



HOOVER DIGEST

RESEARCH + COMMENTARY
ON PUBLIC POLICY

SPRING 2024 NO.2

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ON THE COVER

German-born artist and graphic designer Winold Reiss (1886–1953) painted this portrait of Wades in the Water, a leader and warrior of the Blackfeet tribe, in full regalia. Reiss befriended many of the Blackfeet beginning in 1920, when he first sojourned on their Montana reservation. Many twentieth-century Americans were drawn to stories and imagery of the West and were fascinated with Indians. This painting was one of several to appear on a railroad calendar, a framing that told of technological change pushing aside traditional ways. **See story, page 218.**



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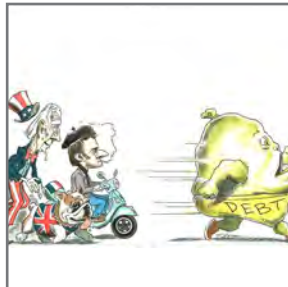
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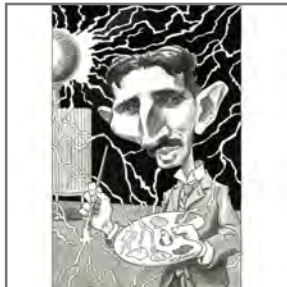
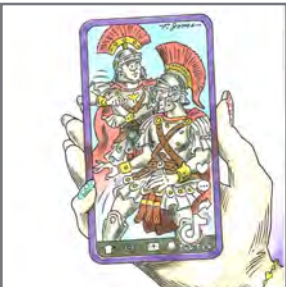
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Social Security's Fateful Day

Two roads diverged in 1977, and Congress took the one that led to higher taxes and—ten years from now—an empty trust fund.

By Andrew G. Biggs, John F. Cogan, and Daniel Heil

December 20, 1977: if not a date that will live in infamy, a date on which a Social Security funding crisis was made inevitable. Had Congress acted differently that day, by adopting the unanimous recommendations of a congressionally appointed expert panel, Social Security's \$22 trillion funding shortfall would not exist, and retirees would not face a 20 percent benefit cut when Social Security's trust fund runs dry in 2034.

As Congress considers a bipartisan fiscal commission to recommend reforms, it should bear in mind that the coming Social Security funding crisis is a man-made catastrophe, not a natural disaster.

Since the Social Security Act was passed in 1935, policy makers have known that changing demographics—specifically, rising numbers of beneficiaries relative to workers paying into the program—would over time cause Social Security to become more costly.

Andrew G. Biggs is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. John F. Cogan is the Leonard and Shirley Ely Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in Hoover's task forces on energy, the economy, and health care. Daniel Heil is a policy fellow at the Hoover Institution.



[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

What wasn't inevitable was a funding crisis. In fact, from 1950 to 1971, Congress was able to increase benefits nine times. That changed in 1977, when Social Security amendments responded to a technical error in 1972 legislation that caused retirement benefits to skyrocket and threatened insolvency by 1979.

The 1977 law sought to slow the rapid growth in benefits for future retirees. At the time, Congress considered two

options. The first, recommended by an expert commission headed by Harvard economist William Hsiao, would link the growth of the initial benefits paid to new retirees to the rate of inflation. The second approach, favored by the Carter administration, would index initial benefits to national average wage growth.

While differing only in seemingly technical ways, the two approaches had dramatically different effects on Social Security's long-term finances. Simply put, the Hsiao Commission's recommendation was fully sustainable under then-legislated tax rates. It would allow, as the commission wrote, "future generations to decide what benefit increases are appropriate and what tax rates to finance them are acceptable."

In contrast, the alternative approach of "wage indexing" initial benefits could not be sustained without substantially higher future taxes.

The Hsiao Commission bluntly criticized that policy, saying that it "gravely doubts the fairness and wisdom of now promising benefits at such a level that we must commit our

sons and daughters to a higher tax rate than we ourselves are willing to pay." Congress, nevertheless, opted for wage indexing. In doing so, Congress guaranteed a future Social Security funding crisis.

While politicians will happily increase Social Security benefits, they avoid at all costs reducing them, in particular after (falsely) telling Americans that these are benefits they have earned and paid for. In reality, a typical couple retiring in the late 2030s is promised 62 percent more in lifetime benefits than they paid in taxes, according to SSA's actuaries.

The road not taken: linking the growth of initial benefits to the rate of inflation.

Despite knowing since 1984 that Social Security promised far more benefits than it could pay, Congress has never passed legislation to address this.

This explains why, despite being aware since 1984 that Social Security promised far more benefits than it could pay, Congress has never passed legislation to address this. Year after year, elected officials passed the problem on to future legislators, who themselves passed it on, until after four decades a funding crisis approached.

That pattern continues. President Biden, while floating a partial Social Security fix during the 2020 campaign, has not promoted reform since taking office. Former president Trump, the Republican frontrunner for

Over the next ten years, Social Security will add nearly \$3 trillion to the publicly held national debt.

2024, vocally opposes any benefit reductions but has no plans to pay for his promises.

And so, during the next ten years, Social Security

will add nearly \$3 trillion to the publicly held national debt. Come 2034, the trust fund will be depleted, and Congress will face the task of addressing what we've calculated will be a \$360 billion funding gap in that year alone, with increasing shortfalls in years to come. All in the interest of paying inflation-adjusted benefits nearly twice as high in 2034 as were paid to retirees in 1970.

Had our elected officials acted differently on December 20, 1977, and adopted the Hsiao Commission's policy, Social Security would be financially solvent, and its small surpluses could be applied to lowering the public debt burden rather than adding to it. Although benefits would be about 12 percent lower than they are today, their inflation-adjusted value would still be about 60 percent higher than in 1977, and a looming insolvency would not threaten future benefits.

Seniors' incomes would still be at record high levels because of increases in benefits from private retirement plans and in earnings in retirement. And with Social Security fully funded in perpetuity, Congress could have enacted targeted benefit increases to protect the poorest retirees.

Instead, Congress locked in benefit growth rates that are unsustainable and yet seemingly impossible to arrest. This history lesson, that Congress should not commit future Americans to tax rates that current Americans are unwilling to pay, should not be lost on policy makers as Social Security reforms are debated. ■

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Available from Stanford University Press is **The High Cost of Good Intentions: A History of US Federal Entitlement Programs**, by John F. Cogan. To order, visit www.sup.org.



High Noon

Advanced economies can't outrun debt and taxes any longer.

By Michael J. Boskin

Around the world, advanced economies are facing heightened fiscal challenges, owing to the simple fact that most have bloated, financially unsustainable welfare states. As Mario Draghi said over a decade ago, when he was serving as the president of the European Central Bank, “The European social model is already gone.” Equally, America risks falling into the same trap if it doesn’t control spending and rein in public debt.

The math is straightforward. Consider the case of welfare-type social benefits that are financed by payroll taxes. The average payroll-tax rate needed to cover such spending (now or later with interest, if financed with government debt) is equal to the dependency rate times the replacement rate—that is, the ratio of benefit recipients to taxpaying workers multiplied by the ratio of average benefits to average wages being taxed.


Key points

- » Most advanced economies are saddled with bloated, financially unsustainable welfare states.
- » Pressure on health and public-pension benefits will only increase.
- » The renewed risk of war, terrorism, and other threats means defense spending will have to grow. Leaders will have to figure out how to do this.

Michael J. Boskin is the Wohlford Family Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Tully M. Friedman Professor of Economics at Stanford University. He is a member of Hoover’s task forces on energy policy, economic policy, and national security.

This equation does not even include the taxes needed to pay for other government-funded programs, from defense and policing to roads and schools. Yes, other kinds of taxes can be used to cover these costs, and various changes can be made to the benefit formulas and tax schedules. Ultimately, though, if you have many people receiving considerable benefits, you will (eventually) have very high tax rates. As Shakespeare’s Hamlet mused, “Aye, there’s the rub.”

Make no mistake: high tax rates are not desirable, regardless of the social benefits they support. They can be extraordinarily harmful, because they reduce incentives and thereby damage the economy—starving the proverbial goose that lays the golden eggs.



High tax rates are undesirable, regardless of the social benefits they support.

By some estimates, Europe’s tax rates are already close to the peak of the Laffer curve, where additional tax hikes no longer increase revenue, and may even cause it to fall.

Moreover, some economists believe that higher taxes are the reason that European economies’ real (inflation-adjusted) per capita GDP is lower than in the United States. Even if that is an overstatement of the causality, taxes are almost certainly an important factor. Most European countries collect revenues equal to about half their GDP, whereas the US ratio is about one-third (Canada and the United Kingdom are in between, at around 42 percent).

For example, America’s after-tax real GDP per capita (in terms of purchasing power parity) is significantly higher than that of Sweden and Denmark, two countries that American progressives eagerly want to emulate. Of course, Swedes and Danes get more publicly provided services, spend less on defense (though they are now committed to raising their meager defense budgets), and work less. But even after accounting for such adjustments, Americans on average are considerably richer.

With populations aging rapidly across advanced economies, the concomitant fiscal pressure on health and public-pension benefits (such as Medicare and Social Security in the United States) will only increase. Over the next dozen years, the ratio of people aged twenty-five to sixty-four to those sixty-five and older is projected to plummet in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, from roughly 3-to-1 to 2-to-1. That follows the trend already seen in Germany, France, and Italy, where the ratio is projected to

be well below 2-to-1 by 2035. In these economies, the fastest-growing demographic group comprises those aged eighty-five and up. While we should welcome longer lifespans, we also must recognize the associated costs for public budgets.

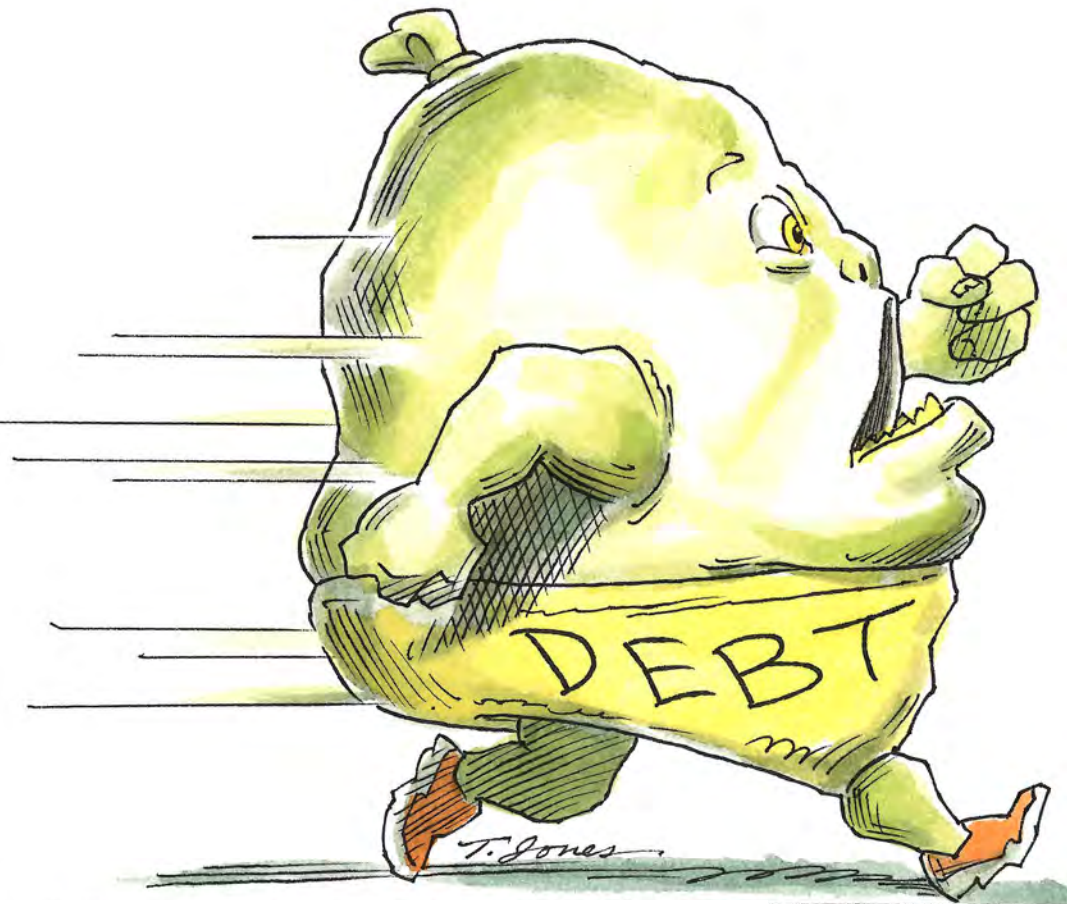
Worse, with the exception of Northern European countries, advanced economies have accumulated much larger public debts over the past decade and a half. For a while, this additional fiscal pressure was masked by extremely low interest rates; but now, interest costs are ballooning everywhere (though they are somewhat more manageable in inflation-adjusted terms). As central banks continue to unwind their huge holdings of government debt (equal to



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

around 20 percent of GDP in the US Federal Reserve's case), they will be competing with governments' efforts to finance large new deficits and roll over maturing debt.

While some of the debt-financed spending in response to the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic was justified, the subsequent failure to consolidate budgets was extremely irresponsible, leaving many economies highly vulnerable to another shock. It is now more urgent than ever for governments to reform their welfare states, including by targeting benefits more narrowly to the needy and introducing stronger work incentives. The best approach is to allow for a gradual slowing of spending



to avoid the economically disruptive forced changes that Draghi and others (including me) have long predicted.

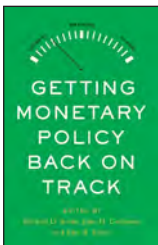
Back when advanced economies were growing rapidly, leaving greater debt burdens to future generations arguably was not a problem because it was assumed that our children and grandchildren would be much richer and thus capable of affording higher taxes. But with productivity growth having long since slowed, the intergenerational inequity we have created is indefensible.

Few political leaders have been willing to confront reality and propose solutions.

Viewed in this light, the policies favored by the political left are a recipe for making a bad situation worse. If we want to support stronger economic growth and intergenerational equity, we should reject proposals for higher tax rates on businesses and personal capital income, as these will reduce incentives to save and invest.

The renewed risk of war, terrorism, and other security threats means that defense spending will have to increase substantially. Economists have long agreed that investments in the military can justifiably be financed by debt, on both efficiency and intergenerational-equity grounds. But to support these necessary outlays, we must get serious about today's growing fiscal pressures. The sooner policies to address them are implemented, the better. Few political leaders have been willing to confront reality and propose solutions. Those who do deserve voters' support. ■

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When Milton Friedman Speaks...

Hoover fellow **Jennifer Burns** explores the fruitful life and continuing influence of Milton Friedman, a Hoover luminary and one of the twentieth century's most brilliant economists.

By Peter Boettke

Though standing around five feet tall, Milton Friedman was a giant among economists in the twentieth century. Arguably only John Maynard Keynes walked as easily in the halls of power, academia, newsrooms, and public-speaking venues. Friedman, throughout his career, was recognized as an elite economic scientist, an unusually astute policy analyst, and a prized op-ed writer. He was a highly in-demand public speaker who was as comfortable on popular afternoon

*Milton Friedman, recipient of the 1976 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, was a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution. Jennifer Burns is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and an associate professor of history at Stanford University. Her latest book is **Milton Friedman: The Last Conservative** (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2023). Peter Boettke is the Distinguished University Professor of Economics and Philosophy and the director of the F. A. Hayek Program for Advanced Study in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University.*



OUT OF CHICAGO: The life of Hoover senior research fellow Milton Friedman (1912–2006), shown accepting the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1988, is also the life of his economic ideas, which had a profound impact in the latter twentieth century and continue to shape economic thinking. [White House Photographic Collection]

TV shows such as *The Phil Donahue Show* as he was in the classroom at the University of Chicago.

Friedman earned the highest recognitions an economist can receive: the John Bates Clark Medal, the presidency of the American Economic Association, and the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. He was also

When Milton Friedman spoke, his peers, his students, those with political power, and the public listened. He educated an entire generation.

a bestselling author, a popular columnist for *Newsweek*, a frequent contributor to the *Wall Street Journal*, and a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. On

December 19, 1969, Friedman's face graced the cover of *Time* magazine. When he spoke, his peers, his students, those with political power, and the public listened. He educated an entire generation with his TV series *Free to Choose*,

and when the accompanying book by the same title was published, it became an international bestseller, translated into more than two dozen languages and selling over a million copies.

Writing his biography presents a unique challenge owing to the immensity of his professional stature and the duration of his excellence from the 1930s through the early 2000s. Jennifer Burns, in *Milton Friedman: The Last Conservative*, is every bit up to the challenge. Deeply researched and beautifully written, her book makes the personal and intellectual life of Friedman jump off the page. Burns not only captures Friedman's life but conveys in her telling of that story the broader

intellectual life of America and the global political and economic order of the twentieth century. Her book gives

us a history of the Chicago School and monetarism while delineating the methodological, analytical, and ideological battle lines of the economics profession.

Along the way, we learn about the broader contours of the intellectual and political movements of the Cold War, among them the tension-filled coalition of free-market classical liberals and conservative anti-communist Republicans, and right-wing extremists from whom Friedman consistently strove to distance himself. And we learn too about the international spread of free market ideas between 1980 and 2005.

Friedman grasped that economic instability was not an inherent feature of capitalism but a consequence of policy mismanagement.

THE ROAD TO OPTIMISM

Milton Friedman was born in Brooklyn in 1912 into a Jewish immigrant family and raised in Rahway, New Jersey. Burns explains that while Friedman was not religiously observant, his identity was undeniably Jewish, and he was keenly aware of the tragic reality of the Holocaust and the strong currents of anti-Semitism in the United States, which created barriers to individual progress that should not have been in place. In his lifetime, though, he experienced the continuous diminution of overt discrimination against Jews and the increase of opportunities for hardworking and talented individuals. This experience fueled his optimism about the power of the market to liberate people, as well as to guide their decision making toward the efficient utilization of scarce resources. Consider, for example, the opening clips of *Free to Choose*, which stressed the opportunities for a better life that immigrants



OPPORTUNITY AWAITS: The new Milton Friedman biography by Hoover fellow Jennifer Burns also gives a history of the Chicago School and monetarism—delineating the methodological, analytical, and ideological battle lines of the economics profession. [Roger Ressimeyer/CORBIS—Creative Commons]

experienced in the first decades of the twentieth century in the United States. The free mobility of capital and labor led to material improvement in the lives of multitudes and provided a foundation for an expansion of individual freedom.

For Friedman, this optimism was important as a bulwark against the loss of faith in the free enterprise system that other economists of his generation suffered in the wake of the Great Depression. The experience of the Depression (both its causes and its political consequences) was the other critical factor shaping Friedman's worldview: economic instability was not an inherent feature of capitalism but a consequence of policy mismanagement.

Friedman earned his undergraduate degree at Rutgers, where he came under the influence of Arthur Burns, the prominent economist and future chairman of the Federal Reserve. In Burns, Friedman had not only a mentor

but also a significant supporter strategically placed at the pinnacle of the policy-making world.

In 1932, Friedman enrolled for graduate work at the University of Chicago. There, he was schooled by Frank Knight and Henry Simons in the analytics of the price system, the quantity theory of money, and a commitment to use economic reasoning to solve problems in the world—such as the economic downturn of the Great Depression.

Jennifer Burns details the potential this group of economists saw in unleashing the competitive market system in general, and the price system in particular, to solve social problems through structuring incentives and communicating vital information by changes in relative prices, and by the profit-and-loss statements recorded by enterprises in the ordinary conduct of commerce. “Economics is the one and all-inclusive science of conduct,” Knight stressed to his students. That science applied not only to trading activity within the market but to any and all choices an individual might make in conducting his life.

As Burns describes, Friedman and his cohort of fellow graduate students (most famously George Stigler) would gather in Room 7 of the economics building with

Simons and Aaron Director (the brother of Friedman’s future wife, Rose) and pursue the depths and limits of economic reasoning, in the process absorbing the Knight-Simons brand of economics and political economy. The influence of Room 7 would be evident throughout Friedman’s career as an academic and public intellectual.

The influence of Room 7 in Chicago’s economics department would be evident throughout Friedman’s career as an academic and public intellectual.

FEMALE COLLEAGUES

Jennifer Burns has unearthed many gems in Friedman’s life and career, and among the most fascinating is her discussion of the female economists who worked closely with him. Rose Director Friedman was a constant in his life, and she helped him in both acknowledged and unacknowledged ways with *Capitalism and Freedom*, *Free to Choose*, and his *Newsweek* columns. Rose was also Milton’s connection to the research of Dorothy Brady and Margaret Reid in the fields of consumption economics and home economics. They were the first developers of the permanent-income hypothesis, which posited that consumption patterns were formed from future expectations and consumption

smoothing rather than transitory changes in income. This foundational idea cut out one of the legs of the Keynesian argument about consumption behavior and the multiplier effect of government spending on aggregate economic performance.

Friedman's long and productive collaboration with Anna Schwartz led to *A Monetary History of the United States*, which transformed the economic profession's view of monetary theory and policy and had a significant impact on central bankers throughout the world. This work also undermined the Keynesian argument that monetary policy was ineffective, and instead demonstrated that sound monetary policy was a critical factor in the wealth or poverty of nations.

Burns does not shy away from highlighting blind spots from which Friedman may have suffered, which included his penchant for viewing economic-policy advice as medicine and economists as analogous to Doctors without Borders. As his fame and reputation grew, he traveled across the globe to free and oppressed nations alike. He was never a paid consultant but traveled as a visiting scholar who was granted audiences with leadership. He told the various political leaders and policy makers he met with about the distortions caused by monetary-policy mismanagement, the burdens of overregulation, and the power of private property and the price system to ameliorate social problems and promote peace and prosperity. His optimism made him believe that sound economics could save even the sickest economic patient.

Friedman did learn from some of the criticisms leveled at him in this regard. In 2002, for example, when asked if he regretted his mantra “privatize, privatize, privatize” during a 1979 trip to China, Friedman replied that he did. He would amend his statement to “privatize, privatize, privatize—provided there is a rule of law.” In making this revision, he returned to the teachings of Knight and Simons in Room 7, which sought to combine price theory with attentiveness to the institutional context of law and politics.

SENSE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Friedman was a lifelong learner who took in influences from a variety of experiences and thinkers and molded them into his own approach. His experience in Washington in the 1930s did not turn him into a New Dealer, nor did his work at Columbia and the National Bureau of Economic Research turn him into an old-school institutionalist. Instead, these experiences taught him how price theory could be applied outside of the classroom to

tackle real-world problems. Economic theory was not a mere intellectual exercise for clever people to enjoy but was a serious science to be deployed to make sense of the senseless and to design policies that would be both sensible and sustainable.

As Burns explains, it was not merely Friedman’s uniquely persuasive powers as a writer and speaker that made his ideas have the impact they did. Those powers were no doubt impressive, but they do not account for how his positions went

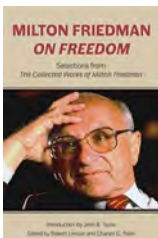
from being held by a distinct minority to defining an era. That can be explained only by the fact that Friedman’s ideas and insights

Economic theory was not a mere intellectual exercise for clever people to enjoy but a serious science to be deployed.

“matched experience, offered new ways to tackle old problems, and predicted what would happen next.” It is because his theories align so closely with reality that “Friedman is too fundamental a thinker to set aside.” His ideas improved our understanding of the operation of economic systems, and in the realm of practical affairs led to improvements in the lives of billions of individuals as they escaped extreme poverty in the developing world, freed themselves from the grasp of totalitarians in the former communist world, and shook off the malaise of stagnation and inflation in the Western democratic states.

Milton Friedman: The Last Conservative is a brilliant book, written by a first-rate scholar in accessible and graceful prose. It is also an immensely enjoyable read and an enticing invitation for this generation to learn anew from Friedman. ▣

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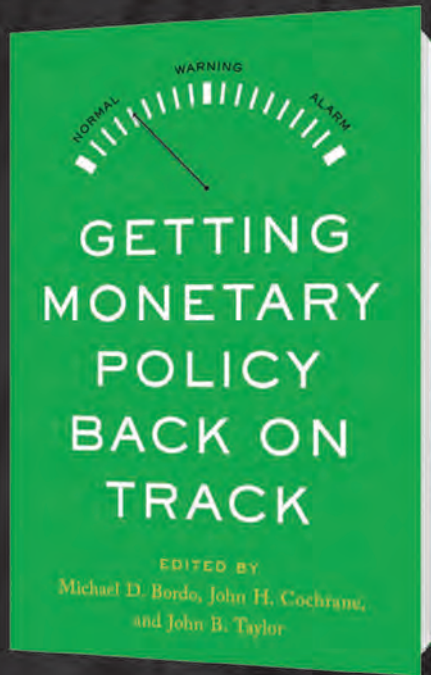


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Empires in a Clear Light

The “colonialism” slander remains just that—a slander.

By Peter Berkowitz

Left-wing intellectuals have transformed the complex history of “colonialism” into an all-encompassing slander against the West. A practice dating back to the ancient world, colonialism involves a nation’s transferring a portion of its population into a foreign land and assuming responsibility for administering it. In the United Kingdom and the United States, professors of literature, history, political theory, and international relations routinely teach that the subjugation of non-Western peoples belongs to the essence of the West—they primarily mean the British Empire, America, and Israel. The anti-colonialists further contend that the perpetration of heinous

Key points

- » The colonialism slander undercuts US diplomacy and enfeebles democracy in America.
- » Left-wing anti-colonialists contend that the perpetration of heinous crimes—including genocide—belongs to the essence of the West’s colonialism.
- » Universities must stress reasoned historical scholarship rather than partisan posturing.

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RIGOROUS: In his bestselling book *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning*, Oxford professor Nigel Biggar conducts an incisive scholarly study into “the complicated, morally ambiguous truth” about the British Empire. What Biggar calls the “unscrupulous indifference to truth” displayed by anti-colonialists also applies to histories of the Middle East. [Tom Pilston—Panos Pictures]

crimes—including genocide, the systematic effort to wipe out a people—belongs to the essence of the West’s colonialism.

So successful have the professors been in promulgating the belief that the West has engaged in centuries of relentlessly brutal conquest and malevolent domination that the colonialism slander has found its way into the US State Department bureaucracy. In November, *Axios* reporters Hans Nichols and Barak Ravid revealed

that “a junior State Department employee who is organizing a dissent cable on the White House’s policy on Israel

has used social media to publicly accuse President Biden of being ‘complicit in genocide’ toward the people of Gaza.”

An organizer of the leaked cable and author of the accusation that the president whom she serves is complicit in genocide, Sylvia Yacoub is “a foreign affairs officer in the Bureau of Middle East Affairs for more than two years.” The obscene abuse of the term “genocide” to characterize Israel’s exercise of its right of self-defense is a tell-tale sign that Yacoub subscribes to the colonialism slander. Had she described the jubilantly executed atrocities and proudly proclaimed goal of the Hamas jihadists as genocide, she would have employed the term correctly.

The colonialism slander blinds its adherents to basic facts and crucial distinctions. On October 7, in grotesque violation of the laws of war, the terrorists massacred some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 240, mostly civilians, in furtherance

of their oft-repeated aim to destroy the Jewish state. In contrast, and in compliance with the laws of war, Israel has targeted Hamas combat-

ants and their military infrastructure. Before attacking Hamas strongholds, which the terrorists illegally built inside and under Gaza’s cities, Israel has warned Palestinian civilians to leave and has directed them to safe areas. The tragic loss of civilian life in Gaza has resulted from Hamas’s callous conversion of civilian areas into war zones.

It turns out, according to Eitan Fischberger, that Sylvia Yacoub, a graduate of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service (SFS) at Georgetown

The obscene abuse of the term “genocide” has been used against Israel and its right of self-defense.

The colonialism slander blinds its adherents to basic facts and crucial distinctions.

University, “wrote her thesis paper about colonialism and its role in international relations.” In “The Georgetown Effect,” an article in *City Journal*, Fischberger explained that Yacoub’s thesis reflected the priorities of her alma mater: “SFS’s curriculum, faculty viewpoints, and campus activities” revolve around colonialism and “decolonization.”

ATTACKS ON TRUTH

In his bestselling book *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning*, Nigel Biggar provides a meticulous accounting of colonialism and the West. A professor emeritus of moral and pastoral theology at Oxford, Biggar writes that in late 2017, he was “plunged into the ‘culture war’ over colonialism.” Shortly after publishing an exploration in *The Times* of London of colonialism’s contributions as well as its costs, “all hell broke loose.” Critics targeted for termination his scholarly project “Ethics and Empire,” his distinguished partner resigned from the enterprise, and nearly two hundred scholars from around the world denounced him in one online statement, as did fifty-eight Oxford colleagues in another. Biggar responded in exemplary fashion by producing an incisive scholarly study—some three hundred pages of closely argued text and one hundred and thirty pages of learned endnotes—examining “the complicated, morally ambiguous truth” about the British Empire’s colonialism.

Edward Said is a quasi-prophet of “de-colonization” and his Orientalism a quasi-bible.

Said, a Columbia University professor of literature, is a quasi-prophet and his *Orientalism* a quasi-bible—reveals that their slanders serve a political function: the diminution of the West. “One important way of corroding faith in the West is to denigrate its record, a major part of which is the history of European empires,” observes Biggar. “And of all those empires, the primary target is the British one, which was by far the largest and gave birth to the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.”

Biggar’s “moral assessment” of the British Empire’s colonialism—which stretches from before 1600 and the creation of the East India Company to the empire’s post-World War II dissolution—is informed by a species of Christian realism. He believes that basic moral principles are real and knowable; human beings are equal in dignity because they are “accountable for

By contrast, Biggar emphasizes that the “unscrupulous indifference to truth” displayed by the anti-colonialists—for whom the late Edward

the spending of their lives to a God who looks with compassion upon their limitations and burdens”; cultures may be unequal in many respects; government, which is indispensable, rightly pursues the national interest despite its inevitable unjust acts; war can be necessary and just; and “history contains an ocean of injustice, most of it unremedied and now lying beyond correction in this world.”

In one long sentence, Biggar summarizes the evils—these encompass “not only culpable wrongdoing or injustice, but also unintended

harms,” but do not include genocide—perpetrated by British colonialism. The debit side of the ledger comprises “brutal slavery; the epidemic spread of devastating disease; economic and social disruption; the unjust displacement of natives by settlers; failures of colonial government to prevent settler abuse and famine; elements of racial alienation and racist contempt; policies of needlessly wholesale

cultural suppression; miscarriages of justice; instances of unjustifiable military aggression and the indiscriminate and

disproportionate use of force; and the failure to admit native talent to the higher echelons of colonial government on terms of equality quickly enough to forestall the buildup of nationalist resentment.”

Then there is the ledger’s credit side. In one comparatively short sentence, Biggar distills the steps Britain undertook to mitigate colonialism’s shameful dimensions and the contributions of which it can be proud: “If the empire initially presided over the slave trade and slavery, it renounced both in the name of basic human equality and then led endeavors to suppress them worldwide for a hundred and fifty years.”

“If the [British] empire initially presided over the slave trade and slavery, it renounced both in the name of basic human equality.”

“History contains an ocean of injustice, most of it unremedied and now lying beyond correction in this world.”

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD

The empire also: moderated the disruptive impact of Western modernity upon very unmodern societies; promoted a worldwide free market that gave native producers and entrepreneurs new economic opportunities; created regional peace by imposing an overarching imperial authority on multiple warring peoples; perforce involved representatives of native

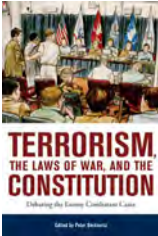
peoples in the lower levels of government; sought to relieve the plight of the rural poor and protect them against rapacious landlords; provided a civil service and judiciary that was generally and extraordinarily incorrupt; developed public infrastructure, albeit usually through private investment; made foreign investment attractive by reducing the risks through establishing political stability and the rule of law; disseminated modern agricultural methods and medicine; stood against German aggression—first militarist, then Nazi—and stood for international law and order in the two world wars, helping to save both the Western and the non-Western world for liberal democracy; brought up three of the most prosperous and liberal states now on earth—Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—and gave birth to two more, the United States and Israel; evolved into a loose, consensual, multiracial, international organization, the (British) Commonwealth of Nations, which some states that never belonged to the British Empire have opted to join; helped to plan and realize first the League of Nations and then the United Nations; through the Commonwealth applied moral pressure to South Africa to abandon its policy of apartheid; through the wartime anti-fascist alliance of 1939–45, evolved into an important part of the postwar Western alliance against Soviet and Chinese communism; and still has a significant afterlife in the Western military alliance of NATO and influential economic development agencies.

An admirable scholarly achievement, Biggar's rigorous assessment invites critical engagement. However, the very idea of carefully considering colonialism's contributions as well as its costs is anathema to the anti-colonialists. Their postmodern progressivism leaves little room for dissent from the dogma that colonialism was implacably racist and rapacious. For the anti-colonialists, the appeal to historical evidence and reasoned argument amounts to one more noxious feature of the colonial mindset.

As Biggar observes in his epilogue, anti-colonialists embrace “the ideas that ‘truth’ is whatever the anti-colonialist revolution requires and that revolutionary vitality should be preferred to bourgeois reason.”

The widespread colonialism slander undercuts US diplomacy and enfeebles democracy in America. A crucial part of the remedy consists in cultivating professors who will engage in reasoned scholarship rather than partisan posturing and will reorient classrooms around education in, rather than indoctrination against, the West. ■

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Worse than Hitler

The Nazis took pains to hide the atrocities they committed against Jews. The Hamas killers celebrated theirs.

By Andrew Roberts

My late publisher Lord George Weidenfeld knew about the Nazis. Escaping from Vienna soon after the Anschluss in 1938, he managed to save his immediate family from the Holocaust, although he lost many other relatives to it. He broadcasted to the Third Reich while working for the BBC during the Second World War, and published Albert Speer's memoirs after it. If anyone could get into the psyche of the Nazis, George could.

It therefore came as a surprise when, over tea in the Carlyle Hotel in New York nearly a decade ago, George said, "There are people who are worse anti-Semites than the Nazis." He went on to explain why Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, although of course not as genocidal on the same physical scale as the Nazis, were qualitatively worse than the Nazis in their belief systems, impulses, and instincts.

Andrew Roberts is the Roger and Martha Mertz Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, a member of Hoover's Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict, and a member of the House of Lords. He is the host of a Hoover Institution podcast, *Secrets of Statecraft with Andrew Roberts*.

George died in January 2016. Had he been alive on October 7 last year, he would have had the satisfaction of having his view, once considered controversial, very publicly justified. For whereas the Nazis went to great lengths to hide their crimes from the world, because they knew they were crimes, Hamas has done the exact opposite, because they do not consider them to be so.

“NEVER TO BE WRITTEN”

In October 1943, Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, delivered a notorious speech to fifty of his senior lieutenants in Posen. “I want to speak frankly to you about an extremely grave matter,” he said. “We can talk about it among ourselves, yet we will never speak of it in public. . . . I am referring to the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people. . . . It is a page of glory in our history that has never been written and is never to be written.”

By total contrast, the Hamas killers eighty years later attached GoPro cameras to their helmets so they could livestream their atrocities over social media. Although the Nazis burnt Jews alive in barns on their retreat in 1945, they did not film themselves doing it. There are plenty of photographs of Nazis standing around death-pits full of Jewish corpses, but these were taken for private delectation rather than public consumption.

When on January 27, 1945, the Red Army reached Auschwitz, they found only seven thousand living skeletons there, out of a normal camp population of one hundred and forty thousand, because the Nazis had marched the rest westwards, partly to kill the death-marchers but also because they did not want evidence of their crimes to be uncovered. Gassing operations there had ended in November 1944, and attempts were made to destroy the gas chambers. “Killing installations had been dismantled,” writes Ian Kershaw in his book *The End*, “and attempts made to raze the traces of the camp’s murderous activities.”

The sheer glee with which Hamas, by contrast, killed parents in front of their children and children in front of their parents was broadcast to the world. Nazi sadism was routine and widespread, but it wasn’t built into their actual operational plans in the way that Hamas’s sadism has been.

The gas chambers were invented in part because the Nazis did not much enjoy the actual process of killing Jews as much as Himmler hoped they might. As Laurence Rees notes of Himmler in 1941, “He had observed two years before the psychological damage that shooting Jews at close range had caused his team of killers, and so he had overseen the development of

a system of murder via the gas chambers that to an extent distanced from emotional trauma.”

No such trauma is evident in Hamas’s teams of killers, who phoned up their parents on October 7 to boast about the number of Jews they had killed.

After invading countries, the Nazis often took hostages to ensure the compliance of the local population with their proclamations. The mayor, businessmen, the popular village priest, and other worthies would be taken hostage and threatened with execution if resistance were offered to Nazi rule. It was brutal and in contravention of all the rules of war, but even the Nazis, foul as they were, did not deliberately take nine-month-old babies and young children, women, and octogenarians hostage, as Hamas has done. Nor did the Nazis use babies in incubators and children in hospital ICU units as human shields.

The Nazis recognized that if the Red Cross or other international agencies uncovered evidence of the Holocaust there would be an international out-

cry, whereas Hamas has spotted something about the modern world that has meant that instead of demonstrations against their atrocities and

Instead of demonstrations against Hamas’s atrocities, there are protests further victimizing the victims.

hostage-taking, the largest demonstrations globally have taken place against the victim, Israel. Even movements traditionally seen as on the left, such as the women’s movement, have failed to raise their voices against the mass rape of Israeli women on October 7.

Rape has been seen in every conflict since the dawn of time. The officer corps of civilized countries denounce it, and in the Second World War even the barbaric Nazis had strict rules against their Aryan master-race having sex with people they considered *Untermenschen*. “One of the differences between the atrocities committed by the Nazis who were carrying out the Final Solution and many other war crimes of the twentieth century,” writes Laurence Rees in his book *Auschwitz*, “is the overt insistence by the Nazis that their troops refrain from sexual violence, not out of humanity but out of ideology... The Jews and Slavic population of the East represented, to the Nazis, racially dangerous peoples... Slav and Jewish women (especially the latter) were absolutely out of bounds. Killing Jewish women was a duty, but having sex with them was a crime.”

