meltdown stands out. It came about not because banks overextended themselves, as was the case elsewhere, but because the government of Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis, whose New Democracy party held power from 2004 to 2009, lost control of public finances. In 2003, just before Karamanlis took power, Greece's debt-to-GDP ratio stood at roughly 97 percent. At the end of his tenure, the figure had ballooned to nearly 130 percent. Ironically, Karamanlis had campaigned as a reformer, promising to shrink the civil service, open up the economy, and clean up politics. Once in office, however, he bowed to special interests. Over the course of his five years in power, Karamanlis appointed an estimated 150,000 new civil servants, pushing the total number of public-sector employees past one million people, or 21 percent of the active work force. During roughly the same period, public health expenditures jumped from just over five percent of GDP to around seven percent; public spending on pensions grew from 11.8 percent of GDP to 13.0 percent. The economic boom following the 2004 Olympics in Athens helped Karamanlis narrowly win reelection in 2007. But in his last two years in power, struggling with a majority of only two seats, he falsified economic performance data in a desperate attempt to win a snap general election. His party lost in a landslide.

Karamanlis acted not so much out of recklessness as weakness. Three structural forces, all the result of long-term trends in Greek politics, limited his room to maneuver. The first was the civil service, which was incapable of carrying out any sort of reform project. Its decline had begun in the 1980s, when political parties took on increased responsibility for staffing the government. In theory, the shift was meant to counteract the bureaucracy's conservative bent, a product of the Greek Civil War of 1946–49. But political interference soon became a permanent feature of central administration, with ministers appointing cronies almost at will. Within a decade, the civil service had doubled in size.

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*The fundamental problem facing Greece is not slow economic growth but political inequality.*

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In 1994, a reformist minister named Anastasios Peponis managed to pass legislation introducing an examination-based hiring system, but the process was widely ignored. Over the next ten years, Parliament amended the law 43 times. Public-sector unions continued to determine promotions and transfers and almost always blocked disciplinary proceedings against their members, even for serious crimes. Ministers with little incentive to think about the needs of their departments beyond the next election cycle became even more powerful. Highly qualified civil servants rarely rose to positions of influence. Morale collapsed.

Then there was Parliament. Simply put, Karamanlis had little control over his party. Due to the structure of the Greek electoral system, most politicians campaign in multimember constituencies and often run against members of their own party. By the time Karamanlis took office, competition had grown fierce in the country's three largest and fastest-growing cities—Athens, Piraeus, and Thessaloniki—which together account for 96 of the legislature's 300 seats. In this contentious environment, television exposure and private money became especially crucial to electoral success. And with access to wealthy donors and media elites, politicians from these urban constituencies could become national players without having to rely on party machines. Many owed their election to influential oligarchs; others, to professional associations or trade unions. Karamanlis' supposed allies in Parliament therefore had few incentives to act on his agenda.

The biggest barrier to Karamanlis' reforms, however, was opposition from the media. Most Greeks get their news from television, and eight private channels, all controlled by well-known businesspeople, share over 90 percent of the market. Some of the owners, such as Yiannis Alafouzos, who founded the Skai media group, are shipping magnates whose businesses rely little on state contracts and licenses. But most have their hands in a broad array of businesses that depend heavily on government patronage. Vardis Vardinoyannis, a lead investor in Greece's largest television station, Mega, controls two petroleum companies, Motor Oil Hellas and Vegas Oil & Gas, in addition to holding a significant stake in Greece's biggest bank, Piraeus. Other Mega shareholders include George Bobolas, whose gold-mining operation relies on government licenses and whose construction company built facilities for the 2004 Olympics, and Stavros Psycharis, whose business interests range from printing to real estate to tourism.

Mega, like nearly all of Greece's television stations and newspapers, has long operated at a loss. But as a leaked U.S. diplomatic cable from 2006 explained, the owners don't care. They keep the stations afloat "primarily to exercise political and economic influence"—to ensure, in other words, that they continue to profit from the government. That's why the country's 11 million citizens have so many television channels and newspapers to choose from—Bobolas and Psycharis each own newspapers, as well—and why independent journalists have so few outlets for their work.

This state of affairs is relatively recent. Until the late 1980s, the government held a monopoly on all broadcasting. But the oligarchs never had to purchase their broadcasting licenses; they took them. In 1987, the political opposition launched a number of radio stations meant to challenge the state's media monopoly. Wealthy families responded by setting up their own full-fledged television studios, and the government ended up handing them temporary television and radio licenses. Two decades later, nothing has changed. Athens has never allowed stations to compete fairly for channel frequencies or subjected them to basic regulations. Instead, Parliament renews the supposedly temporary licenses every few years, as it did most recently this past August.

The television stations do generate some revenue from advertising sales, often as a cover for payoffs made in exchange for friendly coverage. Greek banks, for example, spend lavishly on television spots and provide large loans to the country's media conglomerates. In return,



*My big fat Greek protest: an anti-austerity demonstration in Athens, June 2011*

the media steer clear of them. When Reuters published damaging allegations in 2012 that Michalis Sallas, the chair of Piraeus Bank and a one-time socialist politician, had funneled sweetheart loans to his own family businesses, the Greek media printed Sallas' response without revisiting the charges themselves. And this past August, most of the media downplayed reports that Greek prosecutors were investigating the former Piraeus Bank executive and former Bank of Greece governor Georgios Provopoulos.

### **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

Just as the oligarchs and their political allies use the media to avoid public scrutiny, so they rely on government regulations to retain control of the state. For the past three decades, two highly organized interest groups have profited the most under Greek law: first, elite professionals, such as lawyers, doctors, and engineers, and second, unionized employees of utilities owned wholly or partially by the state, such as the Public Power Corporation and the Hellenic Railways Organization. The memberships of such groups are not large.

Greece has only about 40,000 lawyers, 60,000 doctors, and 87,000 engineers. Public-sector employees number around 600,000. Yet what these groups lack in numbers they more than make up for in

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*Some 20 percent of Greek children live in extreme poverty.*

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organization. By leveraging their ability to drive voter turnout in key urban constituencies, the professionals and the unions have won extraordinary privileges. For example, many professional associations can

set standard prices for basic services, a form of collusion that is illegal in many economies but not in Greece. They are also permitted to self-regulate. When accusations of malpractice arise, the associations themselves have the exclusive right to discipline their members. Moreover, special taxes fund their health-care and retirement accounts: since 1960, the pension fund for lawyers and judges has collected a stamp duty on all property transactions amounting to 1.3 percent of each sale price. And for decades, the doctors' pension fund benefited from a 6.5 percent charge on the value of all drugs prescribed. Last year, Athens eliminated the charge at the troika's request. But it has yet to dispense with any of the other taxes, which continue to redistribute millions of dollars from the poor to the wealthy.

Professionals, many of whom are self-employed, are also among the country's leading tax evaders. In a pathbreaking study published in 2012, the economists Nikolaos Artavanis, Adair Morse, and Margarita Tsoutsoura used data from a large private bank to assess how much money Greek professionals hide. One of their most telling findings was that lawyers, on average, spend more than 100 percent of their declared incomes on mortgage payments alone.

The consequences have been few. In 2010, legislators proposed a bill that would have forced the government to audit professionals who reported annual incomes below roughly \$30,000. But the measure failed, and in fact it never had a chance of passing: according to Artavanis, Morse, and Tsoutsoura, many members of Parliament would have likely faced audits themselves. At the time, 40 doctors, 28 educators, 43 engineers, 40 finance professionals, and 70 lawyers were serving in the legislature—occupying 221 out of 300 total seats.

Employees of state-run enterprises have secured a parallel set of privileges, in large part due to their loyal support for the center-left

Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). In return, the party helped abolish the use of competitive hiring exams in the 1980s and create thousands of new government jobs. PASOK also ensured that those who worked for state-run enterprises received more generous pensions than any other public-sector employees—something that is still largely the case, despite recent cuts to government spending. In 1999, for instance, the Greek government made an open-ended promise to prevent cuts to the Public Power Corporation's pension fund. In 2012, at the height of the financial crisis, this commitment amounted to over \$800 million.

### **TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES**

In any open society, the wealthy and the well-organized are bound to hold outsize sway. There is nothing inherently wrong with large businesses exercising influence given their large stake in the economy. Nor is there any reason that professionals shouldn't earn high incomes commensurate with the demand for their services. But Greek institutions are too weak to hold such interests in check or to uphold even basic standards of law.

Greece's accession to the European Union, in 1981, was supposed to improve things. EU membership, however, did not weaken traditional Greek hierarchies; it strengthened them. It was while the Greek economy was catching up to the rest of Europe—providing the oligarchs with new sources of credit and cash—that the country's institutions began to break down. Greece now ranks near the bottom of European countries when it comes to social mobility and near the top of rankings measuring inequality—a problem that Greek politicians and the media have almost entirely ignored. Even at the height of its spending before the crisis, Athens offered few benefits to the poor. Today, over 90 percent of the unemployed receive no government assistance whatsoever, some 20 percent of Greek children are estimated to live in extreme poverty, and millions of people lack health insurance. Moreover, after seven years of recession, none of the major political parties has proposed any serious reforms to the welfare state or to the health-care system in order to achieve universal coverage. They haven't even expanded a pilot program to offer free lunches at public schools.

Greeks with nowhere to turn have begun to gravitate toward radical political movements. Golden Dawn, a neofascist party with an anti-immigrant and anti-European platform, seized on popular discontent

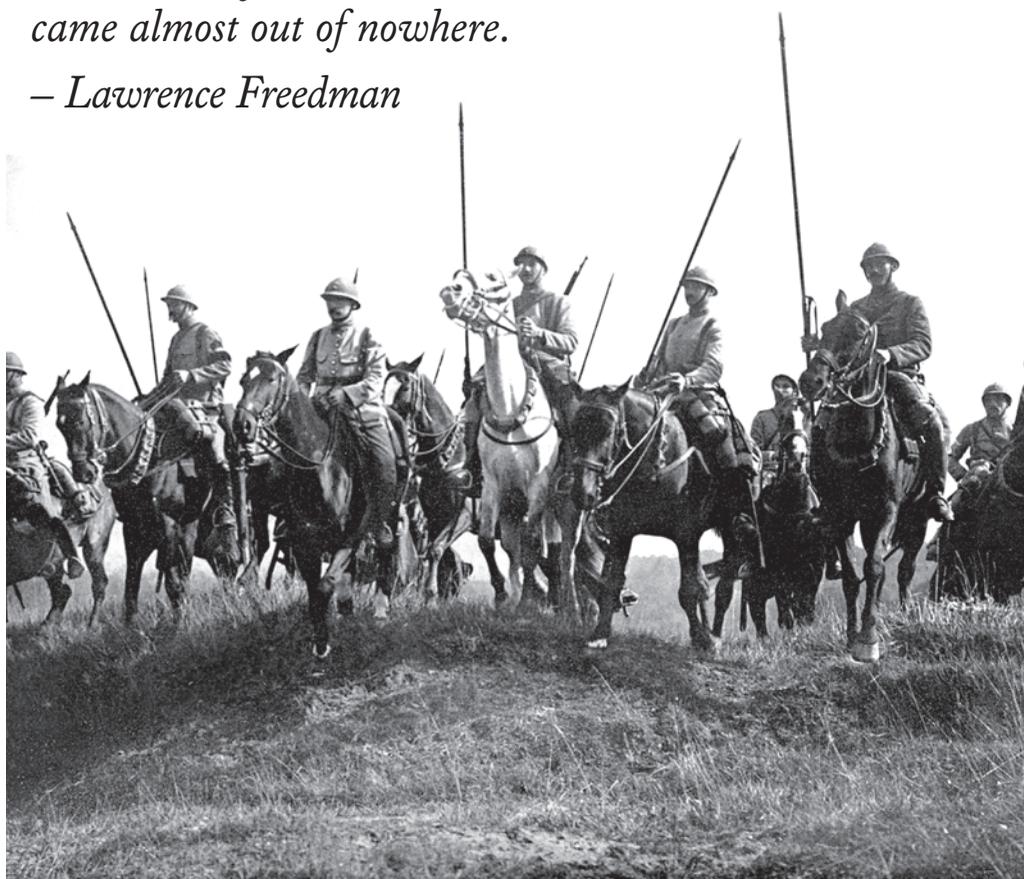
to gain 18 seats in the 2012 parliamentary elections. In September 2013, Greek authorities arrested its founder, Nikos Michaloliakos, on charges of forming a criminal organization. Meanwhile, Syriza, an ascendant far-left coalition, wants to rip up Greece's European bailout agreement, nationalize the country's banks, and cut its ties to NATO.

By bailing out Greece without demanding fundamental reforms, the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund have only strengthened the status quo. Even worse, the troika has lined the pockets of the very forces that brought about the economic collapse in the first place. And Greece is not an isolated case. European bailout funds have had a similar effect throughout the smaller economies of the eurozone, including Ireland, Spain, and Portugal. Leaders in these countries, too, have spent European funds to maximize their short-term political advantage; meanwhile, Brussels has proved incapable of combating cronyism and criminality. Now that European integration has brought the continent's economies closer together than ever before, no member state can be indifferent to what happens in the others. Without addressing Greece's deep inequalities, then, Europe will never fully find its way out of crisis. 🌐

# REVIEWS & RESPONSES

*One hundred years later,  
historians still wonder how  
such a cataclysmic war  
came almost out of nowhere.*

— *Lawrence Freedman*



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# The War That Didn't End All Wars

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What Started in 1914—and Why It Lasted So Long

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*Lawrence D. Freedman*

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*The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*

BY CHRISTOPHER CLARK. Harper, 2013, 736 pp. \$29.99 (paper, \$18.99).

*Catastrophe 1914: Europe Goes to War*

BY MAX HASTINGS. Knopf, 2013, 672 pp. \$35.00 (paper, \$17.95).

*The War That Ended Peace: The Road to 1914*

BY MARGARET MACMILLAN. Random House, 2013, 784 pp. \$35.00 (paper, \$20.00).

*July 1914: Countdown to War*

BY SEAN MCMEEKIN. Basic Books, 2013, 461 pp. \$29.99.

*The Great War for Peace*

BY WILLIAM MULLIGAN. Yale University Press, 2014, 456 pp. \$35.00.

*July Crisis: The World's Descent Into War, Summer 1914*

BY THOMAS OTTE. Cambridge University Press, 2014, 555 pp. \$29.99.

*The Cambridge History of the First World War. Vol. 1, Global War*

EDITED BY JAY WINTER. Cambridge University Press, 2014, 771 pp. \$150.00.

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The diplomat George Kennan described World War I as “the great seminal catastrophe” of the twentieth century, because it led to so many further catastrophes. The flap of the butterfly’s wings that set off the subsequent hurricanes came on June 28, 1914, when the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian throne. One hundred years later, historians still wonder how such a cataclysmic war came almost out of nowhere, deplore the failure of foolish governments to understand where their actions could lead, and mourn the loss of an imagined world of progress and harmony.

One response to this catastrophe was the systematic study of international affairs. Scholars in the 1920s and 1930s hoped that by analyzing the causes of war, they could help find a cure for it. This effort failed, in that a second world war followed the first, and so students of international relations veered away from idealistic schemes of global cooperation toward a tough-minded realism. World War II taught that a demonic dictator should not be appeased, a lesson now invoked every time some regional autocrat attempts a land grab or even when officials propose negotiations with a disagreeable regime. Meanwhile, there is still no firm consensus on the origins of World War I or on whether any useful lessons can be drawn for the present day.

That remains the case even after the publication of a slew of new accounts of the drama by skilled historians, which add to an already vast literature. Despite their differences, the books under review here all help readers navigate the intricacies of European politics and the

maneuverings within national capitals that kicked off the war. Christopher Clark and Margaret MacMillan go back into the previous century. Max Hastings covers the whole year of 1914 and provides a vivid account of the first months of the fighting. Sean McMeekin looks at the single month leading up to the war, as does Thomas Otte. It would be a shame if those suffering from 1914 fatigue neglected Otte's late entry into the field, because it is especially forensic and diligent.

The books have little new to say about the actual sequence of events, which started with Ferdinand's assassination in June, followed by the ultimatum that Austria-Hungary delivered to Serbia in July demanding a crackdown on nationalist groups, the Russian and then German mobilizations thereafter, and the start of fighting in early August. The books do shed light, however, on the interesting question of what those involved actually thought they were doing as what could have been a manageable crisis turned into all-out war. Were they being opportunistic, taking the chance to implement premeditated plans? Or were they just caught up in the swirl of events, trapped by their fears and prejudices and stuck with past commitments?

### **WHODUNIT?**

The blame game began as soon as the war turned into a painful stalemate, and it intensified after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. The belligerents published large compilations of correspondence to show how their peaceful intentions had been thwarted by mendacious enemies, in what the German military historian Bernhard Schwertfeger called a "world war of

documents." Over time, scholars grew more willing to spread the blame around, attributing the conflict to broader factors, such as militarized mindsets, outdated diplomatic practices, and the organization of the international system. In the 1960s, however, the German historian Fritz Fischer revived the question of guilt, claiming that his country was responsible because it had embarked on a premeditated war of aggression. Fischer's student Volker Berghahn has now written a firm restatement of Fischer's thesis, which can be found in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, a comprehensive collection of essays on all aspects of the conflict.

Clark rejects such "prosecutorial narratives" of the conflict's origins, which he criticizes for assuming coherent intentions. He prefers to focus less on "the political temperament and initiatives of one particular state" and more on "the multilateral processes of interaction." In practice, however, even Clark makes his own distinctive indictment. By starting his account in Belgrade, he correctly highlights the importance of the Serbian nationalist campaign that led to Ferdinand's assassination, which not only triggered the crisis but also removed the one Austrian who, aware of his country's weakness, could have exercised a moderating influence on its course. McMeekin draws attention to the culpability of Russia, with its premature mobilization. Hastings is much more inclined to blame Germany and the determination of its military leaders to fight a war while they still had a chance of victory and before Russia became too strong. MacMillan and Otte fault Austria-Hungary (the party that actually set the war in motion

by issuing an ultimatum it knew would not be met), Germany, and Russia, in that order, although MacMillan admits how difficult it is to settle on a single cause or guilty party.

None of these authors shows much interest in what theorists of international relations have said about World War I. Otte engages with them the most, but only to explain his distrust in structural explanations. Readers of these books will find little about whether the international system is more likely to reach a peaceful equilibrium through bipolarity or multipolarity, the comparative merits of balancing versus backing a revisionist power, or how to escape from the self-defeating logic of a security dilemma. The absence of theory is not surprising: historians tend to look askance at attempts to formulate reliable laws of political behavior and are naturally more inclined to give weight to contingency and chance.

In an early passage that somewhat belies his book's title (*The Sleepwalkers*), Clark writes that the story is "saturated with agency." The key decision-makers "walked towards danger in watchful, calculated steps"; they were "political actors with conscious objectives, who were capable of a degree of self-reflection, acknowledged a range of options and formed the best judgements they could on the basis of the best information they had to hand." MacMillan deplors those who said in 1914 that there was no choice other than war, and she ends her book with the sentence, "There are always choices."

All the authors insist that not only was war far from inevitable but it also came about as the result of some spectacularly bad decision-making. Otte

calls it a "failure of statecraft." The overall impression one gets from these histories is that had the players been a bit less weak-willed, vain, incompetent, myopic, delusional, and stupid, the world could have been spared years of misery.

The other strong message is that even accounting for bad judgment and bad luck, the rulers of Europe had no idea what war would actually mean in practice. MacMillan describes their "failure of imagination in not seeing how destructive such a conflict would be." Clark calls them "sleepwalkers" because they were "watchful but unseeing, haunted by dreams, yet blind to the reality of the horror they were about to bring into the world." But Hastings takes exception to the sleepwalking label, since it suggests that the decision-makers were unconscious of their own actions. He prefers to call them "deniers," because they persisted with "supremely dangerous policies and strategies rather than accept the consequences of admitting the prospective implausibility, and retrospective failure, of these."

