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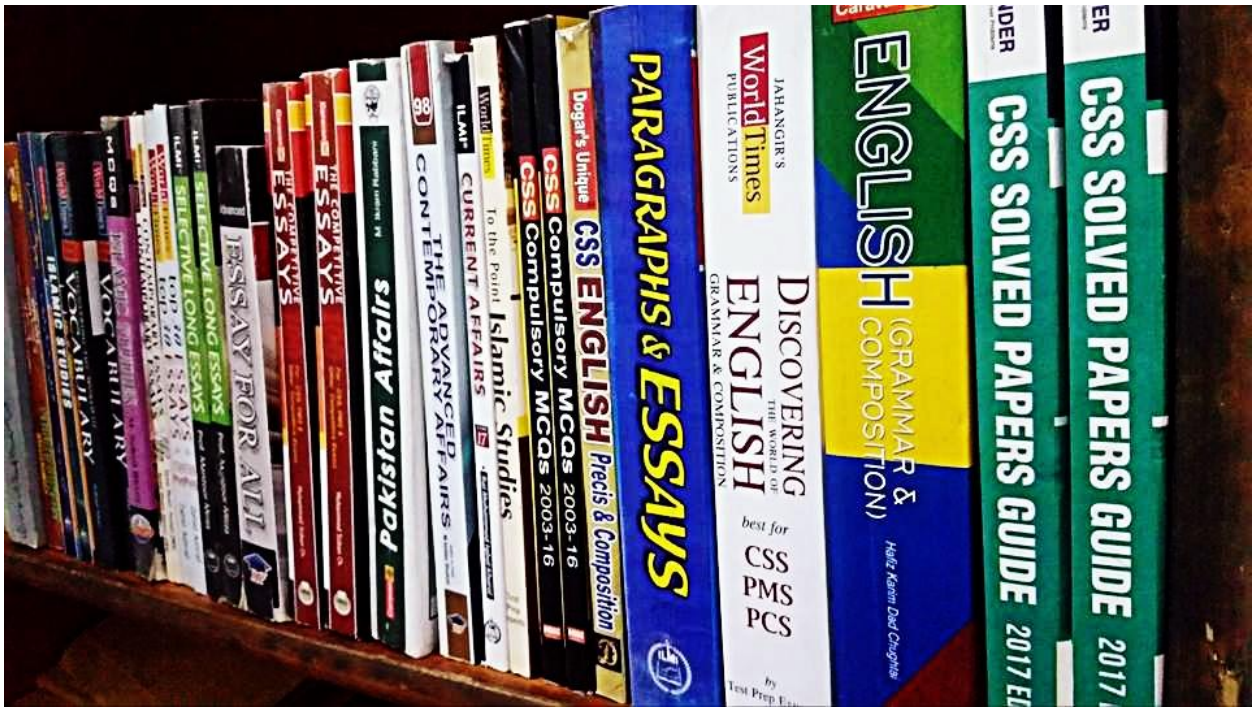

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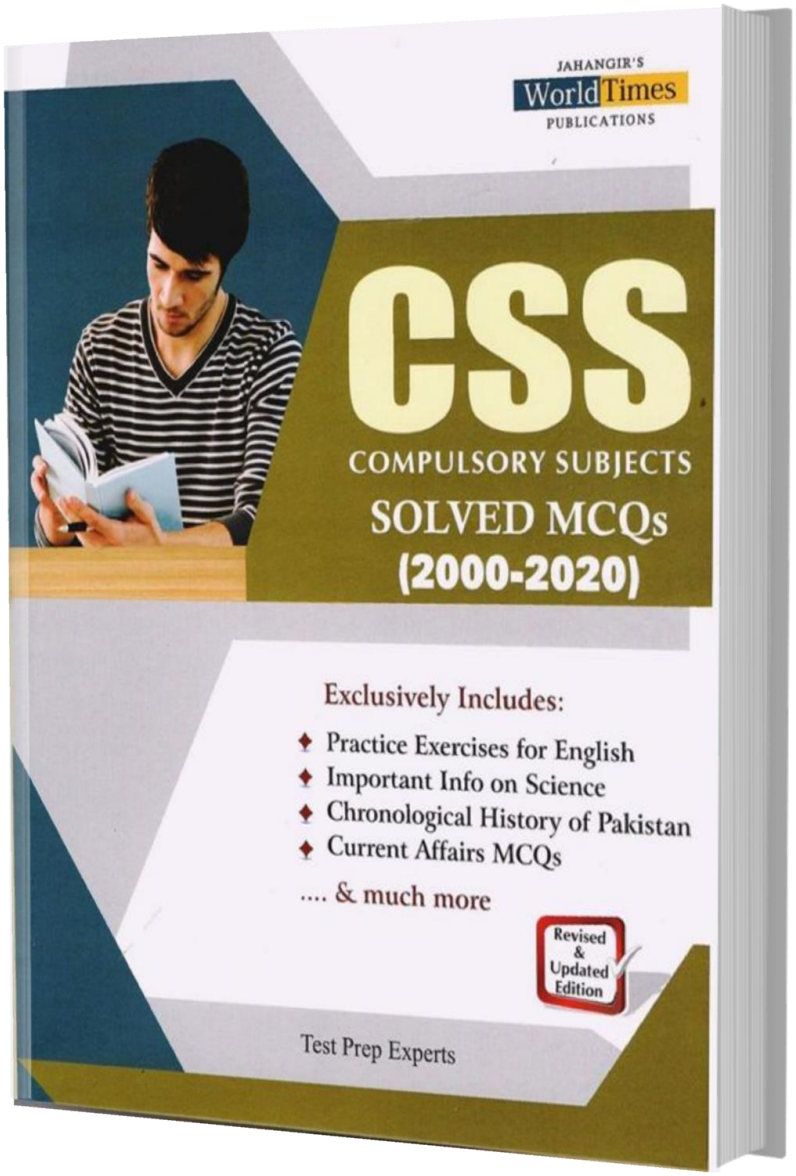

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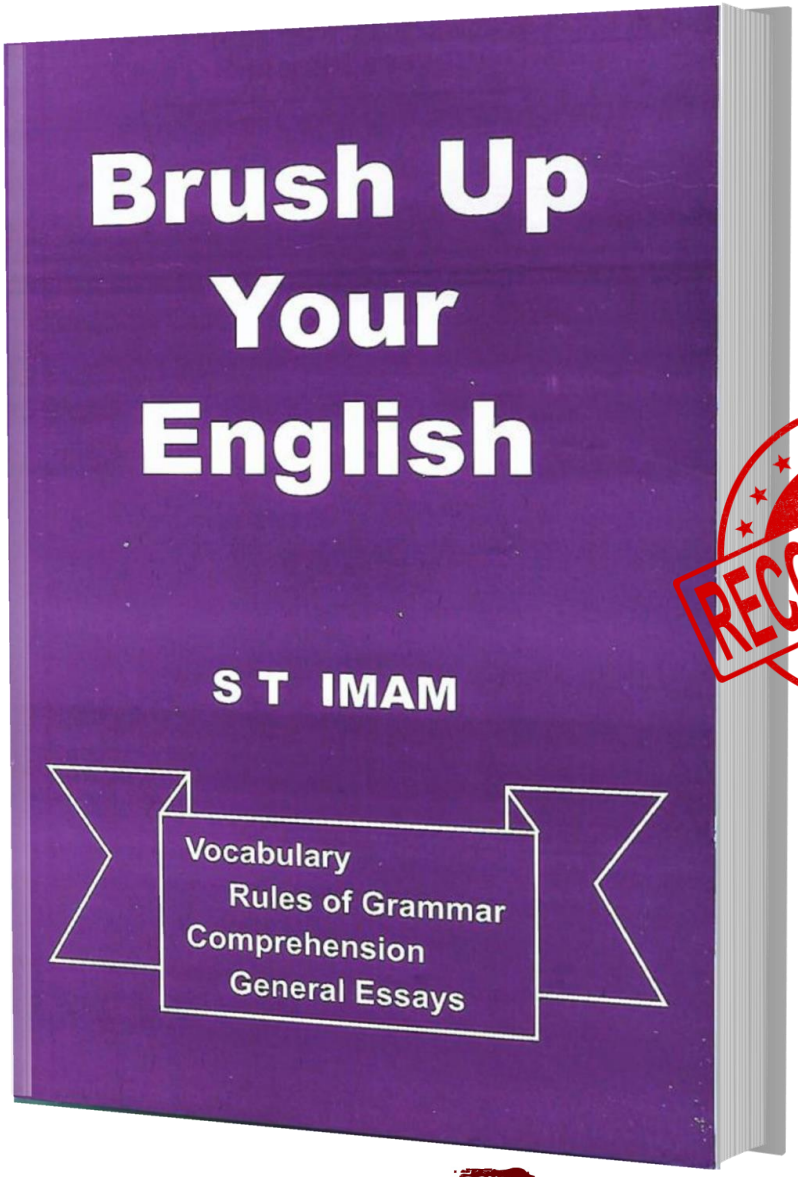

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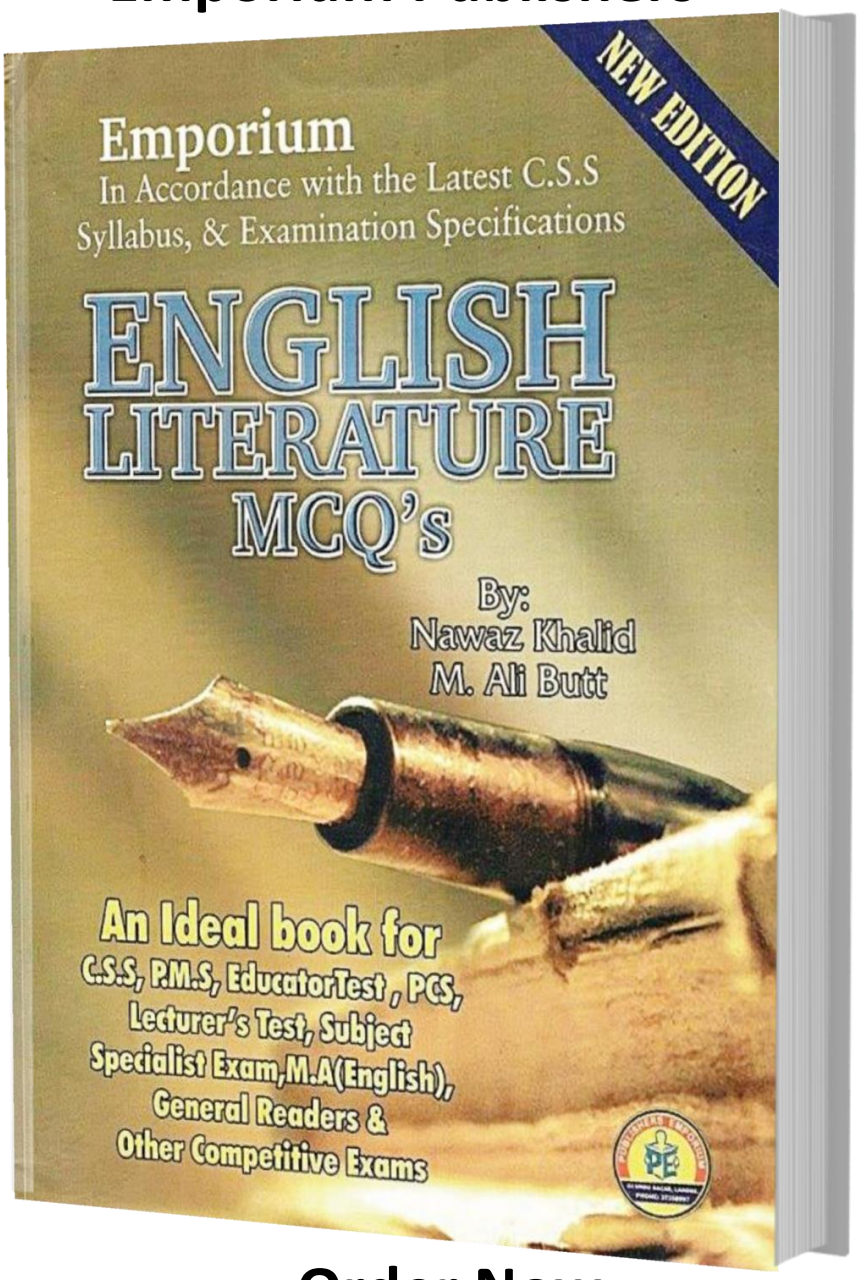

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Volume 99, Number 3

THE FIRE NEXT TIME

COVER: BRIAN STAUFFER

May/June 2020

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WILLIAM NORDHAUS is a pioneer in the economics of climate change. A Sterling professor of economics at Yale University, where he has taught since 1967, Nordhaus was the first to develop the concept of a carbon tax, an idea that has since become central to several dozen countries' strategies for reducing emissions. For his work integrating climate change into long-term macroeconomic analysis, he shared the 2018 Nobel Prize in Economics with Paul Romer. In "The Climate Club" (page 10), Nordhaus explains why the global fight against climate change is failing—and lays out a vision of how to make international climate agreements work.

MOHAMED ADOW has spent almost two decades fighting climate change across Africa. As a member of the relief agency Christian Aid from 2008 to 2019, he consulted for African governments on international climate agreements, disaster risk reduction, and drought management. Today, he continues that work as the founding director of the think tank Power Shift Africa. In "The Climate Debt" (page 60), Adow argues that when it comes to climate change, the West owes the rest.

Ever since **RUCHIR SHARMA** graduated college in New Delhi, at the age of 20, he has balanced a career in finance with his work as an author and columnist, writing several books and frequent articles on emerging markets, global economic trends, and Indian politics, among other topics. In "The Comeback Nation" (page 70), Sharma, currently the head of emerging markets and chief global strategist at Morgan Stanley, argues that despite a widespread narrative of U.S. decline, the 2010s were in fact a golden decade for the United States.

As a doctoral student at Columbia, **JUNG PAK** set out to study U.S. history. Instead, she became a leading authority on North Korea, spending almost ten years analyzing the shadowy regime as a senior official at the CIA and the National Intelligence Council—experience she draws on in her new book, *Becoming Kim Jong Un*. In "What Kim Wants" (page 96), Pak, now the SK-Korea Foundation chair in Korea studies at Brookings, argues that Washington and its allies should focus less on making the North Korean dictator feel secure and more on changing his risk calculus.

THE FIRE NEXT TIME

Professionals warn and plan, amateurs scoff and ignore them, and by the time a crisis arrives, it's too late to do more than react and suffer.

Nothing about this story is novel; the COVID-19 pandemic is only the latest in a long series of unnecessary catastrophes. We can't go back now and regain those precious early months during the winter, using them to aggressively test and quarantine and contain the outbreak. We can't retrospectively conjure up a functioning global public health infrastructure, effective crisis-management systems, and leaders who put lives over pride. But at least we can learn the lessons.

Climate change is also a crisis. It is unfolding more slowly than its pandemic cousin but will have even vaster consequences. The world had a chance to tackle it early but blew that through decades of denial. Much future damage is baked in already. Yet wise public policy can still limit the scale of the eventual disaster—if everybody takes the challenge seriously across the board now, as our lead package this issue explains.

International climate change agreements need to be restructured to reduce incentives for free-riding, writes the Nobel Prize–winning economist William Nordhaus. And a strong global push to develop and adopt low-emission energy technologies could limit future temperature increases, argues a team of top researchers.

Washington should see climate change not only as an environmental risk but also as a strategic opportunity, suggest two former Republican secretaries of state, James Baker and George Shultz, with Ted Halstead, and capitalize on the early U.S. lead in green technology. John Podesta and Todd Stern, who handled climate policy in the Obama administration, offer a road map for overhauling American foreign policy and institutions to rise to the occasion.

Rebecca Henderson shows why business leaders are starting to drive a green agenda rather than obstruct it. Kathy Baughman McLeod notes the crucial role of local and community leadership in fostering simple behavioral changes with powerful collective effects (the environmental equivalents of hand washing). And Mohamed Adow points out that any climate effort must include major development assistance for poor countries, since they are the most vulnerable to the crisis, the least responsible for it, and the key to its solution.

We failed to stop the sickness this time. But we can do better with the fire next time.

—Gideon Rose, Editor

The old design for climate agreements should be scrapped in favor of a new one that can fix its mistakes.
— William Nordhaus

The Climate Club

How to Fix a Failing Global Effort

William Nordhaus

Climate change is the major environmental challenge facing nations today, and it is increasingly viewed as one of the central issues in international relations. Yet governments have used a flawed architecture in their attempts to forge treaties to counter it. The key agreements, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2015 Paris climate accord, have relied on voluntary arrangements, which induce free-riding that undermines any agreement.

States need to reconceptualize climate agreements and replace the current flawed model with an alternative that has a different incentive structure—what I would call the "Climate Club." Nations can overcome the syndrome of free-riding in international climate agreements if they adopt the club model and include penalties for nations that do not participate. Otherwise, the global effort to curb climate change is sure to fail.

In December 2019, the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met in Madrid, Spain. As most independent observers concluded, there was a total disconnect between the need for sharp emission reductions and the outcomes of the deliberations. COP25 followed COP24, which followed COP23, which followed COP22, all the way back to COP1—a series of multilateral negotiations that produced the failed Kyoto Protocol and the wobbly Paris accord. At the end of this long string of conferences, the world in 2020 is no further along than it was after COP1, in 1995: there is no binding international agreement on climate change.

When an athletic team loses 25 games in a row, it is time for a new coach. After a long string of failed climate meetings, similarly, the old design for climate agreements should be scrapped in favor of a new one that can fix its mistakes.

THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Concepts from game theory elucidate different kinds of international conflicts and the potential for international agreements. A first and easy class of agreements are those that are universally beneficial and have strong incentives for parties to participate. Examples include coordination agreements, such as the 1912 accord to coordinate the world measurements of time and, more recently, the agreement to use "aviation English" for civil aviation, which coordinates communications to prevent collisions during air travel. A second class of agreements, of medium difficulty, rely on reciprocity, a central example being treaties on international trade.

A third class of international agreements confront hard problems—those involving global public goods. These are goods whose impacts are indivisibly spread around the entire globe. Public goods do not represent a new phenomenon. But they are becoming more

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BRIAN CRONIN

critical in today's world because of rapid technological change and the astounding decline in transportation and communication costs. The quick spread of COVID-19 is a grim reminder of how global forces respect no boundaries and of the perils of ignoring global problems until they threaten to overwhelm countries that refuse to prepare and cooperate.

Agreements on global public goods are hard because individual countries have an incentive to defect, producing noncooperative, beggar-thy-neighbor outcomes. In doing so, they are pursuing their national interests rather than cooperating on plans that are globally beneficial—and beneficial to the individual countries that participate. Many of the thorniest global issues—interstate armed conflict, nuclear proliferation, the law of the sea, and, increasingly, cyberwarfare—have the structure of a prisoner's dilemma. The prisoner's dilemma occurs in a strategic situation in which the actors have incentives to make themselves better off at the expense of other parties. The result is that all parties are worse off. (The studies of Columbia's Scott Barrett on international environmental agreements lay out the theory and history in an exemplary way.)

International climate treaties, which attempt to address hard problems, fall into the third class, and they have largely failed to meet their objectives. There are many reasons for this failure. Since they are directed at a hard problem, international climate agreements start with an incentive structure that has proved intrinsically difficult to make work. They have also been undermined by myopic or venal leaders who have no interest in long-term global issues and refuse to take the problem seriously. Further obstacles are the scale, difficulty, and cost of slowing climate change.

But in addition to facing the intrinsic difficulty of solving the hard problem of climate change, international climate agreements have been based on a flawed model of how they should be structured. The central flaw has been to overlook the incentive structure. Because countries do not realistically appreciate that the challenge of global warming presents a prisoner's dilemma, they have negotiated agreements that are voluntary and promote free-riding—and are thus sure to fail.

MORE KNOWLEDGE, NO PROGRESS

The risks of climate change were recognized in the UNFCCC, which was ratified in 1994. The UNFCCC declared that the "ultimate objective" of climate policy is "to achieve . . . stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system."

The first step in implementing the UNFCCC was taken in the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. Kyoto's most important innovation was an international cap-and-trade system for emissions. Each country's greenhouse gas emissions were limited under the protocol (the cap). But countries could buy or sell their emission rights to other countries depending on their circumstances (the trade). The idea was that the system would create a market in emissions, which would give countries, companies, and governments strong incentives to reduce their emissions at the lowest possible cost.

The Kyoto Protocol was an ambitious attempt to construct an international architecture to harmonize the

policies of different countries. Because it was voluntary, however, the United States and Canada withdrew without consequences, and no new countries signed on. As a result, there was a sharp reduction in its coverage of emissions. It died a quiet death, mourned by few, on December 31, 2012—a club that no country cared to join.

The Kyoto Protocol was followed by the Paris accord of 2015. This agreement was aimed at "holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels." The Paris agreement requires all countries to make their best efforts through "nationally determined contributions." For example, China announced that it would reduce its carbon intensity (that is, its carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP), and other countries announced absolute reductions in emissions. The United States, under the Trump administration, declared that it would withdraw from the agreement.

Even before the United States withdrew, it was clear that the national targets in the Paris accord were inconsistent with the two-degree temperature target. The accord has two major structural defects: it is uncoordinated, and it is voluntary. It is uncoordinated in the sense that its policies, if undertaken, would not limit climate change to the target of two degrees. And it is voluntary because there are no penalties if countries withdraw or fail to meet their commitments.

Studies of past trends, as well as the likely ineffectiveness of the commitments in the Paris accord, point to a grim reality. Global emissions would need to decline by about three percent annually in the coming years for the world to limit warming to the two-degree target. Actual emissions have grown by about two percent annually over the last two decades. Modeling studies indicate that even if the Paris commitments are met, the global temperature will almost certainly exceed the two-degree target later in the twenty-first century.

The bottom line is that climate policy has not progressed over the last three decades. The dangers of global warming are much better understood, but nations have not adopted effective policies to slow the coming peril.

FREE RIDERS

Why are agreements on global public goods so elusive? After all, nations have succeeded in forging effective policies for national public goods, such as clean air, public health, and water quality. Why have landmark agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris accord failed to make a dent in emission trends?

The reason is free-riding, spurred by the tendency for countries to pursue their national interests. Free-riding occurs when a party receives the benefits of a public good without contributing to the costs. In the case of international climate change policy, countries have an incentive to rely on the emission reductions of others without making costly domestic reductions themselves.

Focusing on national welfare is appropriate when impacts do not spill over national borders. In such cases, countries are well governed if they put their citizens' well-being first rather than promoting narrow interests such as through protectionist tariffs or lax environmental regulations. However, when tackling global problems, nationalist or noncooperative policies that focus solely on the

home country at the expense of other countries—beggar-thy-neighbor policies—are counterproductive.

Many global issues induce cooperation by their very nature. Like players on athletic teams, countries can accomplish more when acting together than when going their separate ways. The most prominent examples of positive-sum cooperation are the treaties and alliances that have led to a sharp decline in battle deaths in recent years. Another important case is the emergence of low-tariff regimes in most countries. By reducing barriers to trade, all nations have seen an improvement in their living standards.

However, alongside the successes lie a string of failures on the global stage. Nations have failed to stop nuclear proliferation, overfishing in the oceans, littering in space, and transnational cybercrime. Many of these failures reflect the syndrome of free-riding. When there are international efforts to resolve a global problem, some nations inevitably contribute very little. For example, NATO is committed to defending its members against attacks. The parties to the alliance agreed to share the costs. In practice, however, the burden sharing is not equal: the United States accounted for 70 percent of the total defense spending by NATO members in 2018. Many other NATO members spend only a tiny fraction of their GDPs on defense, Luxembourg being the extreme case, at just 0.5 percent. Countries that do not fully participate in a multiparty agreement on public goods get a free ride on the costly investments of other countries.

Free-riding is a major hurdle to addressing global externalities, and it lies at the heart of the failure to deal with climate change. Consider a voluntary agreement, such as the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris accord. No single country has an incentive to cut its emissions sharply. Suppose that when Country A spends $100 on abatement, global damages decline by $200 but Country A might get only $20 worth of the benefits: its national cost-benefit analysis would lead it not to undertake the abatement. Hence, nations have a strong incentive not to participate in such agreements. If they do participate, there is a further incentive to understate their emissions or to miss ambitious objectives. The outcome is a noncooperative free-riding equilibrium, in which few countries undertake strong climate change policies—a situation that closely resembles the current international policy environment.

When it comes to climate change policies today, nations speak loudly but carry no stick at all.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

In light of the failure of past agreements, it is easy to conclude that international cooperation on climate change is doomed to fail. This is the wrong conclusion. Past climate treaties have failed because of poor architecture. The key to an effective climate treaty is to change the architecture, from a voluntary agreement to one with strong incentives to participate.

Successful international agreements function as a kind of club of nations. Although most people belong to clubs, they seldom consider their structure. A club is a voluntary group deriving mutual benefits from sharing the costs of producing a shared good or service. The gains from a successful club are sufficiently large that members will pay dues and adhere to club rules to get the benefits of membership.

The principal conditions for a successful club include that there is a public-good-type resource that can be shared (whether the benefits from a military alliance or the enjoyment of low-cost goods from around the world); that the cooperative arrangement, including the costs or dues, is beneficial for each of the members; that nonmembers can be excluded or penalized at relatively low cost to members; and that the membership is stable in the sense that no one wants to leave.

Nations can overcome the syndrome of free-riding in international climate agreements if they adopt the club model rather than the Kyoto-Paris model. How could the Climate Club work? There are two key features of the Climate Club that would distinguish it from previous efforts. The first is that participating countries would agree to undertake harmonized emission reductions designed to meet a climate objective (such as a two-degree temperature limit). The second and critical difference is that nations that do not participate or do not meet their obligations would incur penalties.

Start with the rules for membership. Early climate treaties involved quantitative restrictions, such as emission limits. A more fruitful rule, in line with modern environmental thinking, would focus on a carbon price, a price attached to emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. More precisely, countries would agree on an international target carbon price, which would be the focal provision of the agreement. For example, countries might agree that each will implement policies that produce a minimum domestic carbon price of $50 per metric ton of carbon dioxide. That target price might apply to 2020 and rise over time at, say, three percent per year in real terms. (The World Bank estimates that the global average carbon price today is about $2 per ton of carbon dioxide.)

Why would carbon prices be a better coordinating device than the quantity of emissions? One important reason is that an efficient path for limiting warming would involve equating the incremental (marginal) costs of reductions in all countries and all sectors. This would be accomplished by having equal carbon prices everywhere. A second and equally powerful reason involves bargaining strategy, a point emphasized in the writings of the economist Martin Weitzman. When countries bargain about the target price, this simplifies the negotiations, making them about a single number: dollars per ton. When the bargaining is about each country's emission limit, this is a hopeless matter, because countries want low limits for others and high limits for themselves. A bargain about emission limits is likely to end up with no limits at all.

A treaty focusing on an international target carbon price would not mandate a particular national policy. Countries could use carbon taxes (which would easily solve the problem of setting the price) or a cap-and-trade mechanism (such as is used by the European Union). Either can achieve the minimum price, but different countries might find one or the other approach more suited to its institutions.

The second and critical feature of the Climate Club would be a penalty for nonparticipants. This is what gives the club mechanism its structure of

incentives and what distinguishes it from all current approaches to countering climate change: nonparticipants are penalized. Some form of sanction on nonparticipants is required to induce countries to participate in and abide by agreements with local costs but diffuse benefits. Without penalties, the agreement will dissolve into ineffectiveness, as have the Kyoto and Paris schemes.

Although many different penalties might be considered, the simplest and most effective would be tariffs on imports from nonparticipants into club member states. With penalty tariffs on nonparticipants, the Climate Club would create a situation in which countries acting in their self-interest would choose to enter the club and undertake ambitious emission reductions because of the structure of the payoffs.

One brand of penalty could be a countervailing duty on the carbon content of imports. However, this approach would be both complicated and ineffective as an incentive to join a club. The main problem is that much carbon dioxide is emitted in the production of nontraded goods, such as electricity. Additionally, calculating accurately the indirect carbon content of imports is exceedingly complicated.

A second and more promising approach would be a uniform tariff on all imports from nonclub countries into the club. Take as an example a penalty tariff of five percent. If nonparticipant Country A exported $100 billion worth of goods into the club countries, it would be penalized with $5 billion of tariffs. The advantage of uniform tariffs over countervailing duties is simply simplicity. The point is not to fine-tune the tariffs to a nonparticipant country's production structure but to provide powerful incentives for countries to be part of the Climate Club.

SANCTIONING THE NONPARTICIPANTS

There is a small academic literature analyzing the effectiveness of clubs and comparing them to agreements without sanctions. The results suggest that a well-designed climate club requiring strong carbon abatement and imposing trade sanctions on nonparticipants would provide well-aligned incentives for countries to join.

I will illustrate the point using the results of a study I presented in my 2015 Presidential Address to the American Economic Association and summarized in my Nobel Prize lecture. (The former provided a full explanation of the model, the results, the qualifications, and the sensitivity analyses; the latter was a nontechnical discussion of just the key results.) The study divided the world into 15 major regions. Each region has its own abatement costs and damages from climate change. Because of the global nature of climate change, however, the abatement costs are local, whereas virtually all the benefits of a region's emission reductions spill over to other regions. Even for the largest players (the United States and China), at least 85 percent of the benefits of their emission reductions accrue abroad.

The modeling of the study tested alternative uniform tariff rates, from zero to ten percent, and different international target carbon prices, from $12.50 per ton to $100 per ton. It then asked if there were stable coalitions of countries that wanted to join and remain in the club. One case is a regime

with a carbon price of $25 per ton and a penalty tariff of three percent. With this regime, it is in the national interest of every region to participate, and it is in the interest of no region to defect and free-ride. The coalition of all regions is stable because the losses from the tariff (for nonparticipants) are larger than the costs of abatement (for participants).

The Kyoto Protocol and the Paris accord can be thought of as regimes with zero penalty tariffs. Both history and modeling have shown that these induce minimal abatement. Put differently, the analysis predicts—alas, in a way that history has confirmed—that voluntary international climate agreements will accomplish little; they will definitely not meet the ambitious objectives of the Paris accord.

Such detailed modeling results should not be taken literally. Modeling offers insights rather than single-digit accuracy. The basic lesson is that current approaches are based on a flawed concept of how to manage the global commons. The voluntary approach needs to be replaced by a club structure in which there are penalties for nonparticipation—in effect, environmental taxes on those who are violating the global commons.

TOWARD EFFECTIVE POLICIES

The international community is a long way from adopting a Climate Club or a similar arrangement to slow the ominous march of climate change. The obstacles include ignorance, the distortions of democracy by anti-environmental interests, free-riding among those looking to the interests of their country, and shortsightedness among those who discount the interests of the future. Additionally, nations have continued with the losing strategy (zero wins, 25 losses) pursued by the UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties structure. Global warming is a trillion-dollar problem requiring a trillion-dollar solution, and that demands a far more robust incentive structure.

There are many steps necessary to slow global warming effectively. One central part of a productive strategy is to ensure that actions are global and not just national or local. The best hope for effective coordination is a Climate Club—a coalition of nations that commit to strong steps to reduce emissions and mechanisms to penalize countries that do not participate. Although this is a radical proposal that breaks with the approach of past climate negotiations, no other blueprint on the public agenda holds the promise of strong and coordinated international action.

The Paths to Net Zero

How Technology Can Save the Planet

Inês Azevedo, Michael R. Davidson, Jesse D. Jenkins, Valerie J. Karplus, and David G. Victor

For 30 years, diplomats and policymakers have called for decisive action on climate change—and for 30 years, the climate crisis has grown worse. There are a multitude of reasons for this failure. The benefits of climate action lie mostly in the future, they are diffuse and hard to pin down, and they will accrue above all to poor populations that do not have much of a voice in politics, whether in those countries that emit most of the world's warming pollution or at the global level. The costs of climate action, on the other hand, are evident here and now, and they fall on well-organized interest groups with real political power. In a multipolar world without a responsible hegemon, any collective effort is difficult to organize. And the profound uncertainty about what lies ahead makes it hard to move decisively.

These political hurdles are formidable. The good news is that technological progress can make it much easier to clear them by driving down the costs of action. In the decades to come, innovation could make severe cuts in emissions, also known as "deep decarbonization," achievable at reasonable costs. That will mean reshaping about ten sectors in the global economy—including electric power, transportation, and parts of agriculture—by reinforcing positive change where it is already happening and investing heavily wherever it isn't.

In a few sectors, especially electric power, a major transformation is already underway, and low-emission technologies are quickly becoming more widespread, at least in China, India, and most Western countries. The right policy interventions in wind, solar, and nuclear power, among other technologies, could soon make countries' power grids far less dependent on conventional fossil fuels and radically reduce emissions in the process.

Technological progress in clean electricity has already set off a virtuous circle, with each new innovation creating more political will to do even more. Replicating this symbiosis of technology and politics in other sectors is essential. In most other high-emission industries, however, deep decarbonization has been much slower to arrive. In sectors such as transportation, steel, cement, and plastics, companies will continue to resist profound change unless they are convinced that decarbonization represents not only costs and risks for investors but also an

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opportunity to increase value and revenue. Only a handful have grasped the need for action and begun to test zero-emission technologies at the appropriate scale. Unless governments and businesses come together now to change that—not simply with bold-sounding international agreements and marginal tweaks such as mild carbon taxes but also with a comprehensive industrial policy—there will be little hope of reaching net-zero emissions before it's too late.

THE FUTURE IS ELECTRIC

From today's vantage point, no single domain offers greater opportunities for deep decarbonization than electric power. The use of electricity does not increase or reduce emissions in itself; electricity delivers energy that may or may not be clean depending on how it was generated. An electric car, for instance, doesn't do much good against global warming if all the electricity comes from conventional coal plants. Still, electrifying the economy—in other words, designing more processes to run on electricity rather than the direct combustion of fuels—is essential. This is because, compared with trying to reduce emissions in millions of places where they might occur, it is far easier and more efficient to reduce emissions at a modest number of power plants before distributing the clean electricity by wire. Today, Western economies convert about 30 percent of their energy into electric power. If they want to get serious about decarbonization, that fraction will need to double or more.

Getting there will require progress on two fronts. The first is the electrification of tasks that use vast amounts of energy but still rely on fossil fuels, such as transportation and heating. Overall, transportation accounts for 27 percent of global energy use, and nearly all of it relies on oil. The car industry has had some success in changing this: the latest electric vehicles rival high-end conventional cars in performance and cost, and electric cars now make up around eight percent of new sales in California (although only 1.3 percent nationwide) and nearly 56 percent in Norway, where the government offers massive subsidies to buyers. With improved batteries, heavier-duty vehicles, including buses and trucks, could soon follow. In fact, China already fields a fleet of over 420,000 electric buses. By contrast, aviation—which makes up only two percent of global emissions but is growing rapidly and creates condensation trails in the sky that double its warming effect—presents a tougher challenge. A modern battery can store only two percent of the energy contained in a comparable weight of jet fuel, meaning that any electric airplane would need to carry an extremely heavy load in batteries to travel any reasonable distance. Even in the best-case scenario, commercial electric aviation at significant scale is likely decades away, at least for long-haul flights. Long-distance shipping also faces challenges so daunting that electrification is unlikely to be the best route. And in each of these areas, electrification is all the more difficult because it requires not only changing the conveyances but also building new charging infrastructures.

Besides transportation, the most important electrification frontier is heating—not just in buildings but as part of industrial production, too. All told, heating consumes about half the raw

energy that people and firms around the world use. Of that fraction, some 50 percent goes into industrial processes that require very high temperatures, such as the production of cement and steel and the refining of oil (including for plastics). These sectors will continue to rely on on-site fossil fuel combustion for the foreseeable future, since electricity cannot match the temperature and flexibility of direct fuel combustion. Yet in other areas, such as lower-temperature industrial processes and space heating for buildings, electrification is more practical. Heat pumps are a case in point: whereas conventional heaters work by heating up indoor air, heat pumps act like reversible air conditioners, moving heat (or, if necessary, cold) indoors or outdoors—a far more efficient approach.

Electrification, of course, will not on its own reduce emissions by much unless the power grid that generates and distributes the electricity gets cleaner, too. Ironically, some countries have made modest progress on this front even as they have doubled down on fossil fuels. China, for instance, has swapped out aging coal plants with newer, more efficient ones, cutting emission rates in the process. (The country's most efficient coal plants now emit less carbon dioxide per unit of electricity than comparable U.S. plants.) The United States, for its part, has cut down on its emissions thanks to innovations in horizontal drilling and fracking that have made it economically viable to extract shale gas. In 2005, when this technology first became commercially relevant, coal accounted for half of all the electricity produced in the United States; today, coal's share is down to one-quarter, with much cleaner and inexpensive natural gas and renewables making up the difference.

In theory, fossil fuels could still become much cleaner, even nearly emission free. This could be possible with the help of so-called carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies, which capture the carbon dioxide emissions created by industrial processes and pump it safely underground. In practice, investors have remained wary of this approach, but in both the United States and some European countries, recently introduced subsidies are expected to unleash a wave of new CCS projects in the years ahead. One CCS scheme, currently being tested by a group of engineering and energy firms, completely rethinks the design of power plants, efficiently generating electricity from natural gas while capturing nearly all the carbon dioxide produced in the process at little extra cost. In regions where natural gas is cheap and abundant, this technology could be a game changer.

For now, improved fossil fuel technology has amounted to shallow decarbonization: it has reduced emissions enough to slow the rate of climate change—in the United States, emissions from the power sector have dropped by 29 percent since 2005 thanks mainly to the shale gas revolution and growth of renewables—but not enough to stop it. To prevent the world from warming further will require much more focus on technologies that have essentially zero emissions, such as wind, solar, hydroelectric, and nuclear power, in addition to CCS, if it proves commercially scalable. According to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, these low-carbon technologies would need to generate 80 percent of the world's

The answer, my friend? A wind farm near the Nufenen Pass, Switzerland, September 2016

DENIS BALIBOUSE / REUTERS

electricity by 2050 (up from about one-third today) in order to limit warming to two degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels.

Renewables, in particular, will play a central role. Thanks to decreases in the cost of wind and solar power equipment—and thanks to a mature hydroelectric power industry—renewable energy already accounts for over one-quarter of global electricity production. (Nuclear provides another ten percent.) In the United States, the cost of electricity from large solar farms has tumbled by 90 percent since 2009, and wind energy prices have fallen by nearly 70 percent—and both continue to drop.

Given those plunging costs, the main challenge is no longer to make renewables cheap; it is to integrate them into the power grid without disruptions. To avoid blackouts, a power grid must align supply and demand at all times. Energy output from wind and solar plants, however, varies with the weather, the season, and the daily rise of the sun. The more a power grid relies on renewables, then, the more often the supply will not match the demand. In the extreme, extra power must be dumped—meaning that valuable capital and land were used inefficiently. To be less vulnerable to such shocks, utility companies will need to expand the size of their power grids, so that each can draw on a larger and more diverse array of energy sources. In order to deal with excess supply from renewables—a condition that will become much more frequent as the share of renewables rises—they must also create incentives for users to vary their demand for power more actively and find ways to store surplus electricity on a much larger scale. Today, nearly all bulk storage capacity takes the form of hydroelectric pumps, which store electricity by moving water

uphill and recovering about 80 percent of the power when it flows back down. In the years ahead, soaring demand for electric vehicles will drive down the cost of lithium-ion batteries; those batteries could become an affordable way to store energy at the grid level, too. And as the need for storage increases, even cheaper methods may come on the market.

To better integrate renewables, policymakers can also rely on the strategic use of another zero-emission technology: nuclear energy. Although most efficient when running flat out 24 hours a day, nuclear power plants can also operate flexibly to cover the supply gaps from wind and solar power. Some of France's nuclear reactors, for instance, already cycle from about one-quarter to full power and back again, sometimes twice a day, to compensate for fluctuations in the supply and demand of renewables.

Independent of renewables, nuclear power already contributes massively to cleaner grids. Every year, some 440 operational nuclear reactors account for lower global carbon dioxide emissions of an estimated 1.2 billion metric tons. In the United States, research suggests that keeping most existing nuclear plants open would be far less expensive than many other policy options. In fact, most countries would do well to expand their nuclear power even further to cut back on their emissions. In the West, however, major expansions are not on the horizon: public opposition is strong, and the cost of building new reactors is high, in part because countries have built too few reactors to benefit from the savings that come with repetition and standardization. Yet in other parts of the world—especially China and South Korea, which have more active nuclear power programs—the costs are much lower and public opposition is less pronounced. Moreover, whereas countries once designed and built their own reactors, today many simply import them. That model can create new risks—the sector's leading exporter today is Russia, a country not renowned for its diligence regarding reactor safety or the security of nuclear materials—but it also has the potential to make commercial nuclear technology available to many countries that could not develop and deploy it safely on their own. Abu Dhabi's purchase of four gigantic South Korean–built reactors, the first of which is set to start operating next year, shows the promise of this model. The same approach could work for other countries that currently satisfy their large energy needs with fossil fuels, such as Saudi Arabia.

When it comes to the precise technological makeup of a future decarbonized economy, expert opinions diverge. Engineers and economists, for the most part, imagine solutions that bundle several approaches, with both CCS and nuclear power acting as important complements to renewables. Political scientists, on the other hand, tend to see a bigger role for renewables—one of the few areas in energy policy that usually garners support from across the ideological spectrum, including in the United States. Yet even this rather popular solution can prove divisive. Fierce debates rage over where to locate generators such as wind turbines, including among putative environmentalists who support the technology only if they don't have to look at it. Public opposition to new wind turbines in Norway—even in already industrialized

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areas—and to offshore wind parks in the eastern United States are harbingers of tough siting fights to come. The same issue arises when it comes to power lines: making the most of renewables requires longer, more numerous power lines that can move renewable power wherever it will be needed, but public opposition can make such grid expansions a bureaucratic nightmare. In California, for example, the most recent big power line designed to move renewable power where it will be useful—in that case, from the sunny desert to San Diego—took a decade to build, even though the technical engineering and construction portion of the project should have consumed no more than two years. China, by contrast, has blown past the efforts of the United States and Europe, with dozens of ultrahigh-voltage lines, most of them built in the last decade, crisscrossing the country.

THE GREAT UNKNOWNS

Political obstacles notwithstanding, expanding the electrification of transportation and heat and the production of low-carbon electricity offers the surest path to a clean economy to date. The latest analysis by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for instance, suggests that more pervasive use of clean electricity in the global economy would cover more than half the cuts needed for deep decarbonization. Yet just how big a role electrification will ultimately play is hard to predict—in part because its impact will depend on the future trajectory of rival solutions that are only just beginning to emerge and whose potential is impossible to assess precisely.

Hydrogen, in particular, could serve much the same function as electricity does now in carrying energy from producers to users—and it offers crucial advantages. It is easier to store, making it ideal for power systems dependent on ever-fluctuating supplies of renewable energy. And it can be burned—without producing any new emissions—to generate the high levels of heat needed in heavy industry, meaning that it could replace on-site fossil fuel combustion in sectors that are hard to electrify. Hydrogen (either in its pure form or mixed with other chemicals) could also serve as liquid fuel to power cars, trucks, ships, and airplanes. A zero-emission economy could integrate the two carriers—electricity and hydrogen—using each depending on its suitability for different sectors.

The technology needed to turn hydrogen into an energy carrier already exists in principle. One option is to break up (or electrolyze) water into its constituent elements, hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen could then be stored or transported through the natural gas pipeline networks that already string across all advanced economies. Once it reached its user, it would be burned for heat or used as an input for a variety of chemical processes. So far, this approach is too expensive to be viable on a large scale, but growing investment, especially in Europe, is poised to drive down the cost rapidly. Initial tests, including planned networks of hydrogen pipelines outside Stockholm (for making steel), Port Arthur in Texas (for industrial chemistry), the British city of Leeds (for residential heat), and the Teesside area (for several applications, including power generation) and numerous other ventures, will soon yield more insights into how a real-world hydrogen economy would fare.

CCS is somewhat of a wildcard, too. Some industrial processes produce prodigious and highly concentrated streams of carbon dioxide emissions that should be relatively easy to isolate and capture. The production of cement, which accounts for a whopping four percent of global carbon dioxide emissions, is a good example. But firms operating in global commodity markets, where missteps can be economically disastrous, are hesitant to invest in fledgling systems such as CCS. To change that, state-supported real-world testing is overdue. A nascent Norwegian project to collect carbon dioxide from various industrial sources in several northern European countries and inject it underground may provide some answers.

Another promising area for reducing emissions is agriculture, a field in which advances on the horizon could yield large cuts. More precise control over the diets of animals raised for food—which will probably require more industrial farming and less free grazing—could lead cows, sheep, and other livestock to emit less methane, a warming gas that, pound for pound, is 34 to 86 times as bad as carbon dioxide. (It would also help if people ate less meat.) Meanwhile, a host of changes in crop cultivation—such as altering when rice fields are flooded to strategically determining which engineered crops should be used—could also lower emissions.

Agriculture's biggest potential contribution, however, lies belowground. Plants that engage in photosynthesis use carbon dioxide from the air to grow. The mass cultivation of crops that are specially bred to grow larger roots—a concept being tested on a small scale right now—along with farming methods that avoid tilling the soil, could store huge amounts of carbon dioxide as underground biomass for several decades or longer.

As the hard reality of climate change has set in, some have begun to dream of technologies that could reverse past emissions, such as "direct air capture" machines, which would pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it underground. Pilot projects suggest that these options are very costly—in part because it is thermodynamically difficult to take a dilute gas from the atmosphere and compress it into the high concentrations needed for underground storage. But cost reductions are likely, and the more dire the climate crisis becomes, the more such emergency options must be taken seriously.

GETTING TO ZERO

The ramifications of climate change are proving more disastrous than originally thought, just as politicians are realizing that cutting emissions is harder than anticipated. That leaves a large and growing gap between climate goals, such as the Paris agreement's target of limiting warming to 1.5–2.0 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, and the facts on the ground. The world has already warmed by about 1.1 degrees, and at least another half a degree is probably inevitable, given the downstream effects of today's emissions, the inertia of the climate system, and the inherent difficulty of reshaping industrial infrastructure.

To close the gap between aspirations and reality, governments need to grasp that they cannot rely solely on hard-to-enforce international agreements and seductive market-based approaches, such as carbon pricing, that will work only at the margins. The world needs

new technology, and that means more R & D—much more—and a lot of practical experience in testing and deploying new technologies and business strategies at scale. To stimulate that progress, governments need to embrace what is often called "industrial policy." In each major emitting sector, authorities should create public-private partnerships to invest in, test, and deploy possible solutions.

The details will vary by sector, but the common thread is that governments must directly support fledgling technologies. That means tax credits, direct grants, and promises to procure pioneering green products even if they are more expensive than their conventional alternatives. These steps will ensure that new low-emission products in sectors such as cement, steel, electricity, plastics, and zero-carbon liquid fuels can find lucrative markets. The need for such government intervention is hard to overstate. Producing steel without emissions, for example, could initially be twice as expensive as producing it in the traditional way—a penalty that no company operating in a global, competitive commodity market will accept unless it has direct support in developing the necessary technology, reliable markets through government procurement, and trade protections against dirtier competitors.

For now, no major government is taking these steps at a reasonable scale. The much-touted Green New Deal in the United States is still weak on specifics, and the more concrete it becomes, the harder it may be to form a supportive political coalition around it. Its counterpart, the European Green Deal, is further along yet also faces political challenges and administrative hurdles. If these schemes focus on making critical industries carbon free and provide lots of room for experimentation and learning, they could prove effectual. If they become "Christmas-tree proposals," with ornaments for every industrial and social cause imaginable, then they may collapse under the weight of their cost and poor focus.

A bigger supply of new fundamental ideas for decarbonization is essential. On the first day of the 2015 Paris climate conference, a group of 24 governments, along with the EU and the billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates, pledged to double their spending on clean energy R & D. So far, the group's self-reported data show that it is at 55 percent of its goal; independent and more credible assessments suggest that the actual increase is only half of that. Mission Innovation, as the collective is known, has also set up working groups on solutions such as CCS and hydrogen, but those groups have little capacity to develop and implement a collective research agenda. What is needed instead are smaller, more focused groups of high-powered backers. Powerful governments have a part to play, but not an exclusive one, considering that some (such as the United States today) are unreliable and therefore less important than subnational actors, such as California, or even wealthy philanthropists.

Initiatives such as Mission Innovation are essential because markets for clean technology are global. Three decades ago, when diplomatic efforts to combat climate change began, most innovation in heavy industry, including in the energy sector, came from a small number of Western countries. No

longer. When it comes to electric buses and scooters, China is king, with India taking some baby steps. For electric cars, U.S., Japanese, and European manufacturers are in the lead technologically, but Chinese firms have larger volumes of sales. Innovation in ultrahigh-voltage power lines is coming particularly from engineering firms based in Europe and Asia. The explosion in China of low-cost production of solar photovoltaics was initially geared to supply the highly subsidized German market.

Given this geographic breadth, nationalist trade policies that limit cross-border exchange and investment could easily gum up the works. In particular, the United States should reform its approach to foreign investment in sensitive technologies. Instead of the current review policy—an opaque process managed by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States—regulators should follow the "small yard, high fence" rule proposed by former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates: identify a short list of technologies that are truly sensitive and protect the United States' advantage in those areas while opening the doors to the power of globalization for all others.

