

FUKUYAMA & HIS CRITICS ON IDENTITY POLITICS

MARCH/APRIL 2019

# FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## The New Nationalism



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MARCH/APRIL 2019 • VOLUME 98 • NUMBER 2 • THE NEW NATIONALISM

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# FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Volume 98, Number 2

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Archibald Cary Coolidge, Founding Editor  
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## CONTRIBUTORS

**JILL LEPORE**'s prolific and pathbreaking work has made her one of the United States' most prominent scholar-intellectuals. A professor of history at Harvard University, Lepore is the author of 12 books, including, most recently, *These Truths*, a history of the United States from the fifteenth century to the present. In "A New Americanism" (page 10), she argues that historians' failure to tell a common American national story has ceded the field to charlatans offering their own twisted versions—and allowed a dangerous strain of American nationalism to take hold.



Born to a British mother and a Ghanaian father, **KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH** grew up traveling between his two homelands, an experience that shaped his wide-ranging scholarship and writing on everything from ethnicity and identity to ethics and language. He is the author of numerous books, including *Cosmopolitanism* and *The Lies That Bind*, and has won scores of prizes, among them the National Humanities Medal. Now a professor of philosophy and law at New York University, Appiah, in "The Importance of Elsewhere" (page 20), makes the case for cosmopolitanism.



After he graduated from Harvard, **ROBERT SAPOLSKY** spent over 30 years living on and off in Kenya, observing a troop of baboons for several months at a time. Now a professor of biology and neurology at Stanford, Sapolsky is best known for his work on the long-term effects of stress hormones on the brains of baboons and humans. In "This Is Your Brain on Nationalism" (page 42), he asks whether humans can overcome the neurological, hormonal, and developmental underpinnings of their tribalism.



**HENRI BARKEY** is one of the world's foremost experts on the Kurds. During the Clinton administration, he worked on the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. State Department on issues relating to the Middle East; he went on to serve as the director of the Middle East Program at the Wilson Center. Now a professor at Lehigh University and an adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, in "The Kurdish Awakening" (page 107), Barkey argues that the United States' actions in the Middle East have helped promote a new Kurdish nationalism.



# THE NEW NATIONALISM

**T**he nation-state is so dominant today that it seems natural. But no political arrangements are natural, and any concept with a hyphen has a fault line running through it by definition. States are sovereign political structures. Nations are unified social groups. What does each owe the other?

The claims of the state are obvious: it has a host of practical responsibilities and legions of technocrats working to satisfy them. But the claims of the nation are less clear, and they come with ugly echoes. The advocacy of those claims—nationalism—drove some of the greatest crimes in history. And so the concept became taboo in polite society, in hopes that it might become taboo in practice, as well. Yet now it has come back with a vengeance. Here, a dazzling collection of writers explain what's happening and why.

Jill Lepore opens with a bravura survey of two and a half centuries of American national consciousness. Today's challenge, she argues, is not to resist nationalism but to reappropriate it.

Kwame Anthony Appiah tackles the supposed incompatibility of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, which he claims is based on a misunderstanding, since cosmopolitans believe in the possibility of multiple nested identities.

Andreas Wimmer notes that distinguishing good, civic nationalism from bad, ethnic nationalism is largely unhelpful, since the two share so many assumptions. For him as well, the contemporary battle is not to fight nationalism but to promote inclusive versions of it.

Jan-Werner Müller argues that the true challenge comes not from nationalism per se but from a particular populist variant. The best response is to avoid getting distracted and focus on delivering practical results.

Robert Sapolsky offers a depressing take on nationalism's cognitive enablers. When it comes to group belonging, humans don't seem too far from chimpanzees: people are comfortable with the familiar and bristle at the unfamiliar. Taming our aggressive tendencies requires swimming upstream.

Yael Tamir suggests that the main problem today is a clash between nationalism and neoliberal globalism. Nationalists want states to intervene in the market to defend their citizens; their opponents favor freer trade and freer movement of people. Jack Snyder concurs, suggesting that the proper response is to allow governments greater freedom to manage capitalism. And Lars-Erik Cederman shows that rising ethnic nationalism has usually been followed by violent upheavals, so keeping things peaceful down the road will be difficult.

Nationalism's largely unpredicted resurgence is sobering. But these essays left me hopeful, because they show a way out. Underneath all the theory and history and science, everything boils down to politics. Leaders and governments need to produce real solutions to real problems. If they don't, their disaffected publics will look for answers elsewhere. It's as simple as that.

—Gideon Rose, *Editor*



*Nationalism drove  
some of the greatest  
crimes in history.  
Now it's back with a  
vengeance.*



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# A New Americanism

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## Why a Nation Needs a National Story

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*Jill Lepore*

**I**n 1986, the Pulitzer Prize-winning, bowtie-wearing Stanford historian Carl Degler delivered something other than the usual pipe-smoking, scotch-on-the-rocks, after-dinner disquisition that had plagued the evening program of the annual meeting of the American Historical Association for nearly all of its centurylong history. Instead, Degler, a gentle and quietly heroic man, accused his colleagues of nothing short of dereliction of duty: appalled by nationalism, they had abandoned the study of the nation.

“We can write history that implicitly denies or ignores the nation-state, but it would be a history that flew in the face of what people who live in a nation-state require and demand,” Degler said that night in Chicago. He issued a warning: “If we historians fail to provide a nationally defined history, others less critical and less informed will take over the job for us.”

The nation-state was in decline, said the wise men of the time. The world had grown global. Why bother to study the nation? Nationalism, an infant in

the nineteenth century, had become, in the first half of the twentieth, a monster. But in the second half, it was nearly dead—a stumbling, ghastly wraith, at least outside postcolonial states. And historians seemed to believe that if they stopped studying it, it would die sooner: starved, neglected, and abandoned.

Francis Fukuyama is a political scientist, not a historian. But his 1989 essay “The End of History?” illustrated Degler’s point. Fascism and communism were dead, Fukuyama announced at the end of the Cold War. Nationalism, the greatest remaining threat to liberalism, had been “defanged” in the West, and in other parts of the world where it was still kicking, well, that wasn’t quite nationalism. “The vast majority of the world’s nationalist movements do not have a political program beyond the negative desire of independence from some other group or people, and do not offer anything like a comprehensive agenda for socio-economic organization,” Fukuyama wrote. (Needless to say, he has since had to walk a lot of this back, writing in his most recent book about the “unexpected” populist nationalism of Russia’s Vladimir Putin, Poland’s Jaroslaw Kaczynski, Hungary’s Viktor Orban, Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Philippines’ Rodrigo Duterte, and the United States’ Donald Trump.)

Fukuyama was hardly alone in pronouncing nationalism all but dead. A lot of other people had, too. That’s what worried Degler.

Nation-states, when they form, imagine a past. That, at least in part, accounts for why modern historical writing arose with the nation-state. For more than a century, the nation-state was the central object of historical

---

**JILL LEPORE** is David Woods Kemper '41 Professor of American History at Harvard, a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, and the author of *These Truths: A History of the United States*.



*Proud to be an American: at a Trump rally in Missoula, Montana, October 2018*

inquiry. From George Bancroft in the 1830s through, say, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., or Richard Hofstadter, studying American history meant studying the American nation. As the historian John Higham put it, “From the middle of the nineteenth century until the 1960s, the nation was the grand subject of American history.” Over that same stretch of time, the United States experienced a civil war, emancipation, reconstruction, segregation, two world wars, and unprecedented immigration—making the task even more essential. “A history in common is fundamental to sustaining the affiliation that constitutes national subjects,” the historian Thomas Bender once observed. “Nations are, among other things, a collective agreement, partly coerced, to affirm a common history as the basis for a shared future.”

But in the 1970s, studying the nation fell out of favor in the American historical

profession. Most historians started looking at either smaller or bigger things, investigating the experiences and cultures of social groups or taking the broad vantage promised by global history. This turn produced excellent scholarship. But meanwhile, who was doing the work of providing a legible past and a plausible future—a nation—to the people who lived in the United States? Charlatans, stooges, and tyrants. The endurance of nationalism proves that there’s never any shortage of blackguards willing to prop up people’s sense of themselves and their destiny with a tissue of myths and prophecies, prejudices and hatreds, or to empty out old rubbish bags full of festering resentments and calls to violence. When historians abandon the study of the nation, when scholars stop trying to write a common history for a people, nationalism doesn’t die. Instead, it eats liberalism.



Maybe it's too late to restore a common history, too late for historians to make a difference. But is there any option other than to try to craft a new American history—one that could foster a new Americanism?

### THE NATION AND THE STATE

The United States is different from other nations—every nation is different from every other—and its nationalism is different, too. To review: a nation is a people with common origins, and a state is a political community governed by laws. A nation-state is a political community governed by laws that unites a people with a supposedly common ancestry. When nation-states arose out of city-states and kingdoms and empires, they explained themselves by telling stories about their origins—stories meant to suggest that everyone in, say, “the French nation” had common ancestors, when they of course did not. As I wrote in my book *These Truths*, “Very often, histories of nation-states are little more than myths that hide the seams that stitch the nation to the state.”

But in the American case, the origins of the nation can be found in those seams. When the United States declared its independence, in 1776, it became a state, but what made it a nation? The fiction that its people shared a common ancestry was absurd on its face; they came from all over, and, after having waged a war against Great Britain, just about the last thing they wanted to celebrate was their Britishness. Long after independence, most Americans saw the United States not as a nation but, true to the name, as a confederation of states. That's what made arguing for ratification of the Constitution an uphill battle; it's also why the

Constitution's advocates called themselves “Federalists,” when they were in fact nationalists, in the sense that they were proposing to replace a federal system, under the Articles of Confederation, with a national system. When John Jay insisted, in *The Federalist Papers*, no. 2, “that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs,” he was whistling in the dark.

It was the lack of these similarities that led Federalists such as Noah Webster to attempt to manufacture a national character by urging Americans to adopt distinctive spelling. “Language, as well as government should be national,” Webster wrote in 1789. “America should have her own distinct from all the world.” That got the United States “favor” instead of “favour.” It did not, however, make the United States a nation. And by 1828, when Webster published his monumental *American Dictionary of the English Language*, he did not include the word “nationalism,” which had no meaning or currency in the United States in the 1820s. Not until the 1840s, when European nations were swept up in what has been called “the age of nationalities,” did Americans come to think of themselves as belonging to a nation, with a destiny.

This course of events is so unusual, in the matter of nation building, that the historian David Armitage has suggested that the United States is something other than a nation-state. “What we mean by nationalism is the desire of nations (however defined) to possess states to create the peculiar hybrid we call the

nation-state,” Armitage writes, but “there’s also a beast we might call the state-nation, which arises when the state is formed before the development of any sense of national consciousness. The United States might be seen as a, perhaps the only, spectacular example of the latter”—not a nation-state but a state-nation.

One way to turn a state into a nation is to write its history. The first substantial history of the American nation, Bancroft’s ten-volume *History of the United States, From the Discovery of the American Continent*, was published between 1834 and 1874. Bancroft wasn’t only a historian; he was also a politician who served in the administrations of three U.S. presidents, including as secretary of war in the age of American continental expansion. An architect of manifest destiny, Bancroft wrote his history in an attempt to make the United States’ founding appear inevitable, its growth inexorable, and its history ancient. De-emphasizing its British inheritance, he celebrated the United States as a pluralistic and cosmopolitan nation, with ancestors all over the world:

The origin of the language we speak carries us to India; our religion is from Palestine; of the hymns sung in our churches, some were first heard in Italy, some in the deserts of Arabia, some on the banks of the Euphrates; our arts come from Greece; our jurisprudence from Rome.

Nineteenth-century nationalism was liberal, a product of the Enlightenment. It rested on an analogy between the individual and the collective. As the American theorist of nationalism Hans Kohn once wrote, “The concept of national self-determination—transferring the ideal of liberty from the individual to the organic

collectivity—was raised as the banner of liberalism.”

Liberal nationalism, as an idea, is fundamentally historical. Nineteenth-century Americans understood the nation-state within the context of an emerging set of ideas about human rights: namely, that the power of the state guaranteed everyone eligible for citizenship the same set of irrevocable political rights. The future Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner offered this interpretation in 1849:

Here is the Great Charter of every human being drawing vital breath upon this soil, whatever may be his condition, and whoever may be his parents. He may be poor, weak, humble, or black,—he may be of Caucasian, Jewish, Indian, or Ethiopian race,—he may be of French, German, English, or Irish extraction; but before the Constitution of Massachusetts all these distinctions disappear. . . . He is a MAN, the equal of all his fellow-men. He is one of the children of the State, which, like an impartial parent, regards all of its offspring with an equal care.

Or as the Prussian-born American political philosopher Francis Lieber, a great influence on Sumner, wrote, “Without a national character, states cannot obtain that longevity and continuity of political society which is necessary for our progress.” Lieber’s most influential essay, “Nationalism: A Fragment of Political Science,” appeared in 1860, on the very eve of the Civil War.

## **THE UNION AND THE CONFEDERACY**

The American Civil War was a struggle over two competing ideas of the nation-state. This struggle has never ended; it has just moved around.

In the antebellum United States, Northerners, and especially northern abolitionists, drew a contrast between (northern) nationalism and (southern) sectionalism. “We must cultivate a national, instead of a sectional patriotism” urged one Michigan congressman in 1850. But Southerners were nationalists, too. It’s just that their nationalism was what would now be termed “illiberal” or “ethnic,” as opposed to the Northerners’ liberal or civic nationalism. This distinction has been subjected to much criticism, on the grounds that it’s nothing more than a way of calling one kind of nationalism good and another bad. But the nationalism of the North and that of the South were in fact different, and much of U.S. history has been a battle between them.

“Ours is the government of the white man,” the American statesman John C. Calhoun declared in 1848, arguing against admitting Mexicans as citizens of the United States. “This Government was made by our fathers on the white basis,” the American politician Stephen Douglas said in 1858. “It was made by white men for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever.”

Abraham Lincoln, building on arguments made by black abolitionists, exposed Douglas’ history as fiction. “I believe the entire records of the world, from the date of the Declaration of Independence up to within three years ago, may be searched in vain for one single affirmation, from one single man, that the negro was not included in the Declaration of Independence,” Lincoln said during a debate with Douglas in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1858. He continued:

I think I may defy Judge Douglas to show that he ever said so, that

Washington ever said so, that any President ever said so, that any member of Congress ever said so, or that any living man upon the whole earth ever said so, until the necessities of the present policy of the Democratic party, in regard to slavery, had to invent that affirmation.

No matter, the founders of the Confederacy answered: we will craft a new constitution, based on white supremacy. In 1861, the Confederacy’s newly elected vice president, Alexander Stephens, delivered a speech in Savannah in which he explained that the ideas that lay behind the U.S. Constitution “rested upon the assumption of the equality of races”—here ceding Lincoln’s argument—but that “our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery is his natural and moral condition.”

The North won the war. But the battle between liberal and illiberal nationalism raged on, especially during the debates over the 14th and 15th Amendments, which marked a second founding of the United States on terms set by liberal ideas about the rights of citizens and the powers of nation-states—namely, birthright citizenship, equal rights, universal (male) suffrage, and legal protections for noncitizens. These Reconstruction-era amendments also led to debates over immigration, racial and gender equality, and the limits of citizenship. Under the terms of the 14th Amendment, children of Chinese immigrants born in the United States would be U.S. citizens. Few major political figures talked about Chinese immigrants in favorable terms. Typical

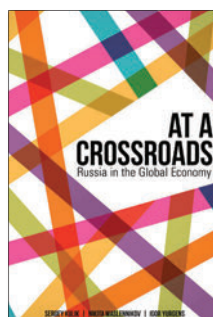
was the virulent prejudice expressed by William Higby, a one-time miner and Republican congressman from California. “The Chinese are nothing but a pagan race,” Higby said in 1866. “You cannot make good citizens of them.” And opponents of the 15th Amendment found both African American voting and Chinese citizenship scandalous. Fumed Garrett Davis, a Democratic senator from Kentucky: “I want no negro government; I want no Mongolian government; I want the government of the white man which our fathers incorporated.”

The most significant statement in this debate was made by a man born into slavery who had sought his own freedom and fought for decades for emancipation, citizenship, and equal rights. In 1869, in front of audiences across the country, Frederick Douglass delivered one of the most important and least read speeches in American political history, urging the ratification of the 14th and 15th Amendments in the spirit of establishing a “composite nation.” He spoke, he said, “to the question of whether we are the better or the worse for being composed of different races of men.” If nations, which are essential for progress, form from similarity, what of nations like the United States, which are formed out of difference, Native American, African, European, Asian, and every possible mixture, “the most conspicuous example of composite nationality in the world”?

To Republicans like Higby, who objected to Chinese immigration and to birthright citizenship, and to Democrats like Davis, who objected to citizenship and voting rights for anyone other than white men, Douglass offered an impassioned reply. As for the Chinese: “Do



An examination of the challenges Russia faces in the global economy given its current foreign policies and globalization’s impact on its decision-making process.



By **Sergey Kulik,**  
**Nikita Maslennikov**  
and **Igor Yurgens**

Globalization proceeds apace, taking on new forms that affect global economic, financial and social processes. Interdependence is not simply strengthening the range of possibilities for national economies to participate in these developments, but expanding the opportunities that are available to them. The question is: how do states take advantage of these global developments?

Although Russia actively participates in the globalization process, it is confronting greater economic, technological, structural and institutional problems than other countries. These problems exist alongside the risk that the gap between Russia and other economies in terms of economic performance and technological development and growth will continue to widen.

The old model of Russian development has been exhausted and a new one must be chosen. Russia’s choice at this juncture will determine the future of its economic development for many years to come.

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you ask, if I would favor such immigration? I answer, I would. Would you have them naturalized, and have them invested with all the rights of American citizenship? I would. Would you allow them to vote? I would." As for future generations, and future immigrants to the United States, Douglass said, "I want a home here not only for the negro, the mulatto and the Latin races; but I want the Asiatic to find a home here in the United States, and feel at home here, both for his sake and for ours." For Douglass, progress could only come in this new form of a nation, the composite nation. "We shall spread the network of our science and civilization over all who seek their shelter, whether from Asia, Africa, or the Isles of the sea," he said, and "all shall here bow to the same law, speak the same language, support the same Government, enjoy the same liberty, vibrate with the same national enthusiasm, and seek the same national ends." That was Douglass' new Americanism. It did not prevail.

Emancipation and Reconstruction, the historian and civil rights activist W. E. B. Du Bois would write in 1935, was "the finest effort to achieve democracy . . . this world had ever seen." But that effort had been betrayed by white Northerners and white Southerners who patched the United States back together by inventing a myth that the war was not a fight over slavery at all but merely a struggle between the nation and the states. "We fell under the leadership of those who would compromise with truth in the past in order to make peace in the present," Du Bois wrote bitterly. Douglass' new Americanism was thus forgotten. So was Du Bois' reckoning with American history.

## NATIONAL HISTORIES

The American Historical Association was founded in 1884—two years after the French philosopher Ernest Renan wrote his signal essay, "What Is a Nation?" Nationalism was taking a turn, away from liberalism and toward illiberalism, including in Germany, beginning with the "blood and iron" of Bismarck. A driver of this change was the emergence of mass politics, under whose terms nation-states "depended on the participation of the ordinary citizen to an extent not previously envisaged," as the historian Eric Hobsbawm once wrote. That "placed the question of the 'nation,' and the citizen's feelings towards whatever he regarded as his 'nation,' 'nationality' or other centre of loyalty, at the top of the political agenda."

This transformation began in the United States in the 1880s, with the rise of Jim Crow laws, and with a regime of immigration restriction, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first federal law restricting immigration, which was passed in 1882. Both betrayed the promises and constitutional guarantees made by the 14th and 15th Amendments. Fighting to realize that promise would be the work of standard-bearers who included Ida B. Wells, who led a campaign against lynching, and Wong Chin Foo, who founded the Chinese Equal Rights League in 1892, insisting, "We claim a common manhood with all other nationalities."

But the white men who delivered speeches at the annual meetings of the American Historical Association during those years had little interest in discussing racial segregation, the disenfranchisement of black men, or immigration restriction. Frederick Jackson Turner

drew historians' attention to the frontier. Others contemplated the challenges of populism and socialism. Progressive-era historians explained the American nation as a product of conflict "between democracy and privilege, the poor versus the rich, the farmers against the monopolists, the workers against the corporations, and, at times, the Free-Soilers against the slaveholders," as Degler observed. And a great many association presidents, notably Woodrow Wilson, mourned what had come to be called "the Lost Cause of the Confederacy." All offered national histories that left out the origins and endurance of racial inequality.

Meanwhile, nationalism changed, beginning in the 1910s and especially in the 1930s. And the uglier and more illiberal nationalism got, the more liberals became convinced of the impossibility of liberal nationalism. In the United States, nationalism largely took the form of economic protectionism and isolationism. In 1917, the publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst, opposing U.S. involvement in World War I, began calling for "America first," and he took the same position in 1938, insisting that "Americans should maintain the traditional policy of our great and independent nation—great largely because it is independent."

In the years before the United States entered World War II, a fringe even supported Hitler; Charles Coughlin—a priest, near presidential candidate, and wildly popular broadcaster—took to the radio to preach anti-Semitism and admiration for Hitler and the Nazi Party and called on his audience to form a new political party, the Christian Front. In 1939, about 20,000 Americans, some dressed in Nazi uniforms, gathered in

Madison Square Garden, decorated with swastikas and American flags, with posters declaring a "Mass Demonstration for True Americanism," where they denounced the New Deal as the "Jew Deal." Hitler, for his part, expressed admiration for the Confederacy and regret that "the beginnings of a great new social order based on the principle of slavery and inequality were destroyed by the war." As one arm of a campaign to widen divisions in the United States and weaken American resolve, Nazi propaganda distributed in the Jim Crow South called for the repeal of the 14th and 15th Amendments.

The "America first" supporter Charles Lindbergh, who, not irrelevantly, had become famous by flying across the Atlantic alone, based his nationalism on geography. "One need only glance at a map to see where our true frontiers lie," he said in 1939. "What more could we ask than the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Pacific on the west?" (This President Franklin Roosevelt answered in 1940, declaring the dream that the United States was "a lone island," to be, in fact, a nightmare, "the nightmare of a people lodged in prison, handcuffed, hungry, and fed through the bars from day to day by the contemptuous, unpitying masters of other continents.")

In the wake of World War II, American historians wrote the history of the United States as a story of consensus, an unvarying "liberal tradition in America," according to the political scientist Louis Hartz, that appeared to stretch forward in time into an unvarying liberal future. Schlesinger, writing in 1949, argued that liberals occupied "the vital center" of American politics. These historians had plenty of blind spots—they were

especially blind to the forces of conservatism and fundamentalism—but they nevertheless offered an expansive, liberal account of the history of the American nation and the American people.

The last, best single-volume popular history of the United States written in the twentieth century was Degler's 1959 book, *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*: a stunning, sweeping account that, greatly influenced by Du Bois, placed race, slavery, segregation, and civil rights at the center of the story, alongside liberty, rights, revolution, freedom, and equality. Astonishingly, it was Degler's first book. It was also the last of its kind.

### THE DECLINE OF NATIONAL HISTORY

If love of the nation is what drove American historians to the study of the past in the nineteenth century, hatred for nationalism drove American historians away from it in the second half of the twentieth century.

It had long been clear that nationalism was a contrivance, an artifice, a fiction. After World War II, while Roosevelt was helping establish what came to be called "the liberal international order," internationalists began predicting the end of the nation-state, with the Harvard political scientist Rupert Emerson declaring that "the nation and the nation-state are anachronisms in the atomic age." By the 1960s, nationalism looked rather worse than an anachronism. Meanwhile, with the coming of the Vietnam War, American historians stopped studying the nation-state in part out of a fear of complicity with atrocities of U.S. foreign policy and regimes of political oppression at home. "The professional practice of history writing and teaching

flourished as the handmaiden of nation-making; the nation provided both support and an appreciative audience," Bender observed in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* in 2002. "Only recently," he continued, "and because of the uncertain status of the nation-state has it been recognized that history as a professional discipline is part of its own substantive narrative and not at all sufficiently self-conscious about the implications of that circularity." Since then, historians have only become more self-conscious, to the point of paralysis. If nationalism was a pathology, the thinking went, the writing of national histories was one of its symptoms, just another form of mythmaking.

Something else was going on, too. Beginning in the 1960s, women and people of color entered the historical profession and wrote new, rich, revolutionary histories, asking different questions and drawing different conclusions. Historical scholarship exploded, and got immeasurably richer and more sophisticated. In a there-goes-the-neighborhood moment, many older historians questioned the value of this scholarship. Degler did not; instead, he contributed to it. Most historians who wrote about race were not white and most historians who wrote about women were not men, but Degler, a white man, was one of two male co-founders of the National Organization for Women and won a Pulitzer in 1972 for a book called *Neither Black nor White*. Still, he shared the concern expressed by Higham that most new American historical scholarship was "not about the United States but merely in the United States."

By 1986, when Degler rose from his chair to deliver his address before the

American Historical Association, a lot of historians in the United States had begun advocating a kind of historical cosmopolitanism, writing global rather than national history. Degler didn't have much patience for this. A few years later, after the onset of civil war in Bosnia, the political philosopher Michael Walzer grimly announced that "the tribes have returned." They had never left. They'd only become harder for historians to see, because they weren't really looking anymore.

### **A NEW AMERICAN HISTORY**

Writing national history creates plenty of problems. But not writing national history creates more problems, and these problems are worse.

What would a new Americanism and a new American history look like? They might look rather a lot like the composite nationalism imagined by Douglass and the clear-eyed histories written by Du Bois. They might take as their starting point the description of the American experiment and its challenges offered by Douglass in 1869:

A Government founded upon justice, and recognizing the equal rights of all men; claiming no higher authority for existence, or sanction for its laws, than nature, reason, and the regularly ascertained will of the people; steadily refusing to put its sword and purse in the service of any religious creed or family, is a standing offense to most of the Governments of the world, and to some narrow and bigoted people among ourselves.

At the close of the Cold War, some commentators concluded that the American experiment had ended in

triumph, that the United States had become all the world. But the American experiment had not in fact ended. A nation founded on revolution and universal rights will forever struggle against chaos and the forces of particularism. A nation born in contradiction will forever fight over the meaning of its history. But that doesn't mean history is meaningless, or that anyone can afford to sit out the fight.

"The history of the United States at the present time does not seek to answer any significant questions," Degler told his audience some three decades ago. If American historians don't start asking and answering those sorts of questions, other people will, he warned. They'll echo Calhoun and Douglas and Father Coughlin. They'll lament "American carnage." They'll call immigrants "animals" and other states "shithole countries." They'll adopt the slogan "America first." They'll say they can "make America great again." They'll call themselves "nationalists." Their history will be a fiction. They will say that they alone love this country. They will be wrong. 🌐



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# The Importance of Elsewhere

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## In Defense of Cosmopolitanism

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*Kwame Anthony Appiah*

**I**n October 2016, British Prime Minister Theresa May made her first speech to a Conservative conference as party leader. Evidently seeking to capture the populist spirit of the Brexit vote that brought down her predecessor, she spoke of “a sense—deep, profound, and, let’s face it, often justified—that many people have today that the world works well for a privileged few, but not for them.” What was needed to challenge this, May argued, was a “spirit of citizenship” lacking among the business elites that made up one strand of her party’s base. Citizenship, she said, “means a commitment to the men and women who live around you, who work for you, who buy the goods and services you sell.” She continued:

Today, too many people in positions of power behave as though they have more in common with international elites than with the people down the road, the people they employ, the people they pass on the street. But if you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere. You don’t understand what citizenship means.

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Although May never used the term, her target was clear: the so-called cosmopolitan elite.

Days after this speech, I was giving a lecture on nationalism for the BBC. The prime minister had been talking in Birmingham, the only one of the five largest British cities that had voted—by the barest of margins, 50.4 percent to 49.6 percent—for Brexit. I was speaking in the largest Scottish city, Glasgow, where two-thirds of the population had voted to stay in the EU, just as every other Scottish district did. Naturally, somebody asked me what I thought about May’s “citizen of nowhere” comment.

It wasn’t the first time I’d heard such a charge, and it won’t be the last. In the character of Mrs. Jellyby, the “telescopic philanthropist” of *Bleak House*, Charles Dickens memorably invoked someone who neglects her own children as she makes improving plans for the inhabitants of a far-off land and whose eyes “had a curious habit of seeming to look a long way off,” as if “they could see nothing nearer than Africa!” The attitude that May evoked has a similar affliction: it’s that of the frequent flyer who can scarcely glimpse his earth-bound compatriots through the clouds.

But this is nearly the opposite of cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan task, in fact, is to be able to focus on both far and near. Cosmopolitanism is an expansive act of the moral imagination. It sees human beings as shaping their lives within nesting memberships: a family, a neighborhood, a plurality of overlapping identity groups, spiraling out to encompass all humanity. It asks us to be many things, because we are many things. And if its critics have seldom been more clamorous, the creed has never been so necessary.



Containing multitudes: pedestrians on the Brooklyn Bridge, December 2018

### NOWHERE MEN

Cosmopolitanism was born in the fourth century BC as an act of defiance, when Diogenes the Cynic—who came from Sinope, a Greek-speaking city on the Black Sea—first claimed he was a *kosmopolitês*. The word, which seems to be a neologism of his own, translates more or less as “citizen of the world.” Diogenes was fond of challenging the common sense of his day, and this word was meant to have a paradox built into it: a *politês* was a free adult male citizen of a polis, one of the self-governing Greek towns in southeastern Europe and Asia Minor, and the *kosmos* was, well, the whole of the universe. It would have been obvious to any of Diogenes’ contemporaries that you couldn’t belong to the universe in the same way as you belonged to a town such as Athens, which had some 30,000 free male adult citizens in his day (and a total population of perhaps 100,000). It was a contradiction in terms as obvious as the one in “global village,” a phrase coined by the media theorist Marshall McLuhan a little more than half a century ago.

Village equals small; globe equals enormous. Cosmopolitanism takes something small and familiar and projects it onto a whole world of strangers.

Nonetheless, this paradoxical formulation has come to enjoy extraordinary appeal around the planet. Conservative populism may be on the rise in Europe, but in a 2016 study conducted by the BBC, nearly three-quarters of the Chinese and Nigerians polled—along with more than half of the Brazilians, Canadians, and Ghanaians polled—said that they saw themselves “more as a global citizen” than a citizen of their own country. Even two in five Americans felt the same way.

Yet there is something misleading about this conception of identity. The BBC poll presupposes that one must weigh the relative importance of global and local allegiances against each other, as if they were bound to be in competition. That seems to be the wrong way to think about things. After all, I am, like millions of people, a voting member of at least three political entities: New York City, New York State, and

the United States. If asked which I was more committed to, I'd have a hard time knowing how to answer. I'd feel the same puzzlement if my metaphorical citizenship of the world were added to the list. Because citizenship is a kind of identity, its pull, like that of all identities, varies with the context and the issue. During mayoral elections, it matters most that I'm a New Yorker; in senatorial elections, the city, the state, and the country all matter to me. In presidential elections, I also find myself thinking as both a citizen of the United States and a citizen of the world. So many of the gravest problems that face us— from climate change to pandemics— simply don't respect political borders.

In her speech to her fellow Conservatives, May was asking not just for a sense of citizenship but also for patriotism, an attachment that is emotional, not merely procedural. Yet there's no reason a patriot cannot feel strongly in some moments about the fate of the earth, just as a patriot can feel strongly about the prospects of a city. Managing multiple citizenships is something everyone has to do: if people can harbor allegiances to a city and a country, whose interests can diverge, why should it be baffling to speak of an allegiance to the wider world? My father, Joe Appiah, was an independence leader of Ghana and titled his autobiography *The Autobiography of an African Patriot*; he saw no inconsistency in telling his children, in the letter he left for us when he died, that we should remember always that we were citizens of the world.

### **PATRIOTIC COSMOPOLITANS**

That thought is one my father probably got from Marcus Aurelius, the second-

century Roman emperor whose *Meditations* lived alongside the Bible on his bedside table. Marcus wrote that for him, as a human being, his city and fatherland was the universe. It's easy to dismiss this as so much imperial grandeur, and yet the point of the metaphor for Stoics such as Marcus was that people were obliged to take care of the whole community, to act responsibly with regard to the well-being of all their fellow world citizens. That has been the central thought of the cosmopolitan tradition for more than two millennia.

But there is something else important in that tradition, which developed more clearly in European cosmopolitanism in the eighteenth century: a recognition and celebration of the fact that our fellow world citizens, in their different places, with their different languages, cultures, and traditions, merit not just our moral concern but also our interest and curiosity. Interactions with foreigners, precisely because they are different, can open us up to new possibilities, as we can open up new possibilities to them. In understanding the metaphor of global citizenship, both the concern for strangers and the curiosity about them matter.

The German intellectual historian Friedrich Meinecke explored the modern philosophical origins of this idea in his 1907 book, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*. Through a careful reading of German intellectuals from the Enlightenment until the late nineteenth century, he showed how the rise of German nationalism was intimately intertwined with a form of cosmopolitanism. In the late eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried Herder and other cosmopolitan thinkers began imagining



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a German nation that brought together the German-speaking peoples of dozens of independent states into a union founded on a shared culture and language, a shared national spirit.

It took a century for modern Germany to achieve that vision (although without the German-speaking parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). In 1871, a Prussian monarch presided over the unification of more than two dozen federated kingdoms, duchies, principalities, and independent cities. But as Meinecke showed, the thinkers behind this accomplishment were deeply respectful of the national spirits and peoples of other nations, as well. In true cosmopolitan spirit, Herder revered the literature and arts of foreigners. His ideas about national culture inspired a generation of folklorists, including the Brothers Grimm, but he also wrote essays on Shakespeare and Homer. One could be both cosmopolitan and patriotic; indeed, for the great liberal nationalists of the nineteenth century, patriotism was ultimately a vehicle for cosmopolitanism. It's why Giuseppe Mazzini, a champion of Italian unification, urged his fellow citizens to "embrace the whole human family in your affections."

The stock modern slander against the cosmopolitans—which played a central role in anti-Semitic Soviet propaganda under Stalin in the period after World War II—is that they are "rootless." This accusation reflects not just moral blindness but also intellectual confusion. What's distinctive about modern cosmopolitanism is its celebration of the contribution of every nation to the chorus of humanity. It is about sharing. And you cannot share if you have nothing to bring to the table.

Cosmopolitans worthy of the label have rhizomes, spreading horizontally, as well as taproots, delving deep; they are anything but rootless.

Another corollary of cosmopolitanism is worth stressing: in respecting the rights of others to be different from themselves, cosmopolitans extend that right to the uncosmopolitan. The thought that every human being matters—the universalism at the heart of cosmopolitanism—is not optional. Cosmopolitanism is thus also committed to the idea that individuals and societies have the right to settle for themselves many questions about what is worthwhile and many features of their social arrangements. In particular, many people value a sense of place and wish to be surrounded by others who speak a familiar language and who follow customs they think of as their own. Those people—the British journalist David Goodhart has dubbed them "Somewheres," in contrast to "Anywheres"—are entitled to shape a social world that allows them these things, that grants them the proverbial comforts of home. And if they want to sustain those comforts by keeping away people unlike themselves or cultural imports from elsewhere, then (assuming certain moral basics of nondiscrimination are observed) that is their right.

The problem, of course, is that these uncosmopolitan localists live in societies with others who think differently. They must cohabit with the cosmopolitans, just as the cosmopolitans must cohabit with them. Furthermore, societies have moral and legal duties to admit at least some foreigners—namely, those escaping persecution and death. Those obligations are shared by the community of nations,

so the burden must be distributed fairly. But each society must contribute to meeting the need.

The fact that the localists share societies with cosmopolitans in countries that have duties to asylum seekers constrains the ways in which the localist camp can achieve the comforts of home. But the existence of the localists constrains what the cosmopolitans can do, as well. Democracy is about respecting the legitimate desires of fellow citizens and seeking to accommodate them when you reasonably can.

### **PLAYING FAVORITES**

If nationalism and cosmopolitanism are, far from being incompatible, actually intertwined, how has cosmopolitanism become such a handy bugbear for those who, like the political strategist Steve Bannon, seek to ally themselves with the spirit of nationalism? One reason is that some people have made excessive claims on behalf of cosmopolitanism. They have often been seduced by this tempting line of thought: if everybody matters, then they must matter equally, and if that is true, then each of us has the same moral obligations to everyone. Partiality—favoring those to whom one is connected by blood or culture or territory—can look morally arbitrary. The real enemy of those who worry about “citizens of nowhere” is not a reasonable cosmopolitanism but the different idea, occasionally espoused by people calling themselves “citizens of the world,” that it is wrong to be partial to your own place or people.

What the impartial version of cosmopolitanism fails to understand is that the fact of everybody’s mattering equally from the perspective of

universal morality does not mean that each of us has the same obligations to everyone. I have a particular fondness for my nephews and nieces, one that does not extend to your nephews and nieces. Indeed, I believe it would be morally wrong not to favor my relatives when it comes to distributing my limited attention and treasure. Does it follow that I must hate your nephews and nieces or try to shape the world to their disadvantage? Surely not. I can recognize the legitimate moral interests of your family, while still paying special attention to mine. It’s not that my family matters more than yours; it’s that it matters more to me. And requiring people to pay special attention to their own is, as the great cosmopolitan philosopher Martha Nussbaum once put it, “the only sensible way to do good.”

We generally have a stronger attachment to those with whom we grew up and with whom we make our lives than we do to those outside the family. But we can still favor those with whom we share projects or identities, and it is a distinct feature of human psychology that we are capable of intense feelings around identities that are shared with millions or billions of strangers. Indeed, this characteristic is evident in the forms of nationalism that do not give rise to respect for other nations—as Herder’s did—but explode instead in hostility and xenophobia. That side of nationalism needs taming, and cosmopolitanism is one means of mastering it. But it is absurd to miss the other side of nationalism: its capacity to bring people together in projects such as creating a social welfare state or building a society of equals.

### **GLOBAL IDENTITY POLITICS**

Beyond the charge that cosmopolitanism is inconsistent with nationalism, another objection to it holds that humanity as a whole is too abstract to generate a powerful sense of identity. But scale simply cannot be the problem. There are nearly 1.4 billion Chinese, and yet their Chinese identification is a real force in their lives and politics. The modern nation-state has always been a community too large for everyone to meet face-to-face; it has always been held together not by literal companionship but by imaginative identification. Cosmopolitans extend their imaginations only a small step further, and in doing so, they do not have to imagine away their roots. Gertrude Stein, the Pittsburgh-born, Oakland-raised writer who lived in Paris for four decades, was right: “What good are roots,” she asked, “if you can’t take them with you?”

To speak for global citizenship is not to oppose local citizenship, then. My father, a self-described citizen of the world, was deeply involved in the political life of his hometown, Kumasi, the capital of the old empire of Ashanti, to which he was proud to belong. He was active, too, in the Organization of African Unity (which became the African Union). He served his country, Ghana, at the UN, in which he also believed passionately. He loved Ashanti traditions, proverbs, and folktales, as well as Shakespeare; as a lawyer, he admired Cicero, whom he would quote at the drop of a hat, but also Thurgood Marshall and Mahatma Gandhi. He listened to the music of Bessie Smith (the African American “Empress of the Blues”), Sophie Tucker (a Ukrainian-born vaudeville star), and Umm Kulthum (an Egyptian singer), and

he sang along to the work of the English musical-theater duo Gilbert and Sullivan. None of that stopped him from joining the Ghanaian independence movement, serving in Ghana’s national parliament, or laying the foundations of pro bono legal work in the country. He recognized that what May called the “bonds and obligations that make our society work” are global as well as local. He saw that those obligations existed not only in his home country and his hometown but also in the international arena. He recognized what that very English poet Philip Larkin once called “the importance of elsewhere.”

Those who deny the importance of elsewhere have withdrawn from the world, where the greatest challenges and threats must be confronted by a community of nations, with a genuine sense of obligation that transcends borders. Today, atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are at their highest point in 800,000 years. Oceanic acidification worsens each year. And according to the UN, there were almost 260 million international migrants in 2017, many fleeing war and oppression in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

As populist demagogues around the world exploit the churn of economic discontent, the danger is that the politics of engagement could give way to the politics of withdrawal. A successful cosmopolitanism must keep its eyes on matters near and far, promoting political systems that also work for localists. The Anywheres must extend their concern to the Somewheres. But forgetting that we are all citizens of the world—a small, warming, intensely vulnerable world—would be a reckless relaxation of vigilance. Elsewhere has never been more important. 🌍

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# Why Nationalism Works

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## And Why It Isn't Going Away

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*Andreas Wimmer*

**N**ationalism has a bad reputation today. It is, in the minds of many educated Westerners, a dangerous ideology. Some acknowledge the virtues of patriotism, understood as the benign affection for one's homeland; at the same time, they see nationalism as narrow-minded and immoral, promoting blind loyalty to a country over deeper commitments to justice and humanity. In a January 2019 speech to his country's diplomatic corps, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier put this view in stark terms: "Nationalism," he said, "is an ideological poison."

In recent years, populists across the West have sought to invert this moral hierarchy. They have proudly claimed the mantle of nationalism, promising to defend the interests of the majority against immigrant minorities and out-of-touch elites. Their critics, meanwhile, cling to the established distinction between malign nationalism and worthy patriotism. In a thinly veiled shot at U.S. President Donald Trump, a self-described nationalist, French

President Emmanuel Macron declared last November that "nationalism is a betrayal of patriotism."

The popular distinction between patriotism and nationalism echoes the one made by scholars who contrast "civic" nationalism, according to which all citizens, regardless of their cultural background, count as members of the nation, with "ethnic" nationalism, in which ancestry and language determine national identity. Yet efforts to draw a hard line between good, civic patriotism and bad, ethnic nationalism overlook the common roots of both. Patriotism is a form of nationalism. They are ideological brothers, not distant cousins.

At their core, all forms of nationalism share the same two tenets: first, that members of the nation, understood as a group of equal citizens with a shared history and future political destiny, should rule the state, and second, that they should do so in the interests of the nation. Nationalism is thus opposed to foreign rule by members of other nations, as in colonial empires and many dynastic kingdoms, as well as to rulers who disregard the perspectives and needs of the majority.

Over the past two centuries, nationalism has been combined with all manner of other political ideologies. Liberal nationalism flourished in nineteenth-century Europe and Latin America, fascist nationalism triumphed in Italy and Germany during the interwar period, and Marxist nationalism motivated the anticolonial movements that spread across the "global South" after the end of World War II. Today, nearly everyone, left and right, accepts the legitimacy of nationalism's two basic tenets. This becomes clearer when contrasting

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nationalism with other doctrines of state legitimacy. In theocracies, the state should be ruled in the name of God, as in the Vatican or the caliphate of the Islamic State (or ISIS). In dynastic kingdoms, the state is owned and ruled by a family, as in Saudi Arabia. In the Soviet Union, the state was ruled in the name of a class: the international proletariat.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the world has become a world of nation-states governed according to nationalist principles. Identifying nationalism exclusively with the political right means misunderstanding the nature of nationalism and ignoring how deeply it has shaped almost all modern political ideologies, including liberal and progressive ones. It has provided the ideological foundation for institutions such as democracy, the welfare state, and public education, all of which were justified in the name of a unified people with a shared sense of purpose and mutual obligation. Nationalism was one of the great motivating forces that helped beat back Nazi Germany and imperial Japan. And nationalists liberated the large majority of humanity from European colonial domination.

Nationalism is not an irrational sentiment that can be banished from contemporary politics through enlightening education; it is one of the modern world's foundational principles and is more widely accepted than its critics acknowledge. Who in the United States would agree to be ruled by French noblemen? Who in Nigeria would publicly call for the British to come back?

With few exceptions, we are all nationalists today.

## **THE NATION IS BORN**

Nationalism is a relatively recent invention. In 1750, vast multinational empires—Austrian, British, Chinese, French, Ottoman, Russian, and Spanish—governed most of the world. But then came the American Revolution, in 1775, and the French Revolution, in 1789. The doctrine of nationalism—rule in the name of a nationally defined people—spread gradually across the globe. Over the next two centuries, empire after empire dissolved into a series of nation-states. In 1900, roughly 35 percent of the globe's surface was governed by nation-states; by 1950, it was already 70 percent. Today, only half a dozen dynastic kingdoms and theocracies remain.

Where did nationalism come from, and why did it prove so popular? Its roots reach back to early modern Europe. European politics in this period—roughly, the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries—was characterized by intense warfare between increasingly centralized, bureaucratic states. By the end of the eighteenth century, these states had largely displaced other institutions (such as churches) as the main providers of public goods within their territory, and they had eliminated or co-opted competing centers of power, such as the independent nobility. The centralization of power, moreover, promoted the spread of a common language within each state, at least among the literate, and provided a shared focus for the emerging civil society organizations that were then becoming preoccupied with matters of state.

Europe's competitive and war-prone multistate system drove rulers to extract ever more taxes from their populations



*Party in the U.S.A.: at a Fourth of July cookout in Brooklyn, New York, July 2018*

and to expand the role of commoners in the military. This, in turn, gave commoners leverage to demand from their rulers increased political participation, equality before the law, and better provision of public goods. In the end, a new compact emerged: that rulers should govern in the population's interests, and that as long as they did so, the ruled owed them political loyalty, soldiers, and taxes. Nationalism at once reflected and justified this new compact. It held that the rulers and the ruled both belonged to the same nation and thus shared a common historical origin and future political destiny. Political elites would look after the interests of the common people rather than those of their dynasty.