Of course, this was regularly ignored in practice. Maris Rowe-McCulloch’s article “Sexual Violence Under Occupation During World War II” shows

how the Nazis regularly forced women into military brothels; indeed, there was a brothel in Auschwitz itself. SS officers who raped Jewish women there tended to be transferred out but not punished. One officer, Gerhard Palitzsch, was arrested, but only transferred to a sub-camp of Birkenau. German officers were instructed not to punish rape when it occurred, as a 1940 memorandum from Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch in Regina Mühlhäuser's article "Reframing Sexual Violence as a Weapon and Strategy of War" shows. But that is different from the Hamas leadership giving their men orders to rape as many Jewish women as they could find and film themselves doing it, and in all too many cases taking them hostage afterwards or killing them.

In *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Daniel Goldhagen notes how "Hitler opted for genocide at the first moment that the policy became practical. The moment that the opportunity existed for the only Final Solution that was final, Hitler seized the opportunity to bring about his ideal of a world forever freed of Jewry and made the leap to genocide." This came in 1941 when both Poland and the western USSR were under his control. (More than half of all Europe's Jews lived in the Soviet Union then.) "Demonological racial anti-Semitism was the motive force of the eliminationist program," Goldhagen adds, "pushing it to its logical genocidal conclusion once German military prowess succeeded in creating appropriate conditions."

Yet Hamas embarked on its genocidal attack when it had southern Israel under its control for only a few hours, and thus when it knew that the Israeli response would be instantaneous and devastating. Unlike the Nazis, who hoped that their murders could be hidden by the fog of war and complete territorial domination,

Hamas grasped at its window of opportunity in the full knowledge that it would be punished for it, and soon. Whereas the Nazis assumed they would win the war and

thus would never have to face retribution for their crimes, Hamas knew it was only a matter of hours away, yet still they launched their attack, caring nothing for the effect on ordinary Gazans. Their lust for torturing and murdering Jews was therefore even more powerful than that of the Nazis, who waited until the front line had pushed forward before sending in the *Einsatzkommando* to wipe out Polish and Russian Jewish communities.

The Nazis assumed they would never have to pay for their crimes. Hamas knew its crimes would be broadcast all over the world.

IMBUED WITH HATE

Toward the end of the war, senior Nazis like Heinrich Himmler and Ernst Kaltenbrunner tried to exchange Jews for cash, exposing how fundamentally cynical and corrupt they were, but also how they were willing to put greed over the killing impulse. Hamas, by contrast, was doing well amid the relative hiatus in military activity before October 7, with thousands of Gazans being

Hamas did not put its greed for cash over its one true love: killing Jews.

and Kaltenbrunner, therefore, Hamas has not put its greed for cash over its one true love: killing Jews.

“Very many, probably most, Germans were opposed to the Jews during the Third Reich,” writes Ian Kershaw in his book *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution*, “welcomed their exclusion from the economy and society, and saw them as natural outsiders to the German ‘National Community,’ a dangerous minority against whom it was legitimate to discriminate. Most would have drawn the line at physical maltreatment. The very secrecy of the Final Solution demonstrates more clearly than anything else the fact that the Nazi leadership felt it could not rely on popular backing for its exterminationist policy.”

Here, too, the contrast with Hamas is obvious. The elimination of Jews is openly promised in the Hamas constitution, as it tacitly is in the “from the

The elimination of Jews is promised in the Hamas constitution, as it is in the chant “from the river to the sea.”

voted for the Nazis in 1932, and a good proportion of them celebrated wildly when Hamas paraded its hostages through the streets of Gaza on the afternoon of October 7.

Kershaw writes of how “the Final Solution would not have been possible without the ... depersonalization and debasement of the figure of the Jew.” In both Gaza and the West Bank, printed educational textbooks present Jews as despicable, worthless, and sinister figures, utterly depersonalized and debased. This is a recipe for further generational conflict. Kershaw argues

issued work permits to earn more in Israel than they ever could in Gaza. Unlike even the heinous anti-Semites Himmler

river to the sea” chant so beloved of today’s demonstrators in the West. Gazans voted for Hamas in 2005 in far greater proportions than Germans

that in Nazi Germany, ordinary Germans’ “mild’ anti-Semitism was clearly quite incapable of containing the progressive radical dynamism of the racial fanatics and the deadly bureaucratization of the doctrine of race-hatred.” This is still more true of Gaza today.

George Weidenfeld was therefore correct back in 2015, and the events of October 7 have confirmed it. Hamas is—while taking into account the wild disparity in the sheer geographical and numerical extent of its crimes—qualitatively even more anti-Semitic than the Nazis were. One thing in which they are exactly equal, however, is that Nazi barbarism had to be utterly extirpated, and that goes for Hamas too. ■

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Cheerleaders for Terror

The progressive left has long nursed an old hatred under its mantle of “social justice.” Because Jews have refused to become either victims or oppressors, leftists are casting them out.

By Aharon Friedman and Joshua D. Rauh

The Hamas massacre on October 7, 2023, set off celebratory rallies around the world.

Immediately afterward, a mixture of Islamists and progressive reactionaries began publicly supporting the Hamas atrocities as a form of justified resistance to Israel and the Jews.

Many of the protesters have been calling for the destruction of Israel within any boundaries. Although some progressives seem not to understand what “from the river to the sea” refers to, or who defend

Key points

- » Outbreaks of hatred of Israel and Jews are fully in harmony with the ideological roots of the reactionary progressives.
- » Jews have succeeded out of proportion to their numbers. That makes them suspect.
- » From before its founding, Israel has made sacrifices and taken great risks to make peace with the Arab world. These overtures were, and still are, rejected.

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the phrase as innocuous, when questioned further many admit to wanting to remove Israel from the map entirely, as students at Oxford and Cambridge revealed when speaking with commentator Ben Shapiro.

The hateful reaction by radical Islamists is not surprising. Jews have historically been harshly discriminated against in most Muslim countries. At least 820,000 Jews were expelled from, or fled violence and discrimination in, Middle Eastern and North African countries between 1948 and 1972.

But the reactionary progressive movement's doubling down on its opposition to Israel, in concert with

the Islamists, has been more shocking to some in that movement, especially given a strong presence of liberal Jews. Yet the response is fully in harmony with the ideological underpinnings of the progressive movement, and revealing of those foundations to anyone who did not previously understand them.

At least 820,000 Jews were expelled from, or fled, Middle Eastern and North African countries between 1948 and 1972.

IDEOLOGICAL SCAPEGOAT

The first place to look to understand the reactionary progressives' response is their theory of social justice, under which individuals are judged primarily not on their own actions but rather as members of an ethnic, religious, racial, or other identity. A view of the world that rejects individual responsibility also rejects traditional Western philosophy. Individual responsibility is paramount to so much of the thinking that undergirds free societies, including that put forward by philosophers such as John Locke and John Stuart Mill, and individual responsibility is one of the pillars upon which the United States was founded.

For example, the reactionary progressive left calls relentlessly for more wealth and income redistribution. If inequality exists in a given place, the progressive movement's solution is more government intervention and redistribution. A person's lot is determined by the group to which he belongs. In this model, oppression of groups is the cause of unequal outcomes. This creates a world not about individuals but only about groups, and those are assigned to categories: a group is either a victimizer or victimized, an oppressor or the oppressed, a colonizer or the colonized.

If some individuals or groups of individuals are less wealthy than others, the progressive movement rejects the examination of the underlying social and



cultural issues that might cause some to fail and others to succeed. The disintegration of the family and failing schools in poor communities are ignored; instead, anyone who is wealthier is accused of exploitation. If one group is poor, the progressive movement assigns the blame to another group that is richer.

Jews pose a problem for this approach. They are a minority—amounting to some 16.1 million of the world’s 8 billion population, compared to around 2 billion Muslims and 2.4 billion Christians.

Yet relative to the size of their population, and despite having suffered considerable oppression

and violence over centuries, Jews have achieved prominent positions of success in many sectors of the economy.

And throughout history, Jews are the group most often accused of having derived their wealth from keeping others down. Karl Marx despised Jews because of their alleged materialism. He wrote:

What is the worldly religion of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money. . . . Money is the jealous god of Israel, in face of which no other god may exist. Money degrades all the gods of man—and turns them into commodities. . . . The bill of exchange is the real god of the Jew. His god is only an illusory bill of exchange. . . . The chimerical nationality of the Jew is the nationality of the merchant, of the man of money in general. (*On the Jewish Question*, 1844)

One need not go back to Adolf Hitler’s infamous 1925 book *Mein Kampf* to find other bold displays of this accusation. Modern examples of much-lauded individuals who overtly state this theory include Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, who in 2018 stated, “Let me tell you something, when you want something in this world, the Jew holds the door”—and he didn’t mean holds the door open—or statements by artist Kanye West in recent years suggesting that Jews exploit others for personal gain.

RETURN: This iconic photo (opposite) shows Israeli paratroopers standing in front of the Western Wall in Jerusalem in June 1967. Israel’s survival, starting in 1948 and continuing through several efforts to exterminate it, shocked the Arab world. Arabs’ grievance was not the lack of a Palestinian Arab state, but Israel’s very existence. [David Rubinger (1924–2017)]

Only a few months ago, Palestinian Authority (PA) president Mahmoud Abbas (who also serves as the head of the Palestine Liberation Organization, or PLO) gave a speech claiming that Hitler was not motivated by hatred of Jews but by Jews' control of money: "They say that Hitler killed the Jews because they were Jews and that Europe hated the Jews because they were Jews. Not true. . . . The Europeans fought against these people because of their role in society, which had to do with usury, money."

While it is false to downplay the role of religious hatred in the twentieth-century extermination of European Jews and the pogroms that came before and since, economic factors have indeed also been important. These atrocities involved extensive expropriation. The confiscation of Jewish property during the Nazi era is well documented, as are the economic motivations of participants in historical pogroms to join religiously motivated attackers for economic reasons, such as seeking the elimination of their debts.

A HATRED OF SUCCESS

The reactionary progressive response to the Hamas attacks fits directly into this framework. Those who reject what they perceive to be unjust economic inequality join with those motivated by religious hate. Jews have a special

Jews have a special and despised place in the progressive hierarchy, as a living refutation of the worldview that discrimination is insurmountable.

and despised place in the progressive hierarchy, as a living refutation of the worldview that failure is generally the fault of others and discrimination and systemic racism

are insurmountable obstacles that hold groups back from thriving in the modern economy.

For hardcore progressives, Israel is the Jew of the world's countries, both literally and figuratively. Israel lifted itself out of poverty. A poor country at the outset, with much difficulty Israel absorbed Jewish refugees from Arab countries who were forced to flee or were expelled. Israel would later absorb Jewish refugees from behind the Iron Curtain and Jews from Ethiopia, and is now absorbing Jews fleeing Western Europe. These different groups of Jews have had many cultural, religious, and social differences. Yet Israel has built a society melding these groups together in some respects, even while each maintains many of its own distinct traditions.

From the beginning, Israel has consistently made the most of its opportunities, instead of making unmeetable demands, and has learned from its experiences. Israel started as a substantially socialist country, with significant government involvement in the economy. Israelis realized that this model was not working and gradually changed their economy

Israel's transformative rejection of socialism is further ground for progressive hatred.

to a more capitalist model, with great success. Israel's transformative rejection of socialism provides further ground for progressive hatred for Israel. For progressives, the failure of socialism in real life can never show that socialism does not work, but only that socialism was not attempted properly or in pure enough form.

Israel has turned some of its biggest weaknesses into opportunities. For example, the lack of drinkable water and fertile land has led Israel to become a leader in desalinization and agriculture technologies. The exposure to security threats has led Israel to become a leader in cybersecurity and defense. As a country, it has refused the mantle of victimhood.

The progressive movement appears to attribute both the lack of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan River and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict to Israel's refusal to withdraw from all the territories captured in 1967. This fits nicely into the oppressor-oppressed framework, but it is contradicted by facts. From before its founding, Israel has made extensive sacrifices and taken considerable risks to make peace with the Arab world, including the Palestinian Arabs. The Jewish leadership in Palestine accepted the UN Partition Plan that left just 55 percent of western Palestine to the Jews. This was even though more than 75 percent of the League of Nations Palestine Mandate allocated for "close settlement" by the Jews had been previously transformed by Great Britain into the kingdom of Transjordan and was entirely closed to the Jews.

The countries in the Arab League make up over thirteen million square kilometers, compared to just twenty-two thousand for Israel (including the 1967 territories and excluding Sinai), but the Arab countries surrounding Israel, and the Palestinian Arabs in 1948, refused to accept Israel at any size. When Israel declared independence, seven Arab armies invaded to assist Palestinian Arabs in wiping out the newly declared Jewish state. Israel's survival shocked the Arab world. Arabs' grievance was not about the lack of a Palestinian Arab state, but about Israel's very existence.

Although portions of western Palestine were occupied by Transjordan (which occupied an area extending from eastern Jerusalem to the Jordan River and named it the West Bank) and Egypt (which occupied Gaza in 1948–67), neither set up an independent Arab state in western Palestine. Instead, they initially kept the territories for themselves. Instead of resettling the Palestinian Arabs (as Israel had done for a similar number of Jewish refugees from Arab countries, and as was done after World War II for tens of millions of displaced persons), the Arab countries generally forced them to remain permanent refugees.

Palestinians, through their leadership, have insisted on remaining wards of the United Nations and its Palestinian refugee agency, the UNRWA, instead of taking responsibility for themselves. When the opportunity arose to reconstitute the Jewish state in just a portion of the Jewish homeland and surrounded by enemies, Israel did not declare the arrangement an “open air prison”—the epithet often applied to Gaza—and refuse to take responsibility for its people. Instead, Israel set to work building a state and its institutions, building an economy, and building a society.

ABSOLUTISM AND ATROCITIES

Israel’s economic success despite this adversity, especially compared to the Gaza Strip, compounds the progressive opposition. Palestinians living in Gaza are worse off economically than those living in Israel, therefore (regardless of the reason) the progressive movement gives them the “right to resist.” The progressive movement has no interest in examining

the underlying cause of Gaza’s troubles, which is the dedication of societal resources—and billions in foreign aid—to seek-

Israel has rejected the mantle of victimhood.

ing the destruction of Israel rather than the improvement of Gaza. In fact, Gaza’s economy grew considerably after Israel’s takeover of the territory until Israel turned control over to the Palestinian Authority in 1993. Life expectancy rose considerably, as did the share of households with electricity and running water.

The progressive left is entirely untroubled by (or even celebrates) the history of Palestinian Arab leaders rejecting offers by Israeli leaders for nearly all of the territories Israel seized in 1967. Egypt accepted such a land-for-peace deal when Israel returned the entire Sinai Peninsula in 1982 in exchange for a true end to hostilities. But the PLO has consistently

followed the example of Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mandate-era leader of the Palestinian Arabs, who allied with Hitler and rejected a Jewish state of any size. PLO leader Yasser Arafat responded to Prime Minister Ehud Barak's offer in 2000 of nearly all of Gaza, Judea, and Samaria by launching a war against Israel. In 2008, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered Palestinian Authority President Abbas a state with land area equaling 99.5 percent of these 1967 territories, but Abbas declined, later boasting: "I rejected it out of hand."

And then, Israel withdrew from Gaza entirely in 2005 expelling every last Jew, even digging up the bodies of dead Jews from Gaza's cemeteries. Israel handed Gaza over to the PA, including valuable agricultural infrastructure, in the hopes that would advance peace.

What theory justifies support of Hamas's "resistance" under these circumstances? Perhaps supporters are absolutists in the belief that Arab Muslims have a right to 100 percent of the land and the Jews to none at all. If so, they are unusually absolute on this point. We have not seen extensive calls by the progressive left that the millions of Syrians displaced by Bashar al-Assad be compensated for their losses or returned to their land. Nor do we hear demands by progressives that Jews who were expelled from Europe and the Arab countries in the twentieth century have their property returned to them and their descendants.

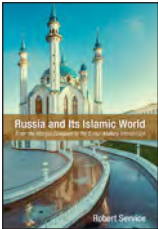
Perhaps reactionary progressives simply reject Israel completely, despite its being a country of many refugees established under a vote of the United Nations, and on land recognized by the League of Nations as belonging to the Jews. This clashes, of course, with progressives' support for open-border policies towards refugees in their own countries.

The Arab-Israeli conflict simply doesn't fit the progressive framework. A false narrative is required. And part of this narrative, on full view since October 7, is reactionary support for terrorism to redress the wrongs progressives believe Israel has inflicted. Such support for terrorism against Israel has intensified but it is not new. The PLO, once heavily aided by the USSR, became a cause célèbre in the progressive movement after its founding in 1964 by the Arab League for the purpose of destroying Israel. This predated any language about "liberating" territories taken by Israel in the 1967 war. The PLO's original charter did not even call for an independent Palestinian state. From its eventual headquarters in Lebanon, the PLO helped train both Marxist and Islamist terrorists from around the world. To the extent that the progressive movement views terrorism against Israel and the West as a legitimate means of addressing injustice,

it views violence as justified if it moves towards the redistribution of resources that serves its social justice goals.

The disturbing level of support in the West and America for nihilistic terror against Israel—not just killing but rape, torture, and mutilation—makes it clear that the situation in the Middle East strikes a particular chord with the reactionary progressive movement. On one hand, the total dedication of large parts of Palestinian Arab society and resources to Israel's destruction, instead of building its own state alongside Israel, fits into the resistance narrative of the oppressed. Indeed, Hamas has openly spent billions in foreign aid on a terror apparatus for attacking Israeli civilians. On the other hand, Israel's economic success despite great hardship challenges the progressive left's oppressor narrative, so that successful nation must be condemned as a "colonizer." In the world's perception of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the entire progressive narrative is at stake. ■

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Life or Death Questions

Israeli commentator **Daniel Gordis** says October 7 obliterated Israelis' belief that they could live in quasi-peace among their enemies. Now comes "a profound conversation about why Jewish sovereignty was an important project in the first place."

By Russ Roberts

Russ Roberts, EconTalk: My guest's Substack, *Israel from the Inside with Daniel Gordis*, is an extraordinary window into what is happening here.

Today, we're going to talk about two things: how the events of October 7 and the war that followed have changed you, Danny, and your perspective on this country; and how the country has changed in response to the war, and maybe where it's headed. You moved here in 1998 from Los Angeles to what shortly after you arrived became a war zone, into what is often called the second Intifada. So, you've seen a lot of chapters of this conflict, you've written about them, you've lived through them, and I want to talk about how this one is different, if at all. To do that, I want to start with the Intifada. What was that about and how did you experience it?

Russ Roberts is the John and Jean De Nault Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, host of the podcast **EconTalk**, and president of Shalem College in Jerusalem. **Daniel Gordis** is the Koret Distinguished Fellow at Shalem College and author of *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn* (Ecco, 2016), among other works. He publishes *Israel from the Inside with Daniel Gordis* on Substack.



STARTING OVER: Author and commentator Daniel Gordis on the broad implications of the Gaza conflict: “This is not really about Israel and Hamas. It’s really about whether or not the West has it in itself to defend the idea of liberal democracy.” [Yoram Reshef Studios]

Daniel Gordis: Well, we got here in 1998. In 1999, it’s hard to believe, but this guy named Ehud Barak won an election and beat a guy named Bibi Netanyahu. Everybody assumed Barak made three promises. He was going to get out of Lebanon, he was going to make peace with Syria, and he was going to make peace with the Palestinians. The peace with Syria went nowhere; the Syrians had no interest in negotiating back then. He did actually get the army out of Lebanon, after about eighteen years. It’s actually very telling that the young men who were the last ones to come out of Lebanon and lock the gate—they literally got off their APCs [armored personnel carriers] and they closed the gate and they put a chain and lock on it—were born the year Israel went into Lebanon in 1982. That seemed unbelievably positive.

What we didn’t understand then was that every Israeli pullback, whether it’s from Gaza in 2005, whether it’s from Lebanon in 2000, wherever, it’s always interpreted as weakness.

By the fall of 2000, Israel was involved in what at first seemed to be a kind of series of terrorist events. The Intifada, an Arabic word which means

popular uprising or spontaneous uprising—which is, by the way, a complete misnomer. There was nothing spontaneous or popular about the Intifada; it was very clearly choreographed by Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. When Israeli troops went into Jenin and other places—Ramallah eventually—they were able to uncover troves of documents that proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that this was orchestrated to look like a popular spontaneous uprising in response to some Israeli provocation or another. It was a very clearly planned attempt to basically end Oslo or to create a new reality in the Middle East.

Roberts: Back up for a second and explain, for listeners who don't know what Oslo is.

Gordis: Oslo is an agreement. It starts in the 1980s, goes into the 1990s. It is an agreement in which Israel, theoretically, reaches an agreement that creates the Palestinian Authority. Israel, at first through intermediaries and then directly, negotiates with the Palestine Liberation Organization and agrees to a series of steps. And the thought was that Oslo would lead over time to Israel pulling out of all sorts of areas—Jericho and Hebron and so on—and would eventually lead to the creation of a Palestinian state.

But to come back to our story: the reason I mention all of that now is because there's a lot of going on in Israel in which the right wing—which objected to pulling out of Gaza in 2005—is saying, "I told you so. We told you eighteen years ago this was going to be a disaster." In the summer of 2005, when the Israeli army

went into the Jewish towns and settlements in Gaza and literally pulled people out of their houses and then bulldozed them a few days later, you see

“Every Israeli pullback, whether it's from Gaza in 2005, whether it's from Lebanon in 2000, wherever, it's always interpreted as weakness.”

people screaming, "You don't understand what you're doing. There are going to be rockets on Sderot, and there are going to be RPGs coming on this kibbutz and that kibbutz, and one day they're actually going to come in here and they're going to kidnap people." It's unbelievable to go back and look at those old videos, to watch these people who were totally right.

There was also a lot of "I told you so" going on in 2000 during the second Intifada, about Oslo. They said, "Every time we give back territory, it's perceived as weakness and it results in Palestinian aggression." It's very hard to argue with that claim, even though those of us who still hold out—or held out,

I think is more appropriate—some hope for peace thought, “We should probably take this chance, or that chance. Maybe it’ll be different this time.”

So, we’re here in 1998, come with three kids. It was a very scary time. It was a very sad time. Lots of buses blew up because of suicide bombers. It was a

war of suicide bombings in buses, and restaurants, and so on. But here’s what we need to understand: it was not an existential war on Israel’s part. Nobody ever said: “You blow up

“We never thought for a moment that Israel’s existence was on the line. What’s going on now actually is existential.”

enough buses and you destroy enough cafes, you can bring down a country.” You can make a country miserable. You can make a country angry. You can create a generation of young children who are going to have PTSD and vote very differently. By the way, the people who came of age back then are the right wing of Israel now, and that’s not incidental. But we never thought for a moment that Israel’s existence was on the line. What’s going on now actually is existential.

Roberts: When the Intifada ended in 2004, why did it end? What changed?

Gordis: The Intifada ended, fundamentally, because we won the war. We destroyed the terrorist infrastructure. We started building the famous separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank, which made it much more difficult for Palestinians to cross. We never quite finished it, but we built enormous portions of it. The more kilometers of the wall that were completed, the fewer terrorist attacks there were.

Unfortunately, Israelis learned that that separation barrier, even though it was problematic in many ways and an international public relations fiasco for Israel, stopped the war. We destroyed the terrorist infrastructure and went back to our lives.

DEATH OF AN ILLUSION

Roberts: Your book [*If a Place Can Make You Cry*] chronicles it very movingly. It was a horrible time for Israel. It was a horrible time for the Palestinians. Israeli efforts to dismantle that infrastructure, of course, had many innocent victims.

Gordis: Right. But it ends in 2004. Their infrastructure is fundamentally dismantled. Arafat is going to die shortly thereafter, and the West Bank stays more or less quiet. There were lots of terrorist attacks over the years,

but the vast majority of Israelis went about their lives and were not affected by it. Where the spotlight moved was to the other side of Israel: not to the east, where the West Bank is, but to the west and the south, the Gaza Strip. Starting not long after the second Intifada, there were elections. The actual machinations are far too complex to get into now, but after this whole election cycle—which, by the way, the United States had pressured Israel to allow— Hamas wins.

What we now know in 2023 is that Israel mishandled that Hamas win entirely. Although we went to war with Hamas time and time again, and some of them were very massive bombings of Gaza with terrible civilian casualties on their side but significant casualties on our side as well, the fundamental Israeli assumption for a very long time was: We can contain Hamas. We might have to batter them periodically—and we did, and we do. But fundamentally, there are a lot of Palestinians there, including the Palestinian leadership, who just want a better life for their people. And as long as we allow foreign money through Qatar or other organizations, and we keep a significant military presence along the border—occasionally, we’re going to have to go to war and destroy some of their rocket launchers—fundamentally, we can live with Hamas at our side.

What started in 2005, with Hamas taking over the Gaza Strip, was a situation in which there was not a terrorist organization in Gaza but an army. Israel did not realize that until October 7. We always had the sense, “Yeah, they have rockets. What are they going to do with rockets? They’re going to kill some people. But they’re not going to be able to take over our country.” But what happened on

the morning of October 7, of course, was that somewhere around three thousand fairly well-trained soldiers—they’re

“There was not a terrorist organization in Gaza but an army. Israel did not realize that until October 7.”

terrorists, but they’re soldiers—came by land, sea, and air. And for several days, certainly October 7 and 8—and some of them survived the 9th and the 10th—Israel was actually taken over. The army had to go back and recapture army bases.

We have two major areas now in which Israel is fundamentally unable to keep its citizens safe. It has evacuated those citizens; and the citizens now are saying, “We’re never going back until you destroy the enemy that can rain terror on us. We’re not willing to raise our kids anymore, running to the bomb shelters in the middle of the night. We’re certainly not willing to raise

our children in the north or in the south with the possibility that people can come over the border again and rape and pillage and burn and murder and do horrible things. We don't trust the government. We don't trust the army."

If we cannot win this war ... and I'm going to say something a little controversial: it's not clear that we can. The country is sobering up after the first months of a sense of huge unity and "together, we're going to win."

WAR AND PEACE

Roberts: It's important to hear your pessimism. I don't think people outside this country have any understanding, or have a very limited understanding, of the mood. We built a wall; it helped. But we pulled out of Gaza, and every few years, Hamas ratcheted up the unpleasantness of being an angry neighbor, and we'd respond. It was sort of a depressing, fatal theater that was played out over the years between Israel and Hamas.

I think the world is catching on how different it is. Tell me if I'm wrong. Among my friends—which, of course, is not a representative sample—people like me who have made *aliyah*, who've moved to Israel, and Israelis that I've come to know through being head of the college, there's not a desire for vengeance. It's a remarkably un-angry response. It is resolve. It's "we can't put up with this. We can't sit idly by and allow our daughters to be violated and our children to be abducted."

This is a small country. It's seven million Jews, it's nine million people. It's a big town. It's really more like a big family, and you have to go to Jerusalem, but especially to Tel Aviv, and walk the streets and see how many reminders there are of the hundreds of kidnapped people all the time.

We don't say, "Well, that was too bad. We go on with our lives." No. People are desperate to get those people back. It is our greatest strength and our

greatest weakness. And I don't know how long we can do what we're doing in Gaza, and I don't know how long we can do it if it doesn't lead to anything

"Certain things have happened to this country that, at the end of the day, are going to make us much stronger."

productive. Right now, it just looks like death, and I don't think that's going to sell outside Israel, and I don't see it selling for very long inside Israel.

Gordis: I think everything you said is exactly right. By the way, Bibi is in a very, very bad spot because he's articulated two goals for this war: the destruction of Hamas and returning all of the hostages. It's very easy to see

a world in which he accomplishes neither. And then Israelis have to look around and say, “My God, really? Even when we decided to pull out all the stops, we couldn’t win?” I don’t know a single Israeli who does not think we should be fighting this.

Maybe you do, and I’m sure they’re out there.

Roberts: I know one.

Gordis: Well, that’s

probably the one. By the way, I know a lot of American Jews who say to me, “Where is the Israeli left? Where are these Israeli progressives that normally I talk to all the time and now I’m not hearing from?” I actually said to someone, “Oh, I can tell you where they are. They’re in the cockpits dropping bombs on Gaza.” I mean, that’s not cute, that’s actually true. The people who were the head of the protest movement, the pilots who said they weren’t going to fly, are now flying 24/7. They went right back to work.

Roberts: They said they weren’t going to fly because they did not feel that Netanyahu’s coalition represented them, so they stopped doing their reserve training in the months of judicial reform that were so contentious. And then as soon as October 7 happened, they ran to their planes ...

Gordis: Two and a half hours later, they were in the cockpits.

Roberts: ... and everybody else was in their convoy and truck and car getting to their bases and reporting. And others outside of Israel who had been anti-Netanyahu were fighting their way to get back here to defend their country. So, it’s an extraordinary moment.

Do you have any optimism, Danny?

Gordis: Yeah.

Roberts: Give me what you got.

Gordis: I have optimism. You said before that my pessimism is a little surprising. I’m not pessimistic. I don’t know that we’re going to destroy Hamas, and I don’t think we’re going to get all the hostages back, unfortunately. But I think that certain things have happened to this country that, at the end of the day, are going to make us much stronger. We have been reminded that we did not move Israel from the Middle East to Western Europe. We pretended in Tel Aviv that if you have enough high-tech companies and enough startups, and a lot of fancy cafes and bars and restaurants and Tumi stores, you’ll live

“The Jewish world is hitting control-alt-delete, basically. The Jewish world is rebooting everything.”

that kind of a life. And you think, yeah, back in the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s we were in the Middle East, but now we're kind of in Western Europe.

Well, we're not. We are, as the expression goes, in the villa that's in the jungle. And Israelis are recognizing, tragically, if you want to survive in the jungle, you've got to act like you live in the jungle. You can't act like you live along the Seine or the Thames.

I think this is going to bring Israelis back to where we were seventy-five years ago: a profound conversation about why Jewish sovereignty was an important project in the first place. A profound conversation about what kind of a country this needs to be.

I do not believe that all of the divisiveness that preceded October 7 has been washed away. Polls are beginning to come out that show that just below the surface, the resentments are still there. We're going to have to figure this out very carefully. If Bibi doesn't resign, I think we're in for a very ugly political period, and it's quite possible that the hundreds of thousands of protesters that we saw about judicial reform are going to seem piddly compared to the millions of people who could take to the streets at the end of this war.

I'm not pessimistic about the future of Israel. I'm actually very optimistic about the future of Israel and always have been. I think that this is going to spark a renewed devotion to the project called the Jewish state.

Six months from now, a year from now, two years from now, whenever this thing ends, Israel is going to start over. People are asking, "What should we call this war?" A number of people have said we should call this the second war of independence because this was the war where we had a fight—an

"Israelis are recognizing, tragically, if you want to survive in the jungle, you've got to act like you live in the jungle. You can't act like you live along the Seine or the Thames."

existential battle—for our right to exist all over again. But not only that: this was the war in which society came together determined to rebuild. We have a lot of questions to ask ourselves.

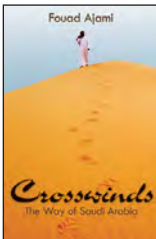
I believe that the Israel that's going to emerge from this is going to be stronger, more determined, more Jewishly self-conscious in a positive way—conscious that this is not just a Hebrew-speaking European country but the country of the Jewish people. It's even possible that we're going to emerge with a much deeper relationship with diaspora Jews. We're in this together. The Jewish world is hitting control-alt-delete, basically. The Jewish world

is rebooting everything. Four thousand years into this, our darkest periods have always led to periods of revival and resurgence. The Holocaust led to the state of Israel. Destruction of the Temple led to the birth of what we call Rabbinic Judaism. And we have a way as a people of taking very, very dark moments and turning them into moments of light and rebirth, and what that light and rebirth looks like you never know in the midst of the darkness. But looking back, you can see that it happened. I believe it's going to happen here, too.

“What that light and rebirth looks like you never know in the midst of the darkness.”

And at the end of the day, this is not really about Israel and Hamas. It's really about whether or not the West has it in itself to defend the idea of liberal democracy. If the West allows Israel to go to a place where it cannot defend itself as a liberal democracy, they're coming for the rest of the West, too. We have to win not only for Israel and the future of the Jewish people, but we have to win somehow or another for the future of freedom, and for the future of democracy. I believe we will. ■

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Tehran Wins Tenure

Iran wields great ideological power on American university campuses. How could this have happened?

By Russell A. Berman

The outbreak of anti-Israel sentiment in American universities after the Hamas attack last October 7 has been widely documented. Students as well as professors rushed to celebrate the atrocities: one Cornell professor found the murders “exhilarating,” while a Columbia colleague declared the slaughter “awesome.” Then, when the inevitable Israeli response began, with a forcefulness that should have surprised no one, the Hamas enthusiasts protested on campus and off, often with violence.

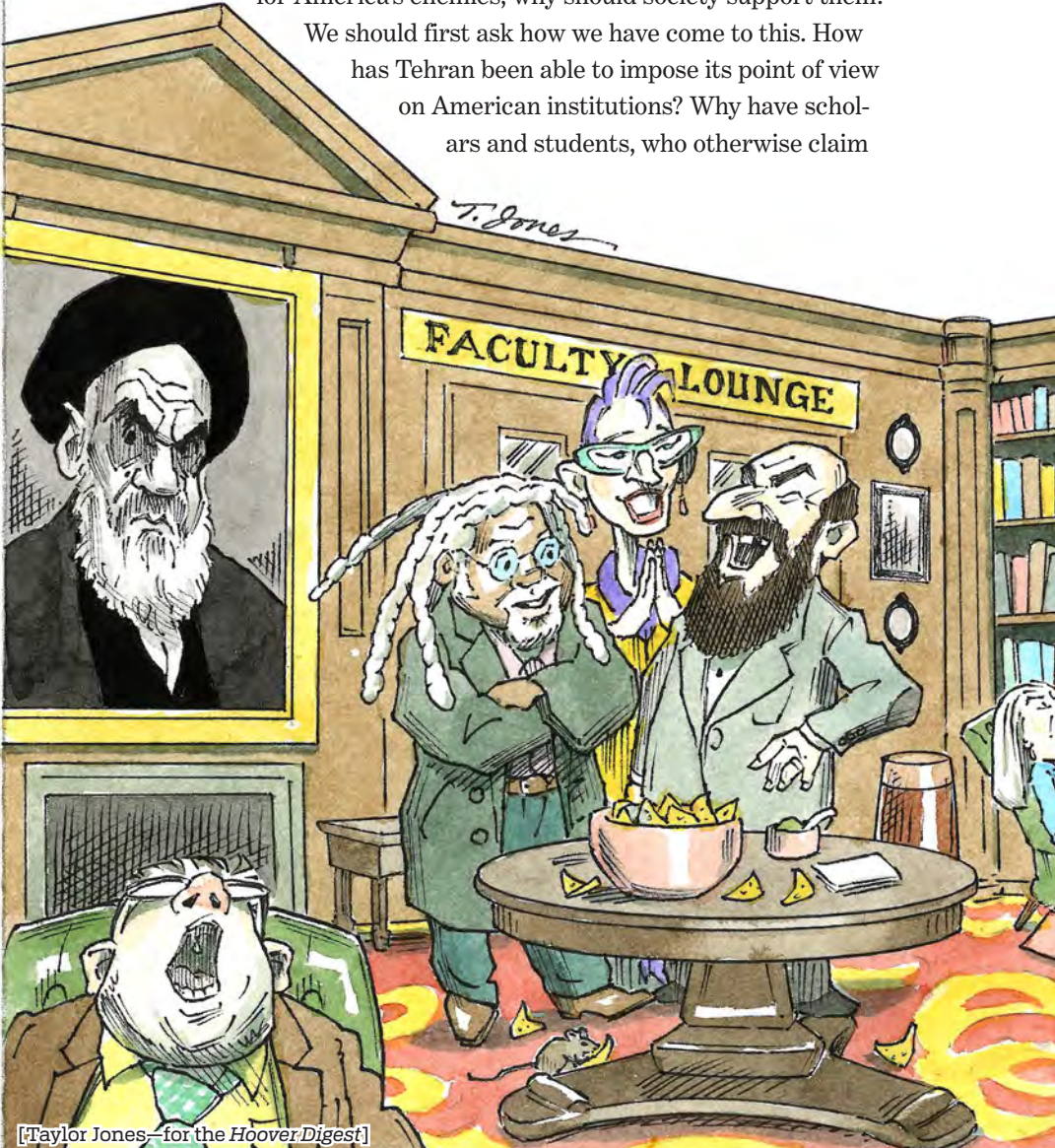
This has been a sorry episode in the history of American universities, and it has contributed to the already widespread public skepticism toward once-revered institutions of higher education. There would be much to be said about the events of October 2023 as indicators of the systemic anti-Semitism in American progressive culture. Another point, far from peripheral, concerns Iranian soft power: the contrast between

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the voluble outcry with regard to the Gaza War and the deafening silence on American campuses concerning the repressive character of the Tehran regime.

No atrocity committed by the regime in Tehran, no matter how vile, interests the idealists on American campuses. Some institutions of higher education have turned into mouthpieces for Tehran and do their best to silence criticism. If universities have become incubators of extremism and advocates for America's enemies, why should society support them?