THE LONG HAUL

The great technological transformation of the nineteenth century was to harness the power of fossil fuels for industrial growth. The twentieth century rode the wave of innovation that followed and, inadvertently, put the planet on track for massive warming. The defining industrial project of this century will be to leave carbon behind. As governments and firms embark on this enterprise, they should prepare for the long haul. It took cars some 30 years, starting in 1900, to completely replace horses on American roadways—and horses and cars could use the same roads. History has shown that transformations affecting entire infrastructures, as are needed today, take even longer.

Even immediate investment by a cluster of motivated countries, organizations, and billionaires, in other words, cannot transform the industrial system overnight. Yelling louder will not change that. Setting bold goals can help, but new technological facts on the ground—sped along by active industrial policy and international cooperation—are what will transform the politics and make deep decarbonization a reality. Change will be slower than advocates and scientists would like. But it will accelerate if the leaders most willing to act on climate change stop moralizing and start seeing deep decarbonization as a matter of industrial engineering.

The Strategic Case for U.S. Climate Leadership

How Americans Can Win With a Pro-Market Solution

James A. Baker III, George P. Shultz, and Ted Halstead

In the United States, the case for greater action on climate change is typically made on environmental grounds. But there are equally compelling economic, geopolitical, and national security rationales for the United States to lead the world on climate policy. Even those who remain skeptical of the environmental urgency of the problem should recognize the overwhelming strategic advantages of U.S. climate action at home and abroad.

Those who oppose greater U.S. engagement and ambition have legitimate concerns. These concerns tend to fall into two buckets. The first is economic: the chief worry is that global climate solutions could put the U.S. economy at a competitive disadvantage with its trading partners and reduce American living standards. The second set is geopolitical: some observers wonder why the United States should reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions if other countries won't do their part.

But a well-designed U.S. climate policy can replace national vulnerabilities with major strategic opportunities. We propose here an environmentally ambitious, economically sound, and politically feasible plan that situates the United States at the forefront of a clean energy future, enhances the competitiveness of U.S. firms, and allows all Americans to benefit directly from emission reductions. Such a plan would also speed up and strengthen the United States' economic recovery once the immediate health concerns from the novel coronavirus outbreak subside.

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AMERICA'S CARBON ADVANTAGE

Consider first the relationship between national climate policy and international competitiveness. Contrary to the traditional perception that more action on climate change would undermine American competitiveness, the lack of a coherent national climate policy now poses a significant risk to U.S. firms. That is because the current rules of global trade effectively subsidize carbon-intensive production overseas and prevent the United States from reaping the economic benefits of its competitive advantage in low-emission manufacturing.

The chief competitors to U.S.-based firms in China, India, Russia, and other countries generally operate under lax environmental standards and produce

goods in a more carbon-intensive manner. Yet they currently pay no penalty for this. For example, China is now the world's largest steel manufacturer, even though its average production of steel is more than twice as carbon intensive as the United States'. A similar pattern emerges in a variety of industries: motor vehicles, chemicals, even solar panels and agricultural products. In each case, U.S.-based firms compete on an unlevel playing field because the current rules of the game put them at a competitive disadvantage. Rather than lower U.S. climate ambitions, a better response would be to encourage U.S. trading partners to raise their standards or penalize them for their polluting ways.

Further misconceptions exist about technology. Republicans are right to focus on clean energy innovation as the key to reducing carbon emissions. Yet some conservatives seem not to realize that the United States is falling behind in the clean energy race. The innovation coming out of U.S. universities, national labs, and businesses is impressive, but too few of the results are being produced in the United States and too little of it is making its way into commercial applications.

Here, too, a comparison with China is revealing. China is now the world's top producer, exporter, and user of wind turbines, solar panels, and batteries—the essential building blocks of a clean energy economy; the United States is in fourth place, trailing Germany and Japan. China also accounts for 60 percent of global electric vehicle sales, and the country has long-range plans in place to turn itself into the global leader in developing the fuels and cars of the future. The United States cannot remain the world's foremost power if it is not also its leading energy innovator.

Another common misconception is that climate action in the United States is too expensive or risks undermining the U.S. economy. Thanks largely to the shale and fracking revolution pioneered in the United States, market prices for natural gas have fallen by 70 percent since 2008, so the cleanest fossil fuel is now also the cheapest fossil fuel. During roughly the same period, the cost of solar power dropped by nearly 90 percent, and the price of wind power dropped by 70 percent. By capitalizing on efficiency gains and replacing coal with natural gas and solar and wind energy, the United States has cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 12 percent since 2005, all while maintaining a vibrant economy.

Although the United States and its trading partners have a long way to go in reducing emissions, a fundamental paradigm shift is occurring. Climate action and economic growth, far from being mutually exclusive, are not only compatible but also increasingly interdependent.

The U.S. economy has prospered in recent decades because the U.S. public and private sectors were the first to embrace the communications and information technology revolutions. The transition to clean energy promises equally far-reaching economic advantages. Next-generation renewables and nuclear energy could substantially drive down the per-unit cost of electricity, just as the digital revolution drove down costs in recent decades. That is why China is investing so heavily in these sectors. And that is why the United States could be putting its global economic leadership position at risk if it continues to ignore this transformation.

Many corporate leaders have already come to this realization and are pushing for climate action, not just because their customers and shareholders are demanding it but also because of facts on the ground that are affecting their bottom line. The potential domestic economic toll of a warming planet is already difficult to ignore. Greater flooding, storms, wildfires, and droughts harm sectors as varied as real estate and agriculture. Today, taxpayer spending on federal disaster relief is almost ten times what it was three decades ago, after adjusting for inflation. Climate change will exact an ever-greater toll on the U.S. economy over the next several decades if emissions remain on their current course.

RISKS TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST

The United States' lack of a coherent climate strategy also threatens its national security and, most important, its position and influence in the international arena. The national security implications of climate change are substantial. New research published in *Nature Communications* has estimated that rising sea levels will put up to 340 million people at risk of annual flooding or permanent inundation during the next 30 years, largely in Asian megacities. The World Bank, meanwhile, has found that increased flooding, as well as food and water insecurity, in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia alone could generate an additional 51 million to 118 million internal "climate migrants" by 2050. This could profoundly destabilize countries around the world, particularly those with poor governance.

As water scarcity gets worse, control over this vital resource will become a growing source of conflict among states. The current tension between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Nile River foreshadows what might come. And the retreat of Arctic sea ice could change the balance of power among China, Russia, and the United States. A relatively ice-free Arctic would not only open vast new mineral riches to China and Russia; it would also alter world trade routes between Europe and East Asia.

Competition in today's multipolar world is characterized less by direct military confrontation among great powers and more by economic and diplomatic rivalry. Seen through this prism, the United States' lack of a long-term climate strategy harms its ability to promote American interests on a rapidly evolving world stage. The United States risks becoming a bystander, as a prior world order that was overly dependent on Middle Eastern oil gives way to a new one dominated by clean energy.

The winner of the emerging clean energy race will determine the economic and geopolitical balance of power for decades to come. The United States faces steep competition in this field. Russia is one of the United States' main challengers in energy; Moscow has flooded the world with cheap oil and gas through new pipelines and has unveiled a new generation of nuclear plants and fuel agreements with developing countries. Each such investment creates closer geopolitical relationships. Meanwhile, China and India are making major investments in renewable energy technologies (as well as coal-fired electricity). China, already a leading manufacturer of solar and wind tech-

With great emission comes great responsibility: at a steel mill in Hefei, China, March 2006

STRINGER CHINA / REUTERS

nology, seeks to dominate the coming transformation in energy storage and delivery, as well.

At the same time, a lack of economic incentives to reduce carbon emissions in China, India, and other developing countries has resulted in an uneven playing field that forces carbon-efficient U.S. and European companies to compete directly with rivals that have far weaker environmental standards. The lower energy-production costs in developing countries lure global firms away from the United States and Europe. China is adding to the competition by promoting carbon-intensive industrialization in other emerging economies, often powered by new coal plants built through its Belt and Road Initiative. Such investments risk saddling poorer countries with rising carbon emissions. As if that were not enough, China and other emerging economies export their more carbon-intensive goods to the United States in what amounts to "carbon dumping."

The European Union poses a different kind of challenge. For the past 15 years, the EU has limited emissions through a trading system that allows companies to emit greenhouse gases based on the number of allowances they have purchased within a limited, or capped, marketplace. It is now dramatically expanding its climate-related regulations and planning to tax energy-intensive imports.

The United States and the European Union should be working together to defend their collective advantage over more carbon-intensive competitors. Unfortunately, the regulatory burden Europe already imposes on U.S. firms will soon increase as the EU adopts tougher measures to combat climate change, sharpening transatlantic rivalries and reducing the opportunities for collaboration.

If Washington wants to avoid accepting new rules imposed by other countries, it should step up and set its own. Specifically, the United States needs to become the global front-runner in clean energy technologies and forge a U.S.-led climate alliance to advance its national interest. The country has everything to gain from positioning itself, as it so often has, at the head of the table.

CLIMATE POLICY BY DEFAULT

An American-led global energy policy must be grounded in a coherent and cost-effective domestic climate policy. By default rather than by design, however, the United States has a national climate policy that leaves a lot to be desired and is clearly not getting the job done.

It consists of an array of federal climate regulations left over from previous administrations, many of them being unwound by the current one; a variety of federal tax credits and subsidies for both conventional and low-emission energy sources; a patchwork of state-based climate regulations and carbon-pricing regimes, which have proliferated in response to the retrenchment of federal policy; and a constellation of clean energy commitments and investments made by large companies, some of them aided by earlier federal subsidies and research investments. These four elements of U.S. climate policy ultimately leave all the key stakeholders in the debate dissatisfied—whether they be environmentalists, businesses, or voters of various political orientations.

The U.S. government has three main options for reducing emissions: regulations, subsidies, and carbon pricing. The United States has experimented with regulations and subsidies for many years, with mixed results at best. Economists have long maintained that carbon pricing, which involves placing a fee on emissions to reduce them and to drive investment into cleaner technologies, is the fastest and most cost-effective way to cut emissions.

Several of the candidates for the Democratic presidential primary voiced support for some form of carbon pricing. Yet they also proposed costly regulations and massive government expenditures that would hurt businesses and the economy. Through both their rhetoric and their policies, high-profile figures in the Democratic Party have gone out of their way to demonize the companies that provide most of the United States' energy and that are among the largest investors in clean technology ventures.

Republican members of Congress, meanwhile, have started to signal that the era of climate denialism is over. Representative Kevin McCarthy of California, the House minority leader, has warned that the GOP ignores the climate issue at its own peril, and Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Senate majority leader, recently emphasized that the Republican Party needs climate solutions of its own. This represents a critical inflection point in the national climate debate.

Republicans still need to determine the cornerstone of their climate strategy. With the regulatory approach off the table, the GOP is leaning toward promoting clean energy innovation through tax credits and subsidies. So far, this has mostly taken the form of incremental proposals that do not add up to a coherent strategy.

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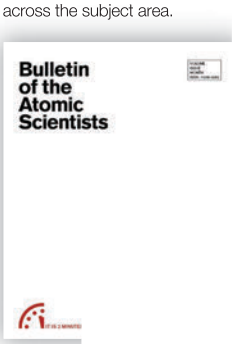

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Democrats and Republicans alike should accept the fact that neither regulations nor subsidies alone will get the job done and that compared with carbon pricing, these two instruments are much more expensive means of reducing emissions, requiring higher overall taxes and deficits. In the end, it is better to rely on the market rather than the government to determine winners and losers.

The time has come for both parties to embrace carbon pricing, which economists and business leaders consistently point to as the most business-friendly and environmentally ambitious way forward. The Republican Party, in particular, can play a major role in this transformation. As the party Americans most associate with business innovation and free-market solutions, the GOP is well positioned to set the terms of a cost-effective and politically viable climate policy breakthrough.

THE WAY FORWARD

In February 2017, we outlined what came to be known as "the Baker-Shultz Carbon Dividends Plan." Our starting premise was that Democrats and Republicans must work together with corporate America and environmentalists to find a market-based, small-government solution capable of overcoming the primary political obstacle to carbon pricing, the risk of harming American living standards. Our second premise was that in order to protect American jobs and competitiveness, the United States must give other leading emitters, such as China and India, a stark choice: do their fair share to reduce emissions or face economic penalties.

A broad coalition has since joined together to turn this plan into a detailed blueprint for bipartisan introduction, hopefully in the current Congress. This coalition includes 19 Fortune 100 companies; three leading environmental nongovernmental organizations; opinion leaders from across the political spectrum; and in the energy sector alone, five of the seven oil and gas supermajors, the largest solar company in the United States, and three of the nation's leading utilities. Last year, our carbon dividends framework was also endorsed by over 3,500 U.S. economists, including the past four chairs of the Federal Reserve, 27 Nobel laureates, and 15 former chairs of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, including all eight former Republican chairs.

The first pillar of this approach would be an economy-wide and revenue-neutral carbon fee. Carbon pricing of this sort would produce faster and greater emission reductions at a lower cost to the economy than regulations or subsidies. Studies show that reducing greenhouse gas emissions by deploying today's most commonly used regulations and subsidies can cost, on average, between $100 and $600 per metric ton. These costs are largely hidden, contributing to the misallocation of capital.

By contrast, our transparent carbon fee would start at $40 per ton and increase by five percent per year above inflation. According to modeling by Resources for the Future, an American nonprofit that researches resource use and allocation, if the plan were enacted in 2021, it would cut U.S. carbon emissions in half by 2035 from 2005 levels. If cumulative U.S. carbon emissions were not on track to meet that objective after five years, then our annual carbon-fee escalator would automatically increase from its base rate of five percent per year to 7.5 percent per year, and then to ten percent per year if

emissions were still not on track. The best modeling indicates that it is highly unlikely that this fee escalator would be triggered, but it is nevertheless an essential component of our approach.

The plan's second pillar calls for returning the revenue from carbon fees directly to the American people in the form of quarterly checks, or dividends. A family of four would receive approximately $2,000 per year in carbon dividends in the first year, an amount that would increase over time as the annual carbon fee increased. According to a study produced by the Treasury Department in 2017, 70 percent of U.S. families—including the least well-off ones—would receive more, on average, in carbon dividends than they would pay in increased energy prices.

Using carrots is a much more effective way to build long-term support than relying on sticks. These provisions would align the economic interests of ordinary Americans with climate progress. And they would create a positive feedback loop: the higher the carbon fee, the lower the carbon emissions and the higher the dividend to all Americans.

Moreover, this approach would empower individual Americans to address climate change on their own terms. It is transparent and easy to understand, leaving decisions over energy choices to consumers and businesses. The fee would increase gradually, allowing people to adjust their habits. And it would incentivize conservation rather than imposing it. By contrast, regulations often take away people's decision-making power, handing it to far-away bureaucratic agencies that are often unresponsive to local concerns.

The dividend would also make the plan revenue neutral. Any climate plan with a high price tag will set off partisan debates over how to pay for the changes and over the size of the government. By contrast, this plan would encourage a smooth transition to a low-carbon future by harnessing the power of the market and incentivizing the private sector to deploy its vast resources for innovation and investment.

PRO-BUSINESS PROVISIONS

A third pillar of the plan would involve significantly simplifying or eliminating regulations, which should be particularly appealing to Republicans. In the many cases in which the carbon fee would provide a more cost-effective policy solution, the fee should replace current and future regulations, which would no longer be necessary. For instance, it should supplant all current and future federal carbon regulations that apply to stationary sources of emissions, such as factories. Given that roughly two-thirds of U.S. carbon emissions currently come from such sources, this regulatory streamlining would provide significant benefits to businesses and the economy. Yet this is not a blanket deregulatory agenda; for example, it would not affect regulations covering other greenhouse gases, such as methane, or building and appliance standards, for which a carbon price is not as effective.

The plan would ultimately give businesses the predictability and flexibility they need to make long-term investments in a low-carbon future. Regulatory stability and a predictable price on carbon would spur clean technology innovation and investment by American companies. Government research and development is, of course, important in establishing a scientific foundation for

technological innovation, and targeted subsidies can accelerate the pace. But a rising carbon fee is the most powerful tool to unleash the innovative power of the private sector. By making it profitable to reduce carbon emissions, such a fee would incentivize businesses across the economy to take their discoveries and use them to pioneer new clean industrial methods and energy sources. Once a technology had proved its commercial viability, the fee would propel its wide and rapid deployment.

The fourth and final pillar of this plan is a carbon tariff designed to level the international playing field by applying the domestic carbon price to energy-intensive imports. This would enable the United States to fully benefit from and leverage its competitive advantage in low-emission manufacturing over many emerging economies. As with the carbon fee, revenues collected from the tariff would be returned to the American people in the form of a quarterly dividend.

Our carbon dividends solution doesn't appeal just to businesses and opinion leaders. When ordinary Americans hear about this approach, they like it, too. A recent survey by the research firm Luntz Global found that 66 percent of American voters would support the plan, as would an even larger share of voters under the age of 40 from both parties. The survey and research company Morning Consult recently polled Americans on all four pillars of the plan separately and found that roughly two-thirds of voters support each one. And both of the polls found that climate change is one of the rare national issues on which Americans truly want a bipartisan solution.

A NEW CLIMATE ALLIANCE

Climate change is the ultimate foreign policy challenge, because any viable solution requires all major countries to act in concert. A domestic reduction of U.S. carbon emissions will be of limited value if other nations, such as China—now the world's top emitter—don't do their part. The United States, accordingly, must complement a carbon dividends plan at home with an international strategy that accounts for the failures of global action so far.

The most successful global environmental treaty to date was the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, which protected the ozone layer by phasing out the production of chemicals responsible for its depletion. Two of us (Baker and Shultz) played significant roles in negotiating that agreement, which succeeded because it was balanced and bipartisan.

As the ozone science developed through the 1980s, so did the technological options to address it. That gave U.S. President Ronald Reagan and contemporaries such as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher the confidence to negotiate a gradual but binding agreement that would encourage the deployment of a substitute class of chemicals. The approach was unanimously ratified by the U.S. Senate. Reagan called it a "monumental achievement." At the time, some environmentalists criticized the deal as too modest. But within just a few years, President George H. W. Bush was able to further increase its ambition, again with broad bipartisan support.

By contrast, 28 years of concerted international efforts—starting in Rio de Janeiro in 1992—to negotiate an effective treaty to reduce global greenhouse

gas emissions have proved disappointing. In large part, this is due to the far greater diplomatic challenge of convincing the leading economies of the world to alter their fundamental energy uses, with all the attendant geopolitical and economic consequences.

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol was unsuccessful, mostly because its binding obligations applied only to developed countries and not developing ones, such as China and India; it was ultimately rejected by the U.S. Senate. The 2015 Paris agreement fared better by getting all parties to the same table. But its voluntary pledge-and-review system lacked an enforcement mechanism. In 2017, the United States decided to withdraw from the agreement.

A new, more robust and realistic diplomatic strategy is now needed to address climate change. The United States should use its dominant position in the world economy, together with its extensive network of international alliances, to persuade other countries, particularly China and India, to do their fair share. The combination of a domestic carbon fee and a carbon tariff can be used to encourage Washington's closest trading partners to join a carbon customs alliance. Such an alliance would have a harmonized carbon price among its members, paired with a common trade policy applied to countries outside the alliance.

The United States' natural partners for an alliance of this sort are Canada, the United Kingdom, and the EU, which already have significant carbon-pricing measures in place and have expressed a clear interest in carbon tariffs. Each may hesitate to go it alone in imposing its own individual carbon tariff due to

the risk of igniting a trade war. But given the importance that U.S. allies now attach to climate change, there is good reason to believe that if the United States led the way, they would join.

Together, the North American and European economies make up nearly half of the world's GDP, giving them considerable market influence over other economies. That influence could grow even further if Japan, Mexico, South Korea, and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations joined the alliance. The very threat of being locked out of such a carbon customs alliance might be enough to move the largest emitters, including China and India, toward a similar regime.

An international climate alliance of this size would do more than just shape the rules of trade governing carbon-intensive goods. It would also partly determine which economies will dominate the energy industries of the future. Naturally, those economies inside the coalition would have the upper hand in any international competition. It would be in China's strategic interest to join, rather than resist, a climate alliance whose price of membership was harmonizing its domestic carbon price with that of its trading partners. China is already experimenting with a domestic carbon price, so this idea is hardly far-fetched. Beijing, after all, would likely understand that it would enjoy greater energy security inside such an alliance than it would outside it.

In the meantime, climate policy does not need to become another source of conflict between China and the United States. In fact, the two great powers could use the climate as a means of cooperating to bring greater prosperity to the world. As China emerges on the world stage, both China and the United States would do well to focus on areas of mutual benefit, even as both sides position themselves for the future.

The world faces a global challenge of uncertain and potentially enormous consequence that is within humanity's innovative capability to solve. Yet not a single major power is implementing adequate solutions, because none has found a viable political, economic, or international formula. The carbon dividends program we propose offers the best solution to resolve this impasse. Domestically, it would enable environmentalists, businesses, and political leaders to forge a lasting pact that leaves the majority of American families economically better off. Internationally, only a U.S.-led climate alliance can muster enough economic leverage to compel China, India, and other major economies to join, face carbon tariffs, or ultimately risk being shut out of the world's largest market. The United States must lead the way.

A Foreign Policy for the Climate

How American Leadership Can Avert Catastrophe

John Podesta and Todd Stern

In September 2019, after a two-year drought and some of the hottest days on record, wildfires broke out across eastern Australia. The fires raged for seven months and consumed 75,000 square miles. They displaced tens of thousands of people and destroyed almost 3,000 homes. In Melbourne, the air quality was 30 percent worse than in famously toxic New Delhi. Researchers estimate that more than one billion animals died in the conflagration. And the total economic damage is expected to exceed the previous $4.4 billion record set by the Black Saturday fires in 2009.

The Australian fires were a particularly harsh reminder of the effects of climate change, but they were hardly the only one to make the headlines recently. Between 2010 and 2019, natural disasters cost the world approximately $2.98 trillion, making the last decade the costliest one on record. And in the first half of 2019, extreme weather displaced seven million people, setting a new midyear high. The situation will only get worse: in the next few decades, climate change threatens to cause shortages of food and water, render coastlines that are home to hundreds of millions of people unsuitable for habitation, and unleash a stream of refugees that will dwarf the flow during the recent European migration crisis.

Tackling the climate emergency will require decisive action. In 2018, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change made it clear that to avoid significant risks to planetary health and human well-being, the United States and other significant emitters must cut their carbon emissions to "net zero" by 2050, a daunting task, well beyond what most thought necessary at the time of the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change. Even if countries increase the amount of carbon dioxide they can capture and sequester, they will still have to radically decarbonize their energy, transportation, and manufacturing systems in the next 30 years, while also transforming agriculture and arresting deforestation.

The United States, in particular, will require both a full mobilization at home and an unhesitating commitment to leadership abroad. A president ready to take on climate change must organize the government to meet this challenge and work with Congress to enact a broad program of investments and incentives for the development and dissemination of clean technology. Abroad, the United States must devise a climate-centered foreign policy that uses the country's political capital and economic resources to drive the decarbonization of the global economy. Several changes are needed—starting at the White House and extend-

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ing to key bilateral relationships, international forums, and financial institutions—to accelerate a global clean energy transformation and galvanize the political will necessary to confront climate change. The tools to spur clean technological innovation, promote sustainable investment and job creation, and confront environmental injustices are within political leaders' grasp. Heads of state and government need only be willing to employ them.

CHANGE BEGINS AT HOME

To reach net-zero emissions by 2050, the United States' executive branch will have to undergo structural changes. The next president should create a national climate council, overseen by an assistant to the president for climate policy. Modeled after the National Security Council and the National Economic Council, the National Climate Council would boast a specialized support staff capable of directing and delivering quantifiable results across the federal government. It would spearhead executive action and legislation and coordinate between actors at the state and local levels. And in conjunction with top members of the National Security Council, the proposed council would develop and execute a diplomatic and security strategy to propel rapid clean energy deployment, build resilience against climate-change-induced disasters, and pressure reluctant actors to achieve the net-zero goal. What's more, the president should direct the Pentagon and the intelligence community to expand their treatment of the climate threat out to 2050 and beyond. To date, both institutions have included useful comments on climate change in their major threat assessments, but more could be done to articulate the profound risks from climate change to U.S. interests abroad—risks that include state failure, migration, and conflict.

The United States should also resume its historic leadership in climate science and climate data collection. In the past, it has made information from American satellites, sonars, and other remote-sensing technologies available to decision-makers around the world as they planned for the impacts of climate change. But the priority given to climate science has withered under the Trump administration.

To achieve the country's sustainability goals, the United States should triple its investment in climate science and data collection. And the country should once more give science pride of place in decision-making, appoint scientists to key advisory positions, and establish rigorous scientific standards across agencies. New funds would also help the country quickly rebuild the U.S. science workforce after losses during the Trump years, bringing in new talent that can tackle the challenges of the coming century.

That said, officials need to be aware that a return by the United States to a position of leadership on climate change would be greeted by some skepticism on the part of the international community. The other major players know that they need the United States, but they have been burned twice: first when President George W. Bush refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol, in which only developed countries promised to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and then when President Donald Trump announced the United States' withdrawal from the Paris agreement. This under-

In the heat of the moment: fighting brush fires in Cathcart, Australia, January 2020

MATTHEW ABBOTT / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

scores the pressing need, as the country moves forward, for Republicans to start joining Democrats in recognizing the reality and urgency of climate change so that Washington can move past the start-and-stop pattern of U.S. climate engagement. A climate-centered foreign policy would go a long way toward rebuilding trust. It would go even further if the United States, in word and deed, chose to abandon gradualism and embrace the net-zero goal; after all, if the country lacks the political will to combat climate change at home, it will be unable to earn the bona fides it needs to lead internationally.

THE PRODIGAL SON RETURNS

To convey its renewed commitment, the United States should promptly announce its intention to rejoin the Paris agreement. The agreement is a crucial component of the global effort to contain climate change. The deal brings countries together each year, urges them to ramp up their action and build resilience, takes stock of their progress toward the 2015 goals, scrutinizes the provision of financial assistance, and provides a platform for joint engagement. The agreement is also the symbolic embodiment of the world's commitment to combat climate change.

Beyond rejoining, the United States will need to prepare new emission targets that are both consistent with the net-zero imperative and credible. In addition, the United States and its allies should push all countries, especially the major emitters, to submit their own strategies for getting to net-zero emissions by 2050, as called for in the Paris agreement.

The Paris agreement is not the only institution that the current administration has been neglecting. In 2009, the United States launched the Major

Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF), a group of 17 economies representing some 80 percent of global emissions that gathered at the ministerial level to facilitate the climate negotiations. The next administration should revive the MEF and recommend that its members' leaders meet every two years to review where the world's largest economies stand on climate change and what new forms of joint action they should undertake. (Government ministers should meet twice a year to prepare for the meetings.) The focus of this new MEF would be the challenge of global decarbonization, and its first order of business would be to secure agreement on the net-zero goal. The body could also promote the development and dissemination of sustainable technology, become a venue for sharing policy ideas and best practices, and support the efforts of multinational businesses to set clean energy standards. Argentina, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey should be invited to join in order to provide additional representation for important regions and so that the MEF and the G-20, which would then share the same membership, could coordinate the timing of their meetings.

The United States should also work with key European allies to reinvigorate the High Ambition Coalition—which was the fiercest champion of bold mitigation measures at the Paris negotiations—so that the organization can advocate both within the Paris regime and outside it for measures to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The members of the High Ambition Coalition include the United Kingdom and the EU, a group of progressive Latin American and Caribbean countries, and many vulnerable states from Africa and Asia, most of whom are not big emitters. But they are strong proponents of the net-zero goal and have the moral standing to put salutary pressure on all the important players.

GREENBACKS FOR A GREEN EARTH

Developing economies badly need investment in low-carbon energy systems and in infrastructure that can withstand climate change. The United States, together with key allies in Europe and Asia, should bring together a coalition of international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and regional development banks—such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which the United States should join—to encourage lending practices in line with the net-zero goal and quickly direct substantial investment toward sustainable infrastructure and development. In addition, the United States should build a coalition to press the major coal-financing countries—China, Japan, and South Korea—to put a moratorium on coal investments around the world, all the while ensuring that funds will be available for clean alternatives.

Washington must also step up its own climate assistance to poor countries. In 2014, Obama pledged $3 billion over a four-year period to the new Green Climate Fund and secured $500 million from Congress for each of the next two years. But the Trump administration cut this funding off. The next president should prioritize getting the remaining $2 billion out the door and should follow the lead of such countries as France, Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom, which doubled their 2014 pledges in 2019.

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Of course, the existing money is not yet being used properly. Huge amounts of funding are perversely protecting fossil fuels at the very moment when the world needs to start breaking the dirty habit. Direct subsidies amount to well over $500 billion per year globally, and total subsidies stood at over $5.2 trillion in 2017. Washington should pressure other governments to eliminate these subsidies, an effort Obama began in the G-20 in 2009.

The next president should also enact carbon tariffs on imports from countries with inadequate climate policies. Such "border adjustment mechanisms" were part of the Waxman-Markey cap-and-trade bill, which was approved by the House of Representatives in 2009 but never voted on in the Senate. Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, has called for carbon tariffs in the EU, as well. Washington should embrace such tariffs and support other governments doing the same.

Additionally, the United States should push for an agreement to facilitate trade in environmental goods—such as products that produce renewable energy or improve energy efficiency—an effort the World Trade Organization pursued during the Obama years but never completed. And it should make sure that all bilateral trade agreements include environmental and labor standards as enforceable components.

The next administration should also capitalize on the work of the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), a body set up in 2015 by the Financial Stability Board, itself an organ of the G-20, to help public and private actors worldwide make informed emission decisions. The task force is designed to push companies to disclose the risk that climate change poses to their businesses so that markets can price that risk. But its recommendations lack impact because disclosures are voluntary. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and other financial regulators around the world should commit to adopting and enforcing the TCFD's protocols.

FRIENDS, NEW AND OLD

A climate-centered foreign policy would also shape the United States' bilateral relations with both partners and rivals. The United Kingdom and members of the EU have been leaders in the fight against climate change for decades, and they would remain essential U.S. allies in the pursuit of a net-zero world. Together with the United States, these countries represent more than a third of global GDP and an equal share of both China's and India's export markets. This kind of clout gives them the leverage to influence Chinese and Indian climate behavior. Other developed countries, such as Japan and New Zealand, have also been important U.S. partners in the past and would be again. Canada and Mexico should also be close allies, both in driving strong climate action across North America and in joining a global coalition for low- or no-carbon economic transformation. The U.S. government will need to collaborate with all these players on a number of fronts, including synchronizing policy approaches to rapidly scale up the production and use of clean and efficient energy.

But the United States will also have to work with more challenging partners. China, in particular, has such an enormous carbon footprint (it accounts for around 29 percent of global carbon

emissions) and so much influence in the developing world that there is no way to reach global climate goals without it. During the Obama years, both the U.S. and the Chinese governments recognized the potential for climate change to serve as a positive pillar of the two countries' often fractious bilateral relationship. This culminated in a joint announcement in 2014 in which both governments pledged to curb their emissions, with China agreeing for the first time to stop its total emissions from growing by 2030.

Today, the challenge is even greater, given the tensions with China over trade, regional security, and human rights. But not only must the United States continue to work with China on climate change; it must also put progress toward a net-zero world in 2050 at the very center of the relationship. There will be plenty of U.S.-Chinese competition in the future, given the two countries' diverging interests, but the setting of priorities matters. The harsh reality is that if the United States and China don't get climate change right, the fallout from that failure will dwarf most other issues, including those stemming from U.S. competition with China.

Early on, the next president should organize a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping to collaborate on climate change. At the meeting, both leaders should attempt to establish parameters regarding the scale and speed of decarbonization globally and in their two countries. No adequate progress is possible if the United States and China are working from fundamentally different assumptions about what needs to be done and when; but if they could come to a genuine meeting of the minds, it would move the world.

The United States will also have to deal with India, the third-largest emitter, behind only China and the United States. The country's use of renewable energy is increasing impressively; New Delhi has worked effectively—with support from the U.S. government and the private sector—to develop green buildings and electric vehicles, yet the country is still forging ahead with plans to build ten new major coal installations. The United States should propose to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi a larger-scale, more dynamic clean energy partnership than ever before, focused on policy as well as technological research, development, and dissemination.

Brazil will also need to be the target of American climate diplomacy. Under President Jair Bolsonaro, the country has gone from being a constructive player on climate change, substantially reducing deforestation in the Amazon River basin, to a first-order threat. Bolsonaro is implementing policies that risk tipping the region into an ecological death spiral that could cause the release of hundreds of billions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, wipe out ten percent of global biodiversity, and destroy a forest system that is essential to regulating the entire region's rainfall. The next U.S. president will need to work urgently with Latin American allies—including progressive friends such as Chile, Colombia, and Peru—to urge Bolsonaro to abandon the catastrophic course he is steering for the Amazon basin. There is no road to global well-being without Brazil.

Some countries will inevitably resist change because they have so much at stake in the global fossil fuel economy.

The United States itself, on the strength of the fracking revolution, has become the largest oil and gas producer in the world, so it, too, must plan for the decline of the fossil fuel sector with the rise of clean energy. But the United States has the advantage of a fully diversified economy, whereas many fossil fuel producers do not. There is no easy answer here, but Washington will need to work closely with its allies to help producing countries find a path forward consistent with the necessary emission reductions.

Finally, climate change will prompt a large-scale movement of people that will threaten stability and democratic politics. Indeed, the migration crises in Europe and on the U.S.-Mexican border will likely seem minor compared with the global exoduses prompted by rising temperatures. As severe climate change displaces more people, the international community will be forced to either change the legal definition of refugees to include climate migrants or create a new category altogether. (The current definition is focused on political persecution rather than environmental degradation.) The United States' ambassador to the UN should take up this cause in the Security Council, and the United States should collaborate with its partners in the worst-affected regions to explore the best ways to support internal refugees and outline the legal rights of those fleeing climate change, along with practical plans for helping them.

The United States' relative absence from climate mitigation and adaptation efforts under the Trump administration has been highly problematic. U.S. resources, influence, and expertise—not to mention the United States' enormous carbon footprint—make the country an indispensable player in such discussions and actions. Pull the United States out of the equation, and the energy and focus dedicated to fighting climate change dwindles from Beijing to New Delhi to Brasília. In spite of the recent lull, however, the United States' policy toward climate change could be rapidly transformed, especially with a new president in the White House. We have sketched out what the changes could look like if climate were made the central organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy. The public, for its part, is increasingly eager to be led, as are large swaths of the business community. The international community will doubtless remain a bit wary of the sharp turns that U.S. politics can produce, but other countries are hungry for the United States to lead again. A new president who sees the climate threat for what it is could make a game-changing difference. It is late in the day, but not yet too late.

The Unlikely Environmentalists

How the Private Sector Can Combat Climate Change

Rebecca Henderson

There's a reason climate change is often described as a "wicked problem." Fully decarbonizing the economy will require not only completely transforming the global energy infrastructure, at a cost of many trillions of dollars, but also retrofitting all of the world's buildings, remaking the planet's agricultural practices, and revolutionizing transportation systems. It is difficult to see how this can be accomplished without some kind of global carbon tax or regulatory regime. But putting such a system in place is proving to be enormously difficult. The 2015 Paris agreement on climate change was a good first step, but many countries show little sign of meeting the commitments they made as part of that agreement, and the United States' withdrawal from the process has presented a significant barrier to further progress. Given the slowing global economy and the slide toward populism and nationalism in much of the world, the prospects for any kind of comprehensive global accord seem increasingly remote. So far, at least, the public sector is failing to confront the problem.

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But the private sector has begun to step in to fill the vacuum. In January, Larry Fink, the CEO of BlackRock, the largest asset manager in the world, declared that "climate risk is investment risk" and announced that going forward BlackRock would ask every firm in its portfolio to disclose its carbon emissions. BlackRock has roughly $7 trillion under management and is one of the largest shareholders in nearly every publicly traded firm in the world. So companies around the world paid attention when Fink went on to say that BlackRock would consider voting against boards whose firms "do not make sufficient progress" in addressing climate-related risks and would cease to invest altogether in some fossil fuel projects.

Fink is not alone. Many of the world's largest asset owners are coming to the conclusion that climate change is the most important risk to the long-term health of their portfolios. More than a third of global invested capital—about $19 trillion—is controlled by the world's 100 largest asset owners. Nearly two-thirds of this money is in pension funds; the remaining third is in sovereign wealth funds. These funds are now so large that they are sometimes referred to as "universal owners" or "universal investors" since, in effect, they hold the entire market. For that reason, they cannot diversify away from the risk of climate change—a risk that Mark Carney, who until earlier this year was the governor of the Bank of England, suggested could result in an abrupt financial collapse, potentially wiping out as much as $20 trillion of assets. To avert that kind of calamity, major asset owners are starting to push the companies in their portfolios to address climate change.

This trend is not driven by altruism or a deep commitment to the environment: it's a function of economic interests. For the world's largest asset owners, climate change is not an externality—it is a profound threat to their long-term returns. It will, after all, be significantly harder to make money in a world where most of the major ports are underwater, harvests are failing on a routine basis, and hundreds of millions of people are on the move.

As more and more major asset owners come to this realization, it is creating increasingly strong incentives for them to cooperate with one another in support of large-scale decarbonization. Together, they are pressing the firms in their portfolios to set concrete targets for emission reductions and to make progress toward meeting those targets, potentially solving the problem posed by firms' unwillingness to cut their emissions unless they can be assured that their competitors will follow suit. Someone, however, will need to monitor that progress and sanction firms that lag behind—a role that would be best filled by government regulators. The need for such public-sector involvement will likely increase private-sector support for the policy changes required to drastically reduce carbon emissions. In this way, private-sector pressure may serve as the force that finally breaks the political logjam that has long blocked the public action needed to solve the climate crisis.

MONEY TALKS

One of the most promising examples of what this might look like in practice is Climate Action 100+, a nonprofit affiliation of more than 300 investors who collectively control nearly half of the world's invested capital. The group was founded in 2017 with the goal of persuading the world's 100 largest private-sector carbon emitters to "cut the financial risk associated with catastrophe" by putting in place board-level processes to assess their climate-related risks and oversee plans for dealing with them, pledging to clearly disclose those risks, and taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across their value chains rapidly enough to help meet the Paris agreement's goal of limiting the increase in the global average temperature to well below two degrees Celsius.

In December 2018, a group of investors belonging to Climate Action 100+ published a letter in the *Financial Times* listing some specific steps they were demanding of companies in which they invest, including "the rapid elimination of coal use by utilities in EU and OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] countries by no later than 2030." Six months later, investors from the consortium pushed the oil giant Shell to announce short-term targets for limiting its greenhouse gas emissions and persuaded BP to support a shareholder resolution that binds the oil company to disclose the carbon intensity of its products, the methodology it uses to consider the climate impact of new investments, and its plans for setting and measuring emission targets. More than half of the 40 oil and gas companies with which the group has engaged have set long-term quantitative targets for reducing their emissions. And the group has helped persuade the shipping giant Maersk and two of the world's largest

mining companies, ArcelorMittal and Thyssenkrupp, to commit to becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

These kinds of commitments are sometimes dismissed as mere greenwashing: public relations stunts designed to buy time. And sometimes they are. But they might also help catalyze an economic transformation that could play a major role in arresting climate change.

Of course, large asset holders are not the only players who shape a company's incentives: employees and consumers do, as well, and they are increasingly insisting that firms go green—and rewarding them when they do. For example, after the consumer goods giant Unilever announced that it planned to cut its carbon footprint in half and double its revenue at the same time—and then followed through by transforming its operations, brand by brand—the firm joined Facebook, Google, and Microsoft on LinkedIn's list of the ten most desirable employers in the world. Sales of Unilever's "sustainable living" brands—which include Ben & Jerry's, Dove, and Vaseline and which Unilever claims "contribute to achieving the company's ambition of halving its environmental footprint"—are growing 69 percent faster than the rest of the business and providing 75 percent of the company's growth.

Shifting public attitudes about climate change and public policies intended to combat it have also created clear business opportunities. Solar and wind energy are both multibillion-dollar businesses. The market for plant-based alternatives to meat is exploding. And global recycling could generate close to $400 billion in the next five years.

RISKY BUSINESS

But embracing the innovation that is required to exploit new opportunities is often risky and expensive. The venture capital industry lost at least $10 billion between 2005 and 2011 investing in clean energy technology. An electric utility that commits to phasing out coal plants might reap the benefits of declining solar and wind energy costs, but it could also misjudge the market and significantly increase its costs. An automobile company that invests in developing electric vehicles might leap ahead of its competitors, but it could also risk losing out to more cautious rivals.

Universal investors can help mitigate those risks by funneling capital to firms that are willing to make the first move. This can be transformational in itself, since companies that decide to embrace new opportunities can often persuade an entire industry to follow them. Walmart's massive investments in energy saving and waste reduction, for example, have helped persuade many other companies to take similar steps. Since 2010, the price of battery storage has fallen by at least 73 percent, a change driven largely by the electric vehicle company Tesla's significant investments in the technology, which spurred the company's competitors to invest more than $90 billion in the development of electric vehicles.

Major asset holders can also push companies to commit to aggressive targets for decarbonizing their business models and insist that they report on their progress. In this way, universal investors may be able to force every firm in an industry to act, solving the collective action problem inherent in tackling climate change. Firms don't naturally

act collectively—for all kinds of reasons, including antitrust law. But when there exists a clear business case for doing so and cooperation can be credibly enforced, voluntary cooperation can be an effective means of creating or preserving public goods. Nearly half of the world's inshore fisheries are managed through some form of cooperative agreement. Most of the rules governing international trade are designed and enforced by the International Chamber of Commerce, a voluntary association founded in 1919.

Some of the world's largest firms are increasingly exploring whether these kinds of voluntary agreements might be an effective way to reduce emissions. For example, after Unilever came under pressure from activists to stop using palm oil, the cultivation of which contributes to deforestation, Paul Polman, who was then the company's CEO, was able to persuade many of his fellow consumer goods CEOs that continuing to purchase conventionally produced palm oil presented a significant threat to their own brands. Partly as a result, more than 60 percent of the world's traded palm oil is now covered by sustainability commitments. Similar agreements with respect to soy and beef have greatly slowed rates of deforestation in the Amazon River basin. And companies in industries as diverse as airlines, food, retail, apparel, travel, hospitality, construction, health care, and high technology have begun to coordinate to reduce carbon emissions across supply chains, so that no single firm is placed at a disadvantage by going green.

Such arrangements produce a wealth of knowledge about what effective decarbonization might look like on the ground. As one might expect, however, they are often unstable and difficult to enforce, since no mechanism exists through which to punish firms that drag their feet or refuse to conform. Here, universal investors might be able to make a significant difference by acting as enforcers. If BlackRock, for example, follows through on its threat to vote against the boards of companies that do not adequately disclose their climate emissions, every major firm in every industry will be forced to report—in an auditable, replicable way—the degree to which it is meeting its commitments. And if the world's major investors then vote against the boards of those companies that are falling behind, investors could catalyze the transformation of entire industries.

THE EARTH LOBBY

Arresting climate change will still require government action, of course, and the changes afoot in finance and the corporate world could ease the path. As firms commit to reducing their carbon emissions, they are increasingly recognizing that the most effective way to ensure that they are not undercut by lagging companies is to press for regulation. Together, they are creating a constituency for effective climate policy.

In 2017, for example, when U.S. President Donald Trump declared that he was going to withdraw the United States from the Paris agreement, the CEOs of more than 50 U.S. companies, including Apple, Gap, Google, HP, and Levi Strauss, published an open letter urging him to rethink the decision. When Trump stuck to his plan, Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla, and Bob Iger, then the CEO of Disney, resigned from some of the president's advisory councils in protest. More than 2,000 compa-

Green is good: Fink, center, with French President Emmanuel Macron, right, in Paris, July 2019

MICHEL EULER / AP

nies have joined a collaborative effort called "We Are Still In," a group working to ensure that the United States meets its commitments under the agreement despite the administration's withdrawal. The group includes not only businesses but also states, cities, religious organizations, and universities. Together, they represent 68 percent of U.S. GDP, 65 percent of the U.S. population, and the source of more than half of all U.S. carbon emissions. Such action independent of the federal government could make a big difference. According to America's Pledge, a nongovernmental organization that tracks local progress toward emission reductions, the "full achievement of already on-the-books policies from state and local actors—paired with rapidly shifting economics in the power sector—would reduce emissions 19 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 and 25 percent below 2005 levels by 2030." This would be a significant step toward the approximately 50 percent reduction in emissions that the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates is necessary to avoid the most dangerous potential outcomes of climate change.

These efforts and others like them also have the potential to change the nature of the political conversation around climate change. In an increasingly partisan world, firms occupy a unique position. According to the 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer, an annual survey measuring credibility and trust, business is now the world's most trusted institution, and 71 percent of employees around the world

agree that "it is critically important" for the CEOs of their companies "to respond to challenging times." A broad-based movement among the world's biggest companies to tackle climate change could help legitimate the idea that climate change is a real danger, that acting to avert it could be a major driver of innovation and economic growth, and that appropriate public policy could be enormously helpful.

Such a movement could also put increasing pressure on companies that resist decarbonizing. One of the reasons that climate regulation has stalled in the United States is that a small minority of firms have invested billions of dollars in actively lobbying against it. If their peers start to push for regulation and highlight the dangers inherent in continuing with business as usual, those laggards will be compelled to change their behavior. One day soon, flooding the political process with money to defend the burning of fossil fuels could be seen as an unacceptable reputational risk—or even as morally indefensible.

For many years, experts have assumed that the fastest and most efficient route to global decarbonization is coordinated state action. But as the world's political institutions have come under pressure, such action has become increasingly elusive. Against this background, the growing understanding that climate change presents a profound threat to the long-term returns of the world's largest asset owners provides some reason for hope. As investors push for change and the realization dawns in more and more boardrooms that the benefits of climate action will outweigh the costs, it is possible that leading-edge firms could trigger a cascade of reinforcing reforms, transforming the economics of individual industries and creating a significant constituency for political action. For decades, when it came to addressing climate change, large asset holders and big companies acted more as obstacles than as catalysts. Those days may soon be over.

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Building a Resilient Planet

How to Adapt to Climate Change From the Bottom Up

Kathy Baughman McLeod

The conventional wisdom holds that climate change is a problem for international organizations, big governments, and global corporations to solve. Only those major players can make a dent in global greenhouse gas emissions, the thinking goes, and only they can pool the necessary resources. Given the monumental scale of the coming climate crisis, anything short of such high-level mobilization seems inconsequential, even futile.

It is true that nothing short of a massive, globally coordinated push can reduce emissions enough to slow down climate change in the decades ahead. That is why international organizations, national governments, and companies are spending some 95 percent of their climate-related investment on carbon emission reductions. But those efforts will serve to prevent only the worst-case scenarios. The fact is that climate change has already done a great deal of damage and that more harmful effects will be impossible to avert altogether.

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Reducing emissions is just half the battle: the other is adjusting to a world already made vastly more hostile and inhospitable by climate change and building up resilience to inevitable further changes down the line.

The good news is that when it comes to adaptation and resilience, individual communities and cities across the world can take the lead on their own, irrespective of progress or gridlock at the national and international levels. Interventions can be small and simple—sometimes as basic as painting rooftops white, for example, to reduce the heat they absorb. The low cost and ease of these measures belie their potential for making life safer and more bearable in an era of climate disaster. In many cases, adaptation is not even a matter of improving infrastructure through expensive protective measures. Instead, it consists of maintaining the natural environment—the forests, coral reefs, and coastal wetlands that provide just as much protection against disaster as manmade measures do. Recognizing these natural features for the assets they are and insuring them against future damage offers a sure path to climate resilience, even as the larger fight against the drivers of climate change continues unabated.

COMMON CRISES

That climate change is already affecting lives in the present is hardly a secret, but few appreciate the magnitude of its impact, even as climate-related disasters play out all over the world. Just in the past year, swarms of locusts the size of whole cities descended on Ethiopia, powerful bush fires ravaged Australia, and massive floods inundated Indonesia. Meanwhile, the West Antarctic Ice

Sheet—which contains enough ice to raise sea levels by up to ten feet were it all to melt—is continuing its slow-motion collapse. And each day, tens of thousands of people flee from natural disasters or wars, many of which have been exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. Even those who have not yet seen a hurricane or a fire sweep through their neighborhood have been affected, albeit in subtler ways. Rising temperatures, droughts, and floods have disrupted their food supply chains; the quality of the air they breathe is declining; and infectious and mosquito-borne diseases are spreading faster.

These crises are unfolding today, and each calls for an immediate response, even as the international community and individual governments work on the longer-term project of cutting emissions. Fortunately, most of the adjustments needed to lessen their impact are not difficult. Many adaptations do not require new technology. Nor do they have to pass through the political minefield of international climate action. Instead, many simply require citizens to take the initiative in their local communities.