Why was this new model of statehood so attractive? Early nation-states—France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States—

quickly became more powerful than the old dynastic kingdoms and empires. Nationalism allowed rulers to raise more taxes from the ruled and to count on their political loyalty. Perhaps most important, nation-states proved able to defeat empires on the battlefield. Universal military conscription—invented by the revolutionary government of France—enabled nation-states to recruit massive armies whose soldiers were motivated to fight for their fatherland. From 1816 to 2001, nation-states won somewhere between 70 and 90 percent of their wars with empires or dynastic states.

As the nation-states of western Europe and the United States came to dominate the international system, ambitious elites around the world sought to match the West's economic and military power by emulating its nationalist political model. Perhaps the

most famous example is Japan, where in 1868, a group of young Japanese noblemen overthrew the feudal aristocracy, centralized power under the emperor, and embarked on an ambitious program to transform Japan into a modern, industrialized nation-state—a development known as the Meiji Restoration. Only one generation later, Japan was able to challenge Western military power in East Asia.

Nationalism did not spread only because of its appeal to ambitious political elites, however. It was also attractive for the common people, because the nation-state offered a better exchange relationship with the government than any previous model of statehood had. Instead of graduated rights based on social status, nationalism promised the equality of all citizens before the law. Instead of restricting political leadership to the nobility, it opened up political careers to talented commoners. Instead of leaving the provision of public goods to guilds, villages, and religious institutions, nationalism brought the power of the modern state to bear in promoting the common good. And instead of perpetuating elite contempt for the uncultured plebs, nationalism elevated the status of the common people by making them the new source of sovereignty and by moving popular culture to the center of the symbolic universe.

### **THE BENEFITS OF NATIONALISM**

In countries where the nationalist compact between the rulers and the ruled was realized, the population came to identify with the idea of the nation as an extended family whose members owed one another loyalty and support. Where rulers held up their end of the

bargain, that is, citizens embraced a nationalist vision of the world. This laid the foundation for a host of other positive developments.

One of these was democracy, which flourished where national identity was able to supersede other identities, such as those centered on religious, ethnic, or tribal communities. Nationalism provided the answer to the classic boundary question of democracy: Who are the people in whose name the government should rule? By limiting the franchise to members of the nation and excluding foreigners from voting, democracy and nationalism entered an enduring marriage.

At the same time as nationalism established a new hierarchy of rights between members (citizens) and non-members (foreigners), it tended to promote equality within the nation itself. Because nationalist ideology holds that the people represent a united body without differences of status, it reinforced the Enlightenment ideal that all citizens should be equal in the eyes of the law. Nationalism, in other words, entered into a symbiotic relationship with the principle of equality. In Europe, in particular, the shift from dynastic rule to the nation-state often went hand in hand with a transition to a representative form of government and the rule of law. These early democracies initially restricted full legal and voting rights to male property owners, but over time, those rights were extended to all citizens of the nation—in the United States, first to poor white men, then to white women and people of color.

Nationalism also helped establish modern welfare states. A sense of mutual obligation and shared political





# WHAT IT TAKES

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destiny popularized the idea that members of the nation—even perfect strangers—should support one another in times of hardship. The first modern welfare state was created in Germany during the late nineteenth century at the behest of the conservative chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who saw it as a way to ensure the working class' loyalty to the German nation rather than the international proletariat. The majority of Europe's welfare states, however, were established after periods of nationalist fervor, mostly after World War II in response to calls for national solidarity in the wake of shared suffering and sacrifice.

### **BLOODY BANNERS**

Yet as any student of history knows, nationalism also has a dark side. Loyalty to the nation can lead to the demonization of others, whether foreigners or allegedly disloyal domestic minorities. Globally, the rise of nationalism has increased the frequency of war: over the last two centuries, the foundation of the first nationalist organization in a country has been associated with an increase in the yearly probability of that country experiencing a full-scale war, from an average of 1.1 percent to an average of 2.5 percent.

About one-third of all contemporary states were born in a nationalist war of independence against imperial armies. The birth of new nation-states has also been accompanied by some of history's most violent episodes of ethnic cleansing, generally of minorities that were considered disloyal to the nation or suspected of collaborating with its enemies. During the two Balkan wars preceding World War I, newly independent Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia divided up the

European parts of the Ottoman Empire among themselves, expelling millions of Muslims across the new border into the rest of the empire. Then, during World War I, the Ottoman government engaged in massive killings of Armenian civilians. During World War II, Hitler's vilification of the Jews—whom he blamed for the rise of Bolshevism, which he saw as a threat to his plans for a German empire in eastern Europe—eventually led to the Holocaust. After the end of that war, millions of German civilians were expelled from the newly re-created Czechoslovakian and Polish states. And in 1947, massive numbers of Hindus and Muslims were killed in communal violence when India and Pakistan became independent states.

Ethnic cleansing is perhaps the most egregious form of nationalist violence, but it is relatively rare. More frequent are civil wars, fought either by nationalist minorities who wish to break away from an existing state or between ethnic groups competing to dominate a newly independent state. Since 1945, 31 countries have experienced secessionist violence and 28 have seen armed struggles over the ethnic composition of the national government.

### **INCLUSIVE AND EXCLUSIVE**

Although nationalism has a propensity for violence, that violence is unevenly distributed. Many countries have remained peaceful after their transition to a nation-state. Understanding why requires focusing on how governing coalitions emerge and how the boundaries of the nation are drawn. In some countries, majorities and minorities are represented in the highest levels of the national government from the outset. Switzerland, for instance, integrated

French-, German-, and Italian-speaking groups into an enduring power-sharing arrangement that no one has ever questioned since the modern state was founded, in 1848. Correspondingly, Swiss nationalist discourse portrays all three linguistic groups as equally worthy members of the national family. There has never been a movement by the French- or the Italian-speaking Swiss minority to secede from the state.

In other countries, however, the state was captured by the elites of a particular ethnic group, who then proceeded to shut other groups out of political power. This raises the specter not just of ethnic cleansing pursued by paranoid state elites but also of secessionism or civil war launched by the excluded groups themselves, who feel that the state lacks legitimacy because it violates the nationalist principle of self-rule. Contemporary Syria offers an extreme example of this scenario: the presidency, the cabinet, the army, the secret service, and the higher levels of the bureaucracy are all dominated by Alawites, who make up just 12 percent of the country's population. It should come as no surprise that many members of Syria's Sunni Arab majority have been willing to fight a long and bloody civil war against what they regard as alien rule.

Whether the configuration of power in a specific country developed in a more inclusive or exclusive direction is a matter of history, stretching back before the rise of the modern nation-state. Inclusive ruling coalitions—and a correspondingly encompassing nationalism—have tended to arise in countries with a long history of centralized, bureaucratic statehood. Today, such states are better able to provide their citizens with public

goods. This makes them more attractive as alliance partners for ordinary citizens, who shift their political loyalty away from ethnic, religious, and tribal leaders and toward the state, allowing for the emergence of more diverse political alliances. A long history of centralized statehood also fosters the adoption of a common language, which again makes it easier to build political alliances across ethnic divides. Finally, in countries where civil society developed relatively early (as it did in Switzerland), multi-ethnic alliances for promoting shared interests have been more likely to emerge, eventually leading to multiethnic ruling elites and more encompassing national identities.

#### **BUILDING A BETTER NATIONALISM**

Unfortunately, these deep historical roots mean that it is difficult, especially for outsiders, to promote inclusive ruling coalitions in countries that lack the conditions for their emergence, as is the case in many parts of the developing world. Western governments and international institutions, such as the World Bank, can help establish these conditions by pursuing long-term policies that increase governments' capacity to provide public goods, encourage the flourishing of civil society organizations, and promote linguistic integration. But such policies should strengthen states, not undermine them or seek to perform their functions. Direct foreign help can reduce, rather than foster, the legitimacy of national governments. Analysis of surveys conducted by the Asia Foundation in Afghanistan from 2006 to 2015 shows that Afghans had a more positive view of Taliban violence after

foreigners sponsored public goods projects in their districts.

In the United States and many other old democracies, the problem of fostering inclusive ruling coalitions and national identities is different. Sections of the white working classes in these countries abandoned center-left parties after those parties began to embrace immigration and free trade. The white working classes also resent their cultural marginalization by liberal elites, who champion diversity while presenting whites, heterosexuals, and men as the enemies of progress. The white working classes find populist nationalism attractive because it promises to prioritize their interests, shield them from competition from immigrants or lower-paid workers abroad, and restore their central and dignified place in the national culture. Populists didn't have to invent the idea that the state should care primarily for core members of the nation; it has always been deeply embedded in the institutional fabric of the nation-state, ready to be activated once its potential audience grew large enough.

Overcoming these citizens' alienation and resentment will require both cultural and economic solutions. Western governments should develop public goods projects that benefit people of all colors, regions, and class backgrounds, thereby avoiding the toxic perception of ethnic or political favoritism. Reassuring working-class, economically marginalized populations that they, too, can count on the solidarity of their more affluent and competitive fellow citizens might go a long way toward reducing the appeal of resentment-driven, anti-immigrant populism. This

should go hand in hand with a new form of inclusive nationalism. In the United States, liberals such as the intellectual historian Mark Lilla and moderate conservatives such as the political scientist Francis Fukuyama have recently suggested how such a national narrative might be constructed: by embracing both majorities and minorities, emphasizing their shared interests rather than pitting white men against a coalition of minorities, as is done today by progressives and populist nationalists alike.

In both the developed and the developing world, nationalism is here to stay. There is currently no other principle on which to base the international state system. (Universalistic cosmopolitanism, for instance, has little purchase outside the philosophy departments of Western universities.) And it is unclear if transnational institutions such as the European Union will ever be able to assume the core functions of national governments, including welfare and defense, which would allow them to gain popular legitimacy.

The challenge for both old and new nation-states is to renew the national contract between the rulers and the ruled by building—or rebuilding—inclusive coalitions that tie the two together. Benign forms of popular nationalism follow from political inclusion. They cannot be imposed by ideological policing from above, nor by attempting to educate citizens about what they should regard as their true interests. In order to promote better forms of nationalism, leaders will have to become better nationalists, and learn to look out for the interests of all their people. 🌐

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## False Flags

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### The Myth of the Nationalist Resurgence

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*Jan-Werner Müller*

There appears to be one indisputable global trend today: the rise of nationalism. Self-described nationalists now lead not only the world's largest autocracies but also some of its most populous democracies, including Brazil, India, and the United States. A deepening fault line seems to divide cosmopolitans and nationalists, advocates of “drawbridge down” and “drawbridge up.” And it seems that more and more people are opting for the latter—for “closed” over “open.”

They do so, many commentators claim, because they feel threatened by something called “globalism” and crave to have their particular national identities recognized and affirmed. According to this now conventional narrative, today's surge of nationalist passions represents a return to normal: the attempts to create a more integrated world after the Cold War were a mere historical blip, and humanity's tribal passions have now been reawakened.

This, however, is a deeply flawed interpretation of the current moment. In reality, the leaders described as “nationalists” are better understood as populist poseurs who have won support by drawing on the rhetoric and imagery of nationalism. Unfortunately, they

have managed to convince not only their supporters but also their opponents that they are responding to deep nationalist yearnings among ordinary people. The more that defenders of liberalism and the liberal order buy the stories these leaders (and associated movements) are selling and adopt the framing and rhetoric of populism, the more they allow their opponents' ideas to shape political debates. In doing so, parties and institutions of the center-left and the center-right are helping bring about the very thing they hope to avoid: more closed societies and less global cooperation to address common problems.

#### THE PEOPLE AND THE NATION

What the past few years have witnessed is not the rise of nationalism per se but the rise of one variant of it: nationalist populism. “Nationalism” and “populism” are often conflated, but they refer to different phenomena. The most charitable definition of “nationalism” is the idea that cultural communities should ideally possess their own states and that loyalty to fellow nationals ought to trump other obligations. “Populism,” meanwhile, is sometimes taken to be a shorthand for “criticism of elites,” and it is true that populists, when in opposition, criticize sitting governments and other parties. More important, however, is their claim that they and they alone represent what they usually call “the real people” or “the silent majority.” Populists thus declare all other contenders for power to be illegitimate. In this way, populists' complaints are always fundamentally personal and moral: the problem, invariably, is that their adversaries are corrupt. In this sense, populists are

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indeed antiestablishment. But populists also deem citizens who do not take their side to be inauthentic, not part of “the real people”: they are un-American, un-Polish, un-Turkish, and so on. Populism attacks not merely elites and establishments but also the very idea of political pluralism—with vulnerable minorities usually becoming the first victims.

This antipluralism explains why populist leaders tend to take their countries in an authoritarian direction if they have sufficient power and if countervailing forces, such as an independent judiciary or free media, are not strong enough to resist them. Such leaders reject all criticisms with the claim that they are merely executing the people’s will. They seek out and thrive on conflict; their political business model is permanent culture war. In a way, they reduce all political questions to questions of belonging: whoever disagrees with them is labeled an “enemy of the people.”

Populism is not a doctrine; it is more like a frame. And all populists have to fill the frame with content that will explain who “the real people” are and what they want. That content can take many different forms and can draw on ideas from the left or the right. From the late 1990s until his death in 2013, the Venezuelan populist leader Hugo Chávez created a disastrous “socialism for the twenty-first century” in his country, wrecking its economy and demonizing all of his opponents in the process. Today’s right-wing populists mostly draw on nationalist ideas, such as distrust of international institutions (even if a nation joined such organizations voluntarily), economic protectionism, and hostility to the idea of providing development aid to other

countries. These beliefs often cross over into nativism or racism, as when nationalist populists promote the idea that only native-born citizens are entitled to jobs and benefits or insinuate that some immigrants can never be loyal citizens. To be sure, one can be a nationalist without being a populist; a leader can maintain that national loyalties come first without saying that he or she alone can represent the nation. But today, all right-wing populists are nationalists. They promise to take back control on behalf of “the real people,” which in their definition is never the population as a whole. Nigel Farage, the leader of the far-right UK Independence Party at the time of the Brexit vote, celebrated the outcome as a “victory for real people,” implying that the 48 percent of British voters who preferred that their country stay in the EU were not properly part of the nation.

#### **DON’T BELIEVE THE HYPE**

The potent combination of nationalism and populism has spread in recent years. A populist playbook—perhaps even a populist art of governance—has emerged as politicians in disparate countries have studied and learned from one another’s experiences. In 2011, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who leads Poland’s populist ruling Law and Justice party, announced that he wanted to create “Budapest in Warsaw,” and he has systematically copied the strategies pioneered by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Hungary. On the other side of the world, Jair Bolsonaro got elected president by following the playbook, railing against immigration (even though more people leave Brazil than enter) and declaring, “Brazil above all, God above everyone.”



*Full of hot air: at the inauguration of Jair Bolsonaro, Brasília, Brazil, January 2019*

To some observers, it appears that nationalist populists have profited from a bitter backlash against globalization and increasing cultural diversity. This has, in fact, become the conventional wisdom not only among populists themselves but also among academics and liberal opponents of populism. The irony, however, is that although critics often charge populists with peddling reductive messages, it is these same critics who now grasp at simple explanations for populism's rise. In doing so, many liberal observers play right into their opponents' hands by taking at face value and even amplifying the dubious stories that nationalist populists tell about their own success.

For example, Orbán has claimed that the 2010 parliamentary elections in

Hungary constituted a “revolution at the voting booths” and that Hungarians had endorsed what he has described as his “Christian and national” vision of an “illiberal democracy.” In reality, all that happened was that a majority of Hungarians were deeply disappointed by the country's left-wing government and did what standard democratic theory recommended they do: they voted for the main opposition party, Orbán's Fidesz. By the next time Hungarians went to the polls, in 2014, Orbán had gerrymandered the electoral map in Fidesz's favor; erected the Orwellian-sounding System of National Cooperation, which included drastic restrictions on media pluralism and civil society; and weakened the independence of the judiciary and other sources of checks and balances.

Similarly, in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, “the people” did not comprehensively endorse a nationalist “America first” agenda. Rather, in more mundane fashion, citizens who identified as Republicans came out to vote for their party’s candidate, who was not a typical politician but also hardly the leader of a spontaneous grass-roots antiglobalization movement. Donald Trump ultimately won the backing of the party machinery; the enthusiastic support of establishment Republican figures such as Chris Christie, Newt Gingrich, and Rudy Giuliani; and near-constant cheerleading on Fox News. As the political scientists Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels have argued, it turned out to be a fairly normal election, albeit with an abnormal Republican candidate who faced a deeply unpopular Democratic contender.

Likewise, Bolsonaro did not win last year’s presidential election in Brazil because a majority of Brazilians wanted a nationalist military dictatorship. The bulk of Bolsonaro’s support came from citizens fed up with the corruption of traditional political elites from across the political spectrum and unwilling to return the left-wing Workers’ Party to power. It also helped that the country’s powerful agricultural sector and, eventually, its financial and industrial elites threw their weight behind the far-right candidate—as did influential evangelical Christian leaders.

As the political scientist Cas Mudde has pointed out, nationalist populists often represent not a silent majority but a very loud minority. They do not come to power because their ideology is an unstoppable world-historical force. Rather, they depend on the center-

right’s willingness to collaborate with them—as was the case for Trump, Bolsonaro, and the pro-Brexit campaigners—or they win by at least partly hiding their intentions, as was the case with Orban.

Once in power, most nationalist populists don’t actually work to take back control on the people’s behalf, as they promised to do. Instead, they perform a sort of nationalist pantomime of largely symbolic gestures: for example, promising to build walls (which achieve nothing concrete other than inciting hatred against minorities) or occasionally having the state seize a multinational company. Behind the scenes, such leaders are generally quite accommodating of international institutions and multinational corporations. They are concerned less with genuinely reasserting their countries’ autonomy than with appearing to do so.

Take Trump, for instance. He has threatened individual companies that planned to close facilities in the United States. But he has also stripped away labor regulations at a breakneck pace, making it hard to claim that he cares about protecting workers. Likewise, after deriding the North American Free Trade Agreement during his campaign, Trump wound up negotiating a new trade deal with Canada and Mexico whose terms are substantially similar to those of NAFTA. In Hungary, Orban has nationalized some industries and railed against foreign corporations that he claimed exploited the Hungarian people. Yet his government recently passed a law that allows employers to demand that workers put in 400 hours of overtime each year, up from the prior limit of 250 hours—and to withhold

payment for that extra labor for up to three years. The main beneficiaries of this measure (dubbed “the slave law” by its critics) are the German car companies that employ thousands of Hungarian factory workers.

**NOT EVERY FIGHT IS CULTURAL**

Many politicians, especially those from mainstream center-right parties, have been at a loss when it comes to countering nationalist populism. Increasingly, though, they are betting on a seemingly paradoxical strategy of what one might call “destruction through imitation.” Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, for example, have tried to outflank their far-right competitors with tough talk on refugees, Islam, and immigration.

This strategy is unlikely to succeed in the long run, but it is bound to do serious damage to European democracy. No matter how fast one chases populists to the fringes, it’s almost impossible to catch them. Extremist outfits such as the Danish People’s Party or the Party for Freedom of the far-right Dutch provocateur Geert Wilders will never be satisfied with the immigration proposals of more established parties, no matter how restrictive they are. And their supporters are unlikely to switch their allegiances: they’ll continue to prefer the originals over the imitators.

A deeper concern is the effect that established parties making opportunistic shifts in response to the populist threat will have. First, they denounce populists as demagogues peddling lies. Then, when support for populists grows, mainstream politicians begin to suggest that the populists have intuited, or even firmly know, something about people’s

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concerns and anxieties that others haven't, or don't. This reflects an understanding of democratic representation as an almost mechanical system for reproducing existing interests, ideas, and even identities. In this view, savvy populist political entrepreneurs discover trends within the polity and then import them into the political system.

But that is not how democracy really works. Representation is a dynamic process, in which citizens' self-perceptions and identities are heavily influenced by what they see, hear, and read: images, words, and ideas produced and circulated by politicians, the media, civil society, and even friends and family members. Modern democracy is a two-way street, in which representative systems do not merely reflect interests and political identities; they shape them, as well.

Nationalist populists have benefited greatly from this process, as media organizations and scholars have adopted their framing and rhetoric, with the effect of ratifying and amplifying their messages. Casual, seemingly self-evident accounts of "ordinary people" who have been "left behind" or "disrespected" and who fear "the destruction of their culture" need to be treated with extreme caution: they are not necessarily accurate descriptions of people's lived experience. One can frame, say, the French government's recent decision to raise taxes on gasoline and to introduce tighter speed limits in the countryside—steps that spurred the "yellow vest" protest movement—as demonstrating disrespect for a "way of life" in rural and exurban areas. But a more mundane interpretation is that the French government simply failed to see how particular policies would have different effects on different parts of

the population. The government failed at distributive justice, not at cultural recognition.

Across Europe and the United States, journalists and analysts have posited that many people—especially older white people—feel disrespected by elites. It's hard to ascertain how many people have directly encountered disrespect. But virtually day and night—on talk radio, on TV news programs, and on social media—millions of people are told that they feel disrespected. What is routinely presented as a cultural conflict between supposedly authentic rural heartlands and cosmopolitan cities usually involves a much less dramatic fight over how opportunities are distributed through regulatory and infrastructure decisions: from the price of airline ticket for flights to more remote areas, to the status of community banks, to policies that determine the cost of housing in big cities.

By casting all issues in cultural terms and by embracing the idea that populists have developed a unique purchase on people's concerns and anxieties, established parties and media organizations have created something akin to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once the entire political spectrum adopts populist language about voters' interests and identities, more and more people will begin to understand themselves and their interests in those terms. For example, voters fed up with established center-right parties might initially cast protest votes for populist parties such as the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) or outsider political candidates such as Trump. But if those voters are then continuously portrayed as "AfD people" or as members of

“Trump’s base,” they may well come to adopt those identities and develop a more permanent sense of allegiance to the party or politician who at first represented little more than a way to express dissatisfaction with the status quo. Eventually, as mainstream parties opportunistically adapt their messages and media commentators lazily repeat populist talking points, the entire political spectrum can shift rightward.

### **BEAT THEM, DON’T JOIN THEM**

This argument may sound like liberal wishful thinking: “People are not nearly as nationalist as populists claim! Conflicts are really all about material interests and not about culture!” But the point is not that fights over culture and identity are illusory or illegitimate just because populists always happen to promote them. Rather, the point is that establishment institutions are too quickly turning to culture and identity to explain politics. In this way, they are playing into populists’ hands—doing their jobs for them, in effect.

Consider, for example, populist attacks on “globalists” who favor “open borders.” Even center-left parties now ritually distancing themselves from that idea, even though, in reality, no politician of any consequence anywhere wants to open all borders. Even among political philosophers not constrained by political concerns, only a very small minority calls for the abolition of frontiers. It is true that advocates of global governance and economic globalization have made serious blunders: they often presented their vision of the world as an inevitable outcome, as when British Prime Minister Tony Blair asserted in 2005 that debating global-

ization was like “debating whether autumn should follow summer.” Some supporters of free trade falsely claimed that everyone would benefit from a more integrated world. But nationalist populists don’t truly want to address those errors. They seek, instead, to cynically exploit them in order to weaken democratic institutions and lump together advocates of globalization, transnational tax evaders, and high-flying private equity investors—along with human rights advocates and immigrants, refugees, and many other marginalized groups—into an undifferentiated “cosmopolitan, rootless elite”: a “them” to pit against an “us.”

There are deep and often legitimate conflicts about trade, immigration, and the shape of the international order. Liberals should not present their choices on these issues as self-evidently correct or as purely win-win; they must convincingly make the case for their ideas and justify their stance to the disadvantaged. But they should also not adopt the framing and rhetoric of populists, opportunistic center-right politicians, and academics who make careers out of explaining away xenophobic views as merely symptoms of economic anxiety. Doing so will lead liberals to make preemptive concessions that betray their ideals. 🌐

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# This Is Your Brain on Nationalism

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## The Biology of Us and Them

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*Robert Sapolsky*

**H**e never stood a chance. His first mistake was looking for food alone; perhaps things would have turned out differently if he'd been with someone else. The second, bigger mistake was wandering too far up the valley into a dangerous wooded area. This was where he risked running into the Others, the ones from the ridge above the valley. At first, there were two of them, and he tried to fight, but another four crept up behind him and he was surrounded. They left him there to bleed to death and later returned to mutilate his body. Eventually, nearly 20 such killings took place, until there was no one left, and the Others took over the whole valley.

The protagonists in this tale of blood and conquest, first told by the primatologist John Mitani, are not people; they are chimpanzees in a national park in Uganda. Over the course of a decade, the male chimps in one group systematically killed every neighboring male, kidnapped the surviving females, and expanded their territory. Similar attacks occur in chimp populations elsewhere; a 2014 study found

that chimps are about 30 times as likely to kill a chimp from a neighboring group as to kill one of their own. On average, eight males gang up on the victim.

If such is the violent reality of life as an ape, is it at all surprising that humans, who share more than 98 percent of their DNA with chimps, also divide the world into “us” and “them” and go to war over these categories? Reductive comparisons are, of course, dangerous; humans share just as much of their DNA with bonobos, among whom such brutal behavior is unheard of. And although humans kill not just over access to a valley but also over abstractions such as ideology, religion, and economic power, they are unrivaled in their ability to change their behavior. (The Swedes spent the seventeenth century rampaging through Europe; today they are, well, the Swedes.) Still, humankind’s best and worst moments arise from a system that incorporates everything from the previous second’s neuronal activity to the last million years of evolution (along with a complex set of social factors). To understand the dynamics of human group identity, including the resurgence of nationalism—that potentially most destructive form of in-group bias—requires grasping the biological and cognitive underpinnings that shape them.

Such an analysis offers little grounds for optimism. Our brains distinguish between in-group members and outsiders in a fraction of a second, and they encourage us to be kind to the former but hostile to the latter. These biases are automatic and unconscious and emerge at astonishingly young ages. They are, of course, arbitrary and often fluid. Today’s “them” can become tomorrow’s “us.” But this is only poor consolation.

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*Not far from the tree: a chimpanzee at a zoo in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, October 2017*

Humans can rein in their instincts and build societies that divert group competition to arenas less destructive than warfare, yet the psychological bases for tribalism persist, even when people understand that their loyalty to their nation, skin color, god, or sports team is as random as the toss of a coin. At the level of the human mind, little prevents new teammates from once again becoming tomorrow's enemies.

### **TRIBAL MINDS**

The human mind's propensity for us-versus-them thinking runs deep. Numerous careful studies have shown that the brain makes such distinctions automatically and with mind-boggling speed. Stick a volunteer in a brain scanner and quickly flash pictures of faces. Among typical white subjects in the scanner, the sight of a black man's

face activates the amygdala, a brain region central to emotions of fear and aggression, in under one-tenth of a second. In most cases, the prefrontal cortex, a region crucial for impulse control and emotional regulation, springs into action a second or two later and silences the amygdala: "Don't think that way, that's not who I am." Still, the initial reaction is usually one of fear, even among those who know better.

This finding is no outlier. Looking at the face of someone of the same race activates a specialized part of the primate brain called the fusiform cortex, which recognizes faces, but it is activated less so when the face in question is that of someone of another race. Watching the hand of someone of the same race being poked with a needle activates the anterior cingulate cortex, a region implicated in feelings of



empathy; being shown the same with the hand of a person of another race produces less activation. Not everyone's face or pain counts equally.

At every turn, humans make automatic, value-laden judgments about social groups. Suppose you are prejudiced against ogres, something you normally hide. Certain instruments, such as the Implicit Association Test, will reveal your prejudice nonetheless. A computer screen alternates between faces and highly emotive terms, such as "heroic" or "ignorant." In response, you are asked to quickly press one of two buttons. If the button pairings fit your biases ("press Button A for an ogre's face or a negative term and Button B for a human face or a positive term"), the task is easy, and you will respond rapidly and accurately. But if the pairings are reversed ("press Button A for a human face or a negative term and Button B for an ogre's face or a positive term"), your responses will slow. There's a slight delay each time, as the dissonance of linking ogres with "graceful" or humans with "smelly" gums you up for a few milliseconds. With enough trials, these delays are detectable, revealing your anti-ogre bias—or, in the case of actual subjects, biases against particular races, religions, ethnicities, age groups, and body types.

Needless to say, many of these biases are acquired over time. Yet the cognitive structures they require are often present from the outset. Even infants prefer those who speak their parents' language. They also respond more positively to—and have an easier time remembering—faces of people of their parents' race. Likewise, three-year-olds tend to prefer people of their own race

and gender. This is not because children are born with innate racist beliefs, nor does it require that parents actively or implicitly teach their babies racial or gender biases, although infants can pick up such environmental influences at a very young age, too. Instead, infants like what is familiar, and this often leads them to copy their parents' ethnic and linguistic in-group categorizations.

Sometimes the very foundations of affection and cooperation are also at the root of humankind's darker impulses. Consider oxytocin, a compound whose reputation as a fuzzy "cuddle hormone" has recently taken a bit of a hit. In mammals, oxytocin is central to mother-infant bonding and helps create close ties in monogamous couples. In humans, it promotes a whole set of pro-social behaviors. Subjects given oxytocin become more generous, trusting, empathic, and expressive. Yet recent findings suggest that oxytocin prompts people to act this way only toward in-group members—their teammates in a game, for instance. Toward outsiders, it makes them aggressive and xenophobic. Hormones rarely affect behavior this way; the norm is an effect whose strength simply varies in different settings. Oxytocin, however, deepens the fault line in our brains between "us" and "them."

Put simply, neurobiology, endocrinology, and developmental psychology all paint a grim picture of our lives as social beings. When it comes to group belonging, humans don't seem too far from the families of chimps killing each other in the forests of Uganda: people's most fundamental allegiance is to the familiar. Anything or anyone else is likely to be met, at least initially, with a measure of skepticism, fear, or hostility.

In practice, humans can second-guess and tame their aggressive tendencies toward the Other. Yet doing so is usually a secondary, corrective step.

### **TURBANS TO HIPSTER BEARDS**

For all this pessimism, there is a crucial difference between humans and those warring chimps. The human tendency toward in-group bias runs deep, but it is relatively value-neutral. Although human biology makes the rapid, implicit formation of us-them dichotomies virtually inevitable, who counts as an outsider is not fixed. In fact, it can change in an instant.

For one, humans belong to multiple, overlapping in-groups at once, each with its own catalog of outsiders—those of a different religion, ethnicity, or race; those who root for a different sports team; those who work for a rival company; or simply those who have a different preference for, say, Coke or Pepsi. Crucially, the salience of these various group identities changes all the time. Walk down a dark street at night, see one of “them” approaching, and your amygdala screams its head off. But sit next to that person in a sports stadium, chanting in unison in support of the same team, and your amygdala stays asleep. Similarly, researchers at the University of California, Santa Barbara, have shown that subjects tend to quickly and automatically categorize pictures of people by race. Yet if the researchers showed their subjects photos of both black and white people wearing two different colored uniforms, the subjects automatically began to categorize the people by their uniforms instead, paying far less attention to race. Much of humans’ tendency toward in-group/

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out-group thinking, in other words, is not permanently tied to specific human attributes, such as race. Instead, this cognitive architecture evolved to detect any potential cues about social coalitions and alliances—to increase one's chance of survival by telling friend from foe. The specific features that humans focus on to make this determination vary depending on the social context and can be easily manipulated.

Even when group boundaries remain fixed, the traits people implicitly associate with “them” can change—think, for instance, about how U.S. perceptions of different immigrant groups have shifted over time. Whether a dividing line is even drawn at all varies from place to place. I grew up in a neighborhood in New York with deep ethnic tensions, only to discover later that Middle America barely distinguishes between my old neighborhood's “us” and “them.” In fact, some actors spend their entire careers alternating between portraying characters of one group and then the other.

This fluidity and situational dependence is uniquely human. In other species, in-group/out-group distinctions reflect degrees of biological relatedness, or what evolutionary biologists call “kin selection.” Rodents distinguish between a sibling, a cousin, and a stranger by smell—fixed, genetically determined pheromonal signatures—and adapt their cooperation accordingly. Those murderous groups of chimps are largely made up of brothers or cousins who grew up together and predominantly harm outsiders.

Humans are plenty capable of kin-selective violence themselves, yet human group mentality is often utterly independent of such instinctual familial bonds. Most modern human societies rely

instead on cultural kin selection, a process allowing people to feel closely related to what are, in a biological sense, total strangers. Often, this requires a highly active process of inculcation, with its attendant rituals and vocabularies. Consider military drills producing “bands of brothers,” unrelated college freshmen becoming sorority “sisters,” or the bygone value of welcoming immigrants into “the American family.” This malleable, rather than genetically fixed, path of identity formation also drives people to adopt arbitrary markers that enable them to spot their cultural kin in an ocean of strangers—hence the importance various communities attach to flags, dress, or facial hair. The hipster beard, the turban, and the “Make America Great Again” hat all fulfill this role by sending strong signals of tribal belonging.

Moreover, these cultural communities are arbitrary when compared to the relatively fixed logic of biological kin selection. Few things show this arbitrariness better than the experience of immigrant families, where the randomness of a visa lottery can radically reshuffle a child's education, career opportunities, and cultural predilections. Had my grandparents and father missed the train out of Moscow that they instead barely made, maybe I'd be a chain-smoking Russian academic rather than a Birkenstock-wearing American one, moved to tears by the heroism during the Battle of Stalingrad rather than that at Pearl Harbor. Scaled up from the level of individual family histories, our big-picture group identities—the national identities and cultural principles that structure our lives—are just as arbitrary and subject to the vagaries of history.

### **REVOLUTION OR REFORM?**

That our group identities—national and otherwise—are random makes them no less consequential in practice, for better and for worse. At its best, nationalism and patriotism can prompt people to pay their taxes and care for their nation's have-nots, including unrelated people they have never met and will never meet. But because this solidarity has historically been built on strong cultural markers of pseudo-kinship, it is easily destabilized, particularly by the forces of globalization, which can make people who were once the archetypes of their culture feel irrelevant and bring them into contact with very different sorts of neighbors than their grandparents had. Confronted with such a disruption, tax-paying civic nationalism can quickly devolve into something much darker: a dehumanizing hatred that turns Jews into “vermin,” Tutsis into “cockroaches,” or Muslims into “terrorists.” Today, this toxic brand of nationalism is making a comeback across the globe, spurred on by political leaders eager to exploit it for electoral advantage.

In the face of this resurgence, the temptation is strong to appeal to people's sense of reason. Surely, if people were to understand how arbitrary nationalism is, the concept would appear ludicrous. Nationalism is a product of human cognition, so cognition should be able to dismantle it, too.

Yet this is wishful thinking. In reality, knowing that our various social bonds are essentially random does little to weaken them. Working in the 1970s, the psychologist Henri Tajfel called this “the minimal group paradigm.” Take a bunch of strangers and randomly split

them into two groups by tossing a coin. The participants know the meaninglessness of the division. And yet within minutes, they are more generous toward and trusting of members of their in-group. Tails prefer not to be in the company of Heads, and vice versa. The pull of us-versus-them thinking is strong even when the arbitrariness of social boundaries is utterly transparent, to say nothing of when it is woven into a complex narrative about loyalty to the fatherland. You can't reason people out of a stance they weren't reasoned into in the first place.

Modern society may well be stuck with nationalism and many other varieties of human divisiveness, and it would perhaps be more productive to harness these dynamics rather than fight or condemn them. Instead of promoting jingoism and xenophobia, leaders should appeal to people's innate in-group tendencies in ways that incentivize cooperation, accountability, and care for one's fellow humans. Imagine a nationalist pride rooted not in a country's military power or ethnic homogeneity but in the ability to take care of its elderly, raise children who score high on tests of empathy, or ensure a high degree of social mobility. Such a progressive nationalism would surely be preferable to one built on myths of victimhood and dreams of revenge. But with the temptation of mistaking the familiar for the superior still etched into the mind, it is not beyond the human species to go to war over which country's people carry out the most noble acts of random kindness. The worst of nationalism, then, is unlikely to be overcome anytime soon. 🌐



# Building a Better Nationalism

## The Nation's Place in a Globalized World

*Yael Tamir*

### *The Virtue of Nationalism*

BY YORAM HAZONY. Basic Books, 2018, 304 pp.

**A**t a rally in Texas last October, U.S. President Donald Trump was delivering his familiar “America first” message, complaining about “corrupt, power-hungry globalists,” when he tried out a new line: “You know, they have a word—it sort of became old-fashioned—it’s called, ‘a nationalist.’ And I say, ‘Really, we’re not supposed to use that word,’” he added, grinning. “You know what I am? I’m a nationalist, OK? I’m a nationalist.” As the crowd cheered, “U.S.A.! U.S.A.!” Trump nodded. “‘Nationalist’: nothing wrong with it. Use that word!”

As Trump correctly noted, in recent decades, “that word,” and all it suggests, has fallen out of favor. For most political thinkers and elites in the developed West, nationalism is a dangerous, divisive, illiberal impulse that should be treated with skepticism or even outright disdain.

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Yes, nationalism helped give rise to the modern state system, served as a liberating force in anticolonial independence struggles, and fueled anti-Soviet sentiment during the Cold War. But surely, the thinking went, nationalism was a phase that the rich democracies of the world had outgrown—and in those places where it still thrived, it posed more problems than solutions.

Today, however, many elite assumptions about politics have come under assault, including those about nationalism. A small but increasingly vocal group of American and European thinkers have begun to mount defenses of nationalism—some modest, others more full-throated. One of the most enthusiastic advocates is Yoram Hazony, an Israeli philosopher and political theorist. His latest book, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, has brought him to prominence in some American conservative political circles. In it, he presents a spirited defense of nationalism and the nation-state. Although he does not ignore nationalism’s flaws, he rightly contends that Western intellectuals have been too quick to dismiss it and that the topic deserves a more balanced and nuanced analysis than what the academy has offered in recent years.

Hazony, however, goes beyond merely defending nationalism. He also launches a fierce attack on contemporary liberalism and its political manifestations, particularly the EU and the American-led “globalist” world order that emerged in the wake of the Cold War, both of which Hazony derides as “imperialist projects.” Nationalism, he complains, has been unfairly blamed for encouraging hatred and bigotry, even though “liberal-imperialist political ideals have



*Patriot games: an air show with the French Aerobatic Patrol, Marseille, France, July 2013*

become among the most powerful agents fomenting intolerance and hate in the Western world today.” Juxtaposing nationalism and liberal imperialism, Hazony accuses liberals of trying to impose a uniform set of values on nation-states, aiming to displace the authentic, “particular” views and beliefs held in those places.

In reality, few liberals endeavor to establish global governance or oppress illiberal communities and cultures. Rather, they seek a world order of international institutions, multilateral cooperation, free markets, free trade, and the free movement of people. Hazony’s insistence that this agenda represents an imperialist assault on nations ignores the fact that liberal and nationalist values often interact. More precisely, modern liberalism arose from national political frameworks. The modern nation-state Hazony is so eager to defend is, in fact, a product of the

marriage of liberal democratic and nationalist values. The fact that liberalism and nationalism don’t tend to advertise their theoretical interdependence should not prevent one from acknowledging their commonalities and understanding their inherent bonds.

#### **LIBERAL OR IMPERIAL?**

Hazony begins by making a moral and political case in favor of the nation-state. A nation, he writes, is constituted of “a number of tribes with a common language or religion, and a past history of acting as a body.” A nation offers the best, most legitimate basis for a state, he argues, because it allows for the realization of the human aspiration to achieve self-rule and collective freedom in the fullest and most satisfactory way. Nation-states represent durable political unions that confer meaning on their individual members, celebrating and giving voice to what Hazony calls “the particular”

(in contrast to the universal). Giving such nations the ability to govern themselves promotes a healthy competition that inspires them to excel, opening up new opportunities for fellow nationals while allowing the international community of nation-states to prosper.

In setting up this analysis, Hazony is clear and persuasive. Yet he muddies the water in two ways. First, he focuses too often on Jewish thinking and history and relies too heavily on Israel and Zionism as the primary example of nationalism under assault by imperialist liberals. This makes what should be a broad argument feel rather narrow and specific. (It is telling, and regrettable, that a book extolling nationalism barely mentions the group that today clamors most loudly for a nation-state of its own: the Palestinians.)

Things get muddier still when Hazony argues that the world faces a stark choice between two moral and political options: the nation-state, which “inculcates an aversion to adventures of conquest in distant lands,” and the empire, which seeks “to bring the world under a single authority and a single doctrine.” Those reductive, incomplete definitions allow Hazony to rewrite the past and miscast the present.

Imperialism, he notes, produced the greatest destroyers the earth has known, “with moderns such as Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin not least among them.” Hazony is right that many empires have been driven by universal ideologies (fascism, communism, and liberalism alike) that turned oppressive. Yet he ignores the vast and often brutal imperial and colonial enterprises launched by nation-states, such as Belgium, England, Portugal, and Spain. This leaves the reader with the

odd idea that, by their very nature, nation-states are bound to live happily within their borders, never looking to expand or conquer. If that were true, the reputation of nationalism would be much easier to defend.

Hazony confuses (or purposely conflates) the liberal belief in moral universalism and internationalism with a desire to erect political empires. To him, those who call themselves “liberal internationalists”—advocates of international law and institutions and humanitarian intervention—are in fact “liberal imperialists.” Just like the tyrants who sought to rule the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, today’s imperialists, he contends, are universalists who harbor a hatred for the particular and seek “to coerce the dissenters—dissenting individuals and dissenting nations—making them conform to the universal theory by force, for their own good.”

This is a straw man. There are no contemporary liberal political movements or institutions seeking the kind of global domination Hazony describes. No liberal empires wish to coerce, govern, and oppress dissenters the world over. Neither the U.S. hegemony that has defined the post-Cold War period nor the liberal international order that Washington has backed can be honestly described as imperial—and both are currently flagging, anyhow. The EU has never tried to extend its rule beyond Europe and is presently fighting for its survival. If there are any imperialists around, they are more likely to be found in corporate headquarters in Silicon Valley or on Wall Street than in Washington or Brussels, and the global dominance they seek is commercial rather than political.

In reality, the nation-state has no serious institutional competitors. International organizations are weak and ineffective; international corporations are powerful and effective but have no desire to spend their energy on governing. The struggle that Hazony describes between noble nationalists and hate-filled imperialists is largely a fantasy. What does exist is a tension between nationalism and neoliberal globalism. Nationalism, in this context, is a theory not just about self-rule but also about the right (and perhaps the duty) of states to intervene in the market in order to defend their citizens and control the malignant effects of hyper-globalism: bringing jobs back home, supporting domestic production, limiting immigration, and raising tariffs. Such policies collide with liberal beliefs in the primacy of free trade and the free movement of people. The real debate between nationalists and globalists is less about identity than about economics.

Until recently, this debate seemed to have been settled in favor of globalism. But recently, national preferences have exploded into full view. The anger over the economic and social outcomes of neoliberal globalism (growing inequality, rapid cultural change) has stirred a populist backlash, some of which has taken on a nationalist bent. Consequently, politicians on both sides of the Atlantic are competing for popular support by claiming to represent “the people” and by blaming elites for adopting self-serving policies.

Critics accuse these newly minted nationalists of racism and nativism and of grounding their appeals in fears of the other. One can certainly find ample evidence of bigotry among those now

aligning themselves with nationalist sentiment. Witness, for example, the open embrace of anti-Muslim rhetoric by the far-right UK Independence Party; the new wave of anti-Semitism among French nationalists; and the rebirth of “blood and soil” nationalism in the United States, where white nationalist groups have combined populist grievances with racist and anti-Semitic appeals.

Yet not all nationalists are bigots. Many simply feel ill served by globetrotting, cosmopolitan elites who have more in common with elites elsewhere than with their fellow citizens. People hunger for leaders and policymakers committed to serving and protecting their own, giving preference and offering better opportunities to the neediest among them rather than the neediest elsewhere. This is what many American voters hear when Trump cries, “America first!” and it makes them feel safe.

The nationalist resurgence is not solely a right-wing phenomenon. Progressive and left-wing leaders and voters are becoming more openly comfortable with policies that have a distinctly nationalist flavor. This has led to some surprising alliances, such as the one between Trump’s lead trade negotiator, Robert Lighthizer, a career Republican policy hand who spent time as a lobbyist pushing for lower taxes and who advocates pursuing a hard line against China, and Sherrod Brown, the progressive Democratic senator from Ohio and a possible 2020 presidential contender, who is a darling of unions and labor rights activists.

But few liberals seem ready to embrace the term “nationalist.” Are there any alternatives? Last November, during a ceremony in Paris to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I,



French President Emmanuel Macron tried to offer one, drawing a sharp distinction between nationalism and patriotism. “Patriotism is the exact opposite of nationalism,” he argued. “By saying, ‘Our interests first. Who cares about the others?’ we erase what a nation holds dearest, what gives it life, what makes it great, and what is essential: its moral values.” But if patriotism does not involve putting the interests of one’s own country over the interests of others, what does it involve? Macron argued that French patriotism stems from a “vision of France as a generous nation, of France as a project, of France as the bearer of universal values.” But that could just as easily serve as a definition of traditional French nationalism. Far from demonstrating an unequivocal contrast between nationalism and patriotism, Macron managed only to demonstrate that there is no clear, useful distinction between the two concepts.

