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JULY/AUGUST 2015

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Hi, Robot Work and Life in the Age of Automation



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JULY/AUGUST 2015 • VOLUME 94 • NUMBER 4 • HI, ROBOT



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Educated at Oxford, **MARTIN WOLF** began his career as an economist at the World Bank, where he specialized in East Africa and India. After a stint at a think tank in the 1980s, Wolf joined the *Financial Times*, eventually rising to become its chief economics commentator. Awarded the title of Commander of the Order of the British Empire for his contributions to financial journalism, Wolf argues in “Same as It Ever Was” (page 15) that today’s technological revolution is vastly overhyped when compared with its predecessors.



AYAAN HIRSI ALI was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, and grew up in Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. In 1992, she received asylum in the Netherlands to escape an arranged marriage. There, she renounced her Muslim faith, won a seat in the Dutch parliament, and embarked on a career as a public intellectual. Now a fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School, in “A Problem From Heaven” (page 36), Hirsi Ali calls on the U.S. government to back reform-minded Muslims.



As an undergraduate at Yale in the 1980s, **WAYNE PACELLE** demonstrated against stores selling furs and pressed the dining halls to introduce vegan meals. He eventually took that agenda nationwide, first at the Fund for Animals and then at the Humane Society of the United States, becoming the head of that organization in 2004. During his tenure, Pacelle has worked to pass more than 500 state animal welfare statutes and more than 25 federal ones. In “The Long Road to Animal Welfare” (page 65), he draws on that experience to show how activism works in practice.



As a jock in high school, **JILL LEPORE** was not enthused by the prospect of college, going only because she got a military scholarship. A year into Tufts University, she had a change of heart, dropped her math courses, quit the military, and started writing—a course that eventually led her to become one of the United States’ most prominent scholar-intellectuals. Now a professor of history at Harvard and a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, Lepore is the author of numerous books and essays on everything from colonial military affairs to Wonder Woman. In “The Facts of Life” (page 144), she explores the global aspects of sex education.



HI, ROBOT

From the cotton gin and the steam engine to electricity and the transistor, new technologies have been revolutionizing the world for centuries, transforming life and labor and enabling an extraordinary flourishing of human development. Now some argue that advances in automation and artificial intelligence are causing us to take yet another world-historical leap into the unknown.

But is that really the case? Will the rise of the robots threaten our jobs, our purpose, our very self-definition as humans? At *Foreign Affairs*, we've been intrigued by the discussion but not yet convinced, so for the lead package in this issue, we've pulled together an all-star team of authors to tell us just what's going on and what it all means.

Daniela Rus is one of the world's leading roboticists and director of the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at MIT. She describes what robots are already doing now and what else they will be doing a few years down the road. Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, also at MIT, explore whether automation and robots will progress to the point where humans become as economically obsolete as horses. Martin Wolf, the chief economics commentator at the *Financial Times*, isn't worried; he thinks the impact and significance of today's emerging technologies are vastly overestimated.

Illah Nourbakhsh, director of the Community Robotics, Education and Technology Empowerment Lab (CREATE Lab) at Carnegie Mellon University,

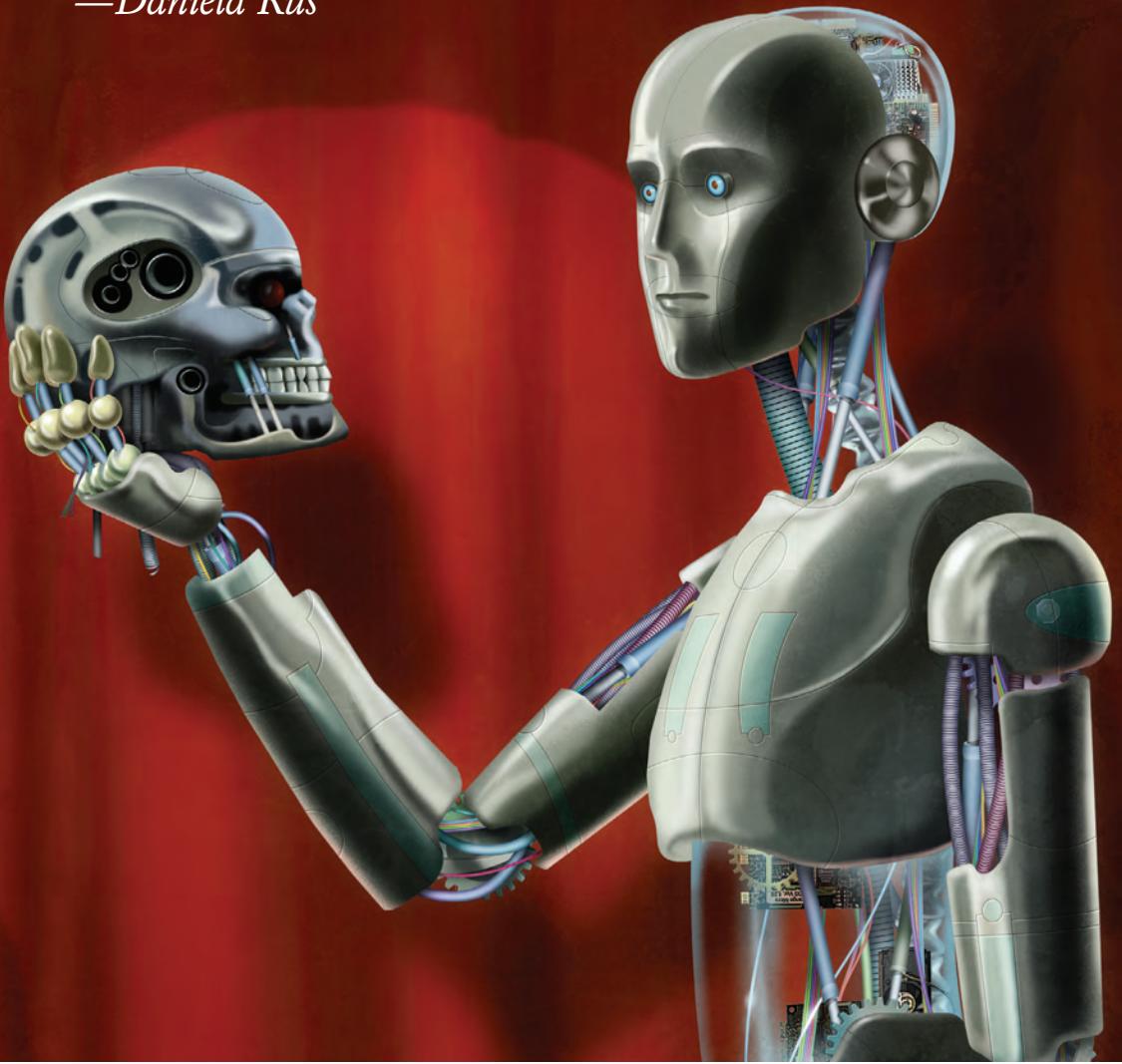
explores the regulatory, legal, and existential challenges that an increasing reliance on robots will soon raise. And the European experts Nicolas Colin and Bruno Palier discuss the future of social policy in the digital age, arguing that a shift to the "flexicurity" at the heart of the Nordic model is more necessary than ever before.

Something is clearly happening here, but we don't know what it means. And by the time we do, authors and editors might well have been replaced by algorithms along with everybody else. Until then, we offer these dispatches from the frontlines of the robotics revolution.

—Gideon Rose, *Editor*

Computers have already achieved
ubiquity in human society.
In the future, robots will, too.

—Daniela Rus



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The Robots Are Coming

How Technological Breakthroughs Will Transform Everyday Life

Daniela Rus

Robots have the potential to greatly improve the quality of our lives at home, at work, and at play. Customized robots working alongside people will create new jobs, improve the quality of existing jobs, and give people more time to focus on what they find interesting, important, and exciting. Commuting to work in driverless cars will allow people to read, reply to e-mails, watch videos, and even nap. After dropping off one passenger, a driverless car will pick up its next rider, coordinating with the other self-driving cars in a system designed to minimize traffic and wait times—and all the while driving more safely and efficiently than humans.

Yet the objective of robotics is not to replace humans by mechanizing and automating tasks; it is to find ways for machines to assist and collaborate with humans more effectively. Robots are better than humans at crunching numbers, lifting heavy objects, and, in certain contexts, moving with precision.

DANIELA RUS is Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Director of the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Humans are better than robots at abstraction, generalization, and creative thinking, thanks to their ability to reason, draw from prior experience, and imagine. By working together, robots and humans can augment and complement each other's skills.

Still, there are significant gaps between where robots are today and the promise of a future era of "pervasive robotics," when robots will be integrated into the fabric of daily life, becoming as common as computers and smartphones are today, performing many specialized tasks, and often operating side by side with humans. Current research aims to improve the way robots are made, how they move themselves and manipulate objects, how they reason, how they perceive their environments, and how they cooperate with one another and with humans.

Creating a world of pervasive, customized robots is a major challenge, but its scope is not unlike that of the problem computer scientists faced nearly three decades ago, when they dreamed of a world where computers would become integral parts of human societies. In the words of Mark Weiser, a chief scientist at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center in the 1990s, who is considered the father of so-called ubiquitous computing: "The most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it." Computers have already achieved that kind of ubiquity. In the future, robots will, too.

YOUR OWN PERSONAL ROBOT

A robot's capabilities are defined by what its body can do and what its brain can compute and control. Today's robots can perform basic locomotion on the

ground, in the air, and in the water. They can recognize objects, map new environments, perform “pick-and-place” operations on an assembly line, imitate simple human motions, acquire simple skills, and even act in coordination with other robots and human partners. One place where these skills are on display is at the annual RoboCup, a robot soccer World Cup, during which teams of robots coordinate to dribble, pass, shoot, and score goals.

This range of functionality has been made possible by innovations in robot design and advances in the algorithms that guide robot perception, reasoning, control, and coordination. Robotics has benefited enormously from progress in many areas: computation, data storage, the scale and performance of the Internet, wireless communication, electronics, and design and manufacturing tools. The costs of hardware have dropped even as the electromechanical components used in robotic devices have become more reliable and the knowledge base available to intelligent machines has grown thanks to the Internet. It has become possible to imagine the leap from the personal computer to the personal robot.

In recent years, the promise of robotics has been particularly visible in the transportation sector. Many major car manufacturers have announced plans to build self-driving cars and predict that they will be able to sell them to consumers by 2020. Google’s self-driving cars have now driven close to two million miles with only 11 minor accidents, most of them caused by human error; the company will begin testing the cars on public roads this summer. Several universities around the world have also launched self-driving-car projects. Meanwhile, California, Florida, Michigan, and

Nevada have all passed legislation to allow autonomous cars on their roads, and many other state legislatures in the United States are considering such measures. Recently, an annual report by Singapore’s Land Transportation Authority predicted that “shared autonomous driving”—fleets of self-driving cars providing customized transportation—could reduce the number of cars on the road by around 80 percent, decreasing travel times and pollution.

Self-driving cars would not merely represent a private luxury: as the cost of producing and maintaining them falls, their spread could greatly improve public transportation. Imagine a mass transit system with two layers: a network of large vehicles, such as trains and buses, that would handle long-distance trips and complementary fleets of small self-driving cars that would offer short, customized rides, picking up passengers at major hubs and also responding to individual requests for rides from almost anywhere. In 2014, the Future Urban Mobility project, which is part of the Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology, invited the public to ride on self-driving buggies that resembled golf carts at the Chinese Garden in Singapore, a park with winding alleys surrounded by trees, benches, and strolling people. More than 500 people took part. The robotic vehicles stayed on the paths, avoided pedestrians, and brought their passengers to their selected destinations.

So far, that level of autonomous-driving performance has been possible only in low-speed, low-complexity environments. Robotic vehicles cannot yet handle all the complexities of driving “in the wild,” such as inclement weather and complex traffic situations. These issues are the focus of ongoing research.

AS YOU LIKE IT

The broad adoption of robots will require a natural integration of intelligent machines into the human world rather than an integration of humans into the machines' world. Despite recent significant progress toward that goal, problems remain in three important areas. It still takes too much time to make new robots, today's robots are still quite limited in their ability to perceive and reason about their surroundings, and robotic communication is still quite brittle.

Many different types of robots are available today, but they all take a great deal of time to produce. Today's robot bodies are difficult to adapt or extend, and thus robots still have limited capabilities and limited applications. Rapidly fabricating new robots, add-on modules, fixtures, and specialized tools is not a real option, as the process of design, assembly, and programming is long and cumbersome. What's needed are design and fabrication tools that will speed up the customized manufacturing of robots. I belong to a team of researchers from Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania currently working to create a "robot compiler" that could take a particular specification—for example, "I want a robot to tidy up the room"—and compute a robot design, a fabrication plan, and a custom programming environment for using the robot.

Better-customized robots would help automate a wide range of tasks. Consider manufacturing. Currently, the use of automation in factories is not uniform across all industries. The car industry automates approximately 80 percent of its assembly processes, which consist of many repeatable actions. In contrast, only around ten percent of the assembly

processes for electronics, such as cell phones, are automated, because such products change frequently and are highly customized. Tailor-made robots could help close this gap by reducing setup times for automation in industries that rely on customization and whose products have short life cycles. Specialized robots would know where things are stored, how to put things together, how to interact with people, how to transport parts from one place to another, how to pack things, and how to reconfigure an assembly line. In a factory equipped with such robots, human workers would still be in control, and robots would assist them.

DOES NOT COMPUTE

A second challenge involved in integrating robots into everyday life is the need to increase their reasoning abilities. Today's robots can perform only limited reasoning due to the fact that their computations are carefully specified. Everything a robot does is spelled out with simple instructions, and the scope of the robot's reasoning is entirely contained in its program. Furthermore, a robot's perception of its environment through its sensors is quite limited. Tasks that humans take for granted—for example, answering the question, "Have I been here before?"—are extremely difficult for robots. Robots use sensors such as cameras and scanners to record the features of the places they visit. But it is hard for a machine to differentiate between features that belong to a scene it has already observed and features of a new scene that happens to contain some of the same objects. In general, robots collect too much low-level data. Current research on machine learning is focused



Robot, you can drive my car: Google's self-driving cars, May 2014

on developing algorithms that can help extract the information that will be useful to a robot from large data sets. Such algorithms will help a robot summarize its history and thus significantly reduce, for example, the number of images it requires to answer that question, “Have I been here before?”

Robots also cannot cope with unexpected situations. If a robot encounters circumstances that it has not been programmed to handle or that fall outside the scope of its capabilities, it enters an “error” state and stops operating. Often, the robot cannot communicate the cause of the error. Robots need to learn how to adjust their programs so as to adapt to their surroundings and interact more easily with people, their environments, and other machines.

Today, everyone with Internet access—including robots—can easily obtain incredible amounts of information. Robots could take advantage of this information to make better decisions.

For example, a dog-walking robot could find weather reports online and then consult its own stored data to determine the ideal length of a walk and the optimal route: perhaps a short walk if it’s hot or raining, or a long walk to a nearby park where other dog walkers tend to congregate if it’s pleasant out.

ROBOT’S LITTLE HELPER

The integration of robots into everyday life will also require more reliable communication between robots and between robots and humans. Despite advances in wireless technology, impediments still hamper robot-to-robot communication. It remains difficult to model or predict how well robots will be able to communicate in any given environment. Moreover, methods of controlling robots that rely on current communications technologies are hindered by noise—extraneous signals and data that make it hard to send and receive commands. Robots need more

reliable approaches to communication that would guarantee the bandwidth they need, when they need it. One promising new approach to this problem involves measuring the quality of communication around a robot locally instead of trying to predict it using models.

Communication between robots and people is also currently quite limited. Although audio sensors and speech-recognition software allow robots to understand and respond to basic spoken commands (“Move to the door”), such interactions are both narrow and shallow in terms of scope and vocabulary. More extensive human-robot communication would enable robots to ask humans for help. It turns out that when a robot is performing a task, even a tiny amount of human intervention completely changes the way the robot deals with a problem and greatly empowers the machine to do more. My research group at MIT’s Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory recently developed a system that allowed groups of robots to assemble IKEA furniture. The robots worked together as long as the parts needed for the assembly were within reach. When a part, such as a table leg, was out of reach, a robot could recognize the problem and ask humans to hand it the part using English-language sentences. After receiving the part, the robots were able to resume the assembly task. A robot’s ability to understand error and enlist human help represents a step toward more synergistic collaborations between humans and robots.

DOMO ARIGATO, MR. ROBOTO

Current research in robotics is pushing the boundaries of what robots can do and aiming for better solutions for

making them, controlling them, and increasing their ability to reason, coordinate, and collaborate. Meeting these challenges will bring the vision of pervasive robotics closer to reality.

In a robot-rich world, people may wake up in the morning and send personal-shopping robots to the supermarket to bring back fruit and milk for breakfast. Once there, the robots may encounter people who are there to do their own shopping but who traveled to the store in self-driving cars and who are using self-driving shopping carts that take them directly to the items they want and then provide information on the freshness, provenance, and nutritional value of the goods—and that can also help visually impaired shoppers navigate the store safely. In a retail environment shaped by pervasive robotics, people will supervise and support robots while offering customers advice and service with a human touch. In turn, robots will support people by automating some physically difficult or tedious jobs: stocking shelves, cleaning windows, sweeping sidewalks, delivering orders to customers.

Personal computers, wireless technology, smartphones, and easy-to-download apps have already democratized access to information and computation and transformed the way people live and work. In the years to come, robots will extend this digital revolution further into the physical realm and deeper into everyday life, with consequences that will be equally profound. 🌐

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Patrick Meier, PhD
Author, "Digital Humanitarians"



Read Patrick's story

Will Humans Go the Way of Horses?

Labor in the Second Machine Age

Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee

The debate over what technology does to work, jobs, and wages is as old as the industrial era itself. In the second decade of the nineteenth century, a group of English textile workers called the Luddites protested the introduction of spinning frames and power looms, machines of the nascent Industrial Revolution that threatened to leave them without jobs. Since then, each new burst of technological progress has brought with it another wave of concern about a possible mass displacement of labor.

On one side of the debate are those who believe that new technologies are likely to replace workers. Karl Marx, writing during the age of steam, described the automation of the proletariat as a

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They are the authors of *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*.

necessary feature of capitalism. In 1930, after electrification and the internal combustion engine had taken off, John Maynard Keynes predicted that such innovations would lead to an increase in material prosperity but also to widespread “technological unemployment.” At the dawn of the computer era, in 1964, a group of scientists and social theorists sent an open letter to U.S. President Lyndon Johnson warning that cybernation “results in a system of almost unlimited productive capacity, which requires progressively less human labor.” Recently, we and others have argued that as digital technologies race ahead, they have the potential to leave many workers behind.

On the other side are those who say that workers will be just fine. They have history on their side: real wages and the number of jobs have increased relatively steadily throughout the industrialized world since the middle of the nineteenth century, even as technology advanced like never before. A 1987 National Academy of Sciences report explained why:

By reducing the costs of production and thereby lowering the price of a particular good in a competitive market, technological change frequently leads to increases in output demand: greater output demand results in increased production, which requires more labor.

This view has gained enough traction in mainstream economics that the contrary belief—that technological progress might reduce human employment—has been dismissed as the “lump of labor fallacy.” It’s a fallacy, the argument goes, because there is no static “lump of labor,” since the amount of work available to be done can increase without bound.

In 1983, the Nobel Prize–winning economist Wassily Leontief brought the debate into sharp relief through a clever comparison of humans and horses. For many decades, horse labor appeared impervious to technological change. Even as the telegraph supplanted the Pony Express and railroads replaced the stagecoach and the Conestoga wagon, the U.S. equine population grew seemingly without end, increasing sixfold between 1840 and 1900 to more than 21 million horses and mules. The animals were vital not only on farms but also in the country’s rapidly growing urban centers, where they carried goods and people on hackney carriages and horse-drawn omnibuses.

But then, with the introduction and spread of the internal combustion engine, the trend rapidly reversed. As engines found their way into automobiles in the city and tractors in the countryside, horses became largely irrelevant. By 1960, the United States counted just three million horses, a decline of nearly 88 percent in just over half a century. If there had been a debate in the early 1900s about the fate of the horse in the face of new industrial technologies, someone might have formulated a “lump of equine labor fallacy,” based on the animal’s resilience up till then. But the fallacy itself would soon be proved false: once the right technology came along, most horses were doomed as labor.

Is a similar tipping point possible for human labor? Are autonomous vehicles, self-service kiosks, warehouse robots, and supercomputers the harbingers of a wave of technological progress that will finally sweep humans out of the economy? For Leontief, the answer was yes:

“The role of humans as the most important factor of production is bound to diminish in the same way that the role of horses . . . was first diminished and then eliminated.”

But humans, fortunately, are not horses, and Leontief missed a number of important differences between them. Many of these suggest that humans will remain an important part of the economy. Even if human labor becomes far less necessary overall, however, people, unlike horses, can choose to prevent themselves from becoming economically irrelevant.

WHAT HUMANS WANT

The most common reason given for why there is no lump of labor is that human wants are infinite. Indeed, throughout modern history, per capita consumption has steadily risen. As Alfred Marshall put it in his foundational 1890 book, *Principles of Economics*, “Human wants and desires are countless in number and very various in kind.” Ever since Marshall, people have linked unlimited wants to full employment. After all, who else but workers will be able to fulfill all those wants and desires?

However comforting this argument may be, it is also incorrect, because technology can sever the link between infinite desires and full employment. As recent advances suggest, it’s no longer pure science fiction to contemplate completely automated mines, farms, factories, and logistics networks supplying all the food and manufactured goods a population could require. Many service jobs and much knowledge work could also be automated, with everything from order taking to customer support

to payment processing handled by autonomous intelligent systems. Perhaps some innovative humans would still be required in this world to dream up new goods and services to be consumed, but not many. The 2008 animated film *WALL-E* provides a vivid and unsettling vision of just such an economy: most people exist only to consume and to be marketed to, and they have become so obese that they can hardly move under their own power.

As the *WALL-E* dystopia suggests, people's unbounded economic wants are not guarantors of full employment in a world of sufficiently advanced technology. After all, even if humans' demand for transportation grew infinitely—and it has grown enormously in the past century—that would have little effect on the demand for horses. Technological progress, in short, could be capable of decoupling ever-growing consumption and large-scale human employment, just as it did earlier with equine employment.

Unless, of course, we don't want to be served exclusively by robots and artificial intelligence. This represents the biggest barrier to a fully automated economy and the strongest reason that human labor will not disappear anytime soon. We humans are a deeply social species, and the desire for human connection carries over to our economic lives. There's an explicitly interpersonal element in many of the things we spend money on. We come together to appreciate human expression or ability when we attend plays and sporting events. Regulars frequent particular bars and restaurants not only because of the food and drink but also because of the hospitality offered. Coaches and trainers provide motivation that can't be found

in exercise books or videos. Good teachers inspire students to keep learning, and counselors and therapists form bonds with clients that help them heal.

In these cases and many others, human interaction is central to the economic transaction, not incidental to it. Contrary to Marshall's emphasis on the quantity of human needs, it's better to focus on the quality of human needs. Humans have economic wants that can be satisfied only by other humans, and that makes us less likely to go the way of the horse or descend into the world of *WALL-E*.

NOT DEAD YET

But are our interpersonal abilities the only ones that will allow us to stave off economic irrelevance? Over at least the next decade, the answer is almost certainly no. That's because recent technological progress, while moving surprisingly fast, is still not on track to allow robots and artificial intelligence to do everything better than humans can within the next few years. So another reason that humans won't soon go the way of the horse is that humans can do many valuable things that will remain beyond the reach of technology.

When it comes to navigating and shaping the physical world, humans maintain many advantages. We are far more dexterous and nimble than any single piece of machinery, and we are comparatively lightweight and energy efficient. Plus, our senses provide fast and multidimensional feedback that allows precise movement and control. There's no robot anywhere in the world right now, for example, that can sort a bowlful of coins as well as the average child or clear a table as well as a restaurant busboy.



Peak horse: a horse-drawn fire engine, 1914

Our mental advantages might be even greater than our physical ones. While we're clearly now inferior to computers at arithmetic and are getting outpaced in some types of pattern recognition—as evidenced by the triumph of Watson, an artificial-intelligence system created by IBM, over human *Jeopardy!* champions in 2011—we still have vastly better common sense. We're also able to formulate goals and then work out how to achieve them. And although there are impressive examples of digital creativity and innovation, including machine-generated music and scientific hypotheses, humans are still better at coming up with useful new ideas in most domains. This calls to mind a quote attributed to a 1965 NASA report: “Man is the lowest-cost, 150-pound, nonlinear, all-purpose computer system which can be mass-produced by unskilled labor.”

It is extraordinarily difficult to get a clear picture of how broadly and quickly technology will encroach on human territory (and a review of past predictions should deter anyone from trying), but it seems unlikely that hardware, software, robots, and artificial intelligence will be able to take over from human labor within the next decade. It is even less likely that people will stop having economic wants that are explicitly interpersonal or social; these will remain, and they will continue to provide demand for human workers.

But will there be enough demand, especially over the long term, for those two types of human labor: that which must be done by people and that which can't yet be done by machines? There is a real possibility that the answer is no—that human labor will, in aggregate, decline in relevance because of

technological progress, just as horse labor did earlier. If that happens, it will raise the specter that the world may not be able to maintain the industrial era's remarkable trajectory of steadily rising employment prospects and wages for a growing population.

BATTLING THE ROBOTS

The story doesn't end there, however. Having valuable labor to offer is not the only way to remain economically important; having capital to invest or spend also ensures continued relevance. A critical difference between people and horses is that humans can own capital, whereas horses cannot. People, in fact, own all the nongovernmental wealth in capitalist societies. All shares in firms, for example, are owned directly or indirectly (via vehicles such as retirement funds) by individuals. That means that humans can choose to redistribute that capital in order to replace income lost to robots.

The challenge here is that capital ownership appears to have always been highly uneven and has become increasingly skewed recently. As the economist Thomas Piketty writes in *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*, "In all known societies, at all times, the least wealthy half of the population own virtually nothing (generally little more than 5 percent of total wealth)." Increases over the past few years in the value of stocks, urban real estate, and several other forms of capital have benefited an incredibly small group. Credit Suisse has estimated that in 2014, the richest one percent held 48 percent of the world's total wealth. In part, this increased unevenness reflects growing inequality in wages and other forms of

compensation. Automation and digitization are less likely to replace all forms of labor than to rearrange, perhaps radically, the rewards for skills, talent, and luck. It is not hard to see how this would lead to an even greater concentration of wealth and, with it, power.

It's possible, however, to imagine a "robot dividend" that created more widespread ownership of robots and similar technologies, or at least a portion of the financial benefits they generated. The state of Alaska provides a possible template: courtesy of the Alaska Permanent Fund, which was established in 1976, the great majority of the state's residents receive a non-trivial amount of capital income every year. A portion of the state's oil revenues is deposited into the fund, and each October, a dividend from it is given to each eligible resident. In 2014, this dividend was \$1,884.

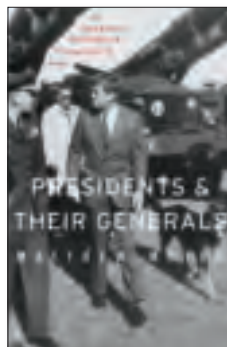
It's important to note that the amendment to the Alaska state constitution establishing the Permanent Fund passed democratically, by a margin of two to one. That Alaskans chose to give themselves a bonus highlights another critical difference between humans and horses: in many countries today, humans can vote. In other words, people can influence economic outcomes, such as wages and incomes, through the democratic process. This can happen directly, through votes on amendments and referendums, or indirectly, through legislation passed by elected representatives. It is voters, not markets, who are picking the minimum wage, determining the legality of sharing-economy companies such as Uber and Airbnb, and settling many other economic issues.

In the future, it's not unreasonable to expect people to vote for policies that will help them avoid the economic fate of the horse. For example, legislatures might pass restrictions on certain types of job-destroying technologies. Although there appear to be few such explicit limits to date, already there are nascent efforts to draft legislation related to autonomous cars and other technologies with relatively direct implications for labor. And in every democracy, there are candidates for office who espouse a desire to help workers. There is no reason they will not continue to act on those impulses.

If and when a large enough group of people become sufficiently displeased with their economic prospects and feel that their government is indifferent or actively hostile to them, a final important difference between horses and humans will become clear: humans can revolt. Recent years have seen explicitly economic uprisings, including both the relatively peaceful Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States and the sporadically violent (and occasionally fatal) anti-austerity protests in Greece.

Over a longer time span, history provides no shortage of examples of uprisings motivated in whole or in part by workers' concerns. Democracy is no guarantee against such uprisings, nor is the fact that the material conditions of life generally improve over time for most people in most countries. The horse population accepted its economic irrelevance with not a murmur of protest (as far as we can tell). If the same happens to human workers, they are unlikely to be so meek.

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A LABOR-LIGHT ECONOMY

Current discussions of economic policy focus on how to improve workers' job and wage prospects. That makes sense, since robots and artificial intelligence are not on the brink of learning how to do every job. The best way to help workers in today's climate is to equip them with valuable skills and to encourage overall economic growth. Governments should therefore pass education and immigration reform, enact policies to stimulate entrepreneurship, and increase investment in infrastructure and basic research. They might also use some combination of awards, competitions, and financial incentives to encourage technology innovators to develop solutions that explicitly encourage and support human labor rather than primarily substituting for it.

That said, it is more than a bit blithe to assume that human labor will forever remain the most important factor of production. As Leontief pointed out, technological progress can change that, just as it did for the horse. If and when this happens, humans' other differences from horses will become critical. Once many, even most, people see their income from labor recede, their views on the ownership of capital and the distribution of its proceeds, as expressed through votes or revolts, will matter even more than they do now.

It's time to start discussing what kind of society we should construct around a labor-light economy. How should the abundance of such an economy be shared? How can the tendency of modern capitalism to produce high levels of inequality be muted while preserving its ability to allocate

resources efficiently and reward initiative and effort? What do fulfilling lives and healthy communities look like when they no longer center on industrial-era conceptions of work? How should education, the social safety net, taxation, and other important elements of civic society be rethought?

The history of horse labor offers no answers to these questions. Nor will answers come from the machines themselves, no matter how clever they become. They will come instead from the goals we set for the technologically sophisticated societies and economies we are creating and the values embedded in them. 🌍

Same as It Ever Was

Why the Techno-optimists Are Wrong

Martin Wolf

Belief in “the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us,” as F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in *The Great Gatsby*, is a characteristic American trait. But hope in a better future is not uniquely American, even if it has long been a more potent secular faith in the United States than elsewhere. The belief has older roots. It was the product of a shift in the temporal location of the golden age from a long-lost past to an ever-brighter future.

That shift was conceived and realized with the Enlightenment and then the Industrial Revolution. As human beings gained ever-greater control of the forces of nature and their economies became ever more productive, they started to hope for lives more like those of the gods their ancestors had imagined.

People might never be immortal, but their lives would be healthy and long. People might never move instantaneously, but they could transport themselves and their possessions swiftly and cheaply across great distances. People might never live on Mount Olympus, but they could enjoy a temperate climate, 24-hour lighting, and abundant food. People

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might never speak mind to mind, but they could communicate with as many others as they desired, anywhere on the planet. People might never enjoy infinite wisdom, but they could gain immediate access to the knowledge accumulated over millennia.

All of this has already happened in the world’s richest countries. It is what the people of the rest of the world hope still to enjoy.

Is a yet more orgiastic future beckoning? Today’s Gatsbys have no doubt that the answer is yes: humanity stands on the verge of breakthroughs in information technology, robotics, and artificial intelligence that will dwarf what has been achieved in the past two centuries. Human beings will be able to live still more like gods because they are about to create machines like gods: not just strong and swift but also supremely intelligent and even self-creating.

Yet this is the optimistic version. Since Mary Shelley created the cautionary tale of Frankenstein, the idea of intelligent machines has also frightened us. Many duly point to great dangers, including those of soaring unemployment and inequality.

But are we likely to experience such profound changes over the next decade or two? The answer is no.

SMALL CHANGE

In reality, the pace of economic and social transformation has slowed in recent decades, not accelerated. This is most clearly shown in the rate of growth of output per worker. The economist Robert Gordon, doyen of the skeptics, has noted that the average growth of U.S. output per worker was 2.3 percent a year between 1891 and 1972. Thereafter, it only matched that

rate briefly, between 1996 and 2004. It was just 1.4 percent a year between 1972 and 1996 and 1.3 percent between 2004 and 2012.

On the basis of these data, the age of rapid productivity growth in the world's frontier economy is firmly in the past, with only a brief upward blip when the Internet, e-mail, and e-commerce made their initial impact.

Those whom Gordon calls "techno-optimists"—Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for example—respond that the GDP statistics omit the enormous unmeasured value provided by the free entertainment and information available on the Internet. They emphasize the plethora of cheap or free services (Skype, Wikipedia), the scale of do-it-yourself entertainment (Facebook), and the failure to account fully for all the new products and services. Techno-optimists point out that before June 2007, an iPhone was out of reach for even the richest man on earth. Its price was infinite. The fall from an infinite to a definite price is not reflected in the price indexes. Moreover, say the techno-optimists, the "consumer surplus" in digital products and services—the difference between the price and the value to consumers—is huge. Finally, they argue, measures of GDP underestimate investment in intangible assets.

These points are correct. But they are nothing new: all of this has repeatedly been true since the nineteenth century. Indeed, past innovations generated vastly greater unmeasured value than the relatively trivial innovations of today. Just consider the shift from a world without telephones to one with them, or from a world of oil lamps to one with electric

light. Next to that, who cares about Facebook or the iPad? Indeed, who really cares about the Internet when one considers clean water and flushing toilets?

Over the past two centuries, historic breakthroughs have been responsible for generating huge unmeasured value. The motor vehicle eliminated vast quantities of manure from urban streets. The refrigerator prevented food from becoming contaminated. Clean running water and vaccines delivered drastic declines in child mortality rates. The introduction of running water, gas and electric cookers, vacuums, and washing machines helped liberate women from domestic labor. The telephone removed obstacles to speedy contact with the police, fire brigades, and ambulance services. The discovery of electric light eliminated forced idleness. Central heating and air conditioning ended discomfort. The introduction of the railroad, the steam ship, the motor car, and the airplane annihilated distance.

The radio, the gramophone, and the television alone did far more to revolutionize home entertainment than the technologies of the past two decades have. Yet these were but a tiny fraction of the cornucopia of innovation that owed its origin to the so-called general-purpose technologies—industrialized chemistry, electricity, and the internal combustion engine—introduced by what is considered the Second Industrial Revolution, which occurred between the 1870s and the early twentieth century. The reason we are impressed by the relatively paltry innovations of our own time is that we take for granted the innovations of the past.

Gordon also notes how concentrated the period of great breakthroughs was.

As he writes:

Electric light and a workable internal combustion engine were invented in a three-month period in late 1879. The number of municipal water-works providing fresh running water to urban homes multiplied tenfold between 1870 and 1900. The telephone, phonograph, and motion pictures were all invented in the 1880s.

And the benefits of these mainstays of the Second Industrial Revolution, Gordon points out, “included subsidiary and complementary inventions, from elevators, electric machinery and consumer appliances; to the motorcar, truck, and airplane; to highways, suburbs, and supermarkets; to sewers to carry the wastewater away.”

PAST, NOT PROLOGUE

The technologies introduced in the late nineteenth century did more than cause three generations of relatively high productivity growth. They did more, too, than generate huge unmeasured economic and social value. They also brought with them unparalleled social and economic changes. An ancient Roman would have understood the way of life of the United States of 1840 fairly well. He would have found that of 1940 beyond his imagination.

Among the most important of these broader changes were urbanization and the huge jumps in life expectancy and standards of education. The United States was 75 percent rural in the 1870s. By the mid-twentieth century, it was 64 percent urban. Life expectancy rose twice as fast in the first half of the twentieth century as in the second half. The collapse in child mortality is surely the

single most beneficial social change of the past two centuries. It is not only a great good in itself; it also liberated women from the burden, trauma, and danger of repeated frequent pregnancies. The jump in high school graduation rates—from less than ten percent of young people in 1900 to roughly 80 percent by 1970—was a central driver of twentieth-century economic growth.

All these changes were also, by their nature, one-offs. This is also true of the more recent shift of women entering the labor force. It has happened. It cannot be repeated.

Yet there is something else of compelling importance in the contrast between the breakthroughs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those of the second half of the twentieth and the early twenty-first century. The former were vastly broader, affecting energy; transportation; sanitation; food production, distribution, and processing; entertainment; and, not least, entire patterns of habitation. Yes, computers, mobile telecommunications, and the Internet are of great significance. Yet it is also essential to remember what has not changed to any fundamental degree. Transportation technologies and speeds are essentially the same as they were half a century ago. The dominant source of commercial energy remains the burning of fossil fuels—introduced with coal and steam in the First Industrial Revolution, of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—and even nuclear power is now an elderly technology. Although fracking is noteworthy, it does not compare with the opening of the petroleum age in the late nineteenth century.

The only recent connections between homes and the outside world are satellite

dishes and broadband. Neither is close to being as important as clean water, sewerage, gas, electricity, and the telephone. The great breakthroughs in health—clean water, sewerage, refrigeration, packaging, vaccinations, and antibiotics—are also all long established.

THE FUTURE'S NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE

The so-called Third Industrial Revolution—of the computer, the Internet, and e-commerce—is also itself quite old. It has already produced many changes. The armies of clerks who used to record all transactions have long since disappeared, replaced by computers; more recently, so have secretaries. E-mail has long since replaced letters. Even the Internet and the technologies that allow it to be searched with ease are now 15 years old, or even older, as is the e-commerce they enabled.

Yet the impact of all of this on measured productivity has been modest. The economic historian Paul David famously argued in 1989 that one should remember how long it took for industrial processes to adapt to electricity. But the computer itself is more than half a century old, and it is now a quarter of a century since David made that point. Yet except for the upward blip between 1996 and 2004, we are still—to adapt the Nobel laureate Robert Solow's celebrated words of 1987—seeing the information technology age “everywhere but in the productivity statistics.”

Meanwhile, other, more recent general-purpose technologies—biotechnology and nanotechnology, most notably—have so far made little impact, either economically or more widely.

The disappointing nature of recent growth is also the theme of an influential

little book, *The Great Stagnation*, by the economist Tyler Cowen, which is subtitled *How America Ate All the Low-Hanging Fruit of Modern History, Got Sick, and Will (Eventually) Feel Better*. As Cowen writes:

The American economy has enjoyed . . . low-hanging fruit since at least the seventeenth century, whether it be free land, . . . immigrant labor, or powerful new technologies. Yet during the last 40 years, that low-hanging fruit started disappearing, and we started pretending it was still there. We have failed to recognise that we are at a technological plateau and the trees are more bare than we would like to think. That's it. That is what has gone wrong.

In considering the disappointing impact of recent innovations, it is important to note that the world's economies are vastly bigger than they used to be. Achieving a two percent economy-wide annual rise in labor productivity may simply be a much bigger challenge than it was in the past.

More important, the share of total output of the sectors with the fastest growth in productivity tends to decline over time, while the share of the sectors where productivity growth has proved hardest to increase tends to rise. Indeed, it is possible that productivity growth will essentially cease because the economic contribution of the sectors where it is fastest will become vanishingly small. Raising productivity in manufacturing matters far less now that it generates only about an eighth of total U.S. GDP. Raising productivity in caring for the young, the infirm, the helpless, and the elderly is hard, if not impossible.

Yet perhaps paradoxically, recent technological progress might still have



Killer app: vacuuming the den, circa 1950

had some important effects on the economy, and particularly the distribution of income, even if its impact on the size of the economy and overall standards of living has been relatively modest. The information age coincided with—and must, to some extent, have caused—adverse economic trends: the stagnation of median real incomes, rising inequality of labor income and of the distribution of income between labor and capital, and growing long-term unemployment.

Information technology has turbocharged globalization by making it vastly easier to organize global supply chains, run 24-hour global financial markets, and spread technological know-how. This has helped accelerate the catch-up process of emerging-market economies, notably China. It has also allowed India to emerge as a significant exporter of technological services.

Technology has also brought about the rise of winner-take-all markets, as superstars have come to bestride the globe. Substantial evidence exists, too, of “skills-biased” technological change. As the demand for and rewards offered to highly skilled workers (software programmers, for example) rise, the demand for and rewards offered to those with skills in the middle of the distribution (such as clerks) decline. The value of intellectual property has also risen. In brief, a modest impact on aggregate output and productivity should not be confused with a modest impact across the board.

NO CRYSTAL BALL REQUIRED

The future is, at least to some extent, unknowable. Yet as Gordon suggests, it is not all that unknowable. Back in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many had already realized the changes

that the recent inventions might bring. The nineteenth-century French novelist Jules Verne is a famous example of such foresight.