### THE BIGGER PICTURE

The problem with a focus on individuals' decisions, however, is that it neglects the importance of context. Among these authors, MacMillan does the most to describe broader factors and prevailing attitudes, whereas Otte is keenest to downplay "impersonal, structural forces." But these governments were not improvising. They were working with well-developed alliance obligations, war plans, and conventions of crisis management. They were reacting, moreover, to the newfound weakness of the old order, which was staggering under the weight of shifts in power, assertive nationalist

movements, and domestic upheavals. In other words, structural factors clearly constrained leaders' decisions. After all, international relations theorists keep returning to the period leading up to 1914 in part because this was a time when states corresponded most to the requirements of theory, led as they were by detached elites who thought in realist terms, dominated by considerations of security.

In the end, entrenched security policies proved impressively, if dangerously, resilient in July 1914. After many high-level wobbles—including the extraordinary “Dear Willy”/“Dear Nicky” correspondence between Tsar Nicholas II and Kaiser Wilhelm II, in which the third cousins tried to stave off war—the alliances largely stuck together, with only Italy holding back. The governments implemented their war plans. Likewise, the overt bellicosity of elite discourse in the preceding years, with preposterous claims about the purifying properties of battle and outlandish celebrations of race, strength, honor, and sacrifice, did much to prepare the public for war. Once countries faced the prospect of actual fighting, the bellicosity subsided and the mood in national capitals grew subdued. Governments started to worry less about glory than about being cast adrift by a reluctant ally or left vulnerable by mobilizing too slowly. Thus, the conflict was not the result of crude warmongering. Rather, it arose from a complex interaction among systemic factors with which any collection of decision-makers would have had to contend, the qualities and idiosyncrasies of this particular collection of leaders, and chance factors.

At the heart of the July crisis lay the meaning of alliances. Nicholas declared

Slavic solidarity with the Serbs, and the French stood by their Russian allies. As Clark notes, “Russia and France thereby tied the fortunes of two of the world’s greatest powers in highly asymmetrical fashion to the uncertain destiny of a turbulent and intermittently violent state.” In the same way, Germany tied itself to the dysfunction of Austria-Hungary when Wilhelm told officials from the ailing empire that they could respond to Ferdinand’s assassination as they pleased, a blank check that emboldened them to take on Serbia. Otte recalls Bismarck’s adage that every alliance involves a horse and a rider and observes that in this instance the horse was in the saddle. This phenomenon is hardly unusual. Today, for example, the United States’ weaker allies regularly demand assurances from Washington, even when they are engaging in reckless behavior, and Washington often grants such assurances for fear that failing to do so would damage its credibility.

The challenge for great powers has always been how to provide enough comfort to weaker allies to make them feel secure while maintaining enough leverage over them to ensure they do not provoke a war. In July 1914, there was no guarantee that Europe’s alliances would hold together, given how incongruent the interests between the great powers and their weaker partners appeared. Russia carefully watched France, which needed convincing that the situation was worth a war. France, in turn, looked fretfully at the United Kingdom, which was not sure it wanted to support the tsar after having laid the foundations for improved relations with Germany. Within both the Entente and the Central Powers, the sense that the alliances might unravel generated

distrust and uncertainty—one reason so much energy went into shoring them up rather than peacefully settling the disputes at hand.

Historians often blame another factor for the outbreak of World War I: the cult of the offensive. In this view, prevalent at the time, wars were best won by taking the initiative as quickly as possible and getting troops to push through defensive barriers by relying on morale and *élan*. Because early action might just produce a victory and delay would surely spell doom, in other words, the fighting could never come too soon. This conviction explains why mobilization mattered so much, especially to the generals, who imposed their sense of urgency on their civilian leaders. On account of its vast size and cumbersome infrastructure, Russia mobilized first. McMeekin quotes Nicholas lamenting, tellingly, that his decision to do so potentially involved “sending thousands of men to their deaths.” Nicholas could not grasp the true stakes; Russia ultimately lost some two million soldiers.

Elites across Europe expected that even a highly costly war would prove quick and decisive. After a few cataclysmic battles, the thinking went, the conflict would end and the continent could adjust to its new political realities. What is striking is how little strategic discussion actually took place. Decision-makers neither scrutinized the practicality of their war plans nor related them to political objectives. In Berlin, only in passing did planners question the wisdom of charging toward France through Belgium, even though that course, by triggering London’s treaty obligations to Brussels, guaranteed British participation in the war.

## THE LONG WAR

Those who make the sleepwalking critique presume that although the outbreak of World War I was not inevitable, its prolonged and catastrophic character was. MacMillan shows how militaries airily dismissed warnings from such figures as the Russian industrialist and scholar Ivan Bloch, who cautioned that strong defenses would result in a drawn-out war. Hastings convincingly characterizes the grand German offensive as fundamentally flawed, despite the meticulous planning that went into it. (The strategy depended on moving the army far and fast enough to deliver a knockout blow to France before Russia’s military strength could make itself felt, but the plan put far too many demands on German logistics and inexperienced reservists.) McMeekin goes too far in saying that the Germans expected to lose, but they certainly knew that the invasion was a gamble. They simply worried that the longer they waited, the more of a gamble it would become.

Yet Berlin’s bet almost paid off.

Although Belgium’s unexpected resistance held up the German advance, the Kaiser’s forces pushed the French far into retreat, until the momentum was reversed in the First Battle of the Marne, which began on September 5, 1914. The battle marked the end of any German hopes for a swift conclusion. The failure of the Allies to follow up the victory led to the stalemate that became the defining feature of the western front. The week before, Russia’s pretensions to having rebuilt itself into a serious military power were dashed at the disastrous Battle of Tannenberg. Both sides experienced moments of desperation before the trenches were dug and the long stalemate began. As governments cast around to see if they could achieve a

decisive victory, questions about the durability of alliances cropped up once again. Would their partners persist in battle or succumb to the lure of a separate peace? In the end, the belligerents never found the various proposals for negotiation sufficiently attractive, even when compared with the costs of continuing with war. Leaders could never overrule the objections of the hard-liners who believed that only complete victory could justify the pain already experienced.

Once the fighting began, as so often happens, the stakes moved up a notch and turned existential. And as leaders played more to idealistic urges than geopolitical fears, their goals got more ambitious. In a phrase that later became derided for its pretension and innocence, the English novelist and futurist H. G. Wells wrote in August 1914 of “the war that will end war.” Having long urged world government as the only alternative to destructive wars, he now thought that once Germany, a “nest of evil ideas,” was defeated, good sense would reign. Although the optimism was misplaced, the sentiment was real. As William Mulligan demonstrates in an original study of the ideological impulses at the time, even as they prosecuted a war of cruel viciousness, European governments pondered the peace that might follow.

After the war, its participants promised to pursue that peace. They pledged to disarm, and they called for a new international organization that would provide “guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike” (to quote the last of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points). The international community adopted these ideas with surprising speed in the 1920s, culminating in the 1925 Pact of Locarno, which formalized

Europe’s new borders. Three years later, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the brainchild of the U.S. secretary of state and the French foreign minister, renounced war as an instrument of policy.

Given what followed, realists mock the interwar period for its naiveté. Scholars are inclined to dismiss the push for peace that came after 1918, just as they deplore the tug toward war that preceded 1914. Mulligan urges readers not to assume that the peace project was doomed just because of what happened during the 1930s, or even that the core themes underlying this effort died on the battlefields of World War II. They returned after the war, albeit with a more cautious gloss, with the politicians who had first heard them in the 1920s, such as West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the French diplomat Jean Monnet. In this respect, the outbreak of World War I was not the seminal catastrophe of the century. Catastrophe was fed by later decisions: namely, both sides’ insistence on continuing the war and their refusal to look for diplomatic ways out, as well as the victors’ imposition of a harsh settlement on Germany and then appeasement of Adolf Hitler.

In the end, the lesson of 1914 is that there are no sure lessons. War has no reliable solutions, because contexts change. What resolves conflicts in one setting will provide cover for aggression in another; actions that deter aggression under some circumstances will at other times provoke it. Yet there are always choices, and the best advice for governments to emerge from the story of 1914 is to make them carefully: be clear about core interests, get the best possible information, explore opportunities for a peaceful settlement, and treat military plans with skepticism. 🌐

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# Why They Fought

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## How War Made the State and the State Made Peace

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*Michael Mandelbaum*

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*War! What Is It Good For? Conflict and the Progress of Civilization From Primates to Robots*

BY IAN MORRIS. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014, 512 pp. \$30.00.

**T**he philosopher Alfred North Whitehead once remarked that the history of European philosophy consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. For Ian Morris, world history may be understood as a series of footnotes to Thomas Hobbes. In Hobbes' philosophy, order takes pride of place among all social conditions. Without it, human existence becomes, in his oft-quoted phrase, "nasty, brutish, and short." Order, he wrote, comes about through the creation of a powerful government, which he termed "Leviathan," after the Old Testament sea monster.

According to Morris' sweeping history of conflict from prehistoric times to the present, order comes from governments strong enough to protect the people living under their jurisdiction, just as Hobbes said it did. Such governments, in turn, emerge from war. The answer to the

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question posed by the title of Morris' book is that war is good for producing safety—in other words, that war is good for peace. To be sure, not all wars are, as Morris puts it, "productive"; those that weaken or break up Leviathans earn the label "counterproductive," since they make people more vulnerable. In his telling, human history has seen long periods of both kinds. In making his case, Morris provides a useful overview of military history since the beginning of organized warfare, although his account runs into difficulties as it approaches the present.

### A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Morris' account begins 10,000 years ago, in the Stone Age, when the planet's several million human inhabitants lived in small, warring bands of hunter-gatherers. In this unhappy era, by admittedly very rough estimates, between ten and 20 percent of all people could expect to die violently at the hands of others. Over the next five millennia, conditions improved thanks to the first great change in the history of the human species: the advent of agriculture and the development of large, settled communities based on farming. The most powerful of these communities expanded and incorporated lesser ones, making use of a variety of military innovations, including bronze weapons, fortifications, and chariots. Ultimately, large empires came into being, including the Mauryan in South Asia, the Han in China, and the Roman Empire around the Mediterranean.

These ancient Leviathans made life safer. Powerful governments could and did protect the people living in their territories, discouraging murder and deterring war. The rate of fatalities from

violence dropped sharply, by Morris' calculation to somewhere between two and five percent of all deaths. The Leviathans also made their inhabitants richer. To explain how this occurred, Morris draws on the economist Mancur Olson's concept of the "stationary bandit." Whereas a "roving bandit" raids settlements, steals as much as he can get, and then moves on, rulers of large agricultural communities, while no less greedy, stay in place. They therefore have an interest in promoting the prosperity of those they rule—that way, there is more to steal. And since prosperity requires order, they impose it. The gains of the roving bandit are called "loot." Stationary bandits call what they extract "taxes," and the more peaceful their domains, the more revenue they can collect.

The tranquility fostered by the ancient empires and the stationary bandits who ruled them did not last. One particular military innovation was responsible: the use of the horse. Nomadic bands mastered mounted combat and were thus able to win counterproductive wars. These new military powers acted as roving bandits: they raided, looted, weakened, and ultimately brought down the Leviathans. This is how the mighty Roman Empire declined and fell. In Europe, the centuries afterward are sometimes called the Dark Ages. Morris thinks the term is



appropriate for other parts of the world as well. As the counterproductive wars destroyed the ancient empires, the world became a disorderly place during the first 14 centuries of the Common Era. The rate of deaths from violence rose again, to between five and ten percent.

Beginning around the time of the Renaissance, however, disorder gave way to a 500-year period of consolidation. Once again, a major military innovation—

gunpowder—initiated the shift. Leaders regained their ability to assemble large political units, this time by using ever more powerful guns and cannon. Within these units, the rate of violent death declined. In the latter part of this era, beginning around 1760, the second great transformation in human history occurred: the Industrial Revolution. The Europeans put the machines it produced to military as well as civilian use, enabling them to conquer much of the rest of the world in the nineteenth century. As in the ancient empires, within the great European empires of modern times—some of them, notably the British one, stretching around the globe—life became safer than ever before.

The nineteenth century also saw the emergence of what Morris calls a “globocop,” a power with responsibility for order on a global scale. The United Kingdom played this role until World War II, after which the United States took its place. Over the course of two millennia of productive warfare, the planet had moved from Pax Romana to Pax Britannica to Pax Americana. Human existence became increasingly safe. The worldwide rate of violent death in the twenty-first century has reached an all-time low, falling below one percent.

### THE FUTURE OF WAR

Over a time span as long as the one Morris covers, it is possible to find evidence for almost any pattern, but the one he puts at the center of his book surely does have historical significance. Powerful states have indeed protected their inhabitants (while also often oppressing them), and the mechanism for the formation

of such states has ordinarily been war. “War is the father of all things,” the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed, so it should not be surprising that one of its offspring has been peace.

The pattern Morris identifies, however, seems to fit the distant past better than it does recent history, let alone the future. In the twentieth century, the trend toward the consolidation of states went into reverse, with modern empires dissolving and leaving behind smaller political units, but without life becoming nastier, more brutish, or shorter. Indeed, over the last hundred years, the chief determinant of a given state’s rate of violence has been its competence, not its size. The Scandinavian countries, anything but Leviathans by contemporary standards, have become the safest places in the world. In fact, small nation-states have proved less prone to violence than large multinational empires, by virtue of the greater legitimacy that homogeneous units enjoy among their inhabitants. People are generally more willing to be governed by those with whom they share an ethnicity, a religion, or a language than by those they regard as foreigners, and they are prepared to fight for the political system they prefer.

In the nineteenth century, moreover, the British globocop did little to make life safer outside its imperial borders. Far from policing Europe—the part of the planet that would prove susceptible to bouts of deadly violence in the twentieth century—the British remained aloof from it. Peace and order on the continent depended on a balance of power among its major states, not on British exertions. The United Kingdom did use its navy to provide a secure framework for an

increasingly global economy. In this way, British military might and political influence did a great deal to raise standards of living all over the world, but not much, outside the British Empire, to reduce the chances of dying violently.

To cite one more awkward application of Morris' pattern to the recent past, World War I and World War II seem to qualify as "productive" by his definition of the term because they paved the way for the advent of the American globocop. Their combined death toll of something on the order of 100 million people does seem, however, to be an excessive price to pay simply to replace one hegemon with another.

Finally, whatever long-term benefits war may have provided in the past, it is difficult to see how, outside a few chaotic, conflict-ridden places, it can be good for peace in the future. Hobbes and the pattern of productive wars Morris identifies do have some relevance for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, and Syria, for example, but in the rest of the world they seem largely irrelevant. The possibility of large-scale violence does persist. Advances in military technology over the last century have given governments the capacity to send rates of violent death skyrocketing should they decide to avail themselves of the most powerful weapons at their disposal.

Morris perceives the greatest threat in the future as coming from a repetition of events in the early twentieth century, when Germany challenged the United Kingdom and plunged the world into two terrible conflicts. Today, with the United States occupying the position the British held a hundred years ago, it is China that poses the threat to the reigning globocop.

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“If the forty years between the 2010s and the 2050s do unfold like the forty between the 1870s and the 1910s,” he writes, drawing a parallel between the United Kingdom then and the United States now, “they will be the most dangerous in history.” The reason is that should China mount a challenge to the United States that leads to a war on the scale of the two that Germany’s ambitions triggered, the two sides could employ the nuclear weapons they possess. This would ensure that whatever adjectives its survivors apply to such a conflict, “productive” would not be one of them.

For Morris, the hope for avoiding such a twenty-first-century cataclysm rests on technology. Computing in particular, he suggests, may progress so rapidly in the years to come as to transform the human species, and the resulting “transhuman” or “posthuman” creatures may be able to transcend violence altogether. Here Morris relies on the ideas of several imaginative futurists. Their visions have the ring of science fiction, and the predictions of science fiction have sometimes proved accurate. Sometimes, however, they haven’t, and it seems incautious, to put it mildly, to rely on the realization of such visions to prevent World War III.

There are other possibilities. For one thing, ideas about war have changed. Once seen as an inevitable feature of human existence, this ancient practice is increasingly regarded as unacceptable, outdated, and avoidable. The enormous destruction modern weapons can wreak imparts a measure of prudence to foreign policy that was rarely, if ever, present before the middle of the twentieth century.

Moreover, the great conflicts of the first half of that century stemmed in no

small part from ideology, a feature of social and political life unknown before the French Revolution and therefore not a part of most of the history that Morris covers. Germany’s commitment to fascist ideas and the Soviet Union’s commitment to communist ones made the world a much bloodier place than it would otherwise have been. Germany, at least, became far more peaceful in the wake of World War II, as did the other great imperial aggressor of that conflict, Japan, in part because the two countries adopted the political ideas and the political system of one of their conquerors, the United States. Democracy helped engender peace. Indeed, the tendency of democracies to avoid war with one another is now well established, and it offers the hope of preventing a massive counterproductive war in the future. If China should become democratic, the prospects for avoiding a rerun of the Anglo-German rivalry, but this time with twenty-first-century armaments, would surely improve.

Democracy is not guaranteed to come to China in the near future, or indeed ever. But a democratic China does seem more plausible, and thus a better bet for keeping the peace, than a computer-driven transformation of the human species. To be sure, the creation and maintenance of order, safety, and peace through the spread of democracy is not a theme of *Leviathan*. But while Hobbes was a powerful, seminal thinker, there are, in our day, more things between heaven and earth than were dreamt of in his philosophy. 🌐

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# What Heidegger Was Hiding

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## Unearthing the Philosopher's Anti-Semitism

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Gregory Fried

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*Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung* (Heidegger and the Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy)  
BY PETER TRAWNY. Klostermann, 2014, 124 pp. €15.80.

**T**he German philosopher Martin Heidegger died in 1976, yet scholars are still plowing through his life's work today—some of it for the very first time. Indeed, few modern thinkers have been as productive: once published in their entirety, his complete works will comprise over 100 volumes. Fewer still have rivaled his reach: Heidegger deeply influenced some of the twentieth century's most important philosophers, among them Leo Strauss, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, and Jacques Derrida. And although Heidegger's work is most firmly entrenched in the Western tradition, his readership is global, with serious followings in Latin America, China, Japan, and even Iran.

But Heidegger's legacy also bears a dark stain, one that his influence has never quite managed to wash out. Heidegger joined the Nazi Party in the spring of

1933, ran the University of Freiburg on behalf of the regime, and gave impassioned speeches in support of Adolf Hitler at key moments, including during the plebiscites in the fall of 1933, which solidified popular support for Nazi policies.

Nevertheless, Heidegger managed to emerge from World War II with his reputation mostly intact. The Allies' denazification program, which aimed to rid German society of Nazi ideology, targeted regime supporters just like him. Freiburg came under French control, and the new authorities there forced Heidegger into retirement and forbade him from teaching. But in 1950, the now-independent university revoked the ban. This resulted in large part from Heidegger's outreach campaign to French intellectuals with anti-Nazi credentials, including Sartre and the resistance fighter Jean Beaufret. In short order, Heidegger won over a wide following in France. Once his international reputation was secure, the university gave him emeritus status and allowed him to resume teaching.

To his new champions, Heidegger portrayed himself as the typical unworldly philosopher, claiming that he had joined the Nazi Party and accepted Freiburg's rectorate primarily to defend higher education from the worst excesses of the regime. He insisted that he had quickly realized his mistake, which led him to resign as rector less than a year into his term and start including veiled critiques of the Nazis in his subsequent lectures and writings.

Among European and American intellectuals friendly to Heidegger, this exculpatory narrative quickly became the conventional wisdom. If the philosopher

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had betrayed a touch of anti-Semitism, the logic went, it was only of the kind that had been ubiquitous in Germany (and most of Europe) before the war: a conservative, cultural reflex that was nothing like Hitler's viciously ideological racism. Moreover, Heidegger had many Jewish students, one of whom, Arendt, was also his lover. After the war and long after their passions had waned, Arendt resumed contact with Heidegger and helped get his work translated into English. Would an inveterate opponent of the Nazis really have assisted an unrepentant anti-Semite? Not everyone was convinced of Heidegger's innocence, but his defenders worked hard to protect the philosophical work from its author's scandal. And until recently, the strategy largely worked.