### **A KINDER, GENTLER NATIONALISM**

The kind of semantic acrobatics Macron performed would be unnecessary if he and other liberals were willing to openly embrace some forms of nationalism. After all, it is only natural for political leaders to look at global issues from a national perspective and to put their own countries’ interests first. Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel endorse a pro-EU position as they identify their countries’ national interests with membership in the union and with a measured degree of regional and global collaboration. The government of British Prime Minister Theresa May holds the opposite view and therefore supports Brexit. Slogans aside, Trump makes similar calculations, operating

from a belief that the United States benefits less than it should from those global agreements he wants to renegotiate. And on the other side of the globe, Chinese President Xi Jinping has developed the One Belt, One Road initiative, which seeks to tie together vast swaths of the Eastern Hemisphere in a Chinese-dominated network of infrastructure and supply chains: a nationalist project with a globalist twist.

Regardless of Hazony’s claims, the main struggle in today’s international politics is not between nationalists and imperialists but between different approaches to balancing national interests with the demands of a globalized economy. When liberals indiscriminately attack all forms of nationalism, they fuel an unnecessary ideological struggle—one that they are currently losing. If liberalism is to regain power, it needs to develop its own form of nationalism, one that reassures citizens that their leaders work for them and put their well-being first.

For too long, the least well-off citizens of powerful states have paid the price of globalism. Their demand that leaders protect their interests is just and timely. One need not embrace Trump’s crude, zero-sum worldview to believe that the wealth of nations should be produced and distributed as part of a relatively narrow social contract among particular individuals. Liberals should not promote national egoism but support policies that will help make their fellow citizens feel connected and committed to a worthy and meaningful community. Liberalism and nationalism are not mutually exclusive; they can and should go hand in hand. 🌐

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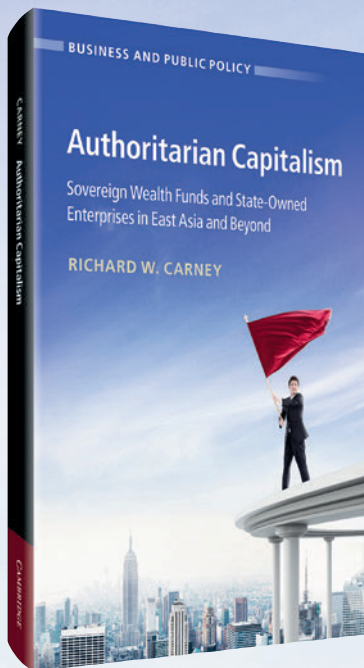
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# The Broken Bargain

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## How Nationalism Came Back

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*Jack Snyder*

**N**ationalism and nativism are roiling politics on every continent. With the election of President Donald Trump in the United States, the growing power of right-wing populist parties in Europe, and the ascent of strongmen in states such as China, the Philippines, and Turkey, liberals around the world are struggling to respond to populist nationalism. Today's nationalists decry the "globalist" liberalism of international institutions. They attack liberal elites as sellouts who care more about foreigners than their fellow citizens. And they promise to put national, rather than global, interests first.

The populist onslaught has, understandably, prompted many liberals to conclude that nationalism itself is a threat to the U.S.-led liberal order. Yet historically, liberalism and nationalism have often been complementary. After World War II, the United States crafted a liberal order that balanced the need for international cooperation with popular demands for national autonomy, curbing the aggressive nationalist impulses that had proved so disastrous in the interwar years. The postwar order was based on strong

democratic welfare states supported by international institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), that coordinated economic policy between states while granting them the flexibility to act in their own national interest. The political scientist John Ruggie has called this arrangement "embedded liberalism," because it embraced free markets while subjecting them to institutionalized political control at both the domestic and the international level—a bargain that held for several decades.

Yet over the past 30 years, liberalism has become disembedded. Elites in the United States and Europe have steadily dismantled the political controls that once allowed national governments to manage capitalism. They have constrained democratic politics to fit the logic of international markets and shifted policymaking to unaccountable bureaucracies or supranational institutions such as the EU. This has created the conditions for the present surge of populist nationalism. To contain it, policymakers will have to return to what worked in the past, finding new ways to reconcile national accountability and international cooperation in a globalized world. The proper response to populism, in other words, is not to abandon liberal internationalism but to re-embed it.

### THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

Nationalism is generally understood as the doctrine that the cultural unit of the nation, whether defined along civic or ethnic lines, should be congruent with the political unit of the state. For most of history, political loyalties did not coincide with national boundaries. This began to change in early modern Europe following the Protestant Reformation, as centralized

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*Meeting in the middle: Viktor Orban greets Angela Merkel in Budapest, February 2015*

states secured monopolies on violence and legal authority within their territory, gradually displacing the Catholic Church and transnational dynastic networks. At the same time, early commercial capitalism was shifting economic power away from rural landlords and toward the thriving urban middle classes. The state increasingly fused with its nation, a distinctive people that contributed blood and treasure to the state and that, in exchange, insisted on the right to participate in government. Over time, the nationalist claim to popular self-determination became the handmaiden of democracy.

During the nineteenth century, nation-states in western Europe (as well as European settler colonies such as the United States) developed strong civic institutions, such as universalistic legal codes and national educational systems, that could assimilate diverse groups into a shared cultural identity. (In eastern European countries and other late-developing states,

however, different ethnic groups gained political consciousness while still living together in multinational empires—there, homogeneity was achieved not through assimilating civic institutions but through war, ethnic cleansing, and expulsion.) One of the most widely invoked theorists of nationalism, Ernest Gellner, argued that this process of internal cultural homogenization was driven by the requirements of industrial capitalism. In order to participate in national economies, workers needed to speak the national language and be fully integrated into the national culture. In countries with a strong civic state, these pressures transformed the nation-state into a culturally, politically, and economically integrated unit.

By the early decades of the twentieth century, however, tensions had begun to emerge between liberal capitalism and nationalist democracy. Nineteenth-century capitalism relied on automatic market controls, such as the gold standard, to



regulate financial relations between states. Governments lacked both the will and the ability to intervene in the economy, whether by spending to counteract downturns in the business cycle or by acting as the lender of last resort to forestall bank runs. Instead, they let the invisible hand of the market correct imbalances, imposing painful costs on the vast majority of their citizens.

This laissez-faire policy became politically untenable during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as more and more people gained the right to vote. After the crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, enfranchised citizens could demand that their national leaders assert control over the economy in order to protect them from harsh economic adjustments. In some countries, such as Germany and Japan, this led to the ascent of militantly nationalist governments that created state-directed cartel economies and pursued imperial expansion abroad. In others, such as the United States under President Franklin Roosevelt, governments instituted a form of social democratic capitalism, in which the state provided a social safety net and launched employment programs during hard times. In both cases, states were attempting to address what the economic historian Karl Polanyi, in *The Great Transformation*, identified as the central tension of liberal democratic capitalism: the contradiction between democratic rule, with its respect for popular self-determination, and market logic, which holds that the economy should be left to operate with limited government interference.

During the interwar years, the world's leading liberal powers—France, the United Kingdom, and the United States—had made tentative efforts to create an

international order to manage this tension. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points called for a world of independent national democracies, and his proposal for a League of Nations promised a peaceful means for resolving international disputes. In practice, the United States refused to join the League of Nations, and the British and the French ensured that the Treaty of Versailles humiliated Germany. But despite these shortcomings, the interwar liberal order functioned, for a time. The 1922 Washington Naval Treaty initially helped prevent a naval arms race between Japan and the Western allies. The 1925 Pact of Locarno guaranteed Germany's western border. And the 1924 Dawes Plan and the 1929 Young Plan provided the Weimar government with enough liquidity to pay reparations while also funding urban infrastructure improvements and social welfare provisions. The system held until the collapse of the international economy after 1929. In both Germany and Japan, the resulting economic crisis discredited liberal and social democratic political parties, leading to the rise of authoritarian nationalists who promised to defend their people against the vicissitudes of the market and the treachery of foreign and domestic enemies.

It was only after World War II that liberal internationalists, led by those in the United States and the United Kingdom, learned how to manage the tension between free markets and national autonomy. The Marshall Plan, in which the United States, beginning in 1948, provided financial assistance to western Europe, did more than provide capital for postwar reconstruction. It also conditioned this aid on governments opening their economies to international trade,

thereby strengthening liberal political coalitions between workers (who benefited from cheaper goods imported from abroad) and export-oriented capitalists (who gained access to global markets for their products). The institutions that came out of the 1944 Bretton Woods conference, including the World Bank and the IMF, offered loans and financial aid so that states could adjust to the fluctuations of the international market. As originally intended, this postwar system, which included the precursor to the EU, the European Economic Community, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, was designed not to supersede national states but to allow them to cooperate while retaining policy autonomy. Crucially, leading democracies such as France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and West Germany decided to share some of their sovereignty in international organizations, which made their nation-states stronger rather than weaker. In more recent decades, however, these hard-won lessons have been set aside.

### **DISEMBEDDING LIBERALISM**

For the first few decades following World War II, embedded liberalism—characterized by strong domestic welfare states supported by international institutions—succeeded in granting autonomy and democratic legitimacy to nation-states while curbing aggressive nationalism. Yet as early as the 1970s, this arrangement came under pressure from structural changes to the global economy and ideological assaults from libertarians and advocates of supra- and transnationalism. The resulting erosion of embedded liberalism has paved the way for the nationalist revival of today.

The Bretton Woods system had relied on countries fixing their exchange rates with the U.S. dollar, which was in turn backed by gold. But already by the early 1970s, chronic U.S. trade deficits and the increasing competitiveness of European and Japanese exports were making this system untenable. At the same time, the United States was experiencing “stagflation”—a combination of high unemployment and high inflation that was resistant to the traditional Keynesian strategies, such as government spending, on which postwar economic management had relied. In response, U.S. President Richard Nixon suspended the dollar’s convertibility to gold in 1971, moving toward an unregulated market system of floating exchange rates. Other structural developments also put embedded liberalism under strain: the globalization of production and markets strengthened the relative power of capital, which was highly mobile, over labor, which was less so. This weakened the power of traditional labor unions, undermining the capital-labor bargain at the center of the postwar order.

These economic trends were accompanied by ideological developments that challenged both core principles of embedded liberalism: social democratic regulation of the economy and the political primacy of the nation-state. The first of these developments was the rise of free-market fundamentalism, pioneered by economists such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman and adopted by political leaders such as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and U.S. President Ronald Reagan. Beginning with Thatcher’s election in 1979, these leaders and their ideological backers sought to drastically curtail the welfare state and return to the

laissez-faire policies of the nineteenth century. This market fundamentalism was initially used by the right as a cudgel against the social democratic left, but over time it was adopted by leaders of center-left parties, such as French President François Mitterrand, U.S. President Bill Clinton, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who during the 1980s and 1990s pushed through financial deregulation and cuts to the welfare state. These policies hurt members of the white working class, alienating them from the political system and the center-left parties that had traditionally protected their interests.

The other element of the ideological assault on embedded liberalism came from enthusiasts of supra- and transnationalism. In an influential 1997 essay in this magazine, Jessica Mathews argued that technological change and the end of the Cold War had rendered the nation-state obsolete. Its functions, according to Mathews and other, like-minded thinkers, would be usurped by supranational organizations such as the EU, coordinating institutions such as the World Trade Organization, and various transnational networks of activists, experts, and innovators. In 1993, for instance, Europe had adopted a common market and created the bureaucratic edifice of the EU to administer the resulting flows of goods, money, and people. This was followed by the adoption of the euro in 2002. Although intended to promote European integration, the euro effectively stripped its members of monetary sovereignty, greatly reducing their policy autonomy.

This transnational paradise, moreover, left little room for democracy. The gradual transfer of authority from national governments to Brussels has

put considerable power in the hands of unelected technocrats. Europeans who are unhappy with EU policies have no way to vote out the bureaucrats in Brussels; their only effective way to impose democratic accountability is through national elections, creating a strong incentive for nationalist mobilization. Different European countries have different policy equilibriums based on the preferences of their voters, the needs of their national economies, and the rhetorical strategies of their national political elites. The search for nationally tailored solutions, however, is confounded by the EU's requirement that all member states agree on a policy in lockstep. After the 2015 migrant crisis, initiated by Germany's decision to briefly open its borders, Brussels began cajoling and coercing other EU member states to accept some of the migrants in the name of burden sharing. Small wonder, then, that Hungarians, Italians, and Poles who opposed immigration began flocking to nationalist politicians who promised to resist pressure from the EU. Similar policy divergences on economic austerity have also been expressed in terms of national resentments—between Germans and Greeks, for instance—and have fueled mobilization against Brussels.

Scholars debate whether populist nationalism in the United States and Europe arises mainly from economic or cultural grievances, but the most persuasive explanation is that nationalist political entrepreneurs have combined both grievances into a narrative about perfidious elites who coddle undeserving out-groups—immigrants and minorities—while treating the nation's true people with contempt. In this view, elites use

bureaucratic and legal red tape to shield themselves from accountability and enforce politically correct speech norms to silence their critics. This story doesn't fit the facts—among other anomalies, residents of rural regions with few immigrants are among the most dedicated opponents of refugees—but it should not be surprising that a narrative of self-dealing elites and dangerous immigrants has resonated, given humans' well-known propensity for in-group bias. Nativistic prejudice is latent, ready to be activated in times of cultural flux or economic strain when traditional elites seem unresponsive.

A different face of the contemporary nationalist revival is the rise of authoritarian populism in developing states such as Brazil, India, the Philippines, and Turkey. Similar to older rising illiberal powers, such as nineteenth-century Germany, these countries have been able to use the so-called advantages of backwardness—cheap labor, technology transfers, and state-directed resource allocation—to grow rapidly; that is, until they reach approximately one-fourth of U.S. GDP per capita. Beyond that point, growth tends to slow markedly unless states follow in the footsteps of reformers such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan and adopt the full panoply of liberal institutions. Often, however, their governments eschew liberal reform. Instead, facing stagnating growth and inefficiencies from corruption, they double down on some combination of demagogic nationalism, repression, and crippling overinvestment in massive infrastructure projects, which are designed to retain the support of business elites. In such cases, it is the responsibility of these states' liberal economic partners to press for

reforms—at the risk, however, of triggering even more nationalist backlash.

### **IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT**

How, then, should leaders respond to the rise of nationalism? The first step is to recognize that the tension fueling contemporary nationalism is not new. It is precisely the tension identified by Polanyi, which the embedded liberal order of the postwar years was designed to manage: the contradiction between free markets and national autonomy. Illiberal nationalism has never been particularly successful at governing, but it is a temptation whenever liberalism drifts too far away from democratic accountability.

Historically, this contradiction has been resolved only through an order of democratic welfare states supported by international institutions, which grant them the policy flexibility to adjust to market fluctuations without inflicting undue pain on their citizens. Resolving today's nationalist dilemma will require abandoning laissez-faire economics and unaccountable supranationalism and returning to the principles of embedded liberalism, updated for the present day. This, in turn, calls for a revival of the basic practices of postwar liberalism: national-level democratic accountability, economic coordination through international institutions, and compromise on competing priorities.

Today, political polarization makes compromise seem unlikely. Both illiberal nationalists and cosmopolitan elites have, in their own way, doubled down on one-sided solutions, seeking to rout their opponents rather than reach a durable settlement. Trump calls for a border wall and a ban on Muslim immigration, and his opponents continue to speak as



if immigration and refugee policy is a matter of abstract legal and moral commitments rather than a subject for democratic deliberation. In Europe, meanwhile, the Germans cling to austerity policies that punish countries such as Greece and Italy, and illiberal populists fume against EU restrictions on their autonomy.

Yet the very failure of these one-sided measures may open up space for a renewed embedded liberalism. In the United States, President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act, which has mostly survived despite egregious assaults from the right, is a clear example of what a modern embedded liberal solution might look like. It strengthened the welfare state by vastly expanding access to state-subsidized health care and accommodating the needs of the private sector—an echo of the domestic capital-labor compromises that made the postwar order possible.

Similar arrangements might be sought on immigration. For instance, rich countries might agree to coordinate investment in poorer ones in order to stabilize migration flows by improving conditions in the source countries. These arrangements should be institutionalized before the next crisis hits, not improvised as they were in 2015–16, when Germany and the EU hurriedly struck a deal with Turkey, paying Ankara billions of euros in exchange for housing refugees. And although international institutions such as the EU should play a role in coordinating immigration policy, democratic states must be allowed to tailor their own policies to the preferences of their voters. Pressuring countries to accept more migrants than they want simply plays into the hands of illiberal populists. And giving the

populists some of what they want now may improve the prospects for embedded liberal compromises in the future. In December 2018, Hungarians began protesting in massive numbers against their nationalist government's policy of forced overtime, which had been enacted due to labor shortages. Faced with such problems, some of the country's anti-immigration zealots may soon begin to reassess their stance.

In the essay in which he coined the term "embedded liberalism," Ruggie noted that institutionalized power always serves a social purpose. The purpose of the postwar order, in his view, had been to reach a compromise between the competing imperatives of liberal markets and national autonomy. Today's crisis of liberalism stems in large part from a loss of this purpose. The institutions of the present international order have ceased responding to the wishes of national electorates.

The evidence of the past century suggests, however, that democratic accountability is necessary for both political stability and economic welfare. And even today, nation-states remain the most reliable political form for achieving and sustaining democracy. It is likely impossible to remake them in order to better conform to the needs of global markets and transnational institutions, and even if it were possible, it would be a bad idea. Instead, defenders of the liberal project must begin adapting institutions to once again fit the shape of democratic nation-states. This was the original dream of the embedded liberal order; now is the time to revive it. 🌐

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# Blood for Soil

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## The Fatal Temptations of Ethnic Politics

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*Lars-Erik Cederman*

Since the French Revolution, nationalism—the idea that state borders should coincide with national communities—has constituted the core source of political legitimacy around the world. As nationalism spread from western Europe in the early nineteenth century, it became increasingly ethnic in nature. In places where the state and the nation did not match up, such as Germany, Italy, and most of eastern Europe, the nation tended to be defined in terms of ethnicity, which led to violent processes of unification or secession. At the beginning of the twentieth century, ethnic nationalism came to disrupt political borders even more, leading to the breakup of multi-ethnic empires, including the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian ones. By changing the size of Europe's political units, this undermined the balance of power and contributed to two world wars.

But then came the liberal norms and institutions established in the wake of World War II. Principles such as territorial integrity and universal human rights and bodies such as the United Nations managed to reduce ethnonationalist conflict in most parts of the world. Today, large interstate wars and violent land grabs are almost entirely a thing of

the past. The rate of ethnic civil war has fallen, too.

But now, ethnic nationalism is back with a vengeance. In 2016, British voters chose to leave the EU out of a belief that the postnational vision of that body undermined British sovereignty and threatened to overwhelm the United Kingdom with immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and the less developed parts of Europe. Donald Trump won the White House that same year by tapping into fears that the United States was being invaded by Mexicans and Muslims. And in office, Trump has not only fanned the flames of ethnic nationalism; he has also denigrated and damaged the norms and institutions designed to save humankind from such forces.

Other leaders around the world have eagerly embraced their own versions of ethnic nationalism. Across Europe, right-wing populist parties that oppose the EU and immigration have gained greater electoral shares. In Austria, Hungary, Italy, Norway, and Poland, among others, they even hold executive power. The brunt of ethnic nationalism has targeted migrants and other foreigners, but ethnic minorities that have long existed in countries have been on the receiving end of this wave, too, as illustrated by the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Hungary and growing discrimination against the Roma in Italy. Brazil, India, Russia, and Turkey, once some of the most promising emerging democracies, have increasingly rejected liberal values. They are defining their governing ideology in narrowly ethnic terms and giving militants more room to attack those who do not belong to the dominant ethnic group. Ethnic nationalism

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now exerts more influence than it has at any point since World War II.

That fact has been bemoaned for all sorts of reasons, from the uptick in hate crimes against immigrants it has caused to the damage it has done to the post-World War II order. Yet the scariest thing about today's ethnic nationalism is that it could bring a return to the ills that accompanied its past ascendance: major violent upheavals both within and among countries. Should ethnic nationalism continue its march, it risks fueling destabilizing civil unrest in multiethnic states around the world—and even violent border disputes that could reverse the long decline of interstate war. Politicians need to resist the electoral temptations of exclusionary politics at home and reconfirm their commitment to the norms and institutions of cooperation abroad. Those who toy with ethnic nationalism are playing with fire.

### IT'S BACK

At the end of the Cold War, there were warning signs that ethnic conflict might return. But at the time, any fear of that actually happening seemed unwarranted. As the scholar Ted Robert Gurr pointed out in this magazine in 2000, despite the violence in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, the frequency of ethnic conflict had actually decreased since the mid-1990s. Pointing to inclusive policies and pragmatic compromises that had prevented and resolved ethnic conflicts, he argued that the trend toward peace would continue. Gurr's essay reflected the liberal optimism that characterized the decades after the Cold War. Globalization was transforming the world. Borders seemed to be withering away. The optimism was not simply fanciful,

and today, ethnic conflict is far less common than it was three decades ago.

A big reason is that governments are increasingly accommodating minorities. That's what the political scientists Kristian Gleditsch, Julian Wucherpfennig, and I concluded after analyzing a data set of ethnic relations that starts in 1993. We found that discrimination against ethnic groups and their exclusion from executive power—major drivers of conflict—are declining globally. Outside the exception of the Middle East, where minorities in Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Syria continue to struggle for influence, ethnic groups are increasingly being included in power-sharing deals. Since World War II, the percentage of the world's population that lives in countries engaging in some form of ethnic power sharing has grown from a quarter to roughly a half. Some groups have been granted autonomous rule—for example, the Acehnese in Indonesia and the indigenous Aymara and Quechua communities in Bolivia. The UN's globe-spanning peacekeeping operations, meanwhile, are helping prevent the outbreak of new hostilities between old belligerents, and efforts to promote democracy are making governments more responsive to minorities and thus convincing such groups to settle their scores at the ballot box rather than on the battlefield.

Our data also show that the number of rebelling ethnic groups has increased only in the Middle East. Outside that region, the trend is moving in the opposite direction. In the mid-1990s, about three percent of the average country's population was composed of groups that rebelled against the government; today, the share has fallen to roughly half of



*It'll end in tears: police confront migrants in Roszke, Hungary, September 2015*

that. Moreover, based on a global comparison of the concessions made to various ethnic groups in terms of rights, autonomy, and power sharing, we found strong evidence that such moves have helped prevent new conflicts and end old ones. By and large, the post-Cold War efforts to stave off ethnic nationalism and prevent war appear to have worked relatively well.

Yet there have long been signs that it is too soon to declare victory over ethnic nationalism. Around the turn of the millennium, right-wing populist parties gained strength in Europe. In 2005, the treaty to establish an EU constitution was defeated by French and Dutch voters, suggesting that Europeans still cared greatly about national identity. In 2008, the financial crisis started to undermine confidence in globalization (and weakened the EU). The upheavals that rocked the Arab world beginning in

late 2010, rather than marking an expansion of democracy, brought instability and strife.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nationalism tended to appear in waves, and it is unlikely that the current one has finished washing over the world. Moreover, it comes at a time when the bulwarks against conflict appear to be giving way: democracies around the world are backsliding, and peacekeeping budgets are under renewed pressure. Ever since it first appeared, ethnic nationalism has had violent consequences. There is good reason to worry that the current surge will, too.

### **THE ROAD TO VIOLENCE**

Rising ethnic nationalism leads to conflict in several different ways. The key variable, recent research has found, is access to power. When ethnic groups



lack it, they are especially likely to seek it through violence. Oftentimes in multi-ethnic states, elites of a particular group come to dominate the government and exclude other, weaker groups, even if the leaders' own group represents a minority of the country's population. Such is the case in Syria, where President Bashar al-Assad, a member of the Alawite minority, a Shiite sect that composes 12 percent of the population, nominally runs a country that is 74 percent Sunni. That disparity has fueled widespread grievances among other ethnic groups and led to a civil war that has so far caused at least 400,000 deaths and triggered a wave of migration that has destabilized Europe. Most of the time, however, the groups struggling for power are minorities, such as the Tutsis, who launched a civil war in Rwanda in 1990, or the Sunnis in Iraq, who are still fighting to win a seat at the table there.

It's not just a lack of political power that can motivate ethnic groups to take up arms under the banner of nationalism; economic, social, and cultural inequality can, too. Scholars have consistently found that inequality along ethnic lines increases the risk of rebellion. The economist Frances Stewart, for example, has shown that such inequality is much more likely to lead to violent conflict than inequality among individuals, because it is far easier to mobilize people along ethnic lines. Similarly, my own collaborative research has found that the risk of rebellion increases rapidly with economic inequality along ethnic lines; for example, the average Chechen is six times as poor as the average Russian, which translates into a tenfold increase in the propensity for rebellion.

These findings are not limited to ethnic groups caught in power struggles over the control of existing countries; they also apply to minorities seeking self-rule. States usually view such demands as anathema to their sovereignty, and so they often resist making even limited compromises with the groups issuing them. They are disinclined, for example, to grant them regional autonomy. This stubbornness, in turn, tends to radicalize the aggrieved minority, causing them to aim instead for full-fledged independence, often through violence. Look no further than the Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Basques in Spain, the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, and several different ethnic groups in Myanmar.

Ethnic nationalism can cause conflict in another way, too: by leading to calls for territorial unity among a single ethnic group divided by international borders, which encourages rebels to rise up against their current states. After the breakup of Yugoslavia left ethnic Serbs stranded in several countries, their leader, Slobodan Milosevic, capitalized on the resulting resentment and advanced claims on territory in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Frequently, nostalgia is invoked. Characterizing the collapse of the Soviet Union as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century," Russian President Vladimir Putin has annexed Crimea and invaded eastern Ukraine and justified these moves by talking of the unification of the Russian nation. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has drawn heavily on the past glory of the Ottoman Empire to extend his country's influence far beyond its current borders. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban

has similarly invoked the Habsburg empire, accepting Russian help to back Hungarian-minority militias inside Ukraine that advocate separatism.

Ethnic nationalism is most likely to lead to civil war, but it can also trigger interstate war by encouraging leaders to make the sorts of domestic appeals that can increase tensions with foreign countries. That dynamic has been at play in the disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, India and Pakistan, and Greece and Turkey. Researchers have found some evidence that political inequality along ethnic lines makes things worse: when ethnonationalist leaders believe that their kin communities in neighboring countries are being treated badly, they are more inclined to come to their rescue with military force.

What's more, those ethnonationalist leaders are typically hostile to international organizations that favor minority rights, multiethnic governance, and compromise. In their eyes, calls for power sharing contradict their ethnic group's rightful dominance. They view the protection of human rights and the rule of law, as well as humanitarian interventions, such as peacekeeping operations, as direct threats to their ethnonationalist agendas, and so they work to undermine them. Russia has explicitly sought to weaken international law and international institutions in order to create more room for its own project of occupation in Crimea. Israel has done the same thing in the service of its occupation of the West Bank. Trump, who has called for an end to U.S. sanctions on Russia and moved the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, has actively backed these ethnonationalist

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impulses, further encouraging the erosion of the postwar consensus that put a cap on ethnic conflict.

If all of these are the risk factors for ethnic nationalism sliding into ethnic conflict, then where are they most prevalent today? Statistical analysis suggests that the ethnically diverse but still relatively peaceful countries most at risk of descending into violence are Ethiopia, Iran, Pakistan, and the Republic of the Congo. These are all developing countries with histories of conflict and where minorities face discrimination and exclusion from power.

The risk of conflict in the developed world is much lower, but even there, ethnic nationalism could well threaten peace. In Spain, the rise of the new right-wing populist party Vox has put pressure on two center-right parties, the People's Party and Citizens, to become even less willing to compromise with Catalan nationalists, setting the stage for an enduring standoff that could turn violent if Madrid resorts to even harsher repressive measures. In Northern Ireland, Brexit could lead to the reimposition of customs checks on the border with the Republic of Ireland, a development that could destroy the agreement that has kept the peace since 1998. In eastern Europe, the return of ethnic nationalism threatens to reawaken so-called frozen conflicts, interstate disputes that were stopped in place first by the Soviet Union and then by the EU. Beyond the outbreak of new wars, the weakening of liberal pressures to share power and respect minority rights will likely embolden ethnonationalists to perpetuate ongoing conflicts—particularly the long-standing ones in Israel, Myanmar, and Turkey. Across the globe, after seven decades of

steady progress toward peace, the trend could soon be reversed.

## THE PATH TO PEACE

In order to head off such destructive consequences, it may be tempting to see ethnic nationalism as part of the solution rather than the problem. Instead of trying to resist such urges, the thinking goes, one should encourage them, since they are likely to bring political borders in line with national borders, thus eliminating the grievances at the root of the problem. Some scholars, such as Edward Luttwak, have even recommended that ethnic groups simply be allowed to fight it out, arguing that the short-term pain of war is worth the long-term benefit of the stability that comes when ethnic dominance replaces ethnic diversity. Yet as the case of Syria has shown, such harsh strategies tend to perpetuate resentment, not consolidate peace.

Others, such as the political scientist Chaim Kaufmann, contend that the best way to diffuse ethnic conflict is to partition a state along ethnic lines and then transfer populations among the new political entities so that each group has its own territory. After World War II, for example, Western policymakers supported population transfers in the hopes that they would lead to, in the words of the historian Tony Judt, “a Europe of nation states more ethnically homogenous than ever before.” The problem with this option, however, is that even with large-scale ethnic cleansing—which tends to be both bloody and morally dubious—there is no guarantee that separation will create sufficiently neat dividing lines. If Catalonia broke free from Spain, for example, a new minority problem would crop up within

Catalonia, since many non-Catalans would still live there.

Of course, where widespread violence and hatred have destroyed all potential for peaceful cohabitation, ethnic separation may well constitute the only viable solution. That's why, for example, the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still enjoys widespread support, at least outside Israel. Yet the problem remains that there are no clear criteria for just how violent and generally hopeless a situation needs to be to justify division. Without such a clear benchmark, secessionism could destabilize interstate borders around the world. Disgruntled groups and irredentist states the world over would have more cause to resort to arms to boost their influence.

Although there are good reasons to be skeptical of these radical solutions of ethnic separation, nationalism cannot be wished away. Despite the emergence of such organizations as the EU, supranational bodies are not going to replace nation-states anytime soon, because people still mostly identify with their nation, rather than with remote and unelected regional bodies. For the EU, for example, the problem is not the lack of stronger decision-making authority but the absence of pan-European solidarity of the type that would allow, say, Germans to see themselves as part of the same political community as Greeks. Thus, any hope of replacing the nation-state is bound to be futile in the near future.

### **CONTAINING NATIONALISM**

Nationalism should therefore be contained, not abolished. And to truly contain ethnic nationalism, governments

will have to address its deeper causes, not just its immediate effects. Both supply and demand—that is, the willingness of governments to implement ethnonationalist policies and the appetite for such policies among populations—will have to be decreased.

On the supply side, political elites need to reinstate the informal taboo against explicitly discriminatory appeals and policies. Ultimately, there is no place for the tolerance of intolerance. What is required is courage on the part of centrist politicians to fight bigotry and defend the basic principles of human decency. Multiethnic democracies will also have to take more forceful steps to resist foreign attempts to stoke grievances among their ethnic groups and sow domestic divisions, such as Russia's interference campaign during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, when, for example, Kremlin-backed operatives masqueraded as Black Lives Matter activists on social media to stir up racial conflict.

Within international organizations, governments must defend core liberal values more strenuously. In the case of the EU, that means cutting the financial support for illiberal member states and perhaps even creating a new, truly liberal European organization with more stringent membership criteria. It also means doubling down on the promotion of inclusive practices such as power sharing. The UN and regional organizations, such as the EU and the African Union, have done much to encourage such solutions. A weakening of these organizations could also undermine the norms they are reinforcing. Inclusive practices tend to spread from state to state, but so do exclusive ones:



just as it did in 1930s Europe, the commitment to power sharing and group rights has now started to slip in eastern Europe and in other parts of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa.

As for the demand side, ethnic nationalism tends to attract the most support from those who have been disadvantaged by globalization and laissez-faire capitalism. Populist demagogues have an easy time exploiting growing socioeconomic inequalities, especially those between states' geographic centers and their peripheries, and they blame ethnically distinct immigrants or resident minorities. Part of the answer is to retool immigration policies so as to better integrate newcomers. Yet without policies that reduce inequality, populist appeals that depict out-groups as welfare sponges will only gain traction. So governments hoping to tamp down ethnic nationalism should set up programs that offer job training to the unemployed in depressed regions, and they should prevent the further hollowing out of welfare programs. Although the economic problems on which ethnic nationalism feeds are most acute in the United States and the United Kingdom, inequality has been increasing across western Europe, and many of the welfare states in the region have been hit hard by austerity policies.

Ultimately, however, the answer to ethnic nationalism goes beyond narrow economic fixes; political elites must argue explicitly for ethnic tolerance and supranational cooperation, portraying them as matters of basic human decency and security. In Europe, politicians have preferred to use the EU as a scapegoat for their own failings rather than point out its crucial contribution to peace.

Setting aside the question of whether and how the EU should be reformed, European political elites would do well to address their own homemade problems of socioeconomic inequality and regional underdevelopment. They should stop pretending that draconian cuts to immigration levels will do the trick when it comes to countering populism and ethnic nationalism.

As the violent first half of the twentieth century recedes into history, it becomes harder and harder to invoke the specter of ethnic conflict. It would be tragic if memories of that past were forgotten. For what they suggest is that the journey from ethnic nationalism to ethnic war may not be so long, after all. 🌐

# ESSAYS



*Instead of expanding the liberal world order, the United States and its partners should consolidate the gains it has reaped.*

*—Jennifer Lind and William Wohlforth*

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# The Future of the Liberal Order Is Conservative

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## A Strategy to Save the System

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*Jennifer Lind and William C. Wohlforth*

**T**he liberal world order is in peril. Seventy-five years after the United States helped found it, this global system of alliances, institutions, and norms is under attack like never before. From within, the order is contending with growing populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism. Externally, it faces mounting pressure from a pugnacious Russia and a rising China. At stake is the survival of not just the order itself but also the unprecedented economic prosperity and peace it has nurtured.

The order is clearly worth saving, but the question is how. Keep calm and carry on, some of its defenders argue; today's difficulties will pass, and the order is resilient enough to survive them. Others appreciate the gravity of the crisis but insist that the best response is to vigorously reaffirm the order's virtues and confront its external challengers. Bold Churchillian moves—sending more American troops to Syria, offering Ukraine more help to kick out pro-Russian forces—would help make the liberal international order great again. Only by doubling down on the norms and institutions that made the liberal world order so successful, they say, can that order be saved.

Such defenders of the order tend to portray the challenge as a struggle between liberal countries trying to sustain the status quo and dissatisfied authoritarians seeking to revise it. What they miss, however, is that for the past 25 years, the international order crafted by and for liberal states has itself been profoundly revisionist, aggressively exporting democracy and expanding in both depth and

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breadth. The scale of the current problems means that more of the same is not viable; the best response is to make the liberal order more conservative. Instead of expanding it to new places and new domains, the United States and its partners should consolidate the gains the order has reaped.

The debate over U.S. grand strategy has traditionally been portrayed as a choice between retrenchment and ambitious expansionism. Conservatism offers a third way: it is a prudent option that seeks to preserve what has been won and minimize the chances that more will be lost. From a conservative vantage point, the United States' other choices—at one extreme, undoing long-standing alliances and institutions or, at the other extreme, further extending American power and spreading American values—represent dangerous experiments. This is especially so in an era when great-power politics has returned and the relative might of the countries upholding the order has shrunk.

It is time for Washington and its liberal allies to gird themselves for a prolonged period of competitive coexistence with illiberal great powers, time to shore up existing alliances rather than add new ones, and time to get out of the democracy-promotion business. Supporters of the order may protest this shift, deeming it capitulation. On the contrary, conservatism is the best way to preserve the global position of the United States and its allies—and save the order they built.

## **A REVISIONIST ORDER**

Since World War II, the United States has pursued its interests in part by creating and maintaining the web of institutions, norms, and rules that make up the U.S.-led liberal order. This order is not a myth, as some allege, but a living, breathing framework that shapes much of international politics. It is U.S.-led because it is built on a foundation of American hegemony: the United States provides security guarantees to its allies in order to restrain regional competition, and the U.S. military ensures an open global commons so that trade can flow uninterrupted. It is liberal because the governments that support it have generally tried to infuse it with liberal norms about economics, human rights, and politics. And it is an order—something bigger than Washington and its policies—because the United States has partnered with a posse of like-minded and influential countries and because its rules and norms have gradually assumed a degree of independent influence.



This order has expanded over time. In the years after World War II, it grew both geographically and functionally, successfully integrating two rising powers, West Germany and Japan. Supporting liberalism and interweaving their security policies with the United States', these countries accepted the order, acting as "responsible stakeholders" well before the term was optimistically applied to China. As the Cold War played out, NATO added not just West Germany but also Greece, Turkey, and Spain. The European Economic Community (the EU's predecessor) doubled its membership. And core economic institutions, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), broadened their remit.

After the Cold War, the liberal order expanded dramatically. With the Soviet Union gone and China still weak, the states at the core of the

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order enjoyed a commanding global position, and they used it to expand their system. In the Asia-Pacific, the United States strengthened its security commitments to Australia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and other partners. In Europe, NATO and the EU took on more and more members, widened and deepened cooperation among their

members, and began intervening far beyond Europe's borders. The EU developed "neighborhood policies" to enhance security, prosperity, and liberal practices across Eurasia, the Middle East, and North Africa; NATO launched missions in Afghanistan, the Gulf of Aden, and Libya.

For liberals, this is simply what progress looks like. And to be sure, much of the order's dynamism—say, the GATT's transformation into the more permanent and institutional World Trade Organization, or the UN's increasingly ambitious peacekeeping agenda—met with broad support among liberal and authoritarian countries alike. But some key additions to the order clearly constituted revisionism by liberal countries, which, tellingly, were the only states that wanted them.

Most controversial were the changes that challenged the principle of sovereignty. Under the banner of "the responsibility to protect," governments, nongovernmental organizations, and activists began pushing a major strengthening of international law with the goal of holding states accountable for how they treated their own people. Potent security alliances such as NATO and powerful economic institutions such as

the IMF joined the game, too, adding their muscle to the campaign to spread liberal conceptions of human rights, freedom of information, markets, and politics.

Democracy promotion assumed a newly prominent role in U.S. grand strategy, with President Bill Clinton speaking of “democratic enlargement” and President George W. Bush championing his “freedom agenda.” The United States and its allies increasingly funded nongovernmental organizations to build civil society and spread democracy around the world, blurring the line between public and private efforts. U.S. taxpayers, for example, have footed the bill for the National

Endowment for Democracy, a nonprofit that promotes democracy and human rights in China, Russia, and elsewhere. Meddling in other states’ domestic affairs is old hat, but what was new was the overt and institutionalized nature of these activities, a sign of the order’s post-Cold War mojo. As Allen Weinstein, the co-founder of the National Endowment for Democracy, admitted in a 1991 interview, “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.”

As never before, state power, legal norms, and public-private partnerships were harnessed together to expand the order’s—and Washington’s—geopolitical reach. Perhaps the clearest example of these heightened ambitions came in the Balkans, where, in 1999, NATO harnessed its military power to the emerging “responsibility to protect” norm and coerced Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to acquiesce to Kosovo’s de facto independence—after which the United States and its allies openly joined forces with local civil society groups to topple him from power. It was a remarkably bold move. In just a few months, the United States and its allies transformed the politics of an entire region that had traditionally been considered peripheral, priming it for incorporation into the security and economic structures dominated by the liberal West.



To say that all of this represented revisionism is not to equate it morally with, say, Beijing's militarization in the South China Sea or Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and electoral meddling in the United States and Europe. Rather, the point is that the order's horizons have expanded dramatically, with state power, new legal norms, overt and covert actions, and public-private partnerships together stretching the order wider and pushing it deeper. No country these days is consistently interested in maintaining the status quo; we are all revisionists now. Revisionism undertaken by illiberal states is often seen as mere power grabbing, but revisionism undertaken by liberal states has also resulted in geopolitical rewards: expanded alliances, increased influence, and more perquisites for the chief sponsors of the order, the United States above all.

### **A WHOLE NEW WORLD**

There are appropriate times to expand, but today is not one of them. Although the liberal order is still backed by a powerful coalition of states, that coalition's margin of superiority has narrowed markedly. In 1995, the United States and its major allies produced some 60 percent of global output (in terms of purchasing power parity); now, that figure stands at 40 percent. Back then, they were responsible for 80 percent of global defense expenditures; today, they account for just 52 percent. It is becoming more difficult to maintain the order, let alone expand it. All the while, the order is suffering from an internal crisis of legitimacy that is already proving to be a constraint, as war-weary Americans, Euroskeptical Britons, and others across the West have taken to the polls to decry so-called globalist elites.

The order's illiberal challengers, meanwhile, have gotten savvier about acting on their long-held dissatisfaction. China and Russia have insulated themselves from external influences by manipulating information, controlling the media, and deploying new information-age techniques to monitor their populations and keep them docile. They have modernized their militaries and embraced clever asymmetric strategies to put the order's defenders on the back foot. The result is that the United States and its allies not only command a slimmer power advantage relative to in the halcyon 1990s but also face a tougher task in sustaining the order.

One might argue that the order should neutralize these challengers by bringing them in. Indeed, such was the motivation behind the

U.S. strategy of engaging a rising China. But even though illiberal countries can participate productively in many aspects of the order, they can never be true insiders. Their statist approach to economics and politics makes it impossible for them to follow Germany's and Japan's path and accept any order that is U.S.-led or liberal. They see U.S.-dominated security arrangements as potential threats directed at them. And they have no interest in making concessions on democracy and human rights, since doing so would undermine vital tools of their authoritarian control. Nor do they wish to embrace liberal economic principles, which run afoul of the (often corrupt) role of the state in their economies.

Given their fundamental aversion to the core precepts of the liberal order, it's no wonder that illiberal powers have invested resources in creating alternative institutions reflecting their own statist principles—bodies such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the New Development Bank, the Eurasian Economic Union, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. There was never a chance that a powerful, undemocratic Russia was going to join NATO, just as there was never a chance that China was going to be satisfied with U.S. military dominance in Asia. U.S. security commitments are directed against these very states. Washington and its allies buy into rules and values that these countries see as threatening. As long as the security commitments remain in place and the expansionist project continues, illiberal states will never fully integrate into the order.

Perhaps, one might argue, the order's authoritarian adversaries are paper tigers. In that case, the order has no reason to adopt a conservative stance; all it has to do is wait for these fragile governments to meet their inevitable demise. The problem with this bet is that it lay behind the liberal order's recent expansion, and yet over the past couple of decades, illiberal governments have only grown more authoritarian. Indeed, history has shown that great powers' domestic regimes rarely collapse in peacetime; the Soviet case was an anomaly. Cheering on political dissent within great powers from afar rarely succeeds, and by feeding narratives about their being encircled by threats, it often backfires.

The bottom line is that the external challenges to the order are happening now. Insisting on continued expansion while waiting for adversaries to decline, liberalize, and accept American leadership is likely to only exacerbate the problems afflicting the order. If that happens, the ability of the United States and its allies to sustain the



order will decline faster than will the capability of their opponents to challenge it. And a failure to head off the rising costs of maintaining the order will only increase the domestic political pressure to abandon it altogether.

### **CONSERVATISM IN PRACTICE**

A more conservative order would recognize that both internal and external circumstances have changed and would adjust accordingly. First and most important, this demands a shift to a status quo mindset in Washington and allied capitals. Despite U.S. President Donald Trump's occasional bluster about withdrawing from the world, his administration has retained all of the United States' existing commitments while adding ambitious new ones, notably an effort to radically scale back Iran's influence. And although the Obama administration was often accused of retrenchment, it, too, kept U.S. commitments in place and even tried its hand at regime change in Libya. Under a conservative approach, Washington would set aside such revisionist projects in order to concentrate its attention and resources on managing great-power rivalries.

As part of this, the United States should reduce the expectation that it will take on new allies. At the very least, any prospective ally should bring more capabilities than costs—a litmus test that has not been applied in recent years. Because the liberal order is in dire need of consolidation rather than expansion, it makes no sense to add small and weak states facing internal problems, especially if including them will exacerbate tensions among existing allies or, worse, with great-power rivals. In July 2018, NATO, with U.S. support, formally invited Macedonia to join the alliance (reviving a dispute with Greece over the name of the country), and the Trump administration has backed NATO membership for Bosnia, too (over the objections of the Serbian minority there). These straws may not break the camel's back, but the principle of limitless expansion might.

The case of Taiwan shows what a successful conservative approach looks like in practice, demonstrating how the United States can deter a rival great power from expanding while preventing a partner from provoking it. For decades, Washington has declared that the island's future should be resolved peacefully. Leaders on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have sometimes sought to overturn the status quo, as when Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian began making pro-independence

moves after he was elected in 2000. In response, U.S. President George W. Bush publicly warned Chen against unilaterally changing the status quo—a tough stance toward a longtime U.S. partner that helped keep the peace. This policy may be tested again, as demographic and economic trends strengthen the Taiwanese people’s sense of national identity, as China grows more assertive, and as voices in the United States call for an unambiguously pro-Taiwan policy. But Washington should hold fast: for decades, conservatism has served it, and the region, well.