The optimistic view is that we are now at an inflection point. In their book *The Second Machine Age*, Brynjolfsson and McAfee offer as a parallel the story of the inventor of chess, who asked to be rewarded with one grain of rice on the first square of his board, two on the second, four on the third, and so forth. Manageable in size on the first half of the board, the reward reaches mountainous proportions toward the end of the second. Humanity's reward from Moore's law—the relentless doubling of the number of transistors on a computer chip every two years or so—will, they argue, grow similarly.

These authors predict that we will experience

two of the most amazing events in history: the creation of true machine intelligence and the connection of all humans via a common digital network, transforming the planet's economics. Innovators, entrepreneurs, scientists, tinkerers, and many other types of geeks will take advantage of this cornucopia to build technologies that astonish us, delight us, and work for us.

In the near term, however, the widely mentioned possibilities—medicine, even bigger data, robots, 3-D printing, self-driving cars—look quite insignificant.

The impact of the biomedical advances so far has been remarkably small, with pharmaceutical companies finding it increasingly difficult to register significant breakthroughs. So-called big data is clearly helping decision-making. But many of its products—ultra-high-speed

trading, for example—are either socially and economically irrelevant or, quite possibly, harmful. Three-D printing is a niche activity—fun, but unlikely to revolutionize manufacturing.

Making robots replicate all the complex abilities of human beings has proved extremely difficult. Yes, robots can do well-defined human jobs in well-defined environments. Indeed, it is quite possible that standard factory work will be entirely automated. But the automation of such work is already very far advanced. It is not a revolution in the making. Yes, it is possible to imagine driverless cars. But this would be a far smaller advance than were cars themselves.

Inevitably, uncertainty is pervasive. Many believe that the impact of what is still to come could be huge. The economist Carl Benedikt Frey and the machine-learning expert Michael Osborne, both of Oxford University, have concluded that 47 percent of U.S. jobs are at high risk from automation. In the nineteenth century, they argue, machines replaced artisans and benefited unskilled labor. In the twentieth century, computers replaced middle-income jobs, creating a polarized labor market.

Over the next decades, they write, “most workers in transportation and logistics occupations, together with the bulk of office and administrative support workers, and labour in production occupations, are likely to be substituted by computer capital.” Moreover, they add, “computerisation will mainly substitute for low-skill and low-wage jobs in the near future. By contrast, high-skill and high-wage occupations are the least susceptible to computer capital.” That would exacerbate already existing trends toward greater inequality. But remember that

previous advances also destroyed millions of jobs. The most striking example is, of course, in agriculture, which was the dominant employer of humanity between the dawn of the agricultural revolution and the nineteenth century.

The economists Jeffrey Sachs and Laurence Kotlikoff even argue that the rise in productivity generated by the coming revolution could make future generations worse off in the aggregate. The replacement of workers by robots could shift income from the former to the robots' owners, most of whom will be retired, and the retired are assumed to save less than the young. This would lower investment in human capital because the young could no longer afford to pay for it, and it would lower investment in machines because savings in this economy would fall.

Beyond this, people imagine something far more profound than robots able to do gardening and the like: the "technological singularity," when intelligent machines take off in a rapid cycle of self-improvement, leaving mere human beings behind. In this view, we will someday create machines with the abilities once ascribed to gods. Is that imminent? I have no idea.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

So how might we respond now to these imagined futures?

First, new technologies bring good and bad. We must believe we can shape the good and manage the bad.

Second, we must understand that education is not a magic wand. One reason is that we do not know what skills will be demanded three decades hence. Also, if Frey and Osborne are right, so many low- to middle-skilled jobs are at



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risk that it may already be too late for anybody much over 18 and for many children. Finally, even if the demand for creative, entrepreneurial, and high-level knowledge services were to grow on the required scale, which is highly unlikely, turning us all into the happy few is surely a fantasy.

Third, we will have to reconsider leisure. For a long time, the wealthiest lived a life of leisure at the expense of the toiling masses. The rise of intelligent machines would make it possible for many more people to live such lives without exploiting others. Today's triumphant puritanism finds such idleness abhorrent. Well then, let people enjoy themselves busily. What else is the true goal of the vast increases in prosperity we have created?

Fourth, we may need to redistribute income and wealth on a large scale. Such redistribution could take the form of a basic income for every adult, together with funding for education and training at any stage in a person's life. In this way, the potential for a more enjoyable life might become a reality. The revenue could come from taxes on bads (pollution, for example) or on rents (including land and, above all, intellectual property). Property rights are a social creation. The idea that a small minority should overwhelm benefit from new technologies should be reconsidered. It would be possible, for example, for the state to obtain an automatic share of the income from the intellectual property it protects.

Fifth, if labor shedding does accelerate, it will be essential to ensure that demand for labor expands in tandem with the rise in potential supply. If we succeed, many of the worries over a lack of jobs will fade away. Given the failure to achieve this in the past seven years,

that may well not happen. But we could do better if we wanted to.

The rise of truly intelligent machines, if it comes, would indeed be a big moment in history. It would change many things, including the global economy. Their potential is clear: they would, in principle, make it possible for human beings to live far better lives. Whether they end up doing so depends on how the gains are produced and distributed.

It is also possible that the ultimate result might be a tiny minority of huge winners and a vast number of losers. But such an outcome would be a choice, not a destiny. Techno-feudalism is unnecessary. Above all, technology itself does not dictate the outcomes. Economic and political institutions do. If the ones we have do not give the results we want, we will need to change them.

As for the singularity, it is hard to conceive of such a state of the world. Would a surpassed humanity live happily ever after, tended, like children, by solicitous machines? Would people find meaning in a world in which their intellectual progeny were so vastly superior to themselves?

What we know for the moment is that there is nothing extraordinary in the changes we are now experiencing. We have been here before and on a much larger scale. But the current and prospective rounds of changes still create problems—above all, the combination of weak growth and significant increases in inequality. The challenge, as always, is to manage such changes. The only good reason to be pessimistic is that we are doing such a poor job of this.

The future does not have to be a disappointment. But as Gatsby learned, it can all too easily be just that. 🌐

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The Coming Robot Dystopia

All Too Inhuman

Illah Reza Nourbakhsh

The term “robotics revolution” evokes images of the future: a not-too-distant future, perhaps, but an era surely distinct from the present. In fact, that revolution is already well under way. Today, military robots appear on battlefields, drones fill the skies, driverless cars take to the roads, and “telepresence robots” allow people to manifest themselves halfway around the world from their actual location. But the exciting, even seductive appeal of these technological advances has overshadowed deep, sometimes uncomfortable questions about what increasing human-robot interaction will mean for society.

Robotic technologies that collect, interpret, and respond to massive amounts of real-world data on behalf of governments, corporations, and ordinary people will unquestionably advance human life. But they also have the potential to produce dystopian outcomes. We are hardly on the brink of the nightmarish futures conjured by Hollywood movies such as *The Matrix* or *The Terminator*, in which intelligent machines attempt to enslave or exterminate humans. But those

dark fantasies contain a seed of truth: the robotic future will involve dramatic tradeoffs, some so significant that they could lead to a collective identity crisis over what it means to be human.

This is a familiar warning when it comes to technological innovations of all kinds. But there is a crucial distinction between what’s happening now and the last great breakthrough in robotic technology, when manufacturing automations began to appear on factory floors during the late twentieth century. Back then, clear boundaries separated industrial robots from humans: protective fences isolated robot workspaces, ensuring minimal contact between man and machine, and humans and robots performed wholly distinct tasks without interacting.

Such barriers have been breached, not only in the workplace but also in the wider society: robots now share the formerly human-only commons, and humans will increasingly interact socially with a diverse ecosystem of robots. The trouble is that the rich traditions of moral thought that guide human relationships have no equivalent when it comes to robot-to-human interactions. And of course, robots themselves have no innate drive to avoid ethical transgressions regarding, say, privacy or the protection of human life. How robots interact with people depends to a great deal on how much their creators know or care about such issues, and robot creators tend to be engineers, programmers, and designers with little training in ethics, human rights, privacy, or security. In the United States, hardly any of the academic engineering programs that grant degrees in robotics require the in-depth study of such fields.

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One might hope that political and legal institutions would fill that gap, by steering and constraining the development of robots with the goal of reducing their potential for harm. Ideally, the rapid expansion of robots' roles in society would be matched by equally impressive advances in regulation and in tort and liability law, so that societies could deal with the issues of accountability and responsibility that will inevitably crop up in the coming years. But the pace of change in robotics is far outstripping the ability of regulators and lawmakers to keep up, especially as large corporations pour massive investments into secretive robotics projects that are nearly invisible to government regulators.

There is every reason to believe that this gap between robot capability and robot regulation will widen every year, posing all kinds of quandaries for law and government. Imagine an adaptive robot that lives with and learns from its human owner. Its behavior over time will be a function of its original programming mixed with the influence of its environment and "upbringing." It would be difficult for existing liability laws to apportion responsibility if such a machine caused injury, since its actions would be determined not merely by computer code but also by a deep neural-like network that would have learned from various sources. Who would be to blame? The robot? Its owner? Its creator?

We face a future in which robots will test the boundaries of our ethical and legal frameworks with increasing audacity. There will be no easy solutions to this challenge—but there are some steps we can take to prepare for it.

Research institutes, universities, and the authorities that regulate them must help ensure that people trained to design and build intelligent machines also receive a rigorous education in ethics. And those already on the frontlines of innovation need to concentrate on investing robots with true agency. Human efforts to determine accountability almost always depend on our ability to discover and analyze intention. If we are going to live in a world with machines who act more and more like people and who make ever more "personal" choices, then we should insist that robots also be able to communicate with us about what they know, how they know it, and what they want.

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

For a good illustration of the kinds of quandaries that robots will pose by mixing clear social benefits with frustrating ethical dilemmas, consider the wheelchair. Today, more than 65 million people are confined to wheelchairs, contending with many more obstacles than their walking peers and sitting in a world designed for standing. But thanks to robotics, the next two decades will likely see the end of the wheelchair. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon; the University of California, Berkeley; and a number of other medical robotics laboratories are currently developing exoskeletal robotic legs that can sense objects and maintain balance. With these new tools, elderly people who are too frail to walk will find new footing, knowing that a slip that could result in a dangerous fracture will be far less likely. For visually impaired wheelchair users, exoskeletal robotic legs combined with computerized cameras and sensors will create a human-robot team: the



He'll be back: Arnold Schwarzenegger in Terminator 3 (2003)

person will select a high-level strategy—say, going to a coffee shop—and the legs will take care of the low-level operations of step-by-step navigation and motion.

Such outcomes would represent unqualified gains for humanity. But as robotic prosthetics enter the mainstream, the able-bodied will surely want to take advantage of them, too. These prosthetics will house sensors and cloud-connected software that will exceed the human body's ability to sense, store, and process information. Such combinations are the first step in what futurists such as Hans Moravec and Ray Kurzweil have dubbed "transhumanism": a post-evolutionary transformation that will

replace humans with a hybrid of man and machine. To date, hybrid performance has mostly fallen short of conventional human prowess, but it is merely a matter of time before human-robot couplings greatly outperform purely biological systems.

These superhuman capabilities will not be limited to physical action: computers are increasingly capable of receiving and interpreting brain signals transmitted through electrodes implanted in the head (or arranged around the head) and have even demonstrated rudimentary forms of brain-based machine control. Today, researchers are primarily interested in designing one-way systems, which can read brain signals and then

send them to devices such as prosthetic limbs and cars. But no serious obstacles prevent computer interfaces from sending such signals right back, arming a human brain with a silicon turbo-charge. The ability to perform complex mathematical calculations, produce top-quality language translation, and even deliver virtuosic musical performances might one day depend not solely on innate skill and practice but also on having access to the best brain-computer hybrid architecture.

Such advantages, however, would run headlong into a set of ethical problems: just as a fine line separates genetic engineering from eugenics, so, too, is there no clear distinction between robotics that would lift a human's capabilities to their organic limit and those that would vault a person beyond all known boundaries. Such technologies have the potential to vastly magnify the already-significant gaps in opportunity and achievement that exist between people of different economic means. In the robotic future, today's intense debates about social and economic inequality will seem almost quaint.

EVERY STEP YOU TAKE

Democracy and capitalism rely on a common underlying assumption: if informed individuals acting rationally can express their free will, their individual choices will combine to yield the best outcome for society as a whole. Both systems thus depend on two conditions: people must have access to information and must have the power to make choices. The age of "big data" promises greater access to information of all kinds. But robotic technologies that collect and interpret unprecedented

amounts of data about human behavior actually threaten both access to information and freedom of choice.

A fundamental shift has begun to take place in the relationship between automation technologies and human behavior. Conventional interactions between consumers and firms are based on direct economic exchanges: consumers pay for goods and services, and firms provide them. In the digital economy, however, consumers benefit more and more from seemingly free service, while firms profit not by directly charging consumers but by collecting and then monetizing information about consumers' behavior, often without their knowledge or acquiescence. This kind of basic data mining has become commonplace: think, for example, of how Google analyzes users' search histories and e-mail messages in order to determine what products they might be interested in buying and then uses that information to sell targeted advertising space to other firms.

As more automation technologies begin to appear in the physical world, such processes will become even more invasive. In the coming years, digital advertisements will incorporate pupil-tracking technology—currently in development at Carnegie Mellon and elsewhere—that can monitor the gazes of passersby from meters away. Fitted with sophisticated cameras and software that can estimate a passerby's age and gender and observe facial cues to recognize moods and emotions, interactive billboards will not merely display static advertisements to viewers but also conduct ongoing tests of human responses to particular messages and stimuli, noting the emotional responses and purchasing

behaviors of every subcategory of consumer and compiling massive, aggregated histories of the effect of each advertisement.

This very concept was depicted in the 2002 science-fiction film *Minority Report* during a scene in which the protagonist (played by Tom Cruise) walks through a shopping center where holographic signs and avatars bombard him with marketing messages, calling out his name and offering him products and services specifically tailored to him. Far from suggesting a shopper's paradise, the scene is deeply unsettling, because it captures the way that intelligent machines might someday push humans' buttons so well that we will become the automations, under the sway (and even control) of well-informed, highly social robots that have learned how to influence our behavior.

A less fantastic, shorter-term concern about the effects of robotics and machine learning on human agency and well-being revolves around labor. In *The Second Machine Age*, the economist Erik Brynjolfsson and the information technology expert Andrew McAfee demonstrate that robotic technology is increasingly more efficient than human labor, offering a significant return on investment when performing both routine manual jobs and simple mental tasks. Unlike human workers, whose collective performance doesn't change much over time, robot employees keep getting more efficient. With each advance in robot capability, it becomes harder to justify employing humans, even in jobs that require specialized skills or knowledge. No fundamental barrier exists to stop the onward march of robots into the labor market: almost

every job, blue collar and white collar, will be at risk in an age of exponential progress in computing and robotics. The result might be higher unemployment, which, in turn, could contribute to rising economic inequality, as the wealth created by new technologies benefits fewer and fewer people.

ONE SINGULAR SENSATION

In discussions and debates among technologists, economists, and philosophers, such visions of the future sit alongside a number of less grim prognostications about what the world will look like once artificial intelligence and machine learning have produced the "technological singularity": computer systems that can themselves invent new technologies that surpass those created by their original human creators. The details of such predictions vary depending on the forecaster. Some, such as Moravec, foresee a post-evolutionary successor to *Homo sapiens* that will usher in a new leisure age of comfort and prosperity. Others envision robotic vessels able to "upload" human consciousness. And Kurzweil has suggested that the technological singularity will offer people a kind of software-based immortality.

These long-term views, however, can distract from the more prosaic near-term consequences of the robotics revolution—not the great dislocations caused by a superhuman machine consciousness but rather the small train wrecks that will result from the spread of mediocre robot intelligence. Today, nearly all our social interactions take place with other humans, but we are on the cusp of an era in which machines will become our usual interlocutors.

Our driverless cars will join in our fights with one another over parking spots: when an argument leads to a fender-bender, we will insist to our robot mechanics that they have not repaired our robot cars properly. We will negotiate with robot hostesses for corner tables at restaurants where the food is prepared by robot chefs. Every day, we will encounter robots, from hovering drones to delivery machines to taxis, that will operate seamlessly with and without human remote control; daily life will involve constantly interacting with machines without knowing just how much another person might be involved in the machine's response. There will be no room in such infinitely adjustable human-robot systems for us to treat robots one way and humans another; each style of interaction will infect the other, and the result will be an erosion of our sense of identity.

But the result need not be a robot dystopia. A clear set of decisions about robot design and regulation stand between today's world of human agency and tomorrow's world of robot autonomy. Inventors must begin to combine technological ingenuity with sociological awareness, and governments need to design institutions and processes that will help integrate new, artificial agents into society. Today, all civil engineers are required to study ethics because an incorrectly designed bridge can cause great public harm. Roboticians face this same kind of responsibility today, because their creations are no longer mere academic pursuits. Computer science departments, which typically sponsor robotics research, must follow the lead of civil engineering departments

and require that every degree candidate receive sufficient training in ethics and some exposure to sociology.

But preparing tomorrow's robot creators will help only so much; the clock is ticking, and today's roboticians must begin to think more clearly about how to build intelligent machines able to integrate themselves into societies. An important first step would be to make clear distinctions between robotic appliances and robotic agents. Robots that follow fixed directions and make no autonomous decisions should wear their limited cognitive abilities on their sleeves. This means they should not have faces, and they should not speak or communicate like people or express human emotions: a robotic vacuum cleaner shouldn't tell its owner that it misses him when he's at work. As for robots designed to formulate goals, make decisions, and convince people of their agency, they need to grow up. If roboticians want such machines to have anthropomorphic qualities, then their robots must also accept direct accountability: people must be able to question these machines about their knowledge, their goals, their desires, and their intentions.

Knowledge and transparency, the most valuable goods promised by the dawn of the information age in the last century, will take on even greater importance in the age of automation. Educators and regulators must help robot inventors acquire knowledge, and the inventors, in turn, must pledge to create more transparent artificial beings. 🌐

The Next Safety Net

Social Policy for a Digital Age

Nicolas Colin and Bruno Palier

As advanced economies become more automated and digitized, almost all workers will be affected, but some more than others. Those who have what the economists Maarten Goos and Alan Manning call “lovely jobs” will do fine, creating and managing robots and various digital applications and adding lots of value in service sectors such as finance. Those who have what Goos and Manning call “lousy jobs,” however—in sectors such as manufacturing, retail, delivery, or routine office work—will fare less well, facing low pay, short contracts, precarious employment, and outright job loss. Economic inequality across society as a whole is likely to grow, along with demands for increased state expenditures on social services of various kinds—just as the resources to cover such expenditures are dropping because of lower tax contributions from a smaller work force.

These trends will create a crisis for modern welfare states, the finances of

which will increasingly become unsustainable. But making the situation even worse will be the changing nature of employment. Twentieth-century social insurance systems were set up to address the risks met by people who worked in mass industrialized economies—ones in which there were generally plenty of jobs available for all kinds of workers. The basic assumption behind them was that almost all adults would be steadily employed, earning wages and paying taxes, and the government would step in to help take care of the unemployable—the young, the old, the sick and disabled, and so forth. Social insurance—provided by the state in Europe and by the market in the United States—was aimed at guaranteeing income security for those with stable jobs.

In twenty-first-century digital economies, however, employment is becoming less routine, less steady, and generally less well remunerated. Social policy will therefore have to cover the needs of not just those outside the labor market but even many inside it. Just as technological development is restructuring the economy, in other words, so the welfare state will need to be restructured as well, to adapt itself to the conditions of the day.

THE WORKING LIFE

The future of social policy will depend on how digitization changes the economy and employment. In the shift from the industrial to the digital economy, many jobs and activities are being destroyed, but new wealth is also being created. Robots are replacing humans in many situations, but new technologies and business models are generating a vast array of new goods, services, and applications,

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as well as the jobs necessary to create and operate them.

Technology doesn't only allow old things to be done better and cheaper; it also opens up new potential business models and the means to satisfy previously unidentified needs. Those who can intuit and develop such models and satisfy such needs—entrepreneurs—are the kings of this new world, putting their talents to use in listening to customers, identifying their unmet desires, and creating businesses to serve them. In such efforts, digital technology is a means to an end, making businesses more scalable and customizable and increasing the return on invested capital. Software and robots don't do all the work in such operations; humans continue to play a crucial role. But the nature of the human work involved often changes. Stable, long-term employment in routinized jobs is often no longer necessary; formal and informal collaboration on temporary projects is more the norm.

A clear distinction between job and home life erodes, moreover, as work becomes ad hoc and can be done anywhere, even as the so-called sharing economy marketizes a range of direct peer-to-peer transactions outside standard corporate channels. People who can no longer find stable wage jobs look for ways to make ends meet with gigs offered on the huge platforms of the on-demand economy. As those platforms expand, everybody can sell things (on eBay), rent out a spare room (on Airbnb), perform a task (on Amazon's Mechanical Turk), or share a ride (on BlaBlaCar).

So why the need for a new social policy? Why not just rely on entrepreneurial activity to redeploy the work

force based on the new activities? Partly because various legal and regulatory barriers stand in the way of this brave new world, barriers erected precisely to avoid a situation in which all of life becomes subject to market operations—but also because there are plentiful dangers lurking, as well as opportunities. Innovation is the coin of the digital realm, for example, and innovation is routinely accompanied by failure. The dynamism of the digital economy is matched by its volatility. Few start-ups find a viable business model, let alone a sustained market. New companies emerge out of nowhere but often crash as quickly as they have soared. The entrepreneurs at the head of such operations may reap rich rewards during their brief time in the sun, but the same might not be true for their employees lower down on the food chain, who absorb much of the same risk and churn without partaking of the outside benefits. So in the digital economy, a few lucky individuals will find significant or sustained income and security, while many more unlucky ones will see their employers go bankrupt and have to seek new ways to make ends meet. Many current social benefits, finally—such as pensions—are organized around the old economy, so people transitioning to the new one end up sacrificing a lot.

Unless social policy evolves, therefore, automation and digitization will aggravate inequality and leave many workers worse off than before. With proper innovations, however, new kinds of social policy can reduce inequality, protect workers, and even promote job creation. The digital work force can be enabled and empowered, firms can



Factory of the future: a coffee shop in Detroit, September 2013

benefit from a more productive work force, and government can prove its relevance and effectiveness.

THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY

Some of the challenges future social policy will need to address are traditional, such as health care, old-age pension, and senior care. Others will have a new twist. Affordable housing, for example, is likely to become an increasing concern, as the digitization of the economy concentrates economic activities in major cities, aggravating the scarcity of real estate there. As the economist Enrico Moretti suggests in *The New Geography of Jobs*, the real estate market in Silicon Valley offers a glimpse of how difficult it will become for most people to find decent housing close to the dense innovation clusters where new jobs will be located.

The greatest challenge, however, will be dealing with mass intermittent employment, as most of the work force will have to switch jobs relatively often and face temporary unemployment in between. For many today, the concept of intermittent work carries with it a sense of dread or shame, but that is only because it is approached with attitudinal baggage from the old economy. In the twenty-first century, stable, long-term employment with a single employer will no longer be the norm, and unemployment or underemployment will no longer be a rare and exceptional situation. Intermittence will increasingly prevail, with individuals serving as wage earners, freelancers, entrepreneurs, and jobless at different stages of their working lives.

With twentieth-century social policies, such a career pattern would be

a disaster, because many benefits would be tied to certain kinds of jobs, and workers without those jobs might fall through the gaps in the social safety net. The task of twenty-first-century social policy is to make a virtue of necessity, finding ways to enable workers to have rich, full, and successful lives even as their careers undergo great volatility.

One commonly touted alternative approach to social policy is government provision of a universal, unconditional basic income to all citizens. The idea, promoted, for instance, by the political economist Philippe Van Parijs, is to pay each citizen a basic income that would guarantee access to basic necessary goods. This would guarantee freedom for all, the argument runs, giving people the option of choosing the jobs and lives they truly wanted. Such an approach would be both extremely expensive and insufficient, however. It would ensure that everyone had some money in their pockets at the beginning of each month, but it wouldn't ensure that they would choose or even be able to afford decent health care or housing. Simply adding money to the demand side of the market would not necessarily produce more or better results on the supply side. So while some form of increased assistance may well be a necessary part of the puzzle, a guaranteed basic income does not amount to comprehensive or effective social policy reform.

Another possible approach is government provision not of incomes but of jobs. Public job creation was a major feature of the New Deal in the United States and similar programs elsewhere, and even today, there are some cases in

which it makes sense for public authorities to at least finance the cost of collectively useful jobs—for example, in childcare, eldercare, education, and basic skills training. But governments have neither the means nor the agility to supplant most entrepreneurial activity in the private sector, inventing and deploying new business models that can trigger significant job creation in the digital economy.

Instead of attempting to replace or compete with entrepreneurs, governments should try to support and help them—by eliminating the legal barriers that often stand in the way of creating and growing the businesses that can provide jobs. In many places today, for example, existing fleets of taxis and taxi drivers cannot be replaced by masses of occasional, on-demand drivers working for companies such as Uber or Lyft because of government regulations that artificially limit the supply of transportation services. Modifying or abolishing such regulations could lead to a virtuous circle in which the availability of more drivers would create greater demand for more personalized or affordable services. And a similar process could take place in the health-care sector as well. In an increasingly digitized economy, many routine health-care tasks that under current law require doctors could in fact be accomplished by nurses supported by software and other technology. Regulatory reform could thus simultaneously lower costs, increase employment, and improve health-care outcomes.

The best approach to reforming social policy would be to build on the notion of “flexicurity,” which has long been a popular model in the Nordic

countries (especially Denmark) and the Netherlands. The essence of flexicurity—shorthand for “flexible security”—is separating the provision of benefits from jobs. If the government can guarantee citizens access to health care, housing, education and training, and the like on a universal basis without regard to their employment status, the argument runs, people won’t be so terrified of switching jobs or losing a job. This, in turn, would allow the government to deregulate labor markets, leaving decisions about hiring and firing of employees to be made by firms themselves, according to economic logic. The result is greater efficiency, dynamism, and productivity, all built around workers’ needs rather than on their backs.

Twentieth-century welfare states emerged from the trauma of the Great Depression, when it became clear that cushioning mass publics from some of the harsher blows of unfettered markets was necessary to ensure capitalism’s efficiency and its broader democratic legitimacy. Flexicurity approaches take matters a step further, embodying a more social democratic notion that states and markets can and should work together to achieve a greater public good that marries a healthy economy with a healthy society. In this view, government social policy doesn’t just compensate for occasional market failures; it also works alongside markets to help sustain a flexible, well-trained, highly productive work force. By assuming public responsibility for the mitigation of certain basic kinds of risk—by dealing with health care, say, not at the level of an individual or a company but rather at the level of society as a

whole—such an activist approach actually fosters a more fluid and entrepreneurial economy, with all the benefits that flow from that. In the end, therefore, the best recipe for social policy in a fast-paced, highly competitive digital economy may ironically be one that involves more state activism than digital entrepreneurs themselves usually favor—but activism that is more sensitive to and supportive of market mechanisms than statisticians have often been in the past. 🌐

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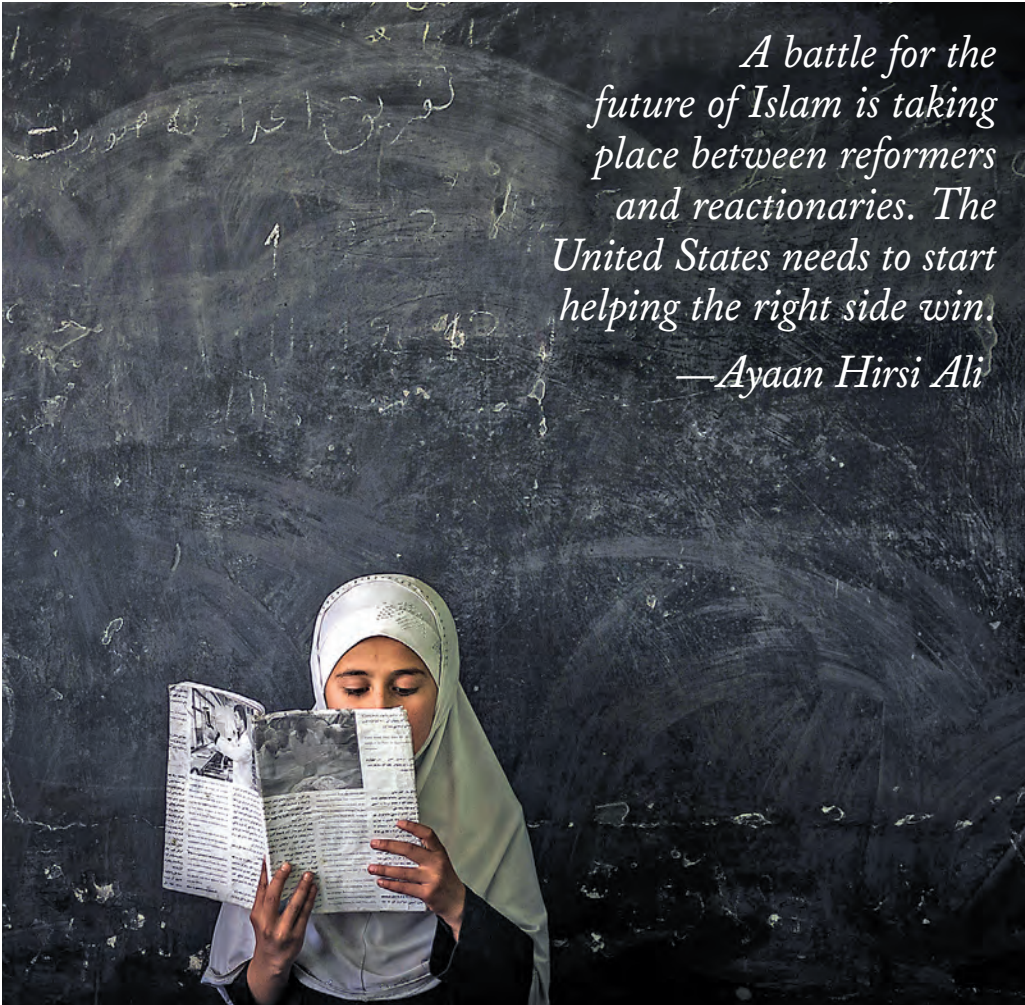
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ESSAYS



A battle for the future of Islam is taking place between reformers and reactionaries. The United States needs to start helping the right side win.
—*Ayaan Hirsi Ali*

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A Problem From Heaven

Why the United States Should Back Islam's Reformation

Ayaan Hirsi Ali

We have a problem—not a problem from hell, but one that claims to come from heaven. That problem is sometimes called radical, or fundamentalist, Islam, and the self-styled Islamic State is just its latest iteration. But no one really understands it. In the summer of 2014, Major General Michael Nagata, the commander of U.S. special operations forces in the Middle East, admitted as much when talking about the Islamic State, or ISIS. “We do not understand the movement,” he said. “And until we do, we are not going to defeat it.” Although Nagata’s words are striking for their candor, there is nothing new about the state of affairs they describe. For years, U.S. policymakers have failed to grasp the nature of the threat posed by militant Islam and have almost entirely failed to mount an effective counteroffensive against it on the battlefield that matters most: the battlefield of ideas.

In the war of ideas, words matter. Last September, U.S. President Barack Obama insisted that the Islamic State “is not Islamic,” and later that month, he told the UN General Assembly that “Islam teaches peace.” In November, Obama condemned the beheading of the American aid worker Peter Kassig as “evil” but refused to use the term “radical Islam” to describe the ideology of his killers. The phrase is no longer heard in White House press briefings. The approved term is “violent extremism.”

The decision not to call violence committed in the name of Islam by its true name—jihad—is a strange one. It would be as if Western leaders during the Cold War had gone around calling communism an ideology of peace or condemning the Baader Meinhof Gang, a West

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German militant group, for not being true Marxists. It is time to drop the euphemisms and verbal contortions. A battle for the future of Islam is taking place between reformers and reactionaries, and its outcome matters. The United States needs to start helping the right side win.

TONGUE-TIED

How did the United States end up with a strategy based on Orwellian Newspeak? In the wake of 9/11, senior Bush administration officials sounded emphatic. “This is a battle for minds,” declared the Pentagon’s no. 2, Paul Wolfowitz, in 2002. But behind the scenes, there was a full-blown struggle going on about how to approach the subject of Islam. According to Joseph Bosco, who worked on strategic communications and Muslim outreach in the Office of the Secretary of Defense from 2002 to 2004, although some American officials defined Islam as inherently peaceful, others argued that, like Christianity, it had to go through a reformation. Eventually, an uneasy compromise was reached. “We bridged the divide by saying that most contemporary Muslims practice their faith peacefully and tolerantly, but a small, radical minority aspires to return to Islam’s harsh seventh century origins,” Bosco wrote in *The National Interest*.

Administration officials could not even agree on the target of their efforts. Was it global terrorism or Islamic extremism? Or was it the alleged root causes—poverty, Saudi funding, past errors of U.S. foreign policy, or something else altogether? There were “agonizing” meetings on the subject, one participant told *U.S. News & World Report*. “We couldn’t clarify what path to take, so it was dropped.”

It did not help that the issue cut across traditional bureaucratic demarcations. Officers from the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command argued for the integration of public diplomacy, press relations, and covert operations. State Department officials saw this as yet another attempt by the Pentagon to annex their turf. Veterans of the campaign trail warned against going negative on a religion—any religion—ahead of the 2004 election. For all these reasons, by the middle of that year, the Bush administration had next to no strategy. Government Accountability Office investigators told Congress that those responsible for public diplomacy at the State Department had no guidance. “Everybody who knows how to do this has been screaming,” one insider told *U.S. News*. But outside Foggy Bottom, no one could hear them scream.

Administration officials eventually settled on the “Muslim World Outreach” strategy, which relied partly on humanitarian projects carried out by the U.S. Agency for International Development and partly on Arabic-language media outlets funded by the U.S. government, such as Alhurra (a plain vanilla TV news channel) and Radio Sawa (a 24-hour pop music station that targets younger listeners). In effect, “Muslim World Outreach” meant not touching Islam at all. Karen Hughes, who was undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs from 2005 to 2007, has said that she “became convinced that our nation should avoid the language of religion in our discussion of terrorist acts.”

Here, if in few other respects, there has been striking continuity from Bush to Obama. From 2009 to 2011, Judith McHale served in the same position that Hughes had. “This effort is not about a ‘war of ideas,’ or winning the hearts and minds of huge numbers of people,” McHale said in 2012. “It’s about using digital platforms to reach that small but dangerous group of people around the world who are considering turning to terrorism and persuading them to instead turn in a different direction.” The whole concept of “violent extremism” implies that the United States is fine with people being extremists, so long as they do not resort to violence. Yet this line of reasoning fails to understand the crucial link between those who preach jihad and those who then carry it out. It also fails to understand that at a pivotal moment, the United States has opted out of a debate about Islam’s future.

THE FAILURE

American policymakers have made two main arguments for avoiding the subject of Islam, one strategic, the other domestic. The first holds that the United States must not jeopardize its interests in the Middle East and other majority-Muslim parts of the world by casting aspersions on Islam. The second contends that the country must not upset the delicate balance in Western democracies between Muslim minorities and non-Muslim majorities by offending Muslims or encouraging so-called Islamophobes. Yet it is becoming harder and harder to sustain these arguments, since U.S. interests in the Middle East are in increasing jeopardy and since the domestic threat of militant Islam is far greater than the threat of a much-exaggerated Islamophobia.

The United States cannot wish away the escalating violence by jihadist groups or the evidence that substantial proportions of many



Faith healer: Imam Hassen Chalghoumi in Paris, May 2014

Muslim populations support at least some of their goals (such as the imposition of sharia and punishing apostates and those who insult Islam with death). The Middle East and North Africa grow more violent by the day. A substantial part of Syria and Iraq has fallen to the Islamic State. Yemen has collapsed into anarchy. Islamists have set up bases in Libya. The militant Islamist group Boko Haram is causing grave instability in northern Nigeria, as well as in neighboring Niger and Cameroon.

The nonstrategy, in short, has failed. Indeed, the official U.S. position collapses when the United States' own Middle Eastern allies begin openly referring to Islamic extremism as a "cancer" (in the words of the United Arab Emirates' ambassador to the United States) and calling for a "revolution" in mainstream Islamic religious thinking (as Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has). As for the home front, an estimated 3,400 Westerners, many of them young men and women with promising futures, have voluntarily chosen to leave behind the West's freedoms and prosperity in order to join the Islamic State. More British Muslims have volunteered for the Islamic State than for the British military. The United States is not in this dire state, but the direction of travel is troubling. Already, more than 50 young American Muslims have tried to join the Islamic State, and around half of them have succeeded. It is time to change course.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The first step is to recognize that the Muslim world is in the early stages of a religious reformation. To understand its nature, it is important to distinguish between the three different groups of Muslims in the world today. The first consists of Muslims who see the forcible imposition of sharia as their religious duty. The second group—the clear majority throughout the Muslim world—consists of Muslims who are loyal to the core creed and worship devoutly but are not inclined to practice or preach violence.

The third group consists of Muslim dissidents. A few, including myself, have been forced by experience to conclude that we cannot continue to be believers, yet we remain deeply engaged in the debate about Islam's future. But the majority of dissidents are reformist believers, among them clerics who have come to realize that their religion must change if its followers are not to be condemned to an interminable cycle of political violence.

Yet there are two fundamental obstacles to a reform of Islam. The first is that those who advocate it, even in the mildest terms, are threatened with death as heretics or apostates. The second is that the majority of otherwise peaceful and law-abiding Muslims are unwilling to acknowledge, much less to repudiate, the theological warrants for intolerance and violence embedded in their own religious texts.

Take the case of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the most prestigious mainstream institution of Sunni religious education in the world. One former Al-Azhar student, Sufyan al-Omari, told the Belgian newspaper *De Standaard* in March that the Islamic State “does not fall from the sky.” He continued: “The texts to which it appeals for support are exactly what we learned at Al-Azhar. The difference is that it truly puts the texts into practice.” Following this logic, he said that he intended to join the Islamic State. Mohamed Abdullah Nasr, another recent graduate of Al-Azhar, did not express a desire to do the same. But, he pointed out, “even if Al-Azhar students don't join it, they still retain these ideas in their head. They spread the ideology in their communities.”

Critical thinking like Nasr's is at the core of the Muslim Reformation. Admittedly, the historical analogy is very rough. There are fundamental differences between the teachings of Jesus and those of Muhammad, to say nothing of the radically different organizational structures of the two religions—one hierarchical and distinct from



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the state, the other decentralized yet aspiring to political power. Nevertheless, three factors at work in the Middle East today resemble the drivers of religious reform in sixteenth-century Europe. First, new information technology has created an unprecedented communications network across the Muslim world. Second, a constituency for a reformation has emerged in major cities, consisting of people disenchanted with Islamist rule (as in Cairo and Tehran) or attracted by Western norms (as in London and New York). Third, there is also a political constituency for religious reform emerging in key regional states, such as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

Already, a growing number of ordinary citizens in the Muslim world, as well as in the West, are calling for reform. The Muslim Reformation will likely be driven by such lay reformers, rather than by the clergy, but a number of clerics are still playing an important role. Among them is Hassen Chalghoumi, the imam of the Drancy mosque, near Paris, who predicted earlier this year that “Islam will also follow the same

The Muslim world is in the early stages of a religious reformation.

historical pattern as Christianity and Judaism,” in terms of reforming its doctrine. “However,” he warned, “this battle for reform will not be concluded if the rest of the world treats it as a solely internal battle and sits as an idle observer, watching the catastrophe as it unfolds.”

Such Islamic thinkers envision a version of their religion that no longer exalts holy war, martyrdom, and life in the hereafter. Abd al-Hamid al-Ansari, a former dean of Islamic law at Qatar University, has said that he “would like the religious scholars, through their religious discourse, to make our youth love life, and not death.” He has recommended that liberal reformers be permitted to sue inflammatory Islamic preachers for any harm that befalls them from the preachers’ sermons. The Iraqi Shiite cleric Ahmad al-Qabbanji, meanwhile, has argued that “the Koran was created by the Prophet Muhammad, but was driven by Allah,” a clear break with orthodoxy, which holds that the Koran is the direct word of God. As a report from the Middle East Media Research Institute explains, he proposes “a modifiable religious ruling based on *fiqh al-maqasid*, or the jurisprudence of the meaning”—code for a more flexible interpretation of sharia. Another reformer, Ayad Jamal al-Din, a Shiite cleric in Iraq who has argued for the separation of mosque and state, has framed the

choice this way: “We must make a decision whether to follow man-made civil law, legislated by the Iraqi parliament, or whether to follow the fatwas issued by Islamic jurists. We must not embellish things and say that Islam is a religion of compassion, peace and rose water, and that everything is fine.”