Some solutions are as easy as painting rooftops white. The building materials used in dense cities often trap heat (a phenomenon known as "the urban heat island effect"). The resulting extreme temperatures are a silent killer, often taking the lives of those already vulnerable, especially among the elderly. Lowering the temperature by just a little can save lives. If most surfaces in cities—especially rooftops, but roads and sidewalks, too—were a lighter shade and therefore reflected more light, local average daytime temperatures could drop by up to two or three degrees Celsius on hot days, according to a study published in the journal *Nature Geoscience*. Los Angeles already has a program in place to paint asphalt road surfaces a light gray, and the Australian city of Melbourne is giving loans to locals who retrofit commercial buildings for increased efficiency, including by painting their rooftops white.

The hotter it gets, the better the white-roof solution works. In Brazil and India and on the Arabian Peninsula, more reflective surfaces in cities could lower average daytime temperatures by a live-saving four or five degrees Celsius during heat waves. A study by the National Center for Atmospheric Research, in Boulder, Colorado, found that if cities around the world added lighter surface colors to 90 percent of their roofs, they could help reduce the rise in temperatures caused by urban heat islands around one-third.

Rooftop gardens offer a related solution, particularly for cities in the developing world. In the summer of 2019, temperatures in the Indian megacity of Chennai topped 50 degrees Celsius, or 122 degrees Fahrenheit, just as the city's water reservoirs began to run dry, exhausted after two years of below-average rainfall. Temperatures in the city are expected to keep rising in the years ahead, as is the risk of drought, meaning that last year's conditions will be the new normal. Rooftop gardens could offer some reprieve: gardens can absorb as much as 75 percent of the rainfall they receive, and certain rooftop garden designs store drainage water, which can later be used to water the plants.

Green roofs absorb heat in the summer and add insulation in the winter. For the residents below, they also provide fresh and nutritious food and, in many

cases, a source of income. Urban gardens already dot the city of Quito, Ecuador, which launched an urban agriculture program in 2002. Thousands of gardeners—the majority of them women, some with only an elementary school education—now help support their families by growing and selling all-organic produce. The gardens are an economic lifeline—and they help cool the city and clean its air.

WHAT CANCÚN CAN TEACH US

Resilience will look different depending on the local context. Some cities may lack the resources or the climatic conditions necessary for easy bottom-up fixes. But most could avail themselves of one solution that most conversations about climate change have overlooked: insurance.

Insuring physical infrastructure—homes, businesses, and so forth—against damages caused by climate change is now common practice. The idea is to protect human achievements and physical property against the ravages of nature. But that approach obscures nature's own protective role. In many places around the world, the primary barrier against sudden natural disasters and grinding environmental degradation is nature itself: coral reefs, wetlands, forests, freshwater reservoirs, and rivers can all serve that role. Insuring these natural assets, in addition to the manmade infrastructure they protect, is a far more efficient way to ensure that communities battered by climate change can cope.

Beginning in 2015, I worked with a team of coral reef scientists and coastal resilience experts from the Nature Conservancy to design what would become the first-ever insurance policy on a natural asset, the Mesoamerican Reef. Located in the Caribbean, the reef stretches over 600 miles, making it second in size only to Australia's Great Barrier Reef. For nearby shorelines, from southeastern Mexico down to Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras, the reef acts as a massive natural barrier against storms and flooding. A healthy coral reef can absorb 97 percent of a wave's energy before it hits the shore, a performance on par with, and often better than, expensive manmade barriers, such as breakwaters and seawalls. In the tourism-heavy coastal towns of the state of Quintana Roo, in Mexico, home to the city of Cancún, the reef slows beach erosion and protects homes and hotels from hurricanes.

Our modeling allowed us to quantify the value of that protection: when the reef is intact, Quintana Roo avoids annual losses of some $1.8 million. In recent years, however, the reef has come under threat from climate change, tourism, overfishing, and pollution. Among the consequences of a warming earth are fiercer storms and stronger waves, which slam into the reef too often and too powerfully for it to recover, gradually exhausting its ability to protect the shoreline. As a result, the reef now requires human help after each major storm to keep functioning. Specially trained teams of locals, the Brigadores, remove debris, collect broken corals and reattach them to the reef, and add manmade support structures to help speed the reef's recovery.

To safeguard the reef and its protective value and fund the work of the Brigadores, we collaborated with the state government, marine scientists, a hotel owners' association, and the global reinsurer Swiss Re. The result was a

Cool it: a heat-reduction pavement project in Los Angeles, California, June 2019

JON DUEDE / CITY OF LOS ANGELES BUREAU OF STREET SERVICES

trust fund used to buy an insurance policy for the reef. If a certain trigger point is reached in the designated area—such as a certain wind speed or storm category—the policy quickly pays out funds for a rapid response, so that the reef system can continue protecting the vulnerable communities and economies that depend on it.

The world is filled with ecosystems that perform a similar role. Wetlands, urban forests, rivers, and lagoons are, like reefs, habitats that provide shelter and protection to a myriad of species, including humans. These natural resources can break the waves of a storm, clean contaminated water, and cool a city. They also capture and store carbon, helping slow the rate of climate change. Since they provide tangible benefits to people and the economy, they can be viewed, in financial terms, as assets worth insuring. The cost of doing so would be higher than doing nothing and escaping disaster, but vastly lower than being unprepared when disaster hits—and given current predictions on climate change, it will hit.

Even if insurance companies stop short of insuring actual natural features, they can incentivize those who buy their policies to maintain those assets. The approach is tried and tested: it transformed cities around the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the time, most urban environments were massive fire hazards, built mostly of wood, with little thought to safety precautions. Fires raged through some of the world's most iconic cities: Chicago in 1871; Boston in 1872; San Francisco in 1906, after an earthquake; and Tokyo in 1923, also

after a major quake. When it was time to rebuild, insurers were unwilling to take the same risks again and demanded that cities upgrade their safety measures and infrastructure to qualify for coverage. In response, cities started installing fire hydrants and fire stations, building houses with fire escapes, and mandating that homes and offices feature fire alarms. Building codes became much more stringent (in many places, regulators banned wood), and the number of major fires and fire-related deaths decreased dramatically.

Today, insurance companies could replicate that success by accounting for nature's protective benefits in their coverage decisions. Risk Management Solutions, a leading risk modeler and adviser to banks and insurance companies worldwide, has already begun factoring the role of natural assets, such as coastal wetlands, into its risk modeling. As the damage from climate-related disasters mounts, more and more insurers might demand that buyers maintain the natural assets in their midst to qualify for coverage and preferential premiums.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of insurance schemes is their potential for protecting natural assets before disaster hits and not afterward, when most of those assets' value is lost. For many years, agricultural insurance has commonly defined specific levels of damage needed to trigger a policy. In a drought, for instance, the number of dead livestock or the amount of a failed crop must cross a certain threshold for payments to kick in. But when some amount of damage can be anticipated

in advance, as is the case in slow-moving catastrophes such as droughts, there is no reason why insurers and farmers should need to wait until the last moment. In Kenya, a consortium of insurers backed by the global reinsurance industry offers insurance to farmers vulnerable to drought and uses satellite technology to measure the vegetation available to livestock. When the system determines that the health of the vegetation has dropped below a certain threshold, the farmers automatically receive payments to their cell phones, which they can use for feed, medicines, and water. This approach allows farmers to save their animals, avoid major financial and emotional loss, and sustain their livelihoods. Since October 2019, the program has covered farmers' "almost losses" with more than $7 million in payouts to 32,000 individuals. Similar programs could help cattle farmers in drought-prone countries and regions across Africa and the Middle East and in parts of northern and southwestern China.

In some cases, insurance can make entire countries less vulnerable to climate catastrophe. Natural disasters can seriously set back a country's economy. To avoid being overwhelmed, some countries already pool their climate-related risks—such as high exposure to floods or hurricanes—allowing them to receive more affordable insurance coverage than they otherwise would have. After the Bahamas was hit by Hurricane Dorian in 2019, the very first money it received to deal with the destruction came from one such regional risk pool, which serves 22 countries in the Caribbean and Central America with catastrophe insurance. The pool provides $1 billion in risk coverage for member countries and has paid out $152 million since its inception in 2007. In recent years, states in Africa, the Pacific, and Southeast Asia have followed suit and started risk pools of their own. These arrangements could provide more than a safety net in the aftermath of a crisis—in theory, much like the Kenyan farmers' insurance, they could make money available before a disaster, allowing countries to take valuable precautionary hardening measures.

None of these steps—from white rooftops to insurance for nature's protective capital—can replace drastic emission cuts. They can, however, reduce the impact of the damage already done and protect communities in a world indelibly marked by climate change. Perhaps more important still, they can help dispel a sense of powerlessness particular to the era of slow-moving climate catastrophe—a feeling so widespread it has its own name: "climate grief." Local steps toward climate adaptation, along with higher-level financial protections and resilience, can counter that despondency with proven and durable solutions—and might, in the process, even create the momentum for more unified and inspired global action.

The Climate Debt

What the West Owes the Rest

Mohamed Adow

Growing up in a pastoral community in northern Kenya gave me a certain clarity about the climate crisis, a clarity born not from abstract understandings but from visceral experience. In 2000, a drought killed much of my father's cattle herd and destroyed our neighbors' livelihoods. I helped distribute parcels of food to starving people knowing that the supplies might keep them alive only until the next inevitable dry spell. In northern Kenya, droughts used to occur once every ten years. But in the last few decades, their frequency and severity have increased thanks to climate change. Droughts now occur once every two to three years, and they will likely become even more frequent, threatening nomadic pastoralism as a viable way of life.

It was devastating to see herds built over many years wiped out in one season. My neighbors had nurtured and cared for these animals. They were vital for my community's livelihood and prosperity—and its future. Like many people in my community, I don't have a conventional pension plan of stocks and shares; I have some goats and camels. When I have the resources, I add a camel to the flock.

It always breaks my heart to see the bodies of dead camels during a drought. Cows are normally the first to go—they are not very resilient to the changing climate. Sheep follow. Goats are much hardier, which is why I keep some in my flock back home. When they start dying, you know it's a serious drought. But camels are so tough and so capable of enduring through droughts that their dead bodies are signs of a real disaster, of a terrible tragedy unfolding in the surrounding communities.

The over five million pastoralists who live in northern Kenya face an increasingly desperate situation. The way of life that has supported them for centuries—herding animals in the rangelands—could soon evaporate thanks to climate change. Consecutive droughts in recent years have devastated livestock populations, forcing hundreds of thousands of herders to give up their traditional lifestyles and move, as unskilled workers, to sprawling towns. They are not alone. Climate change has imperiled or disrupted the lives of millions of people in developing countries around the world.

Herders in Kenya, farmers in Bangladesh, and fishermen in the Mekong River basin are not responsible for this crisis; the rich countries are. Not only do those nations emit more carbon into the atmosphere per capita than poor countries do, but also their very wealth and stature rest on a century of emissions and environmental degradation. And yet it is people in the developing world who disproportionately suffer. For them, climate change is not a theoretical matter but the difference between having dinner or going hungry, having a home, however ramshackle, or not having a roof over their heads at all.

In Western capitals, meanwhile, well-meaning officials are beginning to share the sense of urgency, holding

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BRIAN CRONIN

increasingly frequent summits and speaking of a "climate emergency." But none of this has translated into meaningful change: greenhouse gas emissions, temperatures, and sea levels continue to rise. Moreover, wealthy countries have struggled to reckon with the fundamental injustice of climate change, the fact that those least responsible for its cause now bear the brunt of its consequences.

The most straightforward way that developed nations can address that inequity is through financial transfers and technological support to developing nations. As part of negotiations under the aegis of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), wealthy countries have agreed in principle to provide $100 billion a year by 2020 to assist their poor counterparts—hardly enough to help developing nations adjust to the effects of climate change, receive compensation for loss and damage as a result of extreme weather, and transition to low-carbon economies. Even that funding has not fully materialized, and its lack of implementation suggests a continuing imbalance between the rich and the rest. Rich countries are far more interested in forcing poor countries to cut their own emissions than they are in helping protect them from the ravages of climate change. The economies of developing countries must indeed cut emissions and transition to low-carbon sources of energy. But while that process plays out, many in the developing world will remain vulnerable to a crisis they did not make.

A COMPOUNDING DEBT

The average American is responsible for the emission of as much carbon dioxide per year as are 581 Burundians, 51 Mozambicans (who last year were buffeted by typhoons that scientists have attributed to the warming of the Indian Ocean), or 35 Bangladeshis (who are threatened by both rising sea levels and increasingly erratic rain). That may be the starkest contrast, but in emissions of greenhouse gases by country, there remains a wide gulf between rich and poor.

According to the latest UN statistics, which date from 2017, the United States alone emits over 5.3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year—that's 16.2 metric tons per person. The European Union emits over 3.6 billion metric tons, around seven metric tons per person. By contrast, the per capita emissions of all lower- and middle-income countries combined (including large, rapidly developing ones, such as Brazil, China, India, Nigeria, and South Africa) are only 3.5 metric tons per year. Drilling down further reveals even wider chasms. Although China has become the biggest emitter in the world in absolute terms—at over ten billion metric tons—its per capita rate of 7.4 metric tons is still less than half the U.S. rate. India emits 2.3 billion metric tons a year—a substantial sum—but its per capita rate is only 1.7 metric tons. Beyond the Asian giants, the rest of the developing world emits even less. The one billion people of sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, emit around 823 million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year, a per capita rate of 0.8 metric tons, about one-20th that of the United States.

But these figures reflect merely one year of emissions. For well over a century, countries in Europe and North America—as well as the likes of Australia and Japan—have been pumping carbon into the atmosphere. The former NASA

scientist James Hansen has estimated that those countries were responsible for 77 percent of all carbon emissions between 1751 and 2006. The United States alone produced 28 percent of carbon dioxide emissions in that period. Other estimates reveal similar disparities: according to the German database PRIMAP-hist, developed countries were responsible for 68 percent of carbon dioxide emissions between 1850 and 2016.

These disparities chart the rise of developed countries at the expense of others. The history of climate change is one of compounding injustices. The wealth of the Western countries was built on the riches and natural resources extracted from their colonial empires, a process that motivated—and in turn was fueled by—the burning of coal, oil, and gas and vast deforestation. The Industrial Revolution may have produced crowded, smoke-filled cities full of people with chronic health problems, but over time, it ensured that future generations in industrialized economies would grow up in relative privilege compared with people elsewhere, who were often living under colonial rule. The consumption of fossil fuels lies at the root of global inequality.

The end of World War II ushered in the period of decolonization, but the dynamics of the imperial age persisted. In a 2008 report published by the National Academy of Sciences, a team of economists and ecologists calculated just how much more greenhouse gas emissions from the developed world harmed the developing world—in the form of floods, storm activity, and other events associated with climate change—than emissions from the developing world hurt the developed world. Between 1961 and 2000, emissions from poorer countries caused $740 billion worth of damage to wealthier countries, whereas emissions from richer countries caused $2.3 trillion worth of damage to poorer ones.

Beyond the direct economic damage, climate change disproportionately slows economic growth in poorer countries, further widening the gulf between them and wealthy countries. A 2019 study, also published by the National Academy of Sciences, found that in most low-income countries, higher temperatures are more than 90 percent likely to have curbed economic output. In sub-Saharan Africa, climate change has reduced the per capita GDPs of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Sudan by more than 20 percent.

THE BURDENS OF ADAPTATION

This great fossil-fuel-powered wealth disparity makes it harder for poorer nations to protect themselves from the consequences of climate change. The inequality materializes in some obvious ways: developing countries lack the resources to build infrastructure to guard against deadly storms, rising sea levels, and intense heat waves. But it also strikes at the core of economic production in much of the global South. Many places still depend on agriculture and ways of life wedded to the rhythms of the climate. For example, more than half of all people in Africa rely on farming for all or part of their livelihoods. They are especially vulnerable to climate disruptions.

For poor countries, meeting the costs of adaptation—measures that help people adjust to the changing climate—remains impossible. In parts of India, for instance, those measures might include raising homes onto stilts to lift

them above floodwaters and relocating whole communities farther inland, away from flooded coasts. In Bangladesh, saltwater intrusion has killed crops and livestock, so farmers need to both acquire varieties of saline-resistant seeds and rear animals that can tolerate shifting conditions, such as saltwater ducks. In Nicaragua, coffee growers have found that higher temperatures and greater rainfall have destroyed up to 40 percent of their crop, so many have been forced to turn to cacao instead.

In Africa, the demands of adaptation to climate change are particularly acute. Despite accounting for only 15 percent of the global population and just two percent of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, sub-Saharan African countries currently shoulder nearly 50 percent of global adaptation costs, according to the African Development Bank. At an African Union summit in February, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa pointed out that despite their scarce resources, African countries are spending between two and nine percent of their GDPs dealing with the effects of extreme weather. "Adaptation is a global responsibility," he insisted, calling for greater financial support from the developed countries that caused the crisis in the first place.

BROKEN PROMISES

Ramaphosa's statement was not particularly radical. When nations gathered to grapple with the threat of climate change at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, wealthy countries themselves recognized that they were more liable than the rest of the world for global warming. The UNFCCC, which was agreed on at the summit, enshrined the concept of "common but differentiated responsibilities," the understanding that the countries that had spewed the most emissions in the past needed to lead the way in curbing emissions in the future. The path to a solution seemed relatively simple back then. Scientists would identify the level of emissions that needed to be cut, the world's developed countries would divide the required cuts among themselves, and climate change, the reasoning went, would slow and cease.

But for many years, wealthy countries refused to fully admit to the scale of the problem, dragging their feet on agreeing to legally binding treaties. The 2009 UN Climate Change Conference, in Copenhagen, which many observers hoped would produce meaningful results, collapsed after rich nations tried at the 11th hour to ram through a lopsided deal without the participation of most other countries. The failure of Copenhagen has had lasting implications: had the developed world begun the turn to low-carbon economies a decade ago, such a transition would have helped the rest of the world follow suit, saving untold lives and billions of dollars and avoiding the current crisis.

Following the breakdown of the Copenhagen summit, international negotiations limped on, delayed both by rich countries and by oil-exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia. At the 2011 climate summit in Durban, South Africa, wealthy nations advanced a new approach that insisted that all countries—not just the historical polluters but also poor nations that had done very little to cause the crisis—had to submit plans to cut emissions. This shift allowed wealthy countries to escape from the binding rules of the previous regime,

established by the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, which had sought to build an effective multilateral, rules-based emission-reduction system.

In return for signing on to this new global paradigm, developing countries would receive over $100 billion a year starting in 2020 to help them take measures to adapt to floods, fires, and storms and to support their transitions to low-carbon economies. That sum represented a very modest contribution from wealthy countries considering the resources at their disposal: the United Kingdom alone is planning to spend $137 billion to build a new high-speed rail line from London to Manchester via Leeds.

In 2015, countries met again to coordinate on combating climate change, this time in Paris, and the wealthy countries reaffirmed their commitment to provide financial support to poor countries for adaptation and transitioning away from fossil fuels. But the cumulative emission-reduction pledges that accompanied the Paris agreement were far too weak to achieve the deal's stated goals.

And $100 billion per year is nowhere close to what is required to cover the costs of adapting to climate change and transitioning to greener economies in the developing world. Adaptation alone would cost over $180 billion annually today (and even more as time goes on). If the developed world does not increase its funding beyond the $100 billion per year that has been promised, temperatures are likely to rise by 2.7–3.5 degrees Celsius by 2100—well above the threshold of 1.5–2.0 degrees Celsius agreed to in the Paris agreement. (And even a two-degree rise is nothing to gloat about: an increase of that amount would likely displace hundreds of

millions of people and spark heat waves, droughts, coastal flooding, and storms.) The Paris agreement does include commitments to increase levels of funding every five years, but it's not clear if wealthy countries will meet those additional targets given that they have yet to reach the 2020 goal.

Distressingly, it's not even clear that rich countries will meet the modest goal of $100 billion per year. Already, they have missed multiple deadlines in gathering the initial tranche of money. After the election of President Donald Trump in the United States and of Prime Minister Scott Morrison in Australia, both countries reneged on their commitments. Donors successfully replenished the Green Climate Fund—the largest international fund dedicated to helping developing countries adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change—last year, with $9.7 billion in pledges committed by 27 countries, including 14 countries that doubled their previous contributions. But let's be clear: the money raised so far has not come from straightforward grants from state coffers. Instead, it consists of a collection of loans, private-sector financing, and funds for long-standing projects in overseas aid budgets. The motley nature of this funding has not inspired confidence in the developing world about the sincerity of the wealthy countries' commitments. By all estimates, the mandated $100 billion will not be assembled by the deadline of next November at the next major UN climate summit, in Glasgow. If the money fails to materialize, then poorer nations will have a hard time trusting any of the diplomatic promises of the rich.

LET THEM MITIGATE?

Another major problem with the funding on offer from rich countries is its emphasis. Most of the proposed funding is focused on mitigation efforts: ensuring that developing countries don't burn fossil fuels at accelerating rates by reforming their economies. The funding for adaptation—helping poor nations handle the effects of climate change—amounts to just about 20 percent of all the money governments have set aside. That disparity reveals a depressing truth: although rich countries want to stop poor countries from emitting greenhouse gases, they have shown less interest in protecting those countries' people and property.

Moreover, a third category of funding is proving even harder to generate: compensation for past damage. In many parts of the world, it's no longer possible to simply adapt to a new climate. It's not possible, for instance, to adapt if rising sea levels have submerged your entire island or if you have permanently lost your farmland to desertification. Because these losses are disproportionately the consequence of rich countries' greenhouse gas emissions, those countries are morally bound to help compensate for them. This principle was formally accepted in 2013, when all the parties to the UNFCCC supported the creation of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated With Climate Change Impacts, a forum to discuss the realities of loss due to climate change and ways of addressing those losses. But it has no legally binding provision to compel wealthy countries to compensate poor ones. When poor countries press their wealthier counterparts on pushing the

matter forward, the rich world closes ranks, with even supposedly progressive bodies, such as the EU, happy to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Trump administration in preventing compensation for loss and damage from moving from theory to practice. At the Madrid climate summit last year, the United States, with Russia's support, ruled out agreeing to and implementing a concrete plan to increase financing for loss and damage. Other rich countries, including Australia, Japan, and some member states of the EU, sheepishly followed suit, leaving vulnerable countries without the help promised to them in 2013.

Since the signing of the Paris agreement in 2015, a number of prominent world leaders have dismissed the importance of addressing the climate emergency—not just Trump and Morrison but also Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Other leaders known for their green rhetoric have failed to turn talk into serious action. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau prides himself on his green bona fides, but he persists in allowing the exploitation of his country's oil-rich tar sands. As a result, a country with 0.5 percent of the world's population may use up, through oil exports and their associated emissions, 16 percent of the planet's rapidly disappearing carbon budget, the maximum amount of carbon dioxide that can enter the atmosphere before causing an increase in the global temperature of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

But even the public emphasis on mitigation hides a more disquieting reality. Although wealthy countries urge mitigation in the developing world, they continue to funnel taxpayer money to fossil fuel industries. Last year, the International Monetary Fund estimated that global subsidies for fossil fuels amounted to as much as $5.2 trillion in 2017, up from $4.7 trillion in 2015. If just a fraction of that money were diverted to climate change adaptation and mitigation, it could transform the fortunes of vulnerable countries. To make matters worse, when rich nations do invest in poor countries, they end up spending billions of dollars propping up fossil fuel industries there. A 2018 report by the research and advocacy organization Oil Change International showed that between 2014 and 2016, 60 percent of international public aid for energy projects in Africa was spent on fossil fuels—principally through investments in oil and gas infrastructure—with only 18 percent directed to renewable sources such as wind and solar energy. As China, the United States, and countries in Europe increasingly turn to cleaner energy at home, they remain content to condemn countries in Africa and elsewhere to a fossil fuel future.

At a January summit on ties between the United Kingdom and African countries, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that his country would stop using aid money to fund coal projects abroad, and an official government press release for the event highlighted increased funding for clean energy. But a few days later, it emerged that 90 percent of the energy deals concluded at the summit were in fact for fossil fuels. Even as renewable energy sources are becoming cheaper, easier to deploy, and more able than ever to help decarbonize the world's

power supply, the developed world still strives to help its companies profit from unsustainable fossil fuels in the developing world.

Of course, it's also the case that many developing countries are convinced that they need fossil fuels to modernize and raise their standards of living. Over 358 coal plants are under construction around the world. For much of human history, economic growth was directly tied to energy use; the more energy a country produced and consumed, the more its economy grew. For many poor countries awash with problems, including insufficient energy production, following the fossil-fuel-laden course that wealthy nations took is the path of least resistance. Wealthy countries should drastically slash their emissions to allow what's left of the carbon budget to go to poorer countries. That imperative is also why funding for adaptation and for loss and damage is so important. If wealthy countries won't curb their emissions rapidly enough, they are morally obligated to at least help pay for the consequences of their actions in vulnerable countries.

THE GLOBAL SOUTH WRITES BACK

Societies may finally be breaking the link between energy and growth. In the past six years, the global economy has grown by 23 percent, but energy-related carbon emissions have grown by only three percent. The development of renewable energy means that growth and prosperity are no longer found at the bottom of a coal mine or in a barrel of crude. Researchers at the management consultancy McKinsey & Company have calculated, for instance, that in Vietnam, renewable energy is already cheaper to use than coal. In the same way that Africans have leapfrogged the landline telephone and gone straight to mobile phones, with the right investment and support, the developing world can leapfrog fossil fuels.

But to realize the opportunities of a low-carbon economy, developing countries need an unprecedented increase in financing ahead of the 2020 climate summit in Glasgow. The wealthy nations of the world, whose stature and high standards of living rest on a history of pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, must help encourage the global shift to decarbonized economies to limit the rise in the global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius, in accordance with the Paris agreement's more ambitious goal.

Developing countries can help write the end of the story of the climate crisis. Their new approaches to generating growth can break the vicious cycle that has created the climate emergency. African nations are on the cusp of sweeping economic development over the next 50 years, and there is no need for those economies to follow in the footsteps of Europeans and North Americans. The continent has more wind, sun, and geothermal energy than anywhere else in the world. But to harness the resources available to them, Africans and others in the developing world need the financial and technological support from those who sickened the climate in the first place. There is still time for the world to avoid dropping off the cliff. To steer clear will require establishing fairness in a global system that has trampled the poor at every turn.

ESSAYS

The United States is not in decline. It was the comeback nation of the 2010s.
— Ruchir Sharma

BRENDAN MCDERMID / REUTERS

The Comeback Nation

U.S. Economic Supremacy Has Repeatedly Proved Declinists Wrong

Ruchir Sharma

As the 2020s dawn, it is hard to find any member of the U.S. foreign policy establishment who does not believe that the United States is in decline and that the waning of its influence has accelerated under a president who seems to revel in attacking U.S. allies and enemies alike. The debate is not over the fact of American decline but over how the United States should manage its diminishing status.

Declinists take as a given that the U.S. share of global economic output has been decreasing for decades and that the United States has either already lost its status as the world's largest economy to China or is fated to lose it within the next ten to 15 years. From these assumptions flow recommendations for resizing U.S. foreign policy to fit Washington's shrinking power: accept the loss of primacy, adapt to regional spheres of influence led by China and Russia, and work to avoid the wars that could erupt between a declining empire such as the United States and a rising one such as China.

But what if the United States is not in economic decline? Somehow, the prevailing pessimism survived a surge in American economic and financial might over the last decade. During the 2010s, the United States not only staged a comeback as an economic superpower but reached new heights as a financial empire, driven by its relatively young population, its open door to immigration, and investment pouring into Silicon Valley. The country is now facing new economic challenges as a result of the novel coronavirus. But no country was prepared for the pandemic, and there is no reason to believe the downturn will change the United States' standing among world economies.

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The American comeback was far from expected back in 2010. The United States had just suffered its weakest decade of economic growth since World War II and had hit bottom in the financial crisis of 2008, which started with the meltdown of mortgage debts in the country and quickly spread worldwide. Commentators said the United States had lost all credibility as an economic model and predicted further decline, particularly relative to China and other emerging economies. Instead, the 2010s turned out to be a golden decade for the nation where the crisis started, and not so good for the rest.

A GOLDEN DECADE

For the first time since at least the 1850s, when record keeping began, the United States traversed a full decade without suffering a single recession. Although many Americans were initially disappointed with the pace of the recovery, the United States grew significantly faster than other developed economies, and faster than many developing economies, as well. Defying the many declinist forecasts—one major global bank predicted in 2010 that China would overtake the United States by 2020—the United States actually expanded its share of global GDP during the 2010s, from 23 percent to 25 percent.

The 2020s have opened with the sudden shock of a global pandemic. Economists are downgrading their growth forecasts for countries all over the world, and the United States' record-long economic expansion is at risk of coming to an abrupt end. But there is little evidence to suggest that the downturn will hit the United States disproportionately hard. As of this writing, the U.S. stock market has fallen less than most other stock markets, and investors have bid up the U.S. dollar given its safe-haven status.

The United States now faces a more enduring obstacle: the cyclical churn of the global economy. The United States has had golden decades before. It prospered in the go-go 1960s, then faded amid the malaise of the 1970s. It boomed again with the rise of Silicon Valley in the 1990s, only to go flat after the dot-com bust of 2000. The lesson of history: the fact that the 2010s were great for the United States makes it less likely that the 2020s will be.

These decadal cycles guide the rise and fall of all nations, not just the United States. To make the case for chronic American decline, analysts often choose a measure called "purchasing power parity," or PPP, which aims to compare the living standards that people can afford

in their home countries. The problem with PPP is that it rests its conclusions on theoretical currency exchange rates, calculated by academics. A more accurate measure of economic might is nominal GDP in U.S. dollars, based on real-life exchange rates in the global markets.

The United States emerged from World War II accounting for a dominant share of global output—40 percent or more. Based on PPP, calculations indicate that the United States' share of the global economy has declined steadily since then, dropping below China's in the mid-2010s, and today stands at just 15 percent. Nominal GDP measurements, on the other hand, show that the U.S. share fell to 25 percent by 1980 but then fluctuated over the subsequent decades. By 2020, it had bounced back to 25 percent—exactly where it stood in 1980.

In short, the United States' share of global economic power has essentially held steady for four decades. Over this period, the European Union saw its share fall from 35 percent to 21 percent. Japan's share slipped from ten percent to six percent, and Russia's dropped from three percent to two percent. Meanwhile, China's share swelled during that time from two percent to 16 percent. So it is true that as China has risen, other major powers have declined. But the United States is not one of them.

DOLLAR DOMINANCE

The United States also emerged from the 2010s stronger than ever as a financial superpower, with the world's most sought-after stock and bond markets and its dominant currency. Lifted by the strong performance of American technology companies, the U.S. stock market rose by 250 percent in the 2010s, nearly four times the average gain in other national stock markets. The biggest underperformers were in Europe and, particularly, in emerging markets, which suffered their worst decade of returns since the 1930s. China's stock market rose by a mere 70 percent over the course of the decade—relatively slow growth for an emerging market.

By 2019, the United States accounted for 56 percent of global stock market capitalization, up from 42 percent in 2010. The value of the U.S. stock market, relative to all others, was at a 100-year high before the novel coronavirus hit and maintained this historic lead in the subsequent initial market crash. The 2010s saw the rise of a global "superstar economy," in which huge corporations increasingly dominated small ones, monopolizing market share and investment

flows. And the biggest superstars were American. Today, seven of the world's ten largest companies by total stock market value are American, up from three in 2010.

Global markets reflect the collective mind of millions of investors, and market prices capture their estimate of the relative strength of the world's leading economies and companies. If the markets had one voice, it would not be singing the chorus of "American Decline."

Having the indispensable currency gives the United States tremendous geopolitical leverage.

The U.S. dollar also finished the 2010s on top of the world. When individuals and companies borrow from overseas, they increasingly borrow in dollars, which account for 75 percent of these loans, up from 60 percent before the crisis of 2008. Even though the crisis originated in the United States, U.S. banks today dominate global finance to a greater degree than they did ten years ago—in part because debt troubles have dogged banks in China, Japan, and the European Union even more persistently.

Close to 90 percent of global financial transactions conducted through banks use the dollar, even if the deal does not involve an American party. When South Korea sells phones to Brazil, it generally asks to be paid in dollars, because sellers everywhere prefer to hold the world's favorite legal tender. The share of countries that use the dollar as their anchor currency—the currency against which they measure and stabilize the value of their own currencies—has risen from around 30 percent in 1950 to about 60 percent today. Those countries collectively account for some 60 percent of global GDP. China is one of them.

And because the U.S. Federal Reserve controls the supply of dollars, it is, now more than ever, the world's central bank. When the Fed moves interest rates, every other central bank (including the People's Bank of China) faces heavy pressure to move in the same direction, or face destabilizing capital outflows. The dollar is also the currency that other nations overwhelming prefer to hold in their treasury reserves.

This "reserve currency status" has been a perk of empire since Portugal was the dominant world power, beginning in the mid-fifteenth century. A country that enjoys steady global demand for its currency—often purchased in the form of government bonds—can borrow cheaply from abroad. That's why Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who

was president of France from 1974 to 1981, once called the mighty dollar the United States' "exorbitant privilege." It helps Americans borrow money in order to buy cars and homes, and it allows Washington to run up deficits it could not otherwise afford.

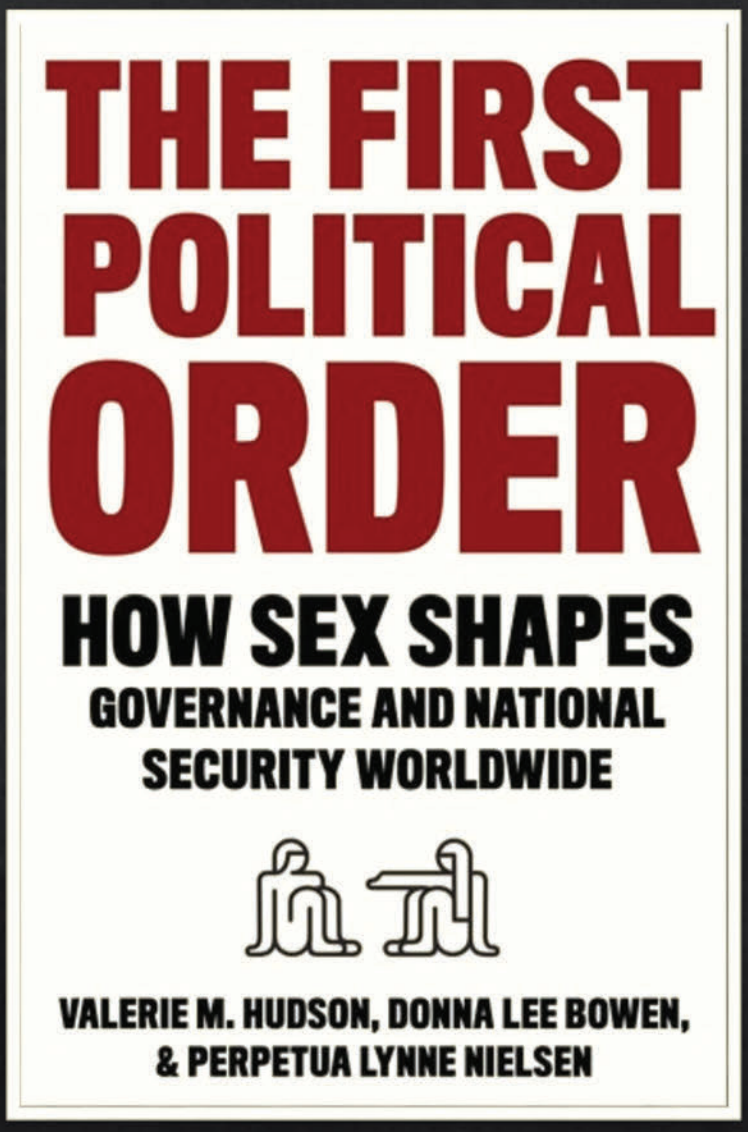
Having the indispensable currency also gives the United States tremendous geopolitical leverage. In 2018, when U.S. President Donald Trump imposed financial sanctions on Iran after pulling the United States out of the nuclear deal that his predecessor, along with other major powers, had negotiated with the Islamic Republic, reluctant European governments ultimately decided they had no choice but to go along, because they could not risk losing access to U.S. banks. When the United States and the European Union sanctioned Russia for invading Ukraine in 2014, the Kremlin turned inward and gave up on promoting economic growth in favor of saving money so as to reduce its vulnerability to foreign creditors and sanctions threats. For all its aggression on the world stage, Russia is currently growing at half the pace of the United States and fading as a global economic power.

Not surprisingly, rivals want a taste of the power that the dollar gives the United States. But Europe's reserve ambitions for the euro have been hobbled by widespread doubts about a currency that is only 20 years old and has been battered by repeated financial crises. China had similar hopes for the renminbi and in the early 2010s took steps to make its currency more readily convertible and easier to trade. Then, in 2015, millions of Chinese rushed out of this opening door. Faced with a stock market crash in Shanghai and a looming debt crisis, they began shipping renminbi to safe havens abroad, in amounts equal to hundreds of billions of dollars a month. In response, the authorities imposed capital controls that remain in place today, putting China's hopes of challenging the dollar's supremacy on hold indefinitely.

What the rest of the world wants in a reserve currency is a vast, liquid market in which people are free to buy and sell without fear that the government will suddenly change the rules. For now, they see this safe haven only in the U.S. dollar, which, as a result, has so far appreciated against most other currencies during the coronavirus shock. Global elites may not trust the current U.S. president, but they trust U.S. institutions, which is why the United States emerged from the 2010s as a financial empire without rivals.

This is the definitive work that ends the debate about the consequences of gender equality.

RYAN CROCKER, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO AFGHANISTAN



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DON'T DESPAIR

The perception of American decline is reinforced by the many pundits and politicians who say that recent decades have been great only for corporations and the rich. They point to data showing that U.S. wages have stagnated since the 1970s and that the United States is the only rich country where life expectancy has declined in recent years, owing to "deaths of despair"—from suicide, alcohol, and opioid abuse. In the 2020 presidential primary season, one of the signature lines of the Democratic front-runner, former Vice President Joe Biden, has been that the middle class is "getting killed."

To be sure, many Americans continue to struggle, and there are frightening concentrations of addiction and despair. But as wage and income growth revived in the mid-2010s, so, broadly speaking, did American spirits. During that period, according to the University of Michigan's monthly surveys of American consumers, confidence grew equally fast among consumers in the top, middle, and bottom thirds of the income ladder.

Of course, the buoyant mood is cracking in the pandemic. But when the United States reported its first coronavirus cases, in mid-January, small-business confidence matched the all-time peaks since surveys of small-business owners began, nearly five decades ago. Consumer confidence was at a high reached only twice before, during the economic booms of the 1960s and 1990s. The University of Michigan surveys blend questions about current and future conditions, asking Americans how well off they are compared to a year ago and how well off they expect to be a year from now.

Ever since Gallup first began asking Americans whether they were satisfied with the way their lives were going, back in 1979, the vast majority have said yes. But in January, that share hit a record 90 percent. That same month, three out of five Americans polled said they were better off now than they were four years ago, the largest proportion since Gallup began asking this question during presidential election years, back in 1992.

Although there are data showing that inflation-adjusted wages have stagnated since the 1970s, as many commentators point out, it's also possible to show that wages have risen—or fallen—by choosing a different start date for comparison or a different measure of inflation. The method and the story it tells are often chosen to support a political point of view. But this much is clear: weekly and hourly wage

growth expanded in the 2010s. And broader measures of personal and household income, including census data, show both long-term gains and a noticeable jump in the 2010s.

Although inequality is growing, it is growing because income gains have disproportionately benefited the richest Americans, not because the middle class and the poor have seen no gains. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income in 2018, adjusted for inflation, was $63,000, an increase of around $15,000 from the early 1970s and of $7,000 from 2013. Those gains likely continued through 2019, a strong year for U.S. jobs, and may help explain why signs of popular optimism were still spreading early this year.

Even believers in middle-class decline should not conflate it with a broader American decline—because the same conversation about the loss of middle-class jobs and wages is going on all over the world, from India, to Japan, to the countries of the EU. And the middle classes in those countries are all suffering for a similar reason, the rise of cheaper and more competitive exports, first from China, lately from rivals such as Bangladesh and Vietnam, which has threatened middle-class manufacturing jobs elsewhere.

In a polarized age, Americans tend to see economic reality through a partisan lens. The Democratic presidential candidates have dwelled on themes of decline and stagnation, which, given the popular mood, had promised to be a tough sell. Fear of the coronavirus will reshape the 2020 election conversation, but again, there is no evidence yet that the pandemic will depress the economy or economic confidence in the United States more than in other major powers. The underlying question now is, will the U.S. economy rule the 2020s the way it ruled the 2010s, with or without the virus?

THE BIG RISK

Countries that dominate the global economy and markets in one decade rarely dominate them in the next. The more they grow, the more complacent their leaders get. They lose discipline, abandon reforms, mire the country in debt and deficits, and push the economy off the rails. This decadal cycle has taken down every economic star of the postwar era, including the United States twice before. The U.S. economy was dominant in the 1960s but stumbled in the next decade. In the 1970s, rising oil prices led some U.S. intelligence analysts to predict that the Soviet Union was on track to be-

come the world's largest economy, but it collapsed economically in the next decade. The 1980s were all about "the rise of Japan," but Japan fell when its market bubble burst in 1989. The 1990s, another American decade, ended with the bust in Silicon Valley. The problem the United States now faces is that its current economic expansion is almost 11 years old, the longest since 1850, and every boom eventually creates excesses that foreshadow its own destruction.

There is no evidence yet that the pandemic will depress the economy in the United States more than in other major powers.

For all the talk of American despair, the bigger risk is complacency in the face of growing threats from debt, deficits, and demographics. Any economy's growth potential is a function of population and productivity. The United States likes to think that its big advantage is productivity, owing to relatively flexible regulations and a culture of innovation fostered in elite universities and in Silicon Valley. Indeed, U.S. productivity has gotten a boost from investment in technology in recent years, but the more important U.S. advantage has been a relatively high population growth rate: babies and immigrants, not Stanford and Google.

In the 1990s, productivity was growing significantly faster in the United States than in Japan and Europe, but that lead began narrowing in the subsequent decade. Meanwhile, the United States' demographic advantage was growing. In Japan and the EU, the working-age population started to shrink after the turn of the millennium. But it kept growing in the United States. If the United States' population had been growing as slowly as Japan's in recent decades, today the U.S. share of the global economy would be 17 percent, not 25 percent.

This advantage, however, is now threatened by politics. During the postwar period, around two-thirds of U.S. population growth was driven by the country's relatively high birthrate. The rest was driven by its relatively open door to immigrants. That door has begun to close under Trump. Since 2016, the number of legal immigrants entering the United States has fallen at an average pace of 43,000 a year.

At the same time, U.S. policymakers have grown complacent about debt and deficits. The United States was growing faster than the rest of the developed world under President Barack Obama, and it widened its lead as Trump pushed through cuts in taxes and regulations.

But cutting taxes without reducing spending has raised the U.S. budget deficit, which is closing in on five percent of GDP, the highest it has ever been except in the aftermath of a recession or a war. Major voices in both parties are now making the case that deficits no longer pose a threat to growth—Republicans in order to defend low taxes, Democrats to defend higher public spending.

Following the 2008 financial crisis, the United States moved more decisively than other rich nations to reduce its debt, but it has been backsliding in recent years, encouraged by endless new rounds of easy money offered by the Federal Reserve in order to keep the economic recovery alive. The big change since 2008: the largest and riskiest debts are now concentrated in the corporate bond market, not bank loans to homeowners.

Today, 16 percent of American public companies are "zombies," meaning they earn too little to cover the interest payments on their debt and stay alive only by issuing new debt. The Fed's record-low interest rates were intended to stimulate investment in productive companies, but much of that money has gone to support zombies or has flowed into the stock market, which is now more than 80 percent larger than the U.S. economy, well above the highs reached during the market manias of the 1920s and late 1990s. The popping of those bubbles led in the first instance to the Great Depression and in the second to a recession. If the coronavirus shock leads to a full-blown financial crisis, troubled corporations will default on their debt payments not only in the United States but worldwide. China, Japan, and Europe are also riddled with zombies.

Eventually, rising debt could threaten the U.S. financial empire. In 1985, the United States owed the rest of the world $104 billion, an amount equal to a negligible 2.5 percent of GDP. Since then, those liabilities have risen to nearly $10 trillion, 50 percent of GDP, a threshold that has often pushed nations into a currency crisis. Empires lose their reserve currency status when foreign nations lose confidence that the imperial power can pay its bills.

Before the United States, five countries had held reserve currency status: Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom. On average, each lasted 94 years in the leading role. Today, the dollar's run as a reserve currency is 100 years old. One reason it is likely to endure even a pandemic-induced recession is the absence of viable national rivals, but in the void, new contend-

ers are emerging, including gold and cryptocurrencies. Facebook is trying to launch a digital currency, Libra. Just because the dollar is the indispensable currency today doesn't mean it will be forever.

AMERICA IS NOT IN DECLINE

If the U.S. economy slips up in the 2020s, will it mean that the declinists were right all along? Unlikely. Beyond the next five to ten years, no forecast is better than a random guess, because too much can change in the intervening years, as the cycles of economics, politics, and technology turn. The long run is a myth.

In most tellings, the declinist narrative reaches its denouement when the United States loses its place as the world's largest economy to China. Often, this story is couched in historical inevitability, evoking the vastness of China's population, the glories of its imperial past, even the fact that sixteenth-century China accounted for 25 percent of the global economy—as if distant past performance guaranteed future results.

Declinists often exaggerate how soon China could overtake the United States by assuming that it can maintain overstated growth rates indefinitely and never once suffer a financial crisis or a recession. For the sake of argument, let's pretend that these exercises in straight-line extrapolation make sense. If into the future, China and the United States maintained their officially reported 2019 nominal GDP growth rates—around six percent and four percent, respectively—China would not catch up to the United States until around 2050.

And since all developing economies slow down as they mature and grow richer, China's economy is likely to slow further than it already has over the past decade. If its growth slowed by one percentage point, China would not catch up until 2090, and even that pace would be tough to sustain. South Korea and Taiwan, the two most successful development stories in history, grew rapidly for five decades, then slowed sharply. China has already been growing rapidly for four decades. Moreover, South Korea and Taiwan boomed during the postwar miracle years, when economic growth was supercharged all over the world by the baby boom and hyperglobalization. Now, the baby boom has gone bust. Trade growth has stalled. Economic growth is slowing worldwide. And all these headwinds are hitting China harder than the United States.

What is more, China's debt now amounts to nearly 270 percent of GDP (the comparable figure in the United States is 250 percent), and it is much harder for a middle-income country such as China to grow

with a debt that high. Zombies account for ten percent of corporate debt in China, so unlike in 2008, when its debt was much lower, China is now highly vulnerable to a global financial crisis. Moreover, the United States is the battle-tested survivor of 12 recessions and a Great Depression over the last century. China has not suffered a recession since its economic boom began four decades ago, and its leaders now respond to any hint of a downturn by pumping more debt into the economy.

Few Americans alive today are likely to be around to see the United States fall to second place.

The most important driver of any economy is the working-age population, which is still growing in the United States but started shrinking in China five years ago. Historically, countries with a shrinking workforce have had virtually no chance of sustaining rapid economic growth for even one decade. Yet declinists assume that China's rise can continue indefinitely. More likely, few Americans alive today will be around to see the United States fall to second place.

Foreign affairs experts may be correct to argue that the United States should modernize its global strategy, restore ties to traditional allies and critical trade partners, rejoin international agreements, and help rebuild the institutional pillars of the postwar order. But often, the argument is not that these moves would be wise; it is that they are necessary to match U.S. policy with the reality of the country's declining economic clout.

That, however, is not the reality. The United States is not in decline. It was the comeback nation of the 2010s. And if the experts aren't right about where the United States is coming from, they may not be right about where it needs to go.

China's Coming Upheaval

Competition, the Coronavirus, and the Weakness of Xi Jinping

Minxin Pei

Over the past few years, the United States' approach to China has taken a hard-line turn, with the balance between cooperation and competition in the U.S.-Chinese relationship tilting sharply toward the latter. Most American policymakers and commentators consider this confrontational new strategy a response to China's growing assertiveness, embodied especially in the controversial figure of Chinese President Xi Jinping. But ultimately, this ongoing tension—particularly with the added pressures of the new coronavirus outbreak and an economic downturn—is likely to expose the brittleness and insecurity that lie beneath the surface of Xi's, and Beijing's, assertions of solidity and strength.

The United States has limited means of influencing China's closed political system, but the diplomatic, economic, and military pressure that Washington can bring to bear on Beijing will put Xi and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) he leads under enormous strain. Indeed, a prolonged period of strategic confrontation with the United States, such as the one China is currently experiencing, will create conditions that are conducive to dramatic changes.

As tension between the United States and China has grown, there has been vociferous debate about the similarities and, perhaps more important, the differences between U.S.-Chinese competition now and U.S.-Soviet competition during the Cold War. Whatever the limitations of the analogy, Chinese leaders have put considerable thought into the lessons of the Cold War and of the Soviet collapse. Ironically, Beijing may nevertheless be repeating some of the most consequential mistakes of the Soviet regime.