A conservative order would also entail drawing clearer lines between official efforts to promote democracy and those undertaken independently by civil society groups. By example and activism, vibrant civil societies in the United States and other liberal countries can do much to further democracy abroad. When governments get in the game, however, the results tend to backfire. As the political scientists Alexander Downes and Lindsey O’Rourke found in their comprehensive study, foreign-imposed regime change rarely leads to improved relations and frequently has the opposite effect. Liberal states should stand ready to help when a foreign government itself seeks assistance. But when one resists help, it is best to stay out. Meddling will only aggravate that government’s concerns about violations of sovereignty and tar opposition forces with the charge of being foreign pawns.

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*The United States should reduce the expectation that it will take on new allies.*

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Far from ceding power to illiberal great powers, a strategy of conservatism would directly address those external threats. Part of the reason those countries contest the order is that it exacerbates their insecurities. Restraining the order’s expansionist impulses would reveal just how much of illiberal states’ current revisionism is defensive in nature and how much is driven by sheer ambition. It could also stymie potential balancing against the order by illiberal states—China, Iran, Russia, and others. Although these revisionists have many divergent geopolitical and economic interests that currently limit their cooperation, the more their rulers worry that their grip on power is under threat from a liberal order, the more they will be inclined to overcome their differences and team up to check liberal powers. Reduce that fear, and there will be more opportunities for the liberal states to divide and rule, or at least divide and deter.

A less revisionist order could take the edge off of growing great-power rivalry in another way, by fully exploiting the advantages of a defensive, rather than offensive, stance. In general, preserving the status quo is cheaper, easier, and less dangerous than overturning it, as strategists from Sun-tzu to Thomas Schelling have argued. The order is deeply set, legitimate, and institutionalized. When it remains committed to the status quo, it is easy for its defenders to set redlines clarifying which challenges will be reversed and which won't, a strategy that can help contain adversaries and limit rivalry. Yet when all the players in the game are revisionists, setting unambiguous lines becomes much more difficult; what is acceptable today could become unacceptable tomorrow. Shifting to a more clearly status quo orientation would increase the chances that the United States and its allies could strike explicit or, more likely, implicit bargains with their rivals. Like any strategic approach, conservatism offers no guarantees and requires skilled statecraft. But by setting more realistic goals, it can dramatically increase the likelihood of success.

Greater conservatism would also help bolster the order against internal challenges. Although these will require domestic policies to address, because a less ambitious order would provoke less pushback from authoritarian states—and such pushback is costly to deal with—it would also be a more sustainable order. The higher the costs of maintaining the order, the more suspicion about it grows, and the harder it gets to maintain domestic support for it. Polls show that American voters like the country's existing alliances. What many balk at are commitments they see as costly adventures unrelated to core national security concerns. Continued expansion risks feeding those perceptions and generating a popular backlash that would throw the baby out with the bath water. Conservatism, by contrast, would minimize that risk.

Conservatism today need not mean conservatism forever. Any ambitious enterprise, whether it be a political movement or a corporation, undergoes phases of expansion and phases of consolidation. After a firm engages in acquisition, for example, the C-suite must ask whether the new management and workers are fully on board with the firm's culture and mission and must address any dislocations caused by the recent changes. Consolidation, then, should be seen as a prudent reaction to expansion. In the future, conditions may change such that the order can responsibly start looking for ways to grow, but that day has not yet arrived.

## **A TIME TO HEAL**

One might wonder whether an order grounded in liberal principles can in fact practice restraint. In the mid-eighteenth century, the philosopher David Hume warned that the United Kingdom was prosecuting its wars against illiberal adversaries with “imprudent vehemence,” contradicting the dictates of the balance of power and risking national bankruptcy. Perhaps such imprudence is part and parcel of the foundational ideology and domestic politics of liberal powers. As the political scientist John Mearsheimer has put it, “Liberal states have a crusader mentality hardwired into them.”

Indeed, the principles of liberalism apply to all individuals, not just those who happen to be citizens of a liberal country. On what basis, then, can a country committed to liberal ideals stand idly by when they are trampled abroad—especially when that country is powerful enough to do something about it? In the United States, leaders often try to square the circle by contending that spreading democracy actually serves the national interest, but the truth is that power and principle don’t always go together.

Because liberal convictions are part of their identity, Americans often feel they should support those who rise up against tyranny. Perhaps in the abstract one can promise restraint, but when demonstrators take to Tahrir Square in Cairo, Maidan in Kiev, or Bolotnaya Square in Moscow, many Americans want their government to stand with those flying freedom’s flag. And when countries want to join the order’s key security and economic institutions, Americans want the United States to say yes, even when there is scant strategic sense in it. Political incentives encourage this impulse, since politicians in the United States know that they can score points by bashing any leader who sells out lovers of liberty.

There is evidence, however, that liberal countries can check their appetite for spreading virtue. Nineteenth-century British statesmen liked to think that liberal principles and imperial interests often coincided, but when the two clashed, they almost always chose realism over idealism—as when the United Kingdom backed the Ottoman Empire for reasons of realpolitik despite domestic pressure to take action on behalf of persecuted Christians in the empire. The United States in the twentieth century had idealistic presidents, such as Woodrow Wilson and Jimmy Carter, but it also had more pragmatic ones, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Nixon.



The period of détente in U.S.-Soviet relations, which lasted throughout the 1970s, exemplifies the possibility of a liberal order going on the defensive. During this period, the West largely followed a live-and-let-live strategy informed by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's controversial maxim to not hold détente hostage to improvements in Moscow's human rights record. Washington negotiated with Moscow on arms control and a range of other security issues and held frequent summits symbolizing its acceptance of the Soviet Union as a superpower equal. In the 1975 Helsinki Accords, aimed at reducing East-West tensions, the United States effectively accommodated itself to the reality of Soviet suzerainty in Eastern Europe.

The essence of the deal was that the United States would render unto the Soviets roughly a third of the world—while making it clear that they should not dare come after its two-thirds. To be sure, superpower competition never truly ceased, and in the 1980s, détente died out altogether. But while it was in place, the strategy worked to limit U.S.-Soviet rivalry and facilitate rapprochement with China. This gave the United States and its allies the breathing room they needed to get their own houses in order and patch up alliances torn apart by domestic upheavals, the Vietnam War, and wrangling over trade and monetary policy. What this history suggests is that today's liberal order, for a time at least, can be conservative.

Liberal countries can never be thoroughly status quo actors, for they foster relatively free economies and civil societies presided over by governments committed to giving those vibrant forces free rein. Left to their own devices, those forces will always be revisionist—such is the nature of liberalism. But that inherent revisionism need not prevent leaders of liberal states, responsible for dealing with the world as it is, from recognizing that conditions have changed and deciding to trim their sails and tack away from expansion. That is what those leaders must do now: to protect an order based on liberalism, they must embrace conservatism. 🌐



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# Who's Afraid of Budget Deficits?

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## How Washington Should End Its Debt Obsession

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*Jason Furman and Lawrence H. Summers*

**T**he United States' annual budget deficit is set to reach nearly \$1 trillion this year, more than four percent of GDP and up from \$585 billion in 2016. As a result of the continuing shortfall, over the next decade, the national debt—the total amount owed by the U.S. government—is projected to balloon from its current level of 78 percent of GDP to 105 percent of GDP. Such huge amounts of debt are unprecedented for the United States during a time of economic prosperity.

Does it matter? To some economists and policymakers, the trend spells disaster, dragging down economic growth and potentially leading to a full-blown debt crisis before too long. These deficit fundamentalists see the failure of the Simpson-Bowles plan (a 2010 proposal to sharply cut deficits) as a major missed opportunity and argue that policymakers should make tackling the national debt a top priority. On the other side, deficit dismissers say the United States can ignore fiscal constraints entirely given low interest rates (which make borrowing cheap), the eagerness of investors in global capital markets to buy U.S. debt (which makes borrowing easy), and the absence of high inflation (which means the Federal Reserve can keep interest rates low).

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*Budget buster: Trump after signing a tax bill, Washington, D.C., December 2017*

The deficit dismissers have a point. Long-term structural declines in interest rates mean that policymakers should reconsider the traditional fiscal approach that has often wrong-headedly limited worthwhile investments in such areas as education, health care, and infrastructure. Yet many remain fixated on cutting spending, especially on entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicaid. That is a mistake. Politicians and policymakers should focus on urgent social problems, not deficits.

But they shouldn't ignore fiscal constraints entirely. The deficit fundamentalists are right that the debt cannot be allowed to grow forever. And the government cannot set budget policy without any limiting principles or guides as to what is and what is not possible or desirable.

There is another policy approach that neither prioritizes cutting deficits nor dismisses them. Unlike in the past, budgeters need not make reducing projected deficits a priority. But they should ensure that, except during downturns, when fiscal stimulus is required, new spending and tax cuts do not add to the debt. This middle course would tolerate large and growing deficits without making a major effort to reduce them—at least for the foreseeable future. But it would also stop the policy trend of the last two years, which will otherwise continue to pile up debt.



Policymakers must also recognize that maintaining existing public services, let alone meeting new needs, will, over time, require higher revenues. Today's large deficits derive more from falling revenues than rising entitlement spending. More spending is not, by itself, something to be afraid of. The United States needs to invest in solutions to its fundamental challenges: finding jobs for the millions of Americans who have given up hope of finding them, providing health insurance for the millions who still lack it, and extending opportunities to the children left behind by an inadequate educational system.

### **THE TRUTH ABOUT DEFICITS**

Economic textbooks teach that government deficits raise interest rates, crowd out private investment, and leave everyone poorer. Cutting deficits, on the other hand, reduces interest rates, spurring productive investment. Those forces may have been important in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when long-term real interest rates (nominal interest rates minus the rate of inflation) averaged around four percent and stock market valuations were much lower than they are today. The deficit reduction efforts of Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton contributed to the investment-led boom in the 1990s.

Today, however, the situation is very different. Although government debt as a share of GDP has risen far higher, long-term real interest rates on government debt have fallen much lower. As shown in the table, in 2000, the Congressional Budget Office forecast that by 2010, the U.S. debt-to-GDP ratio would be six percent. The same ten-year forecast in 2018 put the figure for 2028 at 105 percent. Real interest rates on ten-year government bonds, meanwhile, fell from 4.3 percent in 2000 to an average of 0.8 percent last year. Those low rates haven't been manufactured by the Federal Reserve, nor are they just the result of the financial crisis. They preceded the crisis and appear to be rooted in a set of deeper forces, including lower investment demand, higher savings rates, and widening inequality. Interest rates may well rise a bit over the next several years, but financial markets expect them to end up far below where they stood in the 1980s and 1990s. Federal Reserve Chair Jay Powell has noted that the Fed's current 2.375 percent interest rate is close to the neutral rate, at which the economy grows at a sustainable pace, and financial markets expect that the federal funds rate will not rise any further.

Low interest rates mean that governments can sustain higher levels of debt, since their financing costs are lower. Although the national debt represents a far larger percentage of GDP than in recent decades, the U.S. government currently pays around the same proportion of GDP in interest on its debt, adjusted for inflation, as it has on average since World War II. The cost of deficits to the Treasury is the degree to which the rate of interest paid on the debt exceeds inflation. By this standard, the resources the United States needs to devote to interest payments are also around their historical average as a share of the economy. Although both real and nominal interest rates are set to rise in the coming decade, interest payments on the debt are projected to remain well below the share reached in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when deficit reduction topped the economic agenda.

Government deficits also seem to be hurting the economy less than they used to. Textbook economic theory holds that high levels of government debt make it more expensive for companies to borrow. But these days, interest rates are low, stock market prices are high relative to company earnings, and major companies hold large amounts of cash on their balance sheets. No one seriously argues that the cost of capital is holding back businesses from investing. Cutting the deficit, then, is unlikely to spur much private investment.

Moreover, the lower interest rates that would result from smaller deficits would not be an unambiguously good thing. Many economists and policymakers, including former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and the economist Martin Feldstein, worry that interest rates are already too low. Cheap borrowing, they argue, with some merit, has led investors to put their money in unproductive ventures, created financial bubbles, and left central bankers with less leeway to cut rates in response to the next recession. If the United States cut its deficits by three percent of GDP, enough to stabilize the national debt, interest rates would fall even further.

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### The Dog That Didn't Bark

Ten-Year Projected Debt and Ten-Year Interest Rate, 2000 and 2018

|   | 2000 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|
| Debt-to-GDP ratio projected for ten years later | 6%   | 105% |
| Real interest rate on ten-year government bonds | 4.3% | 0.8% |

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office; U.S. Department of the Treasury; authors' calculations.

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Some commentators worry that rising deficits don't just slowly eat away at economic growth, as the textbooks warn; they could lead to a fiscal crisis in which the United States loses access to credit markets, sparking an economic meltdown. There is precious little economic theory or historical evidence to justify this fear. Few, if any, fiscal crises have taken place in countries that borrow in their own currencies and print their own money. In Japan, for example, the national debt has exceeded 100 percent of GDP for almost two decades. But interest rates on long-term government debt remain near zero, and real interest rates are well below zero. Even in Italy, which does not borrow in its own currency or set its own monetary policy and, according to the markets, faces a substantial risk of defaulting, long-term real interest rates are less than two percent, despite high levels of debt and the government's plans for major new spending.

The eurozone debt crisis at the start of this decade is often held up as a cautionary tale about the perils of fiscal excess. But stagnant growth (made worse by government spending cuts in the face of a recession) was as much the cause of the eurozone's debt problems as profligate spending. And countries such as those in the eurozone, which borrow in currencies they do not control, face a far higher risk of debt crises than countries such as the United States, which have their own currencies. Countries with their own currencies can always have their central bank buy government debt or print money to repay it; countries without them can't.

Higher levels of debt do have downsides. They could make it harder for governments to summon the political will to stimulate the economy in a downturn. But saying that a country would be better off with lower debt is not the same as saying that it would be better off lowering its debt. The risks associated with high debt levels are small relative to the harm cutting deficits would do.

It's true that future generations will have to pay the interest on today's debt, but at current rates, even a 50-percentage-point increase in the U.S. debt-to-GDP ratio would raise real interest payments as a share of GDP by just 0.5 percentage points. That would bring those payments closer to the top of their historical range, but not into uncharted territory.

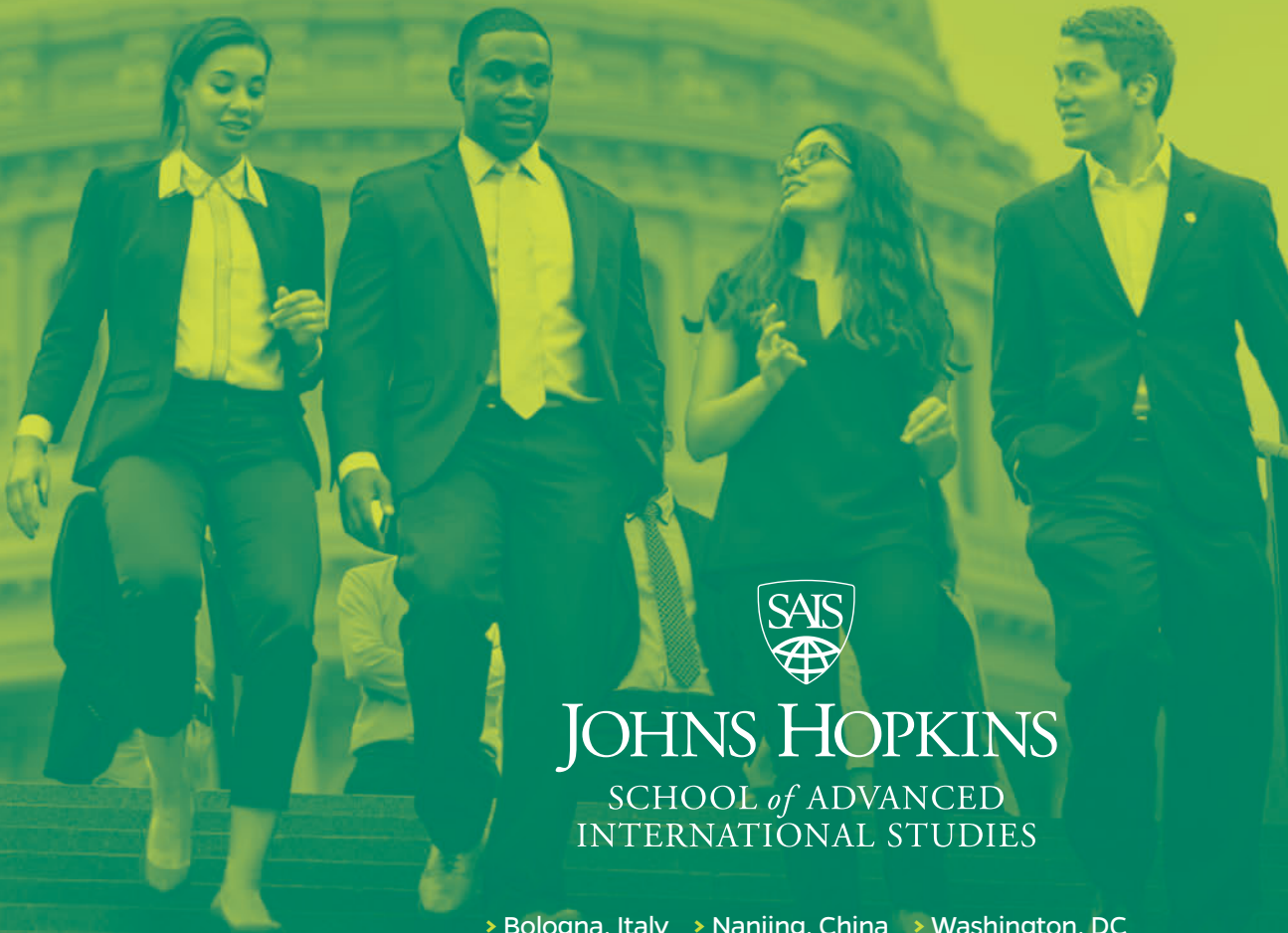
Deficits, then, should not cause policymakers much concern, at least for now. But some economists adopt an even more radical view. Advocates of what is known as modern monetary theory (MMT), such as Stephanie

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Kelton, an economist and former adviser to Senator Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign, have been widely interpreted as arguing that governments that borrow in their own currencies have no reason to concern themselves with budget constraints. Taxes should be set based not on spending levels but on macroeconomic conditions, and deficit financing has no effect on interest rates. Some politicians have invoked those positions to suggest that the government need not worry about debt at all. (Kelton and other MMT supporters claim that this is a misinterpretation of their theory, but it's not clear what their true arguments are, and most of the political supporters of MMT have used it as a justification for ignoring government debt entirely.)

This goes too far. When the economy is held back by lack of demand during a downturn, modern monetary theory gives similar answers to those provided by more mainstream Keynesian theory—that is, that more spending or lower taxes will have little effect on interest rates. But the modern monetarist approach is a poor guide to policy in normal economic times, when it would prescribe large tax hikes to control inflation—not exactly the policy its advocates highlight.

In truth, no one knows the benefits and costs of different debt levels—75 percent of GDP, 100 percent of GDP, or even 150 percent of GDP. According to the best projections, the United States is on course to exceed these figures over the next 30 years. Although the U.S. government will remain solvent for the foreseeable future, it would be imprudent to allow the debt-to-GDP ratio to rise forever in an uncertain world. Trying to make this situation sustainable without adjusting fiscal policy or raising interest rates, as recommended by some advocates of modern monetary theory, is a recipe for hyperinflation.

## **HOW WE GOT HERE**

There is a widely held misconception that the deficit has risen primarily because government programs have grown more generous. Not so. Deficits have ballooned because a series of tax cuts have dramatically reduced government revenue below past projections and historical levels. The tax cuts passed by Presidents George W. Bush and Donald Trump totaled three percent of GDP—much more than the projected increases in entitlement spending over the next 30 years. Those cuts meant that in 2018, the federal government took in revenue equivalent to just 16 percent of GDP, the lowest level in half a century, except for a few brief periods in the aftermath of recessions. Without the Bush

and Trump tax cuts (and the interest payments on the debt that went with them), last year's federal budget would have come close to balancing. As things stand, however, the Congressional Budget Office projects that revenue over the next five years will continue to average less than 17 percent of GDP, a percentage point lower than under President Ronald Reagan.

Today's revenue levels are even lower relative to in the past than these share-of-GDP figures imply. If tax policy is left unchanged, government revenue should rise as a share of GDP. In part, this is because of what economists call "real bracket creep." Society has decided that it is fair to tax people making, say, \$1 million at a higher rate than those making, say, \$50,000.

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*The United States has more of a revenue problem than an entitlement problem.*

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Over time, economic growth means more people earn higher incomes, adjusted for inflation, and so more people pay higher tax rates.

More serious than leading to inadequate revenue is the way that tax cuts in the last 25 years have misallocated resources. They have worsened income inequality and, at best, have done very little for economic growth. The most recent tax cut, in 2017, will cost \$1.9 trillion over ten years, but it boosted growth only slightly, if at all, while shifting the distribution of income toward the wealthy and reducing the number of people with health insurance.

Look abroad, and it becomes obvious that the United States has more of a revenue problem than an entitlement problem. U.S. spending on social programs ranks among the lowest in 35 advanced economies, yet the country has the highest deficit relative to its GDP in the group. That is because the United States brings in the fifth-lowest total revenue as a share of GDP among those 35 countries.

The idea that higher spending, particularly on entitlements, is to blame for rising deficits stems from a combination of faulty numbers and faulty analysis. Total U.S. government spending, excluding interest payments, amounts to 19 percent of GDP, up only slightly from its average of 18 percent between 1960 and 2000. Social Security and Medicare spending are set to rise by more than this over the coming decades, but that rise will be at least partially offset by other spending reductions and will do less to increase the deficit in terms of present value, which accounts for the current value of future spending and borrowing, than the tax cuts passed in the last two and a half decades.

What's more, looking at shares of GDP is a bad way to understand the underlying causes of deficits and how they might shrink. Entitlement costs have risen not because the programs have become more generous but largely because the population as a whole has aged, a fact that is mostly the result of falling birthrates. As retirees' share of the population grows, so does spending on Social Security and Medicare. That is not making government spending more generous to the elderly, and there is no reason why retirees should bear most of the burden of lower birthrates.

One might argue that the rise in entitlement spending caused by longer life spans represents an increase in the generosity of Social Security and Medicare, since people are collecting benefits for a longer period of time. But that is the wrong way to look at it. By 2025, the standard retirement age for Social Security will complete its rise from 65 to 67, reducing the time that most people will collect benefits. Many lower-income Americans, moreover, are dying younger than they used to. That disturbing trend means that poorer retirees are collecting less in Social Security payments than before.

There's another reason that shares of GDP make for a bad way to measure how much the government does: the things the government buys cost much more in relative terms than they used to. Over the last 30 years, the cost of both a day in a hospital and a year in college has risen by a factor of more than 200 relative to the price of a television set. It's also getting more expensive for the United States to maintain its global military advantage as potential adversaries, such as China, Iran, and Russia, boost their military spending.

At a more abstract level, rising inequality also pushes up the cost of achieving any given policy goal. Most people acknowledge that the government has some role to play in redistributing income, even though they disagree on how large that role should be. For any given amount of redistribution, more inequality means more spending.

## **DO NO HARM**

Although politicians shouldn't make the debt their top priority, they also shouldn't act as if it doesn't matter at all. Large mismatches between revenue and spending will have to be fixed at some point. All else being equal, it would be better to do so before the amounts involved get out of hand. And since economists aren't sure just how costly large deficits are, it would be prudent to keep government debt in check in case they turn out to be more harmful than expected.

Even setting aside these macroeconomic considerations, politicians should remember that running budget deficits does not replace the need to raise revenue or cut spending; it merely defers it. Sooner or later, government spending has to be paid for. It is hard to budget rationally and decide what expenditures and tax cuts are worthwhile when one obfuscates the ultimate cost of these policies. Policymakers won't be able to argue against a poorly designed but well-intentioned spending program or middle-class tax cut without any limiting principles for fiscal policy.

The right budget strategy must balance several competing considerations: it should get as close as possible to the most economically efficient policy while remaining understandable and politically sustainable. The optimal policy from an economic standpoint would be to gradually phase in spending cuts or tax increases at a rate that would prevent perpetual growth in the national debt as a share of the economy but would avoid doing serious harm to economic demand along the way. Such an approach, however, would be complicated and difficult to understand. Nuance doesn't sell.

A requirement that the federal government balance its budget or begin paying down the debt is easier to grasp but would impose far more deficit reduction than the economy needs or could bear. Such measures are also politically unsustainable. Even if policymakers passed such legislation tomorrow, they could not bind their successors to it. Clinton oversaw four balanced budgets and bequeathed a declining national debt to Bush, but a decade after Clinton left office, the debt was higher than when he arrived.

A simple approach to fiscal policy that would prove understandable, sustainable, and economically reasonable would be to focus on important investments but do no harm. In short, when you are in a hole, stop digging. That means that instead of passing unfunded legislation, Congress should pay for new measures with either spending cuts or extra revenues, except during recessions, when fiscal stimulus will be essential given the increased constraints on monetary policy now. This approach would provide a ready way to prioritize: if something is truly worth doing, it should be worth paying for. Such a course would also strike a reasonable balance between the harms of extra debt and the harms of deficit reduction. The deficit would continue climbing to unprecedented levels. But no longer would the United States be pursuing the reckless fiscal policies of the last two years, which, if continued, would add even more debt, even faster, while driving up inequality and failing to support growth.



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*Politicians should not let large deficits deter them from addressing the United States' fundamental challenges.*

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A lot of details would need to be worked out. Analysts will have to decide whether to exclude from their deficit calculations certain kinds of spending—such as infrastructure spending—that represent investments rather than current consumption. One critical question is whether analysts will use dynamic scoring, an approach that accounts for how a new policy will affect the economy when calculating what it will cost. Advocates of dynamic scoring argue that it provides more accurate cost estimates, but critics point out that getting the numbers right is tricky, so it's easy to

bake in overly optimistic assumptions and thus get almost any result you want. In truth, dynamic scoring is a useful tool, as long as it's done right.

Dynamic scoring is usually limited to tax debates. That's a mistake, as nontax policies can also have significant budgetary effects. A wide range of experts believe that investments in tax enforcement pay off at a rate of \$5 or more for every \$1 spent. Although official scorekeepers gave only minimal credit to the cost-control measures in the Affordable Care Act, thanks in large part to those measures, cumulative Medicare and Medicaid spending in the decade after the ACA was passed is likely to end up coming in about \$1 trillion below forecasts made at the time.

As policymakers set budgets in the coming years, a lot will depend on what interest rates do. Financial markets do not expect the increases in interest rates that budget forecasters have priced in. If the markets prove right, that will strengthen the case against deficit reduction. If, on the other hand, interest rates start to rise well above what even the budget forecasters expect, then, as in the early 1990s, more active efforts to cut the deficit could make sense.

Even if interest rates remain low, however, the do-no-harm approach won't be sustainable forever. How long the United States will be able to maintain its growing national debt will depend on whether deficits come in above or below current projections. Even so, the national debt presents just one of many problems the United States faces—and not the most pressing.

## **WHAT REALLY MATTERS**

Much more pressing are the problems of languishing labor-force participation rates, slow economic growth, persistent poverty, a lack of access to

health insurance, and global climate change. Politicians should not let large deficits deter them from addressing these fundamental challenges.

A do-no-harm approach would allow large and growing deficits for a long time, but it would put some constraints on the most ambitious political agendas. Progressives have proposed Medicare for all, free college, a federal jobs guarantee, and a massive green infrastructure program. The merits of each of these proposals are up for debate. But each idea responds to a real need that will take resources to address. Some 29 million Americans still do not have health insurance. College is unaffordable for far too many. Millions of working-age Americans have given up even looking for work. Global warming cannot be ignored. Add in the widely shared desire for more investments in education and infrastructure and the likelihood that defense spending will keep rising, and the federal government will clearly have to spend a lot more.

Congress can fund some new programs by trimming lower-priority spending elsewhere. But this will be difficult. Take health care. There is substantial scope to slow the growth of both public and private health spending. But this will require addressing the health-care system as a whole, not just cutting payments or reforming public health programs. That's because public health-care spending has shrunk relative to private spending in recent years as the government has found more effective ways to reduce payments and improve efficiency.

Beyond entitlements, everyone has a list of favorite examples of wasteful government spending: farm programs, corporate welfare, and so on. But the dirty secret is that these programs are mostly small, so making them more efficient would not save much money. Enacting serious cuts to spending is much more difficult than most people acknowledge.

One program the federal government should not cut is Social Security. The gap in life expectancy between the rich and the poor is growing, and reducing benefits to retirees could exacerbate that trend. Cutting Social Security would also weaken economic demand far more than cutting most other programs would, as its beneficiaries tend to spend the money rather than save it. If policymakers reform Social Security and Medicare, they should do so to make the programs more effective, not to reduce the debt.

The truth is the federal government needs to raise more revenue. Even if the United States made no new investments and cut Social Security benefits enough to eliminate half of the long-term gap between the program's revenues and its expenditures (an unwise policy),

it would save only about one-third of what is needed to keep the debt from growing relative to the economy. That is why the Simpson-Bowles Commission also proposed raising revenue to 21 percent of GDP, a step that would require a \$9 trillion tax increase over the next decade.

Congress can raise some extra revenue in ways many Americans would consider fair, such as by imposing higher taxes on the richest households. It should also raise revenue with another round of corporate tax reform. For example, it can make expensing permanent (expensing allows companies to immediately deduct the cost of new investments from their taxable income) while raising corporate tax rates or taxing firms for the carbon they emit. Economists regard such reforms as economically efficient because they make new investments cheaper while taxing windfall gains and past investments. But tapping the top few percent of households and raising corporate taxes won't be enough. Ultimately, all Americans will have to pay a little more to support the kind of society they say they want.

## **ENDING THE DEBT DELUSION**

The economics of deficits have changed. A better appreciation of the sources and consequences of government debt, and of the options to address it, should lead policymakers away from many of the old deficit- and entitlement-focused orthodoxies—but not to wholesale abandonment of fiscal constraints.

Deficit fundamentalists argue that they are championing a noble and underappreciated cause. In some ways, they are; deficit reduction is never a political winner. But if they turn out to be right, economists and policymakers will know soon enough. The financial markets give immediate feedback about the seriousness of the budget deficit. If the debt becomes a problem, interest rates will rise, putting financial and political pressure on policymakers to accomplish what fiscal fundamentalists have long wanted. But even if that happens, it is not likely to cost so much that it would be worth paying a definite cost today to prevent the small chance of a problem in the future.

Policymakers will always know when the market is worried about the deficit. But no alarm bells ring when the government fails to rebuild decaying infrastructure, properly fund preschools, or provide access to health care. The results of that kind of neglect show up only later—but the human cost is often far larger. It's time for Washington to put away its debt obsession and focus on bigger things. 🌐

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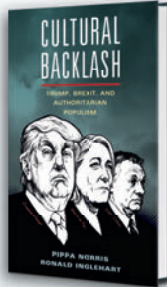
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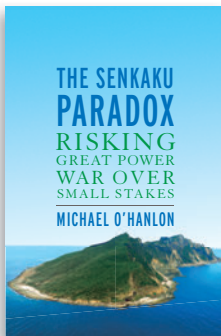
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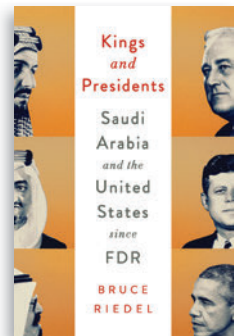
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# No Country for Strongmen

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## How India's Democracy Constrains Modi

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*Ruchir Sharma*

**L**ike most national elections in India, the one coming this spring will be decided in the *mofussil*. Originally a colonial term for any town outside the commercial capitals of the British Raj, *mofussil* now refers to the provincial areas beyond the burgeoning megacities of Mumbai and New Delhi, that is, to the rural and impoverished stretches where two out of three Indians live.

Come April or May, the inhabitants of these rural towns will vote in what is shaping up to be an unexpectedly tight race pitting the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi against the Indian National Congress, led by Rahul Gandhi. Until a year ago, Modi looked like the sure winner. He had sidelined all rivals in the BJP and overshadowed Gandhi and the rest of the opposition. He was running the most centralized administration India had seen in decades, with decisions large and small funneled through the prime minister's office. The BJP and its allies went from governing six of India's 29 states in 2014 to holding 21 by early 2018. So firm seemed Modi's grip on power that many Indian liberals began drawing parallels to the slide toward one-man rule in Vladimir Putin's Russia and Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Turkey.

A series of surprising setbacks late last year have dissipated this aura of invincibility. In three key state elections in December, many voters in the *mofussil* turned against the BJP. Modi's odds of beating the Congress party and its allies at the national level now seem no better than even. This is exactly how Indian voters like their leaders: on the edge and fearing for their jobs. No other major democracy tosses out its ruling party as often as India does. Ever since the country became

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a true multiparty democracy, in the 1970s, two out of three governments at the central and state levels have lost their bids for reelection.

In many ways, India is less a country than a mosaic of states divided by hundreds of languages and thousands of castes and subcastes, many of them fiercely loyal to their own regional parties and leaders. The BJP managed to overcome these divisions in 2014, when voters were eager for change following years of corruption scandals and double-digit inflation under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of Congress. Even then, the BJP won just 31 percent of the popular vote and was able to win a majority of seats in Parliament only thanks to a badly fragmented opposition. Now, opposition parties appear to be uniting against Modi in many of the largest and most politically critical states, just as they have banded together against ascendant national leaders in the past. Modi's reelection bid will hinge on whether he can cobble together coalitions of his own to face this front, state by state, each with unique local dynamics.

### **THE ROOTS OF MODI'S RISE**

I got to see how national politics plays out in the *mofussil* by spending childhood summers with my grandparents in Bijnor, a provincial town in western Uttar Pradesh. Commonly known as UP, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous and one of the least developed states. It has been said that all roads to national power in New Delhi run through UP, and many Indian politicians try to get a head start by launching their bids for power there. Two of the last three Indian prime ministers—including Modi—have chosen to represent parliamentary constituencies in UP, whether they lived there or not. All of India is passionate about politics, but nowhere are people more obsessed than in UP—perhaps owing to the depth of its caste loyalties and its poverty, which make voters particularly dependent on their political leaders for protection and survival.

During my visits in the late 1970s and 1980s, I would watch my grandfather and his friends, all upper-caste members of the Bijnor community, gather around the television and hurl Hindi epithets at the nightly news, much of which was state propaganda for the Congress party. Congress had led India to independence in 1947 and had held power ever since. But by the late 1970s, voters were growing frustrated with the increasingly imperious rule of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and they voted her out of office in 1977.

Upper-caste Hindus, in particular, vilified Congress for “coddling” Muslims, who made up 20 percent of the population in UP, nearly twice the national average. They also attacked Congress for reserving fixed quotas of government jobs and college admissions for those marginalized by an ancient social order that ranks every Hindu into one of several thousand castes.

The Congress party had designed much of its welfare system to lift up the lowest caste, the Dalits, but change occurred at a glacial pace. Well into the 1980s, it was routine among the upper castes to address Dalits with a string of abuse or to refuse them access to schools, temples, and other public spaces. Anger at this mistreatment fueled the rise of challengers to the Congress party’s rule, including dozens of regional parties based on caste, religion, or tribe. One of the most prominent regional leaders, Kumari Mayawati, a fiery champion of the Dalits in UP, began her ascent in Bijnor, much to the dismay of local Brahmans, and eventually became the region’s chief minister, the Indian equivalent of a U.S. governor.

An even bigger challenge to Congress came from Hindu nationalists, who united under the umbrella of the BJP after Indira Gandhi led Congress to a comeback win in 1980. In contrast to the secular and diverse nation extolled by Congress, BJP leaders envisioned India as a society governed by Hindu values and the Hindi language. Although the party was a melting pot for many shades of Hindu nationalism, including moderate strands that eschewed anti-Muslim rhetoric, I can remember listening to hard-core BJP supporters in Bijnor chanting a Hindi limerick that translates as “Muslims are crooks; they have heads like dogs and ears like cats.”

In Bijnor and elsewhere, the BJP’s message resonated, and in 1998, the party formed its first stable national government under the moderate statesman Atal Bihari Vajpayee. That same year, I convened a group of writers and editors to cover major national and state elections on the campaign trail. As a writer and investor, I believed one had to get out and talk to voters in the *mofussil* to have any chance of accurately forecasting elections. Two decades and 27 trips later, our caravan has grown to include about 20 journalists, who have published commentary and analysis in *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, *The Times of India*, and many other outlets. In all, we have visited 15 states, including the ten largest and most politically significant, and this has given the group an intimate feel for how Indian



*Among the believers: at a Hindu nationalist rally in Gauhati, India, January 2018*

democracy works on the ground. We have met with Modi twice and witnessed from the rally grounds his reelection as chief minister of Gujarat in 2007 and 2012 and his national victory in 2014.

Over the same period, we watched the Congress party slide from dominance to irrelevance in one major state after another, sidelined by the BJP and regional parties. In UP, for example, Congress has fallen to a distant fourth among the leading parties and has seen its share of the popular vote drop from more than 40 percent in 1984 to less than ten percent in 2017.

### **“MODI WHO?”**

Many commentators feared that the BJP’s meteoric rise under Modi portended a descent into an intolerant, increasingly ethnonationalist tyranny of the Hindu majority. After the BJP won state elections in UP in 2017, Modi appointed the Hindu monk and right-wing firebrand Yogi Adityanath as the state’s chief minister. When we met Adityanath during the campaign, he greeted us in his temple dressed all in saffron, the sacred color of Hinduism. Sitting in his temple, also decorated in saffron, Adityanath spoke a pure form of Hindi, with no trace of the usual Anglicisms, so close to the ancient language of Sanskrit that many of us could barely understand him. On the campaign trail, he embraced an unapologetic politics of Hindu supremacy, warning that



UP must not become “another Kashmir”—a place where, in his telling, Muslims ruled and Hindus lived in fear. For liberal observers, his appointment to the state’s highest office was a stunning example of the creeping normalization of Hindu extremism under Modi.

But a more complex picture of the prime minister’s tenure emerges from our travels, particularly in states outside the northern “cow belt” around UP, where Hindi speakers and Hindu conservatism dominate. In the country’s south, which has long embraced a more moderate Hin-

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*There are too many Indias for the entire population to be held in thrall to any single vision or figure.*

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duism, Modi’s nationalist message resonates far less. During a 2016 election trip to the southern state of Tamil Nadu, many voters dismissed our questions about the prime minister as irrelevant; one responded, “Modi who?” At a rally last year in the neighboring state of Karnataka, we watched as Modi re-

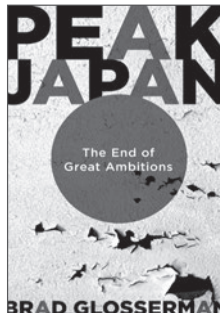
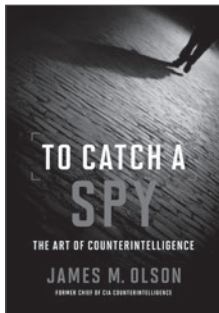
ceived an enthusiastic response when he greeted the crowd with a few words in the local language, Kannada. Then, he switched back to Hindi, with a Kannada translator. Suddenly, his charisma seemed to disappear, and the crowd went silent. Alarmists who fear that India is succumbing to strongman rule miss the fact that there are still too many Indias for the entire population to be held in thrall to any single vision or figure.

If anything genuinely unites Indian voters, it is hostility toward whoever happens to be in office. It wasn’t always this way: in post-independence India, voters returned the incumbent—usually a Congress party politician—to power in 90 percent of state or national elections. But ever since Indira Gandhi imposed a controversial state of emergency in 1975, inspiring the opposition to unite and topple her two years later, voters have unseated their leaders with astonishing regularity.

This anti-incumbent bias is partly the result of India’s fragmented party system. In most states, dozens of parties compete, and the winners often find themselves scrambling for allies to help them form a government. Tiny shifts in the vote, or in the allegiance of one small coalition partner, can make or break a government. The whole system is almost designed to encourage change and make it easy for voters and rival parties to throw out the ruling party.

The discontent of Indian voters is also a reaction to chronic economic mismanagement. The country became a democracy when it was still

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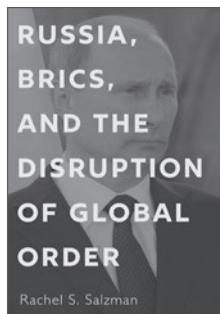
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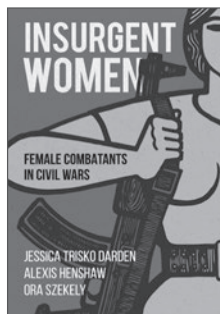
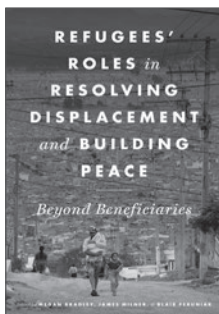
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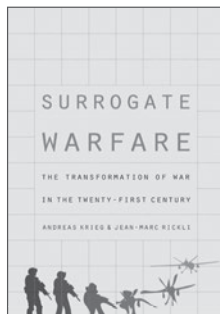
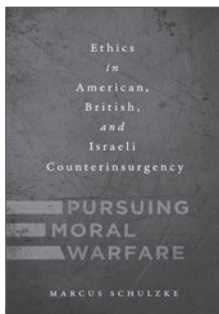
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staggeringly poor, with newborn government institutions that could not meet the needs and demands of the impoverished masses. In the early decades, Congress was able to hold on to power mainly because voters were thankful that the party had led India to independence from the United Kingdom, not because it was delivering economic progress. Congress' socialist vision relegated India to the so-called Hindu rate of growth, a measly 3.5 percent annually, too slow to lift a booming population out of poverty. Once Congress' monopoly was broken, voters never hesitated to express their economic dissatisfaction at the ballot box.

And yet the links between the country's politics and its economics are not entirely clear-cut. After limping along under strong and stable Congress governments until the 1980s, the economy picked up speed under the fragile coalition governments that followed. Still, with the exception of a brief period late in the last decade, voters showed little willingness to reward their leaders based on strong economic performance alone.

My analysis of the economic data, available back to 1980, shows that even when chief ministers presided over a state GDP growth rate above eight percent—which usually puts an economy into the “miracle” class—their chances of being reelected were still only 50–50. This is not because voters do not care about jobs or a stable income. It's that progress often fails to reach them. Many voters in the *mofussil* don't feel a dramatic lift even when fast economic growth boosts the Mumbai stock market, but those enjoying the rise assume that everyone is feeling the good times.

In response, many politicians have tried to buy voter loyalty by offering welfare giveaways rather than relying on rapid economic growth. In more advanced economies, the main ideological divide usually concerns the roles of the state and the market in distributing wealth. But in India, everyone is a statist. The economic debate is largely about how the state can best help the poor: by developing roads and other infrastructure, by distributing welfare benefits, or by doing a bit of everything. Candidates vie to promise voters the longest and most generous list of government giveaways, from free medical care to rice and diesel subsidies to tax cuts for everyone from marriage-hall owners to cumin-seed buyers.

Modi is now playing the same game. On the campaign trail in 2014, he sounded like a free marketeer, promising “maximum governance, minimum government” and bitterly criticizing Congress-sponsored welfare programs as an insult to the poor, who, he said, wanted “jobs,

not handouts.” But lately, he has been ramping up spending on the same Congress programs he criticized, including a 2005 guarantee that every rural Indian would get 100 days of paid labor a year. But it’s not clear that welfare promises are any more a guarantee of victory than economic growth is. Voters who do not qualify for benefits are always resentful, and those who do are often furious because the dysfunctional Indian state fails to deliver on the promises.

Corruption acts as another incumbent killer, although its exact effects are difficult to gauge. India provides no public funding for elections, and political campaigns have become private enterprises. To compete, candidates have little choice but to violate the official spending cap, which sits at just \$70,000 to \$100,000 per parliamentary candidate. We have covered state elections in which candidates exceeded those limits by a factor of 50 or more.

To keep the cash flowing, many Indian politicians wind up surrounding themselves with relatives and well-connected private businesspeople. Voters, for their part, know that there are hardly any “pure” candidates: the cleaner ones spend the dark money on their campaigns; the dirtier ones put a share in their own pockets. Rarely does an incumbent serve out a term without facing corruption charges—and really serious ones can bring leaders down.

Still, the rise of “money politics” in Indian elections is easily exaggerated. Private funding is on the rise but flows heavily toward those in office, who often outspend the opposition by five times or more. If money were the decisive factor, the ruling party would win most of the time, and yet it doesn’t. Candidates need to raise enough money to compete, but they have to pass a host of other tests—above all, those that revolve around community identities, including caste, religion, tribe, and language.