Like Christians and Jews centuries ago, Muslims today must critically evaluate their sacred texts in order to reform their religion. That is not an unreasonable request, as history shows. Of course, history also shows that the path to religious reform can be bloody. By the mid-seventeenth century, Europe had been ravaged by a century of warfare between Roman Catholics and Protestants. But the result was to create the room for the genuine freedom of thought that ultimately made the Enlightenment possible.

One of the most important of these freethinkers was Baruch Spinoza, a brilliant Jewish Dutch philosopher. For Spinoza, the Bible was a collection of loosely assembled moral teachings, not God’s literal word. Spinoza was excommunicated from the Jewish community, and a council of the Dutch Reformed Church called his *Theological-Political Treatise* “the vilest and most sacrilegious book the world has ever seen.” One of Spinoza’s contemporaries, Adriaan Beverland, was even jailed and then banished from the provinces of Holland and Zeeland for questioning the notion of original sin. Yet both men died in their beds. And it is their ideas that prevail in the Netherlands today.

DEFEND THE DISSIDENTS

American presidents and secretaries of state need not give lectures on the finer points of Islamic orthodoxy. But it is not too much to ask them to support Islamic religious reform and make the fate of Muslim dissidents and reformers part of their negotiations with allies (such as Saudi Arabia) and foes (such as Iran) alike. At the same time, U.S. officials need to stop publicly whitewashing unreformed Islam.

There is a precedent for this proposal. During the Cold War, the United States systematically encouraged and funded anticommunist intellectuals to counter the influence of Marxists and other fellow travelers of the left by speaking out against the evils of the Soviet system. In 1950, the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom, dedicated to defending the noncommunist left, opened in Berlin. Leading intellectuals such as Bertrand Russell, Karl Jaspers, and Jacques

Maritain agreed to serve as honorary chairs. Many of the congress' members were former communists—notably, Arthur Koestler—who warned against the dangers of totalitarianism on the basis of personal experience. Thanks to U.S. funding, the group was able to publish such magazines as *Encounter* (in the United Kingdom), *Preuves* (in France), *Der Monat* (in Germany), and *Quadrant* (in Australia).

As détente took hold in the late 1960s and 1970s, the war of ideas died down. When U.S. President Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty—anticommunist stations funded by the U.S. government—were operating with 1940s vacuum tube technology and rusting transmitter towers. Under Reagan, however, funding for the war of ideas was stepped up, largely through the U.S. Information Agency.

The conventional wisdom today is that the Cold War was won on economics. But this is a misunderstanding of history. In fact, in the 1950s and again in the 1980s, the United

States appealed to people living behind the Iron Curtain not only on the basis of Americans' higher standards of living but also—and perhaps more

*Imagine support for schools
that act as anti-madrasahs.*

importantly—on the basis of individual freedom and the rule of law. Soviet dissidents such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, and Vaclav Havel did not condemn the Soviet system because its consumer goods were shoddy and in short supply. They condemned it because it was lawless, lying, and corrupt.

Today, there are many dissidents who challenge Islam with as much courage as the dissidents who spoke out against the Soviet Union. Just as critics of communism during the Cold War came from a variety of backgrounds and disagreed on many issues, so do modern critics of unreformed Islam. Qabbanji, for example, has expressed strong criticism of U.S. and Israeli foreign policy, whereas other reformers, such as Ansari, are more pro-American. But such differences are less important than what the reformers have in common. They are all challenging an orthodoxy that contains within it the seeds of an escalating jihad. Yet the West either ignores them or dismisses them as unrepresentative.

The United States' mistake in this regard has been twofold. First, after the collapse of communism in Russia, political leaders assumed that the United States would never face another ideological challenge.

In 1998, Congress disbanded the U.S. Information Agency. Its functions were absorbed by other agencies. Then, officials assumed that Islam should not be engaged as an ideology at all. They did so mostly because they were—and remain—terrified of taking on Islam.

As William McCants of the Brookings Institution told *The Atlantic*, the Obama administration “is determined not to frame this [conflict] or have it be interpreted as a religious war.” Indeed, McCants explicitly argued against taking the side of Muslim reformers because any U.S. intervention in the debate on the reform of Islam “can discredit the people who reach the same conclusions we do.” But supporting dissidents who are pressing for a reform of Islam is hardly the same thing as waging a religious war. Nor does fighting the war of ideas mean trumpeting the U.S. policy of the day. It means focusing squarely on encouraging those who, for example, oppose the literal application of sharia to apostates and women or who argue that calls to wage holy war have no place in the twenty-first century.

Imagine a platform for Muslim dissidents that communicated their message through YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Imagine ten reformist magazines for every one issue of the Islamic State’s *Dabiq* or al Qaeda’s *Inspire*. Imagine the argument for Islamic reform being available on radio and television in Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Pashto, and Urdu. Imagine grants and prizes for leading religious reformers. Imagine support for schools that act as anti-madrasahs.

Such a strategy would also give the United States an opportunity to shift its alliances to those Muslim individuals and groups that actually share its values and practices: those who fight for a true Muslim reformation and who currently find themselves maligned, if not persecuted, by the very governments Washington props up.

BACK INTO THE IDEOLOGICAL ARENA

The task of backing Islamic reform cannot be carried out by the government alone; civil society has a crucial role to play. Indeed, all the major U.S. charitable foundations committed to humanitarian work can help Islam reform. The Ford Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation—all of which boast endowments in the billions of dollars—have done almost nothing in this area. There have been many grants for the study of Islam, but almost none to promote its reform. The same goes for the United States’ leading universities, which are currently paralyzed

by their fear of being accused of “cultural imperialism” or, worst of all, “Orientalism.”

I am not an Orientalist. Nor am I a racist, although like most critics of Islam, I have been accused of that, too. I do not believe in the innate backwardness of Arabs or Africans. I do not believe that the Middle East and North Africa are somehow doomed to a perpetual cycle of violence. I am a universalist. I believe that each human being possesses the power of reason, as well as a conscience. That includes all Muslims. At present, some Muslims ignore both reason and conscience by joining groups such as Boko Haram or the Islamic State, citing textual prescriptions and religious dogma to justify murder and enslavement. But their crimes are already forcing a reexamination of Islamic Scripture, doctrine, and law. This process cannot be stopped, no matter how much violence is used against would-be reformers.

Yes, the main responsibility for the Muslim Reformation falls on Muslims themselves. But it must be the duty of the Western world, as well as being in its self-interest, to provide assistance and, where necessary, security to those reformers who are carrying out this formidable task, just as it once encouraged those dissidents who stood up to Soviet communism. In her final testimony before Congress in January 2013, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton got it right. “We’re abdicating the ideological arena,” she said, “and we need to get back into it.” Either that, or the problem from heaven will send the entire Muslim world—if not the entire world—to hell. 🌍

Islamic Scripture Is Not the Problem

And Funding Muslim Reformers Is Not the Solution

William McCants

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is correct that darker passages of Islamic Scripture endorse violence and prescribe harsh punishments for moral or theological infractions. And she is right that in many Muslim countries, too many citizens still think it is a good idea to kill people for apostasy, stone them for adultery, and beat women for disobedience just because Scripture says so. But Hirsi Ali is profoundly wrong when she argues that Islamic Scripture causes Muslim terrorism and thus that the U.S. government should fund Muslim dissidents to reform Islam.

Islamic Scripture is a constant. Over 1,000 years old, it is composed of the Koran and hadith, words and deeds attributed to the Prophet Muhammad by his followers. Muslims who want to justify violence can find plenty of passages to cite—collections of hadith run into the hundreds of volumes. Nevertheless, Muslim political behavior has varied greatly throughout history. Some Muslims have cited Scripture to justify violence, and some have cited it to justify peace. If Scripture is a constant but the behavior of its followers is not, then one should look elsewhere to explain why some Muslims engage in terrorism. And if Islamic Scripture doesn't automatically lead to terrorism, then one should not expect the reform of Islam to end terrorism. Indeed, even the ultratextualist followers of the self-proclaimed Islamic State ignore Scripture that is inconvenient for their brutal brand of insurgency.

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Consider the Gospels, Scriptures that advocate far less violence than the Koran or the Hebrew Bible. Jesus taught his followers to turn the other cheek. Yet the crusaders murdered thousands in their rampage across the Middle East, and U.S. President George W. Bush, a devout Christian, invaded Iraq without military provocation. Readers may object to these examples, arguing that other factors were at play—but that is exactly the point: Christian Scripture doesn't always determine the behavior of its followers, and the same goes for Islamic Scripture.

REFORM, MEET REALITY

The faulty causal chain is the biggest flaw in Hirsi Ali's essay, but there are others. Even assuming that the liberal reform of Islam would help reduce terrorism—and indeed, few outsiders would complain if the majority of Muslims decided that some of the harsher passages of their Scriptures weren't relevant to modern life—the picture Hirsi Ali paints of lonely Muslim dissidents trying to start an Islamic reformation is not accurate. A liberal reformation of Islam has been ongoing for two centuries; the problem is that it has faced some stiff competition.

As with the Protestant Reformation, there is a conservative reform movement in Islam today that competes with the liberal reformers. Foremost among the conservatives are the ultraconservative Salafists—Islam's Puritans. They want to scrape off all the foreign accretions, such as Greek philosophy, that have attached themselves to Islam over the centuries and go back to a supposedly pure version of the faith. One big reason the conservative reformers have won the day so far is that some governments, especially the wealthy states of the Persian Gulf, have sponsored the ultraconservatives. Because rich Muslim governments have put their thumbs on the conservative side of the scale, Hirsi Ali wants the United States and other Western countries to do the same on the liberal side.

There are many problems with this approach. For one thing, the United States has laws against promoting one set of religious beliefs over another. Before 9/11, the U.S. government refused to fund programs that gave preference to one sect over others or a more tolerant version of a faith over a less tolerant form, although there was some wiggle room for secular programs, such as science education, overseen by religious institutions. Better, officials argued, to promote human rights and freedoms without the trappings of religion. But after the

attacks, the U.S. government began to make a few exceptions to this long-standing tradition by funding some Muslim institutions overseas to promote pluralistic versions of Islam. For example, the U.S. Agency for International Development mission in Indonesia funded a group that put pluralistic messages in religious sermons delivered by women and sponsored a radio show about religion and tolerance. That's not quite what Hirsi Ali wants—the programs didn't repudiate parts of Islamic Scripture or seek to reform the religion wholesale—but it's close.

Such programs are rare and usually get axed by government lawyers. When I served at the U.S. State Department as a senior adviser for countering violent extremism, I tried to fund a proposal submitted by a small Muslim nongovernmental organization overseas to compile Islamic Scriptures that promoted tolerance. Its plan was to use the compilation to teach locals about pluralism in the vernacular of their religion. Religious tolerance is an American value, after all, so why not fund others who saw that same value reflected in their own faith? And since they were just compiling Scripture, not writing interpretations of it, I didn't think we would run up against U.S. law.

But the lawyers at the State Department would have none of it, even though the department itself had funded a similar program elsewhere. Compiling such a document, they argued, would still promote one interpretation of a religion over another. When I asked about the similar program that was being funded elsewhere, they responded that it probably shouldn't have been funded either and said they might need to review that program, too. Needless to say, the nongovernmental organization had to look elsewhere for support. Given the institutional and legal barriers to funding religious groups that promote American values, it is impossible to imagine the U.S. government funding the reformation of an entire religion.

BACKFIRE

Government backing of liberal Muslim reformers would run into more practical problems, too. For the sake of argument, assume that the U.S. government, finding the national security argument so compelling, managed to circumvent its laws and political culture to fund programs aimed at reforming Islam. At that point, it would still have to figure out whom to fund. There are plenty of smart, well-meaning Muslim liberals to choose from, to be sure. But as anyone who has



Spare me the lecture: Muslim teens bowling in San Francisco, November 2009

followed the liberal Muslim reform movement lately knows, many of its loudest advocates clamoring for money and attention are not so tolerant. They don't want to see Muslim societies where conservatives and liberals compete for a share in the marketplace of ideas; they want the conservatives locked up or legally prohibited from spreading their ideas. Like Hirsi Ali, who approvingly quotes Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, they are willing to overlook the bloody excesses of dictators as long as they claim to promote Islamic reform and suppress conservative Muslim activists and political parties. This is not liberalism; this is intolerance dressed up as liberalism. True liberals would decry authoritarianism whatever its religious hue.

Still, imagine the U.S. government managed to navigate a thicket of laws and find its Muslim Martin Luther. His or her cause is going to suffer greatly in the arena of Muslim public opinion if it is revealed that the wildly unpopular United States is bankrolling it—a secret that will not last long in the era of WikiLeaks. There is a centuries-long history of conservative Muslim critics impugning the motives and agenda of liberal reformers because they have received money or political appointments from Western governments, whether or not the accusations are true. The reformers, the conservative argument goes, are part of the colonial project to eviscerate the Muslims, because they introduce a weak form of Islam that apes the West and serves its interests.

Westerners often fail to understand how all this blithe government meddling in other people's religions comes off or why it's so flawed, so it's helpful to conduct the following thought experiment. Suppose Saudi Arabia felt threatened by evangelical Christianity because of its anti-Islamic tone, its influence over Republican politicians, and its

As anyone who has followed the liberal Muslim reform movement lately knows, many of its loudest advocates are not so tolerant.

pro-Israel slant. Rather than promote more positive images of Islam, ingratiate themselves with Republican politicians, and compete with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the Saudis decide to fund evangelicals who are working to reform Christianity in ways that fit the Saudis' agenda. Because that agenda goes against the grain of contemporary evangelical culture, the

Saudis will probably not find a reformer who is popular among evangelicals. And because most Saudis don't know a thing about American evangelical culture, they will have a tough time figuring out who can get the job done. Still, Saudi Arabia has plenty of money, so they assume it's just a matter of spending enough on books, events, television shows, and so forth. Would they succeed?

Of course not. Apply the same reasoning to what Hirsi Ali proposes, and the flaws in her policy immediately become clear, even for those who know nothing about Muslim countries or U.S. laws and bureaucracy. There is nothing wrong with the liberal Muslim reformist agenda, even though some of its advocates should be met with skepticism. Many people of every faith want to see the rougher edges smoothed off all the ancient religions. But when people outside those faiths—especially Western governments—start getting involved, it sets back the reformist agenda. They usually back the wrong people, and even when they back the right ones, their funding can severely damage the legitimacy of those who use it to reform their religion.

So grave are the problems with the type of government funding Hirsi Ali advocates that readers would be right to ask, Why can't private citizens simply fund the reformers? There are plenty of private individuals and groups, both Muslim and non-Muslim, that are willing to donate to her cause. And while non-Muslims would likely be better off spending their money on something else, at least they represent themselves and not the government of an entire nation.

There are also ways to promote legal and social reform without casting it as religious reform. If an effort leads to the same place—more universal freedom and more respect for human rights—it shouldn't matter whether it is part of a religious reform movement. Muslim countries ended slavery without reforming their religion, and they can do the same for many other behaviors endorsed by Scripture but out of step with modern norms and values.

A FOOL'S ERRAND

Throughout her essay, Hirsi Ali employs a historical analogy: just as the United States funded intellectuals to discredit communism during the Cold War, it should fund intellectuals to point out the flaws in Islam today. Hirsi Ali's evocation of the Cold War may appeal to Westerners, especially Americans. After all, if the United States won that war in part because it managed to counter Soviet propaganda, it makes sense to draw on that experience when combating the newer challenge of jihadism.

But the analogy falls apart on closer inspection. The United States was seeking not to reform communism but to destroy it: the U.S. government funded intellectuals on the noncommunist left to discredit the communist program altogether. If that were the model followed today, then Muslims around the world would not react well when they learned about a U.S. program funding liberals to discredit their religion. It would only stoke fears that the United States is a Christian nation bent on destroying its religious rival.

The Cold War analogy doesn't work for another reason: Western propaganda did not play a major role in discrediting communism. As the former CIA officer Thomas Troy, Jr., wrote in a review of a book on the agency's Cold War propaganda programs, "I also suspect that the ham-handed tactics of the Soviet Union and its allies had a far more profound impact on the West European populaces than any Western propaganda program." If U.S. policymakers were to really follow the Cold War analogy today, they would publicize the ham-handed tactics of the jihadists.

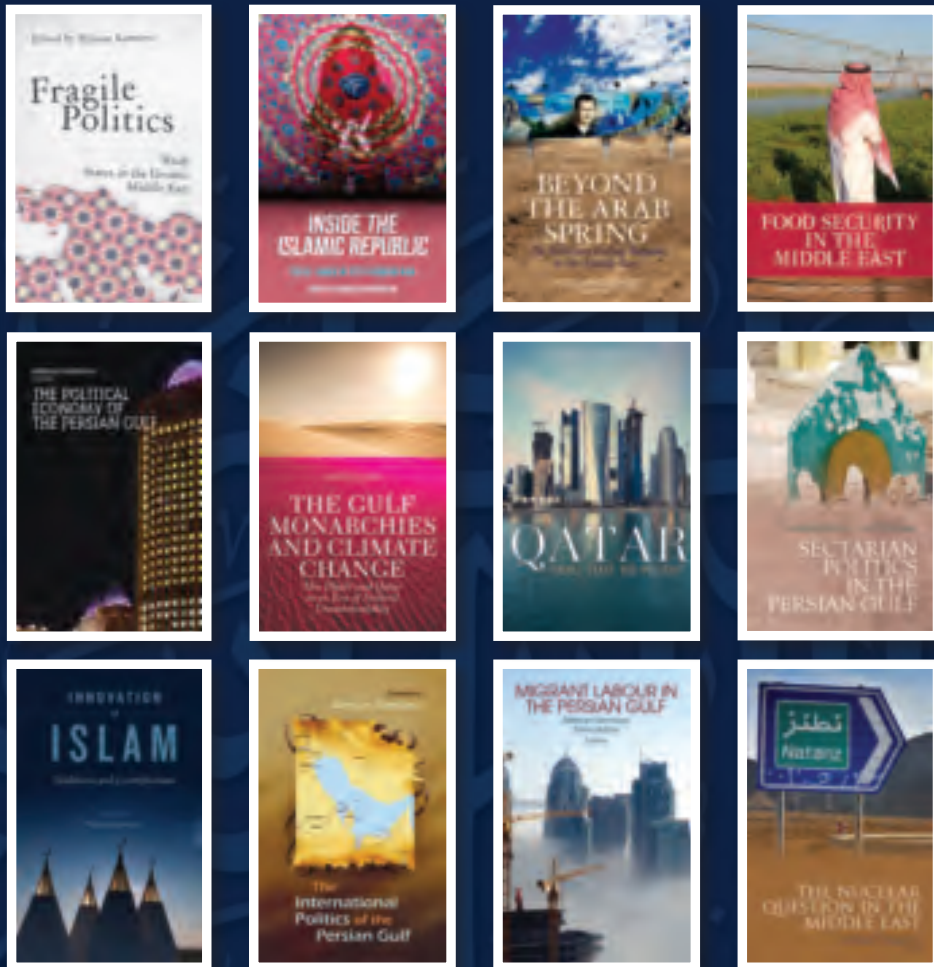
Even then, there wouldn't be much to do, since jihadists have already discredited their cause in the eyes of many Muslims. Al Qaeda hasn't polled well ever since it started killing its coreligionists—in Jordan, after the head of al Qaeda's branch in Iraq ordered the bombing of hotels in Amman, support for the group fell, from 56 percent in 2003

to 11 percent in 2011—and the Islamic State is even less popular. The jihadists do still manage to dupe some Muslims into signing up for their cause, but most Muslims are horrified by their wanton killing of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The United States and its allies should keep driving down public sympathy for the jihadists' cause by exposing their atrocities and hypocrisies, but the levels of sympathy are not that high to begin with anyway.

Rather than refer to poll numbers about support for terrorism, which would undermine her case, Hirsi Ali equates Muslim support for conservative Islam with Muslim support for jihadism, asserting that “substantial proportions of many Muslim populations support at least some of [the jihadists’] goals (such as the imposition of sharia and punishing apostates and those who insult Islam with death).” Her sleight of hand not only obscures the unpopularity of jihadism in the Muslim world; it also elides the difference between holding illiberal ideas and using violent methods to achieve them. Even though Hirsi Ali would contend that this is a distinction without a difference, it makes all the difference in the world to the United States. Americans want to stop groups that violently impose their illiberal views on others, but the United States was founded on the idea that such groups have a right to promulgate those views peacefully. When citizens want to pursue a foolish religious project in private—such as reforming someone else’s faith—the U.S. government stays out of their business provided they do not kill anyone. It should make no exception in the case of Islam. 🌐



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How to Talk to the Taliban

James Dobbins and Carter Malkasian

Peace talks, if not peace itself, may be close at hand in Afghanistan. Over the past few months, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Afghan Taliban have made unexpected strides toward talks. In early May, members of the Taliban and the Afghan government even met in Qatar and expressed real interest in starting official negotiations—a heartening step.

Since 2001, opportunities for peace talks have come and gone. Sometimes, the process has stalled for political reasons, such as the United States' reticence to engage with the Taliban. Other times, discussions have broken down due to miscommunications or a lack of political consensus. It was not until 2010 that the United States fully embraced peace talks as the best way to end the violence in Afghanistan, and even then, progress was slow and halting.

But this time may be different. Ashraf Ghani, Afghanistan's new president, has placed peace talks at the center of his agenda. Pakistan and China both appear willing to help jump-start the process. And the Taliban themselves have hinted that they may be willing to support an end to violence.

The United States must seize the moment, doing what it can to move the peace process forward. Washington will need to employ a mix of carrots and sticks while remaining committed to Afghanistan's

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security. It should help Afghan forces hold the line on the battlefield, pressure Pakistan to keep the Taliban at the table, and accept that in the end some concessions will be necessary. Most important, it will need to stay flexible on the withdrawal timeline and dedicated to supporting Afghanistan into 2017 and beyond.

Of course, peace talks may not yield a lasting peace. In 2007, the political scientist James Fearon noted in these pages that just 16 percent of civil wars and insurgencies end through a negotiated peace settlement. But even if negotiations are a long shot, they are the best option for Afghanistan and the United States. To stick with the status quo would be to consign Afghanistan to a long war of attrition that would ravage the country, upend regional stability, and strain the budgets of the United States and its allies.

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

In December 2001, a group of high-ranking Taliban officials met with Hamid Karzai, the soon-to-be Afghan president, whose own anti-Taliban fighters were then advancing on Kandahar, the Taliban's southern capital. According to the journalists Anand Gopal and Bette Dam, the members of the delegation were willing to lay down their arms in return for immunity. They gave Karzai a letter—possibly signed by the Taliban's supreme commander, Mullah Omar—detailing how the Taliban might step down peacefully. The opportunity never came to anything. U.S. officials denied immunity to Mullah Omar, and U.S. and Afghan forces advanced precipitously on Kandahar City. Whether for these or other reasons, Mullah Omar and the bulk of the Taliban's leadership fled to fight another day. Angered by 9/11 and buoyed by its battlefield victories, the United States did not involve the Taliban in a postinvasion settlement.

In 2002, senior Taliban delegations reached out to Karzai once again. Karzai mentioned the contacts to U.S. officials, only to have the United States strongly discourage his government from negotiating with the Taliban. That same year, U.S. troops even imprisoned the former Taliban foreign minister, Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, when he arrived in Kabul to meet with the Afghan government. By 2003, the Taliban had shifted their focus to taking territory, and once the Taliban offensives began in 2006, peace feelers fell away.

It was not until the last months of the Bush administration that peace talks regained momentum. Within the Taliban, a moderate



Partners for peace? Afghan Taliban joining a reintegration program, January 2012

faction had retained an interest in negotiations, and in 2008, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Mullah Omar's deputy, allowed subordinates to meet with Afghan government officials under Saudi auspices. He also began communicating directly with members of the Karzai family, who happen to be his fellow tribesmen. Around the same time, a Taliban delegation began meeting with Kai Eide, then the UN envoy to Afghanistan, in Dubai. But all conversations came to a halt in February 2010, when Pakistani officials detained Mullah Baradar in Karachi, a move widely interpreted as a Pakistani veto on direct negotiations between Kabul and the Taliban. As a Pakistani security official admitted to *The New York Times* in 2010: "We picked up Baradar . . . because [the Taliban] were trying to make a deal without us. We protect the Taliban. They are dependent on us. We are not going to allow them to make a deal with Karzai and the Indians."

Meanwhile, the idea of a negotiated peace, first championed within the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama by Richard Holbrooke, then Obama's special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Barnett Rubin, one of Holbrooke's top advisers, was

gaining traction in the United States. In May 2010, Karzai visited Washington, and Obama lifted the Bush-era ban on talking to the Taliban leadership. As a result, a month later, Karzai held a *loya jirga*, or grand assembly, to discuss the possibility of peace negotiations. And in September, he created the High Peace Council, which would be the public face of his peace effort, a 70-member body led by former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and filled with Afghan mujahideen commanders and former Taliban members.

Around the same time, the White House encouraged Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN's former top official in Kabul, and Thomas Pickering, a former U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs, to examine the possibility for peace talks in Afghanistan. They led an international group of diplomats that traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan and met with former and active Taliban representatives. They reported back to Washington that the Taliban were interested in the possibility of talks with the United States.

The ball was rolling. In November 2010, U.S. diplomats and Taliban representatives met for the first time, in Germany. In February 2011,

Since 2001, opportunities for Afghan peace talks have come and gone.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the United States was officially ready to begin peace negotiations, although she cautioned that any settlement would have to require the Taliban to lay down their arms, accept

the Afghan constitution, and sever ties with al Qaeda. After some delay, talks between U.S. and Taliban representatives proceeded in late 2011 and continued into the early months of 2012, at which point the Taliban broke off contact, rejecting a request from Washington that they begin negotiating with Kabul.

It was a particularly substantial missed opportunity: a failure to initiate a peace process at the peak of U.S. leverage, as NATO troops were retaking large swaths of the Taliban's heartland in Kandahar, Helmand, and nearby provinces. All parties were to blame. On the Afghan side, Karzai did his best to obstruct a process he feared would marginalize him and demanded that the Taliban speak to his government directly. The Taliban refused to negotiate with Kabul unless they first secured the release of several of their former leaders from the U.S. detention facility in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The United States, for its part, followed up on Clinton's initial offer cautiously,

hindered by lengthy interagency wrangling and indecision. The Defense Department could not agree with the State Department on a variety of issues relating to the negotiations. General David Petraeus, for example, who commanded the NATO-led security mission in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2011, preferred to hold off on peace talks until the surge produced greater military success. Other Pentagon officials balked at the suggestion that the United States should release prisoners from Guantánamo in exchange for Bowe Bergdahl, a U.S. Army sergeant being held by the Taliban. The White House was slow to forge agreement on a way forward, and so the opportunity slipped away.

The “will they, won’t they” saga continued into 2013, when the Taliban sent signals to Washington that they were willing to reopen peace talks and also to meet with the Afghan government. Through intermediaries in Qatar, the Taliban planned to open a political office in Doha dedicated to the negotiations. The initiative foundered at the last moment, however, due to a miscommunication. Taliban leaders knew that U.S. and Afghan officials refused to address them as representatives of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the name adopted by their former government. But they believed, based partly on discussions with Qatari officials, that they could use the title to describe themselves to the outside world. When it opened, the office displayed the flag of the Islamic Emirate and a sign with the name. The United States, having been assured by the Qatari government that the office would not describe itself as part of the Islamic Emirate, demanded that Qatari officials remove the flag and the sign. In response, the Taliban closed the office and cut off all contact with Washington and Kabul.

The experience taught both sides to be more careful when communicating through third parties. In 2014, working again through Qatari intermediaries, the United States and the Taliban were able to arrange the release of Bergdahl in return for the transfer of five former Taliban officials from Guantánamo to Doha, where they would remain for a year. The agreement was not perfect: it sparked a lively controversy in the United States over the legitimacy of the five-for-one exchange rate and whether Congress should have been notified in advance of the deal. But it did demonstrate to each side that the other could deliver on an agreement once reached. Neither side made any attempt to follow up on this success, however, and the momentum for peace talks stalled once again.

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

After a period of radio silence, the opportunity for peace talks reemerged suddenly in February of this year—and this time, the prospects of success may be better. That month, Pakistan's army chief, General Raheel Sharif, went to Kabul and told the newly elected Afghan president that the Taliban would be willing to begin official meetings with the Afghan government as early as the next month and that the Taliban were being told by Pakistani officials that it was no longer acceptable to carry on the war. Although months passed as Taliban moderates and hard-liners worked out what to do, in early May, ranking members of the Taliban met openly and unofficially with members of the Afghan High Peace Council in Qatar. During the meeting, the Taliban participants stressed their interest in peace talks and in reopening their Doha office.

A variety of factors make this particular opportunity more promising than the ones before. The first is new leadership in Kabul. Karzai had an embittered relationship with the United States. He was nearly a decade ahead of Washington in seeking to reach out to the Taliban, but by the time U.S. officials came around to his view, he no longer trusted them. Convinced that the United States wanted to cut a separate deal with the Taliban that would divide Afghanistan, Karzai sought to monopolize any talks with the group. He began to believe that the United States was deliberately sabotaging negotiations in an attempt to prolong the war and keep a U.S. military presence in the region. Other governments, such as France and Japan, tried to foster intra-Afghan dialogue, but Karzai objected to these forums, which he felt reduced his government to simply another Afghan faction.

Ghani, who succeeded Karzai as president in late 2014, promises to be a different sort of leader. Both he and Abdullah Abdullah, the country's chief executive officer, campaigned on their support for a negotiated peace, and unlike Karzai, they appear willing to make concessions and work with other governments to get there. During a trip to Beijing last October, Ghani encouraged other governments to support his country's reconciliation process, implicitly endorsing China's desire to help launch peace talks. Ghani went on to discuss the peace process with representatives from China, Pakistan, and the United States.

The second promising development is Pakistan's positive attitude toward negotiations. Since 2002, Pakistan has offered the Taliban

sanctuary, a place to rest, regroup, and hide. Pervez Musharraf, who served as Pakistan's president from 2001 to 2008, has admitted that his government purposely helped the Taliban in order to secure his country's interests in Afghanistan and counter Indian influence in the region. In recent years, Pakistan's civilian and military leaders have pledged to end the practice, but little has changed. And although Pakistan has occasionally played a positive role in the reconciliation process—releasing Mullah Baradar, for example—it has never brought key Taliban leaders to the table.

That seems to be changing. True to Sharif's word, since February, Pakistani officials have been meeting with Taliban leaders and encouraging negotiations. Although Pakistan's leadership is divided over how hard to pressure the Taliban to seek peace, Islamabad appears to feel that it has more of a stake in a peaceful Afghanistan than originally thought. Without a plan for a negotiated peace, the departure of U.S. troops cannot end well for Pakistan. The drawdown might give the Taliban the opportunity to seize more ground, which would increase Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. But the Afghan government would then almost certainly turn to India for money and arms, leaving Pakistan to fight a long-term proxy war against its rival—or, worse, accede to an Indian protectorate over northern Afghanistan. For Pakistan, this is debatably a worse outcome than a neutral Afghanistan committed to staying out of the Indian-Pakistani rivalry.

Taliban battlefield successes might have other drawbacks as well. The extremist threat to Pakistan could grow. Emboldened by such successes, the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban might start collaborating more, and safe havens for Pakistani terrorists could emerge on the Afghan side of the border, a long-standing fear of the Pakistani government. That risk was underscored on December 16, 2014, when the Pakistani Taliban attacked the Army Public School in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar, killing 132 schoolchildren.

If Pakistan is beginning to realize that it has more to gain from an Afghanistan led by Ghani than one led by the Taliban, the new

A tiny window of opportunity for a negotiated settlement has opened up, and the United States should take advantage of it.

Afghan government deserves part of the credit. Whereas Karzai let the Afghan-Pakistani relationship sour—in 2011, he even signed a strategic partnership agreement with India—Ghani has made an effort to reassure Islamabad, going so far as to take military action against the Pakistani Taliban and cancel a weapons deal with India. Still, it is too early to tell if Pakistan will stand fully behind peace. Not all Pakistani officials and military officers agree that rapprochement with Afghanistan is the best way to secure their country against India.

China has also played a role in galvanizing Pakistani support for peace talks. After Ghani's visit to Beijing, the Chinese government hosted Taliban delegations and offered Pakistan additional aid to encourage the Taliban to join the peace process. China's requests carry weight in Pakistan. The two countries have enjoyed a long and close bilateral relationship. China, for its part, has a strong interest in a stable Afghanistan, since it wants to prevent extremism from spreading to its western region of Xinjiang, which contains a large Muslim population. China also has mineral and energy investments in Afghanistan, and so it would lose out if the country were torn apart by a civil war. More broadly, as China grows into its status as a global superpower, it has been willing to play a greater role in promoting regional stability, especially as the United States steps back.

WHAT THE TALIBAN WANT

Of the various players, the Taliban themselves may be the most reluctant to negotiate. A moderate faction, including members of the Quetta Shura (the movement's central organization) and influential religious leaders, wants to put an end to years of bloodshed. But other Taliban leaders, such as Mullah Omar's current deputy, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, have taken a harder line. Having observed the Taliban's post-2001 comeback, Mansour believes the movement has a chance of outright victory in a protracted war. News reports suggest that it is this internal divide that has slowed the Taliban's coming to the table.

Whether moderate or hard-line, the Taliban have not stopped fighting, nor are they likely to do so before any negotiations are concluded. In 2014, the Quetta Shura launched its biggest offensive in years, pushing back Afghan forces in the southern province of Helmand and striking the provinces of Kandahar, Kunduz, and Nangarhar. Our

contacts in the Taliban say they expect to take more ground this year and next, including provincial capitals. If outright victory on the battlefield seems feasible, Taliban leaders will be unlikely to negotiate. Pakistan and China may have leverage over the Taliban, but the Quetta Shura will be sure to resist foreign pressure that it sees as outside its interests.

If the Taliban do decide to participate in peace talks, the next question will be how much they will concede. According to some Afghanistan experts, such as Thomas Ruttig, Michael Semple, and Theo Farrell, the Taliban may be willing to meet the most important of the three U.S. conditions for peace: the renunciation of al Qaeda. Plenty of Taliban leaders have denied any desire to wage international jihad, and in 2009, the Quetta Shura announced that if foreign forces left Afghanistan, the Taliban would not seek to attack other countries, nor would they let outside terrorist groups use Afghanistan as a base of operations. The Taliban have also made clear, however, that they will officially renounce al Qaeda only once they have gotten what they want out of a peace deal.

A bigger sticking point involves the Afghan constitution. For many in the Taliban, the demand that they accept it is untenable, since doing so would force them to cede the legitimacy of what they see as a puppet regime. The Taliban will also want to elect a new government, in which they will expect to participate. In this sense, a peace agreement would mean not merely a cease-fire but also a reconceptualization of the Afghan state.

The Taliban's other major demand is likely to be the removal of all U.S. forces from Afghanistan. Foreign occupation is a major reason the Taliban's rank and file fight. At the May meeting in Qatar, Taliban participants allegedly said that they would accept a cease-fire only after the withdrawal of all foreign forces. Given the salience of this issue, there can be little doubt that the initial Taliban position in any negotiations will be that all U.S. troops must leave.

Of course, hard-liners within the Taliban—or even within outside groups, such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State, or ISIS—could always take matters into their own hands. If extremists assassinated Mullah Omar, for example, negotiations would collapse. Although the Islamic State currently has little influence in Afghanistan, the death of a leader such as Mullah Omar could allow the group to gain a foothold, win over extremists, and carry on an even more violent and vicious war.

WAR AND PEACE

A tiny window of opportunity for a negotiated settlement has opened up, and the United States should take advantage of it while it can. Although all sides agree that the talks should be led by Afghanistan, at least three outside powers—China, Pakistan, and the United States—will be directly or indirectly involved. The United States, for its part, can take five concrete steps to keep the negotiations moving forward.

First, it must do its best to prevent large-scale Taliban military victories. Peace begins on the battlefield: if the Taliban capture more ground, particularly provincial capitals, the Quetta Shura will see little reason to bargain, believing that an Afghan government defeat is imminent. The summer fighting season will be particularly critical to Taliban decision-making, as the leadership will take note of successes and failures on the battlefield to decide whether war will be more profitable than peace. A strong performance by the Afghan army could therefore deal a serious blow to the Taliban's confidence, pushing the peace process forward.

To beef up Afghan military capabilities, the United States and its allies should continue to provide financial and material support until a settlement is reached, and possibly beyond. Obama made the right decision in March, when he granted Afghan requests to slow the drawdown of U.S. troops from the country, promising to maintain a force of 9,800 through the end of 2015. He should be just as flexible when it comes to drawdowns in 2016 and 2017. Obama should also continue to grant U.S. forces the authority to carry out limited special operations and air strikes, both of which give the Afghan army and police a strategic edge. Strikes against Quetta Shura members in Afghanistan and Pakistan should not be ruled out, especially so that additional pressure can be brought to bear in the course of the negotiations, if needed.

Second, the United States should weigh in behind the scenes to help Ghani and Abdullah form a disciplined government, capable of the executive action necessary to wage war and broker peace. So far, the Afghan government has been a model of indecision. It took Ghani and Abdullah seven months just to choose their cabinet. Such gridlock, whether over cabinet posts or military policy, emboldens the Quetta Shura. A weak, disjointed government will undermine peace talks. The United States, along with the rest of the international community, should continue to press both camps to work together more effectively.

The third area in which the United States can help involves Pakistan. Washington should do what it can to ensure that Islamabad keeps the Taliban at the bargaining table. The United States has many interests in Pakistan—including securing Pakistan’s nuclear weapons and working with Islamabad to weed out al Qaeda—that have distracted it from focusing on ending Pakistan’s support for the Taliban. Luckily, the drawdown in U.S. forces will largely eliminate one of these interests: the U.S. military’s dependence on Pakistani ports and roads to support its presence in Afghanistan. Washington should condition its substantial military and civilian assistance on Pakistan’s agreeing to support the peace process and deny a safe haven to the Taliban.

Fourth, the United States must accept that a workable peace settlement will have to include a new Afghan constitution or institutional arrangements that allow the Taliban to become a legitimate part of the Afghan government. In fact, Washington should assume that a settlement will provide for a *loya jirga* in which representatives of the Taliban, the Afghan government, and civil society come together to amend the current constitution or write an entirely new one. In such a restructuring, certain civil freedoms, particularly women’s rights, would be endangered. The Taliban hold deeply conservative views on women, to put it mildly. Prior to any cease-fire, therefore, the United States should seek to secure from all parties a commitment to leave current civil rights protections unchanged in a new constitution.

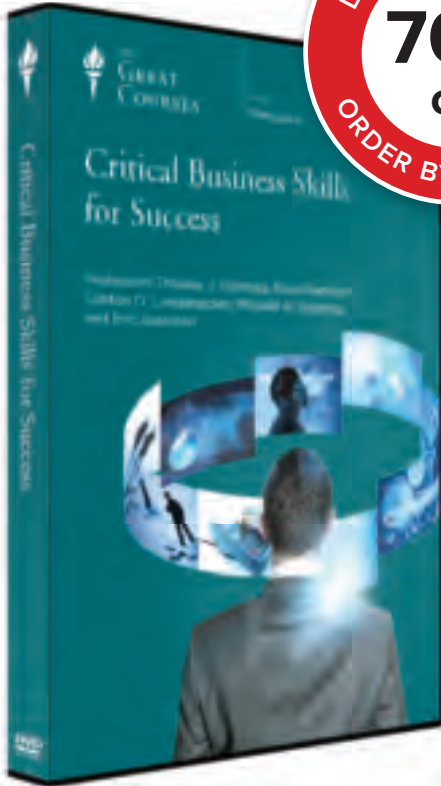
The fifth step will come if and when a settlement is reached. At that point, the United States may need to keep troops on the ground only until the constitutional debate is over and any subsequent election has taken place. But even when its troops have departed, the United States should remain committed to a strategic partnership with Afghanistan and continue to provide a base level of military aid. Otherwise, the balance of power may shift to the Taliban, undoing the peace.

Most Afghanistan experts believe that the war will continue for years to come. They generally agree that the Afghan government will stay in power only with continued U.S. economic and military assistance, without which violent militant groups will reign freely. The peace process offers an alternative future, one that the United States should pursue with determination and patience. Success is far from guaranteed—in fact, it’s a long shot—but the attempt is worth the effort.