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During the multidecade competition of the Cold War, the rigidity of the Soviet regime and its leaders proved to be the United States' most valuable asset. The Kremlin doubled down on failed strategies—sticking with a moribund economic system, continuing a ruinous arms race, and maintaining an unaffordable global empire—rather than accept the losses that thoroughgoing reforms might have entailed. Chinese leaders are similarly constrained by the rigidities of their own system and therefore limited in their ability to correct policy mistakes. In 2018, Xi decided to abolish presidential term limits, signaling his intention to stay in power indefinitely. He has indulged in heavy-handed purges, ousting prominent party officials under the guise of an anticorruption drive. What is more, Xi has suppressed protests in Hong Kong, arrested hundreds of human rights lawyers and activists, and imposed the tightest media censorship of the post-Mao era. His government has constructed "reeducation" camps in Xinjiang, where it has incarcerated more than a million Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities. And it has centralized economic and political decision-making, pouring government resources into state-owned enterprises and honing its surveillance technologies. Yet all together, these measures have made the CCP weaker: the growth of state-owned enterprises distorts the economy, and surveillance fuels resistance. The spread of the novel coronavirus has only deepened the Chinese people's dissatisfaction with their government.

The economic tensions and political critiques stemming from U.S.-Chinese competition may ultimately prove to be the straws that broke this camel's back. If Xi continues on this trajectory, eroding the foundations of China's economic and political power and monopolizing responsibility and control, he will expose the CCP to cataclysmic change.

A PAPER TIGER

Since taking power in 2012, Xi has replaced collective leadership with strongman rule. Before Xi, the regime consistently displayed a high degree of ideological flexibility and political pragmatism. It avoided errors by relying on a consensus-based decision-making process that incorporated views from rival factions and accommodated their dueling interests. The CCP also avoided conflicts abroad by staying out of contentious disputes, such as those in the Middle East, and refraining from activities that could encroach on the United States' vital national interests. At home, China's ruling elites maintained peace by sharing

the spoils of governance. Such a regime was by no means perfect. Corruption was pervasive, and the government often delayed critical decisions and missed valuable opportunities. But the regime that preceded Xi's centralization had one distinct advantage: a built-in propensity for pragmatism and caution.

In the last seven years, that system has been dismantled and replaced by a qualitatively different regime—one marked by a high degree of ideological rigidity, punitive policies toward ethnic minorities and political dissenters at home, and an impulsive foreign policy embodied by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a trillion-dollar infrastructure program with dubious economic potential that has aroused intense suspicion in the West. The centralization of power under Xi has created new fragilities and has exposed the party to greater risks. If the upside of strongman rule is the ability to make difficult decisions quickly, the downside is that it greatly raises the odds of making costly blunders. The consensus-based decision-making of the earlier era might have been slow and inefficient, but it prevented radical or risky ideas from becoming policy.

Under Xi, correcting policy mistakes has proved to be difficult, since reversing decisions made personally by the strongman would undercut his image of infallibility. (It is easier politically to reverse bad decisions made under collective leadership, because a group, not an individual, takes the blame.) Xi's demand for loyalty has also stifled debate and deterred dissent within the CCP. For these reasons, the party lacks the flexibility needed to avoid and reverse future missteps in its confrontation with the United States. The result is likely to be growing disunity within the regime. Some party leaders will no doubt recognize the risks and grow increasingly alarmed that Xi has needlessly endangered the party's standing. The damage to Xi's authority caused by further missteps would also embolden his rivals, especially Premier Li Keqiang and the Politburo members Wang Yang and Hu Chunhua, all of whom have close ties to former President Hu Jintao. Of course, it is nearly impossible to remove a strongman in a one-party regime because of his tight control over the military and the security forces. But creeping discord would at the very least feed Xi's insecurity and paranoia, further eroding his ability to chart a steady course.

A strongman who has suffered setbacks—as Mao Zedong did after the Great Leap Forward, a modernization program that centralized food production, leading to some 30 million deaths by famine

Survival skills: Xi visiting COVID-19 patients in Wuhan, China, March 2020

XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA / EYEVINE / REDUX

in the early 1960s—naturally fears that his rivals will seize the opportunity to conspire against him. To preempt such threats, the strongman typically resorts to purges, which Mao did four years after the end of the Great Leap Forward by launching the Cultural Revolution, a movement intended to eliminate "bourgeois elements" in society and in the government. In the years ahead, Xi may come to rely on purges more than he already does, further heightening tensions and distrust among the ruling elites.

LEAN TIMES AHEAD

A key component of Washington's strategic confrontation with Beijing is economic "decoupling," a significant reduction of the extensive commercial ties that the United States and China have built over the last four decades. Those advocating decoupling—such as U.S. President Donald Trump, who launched a trade war with China in 2018—believe that by cutting China off from the United States' vast market and sophisticated technology, Washington can greatly reduce the potential growth of China's power. In spite of the truce in the trade war

following the interim deal that Trump struck with Xi in January 2020, U.S.-Chinese economic decoupling is almost certain to continue in the coming years regardless of who is in the White House, because reducing the United States' economic dependence on China and constraining the growth of China's power are now bipartisan aims.

As their standard of living stalls, middle-class Chinese may turn against the party.

Since the Chinese economy today is less dependent on exports as an engine of growth—exports in 2018 accounted for 19.5 percent of GDP, down from 32.6 percent in 2008—decoupling may not depress China's economic growth as much as its proponents have hoped. But it will certainly have a net negative impact on the Chinese economy, one that may be amplified by the country's domestic economic slowdown, which is itself the product of a ballooning debt, the exhaustion of investment-driven growth, and a rapidly aging population. The slowdown may be further exacerbated by Beijing's attempt to shore up near-term growth with unsustainable policies, such as increased bank lending and investment in wasteful infrastructure projects.

As the economy weakens, the CCP may have to contend with the erosion of popular support resulting from a falling or stagnant standard of living. In the post-Mao era, the CCP has relied heavily on economic overperformance to sustain its legitimacy. Indeed, the generations born after the Cultural Revolution have experienced steadily rising living standards. A prolonged period of mediocre economic performance—say, a few years in which the growth rate hovers around three or four percent, the historical mean for developing countries—could severely reduce the level of popular support for the CCP, as ordinary Chinese grapple with rising unemployment and an inadequate social safety net.

In such an adverse economic environment, signs of social unrest, such as riots, mass protests, and strikes, will become more common. The deepest threat to the regime's stability will come from the Chinese middle class. Well-educated and ambitious college graduates will find it difficult to obtain desirable jobs in the coming years because of China's anemic economic performance. As their standard of living stalls, middle-class Chinese may turn against the party. This won't be obvious at first: the Chinese middle class has traditionally shied away from politics. But even if members of the middle class

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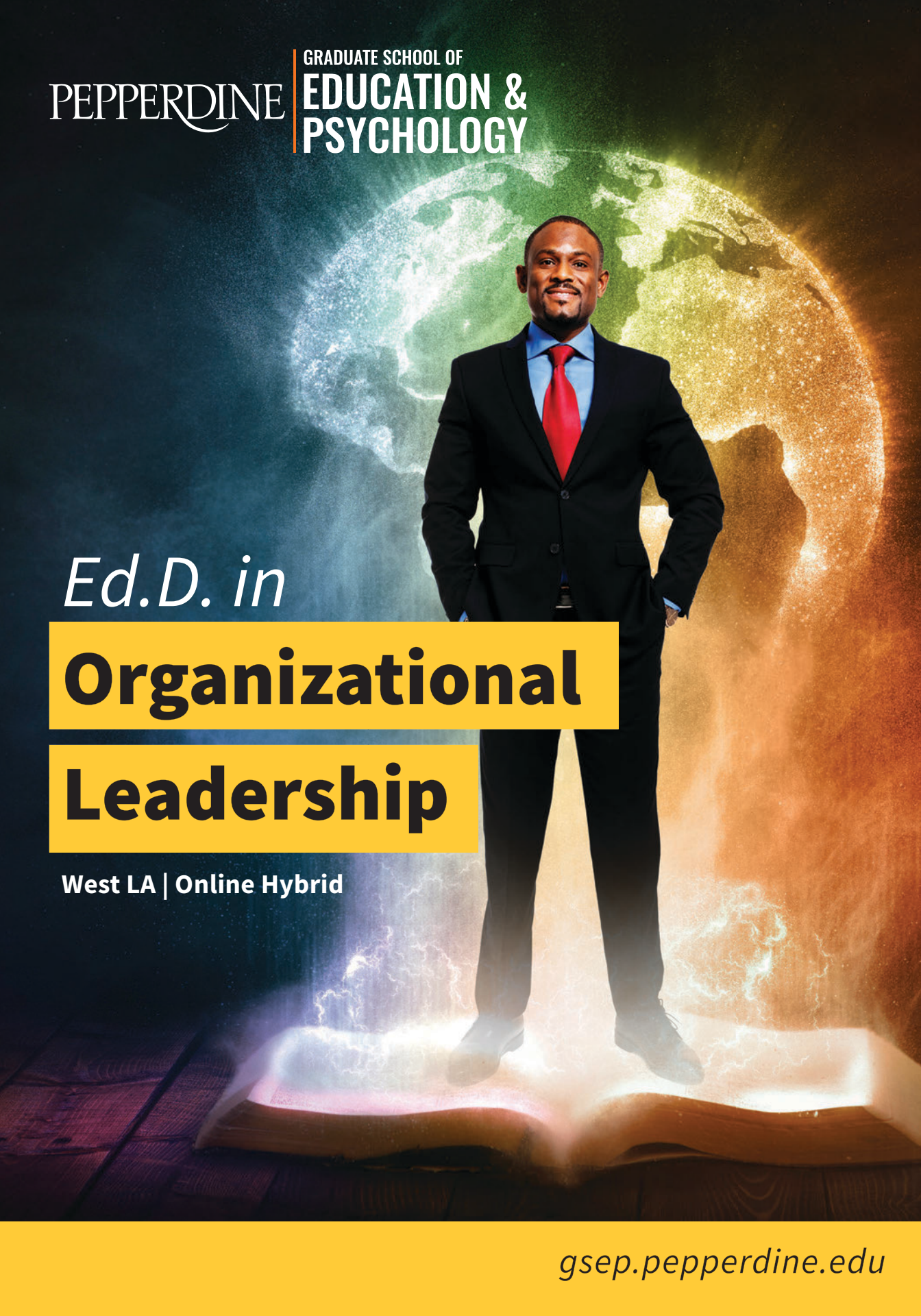

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do not participate in anti-regime protests, they may well express their discontent indirectly, in demonstrations over such issues as environmental protection, public health, education, and food safety. The Chinese middle class could also vote with its feet by emigrating abroad in large numbers.

Xi will probably beat the drums of Chinese nationalism to counter the United States.

An economic slowdown would also disrupt the CCP's patronage structure, the perks and favors that the government provides to cronies and collaborators. In the recent past, a booming economy provided the government with abundant revenue—total revenue in absolute terms tripled between 2008 and 2018—providing the resources the CCP needed to secure the loyalty of midlevel apparatchiks, senior provincial leaders, and the managers of state-owned enterprises. As the Chinese economic miracle falters, the party will find it harder to provide the privileges and material comforts that such officials have come to expect. Party elites will also need to compete harder among themselves to get approval and funding for their pet projects. Dissatisfaction among the elites may spiral if Xi's prized priorities, such as the BRI, continue to receive preferential treatment and everyone else must economize.

Finally, in the event of a dramatic slowdown, the Chinese government will most likely find itself confronting greater resistance in the country's restive periphery, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, which contain China's most vocal ethnic minorities, and in Hong Kong, which was British territory until 1997 and retains a different system of governance with far more civil liberties. To be sure, escalating tensions in China's periphery will not bring the CCP down. But they can be costly distractions. Should the party resort to overly harsh responses to assert its control, as is likely to be the case, the country will incur international criticism and harsh new sanctions. The escalation of human rights violations in China would also help push Europe closer to the United States, thus facilitating the formation of a broad anti-China coalition, which Beijing has been desperately trying to prevent.

Although middle-class discontent, ethnic resistance, and pro-democracy protests won't force Xi out of power, such pervasive malaise would undoubtedly further erode his authority and cast

doubts on his capacity to govern effectively. Economic weakness and elite demoralization could then push Beijing over the edge, leading the CCP toward calamity.

BEATING THE DRUMS OF NATIONALISM

In theory, the CCP should be capable of avoiding or mitigating the damage from an economic slowdown. An effective strategy would incorporate some of the valuable lessons Xi's predecessors learned from the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moscow continued to provide significant aid to Cuba, Vietnam, and several vassal states in Eastern Europe well into the Soviet Union's twilight years. The regime also pursued a costly military intervention in Afghanistan and funded proxies in Angola and Southeast Asia. To avoid those kinds of mistakes, Beijing should prioritize the conservation of its limited financial resources to sustain the open-ended great-power conflict. In particular, China should retrench from its expansionist projects, above all the BRI, and other foreign assistance programs, such as the grants and concessional loans it has provided to Cambodia, Cuba, Venezuela, and several developing countries in Africa. Beijing might incur considerable short-term costs—namely, the loss of prestige and goodwill—but over the long term, China would avoid the perils of imperial overreach and preserve enough funds to recapitalize its banking system, which has been exhausted by excessive lending in the last decade.

Beijing should also build stronger ties with U.S. allies to prevent Washington from recruiting them into a broad anti-China coalition. To do so, the regime will have to offer enormous economic, diplomatic, military, and political concessions, such as opening the Chinese market to Japan, South Korea, and Europe; ensuring the protection of intellectual property; making significant improvements in human rights; and abandoning certain territorial claims. Xi's government has already taken steps to repair ties with Japan. But to truly court U.S. allies and avert a slowdown, either Xi or his successors will need to go further, undertaking market-oriented reforms to offset the economic losses caused by decoupling. The large-scale privatization of state-owned enterprises is a good place to start. These inefficient behemoths control nearly $30 trillion in assets and consume roughly 80 percent of the country's available bank credit, but they contribute only between 23 and 28 percent of GDP. The efficiency gains that would be unleashed by reining in the state's direct role in the economy would be more than enough to compensate

for the loss of the U.S. market. The economist Nicholas Lardy has estimated that genuine economic reforms, in particular those targeting state-owned enterprises, could boost China's annual GDP growth by as much as two percentage points in the coming decade.

Unfortunately, Xi is unlikely to embrace this strategy. After all, it runs against his deeply held ideological views. Most of China's recent foreign and security policy initiatives bear his personal imprint. Curtailing or abandoning them would be seen as an admission of failure. As a result, the CCP might be limited to tactical adjustments: promoting public-private partnerships in the economy, deregulating certain sectors, or reducing government spending. Such steps would represent an improvement but would probably neither raise sufficient revenue nor appeal strongly enough to U.S. allies to decisively alter the course of the U.S.-Chinese confrontation.

Instead, Xi will probably beat the drums of Chinese nationalism to counter the United States. Ever since the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests—which shook the party to its core and resulted in a government crackdown on dissent—the CCP has ceaselessly exploited nationalist sentiment to shore up its legitimacy. In the event of decoupling and an economic slowdown, the party will likely ramp up those efforts. This should not be hard at first: most Chinese are convinced that the United States started the current conflict to thwart China's rise. But ironically, fanning the flames of nationalism could eventually make it harder for the party to switch to a more flexible strategy, since taking a vigorous anti-American stance will lock in conflict and constrain Beijing's policy options.

The party would then have to turn to social control and political repression. Thanks to its vast and effective security apparatus, the party should have little difficulty suppressing internal challenges to its authority. But repression would be costly. Faced with rising unrest fueled by economic stagnation, the party would have to devote substantial resources to stability, largely at the expense of other priorities. Strict social control would also likely alienate some elites, such as private entrepreneurs and high-profile academics and writers. Escalating repression could generate greater resistance in China's periphery—Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong—and elicit international criticism, especially from the European countries that China needs to court.

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AFTER THE DELUGE

The CCP is still far from dead. Short of China's losing a direct military conflict with the United States, the party can conceivably hang on to power. That said, a regime beset by economic stagnation and rising social unrest at home and great-power competition abroad is inherently brittle. The CCP will probably unravel by fits and starts. The rot would set in slowly but then spread quickly.

It is possible, but unlikely, that mounting dissatisfaction within the regime could motivate senior members to organize a palace coup to replace Xi. The party, however, has adopted sophisticated coup-proofing techniques: the General Office of the Central Committee monitors communication among members of the committee, the only body that could conceivably remove Xi. What is more, Xi's loyalists dominate the membership of the Politburo and the Central Committee, and the military is firmly under his control. Under such circumstances, a conspiracy against the top leader would be exceedingly difficult to pull off.

Another possible scenario is a crisis that creates a split among China's top elites, which in turn paralyzes the regime's fearsome repressive apparatus. Such an event could be precipitated by mass protests that the security forces are unable to contain. As with the Tiananmen protests, divisions could emerge among top leaders over how to deal with the protesters, thus allowing the movement to gain momentum and attract broad-based support nationwide. But this scenario, although tantalizing, is unlikely to materialize, since the party has invested heavily in surveillance and information control and has developed effective methods to suppress mass protests.

The scenario that would entail the greatest likelihood of radical change is a succession struggle that would occur if Xi were to pass away or resign owing to infirmity. Typically, the fight for power that follows the end of strongman rule produces a weak interim leader: consider Soviet Premier Georgy Malenkov, who followed Stalin, or CCP Chair Hua Guofeng, who followed Mao. Such leaders are often pushed out by a stronger contender with a transformative vision: think Nikita Khrushchev in the Soviet Union and Deng Xiaoping in China. Given this new leader's need to assert his authority and offer a different, more appealing agenda, it is unlikely that Xi's hard authoritarianism would survive the end of his rule.

That would leave the new leader with only two options. He could return to the survival strategy that the party had before Xi by restoring

collective leadership and a risk-averse foreign policy. But he might find this to be a hard sell, as the party and all its previous survival strategies might have been discredited by this point. So he might instead opt for more radical reforms to save the party. Although stopping short of liberal democracy, he would, in this case, roll back repression, relax social control, and accelerate economic reform, just as the Soviet Union did between 1985 and its collapse in 1991. Such a course of action might be more attractive to a party elite traumatized by two decades of strongman rule; it might also resonate with Chinese youth yearning for a new direction.

Typically, the fight that follows the end of strongman rule produces a weak interim leader.

If reformers gained the upper hand and embarked on such a path, the most critical issue would be whether they could avoid "the Tocqueville paradox," named after the political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville, who observed that the reforms that a weakened dictatorship pursues have a tendency to trigger a revolution that eventually topples the reformist dictatorship itself.

Moderate reforms might be more effective in China than they were in the Soviet Union, however, because a new Chinese leader would not have to deal with a collapsing external empire, as the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, did in Eastern Europe. Nor would a new leader face national disintegration, as the Soviet Union did in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when all 15 Soviet republics bolted from the center, because non-Chinese ethnic minorities make up less than ten percent of China's population. They may cause serious problems in Tibet and Xinjiang, but otherwise, ethnic minorities pose no real threat to China's territorial integrity.

Whatever the outcome after Xi's political exit, the CCP will likely undergo dramatic changes. In the best-case scenario, the party may succeed in transforming itself into a "kinder, gentler" regime, one that endorses economic and political reforms and seeks a geopolitical reconciliation with the United States. By the end, the CCP could be unrecognizable. In the worst-case scenario, deep institutional rot, inept leadership, and the mobilization of anti-regime movements could very well cause a hard landing. Should that happen, it would be one of history's greatest ironies. Despite the lessons the CCP has

learned from the Soviet implosion and the steps it has taken since 1991 to avoid the same fate, the end of one-party rule in China could follow an eerily similar script.

THE SICK MAN OF EAST ASIA

Such a scenario will likely be dismissed as pure fantasy by those who believe in the durability and resilience of CCP rule. But the Chinese party-state's botched initial response to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus and the subsequent eruption of public outrage should make them think again. The worst public health crisis in the history of the People's Republic of China has revealed a number of significant weaknesses. The regime's capacity to collect, process, and act on critical information is much less impressive than most would have anticipated. Considering the enormous investments in disease control and prevention that China has made since the SARS outbreak in 2002–3 and the implementation of laws on emergency management in 2007, it has been staggering to see how thoroughly the Chinese government initially mishandled the new coronavirus epidemic. Local authorities in Wuhan—the epicenter of the outbreak—concealed critical information from the public even after medical professionals sounded the alarm, just as Jiang Yanyong, a veteran army doctor, did in 2003 about SARS. Although they received reports from Wuhan about the spread of the virus in early January, most members of the senior leadership did not take any serious action for two weeks.

The crisis has also revealed the fragility of Xi's strongman rule. One likely reason that Beijing failed to take aggressive action to contain the outbreak early on was that few crucial decisions can be made without Xi's direct approval, and he faces heavy demands on his limited time and attention. A strongman who monopolizes decision-making can also be politically vulnerable during such a crisis. A series of decisions Xi made after the Wuhan lockdown began—such as sending Li, the premier, to the epicenter of the virus instead of going himself and remaining unseen in public for nearly two weeks—undermined his image as a decisive leader at precisely the moment the system seemed to be rudderless. He reasserted control only weeks after the crisis began—by firing the party chiefs in charge of the city and the province where the outbreak started and imposing tight censorship rules on the press and social media.

But the brief window during which Chinese social media and even the official press erupted in outrage revealed just how tenuous the CCP's control over information has become and highlighted the latent power of Chinese civil society. For unknown reasons, China's censorship system performed poorly for about two weeks after the lockdown in Wuhan was announced. During that period, people were able to learn how the government had muzzled medical professionals who had tried to warn the public. Criticism of the government reached a peak when Li Wenliang—a doctor who in late December was among the first to warn Chinese authorities about the danger of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, and who was subsequently interrogated and silenced by local police—died of the illness on February 7, showing that the CCP could lose public support quickly in a crisis situation.

The events of the past few months have shown that CCP rule is far more brittle than many believed. This bolsters the case for a U.S. strategy of sustained pressure to induce political change. Washington should stay the course; its chances of success are only getting better and better.

What Kim Wants

The Hopes and Fears of North Korea's Dictator

Jung H. Pak

Between 2017 and 2019, relations between the United States and North Korea made for great television. Perhaps this was by design: U.S. President Donald Trump seemed to believe that any interactions between the two adversaries would be more successful—or at least play more to his strengths—the more they resembled an entertaining spectacle in which he took center stage. For his part, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un took advantage of Trump's apparent desire for drama, which put Kim and his country at the center of world events. But a spectacle might have been inevitable, given the two leaders' shared penchant for aggressiveness and unpredictability.

The first season of the resulting show was marked by confrontation: Kim's belligerent rhetoric and nuclear and missile tests in 2017, Trump's threats ("fire and fury"), and insults the two men hurled at each other (Trump dubbed Kim "Little Rocket Man," and Kim dismissed Trump as a "mentally deranged U.S. dotard"). In the second season, the plot took a twist, as the main characters stepped back from the brink and held two carefully choreographed summits. After the first meeting, held in Singapore in June 2018, Trump was effusive. "Everybody can now feel much safer than the day I took office," he declared on Twitter. "There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea."

In fact, the summit had achieved little, and in the months that followed, negotiations remained deadlocked. The lack of progress became clear to all at a second summit, held in Hanoi in February 2019. The meeting ended abruptly, without the parties issuing a joint statement. A few months later, the two leaders appeared together once

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more, this time in the demilitarized zone that separates North Korea and South Korea. But it was little more than a photo op, aimed at keeping up the appearance of progress.

The show now seems to have gone on an extended hiatus, and it's not clear whether there will ever be a third season or if it has already reached an unsatisfying end. The Trump administration continues to insist on a narrative of progress, which the White House narrowly defines as the absence of nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile testing on Kim's part. But in the meantime, the Kim regime has been enriching uranium, expanding its long-range missile bases, developing new ballistic missiles, and upgrading its nuclear-weapons-related facilities. The White House credits its strategy of "maximum pressure"—the use of diplomatic, economic, and military means to constrain North Korea's ability to generate funds for its nuclear weapons program—with bringing Kim to the negotiating table. But the sanctions infrastructure has eroded. North Korea has adapted evasion techniques. Its top trading partner, China, has loosened its enforcement of sanctions, seeking regional stability over denuclearization. And the Trump administration itself relaxed elements of its policy in order to maintain Kim's interest in diplomacy. As maximum pressure has morphed into maximum flexibility, Kim seems to have concluded that provocation and passive-aggressive intransigence are enough to secure his country's relevance and independence and his own survival.

In short, the North Korean threat still very much exists, and the Kim regime is determined to stay capable of putting the United States and its allies at risk. If Trump's gambit achieved anything, it was to clarify that Washington and its allies should not seek to make Kim feel more secure and emboldened by making concessions. Rather, they should focus on altering Kim's calculations in such a way that he comes to see having nuclear weapons not as an indispensable asset but as an unacceptable risk to his survival. Doing so requires understanding what makes Kim tick and, perhaps more important, the incentives that structure his decision-making. It also requires the United States and its partners to remain clear about their chief objective: the complete dismantling of North Korea's nuclear weapons arsenal.

UNDERSTANDING KIM

Since inheriting his leadership role from his father, Kim Jong Il, in 2011, Kim Jong Un has taken ownership of the country's nuclear program. He sees his country's military programs as symbols of prestige

and progress and has pegged to them his personal legacy and that of the Kim family dynasty. Moreover, he has elevated and embedded nuclear weapons in both the popular consciousness and the ideological, physical, and cultural landscape, enshrining them in North Korea's constitution and linking them to the country's prosperity.

Pyongyang wields its nuclear weapons to deter a U.S. attack and to conduct coercive diplomacy—including the use of limited violence—to weaken Washington's alliances with Tokyo and Seoul, retain independence of action from Beijing, and maintain North Korea's leverage and strategic relevance amid wealthier and more powerful neighbors. Kim has manufactured and exploited crises by taking provocative steps, such as threatening to test a hydrogen bomb over the Pacific Ocean, and he has cleverly used the perception of the regime's unpredictability and volatility to extract economic and political concessions.

U.S. officials sometimes speak of Kim as if he were an irrational hothead determined to start a war with the United States. After Kim tested a hydrogen bomb in September 2017, Nikki Haley, then the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, warned that the North Korean leader was "begging for war," and James Mattis, then the U.S. defense secretary, pledged "a massive military response" to any further threats. Two months later, after Kim tested an intercontinental ballistic missile, U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, fumed that Washington would not "let this crazy man in North Korea have the capability to hit the homeland." Such language was probably an effort to warn Pyongyang about the consequences of its actions, to press Beijing to use its clout to rein in Kim, and to assure allies. But it also revealed a belief that Kim is irrational and reckless, a notion that has stubbornly clung to discussions about him since he took the reins in 2011. That belief conflates capabilities with intentions and assumes a strategic intent—that Kim seeks a nuclear war with the United States—that almost certainly does not exist.

Over the years, the U.S. intelligence community has firmly concluded that Kim is rational and that his primary purposes for having nuclear weapons are deterring rivals, maintaining his country's international status, and securing his regime's survival. Kim is most likely to use his nuclear weapons against the United States or a U.S. ally only if he assesses that an attack on his country is imminent. Kim's personal stamp on the program, the regime's public celebration of its various technical milestones, and the promotion of scientists and

Desk job: Kim watching a missile launch in Pyongyang, September 2017

KCNA / REUTERS

technicians involved in it all suggest that nuclear weapons are a source of great domestic pride and a vital part of Kim's image as a responsible head of state, which in recent years he has worked to burnish.

In his 2019 New Year's address, Kim wore a suit and tie, as he has since 2017, in place of the dark Mao-style jacket he opted for in earlier years. For the first time, he delivered the address while seated comfortably in an overstuffed leather chair as opposed to standing stiffly at a massive lectern. His appearance reinforced the speech's tone and message: Kim is a modern leader—calm, relatable, professional. Postings on official social media accounts regularly show him smiling alongside his stylish wife and attending summits with other global leaders. The message is clear: Kim is not an immature oddball but rather an old hand at negotiations, respected by his peers abroad.

Nevertheless, although Kim is just as rational as other leaders and shares their desire to be seen as a player on the world stage, his incentive structure and threat perceptions do not necessarily resemble theirs. In the minds of well-meaning peace activists and academics encouraged by Kim's turn to diplomacy, North Korea has always wanted a security guarantee from the United States, and its development of nuclear weapons is a reaction to the perceived threat that

Washington poses to Pyongyang. Some scholars also insist that Kim wants to be a great economic reformer; according to the historian John Delury, Kim wants "North Korea to become a normal East Asian economy" and seeks to "catch up with and integrate into the region."

Kim does not want a "normal" security environment; he wants to preserve his garrison state.

In this view, what North Korea really wants is peace and prosperity. In reality, the regime requires a hostile outside world to justify its diversion of scarce resources into military programs, to be able to cast blame on others for the problems in the country's economy, and to maintain the foundational myth that the Kim family is the sole protector of North Korea's existence. The historian Sheila Miyoshi Jager has argued that since 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea, the regime's main strategic goal has been not peace but "the disruption of peace." The goal of its propaganda and massive indoctrination efforts is to continually stoke fear of the United States.

Kim does not want a "normal" security environment; he wants to preserve his garrison state. He trusts only himself to safeguard North Korea's security and his own survival: after all, even allies such as China and Russia chose to normalize relations with South Korea and have signed on to UN sanctions against North Korea. He puts little faith in the democratic governments of his rivals. The United States holds presidential elections every four years, and South Korea elects a president who is limited to a single five-year term: Who knows whether either government would stick to any deal it offered? Trump's 2018 withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal provided yet another piece of evidence for Kim that Washington is a fickle and unreliable partner.

Kim doesn't trust his own people, either, and fears the influx of information from outside his propaganda machine that would accompany regional economic integration. That is why he has tightened borders and instituted draconian punishments for those who attempt to defect, engage in unsanctioned market activities, or dare to consume South Korean soap operas, films, books, or music. In addition to these defensive measures, Kim has created a closed-off intranet that substitutes for the global Internet and has encouraged the development of a consumer culture around domestically produced luxury goods and services. For example, in recent years, the regime

has introduced online shopping portals for smartphone users, offering high-end clothing, women's accessories, cosmetics, and specialty food items. And since he came to power, Kim has ramped up a massive building boom, constructing ski resorts, amusement parks, a new airport, a dolphinarium, restaurants, and high-rise luxury apartment buildings to showcase North Korea's modernity.

TOUGH GUY

Despite having many reasons to feel insecure, Kim has grown more confident since he took power. His faith in his ability to provoke attention and then de-escalate and avoid punishment has been reinforced by his success in securing summits with Trump without giving an inch on his nuclear weapons program. His reading of the events of recent years is that in a crisis, his arsenal would deter Washington from taking military action, Beijing and Moscow would not abandon him, and the United States and China would rein in any aggressive impulses on the part of Japan or South Korea and restrain those two countries from developing their own nuclear weapons.

Armed with these assumptions, Kim will probably continue to carry out limited acts of aggression, using cyberweapons and other coercive tools to keep North Korea's rivals off balance. Since the failed Hanoi summit, Kim's Plan B has taken shape: cast North Korea as the aggrieved party and put pressure on Washington to budge. In an April 2019 speech to his country's Supreme People's Assembly, Kim touted his strong personal relationship with Trump and the importance of dialogue and negotiations but also declared that "the United States will not be able to move us one iota nor get what it wants at all, even if it sits with us a hundred times, a thousand times." He warned of a "bleak and very dangerous" situation if the United States does not change its "hostile" policies toward North Korea.

He soon took steps to back up his tough talk. In July 2019, North Korea's state media reported that Kim had inspected a newly built submarine that might be intended for launching ballistic missiles and had instructed his officials to "steadily and reliably increase the national defense." Three months later, he presided over a series of missile tests, including one involving a ballistic missile launched from a sea-based platform. A couple of months later, in December, Kim defiantly declared that "the world will witness a new strategic weapon" and hinted at a return to nuclear tests. Kim's efforts to diversify

his military's arsenal, develop a second-strike nuclear capability, upgrade his military's conventional armaments and training, and improve surveillance and reconnaissance suggest that he wants more than the mere ability to deter rivals. They indicate that Kim may have adopted a more expansive vision of how to use his nuclear and missile programs: to advance offensive objectives, such as fostering conditions conducive to the reunification of the Korean Peninsula on terms favorable to his regime.

Still, Kim remains vulnerable. "North Korea's fundamental liabilities are systemic and enduring," the North Korea expert Jonathan Pollack has argued, and "the vision of a self-reliant country bears little relation to North Korea's actual needs." The consequences of the regime's actions and the country's isolation are taking a toll. Thanks to sanctions, its pool of trading partners has shrunk to essentially one: China, which accounts for more than 90 percent of North Korea's trade. In 2017, North Korea's number two trading partner, India, accounted for only slightly more than $7 million worth of imports and exports, a decrease of ten percent from the prior year. Russia was in a distant third place, with around $2 million worth, a 70 percent decrease from a year earlier. Also in 2017, trade between the two Koreas plummeted to about $1 million, down from $333 million in 2016. North Korea's economy shrank by about five percent in 2018, reducing it to a level comparable to that of 1997, when the country was in the midst of a devastating famine. And reports that trickled out of the country in early 2019 suggested that the regime was ceasing or suspending activity and production at government-backed factories and mines amid restrictions on flows of oil into the country. Meanwhile, Kim is trying to squeeze more money out of the North Korean laborers the regime sends to work overseas.

Kim needs to stimulate North Korea's economic development, since he is probably planning to be in power for the next few decades and wants to pass down a stable, thriving, nuclear-armed North Korea to one of his children. But amid rising expectations (especially among young people, who are more individualistic and market-oriented than their elders), the crippling effects of sanctions and isolation will make it hard for Kim to deliver on his promises and rhetoric. Moreover, the regime's closing of North Korea's borders to tourism and trade to stop the spread of COVID-19 has dramatically reduced the country's revenue streams, just when it can least afford it.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

To ramp up the pressure, sharpen the choices that Kim has to make, and alter his risk calculus, the United States and its regional allies must undertake coordinated and consistent actions to convince him that nuclear weapons make his survival less, rather than more, secure. To do so, Washington and its allies—especially Tokyo and Seoul—need to stay on the same page. Any real or perceived fissures or doubts about U.S. credibility and commitments will play to Kim's advantage, allowing him to disrupt regional stability and pull off attacks that would fall just below the threshold for retaliation.

First and foremost, the allies must reaffirm that a durable peace in Northeast Asia requires a nuclear-free North Korea. In pursuit of that objective, the United States, Japan, and South Korea should develop a menu of options that they are prepared to jointly execute to minimize the North Korean threat, giving Beijing the choice of either cooperating or getting out of the way. The list could include covert actions against North Korea and also overt steps, such as enhancing joint military drills to prepare for a range of potential North Korean provocations. Meanwhile, Japan and South Korea could strengthen their own security by reaffirming and implementing their 2016 agreement on military intelligence sharing, which in the past year has been threatened by a trade dispute between the two countries.

The United States and its partners also need to tighten the sanctions regime, which has eroded in the aftermath of the failed Trump-Kim summits. The UN Panel of Experts, the group in charge of monitoring the implementation of the sanctions, has been documenting serious violations and the clever tactics that North Korea uses to evade the sanctions. According to the panel's March 2019 report, Singaporean companies have knowingly shipped banned luxury items to North Korea, and a Chinese businessman helped transfer a number of Mercedes-Benz vehicles—possibly including the Mercedes-Maybach S-class limousine that Kim flaunted at the Hanoi summit. The panel has also reported that North Korea has violated sanctions by conducting unauthorized ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum; in August 2019, the United States blacklisted a number of Chinese entities for facilitating such illegal transfers. Meanwhile, representatives of the Kim regime's financial institutions continue to travel freely and do business in a number of countries, including China, Russia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates. The panel's August 2019 report detailed how

the regime has become more sophisticated in its manipulation of cyberspace, generating as much as $2 billion in ill-gotten gains by launching attacks on foreign financial institutions and cryptocurrency exchanges. The regime has also made money through email phishing scams and ransomware, with which attackers hold hostage the data of individuals or organizations until the targets pay up. Such violations have helped keep the Kim regime stay afloat and fund its nuclear weapons program.

Washington should restore the position of special envoy for human rights in North Korea, which the Trump administration eliminated.

Washington should also augment its diplomacy by starting a round of five-party talks with China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea. Such a group would signal a unity of purpose, and it could agree on a list of benefits that Pyongyang should receive if it decides to abandon its nuclear weapons program. The existence of such a group would also help assuage Pyongyang's concerns about whether any deal it made would survive political changes in the democratic countries involved.

Another pressure point that needs attention is the Kim regime's domestic repression. Washington should restore the position of special envoy for human rights in North Korea, which the Trump administration eliminated in 2017. The envoy should engage with North Korean officials, defectors, and nongovernmental human rights organizations to craft strategies for improving the lives of the North Korean people and supporting the development of their political freedoms and civil rights. Such steps are necessary for any potential deal, since in order to verify that the regime was taking promised steps toward denuclearization, scientists, technicians, and military officials would have to feel free to provide accurate data without fear of reprisal from the regime.

Meanwhile, the United States should invest in programs that allow outside information to penetrate North Korea, a process that helps loosen the regime's grip on its people and creates pressure from the inside. As the scholar Jieun Baek wrote in these pages in 2017, "Pyongyang considers foreign information of any kind a threat and expends great effort keeping it out. The regime's primary fear is that exposure to words, images, and sounds from the outside world could make North Koreans disillusioned with the state of affairs in their own

country, which could lead them to desire—or even demand—change." Washington should feed North Korean citizens' hunger for news, soap operas, documentaries, and radio programs. Working with South Korea, the United States should help North Korean defectors develop programming and partner with technology companies to pursue new ways to produce and distribute such content.

There are no silver bullets, and these policies would have to be sustained over time before they showed any demonstrable effect. They would require disciplined U.S. leadership and a strong international coalition; they would not be dramatic or made for television. Although the United States should keep the door open for dialogue with North Korea, there shouldn't be any more glitzy spectacles that reduce the pressure on Kim without requiring any real concessions on his part. Until it is clear that Kim is willing to consider serious negotiations over his nuclear weapons program and meaningful engagement with the United States and his neighbors—and not just hollow summitry—Washington should hold off on any grand gestures.

The End of Grand Strategy

America Must Think Small

Daniel W. Drezner, Ronald R. Krebs, and Randall Schweller

Whatever else U.S. President Donald Trump has done in the field of international relations, he can claim one signal accomplishment: making grand strategy interesting again. For decades, American foreign policy elites in both parties embraced liberal internationalism, the idea that Washington should sustain and expand a global order that promoted open markets, open polities, and multilateral institutions. But Trump has repeatedly attacked the key pillars of liberal internationalism, from questioning the value of NATO to blowing up trade agreements to insulting allies. When, in July 2017, his national security team met with him in a windowless Pentagon meeting room known as "the Tank" to educate him about the virtues of the liberal international order, Trump blasted them as "a bunch of dopes and babies," according to *The Washington Post*.

Trump's disruptions have forced foreign policy analysts to question first principles for the first time in decades. With bedrock assumptions about liberal internationalism dislodged, the debate over U.S. grand strategy has experienced a renaissance. New voices have entered the fray, ranging from far-left progressives to populist nationalists on the right.

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Advocates of retrenchment and restraint have received a fuller hearing, and unusual alliances have formed to advance common agendas.

Yet even as these debates have flowered, the very concept of grand strategy has become a chimera. A grand strategy is a road map for how to match means with ends. It works best on predictable terrain—in a world where policymakers enjoy a clear understanding of the distribution of power, a solid domestic consensus about national goals and identity, and stable political and national security institutions. In 2020, none of that exists anymore.

The changing nature of power, along with its diffusion in the international system, has made it much more difficult for the United States to shape its destiny. The rise of multiculturalism and the populist backlash against it have eroded shared narratives and a common identity. Political polarization has hollowed out the country's domestic political institutions, meaning that each new administration takes office bent on reversing whatever its predecessor did. Antiestablishment fever has debased policy debate and loosened the checks on executive power that generate consistency.

We write as three scholars who do not agree on much when it comes to politics, policy, or ideology. We do agree, however, that these new factors have rendered any exercise in crafting or pursuing a grand strategy costly and potentially counterproductive. None will be effective, and none will be long standing. Rather than quarrel over contending strategic doctrines, academics, pundits, think tankers, and policymakers should focus on more pragmatic forms of problem solving. From military intervention to foreign aid, policy made on a case-by-case basis will be at least as good, and likely better, than policy derived from grand strategic commitments. To debate grand strategy is to indulge in navel-gazing while the world burns. So it is time to operate without one.

POWER PROBLEMS

A successful grand strategy must be grounded in an accurate perception of the global distribution of power. One that grossly exaggerates a foe or underestimates a threat is not long for this world, because it will trigger policy choices that backfire. Indeed, one reason so many have attacked the United States' strategy of liberal internationalism over the past decade is that they believe the strategy failed to appreciate the rise of China.

Power in global politics is no longer what it once was. The ability of states to exercise power, the way they exercise power, the purposes

The best-laid plans: a U.S. soldier in Zhari District, Afghanistan, July 2010

to which they put power, and who holds power—all have fundamentally changed. The result is an emerging world of nonpolarity and disorder. And that is not a world where grand strategy works well.

Many things remain the same, of course. People still define their identities largely in terms of nationality. Countries still seek control over crucial resources and access to vital sea-lanes and clash over territory and regional influence. They still want to maximize their wealth, influence, security, prestige, and autonomy. But amassing territory is no longer the prize it used to be. Today's great powers seem determined to do two things more than anything else: get rich and avoid catastrophic military contests. They understand that states move up the ladder of international power and prestige by building knowledge-based economies and by promoting technological innovation and connectedness within global networks.

Meanwhile, power is becoming more about the ability to disrupt, block, disable, veto, and destroy than it is about the ability to construct, enable, repair, and build. Consider the "anti-access/area-denial" (A2/AD) capabilities that China is pursuing—mainly cyberwarfare techniques and antisatellite weapons—with the goal of raising the risks to U.S. forces operating in the western Pacific. Iran is believed to be doing the same thing in the Persian Gulf, using submarines, antiship missiles, and sophisticated mines in an effort to make the area a no-go zone for the U.S. Navy.

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When power is used for constructive purposes, it is becoming increasingly issue specific, unable to translate from one domain into another. Military power rarely achieves national goals or fixes problems anymore; interventions usually only make bad situations worse. The yawning outcome gap between the first and the second Gulf wars makes this plain. Power simply isn't as fungible as it used to be. No wonder, for example, that the Trump administration's efforts to hinge security and intelligence cooperation on renegotiated trade deals have fallen flat.

With traditional power no longer buying the influence it once did, global cooperation will be in short supply.

Finally, the diffusion of power throughout the international system is creating a nonpolar world. Many point to the rise of China and other competitors to say that the world is returning to multipolarity (or to bipolarity within a more multipolar setting), but that view understates the tectonic shift currently underway. International relations will no longer be dominated by one, two, or even several great powers. Because economic and military power no longer yield influence as reliably as they once did, the top dogs have lost their bite. The weak and the mighty suffer the same paralysis and enjoy the same freedom of action. Moreover, new actors, from local militias to nongovernmental organizations to large corporations, each possessing and exerting various kinds of power, increasingly compete with states. Relatively few states represented in the UN can claim a monopoly on force within their territorial borders. Violent nonstate actors are no longer minor players. Ethnic groups, warlords, youth gangs, terrorists, militias, insurgents, and transnational criminal organizations—all are redefining power across the globe.

These changes in power are producing a world marked by entropy. A world populated by dozens of power centers will prove extremely difficult to navigate and control. In the new global disorder, even countries with massive economies and militaries may not be able to get others to do what they want. It is essentially impossible for modern states, no matter how militarily and politically powerful, to influence violent groups that prosper in ungoverned spaces or online. Not only do such actors offer no clear target to threaten or destroy, but many are also motivated by nonnegotiable concerns, such as the establishment of a caliphate or their own separate state. Worse still, violence is for many a source of social cohesion.

With traditional power no longer buying the influence it once did, global order and cooperation will be in short supply. International relations will increasingly consist of messy ad hoc arrangements. The danger comes not from fire—shooting wars among the great powers or heated confrontations over human rights, intellectual property, or currency manipulation. The danger comes instead from ice—frozen conflicts over geopolitical, monetary, trade, or environmental issues. Given the immense costs of warfare, great powers that cannot resolve their disputes at the negotiating table no longer have the option—at least if they are rational—of settling them on the battlefield. When political arrangements do materialize, they will be short lived. Like flocking birds or schooling fish, they promise to lose their shape, only to form again after a delay.

Grand strategy is not well suited to an entropic world. Grand strategic thinking is linear. The world today is one of interaction and complexity, wherein the most direct path between two points is not a straight line. A disordered, cluttered, and fluid realm is precisely one that does not recognize grand strategy's supposed virtue: a practical, durable, and consistent plan for the long term. To operate successfully in such an environment, actors must constantly change their strategies.

A NATION DIVIDED

A sustainable grand strategy must also rest on a shared worldview among key political constituencies. If each new government enters office with a radically different understanding of global challenges and opportunities, no strategy will last long. Each new government will tear up its predecessor's policies, shredding the very idea of a grand strategy. Containment endured because every U.S. president from Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan largely adhered to its underlying vision of global affairs. Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all embraced variations on liberal internationalism.

Such a consensus no longer exists. Over the last half century, across the West, there has been rising skepticism of the virtues, and even the reality, of nations—of "imagined communities," in the words of the political scientist Benedict Anderson, each unified by a shared narrative. That skepticism arose from a good place: a growing awareness that dominant narratives can be repressive, that they often reflect the interests and experiences of the powerful and silence the voices of communities on the margins. Beginning in the early 1970s, in the

Vietnam War's dying days, multiculturalism began to hold sway, at least in the United States. More than just a strategy to manage diversity in a fair and inclusive way, the concept was grounded in mounting doubt that societies should be rooted in some common identity.

Some effects of this cultural revolution, such as the explosion of weeks and months designated to celebrate specific ethnic and racial heritages, strike most Americans as innocuous and even good. But one consequence is particularly problematic: Americans today lack a common national narrative. For good reason, few speak any longer of the assimilative "melting pot." As the historian Jill Lepore lamented in these pages in 2019, historians stopped writing about the nation decades ago. Listen to any Democratic debate this presidential campaign season, and you will see how uncomfortable American politicians on the liberal left have become with the rhetoric of American nationalism.

Yet nationalism has proved an enduring force, as has people's desire for a shared narrative to make sense of their world. Cultural conservatives in the United States have long mined this vein. They have sought to define a cultural core, manifest in such books as *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, in which the academic E. D. Hirsch, Jr., attempted to list the figures, events, and works that "every American needs to know." They have waged war against bilingual education, and they have led a decades-long campaign—successful to date in over half of American states—to declare English the official language. They have charged that the United States is coming apart at the seams, blaming new immigrants for refusing to buy into the national creed. Liberals have vacillated on American exceptionalism, as in 2009, when Obama declared, "I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." Conservatives, by contrast, have leaned into it. Unlike the Democrats, Trump is very comfortable with nationalist language—although he deploys it in a manner that excludes half the country.

Among the victims of a fractured national narrative has been grand strategy. Grand strategy rests on a security narrative that sets out the main protagonists of global politics, tells a story about what those actors have done and will do, and depicts the global backdrop against which events will take place. Debates over contending grand strategies are typically debates over one or more of these narrative elements.

Those advocating deep engagement, for instance, believe that American and global security are indivisible, whereas those calling for restraint believe the opposite. In the absence of the rhetorical tropes that a shared national narrative supplies, crafting a grand strategy that can resonate with diverse constituencies becomes impossible. It becomes harder to implement a particular strategy across various policy areas and to sustain that strategy over time.

Among the victims of a fractured national narrative has been grand strategy.

One manifestation of the narrative divide in the United States is the stark polarization that has come to define American politics, and not just on hot-button domestic issues. Across a wide array of foreign policy questions—climate change, counterterrorism, immigration, the Middle East, the use of force—Americans are divided along party lines. That is no environment for a useful debate about grand strategy. For one thing, it eviscerates the utility of expert feedback. Political scientists have found that an expert consensus can alter public attitudes about issues on which the public was not already polarized, such as how to respond to China's currency manipulation. When the public is already split along party lines, however, as it is on climate change, polarization renders an elite consensus worse than useless. Expert opinions from nonpartisan sources simply make partisans double down on their preexisting beliefs.

Political polarization also makes learning difficult. For grand strategy to improve, there has to be agreement on what failed and why. In a polarized political environment, the side that fears being held responsible will not accept the premise that its policy failed until long after the fact. Republicans, for example, insisted that the Iraq war was a triumph for years after it was obvious that the United States had lost the peace. To support their leader, partisans have a persistent incentive to bend the truth to fit their arguments, robbing the foreign policy discussion of the agreed-on facts that ordinarily frame debate.

Most important, polarization means that any party's grand strategy will last only as long as that party controls the executive branch. Because Congress and the courts have granted the president a near monopoly on the articulation of the national security narrative, a single president can radically shift the country's grand strategy. And so can the next president from the other party.

THE PEOPLE VS. THE EXPERTS

Grand strategy requires a robust marketplace of ideas, backed by sturdy institutions, to help policymakers correct course over time. Even an enduring grand strategy must cope with changes in the strategic environment, and even well-considered strategies will result in policy missteps that need to be reversed. The United States made its share of foreign policy errors during the Cold War, but the push and pull between the establishment and its critics and between the executive branch and Congress eventually reined in the worst excesses of American activism and prevented the overembrace of restraint.