### **FAMILY, CASTE, THEN COUNTRY**

The worst abuses of the caste system—such as the exclusion of Dalits from public places—have continued to slowly fade with time. But community identities remain strong. In the *mofussil*, marriage across caste lines is still frowned on, and voters look mainly to leaders from their own group for protection and help. This means that parties cannot win if they do not get the community equation right. In each constituency and state, they need to select candidates who appeal to a complex mix of subcastes, religions, and languages.



In some states, the “dominant” caste or religious community amounts to just ten to 20 percent of the electorate, as is the case in UP and the neighboring state of Bihar. The elections in these states often amount to contests for the affection of the three biggest voting blocs: Muslims, Dalits, and Yadavs (a midlevel caste). Yet the Dalits and the Yadavs of UP are from different subcastes than the Dalits and the Yadavs of Bihar, and they do not see themselves as members of kindred political communities. Mayawati is the unquestioned champion of the Dalits in UP, but not in Bihar, whereas popular Yadav leaders in UP cannot draw a crowd in Bihar.

As a result, the alliances required to win any state involve entirely different sets of caste and religious communities, mixed in varying proportions and led by different regional bigwigs. Multiply this confusion by 29 states, and one can begin to see why it is almost impossible to speak of an Indian election as a “national” event.

The power of community also shines through in the dynasties that are omnipresent in Indian politics. The nationwide cult of adoration that once surrounded the Gandhi family lives on inside the Congress party, which has embraced the dynasty’s latest scion, Rahul Gandhi, as its undisputed leader. For years, Congress supporters have also hailed Rahul’s younger sister, Priyanka, as the second coming of her grandmother Indira.

The BJP, meanwhile, is bitterly critical of Congress’ nepotism, and Modi constantly mocks the Gandhis as “entitled” political royalty, even though his own party has well-entrenched political dynasties, too. Still, some change may be afoot. More and more politicians are rising to power on the argument that their lack of family ties protects them from the temptation to profit from office. Modi, the bachelor prime minister, has made uncorrupted singlehood a centerpiece of his political persona.

## **THE MYTH OF THE INDIAN NATION**

India’s complex polity makes it impossible for any one leader to push a reform agenda as aggressively as leaders in China have in the past, commandeering land for development, opening borders to trade, shuttering state factories, and killing off millions of redundant jobs. Since the 1980s, several Indian prime ministers have pursued elements of free-market reform, but only when faced with some sort of crisis. None of them made a serious attempt to reform the bloated

and incompetent central bureaucracy, even though frustration with bureaucrats fuels the permanent revolt against politicians.

Yet the picture isn't all gloomy. At the level of individual states, the obstacles to economic reform are less daunting. Dynamic chief ministers have helped spark strong runs of economic growth by tailoring reforms to the needs of their state. As chief minister of the coastal state of Gujarat, Modi encouraged an export manufacturing boom in part by building roads and ports; Nitish Kumar transformed landlocked Bihar in part by reining in its rampant crime. The combined effect of such breakout states has been strong enough to keep the economy as a whole growing at a pace of six to seven percent—a respectable showing for a developing country.

India's diversity is also a source of political resilience, as strong sub-national identities provide a check on ethnic and religious nationalism. Many Indians still see themselves as Bengalis, Gujaratis, or Tamils first and Indians second. Best of luck to anyone who offends this ethnic and regional pride. In the early 1980s, after Indira Gandhi's son Rajiv called the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh a "buffoon," the popular film star N. T. Rama Rao capitalized on this insult to "Telugu pride" (Telugu is the principal language spoken in Andhra Pradesh) by forming a regional party that quickly rose to power in the state—demonstrating, in Rama Rao's words, that in India, "the center is a myth and the state is a reality."

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*Many Indians still see themselves as Bengalis, Gujaratis, or Tamils first and Indians second.*

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Ever since Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency in 1975, no prime minister has been able to gain political momentum without triggering fears of creeping authoritarianism and inspiring the fragmented opposition to unite. This pattern brought down Indira in 1977, Rajiv in 1989, and the first BJP prime minister, Vajpayee, in 2004. The same dynamic may repeat itself in this year's election: if the opposition, scattered and squabbling in 2014, manages to unite against Modi in a majority of the states in 2019, the BJP could lose a sizable chunk of its seats in Parliament even if it once again wins a plurality of the vote.

The BJP knows this well and will try to derail budding opposition alliances by casting them as cynical and unprincipled coalitions whose only common interest is power. Ironically, Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, once the BJP's archenemies, used a similar line of attack to

divide and undermine opponents of entrenched Congress party rule. Now back in the opposition under Rajiv's son, Rahul, Congress will take inspiration from the 1960s socialist leader and Congress critic Ram Manohar Lohia, who supposedly quipped that "the Indian government is like a piece of flatbread that needs to be flipped on the griddle or it will burn."

The stakes are high. The BJP and Congress offer two starkly divergent political visions: the former aspiring to build one India, the latter celebrating the reality of many Indias. But even if voters buck the historical trend and return Modi to the prime minister's office this spring, he will likely be left with a reduced majority. The BJP's vision will remain aspirational, as India's complex ecosystem of identities will continue to act as a powerful brake on a descent into outright ethnonationalism. At a time when democracy is said to be in retreat around the world, it is still thriving in India. 🌐

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# The Kurdish Awakening

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## Unity, Betrayal, and the Future of the Middle East

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*Henri J. Barkey*

“**W**e’ve been fighting for a long time in Syria,” said U.S. President Donald Trump in the last days of 2018. “Now it’s time for our troops to come back home.” The president’s surprise call for a rapid withdrawal of the nearly 2,000 U.S. troops stationed in Syria drew widespread criticism from members of the U.S. foreign policy establishment. But it came as an even greater shock to the United States’ main partner in the fight against the Islamic State (or ISIS), the Syrian Kurds. For weeks prior to the announcement, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had been threatening to invade areas of northern Syria controlled by Kurdish militants. The only thing stopping him was the presence of U.S. troops. Removing them would leave the Kurds deeply exposed. “If [the Americans] will leave,” warned one Syrian Kurd, “we will curse them as traitors.”

Details about the U.S. withdrawal from Syria remain sketchy. But whatever Washington ultimately decides to do, Trump’s announcement marked a cruel turn for Kurds across the Middle East. Back in mid-2017, the Kurds had been enjoying a renaissance. Syrian Kurds, allied with the world’s only superpower, had played the central role in largely defeating ISIS on the battlefield and had seized the group’s capital, Raqqa. The People’s Protection Units (YPG), a Syrian Kurdish militia, controlled large swaths of Syrian territory and looked set to become a significant actor in negotiations to end the country’s civil war. Turkish Kurds, although besieged at home, were basking in the glow of the accomplishments of their Syrian counterparts, with whom

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they are closely aligned. And in Iraq, the body that rules the country's Kurdish region—the Kurdistan Regional Government, or KRG—was at the height of its powers, preparing for a September 2017 referendum on independence.

By the end of 2018, many of the Kurds' dreams appeared to be in tatters. After the overwhelming majority of Iraqi Kurds voted for independence in the KRG's referendum, the Iraqi government, backed by Iran and Turkey, invaded Iraqi Kurdistan and conquered some 40 percent of its territory. Overnight, the KRG lost not only nearly half of its land but much of its international influence, too. The Turkish Kurds, despite gaining seats in parliament in the June 2018 elections, had endured relentless assaults from Erdogan and his government throughout the year, including a renewed military campaign against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a left-wing separatist group. In Syria, Turkey invaded the Kurdish-controlled town of Afrin in March 2018, displacing the YPG and some 200,000 local Kurds. Then, in December, the Syrian Kurds learned that their American protectors might soon abandon them altogether.

These setbacks, however, belie a larger trend—one that will shape the Middle East in the years ahead. Across the region, Kurds are gaining self-confidence, pushing for long-denied rights, and, most important, collaborating with one another across national boundaries and throughout the diaspora. To a greater extent than at any previous point in history, Kurds in the four traditionally distinct parts of Kurdistan—in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey—are starting down the road of becoming a single Kurdish nation. Significant barriers to unity remain, including linguistic divisions and the presence of at least two strong states, Iran and Turkey, with an overriding interest in thwarting any form of pan-Kurdism. Yet recent events have initiated a process of Kurdish nation building that will, in the long run, prove difficult to contain. Even if there is never a single, unified, independent Kurdistan, the Kurdish national awakening has begun. The Middle East's states may fear the Kurdish awakening, but it is beyond their power to stop it.

## **THE LOST CAUSE**

Around 30 million Kurds currently live in Greater Kurdistan, a contiguous region stretching across southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, northern Iraq, and northeastern Syria. Kurdish tribes interacted with



*This land is our land: Kurdish peshmerga forces in Makhmur, Iraq, August 2014*

the Arab, Persian, and Turkic empires over the centuries, sometimes cooperating with them and sometimes rebelling against them. Modern Kurdish nationalism has its roots in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, signed between the Allies and the defeated Ottomans, called for an independence referendum in the Kurdish-majority areas of modern-day Turkey. Yet following Turkey's war of independence, the new Turkish government renegotiated with the Allies. This resulted in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which guaranteed Turkish sovereignty over what could have potentially been an independent Kurdistan.

Kurdish demands for independence, however, did not go away. Throughout the twentieth century, Kurdish revolts, often backed by rival states, erupted in nearly every country that had a significant Kurdish population. Turkey put down Kurdish rebellions in 1925, 1930, and 1937. Then, in the mid-1980s, the PKK launched an armed insurgency in Turkey that has continued off and on until the present day. In Iran in 1946, Kurds backed by the Soviet Union established the first genuine Kurdish government, the independent Republic of Mahabad, which lasted for one year before collapsing after Moscow withdrew its support. Iraqi Kurds have also frequently revolted against their central government. Supported by the shah of Iran, they fought two wars against Baghdad during the 1960s and 1970s, only to be

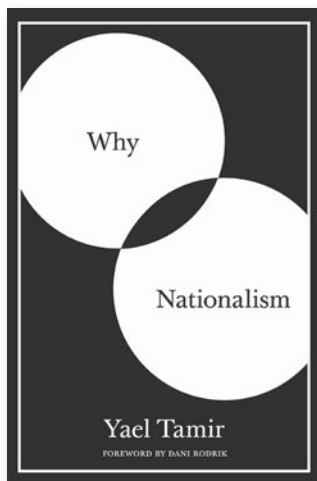
defeated in 1975 after the shah struck a deal with the Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein, abandoning the Kurds to their fate.

This agitation has meant that for each of the four states with a large Kurdish minority, suppressing Kurdish nationalism has been a paramount policy objective. The new Turkish state under President Kemal Ataturk banned the use of the Kurdish language in 1924 and over time introduced draconian rule in Kurdish areas, burning villages, displacing people, and confiscating their property. (Although U.S. intelligence was always confident that Turkey could handle any challenge posed by the Kurds, a 1971 CIA report conceded that Turkish policies, especially those preventing the use of the Kurdish language, were at the root of Kurdish unrest.) Iran similarly banned Kurdish dialects in the 1930s. In Syria, the central government not only prohibited the teaching and learning of Kurdish but also placed restrictions on Kurdish landownership. And beginning in the 1960s, Damascus revoked the citizenship of tens of thousands of Syrian Kurds, rendering them stateless. All across the Middle East, Kurdish areas were economically neglected and marginalized.

In the face of this repression, the Kurds have succeeded in preserving and even strengthening their identity across generations. As the Kurdish scholar Hamit Bozarslan has observed, Kurds have been treated as a minority by the governments of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, but they do not see themselves as one. They are a majority in their homeland, Kurdistan, which only through an accident of geopolitical history has been rendered an appendage of other states. And it is the Middle East's modern state system that has, historically, been the main obstacle to Kurdish national aspirations. A prescient 1960 intelligence report by the CIA argued that the Kurds of Iran and Iraq had all the necessary elements for autonomy—military strength, leadership, and the possibility of material support from an outside power, the Soviet Union. “Only the relative stability of parent governments,” the report noted, “stands in the way of active Kurdish separatism.”

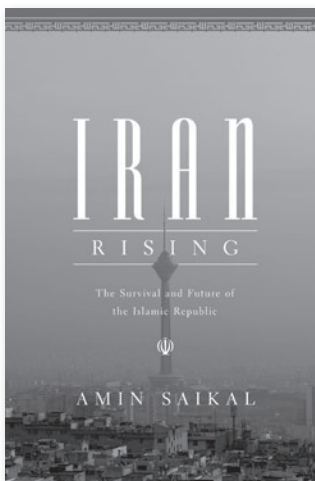
## **TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK**

For most of the twentieth century, the only possible path to Kurdish autonomy (or independence, for that matter) ran through state failure. And in effect, this is exactly what has transpired over the past two decades. If the Kurds today have a glimmer of hope in Iraq and Syria, it is because of the collapse of authority in Baghdad and Damascus. In



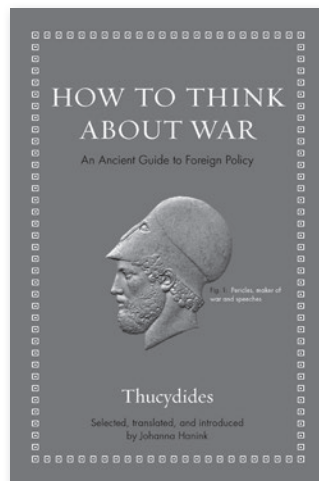
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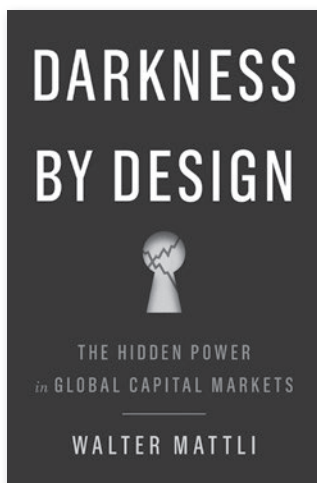
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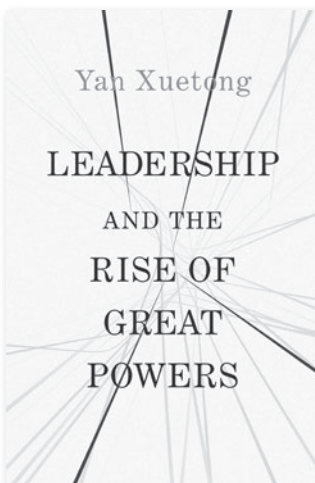
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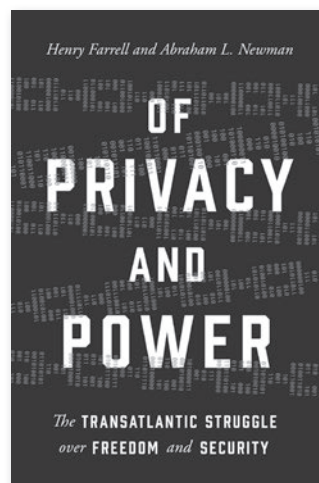
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particular, the actions of the United States—its support of the Kurds following the Persian Gulf War, its 2003 overthrow of Saddam and subsequent occupation of Iraq, and its more recent efforts to combat ISIS in Syria—have created the conditions for the revival of Kurdish political aspirations. Washington, unintentionally and in service of its own strategic needs, has midwived Kurdish nationalism.

American military and political engagement with the Kurds began in earnest with the 1990–91 Gulf War. After the Iraqi army was evicted from Kuwait, it turned its guns on the Kurds and Shiites who had responded to U.S. President George H. W. Bush's call to rise up against Baghdad.

Faced with the possibility of a humanitarian crisis, the United States, with support from France and the United Kingdom, declared a no-fly zone over the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq. Protected by the no-fly zone, the Iraqi Kurds were able to carve out regional autonomy, founding the KRG in 1992. Iraqi Kurdistan became a bastion of pro-American sentiment in the country, especially after the United States' invasion in 2003, promoting further U.S.-Kurdish cooperation. Kurdish forces allied with U.S. troops in the initial war against Saddam, and in the ensuing years, Iraqi Kurdistan provided an anchor of stability as the rest of the country descended into civil war.

The founding of the KRG provided an important psychological boost to the Kurds, not just in Iraq but across the rest of the Middle East, too. It demonstrated that Kurds could govern themselves and secure international recognition. It also began to reshape Kurdish relations with other states. Although Turkey has traditionally disapproved of Kurdish demands for autonomy, the Turkish government under Erdogan chose not to confront the KRG but to build political and economic links with it instead. The landlocked Iraqi Kurds needed a channel for diplomacy and commerce—especially oil exports—and Ankara was happy to provide one. In 2010, Turkey opened a consulate in the KRG's capital, Erbil. Then, in 2012, the KRG and Turkey signed a deal to construct an oil pipeline from Iraqi Kurdistan to the Mediterranean. By 2018, some 400,000 barrels of KRG oil were reaching the Turkish port of Ceyhan every day. Ankara has provided an economic lifeline to the KRG, granting it the breathing room to consolidate itself in Iraq. For a time, Erdogan also profited domestically, as Turkish Kurds close to the KRG's president, Masoud Barzani, began voting for Erdogan's party in Turkish elections.

Confident of his Kurdish bona fides, in 2009, Erdogan launched a domestic peace process with the PKK.

Yet soon, another U.S. action was to unintentionally change the Kurds' position in the Middle East. In 2014, the Obama administration began a bombing campaign to prevent Kobani, a Syrian Kurdish town on the Turkish border, from falling to ISIS. At the time, ISIS had just swept through northern Iraq and Syria, capturing large stretches of territory, including Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul. Washington's decision to protect Kobani elicited frenzied objections from Erdogan, since the United States would be directly supporting the YPG, which had close ties with the PKK in Turkey. The U.S. partnership with the YPG was a battlefield success, and the Kurds' eventual victory at Kobani became a turning point in the fight against ISIS. But this very success began to ring alarm bells in Ankara.

For Erdogan, a U.S.-YPG alliance represented a game changer for the region. What the Turkish president feared most was the emergence of a second KRG, this one in Syria. After all, the KRG itself was the product of a U.S. intervention that led to a civil war and the breakdown of central authority in Baghdad, culminating in the creation of a federal system in Iraq, with the KRG as a constituent element. With Syria already consumed by civil war, Ankara believed that Washington was on the verge of repeating what it had done in Iraq—that is, transforming Syria into a federal state in which the Kurds would gain the right to govern themselves. Erdogan could not assent to federal arrangements in two neighboring countries, much less to a Syrian-Kurdish one closely linked to the PKK. In 2014, Erdogan abandoned his negotiations with the PKK and began a policy of outright conflict with both the Turkish and the Syrian Kurds. He sought to delegitimize all Kurdish political activity by associating it with the PKK, arresting large numbers of Kurdish activists and politicians.

But if the United States inadvertently disrupted Kurdish-Turkish relations, U.S. policy in Iraq and Syria, taken as a whole, has earned the Kurds an unprecedented degree of international legitimacy. France, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all extended diplomatic recognition to the KRG, as well as providing it

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*Washington, unintentionally and in service of its own strategic needs, has midwifed Kurdish nationalism.*

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with economic and other forms of support. And the Syrian Kurds, previously ignored by the outside world, have been able to raise their global profile thanks to their role in the fight against ISIS. This recognition has come not only from Western powers. In a draft proposal for a new Syrian constitution, put forward in 2017 through the Astana peace process, Russia suggested two important concessions to the Kurds: dropping the word “Arab” from the name Syrian Arab Republic and creating a “culturally autonomous” region in the country’s northeast, where children would be educated in both Arabic and Kurdish. These concessions were rejected by Damascus, and there is no guarantee that they will ever be granted. But their inclusion in the Russian proposal demonstrated that despite the Syrian Kurds’ precarious position, outside powers are beginning to recognize them as an autonomous force to be reckoned with.

### **THE KURDISH RENAISSANCE**

Kurds mobilized throughout the twentieth century to win cultural autonomy and some degree of self-rule from central governments. For nearly 100 years, rebellions and resistance constituted the backdrop of ordinary Kurdish life. Now, this is changing, as Kurds have acquired governing experience—not just in the KRG but also in numerous municipalities in Syria and Turkey. This, in turn, has caused Kurdish identity to begin to coalesce across national boundaries.

So far, the Kurds’ experience in power has been fraught with problems. The KRG, for instance, is on the path to becoming a petrostate, dependent on oil sales and beset by corruption, patronage, and the outsize power of its two leading political families, the Barzanis and the Talabanis. The political wing of the YPG, the Democratic Union Party, has succeeded in efficiently providing services in the areas of Syria that it controls, but it has also constructed a one-party proto-state. And in Turkey, although representatives of the left-wing, Kurdish-dominated Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) won 102 municipalities in the July 2016 elections, Erdogan has since removed 94 of them from office. He has vowed to act similarly after the next round of municipal elections this March. Future HDP success may even motivate Erdogan to have the party shut down by the Constitutional Court, as Turkey’s generals did to the HDP’s predecessors.

But even if Kurdish self-government has not been an unalloyed success, it has been a boon for Kurdish culture and language across the

region. This is especially true in Iraqi Kurdistan, which boasts its own Kurdish-language institutions, including schools and media organizations. Despite challenges such as the existence of two distinct Kurdish dialects, which roughly correspond to the KRG's political divisions—Kurmanji is spoken in areas dominated by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, whereas Sorani is spoken in those run by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—the KRG has established a rich Kurdish cultural environment in the territory it controls. There are now hundreds of Kurdish television channels, websites, news agencies, and other cultural products, such as novels and movies. And in Syria, where for decades Damascus banned even private education in Kurdish, the Democratic Union Party has formally introduced Kurdish-language education in the areas under its control. After nearly a century of attempting to prevent the dissemination of Kurdish language and culture, central governments have now decisively lost that battle.

Iraq's Kurdish-language renaissance has in turn stimulated a renewal of Kurdish self-awareness in transnational social media and diaspora communities. The Kurdish diaspora is especially strong in Europe, to which over one million Kurds have immigrated over the past six decades—initially as guest workers and then as refugees fleeing repression. Free to organize and collaborate with other civil society groups, Europe's Kurds have raised public awareness of Kurdish issues and put pressure on national governments in Germany, France, and the Netherlands—as well as on the EU as a whole—to change their policies toward Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. In this, they have been aided by the rise of Kurdish-language social media.

The flourishing of Kurdish has extended even to Iran and Turkey, where the Kurds have relatively little power. During Erdogan's brief opening to the Kurds between 2009 and 2014, there was a proliferation of Kurdish-language institutes, publications, and private schools. The resulting euphoria did not last long; by the end of 2017, almost all of these had been eliminated by Ankara, which went as far as systematically taking down all signs in Kurdish, traffic signals as well as signs for schools and municipal buildings. But not everything has been lost. Some Turkish universities still allow students to study Kurdish, and the Turkish state has created a TV channel dedicated to official broadcasts in Kurdish. In Iran, meanwhile, the government has, since 2015, allowed optional high school and university Kurdish-language classes in the country's Kurdish-majority regions.

## MAKING A NATION

The increasing fluidity of physical boundaries between Kurds, the creation of Kurdish-run governments such as the KRG, the emergence of strong diaspora communities (especially in Europe), and the rise of Kurdish-language social media and cultural products—all have combined to strengthen pan-Kurdish identity. Today, Kurds from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and the diaspora are all engaged in a common conversation. They do not speak in unison, but the days of Kurd-on-Kurd political violence, which flared up in Iraq during the 1990s, are gone, in large part because the Kurdish public will not tolerate it. The Kurds have acquired all the attributes of a nation, except sovereignty.

This newfound unity is reflected in the emergence of pan-Kurdish military units. Turkish Kurds have fought with the YPG in Syria, just as Syrian and Turkish Kurds have been integrated into the armed forces of the KRG. Diaspora Kurds have also volunteered to fight, particularly with the YPG. The PKK commands armed forces in Iraq, Turkey, and Syria and in 2004 created an affiliate in Iran. The erosion of intra-Kurdish boundaries was greatly accelerated by ISIS' advance through Iraq and Syria in the summer of 2014, which imperiled Kurds in both countries and fostered pan-ethnic solidarity. Faced with a genuine existential peril, the Kurds put their own fractious politics aside and appeared as one. And the more that they do so, the more they will begin to reshape the politics of the Middle East.

In both Iraq and Syria, the fragility of central governments provides Kurds with an opportunity for self-rule that is still unthinkable in Iran and Turkey. This process is much further along in Iraq, where the KRG's autonomy is protected by the constitution. Yet the KRG is still vulnerable, as Baghdad's reaction to the disastrous 2017 independence referendum demonstrated. In Syria, the Kurds may have an opportunity to reach a deal with the Assad regime that would grant them a degree of regional autonomy. Such a result is far from guaranteed, however, and a U.S. withdrawal from the country could leave the Syrian Kurds at the mercy of Damascus and Ankara. Even so, any Syrian or Turkish campaign to eliminate the YPG, however bloody, would engender a backlash among Kurds across the Middle East. Nothing builds national consciousness like a David taking on a Goliath.

In Turkey, the Kurds have made a great deal of progress over the past decade, despite the recent deterioration in their relations with the central government. Erdogan's efforts to sabotage the HDP's electoral



chances—imprisoning candidates, imposing media blackouts, and harassing Kurdish voters—have not prevented the party from entering the Turkish parliament in three successive elections. (Many HDP politicians, including the party's leader, Selahattin Demirtas, are even now languishing in jail.) The new Turkish constitution, passed by referendum in April 2017, has transformed Turkey into a presidential system and neutered its parliament, so the HDP's influence, despite its significant number of deputies, is greatly limited.

Nonetheless, the fact that the party came in third in the June 2018 elections, behind only the ruling party and the main opposition party, is an indication that the Kurdish issue has been institutionalized in Turkish politics. The HDP's success will encourage the mobilization of Kurdish civil society and, eventually, the development of Kurdish ties with others in the Turkish opposition. And the proliferation of Kurdish organizations in Europe may help to move European attitudes toward Turkey in a more pro-Kurdish direction. It is the Turkish Kurds who, although divided between a military wing (the PKK) and a political wing (the HDP), are in the best position to assume a leadership role for Kurds across the region. This is because they, unlike the other Kurdish communities, are part of a country embedded in Western institutions. Even if Turkey's practices diverge from Western norms, Turkish Kurds have benefited from exposure to the values and principles associated with the West.

The case of the Iranian Kurds is the most opaque, given Tehran's strained relations with the outside world and the secretive nature of the regime itself. Yet events in other parts of Kurdistan are influencing developments in Iran's Kurdish regions. Iran has always pursued a multipronged policy toward the Kurds. Domestically, it has repressed them, including through the liberal use of capital punishment against activists. At the same time, it has forged ties with the KRG in a successful effort to control Iranian Kurdish groups residing in Iraqi Kurdistan. Yet as Iran finds itself overstretched in the region, its leaders worried about regime stability and the country's worsening economy, the central government may come to see the Kurds as an even greater threat. Iranian Kurds have had little experience with self-rule, having lived for decades under a government that interferes in all aspects of daily life. But Iran, like Syria, is a brittle state. Change will start at the center. The more pan-Kurdish identity and confidence grow, the more likely it is that Iranian Kurds will be prepared for instability in Tehran.

Finally, the United States remains the single most important actor when it comes to determining the future of the Kurds, particularly in Iraq and Syria. Trump may be ending the U.S. partnership with the YPG, but the Syrian Kurds have nonetheless benefited from the relationship, as they were previously considered by outside powers to be the least important Kurdish population in the region. Now they are on the map: hours after Trump announced the United States' withdrawal from Syria, a spokesperson for the French foreign ministry claimed that France would "ensure the security" of the Syrian Kurds. Yet Washington's move will force the Syrian Kurds to negotiate with Damascus earlier than they had planned to, and from a position of relative weakness. A full U.S. withdrawal, moreover, could cause a destabilizing scramble among regional powers in Syria, with disastrous results for the Kurds.

Concerned about these repercussions, U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton, have warned Turkey not to intervene against the Kurds in northern Syria. Having stumbled into the Middle East's perpetual Kurdish conundrum, the United States is finding it hard to extricate itself. Washington will have to employ all its persuasive powers to ensure that the Kurds are not crushed by Ankara, Damascus, and other regional powers. That, in turn, will require a degree of interest and policy coherence not previously evident in the Trump administration. But to the extent that the United States values democracy, human rights, and minority rights, it should support Kurds across the Middle East within the existing nation-state system. Even if Trump is unwilling to expend much political capital to support the Kurds, there are other centers of power and influence in the United States, such as media and civil society organizations, that can do so.

Whatever happens in the near future, however, there can be no going back to the status quo that obtained only a few decades ago, before the United States' interventions in the region set the Kurds on a fundamentally new path. Despite frequent setbacks, continued repression, and over a century without a homeland, the Kurds are finally emerging as a unified people. A Kurdish state may be a long way off, but if one ever does emerge, there will be a nation there to populate it. 🌍



## REBUILDING THE NATION AND THE REGION

By Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

**T**he 14th General Election last May was intense and Malaysians will remember it long after the settles. Not only will they remember the gruelling month-long campaign but more than that, was their selfless commitment to end the powerful Barisan Nasional's 61-year rule. The victory defied all the odds, something that from the outset pundits, journalists and analysts, both local and foreign, had declared nearly impossible.

On the 9th of May 2018, Malaysians rallied together to vote in a new government, a government that they hoped would wash away all the dark and dirty stains left behind by the previous regime. It was the end of a dark period; a period when Malaysia was known to the world as a kleptocracy.

In the early hours of May 10th, when news of the victory swept across the nation, the sense of relief was pervasive. Clearly, democracy had been restored and restored in the best manner possible. The peaceful transition of power signified maturity and good sense. It was an epochal moment, a new beginning. It meant that the time for us to rebuild and re-energize our past achievements had dawned.

However, stark realities soon emerged and it was obvious the damage left by the previ-



Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

ous administration was far greater than what was believed. The government's first steps involved a massive rehabilitation of the civil service, which had become widely corrupted and politicized. This was done within the first six months of our administration and will continue to be our focus in the years to come. Businesses will profit from the eradication of corruption and reduction of bureaucratic delays. The private sector is expected to grow from hereon. As I write this,

Malaysia is already No. 1 in the emerging markets list.

Internationally, our reputation had taken a beating because of a slew of cases involving 1MDB (1Malaysia Development Berhad), whose tentacles spread across the continents. The priority is to let the rule of law return and prosecute all perpetrators of wrongdoing. Those who abused their position of power for personal benefit will be brought to justice. We are serious in recapturing our respectability and reputation.

Malaysia is a trading nation. Trade is the main driver for our economy. Our principle of being friendly to every nation has benefited us since our independence in 1957. Any disputes and disagreements will be resolved at the negotiation table, not through conflict.

In terms of foreign relations, Malaysia has always been neutral and, more often than

not, has spoken out to defend the rights of weaker nations. We endeavour to be the voice of developing countries. 'Prosper thy neighbor' is the principle we adhere to, especially in a world facing many economic challenges.

Our closest neighbors in ASEAN are our allies. We admit that ASEAN as a grouping lack the cohesiveness and the potential to be an economic powerhouse. There are more than 600 million people in this region, yet the market is severely underutilized.

Close cooperation in areas that can bring about mutual benefit must be encouraged. Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things have greatly changed the business landscape and ASEAN cannot afford to be left behind. Working cohesively as a unit will ultimately give a lot of reward in the face of trade wars and economic sanctions. ■

# Malaysia: A fresh start

Ten months since historic elections that rocked the nation's political landscape, Malaysia, once again headed by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, is focused on restoring the transparency and rule of law to the country, which was hounded by several allegations of corruption during the nine-year tenure of Najib Razak.

As the Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope) coalition rebuilds Malaysia's reputation around the world, **Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah** reaffirms Mahathir's commitment to transparent governance, confident

that the policy will ensure the economic prosperity of the nation: "There will be no more 'direct negotiations for government contracts and tenders.' We want to embrace the idea of open candor to the fullest," he stated.

Given that the coalition is led by Mahathir and his erstwhile political rival, Anwar Ibrahim, this new united front provides much needed reassurance to governments and businesses, both domestic and foreign.

The **American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM)** welcomes the fresh commitment to open

governance, stressing that it will attract more American foreign direct investment to the country, which possesses abundant natural resources and highly skilled workers.

**AMCHAM Executive Director Siobhan Das** said: "American companies have found a very exciting and cooperative environment to base themselves in the region. They've thrived, mutually and symbiotically, with Malaysia."

Similarly, companies from other parts of the world have adopted a favorable view of Malaysia's vision and choose for their operations to use the country as a launch pad to the rest of the ASEAN region.

Amid this resurgence, Malaysia can resume its project to build a knowledge-based economy and prepare for so-called Industry 4.0.

Among those gearing up the Fourth Industrial Revolution are the country's law firms, which are contributing to building the knowledge-based economy by providing their partners with further education and training.

Multi-disciplinary practices, like **Lee Hishammuddin Allen & Gledhill (LHAG)**, have adopted this strategy in order to offer extensive services and in-depth expertise to all their clients.

"We want to develop a system that is not just for us, but for the future of our youth. We want

a country that is stable, modern and progressive. This is a government made up of very successful and business-friendly people. We, at LHAG, are doing our part to support and contribute to the government's push towards a better Malaysia," **Partner Dato' Nitin Nadkarni** said.

Meanwhile, specialized law firms, like **Wong Jin Nee & Teo (WJN&T)** have identified the nation's smaller companies as its main clientele, mindful that SMEs are the foundation of stable and successful economies.

"Over 98% of Malaysian businesses are classified as SMEs. They are the backbone of the economy. While we serve many international clients, we do not put our own SMEs in the backseat because they are the ones lacking in services. We need to help them move up the value chain. We help educate them and make them realize the importance of intellectual property," **Founding Partner Teo Bong Kwang** said.

As Malaysia steps up its efforts to regain its economic strength and move towards Industry 4.0, both the private and public sector have increased their investment in improving their technology, developing entrepreneurship and providing workers with the new skills required by a another generation of businesses.

Starting off as a semiconductor manufacturer in the mid-1990s, when

## REAFFIRMING A COMMITMENT TO CREATE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

"Before the election, nobody expected a change in government," recalled **Dato' Nitin Nadkarni**, the Chairman of the Partners' Committee and Head of the Energy, Infrastructure & Projects, and International Arbitration Practice at the Malaysian law firm **Lee Hishammuddin Allen & Gledhill (LHAG)**.

Tracing its origins back more than a century, LHAG has nurtured a reputation for excellence and expertise in dispute resolution, international arbitration, tax, employment and industrial relations, and corporate law, while staying above the political fray, a notable achievement given Malaysia's colonial and post-colonial history.

"We positioned ourselves as a professional law firm. And finding sustained success regardless of who is in power speaks to the strength of our practice," Nadkarni said.

Consistently enlisted to handle high-profile cases and

little-known ones alike, LHAG has proven to be a domestic legal powerhouse. The firm has also widened its focus outside the country as it taps its strong regional network to assist Malaysian clients wanting to expand their businesses abroad.

Meanwhile, the firm's leaders have cited the current government's business-friendly approach to governance and its commitment to economic development as positive steps towards creating a level playing field for big ticket projects and opening the market to more foreign investment.

"Malaysia's current leaders are business-oriented. Mahathir himself has a track record emphasizing economic development. As a firm, we would like to take advantage of the coming growth - if not immediately, certainly in the long term," **Partner Kumar Kanagasingam** said. ■ [www.lh-ag.com](http://www.lh-ag.com)



Malaysia was dubbed as one of Asia's Tiger Cub Economies, **SilTerra** was synonymous with innovation. More than three decades later, the company remains at the forefront of its sector because of its ability to quickly adapt to the ever-changing demands of the industry.

Today, the Malaysian company, with offices also in Taiwan and Silicon Valley, develops emerging technologies, like silicon photonics and advanced power, which go into bio-sensors, DNA sequencing chips, micro-mirror displays, and high efficiency power devices, among others.

The Malaysian government has continued its support for initiatives like the Cradle Fund Sdn Bhd, which brings together tech experts and

offers funding for early stage start-ups to develop Malaysia's tech entrepreneurship. Since its incorporation under the Ministry of Finance in 2003, the fund has helped more than 900 local start-ups and has achieved the highest commercialization rate of all similar government initiatives.

Among the world's fastest growing markets, Malaysia highlights its various races, cultures, languages and religions as an advantage to foreign companies looking for a base of operations in Southeast Asia.

One company in particular, **Global Ikwhan Service & Business (GISB) Holdings**, has shown that it is possible to thrive in an increasingly globalized business environment without

having to turn its back on cherished Islamic values. In doing so, the company is able to provide a fresh perspective about the world view of Islamic-led businesses.

"Our company's main goal is not necessarily to benefit from our businesses, but to provide services to others. Profits come when they come. Our success has stemmed from putting the needs of others before our own," **GISB CEO Lokman Hakim Pfordten** said.

Among the top ten home-grown distribution brands in Malaysia and a major distributor of audio goods in Southeast Asia, **VinnPower** has expanded rapidly in the past eight years and has found its products on the shelves of the Hypermarket and

Electronic retail chain.

"We have grown because of the partnerships that we have formed throughout the years. We designed our own brand, **Vinnfier**, and also designed products for the own distribution of other brands. These relationships we have formed are built on trust. In Southeast Asia, we have become experts," **VinnPower Executive Director Alan Wong** said.

As the Mahathir-led coalition completes its first year in government, the world remains highly enthusiastic about the trajectory of the economy, still confident that the nation will regain its status as an important, credible voice in the region grappling with many challenges, both geopolitical and economic. ■

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Tel/Fax : +603 7772 9218 Email : enquiry@vinnfier.com.my

## DYNAMIC APPROACH, EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

**Wong Jin Nee & Teo (WJNT)** is an intellectual property and technology specialist firm that provides a full spectrum, integrated, holistic, high quality and value-added services in IP portfolio creation, management, brand protection, enforcement, dispute resolution, government engagement, as well as commercialization and monetization.

WJNT's strength lies in its uniqueness as a boutique law firm with a full focus on IP, supported by a team of highly experienced, committed and passionate individuals who truly understand the IP needs of clients. WJNT's approach is to understand clients' needs, goals and corporate policies and provide proactive, responsive and creative solutions to achieve the desirable results and outcomes.

A firm believer in the best technology to create a highly efficient work system, WJNT has created its own database system – **GRAVITAS** – to keep track and monitor deadlines for all its trademark, patents and industrial design files and litigation cases.

### KEY AREAS OF PRACTICE

- ◆ Litigation, Dispute Resolution and Alternative Dispute Resolution
- ◆ Brand Protection and Enforcement
- ◆ Clearance Searches, Filing, Prosecution and Maintenance of IP
- ◆ Trade and Consumer Practices, Privacy and Data Protection
- ◆ Confidential Information and Trade Secrets
- ◆ Competition Laws, Green Technology, Climate Change, Traditional Knowledge, Biodiversity, Geographical Indications
- ◆ Internet, Internet of Things, Big Data, Cloud Computing, Fintech, Blockchain and Other Emerging Rights
- ◆ IP Commercialization and Monetization, Valuation, including franchising and licensing
- ◆ Food, Drugs and Cosmetics
- ◆ IP Transactions (Global M&A, Cross border and Due Diligence)
- ◆ Media, Entertainment and Sports Law
- ◆ Public policy and Government Engagement IPR Management, Counseling, Audit and Strategies

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**Wong Jin Nee  
& Teo**  
ADVOCATES AND SOLICITORS



# SilTerra: Defining tomorrow in Malaysia today

Globally ranked 16th by Gartner in the pure-play foundries category, **SilTerra** clearly punches above its weight. Originally set up in 1995 as a semiconductor manufacturer in line with then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's Second Industrial Master Plan, the company has since expanded into advanced microelectronics.

By focusing on emerging technologies such as silicon photonics, MEMS and advanced power, SilTerra has helped its customers to develop innovative products like bio-sensors, DNA sequencing chips, micro-mirror displays, high efficiency power devices and ultra-low power chips for the IOT, and wearables. Supporting efforts in the life sciences, healthcare and automotive markets, SilTerra also manages to meet green technology standards in the transportation, data-center and communications industries.

SilTerra's emergence as a top company in its industry is the result of years of developing local skills and nurturing strategic partnerships with universities and organizations such as imec, the Belgium-based leading research institute in nanoelectronics.

SilTerra's customers include innovative start-ups and global tech giants LG, Sony and Qualcomm that provide chips to brand names like Amazon and Google. One California-based start-up was acquired for \$1.2 billion after enlisting SilTerra to launch its DNA Sequencing Chip.

"Through SilTerra's own transformation, we have been able to collaborate with emerging companies around the world to

develop their dreams into innovative new products. SilTerra is now looking forward to stepping up its role in Malaysia and playing our part in developing a vibrant high-tech ecosystem for the nation," **CEO Firdaus Abdullah** said. ■

[www.silterra.com](http://www.silterra.com)



SilTerra ensures that its customers receive only the highest quality wafers.

# SILTERRA

**GISB**

GLOBAL IKHWAN SERVICES AND BUSINESS HOLDINGS

Dato' Lokman Hakim Pfordten Chief Executive Officer, Tuan Mohd Rashidi Abdullah Executive Chairman, Tuan Nasiruddin Mohd Ali Advisory Board Chairman

is trained to be multi skilled in leadership, education, architecture and design, event management, tourism, agriculture, culture and arts, etc. However our priority is human development whereby each individual is groomed to be a good employee rich in humanity values. With such values at heart, they are happy to serve just anyone without expecting any return as a proof of their love for God.

GISB Holdings which was established in Malaysia currently has 5,000 employees out of which 70 percent are young adults and youths.

They are employed at over 500 business branches in 14 nations worldwide. They are not only active in running businesses but each and everyone of them

**“ Man is born with the instinct to love and be loved. As it is the key to universal unity, spreading love and care through our business and services has always been our main objective. With our International and multinational business network in Asia, Middle East, Africa, Australia, Europe & UK, we try our best to serve everyone with love and care irrespective of blood, race or position in bringing about peace and harmony throughout the entire world. ”**

[www.gisbholdings.com](http://www.gisbholdings.com)

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# The New Containment

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## Handling Russia, China, and Iran

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*Michael Mandelbaum*

**T**he quarter century following the Cold War was the most peaceful in modern history. The world's strongest powers did not fight one another or even think much about doing so. They did not, on the whole, prepare for war, anticipate war, or conduct negotiations and political maneuvers with the prospect of war looming in the background. As U.S. global military hegemony persisted, the possibility of developed nations fighting one another seemed ever more remote.

Then history began to change course. In the last several years, three powers have launched active efforts to revise security arrangements in their respective regions. Russia has invaded Crimea and other parts of Ukraine and has tried covertly to destabilize European democracies. China has built artificial island fortresses in international waters, claimed vast swaths of the western Pacific, and moved to organize Eurasia economically in ways favorable to Beijing. And the Islamic Republic of Iran has expanded its influence over much of Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen and is pursuing nuclear weapons.

This new world requires a new American foreign policy. Fortunately, the country's own not-so-distant past can offer guidance. During the Cold War, the United States chose to contain the Soviet Union, successfully deterring its military aggression and limiting its political influence for decades. The United States should apply containment once again, now to Russia, China, and Iran. The contemporary world is similar enough to its mid-twentieth-century predecessor to make that old strategy relevant but different enough that it needs to be modified and updated. While success is not guaranteed, a new containment policy offers the best chance to defend American interests in the twenty-first century.

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Now as before, the possibility of armed conflict exerts a major influence on the foreign policies of the United States and countries throughout Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The Cold War divided the world into rival camps, with regions and even countries split in two. Today, similar cleavages are developing, with each revisionist power seeking its own sphere of influence separate from the larger U.S.-backed global order.

Now as before, the revisionist powers are dictatorships that challenge American values as well as American interests. They seek to overturn political, military, and economic arrangements the United States helped establish long ago and has supported ever since. Should Vladimir Putin's Russia succeed in reasserting control over parts of the former Soviet Union, Xi Jinping's China gain control over maritime commerce in the western Pacific, or Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's Iran dominate the oil reserves of the Persian Gulf, the United States, its allies, and the global order they uphold would suffer a major blow.

But today's circumstances differ from those of the past in several important ways. During most of the Cold War, Washington confronted a single powerful opponent, the Soviet Union—the leader of the international communist movement. Now it must cope with three separate adversaries, each largely independent of the other two. Russia and China cooperate, but they also compete with each other. And while both have good relations with Iran, both also have large and potentially restive Muslim populations, giving them reason to worry about the growth of Iranian power and influence. Cold War containment was a single global undertaking, implemented regionally. Contemporary containment will involve three separate regional initiatives, implemented in coordination.

The Soviet Union, moreover, presented a strong ideological challenge, devoted as it was to advancing not just Moscow's geopolitical interests but also its communist principles. Neither Russia nor China has such a crusading ideology today. Russia has abandoned communism completely, and China has done so partially, retaining the notion of party supremacy but shedding most of the economics and the messianic zeal. And although the Islamic Republic represents a cause and not just a stretch of territory, the potential appeal of its ideology is largely limited to the Muslim world and, primarily, its Shiite minority.

None of today's revisionist powers possesses the Soviet Union's fearsome military capabilities. Russia is a shrunken version of its older





*Eye in the sky: a U.S. Navy helicopter in the South China Sea, October 2015*

self militarily, and Iran lacks formidable modern military forces. China's economic growth may ultimately allow it to match the United States in all strategic dimensions and pose a true peer threat, but to date, Beijing is concentrating on developing forces to exclude the United States from the western Pacific, not to project power globally. Moreover, the initiatives each has launched so far—Russia's seizure of Crimea and Middle East meddling, China's island building, Iran's regional subversion—have been limited probes rather than all-out assaults on the existing order.