The alternatives would be costly. One is to keep paying for the Afghan security forces, at between \$2 billion and \$5 billion a year, and let the war go on. In this scenario, an outright government victory would be unlikely, even if the Obama administration left military forces in Afghanistan past 2016. Another option is for the United States to get out of Afghanistan, cut off funding, and accept the attendant Taliban resurgence in Kabul. In either case, the United States might be tempted to bet that the mutual interest of the Afghan government, Pakistan, and China in avoiding regional instability will ultimately bring peace. That would be quite a gamble. Without U.S. pressure on all players, negotiations may never happen, and a full-blown civil war may become inevitable. In that event, extremism would grow: there is little evidence that the Taliban would unilaterally break from al Qaeda or be able to stop al Qaeda or the Islamic State from operating in Afghanistan. And if Iraq is any lesson, even total withdrawal may not prevent the United States from being sucked right back into the morass. 🌐



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The Long Road to Animal Welfare

How Activism Works in Practice

Wayne Pacelle

On election night in November 1992, I waited anxiously with other animal welfare activists at the Radisson Hotel in Denver, Colorado, to learn the outcome of a statewide ballot measure to ban the baiting, hound hunting, and spring hunting of black bears. The initiative was a big deal both for me (it had been my idea) and for the animal welfare movement more generally. Colorado was a political redoubt for the National Rifle Association and other pro-hunting groups; if the ballot measure passed, it might inspire other reforms for animals, and if it failed, it might set the movement back years. Most of my fellow activists had been skeptical about the initiative, arguing that it was a fool's errand because the hunting lobby was too strong to defeat. But the leaders of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)—then as now, the largest animal protection organization in the country—had overruled their political staff and decided to support the effort, on principle. “It’s too important not to try,” John Galt, HSUS president, told me. “If we lose, I want to be on the side of the losers.” In the end, we won big, getting 70 percent of the vote.

Colorado Democrats were also holding their election party at the Radisson that night, and as the votes were counted, they, too, were celebrating, because the Democratic presidential candidate, Bill Clinton, carried the state and the country. The animal advocates decided to hold an impromptu victory parade through the hotel, led by one of our members in a bear costume, and the partying Democrats cheered us on as we passed by. But then the mood darkened: as later returns came in, it became clear that Amendment 2, a major statewide anti-gay-rights

WAYNE PACELLE, President and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States, is the author of the forthcoming book *The Humane Economy*.

measure, had also passed. Dejected gay rights activists slumped along the walls of the ballroom, embittered by the realization that the same people who had voted to protect bears had declined to protect gay and lesbian humans.

Sixteen years later, I found myself in a similar situation, this time in California. On election night in November 2008, I was celebrating the landslide approval of Proposition 2, a statewide ballot initiative to stop the extreme confinement of pigs, calves, and hens on factory farms. Once again, the Democrats also celebrated that night, cheering the victory of Barack Obama. Yet once again, gay and lesbian activists were despondent, since the same voters who had established greater protections for farm animals and voted for the country's first African American president had also passed Proposition 8, a measure that would amend the California constitution to forbid same-sex marriage.

Of course, that's not the end of the story. Several years on, the gay rights movement has raced forward to extraordinary success: the Supreme Court declared Proposition 8 unconstitutional before it took effect and overturned portions of the federal Defense of Marriage Act, three dozen states struck down gay marriage bans, and Obama repealed the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. It now seems inevitable that gay marriage will be the law of the land. After generations of thankless activism that brought more ridicule than results, and more dejection than hope, suddenly gays and lesbians have found themselves on the winning side of a string of court verdicts and legislative and ballot-box battles.

Rather than begrudging other causes' success, those of us in the animal welfare movement take heart from it, because it shows that dramatic progress not only is possible but also can happen in short bursts. In any major social reform movement, one that confronts entrenched ideas or formidable adversaries, there are going to be setbacks, and even moments of desperation. But history demonstrates that if a movement can withstand the brickbats of its adversaries and tap into a country's core values, being smart and opportunistic about what to fight for and how, it can eventually build momentum and achieve a tipping point. It can transform the world in ways even its most optimistic advocates could barely imagine.

FROM CRISIS TO REFORM

In 2004, Michael Vick was the highest-paid player in the NFL. The Atlanta Falcons' quarterback was also an enthusiast of dogfighting, heading to a hideaway in rural Virginia each week to stage death matches



for fun. According to filings in federal court, when Vick's home was raided in early 2007, investigators found "sheds and kennels associated with housing the fighting dogs and hosting dog fights; approximately 54 American Pit Bull Terriers, some of which had scars and injuries appearing to be related to dog fighting; a breeding stand; a 'rape stand' [for female dogs] . . . ; a 'break' or 'parting' stick used to pry open fighting dogs' mouths during fights; . . . and other items." The case provided a rare window into a barbaric American subculture, and a dog-loving nation did not like the view.

The publicity surrounding the Vick case helped spur animal protection efforts nationwide. Many people had no idea that dogfighting was so prevalent and wanted to do something to stop it. In the

Often, change comes in spurts rather than in a steady flow.

two years after Vick's arrest, the HSUS and its partners helped upgrade 40 state laws against animal fighting. Congress amended the federal law against dogfighting and cockfighting, making possession of fighting animals a felony and criminalizing the watching of fights.

And Vick himself joined the cause, saying in a 2011 interview, "During my time in prison, I told myself that I wanted to be a part of the solution and not the problem."

Two years before Vick's arrest, Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast, and New Orleans residents were forced to evacuate without their pets. Many left large food and water bowls behind, enough to get their animals through a long weekend before things returned to normal. Few guessed that floodwaters would submerge whole neighborhoods, prompting the National Guard to seal off the city and prevent evacuees from returning for weeks.

The HSUS and other animal protection groups deployed to the Gulf Coast and raced to save the more than 15,000 animals left behind before they succumbed to dehydration, starvation, or accidents. As rescuers pulled animals from fetid, moldy buildings, television viewers cheered their heroism. And as Americans gave billions of dollars to help Katrina's human victims, they gave additional tens of millions of dollars to fund the animal rescue effort. It did not take long for those watching to realize that the plight of New Orleans' pet population was hardly a trivial concern, because for many locals, their own fate and those of their animals were inextricably bound together. Evacuees implored us to smash down their front doors or break in through upstairs windows to bring food and comfort to their dogs, cats, and birds. People who had lost everything breathlessly searched our emergency pet shelter, some reuniting with their companions and finding an emotional lifeline that helped them survive the trauma.

In the wake of Katrina, emergency responders and others recognized that disaster response could not be successful if it failed to account for the bond between humans and animals. Soon, more than two dozen states passed laws to include animals in disaster plans, and Congress

passed the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act, requiring all other state and local governments to do the same if they hoped to secure federal disaster assistance.

Such twists of fate are not unusual in social activism. Unjust practices or abuses of power may spur the rise of a reform movement, but it often takes specific events to crystallize the problem for society at large and catalyze significant change. As the psychologist Steven Pinker argues in *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, American history has witnessed a progressive extension of moral concern along with declining violence and cruelty. But often, change comes in spurts rather than in a steady flow.

After the American Civil War, the Radical Republicans drove the passage of a series of amendments to the Constitution abolishing slavery, establishing voting rights, and requiring every state to provide equal protection of the laws. From the 1890s to the 1920s, the Progressive movement helped pass a wave of reforms to promote the direct election of senators, women's suffrage, antitrust protections, consumer protections, food- and worker-safety standards, and the conservation of hundreds of millions of acres of public lands. In the 1960s and 1970s, protesters marched for civil rights, women's rights, and an end to the Vietnam War, and the period saw a renaissance in the environmental and gay rights movements.

All these pulses of change put the nation's conduct in closer alignment with its values. Most Americans now take most of the reforms for granted and wonder why it took so long to embrace them in the first place. But in each case, some sort of crisis was required to drive progress. And in each case, it took activist leadership, resolve, and the participation of millions of regular Americans to push a movement from the margins into the mainstream.

BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

The notion of animal protection has a long history in human culture, from Buddha's preaching about nonviolence toward animals and Plutarch's espousing of vegetarianism in the ancient world, to Saint Francis of Assisi's preaching of kindness to all creatures in the Middle Ages, to the British evangelical leader William Wilberforce's co-founding of the world's first anti-animal-cruelty organization in the 1820s. In 1866, appalled at the routine abuse of horses and other creatures, Henry Bergh formed the first American animal protection group, the American

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and in the decades that followed, activists founded hundreds of similar local groups in communities across the nation. There was forward progress, many setbacks through the decades, and a wave of lawmaking in the early 1970s, but the biggest catalyst for change came with the publication of Peter Singer's book *Animal Liberation* in 1975.

Singer argued that the most relevant moral characteristic to take into account when considering the interests of animals was their capacity to suffer. The Australian-born, Oxford-educated philosopher claimed that humans were guilty of speciesism, unjustly excluding nonhuman creatures from their sphere of moral concern, just as whites often excluded blacks be-

The United States alone now counts more than 20,000 animal protection groups.

cause of skin color and men often excluded women because of gender. Concern for dogs and cats was laudable, he noted, but to be morally consistent and to deal with the biggest crises for animals, the movement needed to address not only cute pets but also the large-scale commercial use of animals in areas such as factory farming, medical and product testing, clothing, and entertainment.

Around this time, moreover, something of a scientific revolution occurred in discussions about animal intelligence. Although some scientists still treated animals as mere production units or living test tubes, others were taking a fresh look at animal cognition. The zoologist Donald Griffin challenged long-accepted notions of behaviorism, the theory that animals act on the basis of instinct and primal desires alone. Scientists working in the field, such as Jane Goodall with chimpanzees, Cynthia Moss and Joyce Poole with elephants, and Irene Pepperberg with parrots, showed that animals have complex social and emotional lives. Today, countless books and a wealth of television programs have made the old ideas about animals as programmed solely by instinct and being incapable of thought or choice seem absurd. People were getting to know animals, and to know more about them, just as millions of Americans got to know openly gay and lesbian Americans when they came out in droves in the last quarter century or so.

Singer's book spurred advocates to form hundreds more local and national animal protection groups, including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals in 1980. I was part of that wave, forming an



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animal protection group as an undergraduate at Yale University in 1985, protesting cruelty, screening films, and generally trying to shine a light on large-scale systemic abuses that few wanted to acknowledge. This grass-roots activism pushed established groups to step up their calls for reform and adopt more campaign-oriented tactics. Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s, the animal protection movement was still fundamentally about protest. The issues that animal advocates raised were unfamiliar and challenging, and their demands were mainly for people to reform their lifestyles. Asking someone to stop eating meat or to buy products not tested on animals was a hard sell, because people don't like to change their routines, and because practical, affordable, and easily available alternatives were scarce.

It was not until the 1990s that the animal protection movement adopted a legislative strategy and became more widely understood and embraced. A few groups had been doing the political spadework needed to secure meaningful legislative reforms, focusing mostly on the rescue and sheltering of animals. Then organizations such as the HSUS and the Fund for Animals started introducing ballot measures to establish protections, raise awareness, and demonstrate popular support for reform. The ball got rolling with a successful initiative in 1990 to outlaw the trophy hunting of mountain lions in California, which was followed by the 1992 vote in Colorado to protect bears. Other states followed suit with measures to outlaw cockfighting, dove hunting, greyhound racing, captive hunts, the use of steel-jawed traps for killing fur-bearing mammals, and the intensive confinement of animals on factory farms. Today, activists are working to address the inhumane slaughter of chickens and turkeys, the captive display of marine mammals, the hunting of captive wildlife, and the finning of sharks for food. The United States alone now counts more than 20,000 animal protection groups, with perhaps half of them formed in just the last decade. The two largest groups, the HSUS and the ASPCA, together raise and spend nearly \$400 million a year and have assets approaching \$500 million.

SURVIVING THE BACKLASH

As the movement has grown stronger, however, so has the backlash against it, with industries that profit from animal cruelty mobilizing to fight reform, fearing that small steps will spur demands for ever more change. One tack in this countermovement has been to assure

the public that industry has everything under control. Established interests used to dismiss the very idea of animal welfare as radical and dangerous; recognizing that such an approach is no longer acceptable, they now claim to have cared about it all along. In their attempts to convince the public that factory farms are in the vanguard of progressive change, for example, the leading pork industry trade association established the Swine Welfare Assurance Program and the cattle industry maintains its Beef Quality Assurance program. And almost all relevant industries now claim to adhere to voluntary best-practice standards regarding the treatment of animals, from large-scale dog breeders to fur farms to research labs.

At the same time, these industries try to prevent outsiders from either investigating their conduct or telling them how to run their operations, making use of long-established political connections enjoyed by the farm lobby, the hunting fraternity, and other groups opposed to reform. They have pushed state-level constitutional amendments to establish a “right to farm” or a “right to hunt,” enshrining the status quo of farm-animal confinement and trophy hunting. In 2014, Missouri lawmakers even contemplated a “right to rodeo.” During congressional debate over the 2014 Farm Bill, rural lawmakers came close to passing an amendment, proposed by the Republican representative Steve King of Iowa, to preempt all state laws regulating the sale of agricultural goods. Also in 2014, six state attorneys general, led by the Missouri Democrat Chris Koster, challenged California’s law restricting the sale of eggs that come from hens kept in barren battery cages—tiny, crowded cells in which the vast majority of egg-producing chickens spend their entire lives. “I don’t believe voters in California should be able to set agricultural policy in Missouri,” Koster told members of the Missouri Farm Bureau as he prepared to file his case.

In response to covert reporting that has exposed the mistreatment of farm animals, horses, and chimpanzees in laboratories, nearly half of U.S. states have considered “ag-gag” measures that would effectively criminalize undercover investigations. Reacting to successful animal welfare ballot initiatives, the farm and hunting lobbies have attempted to increase signature-gathering requirements for animal protection initiatives and have even tried to prevent them from appearing on ballots in the first place. Utah now requires a two-thirds majority to pass a wildlife protection ballot initiative, and Florida requires a 60 percent majority for any ballot initiative—a standard that came

into being after voters had the temerity to approve a constitutional amendment banning the confinement of pigs in small crates. And super PACs and front groups now spend millions to attack the brands of animal protection groups, trying to prevent their cause from capturing mainstream public opinion.

MANY PATHS UP THE MOUNTAIN

Before the recent leap forward in public and legal acceptance of gay rights, advocates had been working on the cause for decades. The AIDS crisis in the 1980s claimed the lives of many of that movement's leaders, but it also spawned a deeper involvement in politics in order to increase public spending on finding a cure. The Supreme Court's 2003 decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, striking down sodomy laws in 14 states and making consensual homosexual sex legal in all 50, marked an important victory and demonstrated the potential of using the courts to drive change. And two decades of increasingly positive representations in popular culture, along with countless individual coming-out stories, had helped change popular attitudes on the subject. By 2012, polls showed a narrow majority of Americans supporting gay marriage, giving judges and politicians greater latitude to side with gay rights advocates, and the shift in attitude has been particularly pronounced among younger Americans. There are still opponents of gay marriage and of other rights for gays and lesbians, but increasingly, they are fighting a rear-guard action at the political fringes. The United States' biggest and most powerful corporations—from Apple to Walmart—now speak out in favor of gay rights and against legislative maneuvers to foster discrimination.

The task of securing across-the-board gains for animals has its own special complexities. The cause is ultimately about setting standards for how billions of people interact with tens of billions of animals, including members of thousands of species used in several major sectors of the economy. This will inevitably be a vast, ongoing, multifaceted project. The challenge, therefore, is figuring out how to devise and advocate for plausibly acceptable reforms in the short and medium terms, while linking those to a broader strategy for triggering a revolution in moral consciousness over the long term.

There is no simple formula for change, no one strategy to drive reform. Progress comes from working through multiple channels, often simultaneously. To improve the lives of farm animals, the HSUS managed

to pass an anti-confinement ballot measure in Florida in 2002 and one in Arizona in 2006. In 2007, after undergoing years of criticism from activists, the world's largest pork producer, Smithfield Foods, and the veal industry moved to undertake voluntary corporate reforms. And then California's Proposition 2 and a follow-up law helped convince many retailers that they had to change their procurement practices for eggs and pork.

The cause has also gained momentum by linking animal protection to other social concerns: animal fighting is usually tangled up with others forms of organized criminal behavior, factory farming causes food-safety problems, and animal abuse is associated with domestic violence. Each of these issues creates opportunities for building coalitions and expanding networks of activism and support. When activists campaign against factory farming, for example, they can build alliances with small farmers, farm workers, environmentalists, and medical professionals, and when they campaign against animal fighting, they can join with law enforcement. Those are tough coalitions for opponents to beat.

Technological innovation, moreover, is making many forms of animal abuse obsolete. The United States once was the greatest whaling nation in the world, but today it is a leader of the anti-whaling movement, with a growing whale-watching industry that favors protecting and expanding whale populations rather than hunting them to extinction. Why? In part because there are now better sources of fuel and light than rendered blubber or spermaceti. Similarly, the United States is currently one of the biggest meat- and fur-producing nations—but it may soon be one of the biggest plant-based-protein and faux-fur nations, as more appealing and cruelty-free substitutes come on the market. And developments in laboratory tests, such as in vitro testing and robot-assisted experimentation on chemicals, are increasingly making animal testing appear slow, unreliable, costly, and obsolete.

LIVING IN TRUTH

People's relationship with animals is fraught with contradictions. They express love and appreciation for them and have enacted laws to forbid cruelty to them. The United States is a pet-keeping society, with more dogs, cats, parrots, hamsters, and other pets combined than people and a \$60-billion-a-year industry for their care. Millions of Americans are engaged with wildlife in some way, and some of their

happiest and most transcendent moments are spent in unspoiled settings. And yet at the same time, they exploit animals on a massive scale, with billions of creatures killed or abused every year for food, clothing, research, and other purposes.

Americans have become masters of distancing themselves from these more unpleasant uses of animals, physically and linguistically separating them from the nation's consciousness and their conscience. On factory farms, operators call animals "units of production"; in laboratories, they are "tools for research"; and in wildlife management, they are "game" to be "harvested" on a "sustained yield basis." Such usage turns animals into objects or commodities, things that have practical value but are themselves morally neutral or empty. And most consumers end up getting a sanitized version of the product, with all evidence

The United States, once the greatest whaling nation in the world, is today a leader of the anti-whaling movement.

of its animal origins or connections either masked or eliminated. (The exceptions—the wearing of fur or the mounting of stuffed heads—display the larger contradictions in microcosm: people proudly showcase the beauty of the creature that was sacrificed for their pleasure.)

With gay rights, familiarity bred acceptance. The animal protection movement has realized that in its area of concern, the opposite might be true—that these days, it is precisely the lack of familiarity with how animals are routinely abused that enables public acceptance of the abuse. So a critical component of the contemporary movement is devoted to calling cruelty by its name, exposing abuses that have long been concealed. With the increasingly universal recognition that cruelty to animals is wrong, highlighting the contradiction between society's theory and its practice may be the best way to bring these into alignment.

That was the case with the undercover investigation conducted by the HSUS at the Hallmark/Westland cattle slaughter plant in Chino, California. In 2007, an investigator from the HSUS applied for a job at the plant, which specialized in killing and processing "spent" dairy cows—animals too sick or old to produce large quantities of milk. These days, many of the United States' nine million dairy cows are spent by the age of three or four, which is less than a third of their typical life expectancy, at which point they are sent to the slaughter. The investigator filmed cows arriving at Hallmark/Westland that

were too sick or weak to walk—“downers,” as they say in the industry. Rather than euthanize the downers to put them out of their misery, workers jabbed them with electric prods or shot water into their stomachs with hoses to get them moving, or simply wrapped chains around their legs and dragged them inside, where they were killed and turned into food.

The investigative footage, broadcast on the nightly news for weeks on end, generated widespread revulsion. This particular plant was the second-largest provider of ground beef to the National School Lunch Program, making the problem personal for parents across the country. Recognizing that mad cow disease was 50 times as likely to be present in downer cows as in ambulatory animals, the U.S. Department of Agriculture ordered the largest meat recall in American history, covering 143 million pounds of beef. Congress held a series of hearings about the safety of the food supply and the treatment of animals, including discussions of the USDA’s past failings. Ultimately, Obama banned the slaughter of all downer cows for human consumption through executive action after taking office in 2009.

The Hallmark/Westland investigation was very much on Californians’ minds when they voted on Proposition 2, the statewide measure banning the extreme confinement of farm animals. That remains the nation’s most important animal protection ballot initiative, but it is hardly the only sign of progress. Within the last decade, states have passed more than 1,000 new animal protection laws; Congress has banned animal fighting and horse slaughter; federal agencies have cracked down on wildlife trafficking and puppy mills; and dozens of the biggest names in food retail, agribusiness, fashion, and cosmetics have adopted animal welfare reforms. In 2014, South Dakota became the 50th state to make malicious animal abuse a felony—a milestone in universalizing opposition to animal cruelty. And early this year, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus said that it would halt the use of elephants in traveling acts within three years. This action, from a company that had previously fought animal protection reforms by spending millions of dollars and even infiltrating a number of animal welfare organizations, was a huge victory for animal protection.

The veal, pig, and egg industries, meanwhile, are starting to transition away from extreme confinement. Within the last three years, more than 100 major food retailers—from Burger King to Hilton Hotels & Resorts to Starbucks—have agreed not to buy pork or eggs from

producers that confine sows or hens in tiny crates. The veal industry is set to complete its conversion away from small crates for calves by 2017. And many of the biggest companies in the egg and pork industries, including Smithfield Foods and Cargill, are swapping out extreme confinement for group-housing systems.

Given the scope of the problem, the animal welfare movement is necessarily a worldwide one. Practices that have been banned in North America and Europe, such as dogfighting and cockfighting, are widely engaged in and legal throughout much of the rest of the world. And with the spread of factory farming, the bush meat trade, the killing of wildlife for their tusks and other parts, and the ongoing destruction of natural habitats, the global demands on the cause can seem daunting. But there are some grounds for optimism. Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the EU recently adopted policies to end the use of gestation crates. All but three countries have stopped commercial whaling, and Canada has been prohibited from exporting hundreds of thousands of seal pelts because of trade restrictions rooted in concern for animal welfare. India and the EU recently banned the sale of cosmetics tested on animals, no matter where the testing occurs.

Industries that use animals are struggling to adapt, caught between their routine conduct and a growing public revulsion with what that conduct involves. Their first line of defense has been to block revelations of standard industry practices by hiding what is done and trying to criminalize exposure of it. When that fails, they try to sanitize the behavior or mitigate some of the cruelty while presenting the rest as unfortunate necessities of life. Over time, however, they—and we—may finally realize that it is possible to find better, more humane ways to consume protein, conduct research, and be entertained. There is no reason why our society cannot combine moral agency with technological and social innovation to eliminate cruelty to animals as an ordinary part of life. And when we have done so, we are likely to wonder why it took so long and what all the fuss was about. 🌱

The Death and Life of the Two-State Solution

How the Palestinians May Eventually Get Their State

Grant Rumley and Amir Tibon

On March 17, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won reelection, thanks in part to a desperate last-minute pledge to his right-wing base that the Palestinians would never get a state so long as he was in power. After the election, he tried to walk his comments back, but Palestinian observers weren't buying it. As one person close to the Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas put it, Netanyahu's reelection marked the end of an era, "the final closing of the window of opportunity for a negotiated solution." The insider continued: "Two years ago, [U.S. Secretary of State] John Kerry told the U.S. Congress that in a matter of a year and a half, or two years at most, the window will close. He was right. It's over."

Compounding the Palestinians' frustration was the recognition that the outcome of the election didn't even matter much: even if Netanyahu had been dethroned, the Palestinians would still have had to rely on what they consider an indifferent and ineffective Obama administration to push the stalled Middle East peace negotiations forward. No one in Ramallah, the de facto Palestinian capital, admits it publicly, but some Palestinian officials actually miss the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush, which seemed to have more influence on Israel than the current White House does. Saeb Erekat, the Palestinians' emissary for talks with Israel and the United States, likes to note in

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private conversations that Bush was the first U.S. president to support a Palestinian state and the only president under whom Israel removed settlements from land claimed by the Palestinians. Barack Obama's administration may have gotten into repeated fights with Netanyahu, but for all the hoopla, Obama has done little to create progress on the ground toward a Palestinian state.

None of this has been good for Abbas, the 80-year-old president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the chair of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Today, Abbas is the weakest he has been in years. The man whom former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres once described as "the best partner that Israel ever had" now finds himself ten years into what was meant to be a four-year presidential term without any real achievement or legacy. His supporters point out that during his tenure, the UN General Assembly recognized Palestine as a state, but that recognition means nothing for the average Palestinian in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, or a refugee camp in a neighboring Arab country. Israeli settlements have expanded on his watch, the Islamist militant group Hamas still controls Gaza, and a two-state solution in which an Israeli state and a Palestinian state divide the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea looks more remote than ever. The toll on Abbas is evident. "The man simply looks sad," an Israeli journalist who has covered him for years said. "It's almost heartbreaking to talk to him these days."

Ironically, however, it is precisely the death of the two-state solution that may turn out to be its revival. Israeli leaders seem to be betting that the status quo of military control in the West Bank can persist indefinitely, but they are likely to be proved mistaken. Younger Palestinians who have lost faith in a negotiated two-state settlement to the conflict are likely to start pushing for their rights inside a single, binational state instead. And as these demands for civil liberties and voting rights escalate and gain international backing, many Israeli leaders may come to realize that however scared they are of a two-state solution, a one-state solution could be even worse. And so they could well end up moving to set up a separate Palestinian state after all.

SEEKING A STATE

Since Abbas took office in 2005, Palestinians have sought to achieve statehood by acquiring all the international legal trappings of a state. But it was not until 2011 that the "Palestine 194" campaign, which

envisioned Palestine becoming the 194th country recognized by the UN, began in earnest. That year, Abbas threatened to call a vote at the UN Security Council over Palestinian statehood, arguing that Palestine's admission to the UN would bolster the Palestinians' leverage in future negotiations. Ultimately, Abbas abandoned the vote, mainly due to the threat of a U.S. veto. In 2012, however, he returned to the General Assembly, where the Palestinians won a vote upgrading their status from "non-state observer" to "non-member observer state," putting Palestine on par with the Vatican.

With momentum on their side, in early 2013, Palestinian leaders began mentioning other international organizations and conventions

Many younger Palestinians are abandoning the goal of a Palestinian state.

they wished to join, and Abbas put their number at 63. The plan, officials said, was to apply to these institutions in escalating order of importance, so as to increase their leverage over Israel. The International Criminal Court (ICC) was

to be among the last. So emboldened were the Palestinians that by mid-2013, Kerry insisted that they halt their campaign before he would broker a new round of negotiations. Abbas obliged, but the campaign was never far from his mind. When the talks collapsed on April 1, 2014, Abbas went back to his previous strategy, immediately signing paperwork to join 15 international conventions (most of them minor).

Abbas made a calculated decision to leave the ICC off the list, trying to avoid a full-scale diplomatic confrontation with Israel and keep the door open for renewed talks. But it is difficult to walk such a fine line, and events can take on a life of their own. When war with Israel erupted in the Gaza Strip last summer, Palestinian unilateralism moved forward accordingly, and the ICC—which the Palestinians hoped could be used to prosecute Israelis for war crimes—shot to the top of the agenda. Abbas was not fully comfortable with such a move, but he felt that his domestic political situation left him with little choice. In December he tried once more to get the Security Council to confer statehood on Palestine, but when that attempt failed, he signed the treaty that established the ICC, as well as letters of intent for more than a dozen other organizations, thrusting the conflict into a new, legal era.

But the Palestine 194 campaign doesn't have a very long shelf life. The Palestinians became full members of the ICC on April 1, but any charges they file there will likely take years before coming to trial, if they



Finding a way: Israel's separation barrier in the West Bank, February 2009

ever do. Returning to the UN Security Council is always an option, meanwhile, but Jordan—a natural, if indifferent, sponsor of pro-Palestinian resolutions—is scheduled to lose its nonpermanent seat at the end of the year. And even if the Obama administration decided to abstain from voting on, rather than veto, a resolution calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state based on Israel's 1967 borders, the consequences would be limited: a diplomatic headache for Israel and a symbolic achievement for the PA, but no real progress toward a settlement. When the UN General Assembly voted to recognize Palestine in 2012, Dani Dayan, a prominent Israeli advocate for settlements in the West Bank, tweeted in Hebrew, “The view outside my window in Samaria tonight remains the same: Israel.” Israel's professional diplomats had worked overtime to explain why the Palestinian statehood campaign was outrageous; Dayan pointed out that it was actually meaningless.

So what comes after the Palestinians have exhausted their attempt to force a Palestinian state on Israel through the international arena? With armed struggle, negotiations, and international pressure all having failed, the PA will have to admit that the time has come to try something new. Abbas has threatened many times in the past to dismantle the PA, which would effectively put all responsibility for governance in the West Bank on Israel, but Israel has never taken these threats too seriously. However, his youngest son, the businessman Tareq

Abbas, said last year that the Palestinians should give up on the two-state solution and demand instead civil rights from Israel. This veiled reference to voting rights would give Palestinians access to the Israeli Knesset, where decisions regarding their lives are really made. A combination of the father's threats and the son's alternative strategy would put Israel on a dangerous path: the country would have to deal with approximately 4.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza asking not for land of their own but for a voice and a role inside Israel itself.

YOUTH IN REVOLT

Any such change in strategy would require a changing of the guard in the Palestinian national movement. A new strategy won't happen so long as Mahmoud Abbas is leading the Palestinians, and it is hard to imagine anyone but Abbas leading the Palestinians while he is still on the scene. Abbas has cracked down on dissidents and regularly arrests journalists, but he manages to keep the situation quiet, and there are few things Israeli, Arab, or U.S. officials want more than a quiet West Bank—especially given the turmoil raging elsewhere in the region these days.

But it's a different story internally. These days, Abbas' biggest concern is not fighting Israel or Hamas but fighting his nemesis within Fatah, the leading Palestinian party: Muhammad Dahlan. The feud dates back to the 2007 civil war between Fatah and Hamas, when Abbas watched Dahlan, then a rising leader in Fatah and the security chief in the Gaza Strip, lose the territory to Hamas. Dahlan returned to the West Bank afterward a marked man in the eyes of Abbas, who exiled him in 2011. From his base in the United Arab Emirates, Dahlan now spends his time plotting revenge.

Dahlan represents everything Abbas is not: he is popular, charismatic, relatively young, and unafraid to shed blood. Although he spent time with the PLO's exiled leadership in Tunisia in the 1990s, Dahlan is not exactly in the so-called Tunis crowd, the group of elder statesmen who helped form modern Palestinian politics. The Tunis crowd shifted the Palestinian movement away from armed struggle and toward bilateral negotiations with Israel, and it built the PA. But these leaders haven't made much progress in recent years and are commonly regarded among younger Palestinians as corrupt and stagnant. Few want Abbas' successor to be another member of the old guard, and Abbas sees Dahlan's looming challenge as the start of a major struggle for control over the future of the Palestinian movement.

The divide breaks down along generational lines. Younger Palestinians are losing patience with the Tunis crowd and its creation, the PA. As a result, many of them are undergoing a political evolution—abandoning, like Abbas' own son, the goal of an independent Palestinian state in favor of attaining citizenship and rights in a binational Israeli state. A 2013 poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found that 65 percent of Palestinians over the age of 50 still preferred the two-state solution, compared with only 48 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 28.

The impulse among that younger demographic is realistic. At a recent meeting of about a dozen young Israeli and Palestinian journalists convened by a pro-peace organization, participants were asked whether they supported the two-state solution. All the Israelis were for it, although some, reflecting the fears of many Israeli Jews, thought it was too dangerous to pursue at the moment. On the Palestinian side, only one participant supported the two-state solution. The rest, a group of young, moderate, worldly Palestinians, said they would prefer to get Israeli citizenship. “You guys can just get into your car, drive to the airport, and catch a flight to Paris,” one of the Palestinians told the Israelis. “I have to file a request months ahead, go through checkpoints, and get special permissions from Israeli intelligence agencies. Israel will never give us a state, but it can give us our rights. I want to be like you.”

For young Palestinians who have grown up under the PA, the demise of that corrupt and authoritarian pseudo-state and the incorporation of the West Bank into Israeli institutions would be no great loss. Khalil Shikaki, a 60-year-old Palestinian pollster, explained the differing views to *The New York Times* in 2014:

Just ask my son. He will tell you that my generation has failed and should exit the stage and take its mainstream paradigm, the two-state solution, along with it.

The views of my generation were formed during the heyday of the Palestinian national movement; his views were formed during the failed years of Oslo [the peace process that began in 1993], the days of perceived Palestinian Authority corruption and tyranny, the Internet and social media. We are pragmatic; he is idealistic. We demand independence and sovereignty; he demands equal rights.

Not since the years following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war has Palestinian politics seen such a stark generational divide. Back then, young

Palestinian activists such as Yasir Arafat and George Habash established their own liberation movements and parties, stealing the mantle of leadership from their defeated elders. Today, a new wave of leaders will likely spark a conflict between the liberation movement (the PLO) and the state-building apparatus (the PA), one the latter will probably lose.

Disbanding the PA would send Palestinian politics back to pre-Oslo times, when officials adopted a liberation-movement mindset rather than a state-in-waiting one. Power would rest with whoever controlled the largest political party, Fatah. But Fatah would be itself weakened, since it is so closely tied to the PA, to which it has provided leadership from the beginning. To admit that the PA was a failed experiment would be to admit that the single biggest investment of the premier Palestinian political party was a failure.

Hamas emerged as the antiestablishment political party in the throes of the first intifada, the Palestinian uprising that began in 1987. When the Oslo process led to the creation of a Palestinian government in waiting, Hamas vehemently opposed it. By 2006, Hamas had decided to accept governance enough to contest elections and win control over the Gaza Strip. But Fatah had no intention of letting Gaza go to its rival, and the result was the 2007 civil war. Were the PA to collapse, Hamas officials would line up around the corner to cheer good riddance to a cash cow they never controlled.

A return to the pre-Oslo phase of Palestinian nationalism could also turn the PLO back into a weak government dependent on its neighbors and sponsors, just as it was for most of its existence. Some of the Palestinians' possible regional sponsors, such as Egypt, Jordan, and some of the Gulf states, would find it hard to give up on the PA and the two-state solution—not least because they have served as a fig leaf for their normalization of relations with Israel over the last few decades. For other, more rejectionist states, such as Qatar and Turkey, the abandonment of the two-state solution in favor of an equal rights campaign might allow them to shift their support from Hamas—their current darling—to the PLO.

THE ONE-STATE SOLUTION

A PLO that no longer had to run the PA, enjoyed the support of younger Palestinian nationalists, and received newfound assistance from regional sponsors would not just change the dynamic on the ground in the occupied territories; it would also generate real international pressure

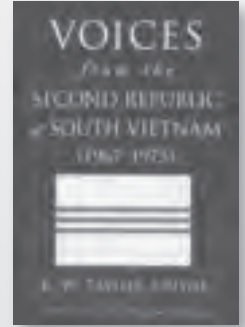
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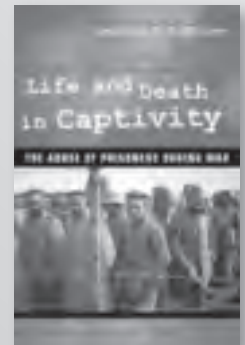
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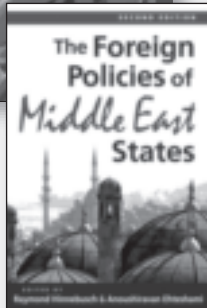


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INFORMING PUBLIC POLICY

on Israel. To date, foreign threats have failed to alter Israel's calculus. Even though some on the Israeli left have hoped that the specter of European sanctions over settlement building would convince the government to renew the two-state solution, that now seems unlikely. Europe's steps on this front have been relatively minimal, targeting the settlements while sparing Israel's economy within the 1967 lines.

In the 2015 election, the Israeli left tried to convince voters that Israel faced a grave threat in the international arena, from economic sanctions to formal condemnations to official recognitions of a Palestinian state.

But voters didn't buy it, because their fear of territorial concessions in the West Bank overcame their fear of any new anti-settlement measures drafted in Brussels. In the absence of progress toward a two-state solution, however, the international debate over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could start sliding

toward a one-state reality, and the world will likely begin demanding that Israel give Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem equal rights. At that point, Israelis would find the international threat more frightening than the cost of a Palestinian state.

This slide would take time, especially given the current cast of characters in the international arena. Obama, now mulling a last-ditch effort to save the two-state solution, may allow Kerry one more try, even though the last round of peace talks was launched under the same pretense. But with such bad chemistry between Abbas and Netanyahu, two leaders who seem to share only a desire to stay in power and a severe disappointment in the Obama administration, new talks are unlikely to achieve anything. A new round may collapse even faster than the last one did.

A shift toward a one-state outcome would create a tough dilemma for Israel, since officials would not be able to argue against it by appealing to security. During his six years in office, Netanyahu has rejected moves toward a Palestinian state by arguing that any land that Israeli forces evacuated and handed over to the PA would immediately be taken over by Hamas, the self-proclaimed Islamic State, or Hezbollah. Abbas has spent his entire time in office trying (and failing) to convince the Israelis that his security forces could quell the more violent elements in the West Bank and Gaza. But since the 2007 civil war, his rhetoric

The most likely result of an impending one-state outcome is the implementation of the two-state solution.

has not been able to overcome Fatah's humiliating defeat at the hands of Hamas and the subsequent expulsion of the entire Fatah leadership from Gaza. So Netanyahu has had an easy time suggesting that a Palestinian state might be a threat to Israel. Yet it would be far harder for him or any future Israeli prime minister to say no to a new generation of Palestinians who called for Israeli citizenship and voting rights but no change to the existing security structure.

The most obvious Israeli counterstrategy to such a one-state campaign would be a move to put the Palestinians on the path to statehood. Since the Palestinians would be getting a state, an Israeli prime minister could argue, there would be no need to grant them voting rights. But the current Israeli leadership is refusing to lay the groundwork for such a state, sometimes invoking reasonable arguments (such as concerns about security and the lack of a viable Palestinian governance system) and at other times sticking to religious arguments about Israel's right to the land. At some point, the international community will question whether Israeli military control of the West Bank really is a temporary, soon-to-be-resolved situation and, if it isn't, what should be done about the two million people living under it.

Granting Israeli voting rights to the Palestinians living under Israeli control in the West Bank and East Jerusalem would mean the end of the Jewish state, and there is no chance the Israelis would agree to it. A one-state campaign could, however, inflict massive damage on Israel, far greater than what anti-Israeli or pro-Palestinian campaigns have. Kerry gave Israel a taste of the umbrage it might face openly when he warned in private last year that without a peace deal, Israel could become "an apartheid state." Although his words angered officials in Jerusalem and members of the organized Jewish community in the United States, Netanyahu's closest confidant, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, regularly sounds a similar warning.

A PARADOXICAL PATH TO PEACE

All of this suggests that the most likely result of an impending one-state outcome is the implementation of the two-state solution. That would be the obvious way for Israel to silence its critics and kill any demands for Palestinian civil rights. An Israeli stance that refused to grant citizenship or voting rights to the Palestinians but held out the prospect of granting them clear title to most of the West Bank would meet with much acclaim.

For the Palestinians, in other words, the increasingly likeliest way to achieve an independent state is, paradoxically, to give up on trying to get one. Only when the Palestinians make the Israelis recognize that the status quo cannot persist indefinitely and reach for something the Israelis hold even more dear than the West Bank—control over Israel itself as a Jewish state—will the Israelis begin to see a two-state solution as their least-bad option. But if things eventually reach this crossroads, the state the Palestinians will be granted won't be the one they have demanded for the last two decades. Instead of following the 1967 borders, its outline will be based on Israel's security and demographic concerns. In the last round of peace talks, Netanyahu was willing to discuss a Palestinian state in approximately 90 percent of the West Bank, with limited land swaps. If Israel decides one day to support a Palestinian state in order to kill a binational state, the result is more likely to be Netanyahu's abridged version of it.

The United States has few options to counter this one-state slide, but one is to revert to the formula Bush used in 2004. That year, in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, he sent Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon a letter reassuring Israel of his support for its position in future negotiations with the Palestinians. In the letter, Bush made a distinction between Israeli settlements deep in the West Bank, which are generally expected to be evacuated in a future agreement, and the larger settlements closer to the 1967 borders, which are generally expected to become part of a future Israel. In effect, Bush was decoupling the 1967 borders from the peace process. One of Obama's first steps on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was to back away from Bush's letter and emphasize the importance of the 1967 borders. The next U.S. president might find this forgotten legacy of Bush and Sharon more useful for making progress in an era of Israeli and Palestinian unilateralism.