Over the last half century, once-stable structures of authority have eroded, and the American public has grown increasingly skeptical of the federal government, the press, and every other major public institution. Americans' distrust extends to the foreign policy establishment, and on this, it is hard to blame them. U.S. foreign policy elites largely endorsed the use of force in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, and none of those interventions could be called a success. As revealed in "The Afghanistan Papers," a collection of government documents published by *The Washington Post* late last year, for over a decade, civilian and military leaders lied to the public about how the war in Afghanistan was going. The 2008 financial crisis and the Arab Spring caught foreign policy elites unprepared. Clearly, some healthy skepticism of experts is warranted.

Too much skepticism, however, can be corrosive. Calling into doubt the value of foreign policy expertise undermines a healthy marketplace of ideas on grand strategy. As the journalist Chris Hayes warned in *Twilight of the Elites*, "If the experts as a whole are discredited, we are faced with an inexhaustible supply of quackery." Furthermore, new entrants are advancing their arguments in part by bashing the preexisting consensus on grand strategy. They are exploiting narratives about failed foreign policies of the past to argue that they could hardly do worse. As Trump told voters at a campaign rally in 2016, "The experts are terrible. They say, 'Donald Trump needs a foreign policy adviser.' . . . Would it be worse than what we're doing now?"

The death of respect for expertise is just one element of the biggest political story of the twenty-first century: the proliferation of right-wing populist nationalism as part of mainstream politics across the West. It is no flash in the pan, because its rise is rooted partly in economic dislocation but equally, if not more, in the politics of cultural reaction. And populism renders grand strategy moot.

At the heart of all forms of populism lies a simple image of politics. The populist leader asserts the existence of a morally pure people, set in contrast to corrupt elites, and he claims that he alone knows the people's will. Populist politics therefore tilts authoritarian. In sweeping away supposedly corrupt elites and institutions, the populist leader weakens all forces standing in his way. Asserting his unmediated line to the people, the populist leader claims to represent them better than any political process can. Critics becomes enemies, constitutional constraints become obstacles to democracy, and the tyranny of the majority becomes a virtue, not a vice.

Populism is not hospitable to grand strategy. First, populism accentuates internal divisions. Polarizing by design, it narrows the sphere of the supposedly authentic people so that, within the nation as a territorial and legal entity, there can be no unity. Second, populist politicians regularly mobilize the people in righteous anger against enemies. When heated rhetoric is in the air, emotional responses to the crisis of the day threaten to overtake rational strategy. Strategy becomes less supple, as leaders have trouble pursuing conciliatory tactics in a climate of affront and retribution. Finally, populism concentrates authority in the charismatic leader. It disempowers bureaucrats and institutions that can check fickle rulers and block extreme decisions. Policy in a populist regime is thus a reflection of the leader—whether of his ideological commitments or his whims. If the populist leader does pursue something akin to a grand strategy, it will not outlive his rule.

WE COME TO BURY GRAND STRATEGY

Grand strategy is dead. The radical uncertainty of nonpolar global politics makes it less useful, even dangerous. Even if it were helpful in organizing the United States' response to global challenges today, an increasingly divided domestic polity has made it harder to implement a coherent and consistent grand strategy. Popular distrust of expertise has corroded sensible debate over historical lessons and prospective strategies. Populism has eviscerated the institutional checks and balances that keep strategy from swinging violently.

The nation's strategic thinkers, however, remain in the early stages of grieving for grand strategy. The raging debate over contending strategic options suggests that many are still in denial. The ire directed at the Trump administration for its lack of strategic thinking implies that many are stuck on anger. We ourselves differ on whether

to mourn or to celebrate the demise of grand strategy, but we agree that it is high time we moved on to the final stage of the grieving process: acceptance.

Moving forward without grand strategy requires embracing two principles: decentralization and incrementalism. Highly uncertain conditions call for decentralized but mutually coordinated decision-making networks. The corporate sector has learned that managers must avoid the temptation to control every decision and instead figure out how to steer innovation, by shaping the environment within which choices emerge. Smart corporations decentralize authority and responsibility, encourage employees to address problems through teamwork, and take an informal approach to assigning tasks and responsibilities. Governments should organize their foreign policy machinery in the same way. Appreciating regional knowledge and trusting expert feedback is a better way to handle trouble spots and emergent problems and to defuse crises before they metastasize.

Organizational change must go hand in hand with a cultural one: toward prizing the virtues of bottom-up experimentation. Grand strategy wagers that careful planning at the center produces the best results. It presumes that the costs of being too flexible outweigh those of being too rigid. But that is unwise when change can occur rapidly and unpredictably. Incrementalism is the safer bet. It does not require putting all your eggs in one basket. It cannot achieve victory in one fell swoop, but it does avoid disastrous losses. It allows for swift adaptation to changing circumstances. In practice, it would mean devolving responsibility from Washington to theater commanders, special envoys, and subject-matter experts. In other words, it means taking the exact opposite tack of so many past administrations, which concentrated ever more decision-making in the White House.

Aspiring national security advisers should give up competing for the title of the next George Kennan. Crafting a durable successor to containment is neither important nor possible for the near future. Improving U.S. foreign policy performance is. Given the recent record of U.S. foreign policy, that goal doesn't seem half bad.

Britain Adrift

The United Kingdom's Search for a Post-Brexit Role

Lawrence D. Freedman

"Great Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a role." What might have appeared as an unexceptional observation by former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, made during a speech at West Point in December 1962, created an uproar in the United Kingdom. London's *Daily Express* spoke of a "stab in the back." British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan felt compelled to defend his country's honor, writing in an open letter, "Mr. Acheson has fallen into an error which has been made by quite a lot of people in the course of the last four hundred years, including Philip of Spain, Louis XIV, Napoleon, the Kaiser and Hitler."

Why did Acheson's comment hurt so much? The loss of empire was accepted as part of the inexorable logic of decolonization, but with an empire had come a set of strategic interests that required active engagement across the globe, and now those were gone. Although many saw the United Kingdom's main task as adjusting to this loss, rather than finding a replacement for it, Acheson's taunt suggested that a new role must be found. And so a search was set in motion for some truly distinctive role that only the British could provide, one that would be essential to the satisfactory functioning of the whole international system. Identifying this elusive role came to represent the holy grail of British foreign policy.

The search for a distinctive role continues to this day, now in much more trying circumstances. The two relationships that have defined British foreign policy for decades—with Europe and with the United States—are clouded by uncertainty, as a result of the United Kingdom's deliberate decision to leave the EU and U.S. President Donald

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Trump's disdain for NATO and free trade. In a country that has always celebrated alliances and partnerships, the government of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is now stressing independence as a virtue in itself. But it has yet to answer the question of whether this independence will enable the United Kingdom to be less involved with the world's problems or more.

A SPECIAL FRIEND

When Acheson made his speech, the most obvious role for the United Kingdom was as the United States' junior partner. As two maritime powers that both valued free trade, they had swapped positions in the international hierarchy earlier in the century as the American economy took off. In August 1941, seeking to encourage the United States to join the war against Nazi Germany, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met with U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt to lay out a shared vision for the postwar world, resulting in the Atlantic Charter. After the war, the two countries sought to turn that vision into a reality, setting up new institutions to manage international security, encourage open trade, and deal with the Soviet threat. London appeared to be settling into its role as a close supporter of and wise counselor to the United States, then seen as brash and inexperienced but boasting the almighty dollar and enormous military power. Without this "special relationship," as it came to be known, the United Kingdom's strategic weight might well have contracted almost as quickly as its imperial holdings.

The United Kingdom wished not only to influence how American power was applied but also to get help in sustaining its own power. Any thoughts of going it alone on the world stage evaporated with its ill-fated Middle Eastern adventure of 1956, when a joint expedition with France, in collusion with Israel, to reverse Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal was stopped in its tracks by the Eisenhower administration. The French concluded from this episode that they must strive for even more independence from the United States. The British drew the opposite conclusion. Macmillan sought to get even closer, reasoning that by doing so, the United Kingdom would be more, rather than less, influential.

There was also a more practical matter. The United Kingdom had developed its own nuclear weapons after 1945 not only because it wanted to assert its independence but also because the United States had broken off wartime cooperation. Macmillan worked hard to get

nuclear cooperation back on track during the 1950s, now aiming for interdependence as much as independence, and he succeeded in getting the United States to agree to sell the United Kingdom Skybolt missiles, which would allow its bombers to launch weapons away from Soviet air defenses. Then, just before Acheson's speech, the Pentagon announced that it was canceling the Skybolt program. The United Kingdom's special relationship with the United States now looked shaky, along with its nuclear deterrent. But the immediate crisis in transatlantic relations quickly passed: the White House distanced itself from Acheson's words, and at a summit later that month in Nassau, the Bahamas, U.S. President John F. Kennedy came to an agreement with Macmillan that the United Kingdom could acquire Polaris submarine-launched missiles, which turned out to be a much better deal.

Close cooperation in the nuclear and intelligence fields remained at the heart of the special relationship, but what truly sustained it was a succession of shared projects that reflected a common strategic perspective. After working together to win World War II and set up the postwar institutions, they joined hands in conducting and ending the Cold War. The British often failed in their attempts to influence the Americans, and the two countries did not agree on everything—even during the golden years of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and U.S. President Ronald Reagan. But the shared projects provided a framework within which disagreements could be addressed.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States embarked on a new set of joint undertakings: adapting international institutions and practices to the new world order and promoting liberal capitalism under the guise of globalization. Then came 9/11, after which British Prime Minister Tony Blair proclaimed that his country would stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the United States in the war on global terrorism. But these new ventures ran into trouble. The 2008 global financial crisis undermined confidence in the economic model the two countries were offering, and the disheartening interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya raised questions about their political judgment. On both sides of the Atlantic, people were growing more skeptical about globalization and foreign interventions.

Further complicating the relationship, President Barack Obama shifted the United States' focus to the Asia-Pacific region, a process that has continued under Trump. If the new big project is containing

Special relationship: Johnson and Trump in Biarritz, France, August 2019

China, it is one in which the interests of the two countries do not wholly coincide and to which the United Kingdom could make only a limited contribution. Trump, moreover, lacks his predecessors' commitment to NATO and free trade. The problem, therefore, is not that the two countries no longer have a special relationship—the many ties of language, culture, and history survive—but that they no longer share a grand strategic project to work on. No wonder the British foreign policy establishment is at a loss about what to do next.

EUROPEAN DREAMS

This is not the first time London has wondered about the future of its relationship with Washington. The difference now is that it is doing so after having abandoned Europe. After working with the European powers to persuade the United States to commit to European security and form NATO in 1949, the United Kingdom failed to sign on to the European Economic Community in 1957. Belatedly, Macmillan pushed to join that group, a common market and customs union, to give a boost to an economy that was lagging behind the rest of western Europe.

But his pursuit of the special relationship with the United States jeopardized that effort. Weeks after the December 1962 missile deal with the

United States in Nassau, French President Charles de Gaulle cited the agreement as evidence of the United Kingdom's innate Atlanticism as he vetoed its application to join the European Economic Community. If the British were let in, he claimed, "there would appear a colossal Atlantic Community under American dependence and leadership, which would soon completely swallow up the European Community."

It took until 1973 before the United Kingdom was at last able to join the group. By then, membership was not just about economics but about foreign policy, too. U.S. President Richard Nixon's 1971 decision to end the convertibility of the dollar to gold had undermined the Bretton Woods system of international financial exchange. His withdrawal from Vietnam, meanwhile, renewed worry that the United States would shirk its alliance commitments, and indeed, Congress was angling to cut U.S. military deployments in Europe by half. On top of that, the Watergate scandal seemed to be throwing the American political system into chaos. London saw real advantages in combining with the other major European powers to form a powerful bloc that could act autonomously, free from the influence of the United States. For a while, this seemed plausible, notably when it came to the Middle East, where the Europeans took a less pro-Israeli position than the United States did. By and large, however, differences in capabilities and priorities limited the extent to which Europe spoke with one voice.

Where the EU, the successor to the European Economic Community, did prove strategically important was when it came to progress on democracy and the rule of law. Membership allowed European countries escaping authoritarian regimes a way to confirm their commitment to liberal values. In the 1980s, Greece, Portugal, and Spain were all allowed to join after military rule in each country ended, and beginning with a round of enlargement in 2004, the same privilege was eventually afforded to eastern European countries emerging from communist rule.

The United Kingdom applauded and encouraged this expansion, but the process changed the character of the organization. As the EU grew, decision-making slowed. Even before the influx of new members, common positions were becoming harder to find. In 1998, Blair tried to make more of the EU's defense and security potential when he met with French President Jacques Chirac at the port of Saint-Malo. In the declaration that resulted from their summit, the two leaders

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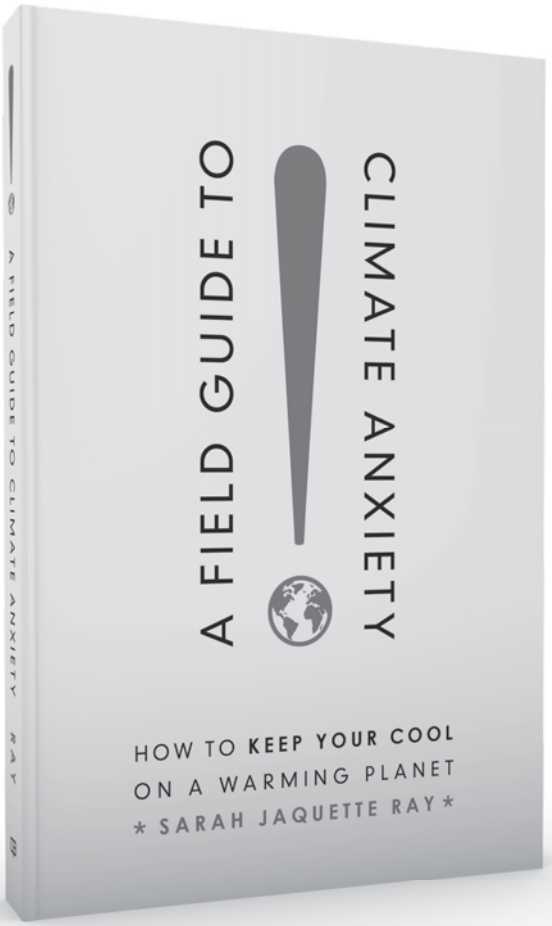

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called for "the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces." Once again, the United Kingdom was hedging against the possibility that the United States was withdrawing from the world. Blair worried that the Clinton administration's tentative response to the breakup of the former Yugoslavia reflected a nascent isolationism. The promises of Saint-Malo never materialized, in part because of tedious arguments about the appropriate division of labor between the EU and NATO, but also because of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, when Blair chose to join a war that France and Germany opposed.

Brexit might affect British foreign policy less than is commonly supposed.

But the biggest divergence between the United Kingdom and its European partners concerned the degree of integration. After German reunification, France and Germany pushed for a far closer union, something that Thatcher and her wing of the Conservative Party deeply opposed, fearing the loss of sovereignty it would entail. Her successor, Prime Minister John Major, only barely managed to overcome the "Euroskeptics" and push through Parliament the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, by which the European Economic Community became the more powerful European Union. He did so by securing a number of opt-outs from the EU's requirements regarding justice and labor and, most important, from its economic and monetary union. Although these exceptions made the EU more politically palatable in the United Kingdom, they also led to a semidetached relationship with it—a distance that was confirmed when the otherwise pro-European government of Blair decided to stick with the pound sterling over the euro.

During the Labour years of Blair and his successor, Gordon Brown, immigration into the United Kingdom from new EU member states surged, and Euroskepticism became an even more powerful force in British politics. It was thus always likely that whenever the Conservative Party returned to power, the relationship with the EU would grow even more strained. When David Cameron, a Conservative, became prime minister, in 2010, at first little changed, because he had to work in a coalition government with the pro-European Liberal Democrats. Yet after Cameron achieved an outright majority, in the 2015 election, he decided that the European issue had to be addressed once and for all, and a referendum on whether the United Kingdom should leave the EU was scheduled.

The Leave campaign argued that if the United Kingdom did not get out, it was bound to get drawn into an ever-closer union, a prospect that this camp claimed would even include a "European army" to which the British would have to contribute troops. Meanwhile, the Remain campaign warned of the economic costs of leaving the customs union and the single market and pointed to the opt-outs that British leaders had secured over the years. But extolling the benefits of semidetachment was hardly a rousing endorsement of membership. Few argued—as was argued in the 1970s—that the EU represented a grand geopolitical project that could enhance British influence. In fact, even if the referendum had gone the other way, the United Kingdom would likely have become increasingly marginalized in the EU, because it was not part of the main European project: creating and sustaining the eurozone.

A NATION ADRIFT

Thus, even before the twin blows to the pillars of British foreign policy in 2016—the Brexit referendum in June and the election of Trump in November—those pillars were already weak. The United Kingdom was neither part of the eurozone nor sharing a grand project with the United States. It was already showing a declining interest in foreign affairs, as evidenced by Cameron's failure to get parliamentary support for strikes against Syria in the summer of 2013 and then his absence during the Ukraine diplomacy of 2014–15, leaving President François Hollande of France and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to take the initiative.

It took until the end of January 2020 for the United Kingdom to actually withdraw from the EU, after over three years of protracted parliamentary wrangling that did little for the country's standing abroad and encouraged further introversion at home. Now, the United Kingdom must work out the details of its future relationship with the EU, a process that will be dominated by questions of trade and thus drain energy away from other areas of policymaking. There is no reason why the current arrangements concerning security cannot continue, including tracking criminals and terrorists and working together on minor military operations. The problem is that difficulties in the wider negotiations may make it harder to sustain these other forms of cooperation. The government will also need to cope with the dislocation at home resulting from the break with the EU, including revived demands for Scottish independence and even pressure for Irish unification.

Nonetheless, Brexit might affect British foreign policy less than is commonly supposed. The United Kingdom will obviously have far less influence over developments within the EU—including, for example, rising authoritarianism in a number of member countries. But precisely because the EU never lived up to the early hopes about its foreign policy potential, the overall effect will be limited. Europe's international influence has always depended as much on cooperation among individual European countries as on European institutions. Consider how close London has stayed to Paris and Berlin in the Trump era. Not only have the three governments worked together to try to preserve something of the Iran nuclear deal after Trump's withdrawal from it; they have also stuck with the Paris agreement on climate change and opposed the United States' recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

The United States and the United Kingdom no longer share a grand strategic project.

Paradoxically, although the United Kingdom is not part of the drive toward ever-closer union in Europe, it does share at least one big project with the continent: coping with the impact of the Trump administration. Some observers contend that Trump's enthusiasm for Brexit and a new bilateral trade deal will push London closer to Washington, but this has yet to happen. Although Johnson is keen to push ahead with trade negotiations with Trump, he is well aware of the potential pitfalls, not to mention the president's unpopularity among British voters. Trump, for his part, has cooled toward Johnson since the prime minister defied U.S. entreaties and allowed the Chinese company Huawei to help develop the United Kingdom's 5G wireless network.

It is the problems of Trump as much as those of Europe that will dominate the major review of British foreign and defense policy that Johnson announced after Brexit. The biggest challenge involves NATO, whose purpose Trump has questioned and whose members he has spurned. Unlike the EU, the alliance is something the United Kingdom helped found, and the country has always seen it as its main contribution to European security. Even with a friendlier U.S. president, the American public will still question why European countries that individually have GDPs far greater than that of Russia need the United States to provide security in their neighborhood. If

the Americans are to be persuaded to continue in their current role, European countries will need to step up—increasing their defense spending and the efficiency with which it is applied and enhancing their capacity to manage the regional crises to which Washington is paying little attention.

Without going as far as French President Emmanuel Macron in announcing the alliance's "brain death," Ben Wallace, the United Kingdom's defense secretary, has publicly doubted the reliability of the United States, saying in a January interview, "We need to diversify our assets." Providing European security with a less attentive United States, or even a completely absent United States, raises hard questions. Can NATO continue without Washington playing a leadership role? Continental Europeans support the alliance in principle, but they are less enthusiastic about the prospect of actually fighting to defend one of its members. When the Pew Research Center asked people whether their country should use force to defend a NATO ally against a hypothetical attack from Russia, only 41 percent of French, 34 percent of Germans, and 25 percent of Italians surveyed said that it should. What does that tell countries that are more exposed to Russia? Then there is the question of how to replace the nuclear umbrella provided by the United States. The United Kingdom has pledged that its nuclear deterrent extends to all NATO members, but that pledge depends on it supplementing the American deterrent. By itself, or even with a corresponding French commitment, the promise hardly seems credible.

Even if the United Kingdom sincerely wanted to stress a new security relationship with Europe, making the shift would not be straightforward. British intelligence and defense capabilities are deeply intertwined with American ones, and it would not be easy to disentangle them in short order. The most substantial recent investments, including in Dreadnought-class ballistic missile submarines, Queen Elizabeth–class aircraft carriers, and F-35 fighter jets, all rely on U.S. technology and facilities. Furthermore, within NATO, the United Kingdom has tended to focus on northern Europe. Although it has been involved in a number of air campaigns in the Middle East and still has a military base in Cyprus, it has offered only modest contributions to ground operations in North Africa, where southern European countries have taken the lead.

A LESS AMBITIOUS UNITED KINGDOM

It is against this unpromising backdrop that the British government is reconsidering its foreign policy. In the past, British governments relished the challenges of multilateralism and took pride in their diplomatic prowess. In recent years, those attempting to identify the country's distinctive role have similarly pointed to its mastery of multilateralism—an ability to build bridges across the Atlantic and uphold a rules-based order. But there are now fewer opportunities for multilateralism as a natural consequence of a United States with little interest in playing the liberal hegemon. The Trump administration's distrust of international organizations has diminished their effectiveness.

Brexit is also part of the trend away from multilateralism. The British government has stepped up its rhetoric of independence as it sorts out its new relationship with the EU, and in this, it is aided by the United Kingdom's fortunate location. The country enjoys relative security as an island at the more tranquil end of the Eurasian landmass, with a decent economy, a moderate climate, and a high standard of living. Because of this, the case for a quiet life, for steering clear of trouble elsewhere, is not so unreasonable that it can be dismissed out of hand.

Yet despite all the talk about sovereign decision-making encouraged by Brexit, in practice, the United Kingdom still has to work with other countries. If getting favorable trade agreements is a priority, for example, then British negotiators will need to be solicitous about the concerns of others. To get its exports accepted into the EU, it will still need to be a rule-taker as much as its own rule-maker. One can add that it will also have to be a crisis-taker. In the age of climate change, cyberattacks, and pandemics, the United Kingdom can be buffeted by events elsewhere. It will still be affected by the stresses and strains in the EU, for example, if there is another financial crisis in the eurozone. The novel coronavirus has provided a tough lesson in global interdependence.

The challenge for Johnson is to manage the tension between independence and interdependence. On the one hand, he wishes to project an image of a confident country enjoying its newfound liberation from an overbearing supranational organization. On the other, he has denied that Brexit represents an inward-looking turn and an embrace of nationalist populism, eschewing any talk of "Britain first" in favor of "global Britain." The latter slogan is intended to

show that the United Kingdom is broadening its focus beyond its backyard, looking for more sources of high-quality trade and immigration rather than just putting up barriers. So somewhat incongruously for a leader in the process of complicating trade relations with his country's most substantial economic partner, Johnson has spoken of the United Kingdom as a force for good in the world and as a "superhero champion" of free trade.

As a helpful problem solver, the United Kingdom still has much to offer.

But to get past the slogans, Johnson will need to offer a realistic assessment of the United Kingdom's foreign policy options. The case for international engagement has to be made—it cannot be taken for granted. The context has changed. The British Empire represented a moment in international history that was passing at the time of Acheson's 1962 gibe. The strategic imperatives that the empire generated were getting harder and harder to meet. The Cold War then created its own imperatives, which were easier to meet. Now, the imperatives are less clear and more contested. One consequence of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is that the British public has little appetite for more military expeditions to help sort out the quarrels and misfortunes of others; another is that it is unlikely to be swayed by alarmists' talk of future threats.

In an encouraging sign, the British government may have found a formula that allows it to evade Acheson's challenge. Although it nodded in Acheson's direction by framing the foreign policy review as an attempt to "define the Government's ambition for the UK's role in the world," it also offered a more modest description of the country as "a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation." This opens up the possibility of focusing on capabilities more than objectives, suggesting a pragmatic, constructive approach to working with others that avoids grandiosity and any suggestion of a grand strategy. A capabilities-based review is about keeping options for a wider range of contingencies, with a stress on flexibility and adaptability; it is not about trying to gear everything toward specific strategic imperatives that have yet to materialize.

As a helpful problem solver, the United Kingdom still has much to offer. The country has a good record of adapting its national security tools to new circumstances. Its GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters), for example, used to be associated solely

with signals intelligence and code-breaking, but it now deals with most of the challenges of the digital age, including cyberattacks, electronic fraud, and child sexual abuse. The country has a long experience with counterterrorism. Its contributions to economic development have been substantial and innovative. In November, in Glasgow, it is set to host the next major international conference on climate change. It remains a significant military power, with only France in a comparable position in Europe.

The "role" Acheson had in mind was a position within an international system that was ordered and stable, but that no longer exists. Instead, the world is beset by anxiety, with much in flux internationally. Power balances are shifting, and disruptive behavior is becoming the norm. In this world, the United Kingdom has much to contribute, so long as it accepts the limits of independence and, above all, abandons the quest for a unique, exceptional role.

The Next Iranian Revolution

Why Washington Should Seek Regime Change in Tehran

Eric Edelman and Ray Takeyh

"Regime change" is a toxic phrase in Washington. It conjures up images of the Iraq war, with the United States trapped in a quagmire of its own making. That is why those who favor a coercive U.S. approach to Iran are routinely charged with secretly supporting regime change. In response, the accused almost always deny it. They don't want regime change, they insist: they just want the Islamic Republic's theocrats to change their behavior.

But no such transformation will ever take place, because the Iranian regime remains a revolutionary movement that will never accommodate the United States. That is why regime change is not a radical or reckless idea but the most pragmatic and effective goal for U.S. policy toward Iran—indeed, it is the only objective that has any chance of meaningfully reducing the Iranian threat.

Backing regime change emphatically does not mean advocating a military invasion of Iran, but it does mean pushing for the United States to use every instrument at its disposal to undermine Iran's clerical state, including covert assistance to dissidents. The United States cannot overthrow the Islamic Republic, but it can contribute to conditions that would make such a demise possible. The regime is weaker

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than many Western analysts believe; a campaign of external pressure and internal resistance could conceivably topple it. Recent years have witnessed explosions of broad-based public opposition to the regime. Iranians are hungry for better leadership. The question for Washington should be not whether to embrace regime change but how to help the Iranian people achieve it.

WE ARE NEVER EVER GETTING TOGETHER

For the past 40 years, almost every U.S. president has tried to reach some kind of accommodation with Iran. Ronald Reagan's attempt led him to the greatest scandal of his presidency, when he traded arms for Americans held hostage in Lebanon by the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah. Bill Clinton unsuccessfully sought to develop a road map for détente with Tehran. George W. Bush came into office displaying moral contempt for the clerical autocracy, only to have his administration spend a considerable amount of time talking to Iran's leaders about the future of Afghanistan and Iraq. And then came Barack Obama, whose desperation to make a deal with Tehran produced an agreement that granted Iran sanctions relief and paved its path to the bomb.

In 2018, President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of that deal and imposed crippling sanctions on Iran that went beyond any that had come before. Trump has repeatedly denounced the regime, and earlier this year, he ordered the killing of Qasem Soleimani, the famed commander of the elite Quds Force, a unit of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). But for all this surface antagonism, the internal logic of the Trump administration's approach resembles that of its predecessors: inflict pain on Iran in order to gain leverage in prospective negotiations. Trump still wants to make a deal—and in fact, he is the first U.S. president to propose meeting with Iranian leaders.

All these administrations have failed to understand that the Iranian regime remains, at heart, a revolutionary organization. Once in power, revolutionaries often yield to the temptations of moderation and pragmatism. The requirements of actually running a government and addressing domestic concerns eventually lead them to adapt to the prevailing international order. But four decades after its birth, the Islamic Republic continues to avoid that fate. Its elites still cling to the revolution's precepts even when they prove self-defeating. That is because the revolution's leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, did not rely on secular principles; he made religion his governing creed. Kho-

Taking it to the streets: rioting in Tehran, November 2019

WANA / REUTERS

meini's ideology rested on a politicized and radicalized version of Shiite Islam, one that often contradicts long-standing traditions of the faith. But for its most dedicated core of supporters, the Iranian theocracy remains an important experiment for realizing God's will on earth. Led by Khomeini's successor, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, these true believers retain control of the most powerful branches of Iran's government and have successfully resisted the reformist efforts of various presidents and parliaments.

For Khomeini and his disciples, the continued vitality of their revolution mandated its relentless export. This was to be a revolution without borders; its appeal would not be limited by cultural differences or diverging national sensibilities within the Muslim world. Khamenei has faithfully carried out that mission, backing proxy militias throughout the Middle East with the goal of advancing Iranian-style Islamism and undermining the U.S.-backed regional security order. In the mullahs' preferred narrative, the imperialist United States seeks to exploit the region's resources for the aggrandizement of the industrial West. Achieving that goal requires Washington to

subjugate the Muslim world by backing corrupt Arab monarchies and an illegitimate Zionist entity. The Iranian regime sees resisting that American dominance as a divine imperative.

That is why the Islamic Republic will never evolve into a responsible regional stakeholder. It will never permit genuine political contestation or allow an organized opposition to take shape. It will never abandon its nuclear ambitions for the sake of commerce. And it will never recognize any U.S. interests in the Middle East as legitimate. The revolutionaries will never give up their revolution.

CARPE DIEM

Since there is no prospect of a sustainable accommodation with the theocrats, the only U.S. policy that makes sense is to seek regime change—that is, to do everything possible to weaken the government and strengthen those inside Iran who oppose it. The aim should be to help the large number of Iranians who want to restore the original promise of the 1979 revolution that overthrew the shah—a movement that drew support from a broad base of groups, including liberal and pro-democratic ones, before it was hijacked by Khomeini and his Islamist faction. The United States should be modest about its capabilities and understand that it cannot always shape events. But given the theocracy's domestic vulnerabilities, Washington can still carve out a considerable role in attenuating the regime's power. The United States cannot choose the precise mechanics of how the regime might fall or the exact contours of what would replace it. But it can exercise a good deal of influence on both.

Today, the Islamic Republic is at an impasse. The regime faces a disaffected populace that is losing its sense of fear and becoming more willing to confront the government's security services on the streets. No one is sure what a post-theocratic future would look like, but an increasing number of Iranians seem willing to find out. And despite the revolution's spirit of intransigence, postrevolutionary Iran has not been without its share of reformers. By the early 1990s, an eclectic group of politicians, clerics, and intellectuals sought to reconcile faith and freedom. Recognizing that a rigid definition of religious governance would threaten the entire system, the reformers wanted to create a new national compact that would preserve Iran's Islamic traditions and also uphold democratic values. The reform movement captured both the presidency and the parliament in the late 1990s but was thwarted by

Khamenei and the hard-liners. Still, courageous movement leaders of that era, such as Abdollah Nouri, Mostafa Tajzadeh, and Saeed Hajjarian, continue to struggle within Iran for an accountable government.

Their views found potent expression during the so-called Green Movement of 2009, which saw Iranians demonstrating in support of reformist figures running for president that year and demanding good governance and the restoration of Iran's place in the international community. When it became clear that the regime had rigged the outcome in order to guarantee the reelection of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a conservative firebrand, the movement vastly expanded, capturing the national imagination and bringing unprecedented numbers of people into the streets. The regime had to resort to brute force to regain control. Today, more than a decade later, the leading figures of the movement, the opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi and the dissident cleric Mehdi Karroubi, still languish under house arrest.

Iranians are losing their sense of fear and becoming more willing to confront the government's security services on the streets.

The Green Movement may be a distant memory for the Western commentariat, but it haunts the regime. In a speech he gave a few months after the crackdown, Mohammad Ali Jafari, then the head of the IRGC, conceded that the protests had brought the regime "to the border of overthrow." In 2013, Khamenei told an audience of university students that the Green Movement had posed "a great challenge" and brought the government to "the edge of the cliff." After the uprising, the regime decided that it could no longer tolerate reformers in its midst. In a remarkable act of self-sabotage, the regime purged itself of some of the country's most popular politicians.

In the past two years, Iran has been rocked by the most serious demonstrations since the 1979 revolution, outstripping even the Green Movement. Compared with earlier episodes of mass dissent, today's protests pose a far greater threat to the theocracy, because they represent a revolt of the working classes and the poor, which have accounted for the majority of demonstrators in recent years. During earlier protests, the regime discounted the participation of university students (whom the mullahs saw as the spoiled offspring of the wealthy classes) and middle-class protesters (who the clerics believed were motivated less by ideological opposition than by a desire

for Western-style material comforts). But the clerics saw the poor as the regime's backbone, tied to the theocracy by piety and patronage.

That bond has weakened, however, owing to Iran's economic collapse. Inflation and unemployment are skyrocketing. Oil exports, which were at 2.5 million barrels a day prior to the reimposition of U.S. sanctions in 2018, have now fallen to as little as 248,000 barrels a day. This has forced the regime to cut fuel subsidies, and the loss of oil income has made it hard for the state to meet its pension obligations and maintain its affordable-housing programs. With the welfare state under pressure, appeals for sacrifice from corrupt mullahs ring hollow. "Clerics with capital, give us our money back!" was a popular chant at protests last year.

Marchers in major cities openly chanted "Death to Khamenei!" and "The clerics should get lost."

But working-class and poor demonstrators have gone beyond expressing economic grievances and have embraced political slogans with an alacrity that has shocked the regime. In December 2017, for example, protests engulfed Iran after the prices of basic goods soared. Marchers in major cities openly chanted "Death to Khamenei!" and "The clerics should get lost." The demonstrations faded after the regime unleashed its security forces. But last November, a sudden increase in fuel prices provoked riots in hundreds of cities; some 1,500 people died at the hands of the police and security forces. This time, the demonstrators did not just call for the death of their leaders; they also decried Iran's involvement in conflicts elsewhere. ("Not Gaza, not Lebanon, my life for Iran!" "Leave Syria, think about us!") Even as the regime condemned American imperialism, Iran's leaders always assumed that their own imperial projects would burnish their legitimacy. But it appears that many Iranians no longer want to waste their resources on Arab civil wars.

In January, after the U.S. drone strike that killed Soleimani, massive crowds of mourners flooded the streets of Iran's cities, and many believed that the attack had united Iranians behind their regime. Just weeks later, however, the illusion of solidarity was shattered by large-scale popular protests that erupted when the government admitted, after days of official denials, that Iranian air defenses—on high alert for U.S. incursions—had accidentally shot down a Ukrainian civilian airliner departing Tehran's airport, killing 176 people.

Far from rebounding to the mullahs' advantage, the regime's latest confrontation with the United States reminded Iranians of the costs of their government's belligerence.

The government's legitimacy took another hit with the outbreak of COVID-19. As the novel coronavirus spread, the Islamic Republic not only failed to protect the health and safety of its citizens but actively impeded their ability to protect themselves by withholding information and hiding the extent of the problem—a response that will diminish the regime's credibility even further and add fuel to the outrage and anger that have been building for years.

HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

Although Iran is brimming with dissidence, no coherent resistance movement has emerged. Washington cannot create one, but by overtly weakening the regime and covertly aiding forces inside Iran that can foment popular demands for change, the United States can help the currently disconnected strands of opposition to consolidate. Washington should seek to further drain Iran's economy, invite defections from the ranks of the regime's enforcers, and surreptitiously enable those who dare to challenge the regime. But it cannot go any further than that: regime change itself—that is, the removal and replacement of the theocracy—must be undertaken by the Iranians themselves.

Adopting the goal of regime change will not be terribly costly, but it will require a stepped-up program of covert action to aid those elements within Iranian civil society that are contesting the regime's legitimacy. Chief among those are professional syndicates, such as labor unions and teachers' unions, which have gone on strike to protest government policies and actions, and student groups, which have organized protests on college campuses. Purged reformers routinely write open letters protesting the regime's abuses, and they have continued to do so in the aftermath of the crackdown on demonstrations. Last November, from under house arrest, the Green Movement leader Mousavi published a statement on the website Kaleme.com in which he compared the regime's conduct to an infamous massacre conducted by the shah's troops in September 1978. Also in November, the reformist former president Mohammad Khatami, whom the regime has tried to silence, denounced the crackdown, writing on Instagram that "no government has the right to resort to force and oppression in confronting protests." These pow-

erful messages were widely reported by international media outlets and reposted on social media. But it is difficult to assess how many Iranians were aware of them, since the government actively blocks Internet access. That is why it is essential for the United States to supply the regime's critics and opponents with technology and software that they can use to evade censorship, communicate with one another, and get their messages out.

Such covert technical assistance is critical, but it is not the only way that Washington can help foster opposition. Direct (but secret) financial support must also play a role. Iranian trade unions should be a particular focus of U.S. efforts. During the Iranian Revolution of 1979, strikes carried out by oil and transportation workers were essential to paralyzing the shah's regime. In recent years, steelworkers, truckers, bus drivers, railway workers, teachers, and sugarcane workers have called strikes to challenge the current regime. By secretly channeling funds to groups that could carry out similar strikes, the United States can further cripple Iran's economy.

In addition to taking such covert steps, Washington should make adjustments to its public diplomacy regarding Iran. U.S. officials should take every opportunity to highlight the regime's human rights abuses and to warn that violators—especially those involved in the use of force to repress popular protests—will be held accountable by the international community when there is a new order in Iran. At the same time, Washington should stress that any member of the Iranian regime who wishes to defect will be guaranteed sanctuary in the United States. The CIA should establish a mechanism for contacting and extracting all who wish to leave. Even a small number of defectors can sow distrust in the system, forcing the security services to constantly look for unreliable elements among its ranks and conduct periodic purges. This would hamper operational efficiency by eliminating some cadres on whom the security services rely and creating distrust and suspicion in the state's apparatus of repression.

Beyond such policies and official rhetoric, the United States must do more to overcome the regime's propaganda by making accurate information and honest analysis available to the Iranian people. Currently, Washington spends $30 million a year on Farsi-language media outlets run by the U.S. Agency for Global Media, including Radio Farda and Sedaye America, which offer news and entertainment programming via radio, television, and the Internet. Accord-

ing to the agency, this programming reaches nearly a quarter of all Iranian adults. The U.S. government should augment that effort by openly funding radio and television programming created by Iranian exiles living in the United States. And although traditional forms of media are important, the U.S. government could bring even more attention to the regime's corruption and economic mismanagement by using Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, and other social media platforms to highlight specific instances of graft and name the regime insiders responsible for them.

UNDER PRESSURE

Aiding dissidents inside Iran is only half the battle, however. To weaken the regime's grip on the country and create an opening for other forces to take power, the United States must also expand the Trump administration's highly successful campaign of "maximum pressure" against the Iranian economy. Critics of the Trump administration were quick to dismiss the plan, insisting that unilateral sanctions would not do much to strain Iran's finances. But they overestimated the willingness of foreign corporations to risk their ability to do business in the United States. Even though the governments of their home countries have not sanctioned Iran, firms such as the French energy company Total, the German manufacturing conglomerate Siemens, and the Danish shipping giant Maersk have stayed out of Iran in order to avoid Washington's sanctions. Going forward, the United States should blacklist Iran's entire financial sector, pressure the global financial messaging platform SWIFT to expel all remaining Iranian banks from its network, fully enforce all sanctions on Iran's non-oil exports (including petrochemicals), and require auditors who certify the financial statements of any company doing business with Iran to adopt stiffer due diligence measures.

The United States must also increase the price that Iran pays for its military adventurism in the region. The strike against Soleimani was an important first step toward directly imposing costs on Iran rather than merely targeting its proxies. Iran's meddling has already made it vulnerable to blowback in places where its proxies have wreaked havoc. In Iraq in recent months, people have taken to the streets in huge numbers to protest Tehran's overweening influence. Outrage over Iran's long reach has also driven recent protests in Lebanon, where many are fed up with Hezbollah, the militia and political

group that Iran backs. Washington should capitalize on Tehran's failing fortunes in the region by aiding the forces that are standing up to Iran—including by providing financial support via covert means, if appropriate—and by using naval and air assets to interdict the flow of Iranian military supplies to the regime's proxies.

The need to intensify the pressure on Iran should also inform U.S. military strategy and posture in the region. The United States should maintain a small military presence in Syria to observe and obstruct Iranian efforts to convert Syrian territory into a "land bridge" through which to supply its proxies. And Washington should encourage Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates to cooperate on developing shared early warning systems and defenses against the cruise missiles and medium-range ballistic missiles that Iran would likely deploy in any conflict with its neighbors. Steps such as these would further weaken the Iranian regime by thwarting its bid for military dominance in the region, neutralizing the value of some Iranian military investments, and imposing additional costs on the country.

WHAT THE CRITICS MISS

There are many objections to a regime-change agenda. One is that U.S. assistance to pro-democracy forces, human rights activists, and regime critics in Iran would discredit them in the eyes of other Iranians. But surely, Iranian dissidents themselves are the best judges of that risk; Washington should identify the most promising recipients of U.S. aid and let them decide for themselves whether to receive it. And it is worth noting that in all the protests that Iran has witnessed in the past decade, the United States has never been the subject of condemnation. Indeed, in 2009, many Green Movement demonstrators called on Obama, in vain, to publicly embrace their cause. Even Trump didn't become a target of any street protests last year. And some of the most viral Internet content to emerge from those protests were videos showing demonstrators going out of their way to avoid walking on American flags that the authorities had painted on the ground in public spaces in order to force people to disrespect the United States by treading on its flag.

Other skeptics of regime change might object that the Algiers Accords of 1981, which ended the crisis over the U.S. hostages that Iran seized in 1979, obligates Washington to refrain from interfering in Tehran's internal affairs. The United States should publicly make clear

that it no longer believes itself to be bound by that agreement, which was negotiated under duress and which Iran has repeatedly and egregiously violated by abducting and killing U.S. officials, sponsoring proxy attacks on American forces, and supporting terrorist groups.

The era of arms control diplomacy between the United States and Iran has essentially ended.

Some critics might contend that openly pursuing regime change would dash any hope of restricting Iran's nuclear program through negotiations. But that assumes that there is the possibility of a reliable arms control agreement with the current regime; there is not. The nuclear deal that Iran entered into with the United States and other powers was fatally flawed: it did not proscribe the domestic enrichment of uranium on Iran's part or the development of advanced centrifuges, and all its most important terms were saddled with sunset clauses. And since the Trump administration pulled out of the agreement, Iran's leaders have made it clear that they will not negotiate a new deal or extend the expiring restrictions of the existing one.

The truth is that the era of arms control diplomacy between the United States and Iran has essentially ended. Still, to maintain international pressure and congressional support for an aggressive policy, the United States should remain open to negotiations even after it embraces regime change as a goal. For their part, the Iranians might see virtue in engaging in talks with a hawkish administration in the hope that doing so might persuade the administration to abandon regime change as a specific objective.

Another common objection to a U.S. strategy of regime change in Iran is the notion that any government that followed the theocracy would be even worse. Some advocates of this view insist that a successful regime-change policy would lead only to the rise of unsavory leaders from the ranks of the IRGC. In this account, Iran would go from a belligerent theocracy to a fascist military dictatorship. This argument wrongly assumes that the IRGC has carved out an identity for itself separate from the cleric-led regime it serves. In reality, the clerical oligarchs and the leaders of the Revolutionary Guards are indivisible. They believe in the same ideology and confront different facets of the same predicament: the mullahs anguish about why young people pay no attention to their revolutionary exhortations; the IRGC's

generals face the daunting task of sending conscripts drawn from the lower classes to their old neighborhoods to beat up and shoot their protesting peers.

Finally, critics of a policy of regime change sometimes warn that if the Islamic Republic fell, Iran would become a failed state along the lines of Iraq in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of 2003 or Libya in the years since the U.S.-led intervention in 2011. But there are significant differences between Iran and those countries. An Iranian state and polity have existed for thousands of years: unlike Iraq and Libya, Iran is not an invention of European postcolonial cartography. What is more, although ethnic tensions do exist in Iran and the regime in Tehran does repress religious minorities, Iranian society is overwhelmingly Shiite and not riven by the ethnic and sectarian divisions that plague Iraq or the tribal factions that make Libya difficult to govern. Finally, even under the theocracy, Iranian civil society has flourished, and it has not been atomized as its counterparts were by the dictators who long ruled Iraq and Libya.

Of course, those characteristics do not guarantee that Iran would develop into a liberal democracy if the theocracy were to fall, and it is impossible to predict with precision what would happen in the event of a revolution. The unrealized hopes of the Arab Spring provide a strong cautionary example. But compared with many Arab countries, Iran has a deep history of vibrant politics, an informed civil society, a lively press, a creative intellectual scene, and a large and literate middle class.

Indeed, the history of Iran since the beginning of the twentieth century is the tale of a long struggle between people seeking freedom from monarchs and mullahs determined to preserve the prerogatives of power. The constitutional revolution of 1905 established the country's first parliament, and in the years that followed, feisty parliamentarians boldly imposed restraints on monarchs. Reza Shah Pahlavi challenged that system after he came to power, in 1925, and momentarily imposed his will on it. But after his abdication, in 1941, Iran returned to a more pluralistic path, with prime ministers and parliaments that once again mattered. In 1953, Prime Minster Mohammad Mosaddeq sparked a crisis by moving to nationalize the oil industry; the coup that removed him from office is often seen as a U.S.-British plot to prevent Iranian autonomy. In fact, Mosaddeq was himself trying to derail Iran's democratic evolution with his own brand of autocracy, and his overthrow was mostly an Iranian initiative. And then came a quarter of a century of

dictatorship under the shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was eventually overthrown in 1979 by a populist revolutionary movement that contained many coalitions but whose main aim was to create a representative government that was sensitive to Iran's traditions.

Now it is the mullahs' turn. In every decade of its existence, the theocratic regime has faced a rebellion. The liberals were the first to object to the mullahs' power grab, in the 1980s. University students, always a political vanguard in Iran, gave up on the theocracy with their own uprising in 1999; ten years later, another wave of youthful rebellion hit the regime. And in the past few years, Iranians have once more pushed back. Students, workers, clerics, and merchants are agitating against despotic rule, just as they have for much of the last century. The people protesting in the streets today are the ones who will lead Iran tomorrow, and their struggle is worthy of Washington's embrace.

A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

The Iranian people want an accountable government and do not share their leaders' animus toward the West. But things don't always happen just because they should. To avoid outcomes such as those in Iraq and Libya, a U.S. policy of regime change must include plans for steering a post-theocratic Iran in the right direction, since Washington would share a large degree of responsibility for the outcome. After a collapse of the regime, the United States would have to immediately lift all sanctions and set up an international donors' conference to inject money into Iran's economy and bring its oil back to the market. Even if the United States helped get rid of the old regime, it would have influence over a new Iranian government only if Washington were prepared to make a long-term commitment to the rehabilitation of the country. Doing so would require an initial injection of U.S. financial assistance to stabilize the Iranian economy and pave the way for further contributions by others. The U.S. president and congressional leaders would have to make the case to the American public that such aid was critical to regional stability and U.S. national security. And Washington would have to make clear to Iran's new rulers that any aid would depend on their complete abandonment of the country's nuclear weapons program.

Governing Iran would be a difficult task for any new leaders. Although there would inevitably be purges in the aftermath of the collapse, Washington would have to press the new rulers of Iran to make

room for members of the old elite who wished to be part of the new order. Iran's nuclear program would leave behind dangerous detritus. Ideally, a robust effort led by the International Atomic Energy Agency would account for all of Iran's nuclear technology and enriched uranium. But failing that, the U.S. military would need to take unilateral action to remove the more sensitive aspects of the program to prevent them from falling into dangerous hands.

Regime change in Iran would not be pretty. It would not immediately solve all the problems between Washington and Tehran, much less immediately stabilize the Middle East. But the United States should at the very least attempt to empower the Iranian people to get the kind of government they deserve. Otherwise, Washington is doomed to repeat its past mistakes: pretending that it is possible to negotiate with the mullahs and blindly expecting that a theocratic revolutionary movement will somehow produce "moderates" willing to steer the regime away from its recklessness—or naively hoping that a popular revolt will succeed without any support from the outside. That approach has failed for more than 40 years. It's time to try something different.

Making Cyberspace Safe for Democracy

The New Landscape of Information Competition

Laura Rosenberger

With the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign underway, stories of Russian interference are again in the headlines. In 2016, Russia's hacking operations and use of social media to manipulate public discourse in the United States caught U.S. policymakers off-guard. Four years later, officials have not yet fully understood that those attacks reflected the changing landscape of geopolitical competition. Viewing Russia's attempts at interference in 2016 in isolation misses the larger context: rival states compete in the twenty-first century as much over information as any other terrain.