Lastly, the Soviet Union was largely detached from the U.S.-centered global economy during the Cold War, whereas today's revisionist powers are very much a part of it. Russia and Iran have relatively small economies and export mostly energy, but China has the world's second-largest economy, with deep, wide, and growing connections to countries everywhere.

Economic interdependence will complicate containment. China, for example, may be a political and military rival, but it is also a crucial economic partner. The United States depends on China to finance



its deficits. China depends on the United States to buy its exports. Containment in Asia will thus require other policies as well, because although a Chinese military collapse would enhance Asian security, a Chinese economic collapse would bring economic disaster.

Together, these differences make today's containment a less urgent challenge than its Cold War predecessor. The United States does not have to deal with a single mortal threat from a country committed to remaking the entire world in its own image. It must address three serious but lesser challenges, mounted by countries seeking not heaven on earth but greater regional power and autonomy. But if today's challenges are less epic, they are far more complicated. The old containment was simple, if not easy. The new containment will have to blend a variety of policies, carefully coordinated with one another in design and execution. This will tax the ingenuity and flexibility of the United States and its allies.

### **STRONGER TOGETHER**

As during the Cold War, containment today requires American military deployments abroad. In Europe, ground troops are needed to deter Russian aggression. The Putin regime has already sent forces into Georgia and Ukraine. The United States is committed to protecting its NATO allies. These include the Baltic states, tiny countries on Russia's border. By defending them, the United States could encounter some of the same difficulties it did defending West Berlin, including, in the worst case, having to decide whether to bring nuclear weapons into play rather than accept military defeat.

East Asia requires a robust U.S. naval presence to fend off China's campaign to dominate the western Pacific. The United States is committed to protecting allies such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan and maintaining open sea-lanes, and it conducts what it calls "freedom-of-navigation operations" in international waters newly claimed by China to make clear that the rest of the world does not accept Chinese claims and Chinese dominance there.

And in the Middle East, American naval and air forces are needed to safeguard shipments of Persian Gulf oil to Europe and Asia and to support a successful rollback of the Iranian nuclear program, should that become necessary. American troops on the ground are not required; it is local forces that must check Iranian efforts at regional subversion (which are carried out by local militias).

Diplomatically, Washington needs to maintain or assemble broad coalitions of local powers to oppose each revisionist challenge. In Europe, NATO was created to carry out this very mission and so should be the pillar of the United States' strategy there. In Asia and the Middle East, the "hub and spoke" pattern of American Cold War alliances still exists, even as regional powers have begun to collaborate among themselves.

Working with partners exploits Washington's greatest strength: its ability to attract allies and create powerful coalitions against isolated opponents. Coordinating with other countries also endows American foreign policy with a legitimacy it would otherwise lack, showing that the United States is not simply acting for itself but defending broad principles of international order that many others support.

The dependence of the revisionists on access to the global economy gives the United States and its coalition partners a potential source of leverage. Washington and its allies have tried to exploit this through sanctions on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, tariffs on China for its trade practices, and sanctions on Iran for its nuclear weapons program. But interdependence cuts both ways. Russia has tried to pressure Ukraine by restricting Ukrainian access to Russian energy. China has placed targeted embargoes on Japan and Norway to express displeasure with specific Japanese and Norwegian policies. Moreover, economic instruments have at best a mixed record in achieving political goals; the broader the sanctioning coalition is, the greater its impact will be.

### **MAKING IT OFFICIAL**

The prospect of a twenty-first-century triple containment strategy raises several questions. Since the United States is already doing much of what is required, how much change in American foreign policy is needed? Is it necessary or feasible to confront all three revisionist powers at once? And how does all this end?

As for the first, explicitly committing the United States to containment would build on many existing policies while reframing them as part of a coherent national strategy rather than the products of inertia or inattention. A public commitment to containment would enhance the credibility of American deterrence and lower the chance of opportunistic attacks by opponents hoping for easy gains (as happened in Korea in 1950 and Iraq in 1990). That, in turn, would reassure actual and potential allies and increase their willingness to join the effort.

Adopting containment as a strategic frame would also help restrain Washington's occasional impulses to do more (try to transform other societies) or less (retreat from global engagement altogether).

As for confronting all three at once, geopolitical logic and historical experience suggest that reducing the number of threats is the best course, as the United States did by joining with the Soviet Union to defeat the Nazis and then aligning with Mao Zedong's China to defeat the Soviet Union. Post-Soviet Russia would have been a natural partner for the West. But Moscow was needlessly alienated from its logical geopolitical partnership by NATO expansion, which brought foreign armies to its doorstep over its objections. At this point, all three revisionist regimes rely for domestic support on nationalist hostility to the United States specifically and Western democracies more generally and reject being part of a U.S.-led coalition. Fortunately, Russia is much weaker than the Soviet Union, China is restrained by both deterrence and the knowledge that military conflict would damage its economy, and Iran is a regional power. So the United States can afford to pursue the containment of all three simultaneously (so long as it does so as part of robust coalitions).

Cold War containment was an open-ended policy with a hoped-for eventual outcome. The same will be true for the new version: the policy should continue as long as the threats it is intended to counter continue, and ideally it will end similarly. Constructive regime change, for example, especially the advent of democracy, would alter the foreign policy orientations of the revisionist powers. Such a change would have to come about through internal processes and is unlikely to happen anytime soon. Still, none of the regimes can be confident of its longevity; repeated outbreaks of political turbulence over the years have shown that each faces significant domestic opposition, maintains itself in power through coercion, and fears its people rather than trusts them. Situations like that can shift rapidly. A well-executed policy of containment could increase the chances of disruption by creating an external context that would encourage it. But when or, indeed, if it would bear fruit is impossible to predict.

### **BEWARE OF FREE RIDERS**

The biggest obstacles to a new policy of containment come, ironically, not from the powers being contained but from the countries doing the containing. The United States needs to relearn how to manage dura-

ble coalitions of allies and persuade its own citizenry that the exercise of global leadership is still worth the effort required.

Coalitions are difficult to manage in the best of circumstances. It was hard to hold the Western alliance together during the Cold War, even though it faced a single powerful threat. Building and maintaining comparable coalitions today, confronted by diverse smaller threats, will be more difficult still. In Europe, although all countries are wary of Russia, some are more so than others. Those closest to Russia's borders most strongly support an enhanced Western military presence. Years of crisis over Europe's common currency, meanwhile, have taken a political toll, increased intra-European tensions, and made cooperation of all kinds more difficult. The continuing Brexit drama will only compound the problems.

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*Coalitions are difficult to manage in the best of circumstances.*

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In Asia, the Philippines and South Korea have sometimes taken a more benign view of Chinese power than other countries in the region. And among those agreeing on the need to check Chinese ambitions (including Australia, India, Indonesia, and Japan), developing common policies is difficult because they are an amorphous, heterogeneous group.

In the Middle East, crucial American allies, such as Qatar (which hosts a U.S. air base) and Saudi Arabia, are sharply at odds. The government of Turkey, a member of NATO, identifies with the Muslim Brotherhood, which Egypt and Saudi Arabia regard as a mortal enemy. Ironically, the one unproblematic member of the anti-Iran coalition is Israel, a country that for decades was anathematized as the root of all the problems in the Middle East but that is now recognized as a dependable counterweight to Persian power.

All coalitions encounter free-rider problems, and the dominant members usually pay more than their fair share of the costs involved. So it will be with the new containment. The imbalance will be most glaring in Europe, where a tradition of letting Washington carry much of the burden of collective defense has persisted for too long; it originated when U.S. allies were weak and poor but continued even after they became strong and rich. During the Cold War, every American president tried, without much success, to get European countries to pay more for NATO, but none pushed the issue hard because the priority was to maintain a common front against the Soviet threat. There



may be a lower tolerance for such free-riding today, as U.S. President Donald Trump's comments make clear.

The Asian countries wary of China have increased their spending on defense. Still, the United States is destined to take the lead in opposing China because the most pressing threat the People's Republic presents is a maritime one—one that requires major naval forces to contest, of the kind that only the United States commands.

In the Middle East, Israel has capable armed forces. Saudi Arabia has purchased expensive military hardware from the United States but has not demonstrated the capacity to use it effectively. Turkey has a formidable military, but the present Turkish government cannot be counted on to use it to contain Iran.

### **WILL AMERICA LEAD?**

The weakest link in the chain may be the most powerful country itself. There are reasons to expect the American public to support a leading role in the containment of Russia, China, and Iran. The United States has a long history with such a foreign policy. The approach has geopolitical logic behind it, promising to protect American interests in crucial parts of the world at a reasonable price. But there are also reasons for skepticism. Today's threats appear less urgent, coping with them will be more complicated, and the country's attitude toward foreign entanglements has understandably soured over the last two decades.

The United States was pulled into both world wars by external attacks, and Americans gave their support to a foreign policy of global reach during the Cold War because they were persuaded it would head off yet another world war. After the Soviet collapse, many of the Cold War arrangements persisted through inertia and gained support because they seemed to entail little expense or risk. Now that the expenses and risks of such a policy have increased, many Americans may reconsider their support.

The skepticism has deepened because of the country's recent misadventures abroad. The interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya turned out poorly, and the public has little taste for more. This view has much to recommend it. But it need not threaten the prospects of a new containment, because that course is quite different from the failed crusades of recent decades. Those involved efforts to transform the internal politics and economies of weak states. Containment involves the opposite, checking the external conduct of strong states. If

national leaders can appreciate and explain the difference, they may be able to bring the public along.

The resurgence of populism, finally, makes any such project more difficult. The essence of populism is hostility to elites, and the design and conduct of foreign policy are elite activities. The foreign policy establishment favors a robust American role in the world. That may be a good enough reason for antiestablishment rebels, including the populist in chief now residing in the White House, to oppose one.

So the future direction of American foreign policy is unclear. Washington might forgo leading coalitions to contain the three revisionist powers, in which case their strength will increase. Emboldened by the American abdication, they may grow aggressive and try to coerce their neighbors. Those neighbors currently rely on the American nuclear arsenal to protect them; if they come to doubt the credibility of American security guarantees, they may follow Israel and opt to develop or acquire their own arsenals in order to protect themselves. An American retreat would thus make the world more dangerous and nuclear proliferation more likely.

Thanks to the size, geography, and power of the United States, Americans for many generations have been able to pay less attention to American foreign policy than have the citizens of other countries, whose lives and fortunes that policy has more immediately and directly affected. Should the country turn decisively away from its global role and allow the revisionist challenges to advance unchecked, however, Americans' happy detachment from the world beyond their borders may disappear. And by the time they realize what they need to protect, it may be too late to do so without great difficulty and high cost. 🌐

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# Educate to Liberate

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## Open Societies Need Open Minds

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*Carla Norrlof*

A populist wave is sweeping the Western world. In Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the United States, populist parties and candidates have entered the government. In France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, they have won record levels of support and reshaped the political landscape. What makes these victories so disturbing is the characteristic that unites all populists: their rejection of liberal values. If the world once seemed to be moving inexorably toward greater political and economic freedom, human dignity, tolerance, equality, nondiscrimination, open markets, and international cooperation, all are now under threat. That is bad enough, but the decline of liberalism will have consequences beyond a few individual countries. Because the countries that uphold the liberal international order, especially the United States, are turning against liberalism, they risk undermining the order they built, ushering in a more antagonistic and dangerous world.

Politicians and pundits have suggested many different responses to the populist phenomenon: reducing inequality, protecting major industries from international trade, curbing immigration. But these are all indirect solutions. The best way to counter the populist trend is to address the underlying problem head-on, by fostering more liberal attitudes. There is a lot of evidence that the best way to promote liberal values is by giving more people more education. In every place where populism is surging, the main determinant of whether someone holds liberal values is his or her level of education. Higher education emphasizes equality, tolerance, and critical thinking; those without access to it are far more likely to oppose liberal values and practices.

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Since the 1990s, American college graduates have held more liberal positions than nongraduates on a wide range of issues. But simply sending more people to college is only the first step. To truly instill liberal values throughout society, universities will also have to live up to those values themselves—rooting out discrimination, overturning traditional academic hierarchies, and breaking up networks of power and patronage that too often keep the connected in and the deserving out.

### **THE ILLIBERAL THREAT**

In the seven decades after World War II, the United States created and then sustained the liberal international order, a system characterized by individual freedom, open markets, and fairly peaceful international relations. It was upheld by an interlocking network of institutions and alliances and undergirded by the United States' brute military force. All 12 U.S. presidents during this era, from Harry Truman to Barack Obama, supported the order.

The system was built on the principles of economic and political freedom. Secure property rights and unrestricted flows of goods, services, and capital have formed its economic backbone. Its founders wanted to free people from government oppression, coercion, and discrimination. So Western governments have focused on the need to combat human rights abuses and promote democracy. But they have spent far less time worrying about ethnic and religious discrimination, especially in developed countries. That is a mistake. If left to fester, such discrimination poses a serious threat to the liberal international order. It undermines the principle of equality and allows illiberal populists to surf into office, where they weaken democracy and the order itself.

No one exemplifies that trend better than U.S. President Donald Trump. Trump's hostility to liberalism goes way back. Long before he started campaigning, Trump pushed the racist conspiracy theory that Obama was born outside the United States. During his campaign kickoff, in 2015, he called Mexican immigrants "rapists" and promised to build a wall along the United States' southern border. He later shared inaccurate and racist crime statistics on Twitter and called for a ban on Muslims entering the United States.

Trump doesn't just reject liberal values; he rejects the liberal order, too. On the campaign trail, he called NATO "obsolete," suggested he



might abandon U.S. allies in East Asia, and threatened to withdraw the United States from the North American Free Trade Agreement, the World Trade Organization, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Like his fellow right-wing populists in Europe, Trump looks at the postwar foreign policy consensus with disdain and advocates instead that countries shut their borders to foreign goods, clamp down on press freedom, curb immigration, and preserve traditional ethnic, religious, and gender hierarchies.

Since taking office, Trump has made good on many of his promises. Within his first week, he issued an executive order suspending the entry of people from seven Muslim-majority countries for 90

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*Trump doesn't just reject liberal values; he rejects the liberal order, too.*

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days. Since then, he has shunned multilateralism by withdrawing the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Paris climate agreement, launched a trade war, crippled the World Trade Organization by blocking

the appointment of new judges to its Dispute Settlement Body, failed to act after Saudi Arabia murdered the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and imposed punitive secondary sanctions on European companies doing business with Iran after withdrawing the United States from the Iran nuclear deal. Most worrying for the global economy, the Trump administration has drafted a new trade bill, the United States Fair and Reciprocal Tariff Act, that would allow the president to raise tariffs unilaterally. That would blow up the world trading system by violating two of the World Trade Organization's basic principles: non-discrimination (the idea that the same tariffs apply to everyone, unless free-trade agreements supersede them) and tariff binding (the understanding that tariffs will not exceed pre-agreed maximums).

Trump has also followed through on his rejection of liberal values. He has expressed a wish that the United States take in more immigrants from countries such as Norway rather than from Africa; pushed Congress to build a wall on the southern border; failed to distance himself from white nationalist protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia; and instituted, and then reversed, a policy of separating immigrant children from their parents.

In area after area, the United States has started to abandon the liberal values it once touted. If this continues, the liberal international order will face a grim future. Openness to foreign goods and people



*The old college try: at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, November 2015*

will be replaced by discriminatory trade and immigration practices. If the Trump administration continues to undermine the global trading system, American workers will be the biggest losers. More expensive imports will hurt household budgets, and as sales fall, companies will lay off workers. Retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods will hurt exporters, too. If a trade war gets out of control, the dollar could lose its position as the global reserve currency. That would cost the United States the vast benefits in trade, finance, and security it currently derives from its status as the world's banker. As the U.S. economy suffers, Washington will have to spend a larger share of GDP on the military. And if the Trump administration continues to alienate U.S. allies, they may form rival power blocs to compete with the United States rather than cooperate with it. That would usher in a more unpredictable, treacherous world order.

Making matters worse, other countries are following Trump's lead in turning their backs on liberalism. They are moving away from an emphasis on identities people can achieve through ingenuity and hard work to ones they can't or won't change, such as skin color or religion. The result will be a less meritocratic, more discriminatory world. That will have profound consequences for the liberal international order, because a country that is preoccupied with racial and religious hierarchies is more likely to close its borders to foreign capital,

goods, and people and to downplay the role of collective action in achieving national security. Such countries are more likely to think in zero-sum terms.

### **IT'S IDENTITY, STUPID**

Trump's attacks on the liberal order have centered on economic globalization. Because in his campaign, Trump so effectively harnessed the resentment Americans felt toward foreign goods and workers, many commentators have explained his success—and the broader populist phenomenon—as a backlash against globalization. But the populist trend is not easily accounted for by economics. In the United States, the gap between rich and poor has been rising since the 1970s without a populist backlash until now.

Economic dislocation did account for some of Trump's appeal, but his support can be much better explained by education and race. Nationally, voters without college degrees backed Trump by eight points, while those with degrees voted for his opponent, Hillary Clinton, by nine points. That was a major change from the previous presidential election, when there was little difference between the two groups. Among white voters, the gap was even wider: whites without a college education went for Trump by a 39-point margin; those with a college education voted for him by just a four-point margin.

The only demographic factor that mattered more than education was race. White voters went for Trump by a 20-point margin. Non-whites went for Clinton by 53 points. Income did not have the same predictive power as education. Lower-income voters (those with annual incomes below \$50,000) favored Clinton by a 12-point margin. Middle-income voters (those who earned between \$50,000 and \$99,999) favored Trump by a three-point margin. And upper-income voters split evenly between the two.

Even in places that were struggling economically, identity often overrode economics. In the Rust Belt, for example, where voters had every reason to revolt over their economic lot, it was white Americans who voted for Trump, not poor Americans. Lower-income voters in the Midwest chose Clinton over Trump by a six-point margin. Middle-income voters and upper-income voters favored Trump by a 12-point margin and an eight-point margin, respectively. Although in recent years, the median income among whites in the Midwest has grown slightly faster than the median income of all other ethnic

groups in the region (except Asians), white voters supported Trump over Clinton by an 18-point margin, while nonwhite voters supported Clinton over Trump by a 54-point margin. Midwestern white voters were slightly more likely to support Trump than whites in the country as a whole (by two points), and Midwestern nonwhite voters were slightly more likely to support Clinton than their national counterparts (by one point). Moreover, financial hardship is difficult to disentangle from concerns about identity. A salary cut or a job loss can cause someone to cling more tightly to other forms of social differentiation, such as race or nationality.

Education has proved important in elections outside the United States, as well. In the 2018 Swedish election, for example, 35 percent of voters without a high school degree and 27 percent of those with only a high school degree supported the populist right-wing Sweden Democrats, compared with just nine percent of those with a college degree. The political scientist Anders Sannerstedt has shown that the link between education and populism persists even when income is accounted for. In France, President Emmanuel Macron defeated the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen in 2017 by winning in highly educated districts. He won 84 percent of the vote in the top ten percent of townships by education level. In the bottom decile, he won only 53 percent. After the 2017 Dutch general election, a survey by the *Financial Times* showed that education levels correlated negatively with support for Geert Wilders' far-right Party for Freedom. A separate *Financial Times* survey showed the same was true of support for Brexit in the United Kingdom. A similar trend is emerging in Germany, although education is a less clear predictor of populist support there.

Some academics have argued that the populist wave reflects voters' concerns about eroding national sovereignty. In Trump's case, this shows up in his opposition to illegal immigration. In the United Kingdom, supporters of Brexit wanted to "take back control" of their country. But concerns about sovereignty are often really about race or nationality. Just as Europeans' discontent with the EU often manifests itself in xenophobia—think of the stereotypes of spendthrift Greeks and austere Germans—it is impossible to miss the racial overtones in the U.S. immigration debate. When destitute emigrants from Scandinavian countries moved to the United States in the late nineteenth century, the blue-eyed visitors were largely welcomed. Today, Trump rejects



Mexican immigrants as dangerous and sneers at African immigrants from what he reportedly called “shithole countries.”

In short, the best way to understand the rise of right-wing populism is as a rejection of liberal values. And the best way to fight it is not to search for economic answers or to try to assuage voters’ concerns about sovereignty but to instill those liberal values as widely as possible throughout society.

## **EDUCATION’S EFFECTS**

That means focusing on education. Although the educational divide started to matter in national politics only recently, researchers have long found that the more educated a person is, the more likely he or she is to adopt liberal social views.

What accounts for that correlation is less apparent. Some argue that more liberals go to college in the first place, although there isn’t much evidence for that. Others emphasize education’s direct role in teaching rational thinking and changing attitudes. What’s clear is that higher education militates against simplistic thinking, undermines stereotypes, opens people up to other points of view, and encourages them to tolerate social differences.

In the United States, according to polls by the Pew Research Center, a college education increasingly correlates with sympathy for the Democratic Party. According to those polls, in 1994, 39 percent of those with a four-year college degree identified with or leaned toward the Democratic Party, and 54 percent identified with or leaned toward the Republican Party. Today, those figures are reversed. Given the Democratic Party’s growing association with liberal values, the partisan effect of education goes some way toward demonstrating universities’ liberalizing effect.

Attending college does more than increase people’s tendency to affiliate with the Democratic Party. It also makes people more likely to tolerate different political views. College-educated liberals have warmer attitudes toward conservatives than non-college-educated liberals do. The same is true of conservatives’ attitudes toward liberals. More education could possibly ease the current crisis of polarization.

On top of its liberalizing effect, higher education also seems to lead people to support the economic policies, such as free trade and high levels of immigration, that form the foundation of the global economic order. There’s also some evidence of a correlation between higher

education and direct support for the liberal international order. In a 2013 survey of nine countries (not including the United States), people with college educations were between 24 percentage points (in Turkey) and ten percentage points (in the United Kingdom) more likely to support the UN than those without college degrees. Regardless of whether overall support was high, as in Germany, or low, as in Pakistan, the educational divide persisted.

It's possible that's in part because a college education equips people for jobs that aren't subject to competition from foreign workers, immigrants, or robots, so college graduates have less reason to oppose international flows of goods and people. But that would not explain why graduates hold more liberal positions in areas unrelated to the financial benefits of the liberal international order, such as freedom of speech, which, according to polling by Gallup, is supported by 73 percent of American college students but only 56 percent of all American adults.

Given education's liberalizing effect, the first step in promoting liberal values should be expanding access to education. Countries should dedicate more resources to their universities and give more people access to them. The U.S. government spends less than one percent of GDP on higher education, putting the United States 21st on that score within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2015. It lagged behind not only European countries, such as Norway (1.7 percent), but also emerging economies, such as Costa Rica (1.6 percent) and Turkey (1.2 percent). The United States makes up for its lack of public spending by having the highest level of private spending on higher education. But it still ranks only fifth in terms of the share of adults with college degrees. (Canada, where in 2017, 57 percent of adults had attended college, ranks first.)

## **FIXING HIGHER EDUCATION**

Sending more people to college is important, but the influence of higher education matters beyond the raw number of students. Since elites in almost every section of society have college degrees, universities have an outsize effect on culture, politics, the economy, science, and public policy.

Throughout history, education has promoted liberal attitudes, but it hasn't done so consistently. Independent thought and deference to authority have always coexisted uneasily in higher learning. From Plato's

philosopher kings, to the emergence of higher education under the influence of Christianity in the eleventh century, to the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to today, entrenched hierarchies and stale dogmas have always interfered with the search for truth.

To cultivate an enlightened society, higher education needs to get serious about upholding liberal values. Many institutions of higher learning pledge to act as vanguards of liberalism in their mission statements. Beneath the surface, however, they look very different.

For starters, although almost all universities in Canada and the United States commit themselves to nondiscrimination, the academy is rummaging in the dark when it comes to understanding and fighting for it. Explicit racism and religious intolerance are now thankfully rare. But many people with higher levels of education show other racist tendencies, particularly toward blacks, such as making negative assumptions about them, discounting their expertise, excluding them from professional opportunities, and retaliating against them. Even when universities recognize the problem, rigid hierarchies can prevent them from holding people accountable. In some ways, the system is set up for failure. Universities and professional associations rely on fellow academics to adjudicate grievances. But it's absurd to ask peers who may be seeking a research connection, publishing opportunities, or a job with the alleged perpetrator to determine wrongdoing.

Problems also arise because discrimination is rarely public; rather, it takes place behind the scenes, making it hard to document. Most administrative activities in academic departments, such as assessments of scholarly work and the decisions of hiring and promotion committees, operate under codes of strict confidentiality, further complicating efforts to document bias. If academics truly want to fight discrimination, they shouldn't look for a smoking gun; they should ask whether a similar person from a different race or religion would have suffered similarly.

Universities are also stiflingly hierarchical. Senior administrators reflexively stand by those below them, so academics who allow discrimination to persist are usually supported all the way up the chain. And they can easily take cover under the principle of academic freedom, which often comes into conflict with that of freedom from discrimination. There's an easy fix for this: hold senior administrators accountable

whenever lower-level officials fail to prevent discrimination.

Finally, universities must put an end to the clubby attitude that excludes far too many people from professional opportunities. Exclusive networks, especially those within predominantly ethnically or religiously homogeneous groups, subvert norms of equal treatment and opportunity. They encourage their members to close ranks when challenged, making it nearly impossible to end discriminatory practices. Even scholars who are not trying to circle the wagons have a hard time imagining someone they know, like, and respect acting in a discriminatory way.

Things are moving in the right direction. Within the American Political Science Association, the leading professional organization of academic political scientists, for example, minority representation is far higher among those under 24 (34 percent) than it is among those over 75 (five percent). But there is still a long way to go. Lack of inclusion is not just a generational problem, and institutions cannot police diversity into existence. Academics, senior administrators, professional associations, and journal editors, however, can all do more to encourage it, by holding minorities to the same standards as everyone else.

By broadening access to higher education and living up to the liberal values in which they claim to believe, universities have a chance to help save those values in society at large. That will play a crucial role in preserving the liberal international order. It's not enough for citizens and policymakers to defend democracy and economic openness. The order cannot survive in societies that allow discrimination to go unchecked. 🌍



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# Less Than Zero

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## Can Carbon-Removal Technologies Curb Climate Change?

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*Fred Krupp, Nathaniel Keohane, and Eric Pooley*

**M**ost Americans used to think about climate change—to the extent that they thought about it at all—as an abstract threat in a distant future. But more and more are now seeing it for what it is: a costly, human-made disaster unfolding before their very eyes. A wave of increasingly destructive hurricanes, heat spells, and wildfires has ravaged communities across the United States, and both scientists and citizens are able to connect these extreme events to a warming earth. Seven in ten Americans agree that global warming is happening, according to a 2018 study conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. About six in ten think it is mostly caused by human activity and is already changing the weather. Four in ten say they have personally experienced its impact. And seven in ten say the United States should enact measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions, including prices and limits on carbon dioxide pollution, no matter what other countries do.

When it comes to generating support for climate policy, a warranted sense of alarm is only half the battle. And the other half—a shared belief that the problem is solvable—is lagging far behind. The newfound sense of urgency is at risk of being swamped by collective despair. A scant six percent of Americans, according to the Yale study, believe that the world “can and will” effectively address climate change. With carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels having risen by an estimated 2.7 percent in 2018 and atmospheric concentrations of carbon

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dioxide, which will determine the ultimate extent of warming, at their highest level in some three million years, such pessimism may seem justified—especially with a climate change denier in the White House.

But it is not too late to solve the global climate crisis. A decade of extraordinary innovation has made the greening of the global economy not only feasible but also likely. The market now favors clean energy: in many U.S. states, it is cheaper to build new renewable energy plants than to run existing coal-fired power plants. By combining solar power with new, efficient batteries, Arizona and other sunny states will soon be able to provide electricity at a lower cost per megawatt-hour than new, efficient natural gas plants. Local, regional, and federal governments, as well as corporations, are making measurable progress on reducing carbon pollution. Since 2000, 21 countries have reduced their annual greenhouse gas emissions while growing their economies; China is expected to see emissions peak by 2025, five years earlier than it promised as part of the negotiations for the Paris climate agreement in 2015. At the UN climate talks held late last year in Poland, countries agreed on rules for how to report progress on meeting emission-reduction commitments, an important step in implementing the Paris accord.

What's more, an entirely new arsenal is emerging in the fight against climate change: negative emission technologies, or NETS. NETS are different from conventional approaches to climate mitigation in that they seek not to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere but to remove carbon dioxide that's already there. These technologies range from the old-fashioned practice of reforestation to high-tech machines that suck carbon out of the sky and store it underground. The window of opportunity to combat climate change has not closed—and with a push from policymakers, NETS can keep it propped open for longer.

## **THE HEAT IS ON**

How much time is left to avoid climate catastrophe? The truth is that it is impossible to answer the question with precision. Scientists know that human activity is warming the planet but still don't fully understand the sensitivity of the climate system to greenhouse gases. Nor do they fully comprehend the link between average global warming and local repercussions. So far, however, most effects of climate change have been faster and more severe than the climate models

predicted. The downside risks are enormous; the most recent predictions, ever more dire.

The Paris agreement aims to limit the increase in global average temperatures above preindustrial levels to well below two degrees Celsius, and ideally to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. Going above those levels of warming would mean more disastrous impacts. Global average temperatures have already risen by about one degree Celsius since 1880, with two-thirds of that increase occurring after 1975. An October 2018 special report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a body of leading scientists and policymakers from around the world, found that unless the world implements "rapid and far-reaching" changes to its energy and industrial systems, the earth is likely to reach temperatures of 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels sometime between 2030 and 2052. Limiting warming to that level, the IPCC found, would require immediate and dramatic cuts in carbon dioxide: roughly a 45 percent reduction in the next dozen years. Even meeting the less ambitious target of two degrees would require deep cuts in emissions by 2030 and sustained aggressive action far beyond then.

The IPCC report also warns that seemingly small global temperature increases can have enormous consequences. For example, the half-degree difference between 1.5 degrees Celsius and two degrees Celsius of total warming could consign twice as many people to water scarcity, put ten million more at risk from rising sea levels, and plunge several hundred million more people into poverty as lower yields of key crops drive hunger across much of the developing world. At two degrees of warming, nearly all of the planet's coral reefs are expected to be lost; at 1.5 degrees, ten to 30 percent could survive.

The deeper message of the IPCC report is that there is no risk-free level of climate change. Targets such as 1.5 degrees Celsius or two degrees Celsius are important political markers, but they shouldn't fool anyone into thinking that nature works so precisely. Just as the risks are lower at 1.5 degrees Celsius than at two degrees Celsius, so are they lower at two degrees Celsius than at 2.5 degrees Celsius. Indeed, the latter difference would be far more destructive, since the damages mount exponentially as temperatures rise.

To manage the enormous risks of climate change, global emissions of greenhouse gases need to be cut sharply, and as soon as possible. That will require transforming energy, land, transport, and industrial systems so they emit less carbon dioxide. It will also require reducing

short-lived climate pollutants such as methane, which stay in the atmosphere for only a fraction of the time that carbon dioxide does but have a disproportionate effect on near-term warming.

Yet even that will not be enough. To stabilize the total atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, the world will have to reach net negative emissions—that is, taking more greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere than are being pumped into it. Achieving that through emission reductions alone will be extremely difficult, since some emissions, such as of methane and nitrous oxide from agriculture, are nearly impossible to eliminate. Countering the emissions that are hardest to abate, and bring concentrations down to safer levels, requires technologies that actually remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

That's where NETS come in—not as a substitute for aggressive efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but as a complement. By deploying technology that removes existing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, while accelerating cuts in emissions, the world can boost its chances of keeping warming below two degrees and reduce the risk of catastrophe.

Scientists and activists have tended to regard these technologies as a fallback option, to be held in reserve in case other efforts fail. Many fear that jumping ahead to carbon dioxide removal will distract from the critical need to cut pollution. But the world no longer has the luxury of waiting for emission-reduction strategies to do the job alone. Far from being a Plan B, NETS must be a critical part of Plan A. What's more, embracing NETS sooner rather than later makes economic sense. Because the marginal costs of emission reductions rise as more emissions are cut, it will be cheaper to deploy NETS at the same time as emission-reduction technologies rather than waiting to exhaust those options first. The wider the solution set, the lower the costs. And the lower the costs, the easier it is to raise ambitions and garner the necessary political support.

## **THE FUTURE IS NOW**

Even though removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere may sound like the stuff of science fiction, there are already NETS that could be deployed at scale today, according to a seminal report released by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in October 2018. One category involves taking advantage of carbon



sinks—the earth’s forests and agricultural soils, which have soaked up more carbon dioxide since the Industrial Revolution than has been released from burning petroleum. To date, the growth of carbon sinks has been inadvertent: in the United States, for example, as agriculture shifted from the rocky soils of the Northeast to the fertile Midwest, forests reclaimed abandoned farmland, breathing in carbon dioxide in the process. But this natural process can be improved through better



forest management—letting trees grow longer before they are harvested and helping degraded forests grow back more quickly. The large-scale planting of trees in suitable locations around the world could increase carbon sinks further, a process that must go hand in hand with efforts to curb tropical deforestation and thereby continue to contain the vast amounts of carbon already stored in the earth's rainforests.

Farmland provides additional potential for negative emissions. Around the world, conventional agricultural practices have reduced the amount of carbon in soils, decreasing their fertility in the process. Smarter approaches can reverse the process. Small and large landholders alike could add agricultural waste to soil, maximize the time that the soil is covered by living plants or mulch, and reduce tilling, which releases carbon dioxide. All these steps would decrease the amount of carbon that is lost from soil and increase the amount of carbon that is stored in it.

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*Removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere may sound like the stuff of science fiction.*

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The most technologically sophisticated NET available in the near term is known as “bioenergy with carbon capture and storage,” or BECCS. It is also the riskiest. Broadly defined, BECCS involves burning or fermenting biomass, such as trees or crops, to generate electricity or make liquid fuel; capturing the carbon dioxide produced in the process; and sequestering it underground. It is considered a negative emission technology, and not a zero emission technology, because growing the biomass used in the process removes carbon from the atmosphere. What makes BECCS so exciting is its potential to remove significantly more carbon from the atmosphere than other approaches do. But it also brings challenges. For one, it is expensive: electricity generated from BECCS could cost twice as much as that generated with natural gas, because biomass is an inefficient fuel source and capturing and sequestering carbon dioxide is costly. The technology would also require careful monitoring to ensure that the carbon dioxide pumped underground stays there and clear rules for legal liability in the event of leaks. But the fact that private companies have been successfully injecting carbon dioxide into depleted oil and gas reservoirs for decades offers good evidence that permanent storage is possible on a large scale.

More worrying are the additional climate risks that BECCS poses. If BECCS drives demand for biomass and more of the carbon that is stored in the forest ecosystem is released as a result, it could end up raising the level of carbon in the atmosphere rather than reducing it. Another concern is competition for land: converting farms or forests to grow energy crops, something that the large-scale use of BECCS might require, could drive up the cost of food, reduce agricultural production, and threaten scarce habitats. These problems could be mitigated by using only biomass waste, such as residues from logging and agriculture, but that would reduce the potential scale. Although BECCS deserves consideration as part of the arsenal, these risks mean that its contribution will likely end up being smaller than some proponents claim.

Taking all these land-based NETs together, and factoring in the considerable economic, practical, and behavioral hurdles to bringing them to scale, the National Academies report concludes that by mid-century, NETs could remove as much as five billion tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually. Given the significant risks involved, that estimate is probably too bullish. Even if it were not, that's still only half of the ten billion tons of carbon dioxide that will likely need to be removed each year to zero out the remaining greenhouse gas emissions, even with aggressive cuts.

### **CLOSING THE GAP**

Removing from the atmosphere the balance of the carbon dioxide necessary will require perfecting technologies currently in development. Two deserve particular mention; both are full of promise, although neither is ready for widespread use. The first is called "direct air capture"—essentially, sucking carbon from the sky. The technology is already being tested in Canada, Iceland, Italy, and Switzerland at pilot plants where massive arrays of fans direct a stream of air toward a special substance that binds with the passing carbon dioxide. The substance is then either heated or forced into a vacuum to release the carbon dioxide, which is compressed and either stored or used as feedstocks for chemicals, fuels, or cement.

These technologies are real—albeit prohibitively expensive in their current form. As a recent study led by David Sandalow of Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy concludes, taking them to scale means solving a variety of technological challenges to bring down the costs. Above all, these processes are highly energy intensive,

so scaling them would require enormous amounts of low-carbon electricity. (A direct-air-capture facility powered by coal-fired electricity, for example, would generate more new carbon dioxide than it would capture.) These obstacles are serious, but the surprising progress of the past decade suggests that they can be overcome in the next one.

The second technology, enhanced carbon mineralization, is even further from being realized, but it is full of even more possibility. Geologists have long known that when rock from the earth's mantle (the layer of the earth between its crust and its core) is exposed to the air, it binds with carbon dioxide to form carbon-containing minerals. The massive tectonic collisions that formed the Appalachian Mountains around 460 million years ago, for example, exposed subsurface rock to weathering that resulted in the absorption of substantial amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. That took tens of millions of years; enhanced carbon mineralization seeks to fast-forward the process. Scientists are exploring two ways to do this. In one approach, rocks would be brought to the surface to bind with carbon from the air. Such natural weathering already occurs in mine tailings, the waste left over from certain mining operations. But mimicking this process on a large scale—by grinding up large quantities of rock containing reactive minerals and bringing it to the earth's surface—would be highly energy intensive and thus costly, roughly on par with direct air capture.

Another potential approach is pumping the carbon dioxide underground to meet the rock. As the National Academies report explains, carbon-dioxide-rich fluids injected into basalt or peridotite formations (two kinds of igneous rock that make up much of the earth's mantle) react with the rock, converting the dissolved carbon dioxide into solid carbon-containing minerals. Pilot projects in Iceland and the United States have demonstrated that this is possible. There is also evidence for how this could work in the natural world. Peridotite usually lies deep inside the earth, but some rock formations around the globe contain pockets of it on the surface. For example, scientists are studying how the surface-level peridotite in Oman's rock formations reacts with the air and absorbs large amounts of carbon. In theory, this approach offers nearly unlimited scale, because suitable rock formations are widespread and readily accessible. It would also be cheap, because it takes advantage of chemical potential energy in the rock instead of costly energy sources. And since the carbon dioxide is converted to solid rock, the effect is permanent, and it carries few of the side effects that other NETS could bring.

## **GETTING TO LESS**

These technologies do not come cheap. The National Academy of Sciences recommends as much as \$1 billion annually in U.S. government funding for research on NETS. And indeed, such funding should be an urgent priority. But to make these technologies economically viable and scale them rapidly, policymakers will also have to tap into a much more powerful force: the profit motive. Putting a price on carbon emissions creates an economic incentive for entrepreneurs to find cheaper, faster ways to cut pollution. Valuing negative emissions—for example, through an emission-trading system that awards credits for carbon removal or a carbon tax that provides rebates for them—would create an incentive for them to join the hunt for NETS.

Forty-five countries, along with ten U.S. states, have put in place some mechanism to price carbon. But only a handful of them offer rewards for converting land into forest, managing existing forests better, or increasing the amount of carbon stored in agricultural soils, and none offers incentives for other NETS. What's needed is a carbon-pricing system that not only charges those who emit carbon but also pays those who remove it. Such a system would provide new revenue streams for landowners who restored forest cover to their land and for farmers and ranchers who increased the amount of carbon stored in their soils. It would also reward the inventors and entrepreneurs who developed new, better technologies to capture carbon from the air and the investors and businesses that took them to scale. Without these incentives, those players will stay on the sidelines. By spurring innovation in lower-cost NETS, incentives would also ease the way politically for an ambitious pollution limit—which, ultimately, is necessary for ensuring that the world meets its climate goals. Simply put, humanity's best hope is to promise that the next crop of billionaires will be those who figure out low-cost ways to remove carbon from the sky.

The biggest hurdle for such incentives is the lack of a global market for carbon credits. Hope on that front, however, is emerging from an unlikely place: aviation. Currently responsible for roughly two percent of global greenhouse gases, aviation's emissions are expected to triple or quadruple by midcentury in the absence of effective policies to limit them. But in 2016, faced with the prospect that the EU would start capping the emissions of flights landing in and taking off from member states, the UN body that governs worldwide air travel, the International Civil Aviation Organization, agreed to cap emissions

from international flights at 2020 levels. The airline industry supported the agreement, hoping to avoid the messy regulatory patchwork that might result if the EU went ahead and states beyond the EU followed suit with their own approaches.

The resulting program, called the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA), requires all airlines to start reporting emissions this year, and it will begin enforcing a cap in 2021. Once in full swing, at least 100 countries are expected to participate, covering at least three-quarters of the forecast increase in international aviation emissions. Airlines flying between participating countries will have two ways to comply: they can lower their emissions (for example, by burning less fuel or switching to alternative fuels), or they can buy emission-reduction credits from companies. Because the technologies for reducing airline emissions at scale are still a long way off, the industry will mostly choose the second option, relying on carbon credits from reductions in other sectors. It is estimated that over the first 15 years of CORSA, demand for these credits will reach

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*Humanity's best hope is to promise that the next crop of billionaires will be those who figure out low-cost ways to remove carbon from the sky.*

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between 2.5 billion and 3.0 billion tons—roughly equal to the annual greenhouse gas emissions from the U.S. power and manufacturing sectors. With this new option to sell emission-reduction credits to airlines, there is a good possibility that a pot of gold will await companies that cut or offset their carbon emissions. In short, CORSA could catalyze a global carbon market that drives investment in low-carbon fuels and technologies—including NETS.

To realize its promise, CORSA must be implemented properly, and there are powerful forces working to see that it is not. Some countries, including ones negotiating on behalf of their state-owned companies, are trying to rig the system by allowing credits from projects that do not produce legitimate carbon reductions, such as Brazil's effort to allow the sale of credits from huge hydroelectric dams in the Amazon that have already been built and paid for (and thus do not represent new reductions). Allowing such credits into the system could crowd out potential rewards for genuine reductions. But there are also powerful, sometimes unexpected allies who stand to gain from a global



carbon market that works. For example, some airlines are motivated to act out of a fear that millennials, concerned about their carbon footprint, may eventually begin to shun air travel. The new regulations, by creating demand for emission reductions and spurring investment in NETS to produce jet fuel, could be the industry's best hope of protecting its reputation—and a critical step toward a broader global carbon market that moves NETS from promising pilot projects to a game-changing reality.

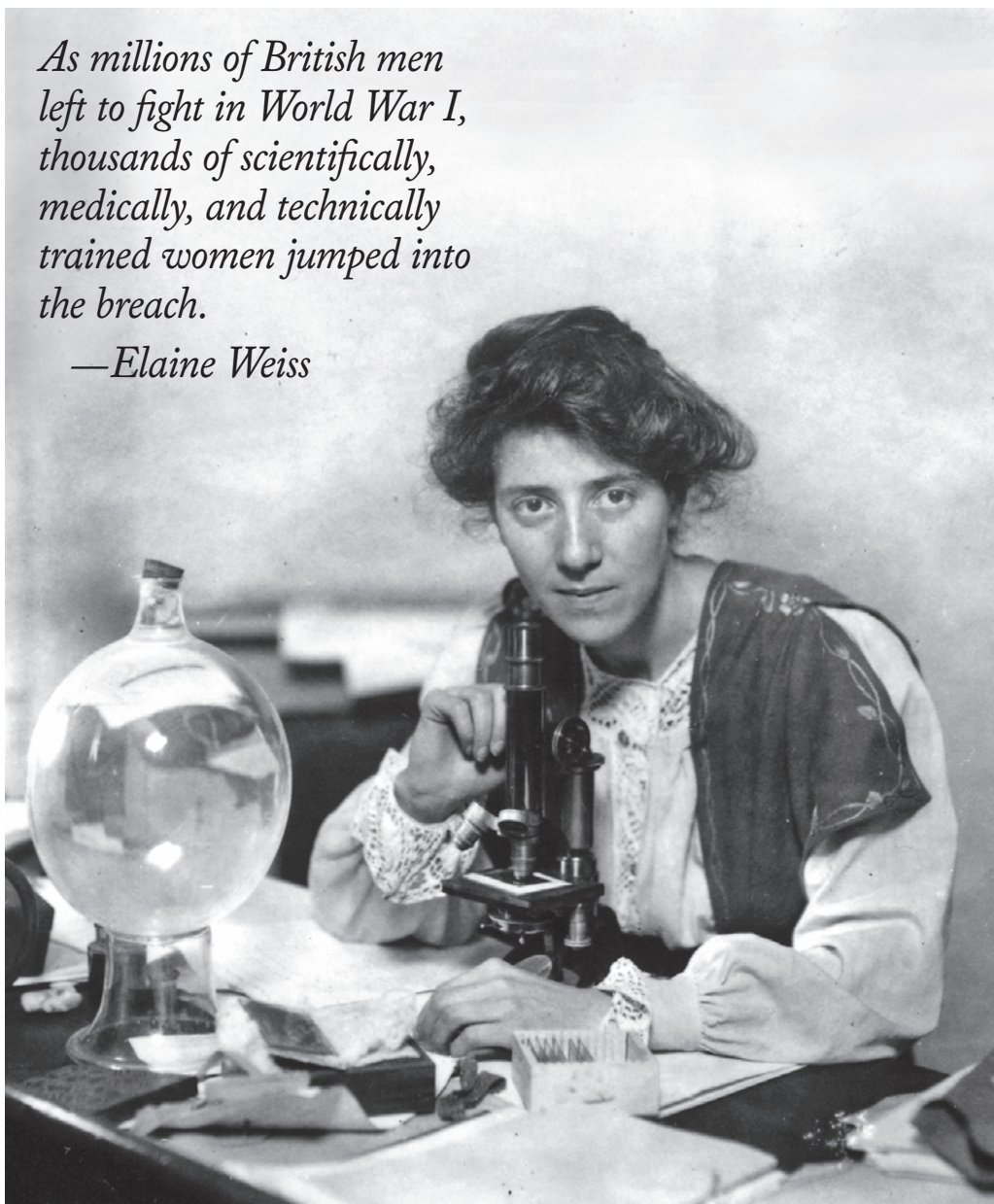
Skeptics say that NETS are too speculative and a possibility only, perhaps, in the distant future. It is true that these innovations are not fully understood and that not all of them will pan out. But no group of scholars and practitioners, no matter how expert, can determine exactly which technologies should be deployed and when. It is impossible to predict what future innovations will look like, but that shouldn't stop the world from pursuing them, especially when the threat is so grave. The fact remains that many NETS are ready to be deployed at scale today, and they might make the difference between limiting warming to two degrees and failing to do so.