In such a situation, moreover, this outcome could credibly be presented to Israeli voters not as a soft act of justice or charity (arguments that do not resonate) but as a hard act of self-preservation. Dov Weisglass, who was Sharon's chief of staff during the Gaza disengagement negotiations, has said that Sharon presented the pullout to Israeli voters in "fluent Likudish." Sharon did not conjure up fantasies of everlasting peace; he framed the decision as necessary for Israel's survival. A pullout from the West Bank will need to be explained in similar terms. Only then will the threats that come with it stop trumping the supposed opportunities of some distant peace accord. 🌐

The Decline of International Studies

Why Flying Blind Is Dangerous

Charles King

In October 2013, the U.S. Department of State eliminated its funding program for advanced language and cultural training on Russia and the former Soviet Union. Created in 1983 as a special appropriation by Congress, the so-called Title VIII Program had supported generations of specialists working in academia, think tanks, and the U.S. government itself. But as a State Department official told the Russian news service RIA Novosti at the time, “In this fiscal climate, it just didn’t make it.” The program’s shuttering came just a month before the start of a now well-known chain of events: Ukraine’s Euromaidan revolution, Russia’s annexation of Crimea, and the descent of U.S.-Russian relations to their lowest level since the Cold War. The timing was, to say the least, unfortunate.

The end of the United States’ premier federal program for Russian studies saved taxpayers only \$3.3 million—the cost of two Tomahawk cruise missiles or about half a day’s sea time for an aircraft carrier strike group. The development was part of a broader trend: the scaling back of a long-term national commitment to education and research focused on international affairs. Two years ago, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences warned of a hidden crisis in the humanities and social sciences. “Now more than ever,” the academy’s report concluded, “the spirit of international cooperation, the promotion of trade and foreign investment, the requirements of international diplomacy, and even the enhancement of national security depend in some measure on an American citizenry trained in humanistic and social scientific

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disciplines, including languages, transnational studies, moral and political philosophy, global ethics, and international relations.” In response to lobbying by universities and scholarly associations, Title VIII was resuscitated earlier this year, but it came back at less than half its previous funding level and with future appropriations left uncertain. Given the mounting challenges that Washington faces in Russia and eastern Europe, now seems to be an especially odd time to reduce federal support for educating the next cohort of experts.

The rise of the United States as a global power was the product of more than merely economic and military advantages. Where the country was truly hegemonic was in its unmatched knowledge of the hidden interior of other nations: their languages and cultures, their

Education and research are now less national priorities than objects of political jockeying.

histories and political systems, their local economies and human geographies. Through programs such as Title VIII, the U.S. government created a remarkable community of minutemen of the mind: scholars, graduate students, and undergraduates who possessed the linguistic skills, historical sensitivity, and

sheer intellectual curiosity to peer deeply into foreign societies. Policymakers sometimes learned to listen to them, and not infrequently, these scholars even became policymakers themselves.

That knowledge flourished in an environment defined by some of the great innovations of American higher education: unfettered inquiry, the assessment of scholarship via rigorous peer review, the expectation that the value of discovery lies somewhere other than in its immediate usefulness, and the link between original research and innovative teaching. If you want evidence-based expertise on terrorism in Pakistan, environmental degradation in China, or local politics in provincial Russia, there is someone in an American university who can provide it. It is harder to imagine a Pakistani scholar who knows Nebraska, a Chinese researcher who can speak with authority about the revival of Detroit, or a Russian professor who wields original survey data on the next U.S. presidential race.

But things are changing. Shifting priorities at the national level, a misreading of the effects of globalization, and academics' own drift away from knowing real things about real places have combined to weaken this vital component of the United States' intellectual capital. Educational institutions and the disciplines they preserve are retreating from the task of cultivating men and women who are comfortable moving around the globe, both literally and figuratively. Government agencies, in turn, are reducing their overall support and narrowing it to fields deemed relevant to U.S. national security—and even to specific research topics within them. Worse, academic research is now subject to the same “culture war” attacks that federal lawmakers used to reserve for profane rap lyrics and blasphemous artwork. Unless Washington

stops this downward spiral, these changes will not only weaken national readiness. They will also erode the habit of mind that good international affairs education was always supposed to produce: an appreciation for people, practices, and ideas that are not one's own.

LOST IN TRANSLATION?

Americans naturally swing between isolation and engagement with the world, but it is government that has usually nudged them in one direction or the other. A century ago, rates of foreign-language study in Europe and the United States were about the same, with roughly a third of secondary school students in both places learning a modern foreign language. After the United States entered World War I, however, almost half the U.S. states criminalized the teaching of German or other foreign languages in schools. It took a Supreme Court decision in 1923 to overturn that practice.

During World War II, the U.S. government made attempts to train up linguists and instant area experts, but these initiatives quickly faded. It was not until the onset of the Cold War that private universities such as Columbia and Harvard devoted serious attention to the problem and opened pioneering programs for Russian studies. The Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations launched grants for scholars working specifically on Soviet politics, history, or economics.

Only in the late 1950s did the focus on what is now known as internationalization become a national priority—a response to the Sputnik scare and the sense that the Soviets could soon gain superiority in fields well beyond science and technology. The National Defense Education Act of 1958, followed by the Higher Education Act of 1965 and its successors, provided special funding for regional studies and advanced language training for American graduate students. Among other measures, the legislation created a network of National Resource Centers located at major U.S. universities, which in turn ran master's programs and other forms of instruction to train the next generation of specialists. In 2010, the total size of this allocation, known as Title VI, stood at \$110 million, distributed across programs for East Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Russia and Eurasia, and other areas. Along with the Fulbright-Hays scholarships for international academic exchanges, established in 1961, Title VI became one of the principal sources of funding for future political scientists, historians, linguists, anthropologists, and others working on distinct world regions.

On the face of it, that investment seems to have paid off. American universities have emerged as among the world's most globally minded. No U.S. college president can long survive without developing a strategy for further internationalization. New schools for specialized study have sprung up across the United States—for example, the University of Oklahoma's College of International Studies, founded in 2011, and Indiana University's School of Global and International Studies, which opened in 2012. Older centers—including Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs—consistently top world rankings. The U.S. example has become the model for a raft of new institutions around the world, such as the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore, founded in 2003 and 2004, respectively, and the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University, founded in 2010.

True, young Americans can play video games with their peers in Cairo, chat online with friends in St. Petersburg, and download music from a punk band based in Beijing. But consuming the world is not the same as understanding it. After a steady expansion over two decades, enrollment in foreign-language courses at U.S. colleges fell by 6.7 percent between 2009 and 2013. Most language programs experienced double-digit losses. Even Spanish—a language chosen by more U.S. students than all other languages combined—has suffered its first decline since the Modern Language Association began keeping count in 1958. Today, the third most studied language in U.S. higher education, behind Spanish and French, is a homegrown one: American Sign Language.

Something similar has happened in the unlikeliest of places: among professional scholars of international relations. According to an annual survey conducted by the College of William and Mary, 30 percent of American researchers in the field say that they have a working knowledge of no language other than English, and more than half say that they rarely or never cite non-English sources in their work. (Forty percent, however, rank Chinese as the most valuable language for their students to know after English.) At least within the United States, the remarkable growth in the study of



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Nominations and expressions of interest will continue to be considered until the position is filled. Henry Bienen, President Emeritus of Northwestern University, is chairing the Search Committee. The Search Committee will initiate the screening of candidates upon receipt of information. Nominations and/or letters of application, including current curriculum vitae, should be electronically sent to:

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international relations in recent decades has produced one of the academy's more parochial disciplines.

Part of the problem lies in the professoriate. An iron law of academia holds that, with time, all disciplines bore even themselves. English professors drift away from novels and toward literary theory. Economists envy mathematicians. Political scientists give up grappling with dilemmas of power and governance—the concerns of thinkers from Aristotle to Max Weber and Hans Morgenthau—and make their own pastiche of the natural sciences with careful hypotheses about minute problems. Being monumentally wrong is less attractive than being unimportantly right. Research questions derive almost exclusively from what has gone unsaid in some previous scholarly conversation. As any graduate student learns early on, one must first “fill a hole in the literature” and only later figure out whether it was worth filling. Doctoral programs also do a criminally poor job of teaching young scholars to write and speak in multiple registers—that is, use jargon with their peers if necessary but then explain their findings to a broader audience with equal zeal and effectiveness.

Still, the cultishness of the American academy can be overstated. Today, younger scholars of Russia and Eurasia, for example, have language skills and local knowledge that are the envy of their older colleagues—in part because of decades of substantial federal investment in the field and in part because many current students actually hail from the region and have chosen to make their careers in American universities. Even the increasing quantification of political science can be a boon when abstract concepts are combined with grass-roots understanding of specific contexts. Statistical modeling, field experiments, and “big data” have revolutionized areas as diverse as development economics, public health, and product marketing. There is no reason that similar techniques shouldn't enrich the study of international affairs, and the private sector is already forging ahead in that area. Companies such as Dataminr—a start-up that analyzes social-media postings for patterns to detect breaking news—now track everything from environmental crises to armed conflict. Foreign policy experts used to debate the causes of war. Now they can see them unspooling in real time.

Scholarly research in global affairs, especially work funded by the National Science Foundation, has come under growing attack.

The deeper problems are matters of money and partisan politics. In an Internet-connected world infused with global English, private funders have radically scaled back their support for work that requires what the political scientist Richard Fenno called “soaking and poking”: studying difficult languages, living in unfamiliar communities, and making sense of complex histories and cultures. Very few of the major U.S. foundations finance international and regional studies on levels approaching those of two decades ago. Foundation boards, influenced by the modish language of disruption and social entrepreneurship, want projects with actionable ideas and measurable impact. Over the short term, serious investments in building hard-to-acquire skills are unlikely to yield either. And these developments don’t represent a mere shift from the study of Russia and Eurasia to a focus on the Middle East and East Asia—a pivot that would be reasonable given changes in global politics. The Carnegie Corporation of New York, for example, ended its prestigious senior fellowship program on Muslim societies in 2009 and wound down its wider Islam Initiative shortly thereafter.

The U.S. government has followed suit. The suspension of Title VIII was only the latest in a series of cutbacks. The Foreign Language Assistance Program, created in 1988 to provide local schools with matching grants from the Department of Education for teaching foreign languages, ended in 2012. The previous year, Title VI funding for university-based regional studies fell by 40 percent and has flatlined since. If today’s Title VI appropriation were funded at the level it was during the Johnson administration, then it would total almost half a billion dollars after adjusting for inflation. Instead, the 2014 number stood at slightly below \$64 million.

The same thing has happened with direct funding to undergraduates and graduate students, particularly when it comes to the National Security Education Program (NSEP), which offers students financial assistance for foreign-language study and cultural immersion. NSEP was established in 1991 on the initiative of David Boren, then a Democratic senator from Oklahoma, with the goal of training a new, post-Cold War generation of foreign affairs specialists. The program’s signature elements—Boren Scholarships and Boren Fellowships—offer grants of up to \$30,000 to highly qualified undergraduates and graduate students in exchange for at least a year of federal government service in national security after graduation. For all its prestige, however, and despite nominal support among both liberals and

conservatives, the Boren program offers fewer such awards today than it did in the mid-1990s.

Another element of NSEP is an innovative initiative for heritage speakers—American citizens who possess native abilities in a foreign language and wish to develop professional-level skills in English—and it, too, has shrunk. The initiative has never been able to fund more than 40 people per year, most of them native speakers of Arabic or Mandarin, and the number has been steadily falling, reaching just 18 in 2014. (This program is now housed at Georgetown University, where I teach.) In a somewhat encouraging sign, enrollment has been growing markedly in NSEP's Language Flagship program, which gives grants to colleges to field advanced courses in languages deemed important for national security. But the raw numbers reveal just how small the United States' next generation of linguists actually is. Last year, the total number of students enrolled in NSEP-sponsored courses for all the "critical languages"—Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, Urdu, and Yoruba—was under a thousand.

In tandem with these trends, scholarly research in global affairs, especially work funded by the National Science Foundation, has come under growing attack. The annual appropriation for the NSF is around \$7.3 billion, of which a fraction—less than \$260 million—goes to the behavioral, social, and economic sciences. Of that figure, only about \$13 million goes to political scientists, and an even smaller amount goes to those doing research on international affairs. Still, these scholars now receive the kind of lambasting that used to be directed mainly against the National Endowment for the Arts.

As just one example, for the past two years, the NSF has been the particular focus of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, which oversees the foundation along with portions of the Federal Aviation Administration, NASA, and other agencies. The committee intends to subject all NSF-funded projects to a relevance test that would require the foundation to certify that every taxpayer dollar is spent "in the national interest." In a recent opinion piece for *The Hill*, Lamar Smith, the Republican representative from Texas who chairs the committee, pilloried NSF-funded researchers working on the environmental history of New Zealand, women and Islam in Turkey, and local politics in India. "How about studying the United States of America?" he wrote. "Federal research agencies have an obligation

to explain to American taxpayers why their money is being used to provide free foreign vacations to college professors.” In response to this kind of criticism, academic associations have hired their own lobbyists—a recognition of the fact that education and research are now less national priorities than objects of political jockeying, on par with items on the wish lists of private corporations and interest groups.

The crusade for relevance is part of a broader development: the growing militarization of government-funded scholarship. Researchers in international and regional studies have always doffed a hat to strategic

Congressional staff could spend their time on things other than trips to the NSF archives to root out recondite research topics for public ridicule.

priorities. Even historians and literature professors became accustomed to tout- ing their work’s policy significance when they applied for federal grants and fellowships. But today, a substan- tial portion of assistance comes directly from the U.S. Department of Defense. The department’s Minerva Initiative provides support for research on “areas of strategic importance to U.S. national security policy” and for “projects ad-

dress- ing specific topic areas determined by the Secretary of Defense,” as the call for applications says. In the current three-year cycle, which runs until 2017, the program expects to disburse \$17 million to university- based researchers in the social sciences. Millions more have been allocated since the first round began in 2009.

But there is a substantial difference between research that broadly supports the national interest and work that directly enhances national security. Developing new techniques for teaching Arabic and Chinese, for example, or analyzing EU regulatory policy is the former without necessarily being the latter. When scholars need research money and Washington needs actionable analysis, the danger is that the meaning of the term “national security” can balloon beyond any reasonable definition. Even more worrying, in an era of real transnational threats, knowledge that used to be thought of as the purview of the police— say, how to manage a mass protest and deter crime—can easily slide into matters of surveilling and soldiering.

It was once the case that state-supported research was meant to give the United States an edge in its relations with other countries. Now, with programs such as Minerva, the temptation is to give government

an edge over the governed. Recent Minerva projects have focused on the origins of mass political movements, “radicalization” among Somali refugees in Minnesota, and—in the words of one project summary—“the study of Islamic conversion in America,” aimed at providing “options for governments to use for the tasking of surveillance.” Professors funded by Minerva work with project managers at U.S. military research facilities, who in turn report to the secretary of defense, who has by definition found the research topics to be matters of strategic concern. In an incentive structure that rewards an emphasis on countering global threats and securing the homeland, the devil lies in the definitions. In this framework, the Boston Marathon bombing becomes a national security problem, whereas the Sandy Hook massacre remains a matter for the police and psychologists—a distinction that is both absurd as social science and troubling as public policy.

THE PRICE OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Things could be different. Funding for foreign-language study, cultural immersion, and advanced inquiry could be a federal priority, with funding levels restored to what they were in previous years. Research and teaching could be placed at one remove from the national security apparatus, as they are in the Department of Education’s model for Title VI or in a public trust along the lines of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The creation of knowledge and its communication through instruction could be made immune from “gotcha” politics. And congressional staff members could spend their time on things other than trips to the NSF archives to root out recondite research topics for public ridicule.

At the same time, universities have their own part to play. Disciplines can, and do, go haywire. Researchers and graduate students should be judged not by how well they embed themselves in a scholarly mainstream but by how truly original and world-connected they aim to be. Fundable scholarship should not be reduced to a narrow matter of national security. But it is hard to see why anyone would make a career of international affairs—a pursuit that begins with valuing people, cultures, and polities in all their diversity—without some commitment to serving the public interest.

Given that no one can know where the next crisis will erupt, having a broadly competent reserve of experts is the price of global engagement. Yesterday’s apparent irrelevancies—the demographics of eastern Ukraine,

for example, or popular attitudes toward public health in West Africa—can suddenly become matters of consequence. Acquiring competence in these sorts of topics forms the mental disposition that J. William Fulbright called “seeing the world as others see it”—an understanding that people could reasonably view their identities, interests, politics, and leaders in ways that might at first seem bizarre or wrong-headed. It also provides the essential context for distinguishing smart policy-specific questions from misguided ones. Great powers should revel in small data: the granular and culture-specific knowledge that can make the critical difference between really getting a place and getting it profoundly wrong.

International affairs education and research are also part of a country’s domestic life. Democratic societies depend on having a cadre of informed professionals outside government—people in universities, think tanks, museums, and research institutes who cultivate expertise protected from the pressures of the state. Many countries can field missile launchers and float destroyers; only a few have built a Brookings Institution or a Chatham House. Yet the latter is what makes them magnets for people from the very places their institutions study. The University of London’s nearly century-old SOAS, for example, which focuses on Asian and African studies, is a beehive of languages and causes, where Koreans, Nigerians, and Palestinians come to receive world-class instruction on, among other things, North and South Korea, Nigeria, and the Palestinian territories.

All of this points to just how important international and regional studies can be when they are adequately funded, publicly valued, and shielded from the exigencies of national security. Their chief role is not to enable the makers of foreign policy. It is rather to constrain them: to show why things will always be more complicated than they seem, how to foresee unintended consequences, and when to temper ambition with a realistic understanding of what is historically and culturally imaginable. For more than half a century, the world has been shaped by the simple fact that the United States could look at other countries—their pasts and presents, their myths and worldviews—with sympathetic curiosity. Maintaining the ability to do so is not only a great power’s insurance policy against the future. It is also the essence of an open, inquisitive, and critical society. 🌐

China's Soft-Power Push

The Search for Respect

David Shambaugh

As China's global power grows, Beijing is learning that its image matters. For all its economic and military might, the country suffers from a severe shortage of soft power. According to global public opinion surveys, it enjoys a decidedly mixed international image. While China's economic prowess impresses much of the world, its repressive political system and mercantilist business practices tarnish its reputation. And so, in an attempt to improve perceptions, Beijing has mounted a major public relations offensive in recent years, investing billions of dollars around the world in a variety of efforts.

Although Beijing's publicity blitz began in 2007 under President Hu Jintao, it has intensified under President Xi Jinping. In October 2011, as Xi was preparing to take power, the 17th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) devoted a whole plenary session to the issue of culture, with the final communiqué declaring that it was a national goal to "build our country into a socialist cultural superpower." And in 2014, Xi announced, "We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's messages to the world." Under Xi, China has bombarded the world with a welter of new initiatives: "the Chinese dream," "the Asia-Pacific dream," "the Silk Road Economic Belt," "the Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road," "a new type of major-country relations," and many others. It is easy to dismiss such talk as "slogan diplomacy," but Beijing nonetheless attaches great importance to it.

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In China, “propaganda” is not a derogatory term.

China is fleshing out these rhetorical salvos in proposed institutions, such as the New Development Bank (a project organized by China together with Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. All of these would supplement a host of regional bodies that China has already created in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and central and eastern Europe. Through these institutions, China is meticulously constructing an alternative architecture to the postwar Western order.

And it is backing up its soft-power ventures with serious money: \$50 billion for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, \$41 billion for the New Development Bank, \$40 billion for the Silk Road Economic Belt, and \$25 billion for the Maritime Silk Road. Beijing has also pledged to invest \$1.25 trillion worldwide by 2025. This scale of investment is unprecedented: even during the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union did not spend anywhere near as much as China is spending today. Together, these recent pledges by Beijing add up to \$1.41 trillion; in contrast, the Marshall Plan cost the equivalent of \$103 billion in today’s dollars.

China’s diplomatic and development schemes form just one part of a much broader agenda aimed at enhancing its soft power in media, publishing, education, the arts, sports, and other domains. Nobody knows for sure how much China spends on these activities, but analysts estimate that the annual budget for “external propaganda” runs in the neighborhood of \$10 billion annually. By contrast, the U.S. Department of State spent \$666 million on public diplomacy in fiscal year 2014.

Clearly, Beijing is using the strongest instrument in its soft-power toolbox: money. Wherever Chinese leaders travel these days—and between them, Xi and Premier Li Keqiang visited more than 50 countries in 2014—they sign huge trade and investment deals, extend generous loans, and dole out hefty aid packages. Major powers always try to use their financial assets to buy influence and shape the actions of others; in this regard, China is no different. But what is striking about China’s investments is how low a return they appear to be yielding. Actions speak louder than words, and in many parts of the world, China’s behavior on the ground contradicts its benign rhetoric.



Tell it like it isn't: a Xinhua reporter in Beijing, August 2008

THE MESSENGERS

The father of soft power, the political scientist Joseph Nye, defined it as emanating largely from society—specifically, cultural, political, and social values. Nye also allowed that a country's political system and foreign policy could earn respect and thus contribute to its soft power. But this definition is premised on the clear demarcation that exists in democratic societies between state and nonstate spheres. In China, the government manipulates and manages almost all propaganda and cultural activities.

The Chinese communist system has always accepted that information must be managed and that people must be indoctrinated. In China, “propaganda” is not a derogatory term. As the country has opened up to the world, the state has had to try harder to maintain its grip on information, and its efforts on this front have become more sophisticated. Now, however, Chinese authorities are trying to control information not only inside China but increasingly outside, too.

The institutional nerve center of this operation is the State Council Information Office (SCIO). Located in a Soviet-era building in central Beijing, it looks like and plays the part of the Ministry of Truth in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The SCIO, which forms part of a broader propaganda apparatus, coordinates various propaganda efforts, and it boasts a large staff, a giant budget, and a great deal of bureaucratic

clout. Because the SCIO is a key censor and media watchdog in China, the mere mention of its name brings a concerned look to the faces of many Chinese, particularly intellectuals and journalists.

Every December, the SCIO convenes an annual conference at which it outlines guidelines for China's external propaganda work for the coming year. As Jiang Weiqiang, the SCIO's vice minister, explained to me in 2009, the blueprint covers "exhibitions, publications, media activities, exchange programs, 'Year of China' festivals abroad, and other activities." Jiang also called the guidelines "our soft-power strategy." Secret at the time of adoption, the plans are subsequently published in a volume called *China Media Yearbook*.

In addition to its main role of overseeing the media and coordinating all of China's external communications, the SCIO acts as a messenger in its own right: it employs spokespeople, holds press conferences, publishes magazines and books, and produces films. It has even developed an app that provides users with one-stop shopping for all of the government's white papers. Some of the SCIO's propaganda targets Taiwan, Hong Kong, and overseas Chinese communities—all high-priority audiences for Beijing. And some of it targets visitors to China, including foreign residents, tourists, and business travelers, through publishing houses such as the Foreign Languages Press and newspapers such as *China Daily* and the *Global Times*. The SCIO is also involved in controlling Internet content, including approving all applications for websites. But the SCIO's principal responsibility is to define the ideas to be propagated abroad and keep other Chinese institutions on message.

THE MEDIA AND THE MESSAGE

A major part of Beijing's "going out" strategy entails subsidizing the dramatic expansion of its media presence overseas, with the goal of establishing its own global media empire to break what it considers "the Western media monopoly." Most prominent among these efforts is the Xinhua News Agency, China's official state news service. From its inception, Xinhua has had a dual role, both domestically and internationally: to report news and to disseminate Communist Party propaganda. Altogether, Xinhua now employs approximately 3,000 journalists, 400 of whom are posted abroad in its 170 bureaus. And Xinhua is expanding the staffs of its existing bureaus and beefing up its online presence with audio and video content.

Xinhua's global expansion is motivated not just by concern for China's international image but also by money. Xinhua sees an opportunity to compete head-to-head with the main Western newswires, such as the Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, and Bloomberg. The goal, as one Xinhua official I spoke with in 2010 put it, is to become a "real world international news agency." Xinhua even harbors ambitions of becoming a modern multimedia conglomerate, competing with the likes of News Corp, Viacom, and Time Warner. And once its online video presence expands, it will try to steal market share from 24-hour news channels such as CNN, the BBC, and Al Jazeera.

In its quest for profit, Xinhua publishes descriptive news reports that it markets as a cheaper product than what the Western wire services offer. In 2010, Xinhua had 80,000 paying institutional subscribers, which produced a strong revenue stream. The agency is targeting the developing world in particular, where Western media have a smaller presence and where there is no real domestic competition for international news. Xinhua's inroads there also help fulfill its goal of telling China's story to the world.

China's premier state television channel, CCTV, or China Central Television, has also gone global. It launched its first 24-hour English channel, CCTV International, in 2000 and now broadcasts in six languages around the world. The network is trying to alter its stilted and propagandistic flavor and package its content in more viewer-friendly formats. In 2012, CCTV set up new production facilities in Nairobi, Kenya, and in Washington, D.C., where it unveiled its ambitious CCTV America channel. The Washington operation, CCTV says, will become the global hub of its newsgathering and broadcasting operations.

China is also stepping up its penetration of foreign radio waves. China Radio International, formerly known as Radio Beijing, was founded in 1941 as a wartime propaganda tool against Japan but now has far greater reach. With its headquarters in Beijing, it broadcasts 392 hours of programming per day in 38 languages and maintains 27 overseas bureaus.

These media outlets constitute the major weapons in what China considers a "discourse war" with the West, in which Beijing is pushing back against what it perceives as anti-China sentiment around the world. But other official organs are also playing a direct role in these skirmishes. Chinese embassies now regularly issue press statements rebutting foreign media characterizations of China, take out full-page

ads in foreign newspapers, and attempt to intimidate universities and nongovernmental organizations that sponsor events deemed unfriendly to China. Their ambassadors publish op-eds.

There is a harder edge to these efforts, too. The Chinese government now monitors foreign China watchers' and journalists' writings more carefully than ever before and has stepped up its efforts to intimidate the foreign media—both inside and outside China. In Beijing, the SCIO and the Foreign Ministry often call foreign journalists in for “tea chats” to scold them for articles deemed unfriendly to China. The government has refused to renew the visas of a number of journalists (including some from *The New York Times*) and has refused to issue visas for American and European scholars on its blacklist. Outside China, embassy officials sometimes warn newspaper editors not to publish articles on subjects that might offend Beijing.

Thus, like its propaganda apparatus, China's censorship machine is going global. And it appears to be having an impact. In a troubling trend, foreign China scholars are increasingly practicing self-censorship, worried about their continued ability to visit China. The Chinese government has penalized major media outlets, such as Bloomberg, for publishing certain articles. And it has blocked the Chinese-language websites of leading U.S. and British newspapers.

CHINESE LESSONS

Another weapon in China's arsenal is education. About 300,000 foreign students now study in Chinese universities (the vast majority learning the Chinese language), with additional numbers in vocational colleges. Every year, the China Scholarship Council offers some 20,000 scholarships to foreign students. Chinese government ministries, meanwhile, administer a variety of short courses for officials, diplomats, and military officers from developing countries. These classes do teach students tangible skills, but they also try to win hearts and minds along the way.

Chinese universities have yet to break into the global elite, however. Only three mainland universities—Peking, Tsinghua, and Fudan—appear in the *Times Higher Education's* ranking of the world's top 100 schools. The impediments to academic renown are serious. The CCP continues to restrict free thought and inquiry, particularly in the humanities and the social sciences. Chinese universities are rife with cronyism, false credentials, plagiarism, and intellectual property theft. Innovation, the Chinese government's top economic priority, requires

open-ended intellectual exploration to incubate, but Chinese educational pedagogy has yet to escape its historical emphasis on rote memorization and censorship.

China's Confucius Institutes—centers charged with teaching Chinese language and culture abroad—form another key part of the effort to build up China's educational soft power. With 475 centers operating in 120 countries, the Confucius Institutes have established footholds worldwide. (By contrast, Germany's long-established Goethe-Institut has 160 centers in 94 countries, and the British Council maintains some 70 centers in 49 countries.) But the Confucius Institutes have come under sharp criticism. In the United States and Canada, professors have called on universities to close down existing Confucius Institutes or not open new ones on the grounds that they undermine academic freedom. And at a Chinese studies conference in 2014 in Portugal, European Sinologists were rankled when Xu Lin—the director of the Ministry of Education organ that oversees the Confucius Institutes—ordered that pages in the conference program that mentioned Taiwan be torn out. As in the United States, media outlets and legislatures across Europe are now scrutinizing Confucius Institutes, and at least one, at Stockholm University, has decided to shut down as a result.

On another front, Beijing is assertively promoting its culture and society abroad through sports, fine arts, performing arts, music, film, literature, and architecture—and making considerable inroads. Art exhibitions of China's rich imperial past have always been popular around the world; indeed, China's 3,000-plus years of civilizational heritage may be its strongest soft-power asset. Chinese martial artists and other Chinese performers also attract audiences, as does China's growing corps of world-class classical musicians, led by the pianist Lang Lang. Chinese films continue to struggle for international market share, but Chinese authors and architects are more popular than ever. In 2012, Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in Literature and Wang Shu won the Pritzker Architecture Prize. Even though China's professional basketball, hockey, and soccer teams remain far less competitive than their North American and European counterparts, Chinese athletes are racking up Olympic medals in a wide range of events.

China is also engaging in what it calls “host diplomacy,” holding countless governmental and nongovernmental conferences. Large-scale conclaves—such as the Boao Forum for Asia (China's Davos), the China Development Forum, the Beijing Forum, Tsinghua University's World

Peace Forum, the World Forum on China Studies, and the Global Think Tank Summit—bring leading figures from around the world to China every year. Some events are real extravaganzas, such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, and the 2014 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting. In 2016, the G-20 summit in Hangzhou is expected to be an equally elaborate showcase.

Then there are the government-affiliated exchange programs. The CCP's International Department (and its front organization, the China Center for Contemporary World Studies) convenes an annual conference called "The Party and the World Dialogue" and brings a steady stream of foreign politicians and intellectuals to China for all-expenses-paid tours. The Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has long engaged in similar outreach. Programs like these offer an astute way for the CCP to cultivate relationships with up-and-coming politicians around the world. The Hong Kong-based China–United States Exchange Foundation, meanwhile, amplifies the voices of Chinese scholars through its website and promotes the positions of the Chinese government through the research grants it gives to American institutions. To date, China has not endowed university research centers or faculty professorships. If and when it does, it will learn that in the West, there are real limits to buying political influence on campuses and in think tanks.

The Chinese military maintains its own outreach organizations: the China Institute of International Strategic Studies and the China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies. Both are affiliated with military intelligence and serve as the principal conduits for inviting foreign security specialists to China. These two institutions both broadcast and receive: in addition to explaining China's positions on strategic and military issues to foreigners, they collect views and intelligence from foreign experts and officials.

Several of China's foreign policy think tanks perform a comparable dual function. The most important of these include the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, the China Institute of International Studies, and the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies—all of which are attached to various parts of the Chinese government. To a lesser extent, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences do the same thing, but on a much broader range of issues. In 2009, private donors

established the Charhar Institute, which focuses specifically on improving China's overseas image. Taken as a whole, this conglomerate of well-funded institutions and initiatives aimed at boosting China's reputation around the world is a testament to the priority Beijing attaches to the effort.

CAN'T BUY ME LOVE

Yet for all the billions of dollars China is spending on these efforts, it has yet to see any demonstrable improvement in its global image, at least as measured by public opinion surveys. In fact, the country's reputation has steadily deteriorated. A 2014 BBC poll showed that since 2005, positive views about China's influence had declined by 14 percentage points and that a full 49 percent of respondents viewed China negatively. Surprisingly, as a 2013 survey by the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project indicates, China's soft-power deficit is apparent even in Africa and Latin America, precisely the regions where one would think the country's appeal would be strongest.

In spite of these meager results, Beijing is still expending enormous effort and resources to change perceptions. Why the disconnect? The answer is that the Chinese government approaches public diplomacy the same way it constructs high-speed rail or builds infrastructure—by investing money and expecting to see development. What China fails to understand is that despite its world-class culture, cuisine, and human capital, and despite its extraordinary economic rise over the last several decades, so long as its political system denies, rather than enables, free human development, its propaganda efforts will face an uphill battle.

Soft power cannot be bought. It must be earned. And it is best earned when a society's talented citizens are allowed to interact directly with the world, rather than being controlled by authorities. For China, that would mean loosening draconian restraints at home and reducing efforts to control opinion abroad. Only then could the country tap its enormous reserves of unrealized soft power. 🌐

Go East, Young Oilman

How Asia Is Shaping the Future of Global Energy

Michael Levi

Most observers agree that the United States, propelled by its boom in oil and gas production, is becoming increasingly central to global energy. As oil prices have plummeted, American oil producers have taken credit. As U.S. imports have fallen, foreign policy thinkers have suggested that Washington could rely far less on the Middle East. As U.S. firms have prepared to export liquefied natural gas (LNG), market watchers have braced for a transformation of global natural gas markets and, as a result, geopolitics. And as U.S. energy companies have begun to capitalize on shale gas and renewable energy to tame their reliance on coal, scientists have hoped that Washington might finally take the lead in combating climate change. But when future historians reflect on the ongoing transformation of the global energy landscape, they won't focus narrowly on the United States: Asia will feature at least as prominently, and interactions between the two sides of the Pacific will prove most important of all.

In the first decade of this century, Asia's centrality—and China's in particular—was obvious. China's growing appetite for oil helped drive crude prices above \$100 a barrel, for the first time ever, in February 2008. Surging coal consumption in China fueled record rises in greenhouse gas emissions. And Chinese investments in overseas energy infrastructure sparked fears that mercantilism would undermine markets and trigger resource wars. Meanwhile, the economies of India, South Korea, and Southeast Asia continued to churn through fossil fuels. Asia, it seemed, would determine the future of energy.

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Then, stunning gains in U.S. oil and gas diverted the world's attention. The new emphasis was in one sense justified; today, the United States is indeed a far more important force in energy than it was five years ago. But it was also misleading. The balance between Asian consumption and U.S. production—not one or the other—will be critical to setting energy prices for decades to come. Whether rising U.S. exports transform natural gas markets will depend on decisions that Asian leaders make. So, too, will progress on climate change, which requires large curbs on Asia's greenhouse gas emissions. Washington must come to grips with this reality if it wants to develop an effective energy strategy; if it fails to, the full promise of the U.S. energy revolution will be left unfulfilled, and many of the world's biggest energy challenges will remain unmet.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Consider the conventional wisdom about why oil prices plunged in 2014, from over \$110 a barrel in June to less than \$50 by January of this year. Most analysts blamed an unexpected surge in U.S. oil production, which had risen from an average of five million barrels a day in 2008 to more than nine million six years later, for flooding the global market and creating a surplus of supply. They also noted that Middle Eastern countries, led by Saudi Arabia, could have cut their own production to balance the market. When it became clear that they wouldn't, prices collapsed.

That explanation is accurate but incomplete. Asia's slowing demand for oil was indispensable to the price crash. In 2010, 2011, and 2012, Asian oil consumption rose by a million barrels a day or more. But in 2013, it grew by less than half a million barrels a day for the first time in 25 years during a period of relative financial and economic stability. Then, in 2014, consumption rose by only half a million barrels a day again. Had Asian demand kept to its historic trend, there would have been no massive glut and probably no earthshaking price collapse.

Recent surprises in Asian oil consumption may be only a taste of things to come. To be sure, it takes a much smaller drop in demand to send oil prices tumbling for a few months, or even a year, than it does to push them permanently lower. But the basic reality is that higher Asian consumption could neutralize the effect of rising U.S. production, and lower Asian oil use could seriously compound the effect.

The trend line could move in either direction with dramatic results. The U.S. Energy Information Administration forecasts that if Asia's developing economies grow by about six percent each year and their oil use rises half as fast, the net result will be an increase in demand of more than seven million barrels a day by 2025, a total larger than almost any projected increase in U.S. oil supplies. This figure may well be too low: it is easy to imagine that Asian economies will experience faster or more oil-intensive growth and so add over ten million barrels a day to Asian oil use over the next decade.

Yet if efforts to reduce subsidies and improve fuel efficiency cut the oil intensity of Asian growth in half from the Energy Information Administration's prediction, developing countries in the region would add less than four million barrels a day of oil consumption over the next decade. At the same time, economic growth could fall sharply, combining with rising efficiency to limit new Asian oil demand to as little as two million barrels a day over the next ten years in an extreme case.

The difference between these two possible extremes could make swings in U.S. oil supplies look small by comparison. If U.S. oil production grows faster than Asian demand, Middle Eastern countries might prove unable or unwilling to curb their own production to balance the market, as they were in 2014, a situation that would lead to lower prices, a healthier global economy, and weaker petrostates. On the other hand, Asian oil demand could easily outpace U.S. production gains, even if those gains are large. The big oil exporters could sit back, perhaps even increasing their own output, as oil prices rose and their pockets were fattened.

SHIFTING STRAITS

The prospect of falling oil prices is far from the only important geopolitical opportunity afforded by the U.S. shale boom. As U.S. output rises and consumption falls, American oil imports from the Middle East will drop. Many argue that this shift in the geography of oil could rewire global security.

On the security front too, though, Asia will shape the future. For more than half a century, global worries about the free flow of oil have focused on the Middle East. And with massive volumes of oil continuing to come from that region, concerns about the security of critical shipping routes remain. Middle Eastern producers aren't going away anytime soon, and so the United States will still have a



Coal country: rescuers at a mine in Heilongjiang Province, China, November 2009

big economic stake in Middle Eastern stability. But increased oil exports to Asia, combined with a regional naval buildup, will lend another area new strategic importance: the East Asian seas.

These crowded waters include the Strait of Malacca, sandwiched between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore; the South China Sea, bordering Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam; and the East China Sea, touching China, Japan, and South Korea. They have already acted as the conduit for massive quantities of oil and gas. (For decades, Middle Eastern oil producers have shipped more oil to Japan than to the United States.) But now the stakes are higher, with regional powers, principally China, more capable than ever of disrupting oil shipments to their adversaries. For now, at least, the United States will continue to provide security for oil shipments to its allies by maintaining its naval presence in the region. But eventually, China will probably challenge this U.S.-dominated arrangement. Given Beijing's new assertiveness in its foreign policy, its recent provocations—including its deployment of an oil rig to a disputed zone in the South China Sea last year, which led to a tense standoff with Vietnam—are only a harbinger of things to come. How the United States and China, along with other regional powers, resolve such conflicts in the future will be as important to shaping global energy markets as U.S. security commitments in the Middle East are today.

REUTERS / ALY SONG

GOING NATURAL

In addition to driving a domestic oil boom, U.S. energy companies are producing massive quantities of natural gas—so much, in fact, that the United States will soon become a significant LNG exporter. That will be a major development that could revolutionize global energy markets, but here again, the ultimate impact will depend in large part on Asia's response.

The global natural gas market has always been rigid. Trade routes are usually fixed by existing gas pipelines, with seaborne LNG playing a secondary role. The world's largest producers typically strike long-term contracts with their customers, setting prices through carefully negotiated formulas that track the price of oil. Buyers have limited access to information about the wider market, and they aren't allowed to resell LNG cargoes to anyone else. If, for example, South Korea agrees to buy LNG from Indonesia, South Korea can't resell that gas elsewhere, even if another country desperately needs it and is willing to pay a premium. The same limitations that make gas markets opaque also make them political. Since negotiations over prices almost invariably include at least one state-owned company and since there is usually no obvious price for the parties to settle on, politics intrude. And because it is difficult for buyers to switch suppliers during a political crisis, maintaining good relations with the biggest gas-producing countries, including the likes of Qatar and Russia, is paramount.

But U.S. LNG exports have the potential to change the rules of the game, particularly in Asia, where the lion's share of U.S. exports would likely flow. The U.S. natural gas market, not secret negotiations between states, will determine the price of natural gas exported from the United States. And U.S. exports won't have so-called destination clauses: buyers of U.S. gas will be able to resell and deliver it to anyone. Since Asia is currently the most attractive destination for exports, U.S. gas could become a major part of the Asian energy mix. The hope is that the Asian gas market will then follow the U.S. example by incorporating transparent pricing and flexible trade. But that would take a lot more than a flood of American LNG. The United States has created an opportunity; exploiting it will fall to Asian governments.

Asia faces two primary challenges when it comes to natural gas. The first is a lack of flexibility when it comes to trade. Today, many Asian countries have relatively few ways of getting spare LNG when they run into shortages, since most of the world's available gas is already

contracted to a fixed destination. With U.S. LNG available to plug sudden supply gaps, that problem won't be as severe. Gas markets will become more like oil ones: although a large fraction of oil shipments are tied up in long-term contracts, the market has enough free supply to make those deals far less important than they would be if a deep spot market did not exist.

Asia's second challenge is tougher: transitioning away from a politically charged system of pricing. The solution might seem obvious. U.S. producers will sell their gas to Asia at the same market-based price they do at home. If every country that sold gas to Asia had to match U.S. offers, geopolitics would be removed. But that won't happen. Any Asian buyer that insisted on paying lower U.S. prices would be out of luck: sellers would simply market their gas to other

On the energy security front, Asia will shape the future.

countries willing to pay more. Buyers would have a chance of succeeding only if all the big Asian consumers banded together and insisted on a new pricing scheme. But the prospect of China, India, Japan, and South Korea joining forces on anything is remote.