The official story began to wear thin in the 1980s, however, when two scholars, Hugo Ott and Victor Farías, using newly uncovered documents, each challenged Heidegger's claim that his brush with Nazism had been a form of reluctant accommodation. More recently, in 2005, the French philosopher Emmanuel Faye drew on newly discovered seminar transcripts from the Nazi period to argue that Heidegger's thinking was inherently fascist even before Hitler's rise to power. Faye accused the French Heideggerians of having orchestrated a cover-up of Heidegger's political extremism and advocated banishing Heidegger's work from the field of philosophy; no one, Faye said, should associate the greatest barbarism of the twentieth century with the West's most exalted tradition of reason and enlightenment. In response, Heidegger's defenders labeled Faye's textual interpre-





tations tendentious and resorted to a variation on Heidegger's old argument: that he had quickly grasped his error and realized that Nazism was nothing more than hubristic nihilism. Still, it was hard to explain away the depth of commitment that Faye had uncovered.

Now, Peter Trawny, the director of the Martin Heidegger Institute at the University of Wuppertal, in Germany, has waded into this long-running controversy with a short but incisive new book, recently published in German. Trawny's meticulous and sober work introduces an entirely new set of sources: a collection of black notebooks in which Heidegger regularly jotted down his thoughts, a practice he began in the early 1930s and continued into the 1970s. Trawny, who is also the editor of the published notebooks, calls them "fully developed philosophical writings." That's a bit strong for a collection of notes, but Heidegger clearly intended them to serve as the capstone to his published works, and they contain his unexpurgated reflections on this key period. Shortly before his death, Heidegger wrote up a schedule stipulating that the notebooks be published only after all his other writings were. That condition having been met, Trawny has so far released three volumes (totaling roughly 1,200 pages), with five more planned.

Trawny's new book caused a sensation among Heidegger scholars even before it appeared in print, in large part because several inflammatory passages quoted from the notebooks, previously unpublished and containing clearly anti-Semitic content, were leaked from the page proofs. But with the book now released, Trawny's novel line of analysis is creating its own stir. Drawing on the new

material, Trawny makes two related arguments: first, that Heidegger's anti-Semitism was deeply entwined with his philosophical ideas and, second, that it was distinct from that of the Nazis. Trawny deals with the notebooks that Heidegger composed in 1931–41, which include the years after he resigned as rector of the University of Freiburg, in 1934. As the notebooks make clear, Heidegger was far from an unthinking Nazi sympathizer. Rather, he was deeply committed to his own philosophical form of anti-Semitism—one he felt the Nazis failed to live up to.

### BEING MARTIN HEIDEGGER

It is hard to exaggerate just how ambitious Heidegger was in publishing his breakout work, *Being and Time*, in 1927. In that book, he sought nothing less than a redefinition of what it meant to be human, which amounted to declaring war on the entire philosophical tradition that preceded him. Western thought, Heidegger argued, had taken a wrong turn beginning with Plato, who had located the meaning of being in the timeless, unchanging realm of ideas. In Plato's view, the world as humans knew it was like a cave; its human inhabitants could perceive only the shadows of true ideals that lay beyond. Plato was thus responsible for liberalism in the broadest sense: the notion that transcendent, eternal norms gave meaning to the mutable realm of human affairs. Today, modern liberals call those rules universal values, natural laws, or human rights.

But for Heidegger, there was no transcendence and no Platonic God—no escape, in effect, from the cave. Meaning lay not in serving abstract ideals but in confronting one's place

within the cave itself: in how individuals and peoples inhabited their finite existence through time. Heidegger's conception of human being required belonging to a specific, shared historical context or national identity. Platonic universalism undermined such collective forms of contingent, historical identity. In the eyes of a transcendent God or natural law, all people—whether Germans, Russians, or Jews—were essentially the same. As Heidegger put it in a 1933 lecture at Freiburg:

If one interprets [Plato's] ideas as representations and thoughts that contain a value, a norm, a law, a rule, such that ideas then become conceived of as norms, then the one subject to these norms is the human being—not the historical human being, but rather the human being in general.

It was against this rootless, "general" conception of humanity, Heidegger told his students, that "we must struggle."

By "we," Heidegger meant Germany under Hitler's National Socialist regime, which he hoped would play a central role in such an effort. Heidegger followed in a long line of German intellectuals, going as far back as the eighteenth century, who believed that the country was destined to play a transformative role in human history—a kind of modern rejoinder to the creative glory of ancient Greece. For Heidegger, this meant replacing the old, Platonic order with one grounded in his vision of historical being. In the early 1930s, he came to see Hitler's National Socialist movement, with its emphasis on German identity, as the best chance of bringing about such a revolutionary change. And in the Jews, he saw a shared enemy.

## FOLLOWING PROTOCOL

As Trawny's title suggests, both Hitler's and Heidegger's view of the Jews grew out of a particular form of German anti-Semitism that was rampant after World War I. This strain of thinking, which saw Jews as part of a monolithic, transnational conspiracy, was crystallized in "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," a forged document that first appeared in Russia in 1903 and made its way to Germany in 1920. Originally published by Russian monarchists to scapegoat the Jews for the tsar's military defeats and the subsequent upheaval, the protocols purported to be minutes from a series of meetings held by Jewish leaders bent on world domination. According to the alleged transcript, the plotters sought to manipulate international finance, culture, and media; promote extreme ideas and radical political movements; and foment war to destabilize existing powers. Hitler devoured the tract, which he swiftly employed as Nazi propaganda. It hit a nerve in Germany, still traumatized by World War I, beset by economic chaos, and subject to extreme political instability—all of which could now be attributed to the Jews.

Trawny does not argue that Heidegger read the protocols or agreed with all their contentions. Rather, he suggests that like so many other Germans, Heidegger accepted their basic premise, which Hitler hammered home in his speeches and in Nazi propaganda. As evidence, Trawny cites the German philosopher and Heidegger colleague Karl Jaspers, who recalled in his memoir a conversation he had with Heidegger in 1933. When Jaspers brought up "the vicious nonsense about the Elders of Zion," Heidegger reportedly expressed

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his genuine concern: “But there is a dangerous international alliance of the Jews,” he replied.

Yet Hitler and Heidegger embraced anti-Semitic conspiracy theories for different reasons. Whereas the former argued that the Jews posed a racial threat (a fear for which the protocols offered evidence), the latter saw them as a philosophical one. The Jews, as uprooted nomads serving a transcendent God—albeit sometimes through their secular activities—embodied the very tradition that Heidegger wanted to overturn. Moreover, as Trawny points out, Heidegger found race deeply problematic. He did not dismiss the concept altogether; if understood as a biological feature of a particular people, race might well inform that people’s historical trajectory. But he rejected using race as the primary determinant of identity. For Heidegger, racism was itself a function of misguided metaphysical thinking, because it presumed a biological, rather than historical, interpretation of what it meant to be human. By “fastening” people into “equally divided arrangement,” he wrote in the notebooks, racism went “hand in hand with a self-alienation of peoples—the loss of history.” Instead of obsessing over racial distinctions, Germans needed to confront their identity as an ongoing philosophical question. Heidegger overtly criticized the Nazis for their fixation on biological identity, but he also lambasted the Jews for the same sin. “The Jews,” he wrote in the notebooks, “have already been ‘living’ for the longest time according to the principle of race.”

Heidegger’s anti-Semitism differed from that of the typical Nazi in other important ways. To many of Hitler’s

supporters, for example, the protocols reinforced the view that the Jews were essentially un-German, incapable of properly integrating with Germany’s way of life or even understanding its spirit. But Heidegger took this notion further, arguing that the Jews belonged truly nowhere. “For a Slavic people, the nature of our German space would definitely be revealed differently from the way it is revealed to us,” Heidegger told his students in a 1934 seminar. “To Semitic nomads, it will perhaps never be revealed at all.” Moreover, Heidegger said, history had shown that “nomads have also often left wastelands behind them where they found fruitful and cultivated land.” By this logic, the Jews were rootless; lacking a proper home, all they had was allegiance to one another.

Another anxiety reflected in the protocols and in Hitler’s propaganda concerned the perceived power of this stateless, conspiratorial Jewry—be it in banking, finance, or academia. But for Heidegger, the success of Europe’s Jews was a symptom of a broader philosophical problem. Playing on the tired cliché of Jews as clever with abstractions and calculation, the notebooks make a more general critique of modern society:

The temporary increase in the power of Jewry has its basis in the fact that the metaphysics of the West, especially in its modern development, served as the hub for the spread of an otherwise empty rationality and calculative skill, which in this way lodged itself in the “spirit.”

In forgetting what it meant to be finite and historical, in other words, the West had become obsessed with mastering

and controlling beings—a tendency Heidegger called “machination,” or the will to dominate nature in all its forms, ranging from raw materials to human beings themselves. And with their “calculative skill,” the Jews had thrived in this distorted “spirit” of the modern age.

At the same time, the Jews were not, in Heidegger’s view, merely passive beneficiaries of Western society’s “empty rationality” and liberal ideology; they were active proponents of them. “The role of world Jewry,” Heidegger wrote in the notebooks, was a “metaphysical question about the kind of humanity that, without any restraints, can take over the uprooting of all beings from Being as its world-historical ‘task.’” Even if the Jews could not be blamed for the introduction of Platonism or for its hold over Western society, they were the chief carriers of its “task.” By asserting liberal rights to demand inclusion in such nations as Germany, the Jews were estranging those countries’ citizens from their humanity—the shared historical identity that made them distinct from other peoples. This reasoning formed the basis for a truly poisonous hostility toward the Jews, and it was perhaps Heidegger’s most damning judgment of them. Now that the notebooks have come into the light, however, such passages constitute the most damning evidence against the philosopher himself.

So what did Heidegger think should be done about the Jews? Did he agree with the Nazi policies? The notebooks give readers little to go on; Heidegger seems to have had no taste for detailed policy discussions. Nevertheless, the philosopher spoke through his silence. Despite his criticism of the Nazis and their crude biological racism, he wrote

nothing against Hitler’s laws targeting the Jews. Although Heidegger resigned as rector of Freiburg before Hitler passed the Nuremberg Laws, which classified German citizens according to race, he had assumed the role in 1933, just after the Nazis enacted their first anti-Jewish codes, which excluded Jews from civil service and university posts (and which Heidegger helped implement). During a lecture in the winter of 1933–34, he warned a hall full of students that “the enemy can have attached itself to the innermost roots” of the people and that they, the German students, must be prepared to attack such an enemy “with the goal of total annihilation.” Heidegger did not specify “the enemy,” but for the Nazis, they included Germany’s communists; its Roma, or Gypsies; and, above all, its Jews. This chilling prefiguration of Hitler’s Final Solution is unmistakable, and Heidegger never explained, let alone apologized for, such horrendous statements.

#### **DEATH OF A PHILOSOPHER**

Trawny ends his analysis by arguing that the anti-Semitism of the notebooks will require a thorough reevaluation of Heidegger’s thought, and he is right. Even if, as Trawny is at pains to remind his readers, the notebooks show that Heidegger became increasingly critical of the Nazis as early as 1933, they also demonstrate just how firmly his anti-Semitism was rooted in his philosophical ideas.

Scholars now need to answer new questions about Heidegger’s motivations. For one thing, how could he have been so hostile to the Jews if he had so many Jewish students and a Jewish mistress? Trawny offers some insight into this

puzzle by pointing to the notion of the so-called exceptional Jew, an idea that circulated among even the most virulent anti-Semites, including top Nazis. According to this view, in spite of the baleful impact of the Jewish people as a whole, rare Jewish individuals could stand out. Trawny cites Arendt herself, who reminded readers in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* that Hitler himself was thought to have lent personal protection to 340 “first-rate Jews” by awarding them German or half-Jewish status. In deeming these Jews exceptions, such practices actually reinforced the general rule by allowing anti-Semites to explain away as anomalies those Jews with whom they felt some personal connection.

Another open question concerns Heidegger’s intentions in prescribing, much less allowing, that the notebooks be published. Initially, of course, Heidegger kept them hidden to conceal their critique of the Nazis, and after the war, given his experience with the denazification process, he must have feared they would harm his reputation. So why release the notebooks at all, and as the capstone to his collected works? A charitable answer is that Heidegger wanted to set the record straight, to submit all the facts to public scrutiny. A more sinister explanation is that he remained loyal to his own understanding of the National Socialist revolution, even if he believed that the movement had betrayed him. In either case, he clearly didn’t want to be around to deal with the fallout.

Whatever the philosopher’s motivations, the notebooks will almost certainly spell the end of Heidegger as an intellectual cult figure, and that is a welcome development. Richard Wolin, an intel-

lectual historian and longtime critic of Heidegger’s politics, leaves open the possibility of a qualified philosophical engagement with Heidegger’s work but argues that scholars will have to tread carefully. As he wrote in the *Jewish Review of Books* last summer, “Any discussion of Heidegger’s legacy that downplays or diminishes the extent of his political folly stands guilty, by extension, of perpetuating the philosophical betrayal initiated by the Master himself.”

But Heidegger might well have wanted the cultish obsession with his persona to die in order for his philosophical questions to live on. He wanted his readers to feel the full force of his questions on their own terms, not to fixate on his or any other particular responses to them. The motto Heidegger chose for his collected writings was therefore fitting: “Ways, not works.” 🌐

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# Faulty Powers

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## Who Started the Ukraine Crisis?

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### Moscow's Choice

*Michael McFaul*

John Mearsheimer (“Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault,” September/October 2014) is one of the most consistent and persuasive theorists in the realist school of international relations, but his explanation of the crisis in Ukraine demonstrates the limits of *realpolitik*. At best, Mearsheimer’s brand of realism explains only some aspects of U.S.-Russian relations over the last 30 years. And as a policy prescription, it can be irrational and dangerous—as Russian President Vladimir Putin’s embrace of it demonstrates.

According to Mearsheimer, Russia has annexed Crimea and intervened in eastern Ukraine in response to NATO expansion, which he calls “the taproot of the trouble.” Russia’s state-controlled media have indeed pointed to the alliance’s enlargement as an explanation for Putin’s actions. But both Russian television coverage and Mearsheimer’s essay fail to explain why Russia kept its troops out of Ukraine for the decade-plus between NATO’s expansion, which began in 1999, and the actual intervention in Ukraine in 2014. It’s not that Russia was too weak: it launched two wars in Chechnya that required much more military might than the Crimean annexation did.

Even more difficult for Mearsheimer to explain is the so-called reset of U.S.-Russian relations, an era of cooperation that lasted from the spring of 2009 to January 2012. Both U.S. President Barack Obama and then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed to moves that they considered in the national interest of their respective countries. The two leaders signed and ratified the New START treaty, voted to support the UN Security Council’s most comprehensive set of sanctions against Iran ever, and vastly expanded the supply route for U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan that travels in part through Russia. They worked together to obtain Russian membership in the World Trade Organization, created a bilateral presidential commission to promote cooperation on everything from nuclear energy to counterterrorism, and put in place a more liberal visa regime. In 2010, polls showed that over 60 percent of Russians held a positive view of the United States.

Russia has pursued both cooperation and confrontation with the United States since this century began. Mearsheimer’s single variable of NATO expansion can’t explain both outcomes. For the real story, one needs to look past the factor that has stayed constant and focus on what has changed: Russian politics.

### **SOME STRATEGIST**

Although realists prefer to focus on the state as the unit of analysis, for his explanation of the Ukraine crisis, Mearsheimer looks to individual leaders and their ideologies. He describes Putin as “a first-class strategist” who is armed with the correct analytic framework—that is, Mearsheimer’s. “Putin and his compatriots have been thinking and acting according

to realist dictates, whereas their Western counterparts have been adhering to liberal ideas about international politics,” he writes. “The result is that the United States and its allies unknowingly provoked a major crisis over Ukraine.”

By introducing leaders and their ideas into his analysis, Mearsheimer allows for the possibility that different statesmen guided by different ideologies might produce different foreign policies. Mearsheimer presumably believes that the United States and the world would be better off if U.S. leaders fully embraced his brand of *realpolitik*, whereas I think both would be better off if Putin and future Russian leaders embraced liberalism. But we don’t have to dream about what this counterfactual might look like; we witnessed it during the Medvedev era.

In the first months of his presidency, Medvedev sounded very much like his realist mentor, Putin. He supported the Russian military intervention into Georgia and coined a strikingly realist term, “sphere of privileged interests,” to assert Russia’s hegemony in former Soviet territory. Obama rejected Medvedev’s interpretation of realism. Meeting with Medvedev in April 2009 in London, Obama countered that the United States and Russia had many common interests, even in Russia’s neighborhood.

At the time, the Obama administration was fighting desperately to keep open the U.S. military’s Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan. Several weeks earlier, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev had traveled to Moscow and received a pledge for \$2 billion in economic assistance, and soon thereafter he announced his intention to close the base. With Medvedev, Obama acknowledged the balance-of-power politics that the Kremlin

was playing, but then asked if closing the base was truly in Russia’s national interest. After all, the U.S. soldiers flying through it were headed to Afghanistan to fight terrorists whom both the United States and Russia considered enemies. Keeping the base operating, Obama reasoned, was not a violation of Russia’s “sphere of privileged interests” but a win-win outcome for both Washington and Moscow.

A realist would have rejected Obama’s logic and pressed forward with closing the base—as Putin eventually did, earlier this year. In the months after the Obama-Medvedev meeting in 2009, however, the Kyrgyz government—with the Kremlin’s tacit support—agreed to extend the U.S. government’s basing rights. Medvedev gradually embraced Obama’s framework of mutually beneficial relations. The progress made during the reset came about partly due to this shift in Russian foreign policy. Medvedev became so convinced about the utility of cooperation with the United States and support for international institutions that he even agreed to abstain from voting on (instead of vetoing) the UN Security Council resolutions authorizing the use of force against Muammar al-Qaddafi’s regime in Libya in 2011—hardly behavior consistent with realism. After his final meeting with Obama in his capacity as Russian president, in South Korea in March 2012, Medvedev told the press that the reset was “an extremely useful exercise.” “We probably enjoyed the best level of relations between the United States and Russia during those three years than ever during the previous decades,” he said.

What he did not mention was NATO expansion. In fact, in the five years that I served in the Obama administration, I

attended almost every meeting Obama held with Putin and Medvedev, and for three of those years, while working at the White House, I listened in on every phone conversation, and I cannot remember NATO expansion ever coming up. Even months before Putin's annexation of Crimea, I cannot recall a single major statement from a senior Russian official warning about the dangerous consequences of NATO expansion. The reason is simple: for the previous several years, NATO was not expanding eastward.

Other realist critics of U.S. policy make a similar mistake when they argue that the Obama administration showed weakness toward the Kremlin, inviting Putin to take advantage of it. Like Mearsheimer's analysis, this argument is fuzzy on causation. It's not clear, for example, how refusing to sign the New START treaty or declining to press Russia to vote for sanctions against Iran would have reduced the odds that Russia would have invaded Ukraine. Moreover, after 2012, Obama changed course and pursued a more confrontational approach in reaction to Putin's behavior. He abandoned missile defense talks, signed no new arms control treaties, levied sanctions against Russian human rights offenders, and canceled the summit with Putin scheduled for September 2013. Going further than what President George W. Bush did after Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, Obama worked with U.S. allies to impose sanctions on individual Russian leaders and companies. He shored up NATO's security commitments, provided assistance to Ukraine, and framed the West's response to Russia's aggression as necessary to preserve international norms and defend democratic values.

These moves can hardly be described as weak or unrealistic. Nonetheless, they failed to deter Russia's recent aggression, just as all U.S. presidents since 1956 have failed to deter Russian interventions in eastern Europe and Afghanistan. Realists who criticize Obama for failing to stand up to Putin must make a persuasive argument about how a different policy could have led to a different outcome. There is only one alternative policy that could have plausibly given Russia pause: granting NATO membership to Ukraine many years ago. But making that counterfactual convincing requires revising a lot of history. For the last several years, neither the Ukrainian government nor NATO members wanted Kiev to join the alliance anytime soon. Even before Viktor Yanukovich's election as president in 2010, Ukrainian leaders were not pressing for membership, and nor were the Ukrainian people.

#### **THE REAL STORY**

Russian foreign policy did not grow more aggressive in response to U.S. policies; it changed as a result of Russian internal political dynamics. The shift began when Putin and his regime came under attack for the first time ever. After Putin announced that he would run for a third presidential term, Russia held parliamentary elections in December 2011 that were just as fraudulent as previous elections. But this time, new technologies and social media—including smartphones with video cameras, Twitter, Facebook, and the Russian social network VKontakte—helped expose the government's wrongdoing and turn out protests on a scale not seen since the final months of the Soviet Union. Disapproval of voter fraud quickly morphed into

discontent with Putin's return to the Kremlin. Some opposition leaders even called for revolutionary change.