Ultimately, climate change will be stopped by creating economic incentives that unleash the innovation of the private sector—not by waiting for the perfect technology to arrive ready-made, maybe when it's already too late. No one is saying that achieving all of this will be easy, but the road to climate stability has never been that. Hard does not mean impossible, however, and the transformative power of human ingenuity offers an endless source of hope. 🌍

# REVIEWS & RESPONSES

*As millions of British men left to fight in World War I, thousands of scientifically, medically, and technically trained women jumped into the breach.*

—*Elaine Weiss*



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# The Original Hidden Figures

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## The Women Scientists Who Won the Great War

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*Elaine Weiss*

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*A Lab of One's Own: Science and Suffrage  
in the First World War*

BY PATRICIA FARA. Oxford  
University Press, 2018, 304 pp.

**I**n the center of many British towns stands a cenotaph, a memorial tomb honoring the native sons who gave their lives during World War I. Etched into the plinths, in between carved garlands and laurels, are the names and military ranks of the fallen. Additional rows list the soldiers and sailors lost in later conflicts. On Remembrance Day, November 11, the anniversary of the end of World War I, red silk poppies adorn the monuments in remembrance of these patriots' sacrifices.

Unrecorded and unrecognized, much less inscribed in stone, is an entire class of patriots that British society has willfully forgotten over the past century: the women who gave their all for the war effort, including many who even gave their lives. Some used their muscles in mines and munitions factories. Some brought their medical expertise to the front. And some put

their minds and scientific skills in the service of their country. *A Lab of One's Own*, the latest book by the historian of science Patricia Fara, seeks to fill this gap in public memory by focusing on this last group, giving the female British scientists of the early twentieth century their rightful due.

Fara's welcome and novel work goes beyond the familiar nurse-on-the-western-front accounts of pluck and patience that appear in many histories of the Great War. Instead, the book meshes two coinciding centenaries: the 1918 armistice that ended World War I and the law that gave British women, at least the older and wealthier among them, the right to vote that same year. As if conducting her own experiment, Fara places her heroines on the examining table and observes their responses to these historical stimuli.

Both events were jolts to British society, shaking up families, economies, and, as Fara reveals, laboratories. At great personal risk, female scientists took on the study of dangerous explosives, toxic chemicals, virulent diseases, and the unrecognized lethal effects of radioactivity. Simply pursuing a career in science was tough enough: whether at universities, in industry, or in the War Office, women faced entrenched misogyny. Desperately needed but decidedly unwelcome, they suffered indignities on the job and were paid far less than their male coworkers. And the rationales used to shut them out might sound all too familiar to modern ears.

### **BARRIERS TO ENTRY**

Fara has pulled off quite a feat of archival archaeology. Digging through the records of universities, scientific

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**ELAINE WEISS** is a journalist and the author of *The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*. Copyright © by Elaine Weiss.

societies, industrial establishments, newspapers, and personal journals and correspondence, she excavates and pieces together the lives of some of the first women to embark on scientific studies and careers in the modern era.

Often, what emerges are just tantalizing snippets, frustratingly incomplete, but such are the limits of the documentary evidence. The compilation also skews toward the socially privileged, who left behind a more complete paper trail through their carefully preserved correspondence (it takes a big house to store all those family letters), their published and unpublished memoirs (often the fruit of thoughtful leisure), and newspaper accounts (where socially prominent women were more likely to pop up). Still, Fara tries hard to include women endowed with scientific talent but not to the manor born.

At the turn of the century, the United Kingdom was not exactly fertile soil for female scientists and mathematicians. Higher education for women, the thinking went, was not just a waste of time; it was a threat to the human species. Eminent physicians warned that too much deep thinking would siphon a woman's bloodflow from her reproductive organs to her brain, harming her childbearing capacities. And with a little twisting, Darwinian theories of adaptation appeared to show that women had evolved for reproduction and nest building rather than intellectual pursuits.

If a strong-willed girl nonetheless convinced her family to let her prepare for college, and she passed the entrance exams, few opportunities were available to her at the most prestigious institutions. Only two colleges at Cambridge and four at Oxford enrolled female

students, and they were women-only schools. Classes and laboratories at Cambridge and Oxford were segregated by sex, and since many male professors refused to lecture to female students, the task fell to female instructors, who, no matter how talented, were rarely given faculty status, let alone time or resources for research.

In the rare instances that female Cambridge or Oxford students got to attend a mixed-sex lecture or meeting, they had to endure the hoots, mockery, and foot stamping of their outraged male classmates. At Cambridge, even mathematical whizzes such as Philippa Fawcett (daughter of the suffrage movement leader Millicent Fawcett), who beat out all her male classmates to take top honors, were neither allowed to attend commencement ceremonies nor given an official degree. In 1897, when the Senate of the University of Cambridge considered granting women full degrees, male students rioted in the streets, hanging and mutilating effigies of a bicycle-riding woman—the symbol of the feared female classmate. It wasn't until 1920 that Oxford allowed women to become full members of the university and bestowed proper diplomas on its female graduates; Cambridge women had to wait until 1948 to be offered a full degree.

If the elite universities made life difficult for women, less prestigious, regional “red brick” universities—such as Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester—seem to have been more egalitarian and welcoming, enrolling middle-class women in coeducational classrooms and labs. Less invested in tradition, pomp, and privilege, these schools became important training grounds for female students

and scientists. Still, science was a perilous career choice for women, and Fara does an admirable job of conjuring the social, political, and scientific attitudes that made theirs an uphill and obstacle-strewn climb.

### **WORKERS AND WARRIORS**

With the outbreak of World War I came a sudden opening, especially in the work force. As millions of men left to fight, thousands of scientifically, medically, and technically trained women jumped into the breach. By necessity, women took over positions long considered men's work. Doors swung open; glass ceilings shattered. Female chemists worked with explosives and poisonous gasses, female metallurgists tested steel strength for the navy, female engineers perfected airplane designs, female medical researchers fought the infectious diseases decimating troops, female physicians and nurses operated at the front. There were female cryptologists, welders, nutritionists, physicists, statisticians, pharmaceutical researchers, laboratory directors, and industrial supervisors.

The physician Mona Chalmers Watson and the botanist Helen Gwynne-Vaughan left their clinic and lab to run the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, supervising nearly 100,000 women in military support activities. The chemist Frances Micklethwait studied chemical weapons during the war and was among the first to analyze mustard gas, closely observing the effects of the pernicious gas on her own skin. As an employee at the state's Censorship Office, Mabel Elliott heated a letter she was inspecting and found secret messages written in lemon juice; her discovery broke open

a German spy ring. The physicist May Leslie conducted groundbreaking secret research on explosives in a government laboratory.

For all these breakthroughs, prewar gender norms did not evaporate into thin air. British society recoiled at the sight of "munitionettes" in wartime factories, clad in safe and practical overalls rather than customary long skirts. Many winced as nurses traded their starched white caps for helmets and khaki breeches, riding motorcycles to hospitals behind the lines. Women did what was needed, but in taking on men's work and wearing men's garb, they were becoming irreparably "masculinized"—at least in the eyes of many male compatriots.

The social and the physical toll of wartime work often went hand in hand. Women ruined their health making TNT explosives, their skin and eyes turning yellow and their internal organs green from exposure to the toxic chemicals involved. Dubbed "canaries" for their strange appearance, many of these women were shunned by neighbors and family; more than 200 of them died, and thousands more became seriously and permanently ill. Fara places their predicament during four harrowing years of national upheaval in high relief, showcasing society's shocking ambivalence toward their patriotic efforts.

It's rather astounding that in the midst of a savage war, the British people still mustered enough energy to rail against working women. But for many, safeguarding patriarchal privilege and the endangered male ego at home was as much a priority as protecting the nation on the battlefield. The same male alarm and resentment cropped up



in the United States during its brief stint in the war, but the effect was milder there, if only because the nation suffered less from the war.

### SCIENCE AND SUFFRAGE

Measuring the war's impact on British women in general, and scientific women in particular, is admittedly easier than gauging the subtler effects of demanding and finally gaining the right to vote. It's hard to weigh the role that the protracted fight for suffrage and women's civil rights played in the lives of female scientists, not least because these efforts were largely put on hold from 1914 to 1918.

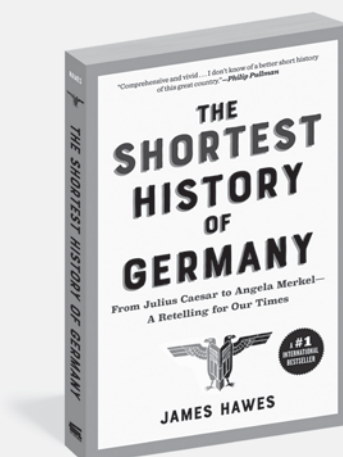
Another problem is that, Fara's lucid writing and admirable dedication notwithstanding, the book would have benefited from a cleaner narrative framework. At times, it reads like an archival dump, a slurry of names and anecdotes in a repetitive thematic stream. Time sequences are jumbled, which robs the story of any logical progression and a sense of societal progress—or lack thereof.

Beyond this, Fara's grasp of women's suffrage history is far less assured than her understanding of British scientific culture. She repeatedly dismisses the militant suffragists affiliated with Emmeline Pankhurst as mere obstructionists; in fact, historians agree that it was the synergy of the Pankhurst militants and the law-abiding Fawcett forces that powered the movement to success. At one point, Fara alludes to Anna Howard Shaw as a character's "American friend" without identifying Shaw as the leader of the U.S. suffrage movement—a woman of international renown at the time.

Fara's account also fails to fully make the case that women's role in science

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catalyzed the suffrage movement. The evidence for this claim is thin and anecdotal. Fara hints at a more fundamental link when she observes, early in the book, “Both suspect activities for women, science and suffrage were often bracketed together by critics worried about this twin threat to long-established conventions of female domesticity, subservience, and demureness.”

The animus against women barging into the male-ruled domains of mathematics and science was indeed the very same that denied women a place in the public sphere and a voice in their government. These prejudices continued to shape public resentment toward female war workers—many of whom were also suffragists. Yet it was the decades-long fight for the vote—born in the Victorian era and carried out up until 1918—that laid the logistical and emotional foundations for women to enter the universities and scientific professions and propelled their wartime participation, not the other way around. The suffrage movement gave women the confidence and skills to organize, demand change, and insist on inclusion, to slowly chip away at the customs and laws that kept them at home, their bodies encumbered by pounds of petticoats, their minds caged. Three generations of committed suffrage activists agitated and lobbied, formed suffrage societies in every British city and town, published their own newspapers, put on massive conventions, and organized giant protests with 40,000 women marching through the streets of London. The women who participated in the movement learned to endure contempt and ridicule, imprisonment and torture. The suffrage movement

taught women to be unapologetically loud, audacious, and ingenious.

So when the women of Cambridge found the doors to university classrooms and laboratories closed to them in the 1880s, they didn’t whine and cry; they raised the funds to build and staff the Balfour Biological Laboratory for Women, where generations of female scientists were trained and nurtured. When distinguished female academics were barred from representation on university committees and denied entry into the plush common rooms that their male colleagues frequented, they founded the British Federation of University Women, in 1907. When fully qualified female chemists tried unsuccessfully to join the professional Chemical Society, the researchers Ida Smedley Maclean and Martha Whiteley led the charge to pry the gates open in 1920. Female scientists learned from their suffragist sisters to expect setbacks and disappointment but to keep their eyes on the prize: the campaign to elect female fellows to the Royal Society, the country’s most prestigious learned society, didn’t succeed until 1945.

### THE CLOCK OF EXPERIENCE

By the war’s end, women composed one-third of the British work force, three million of them in industry. Female scientists were lecturing to men, heading research labs, and running hospitals. But the direct benefits proved short-lived.

“Formerly seen as ‘saviours of the nation,’ wartime workers were now scorned as ‘ruthless self-seekers depriving men and their dependents of a livelihood,’” Fara reports. One million British men did not return from the war; those who did come home were

distressed to find that women had done so splendidly taking over their jobs. Women “have had the time of their lives . . . swaggering about in every kind of uniform,” wrote a British commentator in January 1919, before admonishing that they would have to resume their roles as “wives and mothers now the men are coming home.”

And so they did. Women in industry were given pink slips or reduced wages; female scientists were sent back to teaching school or working behind the scenes in the lab. Possessing the vote didn’t help much: under the 1918 law, women under 30 were not granted suffrage at all, as politicians feared that with so many men lost in the war, giving the vote to all British women at age 21 would create a majority-female electorate. Thus, many of the young women who had eagerly entered dangerous new professions and contributed to the war effort found themselves shut out of civic participation for another decade.

Yet they had learned to push, and they did so until the law was changed to include them, in 1928. In the words of one of the women highlighted in *A Lab of One’s Own*, the Cambridge mathematician and suffrage organizer Ray Strachey, “It is impossible to put the clock of experience backwards.” World War I advanced the hands of that clock—by a little. Yet 20 years later, when the United Kingdom entered another shattering world war, the lessons of the last one had largely been forgotten. Once again, women took on “men’s work,” only to come home to mind the kitchen after the hostilities ended.

The fight for equality in the workplace continues to this day, as does the quest for women’s rights. The long-lived

lessons of the suffrage movement, rather than the short bursts of wartime opportunity, are probably more useful for the future. The suffrage movement trained leaders and feminist thinkers, organizing women of all classes to agitate for their own rights, whereas women’s wartime participation still took place largely on men’s terms, with men’s reluctant cooperation. As today’s women continue to shatter glass ceilings in government, business, and academia, the suffragists offer a legacy of organizing, mentorship, and proud self-reliance.

Fara has composed a worthy and lasting tribute to these pioneering women. One wonders, of course, whether the terrain of the so-called STEM fields has been made much smoother for women during the past century—or whether modern-day female scientists, engineers, and technology professionals will shake their heads in sad recognition at the patronizing and infuriating attitudes described in this book. Fara leaves this question open but cautions against too much optimism: “Before the First World War, suffragists could see what they were fighting against, but modern discrimination is elusive, insidious, and stubbornly hard to eradicate.” Female scientists know how to carry on. 🌍

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# E Pluribus Unum?

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## The Fight Over Identity Politics

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### Identity Politics Strengthens Democracy

*Stacey Y. Abrams*

**R**ecent political upheavals have reinvigorated a long-running debate about the role of identity in American politics—and especially American elections. Electoral politics have long been a lagging indicator of social change. For hundreds of years, the electorate was limited by laws that explicitly deprived women, African Americans, and other groups of the right to vote. (Efforts to deny voting rights and suppress voter turnout continue today, in less overt forms but with the same ill intent.) When marginalized groups finally gained access to the ballot, it took time for them to organize around opposition to the specific forms of discrimination and mistreatment that continued to plague them—and longer still for political parties and candidates to respond to such activism. In recent decades, however, rapid demographic and technological changes have accelerated this process, bolstering demands for inclusion and raising expectations in communities that had long been conditioned to accept a slow pace of change. In the past decade, the U.S. electorate has become younger and more ethnically diverse. Meanwhile, social media has

changed the political landscape. Facebook captures examples of inequality and makes them available for endless replay. Twitter links the voiceless to newsmakers. Instagram immortalizes the faces and consequences of discrimination. Isolated cruelties are yoked into a powerful narrative of marginalization that spurs a common cause.

These changes have encouraged activists and political challengers to make demands with a high level of specificity—to take the identities that dominant groups have used to oppress them and convert them into tools of democratic justice. Critics of this phenomenon, including Francis Fukuyama (“Against Identity Politics,” September/October 2018), condemn it as the practice of “identity politics.” But Fukuyama’s criticism relies on a number of misjudgments. First, Fukuyama complains that “again and again, groups have come to believe that their identities—whether national, religious, ethnic, sexual, gender, or otherwise—are not receiving adequate recognition.” In the United States, marginalized groups have indeed come to believe this—because it is true. Fukuyama also warns that Americans are fragmenting “into segments based on ever-narrower identities, threatening the possibility of deliberation and collective action by society as a whole.” But what Fukuyama laments as “fracturing” is in reality the result of marginalized groups finally overcoming centuries-long efforts to erase them from the American polity—activism that will strengthen democratic rule, not threaten it.

#### THE CLASS TRAP

Fukuyama claims that the Democratic Party “has a major choice to make.” The

party, he writes, can continue “doubling down on the mobilization of the identity groups that today supply its most fervent activists: African Americans, Hispanics, professional women, the LGBT community, and so on.” Or it can take Fukuyama’s preferred tack, focusing more on economic issues in an attempt to “win back some of the white working-class voters . . . who have defected to the Republican Party in recent elections.”

Fukuyama and other critics of identity politics contend that broad categories such as economic class contain multitudes and that all attention should focus on wide constructs rather than the substrates of inequality. But such arguments fail to acknowledge that some members of any particular economic class have advantages not enjoyed by others in their cohort. U.S. history abounds with examples of members of dominant groups abandoning class solidarity after concluding that opportunity is a zero-sum game. The oppressed have often aimed their impotent rage at those too low on the social scale to even attempt rebellion. This is particularly true in the catchall category known as “the working class.” Conflict between black and white laborers stretches back to the earliest eras in U.S. history, which witnessed tensions between African slaves and European indentured servants. Racism and sexism have long tarnished the heroic story of the U.S. labor movement—defects that contributed to the rise of a segregated middle class and to persistent pay disparities between men and women, disparities exacerbated by racial differences. Indeed, the American working class has consistently relied on people of color and women to push for

improved status for workers but has been slow to include them in the movement’s victories.

The facile advice to focus solely on class ignores these complex links among American notions of race, gender, and economics. As Fukuyama himself notes, it has been difficult “to create broad coalitions to fight for redistribution,” since “members of the working class who also belong to higher-status identity groups (such as whites in the United States) tend to resist making common cause with those below them, and vice versa.” Fukuyama’s preferred strategy is also called into question by the success that the Democratic Party enjoyed in 2018 by engaging in what he derides as identity politics. Last year, I was the Democratic Party’s gubernatorial nominee in Georgia and became the first African American woman in U.S. history to be nominated for governor by a major political party. In my bid for office, I intentionally and vigorously highlighted communities of color and other marginalized groups, not to the exclusion of others but as a recognition of their specific policy needs. My campaign championed reforms to eliminate police shootings of African Americans, protect the LGBTQ community against ersatz religious freedom legislation, expand Medicaid to save rural hospitals, and reaffirm that undocumented immigrants deserve legal protections. I refused to accept the notion that the voters most affected by these policies would invariably support me simply because I was a member of a minority group. (The truth is that when people do not hear their causes authentically addressed by campaigns, they generally just don’t vote at all.) My



campaign built an unprecedented coalition of people of color, rural whites, suburban dwellers, and young people in the Deep South by articulating an understanding of each group's unique concerns instead of trying to create a false image of universality. As a result, in a midterm contest with a record-high turnout of nearly four million voters, I received more votes than any Democrat in Georgia's history, falling a scant 54,000 votes shy of victory in a contest riddled with voting irregularities that benefited my opponent.

### **DIFFERENT STROKES**

Beyond electoral politics, Fukuyama and others argue that by calling out ethnic, cultural, gender, or sexual differences, marginalized groups harm themselves and their causes. By enumerating and celebrating distinctions, the argument goes, they give their opponents reasons for further excluding them. But minorities and the marginalized have little choice but to fight against the particular methods of discrimination employed against them. The marginalized did not create identity politics: their identities have been forced on them by dominant groups, and politics is the most effective method of revolt.

To seek redress and inclusion, the first step is to identify the barriers to entry: an array of laws and informal rules to proscribe, diminish, and isolate the marginalized. The specific methods by which the United States has excluded women, Native Americans, African Americans, immigrants, and the LGBTQ community from property ownership, educational achievement, and political enfranchisement have differed; so, too, have the most successful methods of

fighting for inclusion—hence the need for a politics that respects and reflects the complicated nature of these identities and the ways in which they intersect. The basis for sustainable progress is legal protections grounded in an awareness of how identity has been used to deny opportunity. The LGBTQ community is not included in civil rights protections, which means members may lose their jobs or their right to housing or adoption. Antiabortion rules disproportionately harm women of color and low-income women of every ethnicity, affecting their economic capacity and threatening their very lives. Voter suppression, the most insidious tool to thwart the effectiveness of identity politics, demands the renewal of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and massive reforms at the state and local levels.

When the groups most affected by these issues insist on acknowledgment of their intrinsic difference, it should not be viewed as divisive. Embracing the distinct histories and identities of groups in a democracy enhances the complexity and capacity of the whole. For example, by claiming the unique attributes of womanhood—and, for women of color, the experience of inhabiting the intersection of marginalized gender and race—feminists have demonstrated how those characteristics could be leveraged to enhance the whole. Take, for example, the Family and Medical Leave Act, which feminists originally pushed for in order to guarantee women's right to give birth and still keep their jobs, but which men have also come to rely on to take time off from work to care for children or aging parents.

The current demographic and social evolution toward diversity in the United States has played out alongside a trend toward greater economic and social inequality. These parallel but distinct developments are inextricably bound together. The entrance of the marginalized into the workplace, the commons, and the body politic—achieved through litigation and legislation—spawned reactionary limits on their legal standing and restrictions meant to block their complaints and prevent remedies. The natural antidote to this condition is not a retrenchment to amorphous, universal descriptors devoid of context or nuance. Instead, Americans must thoughtfully pursue an expanded, identity-conscious politics. New, vibrant, noisy voices represent the strongest tool to manage the growing pains of multicultural coexistence. By embracing identity and its prickly, uncomfortable contours, Americans will become more likely to grow as one.

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**STACEY Y. ABRAMS** served as Minority Leader of the Georgia House of Representatives from 2011 to 2017 and was the Democratic Party's nominee in Georgia's 2018 gubernatorial election.

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## **Identity Politics Can Lead to Progress**

*John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck*

**F**rancis Fukuyama argues that “identity politics has become a master concept that explains much of what is going on in global affairs.” He attributes a variety of political

developments in the United States and abroad—especially the emergence of populist nationalism—to identity politics. In Fukuyama’s telling, the rise of identity politics constitutes a fall from grace. For him, most of “twentieth-century politics was defined by economic issues.” But in the 1960s, he writes, the civil rights, feminist, and other social movements embraced identity politics. Later, he claims, forces on the political right followed suit, adopting “language and framing from the left.” Fukuyama warns that if democratic societies continue “fracturing into segments based on ever-narrower identities,” the result will be “state breakdown and, ultimately, failure.”

Identity is indeed a “master concept” for understanding American politics. But identity politics has a much longer history than Fukuyama describes. And in the United States, identity politics hasn’t led to the breakdown of democracy; rather, it has helped democracy thrive.

### **ORIGIN STORY**

In Fukuyama’s telling, identity politics first emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. In fact, Americans have been engaged in identity politics since the founding of the republic. If the fight for civil rights for African Americans was fueled by identity politics, then so was the fight to establish and ensure white supremacy via slavery and Jim Crow. In other words, identity politics isn’t behind only the efforts of marginalized groups to seek redress: it also drives the efforts of dominant groups to marginalize others.

Fukuyama believes identity politics went too far when groups such as African Americans began to “assert a separate identity” and “demand respect for [their members] as different from the main-

stream society.” Leaving aside whether that statement correctly characterizes the goal of such groups, it is important to acknowledge that identity politics also defined who was and who was not part of “mainstream society” in the first place.

In Fukuyama’s telling, U.S. politics were healthier when Americans—especially those on the left—organized around economic concerns that transcended ethnic categories. “In past eras,” he writes, “progressives appealed to a shared experience of exploitation and resentment of rich capitalists.” But there is no period in U.S. history when economics were so cleanly divorced from identity. For example, as the political scientist Ira Katznelson has documented, the key social welfare programs of the New Deal era were predicated on racial discrimination: U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt relied on the support of white segregationists, which he won by allowing southern states to prevent blacks from enjoying the New Deal’s benefits. Identity, and especially racial and ethnic identity, has always been intrinsic to fights over economic opportunity and equality.

This is not to say that today’s identity politics is the same as its historical forebears. What makes it different is how tightly Americans’ views about racial, ethnic, and religious identities are now bound up with another salient American identity: partisan affiliation. Well before 2016, Democratic and Republican voters had begun to diverge in their views of immigration and racial equality. Democrats became more supportive of immigration and more willing to attribute racial inequality to discrimination. Republicans became less supportive of immigration and more willing to attribute racial inequality to a lack of effort on the part

of African Americans. This divergence sharpened during Barack Obama’s candidacy and presidency, as whites’ racial attitudes became more closely tied to their partisan identities.

This trend might have accelerated even faster than it did had major political leaders tried to exploit it. But Obama actually talked about race less than other recent Democratic presidents and frequently used rhetoric that sought to unify Americans of different racial backgrounds. Meanwhile, Obama’s Republican opponents in the presidential elections of 2008 and 2012, John McCain and Mitt Romney, chose not to stoke racialized fears of Obama.

Donald Trump was different. His provocative statements about race, immigration, and Islam helped define the 2016 election. Partly as a result, Americans’ views on such issues became stronger predictors of how they voted. For example, compared with in earlier elections, it was easier to determine how people voted in 2016 based on whether they wanted a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants or believed that racial inequality was just a matter of minorities “not trying hard enough.” Meanwhile, economic issues achieved more political potency when refracted through race. As far back as the 2016 Republican primary, whether voters supported Trump depended less on whether they were worried about losing their own jobs than it did on whether they were worried about whites losing jobs to ethnic minorities.

#### **WHOSE CHOICE?**

Since the election, this alignment of partisanship and attitudes about race and immigration has grown even stronger,



*What democracy looks like: new members of the U.S. Congress, January 2019*

and it has an important implication for Fukuyama's argument. Fukuyama's favored political agenda closely resembles that of Democratic voters and the Democratic Party. He supports remedies for police violence against minorities and the sexual harassment of women, endorses birthright citizenship, and wants an American identity based on ideals rather than on "blood and soil" nationalism.

The most forceful opposition to such ideas has come from the Trump administration and its Republican allies and supporters. Yet Fukuyama does not put the onus on Republicans to reject Trump. In his view, the "major choice" belongs to the Democratic Party, which must decide whether to double down on "the mobilization of . . . identity groups" or "try to win back some of the white working-class voters . . . who have defected" to the GOP. But if Fukuyama

wants federal action on his policy agenda in an era of divided government and narrow congressional majorities, the real onus is on Republicans to support his ideas. And if he wants an American identity based on shared values and open to all citizens—even those who hail from what Trump reportedly called "shithole countries"—then he will need at least some Republicans to stand up to Trump.

Fukuyama may be against identity politics, but identity politics is also critical to the success of the agenda that he supports. History has shown that progress toward equality doesn't come about because of happenstance, a sudden change of heart on Capitol Hill, or the magnanimity of dominant groups. Instead, progress comes when marginalized groups organize around their shared identities. Their fight is often unpopular. In one 1964 survey, conducted a few months after the passage



of the Civil Rights Act, of those polled, 84 percent of southerners and 64 percent of Americans living outside the South said that civil rights leaders were pushing too fast. But pushing was their only recourse, and pushing helped change the country's laws and attitudes.

Fukuyama wants a unifying American identity, what he calls a "creedal national identity." But the country is already fairly close to having one. According to the December 2016 Views of the Electorate Research, or VOTER, Survey, 93 percent of Americans think that respecting U.S. political institutions and laws is somewhat or very important to "being American." Far fewer believe that it's important to be born in the United States (55 percent) or to have European heritage (20 percent). Moreover, most Americans actually place identity politics at the center of the American creed: the vast majority (88 percent) think that accepting people of diverse racial and religious backgrounds is important to being American.

There is no necessary tension between identity politics and the American creed. The question is whether identity politics will help Americans live up to that creed. Historically, it has.

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## **A Creedal Identity Is Not Enough**

*Jennifer A. Richeson*

**F**rancis Fukuyama argues that identity politics is eroding national unity in the United States and

Europe, undermining the kind of civil discourse essential to the maintenance of liberal democracy. He also claims that "perhaps the worst thing about identity politics as currently practiced by the left is that it has stimulated the rise of identity politics on the right." This is highly misleading. Identity politics was part of the American political discourse long before liberals and leftists began to practice it in the 1960s and 1970s. Think of the anti-immigrant Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s and the white-supremacist Ku Klux Klan during the first half of the twentieth century. What were such groups if not early practitioners of a brand of white identity politics?

But other parts of Fukuyama's argument are more persuasive, and he is right to focus on the role that identity plays in the health of American democracy. Fukuyama makes one particularly useful point in the closing passages of his article:

People will never stop thinking about themselves and their societies in identity terms. But people's identities are neither fixed nor necessarily given by birth. Identity can be used to divide, but it can also be used to unify. That, in the end, will be the remedy for the populist politics of the present.

What Fukuyama gets right here is the fact that human beings have a fundamental need to belong—a need that their collective identities, be they racial, ethnic, religious, regional, or national, often satisfy. Such affiliations, which psychologists call "social identities," serve multiple psychological functions. These include, for example, the need for a sense of safety, which social identities satisfy by reducing uncertainty and



providing norms that help people navigate everyday life. Some social identities also offer rituals and customs to aid with loss, mourning, and other significant challenges that occur during the course of one's life. At times, identities provide a sense of purpose and meaning and a basis for esteem and regard that is larger than people's individual selves. As Fukuyama suggests, identities efficiently satisfy the human need for respect and dignity.

What Fukuyama gets wrong, however, is the idea that a single unifying identity—a “creedal” American identity—could alone satisfy this suite of psychological needs and thereby allow citizens to abandon the smaller social identities that people invest in and clearly value. Broad identities such as the one Fukuyama promotes are useful and unifying at times, but they rarely meet the human need for individuation. That is why people look to narrower bases for identification. Moreover, broad social identities such as national affiliations—even when ostensibly based on principles that are hypothetically accessible to all—often rely on the terms and norms of the dominant majority and thus end up undermining the identity needs of minority groups.

Furthermore, people's existing social identities are important to them, and attempts to dissolve them would likely be met with severe resistance. The potential loss of a group's identity, real or imagined, is psychologically threatening. A powerful urge compels people to defend their groups at all costs in the face of such threats. As Fukuyama himself notes, a sense of loss due to the changing racial and ethnic composition of the United States is partly to blame for the rise of right-wing identity

politics. Hence, it is important not only to cultivate a common American identity, as Fukuyama argues, but also to promote the idea of the United States as inclusive of multiple racial, ethnic, religious, and other types of identities. Indeed, Americans must create that society.

### **WHY DON'T WE HAVE BOTH?**

Perhaps the main weakness of Fukuyama's argument is the implication that Americans face a binary choice when it comes to political identity: either they can embrace a broad creedal identity or they can cling to narrow identities based on race, ethnicity, gender, or ideology. There is no reason to think that is true. Political leaders can address the sense of psychological vulnerability triggered by shifting demographics and social change and also respect rightful claims for inclusion and fair treatment on the part of members of marginalized groups. Americans can acknowledge and, when appropriate, celebrate the particular identities, cultures, and histories of distinct social groups and also pursue a unifying national creed.

There is even some evidence to suggest that the more identities people maintain—and the more complex and overlapping those identities are—the less conflict they will have with people who maintain different sets of identities. Greater identity complexity may serve as a buffer against the feelings of humiliation and resentment that often fuel ethnonationalist movements.

Identifying as American does not require the relinquishing of other identities. In fact, it is possible to leverage those identities to cultivate and deepen one's Americanness. For instance, researchers

have found that when people highlight their shared experiences, even when they belong to what appear to be opposing, if not adversarial, social groups, they experience an increase in empathy and harmony. Rather than dividing people, the act of reflecting on the marginalization of one's own social group—be it current or historical—can encourage societal cohesion.

In the United States, an honest accounting and acknowledgment of what it has meant to be American could reveal Americans' shared vulnerability and their common capacity for wrongdoing, as well as their resilience in the face of mistreatment. This sentiment is echoed by the lawyer and civil rights activist Bryan Stevenson, who has argued for the need to engage honestly with the history of racial injustice in the United States. "We can create communities in this country where people are less burdened by our history of racial inequality," Stevenson told an interviewer last year. "The more we understand the depth of that suffering, the more we understand the power of people to cope and overcome and survive."

That sounds like a unifying national creed that would allow Americans to embrace their own identities, encourage them to respect the identities embraced by others, and affirm shared principles of equality and justice. Fukuyama appears to believe that this more complex form of national identification is not possible. I think it is. It may even be the only path toward a diverse nation that lives up to its democratic principles.

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## Fukuyama Replies

I appreciate these thoughtful comments on my article. But all three responses, which contain a number of common themes, fundamentally miscast my thinking about identity politics. One reason for this might be that the article focuses more on the kind of identity politics characteristic of the contemporary progressive left, whereas the book from which the article was adapted, *Identity*, focuses more on my central concern: the recent rise of right-wing nationalist populism. This development threatens liberal democracy because populist leaders seek to use the legitimacy they gain from democratic elections to undermine liberal institutions such as courts, the media, and impartial bureaucracies. This has been happening in Hungary, Poland, and, above all, the United States. Populists' distrust of "globalism" also leads them to weaken the international institutions necessary to manage the liberal world order.

I concur with the commonplace judgment that the rise of populism has been triggered by globalization and the consequent massive increase in inequality in many rich countries. But if the fundamental cause were merely economic, one would have expected to see left-wing populism everywhere; instead, since the 2008 financial crisis, parties on the left have been in decline, while the most energized new movements have been anti-immigrant groups, such as the far-right party Alternative for Germany and the populist coalition now governing Italy. In the 2016 U.S. presidential election, enough white working-class voters abandoned the Democratic Party to put Donald Trump over the top,

capping a 40-year trend of shifting party loyalties. This means that there is something going on in the cultural realm that needs explaining, and that something is concern over identity.

### **BALANCING IDENTITY**

The concept of “identity,” as I use the term, builds on a universal aspect of the human psyche that Plato labeled *thymos*, the demand for respect for one’s inner dignity. But there is a specifically modern expression of *thymos* that emerged after the Protestant Reformation and that values the inner self more highly than society’s laws, norms, and customs and insists that society change its own norms to give recognition to that inner self. The first major expression of modern identity politics was nineteenth-century European nationalism, when cultural groups began to demand recognition in the form of statehood. I believe that much of modern Islamism is similarly driven by identity confusion among Muslims in modernizing societies who feel neither Western nor traditional and see a particular form of politicized religion as a source of community and identity.

But is not correct to say, as John Sides, Michael Tesler, Lynn Vavreck, and Jennifer Richeson do, that identity politics as I define it drove white-supremacist and anti-immigrant movements in the nineteenth-century United States. Racism and xenophobia have always existed. But a generation or two ago, white Americans did not typically think of themselves as a victimized minority mistreated by elites who were indifferent to their problems. Today, many do, because contemporary racists have borrowed their framing of identity from groups on the left, in ways that

resonate with people who are not necessarily racist.

Another major misunderstanding of my argument has to do with my view of contemporary identity movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo. Of course they are rooted in real social injustices such as police violence and sexual harassment; they legitimately call for concrete policy remedies and a broad shift in cultural norms. But people can walk and chew gum at the same time. Even as Americans seek to right injustices suffered by specific social groups, they need to balance their small-group identities with a more integrative identity needed to create a cohesive national democratic community. I am not arguing, contrary to Richeson, that this will be an adequate substitute for narrower identities; rather, it will be a complement to them.

Liberal democracy cannot exist without a national identity that defines what citizens hold in common with one another. Given the de facto multiculturalism of contemporary democracies, that identity needs to be civic or creedal. That is, it needs to be based on liberal political ideas that are accessible to people of different cultural backgrounds rather than on fixed characteristics such as race, ethnicity, or religion. I thought that the United States had arrived at such a creedal identity in the wake of the civil rights movement, but that accomplishment is now being threatened by right-wing identitarians, led by Trump, who would like to drag Americans backward to identities based on ethnicity and religion.

### **WINNING VS. GOVERNING**

Stacey Abrams criticizes my desire to return to class as the defining target of

progressive politics, since class and race overlap strongly in the United States. But it is absurd to see white Americans as a uniformly privileged category, as she seems to do. A significant part of the white working class has followed the black working class into underclass status. Communities facing deindustrialization and job loss have experienced increases in crime, family breakdown, and drug use; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that 72,000 Americans died in 2017 of drug overdoses related to the opioid epidemic. So although part of the populist vote both in the United States and in Europe is driven by racism and xenophobia, part of it is driven by legitimate complaints that elites—the mainstream political parties, the media, cultural institutions, and major corporations—have failed to recognize these voters' plight and have stood by as this decline has occurred.

Abrams knows much better than I do what is required to win an election in the contemporary United States, and I'm sorry that she did not succeed in her bid for governor of Georgia. But I'm not sure that a successful electoral strategy would necessarily translate into a sustainable governing strategy. The country's single greatest weakness today is the intense polarization that has infected its political system, a weakness that has been exploited by authoritarian rivals such as China and Russia. In practical terms, overcoming polarization means devising a posture that will win back at least part of the white working-class vote that has shifted from the left to the right. Peeling away populist voters not driven by simple racism means taking seriously some of their concerns over cultural change and national identity. I agree that the burden

is on Republican politicians to stop defending Trump, but they will do so only when they realize that their own voters are turning against him.

The contemporary Middle East, like the Balkans before it, is an extreme example of out-of-control identity politics and what ultimately happens to countries that do not invest in integrative national identities. The United States is fortunately far from that point of state breakdown. But what is happening in the country is part of a larger global shift from a politics based on economic ideas to a politics based on identity. In the 2018 midterm elections, Trump was reportedly advised by Paul Ryan, the Republican Speaker of the House, to campaign on the 2017 tax cut and economic growth; Trump chose instead to go the identity route by railing against migrant caravans and birthright citizenship. This is identity politics on steroids.

This shift, echoed in other countries, is not compatible with modern liberal democracy. The latter is rooted in the rights of individuals, and not the rights of groups or fixed communities. And unless the United States counters this trend domestically, it will continue to set a bad example for the rest of the world. 🌐

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## Recent Books

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### Political and Legal

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*G. John Ikenberry*

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*The Rise and Fall of Peace on Earth*  
BY MICHAEL MANDELBAUM.  
Oxford University Press, 2019, 232 pp.

**M**andelbaum argues that the 25 years after the end of the Cold War were uniquely peaceful thanks to three forces: U.S. liberal hegemony, the spread of democracy, and rising economic interdependence. This was not merely a “realist peace,” that is, a momentary pause in geopolitics or a reflection of U.S. unipolarity. Around the world, there were glimmers of a “Kantian peace,” rooted in shared interests and values among liberal democratic states. Why did it unravel? Mandelbaum points the finger at Russia’s aggression in Europe, China’s expansionism in Asia, and Iran’s tendency to sow chaos in the Middle East. Interestingly, Mandelbaum spares the United States most of the blame. He argues that although NATO expansion did, as many suggest, antagonize Russia, today’s great-power revisionism was caused primarily by the spread of democracy. Ironically, he argues, if democracy had not shown such worldwide appeal, illiberal states would have pursued less aggressive policies in response. World peace, it seems, will have to wait until democracy wins a more complete victory.

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*On Cultural Diversity: International Theory in a World of Difference*  
BY CHRISTIAN REUS-SMIT.  
Cambridge University Press, 2018, 274 pp.

Scholars of international relations rarely look at culture as a force in world politics. Theorists tend to focus on power and interests, not values. In this ambitious book, Reus-Smit seeks to change that. His first discovery is that scholars acknowledge the role of cultural interactions more than one might think. Samuel Huntington famously depicted a “clash of civilizations,” and realists sometimes make arguments about the effects of nationalism. Liberal and rationalist theories of politics often note how better cultural understanding can make cooperation easier. But Reus-Smit argues that scholars conceive of culture as fixed rather than fluid. He also points out that all the great international orders in history—the Roman Empire, the Qing dynasty, the Ottoman Empire, and early modern Europe—evolved in heterogeneous cultural contexts. Grappling with such diversity, Reus-Smit argues, is one of the great tasks of order building.

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*The Development Century: A Global History*  
EDITED BY STEPHEN J. MACEKURA  
AND EREZ MANELA. Cambridge  
University Press, 2018, 366 pp.

During the twentieth century, development emerged as a concept and an organized activity in international society. Every year, governments, international organizations, and private foundations send money and experts abroad to promote economic growth and social development. This collection of essays by a group of prominent historians provides



the best portrait yet of the origins and evolution of international development. The rise of Cold War–era modernization theory and the geopolitics of U.S. foreign aid are well-known stories. But these authors show that international development has a much longer history, one that is intertwined with the emergence of the modern global order. In her contribution, Amanda Kay McVety traces the concept to the Enlightenment and the work of early political economists, such as Adam Smith. Others look at how development was entangled with nineteenth-century European empires and twentieth-century struggles over decolonization and nation building. A chapter by Manela charts the history of disease control and the emergence of a global institutional framework for development assistance. Timothy Nunan explores the efforts of European foresters, American nongovernmental organizations, and Soviet engineers to develop Afghanistan in the 1960s and 1970s. Taken together, these and other contributions suggest that international development is best understood not as the diffusion of knowledge from the West to the rest or as a manifestation of the Cold War struggle but instead as a shared language and set of practices that transcend ideological and political divides.

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*The Rise and Decline of the American Century*

BY WILLIAM O. WALKER. Cornell University Press, 2018, 306 pp.

After World War II, the United States set about building a global order. Some historians believe this was an effort to balance against Soviet power. Others view the order as a modern empire,

designed to make the world safe for American capitalism. Walker offers a third interpretation: the United States did want to spread its influence and the American way of life, but it did so by weaving other societies into a Pax Americana. This is the vision Walker sees in the *Life* owner Henry Luce's famous 1941 call for "an American Century." Walker provides an impressively detailed account of U.S. foreign policy in the early postwar decades, as the United States, in the words of Secretary of State Dean Acheson, learned how to "run the show." Walker agrees with the historian Melvyn Leffler that the United States was driven by the need to protect itself against the illiberal and imperial projects that imperiled it. It sought "preponderance," Walker says, but not "domination." Walker closes his story with the presidency of Richard Nixon, when Americans feared that their century was already ending and the country was struggling to avoid decline.

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*Constructing Global Order: Agency and Change in World Politics*

BY AMITAV ACHARYA. Cambridge University Press, 2018, 224 pp.

Most scholars believe that the modern international order was built in the West and exported to the rest of the world. After all, the Westphalian state system was invented in seventeenth-century Europe, and today's order has Anglo-American fingerprints all over it. Acharya stresses the agency of non-Western actors and offers an alternative vision of a decentralized global system. He argues that despite their pretensions to universality, the Westphalian system and

the liberal world order do not encompass the whole world. International order is contested, and countries on the receiving end of Western power often push back. Regional institutions, in particular, provide “sites for the creation and diffusion” of non-Western ideas. Yet the global pluralism that Acharya describes is closer to the open, multilayered liberal international order than he suggests.

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## Economic, Social, and Environmental

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*Richard N. Cooper*

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*The Pan-Industrial Revolution: How New Manufacturing Titans Will Transform the World*

BY RICHARD D’AVENI. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018, 320 pp.

**I**n the United States and elsewhere, D’Aveni predicts, manufacturing will accelerate over the next decade and come to dominate the economy. His book notes two broad trends behind this takeoff. The first is the increasing substitution of 3-D printing (an example of what is known as “additive manufacturing”) for traditional assembly lines. This technology greatly reduces manufacturers’ economies of scale but makes production faster and allows firms to cater to ever-changing consumer tastes and business requirements. The second trend is the growth of individual manufacturing firms, which he argues will come to span many industrial sectors. In part, that’s also the result of additive

manufacturing, which will allow companies to make products physically near their customers while controlling the process from distant headquarters. In most countries, these giant companies will employ fewer people than their predecessors, as machines will replace assembly-line workers. They may create some extra jobs in the United States, but these will require much higher skill levels than does the typical manufacturing job today. The new behemoths will pose serious challenges to competition regulators and consumer watchdogs, which may need to act to block monopolies and protect customers’ privacy.