We should first ask how we have come to this. How has Tehran been able to impose its point of view on American institutions? Why have scholars and students, who otherwise claim

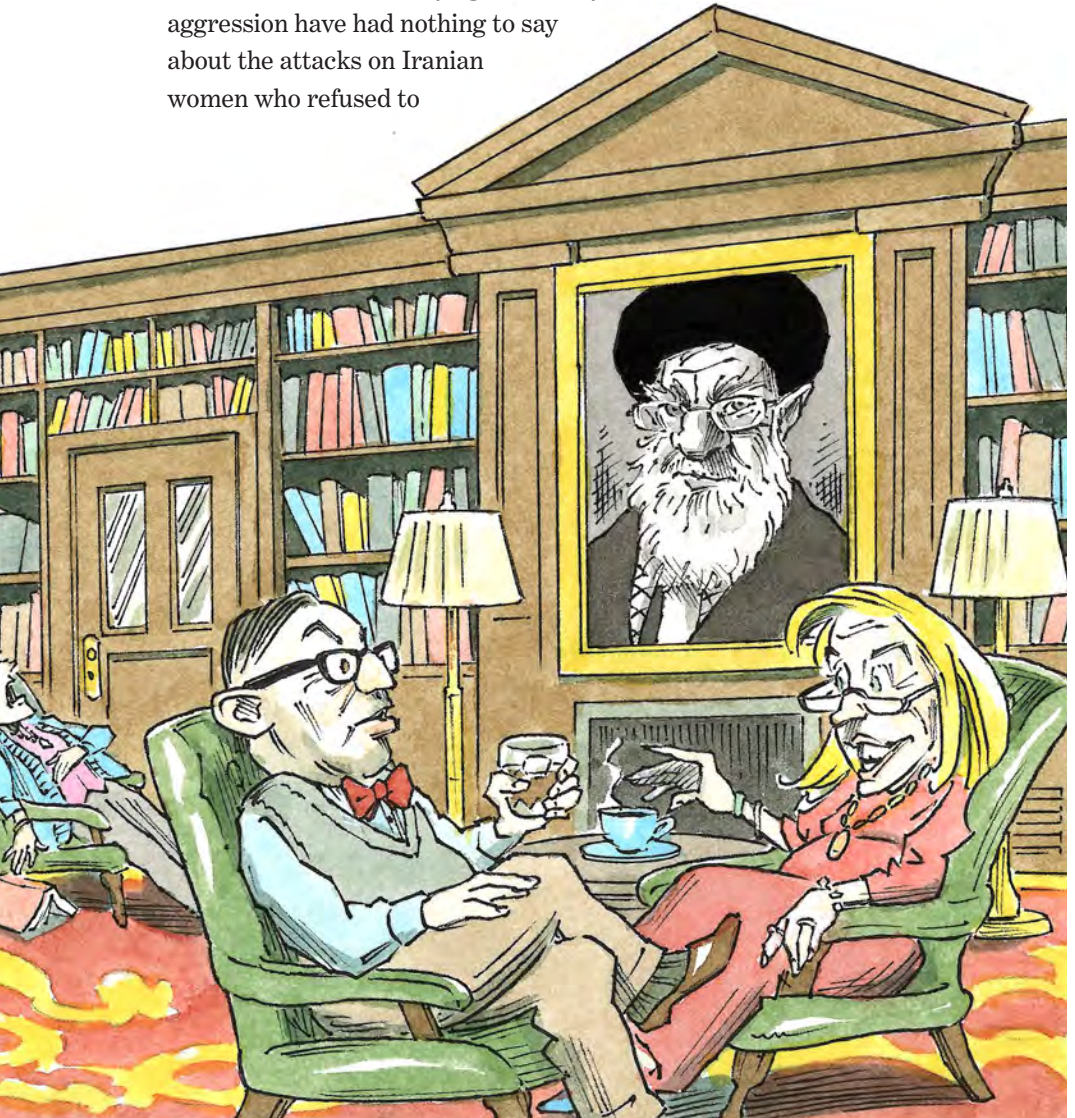


[Taylor Jones—*for the Hoover Digest*]

to be keen to engage in critical thinking, fallen obsequiously silent in the face of repression in Iran?

THREE ROADS TO MALIGN INFLUENCE

Of course, there are some brave dissidents on campus and elsewhere in our public sphere who oppose the Tehran regime. There are plenty of protests from the Iranian-American exile community, which is largely hostile to the regime in Tehran, as is public sentiment in Iran itself. But campus progressives who otherwise rally against every micro-aggression have had nothing to say about the attacks on Iranian women who refused to



wear the hijab, just as they had nothing to say about the rapes in Israel carried out by Hamas, which they may have found “exhilarating.” Nor do campus progressives, faculty or students, speak out against the torture of political prisoners in Iran, the intentional blinding of protestors, or the execution of critical journalists. Even Iranian attempts to assassinate critical voices in the United States have left the progressive community indifferent. The

The Iran problem—the silencing of Iran’s critics by higher education—is part of a larger problem in the academy.

soft power of the Islamic Republic has its knee on the throat of the academic left, keeping it unable to utter the smallest word of criticism.

Exploring this problem requires a diagnosis of the multifaceted malaise that pervades much of higher education. Some explanations are specific to Iran and the relationship of Iran specialists to the regime, and some are a function of particular political constellations in the United States. Yet the success of Iranian soft power in the United States is ultimately also about a much broader failure of US higher education to live up to its mission of free inquiry, which is now too often subordinated to ideological allegiances, vacuous virtue signaling, and an obligatory hostility toward the United States that is embedded in curricula. The Iran problem—the silencing of Iran critics by higher education—is very much a piece of a larger problem in the academy.

One can distinguish three dynamics specific to Iranian soft power in the academy. The first and most innocent version of scholarly silence with regard to the policies of repression carried out by Tehran pertains to those US-based experts whose specialized research requires them to travel to Iran to conduct interviews or to consult archives and the like. These academics know that if they express public criticism of the Iranian regime here, the regime may refuse to grant them a visa, and their research would therefore come to an abrupt halt. This pressure is similar to the problem of Western journalists reporting in other authoritarian contexts who know that they have to watch what they say or report, or risk expulsion. No wonder some journalists and academics begin to sound like parrots instead of analysts: in order to do their job, they have to do it poorly. Add to this the fact that Iran ranks among the lowest countries for press freedom. Reporters Without Borders ranks it 177 out of 180.

Second, there is a different kind of professional misconduct, when scholars based in the United States, and therefore not in fear of being imprisoned

like their colleagues in Iran, nonetheless choose to adjust their accounts to accommodate political pressure domestically. Thus, there are some scholars who reportedly refrain from criticizing the Islamic Republic for fear of appearing to agree with conservative or neoconservative policy positions. A scholar may face pressure to suppress facts or reinterpret them fancifully in order to come to other, more politically acceptable, conclusions.

Writing in *Tablet*, for example, Arian Khameneh discusses Ladan Zarabadi, a gender studies scholar at UCLA with a focus on Iranian feminism. Not surprisingly, her concerns reportedly put her at odds with the misogynistic policies of the Tehran regime. Khameneh labels her “an unabashed critic.” Her progressive colleagues were not at all welcoming. “Zarabadi found that her colleagues in US academia were less interested in seeing Iran through the eyes of Iranians and more prone to positioning themselves in a dichotomous ideological battle between American progressives and conservatives—one in which excessive criticism of the regime in Tehran can be perceived as ‘right-wing’ and even ‘imperialist.’”

Zarabadi told Khameneh: “It is not just about interpreting reality; it’s about interpreting reality in a certain way to fulfill a specific ideology or a specific discourse.” For Zarabadi’s colleagues—so argues Khameneh—the fact that US conservatives criticize Tehran means that academic criticism of Tehran must be prohibited. The facts concerning the repression of women in Iran are worth far less than the political calculus in the United States.

The political opposition of American conservatives, especially the Trump administration, toward Iran pushed progressive academics to defend Tehran. Yet earlier, the Obama administration’s policy of appeasing Iran acted as a pull factor for the same

scholars: siding with the Obama-Biden vision required endorsing the

One Cornell professor found the murders by Hamas “exhilarating.”

mullahs. President Obama, supported by Secretary of State John Kerry, famously tried to move the United States away from alignment with the Arab states and Israel and toward a model in which Saudi Arabia would “share” the region with Iran. The so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the “nuclear deal,” was always a key part of this effort to appease the regime in Tehran, which otherwise had demonstrated consistent hostility toward the United States. Underlying the Obama administration’s appeasement policy lay the naive assumption that Iranian hostility would be reduced if Washington offered pre-emptive concessions.

The third version of Iranian soft power proceeded thanks to some successful personnel placements. Amid the US promotion of a softer approach to Iran, an Iran-created network of policy makers, the “Iran Experts Initiative,” was formed. It succeeded in placing some of its members in influential positions in the State Department and Pentagon, as well as in key think tanks.

A DEEPER ROT

Yet these three specific factors—academics with their need for access to Iran, the impact of political polarization on scholarly discourse, and the influence of Iran-friendly agents in government—would not have shaped academic discourse as extensively as they have if not for profound changes that had already been taking place for decades in higher education.

The various pressures to refrain, at the least, from criticizing the Islamic Republic fell on fertile ground in the relevant university disciplines—parts of the humanities and the interpretive social sciences, and especially Middle East Studies—that have embraced a fundamental hostility to the West and an exclusively negative estimation of the role of the United States in the world. In large swaths of these fields, the West is viewed as marked by indelible sins, the worst moments of which are deemed to be always present, with no regard to achievements or improvements, only permanent guilt. European history is therefore reduced to colonialism, just as American history is always only slavery, never a story of evolving freedom. Universities, of course, ought to be where students develop critical thinking skills, including criticism of their own societies. That legitimate project of criticism has morphed into indoctrination. The result is curriculums built around the dogmatic rejection of the ideas of the Western tradition or the policies of the United States.

This malaise pervades important parts of the university, and in this milieu Iranian soft power finds a welcoming audience eager to have its

biases confirmed. The propagandists of the Islamic Republic of Iran present it as a revolutionary regime hostile to the West, exactly

Because US conservatives criticize Tehran, academic criticism of Tehran must be prohibited.

what ideology-driven scholars can view as confirming their ideological assumptions. For those students for whom “revolution is the answer” and who want to pursue it “by any means necessary,” the brutality of the

Iranian regime turns out to be attractive; no wonder they do not protest when Iranian demonstrators are shot down. For campus progressives, the aspirations of Iranian women to have the freedom to choose whether or not to cover their hair are nothing more than an expression of a decadent Western liberalism. Therefore, they side with the regime, recasting the compulsory hijab as

the uniform of a heroic revolt against the West.

Progressives who stand firmly on the liberal side in our domestic culture wars quickly drop their

commitment to gender equality or gay rights to embrace terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah or states like Iran, whose “anti-imperialism” is more than sufficient to excuse their reactionary cultural values.

The success of Iranian soft power in US higher education is ultimately a symptom of a wider rot, which also triggered the eruption of anti-Semitism in the wake of the October 7 attack.

A previous US administration held the naive assumption that Iranian hostility would go away if Washington offered concessions.

TURNING AROUND

The challenge is to figure out how to solve the problem and save our universities. That is easier said than done, given traditions of faculty governance: ideologues get to appoint new ideologues. Curing the universities will not come quickly. It will require leadership and vision by university leaders who can exercise shaping power through appointments of level-headed department chairs and program directors, but especially through decisions about the allocation of funds. Resources should be withheld from units that have become irrevocably politicized, new hires allowed only if the political deck is not stacked in advance. In some cases,

new units—centers, departments, or even schools—could be initiated, in order to bypass

the hotbeds of academic anti-Americanism. Trustees also have to pay attention when choosing presidents, and donors must be careful with the funds they make available. There are smart ways to give that can prevent resources from flowing in the wrong direction.

Taken together, such steps could shift embedded ideological alignments in higher education and move American universities back toward a seriousness

Ideologues get to appoint new ideologues.

of thinking and a commitment to the common good. Institutions of higher education need to be able to withstand the malign influences of foreign soft power, Iranian or otherwise. Our universities can be regained, but we must fight to retrieve them. ■

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Shamed and Confused

American colleges denounce their own country while excusing Islamicists. Iran finds this extremely useful.

By Mariam Memarsadeghi

Despite domestic dissent over its brutality, corruption, and manifold existential crises, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to be emboldened globally. The theocracy exerts soft power internationally as a means to ensure its survival, sustain its capacity for terror operations and military attacks, and provide cover for its advancement of a nuclear weapons program. It is a regime that regularly calls for the destruction of the “Great Satan” and Israel. In this sense, it is a more overt enemy to America and to freedom writ large than are the regimes of Russia and China.

Hamas, a chief proxy for the regime’s imperial Islamist ambitions, is at war with Israel, the Middle East’s only democracy and America’s chief ally in the region. While denying direct involvement in the October 7 attack on Israel, supreme leader Ali Khamenei quickly celebrated as a victory the pogrom in which Hamas killed more Jews than have been killed in any single day since the Holocaust.

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The Islamic Republic's foreign minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian, met just days after the terror attack with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Doha, Qatar. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its Quds Force in particular are overseers of Hamas, providing it funding, training, intelligence, ideological backing, and global propaganda, including on American social media platforms such as X. The IRGC is the only govern-

ment department ever designated by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO).

The regime's hard power includes attacks on US

How does a regime so openly hostile to the United States develop such a robust network of influence on US soil?

bases and the killing of US soldiers and contractors stationed in the region, the taking of US hostages, the attempted kidnapping and killing of US citizens on US soil, the targeting of former US officials for assassination, and cyberwar on US entities. The regime's soft power abroad is more difficult to spot than these open manifestations of nefarious power but is arguably more potent because of its pervasive, insidious effect on American attitudes and policy making toward a state opposed to the West's most fundamental liberal values.

How does a regime so openly hostile to the United States develop a robust network of influence on US soil? How does it manage to have American think tankers, scholars, civic groups, peace activists, media outlets, celebrities, elected officials, and even the very diaspora it has expunged spread its messaging? I have written elsewhere about the varied soft-power nodes of the regime. In this article, I will focus on America's universities.

SELF-LOATHING IS USEFUL

An overarching strategy of the Islamic Republic is one inspired by the USSR and its KGB, which Khamenei has been known to study and emulate, and not only for the need to avoid the type of reforms that brought an end to the communist dictatorship. His regime, like other anti-American regimes, has learned to capitalize on and reinforce America's own internal weaknesses to thwart policies that advance the security interests and values of the world's democracies. America's growing tendency for self-loathing, division, isolationism, and cynicism toward its global leadership and the unique capacity of liberal democracy to safeguard human freedom

may provide repressive regimes like Iran's their greatest opportunity for sustaining their rule.

American institutions of higher learning provide fertile ground for discourses that hamper scrutiny of the world's top sponsor of terror. The more elite and progressive the school, the more its curriculums and culture can resemble political indoctrination rather than open exploration and learning. These narratives suffuse syllabi, campus organizations, and student social networks and are the very ideas the regime teaches and propagates inside the country to justify its totalitarian ideology.

It is impossible to know how much of this thinking is the natural output of an open society and how much is being propelled by Iran, China, Russia, and other undemocratic states. The federal government requires universities to report their foreign donations, and the regime's ally Qatar tops all other countries, giving \$4.7 billion to American universities between 2001 and 2021.

Even at Brandeis, founded as a Jewish university, condemnation of Hamas came late, and some of the most horrific footage of the persecution of Jewish students was recorded at Harvard University, where the administration has been criticized by the university's former president Larry Summers, alumni, and donors. "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free"—code for the annihilation of Israel—is chanted and displayed on college campuses across the country.

Students who subscribe to the progressive worldview are likely to be highly critical of Israel and America. Iran's revolutionary cause, because it is anti-Israeli, anti-American, and anti-modern, is seen as authentic even as the state grows ever more repressive, corrupt, and belligerent. Tellingly by contrast is how Saudi

Arabia, a US ally, is subjected to heavy scrutiny despite the fact that—or perhaps because—it is liberalizing, opening to

the West, and confronting Iran's regime, and because it was coming close to forging a historic peace with Israel before the Hamas attack.

The issue of the hijab plays a key role in this moral incoherence. The left views the female covering as a matter of diversity, inclusion, and even feminism, a visual rebuke to the right wing. The left self-censors to conceal the inherent oppression of the hijab: even in the West, it is imposed on Muslim girls from a young age as part of a larger ideology of control, subjugation,

America's growing tendency for self-loathing, division, isolationism, and cynicism plays into Tehran's hands.

and inequality, and is the single most important symbol of global jihad. The reality that girls and women in Iran are being beaten to death for showing some strands of hair does not fit the progressive narrative about the hijab, nor does the willingness of Iranian girls and women to risk their lives to overthrow the regime that forces them to wear it.

“Regime change” is, in the ethic of these educated elites, contemptible, particularly for peoples of the Middle East. And yet Iran’s Woman-Life-

Freedom uprising has forced them to face the fierce power of Iranian girls and women and the silence of Western feminists about their decades-

The Islamic Republic’s soft-power strategy prioritizes scholars, especially those of Iranian descent.

long struggle to throw off the real-world *Handmaid’s Tale* that suffocates them. It has compelled them to see, if still not admit, that in the eyes of the Iranian people, wholesale democratic transition is the only way to solve the problem of the Islamic Republic.

NO QUESTIONS

One reason for the dissonance between the truth of the lives of the Iranian people and the progressive outlook is cancel culture’s shutting down of opportunities for questioning, critical thought, and exposure to a plurality of perspectives. In one instance at the London School of Economics, I was shouted at incessantly by a group of angry, bearded young men while giving a public talk about the regime’s human rights abuses. They called me a warmonger because I support international sanctions and other pressure on the Islamic Republic, a talking point about me taken straight from the regime itself. The men had taken seats in the auditorium like everyone else. It is impossible to know if such agitators are paid regime agents whose job it is to intimidate and defame dissidents abroad and to shape Western public opinion, or if they are merely misguided students who have absorbed a mindset intolerant of those insisting that regimes like Iran’s are an existential threat to their own freedoms and way of life.

The Islamic Republic’s soft-power strategy prioritizes university scholars, giving those of Iranian descent in particular access to regime insiders while grooming them to provide a whitewashed version of even the most brutal aspects of clerical rule.

The University of Maryland produces polls on Iranian public opinion that claim the Iranian people strongly support the regime, its top officials,

its handling of the economy, and its nuclear and missile development, while also claiming a majority have a positive view of the Taliban, Russia, and China, and a negative view of the United States. These results are laughable for Iranians, not least of all because they pay with their lives to protest and strike against the regime and also to show their affinity for the United States. The results run counter to opinion polls conducted even inside the country, such as a famous opinion survey conducted by regime insiders together with Gallup, which resulted in imprisonment of the pollsters because it showed a majority of Iranians want good relations with the United States. Other polls show high levels of dissatisfaction with the regime, its foreign policy, its handling of the economy, and the policy of mandatory hijab.

Scholars at America's top academic institutions are close to those Washington think tank analysts who promote appeasement of the Islamic Republic. Recent exposés by Semafor and Iran International show how the Islamic Republic's foreign ministry created an "Iran Experts Initiative" to push Tehran's positions in Washington, particularly on its nuclear program, and managed to have three of its top members land posts as advisers to Robert Malley, Biden's special envoy to Iran, who is now under State Department and FBI investigation. Their reporting has prompted Republicans in both the House and Senate to press the Biden administration, including the Department of Defense, to account for the hiring of individuals to highly sensitive US national security positions who took direction from Tehran.

For those of us who have long been sounding the alarm about the regime's international lobby and propaganda network, the investigative reporting substantiated with e-mail trails between the regime and the experts shows what we had long alleged: a cadre of English-language scholars, analysts, journalists, and advocates,

including at America's most respected institutions, feign independence but in fact take their

This is a war for the minds of young Americans.

talking points straight from an evil cabal fundamentally opposed to human liberty.

If America truly intends to counter the Islamist threat, it must become wise to the corrosion of its own democratic values and the integrity of its universities, and to the exploitation of its freedoms by the world's leading Islamist force. War between Iran's imperial terror state and America is already being fought on American soil—it is a war for the minds of young

Americans who will soon run our country's national security establishment, serve in Congress, report the news, and teach future generations. ■

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Guns and Paranoia

Tehran built its entire revolutionary edifice on an obsession with the “Great Satan” and all its purported harms.

By Abbas Milani

Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader, has shaped a foreign policy for the Islamic Republic around several overriding concepts: jihad, or holy war, culture wars, soft power, an enemy conspiracy, and a “historic turn.” They are interrelated and are at the core of the regime’s successful effort to create an intellectual proxy in the West to fight the purported “culture war” and facilitate the turn.

In the convoluted calculus of Khamenei’s mind, these concepts cohere into a vision that sees the West, and particularly America, in decline; Israel in its death throes; Asia, particularly China, on the rise; and Islam, led of course by Khamenei, on the threshold of a historic change that would bring about an end to the catastrophic era of Judeo-Christian Western hegemony and usher in the apocalyptic victory of Islam.

For years, Ali Khamenei has argued that successive US administrations have attempted to overthrow Iran’s clerical regime through coercive means. To him, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, no less than Barack Obama, Donald

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HARD LINE: Hossein Shariatmadari, managing editor of an Iranian newspaper and an ally of the Tehran regime, has argued that the Holocaust “was falsely claimed by Zionist and Western governments.” Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader, has woven together a foreign policy built on jihad, culture wars, soft power, and an enemy conspiracy, all seasoned with “progressive discourse.” [Foad Ashtari—Creative Commons]

Trump, and now Joe Biden, have all pursued the same policy of attempting to destroy the regime—either with an iron fist, or the same fist clad in a velvet glove—and have all failed. Thus, they have launched not just a “culture war” but also created a “cultural NATO.” In a talk given as early as November 9,

Khamenei preaches that the West is attacking Islam through nihilism, materialism, individualism, and rationalism.

2006, Khamenei for the first time used the term “cultural NATO,” going on at length—as is the pattern in the autumn of every “patriarch”—about a conspiracy, spearheaded

not only by the United States—in his neologism the “Greatest Satan”—but also by “Zionists.” He even alluded to financier and philanthropist George Soros in a tone that betrayed his anti-Semitism, calling him “that Jew whose

name I don't want to mention." Such forces are, according to Khamenei, trying to defeat Islam through nihilism, materialism, individualism, and a rationalism devoid of Allah and faith.

And as Khamenei often repeats, for him Iran's negotiations with the United States have been only a ploy to expose America's true hypocrisy and buy time for that "historic turn."

THERE WILL BE WAR

While Khamenei believes that all direct political or military challenges to the regime have failed, he fiercely believes that America, Israel, and the West have only changed tactics. To continue their attempts at "regime change" in Iran, and to thwart the "historic turn" towards Islam, they now primarily use "soft power." More than once, Khamenei has quoted Joseph Nye and his theories, suggesting that he is now the grand theorist of American global hegemony. All one must do to understand the extent of the culture war conspiracy, Khamenei grandly opines, is to read Nye himself.

Khamenei's insistence on the necessity of fighting the ideological war has been a central part of his political ideology. In one study, published in a journal affiliated with the IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), it is suggested that from 2007 to 2009, Khamenei discussed the topic of the "culture wars" in forty-three of his eighty-nine talks. The journal where the study was published is, in an Orwellian turn of phrase, called the *Scientific-Scholarly Journal for Culturally Guarding the Islamic Revolution*; it is published by the equally Orwellian Center for Islamic Human Sciences and Soft Power and Training of the Guards in Imam Hossein's Officers' College.

No less central in Khamenei's vision is his belief in the divine inevitability of this historic turn. The idea also played a key role in Khamenei's manifesto, issued in 2019 on the

fortieth anniversary of the revolution. Since its publication, sites and papers close to the

For Khamenei and his regime, war and jihad are constant.

regime, as well as ideologues of the IRGC, have gone out of their way to position the paper as a seminal text and strategic gospel for the "second phase" of the revolution. In one "scholarly" article, the authors argued that the publication of Khamenei's manifesto was an auspicious indication of a rebirth and reinvigoration of the revolution, the first stage in that new historic turn.

For Khamenei and his regime, war and jihad are a constant state of affairs, and in this conflict his regime not only trains and employs armed

proxies but also opportunistically uses a whole army of “fellow travelers,” hired guns (literally and metaphorically), “progressives” keen on defending, or “contextualizing,” any action of the regime based on the claim that it is fighting “colonialism” and Euro-centric or Judeo-Christian hegemony.

Most ironic is the existence of some feminists in this strange alliance. They are wary of criticizing the regime’s gender apartheid and its blatantly misogynistic laws. The complicit silence of some parts of the feminist movement about women’s restricted freedom in Iran is an example of the pernicious influence of Tehran’s “soft power.”

Some of the fellow travelers are faculty members of prominent universities. They sit on committees, review and pass judgment on articles or books submitted for publication, and write articles partially validated by the names of the institutions they are affiliated with. And through it all, they help promote or justify the regime’s ideology and actions, silence or sideline critics, and sometimes offer “explanations” of the regime’s behavior by drenching it

in the lexicon of “progressive discourse.” Meantime, a combination of rumor and reality creates an atmosphere of fear among Iranian students

Fellow travelers are eager to defend, or “contextualize,” any action of the regime, no matter how oppressive.

and faculty that Big Brother will punish dissent or disagreement and reward consent and cooperation.

Western journalists are led to believe that harsh criticism of the regime, even pointed questions in press conferences, will mean a denial of access or entry visa. Obviously, many journalists are not intimidated; sadly, some are. Hand in hand with its soft power, the Tehran regime creates a perception that it wields an omniscient and ruthless “sharp power.” Random acts of intimidation against returning members of the Iranian diaspora, along with a shifting, ambiguous “red line” denoting the activity the regime will not tolerate, have helped Tehran extend its reign of terror to Iranians abroad.

CALCIFIED

It is impossible to track how much money the Islamic Republic of Iran spends in creating this vast, varied, multi-pronged, multi-purposed network that provides a muscular soft power. One estimate calculated by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies puts the total budget for Iran’s ideological activities in 2019 at around \$3 billion. It is facile to think that personal gain drives every one of the regime’s fellow travelers who support, legitimize, or

“contextualize” its nefarious activities. To those who play by the regime’s rules, lingering belief in Islam and attachments to shibboleths of “progressive” ideology are at least as powerful as the perks of power.

On Khamenei’s orders, the regime has created institutions inside Iran whose function is to assist and engage in this culture war. Today, there are no fewer than twenty-nine centers operating in Iran that promote the Khamenei vision. These are only the known institutions—and known only because they have a line item in Iran’s state budget. In 2019, the total budget for twenty-three of these centers was \$280 million USD according to the *Mardom Salari* newspaper.

Among the twenty-nine institutions that assist the culture war, Jama’at al-Mostafa al-Alamiye or the International Institute (University) of Mostafa is by far the most influential, and well-funded. Headquartered in Qom, it has branches in Iran and sixty other countries, and runs four thousand weblogs and fifty magazines in forty languages. The university claims that, since its inception, it has published a book a day in one of twenty languages.

In its structure and praxis, Jama’at is akin to the Soviet Patrice Lumumba University during the Cold War. As I have argued elsewhere, “Not only do the Iranian and Soviet regimes bear striking resemblances in their moribund last stages—ruled by septuagenarian men, moored to sclerotic ideas, deluded by self-serving fantasies about the power and appeal of their ideas, and main-

taining total control through terror—the structure and functions of the two institutions also bear fascinating similarities. While there

Western journalists worry that harsh criticism of the regime, even pointed questions, will mean a denial of access.

is no consensus on the effectiveness of the Patrice Lumumba University, its goal was clearly to increase the Soviet Union’s “soft power” and train cadres—whether ideologues or outright agents of the Soviet regime—to promote Soviet ideology.”

POTEMKIN PROTESTS

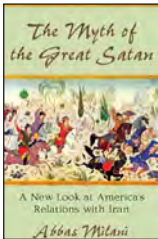
Another component of Tehran’s mandate is symbolic politics; specifically, organizing mass demonstrations and Islamic and Shiite rituals in cities across the world. In recent years, from Sydney and Toronto to London and Los Angeles, there have been mourning rituals during Moharram—the

month of mourning for Shiites for the battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Hossein, the prophet's grandson and a revered figure in Shiism. Journalists and scholars sympathetic to the regime, as well as its overt mouthpieces in Iran, then use these rented crowds as signs and symbols of the regime's sustained support around the world.

Essential to Khamenei's vision is criticism of what he calls the hypocrisy of democracy. But his regime hypocritically uses all the liberties of a democracy to promote an illiberal vision.

As in all its wars, the clerical regime uses a variety of proxies in an asymmetrical battle. Its past operatives and officials, as well as new fellow travelers of every hue, use the cherished liberties of a democracy to promote the regime's soft power strategy; yet in Iran, no possibilities exist for advocates of democracy. ■

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Can Ukraine Still Win?

If anything can break the bloody stalemate, perhaps it's an innovative—and overwhelming—air attack.

By Rose Gottemoeller and Michael Ryan

Ukraine's daring attack on a major Russian warship in occupied Crimea in the small hours of December 26 was one more episode in Kyiv's strategy to deny Russia control over the Black Sea. With most of its ships driven out of its home port in Sevastopol, the Russian Black Sea Fleet can no longer find safe haven anywhere along the Crimean Peninsula. All ports there are now vulnerable to attack.

The Institute for the Study of War tells the story with data, showing that Sevastopol saw

Key points

- » Ukraine has made progress denying Russia control of the sea and the air. But more is needed to win.
- » Decisive air power, using more and better weapons, might offer Kyiv a breakthrough.
- » US and European aid will help Ukraine manage operational complexity and combine technology, information, and tactics.

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SYNCHRONIZED: Ukrainian soldiers fire a Soviet-vintage anti-aircraft gun as a drone carries out surveillance. Despite its determined resistance, Ukraine cannot defeat the Russian army on the ground, nor can it defend against every missile striking civilian targets. [General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine—Creative Commons]

a steady decline in the number of Russian naval vessels in port between June and December 2023; by contrast, Novorossiysk on the Russian mainland farther east showed a steady gain. While Russia has been going all-out to attack Ukraine's infrastructure, its risky move to deploy ships and submarines armed with Kalibr missiles in the Black Sea is exposing them to potential Ukrainian attack. It is a tacit acknowledgment that Russia can no longer depend on Crimean ports and launch sites.

Ukraine's success has been due to domestically produced missiles and drones, sometimes launched using Zodiac boats or personal watercraft. But its most potent attacks have come from the air, where Ukraine has used its Soviet-era fighter aircraft to launch both domestically produced and NATO-supplied missiles. These attacks have taken place with the protection of Ukraine's advanced air defenses—including newly supplied foreign ones—which are regularly shooting down the majority of Russian missiles and drones destined for Ukrainian targets.

Ukraine thus has made significant strides denying Russia control of both the sea and airspace over and around its territory, thereby preventing the

Russian navy and air force from operating with impunity. But is that enough for Kyiv to win? To many Western observers, victory doesn't seem possible

in the face of wave after wave of Russian troops grinding down Ukrainian defenders. Ukraine's strategy to deny Russia free use of its sea and airspace

Ukraine's defeat would also mean defeat for the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia.

may be working, but as things stand, it cannot defeat the Russian army on the ground, nor can it defend against every missile striking civilian targets.

Indeed, the current conventional wisdom in large parts of the West is that Ukraine is losing the ground war, leaving no pathway to victory for the country as Russia pounds Ukrainian civilians into submission. Kyiv might as well call for a cease-fire and sue for peace.

The trouble with this scenario is that it spells defeat not only for Ukraine, but also for the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia. It would embolden both Russia and China to pursue their political, economic, and security objectives undeterred—including the seizure of new territory in Eastern Europe and Taiwan.

DEADLY COORDINATION

But is the conventional wisdom right—or does Ukraine's clever success at sea and in the air suggest that a different outcome is possible? Perhaps the Russian army can be defeated by making use of Ukraine's willingness to fight in new ways. If you ask a US military professional, the key to dislodging the Russians is to subject them to relentless and accurate air attacks that are well synchronized with the maneuver of combined arms forces on the ground. While the Ukrainians are admirably using the weapons at hand to strike Russian forces both strategically, as in Crimea, and operationally, as in hitting command and logistics targets, success at the tactical level has remained elusive. To achieve a tactical breakthrough on the ground front that leads to operational and strategic success, they will need to be more effective from the air.

For power from the air to be decisive in 2024, the Ukrainian armed forces must create temporary windows of localized air superiority in which to mass firepower and maneuver forces. Given the Ukrainians' success in denying their airspace to Russia at points of their choosing, such windows are possible using the assets they already have at hand. More and better weapons tailored to this scenario would make them more successful across the entire front with Russia.

General Valery Zaluzhny, the former commander of the Ukrainian armed forces, acknowledges that to break out of the current positional stalemate—which favors Russia—and return to maneuver warfare, where Ukraine has an advantage, Ukrainian forces need air superiority, the ability to breach mine obstacles, better counter-battery capability, and more assets for electronic warfare. Specifically, he argues for three key components:

» Armed UAVs that use real-time reconnaissance to coordinate attacks with artillery (which could include properly armed Turkish-built TB2s, MQ-1C Gray Eagles, MQ-9 Reapers, or bespoke cheap and light drones capable of employing the necessary weapons).

» Armed UAVs to suppress enemy air defenses, as well as medium-range surface-to-air missile simulators to deter Russian pilots.

» Unmanned vehicles to breach and clear mines.

Although the technologies are new, this combination of capabilities recalls the method US and allied NATO forces practiced during the Cold War in West Germany to confront numerically superior Warsaw Pact ground forces protected by layered air defenses. The Joint Air Attack Team (JAAT) was developed to synchronize attack helicopters, artillery, and close air support by fighter planes to ensure a constant barrage of the enemy in case of a ground force attack.

Pooling NATO assets in this way was designed to give the alliance's forces the mass, maneuverability, and flexibility needed to overcome

Cold War tacticians developed a plan to synchronize attack helicopters, artillery, and close air support to bring down a constant barrage on the enemy.

superior numbers, avoid a war of attrition, and escape the type of bloody slugfest that characterizes the current stalemate in Ukraine.

In Ukraine's case, a modernized JAAT would encompass, among many things, armed UAVs carrying Maverick and Hellfire missiles, loitering munitions, precision-guided artillery shells, and extended-range stand-off missiles fired by aircraft. These systems would be coordinated in an electromagnetic environment shaped by Ukrainian operators to dominate the local airspace, saturate the battlefield with munitions, and clear mines to open the way for a ground assault. This updated JAAT—let's call it electronic, or eJAAT—would create a bubble of localized air superiority that would advance as the combined arms force advances under the bubble's protection.

Given Russia's willingness to endure significant casualty rates, the eJAAT could be even more effective on defense: Massing firepower against advancing troops through an eJAAT might result in a stunning rout of the attackers, opening opportunities for Ukraine to strategically exploit the sudden change of fortunes.

BREAKING THE STALEMATE

Zaluzhny has made it publicly clear that “the decisive factor will not be a single new invention but will come from combining all the technical solutions that already exist.” Like all good commanders, Zaluzhny is painfully aware

Massing firepower against advancing troops might result in a stunning rout of the attackers.

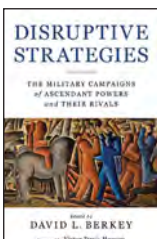
that the 2023 campaign didn't work as well as he had intended. Even so, and to their advantage, the Ukrainians have clearly demonstrated their

innovative talents, willingness to exploit Western methods, and total commitment to victory. US and European assistance to work with them on how to better manage operational complexity and combine technology, information, and tactics in more dynamic ways, coupled with security assistance tailored to the eJAAT approach, would return movement to the now-static battlefield and give Ukraine a fighting chance.

If Ukraine can achieve the momentum in the ground war that evaded it during its failed summer offensive, Kyiv will have a pathway to victory. That pathway will run through Ukraine's demonstrated prowess at sea and in the air, joined to an embrace of a sophisticated combination of techniques on the ground. It will be a pathway to victory not only for Ukraine, but also for the United States and its allies. ■

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The Russian Way

Wherever Russian armies march, war crimes follow. The viciousness is the message.

By David Petraeus and Andrew Roberts

Is there a specifically Russian way of war? The way the Russian army has systematically flouted the Geneva Conventions in its brutal, unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine inevitably prompts the question.

Russia has deliberately chosen to fight a war in Ukraine that is reminiscent of the worst aspects of World War II—the conflict that led to the development of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The mass rapes, torture, and targeting of residential areas for shelling are too widespread to be anything other than the result of Russia’s high command turning a blind eye to abuses. Indeed, the Russian officer corps seems to view civilian terror and death as inherent to its campaign plan.

On a visit to the towns of Bucha and Irpin outside Kyiv in May 2023, we came face to face with Russian barbarism. We saw where the mass grave in Bucha had been dug by Russian soldiers hoping to hide the massacre that had taken place there in late February and March of 2022. In a field behind the church, some 458 people had been buried, many of them with their hands

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tied behind their backs and showing signs of torture. Their bodies have now been disinterred by war-crimes investigators.

It is striking, in the twenty-first century, how human rights abuses are still an inherent part of the way that Russians fight both foreign and domestic enemies. When Russia's history and the psychology of its often badly led army are taken into account, however, the exceptionally brutal Russian way of war becomes perhaps more comprehensible.

THROWBACK

While researching our new book, *Conflict: The Evolution of Warfare from 1945 to Ukraine* (Harper, 2023), we immediately noted how much warfare has evolved during that period. Developments, especially in the field of smart and precision weaponry and unmanned systems, have enabled modern armies to adhere better to the standards of the Geneva Conventions that seek to limit the barbarity of war and protect civilians, medics, and those who can no longer fight, such as the wounded and prisoners of war.

“Smart bombs” first came into major operational use during Operation Desert Storm in 1991, and since then huge advances in microelectronics and navigation have been made to the point that Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian Quds Force commander, could be assassinated in January 2020 by precision munitions fired from a US-made MQ-9 Reaper drone that destroyed his moving car without collateral damage.

True, Russia's smart-weapon technology has been hampered by Western sanctions since the invasion of Ukraine, but it was still more than capable of avoiding the residential centers and shopping malls in Ukraine that have

been destroyed—and continue to be hit.

The viciousness undoubtedly reflects frustration at the failure of the Russian offensives to achieve a speedy victory.

In Ukraine, the Russian officer corps seems to view civilian terror and death as inherent to its campaign plan.

Taking out such frustration and anger on unarmed civilians through torture and rape is a response that is tragically as old as war itself.

Indeed, even when the Red Army was winning the 1944–45 campaign in Eastern Europe and Germany, its soldiers raped several million women, according to Antony Beevor's book *The Fall of Berlin 1945*; other historians have given higher figures. This behavior was significantly different from every other army in that conflict, including the German army, where rape

certainly took place but was not either explicitly or implicitly condoned. By contrast, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that in the Second World War the Russian officers saw it as a useful and cost-free way of rewarding their men, punishing the enemy, and terrorizing the population. Similarly, President Vladimir Putin today knows perfectly well what his troops have been doing in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, Africa, and now Ukraine.

To understand why, it might help to consider the sheer savagery displayed throughout modern Russian and Soviet history, including in the Russian Civil War, Josef Stalin's purges and policy of "collectivization" and starvation, World War II, and several conflicts since.