Putin despised the protesters for their ingratitude. In his view, he had made them rich. How could they turn on him now? But he also feared them, especially in the wake of the "color revolutions" in eastern Europe (especially the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine) and the Arab Spring. In an effort to mobilize his electoral base and discredit the opposition, Putin recast the United States as an enemy. Suddenly, state-controlled media were portraying the United States as fomenting unrest inside Russia. The Russian press accused me of being an agent sent by Obama to lead another color revolution. U.S. policy toward Russia hardly shifted at all between the parliamentary vote and Putin's reelection. Yet by the time Putin was inaugurated, in May 2012, even a casual observer of Putin's speeches or Russian television would have thought that the Cold War was back on.

Some observers of Russian politics hoped that this onslaught of anti-American propaganda would subside after the Russian presidential election was over. Many—including me—assumed that the Medvedev-Putin job swap would produce only minor changes in Russia's foreign policy, since Putin had remained the paramount decision-maker when Medvedev was president. But over time, it became clear that Putin conceived of Russia's national interest differently from how Medvedev did. Unlike Medvedev, Putin tended to frame competition with the United States in zero-sum terms. To sustain his legitimacy at home, Putin continued to need the United States as an

adversary. He also genuinely believed that the United States represented a sinister force in world affairs.

Then came the upheaval in Ukraine. In November 2013, Ukrainians took to the streets after Yanukovich declined to sign an association agreement with the EU. The U.S. government played no role in sparking the protests, but it did prod both Yanukovich and opposition leaders to agree to a transitional plan, which both sides signed on February 21, 2014. Washington also had nothing to do with Yanukovich's surprising decision to flee Ukraine the next day.

Putin interpreted these events differently, blaming the United States for the demonstrations, the failure of the February 21 agreement, and the subsequent change of government, which he called a coup. Putin's ideology compelled him to frame these events as a struggle between the United States and Russia. Constrained by this analytic framework, he reacted unilaterally in a way that he believed tilted the balance of power in his favor, annexing Crimea and supporting armed mercenaries in eastern Ukraine. He was not reacting to NATO's long-ago expansion.

### **PUTIN'S LOSS**

It is too early to judge whether Putin's particular brand of realism is rational in terms of Russia's national interest. So far, however, the gains have been limited. His allegedly pragmatic and realist actions in Ukraine have only served to forge a stronger, more unified, and more pro-Western identity among Ukrainians. They have guaranteed that Ukraine will never join his most prized project, the planned Eurasian Economic Union, and have instead pushed the

country toward the EU. Meanwhile, Belarus and Kazakhstan have turned into nervous, less enthusiastic partners in the Eurasian Economic Union. At the same time, Putin has strengthened NATO, weakened the Russian economy, and undermined Moscow's international reputation as a champion of sovereignty and noninterference.

This crisis is not about Russia, NATO, and realism but about Putin and his unconstrained, erratic adventurism. Whether you label its approach realist or liberal, the challenge for the West is how to deal with such behavior forcefully enough to block it but prudently enough to keep matters from escalating dramatically.

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## How the West Has Won

*Stephen Sestanovich*

**T**he United States has handled its relations with Russia so badly, John Mearsheimer argues, that it, not Vladimir Putin, should be held responsible for the crisis in Ukraine. By trying to get Ukraine into NATO, he writes, Western governments challenged Russia's core security interests. The Kremlin was bound to push back. Meanwhile, silly idealism kept U.S. and European leaders from recognizing the trouble they were creating.

To see what's wrong with this critique, one can start by comparing it with Mearsheimer's 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent." Back then, Mearsheimer was already worrying about a war between Russia and Ukraine, which he said would be "a disaster." But he did not finger U.S. policy as the source of the problem. "Russia," Mearsheimer wrote, "has dominated an unwilling and angry Ukraine for more than two centuries, and has attempted to crush Ukraine's sense of self-identity." Given this history, creating a stable relationship between the two countries was bound to be hard. "Hypernationalism," Mearsheimer feared, would make the situation even more unmanageable. In 1993, his assessment of the situation (if not his policy prescriptions) was correct. It should serve as a reminder that today's aggressive Russian policy was in place long before the mistaken Western policies that Mearsheimer says explain it.

The prospect of NATO membership for Ukraine may, of course, have made a bad problem much worse. In 2008, Mearsheimer points out, NATO declared that Ukraine would at some point join the alliance. But he does not acknowledge what happened next. For more than half a decade, nearly all Ukrainian politicians—not just pro-Russian ones such as Viktor Yanukovich—steered clear of the issue. They recognized that NATO membership lacked strong domestic support and, if mishandled, could threaten national unity. NATO itself put the matter aside. Admitting Ukraine remained a pet project for a few members of the alliance, but most were opposed, many of them implacably so. The Obama administration, for its part, paid no

attention to the subject, and the issue virtually disappeared.

That changed, Mearsheimer claims, with the fall of Yanukovich. Mearsheimer endorses Putin's label of that event as a "coup": a Western-supported provocation that reignited Moscow's fears and justified an aggressive policy. But the facts do not support this interpretation. Few elected presidents have lost their legitimacy as quickly and fully as Yanukovich did. At every step during the "Euro-aidan" protests, he kept the confrontation going by resorting to force. In February 2014, after police killed scores of demonstrators in downtown Kiev, the whole country turned against him, effectively ending his political career. Parliament removed him by a unanimous vote, in which every deputy of his own party participated. This is not what anyone has ever meant by the word "coup."

Yanukovich's fall was a historic event, but it did not, despite Russian claims, revive Ukraine's candidacy for NATO membership. Ukrainian politicians and officials said again and again that this issue was not on the agenda. Nor was the large Russian naval base in Crimea at risk, no matter the feverish charges of Russian commentators. That Putin picked up this argument—and accused "fascists" of having taken over Ukraine—had less to do with Russia's national security than his desire to rebound from political humiliation. Moscow had publicly urged Yanukovich to crack down hard on the protesters. When the Ukrainian leader obliged, his presidency collapsed, and with it Russia's entire Ukraine policy. Putin's seizure of Crimea was first and foremost an attempt to recover from his own egregious mistakes.

This sorry record makes it hard to credit Mearsheimer's description of Putin as "a first-class strategist." Yes, Russian aggression boosted Putin's poll numbers. But success in Crimea was followed by a series of gross miscalculations—about the extent of separatist support in eastern Ukraine, the capacities of the Ukrainian military, the possibility of keeping Russian interference hidden, the West's ability to agree on sanctions, and the reaction of European leaders who had once sympathized with Russia. And all of this for what? Putin cultivates a mystique of cool, KGB professionalism, and the image has often served him well. But the Ukraine crisis has revealed a different style of decision-making. Putin made impulsive decisions that subordinated Russia's national interest to his own personal political motives. He has not acted like a sober realist.

#### **CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE**

Even if Putin is to blame for the current crisis, it might still be possible to find fault with U.S. policy of the past two decades. There is, after all, no doubt that Russians resented NATO enlargement and their country's diminished international standing after the Cold War. For Mearsheimer, the West needlessly stoked this resentment. As he sees it, once the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia was simply too inconsequential to be worth containing, since it was "a declining great power with an aging population and a one-dimensional economy." Today, he calls its army "mediocre." Enlarging NATO was a solution to a problem that didn't exist.

This would be a compelling case but for one thing: in the early 1990s, Mearsheimer himself saw the post-

Cold War world in much more menacing terms. Back then, no one knew what demons would be let loose by the end of East-West competition. Germany, just reunified, might once more go the way of militarism. Yugoslavia was undergoing a bloody breakup. Unscrupulous political leaders had been able to revive eastern Europe's many ancient hatreds. Add to this the risk that Russia itself, once it regained its strength, might threaten the independence of its neighbors, and it was not hard to imagine a Europe of severe turbulence.

Mearsheimer no longer mentions these problems, but at the time, he saw them for what they were. In a much-read 1990 *Atlantic Monthly* article, he predicted that we would all soon "miss the Cold War." To preserve the peace, he even proposed a set of extreme countermeasures, such as letting Moscow keep its large army in central Europe and encouraging Germany and Ukraine to acquire nuclear weapons. Today, these initiatives seem outlandish and otherworldly, to say the least, but the problems they aimed to solve were not imaginary.

Mearsheimer has long ridiculed the idea that, as he describes in his recent *Foreign Affairs* article, "Europe can be kept whole and free on the basis of such liberal principles as the rule of law, economic interdependence, and democracy." In his ire, however, he misses something fundamental. The goals of Western policy have been just as visionary and idealistic as he says, but the means employed to achieve them—at least by U.S. leaders, if not always by their European counterparts—have been far more traditional. They have been the medicine that a realist doctor would have prescribed.

The United States has defended its stake in a stable post-Cold War European order not through airy appeals to shared values but through the regular and effective use of old-fashioned American power. President George H. W. Bush, intending to limit the independence of German foreign policy, demanded a reunification deal that kept Germany within NATO. President Bill Clinton, believing that the Balkan wars of the 1990s were undermining U.S. power and credibility in Europe, twice used military force to stop Serbia under President Slobodan Milosevic. That President George W. Bush continued to take new eastern European democracies into NATO did not mean Washington believed that democracy alone would sustain the peace. It meant Washington believed that an enduring liberal order needed the anchor of U.S. commitment. (You might even say it meant U.S. policymakers did not in fact believe that democracy alone assures peace.)

No one, least of all Mearsheimer, should be surprised to discover that power calculations undergirded U.S. foreign policy. In his 2001 book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, he explained that politicians and policymakers in liberal democratic states often justify hard-headed actions in highfalutin language. Now, however, he takes everything that political leaders say—whether Obama's pieties or Putin's lies—at face value.

The resulting analysis makes it much harder to see whose policies are working, and what to do next. Mearsheimer seems to take it for granted that Putin's challenge proves the complete failure of U.S. strategy. But the mere fact that Russia has a leader bent on conquest is not by itself an indictment of the United States. Putin is certainly not the first

such Russian leader, and he may not be the last. Nor are Ukraine's current agonies, as acute and unnecessary as they are, the best way to measure what NATO enlargement has accomplished. Two decades of U.S. policy have both stabilized Europe and narrowed the scope of the current crisis. Had NATO not grown to its present size and borders, Russia's conflict with Ukraine would be far more dangerous than what is occurring today. Western leaders would be in a state of near panic as they tried to figure out, in the middle of a confrontation, which eastern European countries deserved security guarantees and which did not. At a moment of sudden tension, they would be obliged to improvise. Finding the right middle ground between recklessness and acquiescence would be a matter of guesswork, with unpredictable life-and-death results.

### **CALMING EUROPE**

The addition of so many new NATO members in recent years does mean that the alliance needs to think carefully about how to implement the commitments it has made. But the job of promoting security in eastern Europe has been made much easier because a basic strategic framework is already in place. Ironically, even Putin, for all his complaining, benefits. Despite the rude jolt of his aggression against Ukraine, Western governments are less frightened than they would be without the comfort of a larger NATO and the relatively stable European order that U.S. policy has created. Putin faces less pushback today in part because the United States succeeded in solving the problems of the 1990s.

In proposing to turn Ukraine into "a neutral buffer between NATO and Russia,"

Mearsheimer offers a solution to the current crisis that ignores its real origins and may even make it worse. He is on solid enough ground when he reminds readers that Ukraine has no inherent "right" to join NATO. But good strategy doesn't look only at rights and wrongs; it looks at consequences. The best reason not to push for Ukraine's entry into NATO has always been to avoid tearing the country apart. By forcing Ukraine to repudiate a mere free-trade agreement with Europe last fall, Putin brought on the most extreme turmoil Ukraine has seen in 20 years of independence. Now that the world has seen the results of this little experiment, why should anyone think that declaring Ukraine a permanent gray area of international politics would calm the country down?

Ukraine has not been—and is not—ready for NATO membership. Only Putin has forced this issue onto the agenda. The immediate goal of prudent statesmen should be to figure out a way to hold Ukraine together. If the great powers impose or foreclose its future, they may deepen its present turmoil. The best way to avoid an escalation of radical political confrontation inside Ukraine is not to resolve the big geopolitical questions but to defer them.

Mearsheimer's real subject is, of course, not Ukraine but U.S. foreign policy. After the exertions of the past decade, some retrenchment was inevitable. That does not mean, however, that Washington was wrong to choose an ambitious and activist policy in Europe after the Cold War, or that it should not move toward a more ambitious and activist one now. In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer wrote that it was "misguided" for a state to "pass up an

opportunity to be the hegemon in the system because it thought it already had sufficient power to survive.” He may have forgotten his own advice, but Washington, in its confused and halting way, has usually followed it. Even today, the West is better off because it did.

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## Mearsheimer Replies

**I**t is not surprising that Michael McFaul and Stephen Sestanovich disagree with my account of what caused the Ukraine crisis. Both the policies they helped frame and execute while in the U.S. government and their responses to my article exemplify the liberal foreign policy consensus that helped cause the crisis in the first place. Accordingly, they challenge my claims about the West’s role, mostly by suggesting that I regard NATO expansion as the sole cause of the crisis. McFaul, for example, maintains that my “single variable of NATO expansion” cannot explain the ebb and flow of recent U.S.-Russian relations. Both also claim that the alliance’s growth was a nonissue after 2008.

But McFaul and Sestanovich misrepresent my core argument. I did call NATO expansion “the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia’s orbit and integrate it into the West.” Yet I also emphasized that the strategy had two other “critical elements”:

EU expansion and democracy promotion. My essay makes clear that NATO enlargement did not directly cause the crisis, which began in November 2013 and continues to this day. It was EU expansion coupled with the February 22, 2014, coup that ignited the fire. Still, what I called “the West’s triple package of policies,” which included making Ukraine part of NATO, provided fuel for it.

The notion that the issue of NATO membership for Ukraine, as Sestanovich puts it, “virtually disappeared” after 2008 is also false. No Western leader publicly questioned the alliance’s 2008 declaration that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members of NATO.” Sestanovich downplays that push, writing, “Admitting Ukraine remained a pet project for a few members of the alliance, but most were opposed, many of them implacably so.” What he does not say, however, is that the United States was one of those members backing that pet project, and Washington still wields enormous influence within the alliance. And even if some members were opposed to bringing in Ukraine, Moscow could not count on the naysayers to prevail forever.

Furthermore, the association agreement that the EU was pushing Ukraine to sign in 2013 was not just “a mere free-trade agreement,” as Sestanovich calls it; it also had an important security dimension. The document proposed that all parties “promote gradual convergence on foreign and security matters with the aim of Ukraine’s ever-deeper involvement in the European security area” and called for “taking full and timely advantage of all diplomatic and military channels between the Parties.” This certainly sounds like a backdoor to NATO membership, and no prudent

Russian leader would interpret it any other way. McFaul and Sestanovich may believe that expanding NATO was genuinely off the table after 2008, but that is not how Vladimir Putin and his colleagues saw it.

To argue that Russia's reaction to NATO expansion was based on "resentment," as Sestanovich does, is to trivialize the country's motives. Fear is at the root of Russia's opposition to the prospect of Ukraine becoming a Western bastion on its border. Great powers always worry about the balance of power in their neighborhoods and push back when other great powers march up to their doorsteps. This is why the United States adopted the Monroe Doctrine in the early nineteenth century and why it has repeatedly used military force and covert action to shape political events in the Western Hemisphere. When the Soviet Union placed missiles in Cuba in 1962, U.S. President John F. Kennedy, risking a nuclear war, insisted that they be removed. Security fears, not resentment, drove his conduct.

The same logic applies to Russia. As its leaders have made clear on countless occasions, they will not tolerate Ukraine's entry into NATO. That outcome scares them, as it would scare anyone in Russia's shoes, and fearful great powers often pursue aggressive policies. The failure to understand that Russian thinking about NATO enlargement was motivated by fear—a misreading McFaul and Sestanovich still embrace—helped precipitate the present crisis.

#### **COOPERATION AND CONFLICT**

McFaul claims that I cannot explain the periods of cooperation and confrontation between Russia and the West whereas

he has a compelling explanation for both. This criticism follows from his claim that I have a monocausal argument based on NATO expansion and that this single factor "can't explain both outcomes." But I never argued that NATO expansion, which began in the late 1990s, led to a state of constant crisis. Indeed, I noted that Russia has cooperated with the West on a number of important issues—Afghanistan, Iran, Syria—but that Western policies were making it increasingly difficult to sustain those good relations. The actual crisis, of course, did not erupt until the February 22, 2014, coup.

Two points are in order regarding the coup itself. First, Sestanovich is wrong to suggest that Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych was removed from office legitimately. In a city racked by violence between protesters and government forces, on February 21 a deal was struck with Yanukovych to hold new elections that would surely have removed him from power. But many of the protesters opposed the agreement, insisting that Yanukovych step down immediately. On February 22, armed elements of the opposition, including some fascists, occupied parliament and the main presidential offices. That same day, the legislature held a vote to oust Yanukovych that did not satisfy the Ukrainian constitution's requirements for impeachment. No wonder he fled the country, fearing for his life.

Second, McFaul implies that Washington had nothing to do with the coup. "The U.S. government played no role in sparking the protests," he writes, "but it did prod both Yanukovych and opposition leaders to agree to a transitional plan." McFaul fails to mention the considerable evidence I presented showing that the

United States was encouraging the opposition to Yanukovich before and during the protests. Such actions included the National Endowment for Democracy's decision to ramp up support for anti-Yanukovich groups and the active participation of top U.S. officials (such as Victoria Nuland, the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs) in the public protests in Kiev.

These events alarmed Putin, not only because they threatened his relations with Ukraine but also because he may well have thought that the Obama administration was bent on overthrowing him, too. As I noted in my essay, Carl Gershman, the president of the National Endowment for Democracy, said in September 2013 that "Ukraine's choice to join Europe" would promote Russian democracy and might eventually topple Putin from power. And when McFaul was the U.S. ambassador in Moscow, he openly promoted democracy in Russia, behavior that led the Russian press to accuse him of, in his words, "being an agent sent by Obama to lead another color revolution." Such fears may have been exaggerated, but imagine how U.S. leaders would react if representatives of a powerful foreign country were trying to alter the United States' political order.

McFaul argues that differences between individual leaders explain Russia's alternating policies of cooperation and confrontation: everything is hunky-dory when Dmitry Medvedev is president, but trouble comes when Putin takes charge. The problem with this argument is that these two leaders hardly disagree about Russian foreign policy, which is why Putin is widely regarded as Medvedev's "realist mentor," to use McFaul's words. Medvedev was president when Russia

went to war against Georgia in 2008, and he has fully supported Putin's actions over Ukraine this year. In September, he went so far as to criticize Putin for not responding more forcefully to Western sanctions on Russia. And even during the "reset," Medvedev complained bitterly about NATO's "endless enlargement," as he put it in a 2010 interview.

There is a better explanation for Russia's oscillating relations with the West. When the United States and its allies take note of Moscow's concerns, as they did during the early years of the reset, crises are averted and Russia cooperates on matters of mutual concern. When the West ignores Moscow's interests, as it did in the lead-up to the Ukraine crisis, confrontation reigns. Putin openly welcomed the reset, telling Obama in July 2009, "With you, we link all our hopes for the furtherance of relations between our two countries." And two months later, when Obama abandoned plans to put missile defense systems in the Czech Republic and Poland, Putin praised the decision, saying, "I very much hope that this very right and brave decision will be followed by others." It is unsurprising that when Putin returned to the presidency in May 2012, McFaul, then U.S. ambassador to Russia, said that he expected the reset to continue. In short, Medvedev's replacement by Putin was not the watershed event McFaul portrays it as—and had Medvedev remained president, he would probably have reacted to events in Ukraine the same way Putin has.

Sestanovich claims that "today's aggressive Russian policy was in place" in the early 1990s and that the U.S. response was grounded in "power calculations." But the evidence suggests that NATO

enlargement does not represent a realist policy. Russia was in no position to take the offensive in the 1990s, and although its economy and military improved somewhat in the next decade, hardly anyone in the West thought it was seriously at risk of invading its neighbors—especially Ukraine—before the February 22 coup. Not surprisingly, U.S. leaders rarely invoked the threat of Russian aggression to justify expanding NATO; instead, they emphasized the benefits of expanding the zone of democratic peace eastward.