Asia's best chance at leveling the playing field is to emulate another key feature of U.S. and European markets: trading hubs for natural gas. A hub—a physical trading center for a commodity—brings together large numbers of buyers and sellers to bargain over transactions in a single space; their deals set prices that can then be used in transactions elsewhere. In the United States, for example, the Henry Hub in Louisiana plays a prominent role in setting domestic prices for natural gas well beyond that state; in continental Europe, several hubs do the same.

For a major hub to emerge in Asia and set prices more broadly, several things would have to happen: a single national government would need to support its physical development; ensure that the hub was run in a transparent and reliable way; and allow the emergence of a properly regulated financial system that let buyers, sellers, and others hedge their exposure to fluctuating natural gas prices. On top of all of this, that government would need to attract a critical mass of trading to its hub. The emergence of U.S. LNG, without the destination restrictions or oil-linked prices that encumber other gas supplies, could provide part of that critical mass. But at least one Asian government—the most

likely candidates being China, Japan, and Singapore, each of which faces large obstacles—would need to seize the opportunity.

CURBING COAL

In the immediate aftermath of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009, U.S. and international efforts to tackle global warming were in disarray. Yet in the years since, the United States has surprised its critics and turned things around, reducing its total greenhouse gas emissions to 12 percent below their 2005 level as of 2012. A weak economy, improved fuel efficiency, and an increased reliance on renewable energy all contributed to the change. Critical, however, was a surge in the production of gas from shale formations. Shale gas, which yields roughly half of coal's carbon dioxide emissions when used to produce electricity, edged out coal on lower prices alone. It also created an opening for regulators at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Now that there was a relatively inexpensive substitute for coal, they could press forward with aggressive new regulations curbing coal-fired electricity, which would have been unimaginable just a few years earlier.

But for all its success so far, the United States cannot come anywhere close to successfully fighting climate change without Asia. The continent accounts for nearly half of all global carbon dioxide emissions, a share that has risen steadily in recent years. China and India are the world's first- and third-largest carbon dioxide emitters, respectively. (The United States is second.) And the International Energy Agency projects that without new policies, Asia's developing countries alone will account for 46 percent of carbon dioxide emissions from energy production by 2030, an amount more than three times as large as the projected contribution of the United States.

At the heart of the challenge is coal, the most emissions-intensive fossil fuel. Asia is responsible for more than two-thirds of global coal consumption. And although demand for coal outside the region declined from 2008 to 2013, gains in Asia more than made up for the difference. During the same period, the growth in Chinese coal consumption alone offset U.S. reductions five times over. The trend is regionwide. India consumes almost three-quarters as much coal as the United States. Japan consumes more coal than Russia; South Korea uses as much as Germany.

All the major Asian economies have made efforts to curb their emissions, but their circumstances are fundamentally different from

those of the United States, and so the solutions to their emissions problems will need to be just as distinct. U.S. policymakers have long hoped that low-carbon technologies invented in the United States would prove so economically compelling that they would get adopted overseas on their own merits, without the need for ambitious climate regulations. At least for shale, however, China and other Asian countries are unlikely to adopt U.S. technology on a massive scale anytime soon. The problem is not one of raw materials: the consulting firm Advanced Resources International estimates that China has larger technically recoverable shale gas resources—an estimated 1,115 trillion cubic feet—than any other country, including the United States. It is that the barriers to exploiting this bounty are high. China’s problems start with its rocks. Not all shale rock is

The United States cannot come anywhere close to successfully fighting climate change without Asia.

alike, and drillers have found that much of China has poor geology for the exploitation of shale gas. As a report in *Nature* pointed out, because much of China’s shale is deeper and “less apt to fracture,” it is poorly suited to the drilling technologies that U.S. oil companies have perfected and thus more expensive to develop. Then there are the institutional challenges: price controls have capped the potential profits and limited the market (although the price controls are slowly being reformed); modest government investment in mapping shale potential has made drillers less capable of taking calculated risks; and the dominance of older companies, a handful of which control most of the country’s gas systems, has deterred new firms from entering the fray.

China’s official goals reflect these limitations. In 2011, Beijing aimed to expand the country’s shale gas production to between 60 billion and 100 billion cubic meters a year by 2020—an amount roughly equivalent to three percent of total Chinese energy use in 2013. In August 2014, China slashed the target to 30 billion cubic meters, less than one-tenth of what the United States produces today. Many informed analysts are skeptical that even this will be achieved.

Elsewhere in Asia, shale’s prospects are no brighter. No Asian country other than China ranks among the top ten holders of technically recoverable shale gas resources. Estimates of India’s resources range from 100 trillion cubic feet to a mere six trillion, which would be equivalent to less than six months’ worth of Indian coal consumption

today. Indonesia has an estimated 50 trillion cubic feet of shale gas. Pakistan is the only other large shale gas resource holder in the region, but political instability there makes development a distant prospect. The other big Asian consumers, most notably Japan and South Korea, have no shale gas. If Asia is to strongly curb its greenhouse gas emissions, complementing the United States' recent transformation, it can't count on shale gas to be its savior in the near future.

PIVOT TO ASIA

It is tantalizing to imagine that the United States is now driving the future of global energy. But overstating the country's influence will blind U.S. policymakers to the real work that needs to be done. In order to build an effective strategy that improves national security and combats climate change while fueling economic growth—and, in particular, to realize the full potential of the U.S. oil and gas boom—Washington needs energy and other policies that take full account of Asia's critical importance.

One top priority should be working with Asian countries to curb oil demand. This could involve embedding national fuel-economy regulations in multinational agreements or extending existing technical agreements, such as the 2009 U.S.-Chinese arrangement to jointly set battery-charging standards for electric vehicles. Such initiatives will prove most effective if the United States takes strong steps to curb its own oil use, which would also help keep global oil prices down.

When it comes to securing the free flow of energy supplies, Washington has several roles to play. In the Middle East, it should remain committed to providing some baseline of stability; China is not ready to take the place of the United States in the region, and even if it were, that would represent a significant threat to U.S. interests there. In Asia, the United States should remain committed to providing sea-lane security for as long as possible, since a power vacuum would likely lead to regional conflict and global fears about the reliability of energy supplies. Over the long run, the United States will need to reach a larger understanding with China in which both countries agree to contribute to regional naval security.

Washington can also help facilitate a less political Asian natural gas market by ensuring that its own LNG exports remain as flexible as possible. To that end, Congress should resist passing laws that would segment the natural gas market—by favoring NATO allies, for instance,

or carving out special treatment for Japan—and instead allow U.S. LNG to flow freely. Washington could also lend its relatively neutral diplomatic hand to helping establish a regional gas-trading hub if regional players desire one, although in this area, U.S. leverage would be limited.

Climate change presents perhaps the greatest challenge. The United States has sought to promote the spread of shale gas to Asia, an effort that it ought to continue. But it should keep its hopes modest. The odds that coal will dominate Asia in the coming decades are still strong. As gas and renewable energy replace coal in the United States, there has been waning interest in carbon capture and sequestration technology, which would prevent most carbon dioxide produced by coal-fired power plants from entering the atmosphere. Although such technology, already expensive in its early stages, may become unnecessary in the near term in the United States as coal use declines, this is far from the case in Asia. If anything, recent developments have underlined this technology's importance. For the United States, this means that a premium must be placed on continued investment in driving down the technology's cost and on partnerships that can demonstrate its capabilities in Asia.

The boom in U.S. oil and gas production has many voices wisely calling for a U.S. energy strategy that exploits the United States' new position of strength. But a narrow-minded approach that overstates the importance of U.S. energy and underappreciates the centrality of Asia is bound to fail. As U.S. policymakers chart a course for an energy strategy in a changed world, their ability to get Asia right will determine whether they succeed. 🌐

Improving Humanitarian Aid

How to Make Relief More Efficient and Effective

David Miliband and Ravi Gurumurthy

Every month, nearly one million people flee their homes because of conflicts or natural disasters. With few wars ending, and new wars starting, the number of people displaced by conflict now exceeds 50 million. Not since World War II have people sought refuge—in their own countries or in neighboring states—on such a scale. The disorder driving mass displacement is unlikely to be transitory. In a growing number of countries, the glue of national identity and state authority is unable to patch ethnic, sectarian, or tribal divisions, all of which are exacerbated by regional rivalries. Faced with such threats, multilateral institutions may be strong enough to prevent interstate war but too weak or divided to stop the fighting, as is the case in Iraq, South Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine. Further adding to the tide of humanitarian misery are climate change and demographic pressures.

The humanitarian sector sustains and improves life for people caught in these crises. Its staff are heroic, skillful, and inspiring. Yet the sector is struggling to cope with new realities, and there is a growing gulf between the needs of people affected by crises and the help they are receiving. One measure is humanitarian aid flows: the amounts pledged to address the consequences of crises now regularly fail to reach 40 percent of the UN's targets. It is logical, then, to argue

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for increases in humanitarian aid funding. The total global budget for humanitarian aid stands at just \$22 billion. And at 0.3 percent of GDP, the \$135 billion spent on all aid last year—on poverty reduction as well as humanitarian crises—by members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) fell well short of the UN’s target of 0.7 percent. But with Europe and the United States still emerging from economic crisis, overall aid is unlikely to grow much in the short term.

More resources would help. But resources also need to be used for greater impact. Environmentalists like to speak of “factor 4” improvements, which cut resource use in half while doubling productivity so as to quadruple overall efficiency. The concept provides a useful benchmark for the humanitarian sector, too. Over the next decade, donors need to not just double the amount of aid directed to the places of greatest need but also undertake reforms that seek to double the productivity of aid spending. Doing that would require significant shifts in practices and assumptions. Given the growing scale of the problem, however, anything less risks being marginal.

AID IN FRAGILE PLACES

Aid is given a variety of labels. Money used for saving lives and alleviating suffering in war zones and after natural disasters is categorized as humanitarian relief, whereas funds that support economic growth and long-term improvements in quality of life in poor countries are classified as development assistance. Donors also distinguish between aid for low-income countries and that for middle-income countries.

Those categories are increasingly unhelpful. For example, as António Guterres, the UN high commissioner for refugees, pointed out in February, it is “absurd” that Jordan and Lebanon, despite dealing with millions of refugees from Syria’s civil war, are ineligible for World Bank support because they are considered middle-income countries. Similarly, when wars last for decades, as is the case in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia, it is strange to separate supposedly short-term humanitarian relief from long-term development aid and senseless to have so little alignment among the objectives, processes, conceptual frames, and institutions for the two types of aid. The short-term timeline that often characterizes humanitarian projects, for example, creates disincentives for the type

of planning, implementation, and measurement necessary to offer lasting help to people. Yet donors continue to funnel money through different institutions to many of the same places: the \$5.5 billion in humanitarian relief they spent on the top 20 crises in 2013 sits alongside, and is overshadowed by, the \$28.6 billion they spent in the same countries on development assistance. Add in the false separation of services—between health, education, and women’s protection, for example—and the result is frustration at the failure to meet people’s needs.

A better prism for considering how to focus spending is fragility—defined not just by how much a state lacks the capacity, will, or legitimacy to provide basic services or enforce the rule of law but also by the extent to which that country is exposed to violence, poverty, economic instability, and environmental shocks. The concept of fragility covers both low- and middle-income states, and it cuts across national borders, since relatively stable countries can contain pockets of instability. Statistics show that fragile places are falling behind their stable counterparts. When it comes to the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), four-fifths of the states classified as fragile by the OECD are not on track to achieve universal primary schooling by the end of this year, and two-thirds will fail to cut poverty in half. The proportion of poor people living in fragile states is on the rise; the OECD estimates that even in a best-case scenario, more than 62 percent of the world’s extreme poor (defined as those living on less than \$1.25 a day) will reside in fragile states by 2030, up from 43 percent today. With just 38 percent of aid spent in fragile states today, the growing concentration of poverty, along with the current mismatch between need and provision, makes the case for doubling aid spending in these places.

The changing geography of poverty in recent decades makes it possible to rebalance funding from stable states to fragile places. The majority of the global poor reside in stable middle-income countries, with a third in India alone. But in India, China, the rest of East Asia, and the more stable parts of Africa, aid is not the primary tool for tackling poverty; economic growth, domestic revenues, foreign investment, and remittances are. Rather than larger aid budgets, eradicating poverty there requires sharing the proceeds of growth more equally. In stable low-income countries, aid will continue to play an important role, but the focus should go beyond aid to policy



Help is on the way: in a refugee camp in South Sudan, January 2014

changes. Expanding foreign direct investment, removing international agricultural trade subsidies and tariffs, and facilitating migration and remittances would do far more to eradicate poverty than development assistance.

A new, competing pressure on aid budgets is the challenge of financing action to tackle climate change. The 2009 Copenhagen accord set out the expectation that by 2020, developed countries would give developing countries \$100 billion a year for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The aid budget is an obvious short-term resource. But it is not a sustainable long-term solution. That would require, for example, a global emissions-trading system that built on the growing number of regional carbon markets. By allowing polluters to pay for emissions reductions wherever they were cheapest, such a system would reduce the costs of mitigation. What's more, a dedicated source of finance would be created that did not rely on the discretion of policymakers in aid ministries.

AN EMPHASIS ON EVIDENCE

To improve the impact of aid by anything like a factor of four, a doubling of the funding in fragile places needs to be matched by a doubling of productivity. Every dollar of aid needs to deliver greater impact, reaching more people and achieving more profound and

longer-lasting change in their lives. Donors can drive this shift by creating incentives for generating and applying evidence of what works.

In the past decade or so, aid agencies and donors have partnered with economists and political scientists to analyze various development programs with a new level of rigor. They have embraced randomized impact evaluations (akin to the randomized controlled trials used in health care), which randomly assign communities, schools, and so on to either a control group or a treatment group so as to estimate the net effect of a particular intervention. In the cold light of scientific evidence, some popular development ideas have been shown to have limited impact. Take microfinance, once seen as the game-changing solution to extreme poverty. A body of evidence now shows that although providing small loans increases people's consumption of basic goods and services in the short term, it does not achieve its transformative purpose of significantly lifting their incomes.

A database compiled by the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation counts more than 2,500 studies of various approaches to tackling poverty in relatively stable low- or middle-income countries. Thanks to such evidence, donors have been able to focus their investments on services that they are confident can make a difference—for example, vaccinations, HIV/AIDS treatment, and efforts to lower the financial and geographic barriers to school attendance.

A particularly promising area of emerging research relates to behavioral change. The decision to send one's children to school, save money to start a business, or desist from violence is rarely made by rationally assessing the costs and benefits. People may weigh losses more heavily than gains, value rewards today far more than rewards tomorrow, and base their decisions on their perceptions of what others do. One insight to come from behavioral economics is that one need not change attitudes to change behavior. A study conducted by the psychologist Elizabeth Levy Paluck in Rwanda found that getting people to listen to a reconciliation-themed radio soap opera made them more likely to cooperate and dissent openly in a group conversation and less likely to forbid their children from intermarrying—even as their personal beliefs remained unaltered. The implication is that rather than try to upend deeply held attitudes, programs should focus specifically on behavior.

Where this research falls short, however, is in scope. Put bluntly, it has missed out on fragile places, in many cases due to the perception

of donors and academics that conducting research there is less predictable and more expensive than it is in more stable contexts. Fewer than 100 impact evaluations have been conducted in crisis-affected places. In these zones, the humanitarian imperative to act has often overshadowed the need to measure, learn, and improve.

Many of the lessons from more stable contexts may seem transferable. Vaccinations, clean water, and good hygiene will help tackle the spread of infectious diseases whatever the context. Children will always learn better when they enjoy nutritious food and a caregiver who can provide warmth and stimulation. But in fragile contexts, problems impede the delivery of interventions. And

Every dollar of aid needs to deliver greater impact.

even though the humanitarian sector may know that a particular intervention works, it knows much less about how to nurture the institutions, systems, and staff that can actually implement it in challenging environments. In Pakistan, for example, annual floods devastate whole communities, which need cash quickly to replenish basic goods. Despite the predictability of the crisis, it still takes six to eight weeks for money to get from a donor, via UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local partners, to an actual recipient. And in the first year after a flood, each dollar can cost up to 46 cents to transfer.

A similar problem affects vaccine delivery. Over the last two decades, improvements in vaccine technology, refrigerated supply chains, and global financing have dramatically raised immunization rates. Yet in developing countries, rates have plateaued at 80 percent, causing more than 1.5 million children to die each year from preventable diseases. Part of the problem is behavioral: health workers not showing up at clinics or families failing to make the long journey there, because of either the cost or the distance. In fragile places, however, there are also security threats. Given the burden of disease in such areas, there needs to be greater investment in finding ways to improve coverage and the use of essential medical services.

Evidence-based solutions create a major opportunity for donors and agencies to make aid more productive. Yet in many instances, their practices remain out of step with the data. Take cash transfers. As a substantial body of evidence now shows, money not only helps people buy essential items; it also helps families raise their income,

so they can send their children to school rather than work. Yet between 2009 and 2013, only an estimated 1.5 to 3.5 percent of humanitarian aid went to cash.

Donors should adopt a simple principle: fund only those programs that are based on the best available evidence or, in cases where impact evaluations (or their equivalent) have yet to be conducted, that are supporting the generation of evidence. In the same way that donors expect programs to comply with financial and legal rules, they should ensure that their own programs and those they fund are justified by high-quality, relevant data. The prize is immense: closing the evidence gap in the humanitarian sector's highest-priority areas. This will require investment. Randomized impact evaluations and similar rigorous studies can cost several hundred thousand dollars each, and it would take up to \$1 billion over ten years to conduct the same number of impact evaluations in crisis places as have been conducted in stable low-income places. But without that investment, donors will not be able to deliver the innovations needed to match rising demand or properly direct their spending toward the highest impact.

The focus on evidence has its critics. The most powerful argument is not that emergencies preclude evidence gathering; it is that evaluations are of limited use because the findings from one setting do not necessarily apply to another. Yet this is an argument not for ignoring evidence but for generating more of it across a range of contexts and then ensuring that each program is carefully tailored to the local situation. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa and the violence perpetrated by the self-declared Islamic State in the Middle East have highlighted the increasingly complex and unpredictable nature of humanitarian crises. In order to be effective in such environments, programs must be customized to the local context. But they also need to draw on good evidence.

MORE FOR THE MONEY

Better evidence is not only the foundation for making programs more effective; it can also help make them more efficient. The starting point for that is transparency. The websites of many NGOs and UN institutions, including our own, the International Rescue Committee, tell the public what they can “get” for a donation of \$20, \$50, or \$100. Yet it is not always easy to make sense of those statistics, since there are remarkably few published benchmarks for the actual cost of

delivering water, sanitation, food, and so on. In the International Rescue Committee's own recent analysis, we found large variations in costs, not just between programs—it stands to reason that vaccinating a child may cost \$10, whereas providing time-intensive counseling to a rape survivor could cost several hundred dollars—but also within them. Unless donors begin requiring aid organizations to report the cost of delivering services, those groups will lack an important incentive to improve efficiency and share best practices.

The good news is that costs can be reduced without sacrificing quality. Aid travels on a convoluted journey to recipients. Taxpayers fund aid ministries, which give grants or contracts, sometimes via intermediaries called “fund managers,” to NGOs, which often subcontract the work out to local groups. Or aid ministries hand the money to UN agencies, which spend it through a combination of implementing projects on their own and giving grants to NGOs. The attendant accountability systems are multiple, overlapping, and divergent, all with their own costs. Cutting out some of the layers of bureaucracy could radically reduce transaction costs. And greater transparency about costs would force each link in the aid-delivery chain to justify its role.

NGOs face pressure from public and private donors to keep their overhead costs down and deliver the maximum amount of resources possible to programs. These organizations have made important commitments to employ local, rather than expatriate, staff, which lowers costs. But the fragmentation of the sector overall—among both implementing agencies and donors—raises costs. A greater degree of consolidation could reap significant savings, as would joining forces for procurement. The same goes for setting up shared service centers in such areas as finance, security, human resources, and transportation, as well as for such tasks as developing curricula and treatment protocols.

Cheaper is not always better, of course, which is why donors should combine data on costs with measures of effectiveness. That way, they won't just do the same things more efficiently; they will be able to choose whatever intervention extracts the greatest impact from each dollar. The potential dividends are huge. In Kenya, for example, there is good evidence that a number of programs can improve children's literacy, but they vary widely in their cost-effectiveness. According to a review by the economist Patrick McEwan, \$8,900 could upgrade

the reading skills of 100 students by 20 percent if the money were spent on computer-assisted literacy instruction, but that money could get the same result for 423 students if it were spent on performance incentives for teachers and for 695 students if it were spent on remedial tutoring. Despite the value of such information, however, studies on cost-effectiveness—even among those researchers conducting randomized impact evaluations—remain exceptionally rare.

Such studies can help determine the most productive ways of improving education or health, but they won't help donors decide how to allocate funding between competing priorities. It is not easy to compare vastly different outcomes. What is the value of therapy to a victim of gender-based violence, and how does it compare with the value of teaching a child to read, raising a family's income, or helping someone survive famine? How much should preventive measures, such as climate change adaptation, be discounted, given that the benefits will accrue only many years from now? Yet these are exactly the questions faced by policymakers and donors when allocating billions of dollars and by NGOs when they decide whether to bid on various projects. So even though it may seem jarring to place a monetary value on life, conducting cost-benefit analyses leads to a more rational debate about where to allocate aid.

THE RIGHT INCENTIVES

Over the past three decades, policymakers in Europe and the United States have recognized the power of incentives when it comes to improving government programs. In the United Kingdom, public-service reform over the last 25 years has come in three parts: top-down incentives, including national minimum standards to ensure that those in disadvantaged neighborhoods or schools were not left behind; bottom-up pressure, through mechanisms to allow recipients greater choice and voice; and horizontal pressure, as monopolies were broken up and barriers for private companies and charities removed.

Humanitarian relief would benefit from a similar focus on incentives. First, the goals that shape donors' behavior need to be clearer, which would mean specific global aspirations for citizens in fragile states. When the MDGs were established in 2000, the individual targets for each goal were set at a global level. Those targets then became the *de facto* standard for every country, whatever its starting point. As a result, the incentive was to focus on those countries that

were closer to the threshold and those with the largest concentrations of poverty. So even as overall living standards have increased since the goals were introduced, the MDGs reinforced the gap between those living in stable states and those living in fragile places.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which will replace the MDGs at the end of this year, risk perpetuating this dynamic. Despite the excessive number of individual targets, 169 in all, the specific needs of civilians living in conflict zones are all but ignored. That is true even for the proposed goal dedicated

to peace and even for the proposed goal devoted to equality for women and girls. It would be best if the key Sustainable Development Goals were translated into national targets tailored to each country's starting point and potential. To ensure that fragile states

get the attention they deserve, the goals—for example, on education, health, and the empowerment of women and girls—should be accompanied by floor targets for the most fragile states, creating a commitment to raise levels of a given metric to a minimum standard.

Second, the humanitarian sector could direct funding toward outcomes rather than outputs. Ideally, government donors would take an independent, overarching, and long-term view of countries' needs and award taxpayers' money to the agencies best able to meet those needs. But the reality is more confused, with changing priorities, budgetary pressures, and a lack of coordination among and within governments. Meanwhile, NGOs are incentivized to spend less on management, including on measuring programs' quality.

Donors should shift away from holding NGOs and private contractors accountable for spending money on specified outputs and instead make them demonstrate measurable improvements in clients' lives. Rather than paying organizations to build a certain number of schools and train a certain number of teachers, for example, donors should award grants to the programs that can deliver the biggest improvements in functional literacy and numeracy for the most people. Linking funding to results would encourage organizations to focus as much on high-quality implementation and continuous improvement as on well-drafted proposals. Even in emergency settings, focusing on outcomes can help. In fact, doing so

The humanitarian sector could direct funding toward outcomes rather than outputs.

is all the more important in acute, life-threatening situations, where the imperative to save lives comes first.

At the same time, donors should be less prescriptive about how outcomes are achieved. All proposals ought to draw on relevant evidence or generate rigorous learning. But organizations should be encouraged to assess which intervention would work best in a given context and adapt accordingly. Instead of aid destined for the same country being split into humanitarian and development channels, there needs to be far greater coordination among aid providers, building on experiments with pooled funding. And of course, if different donors aligned their efforts, the potential gains would be all the greater.

A third reform involves bottom-up pressure: programs need to respond less to what donors want and more to what recipients need. The most powerful way to do this is, again, through funding. Giving cash directly to the poor allows them to choose what to spend it on. In that scenario, organizations providing goods and services would be driven to attract and serve clients. And in places where populations have fewer organizations to choose from, the organizations that are present should collect real-time data on the satisfaction levels of those they are attempting to help and make the data public. Doing so would introduce pressure to adapt to the perspectives of clients.

There is a delicate balance between cooperation and competition in the humanitarian sector. Organizations work closely together on the ground, often in coordination with the UN. Yet for incentives to work, aid providers need to know that they can be replaced. Indeed, the fact that the aid sector is fragmented means that it is also competitive. But as the main donor agencies face pressure to reduce their administrative costs, they are making fewer, larger grants and giving them to consortiums that cover wider geographic areas. This funnels money out at a lower cost, but it limits competition, because the main players in a given area are encouraged to join forces.

Donors need to encourage organizations to collaborate on areas of efficiency (such as procurement and other back-office functions) yet compete on quality. This will involve giving individual organizations, particularly local NGOs, enough resources to compete. It will involve leveling the playing field—not assuming that the private sector is

more efficient or that local groups are more sustainable but making choices based on cost-effectiveness. And it will involve subjecting organizations to competition not just from other organizations providing the same products and services but also from ones that offer substitutes, such as cash transfers. Some of the greatest economic leaps have been spurred not by competition between companies but by competition between technologies. The same logic should apply to providing aid in fragile places.

HARDHEADED HUMANITARIANISM

For over a century, the humanitarian sector has been a symbol of compassion, ingenuity, and heroism. It remains so in many ways. The convoys of UN officials shepherding civilians out of Homs, Syria, under sniper fire, the aid workers suiting up to fight Ebola, the women's groups organizing against violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—they remain sources of inspiration in the midst of indifference. The principles the humanitarian sector lives by—not least, independence and impartiality—are extraordinarily powerful.

But the sector is also increasingly a place of missed targets: appeals that are not met, pledges that are not delivered, ideals that are not translated into action. That need not be the case. The sector requires more funding, but it also has to embrace new ways of doing business: more joined together, more evidence-based, more outcome-focused, more hardheaded.

This agenda is not a substitute for political action to prevent and stop wars. After all, the humanitarian sector stanches the dying, but it takes states and politics to stop the killing. In the midst of multiple global crises and pressure across the world for governments to focus on the home front, however, the prospects for renewed political will are slim. That forces the humanitarian sector onto the frontlines. The best armor will be best practices. 🌍

Regime Change for Humanitarian Aid

How to Make Relief More Accountable

Michael Barnett and Peter Walker

The global humanitarian system, already under considerable strain, will soon be tested as never before. In 2013, the gap between the funds available for humanitarian aid and estimated global needs reached \$4.5 billion, leaving at least one-third of the demand unmet. The gap seems certain to widen, as key donors cut their contributions and humanitarian disasters grow more frequent and severe. Complex humanitarian emergencies, such as the war in Syria, have shown just how poorly the world is prepared to respond to human suffering on a large scale, despite considerable practice. The international community's response to last year's outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, for example, was slow off the mark and then stumbled, leaving everyone worried about future public health emergencies. Meanwhile, climate change has increased the destructive force of natural disasters, which fuel violence and put tremendous pressure on governments and aid agencies alike. And rapid urbanization, coupled with massive migration to coasts, has amplified the toll of such crises.

Small wonder, then, that the humanitarian community consistently falls short of expectations—both those of outside observers and its own. To some extent, that is due to factors beyond its control. Humanitarians confront problems that offer no easy solutions. They must contend with powerful funders who would rather make feel-good pledges than actually pay up, with donors who expect relief work

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to serve their own interests above those of local populations, and with disasters that leave first responders as exposed to the dangers they are responding to as the victims themselves. Complex crises of the kind roiling Syria often require aid workers to plead with warlords, rebels, and guerilla groups for the privilege of helping the vulnerable, only to be denied entry or forced at gunpoint to pay a heavy surcharge.

Yet humanitarians also bear some responsibility for their shortcomings. Although donors and publics once held aid agencies to be beyond reproach, awareness of their faults has grown, as has the understanding that on occasion, they can do more harm than good. For all the gaps in funding, humanitarian budgets still attract plenty of aid providers who resemble little more than ambulance chasers in white Land Cruisers; at times, their arrival brings to mind a traveling circus. The victims often see badly needed resources go to waste or disappear, and few true partnerships between relief agencies and local populations have emerged. Most crucial, victims can rarely hold humanitarians accountable for shoddy work. These shortfalls do more than create a bad reputation for crisis responders; they also cost lives.

The humanitarian community is keenly aware of these flaws, and during the past two decades, it has made remarkable progress in improving its competence, coordination, and professionalism. But aid workers have enjoyed much less success in other critical areas, including the creation of genuine partnerships with, and accountability to, local populations. Relief work remains something done to others, not alongside them.

That failure owes in large part to the influence of a tight-knit group of elite players that can be described as the Humanitarian Club: an organized and hierarchical network of states, donors, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that centers on the UN system. This group deserves much credit for implementing many successful reforms, but it is also responsible for the lack of meaningful systemic change. When it comes to humanitarian aid, the club controls much of the resources and the agenda. It seeks to maintain its exclusivity and therefore tends to embrace only changes that reinforce its central position—not those that would put real power in the hands of the aid beneficiaries.

How well the global humanitarian sector faces the future will depend on the club's willingness and ability to continue evolving. There are reasons for optimism: club members are genuinely committed to

building stronger partnerships with local communities and recognize that the system remains stuck in the past. They have recently begun another major push for reform and are busy preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit, which will be convened by the UN secretary-general in 2016 to help overhaul the crisis-response agenda. But if this considerable investment of time, money, and goodwill is to succeed where previous endeavors have failed, it must involve much more than cosmetic changes. Time is running out; new global forces promise to knock the club off its pedestal if it fails to adapt, and the consequences could be dire for both humanitarian workers and disaster victims. Getting ahead of these changes, however, will require the club to overcome its inertia, share power, and accept a diminished role on the world stage; only these kinds of steps can bring the humanitarian system into the twenty-first century.

GIFTS WITH STRINGS ATTACHED

In the 1990s, the humanitarian sector's repeated failure to stave off disaster—in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia—shook its self-confidence. To its credit, the sector looked critically at its own performance and found many weaknesses. Poor planning and a lack of common standards were just the start. Too many actors were running in different directions in crisis zones, and too many amateurs were playing emergency-room physician without a license. The sector was also too top-heavy, smothering any possibility of real partnership with its beneficiaries. And the way the UN funded humanitarian work was too disjointed, forcing different UN agencies to compete with one another for money.

Humanitarians faced wide-ranging and relentless criticism for these failures, and they responded with efforts to tidy up their act. The UN replaced its outdated Disaster Relief Organization with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in 1992, and ultimately with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in 1998. Formerly ad hoc consultation mechanisms grew more formal with the creation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, now the central international coordinating body for relief work. For their part, NGOs drew up a voluntary code of conduct; crafted common standards for meeting victims' basic needs, such as food, water, health care, and shelter; and built networks to strengthen program evaluation and accountability.



High and mighty: U.S. aid for typhoon victims in the Philippines, November 2013

These piecemeal changes ushered in more comprehensive reforms in 2005 and culminated in the far-reaching Transformative Agenda launched by the UN in 2011. An updated funding system consolidated requests for assistance from most UN agencies into one appeal, and the new Central Emergency Response Fund pooled resources and provided quick funding to reduce emergency-response time. In the field, the so-called cluster approach to disaster response took shape, reducing confusion during emergencies through the allocation of specific tasks to designated organizations ahead of time. The UN also gave greater authority to humanitarian coordinators, the most senior UN officials in crisis zones, to oversee the various players on the ground and channel resources where they are needed most. These innovations are already fueling small but meaningful transformations. In Ethiopia, for example, a stronger humanitarian coordinator has been able to push funding toward local water and sanitation projects—usually the poor cousins of the humanitarian world—helping counter what is often a key cause of death in famines: waterborne diseases. And in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, relief agencies have used emergency-response funds to provide kits with essential household items to families displaced by nasty local skirmishes too small to make headlines.

Aid workers have also gotten much better at evaluating and reporting their results. New data-collection techniques have allowed them to keep

better track of what has gone right or wrong and to learn from past mistakes. Meanwhile, improved reporting methods have greatly increased the financial transparency of aid agencies. One resource, the website of the Financial Tracking Service, which is managed by OCHA, now offers a complete financial picture for each crisis. Overall, when it comes to the efficiency of aid delivery, there has been slow but steady progress, made possible by more coordination and centralization at the top.

These gains, however, have not been matched by equal progress in improving the accountability and legitimacy of humanitarian action. In fact, the centralization appears to have reinforced, if not widened, the

Modern aid workers can still resemble the well-meaning but paternalistic missionaries of the colonial era.

distance between givers and receivers. Aid recipients lament in one survey after another that relief agencies remain disconnected from their needs—and that there is little that can be done about it. To be fair, many reasons for these shortfalls stem from the very nature of humanitarian work. Relief workers often rush in not knowing much

about the lay of the land, local customs, and the cultural traits that might determine a community's ability to survive and recover. After they arrive, responders spend much of their time reporting back to their headquarters and their donors—a task that has only grown more urgent and time-intensive with the recent reforms. Increasingly, security threats force aid providers to work from inside barricaded compounds rather than side by side with local populations.

These barriers can combine to detach humanitarian action from local circumstances, which undercuts the trust and connections essential for saving lives. After all, local information can be as vital as food and water, and small indigenous groups are often the only ones who can provide it. The response to the Ebola crisis, for example, could not have ultimately succeeded without the active involvement of local community health workers, village elders, and teachers, who helped convince the families of victims to forgo traditional burial rituals in order to contain the spread of infection—not to mention putting their own lives on the line to help treat the sick. And in the aftermath of the earthquakes in Nepal, locals carried out the majority of the rescues, and local Sherpas and truck drivers transported aid along treacherous roads to remote villages at great personal risk.

Aid agencies have repeatedly pledged to democratize the delivery of assistance by establishing more equitable partnerships and real systems of accountability. But these were mostly empty promises. A 2013 report by a consortium of five British humanitarian agencies observed that the most common approaches to partnering with local institutions were “reactive, driven by emergency and shaped by ad-hoc interactions that take place at the point of crisis.” Another assessment, conducted in 2013 by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (a self-regulatory body of humanitarian and development organizations), found that although local players sometimes contributed to diagnosing their communities’ needs and implementing existing aid projects, they played almost no part in actually designing those projects or monitoring them. Findings such as these illustrate why crisis victims occasionally compare modern aid workers to their predecessors: the well-meaning but paternalistic civilizing missionaries of the colonial era.

THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY HUMANITARIANS

These failures and successes alike can be traced back to the influence and strength of the Humanitarian Club. The club might not represent every single aid worker, but it holds real power over how the world responds to emergencies by setting the rules of humanitarian action and controlling its gears. It also has the ability to push through the reforms that it favors and to deter measures that it dislikes or finds too difficult, not least because they would threaten its privileges.

The club was born after World War II as a Western response to the challenges of reconstructing Europe and decolonizing its former territories. Although its focus has since shifted to the developing world and its members have grown in number and reach, the club remains remarkably homogeneous. Most of its major donors are governments that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or groups and citizens of OECD member countries. In terms of governments, the club’s most important member is Washington, which is represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development; other powerful club members include the British government, represented by the Department for International Development, and the European Commission, represented by its Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department.

Western governments also have a controlling influence over the core pillar of the global humanitarian network: the UN and its specialized

agencies, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Program, which lead the charge in crisis zones. Orbiting this system are a dozen or so NGOs that receive most of the funds distributed by the major Western donors and dominate disaster response, among them CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam International, and World Vision International.

Falling outside the club are many increasingly prominent donor organizations from developing countries, NGOs based in rising economies (such as Turkey's IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation and Kimse Yok Mu), and various faith-based institutions. Also operating largely autonomously are corporate players that have a philanthropic arm, starting with Google, and a few massive philanthropic foundations. And of course, much of the real work undertaken during emergencies falls to local NGOs, which often find themselves knocking on the clubhouse's closed door.

Members of the club are bound together by common principles and shared convictions—namely, that humanitarian aid must be neutral and impartial and that strict standards must regulate the delivery of assistance. But funding also plays a large unifying role. Between 2007 and 2012, some 90 percent of government allocations to humanitarian aid came from OECD members, according to Development Initiatives, an independent monitor of global aid flows. Nonmembers have seen little of this windfall; most of it went to UN agencies and major international NGOs. According to CAFOD, a British aid organization, only \$95 million of the roughly \$19 billion spent globally on humanitarian aid in 2010 made its way to national NGOs based in disaster-affected areas (although another fraction of the overall amount was provided to these NGOs via subgrants made by UN agencies). During ongoing crises in five countries in 2012—in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan—national NGOs saw a mere 14 percent of the resources channeled through the UN's common humanitarian funds. And in post-earthquake Haiti, nearly 90 percent of U.S. contributions went into the pockets of international agencies and organizations, as documented by the Center for Global Development; only one dollar in ten actually reached the victims.

Similar to many old-style associations and guilds before it, the Humanitarian Club is highly exclusive. Although the aid sector is far from being a closed shop, club membership yields useful privileges: a

seat at the planning table, an invitation to field coordination meetings, and UN credentials. But membership criteria are set by the most senior club members, and outside candidates must pass rigorous tests. The UN humanitarian coordinating body, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, restricts its membership to UN agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and a handful of major NGOs. Also, the club works almost exclusively in English, which is frequently an obstacle for smaller organizations based in crisis zones. Aid agencies that pursue agendas that the club deems insufficiently neutral—such as those driven by social justice ideals or religion—also find themselves ostracized.

The club's power to mobilize its members has allowed it to spearhead many of the recent improvements in the effectiveness of aid. But those reforms, premised on the notion that humanitarian action required greater coordination and regulation, have also further centralized the system and solidified its hierarchy. Although these measures forced agencies to strengthen their standards, they have also encouraged aid workers to be more attentive to their donors than to the beneficiaries directly impacted by their decisions.

In addition, the way in which the club has sought to improve the sector's professionalism—by stressing the importance of empirical evidence—has pushed local views further to the margin. An increased reliance on generalizable data, manuals, and checklists has improved the efficiency and transparency of aid delivery, but it comes at the expense of the less quantifiable forms of knowledge often possessed only by people and groups who hail from and live in the areas affected by disasters.

A SHAKY PEDESTAL

As the Humanitarian Club drags its feet on truly meaningful reform, a number of external forces are beginning to reshape the global humanitarian system from the outside. In fact, new actors and technologies could soon bring about the very changes that the club has been resisting: giving more power to affected communities and turning humanitarian action into a more localized enterprise. But they could do so in a way that risks undoing many of the improvements—if not unraveling the humanitarian system altogether.

For one thing, new sources of humanitarian aid are shaking up the sector. In 2013, donors outside the club—including Brazil, China,

Turkey, and the Gulf states—contributed 14 percent of government-derived humanitarian funding, up from an average of seven percent over the previous decade, according to Development Initiatives. That year, Turkey alone gave more than \$1.6 billion to humanitarian causes—a jump of almost 50 percent from the previous year, much of it dedicated to helping refugees from Iraq and Syria. The rising powers' contributions are growing vis-à-vis those of traditional donors, and due to the recent recession and economic slowdown in much of the West, this trend appears likely to continue into the future.

The good news is that these new donors are likely to plow money into regional associations that are more responsive to local needs. The bad news, however, is that they could be even more inclined to politicize humanitarian aid than the members of the Humanitarian

In times of crisis, local information can be as vital as food and water.

Club. The Gulf states' approach to Syria, for instance, has been to operate almost entirely outside the mainstream international effort. Their actions have caused some easily avoidable failures and unnecessary expenses, undermined relief workers' credibility among the vic-

tims, and given new ammunition to critics who charge that aid has become a geopolitical tool.

Meanwhile, new technologies are revolutionizing the system from within. Innovations such as crisis mapping and crowdsourcing are delivering more accurate information and making it easier to anticipate emergencies and respond to them. New technologies are also altering how agencies deliver their assistance. Abandoning outmoded “truck and dump” methods of providing aid to the vulnerable, agencies are now experimenting with direct cash transfers and voucher programs; they are discovering that, as the political scientist Chris Blattman and the economist Paul Niehaus have argued, these new tools empower women, stabilize incomes, and bolster economic sustainability. Such innovative methods also help democratize international aid because they rely on recipients to collect data and thereby allow people to participate more fully in their own rescue.