Democratic countries view information as an empowering force in the hands of people: the free and open flow of ideas, news, and opinion fuels deliberative democracy. Authoritarian systems see this model as a threat, viewing information as a danger to their regimes and something the state must control and shape. Using surveillance, censorship, and the manipulation of information, authoritarian regimes shore up their power at home while weakening democratic competitors abroad.

The United States and its democratic allies have not adjusted to this reality. They have been reactive, focusing on what they are trying to defeat; they have not developed a strategy for success. The struggle over information has emerged at a time when democracies are under increasing pressure from within and without and as authoritarianism is gaining ground around the world. The new great-power competition

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won't necessarily take place on battlefields or in boardrooms; it will happen on smartphones, computers, and other connected devices and on the digital infrastructure that supports them. The typically hands-off approach that many democratic governments take to information will make it hard for them to compete.

Democracies face a dilemma. If they don't take an active role in the information contest, they will leave themselves vulnerable at home and lose ground abroad. But if they are more proactive and aggressive in the wrong ways, they will risk mimicking the heavy-handed behavior of autocracies and creating the kind of rigidly controlled environment autocrats seek.

The stakes of this contest are high. If authoritarian actors succeed, states will increasingly control information and shape how their citizens perceive reality. The global rules that govern information infrastructure will favor authoritarian systems, not democracies, limiting the United States' ability to exert influence and project power, while weakening its own system of government. The world will become more authoritarian and less democratic.

Policymakers must protect a democratic information space in order to preserve the ability of democracies to function and defend their way of life. Understanding the nature of this contest, defining a vision for success, and developing a new strategy to fulfill that vision are critical to protecting U.S. national security in the information age.

WAGING THE INFORMATION WAR

Unlike the United States, China and Russia have made the information contest a key part of their national security strategies. They have prioritized activities both in cyberspace (the network infrastructure underlying the Internet, such as servers and computer systems, which can be vulnerable to intrusions) and in the information space (the arena of data and public perception, where states can employ surveillance, gather data, perform espionage, and distort information). Both countries emphasize their sovereignty in cyberspace, aiming to monitor or control the flow of information within their borders. At the same time, although they use different tactics, both China and Russia have developed methods of manipulating information abroad. China and Russia are also striving to lead in the emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), that will shape this geopolitical contest in the years to come.

As with much of its foreign policy, Russia frames its approach to cyberwarfare and information warfare in defensive terms, believing the United States already uses information to support dissidents within its borders. Its 2016 Doctrine of Information Security formalized "protecting the information sovereignty of Russia" as central to maintaining the stability of Russian society. Its election interference makes up only part of a broader strategy of eroding the political and social systems of a targeted country, attempting the psychological manipulation of its population, and, in the words of the Russian Defense Ministry's 2011 document *Conceptual Views on the Activity of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in Information Space*, coercing "the state to take decisions for the benefit of the opposing force."

Russian actors on social media amplify extreme views and doubts about democratic institutions.

Russian actors typically manipulate information not to persuade others or spread a view or an ideology but to sow confusion and disruption. Their aim is to create the impression that truth does not exist, undermining trust and authority in democracies. Russian manipulators on social media amplify extreme views, conspiracy theories, and doubts about democratic institutions. State-backed media outlets also help spread these narratives. For example, after Russian operatives were accused of poisoning the former Russian intelligence officer Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the United Kingdom, Russian officials used Twitter to spread alternative theories that other forces may have been behind the attack, implying that identifying the culprit would be impossible. State media and covert online networks amplified these claims.

In China, authorities are similarly committed to tightly controlling the flow of information inside the country while harnessing information to influence societies abroad. The Chinese Communist Party has called for close coordination across all organs of the state in guarding cyberspace and the information space, seeking to create a "harmonious Internet" by censoring dissent, limiting foreign suppliers of technology to China, and promoting China's model of cybersovereignty, including elements of its Great Firewall, in other countries. China has also built institutions to advance this strategy, with organs such as the Cyberspace Administration of China and the People's Liberation Army playing roles in China's integrated approach to cyberspace and the information space.

This concerted strategy comes from the top. Chinese President Xi Jinping has emphasized the importance of "discourse power": the creation and dissemination of narratives that serve the state's interests and the suppression of those that threaten the state. For example, Chinese entities have purchased independent media outlets across numerous African countries, incentivizing the publication of favorable narratives in Africa and the removal of unfavorable content. In 2019, actors linked to the Chinese government tried to manipulate discussions of the Hong Kong protests on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Chinese officials and media outlets also sought to shape coverage of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, which began in late 2019, by suppressing reporting on China's failings (including by ejecting three *Wall Street Journal* reporters from the country in retaliation for an op-ed critical of China's initial cover-up), spreading the conspiracy theory that the virus resulted from a U.S. bioweapons attack, and exploiting U.S. President Donald Trump's lack of transparency about the virus to portray the Chinese response to the pandemic as superior.

China's traditionally more cautious diplomats have recently taken more strident postures online, with numerous Chinese officials using Twitter (which is blocked in China) as a bully pulpit. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian is a particularly aggressive diplomat who gained notoriety for defending China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang by mocking American concerns; in several cases, he pointed to examples of racism in the United States to argue that Washington, not Beijing, had a problem with human rights. Meanwhile, China uses coercion to control speech outside its borders, pressing companies to avoid "sensitive" topics if they want to continue to conduct business in the country. In 2019, Chinese companies retaliated against the National Basketball Association by cutting off partnerships, sponsorships, and broadcasts after the general manager of the Houston Rockets tweeted in support of protests in Hong Kong. The league quickly apologized, eager to protect its access to the Chinese market. That incident followed similar cases involving Marriott, Mercedes-Benz, and numerous airlines. Chinese officials have also intimidated foreign media for coverage they considered unfavorable: China's ambassador to Sweden threatened a Swedish media outlet over its reporting on the detention of a dissident bookseller. China's decision to expel all reporters from *The New York Times*, *The Washington*

Post, and *The Wall Street Journal* in March, supposedly in retaliation for the Trump administration's decision to restrict the size of Chinese state-backed media outlets in the United States, was another escalation in this global war on the free press.

A TOTALIZING APPROACH

China and Russia treat cybersecurity and information security as two sides of the same coin, an approach that enables the control and manipulation of information at multiple levels. In China, the government and the private sector work more closely together to develop and deploy new technologies. Both Beijing and Moscow have also injected significant amounts of capital into emerging technologies, guiding development in the state's strategic interest.

Chinese and Russian firms have already begun to develop new technologies and applications that have a global reach. In 2019, the popularity of FaceApp—an application designed and distributed by a Russian company that encouraged users to upload pictures of their faces—raised questions about whether the Russian government could use it to gather facial recognition data from around the world. Algorithms can also be trained to privilege certain content or suppress other content, a function China mandated domestically in its latest content-regulation rules and appears to be using globally through platforms such as the popular video-sharing app TikTok.

Beijing is developing AI-enabled surveillance technology for what it calls "social governance," exemplified in its treatment of the Muslim minorities in the western province of Xinjiang, who are subject to all-encompassing monitoring by such technology and forced into concentration camps for perceived disloyalties. But it is also rolling out surveillance technology across China, accompanied by a system of assigning behavior-based "social credit" scores to individuals. And Beijing is exporting surveillance technology to other countries, often billed as "safe city" programs to supposedly provide high-tech public safety systems. Although Russia lags behind China on AI development, Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought to catch up, investing heavily in research and expanding AI partnerships with China.

To train algorithms and feed machine-learning processes, developers need more and more data from diverse sources. The export of their technology allows China and Russia to shape the global information architecture of platforms, applications, and surveillance systems.

The war room: at a Facebook office in Berlin, February 2018

GORDON WELTERS / LAIF / REDUX

And it allows them to collect more data in the interest of training AI applications and more finely tuning methods of controlling and manipulating information. China's so-called Digital Silk Road, a technological plank of its infrastructure- and investment-driven Belt and Road Initiative, is one vehicle through which it exports network and platform technologies and shapes the infrastructure and norms that govern information in other countries. The installation of Chinese 5G equipment around the world will enable the collection of huge tranches of data by Chinese telecommunications companies. This information could be shared with Chinese state or Communist Party institutions. The Chinese government's support for Huawei, a Chinese technology company that sells telecommunications equipment, smartphones, and other consumer electronics, has helped create a global behemoth. China also distributes its surveillance technologies to Western democracies; the French city of Marseille is working with the Chinese telecommunications company ZTE to establish a public surveillance network. Although China is a bigger exporter of global information infrastructure, Russian companies also export lower-cost Internet monitoring technologies to many countries, including Iraq and Mexico.

Alongside digital infrastructure, China and Russia are building traditional media networks outside their borders, expanding the reach of their state-backed channels to Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East and developing partnerships with overseas outlets to spread content friendly to Chinese and Russian interests. For example, China has invested in independent media in South Africa, and the Chinese-owned StarTimes media group has operations in 30 African countries. Many of these outlets have substantial online presences. Chinese state-owned media companies control some of the fastest-growing Facebook pages, and the English-language Russian channel RT maintains a robust following on YouTube. Chinese and Russian state media outlets increasingly work together, echoing each other's narratives, especially criticism of the United States. For example, Russia's news agency Sputnik, a propaganda outlet, has cooperation agreements with China's state-backed newspaper *Global Times* and its news agency Xinhua, including for sharing content in Arabic and Spanish, and Russia's RT and China's Xinhua have mirrored each other's messages in blaming the United States for fomenting protests in both Hong Kong and Russia.

ARCHITECTURE OF CONTROL

Government control of the digital network architecture also allows authoritarians to restrict information flows within their own borders. Under its 2019 "sovereign Internet" law, Russia is centralizing Internet traffic in the country and creating chokepoints (akin to those of China's Great Firewall) that will enable Moscow to seal off the Internet in Russia from the rest of the world. Other countries, from autocracies such as Iran to democracies such as India, have used Internet shutdowns to limit information in the face of unrest. China's development of a separate Internet root system, the digital mechanism that directs online traffic, could be a key step toward a bifurcation of the Internet. By developing control over part of the Internet, China could turn connectivity into a geopolitical weapon, insisting that countries submit to Chinese terms and conditions. The threat of disruptions on 5G networks that Chinese companies control could provide similar leverage for geopolitical manipulation in the future.

China and Russia pose an alternative model to the free and open Internet that the United States and its allies have championed for decades. Their vision of multiple "sovereign" and controlled Internets would hand significant control to national governments. Last fall,

Russia worked with China and others to secure UN General Assembly support for the development of an international cybercrime treaty, framed around national sovereignty and censorship, that would allow greater government oversight of online content. Despite U.S. opposition, the resolution passed with the support of many African, Asian, and Latin American countries. China and Russia have courted many members of this large group—including Mongolia, Nigeria, and South Africa—which scholars at the think tank New America have dubbed "the Digital Deciders." These states have not yet committed to either the democratic Internet or the statist authoritarian model.

Beijing, in particular, is also working with other governments to develop legal frameworks, often modeled on its own laws, for "sovereign Internets" that sanction greater government control over flows of information. These laws frequently focus on censorship and the removal of sensitive content, as well as issuing requirements for data to be stored locally in a given country, a rule that erects protectionist barriers and enables government scrutiny. The laws often accompany the import of Chinese technologies and network infrastructure. Beijing also frequently trains foreign officials on media and information management and the use of data.

THE DEMOCRAT'S DILEMMA

The United States lags behind in many ways, including in the framework it uses to understand the digital world. Washington views the information contest in largely tactical terms and has failed to recognize that these activities occur across three integrated dimensions: information (the propagation, control, and manipulation of narratives), architecture (the systems and platforms that transmit, order, and collect information), and governance (the laws, norms, and, in some cases, standards for content, data, and technology). And the United States has not fully grasped what is already clear to China and Russia, that the domains of cyberspace and the information space increasingly converge.

Although Washington's 2018 National Cyber Strategy notes the threat of information operations and the authoritarian challenge to an open Internet, most of the text focuses on a traditional view of cybersecurity that is more limited to the functioning of networks. The 2020 report of the Cyberspace Solarium Commission—a bipartisan intergovernmental body tasked with devising a new strategy to defend

U.S. cyberspace—goes a few steps further, recommending more concerted action on developing emerging technologies and countering information operations, but doesn't address questions on how information and data should be governed. In 2017, then U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis insisted that the military should recognize the importance of information in twenty-first-century warfare and great-power competition. But although civilian agencies are involved in various strategies for managing cyberspace and information, the United States lacks an integrated national strategy outside the military domain for competition in the information space. Much of the global information contest takes place on private networks aimed at civilians—areas outside of traditional U.S. government jurisdiction, where Washington has not yet figured out how to work systematically with the private sector and civil society.

Officials in the United States and other democratic countries cannot simply borrow from the Chinese and Russian playbooks. They have to determine how best to engage in the information contest without distorting information or compromising the fundamental openness of their societies. When democracies regulate content and increase control over the Internet's architecture, they weaken democratic institutions. In the information contest, adhering to democratic values is not just the right thing to do—it is necessary to win the competition with autocracies.

That's because a fundamental asymmetry shapes this contest between democracies and authoritarian states. Authoritarian actors see great advantages in controlling and manipulating information, but for democracies, doing so would undermine their institutions and values. At the same time, the dependence of democracies on free and open political discourse provides opportunities for their rivals to intrude into their information ecosystems. These dynamics constrain how democracies can respond to the malicious efforts of their adversaries. Adopting the tactics of Beijing and Moscow, or accepting their framing of the contest as an information war, would mean surrendering to authoritarian terms and creating a race to the bottom in which democracies can only lose. The challenge for democracies is to thwart authoritarians without playing into their hands.

Foreign actors aren't the only threats to a free and open public square. A polluted and chaotic information environment filled with hate speech, extremism, and disinformation has weakened democracies

from within and eroded their claim to the moral high ground. From the spread of white supremacist manifestoes and anti-vaccination conspiracies, to politicians disseminating deceptively manipulated videos, to the online harassment of women, to elected leaders using social media to share lies, the promotion on online platforms of viral and extreme content has encouraged behaviors at odds with healthy democratic discourse.

The challenge for democracies is to not play into the hands of authoritarians.

Without sufficient protections, the new digital economy pioneered in the United States risks undermining traditional protections on privacy and individual rights. What the scholar Shoshana Zuboff calls "surveillance capitalism"—the way private technology firms have turned human experience into the raw material of the new economy—actually narrows the gulf between the application of digital technologies in democracies and their application in autocracies such as China. Surveillance capitalism is motivated by profit, whereas China's extensive surveillance systems are geared toward cementing government control. But both forms of surveillance prioritize the mass collection of data and have the power to shape how citizens perceive their world. In the absence of action by democratic governments to limit the use of surveillance technologies, such tools are eroding the boundaries of privacy in many democracies, with the monitoring of what students do in their dorms, for example, or the ability to identify individuals through images gathered from social media. Although some cities have banned facial recognition technology, others, such as London, are using that technology more concertedly. Washington's hands-off approach to the regulation of emerging technologies doesn't help; when democracies fail to present a clear alternative to their authoritarian counterparts, they fuel the growing perception that the digital technology being developed in the United States is no different from that being developed in China.

European officials have begun to call for a new approach to address these challenges. French President Emmanuel Macron has expressed a desire for a "new path," away from the "Californian form of Internet," in which the government allows companies to make decisions that have huge social and economic implications, and from the "Chinese Internet," in which the government drives innovation and holds the

reins. French and EU officials have separately begun articulating principles for this third way, including many sound ideas. By framing their visions in terms of protecting European "sovereignty," however, they have evoked Beijing's and Moscow's rhetoric, failing to clearly differentiate the democratic model. Most troubling for U.S. officials is that European officials are seeking a new model to distance their countries from the United States, rather than working to build a broader democratic framework. Refusing to address its own shortcomings while withdrawing from the world, the United States is disengaged from these important deliberations.

FINDING STRENGTH IN HUMILITY

The United States should not continue to cede leadership to the private sector. It must wrestle with tough issues, weighing the tradeoffs among protecting democratic values, maintaining the country's technological competitiveness, and keeping data flows relatively open while preventing that information from falling into authoritarian hands. And Washington must figure out how to gain greater cooperation from the private sector without harming the ability of U.S. companies to innovate or undermining the free market.

The United States should not simply focus on countering disinformation or techno-authoritarianism; it must take a more proactive stance in building an information ecosystem that works in the interests of democracies. To do so, the United States needs to work with its democratic partners to develop an updated information model that reflects democratic principles and puts individuals, not companies or governments, in control of how their data are collected and used. Washington also needs to structure and resource its government agencies for success in this contest and develop new means of collaboration between the government and the private sector, particularly around emerging technologies.

The United States needs to approach these tasks with humility, conceding that its aloof approach to data privacy and the regulation of technology has undermined the freedom and openness of its vision for the Internet. With this admission, and through steps taken domestically to better protect privacy and regulate technology companies, Washington could more easily forge a multilateral coalition with its democratic partners, particularly those in Europe. Continuing to support a free and open Internet is important in opposing the control that authoritarian regimes seek through the spread of "sovereign Internets."

But democracies also need to recognize and address the way bad actors exploit democratic rights and freedoms to undermine them. A new framework would prioritize data privacy and make transparent how algorithms dictate what individuals see online. And it should better balance power among governments, technology companies, and individuals. These measures would provide a clear contrast with the authoritarian model and an attractive alternative for other countries tempted by China's side of a future bifurcated Internet.

Success in this endeavor will require restructuring the way the U.S. government works on these issues. The United States should not imitate Chinese or Russian structures, but no U.S. government entity currently has the mandate, authority, or resources to tackle the full scale of the information contest. The National Security Council should organize an integrated, civilian-led interagency approach to network, information, and emerging technologies. It should coordinate across relevant government agencies and develop new cooperative mechanisms with the private sector. The Department of Defense has begun to prioritize the information contest, and Congress has given it new authorities to conduct military operations in the information environment, such as when it sent warning messages to known Russian online operatives ahead of the 2018 midterms, but its role should be limited. Militarizing this contest would only play into the hands of authoritarians by turning information into the weapon that they want it to be.

Much of today's diplomacy happens not at private negotiating tables but in the public square, so the United States needs to free its diplomats from traditionally slow bureaucratic forms of messaging so they can be nimble in the modern information space by engaging in public as a core part of their mission and by integrating technology into their outreach. U.S. officials should expose through public reporting and funding of independent media the malign and coercive information activities of authoritarians. U.S. leaders in the public and private sectors need to push back against extraterritorial censorship by standing with companies threatened by autocracies and exposing technologies that automate censorship. Washington should try to curb the expansion of the authoritarian model by advancing democratic principles about cyberspace and the information space in multilateral governance bodies. And the United States should invest in its own civil society, protecting free and independent media and supporting efforts to conduct research about the information space.

The private sector has a major role to play, including through new modes of public-private cooperation. Technology companies and traditional media need to grasp how malicious actors seek to turn their businesses into geopolitical battlegrounds. At the same time, the government should not approach technological rivalry as a values-neutral exercise in domination: for example, thinking of competition over AI systems as an arms race risks the development of systems fundamentally at odds with democratic governance and values. Instead, the government and the private sector should together drive innovation that advances the democratic values of free speech and privacy, protects the free market, stops attempts by bad actors to distort information, and presents a competitive alternative to authoritarian-developed technologies. Both the public and the private sectors, for instance, have started to develop principles around the ethical use of facial recognition technology and are collaborating on technologies to detect deepfakes: AI-concocted audio or video of events that never happened.

The United States risks falling behind in the development of new technologies.

Thanks to declining funding for basic research and China's hands-on role in stoking innovation, the United States risks falling behind in the development of new technologies. The government should prioritize emerging technologies such as AI and quantum computing and raise funding for research and development in partnership with private industry, redoubling efforts to train—and attract from overseas—top scientists and engineers. Policymakers should also restrict technologies that can significantly hinder democratic governance and human rights, starting with a moratorium on facial and gait recognition technology, which require oversight and clear rules to guard against abuse, followed by a more rigorous consideration of how to use and govern AI. There may also be technological solutions to problems of individual privacy: more sophisticated machine-learning models, for instance, might depend less on large tranches of personal data. The United States and its democratic allies should also prioritize a multilateral approach, in coordination with the private sector, to greater influence international standards bodies such as the International Telecommunication Union and how they guide the use of emerging technology around the world.

The United States urgently needs to seize the initiative in the information contest. The challenge will only grow as technologies evolve and more countries adopt digital authoritarian strategies. As the information space becomes more polluted, segmented, and rigidly controlled, it will become harder for the United States to build resilience and respond to external threats. As more physical objects—from refrigerators to cars to coffee machines—go online as part of the "Internet of Things," digital technology will increasingly order and govern life. Worse, the reliance on digital technologies risks distorting perceptions of reality. Deepfakes may contribute to the loss of any shared sense of reality. And as authoritarian models of technology and information governance spread, the space for democratic practices will shrink.

Yet the biggest barrier to successfully contesting the information space may be the erosion of democracy at home. Democratic leaders who weaponize information and disregard the principles of democratic governance will make their societies less resilient, fail to demonstrate an alternative to the authoritarian model, and accelerate the very degradation of the information space that authoritarians seek. In the information contest, the United States cannot advance a democratic vision if its leaders do not embody it.

The Right Way to Fix the EU

Put Politics Before Economics

Matthias Matthijs

On January 30, 2020, representatives from the European Union's 28 member states gathered at the European Parliament, in Brussels, to approve the United Kingdom's official exit from the EU. After the vote was cast, the parliamentarians from the 27 remaining members waved their British counterparts goodbye while singing "Auld Lang Syne," the Scottish farewell song that celebrates lasting friendship and the passing from old times to new. Among the departing British, some wept tears of sorrow, others tears of joy.

On the continent, most consider the British decision to leave a tragic mistake. Even so, the Brexiteers' core contention—that the European Economic Community they joined in 1973 has grown far beyond an international union of sovereign states and into something far more ambitious and intrusive—is hard to deny. So is the claim that the EU's own missteps in handling the process of European integration played some part in driving the British out.

If the union wants to maintain its legitimacy and global influence after Brexit, it should use this moment as an opportunity to rectify those mistakes. Above all, the EU should stop putting economic logic ahead of political reality when it should be the other way around—as the original guiding principles of European integration held. The goal of integration, as the British historian Alan Milward wrote, was not to create a giant internal market or to eventually become a new global superpower but to rescue Europe's nation-states from the threat of collapse, annexation, and forced occupation—threats that many European

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states had failed to resist in World War II. Those states had failed in their primary task, to defend their national territory and protect their citizens. For the sake of their own survival, European states needed some degree of coordination to achieve the twin goals of political stability and economic prosperity. That would require some surrender of national sovereignty to a supranational entity, but the underlying objective would be to buttress the legitimacy of member states.

European leaders today should recommit to that vision and develop a new division of labor between Brussels and national capitals. That can happen only if the most powerful remaining member states—France, Germany, and Italy—reach a consensus over what went wrong and why. If those states manage to find common ground, Brexit could yet turn from a bruising debacle into a moment of promise and renewal.

ONE MARKET TO RULE THEM ALL

The roots of the EU's multiple crises during the past ten years—over the euro, migration, Brexit, and the rule of law—reach back to the 1980s and 1990s. For much of the postwar era, European integration had followed a simple logic. States would gradually liberalize their economies and foster trade and investment relations. Meanwhile, in the interest of domestic political stability, they would maintain national control over important policy levers—monetary and fiscal affairs, industrial policy, public procurement, labor-market policy, and so forth. But starting in 1985, the new European Commission president, Jacques Delors, turned that logic on its head.

Instead of policy discretion at the national level, Delors's vision for the bloc emphasized pan-European rules on matters of trade, regulations, and public procurement. Over the following decade, the EU rapidly created a genuine common market by abolishing all nontariff barriers to trade. Delors also laid the groundwork for a single currency, which transferred control over monetary policy and exchange rates to the eurozone level and severely limited member states' discretion over fiscal policy through a set of rules laid down in the Stability and Growth Pact. By the mid-1990s, the one-time grand bargain between sovereign states had given way to a radically new paradigm that put economic and financial connectedness first and political sovereignty second.

Yet the new model was deeply flawed. True federations rely on financial solidarity in times of crisis, but the EU failed to put in place the supranational institutions that would have made such solidarity possible,

leaving the single market and the euro vulnerable to inevitable shocks. The single market enabled the free movement of capital but lacked the shared institutions to regulate those flows through mechanisms of joint financial supervision. The single currency meant a common monetary policy but had no provision for common control over fiscal matters to cushion the uneven effects of a potential crisis. At the same time, the EU's focus on strict economic and financial rules eclipsed its political priorities, in particular the need to enforce basic democratic principles and the rule of law, both of which were largely taken for granted, even as enlargement to the East became a reality in 2004.

The milestone treaties of the Delors era, the 1987 Single European Act and the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, radically altered European markets by enshrining specific economic policy choices in supranational agreements that could be changed only by a unanimous vote. To some extent, globalization was driving similar changes everywhere. But the EU's member states embraced the logic of international markets with much greater enthusiasm than anyone else in the advanced industrial world. And in the first decade of this century, when the EU expanded to take in ten formerly communist states of central and eastern Europe, its leaders mostly worried about how the new members would manage the transition from central planning to market principles. They did not concern themselves much with the possibility of democratic backsliding, which has since emerged as the main threat in newer EU members, such as Hungary and Poland, and has the potential to seriously erode the democratic integrity of the entire union.

THE RETURN OF POLITICS

If these oversights once seemed forgivable, the economic and political tumult of the 2010s revealed that they were anything but inconsequential. First came the eurozone crisis. The lack of an EU-wide financial and banking union was always going to lead to serious macroeconomic imbalances between creditor countries and debtor states. But what transmuted a relatively manageable Greek fiscal problem in 2010 into a full-blown, contagious sovereign debt crisis was the EU's obsession with rigid fiscal rules and competitiveness at the expense of national-level flexibility. When the Greek government struggled to pay its sovereign debt, the so-called troika—made up of the European Central Bank (ECB), the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund—arranged a bailout. But in return, it insisted that Greece

Was it something we said? At the G-7 summit in Biarritz, France, August 2019

ANDREW PARSONS / REUTERS

build up a substantial budgetary surplus for the foreseeable future so it could pay back its debt. The troika imposed crippling fiscal austerity measures and sweeping structural reforms, mostly intended to deregulate the Greek economy. That intervention not only exacerbated the Greek sovereign debt problem by slashing growth; it also left the Greek government with very little say in its country's economy. As far as economic policy was concerned, the outcome of national elections—including the 2015 victory of the far-left party Syriza, which promised an end to austerity—was largely meaningless.

If national politics was powerless in the face of the European debt crisis, it came back with a vengeance during the migration crisis that followed in 2015. The EU's response to the wave of refugees reaching its southern shores was hampered by the so-called Dublin Regulation, which required asylum seekers to register as refugees wherever they first entered the EU, putting a disproportionate burden on the main entry states, especially Greece and Italy. German Chancellor Angela Merkel tried to redistribute the refugees more equally but failed. Several central European states, in particular, refused to accept more than a handful, arguing that Merkel's redistribution scheme infringed on their sovereignty. Before long, even the Schengen system of visa-free,

open borders began to fray, with several EU states building fences or temporarily introducing passport checks. It was an ugly reminder that supranational solidarity in the EU had strict limits.

National politics continued its vengeful return in the 2016 Brexit referendum. In the months leading up to the referendum, British Prime Minister David Cameron toured European capitals to renegotiate the terms of his country's EU membership, hoping that the specter of Brexit would allow him to secure even better terms than those his country already enjoyed. But although London had in the past managed to negotiate opt-outs from the euro and the Schengen travel area, renegotiating any of the EU's four basic freedoms—the movement of goods, services, capital, and, above all, people—proved much harder. In the end, Cameron had to admit that under the new membership terms, London would still not be able to control the inflow of migrants from the rest of the EU. Quick to exploit latent fears of immigrants, the Brexit campaign, led by the conservative populists Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage, pounced—and promised, successfully, to "take back control" over British laws, money, and borders.

The EU should stop putting economic logic ahead of political reality when it should be the other way around.

In what is perhaps the bleakest reminder of the EU's failure on the political front, the bloc has impotently stood by as two of its member states have gradually slid into authoritarianism. Hungary and Poland still maintain formal democratic institutions, but both now tilt the playing field so far that neither meets the minimal standards for liberal democracy. Elections in Hungary and Poland are free but not fair, ruling parties have eliminated checks and balances on executive power, and after years of court stacking, the judiciary in both countries is no longer independent. In both cases, the EU has triggered a sanctions mechanism, the so-called Article 7 procedure, which can strip a member state of its voting rights in the European Council, among other sanctions. But the process requires unanimity among all EU member states (excluding the offending country), and Hungary and Poland have both promised to veto any sanctions against the other.

In past decades, European leaders might have agreed on enough to find a way out of these various imbroglios. Each of the big innovations that took shape in the 1980s and 1990s—the single market, the

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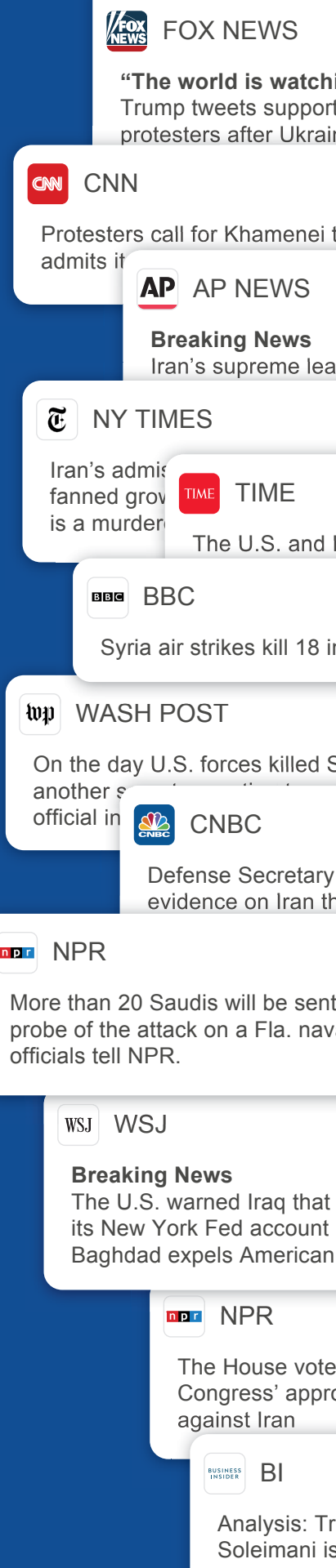

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euro, and eastward enlargement—found broad support among the main national players, with the exception of the British opt-out on the euro. The single market was an Anglo-French idea, the euro was a Franco-German one, and Berlin and London both championed enlargement, although each for its own reasons. Meanwhile, Italian elites across the political spectrum were happy to go along with all three of these projects, which they hoped would accelerate much-needed domestic reform and lower Italy's inflation and interest rates.

There is no trace of consensus today. The United Kingdom is out. French President Emmanuel Macron has outlined an ambitious vision for much more fiscal integration, in which member states would transfer to the EU not only control of monetary policy but also some of the power to tax and spend, so as to build a sizable eurozone budget. Germany, arguably the country that has benefited the most from the EU's current institutional framework, is quite comfortable with the institutional status quo and unwilling to make drastic changes. Many members of Italy's current political elite, meanwhile, dream of a return to a distant, pre-EU past, when the state could use the tools of currency devaluation and fiscal stimulus to spur national economic growth.

Overcoming the EU's current malaise will require European leaders to compromise on a broad set of political and economic principles. And since Germany's commitment to the current regime will be hard to sustain given growing opposition in eastern and southern member states, any such compromise would need to strike a balance between the Italian desire for greater domestic policy flexibility and the French dream of more intra-European solidarity.

A NEW CONSENSUS

What could such a new grand bargain look like in practice? On the economic front, it would mean giving member states far more political control over fiscal policy. National governments should be able to decide for themselves how to use their tax revenues and make budgetary tradeoffs. They should be free to temporarily subsidize ailing sectors, give preference to their own construction companies or law firms in their public procurement (a common practice at the state level in the United States), and bail out struggling banks and other systemically important companies, none of which they can easily do under current EU rules. That flexibility would once again give electorates a real say in economic policy, counteracting the so-called democratic

deficit that has beset the union since the start of the eurozone crisis. Such a deal would require a fairly loose interpretation of the EU's current fiscal rules and some temporary deviations from a few sacred single-market principles, such as the prohibition against favoring national service providers. The outcome would be less economic efficiency at the European level but greater political stability: national governments could afford to be more responsive to the legitimate demands of their electorates, taking the wind out of the sails of right-wing populists such as Marine Le Pen in France and Matteo Salvini in Italy, who consistently argue that the EU does not benefit ordinary people.

National governments should be able to decide for themselves how to use their tax revenues and make budgetary tradeoffs.

At the same time, the EU could follow France's lead in developing more supranational mechanisms for economic risk sharing, even if doing so would run counter to economic orthodoxy. The eurozone states took some steps in this direction in the years following the debt crisis, creating a banking union that allows the ECB to monitor and, if necessary, wind down ailing private banks (even though the rules governing this arrangement are, once again, needlessly strict and could have allowed for more national discretion). Europe should add to this banking union an additional pillar: a eurozone-wide deposit insurance scheme, which would ease the burden on any individual member state if one of its banks ran into trouble.

In the same vein, the EU should finally push its member states to pool some of their sovereign debt through so-called eurobonds, which would make a sudden return of high interest rates far less likely and give individual governments more budgetary breathing room, reducing the risk of capital flight or bank runs in a future crisis. Clearly, that step would carry some risk of moral hazard, since it would reduce individual governments' responsibility for the sovereign debt they accumulated. But even if pooling all present and future debt is not politically viable or financially desirable, a big chunk of the existing debt pile could be mutualized, as long as there are reasonable rules to prevent governments from taking advantage. (The system could have a debt ceiling, for instance, beyond which member states would need to raise their own funds on the market at higher interest rates.) Finally, EU leaders should revisit the ECB's narrow mandate. At present, the

central bank's sole official responsibility is to ensure price stability—an outmoded function in a world where the battle against inflation has long been won. Instead, the ECB should be allowed to do as the U.S. Federal Reserve does and also focus on other goals, including full employment and overall economic prosperity.

On the political front, the EU must not compromise in its commitment to liberal democratic principles, the separation of powers, and the rule of law. The union's existing legal framework to protect fundamental democratic principles needs some extra bite—meaning much stricter rules for potential offenders. The EU disburses substantial amounts of funds to economically lagging member states, including Hungary and Poland, which are among the largest net recipients. It could make those funds conditional on good behavior. Additionally, the pan-European parties in the European Parliament, especially the influential European People's Party, which is home to parliamentarians from Hungary's ruling Fidesz party, should work out clear rules for expelling any representatives from national governments who undermine their country's democracy.

Finally, one need not call into question the free movement of people—one of the EU's fundamental principles—to recognize the political risks that come with high levels of migration among EU member states. Although EU immigrants make significant net financial contributions to their host countries at the national level, they can also put pressure on local public services, such as schools, housing, and hospitals, especially if the inflow is large and sudden. That fact offers ready fodder for populist exploitation.

What is more, the brain drain from eastern and southern European states weakens those countries' economies and can negatively affect their citizens' views of the benefits of European integration. As the political scientist R. Daniel Kelemen has shown in the case of Hungary, emigration can also have the perverse effect of strengthening nascent illiberal regimes. Liberal elites and educated young people leave the country in droves. Those who stay behind are either unwilling or unable to resist the slide into authoritarianism. Of course, counteracting that trend without imperiling free movement is difficult—all the more reason to fight democratic backsliding in Hungary and elsewhere head-on, through a more forceful Article 7 mechanism. As for immigration from outside the EU, the bloc could allocate more funds to border patrol and move away from the outdated Dublin Regulation to a more equitable distribution mechanism for asylum seekers.

THE PATH TO GLOBAL POWER

Putting its own house in order will also allow the EU to be a more effective global power in an increasingly hostile world. With a U.S. president who is loath to enter military conflicts and views the EU as a geopolitical rival, Europe can no longer rely solely on the United States to guarantee its security. Global trade and financial links have created dependencies that powerful actors can easily exploit, especially in an era of intensifying great-power competition. In this more multipolar and chaotic world, the EU is more relevant than ever for its relatively small member states, a lesson the United Kingdom is bound to learn the hard way in the not-too-distant future, as it attempts to steer its own course.

One area of potential European strength is international monetary relations. In the 1960s, the French finance minister—and future president—Valéry Giscard d'Estaing referred to the U.S. dollar as the United States' "exorbitant privilege." He was right—the United States gains both economic and geopolitical advantages from printing the world's reserve currency of choice. It can export some of its inflation and borrow from global markets in its own currency at much cheaper rates than other states. Through its control over the international payment service SWIFT and the influence of the U.S. Federal Reserve System, Washington has been able to pressure adversaries and impose financial sanctions with global reach. The euro has the potential to rival the power of the dollar, but for that to happen, the eurozone needs a much more liquid currency market. Adding a eurozone-wide deposit insurance system and eurobonds would go a long way toward that goal. A bigger international role for the euro would, in turn, allow the EU to give financial weight to its demands and squeeze rival powers such as Russia more effectively, just as the United States has done with Iran.

Trade is another source of European leverage. The trade wars initiated by U.S. President Donald Trump may have diminished his country's overall welfare, but they offer an important reminder: states can use market access as a geopolitical tool. When it comes to using protectionist policies, actors that run a large trade deficit, as the United States does, have a significant advantage over those that depend entirely on export-led growth. But there is no reason why the EU, despite its current trade surplus, could not use access to its formidable internal market as a bargaining chip to force other states to advance core European interests, such as reducing carbon emissions and protecting human rights. The

EU's market power makes trade one of the few domains in which the bloc can negotiate on equal terms with great powers such as the United States and China. The EU's commitment to multilateralism (through institutions such as the World Trade Organization) means it will also have many smaller states on its side in any new global trade disputes.

Finally, if the EU is to compete on equal terms with U.S. and Chinese industrial and digital services giants such as Apple, Google, Alibaba, and Huawei, it will need to create its own rival champions. Europe already has at least one such company: Airbus, the French-German-Spanish multinational aerospace conglomerate that dominates the world market for commercial aircraft in a duopoly with the American firm Boeing. But with only five EU companies among the global top 40 (by annual revenue), much work remains, and the EU's current strict antitrust rules are hopelessly out of date for this type of endeavor. Fortunately, some national leaders—especially France's economy and finance minister, Bruno Le Maire, and his German counterparts, Peter Altmaier and Olaf Scholz—understand the new realities of global competition and are pushing for changes, including an overhaul of the EU's merger rules.

WAITING FOR BERLIN

None of these steps will be easy. The biggest obstacle of all may be political resistance from Germany—the country that stands to lose the most in the short term from moving away from an institutional settlement that has served it well. But Merkel, who is in the twilight of her long tenure as chancellor, has admitted that Brexit should serve as a wake-up call to the EU. She should use her remaining political capital to make the case that more power at the bottom of the EU will mean more economic robustness at the top, just as more solidarity at the top will mean less political instability at the bottom.

The European Commission's new president, former German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, is perhaps uniquely placed, alongside Merkel, to convince her fellow Germans of the need for fundamental reform. Von der Leyen has also promised that hers will be a "geopolitical" European Commission, in a sign that Brussels is at last beginning to take seriously the need for a globally assertive EU. Now national governments—especially in Paris, Berlin, and Rome, but also in Budapest and Warsaw—need to follow her lead. The guiding EU principle should once again be the primacy of politics rather than economics—not for old times' sake but for the future.

REVIEWS & RESPONSES

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A Few Good Men

Trump, the Generals, and the Corrosion of Civil-Military Relations

Max Boot

Trump and His Generals: The Cost of Chaos
BY PETER BERGEN. Penguin Press, 2019, 400 pp.

A Very Stable Genius: Donald J. Trump's Testing of America
BY PHILIP RUCKER AND CAROL LEONNIG. Penguin Press, 2020, 480 pp.

Holding the Line: Inside Trump's Pentagon With Secretary Mattis
BY GUY SNODGRASS. Sentinel, 2019, 252 pp.

Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead
BY JIM MATTIS AND BING WEST. Random House, 2019, 320 pp.

When Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, there was good cause to think that he would be popular with the armed forces. He was, for a start, a Republican, and the military leans heavily conservative. He had also run an ostentatiously pro-military campaign, promising to "rebuild the military, take care of vets and make the world respect the U.S. again!" There were, to be sure, some warning signs of trouble to come, such as when he attacked the war hero John McCain, a Republican senator from Arizona ("I like people who weren't captured"), and belittled the parents of a soldier who had died in combat after they dared to criticize him.

But initially, at least from the military's perspective, the good seemed to far outweigh the bad. Trump pushed for higher defense spending; sent more U.S. forces and firepower to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria; and liberalized the military's rules of engagement, giving commanders on the ground more freedom of maneuver. Even more eye-catching was his appointment of generals to senior civilian positions: the retired Marine Corps general James Mattis became the secretary of defense, the retired Marine general John Kelly became the secretary of homeland security and then the White House chief of staff, the retired army lieutenant general Michael Flynn became Trump's national security adviser—and, when he flamed out after just 24 days, was replaced by the then active-duty army lieutenant general H. R. McMaster. Trump, for his part, reveled in the generals' aura of manliness, hailing "Mad Dog" Mattis (a nickname Mattis hated) as "a true General's General!"

Some critics worried that the overrepresentation of generals in the administration would impinge on civilian control of the military. But many others celebrated the appointment of these generals, hoping that their presence in the administration would provide the reality TV star turned president with much-needed "adult" supervision.

Things went wrong almost immediately. How that happened—how the promise of smooth civil-military relations

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devolved into acrimony, backbiting, and bewilderment—is documented in four new books. Two are journalistic accounts: *Trump and His Generals*, a fair and comprehensive overview of Trump's foreign policy by the journalist and think tanker Peter Bergen, and *A Very Stable Genius*, a work of first-rate news coverage and valuable insight by Philip Rucker and Carol Leonnig, reporters at *The Washington Post* (where I am a columnist). The other two books are memoirs. *Holding the Line*, by Guy Snodgrass, a retired U.S. Navy officer who served as Mattis's Pentagon speechwriter, gives the impression of being hastily cobbled together and includes more interoffice politics than most readers will want to know. But it provides a few nuggets that have not been reported elsewhere—such as the claim that Trump told Mattis to "screw Amazon" on a major contract because he was so unhappy with *The Washington Post* (which is owned by Amazon's founder, Jeff Bezos). The other memoir—*Call Sign Chaos*, by Mattis and Bing West—doesn't deal with the controversies of the Trump administration at all. "I'm old fashioned: I don't write about sitting Presidents," Mattis explains. But the book does provide an expertly crafted account of Mattis's career, which helps explain why the marriage between Trump and his generals was destined for divorce.

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

A key turning point in the relationship was a July 2017 briefing for Trump held in what's known as "the Tank," a secure Pentagon conference room used by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Accounts of the meeting are provided by Bergen (who begins his book with it), Snodgrass (who organized it and was present), and Rucker and Leonnig (who offer the juiciest details). Mattis had summoned the president and his senior advisers to explain why the U.S.-led system of security alliances and trade relationships still benefited the United States. It did not go well. All the accounts agree that Trump, who has a notoriously short attention span and a hair-trigger temper, openly fumed during Mattis's presentation. According to Rucker and Leonnig, the president lashed out at U.S. allies, telling his generals, "We are owed money you haven't been collecting!" Mattis interjected, "This is what keeps us safe," but Trump predictably wasn't buying it. "You're all losers," he spat. "You don't know how to win anymore." A few minutes later, the president—who had cited bone spurs to evade service in the Vietnam War—told a roomful of decorated generals, "I wouldn't go to war with you people. You're a bunch of dopes and babies."

The generals, conditioned not to question the commander in chief's authority, sat in stunned silence. It was left to then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to speak up. "No, that's just wrong," he retorted. "Mr. President, you're totally wrong. None of that is true." After the meeting, standing with a few people he trusted, Tillerson called the president "a fucking moron." When that comment was reported by NBC News a few months later, it sealed Tillerson's fate.

Tillerson's firing in the middle of March 2018 had an unintended consequence: it left the secretary of defense without backup. Until then, Tillerson and Mattis had formed a tag team to stop Trump's more reckless impulses. They had succeeded in preventing the president from pulling out of the Iran nuclear

deal and from abandoning NATO's mutual-defense provision. Mattis had also worked with Kelly to delay the implementation of Trump's more provocative requests, Bergen writes, such as an order in early 2018 to evacuate American civilians from South Korea in preparation for a possible military strike on North Korea.

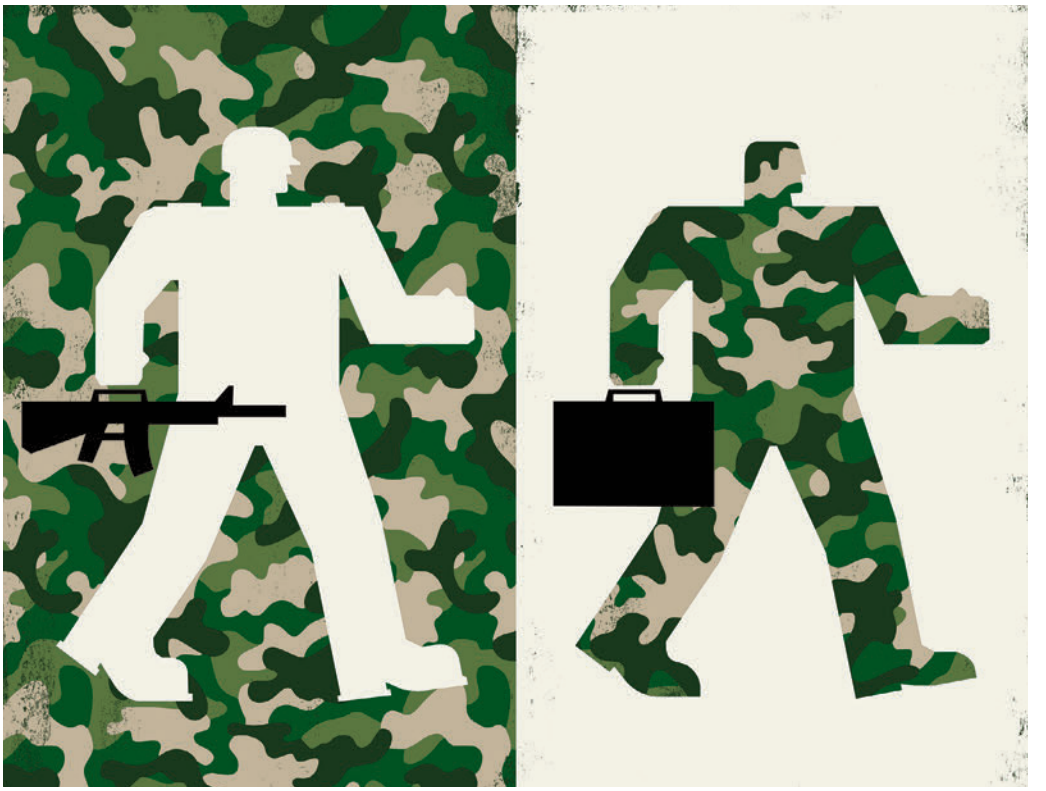
With Tillerson gone, it was only a matter of time before Mattis was out the door, too. Snodgrass writes that he found out as early as the summer of 2018 that Mattis was planning to serve only until the end of the year. The final break came in December, when Mattis objected to Trump's initial decision to pull U.S. forces out of northern Syria. Kelly, who was close to Mattis after years of Marine Corps service together, left shortly after Mattis. McMaster had already been fired in March of that year after clashing with Trump, as well as with Mattis. (Bergen writes that Mattis "pointedly referred" to the national security adviser as "Lieutenant General McMaster" to make clear that he outranked him.)

The only high-ranking officer who has maintained consistent influence with Trump since the start of the administration is the retired general Jack Keane, a former army vice chief of staff who was instrumental in advocating the Iraq "surge" in 2006–7. Keane has never accepted an official appointment, however, preferring to provide informal advice. Bergen writes that at various points, Keane helped talk Trump out of his desire to pull troops out of northern Syria and Afghanistan—but not even Keane could ultimately stop Trump. Trump has since abandoned the Syrian Kurds by relocating U.S. troops to Syria's tiny oil fields, and he has agreed to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan by May 2020 as part of a deal with the Taliban.

READING COMPREHENSION

Although *Call Sign Chaos* does not detail Mattis's tenure at the Defense Department, it reveals why he and the other generals so often clashed with Trump. Mattis writes that from an early age, the Marine Corps instilled in him the fundamentals of leadership, which he sums up as "the three Cs": competence ("Don't dabble in your job; you must master it"), caring ("A marine knows when you are invested in his character, his dreams, and his development. Men like that don't quit on you"), and conviction ("State your flat-ass rules and stick to them. . . . At the same time, leaven your professional passion with personal humility and compassion for your troops"). It is hard to imagine an ethos further removed from Trump's relentless self-promotion, contempt for underlings, and disdain for expertise. The term "self-sacrifice" isn't part of Trump's vocabulary, and he views loyalty as a one-way street: he wants subordinates to be loyal to him—even at the cost of breaking the law—but he will be disloyal to them whenever it is advantageous to do so, often claiming to barely know them when they get in trouble.