Indeed, although Sestanovich now maintains that “Russia has a leader bent on conquest,” there is no evidence that this was his view before the current crisis. For example, in an interview about the ongoing protests in Ukraine published on December 4, 2013—roughly three months before Russia took Crimea—he gave no indication that he thought Putin was set to invade Ukraine (or any other country) or that NATO expansion was necessary to contain Russia. On the contrary, when discussing the alliance’s moves eastward with a Voice of America reporter in 2004, Sestanovich suggested that Russian objections were little more than political posturing. “Russians probably feel that they need to object to this in order to indicate that they are a serious country that cannot be pushed around,” he said.

Sestanovich’s views reflected the liberal consensus at the time, which saw NATO expansion as benign. “Most analysts agree the enlargement of NATO and the EU should not pose a long-term threat to Russian interests,” wrote that same Voice of America reporter, summarizing the positions of the various experts he had interviewed. “They point out that having stable and secure neighbors may increase

stability and prosperity in Russia, as well as help overcome old Cold War fears and encourage former Soviet satellites to engage Russia in a more positive, cooperative way.”

#### **HOW IT ENDS**

McFaul and Sestanovich maintain that Putin’s behavior over Ukraine has been wrong-headed and counterproductive. It is too soon to know how this saga will end, but there is good reason to think that Putin will achieve his primary aim—preventing Ukraine from becoming a Western bulwark. If so, he wins, although there is no question that Russia will have paid a steep price in the process.

The real losers, however, will be the Ukrainian people. Sestanovich writes that “the best reason not to push for Ukraine’s entry into NATO has always been to avoid tearing the country apart.” He is correct. But the policies he and McFaul support have done just that. 🌐

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# A Reunified Theory

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## Should We Welcome the Collapse of North Korea?

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### A Scary Scenario

*John Delury and Chung-in Moon*

**N**orth Korea's implosion is imminent, South Korea's absorption of the North will represent a boon to all, and policymakers in Washington and Seoul should start planning for a military intervention to reunify the Korean Peninsula—at least according to Sue Mi Terry (“A Korea Whole and Free,” July/August 2014). Although the idea that the regime in North Korea stands on the brink of extinction dates back decades, Terry's insistence that the benefits of collapse will outweigh the costs is novel. Yet her assessment grossly overstates both the feasibility and the desirability of reunification after a sudden regime change.

For starters, the benefits that Terry claims will accrue from reunification rest on dubious assumptions. In the event of regime change in the North, she asserts, South Korea would enjoy major savings up-front by shrinking its defense budget in the absence of the North Korean threat. In fact, defense spending would have to skyrocket at first, due to the costs of stabilizing the North. As with de-Baathification in Iraq

after the 2003 U.S. invasion, demobilizing Kim Jong Un's million-man army would pose a huge cost. And even if the necessary initial outlays subsided, the new Korea's national security strategy would require increased defense spending to keep up with China's rise and Japan's resurgence. Planners in Seoul would be making a serious mistake if they counted on a peace dividend to offset the costs of absorption.

Terry also argues that a reunified Korea would reap economic gains from the combination of the North's labor and resources and the South's capital and technology. But the more likely result is systemic dysfunction. As people, goods, and services suddenly flowed freely, the North-South wage gap would close, meaning that labor costs would not fall as low as Terry implies. Once it joined with the South, the impoverished North would automatically enter the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and thus forfeit any foreign aid from its members (as was the case when East Germany joined West Germany). Similarly, the North would no longer enjoy the benefits of the World Trade Organization's system of preferential tariffs for developing countries. Complex litigation over property rights would clog the new country's courts. Chinese investors, meanwhile, would demand that their existing contracts with northern firms be recognized, adding to the prohibitively high costs southern firms would face when trying to enter the northern market.

The societal problems of sudden integration would be legion, too. Reunification would not, as Terry asserts, represent a demographic boon for the South, counteracting its low birthrate

and rapidly aging work force; in fact, North Korea also suffers from an aging population, due to its relatively high life expectancy and low birthrate. The prospect of South Korea's medical insurance system incorporating 25 million new members—including malnourished children and adults with chronic diseases such as tuberculosis—is daunting, to say the least. When it comes to inequality, Northerners would naturally expect the state to undertake a major redistribution of wealth to close the wealth gap, whereas southern taxpayers would naturally resent the burden. Some South Korean corporations would make windfall profits as they gained access to undervalued assets, but those revenue flows would bypass managers, workers, and farmers in the North. Preexisting regional rivalries and ideological differences would likely increase, and the addition of a bloc of voters from the North could further destabilize the already divisive two-party political system in the South.

### **STAYING POWER**

The good news is that Terry exaggerates not just the benefits of a regime collapse in the North but also its likelihood. Despite a hurried succession process, Kim appears to be firmly in charge. The purge of his uncle Jang Song Thaek has not unleashed a wave of elite defections, nor has China severed ties to the country or sealed the border. Although North Korea lags far behind the rest of East Asia, the country's economy is growing steadily, as visitors to Pyongyang in recent years know well. Kim has prioritized economic development, promising, in his words, never to make his people "tighten their belts again." He is experimenting with reforms that empower

farmers, factory managers and entrepreneurs and has created more special economic zones to invite foreign investment. The results remain modest, but for now, each year is moderately better than the last, progress that serves to strengthen the regime.

Even if, as Terry predicts, North Korean elites tired of their "hotheaded" young leader and pushed him out, North Korea as a state would survive. In the unlikely event of a coup, the generals and party elders that formed a new regime would have nothing to gain from turning over the reins of power to Seoul. Indeed, the new leaders might turn out to be far less preferable than Kim, just as the rise of extremists in many post-Arab Spring countries has made the old strongmen look desirable in comparison. Outsiders should be careful what they wish for.

North Korea's neighbors are well aware of such dangers. China would prefer to avoid a calamity on its border, especially since North Korea's collapse would destroy China's strategic buffer and probably bring U.S. troops too close for comfort. Moscow, too, would prefer to keep a buffer beneath the Russian Far East and avoid a meltdown that could undermine its economic development efforts there. Leaders in Japan, despite their enmity toward the Kim regime, feel ambivalent about the prospect of a reunified peninsula, in light of their country's repressed rivalry with South Korea. Even South Koreans, who live under the threat of attack from the North, have mixed feelings about the fall of North Korea, given the costs. In other words, nowhere in Northeast Asia is there the political will to overthrow the North Korean state.

That reluctance, of course, owes in large part to the most powerful factor propping up Pyongyang, which Terry leaves out of the equation: its nuclear deterrent. Facing the threat of nuclear retaliation, neither the United States nor South Korea would dare attempt to overtly topple Kim. That is precisely why it is so hard to convince the North Koreans to abandon their nuclear program, and why an externally triggered regime change is almost inconceivable.

### **A BETTER WAY**

Fortunately, the Korean Peninsula need not reunify in the way Terry imagines. Rather than prepare to swallow North Korea whole, South Korea, with the help of the United States, should work on a long-term strategy for the gradual merging of North and South. Economic integration between the North and the South—a grand project initiated in the late 1990s, then interrupted under the previous South Korean administration, but hopefully resuming now under South Korean President Park Geun-hye—represents the only cost-effective way to reunite the Korean people.

As part of this effort, Washington and Seoul should prudently but proactively engage Pyongyang, as other players in the region are already doing. The most dramatic recent example is Japan, where Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has begun lifting sanctions in order to convince Kim to reopen the investigation into Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s. Russia has stepped up its economic presence, forgiving North Korea's massive Soviet-era debt and investing in a North Korean port. And China has continued to trade and invest in North Korea, despite Beijing's displeasure

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with Kim. The United States' insistence on sanctions and opposition to negotiations look increasingly out of tune with developments in the region. Park, to her credit, has kept the door open to resuming the interrupted process of inter-Korean reconciliation.

Reunification remains the ultimate goal for all Koreans, but it will be a hard slog. For now, the fact on the ground is that the peninsula remains divided. Policymakers in Washington and Seoul need to deal squarely with that reality—instead of preparing for a hypothetical scenario that never seems to come true.

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## Terry Replies

**J**ohn Delury and Chung-in Moon do a good job of refuting an article I did not write. I never claimed that “North Korea’s implosion is imminent,” that “Washington and Seoul should start planning for a military intervention to reunify the Korean Peninsula,” or that reunification would be problem free. I never once suggested that the United States or South Korea should use military action to bring about North Korea’s demise; in fact, I described reunification through war as the worst possible and least likely scenario and argued that the United States should ratchet up sanctions to hasten North Korea’s peaceful demise. Nor did I deny the many problems that reunification would bring in the short

run—some of which Delury and Moon highlight. As I wrote, “The Kim regime will probably not come to a neat end; the collapse of a state is always messy, and it will be particularly so for a regime so militarized and desperate.”

Nevertheless, I did argue that the North’s collapse is, on balance, likely to be for the good (barring disasters such as nuclear proliferation, as I mentioned in my article). Even if “complex litigation over property rights” were to “clog the new country’s courts,” as Delury and Moon allege, this seems a small price to pay to rid the world of a regime that ranks as the worst human rights abuser on the planet and that regularly threatens its neighbors with nuclear annihilation.

Delury and Moon exaggerate the problems that a reunified Korea will face. They claim that its “national security strategy would require increased defense spending to keep up with China’s rise and Japan’s resurgence.” But they offer no reason why a reunified Korea would feel any more threatened by China or Japan than South Korea does today. Moreover, their analogy to Iraq after the U.S. invasion is misleading. There was no South Iraq to absorb the newly liberated state the way that South Korea could absorb the North. And unlike Iraq, which is fragmented along sectarian lines, the Korean Peninsula is one of the most ethnically homogenous places on earth.

Although Delury and Moon may not like the idea of North Korea’s collapse, that is a far more likely scenario than their fantasy of “the gradual merging of North and South.” South Korea has tried to make that dream come true

before, through the so-called sunshine policy it pursued from 1998 to 2008, and the result was unambiguous failure. During those years, South Korea gave North Korea \$8 billion in investment and assistance. In 2000, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung even handed Kim Jong Il \$500 million in cash to stage a summit (an act that earned the former the Nobel Peace Prize). In return, Seoul got, well, nothing. Pyongyang advanced its development of nuclear weapons and missiles, conducting its first nuclear test in 2006, and remained as repressive and dysfunctional as ever. Delury and Moon make no case for why a new sunshine policy would work any better.

Delury and Moon may think that Kim Jong Un is initiating serious economic reform, but the evidence does not bear this out. He is merely tinkering around the edges of a Stalinist system, just as his father and grandfather did. Kim has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on dolphin aquariums, water parks, and ski resorts that cater to the elite. The 84 percent of North Korean households that the UN maintains suffered from “borderline” or “poor” levels of food consumption in 2013 might beg to differ with Delury and Moon’s characterization that “Kim has prioritized economic development.” If Kim were a real reformer, he would have no problem taking the modest step of cutting his country’s bloated defense budget by five percent, which would free up enough money to end the country’s food crisis. Moreover, by executing his own uncle, Kim showed himself to be even more cruel and capricious than his father and grandfather—and that’s saying something.

Delury and Moon call North Korea’s collapse “a hypothetical scenario that never seems to come true.” That, of course, is what people used to say about the possibility that the Soviet Union, East Germany, or other communist regimes would fall. Sooner or later, North Korea will go the way of those other failed states. Outsiders should prepare for this scenario now, rather than pretending that the Kim family’s dysfunctional dictatorship will last forever—or dreaming that after 66 years, it will magically transform into a democratic, capitalist country that respects the rights of its citizens and neighbors. 🌐

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## Recent Books

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### Political and Legal

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G. John Ikenberry

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*The Deluge: The Great War, America, and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916–1931*  
BY ADAM TOOZE. Viking, 2014,  
672 pp. \$40.00.

In this landmark study, Tooze offers an elegant account of the reordering of great-power relations that took place after World War I, at the dawn of “the American century.” He shows how in the period between the war and the onset of the Great Depression, the United States exercised its power in “peculiar” ways, operating indirectly and focusing less on military force. It was not U.S. weakness but rather the “looming potential” of American capitalist democracy and the world order it would create that spurred radicalism in Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union. What made the American-led new order so threatening to those illiberal powers was its combination of moral authority with military strength and economic dominance. The United States was not just another rising great power: it represented a global political project and a way of life. Tooze draws a parallel between the post–World War I period and the “unipolar moment” that followed the Soviet collapse near the end of the twentieth century. In both cases, U.S. leaders embraced an exceptionalist view of their country’s role in the world and sought to overturn a pluralistic world order based on the balance of power.

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*Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*  
BY EDMUND FAWCETT. Princeton  
University Press, 2014, 488 pp. \$35.00.

What is liberalism? The debate never ends, but Fawcett identifies a core set of liberal ideas: respect for the individual, civic equality, suspicion of power, faith in progress, and the search for an ethical order amid the great conflicts generated by a modernizing world. Fawcett traces the liberal tradition from its origins in nineteenth-century Europe, to its historic union with democracy early in the twentieth century, to its near-fatal collapse after World War I and the Great Depression, and culminating in its triumph and spread in the decades after World War II. Fawcett shows how early liberals welcomed the coming of Western advancement and believed that social change could be steered in a progressive direction through science, the accumulation of knowledge, trade, international cooperation, and healthy political institutions. As Fawcett’s compelling history reveals, the twentieth century turned out to be much more unstable and dangerous than the early liberals anticipated and has forced liberals ever since to temper their expectations for human betterment with a world-weary search for small steps that can keep the liberal international system on an upward trajectory.

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*Networks of Domination: The Social Foundations of Peripheral Conquest in International Politics*  
BY PAUL K. MACDONALD. Oxford  
University Press, 2014, 336 pp. \$74.00.

In this illuminating study, MacDonald argues that the success of imperial

conquest during the colonial era hinged less on brute power than on the ability of European states to build and exploit social ties with elites among the colonized. The book looks most closely at the British experience. In India, the close ties between the British and elite Indians allowed the British East India Company to raise an army, establish rule, and at least partially legitimate its presence. The United Kingdom was less successful in Nigeria and South Africa, where a lack of such ties made it harder for the British to overcome opposition to colonial rule. At the end of his book, MacDonald cannily argues that a similar dynamic hampered the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The book is a sober reminder that great military power and dreams of empire cannot guarantee control of even a small foreign country—much less world domination.

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*The International Rule of Law Movement: A Crisis of Legitimacy and the Way Forward*  
 EDITED BY DAVID MARSHALL.  
 Harvard University Press, 2014,  
 322 pp. \$21.95.

During the last two decades, promoting the rule of law has become a global industry. Well-financed activists, governments, and international organizations have championed the cause, touting improved rule of law as a way to reduce poverty, secure human rights, and prevent conflict. All the contributors to this volume affirm the importance of promoting the rule of law in troubled and transitional societies, using tools such as foreign aid and technical assistance. Some argue that international experts need to spend more time grappling with issues of justice in aid-receiving countries and

adapting their plans to local cultural and political circumstances. Others caution that there are severe limits to what can be achieved by outsiders. In his contribution, Marshall offers a hard-hitting assessment of the UN's rule-of-law programs, which he deems unrealistically ambitious. The book's overall message seems quite sensible: if promoting the rule of law has become an industry, that industry needs to tailor its product to local markets, listen to its consumers, remain flexible, learn from its mistakes, and assume it will be in the business for the long term.

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*The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*

BY BRETT BOWDEN. University of Chicago Press, 2009, 320 pp. \$49.00 (paper, \$35.00).

The idea of civilization is often seen as old-fashioned, invoked by Europeans in the nineteenth century to explain Western dominance and justify "civilizing" acts of empire. But in this 2009 book, recently reissued in paperback, Bowden argues that the idea of civilization still lurks in the interventionist worldviews of many Western thinkers and leaders. This fascinating book traces the concept to the Enlightenment, when it evolved along with Western visions of progress and modernity as many Europeans looked at the rest of the world and saw the task of civilizing "backward" peoples as "the white man's burden." The wars and depressions of the first half of the twentieth century discredited that sense of Western superiority, but it returned with a vengeance after the U.S. triumph in the Cold War, and especially after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In his most provocative

claim, Bowden argues that today's "new imperialism"—military interventions, nation building, and financial intrusions led by the International Monetary Fund—draws on deeply embedded assumptions about Western standards of civilization. But he never quite answers two basic questions: Is there, in fact, something called modernity? And if so, is the world heading toward it?

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## Economic, Social, and Environmental

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*Richard N. Cooper*

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*In 100 Years: Leading Economists Predict the Future*

EDITED BY IGNACIO PALACIOS-HUERTA. MIT Press, 2014, 200 pp. \$24.95.

**I**n 1930, John Maynard Keynes gave a famous lecture in which he took an uncharacteristic stab at forecasting the distant future, 100 years away. He predicted that by 2030, "progressive countries," such as the United Kingdom and the United States, would have standards of living four to eight times as high as they did then. Palacios-Huerta saw fit to repeat this thought experiment and invited ten prominent economists to participate, each one independently imagining economic life circa 2114. The results make for stimulating reading. Some common predictions emerge: technology will continue to improve, poverty and population growth will both diminish, most relatively poor countries will continue to catch up with the rich world, the risks from climate change

will grow more severe, and unforeseen epidemics may spread. Many of the contributors emphasize the vital role of good governance in producing positive economic outcomes—an unsurprising but important point given the serious decision-making problems that currently plague Washington and European capitals. Some contributors also stress the crucial role that political rights and individual freedoms play in spurring innovation and contend that as such rights continue to expand around the world—at an uneven pace and with some reversals, to be sure—innovation is likely to accelerate.

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*Consumption in China: How China's New Consumer Ideology Is Shaping the Nation*  
BY LIANNE YU. Polity Press, 2014, 176 pp. \$64.95 (paper, \$22.95).

Economists often remark on China's high savings rate. But if incomes are growing rapidly, as they are in China, high savings do not imply low consumption. With an anthropologist's eye and training, Yu examines how the consumption habits of young urban Chinese have changed during the past two decades and how consumption both reflects and helps define individuality in China. A century ago, the economist Thorstein Veblen coined the term "conspicuous consumption" to characterize the materialism of newly well-to-do Americans. Yu prefers the term "conspicuous accomplishment" for China's young nouveaux riches, who typically work hard and want to establish their social status not only through what they wear but also through what they do. Wealthy young Chinese tend to purchase luxury goods abroad, where they can find reliably authentic wares at lower prices. Such high-end acquisitions typically take

place at a much younger age in China than in the West, since many wealthy young Chinese are unmarried and have no siblings (thanks to China's one-child policy); many still live with their frugal parents and thus have little else on which to spend their money.

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*Why We Need Nuclear Power: The Environmental Case*

BY MICHAEL H. FOX. Oxford University Press, 2014, 320 pp. \$34.95.

Fox might seem an unlikely advocate for nuclear power: he is a biologist who studies the effects of radiation on living things. But he also takes the threat of climate change seriously and believes that the world must reduce its dependence on coal, in part by building many more nuclear power plants. Nuclear energy, he argues, can provide plentiful electric power at a reasonable cost in a way that most renewable sources of energy cannot. The book's discussions of complex scientific issues, including a useful explanation of the influence of radiation on human health, should be accessible to anyone who recalls high school physics. Fox's forceful case for more nuclear power sensibly addresses the dangers, health issues, fuel supply, waste disposal, and potential costs involved; this book deserves to find an audience not only in North America but also in Europe and Japan.

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*Production in the Innovation Economy*  
EDITED BY RICHARD M. LOCKE  
AND RACHEL L. WELLHAUSEN.  
MIT Press, 2014, 352 pp. \$35.00.

*The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*  
BY ERIK BRYNJOLFSSON AND  
ANDREW MCAFEE. Norton, 2014,  
320 pp. \$26.95.

Both these books feature ideas about the future of innovation from researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Locke and Wellhausen's volume, based on research for MIT's Production in the Innovation Economy Commission, offers a sober, cautiously optimistic assessment and foresees the coming of some promising, perhaps even transformational, innovations in manufacturing technology in the coming decades. The contributors stress the fact that in order to have a significant positive effect on the U.S. economy, research and development on manufacturing must be paired with a healthy manufacturing sector. The book also notes that although there is no great mismatch between the skills possessed by the U.S. labor force and the skills required by the U.S. economy, the American educational system could still do a better job of preparing students for the kinds of jobs they are likely to seek.