Furthermore, numerous nontraditional actors—from faith-based institutions and multinational corporations to regional organizations—are also expanding their roles. To take one example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is taking on greater responsibility for regional

emergency relief. Its Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance is now a vibrant hub of information sharing and coordination, helping local players mount swift responses to landslides in Indonesia, flash floods in Laos, and droughts in Thailand. ASEAN's most important role has been in training relief workers from across the region through joint response drills, enabling governments to take greater responsibility for aid efforts when the need comes. Joining ASEAN and new players of its kind are NGOs based in developing countries themselves, such as BRAC, from Bangladesh, which focuses on alleviating extreme poverty, and MERCY Malaysia, a volunteer relief organization that provides medical and humanitarian services at home and abroad.

Diaspora groups, too, are coming to the fore. In fact, global remittance flows exceed the total volume of foreign aid (of which humanitarian assistance is a small part) by a factor of three, and some of these funds are spawning local relief agencies. Africa is now home to a number of quickly growing NGOs, such as Adeso, a charity headquartered in Kenya, that have no intention of acting as junior partners to Western agencies—or of needing much tutoring from them. But neither do such organizations aspire to become transnational behemoths. Rather, they represent the new humanitarians of the twenty-first century: modest in size, agile, knowledgeable, and rooted in local contexts. Their rise, in turn, encourages ever-greater numbers of local actors to follow in their footsteps.

ALL TOGETHER NOW

Ever since it began reforming itself, the Humanitarian Club has embraced a compelling vision of the future: one in which the aid system would no longer be owned and operated by the West and would be fully accountable to its beneficiaries. That ideal system would allow organizations of all sizes and places of origin to take the lead. Standards would be jointly negotiated, foreign experts would dedicate themselves to strengthening local skills, and critical material and organizational support would arrive whenever and wherever needed. Aid workers would cultivate genuine partnerships that would fully expunge any residue of paternalism. Eventually, club members promised, they would work themselves out of the job.

Whether the club is capable of delivering on this promise remains to be seen. Its interests and culture certainly suggest that evolution will come only with a great deal of effort, if at all. What's clear is that

failing to adapt to changing modern realities will almost certainly reduce the club to a historical relic, as new global forces render it irrelevant and leave the real work in the hands of nontraditional actors. That outcome, however, wouldn't necessarily improve the system. It might spur some local successes but would almost certainly unravel many hard-won advances.

A far superior outcome would require patient, deliberate steps toward the very future the club has always professed to desire. Donor countries have all the resources to keep the club on that path, and they certainly still enjoy enough global influence to do so. The United States and other wealthy countries have a key role to play in this process, due to their vast investment in humanitarianism and major stake in its improvement. They can start by sponsoring a number of modest initiatives that will point the way to a more effective and legitimate system.

The first step would be for the club to make good on its promises to help vulnerable communities build up their resilience to crises and prepare for disasters ahead of time. Club members should finally follow through by spending more to train workers and agencies in places likely to struggle in the face of an emergency. Such spending would entail more risk and require heavier oversight, but the outcome would be worth it.

Donor countries should continue to encourage and reward evidence-based results. The transition from evaluations based on anecdotal evidence to methods that prioritize hard data has led to astonishing improvements in performance. It has also helped aid agencies select local partners based on merit and channel funding to groups that demonstrate effectiveness rather than to those with powerful connections. And for all the extra reporting they entail, evidence- and merit-based systems strengthen accountability across the board, forcing donors to cut funding for underperforming agencies and shift resources to more promising candidates.

Improving accountability, however, will not be possible without building true partnerships with local actors—before, during, and after an emergency. Too often, aid agencies, citing the high cost of training local partners, delegate to them purely logistical or administrative roles. But recent research shows that creating genuinely equal working relationships with local groups greatly increases the effectiveness of aid,

even if it does not reduce costs. And a number of studies demonstrate that local partnerships can, in fact, lower the price tag. For instance, a series of accounts published by Peace Direct, a British conflict-resolution charity, showed that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a local organization has been able to reintegrate former child soldiers into society at an average cost of \$153 per person, compared with costs of between \$300 and \$750 per person charged by international agencies.

Once implemented, these reforms might lead to perhaps the most important change of all: a change in attitude. To become as accountable to local populations as they are to the donors who sign their checks, humanitarians should learn to listen to those they aspire to serve. Local populations are already doing their part to make that happen by taking advantage of new technologies. Nepal is just the latest example, where local populations collected cell phone GPS data to help map the affected areas, accelerating rescue efforts and the delivery of relief. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are helping aid recipients organize and speak more assertively. Governments at the village, municipal, and national levels are also growing less reticent about demanding documented professional standards from aid agencies. Old notions of charitable benevolence are being replaced by expectations of proven competence.

The fact that the Humanitarian Club responds to emergencies is no excuse for not working alongside, and even for, affected populations. The question “How can we serve you?” should replace the more common statement: “Here is how you need to change to join us.” True, the club will lose some power in the process, but it might also discover some unexpected benefits, including a stronger esprit de corps. A less paternalistic process might reduce resistance and resentment on the ground, making for far more effective programs. The question is whether humanitarians are prepared to cede power to those they claim to represent and whose lives are at stake. 🌍

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REVIEWS & RESPONSES

*There is no end to
the hypocrisy of people
who tell other people
how or whether or when
to tell kids about sex.*

—Jill Lepore



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The Facts of Life

Sex Ed Around the World

Jill Lepore

Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education

BY JONATHAN ZIMMERMAN.
Princeton University Press, 2015, 216 pp.

“**W**here do little children come from?’ This is an embarrassing question,” admitted Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Best, he thought, was to hope your kid doesn’t ask it. But if the question does come up, Rousseau advised in 1762, answer it “with the greatest plainness, without mystery or confusion.” The important thing is to avoid having this conversation with your kid during the impossible years. Wrote Rousseau: “If you are not sure of keeping him in ignorance of the difference between the sexes till he is sixteen, take care you teach him before he is ten.”

It’s not the worst advice I’ve ever heard, but honestly, what on earth did Rousseau know about it? He had five illegitimate children and, at birth, deposited all of them in a foundling hospital in Paris, l’Hôpital des Enfants-Trouvés. Every year, it seems, his mistress got pregnant: “There came the same inconvenience and the same

expedient,” as he put it in his *Confessions*, a book of remorse. Rousseau’s children almost certainly died as infants—at the time, seven out of ten newborns left at the hospital died in their first year—and in any case, he never saw any of them ever again.

It might be that Rousseau is an extreme case, but suffice it to say, there is no end to the hypocrisy of people who tell other people how or whether or when to tell kids about sex. Much the same, in fact, can be said of people who tell other people how to run their countries. That’s because teaching sex in schools, as educational policy, has rather a lot in common with foreign policy, not least in the way that arrogance, suspicion, and self-interest override generosity, cooperation, and amity. In the eighteenth century, Rousseau told other parents how to talk to their children about sex; at the start of the twentieth century, in some countries, the task of explaining sex began to move from the home to the school; and by the middle of the century, those countries started telling other countries how to teach sex in their schools, too. In Europe and the United States, sex ed began about 1913, at the height of the Progressive movement—a moment, one commentator remarked, when the clock chimed “Sex O’Clock in America.” A century later, it’s sex o’clock all over the world.

Not surprisingly, this has proved controversial. Human sexuality and reproduction are matters of biology, but they’re much more than that, too. Sex can be spiritual; many people consider it sacred. It has medical implications and economic consequences. And the forms it takes are regulated both by

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legal statutes and by religious strictures. Sex, in short, is not easily contained. It's also hard to talk to kids about it without making judgments and setting rules, which, in any case, is usually the point.

Where, what, and when should kids learn about sex? On this subject, there is a great deal of disagreement, from house to house, from nation to nation, and from one era to another. Disputes about teaching sex in schools have commonly been figured as fights between traditionalists and modernists, like the debate over the teaching of evolution, or as battles over authority in which the family or religion vies against the state or science. Those were once tenable interpretations; they aren't any longer. Why that is can be seen only from the vantage of history.

BIRDS, BEES, AND ABCs

The rise of sex education a century ago depended on two things: the development of the biological sciences and the rise of public schooling. A mammalian egg was first seen only in 1827, and before the 1840s, no one knew that human females ovulated monthly; the menstrual cycle remained a mystery, as did what determines the sex of a human embryo. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* transformed the study of evolution and genetics. Meanwhile, the development of germ theory and the discovery of antibiotics launched a series of campaigns to eradicate contagious diseases.

These revolutions in the biological sciences happened to coincide with the emergence of the modern public school system in the United States and much

of Europe. To reformers, bringing the study of human sexuality and reproduction into those schools seemed not only logical but also inevitable, as Jonathan Zimmerman demonstrates in a rich new study, *Too Hot to Handle*. The educational argument seemed self-evident (surely biology belongs on the curriculum), and the public health argument seemed clear, too (explaining human reproduction in schools was meant to halt the spread of sexually transmitted diseases). A staggering number of soldiers had contracted venereal diseases during World War I. In the United Kingdom, reformers founded the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, later known as the British Social Hygiene Council. That group had its analog in the United States in the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, later combined with another group to form the American Social Hygiene Association and today called the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA). By the 1920s, 40 percent of schools in the United States offered some form of instruction in human reproduction.

There were classes in much of Europe as well. They took many names, from Mothercraft in Denmark to Marriage and Motherhood in Germany. Sex ed was most widespread in Sweden, owing in great part to the leadership of the social activist Elise Ottesen-Jensen, who in 1933 founded the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education. (In 1956, Sweden became the first country to mandate instruction in sex in schools.)

Wherever it is taught, sex ed carries with it a national character and a political slant. (So does a lot of what's taught in high schools.) In Russia, a 1925 essay titled "Sexual Education in the Context of Marxist Pedagogy" condemned

masturbation as counterrevolutionary. In Mexico, sex education in schools was recommended by the socialist government, and protested by the Catholic Church.

Like much else in the Progressive era, including intelligence testing, the birth control movement, and immigration law, sex education had ties to eugenics. Teaching the science of sex, social hygiene reformers believed, would not only help stop the spread of venereal diseases and end ignorance but also improve the “race.” Mexico’s sex-education program was the product of cooperation between the National Block of Revolutionary Women and the Mexican Eugenics Society. “A carefully devised scheme of biological training could not fail to stimulate a sense of individual responsibility in the exercise of the racial function,” stated a resolution introduced by the British delegation to the League of Nations in 1928. In support of the resolution, ASHA pledged \$5,000 to fund a study of “the methods adopted in various countries for the imparting of sex knowledge to young people.” The League of Nations demurred, one Belgian delegate remarking that he didn’t think the matter lent itself to international cooperation. And maybe it doesn’t.

Nevertheless, as Zimmerman demonstrates, Western nations “spread the subject to their overseas colonies and territories.” They met with considerable resistance. In India, Mahatma Gandhi declared sex “too special and sacred a subject” for the classroom.

A FEMINIST CAUSE

Zimmerman’s account is patchy. He pays almost no attention to the calls for sex education sounded by feminists, or to the movement itself as a feminist

cause, and although he is interested in venereal diseases (and therefore in condoms), he is much less interested in the relationship between education and other forms of contraception. Beginning in the 1910s, feminists, who quite explicitly linked sex education with birth control (and with the broader need for public education for girls), made some of the strongest and best arguments for introducing the study of human sexuality into the public school curriculum. Zimmerman doesn’t much consider those arguments. Nor does he reckon with the degree to which resistance to sex education, in the United States and around the world, is very often part of a larger rejection of claims for political and economic equality for women.

This shortcoming affects Zimmerman’s account of the second half of the twentieth century, too. World War II led to yet another dramatic rise in sexually transmitted diseases and, with it, new and broader support for education aimed at combating them. After the war, American nongovernmental organizations brought sex education to countries occupied by the United States. In 1947, the International Union against the Venereal Diseases, which was closely allied with ASHA, recommended a curriculum for schools that was later adopted by countries including Finland, France, and Romania. ASHA officials visited dozens of countries and distributed thousands of pieces of literature. In 1954, its director visited 21 countries across Asia and Africa. “The ASHA’s slogan, ‘The American Home, the American Hope,’” one official wrote in 1959, “may soon become ‘The World Home, the World Hope.’” What

Zimmerman's analysis makes no effort to explain, though, is what part of this effort—and the resistance to this effort—had to do with American ideas not about sex but about gender.

During the Cold War, “family life education,” the then preferred euphemism, led to a political backlash. Beneath family life education's rhetoric of internationalism, Zimmerman argues, many commentators found nothing but Americanism. “A *seks* manual in the Soviet Union is about as hard to find as a Barry Goldwater button in the Kremlin,” one reporter remarked in 1964. In postcolonial and communist countries, in particular, sex ed came to be seen as just another suspicious U.S. import. Its critics pointed out that the very evils that family life education was supposedly meant to combat—promiscuity, sexual abandon, and unwed mothers—were themselves the product of other American imports: rock 'n' roll and Hollywood films. Emancipated women, of course, posed a problem, too.

In the 1960s, sex education was often called “population education,” animated by new fears about a so-called population bomb. As Zimmerman points out, “By the 1970s, nearly every country in the Western world had instituted some form of sex education.” Exactly what was taught is difficult to say. Zimmerman writes, “Almost all countries continued to avoid discussion of the ‘Big Four’ taboos, as sex educators around the world called them: abortion, contraception, homosexuality, and masturbation.” The global health crisis presented by the outbreak and spread of HIV changed all that. For countries in the developed and the developing world alike, the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s “made it impossible to ignore sex entirely in

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their schools,” Zimmerman writes. This hardly closed the debate.

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW . . .

Is there such a thing as educated sex? Today, sex for beginners, in one form or another, is taught in schools nearly everywhere. Lately, in European countries with aging populations and low birthrates, the curriculum has taken a turn. “For many, many years, we only talked about safe sex, how to prevent getting pregnant,” Marianne Lomholt, the national director of Sex and Society, a nonprofit group that provides sex education in Denmark, told *The New York Times* earlier this year. “Suddenly we just thought, maybe we should actually also tell them about how to get pregnant.”

Zimmerman’s argument is that sex education has been, on the whole, a failure. This is more easily asserted than proved, and the book ends up being unpersuasive owing to the author’s lack of interest in particular outcomes. A great many social scientists would argue that sex education, like the availability of contraception, has improved and continues to improve girls’ ability to finish their education and is therefore part of a larger set of gains for women in the pursuit of equal rights. Whether sex education is a failure depends on what counts as success, and on that score, there is no consensus. Is the aim of sex education a reduction in the rate of teenage pregnancy, or disease, or family size, or the rate of divorce, or violence against homosexuals? Or is it an increase in the rate of high school graduation for girls, or the age of first marriage, or the frequency of female orgasm, or the use of contraception,

or the birthrate? Zimmerman, a professor of education, never answers these questions; he barely even raises them. He’s not interested in public health outcomes: he’s interested in the history of education. His measure of success is whether, a hundred years after it started, sex education has become uncontroversial. It has not.

Nevertheless, Zimmerman’s international and centurylong vantage is important: it casts new light on old fights. In the United States, controversies over sex ed are rooted in a political realignment that dates to the 1960s. In 1964, Mary Calderone, a director of Planned Parenthood, founded the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States to promote frank and informed conversation in public schools. In 1968, Gordon Drake, the education director of the Christian Crusade, wrote a pamphlet called *Is the School House the Proper Place to Teach Raw Sex?* Almost 50 years later, the American conversation on the subject is more or less still stuck in the same place.

Zimmerman’s main contribution is to set the more familiar dispute in the United States alongside arguments from other times and places in order to make a claim about the rise of a global conservative movement. He suggests that the ideological fight between American progressives and traditionalists has exported itself to other parts of the world. On a now-global stage, organizations dedicated to cosmopolitan internationalism pledge, in the words of UNESCO, not to “leave children to find their own way through the clouds of partial information, misinformation and outright exploitation that they will find from

media, the Internet, peers and the unscrupulous” and promise to instead provide them with “scientifically-grounded sexuality education based in the universal values of respect and human rights.” Meanwhile, on the opposing side, groups such as the World Congress of Families, a conservative Christian group founded in 1997, condemn the spread of secularism and the power of the administrative state. “Ideologies of statism, individualism and sexual revolution, today challenge the family’s very legitimacy as an institution,” the group proclaims on its website. And: “School curricula should not undermine the right of parents to teach their children moral and spiritual values.”

Zimmerman’s effort to trace the origin of these disputes provides critical insights. But his approach also has grave limitations. One problem is that global histories such as Zimmerman’s tend to have only the scantest sense of or appreciation for the force and endurance of the local. Global history often suffers from provincialism. Zimmerman’s research, for instance, is largely confined to English-language sources. *Too Hot to Handle* gives the false impression that all over the world, both support for and opposition to sex ed come from organizations headed by, founded by, or funded by Americans. Another problem is that Zimmerman is relatively uninterested in the way the history of sex education intersects with the history of the struggles for political equality for women, reproductive rights, and gay rights. Those struggles have been waged on the streets and in the courts—and in classrooms, too.

But there’s a bigger, deeper problem. However tempting it is to see the debate

over sex ed as a proxy war between the state and the family or between science and religion, this perspective misses the way a fight once figured as a battle between traditionalists and modernists has come to be figured as a battle over rights: the left invokes the rights of women and children; the right invokes the rights of parents and families. Meanwhile, all over the world, girls are still coerced into sex and forced into marriages, contraception can be hard to come by, homosexuals are beaten and killed, and sexually transmitted diseases rage on. Is that because sex education has failed? No. It’s because the rights revolution has become a counterrevolution. 🌐

The Plunder of Africa

How Everybody Holds the Continent Back

Howard W. French

The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth

BY TOM BURGIS. PublicAffairs, 2015, 352 pp.

Discussions about the fate of Africa have long had a cyclical quality. That is especially the case when it comes to the question of how to explain the region's persistent underdevelopment. At times, the dominant view has stressed the importance of centuries of exploitation by outsiders, from the distant past all the way to the present. Scholars such as the economist William Easterly, for example, have argued that even now, the effects of the African slave trade can be measured on the continent, with areas that experienced intensive slaving still showing greater instability, a lack of social trust, and lower growth. Others observers have focused on different

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external factors, such as the support that powerful countries offered corrupt African dictatorships during the Cold War and the structural-adjustment policies imposed by Western-led institutions in the 1980s—which, some argue, favored disinvestment in national education, health care, and other vital services.

At other times, a consensus has formed around arguments that pin the blame on poor African leadership in the decades since most of the continent achieved independence in the 1960s. According to this view, the outside world has been generous to Africa, providing substantial aid in recent decades, leaving no excuse for the continent's debility. There's little wrong with African countries that an end to the corruption and thievery of their leaders wouldn't fix, voices from this camp say. Western media coverage of Africa has tended to provide fodder for that argument, highlighting the shortcomings and excesses of the region's leaders while saying little about the influence of powerful international institutions and corporations. It's easy to understand why: Africa's supply of incompetent or colorful villains has been so plentiful over the years, and reading about them is perversely comforting for many Westerners who, like audiences everywhere, would rather not dwell on their own complicity in the world's problems.

One of the many strengths of Tom Burgis' *The Looting Machine* is the way it avoids falling firmly into either camp in this long-running debate. Burgis, who writes about Africa for the *Financial Times*, brings the tools of an investigative reporter and the sensibility of a foreign correspondent to his story,

narrating scenes of graft in the swamps of Nigeria's oil-producing coastal delta region and in the lush mining country of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, while also sniffing out corruption in the lobbies of Hong Kong skyscrapers, where shell corporations engineer murky deals that earn huge sums of money for a host of shady international players. Although Burgis' emphasis is ultimately on Africa's exploitation by outsiders, he never loses sight of local culprits.

GIMME THE LOOT

Sure signs that Burgis is no knee-jerk apologist for African elites arrive early in the book, beginning with his fascinating and lengthy account of "the Futungo," a shadowy clique of Angolan insiders who he claims control their country's immense oil wealth, personally profiting from it and also using it to keep a repressive ruling regime in power. The country's leader, José Eduardo dos Santos, has been president since 1979, and in 2013, *Forbes* magazine identified his daughter, Isabel, as Africa's first female billionaire. "When the International Monetary Fund [IMF] examined Angola's national accounts in 2011," Burgis writes, it found that between 2007 and 2010, "\$32 billion had gone missing, a sum greater than the gross domestic product of each of forty-three African countries and equivalent to one in every four dollars that the Angolan economy generates annually." Meanwhile, according to Burgis, even though the country is at peace, in 2013 the Angolan government spent 18 percent of its budget on the Futungo-dominated military and police forces that prop up dos Santos' rule—almost 40 percent

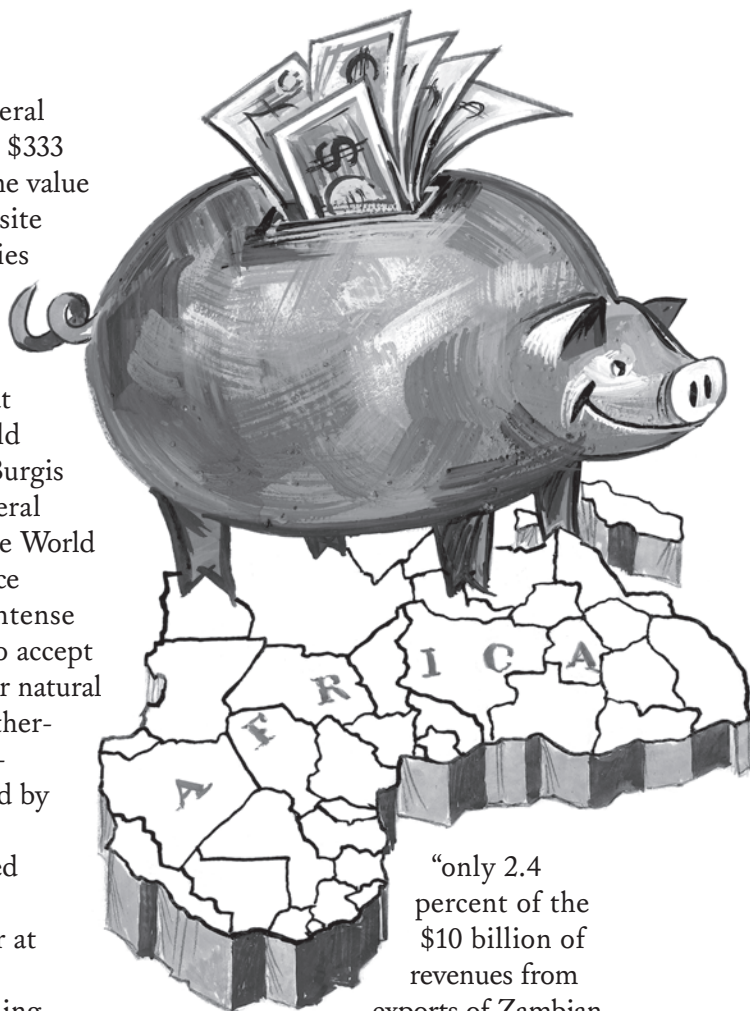
more than it spends on health and education combined.

Those who tend to blame Africa's woes on elite thievery seize on such examples with relish. But Burgis tells a much fuller story. Angola's leaders may seem more clever and perhaps possess more agency than other African regimes—and indeed, other African states seem to be eagerly adopting the Angolan model. But the regime relies on the complicity of a number of actors in the international system—and the willful ignorance of many others—to facilitate the dispossession of the Angolan people: Western governments, which remain largely mute about governance in Angola; major banks; big oil companies; weapons dealers; and even the IMF. They provide the political cover, the capital, and the technology necessary to extract oil from the country's rich offshore wells and have facilitated the concealment (and overseas investment) of enormous sums of money on behalf of a small cabal of Angolans and their foreign enablers. Because Angola's primary resource, oil, is deemed so important to the global economy, and because its production is so lucrative for others, Angola is rarely pressed to account for how it uses its profits, much less over questions of democracy or human rights. Burgis shows how even the IMF, after uncovering the \$32 billion theft, docilely reverted to its role as a facilitator of the regime's dubious economic programs.

For those who insist that foreign aid to Africa compensates for the role that rich countries, big businesses, and international organizations play in plundering the continent's resource wealth, Burgis has a ready rejoinder. "In

2010,” he writes, “fuel and mineral exports from Africa were worth \$333 billion, more than seven times the value of the aid that went in the opposite direction.” And African countries generally receive only a small fraction of the value that their extractive industries produce, at least relative to the sums that states in other parts of the world earn from their resources. As Burgis reveals, that is because multilateral financial institutions, led by the World Bank and its International Finance Corporation (IFC), often put intense pressure on African countries to accept tiny royalties on the sales of their natural resources, warning them that otherwise, they will be labeled as “resource nationalists” and shunned by foreign investors. “The result,” Burgis writes, “is like an inverted auction, in which poor countries compete to sell the family silver at the lowest price.”

Meanwhile, oil, gas, and mining giants employ crafty tax-avoidance strategies, severely understating the value of their assets in African countries and assigning the bulk of their income to subsidiaries in tax havens such as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, and the Marshall Islands. Some Western governments tolerate and even defend such arrangements, which increase the profits of Western companies and major multinational firms. But these tax dodges further shrink the proceeds that African states earn from their resources. According to Burgis, in Zambia, one of the world’s top copper producers, major mining companies pay lower tax rates than the country’s poor miners themselves. Partly as a result, he reports, in 2011,



“only 2.4 percent of the \$10 billion of revenues from exports of Zambian copper accrued to the

government.” Ghana, a major gold producer, fared slightly better, with foreign mining companies paying seven percent of the revenue they earned in taxes—still a tiny amount, Burgis points out, “compared with the 45 to 65 percent that the IMF estimates to be the global average effective tax rate in mining.”

A RACE TO THE BOTTOM

African countries’ unequal relationships with powerful international financial organizations and large multinational firms help explain the “resource curse” so frequently lamented in discussions of the continent’s economies. Rather than



issuing from some mysterious invisible force, the curse is to a large degree the product of greed and the disparities in leverage between rich and poor—and its effects are undeniable. Burgis quotes a 2004 internal IFC review that found that between 1960 and 2000, “poor countries that were rich in natural resources grew two to three times more slowly than those that were not.” Without exception, the IFC found, “every country that borrowed from the World Bank did worse the more it depended on extractive industries.”

A case in point is the arid, Sahelian country of Niger, which for decades has served as a major supplier of uranium to France, its former colonial master. According to Burgis, the French company Areva pays tiny royalties for Niger’s uranium—an estimated 5.5 percent of its market value. And the details of the company’s contracts with Niger’s government are not publicly disclosed. Reflecting on this situation during an interview with

Burgis, China’s ambassador to Niger adopts a posture of moral outrage, proclaiming that Niger’s “direct receipts from uranium are more or less equivalent to those from the export of onions.”

This is a telling exchange, since many Africans believed that Chinese investment and influence on the continent would offer a way to lift the resource curse. Many greeted the arrival of the Chinese as big economic players in the region, which began in the mid-1990s, with great enthusiasm—especially the leaders of states whose economies depend heavily on minerals. China’s share of the global consumption of refined metals rose from five percent in the early 1990s to 45 percent in 2010; its oil consumption increased fivefold during the same period. In 2002, Chinese trade with Africa was worth \$13 billion; a mere decade later, that figure had soared to \$180 billion, three times the value of U.S. trade with the continent.

The hope was that with China directly competing with Africa’s economic partners in the West, African countries would win better terms for themselves. But as Burgis makes painfully clear, what has happened more often is a race to the bottom, in which Chinese firms focus their attention on African countries that face sharp credit restrictions or economic boycotts from the West, owing to coups d’état or human rights abuses. In many such countries, including Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Guinea, the Chinese have extended easy financing to governments, crafting secretive deals that reward Chinese investors with even more lopsided terms than Western governments and firms tend to enjoy. “Access

to easy Chinese loans might have looked like a chance for African governments to reassert sovereignty after decades of hectoring by the [World] Bank, the IMF, and Western donors,” Burgis writes, but, “like a credit card issued with no credit check, it also removed a source of pressure for sensible economic management.” In addition to this, critics point out that Chinese companies frequently bring in their own workers from China, providing little employment for Africans and few opportunities for Africans to master new skills and technologies.

Some of Burgis’ strongest work follows the dealmaking of a shadowy Hong Kong–based outfit called the 88 Queensway Group, which was founded by a man sometimes known as Sam Pa, whose background is reportedly in Chinese intelligence. By tracing a complex web of corporate relations, Burgis shows how Pa’s group has put together lucrative deals in one African country after another, since starting seemingly from scratch in Angola during the early phases of China’s push into Africa.

In Burgis’ telling, one mission of Pa’s 88 Queensway Group and its associated companies, including China Sonangol and the China International Fund, seems to be offering the Chinese government plausible deniability when it comes to major transactions and contracts with some of Africa’s most corrupt and violent regimes. But some African elites at the receiving end of Pa’s entreaties have been left with little doubt that dealing with Queensway would in fact put them in contact with the highest levels of the Chinese state. Mahmoud Thiam served as the minister of mines in Guinea under President Moussa Dadis Camara, a junta leader

who faced international outrage after his forces opened fire on a peaceful opposition rally in September 2009, killing at least 150 and gang-raping many who tried to flee the assault. In 2009, Thiam traveled to China at Queensway’s invitation and later told Burgis about being whisked around Beijing by Pa’s associates. “If they were not a government entity, they definitely had strong backing and strong ties,” Thiam recalled. “The level of clearances they had to do things that are difficult in China, the facility they had in getting people to see us [and] the military motorcade gave us the impression that they were strongly connected.” In the case of Guinea and other places, Burgis reports that Queensway was able to provide tens of millions of dollars to African governments on short notice, with virtually no strings attached, sometimes to help bail out leaders presiding over economic crises and sometimes merely to prove the company’s bona fides.

In the hands of a less astute observer, Pa could come off as something like a Bond villain. But Burgis rightly reminds readers that it hardly takes a conniving mastermind to profit off the inequities and shortcomings of African political systems. “If it weren’t him, it would be someone else,” as a U.S. congressional researcher puts it to Burgis. The researcher adds that even if Pa’s operation were shut down, “the system is still there: these investors can still form a company without saying who they are, they can still anchor their business in a country that is not concerned about investors’ behavior overseas, and, sadly, there’s no shortage of resource-rich fragile states on which these investors can prey.”

LOSS PREVENTION

By showing how “the looting machine” is operated by people and institutions both inside and outside Africa, Burgis transcends the tired binary debate about the root causes of the continent’s misery. But if the problem is as complex as he makes it out to be, with avarice flowing from so many different sources, how can ordinary Africans—and African elites intent on leading more just, prosperous, and equitable societies—improve their prospects?

For Africans, the answer lies in large part in insisting on more open and accountable government. Although the outside world has taken little notice, democracy has spread significantly around the continent in the last two decades, and although conflicts grab the headlines, evidence suggests that war and other forms of large-scale violence have declined during this same period. Stronger civil societies and regular, free, and fair elections would prevent leaders such as Angola’s dos Santos from perpetuating their rule for decades and might allow more responsive elites to put Africa’s resources in the service of more equitable development strategies.

For the outside world, the priority should be getting foreign powers, including China, to agree on more stringent measures to combat corrupt business practices. The U.S. Treasury Department is cracking down on foreign banks that enable Americans to evade taxes; Washington should expand its efforts to prevent illicit financial flows involving other countries as well, reducing the amount of revenue that African countries lose owing to tax havens.

Finally, as Burgis’ book strongly implies (although does not explicitly argue), international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF must be made much more accountable. In Africa, that would mean publicly measuring their programs’ performance in terms of their impact on economic growth. Over the years, such institutions have demanded rigorous compliance from their poorest clients while never holding their own performance or the soundness of their advice up to public scrutiny. The internal IFC review Burgis cites made the same point more than a decade ago. But its findings were largely ignored as the World Bank continued to promote extractive industries in Africa even when they contributed nothing to development. Today, with Africans seeking to cross the Mediterranean Sea by the thousands to escape misery, a simple recommendation from that review is perhaps more pertinent than ever: World Bank and IFC staff should be rewarded not simply for allocating money to projects but for demonstrably reducing poverty. After all, whatever the causes of African poverty, any efforts to address it will fail if they are blind to their own effects. 🌍

Holier Than Thou

Politics and the Pulpit in America

James Morone

One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America
BY KEVIN KRUSE. Basic Books, 2015,
384 pp.

Americans have been arguing about the role of religion in government since the earliest days of the republic. In 1789, soon after taking office, President George Washington declared a day of “public thanksgiving and prayer.” God had bestowed a republican government on the United States, said Washington, and the nation ought to express its gratitude. Just 12 years later, President Thomas Jefferson abruptly canceled the ritual. The First Amendment, explained Jefferson, erected a “wall of separation between church and state.”

Jefferson’s wall could have used a better contractor. Today, there is hardly an aspect of American political life untouched by religion. God seems to be everywhere. The nation’s official motto is “In God We Trust.” The phrase is printed on the nation’s money, affixed

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behind the Speaker’s dais in the House of Representatives, and engraved over the entrance to the Senate. The Pledge of Allegiance declares a nation “under God,” and—sorry, Jefferson—the National Day of Prayer is back (the first Thursday in May); there is even a National Prayer Breakfast (the first Thursday in February). When they address the nation, U.S. presidents almost always conclude with a request that “God bless America.”

All this religiosity isn’t exactly ecumenical: a majority of Americans consider the United States a “Christian nation.” In his fine new book, Kevin Kruse declares that, whatever the public may think today, the founders had no intention of establishing a religious (much less a Christian) republic. For the most part, they agreed with Jefferson and believed in separating church and state.

What, then, explains the religiosity of American politics? Kruse traces its origins back to the 1930s. Conservative business leaders had trouble gaining traction against the New Deal and eventually discovered that moral claims generated more popular enthusiasm than calling for free markets. The business leaders funded a national movement led by religious figures such as James Fife, Jr., a Congregational minister who preached that the New Deal, with its emphasis on collective responsibility, had introduced a “pagan statism.” Together, these men of the world and men of the cloth engineered a spiritual revival designed to shake Americans free from creeping collectivism.

This pro-business, anticommunist, politicized Christianity seemed to find its political champion when Dwight Eisenhower won the presidency in 1952.

But Eisenhower recast the movement (Kruse implies he hijacked it) as a more ecumenical, all-American consensus that would unite the nation in the Cold War struggle against the godless Soviet Union. Eisenhower set the agenda, and Congress—Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals—eagerly followed. Many of the most familiar manifestations of religion in government—the legislatively mandated allusions to God in the country’s official motto, on its money, and in its Pledge of Allegiance—emerged during the Eisenhower era.

Kruse masterfully excavates this tale. But it is only one episode in a larger story that runs through U.S. history, and Kruse’s book raises questions that lie beyond the scope of his study: Exactly how does religion operate in U.S. politics? What came before and after the mid-twentieth-century period that Kruse focuses on? And what’s likely to happen next in American religious politics?

GOD’S COUNTRY

Most rich nations long ago evolved from mostly religious to mostly secular. Today in France, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, fewer than 20 percent of citizens say they regularly attend church. In contrast, 40 percent of Americans say they attend services weekly, and 70 percent say they go a few times a year. The most familiar explanation for this disparity is the vibrant religious marketplace in the United States. In contrast to nations with an official church supported by taxes, the U.S. religious scene has always been open to anyone who can draw a paying congregation.

The result—locked into law by the U.S. Constitution’s protections against the establishment of an official religion—

is a land of many creeds. And that, in turn, has an important political ramification: there is a religion to support every perspective. Across U.S. history, churches have inspired revolutionaries and reactionaries, abolitionists and slaveholders, liberals and conservatives. Kruse’s story focuses on the Eisenhower administration co-opting a right-wing religious revival and rendering it palatable to a broad political center. But today, religion reflects polarization rather than consensus: African American churches bus their largely Democratic congregants to the polls, while white evangelical preachers warn that it would be a sin against the Almighty to cast a “blue” vote. Many foreign observers find this astonishing; most Americans see it as perfectly normal.

The United States is also different from other developed countries in a less familiar way: Americans don’t mind meddling clerics. As the political scientist Anna Grzymala-Busse has recently shown, people in most rich nations condemn religious involvement in politics. Even in highly church-ed states, such as Croatia, Ireland, Poland, and Portugal, between 70 and 90 percent of the public rejects religious efforts to influence government. Americans have been much slower to object (although impatience has been on the rise). The difference might stem, once again, from the multiplicity of U.S. religious politics; in contrast to places where religion stoutly supports the *ancien régime*, in the United States, every political faction draws on religion.

In broad historical terms, religion cycles through American politics in three great steps. First, preachers denounce a rising tide of secularism,

false religion, and the government policies that encourage them. Occasionally, these jeremiads leak into mainstream culture and the mass media begin to reverberate with a warning: Change your ways, Americans, or there will be hell to pay.

The second phase begins when a powerful politician—during the twentieth century, usually a president—answers the religious call and champions the crusade, ushering the religious reformers and their ideas into his or her political coalition. The reformers win some changes but grow disillusioned when the reforms fail to live up to expectations. Politicians make unreliable moralists, leaving the churches to rediscover an ancient truth: religious life, devoted to fundamental principles, sits awkwardly in the world of power and political expediency.

In the final stage, after achieving some goals and seeing others watered down or cast aside, the movement begins to come apart, as every coalition (and revival) eventually does. Fervor wanes. The religious battalions get tired of compromising and drift away from politics—until a new generation of activists springs up and the cycle begins again.

BIG TENT REVIVAL

That cycle has shaped three religious revivals during the past 80 years: think of them as the Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Reagan dispensations. In each case, a president seized on a powerful religious movement and used it to rewrite the American relationship between politics and faith.

In the early twentieth century, what came to be known as the Social Gospel movement rose up in the mainline Protestant churches and called on

Christians to focus on economic injustice. Its adherents demanded fair wages, aid for the poor, the prohibition of liquor, women's rights, child labor laws, and steps to drastically reduce economic inequality. In the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt used the movement to define his policies and denounce his enemies. For example, Roosevelt introduced his plan for Social Security in what he described as a "Sunday sermon." Catholics, Protestants, and Jews all condemn the "unbrotherly . . . distribution of wealth," preached Roosevelt, yet the "spirit of Mammon" has crowded out the "eternal principles of God and justice." The Roosevelt administration touted the president's agenda as not merely sound policy but also "the Christian thing to do."

Roosevelt and the New Dealers were selective when it came to putting the Social Gospel into practice, casting aside Prohibition and mostly ignoring the women's agenda. But they crafted a highly religious attack on wealth and privilege. "The moneychangers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization," said Roosevelt in his first inaugural address. "We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths," to "social values more noble than mere monetary profit." Future Democrats would invoke the Social Gospel—President Barack Obama regularly uses the term—but they would leave out the harsh bits about Mammon and the moneychangers; in these Gordon Gekko times, Roosevelt's Christian rhetoric sounds radical.

Kruse offers an excellent guide to the next part of the story: a conservative Christian backlash against the New Deal's version of the Social Gospel.



Are you there, God? The Obamas at the National Prayer Breakfast, February 2012

Conservative ministers warned that collectivism offered no path to salvation, public works did not amount to worship, and a faith focused on material matters squandered all of religion's awe and transcendence. The critique slowly gathered adherents and, as Americans began to turn rightward after World War II, swelled into a national revival.

When Eisenhower took office in 1953, he championed conservative religious ideals, seeing in them the potential to unify Americans during the Cold War. He began his first inaugural address by asking, "Would you permit me the privilege of uttering a little private prayer of my own?" For over a minute, the president beseeched God for cooperation and understanding among people "of differing political faiths." A month earlier, he had made his most famous religious declaration: "Our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt

religious faith, and I don't care what it is." Liberal intellectuals hooted: "a very fervent believer in a very vague religion," scorned the theologian William Lee Miller. But Congress eagerly signed on to Eisenhower's ceremonial deism and churned out one emblem of "Christian America" after another, with almost no opposition. Even the American Civil Liberties Union declined to object as the U.S. government infused itself with symbols of Christianity.

But the symbols were the easy part. The limits of this national revival came into focus when policymakers got down to practical details. Most Americans agreed that schoolchildren ought to pray, but exactly which prayers should they say? Faith tugged local officials toward Christian prayer in Mississippi, Mormon prayer in Utah, and non-denominational prayer in New York—which evangelicals denounced as no prayer at all, since it failed to mention

Jesus. Finally, in 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court stepped in and declared that all school prayers breached Jefferson's wall and were unconstitutional. A similar effort to mandate the presence of Bibles in schools collapsed when different faiths insisted on different translations.

THE GREAT CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATOR

The chaos of the 1960s buried whatever remained of the establishmentarian religious consensus that had thrived during the 1950s. White Americans (outside the South, at least) came to cheer Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Christian nonviolence but were baffled by the rising black Muslim leaders who challenged King. Meanwhile, a new generation of Jeremiahs condemned the hedonistic American people and the immoral state that ruled them. When Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972 (still yet to be ratified) and the Supreme Court struck down abortion restrictions in 1973, the religious right rushed back into politics. The Moral Majority became the most visible organization preaching an increasingly popular sermon: pro-life, pro-traditional family, pro-morality, and pro-American. The movement soon found a formidable champion in California's governor, Ronald Reagan.