Similarly, the Russians have demonstrated a capacity for absorbing extraordinarily high casualty rates, ones that in Western armies would be politically unacceptable. Again, look to the past:

"The Second World War is the dominant experience in Soviet military history," Condoleezza Rice, who went on to become secretary of state, wrote in 1986, and that is still true

today. Putin appears to have seen 1943—when the Red Army started to force the Axis powers out of the USSR—as the historical precedent

Russian technology is more than capable of avoiding the apartment buildings and shopping malls it has attacked in Ukraine.

for his invasion of Ukraine. The analogy is ludicrous; the Russians are at war with the people of Ukraine, not foreign invaders. Still, it ought to give pause for thought, as merely the first of the four great battles of Kyiv cost the Soviets more than 700,000 killed, wounded, captured, or missing. Soviet military deaths during World War II are estimated to have been as high as 10.7 million.

So there is plenty of precedent for both the high casualties and the mistreatment of civilians.

MISTAKES AND RESTRAINT

While Western armies have killed civilians, too, they have not deliberately made civilians their targets. For example, in one heart-rending error, a wedding party in 2002 was bombed by the Coalition in Afghanistan when the traditional celebratory firing of rifles in the air was mistaken for aggression. In 2011, teenage boys collecting sticks in pre-dawn hours were misidentified through the thermal sights of Apache attack helicopters as insurgents with weapons deploying for an attack—and mistakenly targeted and killed.

In the main, however, US-led Coalition forces in the wars of the post-9/11 era went to considerable lengths to avoid civilian deaths, regularly curtailing operations to do so. “Having seen our troops up close in repeated fights,” assert General Jim Mattis and Bing West in their 2019 book, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, “I doubt any military in history could match their efforts to avoid injuring the innocent.”

Nor does the West employ essentially mercenary auxiliary units in the way that Russia does. The Wagner Group, for example, is synonymous with war

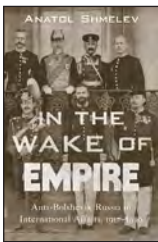
Taking out frustration and anger on civilians through torture and rape is as old as war itself.

crimes; another exceptionally brutal group of fighters in Ukraine and Syria is commanded by Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya’s vicious, unstable,

dictatorial leader. His strongman rule has been characterized by the kidnapping, torture, and murder of human rights activists, political opponents, and their families.

It is, of course, important to differentiate between the Russian people and the Russian armed forces when apportioning blame for “the Russian way of war.” As the British statesman Edmund Burke rightly stated, “I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people.” He was writing, in 1775, about the American colonists. However, in the unlikely event that Putin ever has to face justice at the International Criminal Court, there ought to be a large number of his high command and henchmen standing in the dock beside him. ■

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The Last Crusade

There's only one way to grasp Russia's hate for a free Ukraine: listen for echoes of religion and empire.

By Ralph Peters

The Russian-Orthodox jihad in Ukraine adheres uncannily to the patterns of campaigning and giving battle that have defined the Russian way of war since Peter the Great fielded his empire's first modernized army and defeated the Swedish warrior-state of Charles XII at Poltava in 1709. Today's pretender to the throne of the czars, Vladimir Putin, has introduced a few new tools (such as drones) but no new behaviors. The list of tactical and operational characteristics that follows is as reliable as the Russian taste for vodka.

Our misunderstanding of Moscow's latest aggression is not about hyper-sonic missiles or the massive deployment of land mines, but about a pre-modern state that can reach into space, a slumbering cult ever awaiting a prophet's call, and a friendless frontier land with a sense of divine purpose so enduring it shapes the worldview of atheists.

The date that continues to deform the Russian soul isn't 1917, or 1941, or 1991, but 1453, when Byzantium, the "Second Rome," weakened by the assaults of other Christians, fell to the Muslim Turks, inspiring a struggling duchy far to the north to assume the title of the "Third Rome" and the duty to recover all that had been lost over centuries.

Ralph Peters participates in the Hoover Institution's Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict.



PIERRE I.

et d'après Nature par L. Caravaque.

*et gravé par P. G. Lang
à Paris en 1783.*

We smirk at Putin's counterfactual interpretation of history, but we would be wiser to pay attention. He's telling us precisely who he is and who his subjects are. We merely roll our eyes because that's far easier than attempting to grasp the mythologized spiritual landscape of a population that looks more or less like us but responds to events as souls from another cosmology.

Russian war crimes in eastern Ukraine should surprise no one. We see Ukrainians as patriots fighting desperately for their freedom. The

Russia is a premodern state that can reach into space. It's a slumbering cult ever awaiting a prophet's call.

Russians see separatist rebels and heretical apostates. We see a struggle to defend de jure sovereignty. Putin sees yet another uprising in a centuries-long chain of rebellions against Moscow's entitlement to rule the steppes. We imagine a resolution of this crisis within the framework of twenty-first-century diplomacy. Putin (like Stalin and many a czar) believes that the fiction of a Ukrainian identity must be exterminated. The rapes, torture, looting, and wanton slaughter in Ukraine are not lamentable corollaries but means to an end.

BLOODY VICTORIES

Here are a few of the consistencies.

» ***Unpreparedness.*** Russian forces have rarely entered a conflict with a well-prepared military. Initial reverses consistently revealed hollow forces, faulty arms, poor training, incompetent leadership, and overconfidence. While Putin's Russia may be the worst grab-ocracy in all of that benighted land's history, extensive corruption has never been absent—it's a primary tool of state control, for creating dependencies. Thus, again and again, startling deficiencies have had to be redeemed with an appalling (to us) sacrifice of lives.

Yet, the Russians have also shown unexpected resilience and a knack for recovering as wars drag on. Awful at short wars, Russians have achieved

CRUSADER: Czar Peter the Great (opposite) fielded the first modernized army of Russia, which has been an aggressor state for half a millennium. From the sixteenth century onward, Russia fought routine wars of expansion, intensified by the idea of divine duty inherent in its role as the "Third Rome" after Byzantium fell in 1453. [Pierre Gabriel Langlois (1754–1810) from original by Louis Caravaque (1684–1754)]

“impossible” victories in longer conflicts, as the sycophants are cast aside and the capable rise to command. For example, the Red Army’s catastrophic losses in the first months of the Great Patriotic War (World War II) should have finished Stalin’s regime. But under the pressures of war, a terror-crippled military whose scrawled plans were laughably inept managed by mid-war to produce solidly professional staff work that won battles. By the closing phases of the war, Red Army plans were the professional equal of those in Western armies and won campaigns. In war, Russians lose and learn.

We have already seen the pattern in Ukraine, albeit still at an early stage.

In war, Russians lose and learn.

The postwar pattern, too, is consistent: earnest reforms are implemented and real improvements made, but over time the reform impulse dissipates and the military bureaucracy reverts to its traditional apathy and thievery. The closest thing to an exception from the post-Napoleonic period to today was the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, when post-Crimean-War reforms still retained some effectiveness. Despite superior Ottoman armaments, such as Krupp artillery and American-designed rifles, the Russians reached the outskirts of Istanbul and were halted only by threats of intervention on the Ottoman Empire’s behalf by European powers. On the other hand, reforms in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 did not have adequate time to recast the force before the outbreak of a far greater war in 1914 and the Russian dash to disaster at Tannenberg.

» ***Clumsy offense, stalwart defense.*** On the attack, Russian forces are stiff yet unsteady, and readily paralyzed by surprises (as we saw on the outskirts of Kyiv in the present war’s first days). They rely on mass and the readiness to suffer “intolerable” casualties. In World War II, a prevalent comment was “we have a lot of people.” Heartless it may have been, but that attitude got Russian forces to Berlin.

On the other hand, Russian soldiers over the centuries have shown themselves to be stalwart and steady on the defense when led with even marginal competence. We are witnessing that in Ukraine, as a “broken” Russian military nonetheless continues to prosecute an uninspiring war doggedly. Millions of land mines help, but even if draconian punishments are part of the equation, Russian troops continue to man their defenses and will not be vulnerable to mass losses until they are displaced from their fortifications in disorder.

The fatalism and resolution of Russian infantry on the defense led to Frederick the Great’s notable—and bloody—defeats at Zorndorf (1758) and

Kunersdorf (1759), and the Russians were the toughest enemy Frederick faced. At Prussia's low point, Cossacks rode through the streets of Berlin, previewing repeat visits in the future.

From Napoleon and his crippling “victory” at Borodino (1812), through the frustrated Japanese plan for a lightning triumph at Port Arthur (1904), to the comeuppance of Hitler and his generals at Stalingrad (1942–43), the cost of underestimating the stubbornness of Russians on the defense has been agony at the least, catastrophe at the worst.

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 is particularly instructive: with superior training and equipment, shorter lines of communication, fierce confidence, and clear objectives, Japan expected to knock out Russia's slovenly Far Eastern forces swiftly, seizing Port Arthur in a *coup de main*. Instead, the Russians defended the city and its harbor for months, inflicting irreplaceable casualties on the Japanese. Port Arthur eventually fell, but the Japanese then faced a painfully costly, incomplete victory at Mukden that left Japan broke and almost bankrupt of manpower. The ensuing, American-brokered peace left neither side satisfied, guaranteeing that the initial assault on Port Arthur would not be the last Japanese surprise attack in the Pacific theater.

MILITARY FAILINGS

Drastic losses in the early, botched phases of Moscow's wars consistently lead decision-makers to turn to firepower: first artillery and now airpower (in one form or another).

» ***Reliance on massive firepower.*** Russia's first gunners were European mercenaries, present in Muscovy from at least the sixteenth century onward, and only under Peter the

Great did Russia begin to methodically develop its “native” artillery arm. Ironically, the professionalization of the artillery

In World War II, a prevalent remark about Russian losses was “we have a lot of people.”

advanced because officers of noble birth—the handsomely uniformed dilettantes—disdained the dirty, sweaty work of the gun crews, leaving gunnery to the untitled but ambitious and competent. The same applied to engineers, who would form another island of professionalism in a sea of mediocrity. Young noblemen wanted to serve in elite cavalry regiments or, at least, infantry regiments of the best lineage. Artillery and engineer officers needed to prove their worth.

This tradition of strong artillery and competent engineers is manifest in Ukraine today. Russian targeters need not be up to discriminating Western standards (we want the Ukrainians to fight politely, of course); on the contrary, the unbounded readiness to inflict destruction on anything or anyone within range is a great advantage for any military power—despite our ahistorical insistence otherwise.

» **Poor command and control, weak coordination.** Russian deficiencies—and they are grave—in these areas are products of rivalries, distrust, and fear. The atmosphere of trust taken for granted within Western armies simply does

not exist in Russian ranks. Officers do not know whom they can trust, if anyone. The officer who acts on his own initiative becomes the scapegoat for those who wait too long

The Red Army of 1945 was not the one of 1941. So too, in Ukraine, the Russian forces of 2025 will not be those of 2022.

to act. The mindset is difficult for an American officer to grasp—rather than chafing at constricting orders, Russian officers crave them.

The Russian vision for an effective military is stuck in the eighteenth century, where clockwork drills hoped to produce military automatons. Showpiece exercises, with an emphasis on scripts and rigid timetables, may provide impressive visuals for foreign observers and propaganda clips, but they do not build capable modern units and formations as free-play exercises and rigorous gunnery practice do.

Nonetheless, we can expect to see Russian forces improve their combat coordination under the pressures of wartime. Just as the Red Army of 1945 was not the one of 1941, so too, if the Ukraine war continues, the Russian combat forces of 2025 will not be those of 2022.

Time is on Russia's side, not ours.

» **Poor intelligence.** Those responsible for Russia's military intelligence completely missed Japanese preparations for war in 1904; they misread German dispositions in 1914; they utterly misread Finnish determination in 1939 (as they did with Ukraine in 2022); terrified of annoying Stalin, they closed their eyes to Nazi Germany's impossible-to-hide preparations for a multi-front invasion; they underestimated American resolve and suffered the propaganda defeat of the Berlin Airlift; they repeated their underappreciation of American grit in the Cuban missile crisis; they expected a quick win in Afghanistan; and they wildly erred in predicting the NATO response to Ukraine.

It may seem incredible that the state (or the succession of states imposed upon the Russian people) that pioneered mass surveillance and political terror—the only fields in which Russia anticipated Europe—should have failed so consistently to provide warnings of foreign attacks, but it's readily explicable: whether we speak of Ivan the Terrible's Oprichniki, a merciless forerunner of the Soviet Union's terror executors; of the Romanov-era Okhrana secret police (whom we can also thank for *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Russia's most enduring work of fantasy fiction); or of the Soviet Cheka/NKVD/MGB/KGB and Putin's FSB, Russia's overwhelming security concern always has been the suspicion, detection, and suppression of domestic dissent. Military intelligence got the scraps, the leftovers. Today, the assets of the GRU—military intelligence—may appear extensive, but they're second-rate, bureaucratized to near-uselessness, and (as we have seen in Ukraine) whoppingly ineffective.

The timeless paranoia of Russian leaders and the relative weight accorded to various intelligence disciplines were perfectly encapsulated by Stalin's continued purging of his most talented military officers as German tanks lined up on Russia's newly demarcated western border in 1941.

Paradoxically, the great danger for us is not the risk that Russian military intelligence will get things right, but that it will get some grave strategic issue tragically wrong.

» ***Ruthlessness.*** The Soviet massacre of between fifteen thousand and twenty thousand Polish POWs at Katyn and other sites early in the Great Patriotic War shocked even the Germans. For the Russians, it was common sense. Crucial to the Russian way of war is the determination to win at all costs, to shy from no barbarism, and it always includes eliminating foreign elites. In comparison, the United States no longer has a way of war, only a checklist for operating

under the scrutiny of a gotcha! media. We wish to wage war morally. For Russian leaders the only immorality is to lose.

Above all this, and crucial, is Russia's deeply ingrained sense of a special destiny that elevates Russianness and assigns it a mission to expand, a physical and metaphysical imperialism. Russia is an aggressor state and has been one for half a millennium, profoundly convinced that its way is the sole right way, whether under reforming czars or reactionaries, Soviets or "new" Russians. To a degree

The Soviet massacre of Polish POWs at Katyn shocked even the Germans. For the Russians, it was just common sense.

today's Western think-tank caste simply cannot imagine, let alone accept, Russia's behavior in Ukraine is shaped by a religious imperialism and secular evangelism that have not progressed beyond the medieval, a faith that never had a Reformation and a social order that never had a Renaissance.

Only during Europe's Enlightenment did Russian rulers begin to impose a selective veneer of Western practices, and the instigator of that, Peter

the Great, was interested in utility, not ethics. Nor did modernity make the slightest inroads with the general population, which remained

For Russian leaders, the only immorality is to lose.

mired in servitude, ignorance, and obscurantist religion that preached passive obedience and the virtues of suffering. The Soviet era merely secularized the vocabulary. Russia's metaphysical landscape is stuck in the Middle Ages. With smartphones.

VIOLENCE IS DESTINY

The Russian sense of destiny, of righteousness, of entitlement, and, yes, of divine duty more closely resembles jihad in its purest, cruelest form than it does the mixed-motive Crusades of medieval Europe. The single thing Russians share with the most sincere of the Christian Crusaders is the conviction that any act is acceptable if it furthers a divine destiny.

From the sixteenth century onward, Russia fought routine wars of expansion in every direction—although the fiercest were waged against Turks and Tartars, the former the power that held Byzantium, the Second Rome, captive; and the latter the remnants of the Mongol yoke.

The wars with Catholic Poles or Lutheran Swedes, Balts, and Germans, were also intensified by the grip of faith. Polish Counter-Reformation Catholicism was virtually a different religion from Eastern Orthodoxy's dour cult of suffering that still shapes today's Russian mentality.

Even if Putin does not really believe in religion, his view of the world and his mission is shaped by it. The Soviet era did not abandon that sense of destiny but merely substituted other gods and commandments. The endless debate over whether Russia is European or Asian misses the target entirely. Russia is neither. Russia is Russian.

For us, Putin's invasion of Ukraine is the violation of a sovereign state. For the Russians, the war in Ukraine is the belated suppression of yet another Cossack uprising that began a decade ago on the Maidan in Kyiv, another traitorous rebellion in the long tradition of Ukrainian resistance.

Heirs to endless grievances, a frustrated destiny, and ferocious envy of Western success, Russians can find neither peace nor place in the postmodern world. Ukraine faces a sullen people trapped in the Middle Ages and led by yet another false messiah. ■

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“It Will Be Decided Here”

Settling the great-power rivalry between the United States and China, analysts **Dan Blumenthal** and **Elbridge A. Colby** argue, will come down to American strength, confidence, and national values.

By Peter Robinson

Peter Robinson, Uncommon Knowledge: The US Navy now numbers some 290 battle force ships, and the Biden administration’s 2023 budget would shrink that number still further. The Chinese navy, by 2025, just a couple of years from now, is expected to number 400 ships. Should we be worried?

We’ll come to strategy in a moment, but first a threshold question: if China were to have its way, if President Xi Jinping were to attain every one of his aims, how would life in *this* country be different?

Dan Blumenthal: First of all, the world itself would be a much more authoritarian, corrupt, and dictatorial place. So, it wouldn’t be a welcoming place for Americans who cherish their freedoms and their liberties. The Chinese

*Dan Blumenthal is the director of Asian studies at the American Enterprise Institute. His most recent book is **The China Nightmare: The Grand Ambitions of a Decaying State** (AEI Press, 2020). Elbridge A. Colby is a founder of the Marathon Initiative. His most recent publication is **The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict** (Yale University Press, 2021). Peter Robinson is the editor of the **Hoover Digest**, the host of **Uncommon Knowledge**, and the **Murdoch Distinguished Policy Fellow** at the Hoover Institution.*



WE’LL MEET AGAIN: President Biden bids farewell to Chinese leader Xi Jinping after a summit at the Filoli Estate in Woodside, south of San Francisco, last November. Xi “is challenging us everywhere, all the time, and he is very clear that this is a global struggle,” according to analyst Dan Blumenthal.

[Adam Schultz—White House]

would enforce their will, as they’ve done in Hong Kong and other places, to make more countries authoritarian and dictatorial. Second, we would be locked out of many of the economic arrangements inside the East Asian area, parts of which have the potential to really boom and be the future of economic activity throughout the world. And third, our military would be reduced to probably defending around our hemisphere and be locked out of access to East Asia. We’ve really needed access to East Asia to secure ourselves since the end of World War II. So, at these three levels, I think the world would be a lot more difficult and challenging for the United States.

Robinson: Would ordinary Americans feel poorer? What difference would it make to them?

Elbridge A. Colby: I think it would be a profound change. Americans would be poorer *and* less free. And the reason is, I think that even a modest conception of what Xi Jinping—and not just Xi Jinping as a person, but Beijing

as a state, and a great number of Chinese people—is pursuing in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is a hegemonic or dominant position. Not imperial as in the old days, but a kind of soft control over first, Asia, which, as Dan rightly pointed out, is going to be the world’s largest market area. China would orient the world’s largest economic area around itself. It would have the best universities, its treasury department would enforce sanctions against everybody, its companies would become the world-beating ones, its stock exchange would be the world’s best, its currency would ultimately supplant the dollar.

What would that mean for Americans? We know we would become a lot poorer because the Chinese would gatekeep that large economic area, not

“China would orient the world’s largest economic area around itself.”

only against Americans but also Europeans and Middle Easterners and Latin Americans, who

would essentially be forced to play ball in the same way that today many countries play ball with our sanctions, even though they don’t want to. And then we become less free. Why? Because if we don’t have economic control, or at least a significant amount of control over our own destiny, and we’re becoming poorer, the issues are going to be settled—even your employment is going to be settled—ultimately, in Beijing.

My favorite example of this is social media companies. Today we have a lot of debates in our country about social media companies. I have a lot of concerns about them, but we all assume that the issues can be solved in Washington or Sacramento or Albany, or whatever. That wouldn’t be the case. They would be settled in Beijing, either directly or indirectly. Today, the Chinese are talking about Xinjiang or Hong Kong or Taiwan. But we know it’s human nature that their ambitions and their demands will expand and escalate.

WHAT BEIJING THINKS

Robinson: What are the outer limits of what China wants? Now, if a great big rich China wants to dominate its own region, that’s one thing. It seems mad to us, now that Russia is such a basket case, that in the Soviet Union, communist ideology really, truly called for worldwide revolution. But it did. So, which is it? “We can live with that. We can’t live with that.”

Blumenthal: We can’t live with either, because East Asia is just so fundamentally important for US national security. You’re talking about massive economies. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the growing economies of the

Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, parts of India. But what Xi Jinping is doing is challenging us everywhere, all the time, and he is very clear that this is a global struggle. He is completely supporting Russia in its war against Ukraine. Without Chinese economic support, Russia would probably not be able to keep carrying out this war in Europe. He's supporting Iran now. Iran exports more oil to China than to any other country; it's Iran's top trading partner. He's looking to build bases around the Gulf. He wants to challenge the United States.

Xi Jinping will not be satisfied that he is safe and secure, as he told Vladimir Putin, unless the world order changes. He believes the United States is implacably hostile, ideologically hostile, trying to throw the Communist Party out of power. And that unless the United States is a second- or third-tier power, he won't be safe.

Colby: I agree with Dan: the stakes are global, but the strategy is primarily about Asia. And this gets back to something Winston Churchill very memorably said, I think it was at the beginning of World War I: "Europe is the decisive theater; if we get things right there, we can put everything else right again." Europe was the world's largest market area, and it controlled vast empires through its various countries. Churchill recognized through both world wars, as we did, that if you defeated the Germans, you could set other things right again. So, Asia is the decisive theater, but the implications will be global.

We could survive in that world, but if you go back to *The Federalist Papers* and the whole tradition of the American republic, we aren't just looking for the bare minimum. We

want a country in which people can flourish and grow and become prosperous and confident, and that creates a

"Taiwan is the only Chinese democracy in the world. And this drives the Chinese Communist Party crazy."

certain kind of culture. What's in jeopardy is, in a way, actually far greater in scale than even the Axis powers.

Robinson: So, what is in this man's head? The two models seem to be, he's an emperor, he's operating in the ancient Chinese imperial tradition, or he is a communist. And Dan, you say, in *The China Nightmare*, that "the CCP is no longer a communist revolutionary party." On the other hand, doing my research, I discovered that shortly after becoming general secretary, Xi Jinping gave a speech to the party in which he said, "There are people who

believe that communism is an unattainable hope. But facts have repeatedly told us that Marx and Engels's analysis is not outdated. Capitalism is bound to die out."

But when Deng Xiaoping decides to open markets a little bit, at least, in 1978 and 1979, and within the order that the United States established after the Second World War, China flourishes as it never has in its history. Why isn't it delighted? They've brought hundreds of millions of their own popula-

"East Asia is just so fundamentally important for US national security."

tion out of abject poverty.

There are still hundreds of millions to go, but it's a different nation alto-

gether. And that has happened in this world of free trade, according to rules established by the United States and its allies. Is it communist ideology that requires Xi to view this as a threat? Or is it the old imperial impulse? And why isn't he delighted with the world as it stands?

Colby: Gratitude is not often found. As an Austrian once said, "We will shock the world by our ingratitude." So, that's something to bear in mind. Also, the mindset that the Chinese have, and I think it is true that Xi Jinping himself is a dedicated Marxist-Leninist in some way ...

Robinson: He is a communist?

Colby: I think so, but the project he has embarked upon is the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, which not only is not Marxist, but is something closer to nationalism. Here's the way I try to approach it in my book. We can paint Xi Jinping and Beijing in the most lurid and negative light, but I think it helps from a strategic perspective to almost give them the benefit of the doubt. And the thing I fear is that China actually has very potent incentives to create what I think of as a secure geoeconomic sphere. They think of us as an existential threat. They think that we did nuclear blackmail, that we tried to divide them, that we've tried to exploit them. Going back to the Opium Wars and the Boxer Rebellion, they think of the past two hundred years as a terrible experience in which they were ruthlessly exploited by foreigners, Westerners, Japan, et cetera. And so, they have to be strong and dominant to be secure. That is not just Xi Jinping, I think that's a common view.

Blumenthal: So, ideologically, Xi Jinping is very afraid of the United States. He does study sessions about how Gorbachev lost control of the Soviet Union. His conclusion was that perestroika and other reforms of the kind that China was already doing then led to the political destruction of the

Soviet Communist Party. He said: “Not on my watch. Never!” And he went into a full-blown ideological crusade to make the party red again, more communist. Although, as you point out, the project is essentially nationalist. National rejuvenation. National greatness. It’s dressed up in Marxist-Leninist language.

HARD POWER

Robinson: On to hard power. As I understand it, China has invested in two basic areas. Its own navy. From *The China Nightmare*: “China has launched more submarines, surface warships, amphibious-assault ships, and auxiliary vessels than the total

number of ships currently serving in the navies of Germany, India, Spain, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom combined.”

“Xi Jinping will not be satisfied that he is safe and secure ... unless the world order changes.”

China’s second major investment is forces capable of destroying our naval vessels. Ship-killing missiles, essentially. They want us out of the Pacific? Is it as simple as that?

Colby: We can argue about intent. I would point out a concrete historical example that I think has bearing. Was it rational for the Japanese to attack the United States and the European colonial powers at the end of 1941? It did so for reasons that are not dissimilar: the creation of a secure geoeconomic sphere and the perception that we were trying to strangle them. There are real echoes. Not to say that it’s an exact analogy, but strict rationality in neo-classical economic terms is not how countries often behave.

Robinson: So, FDR was trying to deprive the Japanese of oil.

Colby: Which was critical. It’s an archipelago, right?

Robinson: And we are trying to deprive China of what?

Colby: Well, Xi Jinping apparently thinks that we are trying to contain and suppress them. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Xi personally uses the term “strangling.” That we are trying to suppress their growth. If you go back to the work of Robert Gilpin, I think the most compelling scholarship about why wars often happen is a fear of economic slowdown. And if you think of Xi Jinping’s incentives, they do have to grow. This is the basic bargain of the Communist Party. I’m not saying they’re justified, just as I wouldn’t say that the Japanese were justified, but if we’re thinking about it

from a strategic point of view, we have to keep that in mind. And the means for them to pursue those goals are going to be military.

Blumenthal: I would say that the Chinese don't just have a strategy to keep us out of Asia. They use their military every day. Every day, they are intruding upon Taiwan's airspace and Taiwan's maritime space. They are putting pressure on the Japanese and the Senkaku Islands to loosen Japanese control over their own administered islands. They're using force, as we speak, in the South China Sea, to intimidate and make excessive claims. So, this military is not staying in garrison, it's out every day, shaping and intimidating the region, trying to send a message to the region that the United States doesn't have the endurance or staying power to defend these allies. Their grand strategy is one of coercion.

RETURN TO EMPIRE

Robinson: From Dan's book: "Beijing is obsessed with national reunification. Taiwan is the last Qing Dynasty territory that Communist China has not managed to reconquer."

The Qing Dynasty fell more than one hundred and ten years ago. Why does the Chinese Communist Party want Taiwan now?

Colby: Two reasons. One is nationalist irredentism. I would say it's easy for us who've had a great last century to float magnanimously above these kinds of petty disputes. But a lot of the Chinese narrative, and there's some reason for it, is foreign exploitation going back to the Opium Wars and the exploitation of the weakness of the Qing. In Western Europe, nationalism is in bad odor because they were the ones who imperialized everybody. But if you go to India, people are also very nationalistic, and proudly so. Or Vietnam. And they

"He went into a full-blown ideological crusade to make the party red again, more communist."

remember the humiliations they suffered. They don't want a repeat of that experience, so Taiwan is important in that context. And as the Chinese think

about it—and I think this is genuinely felt—they do want to end the civil war, rightly or not.

More important, though, Taiwan is the critical way for them to pursue this geoeconomic sphere. They have to break out of the first island chain, and they have to break apart what I call the anti-hegemonic coalition, which is clearly forming and is part of the containment narrative that the Chinese see.

Elements of containment are happening—the Quad, AUKUS, the trilateral relationship with Japan and South Korea, the relationship with the Philippines—largely because of China’s own behavior. But nonetheless, this is part of the tragedy of great-power politics. This is basically why they care about it. You can add on the semiconductor issue, but you don’t even need to get to that.

Blumenthal: There’s one more big, big issue. Taiwan is the only Chinese democracy in the world. And this drives the Chinese Communist Party crazy. Before 2016, there would be tourists pouring into Taiwan from China. And China didn’t like it, because what would they do at night? They would watch political TV shows! The raucous democracy of Taiwan. And they would enjoy it. And this is something Beijing just cannot countenance. They’ve been telling people for so long that democracy is chaotic, that democracy doesn’t work. And guess what? In Taiwan, it really does work. They held an election a few months ago, and it was another peaceful transfer of power. It’s just something China cannot live with.

Robinson: So, the overwhelming challenge we face is standing up to the attempts by China to engage in military and economic coercion of us and of our allies. And the whole game right now is Taiwan. Fair?

Blumenthal: I don’t think the *whole* game is Taiwan. Taiwan is a critical part of the game. The game is to restore our military deterrent capability, to undermine these Chinese coercion campaigns that are going on every day, to decouple such

that we’re not subject to China’s decisions about what supply to cut us off from. Certainly not to do what we’re doing when

it comes to, say, the green supply chain right now, which is making ourselves more dependent on China. We’re moving to an electric-vehicle supply chain almost completely dependent upon Chinese processing of rare earth metals.

Robinson: One argument is that if Xi Jinping sees us take our hands off Ukraine, he will conclude that that is the way we handle our allies, and that will embolden him in Taiwan. That the defense of Taiwan runs through Ukraine.

Blumenthal: The defense of Taiwan doesn’t run through Ukraine. The defense of Taiwan runs through Taiwan. I’m just back from Japan, where I

“The most compelling scholarship about why wars often happen is a fear of economic slowdown.”

would say the single biggest transformative factor in Japanese defense, the ways they are modernizing their military and scaling up their defenses, is that the Russians attacked Ukraine. They now believe it's not abstract that

“We want a country in which people can flourish and grow and become prosperous and confident.”

an authoritarian great power will go to war. You don't have to hear it from me, you can hear from the Japanese, the Taiwanese, the South Koreans,

the Australians, who are all backing resistance to Russian aggression in the middle of Europe. It would be a catastrophe if we didn't continue to aid Ukraine.

But the Taiwan issue has to be dealt with. That backlog [in US weapons deliveries] has to be dealt with. The most important thing in terms of Taiwan, because China is so strong and can overrun Taiwan, is our own ability to defend Taiwan, our own ability to keep the sea lanes open. Taiwan can be cut off. And if we're not able to provide Taiwan with assistance, there's not much Taiwan can do on its own.

Robinson: Last question. George Kennan, at the beginning of the Cold War, wrote, “The decision”—between the USSR and the United States—“will really fall in large measure in this country itself. The issue of Soviet-American relations is in essence a test of the overall worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction, the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.” Is something like that analysis applicable now?

Blumenthal: Yes. We are a far, far wealthier country than China. We have not used our wealth well; we haven't translated it into power. But we have an allied system second to none. We have a military that, if we get our act together in the next few years, is second to none. It will be decided here. ■

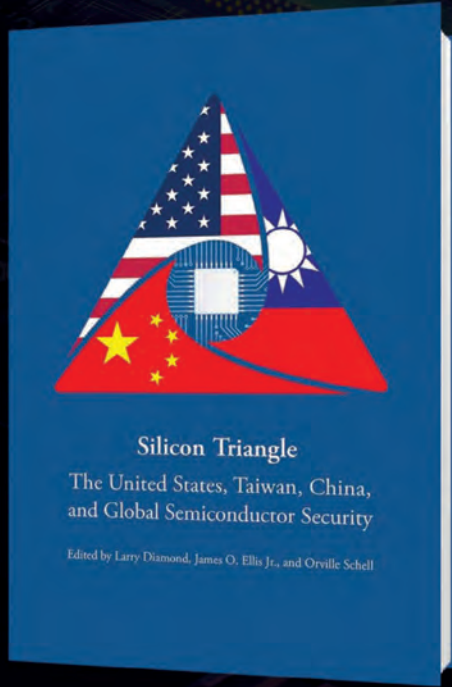


FROM HOOVER INSTITUTION PRESS

SILICON TRIANGLE

The United States, Taiwan, China, and Global Semiconductor Security

Edited by Larry Diamond, James O. Ellis Jr., and Orville Schell



A working group of industry and policy experts contemplate the future role of semiconductors on the security, economic prosperity, and technological competitiveness of the United States, Taiwan, and China.



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Bipolar Disorders

An international survey shows the familiar “us versus them” views of the world have splintered into countless permutations. Time for new rules.

By Timothy Garton Ash

As the leaders of the world’s two superpowers, the United States and China, held a summit last winter in San Francisco, many observers harked back to grand bipolar simplicities. A new Cold War! The West versus the rest! Democracy versus autocracy! Let’s woo the global south! But the great Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt warned us always to beware of the *terribles simplificateurs*, the frightful simplifiers. The beginning of wisdom is to understand that we now live in a world fragmented between multiple great and middle powers who do not divide simply into two camps.

The results of an ambitious round of global polling, released in November, help us to understand this new world disorder. Conducted for the European Council on Foreign Relations and an Oxford University research project on Europe in a Changing World that I co-direct, this is the second time we have surveyed what we call in shorthand the Citrus countries: China, India,

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FREE TO CHOOSE? Hoover senior fellow Timothy Garton Ash is co-leader of a broad survey that found startling trends in what he calls a “four-dimensional game” of international relations. [Daniel Vogel—Creative Commons]

Turkey, Russia, and the United States. Last autumn we added to them five other major non-European countries: Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil, and South Korea—as well as covering eleven European countries.

THE WORLD PICKS AND CHOOSES

Here are a few findings to keep you awake at night. More than half of those we asked in China, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey said the United States was at war with Russia. Clear

majorities in those countries—as well as in India and Indonesia—believe

Multiple great and middle powers do not divide simply into two camps.

that Russia will win the war in Ukraine within the next five years. More than half the respondents in China, Saudi Arabia, and Russia said they thought it was likely that the European Union would fall apart in the next twenty years. That was also the view of 45 percent in Turkey (a recognized candidate for membership of this putatively disintegrating union) and, rather shockingly, of no fewer than one-third of the Europeans we asked.

Interestingly, there's a correlation between a belief that the European Union is likely to fall apart and a belief that Russia is likely to win the war in Ukraine. Put all this together and you see how much the credibility of Europe and the United States is at stake in Ukraine.

Our polling was completed before the outbreak of another war, that between Israel and Hamas, which further exacerbates the new world

disorder, but we did ask how likely it was that, within the next five years, the United States and China would enter into direct military con-

Do people think China and the United States will go to war? Such prophecies can be self-fulfilling.

frontation over Taiwan. Fifty-two per cent of those asked in China and 39 percent in the United States said it was likely. Such prophecies can be self-fulfilling.

One other thing to disturb your sleep. Among countries that don't already have nuclear weapons, 62 percent of those asked in Saudi Arabia, 56 percent in South Korea, 48 percent in Turkey, and 41 percent in South Africa favor their countries getting access to them.

There's some good news for the West too. Europe and the United States win the soft-power beauty contest hands down. Asked where you would like to live if not in your own country, clear majorities in Brazil, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey indicated Europe or the United States. Only in South Africa did the proportion of respondents choosing China exceed 10 percent—and almost nobody wants to live in Russia. But the West's attractions extend beyond that. With the exception of Russia, people

in most of these countries choose “the United States and its partners” over “China and its partners” on both human rights and Internet regulation.

People in most countries say Russia is not part of Europe “when it comes to its current political values.”

They also say that Russia is not part of Europe “when it comes to its current political values,” clearly indicating that they associate Europe with a set of political values.

They are distinctly underwhelmed by European hard power but impressed by that of the United States. On trade, China is the favored partner, but almost all of these countries prefer the United States over China when it comes to “security cooperation.”

Then we asked a more challenging question: if your country were forced to choose between being part of an American or of a Chinese bloc of countries, which would you prefer it to end up in? The United States wins hands down. If push came to shove, people in Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey say they would choose a US-led bloc. In Indonesia, it's a closer call, but on this, as on much else, the only clear exception is Russia.

So, the rest prefer the West? Well, maybe if

forced to choose. But what really emerges from our two rounds of polling, taken together with other evidence, is that most of these countries think that they can choose not to choose. They can have closer economic relations with China, security cooperation with the United States, and simultaneously enjoy all the delights that soft-power Europe has to offer. A world with many competing powers gives them the chance to mix and match.

A multipolar world, in this form, enables not multilateralism, nor even non-alignment as it was understood in the Cold War, but rather what the Indian leader Narendra Modi has called *multialignment*. A great power among other great powers, you pursue your own national interests wherever they lead you, aligning with different partners on different issues. I and my co-authors, Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard, characterize this as an à la carte world, contrasting it with the old set menus of the Cold War, to which the US president, Joe Biden, harks back with his binary framing of democracy versus autocracy.

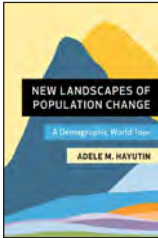
In the end, polling shows that most countries think they can choose not to choose.

NEW GAME, NEW RULES

Many people have enjoyed (and a few friendships been broken over) the board game *Diplomacy*, in which you play as early-twentieth-century European great powers forging sacred, perpetual alliances—and then treacherously switching sides, leaving your best friend in the lurch. But in the early twenty-first century, the real-life *Diplomacy* covers the entire world—and it's now a four-dimensional game. You can be aligned with the United States on security while cozying up to Russia on energy and China on trade. It's not just major extra-European powers who are into this game. Aleksandar Vučić's Serbia plays it too, and Hungary's Viktor Orbán is the ultimate cynic at the board.

The lesson for the West is not that we should abandon our values. It's that we should get a lot smarter, seeing the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. Avoid all those simplistic binary framings and instead develop targeted strategies for particular great and middle powers, such as India, South Africa, or Turkey. You'll never win unless you understand the new rules of the game. ■

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The Cost of a Dangerous World

How can we build, deploy, and pay for tomorrow's military? Like this.

By **Michael J. Boskin**

The US defense budget provides the resources and authorities for the military to deter aggression and, if necessary, defeat aggressors.