Brynjolfsson and McAfee enthusiastically predict that the next several decades will witness transformational changes in the United States and elsewhere, mostly as a result of advances in information technology. They also argue that knowledge will evolve more quickly as the global economy allows ever more people to participate in the process of innovation. Among their more intriguing predictions

are the arrival of computers and sensors that will greatly improve the diagnoses of medical conditions and technologies that will allow for direct conversation between people all over the world through automatic spontaneous translation. But rapid changes, they warn, will also pose serious challenges to existing institutions, and the benefits of innovation will be unevenly distributed. That will lead to calls for cushioning the impact on those who will find themselves disadvantaged.

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*Beautiful Game Theory: How Soccer Can Help Economics*

BY IGNACIO PALACIOS-HUERTA.  
Princeton University Press, 2014,  
224 pp. \$35.00.

Soccer—or football, in most of the world—is universally popular, especially in years when the World Cup takes place. The sport is also notable for another reason: it has produced a gold mine of data. Detailed records of professional-league games go back many years and cover many countries. Palacios-Huerta draws on that copious archive of information to illuminate and formally test a number of propositions in economics, including the “minimax” strategy devised by game theorists and the efficient-market hypothesis proposed by finance theorists; both concepts pass empirical muster, according to Palacios-Huerta’s analysis. The book also examines the impact on soccer matches of economic incentives, social pressure, racial discrimination, and the fear of hooliganism, which sometimes emerges among the crowds at soccer games. Parts of the book are written mainly for economists, and numbers abound. But lay readers can skim or even skip those parts; the rest of the

book is enjoyably accessible to nonspecialists, especially sports enthusiasts, who will learn a great deal about soccer, economics, and human behavior more generally.

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## Military, Scientific, and Technological

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*Lawrence D. Freedman*

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*A Sense of the Enemy: The High Stakes History of Reading Your Rival's Mind*  
BY ZACHARY SHORE. Oxford  
University Press, 2014, 272 pp. \$29.95.

**D**uring international crises, political leaders must make judgments about the likely attitudes and behavior of both prospective allies and enemies. Shore is skeptical of models that assume that actors will behave rationally. Instead, he looks to cognitive psychology and explores the idea of empathy as an aid to decision-making in a crisis. He uses a number of examples to show how leaders able to get into the minds of their opponents (think of Mahatma Gandhi facing the British) do better than those who cannot (think of Stalin missing signs of Hitler’s aggressive intentions). Shore’s less familiar examples of canny mind readers include Gustav Stresemann, the German chancellor during the Weimar era, who managed to acquire weapons from the Soviets in violation of the Treaty of Versailles without falling out with France and the United Kingdom. Shore’s case studies are rich and well written, but with so many factors at play in any given crisis, including luck and timing, it is hard to demonstrate that one human quality can

improve the chances of a good result—or even that what passes for empathy will always yield true insight.

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*Reconsidering the American Way of War: U.S. Military Practice From the Revolution to Afghanistan*

BY ANTULIO J. ECHEVARRIA II.  
Georgetown University Press, 2014,  
232 pp. \$49.95 (paper, \$29.95).

*The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective*

BY HEW STRACHAN. Cambridge University Press, 2014, 338 pp. \$85.00 (paper, \$29.99).

Echevarria and Strachan represent the classical tradition in strategic thought. Both have closely studied Clausewitz and display an outstanding grasp of military history. Both write lucidly and sharply criticize sloppy thinking. Both are intrigued by the relationship between national policy and military strategy. Both are wary of cultural explanations for a nation's conduct of war. Finally, both challenge the view that their respective countries, the United States and the United Kingdom, have unique "ways of war" that shape their responses to conflict.

Echevarria's book questions whether U.S. military practice has ever followed a single "big idea," arguing that the concept of a specifically American strategic culture is an "elusive fiction." It offers concise examinations of every instance in which the United States has used military force since 1775, including lesser-known episodes such as the intervention in the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China. Echevarria provides valuable synopses of the most important campaigns

and explains what they reveal about developments in military practice, demonstrating the variety of ways in which U.S. leaders have adapted their approaches to military force to fit the circumstances. He concludes that although an American way of war probably does not exist, there is an American "way of battle," built on the assumption that tactical victories will be sufficient to achieve strategic success.

*The Direction of War* explores how strategy serves as a guide to action. Strachan uses Clausewitz's theories as a starting point and relies on them to challenge contemporary British military practice. He buttresses his analysis with his close knowledge of the debates over the United Kingdom's use of force in recent international conflicts. Strachan laments the damage done to the concept of strategy as it has been torn away from its classical roots and muddled with policy. He raises important questions about civil-military relations and the interaction between professional advice and practical politics. Although he criticizes generals and politicians alike, Strachan's sympathies usually lie with military leaders. Strachan offers much good sense; at times, however, he appears to expect more of strategy than it could ever possibly deliver.

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*Agent Storm: My Life Inside al-Qaeda and the CIA*

BY MORTEN STORM WITH PAUL CRUICKSHANK AND TIM LISTER.  
Atlantic Monthly Press, 2014,  
416 pp. \$26.00.

This is an extraordinary story, well told and convincing. It is the autobiography of a delinquent young Danish man, Storm, who gave up on a boxing career and turned

to Islam to give his life some meaning. His views became progressively more militant, and he was drawn into jihadist groups, both close to home (in the United Kingdom) and farther afield (in Yemen). His reminiscences convey the cultish and criminal aspects of life on the jihadist fringe. Over time, theological doubts, as well as a growing distaste for indiscriminate violence, led Storm to a rather abrupt disillusion with jihadism. He knew he was on the radar of Danish intelligence and ultimately offered his services as a double agent, a role he performed effectively. His tale illuminates the methods that intelligence agencies (including MI6 and the CIA) use to keep track of terrorists and how terrorists seek to evade them. Storm fell out with British intelligence, which would not get involved in assassinations, and later parted ways with the CIA, which he claims declined to give him the reward he felt was due for his role in the assassination of the militant imam Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen who was targeted by a 2011 U.S. drone strike in Yemen.

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*Knife Fights: A Memoir of Modern War in Theory and Practice*

BY JOHN A. NAGL. Penguin Press, 2014, 288 pp. \$27.95.

T. E. Lawrence famously described guerrilla warfare as akin to “eating soup with a knife.” Nagl, a retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, chose that expression as the title for an earlier book on how armies conduct counterinsurgency; the title of this memoir alludes to it as well. In 2004, as an operations officer in a tank battalion in Iraq, Nagl witnessed U.S. forces commit critical errors. Later, he became familiar in defense and media

circles as a scholar-soldier—a leading light among the “COINdinistas,” the group of academics and officers associated with U.S. General David Petraeus, who pushed hard for and then implemented a new approach to counterinsurgency, or COIN, in Iraq. This engaging book exhibits droll humor and a sharp grasp of the limits and possibilities of the U.S. Army as a learning organization.

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## The United States

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*Walter Russell Mead*

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*Blessed Experiences: Genuinely Southern, Proudly Black*

BY JAMES E. CLYBURN. University of South Carolina Press, 2014, 336 pp. \$34.95.

**I**n 1955, Clyburn was an enthusiastic clarinetist in the marching band at Lincoln High, the all-black high school in his hometown of Sumter, South Carolina. So he was thrilled when local authorities decided to allow the band to march in that year’s Christmas parade through town. But pride turned to chagrin when the band discovered that it would come last in the parade, separated from the white high school’s band and positioned directly behind a contingent of horses—ridden by whites, of course. “A two and a half mile march through the muck and the other stuff left by the horses,” is how Clyburn describes what followed. Jim Crow died hard in Sumter, yet Clyburn became the first black man elected to represent South Carolina in the House of Representatives since Reconstruction and went on to serve as

majority whip, one of the highest congressional positions ever held by an African American. To read his remarkable, engaging memoir is to be reminded of the stunning accomplishments of the generation of African Americans who broke Jim Crow and brought the United States (and especially Clyburn's beloved South) into a new and brighter era. The civil rights movement did not emerge from a vacuum; it was formed by idealistic and hard-working entrepreneurs, preachers, and community leaders living in a segregated and unequal society who refused to lose hope. Clyburn's memoir is more than the account of one man's life: it is a portrait of the South in a time of historic change.

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*The New Class Conflict*

BY JOEL KOTKIN. Telos Press, 2014, 230 pp. \$29.95.

This original and provocative book should stimulate fresh thinking—and produce vigorous dissent. In essence, Kotkin argues that an alliance between superwealthy elites in Silicon Valley and on Wall Street and what he calls the “clerisy” of upper-middle-class professionals is driving the American middle class proper to the brink. The middle class, Kotkin argues, depends on things such as cheap energy, heavy industry, land-use rules that favor single-family housing, regional-planning policies that reduce the cost of homeownership, and more effective border control to protect lower-skilled workers from wage competition. Those policies are anathema to climate change activists, conservationists, and “new urbanists” (who see a revival of dense urban cores as good social and environmental policy). Kotkin foresees bitter political conflict between populists

and environmentalists, and if *The New Class Conflict* is even partly right, interesting times lie ahead. Populism has always been one of the driving forces in U.S. politics, but as Kotkin reminds us, neither the liberal left nor the Tea Party right fully captures populist aspirations.

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*An Empire on the Edge: How Britain Came to Fight America*

BY NICK BUNKER. Knopf, 2014, 448 pp. \$30.00.

The most important task confronting American historians today is to integrate U.S. history with the history of the rest of the world. Conventional treatments of the American Revolution, for example, usually give short shrift to the economics and politics of Great Britain. Bunker's tightly argued and deeply researched book shows how a broader perspective can shed new light on even the most familiar events. Bunker puts the conflict between the colonists and the crown into perspective, demonstrating how it was just one part of a broader crisis in the evolving global economy. The British Empire was developing too rapidly for London's ramshackle institutions to manage or control. At the same time, British politicians largely failed to understand the dynamics of the rapidly modernizing global economy centered in London. The American revolutionaries thought they faced an efficient and tyrannical regime; in reality, overworked and underresourced British colonial administrators were so poorly informed and so badly organized that they were unable to understand, much less control, the rapid developments taking place on the other side of the Atlantic.

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*Founders' Son: A Life of Abraham Lincoln*  
BY RICHARD BROOKHISER. Basic  
Books, 2014, 376 pp. \$27.99.

When Abraham Lincoln was born, in 1809, Thomas Jefferson was still president and the revolutionary generation of 1776 was still firmly in command of the country. As Lincoln reached maturity, the founding generation slowly died off, and American political culture had to adjust to its absence. As Lincoln built his career and developed his political philosophy, the nature of the founders' legacy remained a contentious issue. In this elegantly written book, Brookhiser reveals Lincoln's role in that debate and offers new insights into Lincoln's inner life and political thinking. *Founders' Son* reminds readers that the Civil War was a struggle over the meaning of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution; Southern secessionists based their positions on a particular interpretation of what the founders meant to say in those documents. It fell to Lincoln, more than to anyone else, to combat those ideas. Brookhiser's argument that Lincoln's reading of the Declaration of Independence serves as the foundation of contemporary American political ideology is hardly original, but the biographical and cultural context in which Brookhiser sets the observation makes it feel fresh.

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*The American Vice Presidency: From  
Irrelevance to Power*

BY JULES WITCOVER. Smithsonian  
Books, 2014, 592 pp. \$34.95.

The transformation of the vice-presidency in the last generation represents the most striking contemporary innovation in

U.S. governance. The vice president of the United States has become a kind of assistant president, often enjoying greater influence than any member of the executive branch save the president. Readers hoping that this book (by one of the country's most distinguished journalists and political commentators) will explain this transformation will be disappointed. Instead, Witcover has produced a series of capsule biographies of each person who has held the office, from John Adams to Joe Biden. The short biographies lack the depth of reflection and intensity of analysis that might have turned the book into something more than a superficial chronicle. One hopes that another writer will step forward to show how the rise of the modern vice-presidency—which began, as Witcover rightly notes, with Walter Mondale—illustrates the changing nature of executive power in the contemporary United States.

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## Western Europe

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*Andrew Moravcsik*

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*Unhappy Union: How the Euro Crisis—  
and Europe—Can Be Fixed*

BY JOHN PEET AND ANTON  
LA GUARDIA. PublicAffairs, 2014,  
240 pp. \$23.99.

**T**his book represents one of the best overviews of the euro's current travails and future prospects. It reflects the virtues of *The Economist*, where both authors work: the analysis is well informed, concise, sober, and backed by pertinent data. It also

shares the vices of magazine writing, notably an episodic approach to presentation and an overemphasis on the current conventional wisdom. Peet and La Guardia argue that although establishing the euro was a mistake based on optimistic beliefs about future economic convergence and institutional development, muddling through remains the only viable alternative. Yet when it comes to how, exactly, to do that, they seem as perplexed as today's European leaders.

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*The Europe Dilemma: Britain and the Drama of EU Integration*

BY ROGER LIDDLE. I.B. Tauris, 2014, 256 pp. \$95.00 (paper, \$35.00).

*The Trouble With Europe: Why the EU Isn't Working—How It Can Be Reformed—What Could Take Its Place*

BY ROGER BOOTLE. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2014, 224 pp. \$29.95.

Pity British politicians, who must contend with absurdly polarized domestic opinion when it comes to the euro and the EU. Both these books come plastered with plaudits from British pundits and professors, yet they contain starkly opposing policy prescriptions. What they share is an extremism that would condemn either approach to failure if it were ever put into practice.

Liddle harbors genuine pro-European convictions. He believes, even now, that British Prime Minister Tony Blair, whom Liddle served as a special adviser on Europe, should have brought the United Kingdom into the eurozone, not only for pragmatic economic purposes but also to advance broader political and ideological goals. This fascinating book traces

Liddle's growing disillusionment as he slowly recognized that his political master, always focused on the next election, would never commit to the euro. Undaunted, Liddle devotes his final chapter to describing a "progressive" alternative to the status quo. He calls for the United Kingdom to adopt the euro and for Brussels to pursue a reflationary (and, hence, anti-German) monetary policy in the eurozone, increase stimulus spending, and craft a pan-EU foreign policy.

Bootle is a capital-market investor who advises the British Conservative Party. He believes that the EU is an illegitimate, overregulating, declining failure, and he advocates British withdrawal. Yet after pages of invective, the economic case for his position turns out to be surprisingly weak. Bootle presents no hard data on the likely impact of withdrawal on foreign direct investment, employment levels, or the financial sector in the United Kingdom. Indeed, he remains openly agnostic, and in some cases is even skeptical, about whether the country would be better off without the EU. Faced with such unsatisfying alternatives, no wonder British politicians cannot make up their minds.

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*Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I*

BY ALEXANDER WATSON. Basic Books, 2014, 832 pp. \$35.00.

The centennial of World War I has renewed public interest in the conflict's legacy. Most of the attention has been focused on its causes and on participants' memories of life in the trenches. Yet that kind of remembrance overlooks the question that is perhaps most puzzling to contemporary sensibilities: If, as most

analysts believe, this horrific war was unintended, then why did it last so long? What explains the four years of remarkably persistent commitment to the war effort by all parties—but particularly by Germany, which was surrounded by enemies and where between 80 and 90 percent of adult males under 50 served in the military? Watson's original and often riveting book traces the subtle interplay of propaganda, hardship, and martial enthusiasm that strengthened the resolve of publics in Central Europe. It goes on to trace the ruthless economic exploitation of eastern Europe by Austria and Germany and the suffering caused by the equally brutal economic blockade imposed by the war's eventual winners on its eventual losers, both of which help explain why public support for the war waned. Yet the destructive legacy of this experience also illuminates the socially, politically, and economically polarized politics of the interwar period, which led to the rise of extremism and the outbreak of World War II.

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*The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism*  
BY FRANK UEKÖTTER. MIT Press, 2014, 232 pp. \$28.00.

Today, Germany is the “greenest” of the world's major economies, far ahead of the United States when it comes to environmental policy. Uekötter, who belongs to a new generation of environmental historians, explores why Germany—a crowded nation of industrial exporters—has produced one of the world's most advanced approaches to environmental protection. The conventional view holds that Germans have been rich for long

enough to develop (and afford) “postmaterialist” values and had, for a time, a strong and chic Green Party that surfed a global wave of environmentalism. Some of Uekötter's evidence points in that direction. But his account demonstrates that even as the German Green Party faded, Germany continued to implement and maintain important environmental policies through fiscal and regulatory means, suggesting that the party and its historical moment has had a lasting impact on mainstream German politics.

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## Western Hemisphere

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*Richard Feinberg*

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*Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations Between Washington and Havana*  
BY WILLIAM M. LEOGRANDE AND PETER KORNBLUH. University of North Carolina Press, 2014, 544 pp. \$35.00.

*Economic Normalization With Cuba: A Roadmap for U.S. Policymakers*  
BY GARY CLYDE HUFBAUER AND BARBARA KOTSCHWAR. Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2014, 136 pp. \$23.95.

**L**eoGrande and Kornbluh's exhaustive and masterful diplomatic history will stand as the most authoritative account of U.S.-Cuban diplomatic relations during the five decades of Cuban President Fidel Castro's rule—at least until scholars gain better access to Cuban archives and officials. Skillfully interpreting reams of declassified memorandums,

unpublished memoirs, and in-depth interviews with key U.S. players, LeoGrande and Kornbluh uncover the intriguing secret dialogues that 11 American presidential administrations conducted with Castro's shrewd emissaries and sometimes with Castro himself. The authors focus on the central question of why so many attempts by so many seasoned diplomats repeatedly collapsed, sometimes after promising beginnings. LeoGrande and Kornbluh highlight a number of factors. On the Cuban side, they note Cuba's insistence that the United States lift its economic embargo at the outset of any talks (which would eliminate a key source of U.S. leverage); Cuba's refusal during the Cold War to compromise on its policy of international solidarity with leftist allies and the Soviet Union; and, perhaps, Castro's reliance on an acrimonious relationship with the United States to cement his domestic rule. On the U.S. side, the book reveals the American tendency to fumble the sequencing of quid pro quo offers; the way that, within every presidential administration, tenacious Cuba policy hawks sabotaged doves; the disruptive effects of U.S. domestic politics; and, perhaps most important, Washington's utter refusal to recognize Cuban autonomy. Facing so many potential veto points, back-channel diplomacy was bound to fail.

Hufbauer and Kotschwar peer into a post-Castro future where Cuba is already well on the path toward liberal democracy and a market economy. But rather than advocate for an immediate normalization of economic relations, the authors suggest that Washington maintain sanctions to keep up the pressure for deeper reforms in Havana. LeoGrande and

Kornbluh would probably counsel that such an approach would likely fail to influence the Cuban government today, but perhaps a post-Castro Cuba would react differently. Hufbauer and Kotschwar hope that Cuba will welcome market capitalism with a "big bang" and enact reforms on its own but worry that Cuba might go the way of Vladimir Putin's Russia, with its crony capitalism. The United States, they suggest, should engage in gradual, reciprocal negotiations to force market competition and to secure most-favored-nation treatment for U.S. firms. For example, in exchange for regaining access to the U.S. sugar market, Cuba would remove remaining restrictions on U.S. agricultural exporters. This hard-nosed approach represents a tortured, but possibly realistic, resolution to the U.S.-Cuban imbroglio.

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*After Love: Queer Intimacy and Erotic Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba*

BY NOELLE M. STOUT. Duke University Press, 2014, 248 pp. \$84.95 (paper, \$23.95).

Immersing herself in Havana's gay culture, Stout, an American anthropologist, gives readers a street-level view of the turbulent changes under way in Cuba, as Cuban society gradually transitions from conformist socialism to a more market-oriented individualism. In its formative years, the austere Cuban Revolution repressed homosexuality. Today, figures as influential as President Raúl Castro's daughter Mariela push for equal rights for LGBT Cubans. Cuba's LGBT community seeks to disassociate itself from those who service sexual tourism, but Stout meets gay Cubans in

loving relationships with foreigners that nonetheless seem to blur the line between transactional and authentic intimacy. More generally, Cubans are embracing new opportunities for private business even as they regret the sacrifice of socialist solidarity. In this newly fluid environment, Stout explores multilayered subcultures and shifting gender roles as they interact with ethnicity, class, and the emergence of consumer lifestyles: a desire for designer clothes, rather than the deprivations of abject poverty, drives some of the sex workers she profiles.