When Reagan accepted the Republican nomination for president in 1980, he stopped in the middle of his acceptance speech and went off script, deftly alluding to some shadowy authority that might punish him for performing a forbidden act. "I have thought of something that is not part of my speech and I'm worried over whether I should do it," he said, before plunging on: "We

begin our crusade joined together in a moment of silent prayer." The following month, Reagan addressed a national gathering of evangelical and fundamentalist ministers. "I know you can't endorse me," he said, again referencing a wall that unjustly separated church and state (and prevented the tax-exempt religious groups from directly aiding his campaign). "But," Reagan added, "I want you to know that I endorse you."

The Reagan administration introduced religious reforms, changed the tone of American politics, and, inevitably, disappointed its more ardent evangelical supporters. Before Reagan's tenure, roughly half of all presidential addresses ended with an invocation of God; after him, the number soared to around 90 percent. By drawing Christian fundamentalists into the governing coalition, Reagan committed his party to a fierce attack on abortion, a soft endorsement of biblical inerrancy, and a tough, moralizing stance on bad behavior of every sort. Two existing policies—the "wars" on drugs and crime—became centerpieces of his policy agenda. Crime and poverty, said the president again and again, were not the results of racism or hard times, as the old Social Gospel suggested. Echoing Fifield's message, Reagan insisted that individuals be held accountable for their own actions. Owing in great part to policies put in place during the Reagan years, the number of Americans behind bars rose fivefold during the 1980s and 1990s.

Reagan's framing of public policy in moral terms continued to shape politics long after he'd left office. Christian conservatives had no fondness for President Bill Clinton, but on some issues, Clinton hewed fairly closely to

the moralism of the Reagan era—for example, ending traditional welfare, which critics had denounced for promoting laziness and promiscuity, and embracing a law-and-order agenda that funded the hiring of around 100,000 new police officers across the nation. The George W. Bush administration even more explicitly embraced moral and religious themes, especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when Bush spoke unabashedly about crusades and evildoers.

Yet despite its political influence on three decades of U.S. politics, the religious right never quite savored victory. Its most cherished goals—ending abortion, restoring traditional families, cleaning up the culture—remained out of reach. And during the Obama years, the moral and religious climate has shifted even more firmly away from conservative Christian ideals: consider, for instance, the spread of same-sex marriage and the decriminalization and even legalization, in some places, of marijuana. Young people have turned decisively away from organized religion; according to a recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center, more than a third of Americans under age 33 do not identify with any church—an unprecedented figure. The trend is particularly stark within Christianity: only 71 percent of Americans now describe themselves as Christian, reflecting a drop of nearly eight percentage points in the past seven years alone. For those reasons, Christian conservatism, although hardly a spent force, will likely wane as a political movement, as the religious politics of the United States seem to have reached another inflection point.

FAITH NO MORE?

Religious ideas emerge and gain momentum over years before finding a political champion. What might the next phase of Christian politics in the United States look like? Two very different possibilities stand out.

First, a full-throated new social gospel might rise out of the country's black churches. Most Americans got their first taste of this possible future in 2008, when they heard snippets of a sermon by Obama's former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, including the infamous line "Not 'God Bless America': God damn America!" But the media storm that engulfed Wright blew right past the preacher's old-fashioned message: God has grown wrathful over his chosen people's iniquity and will continue to punish them unless they change their ways. The country's transgression, as Wright described it, was the traditional Social Gospel sin: "treating our citizens as less than human." The solutions, Wright insisted, lay in the familiar agenda of racial and social justice.

Although both the left and the right repudiated Wright himself, the next dispensation may very well flow out of majority-black churches like Wright's. African Americans represent the single most churched group in the nation. Historically black denominations present a fully developed religious vision that draws on both the Social Gospel and the legacy of the civil rights crusade. Outrage over police killings of unarmed black men has produced huge protests all over the country during the past year and could very well spark a powerful moral movement.

Black religious fervor would be especially formidable if it forged an

alliance between African Americans and Hispanic Americans, another group with high rates of church attendance. Both groups bear the brunt of militarized policing and harsh sentencing; both have rallied for social justice, a living wage, and better government services. Together, they compose around 30 percent of the U.S. population. Although there are undeniable tensions between the communities, less likely partners have forged religious coalitions in recent times. The challenge will be finding effective leaders to foster such an alliance and bring it to political power.

Another very different possibility lies in the “prosperity gospel.” Many contemporary American pastors have cast aside their hellfire sermons and started focusing instead on personal fulfillment—and riches. God will show you how to “move forward into your bright future,” declares the megachurch minister Joel Osteen. The hip-hop artist Mary J. Blige offers a more ecstatic version of the message. “My God is a God who wants me to have things,” she told an interviewer in 2006. “He wants me to bling!”

The prosperity gospel mixes the Christian ideal of individual salvation with the bootstrapping ethos of Horatio Alger, then adds a touch of New Age blather. It would neatly complement the rising libertarian movement in the United States. Prosperity preachers and libertarians might find common ground around the idea that individuals should save themselves, without drug wars or welfare programs. Prosperity-gospel Christians could provide a moral grounding for the nascent political coalitions around libertarians such as

U.S. Senator Rand Paul—pulling together young people cheering legal marijuana and economic conservatives calling for cuts to entitlements.

Kruse’s thoughtful book illustrates a kind of life cycle of American religious politics: fervent social movements rise up, crest with presidential support, and then slip away, leaving behind rituals, rhetoric, rules, and reforms. It is, of course, impossible to know the next turn of the cycle. But if history is a reliable guide, the next moral moment is already stirring somewhere in the culture and waiting for a coalition to push it toward political power. 🌐

Hired Guns

How Private Military Contractors Undermine World Order

Allison Stanger

The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order
BY SEAN MCFATE. Oxford University Press, 2014, 248 pp.

In 2008, the actress and activist Mia Farrow approached the private security company Blackwater and some human rights organizations with a proposition: Might it be possible to hire private military contractors to end the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan? Sean McFate, who had just finished working as a military contractor at DynCorp International, was asked to weigh in. “The plan was simple,” he writes in *The Modern Mercenary*, his thought-provoking book on the rise of private armies. “Blackwater would stage an armed intervention in Darfur and establish so-called islands of humanity, refugee camps protected by PMC [private military company] firepower for civilians fleeing the deadly *janjaweed*.” The scheme was soon scrapped—it was just too unprecedented and risky—but the very fact that it got so far was a

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testament to how widespread the use of private military contractors had become. The idea would have been unthinkable just a decade earlier.

What made the notion plausible, of course, were the game-changing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. They marked the first time that the United States had contracted out so much of its fighting, with private employees outnumbering uniformed personnel in theater at times in both campaigns. At the height of the Vietnam War, by contrast, contractors represented less than 20 percent of the U.S. presence on the ground. In Afghanistan and Iraq, contractors allowed the U.S. government to scale up its military footprint quickly and cheaply. But they also led to a spate of scandals—most infamously in 2007, when Blackwater contractors killed 17 civilians in Nisour Square, in Baghdad. In April 2015, almost eight years after the event, a federal judge in Washington sentenced four former Blackwater guards to long prison terms.

McFate, however, trains his eye on a bigger-picture problem posed by private military contractors: the havoc they are wreaking on world order. For the moment, he writes, the market for force “is a monopsony, where there is a predominant buyer—the United States—and many sellers.” But that will no doubt change, especially because the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq has only increased the importance of security contractors in those countries. And as other countries, including China and Russia, get into the private-contracting game, the world will start to see a freer market for force.

The result, McFate predicts, will be a return to the Middle Ages, when private

warriors determined the outcomes of conflicts and states stood at the sidelines of international politics. This “neo-medieval” world will be characterized by “a non-state-centric, multipolar international system of overlapping authorities and allegiances within the same territory.” Yet it need not be chaotic, he reassures readers, since “the global system will persist in a durable disorder that contains, rather than solves, problems.”

How can the world avoid replicating the problems generated by hired guns in the medieval era? The answer, according to McFate, is to rely less on mere mercenaries and instead foster “military enterprisers.” The former sell their skills to the highest bidder; the latter “raise armies rather than command them” and thus contribute to stability. During the Thirty Years’ War, military enterprisers included such figures as Ernst von Mansfeld, who raised an army for the elector palatine, and Albrecht von Wallenstein, who offered his services to Ferdinand II, the Holy Roman emperor.

But in sketching out a strategy for dealing with a world of privatized power, McFate is too quick to jettison the state-centric principles that have served the world so well since the end of the Thirty Years’ War. The biggest challenges to U.S. security in the years ahead, from climate change to terrorism to cybersecurity, will require more state-to-state collaboration, not less. And U.S. support, tacit or otherwise, for a free market for force will only serve to exacerbate these problems.

PRIVATE POWER

McFate offers two in-depth case studies of modern contractors: in Liberia, where they played the role of military enter-

prisers, and in Somalia, where they acted as mercenaries. Some of his stories have never been told before, which makes the book particularly valuable. Readers learn that after the second Liberian civil war ended in 2003, the State Department wanted the U.S. military to raise a new army for the country, since the old one had been complicit in the conflict. But the Pentagon, busy with Afghanistan and Iraq, balked. The choice thus came down to seeing Liberia have no viable military whatsoever or having the U.S. government outsource training to the private sector. To do nothing would have meant conceding defeat in Liberia, where the United States had helped fortify the military since its inception in 1908.

So the State Department chose DynCorp to reconstruct Liberia’s armed forces. According to McFate, who served as a principal architect of the program, the decision marked “the first time in two centuries that one sovereign nation hired a private enterprise to raise another sovereign nation’s armed forces.” To date, McFate reports, the program has worked: Liberia’s new army has maintained the peace at home, remains loyal to the government, and even sent peacekeepers to Mali in 2013, ten years after the end of Liberia’s own civil war.

McFate credits several of DynCorp’s innovations for the outcome, including the vetting of new army recruits to make sure they had not committed human rights abuses in the past, the addition of civics lessons to basic training, and the pressure DynCorp placed on the Liberian government to issue an executive order mandating the demobilization of the old army,



Contract dispute: Blackwater guards with the U.S. ambassador in Baghdad, March 2006

which legitimized the firm's work. For McFate, Liberia offers an example of how military enterprisers operating in a "mediated market for force"—one in which the government and contractors form a public-private partnership—can serve as a powerful tool for stability in an otherwise neomedieval world.

In contrast, the use of contractors in the failed state of Somalia provides a "tragic" example of neomedievalism. After the UN withdrew all peacekeeping forces from the country in 1995, politics became radically localized. Puntland and Somaliland, semiautonomous regions within Somalia, hired private security companies to help fight piracy on their coastlines, as did Somalia's weak central government. (According to McFate, at least one of these firms, the South Africa-based Saracen International, also started secretly shipping military equipment on

cargo planes into Somalia, in violation of arms embargoes.) The United States entered the fray, too. As McFate explains, the State Department hired DynCorp to train, equip, and deploy peacekeepers from Uganda and Burundi and "indirectly financed" Bancroft Global Development to train African troops to fight the Islamist terrorist group al Shabab—all without leaving an obvious U.S. footprint.

In Somalia, the problem was that no real state existed, so the United States and other countries were unable to raise a legitimate national military, as they had in Liberia. Puzzlingly, McFate simultaneously praises and condemns U.S. policy in Somalia. On the one hand, he writes that "Somalia's free market with mercenaries contributed to instability rather than resolving it." On the other, he finds a "durable disorder" in the country that might hold insights for

stabilizing other failed states. But surely, the victims of al Shabab's April 2015 deadly attack on a university in neighboring Kenya would find nothing durable about the disorder in Somalia.

Surveying the world, McFate sees an emergent neomedieval order that must be channeled in the right direction. A *laissez-faire* approach to the private military industry is likely to encourage the worst outcome: a free market for force, akin to the situation in Somalia or the predatory mercenarism of medieval Italy, which prompted Machiavelli to urge the prince to always rely on his own arms. An unmediated market for force is a recipe for unending conflict, since war pays. "More war means more mercenaries, which gives private armies more resources to ply their trade, fostering more war," McFate writes.

The desired outcome is a mediated market for force, where military enterprisers dominate the market. But McFate provides no blueprint for how such a market might be encouraged, except to say that military enterprisers must predominate. As he himself acknowledges, any military enterpriser is just one step away from doubling as a mercenary, since knowing how to raise and train an army is not far from knowing how to deploy one. And so he never answers the question of which factors might foster a mediated market for force and which might undermine it.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Perhaps an answer can be found by reconsidering why private armies were abandoned at the close of the medieval era. After the Thirty Years' War devastated Europe, diplomats met in Westphalia

to forge norms that would contain the violence inherent in medieval life. The resulting treaties enshrined three principles of international stability: that power should be vested in states, that states must recognize one another as equals, and that states should not interfere in others' internal affairs. Afterward, governments gradually monopolized the market for force by investing in their own standing armies, loyal only to them, and outlawing armed nonstate actors. There were moments along the way when expediency threatened to unravel the Westphalian system, such as when Great Britain hired some 30,000 Hessians to help it fight American revolutionaries, or when various governments issued so-called letters of marque to legitimize privateers in the fight against piracy. Yet state-centric principles won out and became the foundation on which collective-security enterprises such as the UN were built.

Those principles also guided the American superpower. It was in the spirit of Westphalia, for example, that the United States launched the Persian Gulf War, kicking Iraq out of Kuwait with the overwhelming support of the international community and the backing of the UN Security Council. But the wars Washington pursued thereafter exchanged Westphalian principles for human rights and democratization. The interventions in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya all presumed that state sovereignty was no license to conduct atrocities against one's own people. Similarly, drone strikes against terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the assassination of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, and the deployment

of security contractors across the world in the pursuit of U.S. objectives all presume that the state does not have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force in its territory. The United States has gone from upholding Westphalian norms to undermining them.

Why did the United States start relying so heavily on privatized warfare? In part, it did so because of policymakers' faith in the power of free markets. Indeed, maintaining a standing army is an expensive proposition, and letting contractors provide surge capacity can significantly lower costs. But Washington was also in some sense forced to outsource its fighting. The move to an all-volunteer force and Americans' aversion to a draft made security contractors an attractive way to plug the gap between the demand for soldiers and their supply—with the added benefit of providing plausible deniability when things went wrong.

Yet even though security contractors may save money in the short run, the long-term costs are significant. On-demand military services make it easier and more tempting to go to war in the first place, as the American people do not have to be mobilized in support of private ventures. They also create a moral hazard, since the U.S. government makes the decision about how much risk to take, yet the company bears the cost when things go badly. It was the State Department that chose to hire Blackwater to provide much of its security in Iraq, but it was Blackwater whose reputation suffered as a result. Erik Prince, the founder of Blackwater, has said that he regrets ever signing a contract with the State Department. He now works for China.

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That Prince is on the payroll of another government illustrates a worrisome unintended consequence of privatizing war, as well as the strategic challenges that are likely to arise in a free market for force. U.S. firms currently face no substantial restrictions on working for foreign clients, other than the powerful disincentive that doing so will lose them any hope of securing future U.S. government contracts. As Prince's trajectory illustrates, becoming *persona non grata* in Washington does not mean unemployment. With so much money to be made, it is no wonder that the United States' reliance on private security has spawned imitators on both the supply and the demand sides.

Indeed, American private military contractors are just the tip of the iceberg, as the experience of Afghanistan illustrates. Even when U.S. firms held the prime contracts there, they hired locals under the "Afghan first" strategy. But that decision ended up undercutting state capacity in Afghanistan, since Afghans chose the higher paychecks of private work over serving their country in the army or the police force. By 2010, at least 90 percent of private security contractors operating in Afghanistan were Afghans, leading President Hamid Karzai to attempt, unsuccessfully, to expel all private security firms from the country. Subcontracting to locals and third-country nationals creates other problems, too. When the contracts end, the newly trained soldiers must look for work. As was the case in the Middle Ages, unemployed former mercenaries often turn into marauders, preying on the weak to survive and wreaking havoc on ordinary citizens.

A MARKET FOR FORCE

Since McFate finds that private security contractors bolster stability in a mediated market while degrading security in a free market, he ends with a halfhearted call for the UN to do the mediating. In lieu of regulation, he prefers a market-based approach that would incentivize the right behavior among private contractors. Yet he also wants the UN to operate a licensing and registration regime that would establish best practices. He finds a role for Washington, too: as the industry begins to bifurcate into a mediated market with military enterprisers and a free market populated by mercenaries, McFate argues, the United States should use its overwhelming market power to shape industry standards. Elaborating in *The New York Times* in April, McFate said that he believes "superclients" such as the United States and the UN could shape best practices through self-regulation. In his view, the private military industry is not going away, so every effort should be made to harness the good and limit the bad. When he calls for "a market approach blended with regulation," however, he never articulates just what balance should be struck between these two impulses, nor does he articulate who should serve as the legitimate regulator.

A balanced approach sounds sensible, given that the privatization genie is out of the bottle. But McFate is wrong that "excessive concerns over mercenarism are a Westphalian bias"; a little more Westphalian bias is exactly what U.S. policymakers need. McFate clearly sees the world reverting to the Middle Ages, but his conclusion ignores two enormous differences between then and now: first, powerful states already exist, the United

States being first among equals, and second, the UN, which has to date resisted the siren song of privatized security for good reasons, is on the scene. Both are forces for order that were absent in medieval times, and it makes little sense for either to promote its own demise. The potential stabilizing power of the UN is part of the reason McFate wants it to help mediate the market for force—but the UN is nothing if not a gigantic manifestation of the Westphalian bias McFate condemns.

It's important to remember that the Westphalian taboo on mercenaries set up precisely the distinction that makes terrorists illegitimate and state armies legitimate. A blurring of that line is just what terrorists want. To be sure, globalization and the information revolution have contributed mightily to the fraying of the Westphalian order, but the policies that the United States has pursued have also accelerated the process. It is hard to construct an argument that these have served the country's long-term interests. "We did it because we could" is not a rationale that wins friends or influences other states, let alone one that sets an example for others to follow. After all, Russian President Vladimir Putin seized Crimea because he could, and it was no accident that he used so-called little green men rather than Russian troops to do so.

Westphalian norms can provide the foundation for a "durable disorder" with greater staying power than anything neomedieval strategies might provide, and they can do so for the same reason they proved so powerful in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War: states can agree on their usefulness without agreeing on much of anything else.

Today, China, Iran, Israel, Russia, and the United States all share an interest in the state-centric principles that came out of Westphalia. Rather than acquiesce to the demise of these principles, the United States should reinforce them. When it comes to contractors, that would mean launching an initiative among the world's great powers to establish limits on the deployment of private armies. As was the case with nuclear weapons, the United States' early adoption need not preclude the country from leading an effort to restrain the destructive forces it itself unleashed. Otherwise, McFate's mediated market for force will be unattainable, with the only beneficiaries being nonstate actors such as al Shabab and the self-proclaimed Islamic State. 🌐

What Caused the Crash?

The Political Roots of the Financial Crisis

Athanasios Orphanides

The Shifts and the Shocks: What We've Learned—and Have Still to Learn—From the Financial Crisis

BY MARTIN WOLF. Penguin Press, 2014, 465 pp.

Crisis are an inevitable outgrowth of the modern capitalist economy. So argues Martin Wolf, chief economics commentator for the *Financial Times*, in his authoritative account of the 2008 financial crisis. Instability reveals itself in the form of shocks; even a seemingly small deviation from the norm can set off a major crisis. Consider the decline in U.S. housing prices, which began in 2006 and hit its nadir in 2012. In isolation, the trend appeared manageable. After a period of exceptionally high housing prices, U.S. policymakers initially welcomed the drop, which they saw as a much-needed correction to the market, a gradual unwinding of excess. They did not expect a crisis of

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the magnitude that eventually arrived; nearly no one did.

With characteristic thoroughness and clarity, Wolf identifies a number of culprits for this failure. At the broadest level, it was a failure of imagination. Bankers, regulators, and policymakers assumed that a long period of macroeconomic stability had made the economy invulnerable to shocks. In the United States and the United Kingdom, it had been many decades since the last major busts. Unfamiliarity, Wolf writes, bred complacency. “Why did the world’s leading economies fall into such a mess?” Wolf asks. “The answer, in part, is that the people in charge did not believe that they could fall into it.”

Wolf walks through developments in the United States, Europe, and the developing world, identifying key events and policies that collectively made the crisis the biggest, baddest, and costliest in a century. He pinpoints a host of troubling trends, including the global savings glut, an unsustainable credit boom, and an increase in the level of fraud. In the final chapters of the book, Wolf sketches a road map for the future, offering his vision for a more stable financial system.

Wolf’s book contains a wealth of illuminating details and sharp analysis. Two subjects, in particular, stand out: his critique of the mainstream economic ideas that held sway prior to the crisis and his analysis of the disaster in the eurozone. Wolf highlights a number of weaknesses in economic theory and practice that spurred the collapse, among them faulty modeling and shortsighted monetary policy. But his focus on economics comes at the expense of an equally important part of the story: politics. Political maneuvering, rather



Game over: leaving Bear Stearns' headquarters in New York, March 2008

than flawed economic thinking and policymaking, is the key to understanding why financial regulations were so weak before the crisis—and also helps explain why, even now, relatively little has been done to strengthen them. But that narrative does not take center stage in his telling, even when it arguably should.

“STABILITY DESTABILIZES”

Prior to the slump, most economists—including Wolf himself—did not conceive of the possibility of a global financial meltdown. As Wolf writes, it was “partly because the economic models of the mainstream rendered [a crisis] ostensibly so unlikely in theory that they ended up making it far more likely in practice.” Regulators and investors blithely assumed, among other things, that people tend to make rational economic choices and that market prices reflect the true value of assets. This false sense of

security made them careless: more willing to take risks and less concerned when warning signs arose. “Stability destabilizes,” Wolf writes, paraphrasing the American economist Hyman Minsky.

But the failures of economic theory alone cannot fully account for the crisis. After all, it is not unusual for economic models to contain simplifications. Most rely heavily on assumptions that do not wholly correspond to reality: frictionless markets, individuals who optimize with perfect accuracy, contracts that are enforced fully and without cost. Such assumptions are par for the course in economics, as they are in other fields of scientific inquiry.

When used correctly, economic models can be useful guides for policy; in the wrong hands, they can spell disaster. Before the crisis, some models did include the possibility of bank failures and financial collapse, but they did not focus on

how to minimize fluctuations in the economy. The economy is simply too complex to be captured in a single model; every model has limits. Still, policymakers should not dismiss economic orthodoxy as irrelevant, even if some mistakes are inevitable. They should be at once familiar with its tools and respectful of its limits.

In Wolf's telling, bad economic theory manifested itself in poor regulatory and monetary policy. When it comes to financial regulation, his case is convincing. In the run-up to the crisis, many mainstream economists insisted that self-interest acted as an invisible hand, guiding the market toward efficiency, stability, and dynamism. Reviews of the pre-crisis regulatory and supervisory approach in the United Kingdom and the United States have identified that part of the problem was a philosophy that markets are generally self-correcting and that market discipline is a more effective tool than regulation—a mindset that led to excessive deregulation.

Wolf singles out two especially harmful regulatory errors. First, under the Basel Accords, the global framework for banking regulation, banks have been allowed to classify government bonds as risk free. When a bank acquires a risky asset, it must have enough capital to hedge against the possibility of default. The Basel rules meant that banks holding sovereign debt did not need to accumulate extra capital. "The assumption," Wolf writes, "was that governments would not default," a belief that appeared less and less secure as the crisis unfolded in the eurozone. Second, governments, most notably in the United States, strongly encouraged firms to make it easier for people to borrow money to purchase

homes, which led to a frenzy of mortgage lending—including to borrowers with little ability to pay their debts—and contributed to the unsustainable housing bubble.

Wolf's critique of pre-2008 monetary policy is less convincing. He finds fault primarily with the practice of inflation targeting, whereby central banks identify a particular low target inflation rate and then attempt to steer actual inflation toward it. Prior to the crisis, central banks did this by raising or lowering interest rates, a transparent and predictable process that was believed to make the economy more stable. Quite the contrary, says Wolf. "Central banks did deliver stable inflation," he writes, but that predictability led people to underestimate the amount of risk that nevertheless existed in the markets, which made the financial system more fragile. But crisis prevention is not the main purpose of monetary policy. Monetary policy should aim to achieve low and stable inflation and milder business cycles, which inflation targeting has done. The robustness of the financial system should be safeguarded not by monetary policy but by tighter regulations.

IT'S POLITICS, STUPID

In his analysis, Wolf tends to depict economic policy as the practical implementation of economic theory. The reality is more complicated. Crafting policy is not merely an economic act but also a highly political one. Regulatory policies, for example, can reflect the whims of politicians, the pressures of the public, and the influence of lobbyists.

But Wolf keeps politics behind the scenes, even when they should be front and center. Regulatory policy failed not because of shoddy economic theory but

mainly because societies have been unable to remove banking and finance from the orbit of political manipulation. Consider the decision to allow banks to treat sovereign debt as risk free. Eurozone governments benefited from this policy, as calling their debt risk free made it cheaper to borrow, facilitating greater levels of government spending. Banks, eager to lower their capital requirements, were all too happy to play along. This is one example of the symbiotic relationship between governments and banks that permeates banking around the globe.

Politics also played a defining role in the U.S. government's decision to promote lending for home purchases, particularly through government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs), such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The regulatory failures surrounding GSEs cannot be blamed on faulty economic theory. In fact, in testimony before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs in 2005, Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan identified the risk GSEs posed to the country's financial system and pleaded for more regulation. He said:

In the Federal Reserve's judgment, a GSE regulator must have as free a hand as a bank regulator in determining the minimum and risk-based capital standards for these institutions. . . . We at the Federal Reserve remain concerned about the growth and magnitude of the mortgage portfolios of the GSEs, which concentrate interest rate risk and prepayment risk at [Fannie and Freddie] and makes our financial system dependent on their ability to manage these risks. . . . To fend off possible future systemic difficulties, which we assess as likely

if GSE expansion continues unabated, preventive actions are required sooner rather than later.

The same year, a bill was introduced in the U.S. Congress that would have tightened the regulation of GSEs along the lines Greenspan suggested, but support for the bill proved weak. In a 2008 op-ed for *The Wall Street Journal*, the economist Charles Calomiris and the lawyer and financial policy analyst Peter Wallison blamed the bill's failure on political maneuvering by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. To curry favor on Capitol Hill, the companies presented themselves as champions of affordable housing. As a result, wrote Calomiris and Wallison, "Fannie and Freddie retained the support of many in Congress, particularly Democrats, and they were allowed to continue unrestrained."

To his credit, Wolf does recognize the corrosive influence of politics, taking issue, in particular, with the ways in which the financial industry uses its money and lobbying clout to shape policy. The pushback against postcrisis regulation reveals that such meddling remains alive and well. "This is one of the reasons why crises will recur," Wolf writes. "Regulation will be eroded, both overtly and covertly, under the remorseless pressure and unflinching imagination of a huge, well-organized and highly motivated industry. This is not about fraud narrowly defined. It is more about the corruption of a political process in which organized interests outweigh the public interest." Instead of dwelling on this point, however, Wolf diverts attention away from it, making flawed economic thinking the focal point of his story.

THE POST-HONEYMOON BLUES

When it comes to Europe, Wolf identifies the political challenges inherent in creating a single currency across the continent, but he is less attuned to the ways in which politics also inform crisis management. Wolf describes the eurozone as a “polygamous monetary marriage entered into by people who should have known better, in haste and with insufficient forethought, without any mechanism for divorce.” The wedding was followed by an irresponsible honeymoon: debtor countries, such as Greece and Portugal, borrowed freely and spent recklessly, while Germany, the creditor spouse, built up a competitive export sector and an external surplus “matched by growing claims on the debtors.” When the crisis hit, the marriage turned bad: Germany blamed the debtor countries for wasting its money, and they blamed Germany for forcing them into destitution.

“The euro has been a disaster,” Wolf concludes. “No other word will do.” He justifiably reminds readers that he foresaw this outcome as far back as 1991, when the negotiations that led to the single currency were just concluding. He quotes from a *Financial Times* column he wrote that year, in which he judged the venture “in words used by the ancient Greeks of the path taken by a tragic play: *hubris* (arrogance); *atē* (folly); *nemesis* (retribution).” A day of reckoning appeared inevitable, even in the absence of the massive shock imported from overseas.

Wolf recognizes that the eurozone has always been more than an economic project. From the beginning, politics constrained its efficacy. Its design was flawed and incomplete. Seeking to avoid political resistance, European leaders

intentionally designed the euro without building in a way for the currency union to deal with crises or correct macroeconomic imbalances. The misplaced hope was that if a crisis erupted, future leaders would find a way to handle it. In creating an imperfect union, European leaders acted irresponsibly; believing that it could succeed in spite of its shortcomings was nothing short of hubris.

If a poorly constructed eurozone explains why the continent was vulnerable to the crisis in the first place, policy blunders after the crash explain why it had trouble recovering. Many countries adopted austerity measures, slashing budgets and reducing their own borrowing, which turned out to be misguided. Economic growth slowed, “given that post-crisis private demand was so weak.” On the monetary side, Wolf pinpoints a number of missteps by the European Central Bank, including its failure “to ensure liquidity in debt markets.”

But again, the larger problems were political. The eurozone governments found themselves unable to work together to manage the crisis. Speaking in 2011 at a farewell event for Jean-Claude Trichet, the departing president of the European Central Bank, the former West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt highlighted the continent’s impotence. “All the talk of a so-called ‘euro crisis’ is just the idle chatter of politicians and journalists,” he said. “What we have, in fact, is a crisis of the ability of the European Union’s political bodies to act. This glaring weakness of action is a much greater threat to the future of Europe than the excessive debt levels of individual euro area countries.” Schmidt’s remarks, delivered in German at the old opera house in Frankfurt, were directed at

Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, and Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president. Schmidt hoped to galvanize at least one of the two most powerful nations in Europe, but he failed to move either. At this critical moment, Europe's economy was leaderless.

PASSING THE BUCK

Wolf provides a relatively charitable explanation for why political considerations guided crisis management in the eurozone:

In a financial crisis, creditors rule. In the Eurozone crisis, the creditor that mattered was Germany, because it was much the largest. The aims of any plausible German government, and certainly of one headed by Angela Merkel, the country's popular, cautious and self-disciplined chancellor, have been relatively simple to understand: these are to preserve the Eurozone, but on Germany's terms.

Like most creditor nations, Wolf writes, Germany saw the suffering of debtor countries as their own fault. To exculpate itself, Germany argued that the crisis was a product not of current account imbalances—in which it was complicit—but of fiscal deficits. And because Germany “believes in tough love,” according to Wolf, it did not want to provide generous aid to countries, such as Greece, that it blamed for excessive borrowing.

A less charitable explanation is that Germany did whatever it could to avoid responsibility. Every crisis generates losses that someone must assume. In theory, the losses from a collective failure, such as the one in the eurozone, should be a collective responsibility. But without

a common government to manage a fair and efficient distribution of the costs, countries acted in their own self-interest, guarding themselves against losses wherever and however they could. Stronger countries, such as Germany, exploited their leverage to avoid their share of the costs and impose losses on the constituents of less powerful countries.

Two episodes, largely absent from Wolf's narrative, clarify the extent of the loss-shifting game. The first occurred in early 2010, when Greece, buckling under years of unsustainable debt accumulation and overconsumption, turned to the International Monetary Fund for help. According to leaked IMF documents, however, a decision to write off Greece's debt, which the country badly needed, was delayed due to resistance from countries whose banks held Greek bonds. As Karl Otto Pöhl, former president of the Bundesbank, Germany's central bank, said in an interview in *Der Spiegel*, the resultant IMF program “was about protecting German banks, but especially the French banks, from debt write-offs.” According to an internal IMF account of the May 2010 meeting of the IMF's Executive Board, to gain support for a plan that would delay a debt restructuring and thus shield their banks from losses, the Dutch, French, and German chairs “conveyed to the Board the commitments of their commercial banks to support Greece and broadly maintain their exposures.”

Merkel did eventually force losses on selected holders of Greek sovereign bonds, but only after allowing German banks the opportunity to sell their holdings—a violation of the 2010 promise. The loser in all of this was

Greece. According to the IMF, Greece's debt-to-GDP ratio skyrocketed, from 126 percent in 2009 to 177 percent in 2014. Real GDP per person sharply declined, falling by 25 percent between 2007 and 2014.

The second episode took place in October 2010. At a summit in the French commune of Deauville, Merkel and Sarkozy decided to use their countries' veto power in the euro area to block temporary assistance programs to eurozone member states—unless France and Germany could first impose losses on the private creditors of those states. This policy, known as private-sector involvement, was a serious misstep. The realization that the French and the Germans could force losses on private lenders alarmed those who held sovereign debt, which led to the deepening of the crisis throughout the eurozone, beginning with the collapse of the Irish economy. Germany, of course, came out on top. By making euro-denominated sovereign debt of peripheral states less attractive, Merkel masterfully created an implicit subsidy for Germany from the euro area periphery.

Throughout the crisis, Merkel has faced the same choice again and again: act to diffuse the crisis and avert catastrophe in the eurozone at the risk of losing support at home or enact policies that are sure to be popular in Germany but that will spread misery elsewhere. Put this way, Merkel's decisions seem understandable—even inevitable. As Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, has said about the euro crisis, "We all know what to do, we just don't know how to get reelected after we've done it."

BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Outside Europe, the global economy is on the mend. But inside the eurozone, the outlook remains bleak. The eurozone, in its current form, cannot last. Wolf succinctly identifies the separation that has emerged between "the national level of accountability and the Eurozone level of power," which has allowed Germany to wield outsized control over other nations. "This structure cannot hold," Wolf writes, "and, if it can, it should not."

In his final chapter, Wolf suggests several ways to mend the rocky marriage, including creating a proper banking union; converting some existing government debt into eurobonds, which could serve as a safe common asset; and giving the European Central Bank more freedom to intervene in government bond markets. But Wolf recognizes the large obstacle in the way: Germany is currently powerful enough to impose its views on the rest of the eurozone, blocking such reforms.

The eurozone needs a European solution. But politics are national, and no political body exists to protect the eurozone from individual countries that would rather pursue their own narrow interests. Europe needs leaders who are willing to risk short-term political costs to advance the common good, despite the misalignment of political incentives. Judging from the record of the past five years, however, the eurozone's Greek tragedy may remain just that. 🌐

Fear of Flying

Are Drones Dangerous?

Better Safe Than Sorry

Robert Matthews

Gretchen West (“Drone On,” *May/June 2015*) argues that the growing U.S. drone industry “faces a major regulatory obstacle” in the form of the Federal Aviation Administration. She’s right that the agency needs to make some basic decisions about how to regulate drones—and soon, lest the United States surrender its technological edge. But she is unfair to the FAA, too easily dismissing the agency’s safety concerns and wrongly suggesting that its caution is little more than regulatory Luddism.

In fact, the FAA’s caution stems largely from the volume and complexity of the U.S. aviation system. According to my analysis of data from the FAA, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United States oversees about 110,000 takeoffs a day, accounting for some 30 percent of worldwide commercial airline departures and more than 75 percent of the world’s general aviation.

The FAA faces two contradictory demands: get out of everyone’s way, yet make sure that nothing goes wrong. When it comes to drones, something could go wrong: drones could collide midair with commercial aircraft or hit people or property on the ground. West dismisses the risk of midair collisions

with a passing reference to “geo-fences,” which drone operators can use to set up boundaries for their flights. Drone technologies have come a long way, but they are nowhere near ready to be fully integrated into the United States’ complex civil aviation system.

West treats the on-the-ground risk even more casually. She laments that the FAA prohibits the flying of commercial drones over people, limiting drone operations to unpopulated areas. But this is a legitimate rule, meant to keep people from harm. The same rationale explains why the FAA has long restricted the operation of commercial aircraft within 500 feet of people and why pilots must observe more stringent regulations in busy airspace.

There is a case to be made for drones, but West and other drone advocates are missing the best way to sell their pitch to the FAA: by arguing that drones can replace manned aircraft for flights deemed high risk, thereby reducing fatalities. Manned flights for such tasks as pipeline surveillance, traffic observation, fire-fighting, and filming require precariously low speeds and altitudes. Not surprisingly, they tend to have relatively high accident rates: since 2003, according to NTSB data, they have led to an average of roughly 20 fatal accidents a year.

West is right to point out that drones can bring safety benefits to sectors unconnected to aviation, mainly by allowing inspection companies to take “men and women off ladders.” Drone advocates should quantify such benefits to enhance their case to the FAA. Until they do, however, the FAA is right to remain cautious.

ROBERT MATTHEWS is a retired Senior Safety Analyst for the FAA.

Written in Blood

Daniel L. Johnson

As flying objects, drones pose three safety risks: they may crash, destroying cargo; they may unintentionally strike people or structures on the ground; or they may collide with other aircraft in the air. In her criticism of the FAA's regulation of commercial drones, Gretchen West ignores these hazards. But accidents are inevitable. Commercial drones are small, light, and slow, making them particularly susceptible to turbulence, the strong and invisible vortexes that characterize wind near the ground. Whereas airplanes fly at high altitudes to avoid tumultuous winds, commercial drones are expected to fly down low—a recipe for disaster.

West faults the FAA for its complex airspace regulations, which she blames for holding back the commercial drone industry. But such regulations, meant to keep aircraft from colliding, are complex by necessity: they must apply in many different contexts and keep as many people as possible safe. Near airports, for example, FAA rules prevent construction in the path of flight. Mistakes can be deadly. The FAA has implemented zoning ordinances around airports to prevent tragedies, yet all too often, construction begins before anyone realizes the danger.

Creating rules for the low-altitude airspace in which drones operate is similarly daunting. The rules must be permissive yet stringent, friendly to drone operators but strict enough to protect people and property. There

have already been incidents involving drone flights, both recreational and professional, and people affected by such incidents have written letters to the FAA. The agency must represent their interests—as well as those of the aviation industry—while also making room for private companies. This is not an easy balance to strike, which explains the FAA's delay in drafting regulation.

West complains that the FAA's rules and procedures have made commercial drone operators “jump through far too many hoops.” She finds particular fault with a rule, now relaxed, that operators must have a pilot's license to fly drones. But there is legitimate rationale for such regulations: commercial operators should not be allowed to be ignorant of the rules governing the U.S. national airspace system.

The purpose of regulation is not to slow progress but to stymie bad judgment. Most aviation rules are written in blood; flying will always be risky. If commercial aviation feels safe and routine, that is because its regulations are created with great care and followed with professionalism. Drones need similarly well-thought-out rules and procedures. West argues that a “negligent drone user” could be held accountable through civil and criminal law. But better regulations will reduce the need for prosecution, nipping the problem in the bud.

DANIEL L. JOHNSON is a Senior Aviation Medical Examiner.

West Replies

Robert Matthews and Daniel Johnson write that in advocating less restrictive rules for drones, I have dismissed the FAA's safety concerns.

Although my piece did not focus on safety, everyone in the commercial drone industry agrees that it should be the number one priority. Manufacturers are working tirelessly to improve the technology so that drones can fly safely around people, buildings, and other aircraft—for example, by programming drones to recognize no-fly zones.

The industry also recently partnered with the FAA to create the Know Before You Fly educational campaign, designed to teach people how to safely operate drones. The campaign warns that drones should be flown no higher than 400 feet, for example, and should be steered clear of manned aircraft. As part of the campaign, the FAA announced the launch of a smartphone app called B4UFLY, which lets drone users know when they are cleared for takeoff.

A number of other safety initiatives have also gained traction. NASA is building an unmanned-aircraft traffic management system, a so-called highway in the sky, that will be able to monitor drone traffic and ensure safe flight. The system will also set up geo-fences around airports and near sensitive areas such as the White House. Meanwhile, many insurance agencies are aggressively researching and entering the commercial

drone market and will likely set the bar higher for safety than even the FAA has.

As drones become ubiquitous, safety will become even more important. In May, the FAA announced that it had partnered with three companies to explore possibilities for the expansion of drone use in the United States. Through the partnership, the manufacturing company PrecisionHawk will use drones to survey crops in rural areas, CNN will research how drones can be used for newsgathering, and BNSF Railway will see if drones can be used to inspect rail infrastructure in isolated areas. The program, known as Pathfinder, marks a major step toward allowing for the broader operation of commercial drones.

True, the commercial drone industry has grown frustrated with the FAA's glacial pace. But it would be wrong to portray it as opposed to sensible regulations that protect people and property. Working together, regulators and innovators can ensure that drones are integrated into the existing aviation system not just quickly but safely, too. 🌍

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