The only thing more alien to Trump than Mattis's military ethos is the former secretary of defense's love of reading. *Call Sign Chaos* was largely finished before Mattis joined the administration, but it reads as if Mattis is covertly addressing the president when he writes, "If you haven't read



hundreds of books, you are functionally illiterate, and you will be incompetent, because your personal experiences alone aren't broad enough to sustain you. Any commander who claims he is 'too busy to read' is going to fill body bags with his troops as he learns the hard way." Trump is, of course, notorious for not reading long briefing papers, much less books.

By contrast, all the generals who served at the top of the Trump administration were voracious readers, and it came as a shock to them to deal with a president so intellectually incurious and certain that he already knew everything—even though, Rucker and Leonnig report, Trump didn't even know that India shares a 2,000-mile border with China. Trump became disenchanted by McMaster because the national security adviser was too professorial, trying to cram him with too much information. "Trump would ridicule McMaster," Rucker and Leonnig write, "by describing the topic of the day and deploying a series of large, complex phrases to indicate how boring McMaster's briefing was going to be." They add that "the National Security Council staff were deeply disturbed by Trump's treatment of their boss"—and rightfully so. Because many of those staffers were military officers, word spread through the tight-knit military community about how poorly Trump treated the decorated veteran of the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

EVERYBODY TALKS

The hostility between Trump and the generals has since broken into public view.

After Mattis wrote a blistering resignation letter, Trump called him "the world's most overrated general." Kelly waited more than a year after his departure to publicly criticize Trump, and when he did, in February of this year, Trump attacked him on Twitter: "When I terminated John Kelly, which I couldn't do fast enough, he knew full well that he was way over his head. Being Chief of Staff just wasn't for him." That critique, of course, only raises the question of why Trump appointed Kelly—and so many other officials he now disparages—in the first place.

Beyond his very public break with his generals, Trump's relationship with the military deteriorated owing to a series of decisions that did not sit well with the armed forces. My conversations with current and former officers indicated that they approved of Trump's killing of Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian general who was responsible for hundreds of U.S. deaths in Iraq, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the head of the Islamic State (or ISIS). But many I talked to were furious when Trump decided last October to abandon Syrian Kurdish forces by moving U.S. military personnel who had long served as a buffer between the Kurds and hostile Turkish forces, despite the fact that the Kurds had fought alongside the United States to defeat ISIS and had lost 11,000 soldiers in the process. That decision, many felt, ran counter to the military's commitment to comrades on the battlefield. Many in the U.S. military were unhappy that Trump restored the rank of the Navy SEAL Edward Gallagher—who was accused of war crimes in Iraq—and fired Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, an Iraq war veteran who had testified about Trump's attempts to pressure Ukraine into helping his reelection campaign. Trump had Vindman and his twin brother, also a lieutenant colonel serving on the National Security Council staff, escorted from the White House grounds and then suggested that the military launch disciplinary proceedings against Vindman—something that the army refused to do. Kelly praised Vindman after his firing for doing "exactly what we teach them to do" by refusing to obey an "illegal order" and criticized Trump's support of Gallagher as "exactly the wrong thing to do." Officers such as Kelly know how hard it is to maintain discipline and good order when the commander in chief is signaling that war crimes are acceptable but telling the truth is not.

Many military personnel clearly still support Trump and approve of his swagger, but the president's assaults on the military's hallowed traditions of "duty, honor, country" have grated on many others. The *Military Times*' surveys of military personnel reflect this disenchantment: when Trump was first elected, in November 2016, 46 percent of respondents had a positive view of him, and 37 percent had a negative one. By November 2019, a stark change had taken place: 42 percent positive, 50 percent negative. That same month, a number of generals unloaded on Trump, albeit from behind the cloak of anonymity, in an article in *The Atlantic* by Mark Bowden. Some have criticized the now departed generals for not speaking out more in public, but their reticence is understandable given that they have been taught from the start of their careers to steer clear of politics and

that opposition to Trump could create a presidential backlash against colleagues still on active duty. At the same time, by not coming to Trump's defense, the retired generals have made clear that they are no fans of the president.

KISS THE RING

The Trump presidency has been an education for both the commander in chief and the troops he leads. Trump, who knew little of government at first, learned about how much power he can wield. He doesn't seem to have learned why previous presidents restrained themselves, by, for example, not telling the Justice Department whom to prosecute or what prison sentences to recommend. Trump has been emboldened because he feels that his controversial decisions—such as moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and killing Soleimani—have worked out better than naysayers predicted. He has become more obstinate and less willing to listen to advice the longer he has been in office.

The generals, for their part, learned that they could not simply proceed with business as usual. Trump dispelled that hope by surprising the Pentagon leadership with out-of-the-blue orders to stop military exercises with South Korea and to kick out transgender troops; the latter decision, Snodgrass writes, "created chaos in the Pentagon." Mattis tried to humor Trump as much as he could but block him as much as possible. Snodgrass recalls Mattis saying that he'd "rather swallow acid" than hold Trump's military parade in Washington and notes that Mattis alone among the cabinet refused to praise Trump on command. But even Mattis made compromises, such as sending the National Guard to the border in a pointless deployment designed to score political points for Trump. And although Mattis's decision to avoid criticizing the serving president makes sense from his perspective as a retired general, he should realize that he was serving in a civilian capacity and that he owes the American people a full explanation before the 2020 election of whether Trump is fit to be president, based on his personal experience. Precisely because Mattis is such a well-known and well-respected figure, his judgment would carry weight, especially with Republican voters. His successor, Mark Esper, lacks Mattis's public standing (and obvious allies at the top echelon of the government) and thus is more readily susceptible to political influence.

Trump has now surrounded himself with partisans, such as Mike Pompeo, his secretary of state, and Robert O'Brien, his national security adviser, who see themselves as the president's enablers, not his restrainers. (O'Brien reportedly distributes printouts of Trump's tweets to his staff to guide their decision-making and priorities.) The agencies they oversee have suffered lasting damage: at the National Security Council, O'Brien has cut staffing by a third, and at the State Department, morale plummeted after Pompeo refused to defend diplomats such as William Taylor and Marie Yovanovitch against the criticism of the president and his political allies.

By contrast, the Department of Defense, because it is so much larger than any other government agency and so suffused with the military ethos, is

more resistant to outside influence. But it is hardly immune. Witness, for example, Trump's decision in February to fire John Rood, an undersecretary of defense who had clashed with the president by pushing to release aid to Ukraine and by opposing the designation of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization.

Trump's attempts to bend the Defense Department to his will, employ it for political purposes, and purge it of all dissenting viewpoints will only accelerate if he wins another term. The generals who were hailed as the "axis of adults" are long gone, and their successors, military and civilian alike, have gotten the message about what happens to any official who dares to stand up to a mercurial and wrathful chief executive. The longer Trump stays in office, the harder it will be to safeguard the apolitical traditions of service to the nation, dedication to the rule of law, and loyalty to the Constitution, which are the hallmarks of the American armed forces.

If Trump loses in November, the process of repairing the damage can begin, but the past three years have shown how easily a power-hungry president can ride roughshod over norms in ways that harm the country's institutions. Trump is surely not the last populist demagogue to win office. Going forward, Congress must impose greater limits on the president's authority to prevent abuses such as political interference at the Department of Justice and troop deployments for political purposes. Congress is already taking action to limit the president's war-making authority—for example, by repealing authorizations for the use of military force—although such legislation will not be enacted as long as Trump is in the White House and Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, is in control of the Senate. But limits on the president's authority will always be hardest to enforce in the realm of national security, where there is good reason to give the commander in chief considerable discretion to defend the nation. Ultimately, the greatest safeguard against the misuse of the military is to inculcate a strong devotion to the rule of law among the officer corps so that future military leaders will fight back against illegal or unethical commands—as Mattis, Kelly, and McMaster have recently done in many (but not all) instances.

The Myanmar Mirage

Why the West Got Burma Wrong

Sebastian Strangio

The Hidden History of Burma: Race, Capitalism, and the Crisis of Democracy in the Twenty-first Century
BY THANT MYINT-U. Norton, 2019, 304 pp.

Just a few years ago, Myanmar (also called Burma) was widely seen as an international success story. In March 2011, after half a century of military rule, a quasi-civilian government led by the former general Thein Sein came to power and embarked on a remarkable campaign of political and economic reforms. Over the next year and a half, the government released dissidents, lifted press censorship, let the democratic icon Aung San Suu Kyi reenter politics after spending years under house arrest, and opened peace talks with more than a dozen rebel groups. President Thein Sein's administration also took important steps to rationalize an economy distorted by decades of autarkic socialist policies and harsh Western sanctions.

On the foreign policy front, Myanmar spurned China, its overbearing patron, by suspending unpopular infrastructure projects, and it moved to improve relations with the United States and the West. In late 2011, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Yangon. Shortly after, Barack Obama made the first-ever visit to Myanmar by a sitting U.S. president, touting "the power of a new beginning." As liberalization proceeded, Western countries lifted sanctions, and Myanmar rejoined the world. Aid and investment flooded into the country, along with a parade of luminaries—from the financier and philanthropist George Soros to former British Prime Minister Tony Blair—eager to participate in a seemingly historic transformation.

Myanmar's democratic transition reached its apex on November 8, 2015, when Aung San Suu Kyi led her party, the National League for Democracy, to a staggering victory in national elections. The following March, Thein Sein handed over power to the new administration. It was the first peaceful transfer of power in Myanmar since 1960. A country once mentioned in the same breath as North Korea had seemingly flipped onto the right side of history.

Then the story darkened. On August 25, 2017, a militant group calling itself the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army launched a string of attacks on military outposts across the northern reaches of Rakhine State. The Burmese army responded with a merciless series of military operations—a campaign of ethnic cleansing that emptied villages of Rohingya Muslims. By the end of the year, some 700,000 Rohingya had fled into neighboring Bangladesh. Terrified refugees told of rape, torture, arson, and extrajudicial killings by Burmese soldiers and Buddhist vigilantes. Two Burmese Reuters journalists who reported on the

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atrocities were arrested and charged with breaching Myanmar's Official Secrets Act. A UN fact-finding commission later concluded that the military's campaign amounted to possible war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

As this humanitarian crisis unfolded, many outside Myanmar looked to Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate who had won praise for her years of opposition to Myanmar's military dictatorship, for a solution. But she declined to condemn the military's actions, displaying an indifference that seemed to border on complicity. Aung San Suu Kyi's moral stock plummeted. By the end of 2017, pundits and journalists were calling for her Nobel Peace Prize to be revoked. The undergraduate college at Oxford University where Aung San Suu Kyi had studied took down a portrait of her that had hung by its main entrance for almost 20 years. Amnesty International stripped her of its highest honor. For her former admirers, the low point came in December 2019, when she appeared at the International Court of Justice, in The Hague, to defend Myanmar against accusations of genocide. Here was a world-famous icon of peaceful democratic struggle speaking up for the very generals she had battled since the late 1980s.

For outside observers, this lurching trajectory is hard to comprehend. But as the historian Thant Myint-U writes in his incisive new book, *The Hidden History of Burma*, the vacillating international perceptions of Myanmar—from pariah state to democratic success story and back again—say more about Western hopes than they do about Burmese realities. In fact, Thant Myint-U argues, for all the positive changes that swept the country between 2011 and 2015, more open politics did little to heal long-standing ethnic and sectarian cleavages. Myanmar's recent story is as much about continuity as it is about change.

THE END OF HISTORY

With its maroon-robed monks, golden-spired pagodas and mist-shrouded hills, Myanmar has always been an easy country to romanticize. In the nineteenth century, British writers depicted it as a land of innocents slumbering under the yoke of incompetent Oriental despotism. This image was peddled for political gain, including by the British press to justify the overthrow of Burma's last king, Thibaw, in 1885.

In more recent times, a different kind of reductionism has skewed Western understanding. In 1988, the Burmese army brutally repressed nationwide pro-democracy protests, killing thousands of demonstrators. In the aftermath, Aung San Suu Kyi emerged as a figure of heroic opposition to military rule, and in Western eyes, the country's struggles coalesced into a morality play: on one side was a clique of wicked generals and their cronies; on the other, a beloved icon leading her people in their struggle for human rights and democracy.

One reason that this narrative was powerful is that it reaffirmed the prevailing ideological assumptions of analysts and politicians in the West: that the world was moving inexorably, if sometimes haltingly, in the direction of liberal values. Amid the disappointments of the Arab Spring, Thant Myint-U observes, Myanmar's apparently frictionless progress offered a much-needed tonic, a reassurance that history was still moving in its preordained direction. But this view of Myanmar failed to consider its tortured

Aung San Suu Kyi

political, social, and economic conditions. It disregarded the endemic civil wars that had raged for seven decades along the country's mountainous periphery, as well as the racial and religious tensions that underpinned them. It also overlooked the challenges posed by the country's gaping economic inequalities, the result of rapacious crony capitalism layered on top of the failed economic policies of an earlier age.

Thant Myint-U, a writer, historian, and conservationist, offers perhaps the definitive account of Myanmar's halting transformation over the past decade. Thant Myint-U is well placed to tell this story. His grandfather U Thant was a leading figure in Burmese politics in the years after the country won its independence from the United Kingdom, in 1948, and later served as secretary-general of the United Nations. An author of three previous books on Myanmar who taught for several years at Cambridge University, Thant Myint-U also enjoyed a ringside seat to the events he describes, acting as an unofficial intermediary between Western officials and Myanmar's junta during the early years of reform and later as an adviser to Thein Sein. These experiences have allowed him to piece together a detailed

narrative of a crucial period in Myanmar's history, enriched with anecdotes and interviews with key players.

In Thant Myint-U's telling, there was more to Myanmar's opening in 2011 than a simple liberal conversion. Thein Sein's reforms had many interconnected motivations, but the one common denominator was Burmese officials' growing shame and embarrassment at the extent of their country's dysfunction. By the early years of this century, Myanmar was the poorest country in Asia. Its estimated GDP per capita was little more than half those of Bangladesh and Cambodia and less than half those of Laos and Vietnam. Harsh sanctions imposed by the George W. Bush administration strangled aid flows and stamped out most legitimate business enterprises, concentrating economic power in the hands of corrupt tycoons and meth-peddling warlords. Shut out from much of the global economy, the Burmese junta became heavily reliant on trade with and investment from China, whose suffocating economic presence and flows of migrants into northern Myanmar stoked popular anxiety. By pursuing a carefully graduated political opening, the junta hoped to institutionalize the military's legacy and accomplishments and restore a semblance of balance to Myanmar's domestic and foreign policies.

What emerges from *The Hidden History of Burma* is a sense of just how contingent and uncertain that reform process was. Although the most dramatic changes took place after Thein Sein took office, moves toward reform had begun much earlier, although few outside the country gave them much credit. In particular, Thant Myint-U emphasizes the importance of Cyclone Nargis, which slashed through the Irrawaddy Delta in late April and early May 2008. It left more than 100,000 people dead in Myanmar and devastated large parts of the delta. By exposing the fragility, paranoia, and dire capacity of the Burmese state, Nargis created the conditions in which Myanmar could begin to pursue a new path. Thant Myint-U points out that this progress relied on individuals within the government and civil society bravely pressing their advantage at key junctures. One such moment came in September 2011, when the government suspended the Chinese-backed Myitsone Dam project in northern Myanmar, which had become the subject of fierce public opposition. In Thant Myint-U's analysis, the ebullient public reaction to the dam's suspension catalyzed the reform process by giving Thein Sein the political capital necessary to move ahead with further liberalization.

NATURE VS. NURTURE

The apparent ease with which the reforms unfolded led many outside observers to overlook the depth and complexity of Myanmar's challenges. Thant Myint-U argues that these challenges, including the sectarian tensions in Rakhine State, have roots in the colonial era, when the United Kingdom, after seizing Burma in a series of conquests between 1824 and 1885, rearranged the nation's ethnic and racial hierarchies in order to best extract profit. In 1929, George Orwell wrote that the British were "robbing and pilfering Burma quite shamelessly."

Importing institutions and methods from their Indian colony, the British put different parts of the country under separate forms of administration and favored certain ethnic minorities over the ethnic Burman majority. They also

imported hundreds of thousands of Indian immigrants from the British Raj, who, arriving with little more than the rags on their backs, squeezed the livelihoods of the Burmans. "Burma was born as a military occupation," Thant Myint-U writes, "and grew up as a racial hierarchy." This inequity of colonial rule created the fault lines of race and identity that would overwhelm the country after independence.

This is the "hidden history" of the book's title: Thant Myint-U describes how modern Burmese nationalism was bent on righting colonial imbalances, restoring a lost martial tradition, and establishing the country's own ethnic and religious identity as the organizing principle of the new nation. The problem was that before its independence in 1948, Burma had no precedent as a unified state. The British anthropologist Edmund Leach described the country as a "map maker's fiction": "Burma as represented on a modern political map is not a natural geographical or historical entity," he wrote in 1963. "It is a creation of the armed diplomacy and administrative convenience of late nineteenth-century British Imperialism."

Almost from the moment of independence, Burma collapsed into a raft of civil conflicts pitting the military and the central state—dominated by ethnic Burmans—against ethnic rebels and communist insurgent groups holding territory along the country's periphery. This chronic instability provided the justification for the military coup in 1962, which further inflamed the insurgents' desire for autonomy. The fighting has never stopped.

Seen in this light, military rule was as much a symptom of Myanmar's problems as a cause. As the political scientist Mary Callahan has argued, army control was simply one solution—however baneful and self-defeating—to a centuries-old challenge of building a state in outlying regions that had rarely, if ever, been under effective central control.

FEAR AND LOATHING IN RAKHINE

By 2011, then, Myanmar's problems went far deeper than a simple absence of democratic elections. During the reform period, many Western observers and policymakers seemed to believe that all good things go together—that free elections and markets would push Myanmar's remaining challenges toward resolution. But as Thant Myint-U writes, "There was also little thought given to what landscape could best prepare the country for democratic change and make change sustainable if and when it ever came. . . . And there was no thinking about whether democracy itself was really the best initial exit from military dictatorship."

In practice, the sudden appearance of freedom of expression and competitive politics stoked "older anxieties around race, religion, and national identity." These anxieties were particularly anguished in Rakhine State, where the Buddhist Rakhines nurtured grievances against the Burmese state dating back to the Burmese conquest of the Rakhine kingdom of Mrauk U in the late eighteenth century. Rakhine nationalists also pitted themselves against the Rohingya, many of whose ancestors had emigrated from Bengal under the British and who were widely seen as illegal immigrants eroding Buddhist culture and identity. Many ethnic Burmans shared Rakhine fears of the Rohingya as part of a wider paranoia that Myanmar was on the verge of being overrun by Muslims. These concerns

were amplified by Facebook, which rose to prominence in Myanmar in 2014, functioning as a potent multiplier of racial and religious tropes. In March 2018, the United Nations reported that Facebook posts "substantively contributed to the level of acrimony and dissension and conflict" in Rakhine.

From the beginning of the crisis in Rakhine State, Aung San Suu Kyi's response was muted. On September 19, 2017, she broke her silence in a speech, insisting there had been "no clearance operations" against the country's Muslim minority. Addressing the tribunal in The Hague in late 2019, she said that the crackdown had been a necessary response to the threat posed by Rohingya militants. Although Aung San Suu Kyi admitted that some soldiers may have used excessive force or violated international humanitarian law, she argued that this was an issue for Myanmar's justice system, not the international court, to handle. Amnesty International later referred to Aung San Suu Kyi's comments as "deliberate, deceitful and dangerous."

The Rohingya crisis revealed a side of Aung San Suu Kyi's character that had long been concealed from view. As the journalist Peter Popham has argued, Aung San Suu Kyi's mystique had originated from her absence. Confined for years by the junta to her family's crumbling home on Yangon's Inya Lake, with only fleeting connections to the outside world, she became a blank screen on which people abroad could project their hopes. Hidden from view were the prejudices and proclivities that Aung San Suu Kyi shared with many of her fellow ethnic Burmans, as well as a character that tended toward apparent rigidity and intolerance of criticism. By 2018, it was apparent that Western observers didn't know Aung San Suu Kyi as well as they once might have imagined.

Myanmar's failure to resolve its ethnic and religious tensions has international implications. As the United States and other Western countries have reimposed sanctions, Aung San Suu Kyi and her government have turned, just as the old military junta did, to China. Since 2017, Beijing has used its veto power in the UN Security Council to shield Myanmar from international scrutiny over the Rohingya crisis, while offering support in economic development and peace negotiations. In January, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid the first state visit to Myanmar by a Chinese leader in 19 years, promising infrastructure financing through the Belt and Road Initiative. China has taken advantage of Myanmar's growing alienation from the West to push forward projects that serve its own interests, such as creating a land corridor from China to the Indian Ocean that will reduce Chinese dependence on oil imports that come through the Strait of Malacca.

To be sure, China's gains in Myanmar remain fragile. Popular resentment of its investment and migrants is widespread among the public and within the political establishment. Yet with no immediate end in sight to Myanmar's structural problems, relations with the West are likely to remain difficult—and China is only too happy to play the role of the deep-pocketed, sympathetic partner.

UNFINISHED NATION

Have the hopes raised by the reform period been entirely dashed? For Thant Myint-U, any future progress will depend on structural change in both

institutions and perceptions. He argues that "the core strategy of the state since independence—of seeing Burma as a collection of peoples with the Burmese language and culture at the core—has failed, and will continue to fail."

Thant Myint-U argues that instead of immediate political liberalization, Myanmar should have focused on introducing "radical measures" to fight discrimination, such as creating a robust media, building inclusive state institutions, and setting up a welfare state. Going forward, he concludes that Myanmar needs "a new story that embraces its diversity, celebrates its natural environment, and aspires to a new way of life." If this recommendation seems nebulous, it is because it speaks to the depth and intractability of so many of Myanmar's challenges.

This prescription also suggests that Myanmar will continue to confound the West. Thant Myint-U's conclusion implies that Washington and other Western governments need to jettison any hope of a sudden liberal transformation, while eschewing the temptation to revert to the demonization and isolating policies of the past. Thant Myint-U is right to emphasize the need to encourage policies designed to address the issues of race and identity that lie at the root of Myanmar's crises. But the problem with such a recommendation is that patient engagement will be all the more difficult to sustain with a country that is once again a byword for oppression and human rights violations. Until Myanmar can transcend the racial and national myths that predate the nation's independence, its identity crisis will continue to exact a harrowing human cost.

Trials and Tribulations

A Response to "How Poverty Ends"

Jeffrey D. Sachs

In "How Poverty Ends" (January/February 2020), Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, two of last year's three Nobel laureates in economics, contend that "the true ingredients of persistent economic growth"—development of the sort that pulls people out of poverty and raises living standards across the board—"remain mysterious." They understand poverty as a big puzzle to be solved mainly through experiments, notably randomized controlled trials. I have admired and supported Banerjee and Duflo from the early days of their economics training. But I believe theirs is not the right way to understand the challenge of ending poverty. There are not huge mysteries about what is needed to end extreme poverty. Practical solutions are largely known and within reach; what poor countries need is not more economists performing randomized trials to confirm what experts already know but good governance and development assistance to cover financing gaps.

I stated my basic position 15 years ago in *The End of Poverty.* Most of the progress in ending extreme poverty, I argued, would come mainly through long-term economic growth that would result from good governance, investments in health and education, and the global spread of technological advances. Development aid would, however, be necessary to break poverty traps or accelerate progress in certain disadvantaged regions, especially in the deserts, tropical drylands, and distant inland regions of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. I argued that if the world's rich countries converted 0.7 percent of their respective GDPs into well-targeted development assistance, extreme poverty could be ended by 2025. (This recommendation was and is well within the realm of the feasible. Rich countries have promised 0.7 percent of GDP in aid on several occasions—for example, at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002.) I also noted that most seasoned development practitioners—including epidemiologists, agronomists, engineers, sociologists, educators, and others—believed that they already had the technologies and tools for success but needed incremental financing to bring those technologies to impoverished regions.

Few donor governments have followed the course that they promised and that I proposed. Today, rich countries are giving an average of just 0.31 percent of their GDPs per year in development aid—an annual shortfall of about $200 billion from my recommendation in 2005. As a result of this global shortfall, around five million children under the age of five will die from preventable causes in 2020, and around 260 million school-age children will be unable to go to school. Moreover, if the

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dearth of funds continues, the poorest countries will be unable to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which call for ending extreme poverty and hunger by 2030, among other things. The International Monetary Fund has found that the "fiscal gap" for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals comes to around $350 billion per year, or roughly 0.7 percent of the income of the rich world.

On a global scale, however, extreme poverty is clearly on the wane, largely because of the market-based diffusion of technologies, as I predicted in *The End of Poverty*. According to the World Bank, 35.9 percent of the global population was living in extreme poverty in 1990; this proportion declined to 10.0 percent in 2015, the last year for which the World Bank has published data. China has made the greatest strides, with extreme poverty falling from 66.2 percent in 1990 to 0.7 percent in 2015. And since 2000—supported by such organizations as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, which I helped create—sub-Saharan Africa, too, has made meaningful progress, with poverty in the region declining from the World Bank's estimate of 54.7 percent in 1990 to 41.4 percent in 2015.

But the challenges remain daunting. The need for more aid is particularly urgent in sub-Saharan Africa, where governments do not possess the domestic revenue bases needed to build infrastructure or provide vital public services such as health care and education. Although sub-Saharan countries may emerge from this morass on the basis of their own financing, such a process would be too slow and accompanied by much avoidable suffering: tens of millions of lives will be lost unnecessarily to disease and hundreds of millions of lives will be hindered by illiteracy and other extreme privations unless the developed world supplies these countries with increased assistance to ensure investment and vital public services.

Ultimately, development experts know a lot more about how to stimulate economic growth than Banerjee and Duflo seem to suggest. Poor countries can catch up by exporting labor- and resource-intensive products and using the proceeds to build human capital (skills and health) and infrastructure (roads, railways, and ports). This approach works well when countries are at peace, reasonably well governed, and close enough to sea-lanes and major markets to generate profitable business investments. Scholars of economic growth call this process "conditional convergence," and evidence for it abounds around the world. As an economic adviser to the Polish government in 1989, following the end of Soviet dominance, I listened to Poland's democratic leaders bemoan the inevitability of chronic economic crises and even hunger and civil war. Yet this pessimism made little sense because Poland's economic links with nearby western Europe could readily be restored. In Poland's case, the country's proximity to wealthier countries and ability to maintain open trade, property rights, social services, and a convertible currency—steps I recommended to the government—could promote convergent economic growth. According to data from the International Monetary Fund, Poland's GDP per capita in 1990 (as measured in international prices) stood at 32 percent of Germany's. By 2019, it had risen to 63 percent of Germany's.

PUT THE TESTERS TO THE TEST

One does not need to carry out an experiment to test the efficacy of the approach that has worked in East Asia, eastern Europe, and elsewhere. But Banerjee and Duflo suggest that only randomized trials can yield genuine insight into how to end poverty. Tellingly, they contend that it was only after a series of randomized trials, whose results were published in 2010, "found that charging people for bed nets, which was once thought to make the nets more likely to be used, in fact decreased their use" that "major development organizations [decided] to abandon fees" for the nets. This description is simply wrong. As the director of the World Health Organization's Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, I began advocating the mass free distribution of bed nets to the poor in 2000 based on the already voluminous evidence from the world's top malaria experts that the bed nets were highly effective and could save vast numbers of lives. In 2008, my advice on the mass free distribution of bed nets became official UN policy. The bed net study that Banerjee and Duflo reference was published two years later, after many breakthroughs in public policy and funding that were a decade in the making and after the distribution of around 400 million free nets between 2004 and 2010.

Randomized trials can, of course, be useful in certain situations. They are a potent method of evaluating new medical treatments and have helped prove the efficacy of many interventions, including insecticide-treated bed nets. Yet once practitioners and policymakers have enough information, they can and should move forward without endless new experiments, especially when millions of lives are at stake. Economists typically underestimate what is already known because they are not in direct contact with the real subject experts, such as the epidemiologists, parasitologists, agronomists, and civil engineers. Development-focused institutions urgently need cross-disciplinary teams, not experiments to test the known or the obvious.

Randomized trials are also often inappropriate when the issue is not the efficacy of a specific intervention (such as a medicine) but how to deliver a proven intervention in a local context. Management practices that work in one cultural or geographic environment might not work well in others. In such circumstances, the most effective ways to deliver proven interventions are often best identified through "learning by doing," work that takes into account practitioner expertise and the local context. This is also true when the policy challenge is to manage several proven interventions simultaneously. What's more, randomized trials should not delay the implementation of proven life-saving interventions. Speedy, forceful execution is undeniably important when lives are at risk. An overreliance on trials would ultimately leave development institutions paralyzed, exhausted, and stumbling.

History and geography have provided a vast wealth of development experience. Practitioners and policymakers know, or should know, how to tap into this knowledge. Cross-disciplinary research projects and teams are vital for harvesting and utilizing existing information. Before taking on an investigation, researchers have an obligation to canvass existing knowledge and to ensure that any proposed trial would truly be useful. To end

extreme poverty, governments, public and private organizations, and individuals must do much better in deploying the vast and remarkable information they already have within reach if they look diligently and skillfully.

Poor countries are today limited primarily by a lack of education, skills, and infrastructure; these need to be addressed through more development financing rather than randomized trials. The United States and many of the other rich countries remain unwilling to extend adequate help to the world's poor despite their vast wealth, extensive knowledge, and powerful tools. U.S. President Donald Trump's new budget calls for further cuts to development aid and for security spending roughly 25 times as great as the aid he proposes. This rejection of development aid, combined with a disdain for existing development knowledge, is the real cause of the continuing crisis of extreme poverty in the midst of great global wealth. It also accounts for the instability confronting U.S. interests in many parts of the impoverished world—instability that can be solved by decent jobs, schools, health-care workers, and full stomachs, not by U.S. troops or drones. To fight extreme poverty, we need to tap into the world's stores of practical wisdom and our own moral compasses. We have the knowledge and financial means to end extreme poverty by 2030, as called for in the Sustainable Development Goals, if we try.

The Two-State Devolution

Will Power Shifts in the Middle East Revive "Land for Peace"?

Nothing Lasts Forever

Tarek Osman

In "The Dream Palace of the Americans" (November/December 2019), Michael Doran reviews the past 70 years of Arab-Israeli conflict and concludes that Israel will not "give back at the negotiating table what it has taken on the battlefield" because power dynamics in the Middle East favor Israel over its rivals. This realpolitik view, he says, should guide the United States' policy in the region, which should proceed from the premise that there will be no two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But this conclusion ignores an inconvenient reality: power dynamics change. That is precisely why Israel has sometimes handed back territories that it took on the battlefield. In 1979, it returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt after a long negotiation process. In 2000, it withdrew from southern Lebanon after judging that the benefits of staying were not worth the costs that the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah could inflict. And in 2005, similar calculations, along with demographic pressures, led Israel to withdraw from Gaza.

At the heart of these withdrawals were a series of assessments by Israel that shifts in the relative power of its rivals required a change in strategy. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Egypt crossed the Suez Canal and rapidly moved into the Sinai Peninsula, demonstrating that it commanded modern military technologies and was able to innovatively deploy them in a time frame shorter than most Israeli experts had expected. Egypt's aggression challenged Israel's security doctrine, which since the 1967 war had been premised on military dominance, and proved that Israeli superiority was far from guaranteed. This major shift in the Middle East's strategic landscape paved the way for the 1978 Camp David peace accords and the Egyptian-Israeli "land for peace" deal, which has proved durable for over 40 years.

Today, Israel's technological, military, and economic power are significantly greater than those of its opponents combined. But what happened in the mid-1970s could happen again. Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah have built up serious offensive capabilities on Israel's northern borders. Hamas, taking notes from Hezbollah's experience, has been able to disrupt life in southern Israel. If those actors were to enhance their cooperation and use increasingly accessible technologies, such as missiles with cyber-capabilities, they could bridge the power differential with Israel. Such an alliance would not aim to defeat Israel but instead strive to increase the cost it would bear in any confrontation with the coalition's members. These changes could alter Israel's security calculus.

Even if this possibility seems remote, the fact remains that successful societies should not base their security doctrines

on their presumed perpetual ability to control others. In Israel, it took an experienced soldier with a strategic vision, Yitzhak Rabin, to see this. His insight was that Israel cannot—and does not want to—permanently control a large population that seeks independence. By the time he became Israel's prime minister for a second term, in 1992, Rabin saw that Israel's long-term security required a viable Palestinian state, albeit one that would pose no threat to Israel. And he understood that "land for peace" was the only workable formula. (Rabin was attacked on several fronts for the talks that emerged from that insight, but ultimately, it was an ultranationalist Israeli who killed Rabin in 1995.)

Doran's essay also includes several mischaracterizations. For example, he presents the 1967 Six-Day War as a struggle between Soviet-backed Arab states and Israel, with the United States as a mere observer. In fact, the United States had previously decided to support Israel, particularly against the Arab nationalist movements gaining force at the time, and Washington was intimately involved in Israel's preparation for and execution of the war. Doran also errs in accusing the Arab states of distorting the meaning of UN Security Council Resolution 242. The resolution called on Israel to withdraw "from territories occupied" in the 1967 war—using a phrase that Doran claims was "deliberately ambiguous." The Arab states, he writes, later insisted that the resolution required Israel to withdraw from all those territories, even though the Americans made sure that the words "all of the" did not appear in what Doran calls "the official text." But the Arabs' position was based on the French version of the resolution, which clearly demands that Israel withdraw from all the territories it occupied during the war. According to the UN Charter, both versions have equal legal weight; the French text is no less official than the English one.

Doran lauds the Trump administration for "playing power politics rather than trying to move the world beyond them" and for "challenging people's illusions" about the Middle East. But if the administration's ideas about the region resemble Doran's, then it will merely be acting on another set of illusions.

TAREK OSMAN is the author of ***Islamism: A History of Political Islam From the Fall of the Ottoman Empire to the Rise of ISIS***.

Doran Replies

I argued that the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as traditionally envisioned, is unrealistic and that the Trump administration is wise to adjust U.S. policy accordingly. Tarek Osman responds by asserting that, although it may seem unrealistic today, "power dynamics change."

The question, however, is not whether power dynamics might change in the future but whether they are likely to do so. In this case, they are not. For the two-state solution to become viable, Hamas must collapse, Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank must craft a shared vision of the future, and then they must march in lockstep toward a compromise with Israel. The number of stars that must align for this vision to become reality is too great to count.

Yet for a quarter century, U.S. leaders have stubbornly insisted on treating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as if it were ripe for settlement. Between 1993 and 2017, three presidents and dozens of their senior aides invested thousands of hours in pursuit of a permanent peace agreement. No other diplomatic goal has received this level of sustained attention across administrations. The meager fruits of this work do not justify the massive investment.

In support of his belief that the two-state solution is within reach, Osman invokes the memory of Yitzhak Rabin. A seasoned military man and political leader, Rabin was no starry-eyed peacemaker, and yet he was still ready to make painful compromises. Osman's depiction of Rabin echoes that presented by former U.S. President Bill Clinton, who often laments that were it not for Rabin's assassination, the Israelis and the Palestinians would have signed a peace agreement.

This is a saccharine myth that ignores the chasm between Rabin's and Clinton's positions. The vision Rabin pursued was not compatible with the parameters Clinton presented to negotiators in 2000, which proposed a Palestinian state in 94 to 96 percent of the West Bank and Palestinian sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and East Jerusalem. In a speech made before the Knesset a month before his assassination, Rabin described the Palestinian entity that he expected to emerge from the Oslo accords. It would be, he explained, "less than a state." It would accept Israeli control over the Jordan Valley and a unified Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty. Rabin's vision was, on the other hand, far more compatible with the so-called deal of the century—the peace plan that the Trump administration recently announced. And President Donald Trump's proposal reflects a broad consensus in Israeli politics: both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his rival Benny Gantz have applauded the deal.

Osman also devotes much effort to validating the Arab interpretation of Resolution 242, namely, that Israel must withdraw from all the territory it occupied after the 1967 war. Osman's points on this subject are entirely academic. No U.S. administration has ever accepted that interpretation of the resolution. The American and British drafters of it regarded the English-language text as the definitive version, and they took pains to ensure that it supported their preferred outcome—a withdrawal of Israeli forces from only some of the occupied territories, and only after Israel's neighbors recognized its new borders. The American architects saw "land for peace" as a way of compelling Israel's enemies to compromise. President Richard Nixon and his adviser Henry Kissinger developed "land for peace" into a coherent doctrine, but President Jimmy Carter subsequently turned it on its head, fashioning it into a tool for forcing concessions from Israel rather than from its neighbors.

The Oslo accords used Carter's approach as a template. But Oslo was born at a unique point in time—the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union—when the laws of power politics seemed suspended and miracles seemed possible. No one would claim that we are living in such a moment now. Nevertheless, what became known as the Clinton Parameters continued to drive American policy until the advent of the Trump administration.

Osman is right that power dynamics change, but in the last 25 years in the Middle East, they have changed mostly for the worse. Washington has seen the rise of Iran, the disintegration of Arab states, the advent of jihadism, the reemergence of Russia as a spoiler, and the deterioration of U.S.-Turkish relations. In the face of these troubling developments, the United States has become increasingly ambivalent about its leadership role in the region.

But not all changes have been negative. Israel has emerged as an economic powerhouse, especially in its high-tech sector, and it has developed an unprecedented closeness with the Gulf states. More than ever before, Washington's interests lie in building Israeli power to shore up the battered U.S. regional security structure, not in tearing it down in the pursuit of a peace fantasy.

In this context, it is the responsibility of Palestinian leaders, whose politics remain riddled with irredentism, to prove that their nationalism can promote international peace and stability. Trump's plan reflects this new reality. It returns to the original understanding of "land for peace" and to the Nixonian idea of how to fashion a successful Middle East strategy. If they desire American partnership and assistance, the onus is once again on Israel's rivals to demonstrate that their aspirations serve the United States' interests.

Recent Books

Political and Legal

G. John Ikenberry

Exit From Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order
BY ALEXANDER COOLEY AND DANIEL NEXON. Oxford University Press, 2020, 304 pp.

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States built and presided over a liberal hegemonic order, which now seems to be unraveling. In this important book, Cooley and Nexon provide one of the best guides to understanding how global orders rise and fall. The United States' postwar effort to create an international order—what the authors describe as an "ecosystem"—that was friendly to liberal democracies led Washington to emphasize open markets, multilateral cooperation, and liberal values, giving its hegemony a "liberal internationalist" cast. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the United States gained "patronage monopoly": it was left as the only state with an existing framework for ordering international relations. Other states had few options but to integrate into Washington's grand liberal ecosystem. The authors' key insight is that all of this has now changed. With the rise of China and Russia, countries around the world have alternative suppliers of development assistance, military security, and public goods—in effect, countries now have "exit options" from U.S. hegemony. Beyond the illiberal order building of China and Russia, the exit from U.S. hegemony occurs primarily through "bottom-up" processes in which nongovernmental organizations, transnational political movements, and non-Western international organizations create geopolitical "niches" in which countries can escape the dominance of the United States.

The Return of Great Power Rivalry
BY MATTHEW KROENIG. Oxford University Press, 2020, 304 pp.

Alexis de Tocqueville famously argued that democracies were "decidedly inferior" to autocratic states in the conduct of foreign affairs. Other thinkers, including Herodotus, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and some modern liberal theorists, have insisted that, on the contrary, democracies have an advantage over nondemocracies. In this timely return to an old debate, Kroenig makes the case that democratic states tend to "do better" than other types of states in great-power rivalries. Democracies have greater capacities for generating long-term economic growth, borrowing capital, building alliances, making international agreements, and sustaining stable and legitimate rule. Kroenig bundles these familiar arguments together and sets out on a fast-paced historical journey through the classic cases of competition between democratic great powers and autocratic ones: from Athens and Sparta, to medieval Venice and its rivals, to the United Kingdom and Germany in the twentieth century, and finally to the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Kroenig does not claim that democracies

always prevail in war or succeed in building hegemony, but he does insist that democratic states can "punch above their weight." The value of the book lies in framing an important question for today: In the United States' growing competition with China, will its democracy be an advantage or a hindrance?

Reluctant Warriors: Germany, Japan, and Their U.S. Alliance Dilemma
BY ALEXANDRA SAKAKI, HANNS W. MAULL, KERSTIN LUKNER, ELLIS S. KRAUSS, AND THOMAS U. BERGER. Brookings Institution Press, 2019, 314 pp.

Germany and Japan have benefited from the U.S.-led postwar order, rising to the top of the developed world as what the authors of this book call "civilian great powers" within the U.S.-led alliance system. The United States, too, has been lucky to have Germany and Japan as stable and cooperative partners, anchoring its global leadership position in Europe and Asia. Since the end of the Cold War, both countries have moved closer to involvement in U.S. military interventions despite their postwar antimilitaristic legal and cultural norms. But as the authors cogently detail, these mutually beneficial ties have long been laced with frustrations. As early as the 1970s, Washington began criticizing Germany and Japan for free-riding and urging them to expand their defense spending and international military roles. The Trump administration now reiterates these demands, in blunter terms. The authors argue that Germany and Japan will continue to manage these tensions, inching just enough toward meeting U.S. demands to maintain ties. But that delicate balancing act will fall apart if the United States acts erratically and disrupts relations.

Toward a Theory of Peace: The Role of Moral Beliefs
BY RANDALL CAROLINE WATSON FORSBERG. EDITED BY MATTHEW EVANGELISTA AND NETA C. CRAWFORD. Cornell University Press, 2019, 270 pp.

Forsberg, an antinuclear activist and defense policy expert who died in 2007, is most famous as a leader of the "nuclear freeze" campaign of the 1980s. As revealed by this remarkable book, the text of which comes from her 1997 doctoral dissertation, Forsberg was also a thoughtful theorist of peace studies and political change. War in world history, Forsberg claims, can be seen as "socially sanctioned large scale group violence," a class of human behavior akin to human sacrifice, cannibalism, slavery, and lethal punishment. She observes that most people are revolted by these forms of violence, and so she delves deeply into psychology, anthropology, and history to see how and under what conditions societies reach moral judgments about certain kinds of violence. She believed that popular movements could transform people's moral beliefs about war and weapons. Her thesis is a dazzling intellectual tour de force with a sobering conclusion: moral revolutions take many lifetimes to unfold, requiring centuries of dedication and struggle.

Culture and Order in World Politics
EDITED BY ANDREW PHILLIPS AND CHRISTIAN REUS-SMIT.
Cambridge University Press, 2020, 440 pp.

This persuasive collection of essays makes the case that constructing order in international relations is in large part a matter of managing cultural diversity. In recent centuries, building international or regional orders over sets of fluid, shifting cultures has entailed establishing various regimes, from imperial realms (such as the Chinese and Ottoman empires) to the more familiar liberal hegemony of the United States after World War II. Problems arise when these overarching orders favor some cultural identities over others, which can generate new cultural movements that aim to overthrow the order, from Uighur resistance to Han Chinese hegemony in Xinjiang to populist reactions to liberal internationalism in Western countries. The authors generally agree that a legitimate international order must tolerate cultural diversity, but they disagree over the extent to which the current international order—based on Western liberal norms—actually does so. This stimulating volume reveals an important tension in world politics today: even as the institutions that uphold the current one express respect for cultural difference, fractious cultural forces—including within the West—threaten to topple it.

JOHN M. OWEN IV

Economic, Social, and Environmental

Richard N. Cooper

Paying for Pollution: Why a Carbon Tax Is Good for America
BY GILBERT E. METCALF. Oxford University Press, 2019, 200 pp.

If governments hope to slow global warming and rising sea levels, they must reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide. Metcalf, an economist and former U.S. Treasury official, argues that the best way to do that is to levy a tax on carbon emissions. Such a tax would be far superior, in his view, to both strenuous new regulations on carbon emissions (although some additional regulations will be needed) and cap and trade, a program in which companies are given emission allowances and permitted to sell what they do not use to companies that exceed their limits. Any new tax produces distributional concerns. Metcalf would prefer to return the substantial revenues generated by a carbon tax to the taxpaying public, perhaps by reducing other taxes. The book doubles as a primer on public taxation. Metcalf draws the majority of his examples from the United States, but his argument applies to most other countries, as well.

More: A History of the World Economy From the Iron Age to the Information Age
BY PHILIP COGGAN. PublicAffairs, 2020, 496 pp.

Coggan, a columnist at *The Economist*, ably covers the history of the world economy in under 500 pages. Much of the book charts the evolution of agriculture—after all, most human beings in recent millennia have been farmers—tracing the development of new and better edible plants, as well as pivotal inventions such as the stirrup, the iron plow, and the horse collar. With the emergence of energy from fossil fuels such as coal and oil, the industrializing West greatly improved production and raised standards of living (albeit at the cost of tremendous pollution). The rest of the world eventually followed suit. As a result, the human population exploded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, because of better nutrition and health care. But Malthusian predictions of overpopulation have not been borne out: fertility rates gradually declined in many parts of the world even as living standards improved. Coggan also pays due attention to the historical importance of economies outside the West—China, India, and Islamic empires—and their many contributions to Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire.

The Political Economy of International Trade
BY KEN HEYDON. Polity Press, 2019, 240 pp.

In recent years, the Trump administration has attacked and hobbled the World Trade Organization. Heydon, a former Australian trade official, provides a useful description and analysis of the predicament of the WTO, delving into how countries have had to negotiate trade agreements outside the multilateral framework of the organization. Heydon analyzes 21 case studies drawn from many countries that explain how the world trade system has worked (or failed). The book serves as a well-written introduction to the world trading system as it actually exists today and is also a good reference for readers who want to pursue more granular topics, such as trade in intellectual property or national support for agriculture.

Golden Rice: The Imperiled Birth of a GMO Superfood
BY ED REGIS. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019, 256 pp.

Millions of people are blinded or die every year from diets low in nutrition. This fine and informative book explores one effort to find a remedy for vitamin deficiency. With private financing from the United States, European scientists began three decades ago to try to breed a strain of genetically modified rice that contains beta carotene, a precursor to vitamin A. By 2002, they had succeeded, creating a variety known as "golden rice" thanks to its color. But nearly 20 years later, only Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States—whose populations already have adequate levels of vitamin A in their diets—have allowed the release of this rice. Many official obstacles sit in the way of the spread of golden rice, with even approval for field trials difficult to secure. Regis shows that although nongovernmental organizations and activist

groups such as Greenpeace have generated much emotional opposition to genetically modified organisms, it is government regulations and the glacial pace of plant breeding that have delayed the introduction of golden rice to the parts of the world where it would be most beneficial.

Finance and Security: Global Vulnerabilities, Threats, and Responses
BY MARTIN S. NAVIAS. Hurst, 2019, 310 pp.

Globalization has encouraged the movement of capital across borders in both legal and illicit ways. This detailed work by a London-based lawyer studies the growth of illegal financial activities across borders, including the money laundering of drug dealers, human traffickers, and terrorist financers. Governments, separately and in cooperation, have tried to clamp down on these cross-border financial transfers in (sometimes reluctant) private partnership with the major global banks. In other cases, governments—acting both unilaterally and multilaterally—have imposed sanctions on foreign individuals, organizations, and even other governments. The United States, for instance, maintained financial sanctions on entities in 12 countries and territories at the time of this writing. Navias parses the thicket of laws and regulations in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union that regulate financial transactions, showing the tensions and even conflicts between these legal regimes. This is a necessary handbook for anyone doing international business who wants to stay within the law.

Military, Scientific, and Technological

Lawrence D. Freedman

On Obedience: Contrasting Philosophies for the Military, Citizenry, and Community
BY PAULINE SHANKS KAURIN. Naval Institute Press, 2020, 288 pp.

As commander in chief, U.S. President Donald Trump has disrupted civil-military relations, showing total indifference to established chains of command and emphasizing personal loyalty over constitutional duty. In this timely and thoughtful book, Kaurin doesn't address Trump directly but provides an invaluable guide for situations in which demands for obedience conflict with the imperatives of conscience. How should military personnel and ordinary citizens respond to troubling orders or manage the competing claims of loyalty to the group and belonging in a broader society? Through chapters considering the virtue of obedience, discipline and loyalty, and the use of judgment and discretion, she argues that individuals faced with demands to obey should adopt a "critical" stance that keeps the wider context in view while allowing them to act in morally and practically sustainable ways. She concludes by testing her approach in a number of hypothetical scenarios, including receiving orders to launch a nuclear strike, dealing with a toxic company commander, and coping with the tensions between a mission's goals and a senior commander's orders.

Conspiring With the Enemy: The Ethic of Cooperation in Warfare
BY YVONNE CHIU. Columbia University Press, 2019, 360 pp.

In a book full of insight and provocation, Chiu explores the ways that enemies at war can cooperate. These moments of collaboration between foes have included upholding standards of fairness in combat; establishing protections for noncombatants and prisoners, as required by the Geneva Conventions; and working together to bring fighting to an end. Such actions relate to the broader moral complexity of combat: for example, doctors at a field hospital may try but fail to save one of their own and then successfully treat the enemy solider responsible for their colleague's death. And even as the killing proceeds—and despite rhetorical claims that victory depends on uncompromising ruthlessness—enemies can still set boundaries that preserve mutual respect and a shared sense of humanity. When unsure of a war's purpose and strategic rationale, those on the frontlines make their own accommodations. In the trenches of World War I, soldiers often saw their own overzealous superior officers as more of a menace than the enemy.

Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War
BY JASON LYALL. Princeton University Press, 2020, 528 pp.

Like all good political science propositions, Lyall's claim that armed forces whose composition reflects severe inequalities between ethnic groups will fare far worse in battle than those whose composition reflects more inclusive social and political structures seems obvious once stated. But it may well now stand as one of the best-established contentions in the field, supported not only by Lyall's carefully constructed statistical analysis but also by his series of fascinating case studies that cover a range of encounters, some long forgotten, to show how the proposition works in practice. For instance, Lyall dips into the nineteenth-century wars between Russia and Kokand (now part of Uzbekistan) and between Spain and Morocco to demonstrate that schisms within Kokand's and Morocco's armies led to their defeat. Lyall's book represents a welcome mingling of the traditions of quantitative and qualitative political science. He sets a rigorous and imaginative methodological standard that others will struggle to match, in the process raising questions, perhaps unintentionally, about the value of prior quantitative research that has drawn from inferior databases.

Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare
BY THOMAS RID. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020, 528 pp.

Soon after the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik regime used misinformation to confuse its opponents. With word of a faux anti-Bolshevik conspiracy within Russia, the Soviets forged links with real anti-Bolsheviks abroad, persuading them that encouraging developments in Russia would dampen the need for outside intervention. Although the United States was not above using such "active measures" during the Cold War, the Soviet Union and its satellite states, such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany, were more accomplished in their design of them: they planted stories to convince the

United States' European allies of the threat posed by Washington's imperialist warmongering and reckless preparations for nuclear war. By the time the Cold War ended, such measures had become almost routine. Moscow has revived them in recent years as Russian relations with the West have become more hostile, with the added impetus and reach of social media. Rid concludes this fascinating and well-researched history by warning of the need to take the challenge of misinformation seriously while being careful to not exaggerate its effects.

Stealth: The Secret Contest to Invent Invisible Aircraft
BY PETER WESTWICK. Oxford University Press, 2020, 272 pp.

In 1974, the Pentagon held a competition to see if aerospace companies could develop an aircraft that could not be detected by radar. Creating stealth aircraft required reducing the likelihood that a plane would be detected by radar by a factor of 10,000. Two companies competed successfully, and each ended up with a major stealth program. Lockheed got the F-117 fighter, and Northrop, the B-2 bomber. Westwick does a good job of explaining the engineering principles at work, the competitive instinct of the engineers—which motivated them more than did a patriotic desire to gain the upper hand over the Soviet Union—and the advantages of a close partnership between the private sector and the state. This narrative presents a positive story of technological advance and the people who made it possible, although Westwick does raise questions about the expense of the programs, given that so few B-2 bombers were built, such as, "What targets were worth risking $2 billion to hit?"

The United States

Jessica T. Mathews

How to Make Love to a Despot: An Alternative Foreign Policy for the Twenty-first Century
BY STEPHEN D. KRASNER. Liveright, 2020, 336 pp.

The Inevitability of Tragedy: Henry Kissinger and His World
BY BARRY GEWEN. Norton, 2020, 480 pp.

These two volumes are among a coming tidal wave of books that debate what the United States' strategic posture should be now that its global primacy seems to have run its course. Krasner argues that because prosperous, democratic nations are exceptions in international politics, the United States would protect itself better and make the world safer if it adopted policies "acceptable to despotic rulers," coming to terms with the "good-enough governance" of nondemocratic governments instead of trying to consolidate democracy around the world. His detailed list of what counts as good enough leaves no doubt that he is calling for a dramatic departure from current policy. Good-enough governments are those that are able to maintain order and a moderate level of economic growth and uphold rule by law (if not necessarily the rule of law). Washington would accept that elections in many countries are a sham and that it is hard to protect human rights from abroad. Because weak states can cause such great harm to others (from terrorism, pandemics, proliferation,

refugee flows, and other transnational threats), their capacity to govern is more important than the finer points of democracy. Good enough, it seems, is a very low bar. Krasner's call for greater humility in U.S. foreign policy is welcome, but many will find it hard to discern how such a policy is compatible with American values.

Gewen, an editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, has written a sterling, highly readable intellectual biography of Henry Kissinger. Although the former U.S. secretary of state has been out of office for more than 40 years, Gewen convincingly argues that a full appreciation of Kissinger's realist philosophy is now more important than ever, as the United States rethinks its role in the world. The main topics are familiar: the centrality of the national interest and the balance of power and the importance of a deep understanding of and respect for others' national interests and therefore of diplomatic compromise. But the profound pessimism of Kissinger's view of history and his deep ambivalence about democracy—forged by a childhood under Nazism—will be new to many readers. The book does not attempt to render a judgment on Kissinger's policies in government and his abiding influence thereafter. Gewen is obviously an admirer, but he is also unflinching in portraying Kissinger's deviousness, thin skin, and overweening ambition.

The Power Worshippers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism
BY KATHERINE STEWART.
Bloomsbury, 2020, 352 pp.

Based on more than a decade of investigative reporting, Stewart conducts a chilling exploration of an American political movement that she dubs "Christian nationalism" because of its claim of returning to the founders' core belief—a false claim, of course—that the United States was a Christian nation. The movement began in the late 1970s, latching on to abortion as a useful hot-button issue. But contrary to its conventional portrayal as a social or cultural phenomenon, Stewart insists that the movement is an ambitious political effort to take over every element of government with the aim of elevating the Bible (in cherry-picked form) over the Constitution as the chief source of governmental legitimacy. Christian nationalism represents a radical rejection of the founders' core belief in the separation of church and state. Made up of a coalition of pastoral, advocacy, and activist groups, the movement also has international ambitions. Its adherents are particularly fond of autocrats, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin, who are able to fuse church and state. Much of what Stewart recounts would seem incredible were it not presented through extensive quotations from speeches by, documents of, and conversations with movement leaders.

The Abandonment of the West: The History of an Idea in American Foreign Policy
BY MICHAEL KIMMAGE. Basic Books, 2020, 384 pp.

The fall of the Berlin Wall exposed the failures of Soviet communism. Now, writes Kimmage, "it is a wavering West that is on trial." Defending the West—which he defines as a geopolitical and cultural concept rather than a geographic place—has been the animating core of U.S. foreign policy since the

beginning of the twentieth century. Kimmage traces the rise of the concept in the first half of the century and then its gradual decline under criticism from both the left (which saw the paradigm as too white and too imperial) and the right (which saw it as too multinational), through to its evaporation after the end of the Cold War. Presidents once routinely touted the West in their speeches, and universities required introductory courses in Western civilization. No more. Kimmage outlines the costs of this loss: the idea had provided a reason for international engagement, a compass for dealing with authoritarian challenges from states such as China and Russia, and a broader guiding principle for U.S. foreign policy.

Running Against the Devil: A Plot to Save America From Trump—and Democrats From Themselves
BY RICK WILSON. Crown Forum, 2020, 352 pp.

Snappy, breezy, entertaining, passionate, and full of unnecessary obscenity, this book implores Democrats not to throw away the 2020 presidential election, telling them exactly what to do and what not to. Wilson, a former Republican political consultant, has the zeal of a convert. Some of his advice is elementary: for example, only 15 swing states will matter in the general election. Other admonitions are more compelling. With Donald Trump as the incumbent, the election will be a referendum on his presidency. But because Trump practices "pure, unadulterated opportunistic politics," Democrats will have to beat him at his own game. They should refuse to feed Trump issues that he can use against them (including socialism, reparations for slavery, and the Green New Deal). Instead, Democrats should engage in "shallow, content-free campaigning," concentrating on a unifying message of common purpose and traditional values. Trump will stop at nothing to avoid a loss, so Democrats must be prepared to respond to the worst attacks they can imagine. A brisk read, the book delivers sobering insights that must be heeded before the Democrats choose their nominee.

Western Europe

Andrew Moravcsik

Germany: A Nation in Its Time—Before, During, and After Nationalism, 1500–2000
BY HELMUT WALSER SMITH. Liveright, 2020, 608 pp.

This magisterial study addresses the central question in modern German history: How and why did the country embrace a racial and cultural nationalism that ultimately led to war and genocide? Smith denies that German nationalism is, as some historians argue, a single doctrine, let alone an intrinsically aggressive one. To support this thesis, Smith provides a sweeping history beginning in 1500, when Germany was an amalgam of regions, cities, and principalities. For most of the next four centuries, as Germany's sense of cultural coherence grew, it remained a relatively peaceful region with a benign sense of

national identity that neither excluded domestic minorities nor threatened external neighbors. Even in the nineteenth century, as a nationalist project to unite Germany took hold, the country remained relatively peaceful, with a few brief, if notable, exceptions, such as the Franco-Prussian War. And for the last 75 years, Germans have developed what Smith describes as a "compassionate, empathetic realism about belonging." The "nationalist age," from 1914 to 1945, when the politics of identity turned horribly violent, is thus an exception. Smith describes its excesses—from the slaughter on the eastern front to the Holocaust—in moving detail, but he seems, like many historians before him, somewhat baffled by their ultimate cause.

Two Blankets, Three Sheets
BY RODAAN AL GALIDI. World Editions, 2020, 400 pp.

The author of this best-selling novel, translated from the Dutch, emigrated in 1998 from Iraq to the Netherlands to avoid military service. He then spent nine years in a Dutch government-run housing center as an undocumented asylum seeker. He was denied citizenship but taught himself Dutch and published a book in 2009 that was awarded the EU Prize for Literature. His newest novel is an account, by turns comic and heart-rending, of an applicant's interaction with the asylum apparatus in the Netherlands. The asylum seeker arrives a trusting person, assuming that acceptance is just around the corner. Officials welcome him with two blankets and three sheets and tell him that he must constantly report those items' location—a first hint that he is actually stuck in a Kafkaesque world of seemingly arbitrary legalistic procedures, in which truth is subject to bureaucratic whimsy. Day to day, he is treated much like a Victorian schoolboy, subject to petty humiliations and punishments. Some asylum seekers in Europe wait for decades for legal status, enduring a series of determinations designed to make asylum more difficult to obtain. No other book I have read makes the soul-destroying effects of European asylum procedures more vividly clear than this one.

Europe's Burden: Promoting Good Governance Across Borders
BY ALINA MUNGIU-PIPPIDI. Cambridge University Press, 2019, 344 pp.

European countries are unparalleled in their use of economic, cultural, legal, and other tools to peacefully project influence abroad. But critics often charge that Europeans do not do enough to raise standards of governance elsewhere—particularly in their own neighborhood. In this wide-ranging book, a political scientist argues that European efforts to use nonmilitary means to promote the rule of law and good governance outside the EU—in particular, to quash corruption—have not been hugely successful. She cites examples from a dozen countries from Egypt to Moldova. Yet one wonders if such criticism, backed by calls for a more "comprehensive" anticorruption policy, hold the EU to an unrealistic standard. After all, few efforts to promote democracy and good government are successful. It seems incontrovertible that EU investment,

trade, and diplomatic support made all the difference in at least three recent cases. Without such aid, Ukraine would almost certainly have collapsed, Kosovo would be dysfunctional, and Tunisia would have made less progress than it has. Perhaps Europeans should be more modest, as many development analysts counsel, and learn to accept "good enough" governance.

Island Stories: An Unconventional History of Britain
BY DAVID REYNOLDS. Basic Books, 2020, 304 pp.

One of the more amusing aspects of Brexit has been the tendency of Conservative Party leaders in the United Kingdom to analogize leaving the EU to heroic past triumphs, comparing Brexit to the waging of World War II, for instance, or to the famous British victories at Agincourt in 1415 and Waterloo in 1815. Many non-Britons (and many Britons, as well) find such comparisons risible. Reynolds, a historian, seeks to explain why some of his compatriots view the United Kingdom in this grandiose way. Although he has written a number of weighty books on twentieth-century history, this volume—lively, slender, and timely—is more reminiscent of his historical documentaries for BBC television. His pithy summaries of British experiences of and beliefs about empire and decline demonstrate why the fanciful Brexit analogies are misguided. The reader is left to wonder, however, why these narratives remain persuasive to Britons in a way that has no parallel in the rest of Europe.

A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe
BY GIULIANA CHAMEDES. Harvard University Press, 2019, 440 pp.

This pathbreaking book offers the first serious historical account of the modern diplomacy of the Catholic Church—an organization that for the first three-quarters of the twentieth century was more powerful than any other nonstate actor. The church, which viewed democracy with suspicion, began its international activities in 1917 with systematic opposition to Wilsonian liberalism and Soviet communism. In the interwar period, it signed "concordats" with any government—including fascist ones in Germany, Italy, and Spain, and also the newly independent Baltic states—that promised to deepen Catholic influence in family law (opposing divorce and, later, abortion), education (creating space for religious teaching), and civil society (where religious symbols would remain part of civic life) and to provide state support for the church. Famously, the church remained silent on the persecution and extermination of the Jews during World War II. After the war, the church became a consistent bulwark against communism. This became particularly important after the war, when the church reconciled with democrats and promoted Christian democratic parties in Europe in order to bolster resistance to the influence of the Soviet Union. The church took a more conciliatory stance on decolonization, rightly sensing that the developing world might be fertile ground for future expansion.

Is Europe Christian?
BY OLIVIER ROY. TRANSLATED BY CYNTHIA SCHOCH. Oxford University Press, 2020, 112 pp.

This book, widely discussed when it first appeared in French, critiques the notion that Europe is fundamentally Christian, an idea in vogue in far-right populist rhetoric. The author is a specialist in Islamic culture but also—tellingly, given the book's short length, thin documentation, and occasional factual lapses—a celebrated French public intellectual. He grabbed headlines in the past for arguing, convincingly, that Islamist terrorism has little to do with Islam. Here, he effortlessly skewers the pieties surrounding the idea of a Christian Europe, insisting that the continent today is extremely secular and multicultural and that most right-wing nationalists ignore or reject Christian teachings on sex, abortion, and the role of women. Why have calls for a Christian Europe gained such traction? His provocative answer is that since the 1960s, a "totalitarian" left has foisted on European countries a political correctness comprised of libertarianism, hedonism, and the marginalization of the church. Right-wing populists appeal to Christianity to rebel against this discourse. But since they are not actually religious, they wind up simply reinforcing the "dechristianization" of Europe by draining meaning from the symbols of Christianity. Unfortunately, the book ends with just a single paragraph on how to rebalance secular and religious values.

Western Hemisphere

Richard Feinberg

U.S. Hegemony and the Americas: Power and Economic Statecraft in International Relations
BY ARTURO SANTA-CRUZ. Routledge, 2019, 238 pp.

Santa-Cruz argues that since the 1970s, the United States has successfully preserved its core interests in Latin America through "thick" economic statecraft, a sophisticated approach that embeds liberal values, mutual gains, and strategic restraint in commercial diplomacy. With some regrettable exceptions—including supporting the brutal overthrow of a progressive government in Chile in 1973 and fruitlessly twisting arms to corral support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq—the United States has eschewed heavy-handed unilateralism in the Americas. In separate chapters on Canada, Mexico, and Central and South America, Santa-Cruz pushes back against the notion that U.S. influence has steadily declined in the Western Hemisphere but declines to pin down the indicators or key measurements of Washington's sway. Santa-Cruz denounces U.S. President Donald Trump's raw exercise of coercive power as counterproductive and badly, perhaps irreparably, damaging to the United States' reputation and legitimacy. Integrating international relations theory and detailed histories, this book is an ambitious, landmark contribution against which future studies of inter-American relations will be judged.

El Norte: The Epic and Forgotten Story of Hispanic North America
BY CARRIE GIBSON. Grove Atlantic, 2019, 576 pp.

A scholar and journalist, Gibson traversed the United States in search of monuments and other traces of Hispanic influence on U.S. history and culture. The sweeping journey of the book stretches from the arrival of Columbus to the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, and it intends to reinsert the Hispanic past into the memories and imaginations of contemporary Americans. The tragedies and injustices are countless. Gibson unearths the deep roots of white supremacy, which was critical to justifying the demolition of indigenous communities, the enslavement of Africans, the conquest of Mexico, the land grabs from the Spanish in California, and a succession of U.S. military interventions in the Caribbean. But Gibson avoids dogma, celebrating the enduring contributions of Hispanic peoples to American life in her visits to Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Tucson, and her hometown of Dalton, Georgia. "In a shared Anglo-Hispanic popular culture, who or what is 'Hispanic' remains unresolved," she observes. The story she tells "is not a separate history of outsiders or interlopers, but one that is central to how the United States has developed and will continue to develop."

Escape From Vichy: The Refugee Exodus to the French Caribbean
BY ERIC T. JENNINGS. Harvard University Press, 2018, 320 pp.

Nearly the New World: The British West Indies and the Flight From Nazism, 1933–1945
BY JOANNA NEWMAN. Berghahn Books, 2019, 320 pp.

As global migration flows surge, there is renewed interest in the histories of previously displaced populations. When the Nazis tightened their grip on Europe, and the United Kingdom and the United States slammed shut their doors, desperate refugees turned to less common destinations, including the British and French colonies of the Caribbean. Two highly competent studies recount the harrowing journeys of those European refugees lucky enough to secure safe havens in distant tropical destinations.

For a brief period during the early 1940s, Vichy France allowed refugees—mostly German Jews, anti-Nazi activists, and defeated Spanish Republicans—passage on cargo ships sailing from Marseille via Casablanca to the French colony of Martinique. They still had to overcome Kafkaesque hurdles in the Vichy bureaucracy and anti-immigrant attitudes among the authorities in Martinique. Expertly analyzing archives and illustrative case studies, Jennings finds that success required good luck, financial resources, personal connections, courage, and determination. For most of these refugees, Martinique was a transit point for eventual resettlement in the United States or elsewhere in the Americas. Particularly fascinating is Jennings's sketch of a constellation of celebrity refugees that included the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the surrealist André Breton, the Russian revolutionary Victor Serge, and the

Afro-Cuban cubist painter Wifredo Lam. Once in Martinique, these figures encountered Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, early advocates of black pride, opening new horizons that, Jennings suggests, "built a stepping-stone of postwar liberation ideology."

Newman's father was a child refugee from Germany, arriving in the United Kingdom in 1937. She seeks "to explain rather than cast blame" as she describes the conflicting priorities of the rulers of the British Empire during the tumultuous 1930s. The plight of asylum seekers barely registered in a time of economic depression, xenophobia, fears of instability in the colonies, and, eventually, the overwhelming imperatives of waging war. Nevertheless, the British West Indies offered temporary sanctuary to some 5,000 European refugees. These refugees often met with a "reluctant welcome" in the Caribbean; the West Indies was not a mythical haven of tolerance. Some Jewish immigrants prospered in their new island communities; most chose to move on when political conditions allowed.

Electrified Islands: The Road to E-Mobility in the Caribbean
BY LISA VISCIDI, NATE GRAHAM, MARCELINO MADRIGAL, MALAIKA MASSON, VERONICA R. PRADO, AND JUAN CRUZ MONTICELLI.
Inter-American Dialogue, Inter-American Development Bank, and the Organization of American States, 2019, 28 pp.

Finally, a good news story for the long-suffering islands of the Caribbean. The relatively small size of these islands makes them practical places to convert vehicles to run on batteries and to generate power for those vehicles from potentially abundant renewables such as energy from wind, the sun, and biomass. For too long, dependence on imported oil has contributed to crippling external debt levels, price inflation, and weak currencies in the region. Pairing electric vehicle deployment with an expansion of renewable energy could make Caribbean nations less vulnerable to the fluctuating price of oil, reduce transport and electricity costs, and drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions. Electric vehicles could also bolster resilience by storing energy that might otherwise be cut off during natural disasters. The authors of this snappy policy brief produce case studies of Barbados, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica, arguing that these islands' relatively small fleets of vehicles could be quickly electrified and that charging networks will not need to be as extensive in Caribbean nations as they would have to be in larger countries. The authors urge governments in the Caribbean to transform nature's potential into national progress.

Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Republics

Maria Lipman

Midnight in Chernobyl: The Untold Story of the World's Greatest Nuclear Disaster
BY ADAM HIGGINBOTHAM. Simon & Schuster, 2019, 560 pp.

Chernobyl: The History of a Nuclear Catastrophe
BY SERHII PLOKHY. Basic Books, 2018, 432 pp.

Manual for Survival: A Chernobyl Guide to the Future
BY KATE BROWN. Norton, 2019, 432 pp.

Three recent books examine the origins and fallout of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion in 1986. At the center of both Higginbotham's and Plokhy's books are minute-by-minute reconstructions of the world's worst nuclear accident and its immediate aftermath. The more detailed their accounts become, the more the two histories overlap. The two narratives feature many of the same protagonists: scientists, managers, engineers, firefighters, doctors, Communist Party functionaries, and government officials. They even use some of the same quotes. Both works begin with the preparation for the fatal test of Chernobyl's Unit 4 reactor, which led to the explosion. In both books, one encounters the initial obliviousness of local residents, with children playing outdoors, men fishing, and sunbathers marveling at how easy it was to get a tan that day, all while the radiation readings on the (very scarce) dosimeters were off the scale and terror-stricken nuclear experts feared the possibility of a true Armageddon of radioactive contamination reaching the Dnieper River and the oceans of the world. Both Higginbotham and Plokhy show how the communist leadership mobilized hundreds of thousands of "expendable" people to clear the damage caused by the catastrophe. They explain how the Soviet Union's enormous appetite for nuclear energy encouraged thrift over safety; the state ignored warnings about flaws in the reactor design and covered up information about preceding accidents.

The two books are, of course, not entirely identical. Readers interested in technology will appreciate Higginbotham's fascinating descriptions of how Soviet specialists solved the formidable technological challenges involved in the cleanup of the contaminated territory. He calls the sarcophagus installed over Unit 4 a "medieval fantasy of a prison to hold Satan himself," whose construction was a technical triumph in the face of horrifying conditions: Soviet officials had to measure each job not only in terms of the time it would require but also in terms of the number of individuals who would be "burnt."

Plokhy's book focuses more on political history. Its closing chapters explain how the antinuclear movement started by Ukrainian writers soon broke the bounds of the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's timid policy of openness and evolved as a Ukraine-wide eco-nationalist movement. In December 1991, five years after the Chernobyl catastrophe, Ukrainians overwhelmingly voted for independence.

The Soviet Union ceased to exist that month, but it took many more years before the Chernobyl nuclear plant was finally decommissioned.

Brown explores the legacy of the disaster, arguing convincingly that experts have underestimated the damage it inflicted in the following years on people in Ukraine and neighboring Belarus and Russia. International organizations, and especially the International Atomic Energy Agency, she contends, have consistently ignored evidence pointing to the deleterious effects on human health of chronic exposure to low-dose radiation. She rests her conviction that healthy people in the territories well beyond the "alienation zone" became ill soon after the disaster on the vast material collected by doctors in Belarus and Ukraine and on years of her own dogged research, including painstaking studies of those countries' health registry records. Working in national and provincial archives, she was often the first researcher to sign out long-neglected files. Traveling in the contaminated rural regions, she discovered that although government officials gave residents safety recommendations, they could not follow them for lack of appropriate resources. Residents were chronically exposed to low-dose radiation as they continued eating contaminated food and using water from wells, wood for cooking, and ashes and manure as fertilizer. Experts are fixated on the sheer levels of radiation that spread from the plant, but Brown argues that they too easily dismiss factors that encouraged the absorption of low doses of radiation, such as rural lifestyles, the types of soil in the area, and local food chains, all of which contributed to the development of chronic radiation syndrome. Experts claim that they still know little about the effects of low doses of radiation, but Brown is convinced that they simply do not want to see the facts.

Nikita Khrushchev's Journey Into America
BY LAWRENCE J. NELSON AND MATTHEW G. SCHOENBACHLER.
University Press of Kansas, 2019, 296 pp.

In 1959, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower controversially welcomed the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev for a jaunt around the United States—just three years earlier, the Soviet government had brutally crushed a revolution in Hungary. Khrushchev's improbable two-week visit did not change the course of the Cold War, nor do Nelson and Schoenbachler change the general understanding of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. Instead, the book presents a colorful chronicle of Khrushchev's tour and a lively portrait of the Soviet leader. A firm Marxist, Khrushchev never missed an opportunity to remind his hosts, whether on Wall Street or in Hollywood, that communism was on the right side of history and that capitalism was doomed. He bragged incessantly about Soviet triumphs in space and reacted rudely, sometimes exploding in anger, whenever he detected condescension or disrespect. When not provoked, he could be open and genial, charming and funny, and always anxious to connect with "ordinary Americans." Unwilling to admit the United States' economic or technological superiority, he showed curiosity and admiration for things that were new to him, from Eisenhower's helicopter (he ordered several for his own use in the Soviet

Union) to self-service at the IBM cafeteria (he began to introduce this technology in the Soviet Union on his return).

The Icon and the Square: Russian Modernism and the Russo-Byzantine Revival
BY MARIA TAROUTINA. Penn State University Press, 2018, 288 pp.

In her lavishly illustrated book, Taroutina revises the time period during which art historians generally locate the origins of modernism in Russian art from the beginning of the twentieth century to the closing decades of the nineteenth. During that earlier time period, Taroutina points out, Russian artists had moved away from imitating contemporary European styles and toward developing a local "Russo-Byzantine" tradition that drew from older sources. This shift, although seemingly conservative in nature, in fact produced innovative art. The new fascination with Byzantine roots generated an interest in cleaning the dust off old icons that suddenly struck Russian viewers as looking rather modern. These pictures likely served as a source of inspiration for many modernist artists. Mikhail Vrubel began his artistic career working in the Byzantine manner. Wassily Kandinsky in his youth copied Byzantine miniatures, his artistic theory informed by his church attendance; according to Taroutina, even his mature paintings bear some resemblance to old Russian icons. Kazimir Malevich's "quasi-cubism," Taroutina writes, also owes more to the Russo-Byzantine tradition than to contemporary European cubism.

Middle East

John Waterbury

The Arab Winter: A Tragedy
BY NOAH FELDMAN. Princeton University Press, 2020, 216 pp.

Feldman, a legal scholar, analyzes the events of the 2010–11 Arab Spring and its aftermath at a high level of abstraction. In his view, the revolts represented the first time Arabs rose up against their leaders, replacing the unity of Arab states with the unity of Arab peoples. But it's not entirely clear whom he's referring to when he writes about "the Arab people." In one brief aside, Feldman describes "the people" as the intelligentsia and "the ordinary middle class" who led the protests in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere. But many other groups were involved in the movements that toppled governments in 2011. Feldman misconstrues the dynamics of the social contract in Arab autocracies, claims that the Syrian uprising was inherently violent even though it was initially peaceful, and insists that the Egyptian people invited the armed forces to topple the democratically elected government of the Muslim Brotherhood in June 2013. But the book is still worthwhile because Feldman challenges readers to rethink what happened in 2011.

Black Wave: Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Forty-Year Rivalry That Unraveled Culture, Religion, and Collective Memory in the Middle East
BY KIM GHATTAS. Henry Holt, 2020, 400 pp.

A number of pivotal events in the years around 1979 transformed the Middle East: the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Islamist insurgents, and the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat. Ghattas describes how waves of extremism and bigotry flowed out from Iran and Saudi Arabia, reshaping a region that had been generally pluralistic and fundamentally tolerant. After 1979, "the dictatorship of the closed mind" took hold in many societies in the Middle East. Ghattas paints a big picture through a number of small portraits. Many of her protagonists tried to resist the rising tide of extremism, including the late Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi, whose killing at the hands of Saudi operatives Ghattas narrates in the conclusion of the book. She is unsparing in her critique of regional leadership through the decades, from Iran's revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in modern Saudi Arabia. Ghattas eschews despair and finds heroes among her own millennial generation, men and women who refuse to buckle under the inherited calamities of an earlier era.

Trump and Iran: From Containment to Confrontation
BY NADER ENTESSAR AND KAVEH L. AFRASIABI. Lexington Books, 2019, 288 pp.

Written before the assassination of the Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani, this book assesses the change in the United States' approach to Iran from the Obama administration to the Trump administration. Under Barack Obama, the United States and other major powers negotiated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to contain Iran's presumed nuclear ambitions. That deal, however, did little to curb the role of Iranian proxies in the wider region. Under Donald Trump—and especially following the appointments of John Bolton as national security adviser and Mike Pompeo as secretary of state—Washington shifted from containment to a more hostile posture, with the goal of regime change and the possibility of military confrontation very much on the table. The Trump administration has also promoted joint Israeli and Saudi regional hegemony to counter Tehran's influence. Entessar and Afrasiabi do a fine job of parsing the technical aspects of the nuclear deal, as well as the recent efforts of China, Russia, and European powers to dilute the effects of new U.S. sanctions on Iran. Although the authors underline the limitations of Obama's approach to Iran, they clearly prefer it to Trump's more coercive policy. They suggest that Iran is too big and well rooted in the region to succumb to Trump's campaign of "maximum pressure."

The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity
BY DARRYL LI. Stanford University Press, 2019, 384 pp.

Li sees the global "war on terror" as a clash of competing universalist visions. In this provocative book, he explores how jihadis and other Islamists develop their projects. He draws from his fieldwork in Bosnia with Muslim Bosniaks and with foreign, mainly Arab fighters who came to the Balkans during the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and remained beyond 9/11. Li is a gifted writer and storyteller, and his research has amazing breadth. Jihadi universalism jostled with other belief systems in Bosnia, including those promulgated by international peacekeeping missions, the "war on terror," and the Non-Aligned Movement (which was headquartered during the Cold War in Yugoslavia). But universalism is an awkward framework for understanding what drove holy warriors to Bosnia in the first place. Li's analysis leaves unexamined the overwhelmingly Sunni composition of the foreign Arab fighters. He doesn't delve into the particularities of Bosniak Islam or consider the role of the Ottoman Empire in shaping religious practices and belief in the region. Despite these omissions, Li should be commended for a finely crafted plunge into international jihad.

How the West Stole Democracy From the Arabs: The Syrian Arab Congress of 1920 and the Destruction of Its Liberal-Islamic Alliance
BY ELIZABETH F. THOMPSON. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2020, 496 pp.

This accessible historical narrative focuses on the thwarted Syrian drive for independence following World War I. Thompson traces how a coalition of liberals and religious leaders sought to create a democratic constitutional monarchy in what was known as Greater Syria (an area that comprised parts of present-day Israel, Lebanon, and Syria). They drew inspiration from Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and the growing clamor for self-determination around the world. But British and French leaders and bureaucrats, especially the French diplomat and imperialist Robert de Caix, conspired to squash this Arab bid for independence. Thompson imagines what would have happened had Syria gained independence in 1920 and suggests that the resulting state could have offered a model for the marriage of Islam and liberal democracy in the region. This counterfactual is both sweeping and unprovable. In reality, European powers strangled Syrian independence in its crib, and by the late 1930s, an intolerant form of Islam and autocratic Arab nationalism came to prevail in the Middle East.

Asia and Pacific

Andrew J. Nathan

The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India
BY AJANTHA SUBRAMANIAN.
Harvard University Press, 2019, 384 pp.

Throughout Indian history, castes have jostled with one another in the economic and political spheres, with those lower in the hierarchy seeking to raise their social standing and those above seeking to defend theirs. Subramanian observes how these contests play out in the context of the Indian Institutes of Technology, 23 schools around the country that have trained an engineering elite not only for Indian firms but also for many U.S. companies and universities. Admission is strictly exam-based, yet IIT students overwhelmingly come from high-caste backgrounds. In India—as in the United States and elsewhere—academic advancement rarely occurs without a foundation of family privilege. Focusing on the IIT in Madras, Subramanian shows how upper-caste Tamil graduates have converted their caste privilege into professional prestige and resisted attempts to increase the enrollment of lower-caste groups. The fetishization of exams has rendered caste invisible in the engineering profession but, she argues, lets it function behind the scenes. In India as elsewhere, the myth of meritocracy justifies the reproduction of long-standing social hierarchies.

Extraordinary Justice: Law, Politics, and the Khmer Rouge Tribunals
BY CRAIG ETCHESON. Columbia University Press, 2019, 488 pp.

Etcheson served for six years as chief of investigations in the mixed international and Cambodian tribunal that was set up to try the leaders of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime, which ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. He recounts in dispiriting detail the maneuvers by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen first to delay the tribunal's creation and then to undermine its effectiveness. Negotiations over the formation and operation of the tribunal did not even start until 1997—18 years after the defeat of the Khmer Rouge. Nine more years were spent negotiating the tribunal's structure and getting it funded, set up, and staffed. The court then got bogged down in legal and procedural debates between the international and the Cambodian prosecutors and judges. The Cambodian side tried to prevent the court from going after anyone with influence in or connections to the Hun Sen government. To add to the mess, zealous defense lawyers recruited from overseas did their best to stymie the few active prosecutions. Despite ample funding from foreign donors, in 14 years of operation, the tribunal has convicted only three people and opened investigations into just four others.

The Art of Political Control in China
BY DANIEL C. MATTINGLY.
Cambridge University Press, 2019, 244 pp.

Scholars increasingly find that state-society relations in modern China are too

complex to be captured by concepts such as authoritarianism, totalitarianism, or, as some propose, partial democracy. Looking at the state's relationship with rural society, Mattingly finds a dynamic system in which the state recruits low-level officials from within local kinship and religious networks. These officials try to serve both their superiors and their communities—and sometimes themselves. Mattingly's sharply observed examples show how local officials help get villagers to give up land (usually for unfairly low compensation and often to be used by crony capitalists), comply with unpopular family-planning regulations, and stay silent in the face of corruption. But the system is delicately balanced. Where social networks are weak, local cadres are unable to exert control, and where those networks are strong, local leaders may try to protect their communities against the state. When that happens, the central government sends in the police.

Demolishing Faith: The Destruction and Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines
BY BAHRAM K. SINTASH.
Uyghurism.com and the Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2019, 55 pp.

The Washington-based Uyghur Human Rights Project uses its networks among Uighurs in exile and in Xinjiang to produce informative reports on the human rights disaster unfolding in that region. (I served for nine years on the board of the National Endowment for Democracy, which supports the UHRP.) *Demolishing Faith* details a couple of dozen of what may be thousands of destroyed mosques, shrines, and Muslim cemeteries in the region, using satellite photos and interviews of Uighurs who cared about these sites. Another report from 2019, *Detained and Disappeared: Intellectuals Under Assault in the Uyghur Homeland*, profiles seven of what were at the time 386 known cases of detained Uighur intellectuals. The organization maintains an updated list online and believes that the known cases are only a fraction of the total. The UHRP report *Repression Across Borders: The CCP's Illegal Harassment and Coercion of Uyghur Americans* gives chilling examples of the way the Chinese government uses threatening phone calls and text messages—as well as arrests of relatives still in China—to put pressure on Uighur Americans to stay silent and to inform on others.

Fateful Triangle: How China Shaped U.S.-India Relations During the Cold War
BY TANVI MADAN. Brookings Institution Press, 2020, 380 pp.

Madan argues that the main factor shaping U.S.-Indian relations during the Cold War—even more than relations with Pakistan and the Soviet Union, nuclear proliferation, or shared democratic values—was China. Both New Delhi and Washington were worried about the rise of China, but they seldom agreed on how to respond to it. In the early 1950s, New Delhi wanted to engage with Beijing, whereas Washington sought confrontation; in the 1970s, the United States engaged, whereas India grew more hostile. Even when the Indian and U.S. positions aligned—as they did on confronting China in the late 1950s and early 1960s—the two countries did not agree on how to do it. In Madan's account, Chinese thinking about the triangular relationship appears only occasionally, through the eyes of

Indian and U.S. policymakers who believed that Beijing was anxious about the threat of U.S.-Indian collusion. Since the end of the Cold War, the basic calculations of the three sides have not fundamentally changed, which makes this work a useful guide to the likely limits of future U.S.-Indian collaboration in dealing with China.

The Shenzhen Experiment: The Story of China's Instant City
BY JUAN DU. Harvard University Press, 2020, 384 pp.

Shenzhen was a fishing village that turned into a megalopolis through the alchemy of China's reforms of the last 40 years. But Du, an architect and urban planner, complicates the simple narrative of the city's ascent. The city sprawls over an area more than twice as large as that of the five boroughs of New York City. It has swallowed up land originally occupied by more than 2,000 long-established rural villages, which had flourished for centuries through farming, fishing, oyster cultivation, and, more recently, simple food processing and small-scale manufacturing. Some 300 "urban villages" survive inside the modern city, their roughly built tenements filled with cheap apartments that house migrants from all over the country. The most expensive gated community backs onto the biggest slum, which the city has targeted for redevelopment, a plan that in turn has spawned a resistance movement of preservationists. Throughout China, breakneck urbanization has required the seizure of land from communities in rural areas. Du hopes that the Shenzhen experiment can teach the rest of China to adopt development policies that are both more socially sensitive and concerned with protecting historical sites.

The Scientist and the Spy: A True Story of China, the FBI, and Industrial Espionage
BY MARA HVISTENDAHL. Riverhead Books, 2020, 336 pp.

The theft of intellectual property is not just about computer chips and pharmaceutical formulas: some of the most valuable targets are seeds. To feed a growing population with shrinking arable land, China needs hardy, high-yield seeds but cannot afford to spend the many years it takes to develop them. That's why a police officer in Iowa in 2011 found a Chinese businessman named Robert Mo wandering around in a cornfield where he didn't belong. The book offers a fly-on-the-wall procedural of the resulting case that involves spies, informants, FBI agents, customs officials, and bugged phones and cars. Along the way, Hvistendahl delves into seed breeding, the antitrust investigation of the agribusiness giant Monsanto, the differences between security espionage and intellectual property theft, and the problem of racial profiling in U.S. investigations in these areas. Although most ethnic Chinese scientists and businesspeople in the United States are not spies—and most who are spies are not amateur collectors such as Mo—in this case, the suspect was indeed guilty. But he was the only person convicted in a case that involved many bad actors, and while he sat in prison, the Chinese company ChemChina legally acquired a huge amount of seed technology by purchasing the Swiss agriculture firm Syngenta.

Africa

Nicolas van de Walle

Nigeria's Soldiers of Fortune: The Abacha and Obasanjo Years
BY MAX SIOLLUN. Hurst, 2019, 325 pp.

Siollun, a Nigerian journalist and historian, is the premier expert on the role of the military in Nigeria since the country won independence, in 1960. This sharply written and well-informed book is the third in his series on military rule in the country and focuses on the period between the end of General Ibrahim Babangida's presidency, in 1993, and the return to power of General Olusegun Obasanjo, in 1999, through relatively free and fair elections. Those six years saw the rise of a particularly toxic politics, in which senior military officers constantly maneuvered and conspired to maintain their power. Siollun ably steers the reader through the events surrounding the businessman Mashood Abiola's election to the presidency in 1993, the military's refusal to allow him to assume office, and his subsequent arrest and death in custody; General Sani Abacha's paranoid and violent presidency, from 1993 to 1998; and the trial and execution of the activist Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995. Siollun argues that by the end of the twentieth century, the military had ruled Nigeria so badly that citizens were finally convinced of the superiority of civilian rule. This kind of judgment is rare in a narrative that is studiously dispassionate and entirely focused on the personalities and networks that shaped elite politics during this period, to the detriment of assessing the consequences of military rule.

Understanding South Africa
BY CARIEN DU PLESSIS AND MARTIN PLAUT. Hurst, 2019, 316 pp.

This breezy introduction to contemporary South Africa by two of its veteran journalists is perfect for anyone wanting a quick survey of the main issues currently facing the country. Chapters cover the reasons for South Africa's disappointing economic performance over the last three decades, the lamentable state of the educational system, the failure of the opposition to wrest power from the African National Congress, the divisive politics around land, and other contentious subjects. In each case, Du Plessis and Plaut smartly start with the historical context before tracing continuities with and departures from the apartheid years. The authors don't present precise prescriptions for a way out of the stagnation in which the country finds itself. Nonetheless, one of the book's strengths is its nuanced recognition of the many interests and viewpoints that inform the country's major political issues, a complexity that stems directly from South Africa's divided past.

Land of Tears: The Exploration and Exploitation of Equatorial Africa
BY ROBERT HARMS. Basic Books, 2019, 544 pp.

Many writers have documented the abuses of the Belgian king Leopold II, who ruled the Congo Free State as a private fiefdom around the turn of the

twentieth century. In search of ivory and rubber, Leopold's agents committed unspeakable atrocities and violence that persisted even after Belgium nationalized the Congo Free State in 1908 to make it a more conventional colony. Harms's deeply rewarding account of this history breaks new ground by broadening the context of Leopold's depredations. His book places Leopold's excesses alongside two other deeply exploitative state-building ventures in central Africa: France's pillaging of its own neighboring Congo colony and the handiwork of the slave and ivory trader Tippu Tib, who operated on behalf of the sultan of Zanzibar and carved out an Arab zone of influence in the eastern half of the vast Congo River basin. Harms's focus on economic and material factors reveals how the global demand for ivory and rubber shaped all three ventures.

Give and Take: Developmental Foreign Aid and the Pharmaceutical Industry in East Africa
BY NITSAN CHOREV. Princeton University Press, 2019, 320 pp.

Chorev examines the role that foreign aid played in helping build the pharmaceutical industry in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda over the course of the last three decades. She argues convincingly that aid helped generate a market for local companies, mostly thanks to the demand for HIV drugs. Foreign donors then offered technical assistance and suggested quality-control measures. Chorev conducted thorough research on the ground in East Africa and in the headquarters of international agencies such as the World Health Organization and presents a perceptive analysis of what it takes to devise a productive industrial policy in the region. Less successful is the author's claim that these case studies can provide a general template for the overall reform of foreign aid. Chorev is a fan of state-led industrial policy and argues that aid would be more effective if it directly promoted local production efforts. Unfortunately, the record of donors attempting this approach is extremely uneven. Many areas of economic development and poverty alleviation, including the provision of public goods, rarely lend themselves to the sort of public-private partnerships she encourages.

Whose Agency: The Politics and Practice of Kenya's HIV-Prevention NGOs
BY MEGAN HERSHEY. University of Wisconsin Press, 2019, 224 pp.

The proliferation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the last three decades has constituted one of the signal changes in the landscape of development policy in Africa. Countries such as Kenya, which saw just a handful of foreign or religious groups in the 1980s, now host several thousand NGOs, including a growing number of local organizations. Often dependent on foreign aid, not always boasting the highest ethical standards, and prone to instability, these NGOs have drawn criticism for the way they affect policymaking in African countries, specifically how they sometimes erode the capacity and legitimacy of the state. This detailed ethnographic study of the grassroots activities of four Kenyan NGOs involved in HIV prevention argues persuasively that even the smallest and least well-funded organizations can have a significant and positive policy impact. Hershey

finds that these small NGOs have proved surprisingly resilient and able to adapt to the vagaries of donor funding by shifting objectives and tactics.

From Pews to Politics: Religious Sermons and Political Participation in Africa
BY GWYNETH H. MCCLENDON AND RACHEL BEATTY RIEDL.
Cambridge University Press, 2019, 286 pp.

Every week, hundreds of millions of Africans listen to religious sermons about how best to live their lives. In this powerfully argued and creative book, McClendon and Riedl unpack how Christian sermons shape political life in contemporary Africa. Drawing on an impressive toolkit of modern social science methods—including surveys, randomized experiments, case studies, and the close reading of sermons themselves—the authors argue that religious messages shape their audiences' political activity even when those messages are not explicitly political. Even if mainly about personal or family topics, sermons give parishioners analytic frameworks for understanding events in the world and how change is possible. Mainline Protestant and Catholic churches focus more on institutions and structural conditions; Pentecostals concentrate instead on individual causes and solutions. These different worldviews carry over into how their parishioners seek political change. The book is a must-read for those interested in contemporary Africa, the role of religion in politics, or the ongoing rise of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity across the developing world.

NOAH NATHAN

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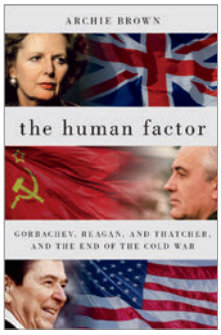

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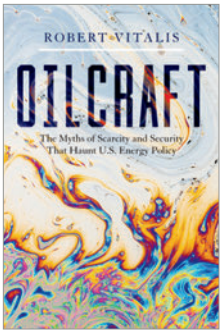

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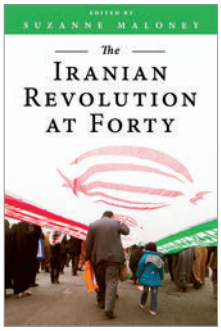

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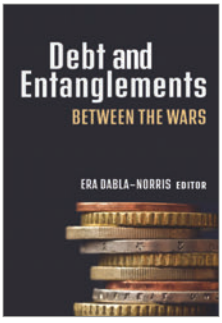

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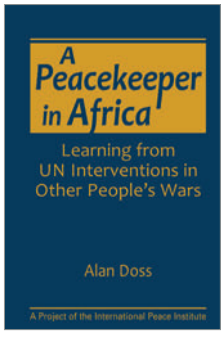

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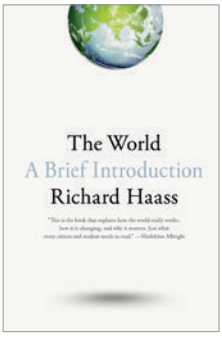

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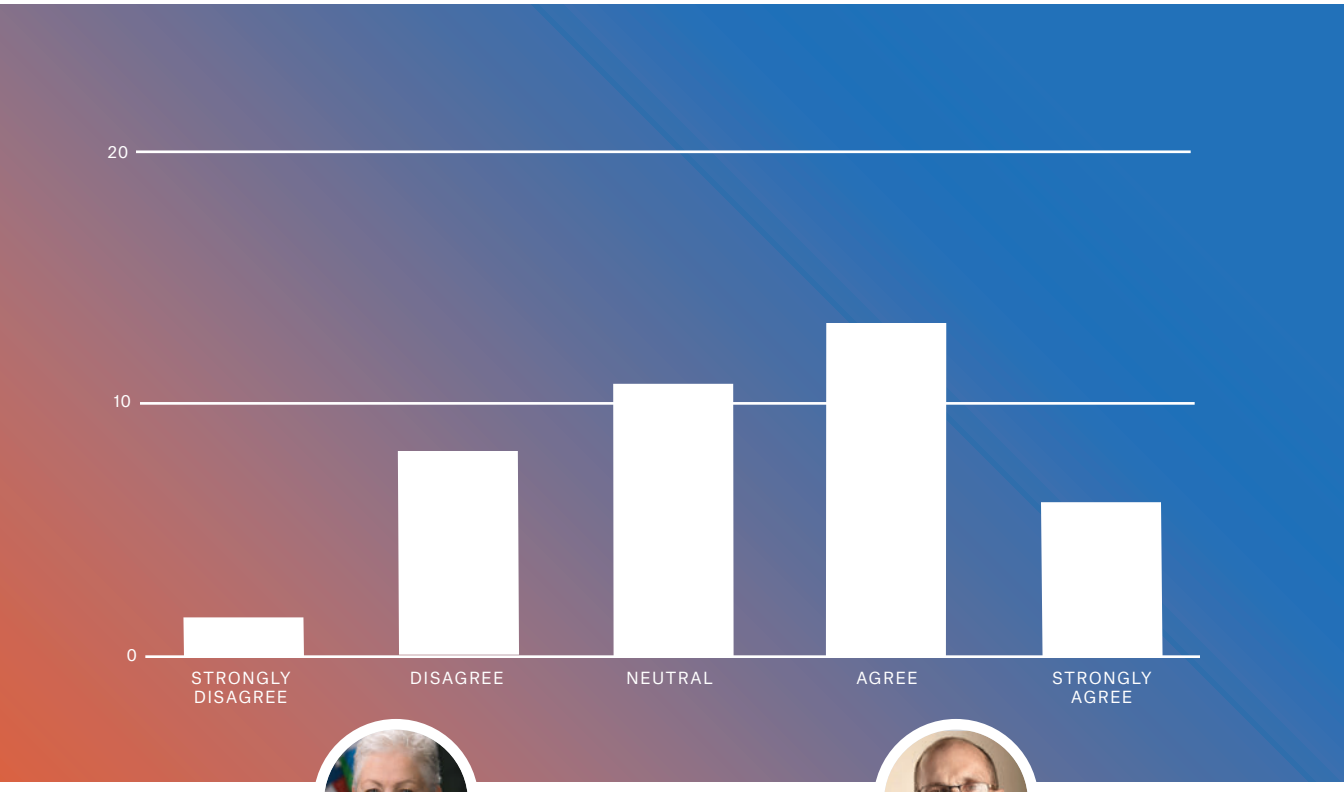

DISAGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 8

Gina McCarthy

President and CEO, Natural Resources Defense Council, and former Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

"Nuclear energy should not be a central piece of the climate fight unless and until nuclear waste is properly managed, costs can be significantly reduced, and technology advances offer the potential to build public confidence and acceptance. Until then, renewable energy is ready to rock-and-roll."

STRONGLY AGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 10

Ted Nordhaus

Founder and Executive Director, Breakthrough Institute

"It will be difficult to fully decarbonize the global economy with renewable energy alone, and nuclear energy has a demonstrated history of decarbonizing modern economies and displacing fossil fuels."

→ **See the full responses at ForeignAffairs.com/Energy**


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