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*Rivalry and Alliance Politics in Cold War Latin America*

BY CHRISTOPHER DARNTON.  
Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014,  
304 pp. \$44.95.

As Darnton notes, parochial bureaucratic interests—particularly within security forces that rely on perceptions of enduring external threats to justify their influence and incomes—can act as major obstacles to reconciliation between rival states. What, then, explains the rapprochements between traditional pairs of rivals such as Argentina and Brazil, Argentina and Chile, or Honduras and Nicaragua? Darnton identifies two conditions that have made such *détentes* possible: the emergence of alternative threats such as domestic insurgencies and tight budget constraints that compel security forces to forgo preparations for external wars in favor of counterinsurgency at home. Darnton does not overstate his case and recognizes that there are other paths to peace. Darnton warns U.S. policymakers that too much foreign assistance to security forces might inadvertently

delay reconciliation between two rivals that are both U.S. allies by removing budget constraints that would otherwise encourage pragmatism. Political scientists will appreciate Darnton's well-aimed jibes at the major schools of international relations theory, and Latin America specialists will welcome his deft applications of cutting-edge theories to a region long underrepresented in political science scholarship.

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*The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism as an Instrument of Cartel Warfare*

BY GEORGE W. GRAYSON. Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2014, 104 pp. Free online.

Grayson, an expert on Mexico's underworld, offers a quick primer on the murderous Zetas criminal organization, combining many gruesome anecdotes with informed analysis and detailed policy recommendations. In the late 1990s, the Zetas emerged from elite military units determined to get a piece of the action in the burgeoning drug-trafficking business. Grayson attributes the Zetas' startling success to various techniques, including creating a brand based on extreme violence, which intimidates rivals and victims but also facilitates recruitment and personnel retention; diversifying the group's business activities beyond drug trafficking to include extortion, petroleum theft, and the illicit sale of organs; entering into pragmatic, ad hoc alliances with other gangs and corrupt law enforcement units; employing attractive women known as *panteras* (panthers) to seduce or kill opponents; and, most alarming,

penetrating the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Border Patrol. To better counter the Zetas, Grayson advocates the increased use of intelligence-collecting drones; tougher anti-money-laundering measures; more training for Mexicans by non-U.S. security forces, such as Spain's Guardia Civil; and grass-roots community-based programs to prevent at-risk youths from falling under the sway of traffickers.

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## Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Republics

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*Robert Legvold*

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*The Baron's Cloak: A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution*  
BY WILLARD SUNDERLAND. Cornell University Press, 2014, 368 pp. \$35.00.

**R**are is the book this creative, engaging, and written with such unpretentious grace. The baron of the title is Roman von Ungern-Sternberg. He was born in 1885 in Graz, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to an aristocratic Baltic German father, and was raised in what is now Estonia. He received military training in St. Petersburg and went on to make a career as an officer in the tsar's army, stationed mostly on Russia's border with Mongolia. Ungern-Sternberg's life spanned great events: the intense Russification of the tsar's sprawling empire in the late nineteenth century, the rising revolutionary tide of 1905, World War I, the 1917 Russian Revolution, and the subsequent civil war. After the Bolsheviks took power,

Ungern-Sternberg attempted to establish an independent state in Mongolia—a monarchy that he himself would rule. In 1921, that dream was crushed by the Red Army, which captured and executed the baron. Sunderland does a remarkable job of blending Ungern-Sternberg's life story with an exquisite portrait of the far-flung reaches of the Russian empire, producing an utterly absorbing tale of one man encountering historic change in almost incomprehensibly complex surroundings.

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*The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact With Stalin, 1939–1941*

BY ROGER MOORHOUSE. Basic Books, 2014, 432 pp. \$29.99.

A cartoon that appeared in London's *Evening Standard* in September 1939 shows Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin tipping their hats and bowing to each other. "The scum of the Earth, I believe?" says Hitler. "The bloody assassin of the workers, I presume?" Stalin replies. A month earlier, the two leaders had concluded a pact promising not to interfere in each other's aggressive military campaigns and devised a secret plan to divvy up the lands between their countries. Moorhouse captures the essence of the wretched deal better than anyone has before. As they ripped Europe apart, Berlin and Moscow danced an awkward ballet, straining to preserve their compact while mutual mistrust mounted and their armies deported large segments of the local populations in captured territories. Moorhouse concludes by tracing with new detail the stages by which Hitler ultimately decided to invade the Soviet Union and, on the other side, Stalin's bewildered efforts to both deny and prepare for the double-cross.

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*Putin and the Oligarch: The Khodorkovsky-Yukos Affair*

BY RICHARD SAKWA. I.B. Tauris, 2014, 288 pp. \$29.00.

Among living Russians, perhaps only Vladimir Putin has been written about more than Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the banking and oil oligarch who challenged Putin, lost, and spent the next ten years of his life in Russian prisons. Khodorkovsky's story—his corrupt path to wealth, which surpassed that of all other Russians; his 2003 arrest; the rigged trials that brought him down; his imprisonment; and his release last year—has been examined many times from many angles. Sakwa, however, draws all the tale's strands together in unmatched detail. He also explores Khodorkovsky's philosophical development during the time he spent in prison, where the former tycoon reflected on and wrote about the concept of freedom and the relationship between state power and social justice; a full third of the book examines Khodorkovsky as a social critic and political theorist. Sakwa also uses the story of Khodorkovsky's spectacular rise and fall as a lever, helping him pry open the inner workings of the Russian political system.

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*Genocide on the Drina River*

BY EDINA BECIREVIC. Yale University Press, 2014, 264 pp. \$65.00.

Becirevic walks the reader through the controversy surrounding the concept and definition of "genocide," then makes an energetic case that the term applies to the war waged by Serbian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992–95. Her task, however, goes beyond merely

justifying the label as a fair characterization of the murder of thousands of Bosnian Muslims during that conflict. She probes deeply into the nature of the killings, focusing as much on the intent to commit genocide as on the various methods of carrying it out. She argues that destroying a people first requires dehumanizing them; in this case, the Serbs relied in part on historical myths and popular biases against the Bosniaks. But transforming ordinary people into murderers, Becirevic contends, also requires calculating leadership and the intensive use of propaganda. Ultimately, her attention turns to those present at the time of the killings—and others, much farther away—who averted their eyes at the time or later denied the truth of the episode. Such denial, she warns, contains the seeds of future tragedy.

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*Nationalism and the Rule of Law: Lessons From the Balkans and Beyond*

BY IAVOR RANGELOV. Cambridge University Press, 2013, 224 pp. \$95.00.

Books on nationalism abound; so do books on the rule of law. But few, if any, explore the relationship between the two subjects. This one does so by looking at how nationalist excesses undo the rule of law—and how the rule of law, when properly defended, can tame nationalism. Rangelov takes "ethnic citizenship," the state's privileging of one ethnic group over others, as his point of departure. He examines how a government's attempts to engineer ethnic citizenship can undermine the rule of law, using the case of Slovenia in the early 1990s as evidence. Then, he shows how confronting wartime

crimes and struggling with transitional justice after a conflict can help a country come to terms with the dark side of nationalism; Croatia after 1999 serves as an example. Finally, Rangelov explores the evolution of international criminal justice, whose focus has shifted from “crimes against peace” to “crimes against humanity.” Here, he zeroes in on the case of Serbia during and after the Balkan wars of the 1990s, where the attempt to enforce this new international norm has produced both justice and strident local opposition.

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*Secret Cables of the Comintern, 1933–1943*  
BY FRIDRIKH I. FIRSOV, HARVEY KLEHR, AND JOHN EARL HAYNES.  
Yale University Press, 2014, 320 pp. \$40.00.

This compilation of historical documents on the Communist International (Comintern), the Soviet tool for controlling foreign communist parties, represents the latest contribution to Yale University Press’ invaluable *Annals of Communism* series. Klehr and Haynes have taken a massive original Russian text by Firsov, a Russian archivist, and boiled it down into a well-synthesized volume. So well do the authors compress, integrate, and discuss the material that the text has the flow of a full-blown history. Although the international communist movement’s abject servility to Joseph Stalin has been well documented, it is still stunning to read about the contortions that communists all over the world undertook to placate the Soviet leader: first resisting the rise of fascism, then applauding Stalin’s 1939 deal with Adolf Hitler, then explaining away Stalin’s purges, and ultimately swallowing even the expedient abolition of the Comintern itself during

World War II. The documents reveal an interesting form of consistency: the language and ideas conveyed in these secret communications closely parallel those of the public speeches and propaganda broadsides of the Soviet regime.

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## Middle East

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*John Waterbury*

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*A Time to Attack: The Looming Iranian Nuclear Threat*  
BY MATTHEW KROENIG. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 227 pp. \$28.00.

**K**roenig advances a serious, but not entirely convincing, argument in favor of a U.S. strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities. The case rests on one premise in particular: the United States has the military capability to destroy all known Iranian nuclear facilities without committing any ground troops to the task. If that premise is incorrect, the rest of Kroenig’s brief crumbles. Kroenig proposes that if Iran dismisses inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency and begins to enrich uranium to a level of 90 percent purity, Washington should introduce a UN Security Council resolution in favor of a military strike—but should prepare and expect to act alone. He contends that a successful U.S. strike would halt Iran’s nuclear program for at least five years. Kroenig makes his case without tub-thumping or demonization, but his position is weakened by the fact that he sees a nuclear-armed Iran as a uniquely dangerous goad to proliferation in the Middle East without seeming to

realize that Israel, which has had nuclear weapons for decades, also fits that bill.

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*Water on Sand: Environmental Histories of the Middle East and North Africa*

EDITED BY ALAN MIKHAIL. Oxford University Press, 2012, 352 pp. \$105.00 (paper, \$24.95).

Environmental history is a fascinating field, but this volume lacks a binding thread. Despite its fractured focus, much of the material the collection presents is interesting, and its range is impressive, from considerations of the environment's effect on the longevity of empires to estimates of the size of the typical daily catch enjoyed by fishermen in medieval Istanbul. In his chapter, J. R. McNeill explores the differing power bases relied on by agrarian and pastoral empires. Richard Bulliet shows how during the Middle Ages, population growth spurred the development of wind and water power for milling in Europe, while in the Middle East, cheap communal grazing favored the use of animals. Sam White speculates on the degree to which the Little Ice Age weakened the Ottoman Empire. Other contributions explore the incidence of plague in Egypt, the role water and oil played in building the power base of the Saudi monarchy, France's establishment of national parks in its colonies, environmental policymaking in Lebanon, and land reclamation in Egypt. Before reading on such topics, however, it is wise to keep in mind a caveat McNeill issues: "Much of the foregoing is speculation that cannot be tested or verified."

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*Turkey and the Arab Spring: Leadership in the Middle East*

BY GRAHAM E. FULLER. Bozorg Press, 2014, 408 pp. \$15.95.

Despite his years as a Middle East analyst for the CIA, the National Intelligence Council, and the RAND Corporation, Fuller is a fierce critic of U.S. policy in the region. He spreads the blame for the Middle East's woes among Western powers and local actors—especially Saudi Arabia, whose regime he believes will not survive much longer. Fuller's portrait of the present state of the region is at odds with most conventional accounts. In his view, the great contemporary battle is neither the conflict between Shiites and Sunnis nor the one between Iran and Saudi Arabia, but rather a tug of war over Sunni identity that pits Turkey and its moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) against Saudi Arabia and the extremist Salafi vassals it funds. Fuller backs the AKP (as well as the Muslim Brotherhood more generally) and seems confident that the AKP embodies a truly democratic brand of political Islam. This sweeping survey is marred by a number of oddities (such as an apologia for the idea of a reinvented caliphate) and inconsistencies (for example, Fuller minimizes the role of sectarianism in regional politics while also insisting on the centrality of the struggle to define Sunni identity).

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*The Good Spy: The Life and Death of Robert Ames*

BY KAI BIRD. Crown, 2014, 448 pp. \$26.00.

Robert Ames was an influential CIA operative in the Middle East who was

killed in the blast that leveled the U.S. embassy in Beirut in April 1983, which Washington has blamed on Hezbollah and Iran. Bird argues that for more than a decade, Ames was the sole U.S. conduit to Yasir Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Ames' main connection to Arafat was Ali Hassan Salameh, a flamboyant Palestinian who was close to the PLO leader—and whom the Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency, assassinated in 1979. The friction such actions led to between the CIA and the Mossad emerge as a constant theme in the book. Bird also tells the lesser-known tale of how U.S. intelligence came close to abandoning the Hashemite monarchy of Jordan in 1970 after King Hussein drove the PLO from his country and into Lebanon, with terrible consequences. Bird narrates the bombing that killed Ames in gut-wrenching detail. Ames left behind six children and a widow and did not live to see Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shake hands on the White House lawn—nor to witness the slow-motion collapse of the dream of peace between Israel and the Palestinians, in which Ames deeply believed.

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*The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier*

BY HASSAN ABBAS. Yale University Press, 2014, 296 pp. \$30.00.

Abbas is a Pakistani academic based in the United States who previously worked as a police officer in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas. His book seeks to answer a basic question: Why did the Afghan Taliban rebound after U.S.-led forces defeated them in 2001–2?

His answers spare none of the region's main players: there is plenty of blame to go around. Abbas' clear and convincing analysis also shows how the Afghan Taliban differ from Taliban groups based in Pakistan and how all those groups fit into the not-so-Great Game played by India, Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Still, although the book is thoughtful and well written, it offers little new information. Abbas concludes with a number of recommendations for how Afghanistan can avoid sliding back into chaos: strengthen the criminal justice system, find ways to generate more revenue for the central government, engage extremists in dialogue, decentralize authority, and promote religious harmony.

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## Asia and Pacific

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### *Andrew J. Nathan*

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*By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest Is Changing the World*  
BY ELIZABETH C. ECONOMY AND  
MICHAEL LEVI. Oxford University  
Press, 2014, 296 pp. \$27.95.

**E**conomy and Levi's findings thread a path between alarmist and complacent views of China's impact on the global economy. Chinese demand drives up world prices of oil and copper, but not those of natural gas and bauxite, owing to differences in the market structures surrounding each commodity. Some Chinese companies buy foreign mines and farmland to carry out state strategy, but others consist of private entrepreneurs pursuing commercial

interests. Chinese firms might bring pollution and corrupt business practices when they invest abroad, but their behavior depends on the regulatory frameworks of their host countries. China will try to protect its overseas assets and sea-lanes, but with a lighter military hand than the United States uses. Ironically, China pays a bigger reputational cost than other big countries for its firms' bad practices abroad, so Beijing pushes its enterprises harder to adhere to high standards than do Western governments, although with mixed results. The authors present these nuanced views with exemplary clarity and leave the impression that Washington's policies toward Beijing do not require fundamental change.

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*My Tibetan Childhood: When Ice Shattered Stone*

BY NAKTSANG NULO. Duke University Press, 2014, 356 pp. \$89.95 (paper, \$24.95).

This unconventional memoir is a literary as well as historical treasure. Its spare style reflects the stoicism of an isolated nomadic community surviving on the Tibetan Plateau in the early 1950s. At age five, the narrator makes a 1,500-mile pilgrimage to Lhasa with his father and brother. Run-ins with wolves, bears, and bandits alternate with the benevolence of kindly strangers in dreamlike sequences that skirt the boundary between reality and myth. But things turn terribly real when the author, at age ten, flees with his clanmates before advancing Chinese troops, only to find himself in a prison consisting of holes in the ground, suffering through a famine. The story ends with the author and his brother in a Chinese-run school; he would later go

on to serve as a local official in the Communist-led government. A lucid introduction by Robert Barnett (a colleague of mine at Columbia) shows how the author uses the "convention of childish innocence" to explore forbidden issues in Tibetan history, including the cruelty of the Chinese invasion but also that of the preinvasion Tibetan order.

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*Patronage and Power: Local State Networks and Party-State Resilience in Rural China*

BY BEN HILLMAN. Stanford University Press, 2014, 216 pp. \$50.00.

Hillman has deciphered "the unwritten rules of Chinese officialdom" over the course of ten years of fieldwork in south-western China. Patronage lubricates the rigid gears of government so that bureaucrats and their friends can get things done. Upper levels of government shower grants, subsidies, and incentive payments on favored officials in townships and villages; local officials skim, bribe, and use favoritism to cultivate popular support. The results include land grabbing, pollution, and failed infrastructure projects, but also economic dynamism and the mostly peaceful resolution of local conflicts, since the losers in power struggles can always hope for a future spot at the trough. The area Hillman studied was poorer and more ethnically diverse than most parts of China, but his insights apply to local governments throughout the country and to higher levels of politics, as well. The practices he describes are so entrenched that even President Xi Jinping's muscular anticorruption campaign might not uproot them. It is debatable whether they contribute to the resilience of the regime,

as Hillman argues, or whether they serve to hollow out the state's authority.

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*"Good Coup" Gone Bad: Thailand's Political Developments Since Thaksin's Downfall*

EDITED BY PAVIN

CHACHAVALPONGPUN. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014, 322 pp. \$49.35.

According to the contributors to this volume, the Thai monarchy is not a rock of stability, as royalist orthodoxy would have it, but rather the root of Thailand's troubles. These include frequent coups (including one that occurred earlier this year), a slow-growing rural economy, violent political polarization, a prolonged insurgency in the south, and a manufactured border crisis with Cambodia. The book focuses on the "yellow," or royalist, camp, which consists of a network of elite interests backed by key military factions. Yellow politicians use an emotional "hyper-royalism" grounded in ancient Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, along with a draconian lese majesty law, to resist the challenge to their interests from the "red" movement, supported by politically aware peasants, the urban middle class, and urban workers. The authors give less attention to the corruption and human rights violations committed by politicians in this populist camp.

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*The Bullet and the Ballot Box: The Story of Nepal's Maoist Revolution*

BY ADITYA ADHIKARI. Verso, 2014, 326 pp. \$29.95.

The Nepalese Maoist movement emerged at an unlikely time: the mid-1990s, when

communism was in global retreat. But by 2006, the movement had gained control over most of Nepal's countryside and had become the largest party in the country's parliament. This thoroughly researched book reveals how this happened. The leaders were mostly educated youths from marginalized upper-caste families. As machinations rivaling those on the television show *House of Cards* roiled the palace and the parliament, the Maoists used hit-and-run tactics in poverty-stricken minority districts to provoke the king to unleash the army—a move approved of by Washington. The regime's harsh response generated additional support for the rebels. The Maoists made mistakes, but these were trumped by the king's overreaching, which triggered an alliance between the rebels and the factions that finally drove the royal family from power in 2008. But in the aftermath of those events, the revolution has stalled. The government remains divided, the Maoists and the military have declined to cooperate with inquiries into the atrocities both sides committed, and a hard-line Maoist splinter group has accused the movement's more mainstream leadership of opportunism for joining the parliamentary game.

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*China 1945: Mao's Revolution and America's Fateful Choice*

BY RICHARD BERNSTEIN. Knopf, 2014, 464 pp. \$30.00.

In 1945, with World War II finally over, the United States was keen to find a compromise between the Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek and the head of the Chinese Communist

Party, Mao Zedong, that would avoid more bloodshed in Asia. But even a U.S. negotiator as influential and effective as George Marshall could not reconcile the two sides. The ensuing civil war ended with Mao's victory in 1949 and ignited a decades-long Cold War debate in Washington over who "lost" China. Bernstein argues convincingly that Mao's party was always oriented toward anti-imperialist revolution and the Soviet Union and would never have been a partner of the United States. His narrative is elegant and compelling, drawing mainly on U.S. sources but also using some Chinese materials. The book brings to life characters such as the waspish U.S. Army general Joseph Stilwell and the eccentric U.S. ambassador Patrick Hurley. Bernstein also discusses with empathy how accusations of communist fellow-traveling ruined the careers of many U.S. Foreign Service officers and likely delayed the prospect of reengagement with China. This thoughtful book moves decisively beyond sterile old debates to demonstrate that in the end, China's fate in 1945 was for the Chinese people, and not Americans, to decide.