Its adequacy and composition reflect America's priorities in dealing with threats to our national security, which are growing in potential severity and spreading throughout the world. Yet the defense budget has experienced wild fluctuations in recent years, from sequester starvation to sizable increases of uncertain duration. Worse yet, it has often been subject to significant delays beyond the start of the fiscal year.

Key points

- » It's widely held in national security circles that the world has become increasingly dangerous.
- » Democracies usually underinvest in their militaries during peacetime.
- » Fiscal issues loom ever larger: the growing national debt, the rapidly approaching insolvency of Social Security and Medicare, and what those mean for defense budgets.

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[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

The belief that the world has become increasingly dangerous has been a staple in national security circles for some time. Russia's invasion of Ukraine spread awareness of this harsh reality to the broader public. Adding Chinese president Xi Jinping's increasing assertiveness, especially toward Taiwan but also far beyond; continued terrorist threats from multiple corners; North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile tests; Iran's coming ever closer to acquiring nuclear-weapon capability and continued sponsoring of terrorism, as evidenced now by Hamas's attacks on Israel and the regional reactions; risks in the cyber and space domains; and, of course, the potential of an "unknown unknown" military conflict, leaves America's geopolitical strategy and military preparedness stretched and challenged.

As Colin Powell says, "Show me your budget, and I'll show you your strategy."

The Navy cannot send ships it does not have to keep sea lanes open. The Army cannot deploy troops it has been unable to recruit, train, and equip. Ditto for the capacity of the Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Space Force, and, if necessary, the reserves and the National Guard. And for each of the services, in cooperation with the private sector, rapidly developing and deploying technology and recapitalizing and equipping with surge capacity have become urgent priorities—for which we have not been adequately preparing. As former chairman of the Joint Chiefs and secretary of state Colin Powell summarized, "Show me your budget, and I'll show you your strategy."

Democracies usually underinvest in their militaries during peacetime. And so, the great military advantage over potential adversaries the United States has enjoyed for decades is shrinking. Adversaries have been strengthening their military capabilities, often with sophisticated technology and directly focused on potential conflict with the United States. Our threat evaluation and strategy must be built on this sobering reality. At the same time, as former defense secretary and CIA director Bob Gates says, "When it comes to predicting future conflicts ... and what will be needed, we need a lot more humility."

Former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen concurs: "We're pretty lousy at predicting where we'll go ... the kind of warfare we'll be in." My Hoover Institution colleague and former defense secretary Jim Mattis points out: "I have never fought anywhere I expected to in all my years." Another Hoover colleague, former national security adviser

H. R. McMaster, says: “We have a perfect record in predicting future wars: zero percent.”

The essays, panel presentations, and discussions in a new volume, featuring contributions from many of the nation’s leading experts, address concerns such as these.

COLLECTIVE WISDOM

This new book by the Hoover Institution Press, *Defense Budgeting for a Safer World: The Experts Speak*, brings together and interweaves the main contemporary topics in national security budgeting. These include the geopolitical, military, and fiscal context for defense budget reforms; the threats the nation faces and might face; the strategies necessary to enable effective actions to deal with those threats; and the technology, recapitalization, and innovation challenges the services face and the opportunities for better harnessing new technologies.

Also covered are personnel strengths and weaknesses, from recruiting to training and retaining the active-duty force; to the best mix of active-duty and reserve personnel and private contractors, including highly technical talent. There are also overviews of reform possibilities, the checkered history of previous reform attempts, and a discussion of the politics of enacting defense budgets that are adequate, flexible, and incentivized enough to do the job without the undue burden of non-core-mission

spending that crowds out mission-critical imperatives.

Fiscal issues loom ever larger: the growing national debt, the

America’s geopolitical strategy and military preparedness are stretched and challenged.

rapidly approaching insolvency of Social Security and Medicare, and the dilemma those budgetary pressures will create for making the necessary investments in defense. In their efforts to rightsize the defense budget, the Pentagon and Congress will need to do a much better job of using resources for the things the military needs to do. Not just more bucks, but more bang for the buck.

Our allies are key to our overall strategy and its execution. Former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice stresses the vital role allies play in protecting our—and their—national security through the fusion of intelligence, diplomacy, and the military. As Jim Mattis states, the “only thing worse than going to war with allies is going to war without them.”

We have encountered many people who believe they need to know more about national security and defense budgeting but seek help in assembling a comprehensive view from disparate places and sources. In a poll jointly coordinated by the

Hoover Institution's
Tennenbaum Program
for Fact-Based Policy
and YouGov, respondents
ranked national security

The defense budget needs not just more bucks, but more bang for the buck.

and the defense budget as among the five most important public policy topics (out of the fifteen surveyed) about which they would most value more objective information.

We hope that bringing these commentaries and analyses from leading experts together in one place can serve that purpose, adding to the significant individual insights and independent value that each brings. Their collective wisdom should prove valuable not just to those in the national security community and those interacting with it directly but also to those who would benefit from deeper knowledge on these issues in dealing with the economy, the budget, politics, and international relations as citizens and voters.

And we note reasons for cautious optimism on the task of rightsizing the budget's adequacy, flexibility, and accountability.

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The perspectives, concerns, ideas, and solutions offered by these leading experts form a comprehensive, readily accessible overview of the major interrelated issues in defense budgeting upon which America's national security and the prospects for a safer world depend. On some issues, there is a range of disagreement—for example, on the time frame within which China might attempt a military takeover of Taiwan, or the need to expand active-duty personnel and weapons systems, by how much, and for which services.

But on most issues, there is widespread, if importantly nuanced, agreement among these experts, most of whom have served in key leadership positions, encompassing administrations of both major political parties.

The experts who contributed to *Defense Budgeting for a Safer World* agree on these major points:

- » The geopolitical environment is increasingly dangerous and complex.
- » Adversaries are devoting ever-greater resources to closing the military gap with the United States in their theaters of interest, so we must contend with multiple adversaries in multiple theaters.

- » It is important to better coordinate with allies.
- » Greater adequacy, flexibility, and accountability are needed in the defense budget.
- » It is urgent that we strengthen the defense industrial base while investing in modernization to replace aging systems and equipment.
- » We can and should better integrate commercial technology, and more rapidly, in the acquisition process.
- » We need more flexible, incentive-based reforms to better recruit, train, promote, and retain people, including those with advanced technical and business skills.
- » There is considerable opportunity for reforms to lead to efficiencies and to reductions of spending outside Pentagon core missions. These will help free up resources for necessary topline funding.
- » And finally, there is a vital need to better educate the public on the role that its investment of tax dollars in defense plays in enabling the military, along with intelligence and diplomacy, to keep America safe, free, and prosperous.

There are many opportunities and options for reform to strengthen the security of the United States and the world by combining efficiency, realignment of priorities, and greater flexibility with the additional spending necessary to do the job. Whether the nation has the political will to seize the best of them, with the urgency required, is an open question. In an ever more dangerous world, our national security in the coming years depends on doing so. We hope the papers and presentations by leading experts in this volume will serve as a valuable resource in that effort. ■

Special to the Hoover Digest.



*New from the Hoover Institution Press is **Defense Budgeting for a Safer World: The Experts Speak**, edited by Michael J. Boskin, John N. Rader, and Kiran Sridhar. To order, call (800) 888-4741 or visit www.hooverpress.org.*



Hearts and Minds—and Force

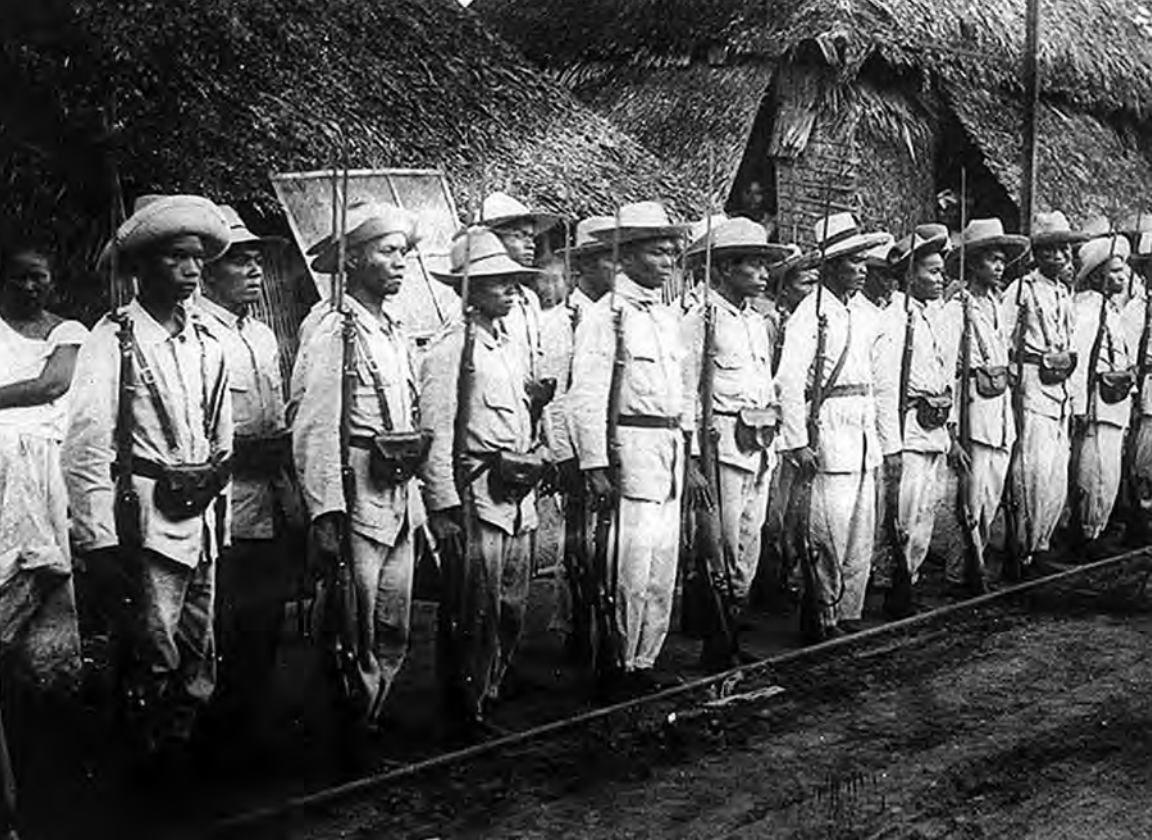
Counterinsurgency campaigns of the past used harsh tactics that harmed civilians and drove away supporters. In small wars, is there a better way?

By David M. DiCrescenzo and Arun Shankar

Over the years, the United States failed to achieve its desired objectives in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan because it followed an inadequate counterinsurgency doctrine. This inadequacy has still not been addressed. Failure to do so poses a national security vulnerability that can be exploited in the coming years by both nation-states and nonstate actors.

But developing and refining such a doctrine is never easy, and the difficulty begins with the words themselves: US military counterinsurgency doctrine focuses on achieving the *support and consent* of the population, while “successful” counterinsurgencies in the twentieth century—military

LtCol David M. DiCrescenzo (US Army) serves in the Massachusetts Army National Guard and is an adjunct professor of homeland security studies at Endicott College and a Massachusetts state trooper. LtCol Arun Shankar (USMC), a 2022–23 national security affairs fellow at the Hoover Institution, serves with US Space Command.



RESISTANCE: Philippine insurgents muster in 1899. After US forces arrived in the Philippines in 1898, Moro agitation for autonomy and against US rule led to hostilities. The American military governor launched “punitive expeditions” in which troops would kill hundreds of Moros, burn their homes and crops, and destroy all warlike supplies. [US Army Signal Corps]

campaigns that managed to pacify populations, defeat guerrillas, and impose order—focused on the *acquiescence* of the population, a distinct and crucial difference. Of great importance, legal and moral reasons prevent the United States from repeating the harsh tactics that were used to win that acquiescence in counterinsurgencies of the twentieth century. These have included deliberately targeting civilians and their property, forced population moves, concentration camps, starvation, summary executions, and physical separation of the population from insurgents. Yet it cannot be ignored that attempts in the modern mold to build local capacity and win the support and consent of populations have repeatedly failed.

We propose two solutions to help the United States fill its counterinsurgency capability gap. One is to carry out limited duration, high intensity, punitive expeditions where retribution without rebuilding is used to degrade an

adversary's ability to attack the United States while simultaneously sending a strategic message that US interests will be protected. Alternatively, and similar to civilian policing, we suggest establishing a continuous, well-guided, well-supported presence of forces in areas being secured when counterinsurgency operations are desired or unavoidable.

A DOCTRINE AND ITS GOALS

After August 31, 2021, when the United States left Afghanistan after twenty years of conflict, the Taliban immediately regained control. The world has also seen the government of Iraq lose vast territories to ISIS, requiring the United States to assist after sixteen years of combined operations and nation building. In both cases, the United States failed, despite long and costly attempts, to achieve its objective of creating self-governing nations capable of securing themselves against Islamist movements and protecting US interests from attack.

Counterinsurgency will continue to matter in the future. Success in conventional battles can shift into ongoing irregular warfare, as the United States learned in the Philippines in the early twentieth century, and more recently in Iraq. Future conflict may further blur the lines between irregular and conventional warfare through techniques that tightly integrate irregular and conventional capabilities. Consider China, for instance, where “irregular warfare activities are so fully integrated with conventional tactics and operations that they are not identified as ‘irregular,’” according to an article by David

Knoll, Kevin Pollpeter, and Sam Plapinger. The United States' pivot toward anticipating near-peer, large-scale

combat operations leaves a strategic gap that must be filled. How can the United States modify its doctrine and strategy for irregular warfare without violating its values?

Values loom large in the modern US approach to counterinsurgency. The United States developed and followed its counterinsurgency doctrine by focusing on the ideological separation of the population from insurgents—providing security, food, education, democracy, medicine, religious freedom, and women's rights to gain consent and support. This approach assumes the foreign population also values and supports those efforts in the face of violence and intimidation from insurgent groups.

The US military's goal is to win the support and consent of the population.



SCORCHED EARTH: *This stereoscopic card, designed to be seen through a special viewer, shows British prisoners marching to Pretoria in 1901 after being released by the Boers during the Second Boer War. British forces fought the two Afrikaner republics with a coercive strategy that forced the Boers to choose surrender or destruction.* [Columbus Metropolitan Library—Creative Commons]

Counterinsurgencies are about people, so gaining and keeping their support is critical to success. Therefore, accurately assessing which tactics and strategies are most likely to attain the desired result—based on what those people value and how they respond to different tactics—is an important part of planning for counterinsurgency warfare. Whereas some populations may cover to the group wielding the greatest power, others may be driven to fight even more aggressively. The selection of tactics should take into account historical analysis of how different cultures react to different strategies.

The phrase “hearts and minds” is commonly used to describe efforts to gain popular support. The term, originally credited to Field Marshal Gerald Templer during the Malayan Emergency, is ambiguous in its meaning for counterinsurgency efforts. US interpretations refer to the consent and support of the population, while historical British understandings of the term focus on its acquiescence. British Colonel I. A. Rigden, quoted in a Ministry of Defense report, argued for a coercive interpretation of the term:

“Hearts and minds” is often mistaken to mean taking a soft approach when dealing with the civilian population, but this is a misnomer. The key is changing the mindset of the target audience and, sometimes, this

requires tough measures and a hard approach, i.e., mass movement of the population, curfews, and direct military action (riot control). As the mindset is being changed, small acts of support (i.e., medical and veterinary support) and the way in which government security forces interact with the population, combined with an effective information operations campaign, wins over their hearts.

Ashley Jackson corroborated this interpretation in a 2006 article, “British Counter-insurgency in History: A Useful Precedent?”: “Far from minimum force being the keynote of British victory in colonial counterinsurgency campaigns, it can be argued that victory was won by the availability, and sometimes the application, of overwhelming force.”

PACIFICATION

As mentioned above, successful counterinsurgency operations such as the ones that follow involved tactics that are unlawful and unacceptable to modern Americans. They also demonstrate the interplay between violence and persuasion, with implications for the design of modern counterinsurgency approaches.

» *The Philippines.* US military forces arrived in the Philippines in 1898 after the Spanish-American War. About three hundred thousand Moros in the Sulu Archipelago and southern half of Mindanao enjoyed a fair level of autonomy. They also held societal norms that put them at odds with US interests. American officers were frustrated by local values, including slavery, and local leaders’ inability to maintain order. After initial efforts failed to exchange local rule

for recognition of US sovereignty, US officers lobbied for direct control. Thus, in 1903, a US military governor was

appointed and given wide authority to bring order and modernize the area. Major General Leonard Wood abolished slavery, installed a new legal code, and restored a tax on every adult male. These policies resulted in increased opposition, and hostilities followed.

The Moros used various tactics, including suicide attacks, guerrilla warfare, and, most commonly, the use of prepared defensive positions upon the approach of US military forces. Moros possessed a limited number of rifles and primarily armed themselves with edged weapons, putting them at a disadvantage to US weaponry.

Future conflict is likely to blur the lines between irregular and conventional warfare even further.

American forces relied on coercive tactics during counterinsurgency operations. Wood launched “punitive expeditions” in which US troops would kill hundreds of Moros, burn their homes and crops, and destroy all warlike supplies. These expeditions used indiscriminate violence, often resulting in the deaths of women and children. Punitive expeditions left people without homes

or food, children without parents, and clans without leaders, and contributed to the breakdown of the Moro social order. The population was forcibly disarmed,

“Winning hearts and minds” is ambiguous. It might mean persuasion, or it might mean surrender.

and entire towns were forced to move all their belongings to concentrated areas that separated them from the guerrillas. An estimated eleven thousand civilians died in these areas from disease and unsanitary conditions. Hostilities with the Moros during Wood’s tenure as governor culminated with the 1906 attack on Bud Dajo where hundreds of Moros were killed, including women and children, and which effectively ended organized resistance.

Subsequent military commanders, including Brigadier General Tasker Bliss and Brigadier General John Pershing, took more diplomatic approaches with the Moros but agreed that the willingness of the US military to use force contributed to peace.

» ***The Malayan Emergency.*** This 1948–60 clash was “one of the few successful counterinsurgency operations undertaken by the Western powers during the Cold War,” reads the website of Britain’s National Army Museum. “It saw British and Commonwealth forces defeat a communist revolt in Malaya.” The emergency began because the Malayan Communist Party, made up mostly of Chinese members, opposed British colonial rule and sought an independent and communist Malaya. Guerrillas from the Malayan National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party, began attacking rubber plantations, mines, and police stations, derailing trains, and burning workers’ houses.

In response, the British military benefited from several advantages, including deep knowledge of the area and people before the emergency, but Britain still used coercive techniques to achieve victory. A significant British advantage was the lack of a guerrilla sanctuary: British-controlled states lined three borders of Malaya, and a tribe opposed to the communists lived along the fourth. According to Paul Dixon, author of *“Hearts and Minds”? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq*, British tactics during the Malayan conflict including burning the homes of communist sympathizers,

indiscriminately shooting rural Chinese who could aid the insurgents, the massacre of twenty-four unarmed civilians in Batang Kali in 1948, a death penalty for carrying arms, the detention of over thirty-four thousand people without trial, and a plan that forcibly resettled a half-million rural Chinese. These tactics were used to separate the civilian population from the guerrillas, starve the fighters, punish supporters, and gain the acquiescence of the population.

Britain shaped its tactics by assessing what the population responded to. It began with highly coercive, control-oriented tactics in 1948–52; force by insurgents was met with greater force by the British in what is often referred to as a “search

and destroy” policy. Sir Henry Gurney, the British high commissioner in Malaya during the emergency, was quoted

In Malaya, a British officer noticed the tendency for people to “lean towards whichever side frightens them more.”

as saying the Chinese were “notoriously inclined to lean towards whichever side frightens them more, and at the moment this seems to be the government.” (Insurgents assassinated Gurney in 1951.)

By 1953, the British had gained the upper hand militarily and, with the arrival of Templer, Gurney’s replacement, shifted to propaganda to win over the population. At the same time, it forced resettlement of five hundred thousand Chinese, imposed registration cards on everyone older than twelve, meted out collective punishment against civilians for attacks, and carried out mass incarceration of suspect populations. Effectively separating civilians from the guerrillas—denying the insurgents their base of support—was considered significant to the success of the campaign.

In sum, the British used brutal tactics to gain the initiative in the beginning of the conflict; once control was achieved, they had the luxury of building government services and pursuing the willing support of the population.

» ***The Second Boer War.*** The South African War (1899–1902) was a clash between Britain and the two Afrikaner republics, the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. The British under Field Marshal Frederick Roberts began with a policy of leniency, offering amnesty for any Boer commando who surrendered arms. After several months of little progress and much criticism from the news media and the British government, Roberts, and later Horatio Kitchener, who assumed command in November 1900, moved to a more coercive strategy: burning farms, forcing populations into concentration camps, and using flying columns to force Boer

commandos into blockhouses and barbed wire obstacles. The result was more than thirty thousand farms and forty towns burned; millions of livestock seized or slaughtered; one hundred and ten thousand civilians (mostly women and children) forced into concentration camps, where an estimated two thousand died every month; and the overall devastation of land to the point of inhabitability.

The British were willing to destroy the entire region and everyone in it to win. The Boers were forced to choose between surrender and annihila-

During the Boer War, the British were willing to destroy the entire region and everyone in it to win.

tion. Thomas Pakenham, author of *The Boer War*, summarizes their decision: “Negotiate now ... (and) keep the volk together as a nation. Fight

on, and the volk will die (or suffer worse than death). The threat was not only to the lives of individuals, but to the continued existence of the nation.” The Boers chose surrender.

NEXT STEPS

If historical success in counterinsurgencies consistently involved the use of tactics that go against US values and the rule of law, as the above cases indicate, how does the United States win in future counterinsurgencies? American forces could pursue two strategies:

» ***Stay out of the counterinsurgency business.*** Accepting that US values are incompatible with tactics used in successful counterinsurgencies, the United States can avoid counterinsurgencies by carrying out limited duration, high intensity, offensive operations. For example, the United States successfully applied military power in Afghanistan in the months after 9/11. Today, it can develop a strategy for conducting defined-term offensive operations against groups or areas responsible for attacks on US interests. These operations would probably demand a high level of “shock and awe” to message adversaries that threats against the United States are dealt with decisively. This approach requires building a robust intelligence capability and avoiding on-the-ground post-conflict stabilization and recovery operations, which would give adversary groups the time and opportunity to draw US forces into prolonged conflict.

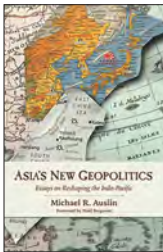
» ***Refine current counterinsurgency doctrine*** to develop ways to achieve victory without violating American values. For instance, continuity of the security personnel in the areas they secure is critical for seeking a

population's support and consent. The US military's use of one-year deployments leads to a new set of security personnel arriving each year for the same area and population. How effective would a police force of a major city be if its entire staff were replaced each year? Significantly longer deployments, and forces assigned by geography, would address this issue. Divisions could be assigned battalion- or brigade-sized areas and required to rotate through those areas for the duration of the conflict, supporting the knowledge, relationships, long-term goal achievement, and effects required for stabilization.

Also, to correct a problem evident during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, operations-level staff in any counterinsurgency campaign could be reoriented toward providing better, and more relevant, guidance to warfighters. Because of vague and poorly thought-out operational guidance in those conflicts, tactical commands were left to solve massive strategic issues without the wisdom and resources to do so.

Better knowledge of an area, continuity of processes and policies, relationships between key leaders, acquisition of specialized resources, and an ability to train for the specifics of a conflict zone would lead to increased effectiveness of US counterinsurgency efforts in the twenty-first century. ■

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Tech New World

The *Stanford Emerging Technology Review* sets out on a journey to understand, explain, and use tomorrow's transformational tech.

By Condoleezza Rice, John B. Taylor, Jennifer Widom, and Amy B. Zegart

*The first issue of the **Stanford Emerging Technology Review**, the product of a major new technology education initiative for policy makers, has been released. Download it at setr.stanford.edu.*

Emerging technologies are transforming societies, economies, and geopolitics. This moment brings unparalleled promise and novel risks. In every era, technological advances buoy nations that develop and scale them—helping to save lives, win wars, foster greater prosperity, and advance the human condition. At the same time, history is filled with examples where slow-moving governments stifled innovation in ways policy makers never intended, and nefarious actors used technological advances in ways that inventors never imagined.

Technology is a tool. It is not inherently good or bad. But its use can amplify human talent or degrade it, uplift societies or repress them, solve

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vexing challenges or exacerbate them. These effects are sometimes deliberate but often accidental.

The stakes of technological developments today are especially high. Artificial intelligence (AI) is already revolutionizing industries, from

music to medicine to the military, and its impact has been likened to the invention of electricity. Yet AI is just one among many technologies that

Too often, government leaders lack technical expertise and technologists lack policy expertise.

are ushering in profound change. Fields like synthetic biology, materials science, and neuroscience hold potential to vastly improve health care, environmental sustainability, economic growth, and more. We have experienced moments of major technological change before. But we have never experienced the convergence of so many technologies with the potential to change so much, so fast.

The goal of the *Stanford Emerging Technology Review (SETR)* is to help both the public and private sectors better understand the technologies poised to transform our world so that the United States can seize opportunities, mitigate risks, and ensure the American innovation ecosystem continues to thrive.

GUIDEPOSTS

Our efforts are guided by four observations:

» ***Policy makers need better resources to help them understand technological developments faster, continuously, and more easily.***

Technology policy increasingly requires a more sophisticated understanding across a broad range of fields and sectors. Indeed, policy makers today include an expanding array of decision makers, from legislators and executive branch officials in Washington to state and local governments, investors, and corporate leaders. Too often, government leaders lack technical expertise to understand scientific developments, while technologists lack the policy expertise to consider and build security, safety, and other societal considerations into their products by design.

Policy makers need to understand technological basics and new discoveries before crises emerge; to focus their attention on the most important issues; to better assess the policy implications; and to see over the horizon to shape, accelerate, and guide technological innovation and applications. We need a new model of technology education for nontechnical leaders. This report aims to be a first, important step.

» *America's global innovation leadership matters.*

American innovation leadership is not just important for the nation's economy and security. It is the linchpin for maintaining a dynamic global technology innovation ecosystem and securing its benefits.

International scientific collaboration has long been pivotal to fostering global peace, progress, and prosperity, even in times of intense geopolitical competition. During the Cold War, for example, American and Soviet nuclear scientists and policy makers worked together to reduce the risk of accidental nuclear war through arms control agreements and safety measures. Today, China's rise poses many new challenges. Yet maintaining a robust global ecosystem of scientific cooperation remains essential—and it does not happen by magic. It takes work, leadership, and a fundamental commitment to freedom to sustain the openness essential for scientific discovery. Freedom is the fertile soil of innovation, and it takes many forms: the freedom to criticize a government; to admit failure in a research program as a step toward future progress; to share findings openly with others; to collaborate across geographical and technical borders with reciprocal access to talent, knowledge, and resources; and to work without fear of repression or persecution. In short, it matters whether the innovation ecosystem is led by democracies or autocracies.

» *Academia's role in American innovation is essential yet increasingly at risk.*

The US innovation ecosystem has three pillars: the government, the private sector, and the academy. Success requires that all three remain robust and actively engaged. America's research universities have generated transformational scientific discoveries, from the invention of the polio vaccine to rocket fuel. Universities have also been the seedbeds of policy innovations, from nuclear deterrence theory to behavioral economics. And they have played a vital role in training the next generation.

It matters whether the innovation ecosystem is led by democracies or autocracies.

Today, however, innovations are increasingly emerging from the private sector, often alongside academia. The funding sources for innovation have shifted, too—in deeply worrying ways. The US government is the only funder capable of making large and risky investments in the basic science conducted at universities (and national laboratories) that is essential for future applications. Yet federal research and development funding has

plummeted since the 1960s, from 1.86 percent of GDP in 1964 to just 0.66 percent of GDP in 2016. Although private sector investment in technology companies and associated university research has increased substantially, it is no substitute; federal funding of university research leads universities to study different technological challenges and opportunities than industry funding does.

To be sure, the rising dominance of private industry in innovation brings significant benefits. But it is also generating serious and more hidden risks to the health of the entire American innovation ecosystem. Universities and companies are not the same. Companies must answer to investors and shareholders, who expect returns on their capital investments, so they tend to focus on technologies that can be commercialized in the foreseeable future. Research universities, by contrast, operate on much longer time horizons without regard for profit, engaging in fundamental research at the frontiers of knowledge that has little if any foreseeable commercial benefit. This fundamental research is the foundation for applications that may take years, even decades, to emerge. For instance, it took decades of research in number theory—a branch of pure mathematics—to develop the modern cryptography that is widely used to protect data.

Today, technology and talent are migrating from academia to the private sector, accelerating the development of commercial products while eroding the foundation for the future.

Research in the field is likely to be skewed to applications driven by commercial rather than public interests. The ability for universities—or anyone outside the leading AI companies—to conduct independent analysis of the weaknesses, risks, and vulnerabilities of AI (especially

Fundamental research is the foundation for applications that may take years, even decades, to emerge.

large language models recently in the news) will become more important and simultaneously more difficult. Further, the more that industry offers unparalleled talent concentrations, computing power, training data, and the most sophisticated models, the more likely it is that future generations of the best AI minds will continue to flock there—hollowing out university faculty and eroding the nation’s ability to conduct broad-ranging foundational research in the field.

» The view from Stanford is unique, important—and needed now more than ever.

Stanford University has a unique vantage point when it comes to technological innovation. It is no accident that Silicon Valley surrounds Stanford; the university lies at the heart of the innovation ecosystem. Stanford faculty, researchers, and former students have founded Alphabet, Cisco Systems, Hewlett-Packard, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nvidia, Sun Microsystems, Yahoo, and many other companies, together generating more annual revenues than most of the world's

economies. Start-ups take flight in our dorm rooms, classrooms,

laboratories, and kitchens. Technological innovation is lived every day and up close on our campus—with all its benefits and downsides. This ecosystem's culture, ideas, and perspectives often seem a world apart from the needs and norms of Washington, DC. Bridging the divide between the locus of American policy and the heart of American technological innovation has never been more important.

Stanford has a rich history of policy engagement, with individuals who serve at the highest levels of government as well as institutional initiatives that bring together policy makers and researchers to tackle the world's toughest policy problems. But in this moment of rapid technological change, we must do more. We, the co-chairs of this exciting project, are delighted to launch this unprecedented collaboration between Stanford's Hoover Institution and the School of Engineering to bring policy analysis, social science, science, medicine, and engineering together.

In setting out to harness the latest insights from leading scholars in ten of the most important fields today—fields that are rapidly shaping American society and promise to be even more important in the coming years—we selected these ten as a starting point, not an endpoint. We wanted to begin by leveraging areas of deep expertise at Stanford and covering technologies widely recognized as essential for expanding American economic prosperity, advancing democratic values, and protecting the security of the nation. But science is always moving, and we expect that future reports may select different areas or divide fields in different ways.

ONLY THE START

Three points bear noting. First, we offer no specific policy recommendations. That is by design. Washington is littered with reports offering policy recommendations that were long forgotten, overtaken by events, or both. We want to provide a reference resource that endures—a report that is updated and

SETR aims to provide a reference resource that endures.

issued annually, a guide that can inform successive generations of policy makers about evolving technological fields and their implications.

Second, *SETR* offers a view from Stanford, not *the* view from Stanford. There is no single view of anything in a university. The report is intended to reflect the best collective judgment about the state of these ten fields—guided by leading experts in those fields.

Third, this report is just the beginning. In the months ahead, *SETR* will produce deep-dive reports on the ten technological areas, holding briefings in California and Washington, DC, and launching multimedia educational products. Our goal is to develop a new model to help policy makers understand tech issues in a more real-time, continuous, rigorous, and user-friendly way.

Ensuring American leadership in science and technology requires all of us—academia, industry, government—to keep listening, learning, and working together. We hope the *Stanford Emerging Technology Review* starts meaningful and lasting conversations about how an innovation ecosystem benefits us all. The promise of emerging technology is boundless if we have the foresight to understand it and the fortitude to embrace the challenges. ■

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY

THE STANFORD EMERGING TECHNOLOGY REVIEW 2023

A Report on Ten Key Technologies and Their Policy Implications

CHAired BY Condoleezza Rice, John B. Taylor, Jennifer Widom, and Amy Zegart

DIRECTED BY Herbert S. Lin



Stanford



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Emerging technologies are transforming societies, economies, and geopolitics, and at a time of great-power competition between the United States and China, the stakes today are especially high. The *Stanford Emerging Technology Review* brings together scientists, engineers, and social scientists to account for new developments at Stanford University in 10 key technology areas, highlight their policy implications, opportunities, and risks, and identify barriers for US government decision makers and private-sector leaders.



setr.stanford.edu



Wasting of the Green

As First World groups shovel money into climate schemes, they forgo real progress against hunger, sickness, and poverty.

By Bjorn Lomborg

Well-off nations seem to have forgotten that while they're no longer plagued by poverty-related ills such as hunger and illiteracy, most people in the world still are. Increasingly, the Biden administration and leaders of other high-income countries are putting climate policy ahead of these core development issues.

It's easy to treat reducing carbon output as the world's priority when your life is comfortable. Things can still be tough for people in high-income countries, but the

Key points

- » Climate ranks far down the priority list of people living in poor countries. Even the World Bank's own polling shows this.
- » Real development investments can dramatically change lives for the better now, while making poor countries more resilient.
- » Developmental institutions should speak for the world's poorest—not the elites in Washington, London, and Paris.

***Bjorn Lomborg** is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, president of the Copenhagen Consensus Center, and a visiting professor at the Copenhagen Business School. His latest book is **Best Things First: The Twelve Most Efficient Solutions for the World's Poorest and Our Global SDG Promises** (Copenhagen Consensus Center, 2023).*

16 percent of the global population who live in those countries don't routinely go hungry or see their children die. Most are well-educated, and the average income is in the range of what was once reserved for the pinnacle of society.

Much of the rest of the world, however, is still struggling. While conditions vary, across poorer countries five million children die each year before their fifth birthday and almost a billion people don't get enough to eat. More than two billion have to cook and keep warm with polluting fuels such as dung and wood, which shortens their lifespans. Although most young kids are in school, education is so dismal that most children in low- and lower-middle-income countries will remain functionally illiterate.

Opportunity is restricted in particular by a lack of the cheap and plentiful energy that allowed rich nations to develop. In Africa, electricity is so rare that total monthly consumption per person is often less than what a single refrigerator uses during that time. This absence of energy access hampers industrialization and growth. Case in point: The rich world on average has 530 tractors per 10,000 acres, while the impoverished parts of Africa have fewer than one.

Yet a new Group of 20 report urges the World Bank and other development organizations to push for an additional \$3 trillion annual spending and direct most of it to climate policy. Almost as an afterthought, it suggests that a fraction of the money should go to everything else, such as schooling, health, and food. It's unlikely the world will raise anywhere close to \$3 trillion. Unfortunately, experience indicates that much of what does get raised will go toward climate. Development funding is already being raided for climate spending.

While climate change is a real challenge, the data don't sup-

port confronting it ahead of poverty-related ills. United Nations climate panel scenarios predict the world will dramatically improve over the next century. Climate change will merely slow that progress slightly. Hunger will fall dramatically over the coming decades, but with climate change

When your life is comfortable, it's easy to treat carbon output as the world's priority.

Almost an afterthought is the fraction of aid money that goes to everything else: schooling, health, and food, for instance.

it will decline a smidgen slower. Likewise, the panel expects global average income to increase 3½-fold by 2100, absent climate change. If climate change continues undeterred, William Nordhaus, the only climate economist to win the Nobel Prize, estimates that this would mean income would still rise by 3.34 times.

Climate activists try to paper over these realities by arguing that poverty and climate change are inextricably linked. Yet research repeatedly shows

Spending on core development priorities would help much more—and much faster—per dollar than putting funds toward climate.

that spending on core development priorities would help much more and much faster per dollar spent than putting funds toward climate. That is because

real development investments can dramatically change lives for the better right now and make poorer countries more resilient against climate-related problems such as diseases and natural disasters. By contrast, even drastic emission reductions won't deliver noticeably different outcomes for a generation or more.

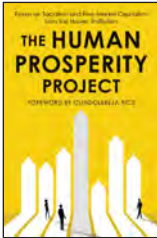
Efforts to divert development aid to climate policy also smack of hypocrisy. Though rich nations refuse to fund fossil-fuel-related projects abroad—either directly or through international financial institutions—high-income countries still get almost 80 percent of their energy from fossil fuels. This is in large part because solar and wind power remain intermittent. To make them reliable is expensive, as they require massive backup from batteries or fossil fuels. That makes the argument for foisting them on poorer countries even weaker. Without access to cheap, consistent energy, it is likely impossible for such nations to rise to a developed economy's quality of life.

It's no wonder then that the World Bank's own polling shows that climate ranks far down the priority list of people living in poorer countries. Another large 2021 survey of leaders in low- and middle-income countries similarly found education, employment, peace, and health at the top of development priorities, with climate coming twelfth out of sixteen issues.

Instead of forcing expensive, unreliable renewables on poorer countries—let alone sacrificing more meaningful aid to do so—those concerned with climate change should invest intelligently in long-term research that promotes affordable and reliable green-energy innovations.

The majority of the world population that still lives in poverty deserves a shot at a better life. We should all stand up for that right, but especially developmental institutions. Their job is to speak for the world's poorest—not the political hobbyhorses of elites in Washington, London, and Paris. ■

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A Nation Still at Risk

Forty years ago, an urgent report called for the transformation of American schools. **Stephen L. Bowen**, leader of the Hoover Education Success Initiative, discusses how far we still have to go.

By Jonathan Movroydis

Jonathan Movroydis: Distinguished research fellow Stephen Bowen leads the Hoover Education Success Initiative (HESI), whose new report looks at the birth, struggles, and future of the modern education reform movement. How was *A Nation at Risk* received forty years ago, and what was its impact?