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*Broken Bargain: Bankers, Bailouts, and the Struggle to Tame Wall Street*

BY KATHLEEN DAY. Yale University Press, 2019, 440 pp.

Day tells the story of U.S. banking since the beginning of the American republic, emphasizing the bargain that she says was struck after the banking crisis of 1930–33. Under that arrangement, the federal government provided deposit insurance (thereby limiting bank runs), and in exchange, the banks accepted heavy regulation. In romping fashion, Day recounts the troubling story of the last 40 years, during which a combination of new legislation and deregulation broke that bargain. In large part thanks to lobbying and campaign contributions by financial firms, Congress rolled back regulations. Meanwhile, regulators, such as Robert Rubin, U.S. treasury secretary during the Clinton administration, and Alan Greenspan, a longtime chair of the Federal Reserve, embraced a philosophy of deregulation and supported, and even encouraged,

the rollbacks. Some regulators, bankers, state government officials, and even legislators did warn of the risks, but those in power did not heed them.

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*Carbon Capture*

BY HOWARD. J. HERZOG. MIT Press, 2018, 216 pp.

If humans are to seriously mitigate climate change, they will have to use a lot less coal, oil, and natural gas—or find ways to capture and store the carbon dioxide that fossil fuels give off when they burn. This useful little book explains in simple terms the various methods of capturing and then storing the carbon dioxide emitted by power plants and factories and how much doing so is likely to cost. Herzog also discusses various possible ways to suck carbon dioxide directly out of the atmosphere, since what's already up there is the leading cause of global warming. Right now, the main options for capturing and storing carbon dioxide are not cheap, but the price might well prove bearable; capture and storage would raise the cost of producing electricity in a modern coal-fired power plant by 43 percent. (Herzog calculates that that would mean the typical American consumer would pay about 25 percent more to run his or her appliances.) Herzog also describes various programs that already capture and store carbon dioxide and the strengths and deficiencies of their different approaches. Given how much coal, oil, and gas the world uses, it is surprising that countries have not already put more time and money into such technologies.

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*The Venture Capital State: The Silicon Valley Model in East Asia*

BY ROBYN KLINGLER-VIDRA.

Cornell University Press, 2018, 210 pp.

Silicon Valley has become a model for a cluster of successful business start-ups that later mature into firms and turn huge profits for their original venture capital investors. No surprise, then, that many governments—45 so far—have attempted to replicate it. This informative book examines in detail three such attempts—in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan—and draws on the experiences of related ventures in several other places, including Israel and Japan. Unsurprisingly, Silicon Valley and its host governments, the California state government and the U.S. federal government, have legal, institutional, and cultural characteristics that other places find hard to replicate. Klingler-Vidra shows how Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan have financed new ventures by giving funds and tax breaks to venture capital firms and start-ups. She says little about the ultimate outcomes, such as the number of successful firms per public dollar spent, but she does show that the venture capitalists supported by governments tend to invest in older, already profitable firms rather than true start-ups.

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*A Political Economy of the United States, China, and India: Prosperity With Inequality*

BY SHALENDRA D. SHARMA.

Cambridge University Press, 2018, 232 pp.

Sharma compares economic growth and inequality in the world's three most populous countries—China, India, and the United States—and then draws connections to globalization and domestic politics.

He summarizes a wealth of scholarly research in this compact volume. World-wide inequality has fallen over the last 30 years thanks to the rapid economic growth that has slashed poverty in China and India. But inequality has risen within each of the countries Sharma studied and in many others, as well. Globalization has played a role in both trends. Exports have created a lot of low-wage jobs in China and cut prices for Americans, bringing down global inequality (although trade has done less to help the more protectionist India). Meanwhile, the accompanying free flow of capital across borders has made its owners richer, concentrating wealth in the hands of a few. Local politics also shape inequality. In the United States, campaign contributions help determine who gets elected and the policies they enact. Local politics also play a big role in authoritarian China and democratic India, where political connections and outright bribery dictate policy and ensure that the wealthy grow ever wealthier.

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## Military, Scientific, and Technological

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*Lawrence D. Freedman*

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*Strategy Strikes Back: How "Star Wars" Explains Modern Military Conflict*  
 EDITED BY MAX BROOKS, JOHN AMBLE, ML CAVANAUGH, AND JAYM GATES. Potomac Books, 2018, 272 pp.

**A**cademics have long mined science fiction for insights into leadership, strategy, and conflict.

This illuminating, if uneven, collection of essays is united by the idea that the *Star Wars* movies are particularly valuable in this regard. In part, that is due to the quality of the storytelling. But *Star Wars* has another virtue: popularity. Students, even those in military academies, often struggle with dry texts on strategy and have gaps in their knowledge of contemporary conflicts, but they know all about the struggles between the Galactic Empire and the Rebel Alliance. As the contributors show, teachers can use examples from the *Star Wars* movies to demonstrate the importance of paying attention to vulnerable societies (the lack of development on Endor), the limitations of modern military training (Jedi training, which separates soldiers from the people they serve and is far too geared toward individual combat), the dangers of an overreliance on technology (the empire's dependence on the Death Star), and common errors of grand strategy (Yoda's overconfidence in the Jedi's ability to protect the republic). These failings also highlight a key difference between the movies and real-life situations: without them, the plots would have been left with less suspense and fewer thrills.

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*Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita, and the Battle of Manila*

BY JAMES M. SCOTT. Norton, 2018, 640 pp.

Early in 1945, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, who had fled the Philippines three years earlier, returned to wrest the capital, Manila, from the Japanese—just as he had promised. Facing him were just over a quarter of a million soldiers, led by

one of Japan's top generals, Tomoyuki Yamashita, the conqueror of Singapore. The Japanese were well positioned to thwart the American advance but had little ammunition or food. Manila itself was home to one million civilians, many of them close to starvation, and 10,000 prisoners of war, including many Americans. During the ferocious battle for the city, which raged for 29 days, some 100,000 Filipino civilians died. Some were killed by U.S. artillery, but most were murdered by unhinged Japanese troops who used bayonets and grenades to avenge their imminent defeat. Scott's masterful reconstruction of the horror of the battle intersperses accounts of massacres with happier moments of liberation.

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*The Girls Next Door: Bringing the Home Front to the Front Lines*

BY KARA DIXON VUIC. Harvard University Press, 2019, 392 pp.

From 1918 until the end of the Vietnam War, every time young American men were sent to fight overseas, they would be joined by small groups of young women who would serve drinks and snacks, put on shows, and offer (platonic) friendship to the soldiers. The women were chosen for their good character and attractive appearance, and their presence was meant to remind the men of the ideal of womanhood for which they were fighting, raise soldiers' morale by providing them with feminine company, and discourage them from seeking out prostitutes. By the end of the Cold War, the practice had died out, as U.S. forces were made up of volunteers rather than draftees and feminism was on the rise. Women

began serving as soldiers rather than entertainers. In this fascinating history, Vuic largely lets the women speak for themselves. They signed up out of a desire for overseas adventure, to support the war effort, and out of sympathy for lonely and fearful young men who missed their families. Vuic explores the sexual politics of frontline forces, as the women tried to find the appropriate codes of dress, dating, and maintaining distance to avoid raising expectations they could not meet. The issues of race and segregation also inevitably loom large in her account.

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*Operation Columba—The Secret Pigeon Service: The Untold Story of World War II Resistance in Europe*

BY GORDON CORERA. William Morrow, 2018, 352 pp.

During World War II, British intelligence agencies sent operatives into occupied Europe to place some 16,000 homing pigeons carried in special containers. Most of the birds were never seen again, in some cases lost to hawks sent by the Germans to intercept them. But about ten percent returned, enough to make the effort worthwhile. The aim was to persuade any local people who chanced on the birds to write messages, hopefully containing intelligence on German military positions and movements, on tiny pieces of rice paper stuffed into a canister clipped onto each pigeon's leg. As so often in wartime British intelligence, the project was handled by a collection of "oddballs and professors" and suffered from bureaucratic infighting, but it still made a difference. Corera's vivid account shows how the pigeons' messages revealed daily life under the



Nazis and valuable intelligence. Some of the most useful information, including details of German positions and an assessment of recent British air raids, came from a Belgian network known as Leopold Vindictive, which was led by Father Joseph Raskin, a priest with intelligence experience from the previous war. In the end, Raskin was betrayed and caught and executed by the Germans.

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*We Want to Negotiate: The Secret World of Kidnapping, Hostages, and Ransom*  
BY JOEL SIMON. Columbia Global Reports, 2019, 189 pp.

This excellent and careful book asks tough questions about whether and how governments should negotiate with kidnappers to get hostages released. Simon, who has worked for two decades at the Committee to Protect Journalists, challenges the view that paying ransoms simply creates incentives for more kidnapping. His detailed history of hostage taking includes case studies demonstrating the different approaches followed by such countries as France and Spain, which are prepared to do whatever it takes to free their citizens, and the United Kingdom and the United States, which generally refuse to negotiate and whose nationals are, therefore, more likely to be killed. Kidnappers' motives vary: some crave publicity; others just want cash. Simon's overall approach is pragmatic. In addition to arguing against a blanket refusal to negotiate, he addresses the value of publicity campaigns, the risks involved in rescue missions, the role of insurance companies and private negotiators, and how the ransoms actually get paid.

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## The United States

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*Walter Russell Mead*

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*Every Day Is Extra*

BY JOHN KERRY. Simon & Schuster, 2018, 640 pp.

**K**erry will likely be remembered as the last U.S. secretary of state whose outlook reflected the assumptions and aspirations of the post Cold War unipolar era in world politics. For Kerry, the job involved serving as a kind of global first responder. Christmas 2013 found him managing a crisis in South Sudan: "I was talking to our embassy in Juba and the White House as we tracked militias and fighters. . . . If they reached Juba, and the fighting devolved into chaos, it would be 'Katy, bar the door!'" Kerry's successors are unlikely to follow the news in Juba as closely. In other ways, too, Kerry, a son of the old WASP ascendancy, seems to belong to an America that is rapidly receding in the rearview mirror. Kerry saw U.S. power much as he saw his own privilege: as a call to service. His memoir gives a comprehensive and, in places, moving account of his response to that call. People disagree over the wisdom and effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy in the Kerry years, but there can be no serious dispute about the integrity and patriotism that Kerry brought to the job.

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*The Empty Throne: America's Abdication of Global Leadership*

BY IVO H. DAALDER AND JAMES M. LINDSAY. PublicAffairs, 2018, 256 pp.

Few observers of U.S. foreign policy have the skills and experience of Daalder and Lindsay. In their new book, they lucidly, if not very originally, argue that U.S. President Donald Trump's leadership has weakened the United States' alliances, undermined the institutions on which much of U.S. security depends, and put American companies and exporters at a disadvantage. On the question of why so many voters rejected the traditional foreign policy approach in 2016, Daalder and Lindsay have less to say. Their book refers to U.S. overextension in the Clinton and Bush administrations and notes that the Obama-era attempt to offer a more limited form of American leadership proved less satisfying than many hoped, but such concerns occupy a marginal place in the narrative. One hopes their next book will do more. The most urgent task facing students of contemporary U.S. foreign policy is less to deconstruct Trump's approach than to craft long-term strategies that will be politically sustainable at home and effective abroad.

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*John Marshall: The Man Who Made the Supreme Court*

BY RICHARD BROOKHISER. Basic Books, 2018, 336 pp.

It is thanks to John Marshall's work as the fourth chief justice of the United States that the constitutional doctrines of the Federalist Party, which espoused strong judicial power and the supremacy

of the national government over the states, formed the foundation of the American state. As Brookhiser shows in this brisk biography, Marshall's success was partly due to the power of his legal reasoning and partly to his brilliant management of the men who served with him on the Supreme Court. Marshall doesn't offer much grist for a biographer; he led a quietly respectable private life and was as marmoreal in his public persona as George Washington. Few surviving papers reveal much of the inner man. Brookhiser does his best with this unpromising material, but Marshall would doubtless be pleased that it is his ideas that dominate this biography, not his quarrels, debts, ambitions, or amours. The greatest blot on Marshall's record, as Brookhiser notes, was his failure to confront the horrors of slavery. Washington freed his slaves when he died, in 1799. Marshall, who died in 1835, left his in bondage.

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*The Chosen Wars: How Judaism Became an American Religion*

BY STEVEN R. WEISMAN. Simon & Schuster, 2018, 368 pp.

Weisman makes a convincing case that the cultural and theological beliefs of the nineteenth-century American Jewish community continue to shape American Jewish life today. American Jews of that era, like many of their neighbors, tended to be anticlerical, suspicious of institutions, and independent-minded with respect to religion. Enthusiastically embracing the rational, liberal theology and biblical criticism then coming out of Germany, they worked to adapt an ancient religion to what they saw as a new era of enlightenment. Change was

not always smooth: at the 1883 graduation of the first new rabbis from the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, guests were horrified when waiters served crab, shrimp, and frogs' legs. After 1880, the largely German American Jewish community would be overwhelmed by a great wave of Jews from central and eastern Europe. But their ideas about Judaism, including their complicated responses to Zionism, endured.

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*The Point of It All: A Lifetime of Great Loves and Endeavors*

BY CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER.  
EDITED BY DANIEL  
KRAUTHAMMER. Crown Forum,  
2018, 400 pp.

Last summer, the death of Charles Krauthammer, a longtime columnist for *The Washington Post*, silenced one of the most influential voices in the world of U.S. foreign policy. After a diving accident left him partially paralyzed in 1972, Krauthammer went to on graduate from Harvard Medical School, practice psychiatry, and then enter politics, working as a speechwriter for Vice President Walter Mondale. After the end of the Cold War, Krauthammer, already known for his hawkish foreign policy views, embraced and helped define the concept of unipolarity—the idea that the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union had been replaced by a “unipolar moment,” in which the United States, for a limited time, had no serious rivals. Krauthammer went on to bitterly criticize what he saw as President Barack Obama’s retreat from U.S. responsibilities and what he deemed the fundamentally irresponsible approach of Obama’s successor, Donald Trump. In

this book, Krauthammer’s son, Daniel, himself a writer, assembles some of his father’s most important columns. To read (or reread) them is to be reminded of how central the elder Krauthammer was to 30 years of American foreign policy debate.

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## Western Europe

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*Andrew Moravcsik*

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*Pandemic 1918: Eyewitness Accounts From the Greatest Medical Holocaust in Modern History*

BY CATHARINE ARNOLD. St. Martin’s Press, 2018, 368 pp.

Patients coughed up blood riddled with parasitic bacteria, spraying it across hospital rooms. Dying bodies inflated with the air seeping out of their punctured lungs. Huge numbers of otherwise healthy young people died within hours when their powerful immune systems turned on them. Worldwide, between 50 million and 100 million people perished. Among remote populations that lacked immunity, the mortality rate often exceeded 90 percent. Cities threw the dead in mass graves—unless, as in Philadelphia, too few workers remained to bury them all. Scientists and governments were powerless to stop it. This is no horror-movie vision of Ebola or the Black Death. These are stories from the Spanish flu pandemic a century ago, which claimed five times as many victims as World War I. More scientifically rigorous accounts exist, but Arnold, a popular historian, has assembled the

most terrifying eyewitness testimony. The lessons are obvious. A pandemic today might well spread even more quickly and kill even more people. General multipurpose vaccines—even genetically engineered ones—are often powerless to combat diseases that mutate rapidly. Only a permanent global system that can quickly diagnose and treat people could blunt the spread of such a scourge, yet governments still underfund such programs.

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*English Nationalism: A Short History*  
BY JEREMY BLACK. Hurst, 2018,  
224 pp.

Does England have a national identity distinct from that of the United Kingdom? Recent political conflict between England and the rest of the union over Brexit, Scottish independence, Irish unity, and other issues has made this a hot-button question. Black argues that English nationalism is genuine: Englishness rests on the shared experiences of Magna Carta, the Reformation, the Thirty Years' War, the British Empire, and World War II. Yet Black struggles to persuade. Memories of internal and external warfare hundreds of years ago neither distinguish England from the rest of the United Kingdom nor reveal much about how media-savvy politicians, a sensationalistic press, and right-wing skinheads are redefining populist nationalism today—something the author all but admits in the last chapter, “Postscript From a Pub.” In general, current events stymie Black. In considering Brexit, he dismisses (without evidence) any thought that Euroskeptical voters are ignorant or have been manipulated, or that they are indulging in nationalism.

Yet he fails to provide a plausible alternative explanation for their behavior.

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*A Bite-Sized History of France: Gastronomic Tales of Revolution, War, and Enlightenment*  
BY STÉPHANE HÉNAUT AND JENI MITCHELL. New Press, 2019, 352 pp.

This engaging book recounts the history of France through its food. For the French, their cuisine is a prime source of national pride, but as Hénaut and Mitchell's lively vignettes show, few French delicacies are indigenous. The Romans converted uncouth beer-drinking Gauls to wine. The Frank Charlemagne standardized French farms, decreeing that every estate should grow garlic, produce honey, and much else. Returning crusaders brought plums and other exotic fruits. Schismatic popes from Italy established eggplants and Syrah wine. An Italian noblewoman turned French queen, Catherine de Medicis, brought artichokes, spinach, broccoli, sorbet, and the fork. The Turks added coffee; the Austrians the croissant. Brutal slave plantations in imperial domains satisfied sugar cravings. One day, Louis XIV's troops in Spain substituted olive oil for butter, and—voilà!—mayonnaise was born. In the nineteenth century, farmers had to graft American vines onto French grape plants to save them from disease. Today, couscous and pho are ubiquitous in Paris. Aside from a few cases, such as champagne, which was perfected by Dom Pierre Pérignon, a French Benedictine monk, French cuisine is largely the fruit of globalization and appropriation.

*The End of the French Intellectual*

BY SHLOMO SAND. TRANSLATED  
BY DAVID FERNBACH. Verso, 2018,  
304 pp.

Modern French intellectuals receive tremendous social respect—so much so that they are generally immune from punishment even when they commit common crimes, preach treason or hatred, or speak in riddles. This book argues that in recent decades, although these intellectuals' social status has remained largely intact, the quality of their thought has ebbed. Sand is hardly the first to say this—and certainly not the most persuasive. He is concerned with only one angle of French intellectual life: the conflict between Jews and Muslims. He argues that a century ago, anti-Semitism led many leading French intellectuals to abandon the army captain Alfred Dreyfus after he was falsely convicted of treason. Under the Nazi occupation, many again failed to defend the Jews. Today, Islamophobia is common. Sand argues that the cartoons that provoked the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting in 2015 trucked in tasteless ethnic stereotypes that would have been unacceptable if directed at Jews. He has a point, but he is wrong to level the same charge at such leading French thinkers as Alain Finkielkraut, Michel Houellebecq, and Éric Zemmour. These men may be sensationalistic and perhaps even distasteful, but Sand does little to show that they preach systematic ethnic hatred in the manner of their anti-Dreyfusard and pro-fascist predecessors.

*The Islamic State in Britain:*

*Radicalization and Resilience in an  
Activist Network*

BY MICHAEL KENNEY. Cambridge  
University Press, 2018, 298 pp.

This book contains an ethnographic study of al Muhajiroun, an outlawed radical jihadist group in London. Kenney seeks to explain how, despite intense police surveillance, the group survived, attracted adherents, and recruited fighters to join the war in Syria until the British government banned it in 2010. Ideological sympathy, ties of friendship, charismatic leaders, and youthful inexperience led people to join the group. Once there, they learned how to be activists by watching more experienced members, often imbibing even more dangerous ideologies along the way. Tight subgroups permitted the movement to deflect government pressure by frequently reconfiguring themselves and fostering ambiguity about their purposes. As they aged, some members left for more normal lives, while others turned to different, often more radical groups. These broad conclusions are hardly new, but some readers may be surprised by Kenney's argument that such groups can allow young men to let off steam, thus containing, rather than promoting, violence. As the authorities stamp out these organizations, their disgruntled members may pose an even greater danger.



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## Western Hemisphere

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*Richard Feinberg*

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*The Future of Latin America and the Caribbean in the Context of the Rise of China*

BY R. EVAN ELLIS. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018, 42 pp.

*Latin America—China Trade and Investment Amid Global Tensions: A Need to Upgrade and Diversify*

BY ANABEL GONZÁLEZ. Atlantic Council, 2018, 32 pp.

Ellis warns of a possible dystopian future for Latin America. By 2050, if current economic trends persist, China may use its growing economic power and technological sophistication to co-opt Latin American business and political elites and give Chinese firms a competitive advantage. The Chinese military presence in Latin America is also likely to expand, especially if China wins a military confrontation with the United States (over Taiwan, for example). Latin America is unlikely to produce a coherent strategy to counter China's encroachments, Ellis judges, although he recommends that the United States help strengthen the region's regulatory and political institutions so they can better protect against predatory Chinese practices. Ellis' description of the asymmetric relations between a dominant China and a subservient Latin America recalls Marxist-leaning theorists' critiques of U.S.–Latin American relations in the 1960s and 1970s. Ellis, however, does

acknowledge that Chinese influence may have some upsides. Chinese surveillance technology could enable Latin America to overcome two of its biggest scourges: official corruption and crime syndicates. From the perspective of some Latin Americans, these gains may warrant a grudging acquiescence to Chinese power.

González, a leading Costa Rican economist, worries that economic tensions between China and the United States could upend the international trading system, dampen global economic growth, and harm Latin America's prospects. But she also foresees plentiful opportunities in Chinese markets for Latin American exports, such as high-end agricultural products. She cites Chile's success in exporting fresh fruit to China as a promising example. The growing Chinese middle class could also create a bonanza for the Latin American tourism industry. González argues that rather than fear Chinese influence, other Latin American governments should follow the lead of Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru and strike free-trade agreements with Beijing in order to ensure that their companies have access to Chinese markets. González counsels Latin America to upgrade its trade infrastructure, improve its schools, boost its labor productivity, and enact good-governance reforms in order to benefit more fully from Chinese partnerships.

*Report of the Expert Advisory Group on Anti-Corruption, Transparency, and Integrity in Latin America and the Caribbean*

BY EDUARDO ENGEL, DELIA FERREIRA RUBIO, DANIEL KAUFMANN, ARMANDO LARA YAFFAR, JORGE LONDOÑO SALDARRIAGA, BETH SIMONE NOVECK, MARK PIETH, AND SUSAN ROSE-ACKERMAN. Inter-American Development Bank, 2018, 42 pp.

This all-star team of eight governance and anticorruption experts has produced a powerful indictment of Latin American institutions. The authors condemn both public and private elites for “undermining sound policymaking and the rule of law, entrenching impunity, and diverting public resources and investment away from the public good.” The prosecution continues: “Though some [Latin American] countries . . . have been engaged in selected anti-corruption reforms for the last decade, these have been uneven, partial, and focused more on enacting laws and regulations rather than implementation.” Although the report provides an invaluable compilation of state-of-the-art anticorruption initiatives, the authors fail to confront the inconvenient contradiction in their work: the very same elites they indict are called on to enact comprehensive reforms that would presumably prejudice their own interests.

*Desarrollo, integración e igualdad: La respuesta de Centroamérica a la crisis de la globalización* (Development, integration, and equality: The response of Central America to the crisis of globalization)

BY THE UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2018, 180 pp.

This comprehensive, data-rich review traces the social and economic progress of Central America since 1960, with an emphasis on the last five years. The region has enjoyed economic stability and has made significant strides toward integrating commerce, installing modern telecommunications networks, adopting renewable energy, and improving its residents’ quality of life. Local firms now stretch across the region, and foreign direct investment has accelerated. But a demographic explosion has eroded these gains. Central America’s population skyrocketed from 13 million in 1960 to nearly 50 million today. Rural poverty remains shockingly high, especially in Guatemala and Honduras. As a result, much of the region’s foreign currency comes from emigrant workers; remittances totaled \$84 billion from 2013 to 2017. The report emphasizes the need for investment in public education, rural irrigation, and basic infrastructure, since lasting increases in real wages will require strong growth in labor productivity. It also warns the United States against deporting millions of immigrants, as sending so many people back would inflame social tensions in their home countries.

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*The Peace Corps and Latin America: In the Last Mile of U.S. Foreign Policy*

BY THOMAS J. NISLEY. Lexington Books, 2018, 158 pp.

Over 230,000 Americans have served as Peace Corps volunteers since the agency was established in the early days of the Kennedy administration. Nisley, a former volunteer in the Dominican Republic, argues that the Peace Corps, which costs roughly \$50,000 per volunteer per year, has provided a cost-effective way to advance U.S. foreign policy. Small project by small project, the volunteers promote development in poor countries. Statistical evidence suggests that their sustained interactions with local citizens improve perceptions of the United States. In perhaps its most important role, the Peace Corps serves as a graduate school in foreign policy, preparing volunteers for careers in diplomacy and international development. The White House's enthusiasm for the Peace Corps has waxed and waned, Nisley finds, depending on presidential preferences and perceived security threats. For John F. Kennedy, the Peace Corps aligned well with his Alliance for Progress initiative, which aimed to promote democracy and economic growth in Latin America. Richard Nixon saw the Peace Corps as a haven for those opposed to the Vietnam War and reduced the number of volunteers. Later, Ronald Reagan expanded the agency's presence in Central America to counter leftist insurgencies.

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Middle East

*John Waterbury*

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*What Is Russia Up To in the Middle East?*

BY DMITRI TRENIN. Polity, 2017, 144 pp.

Trenin packs a great deal of substance into this slender volume. In quick strokes, he paints Russia's history in the Middle East and President Vladimir Putin's objectives over the last two decades. Putin has chosen the region as the theater to reassert Russia's global role after its 25-year absence. Russia has no grand strategy for the Middle East, but it has managed overlapping and often antagonistic coalitions with great skill. As Trenin reminds readers, Russia unreservedly supported the United States in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and in 2011, Putin tasked Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev with crafting a grand bargain with U.S. President Barack Obama. The effort failed, and after the Obama administration's disastrous intervention in Libya later that year, which Russia had initially endorsed, Putin challenged the United States in the Middle East for the first time. Moscow still wants to strike deals with Washington on several specific issues: post-civil-war Syria, Iran's nuclear program, the future of Afghanistan, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. On the last, Trenin shows that Putin has positioned himself to serve as a far more honest broker between the Israelis and the Palestinians than has the Trump team.

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*Building the Nation: Missed Opportunities in Iraq and Afghanistan*BY HEATHER SELMA GREGG.  
Potomac Books, 2018, 296 pp.

Gregg believes that U.S. security needs will always drive Washington to attempt to salvage failed or fragile states. So the United States needs to understand why it failed to build nations in Afghanistan and Iraq and how it might do better elsewhere. It must focus on creating a shared sense of national destiny, Gregg says, which will require devolving reform to the local level so that the people own the process. Gregg sees the U.S. military as the right agent to achieve this. The military can even make Afghan peasants better farmers, she says. Nearly every part of Gregg's analysis contains problems. She largely ignores the literature on democratic transitions and counter-insurgency and barely mentions the role of external actors, such as Pakistan's intelligence services, in supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan. Worst of all, she offers no examples of successful nation building by an occupying power. In the success stories Gregg does tell, such as Rwanda, reform came from the inside.

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*Coping With Uncertainty: Youth in the Middle East and North Africa*

EDITED BY JÖRG GERTEL AND RALF HEXEL. Saqi Books, 2018, 400 pp.

This study presents the results of a 2016 survey of Arabs aged 16 to 30 in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, and the Palestinian territories, as well as Syrian refugees in the same age group in Lebanon. The organizers interviewed 1,000 people in

each place. The survey leaves out some important countries, but its results offer cause for hope. Although most of the respondents had negative views of the 2011 uprisings that formed the Arab Spring, two-thirds of them expressed optimism about the future. The vast majority wanted to help the less privileged. They respected their families more than any other institution. (Their countries' respective militaries came second.) And although they reported having little respect for political parties or parliaments, they still wanted to participate in civic life. Two-thirds professed strong religious faith, but most of them regarded religion as a personal matter. In the final chapter, Mathias Albert and Gertel compare those surveyed with their German counterparts. The two groups have similar levels of optimism, they find, but German youth are much more interested in formal politics than are young Arabs.

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*The Islamic State in Khorasan: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the New Central Asian Jihad*

BY ANTONIO GIUSTOZZI. Hurst, 2018, 296 pp.

Giustozzi, together with a group of anonymous colleagues, spent two years interviewing members of jihadist groups active in Khorasan, a region that includes parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia. The book provides extraordinary depth and detail, yet Giustozzi still manages to show the forest along with the trees. As its home base in Iraq and Syria collapses, the Islamic State (or ISIS) is looking for a new home. Khorasan

offers big advantages over Libya, Yemen, or the Sahel: it is close to China, Iran, and Russia, and to U.S. forces based in Afghanistan. The ISIS affiliate known as the Islamic State in Khorasan receives around \$300 million each year from outside donors, mostly individuals from Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, but the governments of those countries contribute, too. The ISK wants to absorb the Taliban and then take the fight to its external enemies, above all Iran. The ISK's greatest hope is Iran's fear: that the Taliban will cut a deal with the Afghan government that will discredit the group among true believers, sending recruits to the ISK.

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*Beirut Rules: The Murder of a CIA Station Chief and Hezbollah's War Against America*

BY FRED BURTON AND SAMUEL M. KATZ. Berkley, 2018, 400 pp.

In March 1984, Hezbollah fighters abducted William Buckley, the CIA station chief in Beirut. They held him prisoner until June 1985, when he died of torture and neglect. Buckley, who had served in the Korean War before embarking on a long and distinguished career with the CIA, rose to the position of Beirut station chief after the bombings of the U.S. embassy and the Marine barracks there. His nemesis was Imad Mughniyeh, Hezbollah's master hit man, who was himself blown up by a car bomb in Damascus in 2008. The authors of this account of Buckley's murder seek to honor his memory and openly thirst to avenge his death. They clearly intend the story to grip the reader, but too often they fall into annoying invocations of

supposed local color. They also lament the "castration" of the CIA by the 1975 Church Committee investigation into the intelligence community, and they rejoice that the 9/11 attacks prompted the rebirth of the agency as a paramilitary force tasked with hunting the United States' enemies.

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## Asia and Pacific

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*Andrew J. Nathan*

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*The RSS: A View to the Inside*

BY WALTER K. ANDERSEN AND SHRIDHAR D. DAMLE. Penguin India, 2018, 400 pp.

**T**he Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is a Hindu nationalist organization that provides crucial electoral support for India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and its leader, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is a former RSS cadre. The two organizations coordinate policy, but neither calls the shots for the other. Andersen and Damle take an exceptionally well-informed look at the RSS, including its relations with affiliate organizations, such as India's largest trade union and student association, and its policies on the slaughter of cows, foreign direct investment, relations with China, and other issues. As the RSS has grown, its leadership has moderated the group's fundamentalist ideology, denounced caste discrimination, and tried, without much success, to bring women and non-Hindus into the ranks. The group's core concept of



*Hindutva*, or “Hinduness,” is now glossed as loyalty to a vaguely defined Indian civilization rather than adherence to specific religious practices, a revision made easier by the unsystematic character of Hindu beliefs. But religious nationalism remains the RSS’ chief mobilizing tool, and many of the organization’s local branches and affiliates still espouse aggressive anti-Muslim and socially conservative positions.

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*Peak Japan: The End of Great Ambitions*

BY BRAD GLOSSERMAN.

Georgetown University Press, 2019, 272 pp.

Glosserman explores Japan’s inability to adopt much-needed reforms during four recent political and economic shocks: the 2008 global financial crisis, the 2009 electoral defeat of the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party by its rival the Democratic Party of Japan, the 2010 crisis with China over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and the 2011 triple disaster of an earthquake, a tsunami, and a nuclear power plant meltdown. The country faces intractable problems: a falling population, excessive government debt, the decline of its most important ally (the United States), and the rise of its main rival (China). But weak leadership and political gridlock have made Japan’s situation worse. Glosserman puts the ultimate blame on Japan’s culture of collectivism, harmony, and fatalism. The Japanese are too comfortable to strike out on a new path, he says. Although Prime Minister Shinzo Abe aims to revitalize his country, Glosserman regretfully concludes that Japan “can no longer harbor grand ambitions.”

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*Brand New Art From China: A Generation on the Rise*

BY BARBARA POLLACK. I.B. Tauris, 2018, 192 pp.

Chinese artists in their 20s and 30s seem to have escaped the growing repression in China, perhaps because the censors have no idea what to make of their work. As Pollack reveals, they are linked as much to Berlin, Miami, and New York as to Beijing and Shanghai, and as much to the Internet, animation, and performance as to paint and wood. They make fresh use of images and techniques from all over the world and from many different historical periods. They do not feel compelled to focus on the totalitarian past or the enduring puzzle of what it means to be Chinese, as the first post-Mao generation of modern Chinese artists did. But China and its problems keep tugging at them. To avoid politics is to be political; to produce unique work is to join a trend; to call oneself “an artist from China” (as this younger generation prefers to do) instead of “a Chinese artist” is to comment on being Chinese today. Along with this analysis, Pollack offers plenty of sharp biographical and aesthetic insights. The book’s illustrations leave the reader eager for more contemporary Chinese art.

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*The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History*

BY MONICA KIM. Princeton University Press, 2019, 452 pp.

During the Korean War, the United States seemed to strike a blow for individual liberty when it insisted on offering Chinese and North Korean prisoners of war the opportunity to stay

in South Korea rather than return home after the war was over. But the result was to import the ideological Cold War into POW camps. Anticomunist North Koreans tattooed themselves and wrote petitions in blood demanding to be released to fight against their former comrades. Meanwhile, the majority of North Korean prisoners saw the U.S.-led forces as colonialists and anyone who refused repatriation as a traitor, so they protested the voluntary repatriation policy by demonstrating, singing songs, getting into shouting matches with the guards, going on hunger strikes, and, in one famous incident, kidnapping a U.S. camp commander. American POWs in Chinese and North Korean camps formed groups of self-described “reactionaries,” including one that called itself the Ku Klux Klan, to punish anyone who seemed to accept the communists’ criticisms of the United States. When 21 American POWs decided to go to China instead of returning home, Americans panicked over “brainwashing.” Partly as a result of the panic, even American POWs who came home were suspected of communist contamination.

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*Does ASEAN Matter? A View From Within*

BY MARTY NATALEGAWA. ISEAS—Yusuf Ishak Institute, 2018, 258 pp.

Natalegawa, a former Indonesian foreign minister, is a strong believer in the value of the ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and its often-derided process of constant meetings and declarations, for dampening conflict and getting the attention of outside powers. He gives blow-by-blow accounts of some of his toughest negotiations within the

group. He helped persuade Myanmar to accept international aid after Cyclone Nargis, mediated Cambodian-Thai talks over the contested Preah Vihear Temple, worked to pull ASEAN’s member states back together after a split over the South China Sea, and pushed the group to adopt a declaration of principles on human rights. Natalegawa’s stories constitute a primer on the dark arts of diplomacy, including the value of ambiguity, the cultivation of personal relationships with fellow leaders, creative word and punctuation choices, the profligate use of the passive voice—and just showing up. As the most populous and most active member of ASEAN, Indonesia has been accused of “overactivism” by other members. Natalegawa is proud to own the label.

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*India and Nuclear Asia: Forces, Doctrine, and Dangers*

BY YOGESH JOSHI AND FRANK O’DONNELL. Georgetown University Press, 2018, 235 pp.

The authors’ language is clinical, but their message is frightening. India possesses or is developing ballistic missiles that can reach anywhere in China, shorter-range missiles for potential tactical use against China and Pakistan, missiles with multiple independently targeted warheads, submarine-launched missiles, and missile defenses. Pakistan has developed a variety of nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles intended to deter even nonnuclear Indian attacks. China has merged its conventional and nuclear missile forces under a single command, making it harder for an adversary to know what kind of warhead has been launched. China and India have both

adopted more aggressive postures near disputed sections of their shared border. The two countries have announced “no first use” policies but have left them ambiguous; Pakistan has no such policy at all. Concepts such as “minimum deterrence,” “limited deterrence,” “credible deterrence,” and “full-spectrum deterrence” are tossed about with little clarity on what they mean. Add in the near-total lack of dialogue among the three states, and the opportunities for miscommunication and miscalculation proliferate.

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*Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter With Asia*

BY JÜRGEN OSTERHAMMEL.

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT SAVAGE.  
Princeton University Press, 2018, 696 pp.

For Europe, the eighteenth century was a time of intense study of the lands to the east. Intrepid travelers spent years and fortunes learning languages, registering facts, and coming up with generalizations that were as often wrong as right. The travelers' images of the East, Osterhammel writes in this learned and engrossing account, played “a key rhetorical role in the domestic controversies of the era.” Montesquieu, who never visited Asia, used the idea of Oriental despotism to expose the risks of Bourbon absolutism; his less well-known royalist compatriot Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron defended the Bourbons by showing that Oriental monarchies ruled through law. Every major philosophical dispute of the age was influenced by the work of scholars of the East, on subjects as diverse as the nature of civilization, the forms of government, the sources of national

wealth, the stages of social development, and the role of women. These disputes laid the foundations for much of modern political thought. Over the course of the eighteenth century, Europeans shifted from an open attitude toward Asia to the belief that only European society was rational, dynamic, and just. That attitude then helped justify the colonialism of the following century.

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## Africa

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*Nicolas van de Walle*

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*Shadow State: The Politics of State Capture*

BY IVOR CHIPKIN, MARK

SWILLING, HAROON BHORAT,

MZUKISI QOBO, SIKHULEKILE

DUMA, AND LUMKILE MONDI. Wits

University Press, 2018, 176 pp.

*Cyril Ramaphosa: The Path to Power in South Africa*

BY RAY HARTLEY. Hurst, 2018, 280 pp.

These two excellent books provide some clues about the prospects for South African democracy. Chipkin and his co-authors analyze the corruption scandals that helped bring down President Jacob Zuma in early 2018. They provide meticulous evidence that Zuma and his associates, most notably the Gupta family and its business empire, captured state institutions for personal gain. The book documents the influence peddling, rent seeking, insider trading, and corruption that helped turn the Guptas' business into one of South Africa's largest corporate empires. In

the end, the justice system, key elements of the ruling African National Congress, and the press resisted capture and exposed the scandal. The book describes an alarming level of corruption inside the ANC and the state bureaucracy, but that such a book could be published at all in South Africa is a cause for optimism.

If reform is going to happen, it will come from Cyril Ramaphosa, who replaced Zuma as president in 2018. In this fascinating portrait of Ramaphosa, Hartley, a veteran South African journalist, describes the new president's early years as a radical labor leader and then as the ANC wunderkind who led the negotiations that ended apartheid. After the party prevented him from becoming Nelson Mandela's heir, in favor of Thabo Mbeki, Ramaphosa left politics for a successful business career, taking advantage of policies that favored new black entrepreneurs. He returned to politics in 2014 as deputy president. Ramaphosa is no ideologue; Hartley describes him as a ruthless pragmatist. But he does seem genuinely animated by the original objectives of the ANC: to create a modern and effective state dedicated to democracy and the fight against poverty. As president, Ramaphosa has moved to strengthen anticorruption institutions and ensure that Zuma cannot engineer a comeback. Hartley is more circumspect about Ramaphosa's ability to reverse South Africa's long economic decline, worrying that the party bosses will sabotage any reforms that attack their power and limit their graft.

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*Pentecostal Republic: Religion and the Struggle for State Power in Nigeria*

BY EBENEZER OBADARE. Zed Books, 2018, 252 pp.

Academics have long understood Nigerian politics as structured by the division between northern Muslims and southern Christians. This probing, well-informed account from one of the most astute observers of contemporary Nigeria argues that since democracy was restored in the country, in 1999, the Christian side of Nigerian politics has been marked by the rising power of Pentecostalism, a loose category that encompasses as many as a third of Nigerians and is the country's fastest-growing religious group. Obadare shows how Pentecostal churches have turned their numerical ascendancy into political influence. Two of Nigeria's four presidents since 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan, were Pentecostals, and although the current president, Muhammadu Buhari, is Muslim, his administration contains several prominent Pentecostals. Obadare sees Pentecostals as a force for stability but not democracy, as pastors typically use their pulpits to legitimate a corrupt and ineffectual elite. One consequence, he worries, has been growing Christian-Muslim polarization, as the Pentecostal churches have proved less accommodating of Muslims than have the establishment Christian churches.

*African Exodus: Migration and the Future of Europe*

BY ASFA-WOSSEN ASSERATE.  
TRANSLATED BY PETER LEWIS.  
Haus, 2018, 226 pp.

In this short, snappy book, Asserate places the recent surge in flows of migrants from Africa to Europe in the context of the centuries-long relationship between the two continents. Africans, he says, are trying to escape their dysfunctional home countries. Conflict, bad governance, and stagnant economies leave many Africans with such dismal prospects that they are willing to attempt the perilous journey. Asserate does not believe that it is possible to stop them—or ethical to try. In his view, the only practical solution is the economic and political development of Africa, to which Europe should now dedicate itself. Since he blames the legacy of European colonialism for much of what ails African countries, he believes the continent has a moral obligation to make a massive effort on behalf of Africans. Even if one does not agree with his normative argument, Asserate is clearly right that in the long run, the only way to moderate illegal migrant flows from Africa is to improve the welfare of Africans at home.

*Global Governance and Local Peace: Accountability and Performance in International Peacebuilding*

BY SUSANNA P. CAMPBELL.  
Cambridge University Press, 2018,  
306 pp.

Campbell examines the factors that lead to the success or failure of international peace-building operations. The most important one, she argues, is how accountable peacemakers are to local people. Unfortunately, she reports, most peace workers answer primarily to the Western headquarters of the international agencies for which they work. Rather than developing strong relationships with locals who can inform them about conditions on the ground and help them get things done, they spend most of their time fulfilling reporting requirements and other bureaucratic tasks to keep their administrators happy. The book is steeped in the language of public administration and organizational theory, and Campbell is cautious in her conclusions, so it is easy to miss how devastating her account really is. She shows that the core organizational logic of peace-building agencies undermines their ability to help the people they are trying to reach. 🌍

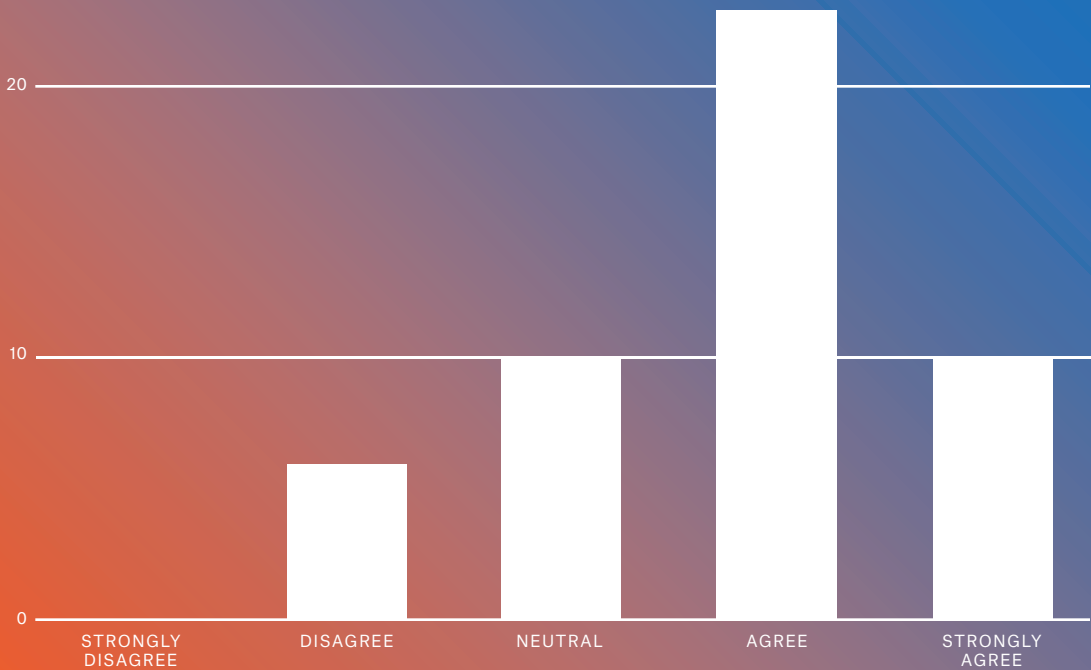
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# Does Technology Favor Tyranny?

## Foreign Affairs Brain Trust

We asked dozens of experts whether they agreed or disagreed that technological change today is strengthening authoritarianism relative to democracy. The results from those who responded are below.



NEUTRAL, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 4

### Theda Skocpol

Victor S. Thomas Professor of Government and Sociology, Harvard University

“Technologies as such are always neutral. Communications technology breakthroughs always affect politics but can usually cut both ways depending on institutions, power relationships, and events.”



STRONGLY AGREE, CONFIDENCE LEVEL 8

### Mark Warner

Democratic U.S. Senator From Virginia and Vice Chair of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee

“For the better part of two decades, the United States embraced the Internet revolution as inherently democratizing, ignoring the warning signs outside the bubble of Western democracies.”

→ See the full responses at [ForeignAffairs.com/TechnologyandTyranny](https://ForeignAffairs.com/TechnologyandTyranny)



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(yán)

1. speech, 2. speak, say.

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