RANA MITTER

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*My Fight for a New Taiwan: One Woman's Journey From Prison to Power*  
BY LU HSIU-LIEN AND ASHLEY ESAREY. University of Washington Press, 2014, 344 pp. \$34.95.

Today, the optimism and excitement stirred up by the wave of democratic transitions that swept the world in the 1980s and 1990s are hard to recall, much less rekindle. Many of the so-called Third Wave democracies have struggled to sustain the gains they made during those years, and more recent attempts to transform authoritarian states have ended in disappointment. That makes the new memoir by the democracy activist and feminist leader Lu (also known as Annette Lu), who was Taiwan's vice president from 2000 to 2008, a welcome reminder of what is possible when political leaders—government officials and antigovernment activists alike—set aside their own interests and follow the will of the people they claim to serve. Lu's story, which includes a stint in prison for political activity, emphasizes the compromises and sacrifices Taiwan's democratic transition required from both sides. As an activist, Lu came to understand that attaining justice and democracy would mean collaborating with people who held goals quite different from hers, including nationalists and social conservatives. She portrays Taiwan's democratization as the product of elites inside and outside the government responding to broad-based demands for freedom and accountability. Although the book includes some of the self-serving rhetoric one might expect to find in a political memoir, Lu's engaging voice and extraordinary candor make it a surprising and inspiring read.

SHELLEY RIGGER

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## Africa

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### *Nicolas van de Walle*

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*China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa*

BY HOWARD W. FRENCH. Knopf, 2014, 304 pp. \$27.95 (paper, \$16.95).

Over one million Chinese citizens have moved to Africa in the last two decades, where they have established a wide array of businesses, from small farms to large construction companies. In this perceptive account, backed by numerous and often insightful interviews with people in a dozen African countries, French makes clear that the Chinese presence in Africa is not solely the result of Chinese government policies. A surprising number of his subjects reveal that they left China because they found life in Africa more attractive and do not intend to return home. Although many of them rely on networks of fellow Chinese immigrants for capital and know-how, they often complain to the author about their countrymen, particularly those who hail from different parts of China. Still, French concedes that this substantial wave of emigration cannot be completely disassociated from China's strategic and commercial ambitions in the region. Although French declines to render a simplistic positive or negative verdict on the effect of the Chinese presence on the region, he does argue that it expresses China's quasi-imperial

approach to promoting its global influence and power.

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*Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday Resistance to Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda*

BY SUSAN THOMSON. University of Wisconsin Press, 2013, 256 pp. \$27.95.

The Kagame regime in Rwanda continues to enjoy a solid reputation in the West, earning plaudits for its role in ending the 1994 genocide, promoting economic growth since then, and advocating national reconciliation. Thomson's provocative study offers a useful corrective to that overly charitable conventional wisdom. Through extensive interviews with poor peasants in the southern Rwandan countryside, Thomson shows how Paul Kagame's version of national reconciliation is designed not merely to forge a united Rwanda but also to control its citizens, shape the country's history in a self-serving manner, and ensure Kagame's hold on power. Thomson reveals that officials who carry out the government's national-reconciliation policies often abuse their power to advance their own interests and, as a result, often enjoy little legitimacy. The book's most novel sections describe the subtle and discrete but still subversive acts of passive resistance that poor Rwandans take to undermine government policies that disadvantage them. Thomson suggests the emergence of a kind of Rwandan class consciousness, as her respondents express a deep sense of alienation from elites whose policies they doubt will promote the broader welfare.

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*The Political Economy of Tanzania:  
Decline and Recovery*

BY MICHAEL F. LOFCHIE.

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014,  
280 pp. \$59.95.

*Race, Nation, and Citizenship in Post-  
colonial Africa: The Case of Tanzania*

BY RONALD AMINZADE. Cambridge  
University Press, 2013, 451 pp. \$99.00.

Since its independence in 1961, Tanzania has combined political stability with economic stagnation. The country has been remarkably free of the ethnic strife that engulfed all its neighbors after independence. However, a variety of socialist experiments led to economic collapse in the 1970s, and the country continues to suffer from slower economic growth than those same neighbors. These two books analyze the seeming contradiction.

Lofchie has written the broader account of the two, and his book provides a compelling introduction to the country's development since independence. He begins with the socialist ambitions that guided the country's postindependence leaders, detailing the disastrous consequences. He then explores the fitful and ongoing process of economic liberalization that began in the late 1980s and has produced growth but also endemic corruption and rising inequality. Two excellent chapters explore the tension between the regime's loudly proclaimed policy of self-reliance and its increasing dependence on foreign aid.

Aminzade's book covers much of the same ground but is more specifically focused on the contradictions of Tanzanian nationalism. Under the

moderate leadership of President Julius Nyerere, who ruled the country from 1964 until 1985, the governing party espoused a tolerant, nonracialist discourse of inclusive citizenship. Nyerere was personally incorruptible and undeniably tolerant, and he instilled Tanzanian political culture with a form of nationalism that united the country and helped it steer clear of the ethnic strife experienced by neighboring countries such as Congo and Kenya. But Nyerere's government also pandered to anti-Asian sentiments among its supporters and instituted policies that discriminated against the country's Asian minorities. Aminzade has produced a nuanced and authoritative analysis of this contradiction. As he points out, nationalism almost invariably combines the same troubling mix of exclusion and inclusion.

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*Property and Political Order in Africa:  
Land Rights and the Structure of Politics*

BY CATHERINE BOONE. Cambridge  
University Press, 2014, 424 pp. \$95.00  
(paper, \$32.99).

Although little reliable information exists on the issue, experts widely believe that conflict over land is increasing in Africa, where property rights are often not firmly established and most arable land has not been recorded in authoritative registries. In her ambitious new book, Boone argues that struggles over land are now the defining characteristic of African politics and have an impact on all other political institutions and every interaction between citizens

and states. In a dozen well-documented case studies from across the continent, she demonstrates how the powerful manipulate property rights for political purposes—a phenomenon, Boone notes, that has been present since the colonial era. Why, then, do conflicts over land seem to be on the rise? Boone acknowledges the pressures created by explosive population growth and environmental deterioration but concludes that the main culprit is the democratization of the region during the last quarter of a century. The emergence of multiparty electoral competition, she claims, has created stronger incentives to manipulate land resources. One need not be convinced by that central thesis to be deeply impressed by this insightful book.

the U.S. Foreign Service, professional diplomats will enjoy comparing his fictional portrayal with the reality they know. The novel provides little insight into how U.S. foreign policy has been made in recent years, nor does it illuminate the institutional issues that bedevil U.S. foreign policy. *The Golden Hour* mostly aims to entertain—and in that, it succeeds. 🌐

JOHN CAMPBELL

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*The Golden Hour*

BY TODD MOSS. Putnam, 2014,  
336 pp. \$26.95.

Judd Ryker, the daring hero of Moss' novel, is a U.S. diplomat based in Mali who, over the course of 100 hours, must undo a coup, free a kidnapped Peace Corps volunteer, and stop an attack on the U.S. embassy. As the head of a crisis-response unit, Ryker faces down terrorists and—almost as dangerous—vicious bureaucratic infighting at the U.S. Department of State. In an author's note, Moss, an economist who served briefly as a deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau of African Affairs, explains that his novel was partly inspired by the coup that took place in Mauritania in 2008, during his time in government. Although the novel suggests that Moss feels some animus toward

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# Letters to the Editor

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## NO SUCH PROMISE

*To the Editor:*

In an article published in *The Washington Quarterly* in April 2009, I addressed a narrow but important question: Was it true, as Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev claimed, that Western leaders, during the 1990 negotiations on German reunification, promised him that NATO would not expand into eastern Europe? I examined the declassified negotiating records and concluded that no such promise was ever offered.

Mary Elise Sarotte (“A Broken Promise?” September/October 2014) points to my article as an example of the history she intends to correct, but she provides nothing that would change my judgment about what happened. As I wrote, the question of NATO’s possible expansion eastward arose numerous times during negotiations Gorbachev conducted with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and U.S. President George H. W. Bush. Viewed in context, however, it is clear that they were speaking solely about expanding the alliance into East Germany.

Sarotte admits that Gorbachev never received a formal promise regarding NATO expansion, but she does refer to a conversation in early 1990 between Douglas Hurd, the British foreign secretary, and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German foreign minister, in which Genscher suggested that NATO should issue a public statement saying it did not intend to expand eastward. But nothing

about this discussion was ever disclosed to Gorbachev or to any other Soviet policymaker. Hence, it is a red herring, irrelevant to any judgment of the East-West negotiations.

Sarotte implies that Bush and Baker, throughout the negotiations, were hell-bent on enlarging NATO into central and eastern Europe. This is not true. U.S. leaders believed that NATO should include a reunified Germany but were opposed to enlarging the alliance beyond that. Indeed, whenever policymakers from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, or Poland raised the question of admission into NATO in 1990 and 1991, U.S. officials made clear that no such offer was on the table. In June 1991, Manfred Wörner, then NATO’s secretary-general, even declared publicly that granting NATO membership to former Warsaw Treaty members “would be a serious obstacle to reaching mutual understanding with the Soviet Union.”

After the Soviet Union collapsed, the first Bush administration continued to oppose NATO enlargement, a position the Clinton administration also later embraced. Eventually, the Clinton administration shifted to favoring NATO enlargement. The driving force behind expansion, however, was not the United States but the governments of eastern Europe, which did all they could to persuade the alliance to include them.

MARK KRAMER

*Director, Project on Cold War Studies,  
Harvard University*

*Sarotte replies:*

Those who read my article will note that I agree with Mark Kramer: no formal pledge against NATO expansion surfaced in 1990. But on the basis of new evidence, presented in the latest edition of my book *1989: The Struggle to*

*Create Post–Cold War Europe*, I disagree with Kramer’s now outdated understanding of how that result emerged.

First, Kramer claims that during negotiations about German reunification, James Baker, Helmut Kohl, and Hans-Dietrich Genscher spoke “solely about expanding the alliance into East Germany.” But in fact, visiting Moscow in February 1990, they repeatedly affirmed that NATO would not move eastward at all. Mikhail Gorbachev said that any expansion of the zone of NATO whatsoever was unacceptable, and he let German reunification commence on that basis. As the process unfolded, however, he was forced to accept a NATO presence in former East Germany.

Second, Kramer denies that London and Bonn were considering NATO expansion into eastern Europe at that time. Rather than being “a red herring,” however, the example from Genscher’s papers shows explicitly that Genscher was considering NATO’s presence in eastern Europe.

Third, Kramer claims that U.S. leaders were opposed to expanding the alliance beyond a reunified Germany. But in written accords, Washington fought hard to keep open NATO’s options for further eastward movement. A furious Gorbachev was too weak to resist.

Finally, Kramer deems anything not mentioned explicitly to Gorbachev irrelevant, but it’s unsurprising that Western leaders refrained from revealing all. In a high-stakes chess match, if you’re thinking several steps ahead of your opponent, there is no reason to tell him.

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### **PUTIN’S PROPAGANDA**

*To the Editor:*

Alexander Lukin’s recent article (“What the Kremlin Is Thinking,” July/

August 2014) is yet another blunt example of Russia’s misinformation campaign, which has increasingly dominated the public sphere as the crisis in Ukraine continues. The myths publicized by the Kremlin, many of which appear in Lukin’s article, are deeply flawed attempts to justify Russia’s actions in Ukraine.

The first myth has to do with NATO expansion. The Kremlin insists that the West violated its promise to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev not to enlarge NATO. The current policy of the West, according to the Kremlin, is to mitigate Russia’s influence in the region. For the sake of clarity and historical truthfulness, however, it should be understood that the West never made any such promise to Gorbachev. The Kremlin also believes that the West forces European countries to join the European Union and NATO even though they actually desire closer cooperation with Russia. This is also false. The value of Western policy lies in its respect for sovereignty, allowing each country to decide its own future.

The next myth is that the West applies a different standard to itself than it does to Russia. According to Russia, it is the West that violates international laws and treaties, most prominently the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, which recognizes the inviolability of national frontiers.

But it is Russia that has brutally violated international law by exercising military power in its neighborhood. Scholars have tried to dismiss the long-standing conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria, as well as the Russian occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as inevitable convulsions induced by the collapse of the Soviet Union. But Russia’s recent annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula should be a wake-up call. When

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, Russia said that the West had violated international laws protecting sovereignty. In fact, Kosovo's declaration of independence came only after exhaustive international discussions. In Crimea, by contrast, there was no attempt to negotiate a solution, and Russia bypassed the entire international community—including the United Nations—to occupy part of another country's territory.

If the Kremlin is to be believed, Russia's actions are a justified response to NATO's plans to position armaments and military infrastructure closer to Russia's borders. In fact, the West has offered Russia an unprecedented level of transparency and openness regarding arms control and missile defense. NATO has indeed supported the upgrading of military infrastructure, including air bases, in countries that have joined the alliance. But the only substantial combat forces in the eastern European countries bordering Russia are their own.

Finally, the Russian government believes it has the right to protect Russians across the world. But Russians worldwide do not need the Kremlin to come to their aid. The cases of Estonia and Latvia have proved that patient and tolerant policies toward national minorities can help prevent conflict. Ethnic minorities in those countries, including ethnic Russians, are given wide access to education and to opportunities to nurture their own cultures and traditions. In fact, the opportunities provided to Russian minorities in the Baltic states are much more comprehensive than those for any minority in the Russian Federation.

Given the misinformation Russia has been promulgating, should the West adopt a more forward-leaning policy toward Russia? The clear answer is no.

The only fruitful long-term strategy for the West would be to encourage Russian compliance with international law. The West should ask Russia for an explicit promise—in words as well as deeds—to respect the sovereign rights of other countries, especially those in its neighborhood. The West should also urge Russia to utilize international avenues to resolve conflicts. If Russia is worried about Russian minorities in other states, for example, it can turn for help to the United Nations or the Council of Europe.

The task of the West, in other words, is to stay unified against Russia's aggression in Ukraine. This includes providing support to Ukraine and other Russian neighbors. The association agreements that the EU recently signed with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are a good starting point. The West should also strengthen NATO's collective defense capabilities, as agreed at the recent Wales summit.

MARIS RIEKSTINS

*Permanent Representative of Latvia to NATO and former Foreign Minister of Latvia*

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## **DEMOCRACY IN UKRAINE**

*To the Editor:*

John Mearsheimer ("Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," September/October 2014) fails to properly consider the Ukrainian people themselves. In his telling, the Ukrainians are passive pawns in the struggle between an aggressive West and a reactive Vladimir Putin. But polls have shown that a majority of Ukrainians would vote to join the European Union in a referendum, and an overwhelming majority oppose Russian interference.

In describing how Western powers provoked Russia, Mearsheimer targets the National Endowment for Democracy

as an example of Western social engineering in Ukraine. For proof, he quotes from a *Washington Post* op-ed I wrote last fall in which I called Ukraine “the biggest prize.” It should be clear to any fair reader, however, what I meant: that Ukraine was the biggest prize for Russia, not for the United States or for the NED, which is publicly funded but entirely independent of the U.S. government. The NED’s objectives in Ukraine, as everywhere, have been and continue to be to support nongovernmental organizations working to strengthen democracy. We supported democratic groups in Ukraine before President Viktor Yanukovich was elected, and we continued to support them afterward. To assert, as Mearsheimer does, that the NED “stepped up its efforts” after Yanukovich’s election because we felt the new president was undermining us misrepresents our philosophy and approach: to help indigenous democratic groups achieve their goals, not ours.

CARL GERSHMAN

*President, National Endowment for Democracy*

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## A HOLISTIC APPROACH

*To the Editor:*

In their recent essay (“Show Them the Money,” May/June 2014), Christopher Blattman and Paul Niehaus argue that cash grants are more effective than traditional forms of aid, especially asset transfers in the form of goods and livestock.

Blattman and Niehaus are right that the asset-transfer model is not perfect: the nonprofit sector needs greater transparency and accountability, and micro-credit has a weak record of success. But they overstate the cost-effectiveness of cash grants and overlook the fact that cash alone cannot address the root causes of poverty.

First, contrary to Blattman and Niehaus’ suggestion, studies show that asset-transfer programs are both cost effective and effectual. In 2011, researchers at Western Michigan University evaluated Heifer International programs in Albania, Nepal, and Uganda. For every \$1 Heifer spent in Uganda, families gained an average of \$1.25 in income and \$2.81 in total assets. Families saw similar gains in Albania and Nepal.

How does cash compare? In an article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Kevin Starr and Laura Hattendorf calculated the cost-effectiveness of a cash-grant program in Uganda, one of several mentioned by Blattman and Niehaus. When computed for three-year gains, the cost-effectiveness of that program was just \$1.03 for every \$1 given in grants.

In addition, although cash grants can and do alleviate poverty for those in low-income communities, no evidence suggests that these programs lead to long-term, sustainable community development. People who receive cash grants spend the money on immediate needs or on starting a business. The root causes of poverty—discrimination, lack of education, environmental destruction, corruption, violence—may render any short-term gains fleeting.

Blattman and Niehaus say that people are poor “because they lack resources and opportunities—things that, in many places, money can buy.” If it were so simple, remittances would be more successful at ending poverty over the long term. The World Bank estimates that migrant workers sent \$414 billion home to developing countries in 2013, almost four times the amount of foreign aid given by national governments. If more than \$400 billion a year in remittances isn’t working, donor-funded

cash grants are unlikely to provide a superior solution.

Heifer International, the nonprofit I head, works with communities to end hunger and poverty through asset transfers. Why don't we simply give our participants cash and let them choose whether or not to buy livestock with it? When people use cash grants to purchase livestock, they typically have access to only local breeds, most of which are not highly productive. Heifer, on the other hand, purchases livestock with better genetics and provides training to farmers, resulting in higher productivity and, ultimately, greater profits.

PIERRE U. FERRARI

*President and CEO, Heifer International*

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## **BITCOIN AND STABILITY**

*To the Editor:*

Benn Steil ("Taper Trouble," July/August 2014) makes an all-too-common error in dismissing the role of Bitcoin in world monetary affairs: equating the currency with one service provider. The collapse of Mt. Gox, a large Bitcoin exchange based in Japan, did roil the Bitcoin world. Mt. Gox tried to blame its downfall on the Bitcoin protocol, but it was actually the exchange's inattention to the protocol that caused its problems. If a large U.S. bank collapsed as a result of poor accounting and bad cash management, few would see cause to argue against the U.S. dollar; likewise, assessments of Bitcoin's role in monetary affairs should be based not on Mt. Gox but on the protocol itself.

The Bitcoin protocol can be thought of as a global public ledger optimized for value transfer. Anyone can add entries to the ledger, known as the "blockchain," and nobody can erase them. Cryptography secures assets recorded on the ledger and ensures its integrity. This system allows people and businesses to transfer value directly and globally, without the interference of a third-party intermediary.

The amount of Bitcoin that can be created is limited by the protocol itself. Bitcoin's mild inflationary policy is governed by math that can't be changed without an amendment to its software, which requires the consensus of the Bitcoin community. This gives Bitcoin investors confidence that no monetary authority can debase their assets.

Steil illustrates how central banks, such as the U.S. Federal Reserve, can institute policies that damage economies and interests they view as peripheral. Countries that integrate Bitcoin into their economies, however, will thereby move their economies away from the periphery. Of course, this is not an all-or-nothing proposition: Bitcoin can and will coexist with other currencies.

JIM HARPER

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There's a tendency to imagine that China makes decisions out of a grand strategy. The reality is that China today is operating most of all based on its domestic needs. Those are very specific, and they act as both a motivator and a hedge against more adventurous actions abroad.

**ON SPIRITUALITY:**

There has been this hole in Chinese life. People talk about it. They call it a spiritual void. And it's up to them as individuals to fill it. As a result, you have this huge explosion in religion, and also pursuits of other moral systems. This is going to be a big story in the years ahead.

**ON XI'S CRACKDOWN:**

He sees it as a way to try to bring the Communist Party back into some alignment with its political objectives. The party got big. It got extravagant. It got out of control. And what he says is that if we're going to survive for another 30 years, we need to be more responsive to what people want.

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China has grown for 30 years at a rate of about eight percent a year. But that period has come to an end. So it's looking for a new source of domestic legitimacy, growth, and unity, and that has forced the government to draw on new impulses. One of the ways that it's doing that, of course, is by turning to nationalism.

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