Stephen L. Bowen: *A Nation at Risk* came out in 1983. It was produced by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which was chaired by Terrel Bell, President Reagan's secretary of education. People who remember the Reagan era recall that one of the things President Reagan campaigned on was getting rid of the Department of Education, which had been created by his predecessor, Jimmy Carter. Poor Terrel Bell was tasked with getting rid of his own department. That didn't happen, but Bell thought, all right, at least if we're going to make this argument, let's get a sense of how things are going. So, he pitched the

*Stephen L. Bowen is the executive director of the Hoover Education Success Initiative (HESI) and a distinguished policy fellow at Hoover. He is the co-editor, with Margaret Raymond, of **A Nation at Risk +40: A Review of Progress in US Public Education** (Hoover Institution Press, 2023). Jonathan Movroydis is the senior content writer for the Hoover Institution.*



AFTER COVID: Stephen L. Bowen, a distinguished research fellow at the Hoover Institution, leads the effort to understand the challenges and build on the successes of A Nation at Risk, the pathbreaking education report of 1983: “There is so much more to learn about what works.” [Eric Draper]

idea of a presidential commission on education. The administration was reluctant to do that because they didn't think there should be a significant federal role in education, but it allowed Bell to create his own commission instead. I don't think anybody realized the impact it might have—it's very brief, only thirty-some pages, plus an appendix—but it was written in alarming language about this crisis of public education. As it turned out, it became a huge hit. Millions of copies were

printed and ultimately it drove a lot of reforms.

Because President Reagan still didn't see a big role for the federal government in K-12 education, it

“I don't think anybody realized the impact it might have—it's very brief, only thirty-some pages.”

was the governors who picked up the ball and ran with it; they were convinced by the argument in *A Nation at Risk* that America's economic prosperity was at stake, as well as our national security. If you remember, in that era there was concern about competition from Germany, there was concern about Japan and our economic competitiveness—those were the prominent challenges.

A lot of governors jumped aboard and started putting some of the suggestions from the report into place at the state level, and over time, those grew. Our researchers went back to the original recommendations and followed up on the reforms that grew out of them. I don't think anybody anticipated it to be as much of a driver of reform as it ended up being. But we know it generated a lot of action. The more important question is: did it have any real impact? That was something we wanted to dig in on.

Movroydis: Since state governors were the key drivers of this reform, were the states more or less aligned on this issue?

Bowen: I think the states understood the economic-competitiveness argument of the report, but they saw that their competition was not foreign countries; it was the state next door. That was what they were worried about. And so, there was a sense, particularly in the Southern states and among a generation of Southern leaders—Bill Clinton was one, as governor of Arkansas, who leaned into this space—that “we really have to focus on K-12 education if we hope to be economically competitive.” Those Southern governors led the way, spinning up a lot of task forces and working groups to figure out what to do about this. And again, because there wasn't much of a federal role in K-12 education at a policy level, it fell to the states to respond, when, for example, the *Nation at Risk* report called for more rigorous standards. That led to the standards movement, in which we saw the states adopting these

rigorous learning standards for the main content areas like math and English language arts. There was also a lot of focus on teacher policy. Many states realized that they would have to pay their teachers more if they were going to be competitive, in order to attract and retain good teachers.

A lot of the governors went through the report's list of recommendations and changes were pretty widely adopted—you didn't want to be the governor who failed to act when the governors around you were all making a big push on K-12 education. These governors also soon discovered that they didn't have a good sense of how well their kids were doing, since states weren't doing large-scale standardized testing. That eventually led to state standardized tests, as well as to NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), the national test done on a sampling model across the country.

Movroydis: Was there opposition?

Bowen: In terms of the recommendations themselves, there wasn't anything particularly controversial, if you look at it now. It's a lot about improving teaching, and improving standards, focusing on instructional time—let's lengthen the school day and the school year, and so on. President Reagan, of course, was advancing his own agenda, which touched on things like school choice, education savings accounts, prayer in school, and issues that at the time were more controversial.

The opposition was mostly around the report's tone. It has these very memorable lines, such as, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." It spoke in stark language about how bad the schools were and what a challenge that was going to be for the nation. And I think some folks in the school community responded with, "Look, we've got problems, but this seems

a little over the top to suggest that if we don't do something dramatic

with our schools, our future prosperity as a nation is literally at risk." If you read the early press reports, that seemed to be most of the pushback—that the commission was over the top in its critique of the existing system.

Movroydis: The new Hoover report, *A Nation at Risk +40*, is edited by you and Hoover fellow Margaret Raymond. What are you and the other scholars hoping to accomplish with this publication?

Bowen: The Hoover Education Success Initiative, which I lead, is a project that's really about connecting the research we're doing with policy makers. We have

"Their competition was not foreign countries; it was the state next door."

something called the Practitioner Council, a group of state education officials, district leaders, and folks at nonprofits and advocacy organizations. We wanted to get their sense of what we should be working on, and, as you might imagine, as we were coming out of the COVID crisis, they wanted to know what we should

do about that. We have this huge learning loss that we need to make up; how should we respond?

We don't have a lot of good data on that yet.

“The ultimate goal was to extract from these forty years of history some concrete recommendations.”

Instead, we thought that since we've reached this anniversary of *A Nation at Risk*, maybe it would make sense to back up and see what reforms have been tried in the years since and whether there were any lessons learned there that would be of help. Was there any impact? We sat down with the report, went through its recommendations, and then built out this collection of essays. We said to our authors, “What's the problem each attempted reform was trying to solve? Why were these reforms attempted in the first place?” The second piece was, “What happened? Did it work?” And third—this was the key part—“What are the lessons learned? What are your recommendations for policy makers?”

The ultimate goal was to extract from these forty years of history some concrete recommendations for policy makers for what they could do to improve schools as we come out of the COVID crisis.

Movroydis: What kind of recommendations are you advancing?

Bowen: A lot of them are topic-specific. The paper on early childhood, for example, says early childhood education can be really impactful, but it has to be high quality, you have to train the staff and have strong curricula. A paper on school choice talks about how school-choice programs are structured and how important it is to structure them the right way. The school-finance paper that Hoover senior fellow Rick Hanushek wrote talks about how important it is to understand that simply spending money on schools isn't enough, we have to get better at figuring out which money spent in which way is having the most impact. And Margaret Raymond wrote a concluding essay where she went through all twelve papers to identify common themes, and she came up with this list of “I words”: *impulsive, incremental, incoherent, impatient, intransigent, ineffective*. Here's what they mean.

Impulsive: You can see that people put the reforms in place without a lot of planning, without thinking about how hard they were going to be to implement, and without thinking about how to sustain them over the long term.

Incremental reforms just nibble around the edges: they're over here on the side, taking on this tiny piece of the puzzle, and are not really systemic. And those little incremental reforms don't add up to much in the way of big systems change.

Incoherent reforms were put into place with little consideration for how they intersected with other reforms—including those that might have been enacted at the exact same time. Each reform was just “bolted on” and often the reforms were in conflict with each other.

The *impatient* piece is about policy makers not

giving things time. If you're a state legislator with a two-year term, you come in saying, “I want to do something.” You don't have the patience to give a complicated new initiative the time it needs to get established, get under way, and (hopefully) improve over time.

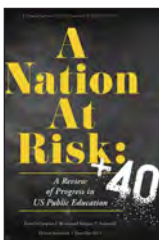
The *intransigent* piece speaks to the education system's response to this endless “churn” of reform. It's been able to build a resistance against reform, so it's become really hard to change schools in any meaningful way. You have this weird dynamic where there always seems to be some kind of new math curriculum and new teaching practices and all these other reforms all the time, and yet the systems never change meaningfully, especially in high-need communities. Our advice on this score is that you have to think about systems change and how to bring people along over the long term to make real change.

The last piece is *ineffective*. That's about the education system not being very good at researching what it's doing. When it puts a policy in place, it doesn't think about how it is going to know whether it works.

There is so much more to learn about what works, and that drives our research agenda as we look across the years to find bigger-picture recommendations. ■

“There is so much more to learn about what works.”

Special to the Hoover Digest.



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

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Facts Meet Fakery

Politicians think they're qualified to teach California students to recognize "fake news." Think about *that*.

By Lee E. Ohanian

California has a new requirement for its K-12 students: learn how to recognize fake news. Assemblyman Marc Berman (D-Menlo Park), who sponsored the bill requiring this instruction, believes it will help combat misinformation. With an obvious reference to Donald Trump and his supporters, Berman stated, "I've seen the impact that misinformation has had in the real world—how it affects the way people vote, whether they accept the outcomes of elections, try to overthrow our democracy." The bill requires "media literacy" be taught beginning in kindergarten and continuing through twelfth grade. It was signed into law by Gavin Newsom in October.

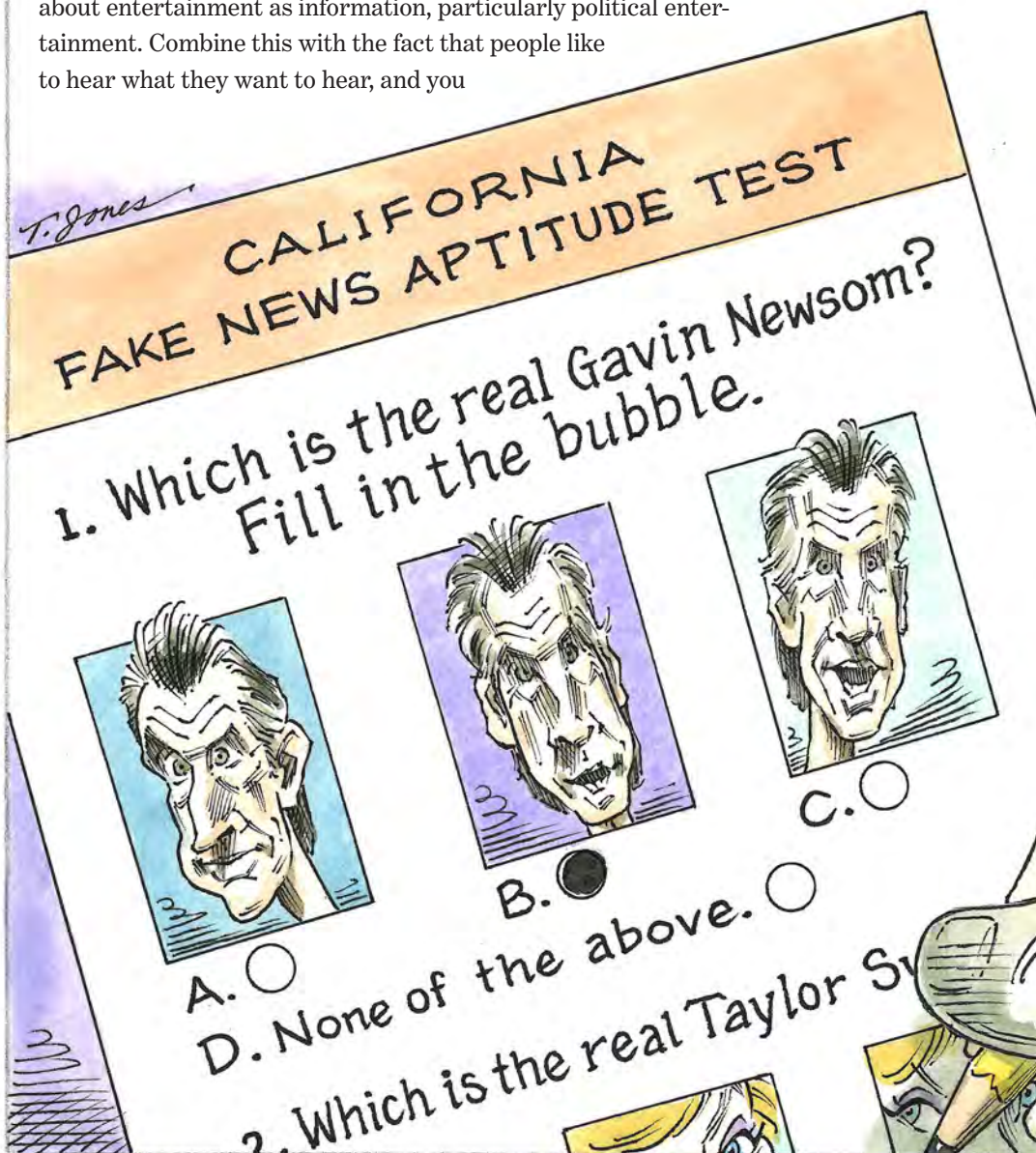
Key points

- » California requires that schools teach "media literacy" in kindergarten through twelfth grade.
- » All schools—not just in California—should already be teaching students to think critically.
- » Neither more bureaucracy nor more money is helping California schools prepare students for their future.

Lee E. Ohanian is a senior fellow (adjunct) at the Hoover Institution. He is a professor of economics and director of the Ettinger Family Program in Macroeconomic Research at UCLA.

But who will teach California's teachers how to recognize fake news? One study found that about 75 percent of US adults overestimate their ability to identify fake news, and the more confident they are of their limited abilities, the more likely they are to share the misinformation with others. Another study found that a whopping 96 percent of adults were unable to identify fake news.

A big problem with this new requirement is that today's news is as much about entertainment as information, particularly political entertainment. Combine this with the fact that people like to hear what they want to hear, and you



[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

can see how these classes could devolve into “CNN good; Fox News bad” in many California schools.

One San Francisco teacher framed the new requirement more broadly: “If we’re just teaching kids how to read and not think critically about what they’re reading, we’re doing them a disservice.”

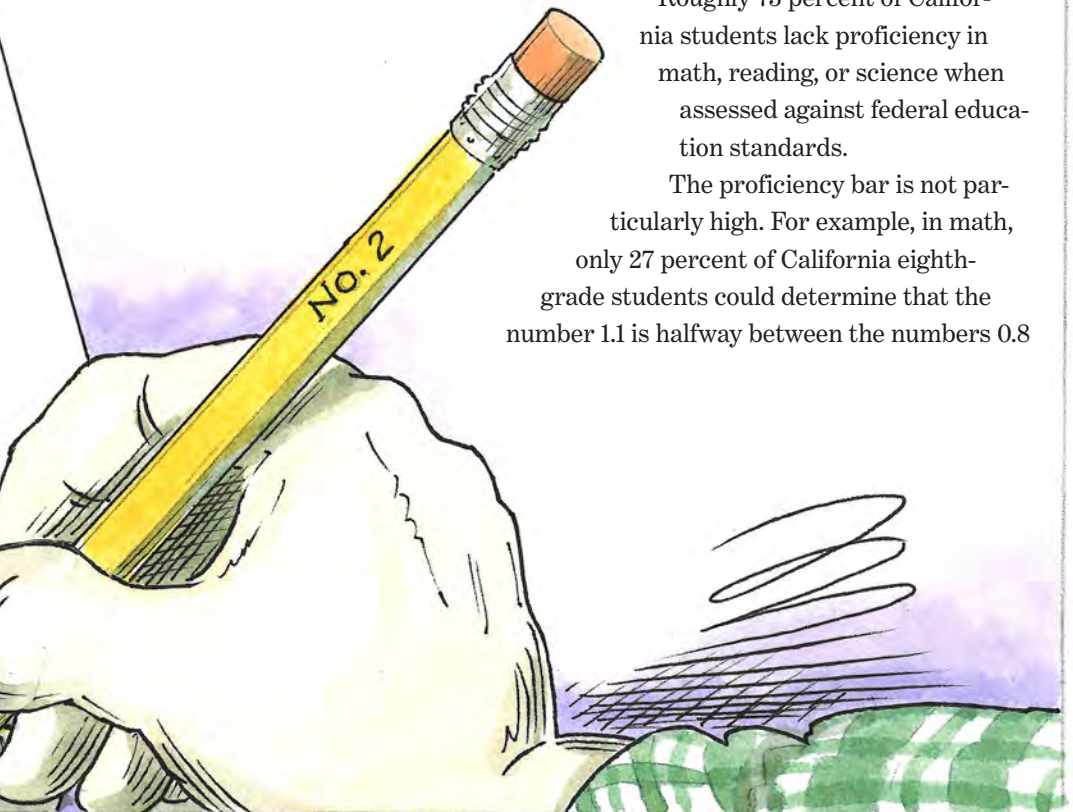
Critical thinking is paramount. But how is it possible that the state is not already doing this?

A “fake news” law is not needed for teachers to help students learn to think on their own. But developing critical thinking is light years away in California schools, because California is not even teaching its kids how to read. Or do math. Or do science. And until California succeeds in teaching the basics, it has no business implementing new requirements like “fake news studies” or “ethnic studies.”

Today’s news is as much entertainment as information—political entertainment in particular.

Roughly 75 percent of California students lack proficiency in math, reading, or science when assessed against federal education standards.

The proficiency bar is not particularly high. For example, in math, only 27 percent of California eighth-grade students could determine that the number 1.1 is halfway between the numbers 0.8



and 1.4 on a number line, even though the number line included marks that help students measure the distance between numbers.

California's educational deficiencies are nothing short of a disaster. The greatest public investment we can make is in educating those who will inherit

the future, but we are failing miserably at this task, despite a school budget of \$128 billion. California's school budget is comparable to the combined

California isn't even teaching its kids how to read. Or to do math. Or science.

full state budgets of Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Tennessee. The population of these states together is nearly 33 million, compared to California's 39.2 million population.

What future will three out of four kids have in California? Without proficiency in basic subjects, most will struggle mightily. How many could afford to purchase a future home, in a state with a current median home price of \$843,000? How many could even afford the average rent of \$2,405 per month for a two-bedroom apartment, which requires nearly \$100,000 in household income based on the industry standard of allocating no more than 30 percent of pretax income for rent?

California parents are responding to the state's failure to educate by pulling their children out of the state's educational system. Since 2019, the state school system has lost more than 300,000 students. Of those who remain, an alarming 30 percent are chronically absent, meaning that they miss at least 10 percent of school days.

The poor performance of California schools is particularly concerning among schools outside of high-income districts, the latter of which attract the best teachers and administrators. The median home price, averaged over

the twenty highest-ranked school districts as rated by Niche, a popular school and neighborhood review firm, is around \$2 million.

Lawmakers' creation of pet requirements like "fake news" classes is an affront to the millions of families with children in deficient schools.

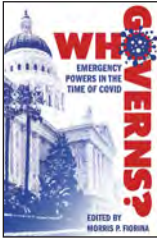
It is important to note, however, that high-per-

forming schools are not just those that are funded well. Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles, which is one of the lowest-performing high schools in the state, has a per-pupil budget that is about twice as high as that of Palos Verdes High School, one of the top high schools in the state. Spending

more money is not the key to fixing California’s underperforming schools. The state’s school budget has increased more than 40 percent, adjusted for inflation, in the past fifteen years, but test scores are about the same now as in 2008.

For decades, California schools have failed to teach our kids, particularly those in low-income districts with the poorest-performing teachers: employees who are nearly impossible to fire for cause, given union protections. The fact that lawmakers create new pet requirements including “fake news” classes is an affront to the millions of California families whose children attend deficient public schools, children who will become adults without the skills to afford to live in the state, much less succeed in any career requiring mastery of the basics that our schools should be teaching. ■

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Canceling the Cancelers

Hoover fellow **Niall Ferguson** probes the spread of an insidious ideology in America's institutions of higher learning and offers a suggestion: start over.

By Peter Robinson

Peter Robinson, Uncommon Knowledge: A fellow at the Hoover Institution, Niall Ferguson received his undergraduate and doctoral degrees from Oxford. Before coming here to Stanford, he held posts at Oxford, Cambridge, NYU, Harvard, and the London School of Economics. Professor Ferguson is the author of more than a dozen major works of history. Today, our topic is the essay Professor Ferguson published in *The Free Press* just a few months ago, "The Treason of the Intellectuals." In it, he writes, "For nearly ten years, I have marveled at the treason of my fellow intellectuals. Throughout that period, friends have assured me that I was exaggerating. Who could possibly object to more diversity, equality, and inclusion on campus? Such arguments fell apart after October 7." Of course, you're playing on a famous book [by Julien Benda], *La Trahison des Clercs*—

Niall Ferguson: That's right.

Niall Ferguson is the Milbank Family Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, where he is chairman of the History Working Group and co-leader of the Hoover History Lab. He also participates in Hoover's task forces on military history, digital currency, global policy, and semiconductors. Peter Robinson is the editor of the Hoover Digest, the host of Uncommon Knowledge, and the Murdoch Distinguished Policy Fellow at the Hoover Institution.



“A MARKET FOR NEW IDEAS”: Hoover senior fellow Niall Ferguson is alarmed by what he sees as a modern version of the “*Treason of the Intellectuals*,” in which academics and other thinkers betray their integrity by falling in line with political pressure. [Patrick Beaudoin]

Robinson: But you use the word *treason* for your own experience of your fellow academics. What exactly are they betraying?

Ferguson: When Benda wrote that book, which is usually translated as “*Treason of the Intellectuals*,” in interwar France, he was talking about what seemed to him a great betrayal of academics and intellectuals by siding with the political right. And so, when one uses the phrase today, the initial response is one of shock. People say, “But surely, today’s academics are on the left. Why would you want to invoke the spirit of Benda and the interwar period?” And the answer is that it’s a betrayal of your role as a professor, or for that matter, a public intellectual, if you pursue a specific political goal while pretending that you’re engaged in an academic activity.

Let me go even further back in time. Max Weber, perhaps the founder of sociology, a great German thinker, gave a memorable lecture more than one hundred years ago in which he argued that there should be a clear distinction between *Politik* and *Wissenschaft*, between politics and science, or let’s call

it scholarship. And that is the betrayal: when you forget about that separation and use your privilege, which you have as a professor, to pursue a political agenda. And it doesn't matter whether you are leaning to the right in your politics or to the left, it's treason to the ideals of the university, to mottos like *Veritas* ["Truth"] or *Die Luft der Freiheit Weht* ["The Wind of Freedom Blows"], if you use your position to engage in political activism. And the generation of academics in America today are as guilty of that treason as the generation of academics between the wars who aligned themselves with the far right.

CANCELED

Robinson: You earned your doctorate more than three decades ago, and you've been a public intellectual at least since the moment that first book on the First World War [*The Pity of War*] became an international bestseller. What happened ten years ago?

Ferguson: Well, it was almost ten years ago that I think my wife, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and I came into contact with cancel culture for the first time. That was when she was invited to give a commencement address at Brandeis University, and then shortly before the event was told that she was disinvited because

a strange coalition of progressive and Islamist elements had signed a petition demanding she be disinvited. It was at that stage that cancel culture

“Cancel culture began to be something of a recurrent phenomenon in universities in the United States.”

began to be something of a recurrent phenomenon in universities in the United States. I remember digging into it and trying to understand what was going on, and being kind of mystified by this unholy alliance between radical leftists, gay rights activists, and Islamists who thought that somebody like my wife should be publicly humiliated. And I think that's when I began to worry that something was going wrong, and I spotted it going wrong at that time at Harvard, where I was a professor. It is in the space of about ten years that what you might call wokeism has gone from being a fringe fashion to being the dominant ideology of the major universities.

Robinson: Why was the response to October 7 different?

Ferguson: I think for many American Jews who had, perhaps, been at Harvard, or Stanford, or Yale, or Princeton, and had left many years ago and got on with their lives, whether it was in technology or finance in the real world,

for them it was a tremendous shock to see more than thirty Harvard student groups issue a statement condoning Hamas's atrocious behavior—the violence, the rape, the atrocities of October 7. And that in the wake of those public statements, the university authorities at Harvard and elsewhere seemed unable to express anything beyond lame bromides. I think that

“Wokeism has gone from being a fringe fashion to being the dominant ideology of the major universities.”

was the moment many American Jews realized that something had indeed gone terribly wrong. There was a new anti-Semitism that they hadn't realized was there, the anti-Semitism of the woke left, and this was a great shock to people who'd not been paying attention.

And so the only good thing that came of October 7 was that people in the United States and elsewhere—in Britain too—realized that the Anglosphere as a whole has a major problem with a new kind of anti-Semitism, and it is entrenched amongst young people, and it's entrenched because the universities have been teaching a particular brand of politics and history that depicts Israel as just the latest manifestation of settler colonialism and portrays the Palestinians as the latest victims of white supremacy, of which, somehow, the Jews have become the leading exponents.

ALLIES FOR ATROCITIES

Robinson: On to the heart of the essay. I quote: “It might be thought extraordinary that the most prestigious universities in the world should have become infected so rapidly with a politics imbued with anti-Semitism. Yet exactly the same thing has happened before. Academically educated Germans were unusually ready to prostrate themselves before a charismatic leader. Lawyers and doctors, all credentialed with university degrees, were substantially overrepresented within the Nazi Party, as were university students.” So, if you were looking for characteristics that predicted membership in the Nazi Party, you would have looked at educational attainment.

Ferguson: That is correct.

Robinson: How can that have been?

Ferguson: First, let's go back to the German universities a hundred years ago. It's 1924, and the greatest universities in the world are not Harvard and Stanford and Yale; the greatest universities are Heidelberg and Marburg,

Tübingen, Königsberg, the great German universities. They were dominant in almost every field. By comparison, the American universities were country clubs. If you were an ambitious scientist or classicist, and you had your first degree from Oxford, Cambridge, you had to get your PhD from Germany if you wanted to be taken seriously.

Robinson: We see that in the movie *Oppenheimer*, where he feels compelled to go to Germany to study up on the latest in the field.

Ferguson: That's the context. Now, if you look at these institutions you see they were already right-leaning, even before World War I. And perhaps that shouldn't surprise us, because it was the social elite that went to university. It was a much narrower section of society than today. The trauma of defeat in 1918 led to a tremendous backlash, a backlash not only against the Weimar Republic, the successor to the imperial regime, but I think broadly, a backlash against many other things associated with defeat, a backlash against the Anglo-Saxon powers that had won the war. And it was in this context that many students and professors were highly attracted by an exciting new demagogic figure, Adolf Hitler, and his National Socialist German Workers' Party.

It wasn't especially attractive to workers. Workers in the 1920s gravitated towards either the Social Democrats or the Communists. And so, the NSDAP, the Nazi Party, in its early phase, as it grew in the 1920s and broke through electorally in 1932 and '33, was a party that was very attractive to people with university degrees. The radical right penetrated the student body and the professorship, and anti-Semitism became institutionalized.

If you think about why an ideology spreads, there are two driving forces. Typically, the obvious one is that people are just persuaded by it. But the other reason ideologies spread is that there are people who gain from them. "Who, whom?" is always the good question. Lenin wasn't wrong about that. And in the case of Germany in the 1930s, "who, whom?" was that the gentile professors could screw over the Jewish ones. The Jewish professors were removed from their jobs because professors were civil servants, in effect, in the German system. That's one of the earliest things the Nazis do when they come to power: purge the civil service of Jews. That's a terrific career opportunity if you're not Jewish and you can avoid the purge, so you see the self-interest that motivated certain people to become Nazis. People became Nazis once it was clear that the Nazis really were in power; the massive increase in Nazi Party membership after Hitler is very clearly establishing a dictatorship. I find this a very interesting moment in German history because it's the moment when the opportunists join the convinced.

Now, you might think this is an analogy too far, but I don't think it is, because what's fascinating about academic life in America in the past ten years is that the ideology of diversity, equity, and inclusion—let's call it wokeism for short—has been a great career opportunity for some people, and it's also been a terrific opportunity to kick anybody suspected of conservatism out of academia. So, the systematic discrimination that has been going on—and it's quite overt in most universities now—against people who are ideologically to the right, has, of course, been a career opportunity for others.

Robinson: Here I want to make sure that I understand whether you're making a strong or weak version of the argument.

Ferguson: I tend to make strong versions.

Robinson: You do tend to, Niall, I do know that. You write, "The lesson of German history for American academia should now be clear. In Germany, to use the legalistic language of 2023, 'speech crossed into conduct.' The 'final solution of the Jewish question' began as speech. To be precise, it began as lectures and monographs and scholarly articles." All right, German universities failed to stop Hitler. That much is clear. But are you making the much stronger argument that the universities helped to produce the Holocaust?

Ferguson: Well, Hitler was not a tremendously sophisticated thinker. What's in *Mein Kampf* is a ragbag of ideas about race, about living space, borrowed from various quarters, including the United States. There's not a very clear path in *Mein Kampf* to a solution of "the Jewish question." In order to achieve the murder of roughly

six million Jews, you need some people to articulate the mechanisms. And what is very striking to me about German academia in the

"In order to achieve the murder of roughly six million Jews, you need some people to articulate the mechanisms."

1920s and 1930s, before the outbreak of World War II, before the Holocaust, in fact, begins, is the amount of research that's produced, for example, to explain why you would want to annihilate the mentally ill, to explain why you would want to drive Jews and Slavs out of Eastern Europe to create a new German living space. And this production of the details of what we have come to call the Holocaust is not the work of Goebbels's propaganda ministry. Much of it is the work of people working in departments in German

universities. There are even doctoral theses on how to make use of the gold fillings in Jewish skulls.

I think it's a very important feature of Nazism that is not well enough understood, perhaps because we don't teach the history of the Third Reich at universities the way we used to, that what makes the Third Reich distinctive, makes it different from the Soviet Union, is the extreme sophistication with which a program of mass systematic murder is carried out.

Robinson: By now, I feel certain that some of our listeners will be agreeing with your friends. They'll be saying, "This is all fascinating as a matter of history, but there Niall Ferguson goes again, exaggerating away. What happened there could not happen here because the cases are virtually opposite. The German universities glorify the German state and the dominant ethnic group, the so-called Aryan race. American universities don't glorify America. They're very happy to have the borders erased. They're one-worlders, they're internationalists. They're not committed to glorifying the dominant WASP, the old WASP ascendancy. On the contrary, they're committed to humiliating it on behalf of other ethnic groups. So, the cases are not just different, but almost opposite to each other." Why is that wrong?

Ferguson: Well, if it becomes the conventional wisdom on campus that "from the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free" and Israel should be wiped from the map, and that Hamas is engaged in a legitimate insurrection against the "settler colonists," then, at the very least, you have a significant proportion of educated America endorsing a second Holocaust, because that's what Hamas has in mind. We saw a trailer for that on October 7. We should have no doubts about the intentions of Iran and its proxies in the Middle East. They wish to wipe Israel from the map, and they're explicit about that and they're setting about achieving that objective. Anybody, Jew or non-Jew, in the Western world, who is willing to accept that outcome is willing to accept a second Holocaust. I think your skeptical listeners should pause for a moment and ask themselves if they wish to live to see that happen after the horrific events of the early 1940s and the repeated avowals of Western leaders that that should never happen again.

We glimpsed on October 7, in the sadistic violence perpetrated against Israeli civilians, the spirit of a second Holocaust. Don't be under any illusions about what that means in practice because it's precisely illusions about what it means in practice that persisted through the 1930s into the 1940s, leading many people to disbelieve that the Holocaust was being committed, even as the death camps went about their hideous work.

INTERSECTIONAL INCOHERENCE

Robinson: In recent weeks, you mentioned people who were shocked by what had happened at their alma maters. Bill Ackman has become famous. He's been investigating the prevailing ethic at his alma mater, Harvard, where not only was he an undergraduate, but to which he's given some \$50 million. Here's from one of his posts on X: "DEI is racist because reverse racism is racism even if it is against white people, and it is remarkable that I even need to point this out." Academics now holding tenure came to their positions during a quarter of a century of unparalleled prosperity and relative peace. How do you explain the emergence of DEI in American universities?

Ferguson: Bill Ackman was well known to me long before you came across him, as one of the world's most successful activist hedge fund managers. And he just turned his activism away from corporations that were being badly run to the Harvard Corporation and Harvard University, and I just wish he'd done it sooner. I think I could put it more brutally, because "diversity, equity, and inclusion" is a kind of newspeak, in Orwell's sense. It actually means the exact opposite of what it says. The diversity they aspire to is uniformity—uniformity of ideological outlook. Equity is actually entirely absent because there's no due process when the DEI bureaucracy goes into action. And as for inclusion, the real objective is *exclusion* of those who aren't conforming to the ideology of the progressive left. Where did it come from? That's quite easy, I think, to explain.

Robinson: Is it? All right.

Ferguson: The universities in the 1960s already leaned liberal. The problem in the 1970s and '80s was that the liberals had a tendency to hire Marxists over other liberals. And then, in due course, the Marxists would hire cultural Marxists, the post-1989 version of Marxism, which switched economics out in favor of identity politics. When you lost the class war, as the left did spectacularly in the 1980s, and you lost the Cold War too, what was left? Well, it turned out that the answer was identity politics, and identity politics is designed to be hostile to individual liberty by insisting that nobody is an individual.

“Identity politics is designed to be hostile to individual liberty by insisting that nobody is an individual.”

Everybody belongs to some category or other of identity—ethnic, sexual, gender, racial, religious, you name it. And once you’ve identified the identity category to which an individual belongs, they can then be ranked according to their level of victimhood. What I think many Jewish

liberals hadn’t noticed was their descent down the rankings from the oppressed. You would be hard pressed to say that anybody in the 1940s

“Anti-Zionism was part of what the Soviets did when they found that they were badly losing in the Middle East.”

was more oppressed than the Jews, but strangely, the Jews were demoted to the very bottom of the table, and they became part of the oppressor groups.

Now, why did that happen? Two things, and this is really important; one, this had always been a part of the leftist propaganda of the late Cold War. Anti-Zionism was part of what the Soviets did when they found that they were badly losing in the Middle East and were gradually being squeezed out. Hostility to Israel, support for Arab nationalists, was part and parcel of Soviet strategy, hence anti-Zionism was a part of the left’s propaganda when I was a student in the 1980s. But what you added on top of that more recently was something with a quite different intellectual origin: Islamism, the political Islam that has become better and better represented in universities.

In a fascinating way, the different elements of the wokeist movement coalesced despite their obvious differences. Why on earth would you have Queers for Palestine? How long would a group of young gay men last in Gaza if they proclaimed their sexual orientation? Not long. But in the weird parallel world of the American campus, Queers for Palestine makes perfect sense. And so, we have a great realignment on campus, and it was only really after October 7 that people like Bill Ackman realized that in that great realignment, their people, their group, Jews, had been major losers.

RESCUING ACADEMIA

Robinson: Here are two posts on X. From Konstantin Kisin: “One of the biggest benefits of Bill Ackman’s successful campaign to dismantle discriminatory practices at elite colleges is that it proves something that many of us have been saying for a long time: all it takes is for a few people with power, money, and influence to start standing up to this crap and it’ll be over.” And

two, Jordan Peterson: “Bill Ackman, for all his good work, appears to have no real idea how far down the rabbit hole the universities have gone.”

Ferguson: A lot has been achieved in a relatively short time.

Robinson: Since October 7.

Ferguson: Since October 7, and not only because of Bill Ackman. Many other people have either publicly or privately expressed their horror at the way things have been going at the major universities. That’s good and it can only, I think, begin the process of change, and that’s where Jordan Peterson is right. There’s a lot here that’s wrong. Part of the problem is that when you set aside academic standards to pursue diversity, equity, and inclusion—in other words, you start making appointments not on the basis of ability and performance and achievement, but on the basis of other criteria—you are essentially going to start giving promotion and performance to inferior scholars. And how do inferior scholars get by? Plagiarism is one of the ways that people get by who are not really up to it. So, that’s part of it. But Jordan Peterson is right that the problems are profound, and they won’t be addressed simply by replacing presidents or even boards of trustees. They have to be addressed by changing the way that universities are run.

One of the recommendations I have made on behalf of the new university we are founding in Austin, Texas, is that there should be proper constitutional protection within a university’s governance system of free speech, of academic freedom, and it needs to be enforced. It’s all very well having the “Chicago Principles,” and they sound grand, but if they’re not enforced, if undergraduates don’t feel free to speak because there may be consequences, then what use are they? So, the University of Austin will be unique in that it will model a new kind of academic governance in which the freedom of students and professors alike will be protected, and that freedom will be enforced.

Robinson: Here’s what occurs to this layman’s mind. We have a tax code which has favored universities for decades, permitting a Harvard to accumulate an endowment of \$50 billion; Yale and Stanford are in the multiple of tens of billions of dollars; Princeton is not far behind. You can change the tax code, you can point out that during the Cold War is when federal funding of research at these institutions began to become routine, but this was in the 1950s, when the institutions were making common cause with the rest of the nation. Now the institutions are in a world of their own, this woke DEI world, so you could cut off the funding. What does the rest of the country do to say, “stop this nonsense”?

Ferguson: I think the fact that the universities are not all public institutions, as they were in Germany, but are, in substantial measure, private institutions, is a good thing, and we should be wary of breaking that unique model, which really doesn't have a counterpart elsewhere. So, I'm wary of the argument that this is a problem for Congress to solve with new taxes. I would say that the solution to the problem of the excessive wealth of Harvard is for donors to stop giving it money that it clearly doesn't need, and wastes. I would rather they gave the money to a new institution that would make much better use of it, and that's why I prefer an authentically American solution to this problem. Let's create some new ones. That was the spirit that produced the University of Chicago and the university that we are sitting in today, at Stanford.

And so, the American solution shouldn't be "government needs to fix this." The American solution should be "let's give the money to new institutions," and those new institutions will ideally flourish without federal funds. Remember, part of the problem here, Peter, is that the government got too involved in the universities: it got too involved in their finances, and then it started getting involved in their governance. There are almost as many Title IX officers, I would guess, at this university as DEI officers, and they're all part of the problem.

If we succeed in Austin, if we can create a new model of university that doesn't work like the old ones but actually believes what it says about pursuing truth, then, ideally, we'll force these older institutions

to change their ways.

The simplest way to win this fight is to create a better institution that attracts the smartest people as students, and the smartest people as professors. This has

“The simplest way to win this fight is to create a better institution that attracts the smartest people as students, and the smartest people as professors.”

happened before. Oxford and Cambridge didn't worry about doctorates until the German universities started to, and in many ways, the American universities were modeled off the German universities in their heyday. Nothing stays the same. Oddly enough, academia, for all that it appears unworldly, is a very competitive place, and there really is still, in the end, a market for genius and a market for new ideas. The market's moving. It's leaving Harvard, and oddly enough, it's heading for Austin, Texas. See you there.

FIRST STEPS

Robinson: In “The Treason of the Intellectuals” you write, “Only if the once-great American universities can re-establish, throughout their fabric, the separation of *Wissenschaft* from *Politik* can they be sure of avoiding the fate of the German universities.” Are you more optimistic today than when you published it?

Ferguson: Well, I’m habitually not optimistic, as you know, Peter.

Robinson: You’re a dour Scot.

Ferguson: But I’m a little bit more optimistic because I think it’s been brought home forcibly to trustees all across the country, not just at Harvard, that they have to change the way they go about things: that they can no longer allow the ideo-

logues, the progressives, to call the shots, and that has to be a step in the right direction. You and I are fellows at the Hoover Institution. The

Hoover Institution is unique in that it’s a semiautonomous republic within Stanford University. Why is there no Hoover Institution at Harvard—ever wondered?—or at Yale? They could use a Hoover Institution, those places. One of the reasons that I believe passionately in what we do here at Hoover is that we are the counterculture to DEI, and if we can continue to show that it’s possible to engage in scholarship in a way that is not politicized, if we can be an institution that shows that liberals and conservatives can work together on academic problems, leaving politics at the threshold, then we’ll also be acting as role models. So, I’m kind of hopeful, just a little bit hopeful, Peter, that the probability of there being Hoover Institutions at other universities just went up from zero percent to, I don’t know, maybe five. ■

“We can be an institution that shows that liberals and conservatives can work together on academic problems, leaving politics at the threshold.”





Friends, Romans... Influencers?

Ancient Rome is supposedly trendy. Time for a few untrendy lessons about the life and death of empires.

By Bruce S. Thornton

Recently a trend on TikTok had its fifteen minutes of click-fame. It seems that some women are asking their men how often they think about the Roman Empire. The usual suspect experts were consulted, and of course they concluded that this interest in Rome reflects modern males' angst over, or nostalgia for, a time when

Key points

- » Roman wisdom insists on virtue, fealty to the gods, and moral vigilance.
- » US foreign policy has indulged the idea that nonlethal diplomacy can defuse conflict and restore peace.
- » No matter how noble our intentions, how brilliant our civilization, how sophisticated and expansive our empire, human nature never changes.

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patriarchy dominated and manly deeds defined the male sex—the original “toxic masculinity.”

There’s nothing wrong per se with thinking about ancient Rome. Since Edward Gibbon’s magisterial *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Rome has been

a cautionary tale of how great empires collapse.

Given the abundance of empirical evidence—

invasions of unvetted migrants, our geopoliti-

cal enemies’ increasing challenges, a looming fiscal apocalypse, and suicidal social and cultural corruption—our country may be experiencing a fate similar to that of Rome, making its history deserving of attention. And one place to start is to read what one brilliant Roman thought about the empire when it was new.

Free governments have an idealistic notion that persuasion should trump force, words replace blood. In reality, this restraint is rare.

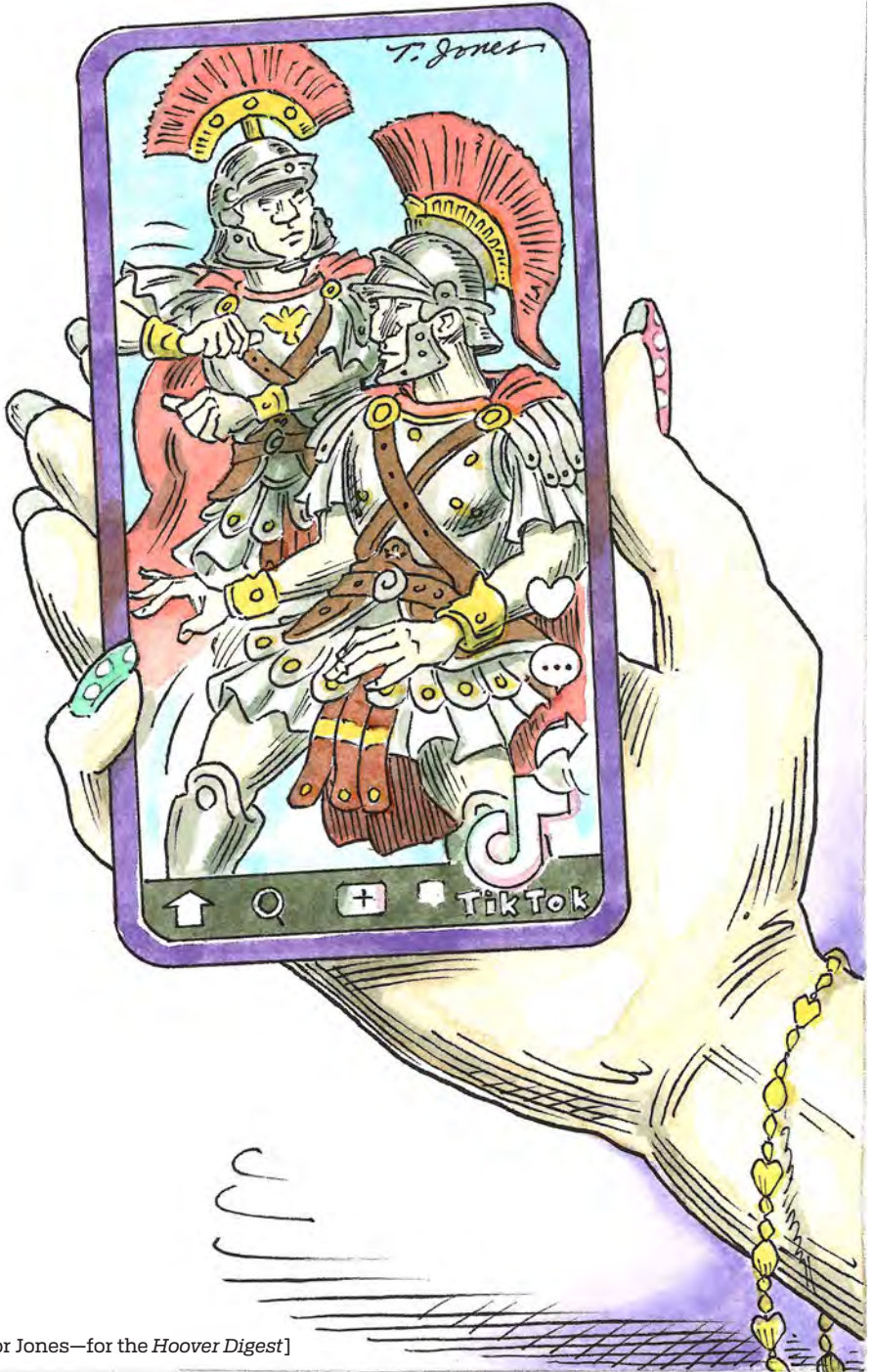
WHAT VIRGIL KNEW

There’s no greater witness than the poet Virgil, who came of age during the last years of the Roman Republic, a century when social disorder, civic violence, and civil wars between Roman generals and their legions were chronic. Virgil’s *Aeneid* (19 BC) tells a story of Rome’s beginnings in the invasion of Italy by Trojan refugees, and also explores the tragic costs of civilization, and the lofty idealism that some great empires have claimed to represent. That theme is what makes Rome and its fate so significant for us Americans.

Virgil has several scenes that make Rome’s imperial idealism explicit. One dimension of Rome’s greatness was its virtue: not just courage, the most important virtue for every civilization, but also *pietas*, the duty and responsibility one owes to family, the dead, the gods, and Rome itself. Virgil’s hero Aeneas is known for this virtue, hence the honorific *pius* attached to his name.

Early in the epic, Virgil uses a striking extended simile to highlight the political importance of *pietas*. When Neptune calms the violent storm incited by Juno, who hates the Trojans, Virgil writes,

Just as, all too often, some huge crowd is seized by a vast uprising, the rabble runs amok, all slaves to passion, rocks, firebrands flying. Rage finds them arms but then, if they chance to see a man among them, one whose devotion and public service [*pietas*] lends him weight, they stand



[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

there, stock still with their ears alert as he rules their furor with his words and calms their passion. [Robert Fagles translation]

For Romans who had lived through the bloody chaos of the dying republic, this scene would have been all too familiar. Note the idealism that all free governments are predicated on: persuasion should trump force, words should replace blood. But Virgil's and his readers' knowledge that such a scene of leadership had rarely happened in the decades-long death of the republic challenges the idealism.

This prizing of language over force has also characterized a century of our foreign policy of moralizing internationalism, the idea that nonlethal diplomacy can defuse conflict and restore peace. However, we predicate its efficacy more on rational technique and transactional negotiations than on the virtue of a great leader. And that noble idealism has also failed, as we are witnessing today with the Biden administration's appeasement of Iran, another milestone on the road to decline.

The second, more important expression of Virgil's qualified idealism comes when Jupiter calms down his daughter—and Aeneas's mother—Venus amid her angry grief over

Juno's violence against her son and his fated future glory. The "father of gods and men" assures his daughter that the glorious civilization, the

Roman Empire, will indeed happen: "Then will the violent centuries, battles set aside, grow gentle, kind," and force be replaced by laws and a higher civilization.

This "new world order," moreover, as we've been calling it since the Versailles settlement, will create lasting peace:

The terrible Gates of War with their welded iron bars will stand bolted shut, and locked inside the Frenzy of civil strife will crouch down on his savage weapons, hands pinioned behind his back with a hundred brazen shackles, monstrously roaring out from his bloody jaws."

This is the Pax Romana that will rule the world, and that created the foundations of the West.

This idealistic hope for the Roman Empire was expressed much later in Immanuel Kant's 1795 essay "Perpetual Peace" and in Norman Angell's 1914

To Virgil, peace doesn't depend on material improvements. It depends on great leaders controlling the permanent passions of men.

prediction in *The Great Illusion* that global trade and the expansion of the West would make war obsolete. Both of these products of our “rules-based international order” idealism have, of course, not come to pass, any more than did Virgil’s predictions of Rome’s universal peace.

But notice how Virgil describes this peace as contingent not on material improvements and progress but on great leaders controlling the permanent passions of men—greed for honor and wealth, vengeance for dishonor, the lust for power—passions that can be locked away for a while. But without

virtue, fealty to the gods, and moral vigilance, they will break out again.

The third example of idealism that for Virgil will characterize the Roman Empire takes

We assume that people everywhere want to live just like us in a Pax Americana, once their tyrannical leaders are neutralized.

place in the underworld, where Aeneas’s father, Anchises, who had recently died, parades before his son the greatness of Rome with a procession of the souls of great Romans who will be born over the next twelve hundred years. He finishes with a statement of Rome’s moral destiny. The Greeks may surpass the Romans in art, science, or oratory, Anchises concedes, “But you, Roman, remember, rule with all your power the peoples of the earth—these will be your arts: to put your stamp on the works and ways of peace, to spare the defeated, but break the proud in war.”

These idealizations were not flattery of Augustus and his new empire. Virgil knew the cost in blood the creation of Rome exacted—not just from enemies like the Gauls, a million of whom by his own count Julius Caesar killed or enslaved, but from Romans slaughtering Romans in a century of civil wars and civic violence. And he knew that Octavian had waded through blood to become Augustus.

But in the final lines of the *Aeneid*, Virgil shows the permanent reality of human nature that challenged his idealism. The second half of the epic describes the brutal wars between the tribes of Central Italy and the newly arrived Trojans, in effect a civil war since Romans would arise from the merging of the Latins and Trojans. The wars end with the death of Turnus, a leader of the indigenous resistance, at the hands of Pius Aeneas, who inflamed with vengeful rage forgets his father’s injunction “to spare the defeated,” and instead kills Turnus even as he kneels in submission and begs for mercy.

With this ending, we are reminded of Rome’s original sin of fratricide in its famous foundation myth, the murder of Remus by his brother, Romulus.

No matter how noble our intentions, how brilliant the civilization we create, how sophisticated and expansive the empire we rule, human nature never changes, and ruthless violence always must be the cost of our idealism.

Yet this probe of Roman idealism should not imply that Rome's influence was completely malign. As the old saying had it, the Romans brought with them "peace and taxes." Most of the lands the Romans conquered were scenes of endless wars and bloody competitions over power, resources, and slaves. Roman peace and her legions mostly put an end to that disorder.

These lessons in impossible idealism are why we should think about the Romans.

Rome also brought an advanced civilization that was open to all, Roman or not: aqueducts, sewers, stone roads, arenas, theaters, magnificent temples and public buildings, villas, public art and sculpture, not to mention public laws and citizens' rights. The ruins of all this civil and cultural infrastructure are still visible today, from Scotland to North Africa, from the Danube to the Euphrates. And all these advances were defended with utmost ruthlessness, something our idealism today scorns and avoids.

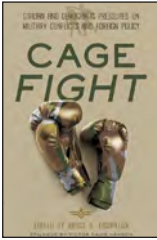
HUBRIS

This lesson in impossible idealism is why we should think about the Romans, for we still cling to the foreign policy idealism that has driven our foreign relations for a century. Our "rules-based liberal order" and technocratic hubris have claimed that through greater knowledge and material improvement, human nature also can be improved, and conflict resolved through diplomacy and global institutions.

Moreover, we assume that a complex diversity of peoples want to live just like us in a Pax Americana, once their illiberal and tyrannical leaders are neutralized. They will then embrace our political idealism of tolerance and unalienable rights and discard their own ambitions for dominance and power. But those passions remain, and without a credible threat of force to deter them, they will erupt into violence against our arrogant tutelage. The Middle East since World War II illustrates this tragic reality, as does Russia's brutal war against Ukraine, one fueled by Putin's dreams of correcting the "geopolitical disaster," as he described the collapse of the Soviet empire, and restoring the ethnic Russian empire.

Thinking about Rome, especially through Virgil’s eyes in his brilliant epic, is not about “toxic masculinity” or “patriarchy,” but rather our own dangerous idealism that threatens our security and interests. ■

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Whom Can We Trust?

Brandice Canes-Wrone, head of Hoover's new Center for Revitalizing American Institutions, looks for ways to bring fresh life to American democracy.

By Jonathan Movroydis

Jonathan Movroydis: What is the mission of the Center for Revitalizing American Institutions (RAI), and why now?

Brandice Canes-Wrone: Confidence in American institutions has declined for decades and continues to decline. The trend isn't simply a partisan phenomenon, nor explained by a particular set of presidents. This development influences how effectively our institutions can handle an emergency or even run day to day, thereby compromising their missions. Our purpose is to understand the reasons for the crisis in trust, understand how institutions are operating today, evaluate proposals for reform, and offer potential alternative reforms suggested by our analysis.

Movroydis: What are the roots of the low trust and confidence in our institutions?

Brandice Canes-Wrone is the director of the Hoover Institution's new Center for Revitalizing American Institutions (RAI). She is the Maurice R. Greenberg Senior Fellow at Hoover and a professor in Stanford University's political-science department. Jonathan Movroydis is the senior content writer for the Hoover Institution.



BOTH SIDES NOW: Brandice Canes-Wrone, head of the Center for Revitalizing American Institutions, seeks to “understand the reasons for the crisis in trust” in America: “The center is looking for solutions that extend beyond specific parties. RAI is interested in what works.” [Eric Draper]

Canes-Wrone: There are a variety of causes, so your question entails a large research agenda. Certainly, polarization is a factor, although, again, this is not simply a trend whereby Republicans don't trust Democrats when they're in power and Democrats don't trust Republicans when they're in power. There's been a decrease even among those whose party is in power, and a large drop among independents.

We're interested in investigating—and here I want to be cautious in not prejudging the conclusion—the role of developments in the media. These developments include a variety of changes such as the rise of social media and the decrease in local news. Citizens used to receive a lot of information about government, particularly their own members of Congress, from local and state news, and there's been a large decline in coverage as well as the

number of local outlets. Citizens aren't receiving the same information they were receiving thirty years ago, and in some cases, that's been filled in by what comes over social media.

Separately, we know that civics education in this country also has experienced a decline. The number of schools offering civics classes, as well as the role of civics in the curriculum, is not what it was. And you see these results. Fewer than one in four eighth-graders in the United States are proficient in US history or civics, according to the nonpartisan National Assessment of Educational Progress. One component of the center will be to look at what's happening in civics education in the country and offer potential solutions there.

Movroydis: The center has three main themes: governmental institutions, organization democratic practice, and democratic citizenship. Let's talk about what these three mean and how you distinguish them, beginning with governmental institutions.

Canes-Wrone: The first one is about what we might think of as formal governmental bodies—for instance, Congress, the executive branch, the courts, state and local governmental bodies, the military, and executive agencies. We'll consider topics such as, how has the balance of power between the presidency and Congress changed over time? To what extent do Congress and our state legislatures reflect the preferences of their constituents? And what reforms might increase the effectiveness of these institutions?

Movroydis: What about organizations and democratic practice?

Canes-Wrone: Here, we're thinking about organizations that are outside the government but nonetheless critical

to a well-functioning democracy and, correspondingly, the practices that affect how the democracy operates. Examples of organizations include the media, interest groups, and even universities, and examples of practices include how elections are administered and what constitutes freedom of speech. We'll consider topics such as, what are the most effective policies

“Citizens aren't receiving the same information they were receiving thirty years ago.”

“What are the most effective policies and practices for ensuring the integrity of and participation in our elections?”

and practices for ensuring the integrity of and participation in our elections? How have developments in the media shaped public discourse? And what role do universities have in creating a healthy democracy?

Movroydis: And democratic citizenship?

Canes-Wrone: Democratic citizenship is at the level of the individual. It's the individual's political beliefs, preferences, and responsibilities in a democratic society, particularly with respect to the individual's relationship with democratic institutions. So, one part of the theme will consider public opinion and participation. Another part will relate to the civic-education piece I mentioned earlier in terms of how citizens become informed about democratic processes and their own rights and responsibilities.

So, if you think about the three themes, you have formal government bodies; you have informal democratic organizations and practices that foster democratic competition and innovation; and then you have citizens—the individual holding the government accountable by becoming active and engaged.

Movroydis: How does the center plan to do its research and communicate it to policy makers and other stakeholders?

Canes-Wrone: We think of the Center for Revitalizing American Institutions as having three primary audiences. The first is the research community. We believe strongly that research—nonpartisan, fact-based research—is vitally important to understanding American institutions. Our second audience is what we might call the attentive public. That would include policy makers and those who follow policy closely, as well as the media. And the third is the civic-education field, with a broad aim of influencing civic education.

We have a number of affiliated faculty with incredibly exciting projects. For instance, Hoover fellow and political-science professor Justin Grimmer and Hoover fellow Ben Ginsberg are working on a major project about trust in elections and election administration. They have conferences and other events planned that are designed to build on their research about how to make our elections work as well as possible. Their goals are to influence election administration officials in terms of adopting reforms that will build trust in elections, as well as to influence voters in terms of understanding how elections work and taking on myths about how the electoral process operates in practice.

Another project, led by Hoover fellow Jack Goldsmith, focuses on the administrative state. This project has produced a series of recently published

papers about the role of executive power in the administrative state, its growth, and potential areas for reform.

Hoover fellow and Stanford professor Josiah Ober is leading an effort to think about the role of civics in college curricula around the country. He's been very involved in that issue at Stanford and is convening others around the country to bring what we've learned at Stanford to a wide range of universities, from small liberal arts colleges to large state institutions.

And we have a large survey being led by Doug Rivers, a Hoover fellow and political-science professor, and Hoover emeritus fellow David Brady, which will be a panel survey about the 2024 elections that seeks to provide new information both to scholars and the broader public about what affects individuals' votes and preferences.

One more: we're co-funding a project by Robb Willer, a sociology professor at Stanford, relating to the topic of democratic practice. He'll be working with Governor Spencer Cox of Utah. Governor Cox is the head of the National Governors Association and is trying to encourage gubernatorial candidates to pledge in bipartisan ads that they believe in their state's election administration and will accept

the election outcomes. Governor Cox himself did this with

“RAI is interested in what works.”

his Democratic opponent in the previous Utah gubernatorial election. Robb is planning to test the effects of these ads as they roll out in 2024. These are just some of the projects under way for this year.

Movroydis: Could you talk about why multiple perspectives are important?

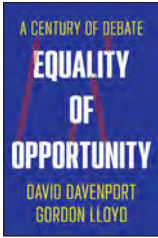
Canes-Wrone: The center is looking for solutions that extend beyond specific parties. RAI is interested in what works, and one thing we haven't talked about yet is that the public's trust in state and local governments is an exception to the general decline in trust. Citizens tend to be much more supportive of their state and local governments. Amid the general crisis in confidence, it makes sense to think about why things are working at least better in the states and localities than at the national level.

One of the important features of RAI, consistent with bipartisanship, is—and to me, this is always at the heart of any scholarly work—to be very open to alternative ideas and be willing to defend your own through discussion.

RAI is a Hoover-funded institution. We share Hoover's commitment to individual freedom, and that's part of our mission. But when it comes

to a specific topic, such as the best way to revitalize Congress, that's something we're studying; it's not something for which we already know the answer. We look forward to incorporating different ideas on this and all our topics. ■

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Dependent No More

It's been a hundred years since the United States granted citizenship to American Indians. Will it take a hundred more before it frees tribes to make their own decisions?

by Terry L. Anderson and Dominic P. Parker

In 1924, Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act (ICA), declaring that “all non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States.” President Coolidge signed it into law on June 2, 1924. The act, partially inspired by robust Native American enlistment during the First World War, is celebrated as a step toward honoring American Indians—regardless of whether they abandoned their tribal affiliations—by welcoming them to US citizenship, giving them the right to vote. There is, however, dissonance in “declaring” people as citizens who were the continent’s first inhabitants and who were already citizens of their own nations—Iroquois, Comanche, Osage, Sioux, Crow, and so on. Those nations long had rules of law, boundaries, and rituals for choosing leaders and adopting others into

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their tribes. Because US citizenship brought with it subjugation to federal laws, accepting it was controversial among some tribal leaders, who foresaw that it would create a morass of legal questions about where and to whom tribal laws would still apply.

The ICA came a century after the US Supreme Court declared in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) that tribes were “domestic dependent nations,” making “their relation to the United States” resemble “that of a ward to his guardian.” Before 1924, the “wards” were usually not US citizens until a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agent of the federal government deemed them to be “competent and capable.” In practice, this generally meant becoming farmers and assimilating into the white population.

This was part of a more general effort to “detrribalize” Native Americans. As trustee for Indian wards, the federal government, to this day, oversees land use and title transfer of millions of Indian reservation acres. The US citizenship announced in 1924 did not terminate this ward-to-guardian relationship. On the contrary,

these terms remain part of modern federal Indian law under the Burke Act of 1906, which requires

that the government assess the competence of individual Indians before giving them fee-simple patent to their allotted land.

These laws help explain the theme of the book and recent movie *Killers of the Flower Moon*. Because Indian “headrights” to subsurface oil in Oklahoma were held in trust during this 1920s episode, revenues from leases were held by the Department of the Interior and could be released to tribal members only at the discretion of the department. Hence, Golden Globe winner Lily Gladstone, playing the part of an Osage Tribe citizen, must grovel before her Indian agent, stating her allotment number and declaring, “I’m Mollie Kyle, incompetent.”

Can someone be both a free citizen and a ward of the state?

LEADERSHIP: This painting of Chief Wades in the Water (opposite), a Black-foot tribal elder shown in his regalia, is among dozens of artworks by Winold Reiss that feature Indians living in Montana in the mid-twentieth century. Many of Reiss’s subjects were Blackfeet who re-created traditional ways for the benefit of tourists to Glacier National Park. The image of Wades in the Water (1870s–1947) became widely known, along with those of other tribal members, after the Great Northern Railway purchased it to use in promotional materials. (Turn to page 218 to read more about this artwork.) [Winold Reiss (1886–1953)—BNSF Railway Collection]



CITIZENS: In December 1923, the “Committee of One Hundred,” formally known as the Advisory Council on Indian Affairs, paid a visit to President Calvin Coolidge at the White House. A Mount Holyoke student of Cherokee descent named Ruth Muskrat, shown here presenting Coolidge with a book, told the president in a speech, “We want to become citizens of the United States, and to have our share in the building of this great nation that we love. But we want also to preserve the best that is in our own civilization.” [National

Photo Company Collection—Library of Congress]

Can a United States citizen simultaneously be a ward and a free American?

POWER IN AUTONOMY

On the 100th anniversary of the Indian Citizenship Act, it is appropriate to reflect that Native Americans held a status before the conquest by Europeans that allowed them to be, in the words of Crow tribal citizen Bill Yellowtail, “strong, self-sufficient, self-initiating, entrepreneurial, independent,

healthful, and therefore powerful individual persons. Human beings, Indians.” Yet the guardian role assumed by the federal government too often has limited the benefits of both tribal citizenship and US citizenship, leaving Native Americans to operate in a no-man’s land of uncertain and limited privileges and rights.

Citizenship requires two things: territorial control by a government, and a legal (written or unwritten) relationship between an individual and the state that specifies rights and duties for both individuals and the state. By these criteria, most Native Americans were citizens of nations before they were declared to be citizens of the United States.

Whether it is a matter of enforcing individual ownership claims, protecting territorial borders, or

producing public goods such as trails, meeting halls, or irrigation systems, tribes were organized to make and enforce laws and to produce collective goods. In this sense, tribes were nations and members were citizens.

Consider the League of Five Nations, or Iroquois League, as the Europeans called it. The league was a loose alliance among the Oneida, Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga tribes, governed by the Great Law of Peace. The Iroquois League was governed by a constitution that influenced language in the US Constitution. Its constitution limited the powers of the collective and enforced the rights of the subgroups and individual citizens. By any definition, the organization of the Iroquois League under the Great Law of Peace constituted a nation, and its individual members were citizens of that nation.

In *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power*, Pekka Hämäläinen describes how the Lakota Nation evolved from an upper Great Lakes hunter-gatherer tribe to one of the most powerful Indian nations west of the Mississippi. The Lakota took control of trade in the Missouri Valley and charged tolls to the trappers and traders, as well as to Lewis and Clark’s Corps of Discovery, moving furs and trade goods up and down the river. Where buffalo were plentiful, they excluded other tribes from hunting, and they had individual and clan property rights to cultivated land from which crops such as corn added to their diet.

All of this required complicated governance structures, at levels ranging from the nation to the band to the citizen. The nation was not “a formal state or confederacy” but instead “a manifestation of deep voluntary attachments that bound the seven fires [tribes] together . . . from the bottom up, with

The federal guardian role too often limits the benefits of both tribal citizenship and US citizenship.

language and kinship as the main cohesive,” Hämäläinen writes. At the lower end were smaller groups in which “individuals, families, and bands moved around constantly, arranging themselves into different constellations as circumstances demanded ... creating a thick lattice of kinship ties that tran-

sceded local and regional identities.” The bottom-up structure limited the power of the chiefs and councils, but they did

The Iroquois League’s constitution influenced the US Constitution.

have the power to organize armies, with the consent of the subgroups, to defend or expand their territories. The Lakota enforced rules on the inside and protected citizens from invaders from outside. The rules within the tribe provided incentives for individuals, families, and clans to make investments in their personal wealth that allowed them to thrive in new territories and to trade with other tribes when gains from trade were available. Furthermore, those investments, especially in equestrian skills, provided the human and physical (e.g., horses) capital that could be called on by war leaders to protect tribal territories and acquire new lands.

These are but two examples of Native American nations and the citizenship of those nations. European conquest overtook tribal territories and subjected American Indians to new rules over which they had little control.

“DEAD CAPITAL”

Once Indians were declared to be wards of the federal government, they became more like colonial citizens. The nature of their tribal governments, the laws to which they must abide, the structure of their property rights, and even their racial identity were mostly determined by a bureaucracy unaccountable to them. The legacy consists of today’s policies regulating everything from health care to education to reservation land use that are still manifest in federal agencies such as the BIA, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the Indian Health Service.

Bureaucracy went so far as to tie Native American citizenship to ethnicity by inventing a pseudoscientific “blood quantum” system of enumeration that persists to this day. Blood quantum was determined by federal Indian agents who tracked the fraction of ancestors documented as full-blooded Indian in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sometimes just by looking at the person. These assessments determined eligibility for federal payments under treaties, land cessions, and litigation settlements. Before the Indian

Citizenship Act of 1924, low blood quantum was the implicit criterion for US citizenship and high blood quantum for federal payments and wardship. In a nation of immigrants where the Fourteenth Amendment acknowledges citizenship as automatic by place of birth, for Native Americans that status depended on dubious assessments of ancestry.

This federal bureaucracy wields jurisdiction over what is known as Indian Country. It is defined by the US federal criminal code (18 US Code § 1151): land within the boundaries of an Indian reservation, including rights of way through a reservation; dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States; and all

individual Indian allotments, including rights of way, and excluding allotments for which Indian title has been

Bureaucrats invented a pseudoscientific “blood quantum” system that persists to this day.

extinguished. Real property in Indian Country may be owned in fee simple by either Indians or non-Indians, but sixty-six million acres in Indian Country are held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, meaning the bureau must approve how the land is used and must monitor the distribution of revenues generated from the land and minerals. In essence, the land is owned by the federal government. American Indians are the only US citizens with such a preponderance of their assets held in trust.

Despite the large acreage held in trust, the lands have yielded a pittance of monetary return when compared to land and natural resources owned by non-Indian American citizens. For example, Indian reservations have abundant energy resources, but have profited little from these supplies. Reservations contain almost 30 percent of the nation’s coal reserves west of the Mississippi, 50 percent of potential uranium, and 20 percent of known oil and gas reserves. They also contain almost 10 percent of the nation’s wind and solar energy potential and a large stock of critical minerals. Yet Senate committee hearings have concluded that only two million of fifteen million acres of energy resources were developed on reservations, and that \$1.5 trillion worth of subsurface reserves remain untapped. Commercial renewable-energy production is also lacking, with only a handful of tribes capitalizing on the national momentum for sources of alternative energy.

Why do reservation resources held in trust often fail to generate wealth for the reservation? Some tribes choose not to develop their natural resources. Others wish to develop, but stifling federal bureaucracy stands in the way.

As Ernest Sickey, the late chairman of the Coushatta Tribe, put it, federal bureaucracy has strangled American Indian enterprise with “white tape.”

The white tape traces back to *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, the 1831 Supreme Court decision, which was not undone by the Indian Citizenship Act. Instead, that court’s assertion that Indians “are in a state of pupilage” remains in force as trusteeship continues to govern natural-resources use.

The result is an unparalleled regulatory burden on Native American citizens. As the Environmental Protection Agency notes, “Activities in Indian country

... often require a greater level of NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] involvement than the same activities in nontribal areas.” This means, for

American Indians are the only US citizens with such a preponderance of their assets held in trust.

instance, that forty-nine regulatory steps were required to get an oil lease in Indian Country, compared to four steps elsewhere. A similar regulatory morass awaits tribes wanting to develop wind and solar in Indian Country.

Trusteeship also helps explain why tribal members in the water-thirsty West do not benefit from paper water rights valued in the billions annually, and why members of North Dakota’s Three Affiliated Tribes missed out on millions in royalties during the 2010s petroleum-fracking boom. Bureaucracy and regulatory rules also help explain why good farmland is often left unused despite price booms in agriculture. These valuable resources are effectively “dead capital,” to use the phrase of Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto.

And when land and natural resources are put to use, trustee management of revenue has allowed federal bureaucrats to lose billions of dollars belonging to individual Indians through poor recordkeeping and by brokering leases of Indian land for pittance. This was documented in great detail in the so-called Cobell litigation—named for its lead plaintiff, Blackfeet elder Elouise Cobell—a class-action suit accusing the Departments of the Interior and Treasury of mismanaging Indian trust funds. Despite a settlement of \$3.4 billion reached in 2009, Cobell said at the time, “There is little doubt this is significantly less than the full accounting to which individual Indians are entitled.” The Indian Citizenship Act did not prevent these losses because it did not undo the guardian’s power.

LONG ROADS TO SUCCESS

The Indian Citizenship Act was a step forward in tribal and individual Indian relations with the federal government, but as long as the historic

legal relationship remains, it is difficult for tribes to be sovereign governments and Native Americans to be sovereign citizens. Tribes refer to themselves as “sovereign nations,” but trusteeship and federal bureaucracy weaken both the sovereignty of Indian nations and the benefits of US citizenship.

Furthermore, unlike other governmental units (states, counties, cities) beneath the federal government, tribal governments have little power to tax and therefore few sources of revenue to produce public services such as police protection, education, health care, and roads. Without revenue sources, they depend on grants to produce those services or on federal agencies to provide them directly.

The Southern Ute Tribe’s struggle for economic independence illustrates the legacy of nineteenth-century Indian policy that made tribes “domestic dependent nations,”

and it also shows a path out of dependency. The Southern Ute Reservation in southwest Colorado sits on mas-

Ultimately, citizenship is only as useful as the rules that govern citizens.

sive energy resources, yet for most of the past century the small tribe—now numbering fewer than fifteen hundred members—was impoverished. The prosperous hunters and traders who once roamed the Great Basin were forced onto a reservation spanning about one-third of what would become Colorado, and their strength and wealth quickly dissipated. By 1895, the tribe had been squeezed into a fifteen-by-seventy-five-mile strip consisting of a mosaic of land tenure, including both private and trust property, the latter under the control of the federal government.

It took more than a century, but the Southern Utes persevered, slowly winning court judgments to reclaim their water, land, and mineral rights and the revenue from those sources. Revenue from five tribal energy companies is invested in the Southern Ute Growth Fund, estimated to be worth \$4 billion, and dividends from the fund are distributed annually to tribal members.

With profits from oil, gas, and other enterprises, the tribe was able to take control of and manage the reservation’s infrastructure. It runs a medical clinic, formerly operated by the federal Indian Health Service. It built a state-of-the-art recreation center and introduced a Ute-language program in its schools. The tribe’s Southern Ute Community Action Programs include substance-abuse treatment centers, a senior citizen center, and job-training

programs. Oil and gas profits provide scholarships for every tribal member who wants to attend college, dividends for members between twenty-six and fifty-nine, and retirement benefits to those over sixty.

In western North Dakota, the Three Affiliated Tribes—Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara—on the Fort Berthold Reservation also managed to gain more control of their oil and gas resources. As a result, the former tribal chairman, Tex Hall, said the tribes were gaining “sovereignty by the barrel”—making clear the links between sovereignty, citizenship, and wealth.

Examples extend beyond oil and gas. The Salish-Kootenai Confederated Tribes on the Flathead Reservation in Northwest Montana took over their forest management under a special agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Not only has their management made profits for the tribe while neighboring federal forests lost money, but the tribes’ forests have outperformed federal forests by virtually all environmental standards.

Sovereign control gives tribes an incentive to maximize economic returns from their land. This is in sharp contrast to federal agencies, for which the incentives “might be not just weak but actually perverse,” according to a 1994 article in the *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, because the BIA’s budget tends to grow when it fails to fulfill its federal trust responsibility.

There are risks to achieving economic independence, and not every tribal project succeeds. But the data show that Indigenous self-governance succeeds over the long run. Research showed that tribes opting out of federal oversight through the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, for instance, have had 12 to 16 percent greater economic growth when compared to those without self-governance.

A PROFOUND SHIFT

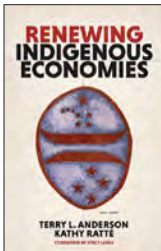
The recent landmark case of *McGirt v. Oklahoma* (2020) provides an opportunity to redefine the meaning of citizenship for American Indians. The case began over the question of whether the federal or state government had jurisdiction over a case involving Jimcy McGirt, a citizen of the Seminole Tribe, who was accused of sexually assaulting a non-Indian minor. Ultimately, the case was heard by the US Supreme Court, which ruled that criminal cases belong in federal or tribal courts if the crime was committed in “Indian Territory,” and it concluded that this land makes up nearly half of the state of Oklahoma.

Some citizens of Oklahoma who are not citizens of the “Five Civilized Tribes”—the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole—feared that the new jurisdictional arrangement would stunt the state’s economy.

Governor Kevin Stitt worried that “no investment is going to come” because the “uncertainty is huge.” The fears, however, have not come to pass, because the “competent and capable” Indian nations understand the importance of stable governance rules for tribal, state, and US citizens alike.

The history of tribal governance all the way up to *McGirt* illustrates that citizenship is only as useful as the rules that govern citizens. Before colonization, Native Americans lived under rules that limited tribal authority, enhanced individual freedom, and allowed members to thrive, not just survive. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 should have lessened the federal government’s guardian role because laws that consider a class of citizens to be incompetent and incapable clash with citizenship in a free country. As we celebrate the ICA, we should also work to recognize the continent’s first inhabitants as free, competent, and capable citizens. ■

Special to the Hoover Digest.



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Memorial Day: One Life

To honor our fallen warriors, remember them as individuals. A commander's eulogy.

By **H. R. McMaster**

In World War II, America lost 291,557 military lives in combat. But, as Pulitzer Prize-winning author Rick Atkinson wrote, “Each death is as unique as a snowflake or a fingerprint. The most critical lesson for every American is to understand, viscerally, that this vast host died one by one by one; to understand in your bones that they died for you.”

Perhaps back then, it was easier for more Americans to feel that reality in their bones. These days, with a relatively small all-volunteer force, the American people are more distant from those who fight in their name.

Combat veterans suppress dreadful memories of battles, but they never forget their comrades who fell alongside them one by one. Their countenances, often smiling or laughing, flash before our mind's eye. I see them unexpectedly. Sometimes they come in waves.

This Memorial Day, in between the backyard barbecues and parades, Americans might hear statistics of our fallen soldiers, like the approximately

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COMRADE: Ceremonies from combat zones in Afghanistan and Iraq centered on a fallen warrior's boots, helmet, rifle, and ID tags. "Combat veterans suppress dreadful memories of battles, but they never forget their comrades who fell alongside them one by one," writes Hoover senior fellow H. R. McMaster.

[US military]

650,000 who died in battle since the beginning of the War of Independence. They might know that 7,054 American military personnel died in the most recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. But most are unfamiliar with the stories of individual soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice. That is a shame.

To help our fellow Americans appreciate such a sacrifice, we who served alongside those heroes should tell the stories of our fallen comrades as we lost them: one by one.

A MODEL SCOUT

Today, I would like to share my memory of Private First Class Joseph Knott, the first trooper killed in action after the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment returned to Iraq for its second combat tour of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Even now, I still see Joseph, smiling, in my mind's eye. Just twenty-one, from Yuma, Arizona, he was the very model of a cavalry scout. In fact, his photo, in silhouette standing guard in the gunner's station of his Humvee as the sun

set behind him, was selected for the cover of our regimental magazine only a week before his death.

The date was April 17, 2005. As always, I briefed our security detachment—really a small scout platoon—before we departed our base in Iraq. Six of the battalion’s soldiers had been wounded the day before. I made sure I met and shook the hands of every soldier in the battalion task force that had been attached to our regiment.

Our mission that day was to assess the situation in the so-called “triangle of death” area south of Baghdad so we could refine our plans to defeat the enemy. The area—filled with infiltration routes, or “ratlines,” from Syria along the Euphrates River valley—was well-suited to Al-Qaeda terrorists.

Narrow roads paralleling the canals that crisscrossed the area made our forces easy to spot and vulnerable to attack.

It was the perfect place to

manufacture bombs and suicide vests for attacks in Baghdad. And Al-Qaeda needed to behead only a few people in the small towns before all the locals understood that they were to see nothing and hear nothing about the explosive device factories the group had established there.

Halfway through the patrol, I switched places with our command sergeant major, John Caldwell, a charismatic and courageous larger-than-life man whose bad back would have more than justified him forgoing another combat tour. But the dedication of “Big John” to his soldiers overwhelmed the constant pain he endured to lead our troopers back to Iraq.

Our eight-vehicle convoy of six armored Humvees and two Bradley Fighting Vehicles headed out on the Mullah Fayad Highway—a narrow, two-lane road lined by tall reeds alongside a canal. Caldwell’s vehicle, containing three other soldiers including Joseph, was positioned in the center of our column.

Suddenly I sensed that tingling feeling at the back of my neck. The evil presence of Al-Qaeda was palpable. From the front right seat, I grabbed the hand mike and pressed the transmit button, instructing our troopers to “be vigilant and stay low.”

A moment later, fifty yards in front of me, a large explosion washed over Caldwell’s Humvee. A cloud of black smoke and debris obscured the road.

“Punch through it!” I told the driver. We drove to the far side as I reported the attack, requesting medical evacuation at a secured landing

Today, the American people are distant from those who fight in their name.

zone just ahead of us. Then I jumped out and met our platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant Matt Hodges, at Caldwell's Humvee. Sergeant First Class Donald Sparks and our interpreter, Mr. Kamel Abbo, were injured, and Caldwell was seriously wounded. We treated him and got him to the landing zone just as the medevac helicopter landed. But we were unable to save his gunner, Private Joseph Knott. I held Joseph's hand and said a prayer. Hodges and I folded his arms across his chest and covered his body.

A PROUD VOLUNTEER

Two days later I eulogized Joseph, surrounded by his fellow cavalry troopers at our base in Baghdad. I wish that more Americans could witness combat memorials to the fallen so they could understand how fortunate we are to have selfless young men and women willing to fight and sacrifice in our name. Eighteen years later, I welcome readers back to that ceremony, with the speech I gave about Joseph:

“We are here to honor and say goodbye to one of our Brave Rifles brothers, a great cavalry trooper and a fine man, Private First Class Joseph Knott. Private First Class Knott, like all of you, volunteered to serve his nation in

time of war. On 17 April during operations in the South Baghdad area, he made the ultimate sacrifice to bring peace to this difficult region, defeat

the forces of terrorism and hatred, and permit children, both in Iraq and in our own nation, to live free of fear. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and with his family—his father, Jerry; his mother, Pamela; his sisters, Susan and Sheila; and his brother, Jerry.”

I then shared the reminiscences of Joseph from soldiers in our platoon. Grief shared is grief divided.

“Corporal Dillard recalled how ‘he strived for excellence in everything he did and always kept the morale of his fellow troopers high.’

“Staff Sergeant Hodges, who I know has the highest standards, described Joseph as an ‘exemplary soldier . . . motivated and disciplined.’

“Specialist Bruce recalled that ‘everything he did, he put all of his energy into it and made sure it was done right.’

“Sergeant Braxton recalled that ‘he was the type of person who would do everything he could to help the next person.’

“Sergeant Harris said ‘he always had a smile on his face and served our country proudly.’”

“PFC Ryan said that PFC Knott ‘was always the one to make us laugh. He was always singing or looked like he was posing for a picture and smiling.’

“Sergeant Harris said ‘he always had a smile on his face and served our country proudly.’”

Military units conduct memorial services to renew their commitment to each other and the mission as well as mourn the loss of their comrades.

I went on to highlight our responsibility to Joseph and his memory.

“We should also draw strength from Joseph Knott’s example. I, for one, will do my best to follow his example—to put fellow troopers before myself,

to do my very best to win this fight against terrorists and the enemies of freedom, to maintain my sense of humor and enjoy the company of my fellow troopers. If I could sing, I would sing louder. Today

On this Memorial Day, pledge to live well, strengthen our republic, and treasure the freedoms PFC Joseph Knott and all our other fallen warriors fought to preserve.

we honor PFC Joseph Knott with words as we pray for him and his family. I ask that tomorrow we all do our best to honor PFC Knott with our deeds as we continue to serve our nation in this great Regiment.”

Our troopers did honor PFC Knott, and others who fell alongside him in South Baghdad and in western Ninewa Province, as they defeated modern-day barbarians while demonstrating compassion for the Iraqi people. As the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment departed Iraq a year after Joseph’s death, the mayor of the Iraqi city of Tal Afar, Major General Najim Abed Abdullah al-Jibouri, wrote the following to the families of our fallen troopers:

To the families of those who have given their holy blood for our land, we all bow to you in reverence and to the souls of your loved ones. Their sacrifice was not in vain. They are not dead, but alive, and their souls hovering around us every second of every minute. They will never be forgotten.... We see them in the smile of every child, and in every flower growing in this land. Let America, their families, and the world be proud of their sacrifice for humanity and life.

Combat memorial ceremonies help military units, which take on the qualities of a family, communalize grief and resolve to continue the mission. At the end of the ceremony, soldiers kneel one by one, or with their squad, in front of the fallen soldier’s boots and helmet, which sit on top of an inverted rifle.

The soldier's ID tags dangle from the trigger housing. At the end of the ceremony, each soldier grasps the ID tags for a moment to pay a personal, silent tribute to their brother or sister.

I wonder if, on this Memorial Day, all of us might imagine reaching out, holding those ID tags for a moment, and pledging to live well, strengthen our republic, and treasure the freedoms that Private First Class Joseph Knott and all of our other fallen warriors fought to preserve. ■

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The Spirit of '44

The men who faced death during the D-Day landings were sure of their country—and they knew what their sacrifice meant.

By Victor Davis Hanson

The June 6, 1944, invasion marked the largest amphibious landing since the Persians under Xerxes invaded the Greek mainland in 480 BC. Nearly 160,000 American, British, and Canadian soldiers stormed five beaches of Nazi-occupied France. The plan was to liberate Western Europe after four years of occupation, push into Germany, and end the Nazi regime. Less than a year later, the Allies from the West, and the Soviet Russians from the East, did just that, utterly destroying Hitler's Third Reich.

Two years earlier, in August 1942, Germany had repulsed with heavy Canadian losses an earlier Normandy raid at Dieppe. In 1944, the Germans also knew roughly when the Allies would be coming. They placed their best general, Erwin Rommel, in charge of the Normandy defenses.

The huge D-Day force required enormous supplies of arms and provisions just to get off the beaches, yet the Allies had no way to capture even one port on the heavily fortified French coast.

To land so many troops so quickly, the Allies would have to ensure complete naval and air supremacy. They would have to tow over from Britain their own portable harbors, lay their own gasoline pipeline across the English

Victor Davis Hanson is the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and the chair of Hoover's Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict.



THE MISSION: Landing craft charge toward the Normandy shore. The D-Day landings of June 1944, the long-awaited thrust at the heart of Hitler's empire, were the largest amphibious expedition in centuries. The warriors who went ashore understood the risks and accepted them. [Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces]

Channel, and invent novel ships and armored vehicles just to get onto and over the beaches.

More dangerous still, the invaders would need to ensure armor and tactical air dominance to avoid being cut off, surrounded, and annihilated once they went inland.

German Panzer units—battle-hardened troops in frightening Panther and Tiger tanks, with over three hard years of fighting experience on the Eastern Front—were confident they could annihilate in a matter of days the outnumbered and lightly armed invaders.

Such a huge force required fifty miles of landing space on the beaches. That vast expanse ensured that some landing sites were less than ideal—Omaha Beach in particular.

No one quite knows how many Allied soldiers, airmen, and sailors were lost during D-Day's twenty-four hours. Some 10,000 casualties is a good guess, including nearly 4,500 dead. Well over 400 soldiers were killed, wounded,

or captured every hour of the first day. Most of the losses occurred at Omaha Beach, the riskiest landing area. Cliffs there offered perfect German

No one knows how many Allied soldiers, airmen, and sailors were lost during D-day's twenty-four hours.

lines of fire onto the landing craft below.

Concrete seawalls blocked access from the beaches. Crack German troops had recently beefed up the fortifications. Mined hedgerows blocked entry into the countryside.

Omaha Beach proved an ungodly nightmare, while the four other landing sites worked like clockwork, with fewer casualties.

Nearly a quarter million Allied soldiers were killed or wounded in Operation Overlord over the ensuing seven weeks of fighting in Normandy. Combined German and Allied casualties exceeded 400,000. Nearly 20,000 French civilians were killed as well. The Allies did not secure Normandy until the end of July, when they finally broke out into the plains of France and began racing toward Germany.

Intelligence failures, poor coordination between airborne and infantry troops, and mediocre leadership all plagued the Allies for most of June and July. Yet they pulled off the impossible by surprising the Germans, securing a beachhead, supplying that toehold in Western Europe, and then expanding the pocket into a vast, thousand-mile front that in less than a year shattered

Hitler's western defenses.

They were confident in American know-how. They were convinced they fought for the right cause.

How and why did the Americans on Omaha charge right off their landing craft into a hail of German machine gun and

artillery fire, despite being mowed down in droves?

In a word, they "believed" in the United States.

That generation had emerged from the crushing poverty of the Great Depression to face the reality that the Axis powers wanted to destroy their civilization and their country. They were confident in American know-how. They were convinced they fought for the right cause. They were not awed by traveling thousands of miles from home to face German technological

wizardry, veterans with years of battle experience, and a ruthless martial code.

The men at Omaha did not believe America had to be perfect to be good—just far better than the alternative.

They understood, like their predecessors at Valley Forge, Gettysburg, and the Meuse-Argonne, that nothing in the United States was guaranteed. They accepted that periodically some Americans—

usually those in the prime of life with the greatest futures and the most to lose—would be

asked to face certain death in nightmarish places like Omaha, in a B-17 over Berlin, or in the horrid jungles in the Pacific.

The least our generation—affluent, leisured, and so often self-absorbed—can do is remember who they were, what they did, and how much we owe them. ■

The men who stormed Omaha Beach did not believe America had to be perfect to be good.

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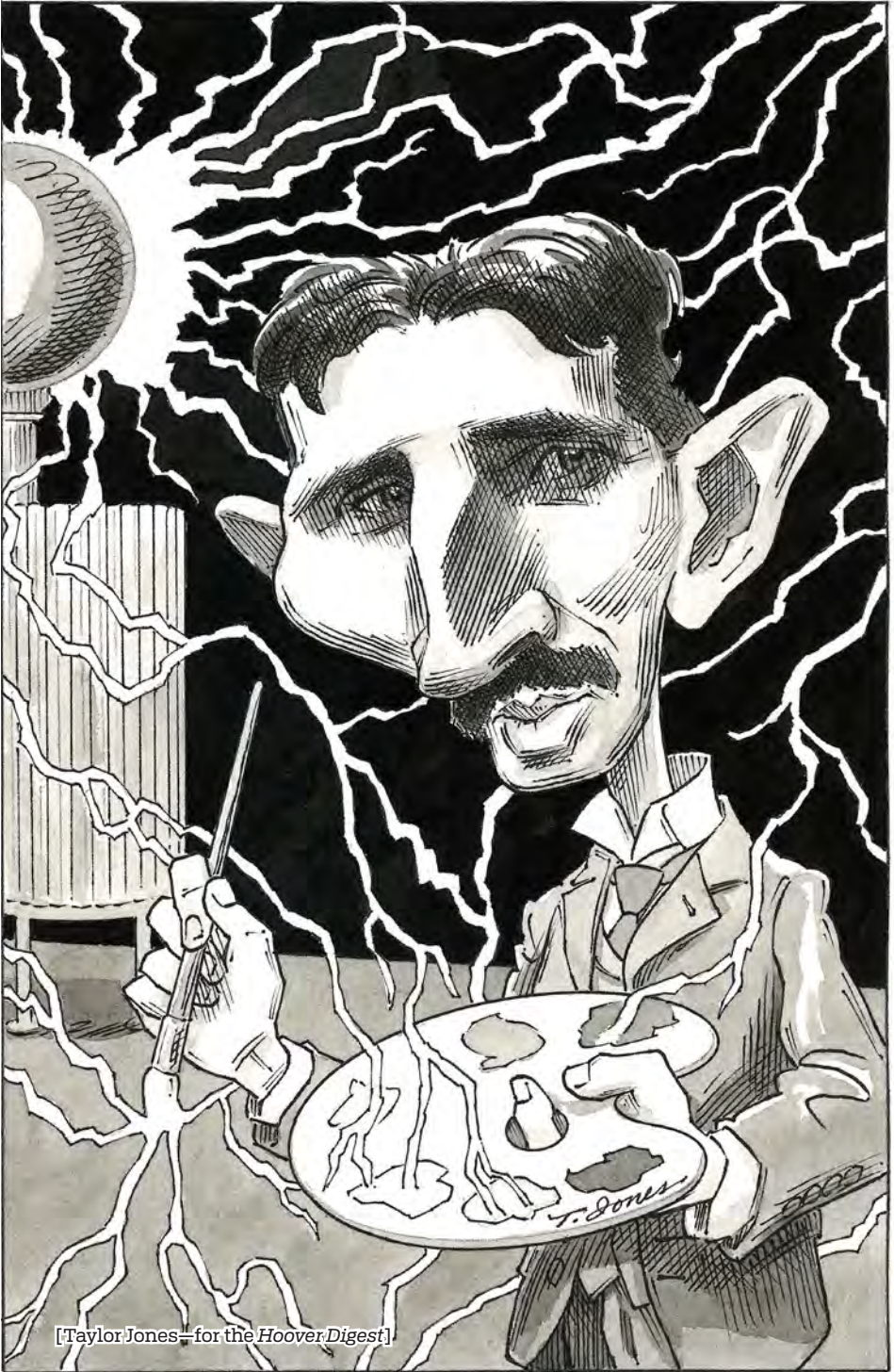
The Last Years of Nikola Tesla

A Hoover collection illuminates the ideas, aspirations, and eccentricities of the “pure scientific genius, a poet in science” who begged the World War II Allies to help him build a fantastical weapon to save his beloved Yugoslavia.

By Ognjen Kovačević and Bertrand M. Patenaude

“I’ve been honored to be asked to read a tribute to a great American, Nikola Tesla.” So began New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia on WNYC radio on January 10, 1943, three days after the great inventor’s death in Manhattan at age eighty-six. The eulogy was written by Slovenian author and translator Louis Adamic. The half-hour broadcast opened with an “Ave Maria” played by Zlatko Baloković, a Croatian violinist and friend of Tesla’s, who also played a Serbian patriotic song, “Tamo Daleko” (“There, Far Away”). The eulogy stated that Tesla had “died in his humble hotel room He died in poverty, but he was one of the most useful and successful men who ever lived. His achievements were great and are becoming greater as time goes on.” The fact that Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia were all represented in the ceremony is testimony to Tesla’s enduring bond to his Yugoslav homeland.

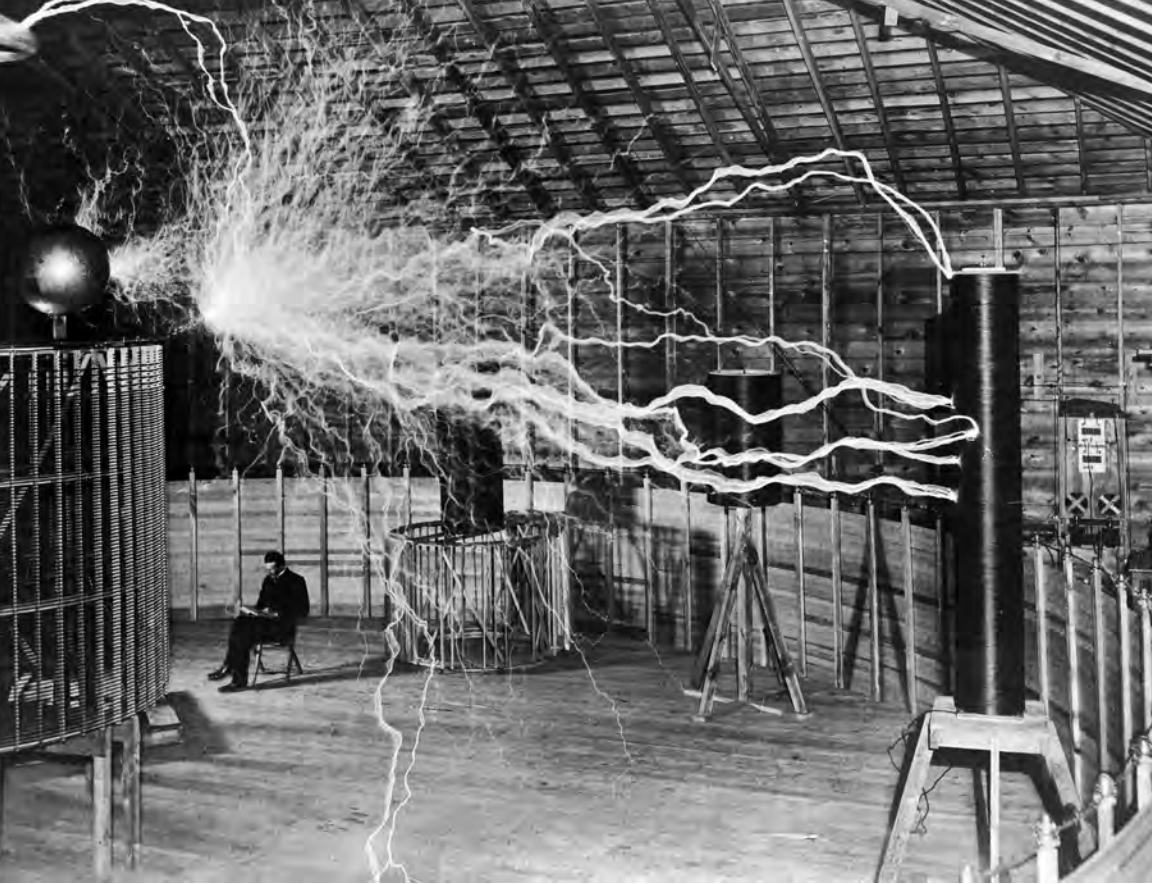
Ognjen Kovačević is the metadata librarian at the Hoover Institution Library & Archives. Bertrand M. Patenaude is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a lecturer in history and international relations at Stanford University.



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]



A FRIEND IN NEED: Konstantin Fotić opposite, Yugoslavia's ambassador to the United States in 1935–44, exchanged many communications with Nikola Tesla about his ideas and his circumstances. Fotić's collection also holds valuable materials related to the history of Yugoslavia, Yugoslav-US relations, and postwar Serbian emigration to America. [Konstantin Fotić papers—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]



BRILLIANT FLASHES: In a famous photo, the inventor sits calmly while powerful bolts of electricity leap between poles in his Colorado Springs laboratory. The photo is in fact a double-exposure, with Tesla's photo combined with that of the coil, and was published (without Tesla in it) to accompany his long article in the Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine in May 1900. "The scientific man does not aim at immediate result," Tesla writes at the end. "He does not expect that his advanced ideas will be readily taken up. His work is like that of the planter—for the future." [Dickenson V. Alley]

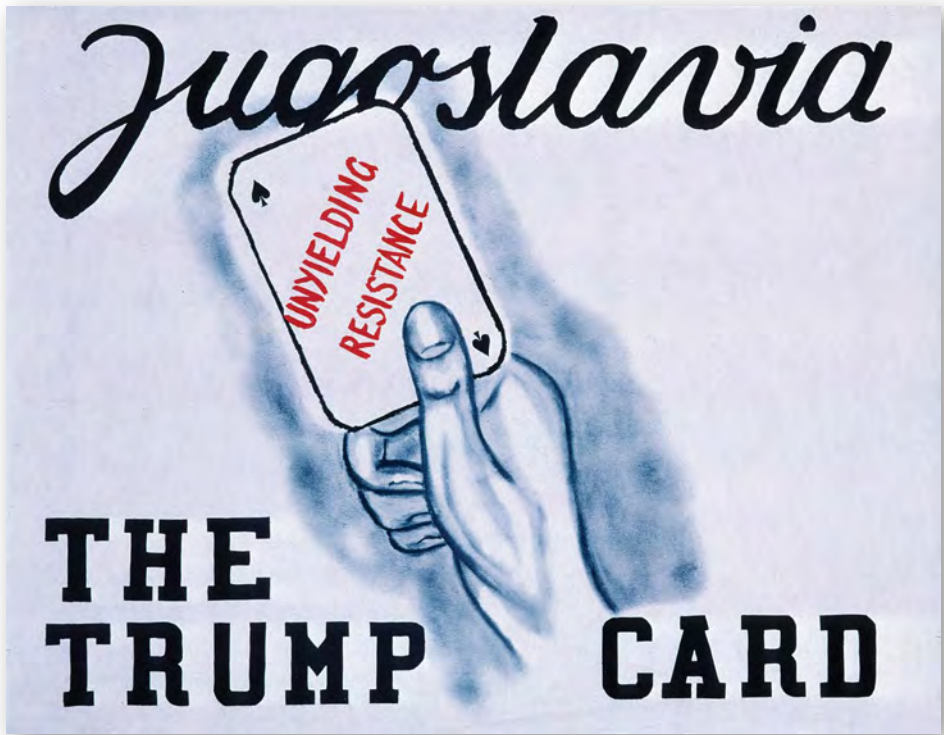
Nikola Tesla, the son of a Serbian Orthodox priest, was born in 1856 in the Austrian Empire, the part that today belongs to the Republic of Croatia. At the time of his birth and during his youth, the idea of South Slav unity was gathering force. Tesla immigrated to the United States in 1884. During his lifetime, he would witness the unification of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and other ethno-national groups into one country, Yugoslavia (literally, the Union of South Slavs); years of political turbulence and troubled relations between the constituent nations of Yugoslavia; and finally, the demise of the kingdom of Yugoslavia in the whirlwind of the Second World War. To the end, Tesla remained loyal to Yugoslavia as well as to his adopted homeland, the United



INTO THE UNKNOWN: In 1901, Tesla began construction on Long Island of Wardencllyffe Tower, a 187-foot-high structure intended for wireless communication and power transmission, shown here incomplete. Details of its construction and features are mysterious to this day. Tesla intended to use the earth itself to carry the signals. Amid chronic financial struggles, he abandoned the project in 1906, and the tower was never operational. The structure was demolished in 1917 and the property repossessed. Today, Tesla's former lab there survives as part of the Tesla Science Center at Wardencllyffe, but the historic building was severely damaged in a November 2023 fire. [Public domain]

States. “He is a feather in the cap of the whole human race,” intoned La Guardia, “and Yugoslavia and America can be proud of him.”

The eulogy lauded the scientific achievements and discoveries of the man many consider the inventor of radio and the pioneer of modern methods for generating and transmitting electrical power. Tesla’s first important invention came in 1888 in the form of the alternating current (AC) induction motor, a method of converting energy to mechanical force superior in efficiency to the use of direct current. In 1891, in his quest to develop a system for the



BATTLEGROUND: *Nikola Tesla was acutely aware of Yugoslavia's suffering in war-torn Europe, and he devoted himself to seeking ways to defend his homeland from abroad. In the late 1930s he desperately sought funding for his "teleforce," a proposed weapon that he claimed "will bring down a fleet of 10,000 enemy airplanes at a distance of 250 miles . . . and will cause armies of millions to drop dead in their tracks." Never one for modesty, he boasted the weapon was "the most revolutionary technical advance in history."* [Historic poster collection—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

wireless transmission of energy and information, he came up with his best-known invention, the Tesla coil, an electrical transformer that produced high voltages with low currents. He devised an electric arc lamp, one of the hundreds of patents he obtained, "as well as innumerable dynamos, transformers, coils, condensers, and other electrical apparatus," in the awed words of an obituary in the *New York Herald Tribune*.

The Hoover Institution Library & Archives holds personal correspondence and other documentation that shed light on Tesla's final years: his last ideas, inspirations, and eccentricities, as war clouds gathered over Europe and, after war broke out, his beloved Yugoslav homeland was overrun and occupied by the Axis forces. These materials can be found in the papers of Konstantin Fotić



HONORS: Vladimir Hurban, the head of the Czechoslovak mission in the United States, presents Tesla the Order of the White Lion, his country's highest medal, on the scientist's eighty-first birthday, July 10, 1937. That same day, Tesla was honored with the Grand Cordon of the White Eagle, Yugoslavia's highest order; it was the first time the award had been granted to a US citizen for civil accomplishments. Yugoslav representative Konstantin Fotić, left, watches. [Nikola Tesla Museum]

(1891–1959). The Serbian-born Fotić was the kingdom of Yugoslavia's head of mission and then ambassador to the United States in 1935–44. Fotić's collection contains valuable materials related to the history of Yugoslavia, Yugoslav-US relations, and postwar Serbian emigration to America. Among these materials are Tesla's letters, telegrams, reports, and other items that the scientist sent from his apartment in New York to the Yugoslav embassy in Washington.

A SECRET WEAPON

The Tesla legend has, if anything, grown stronger with time. In recent years he has been called “the inventor of the twentieth century” and “the inventor

PROJEKTOVANJE AVIONA: DR. NIKOLA TESLA
STRAŠNO NAČINJENJE PROJEKTOVANJE AVIONA

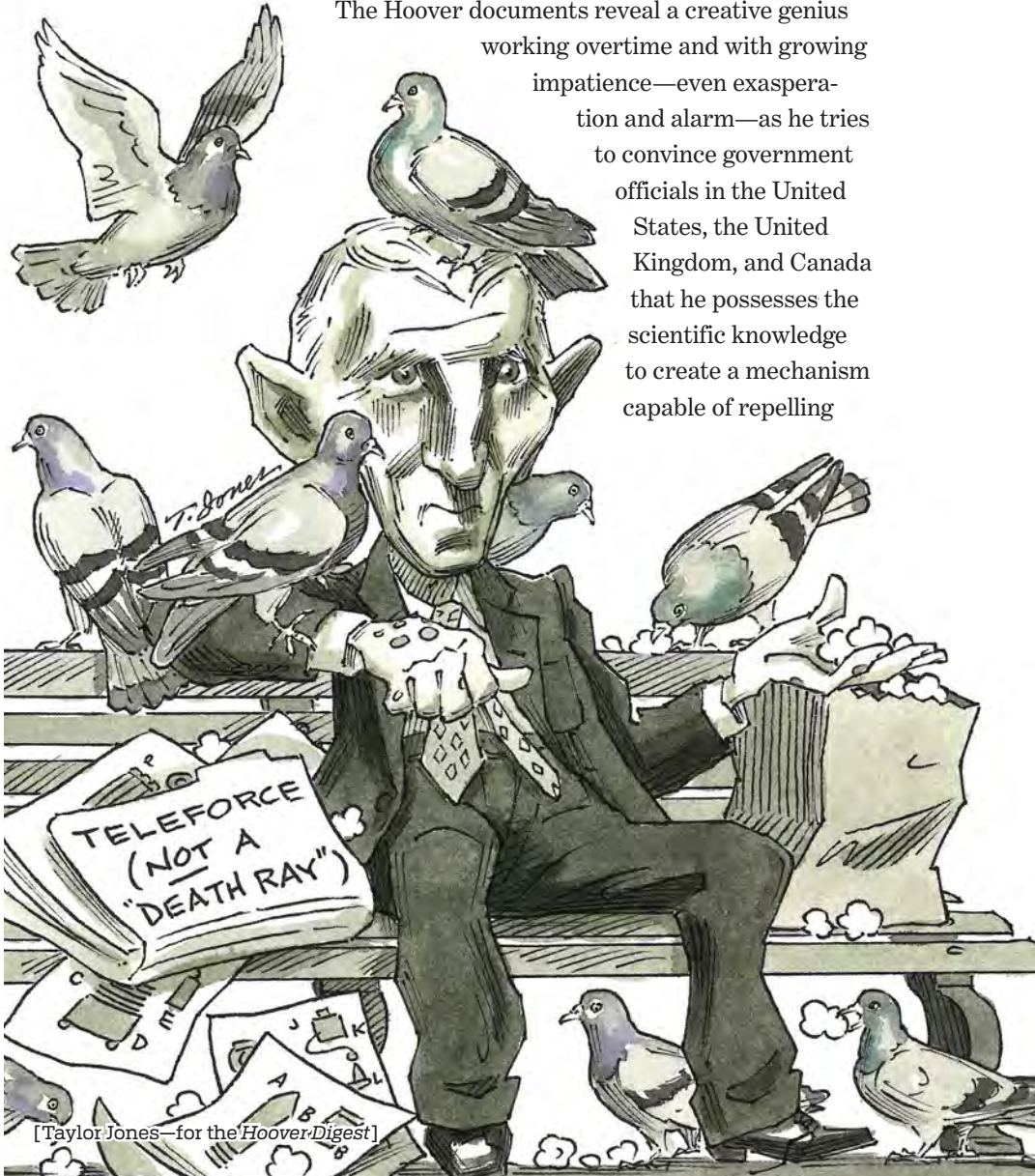
EVROPSKI SAVEZNICI V. BRITANIJE NAPADAJU NA BRITANSKIM AVIONIMA



ALLIES: A World War II British poster, written in Serbo-Croatian, highlights the pilots from many nations, including Yugoslavia, who are joining the fight against Nazi Germany. Nikola Tesla sought to do his part for the war effort by beseeching first Great Britain, then Canada and the United States, to pay for the development of his secret weapon. Even after German troops overran Yugoslavia in 1941, Tesla reassured his friend Fotić that he was “preparing several discoveries for our homeland that will produce a complete turnaround.” [Historic poster collection—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

of the modern,” his name synonymous with bold ideas and inventions, with cutting-edge creativity. His extraordinary achievements were accompanied by an eccentric life, which has added to his legend. Mayor La Guardia noted this dichotomy. Tesla retains a reputation as an eccentric genius known for selflessly giving his ideas and inventions to the world: a pure scientific genius, a poet in science.

The Hoover documents reveal a creative genius working overtime and with growing impatience—even exasperation and alarm—as he tries to convince government officials in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada that he possesses the scientific knowledge to create a mechanism capable of repelling



[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

the military threat posed by Nazi Germany. In 1934, he announced a new invention: the “teleforce,” a defensive weapon capable of destroying enemy forces and weapons across great distances. As reported in the *New York Times*, it would “send concentrated beams of particles through the free air, of such tremendous energy that they will bring down a fleet of 10,000 enemy airplanes at a distance of 250 miles from a defending nation’s border and will cause armies of millions to drop dead in their tracks.” The invention would make war impossible,

Tesla claimed, by making “every nation impregnable against attack by airplanes or by large invading armies.”

“He is a feather in the cap of the whole human race,” said Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.

Newspapers called it Tesla’s “death ray.” He rejected the name. His proposed teleforce, Tesla insisted, would not project rays. But the name stuck, much the same way that, in a later day, President Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative was nicknamed “star wars.”

The Hoover archival documents pick up the story in 1937, as Tesla implores British and Canadian officials to support the development of his teleforce to defend against an attack from Nazi Germany, which Tesla assumed was inevitable. “Even a projectile from the Big Bertha could not penetrate the barrage of my machines without being exploded far from its mark,” Tesla wrote to an official in the War Office in London on September 7, 1937, referring to a big German cannon. Tesla’s tone is self-assured, even boastful, throughout these letters. The following month he appealed to Major-General A. E. Davidson, the Director of Mechanization at the War Office:

My discoveries and inventions for securing complete immunity from any form of attack constitute the most revolutionary technical advance in history and will affect profoundly the future of humanity. They will save millions of people and prevent destruction of property of inestimable value in all countries. They may also be the means of preserving and strengthening the greatest empire on earth.

Tesla demanded binding secrecy regarding all his communications and a guarantee of payment, to be delivered as soon as his invention’s protective power had been demonstrated, “without involved formalities or lawyer’s hocus pocus.” A few weeks later, having received no immediate



CURRENT: Postwar Yugoslavia basked in Tesla's aura, and the nations that emerged from the violent breakup of Yugoslavia still contest his legacy. The inventor appears on banknotes, coins, schools, and consumer goods—even as the namesake of the international airport in Belgrade, Serbia. Here, Serbia's 100-dinar banknote features a familiar image of the young inventor, along with the equation for the “tesla unit” (a measurement of the strength of magnetic fields) and a cascade of sparks. On the back: a drawing of his induction engine—and a dove.

reply from Davidson, he sent him another letter: “I remind you again respectfully that a barrage by my machines is the only possible remedy.”

Skepticism about the potential of Tesla's proposed teleforce aside, a major sticking point was that the inventor was asking for funds up front

in order to make good on his promises. He believed that what he was asking for was a small price to pay in view of the expect-

“His achievements were great and are becoming greater as time goes on.”

ed payoff, and he grew exasperated when his proposal was not instantly embraced. He again wrote to Davidson on February 8, 1938, to express his incredulity that “his Majesty's Government” could be so “amazingly short-sighted and penurious.” If the British government failed to act, Tesla wrote, the people will find out that Davidson and people in positions of responsibility like him had done nothing to defend them and they will rise up in revolution. “And I can predict, with almost mathematical certitude,” the scientist said, “that your distinguished career would be quickly and tragically terminated.”

Two days later, Tesla turned his attention toward the Canadian government, appealing his case to Major General A. G. L. McNaughton, president of the National Research Council in Ottawa. The letter's barrage of extravagant claims seems intended to overwhelm McNaughton's defenses:

The system I have perfected for protection and other military use is the result of many years of theoretical and experimental research and happy inspiration. Its practical realization was made possible through revolutionary discoveries I was fortunate to make and [my] invention of new methods and means for the generation, control, and transmission of non-dispersive energy under a tension exceeding twenty million volts I attained in 1899 and of such intensity as to destroy attacking aeroplanes at

great distances
and explode the
enemy's shells
while in flight. The
system embraces

an immense variety of subjects in the domain of mechanics, electricity, physics, and other branches of industry and science so that many volumes might be written in describing it.

***The Hoover collection highlights
Tesla's last ideas, inspirations, and
eccentricities.***

Tesla argued that he could not make a convincing case for his invention simply by providing a mere summary of his ideas. His scheme would have to be spelled out in detail, which meant financing up front. "If something is to be done I must meet your representatives well prepared to answer every question and to prove everything, that is to say furnish, virtually, all information to be contained in my full specifications which the disgusting stinginess of the British Government has prevented me from producing—a vice that may cause the fall of the Empire. To this end it would be necessary to prepare condensed specifications, drawings, and diagrams." The information could be compiled within six weeks, Tesla wrote, at a cost of twelve hundred pounds (about \$150,000 in today's dollars), "not including a reasonable compensation for myself."

DEFIANT FOR YUGOSLAVIA

Tesla shared the contents of the letters he sent to British and Canadian officials with Ambassador Fotić in Washington, reiterating his sense of exasperation about the reluctance to endorse his proposals. Throughout

this correspondence, as well as in his public statements, Tesla expressed his concerns about the fate of Yugoslavia under the shadow of war and his desire for his native land to draw closer to his adopted homeland.

The Yugoslav government showed its appreciation of his loyalty. On his eighty-first birthday, July 10, 1937, Tesla was presented the Grand Cordon of the White Eagle, the highest order of Yugoslavia, the first time the order had been granted to an American citizen for civil accomplishments. He was also, on this same occasion, the recipient of the Order of the White Lion, the highest medal of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, presented by Vladimir Hurban, the head of the Czechoslovak mission in the United States.

In a letter to Fotić dated May 19, 1939, shortly after the opening of the New York World's Fair, where Yugoslavia was represented, Tesla conveyed his deep sense of Yugoslav national pride. Most Americans would be “shocked”

Tesla announced his teleforce was “the most revolutionary technical advance in history and will affect profoundly the future of humanity.”

to learn about Yugoslavia's extraordinary contributions “to every field of human activity,” he wrote.

The Axis forces invaded Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941. The country was

quickly overrun and surrendered after only twelve days, as young King Peter II went into exile. The territory of Yugoslavia was divided among Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and their protectorates, with the creation of the fascist puppet Independent State of Croatia. The remains of the Royal Yugoslav Army formed a nationalist-royalist resistance movement. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, Yugoslavia's communists organized their own resistance movement. In the beginning, the two organizations were able to coexist. But their clashing ideologies and divergent views on politics, national questions, and methods of fighting the occupation forces eventually led to violent conflict between them.

Tesla remained defiant for Yugoslavia, insisting that, despite being occupied and parceled out, the country remained whole and would ultimately be victorious. As he wrote in a telegram to Fotić on May 11, 1941: “The Germans now have 300,000 troops in Yugoslavia, but they would need 6 million to defeat us and even then they wouldn't succeed. I am preparing several discoveries for our homeland that will produce a complete turnaround and which will be made available immediately.” After Tesla's

death, Ambassador Fotić recalled of him that “he was continually worrying about what was happening to Yugoslavia and was distressed upon hearing bad news from his native land. I am afraid that even though he was advanced in years he would have lived much longer had it not been for the terrible news of the sufferings which the war had inflicted upon all humanity.”

WIZARD OF THE HOTEL NEW YORKER

Tesla’s personal financial situation, meanwhile, was increasingly precarious. His communications with Ambassador Fotić almost always include an urgent request for money. Even in his glory days of landmark discoveries and inventions, Tesla had been impractical when it came to money, careless and luckless with protecting his patents. His lack of business acumen enabled others to make fortunes from his inventions. Now, in his final years, his situation

often seemed desperate. He was living in the Hotel New Yorker, near Penn Station in Midtown Manhattan, on the thirty-third floor, “in one large room crowd-

ed with plans, boxes, and technical references [where] he conducts his experiments and research,” as the *New York Times* reported in July 1938.

The famous inventor maintained a strictly vegetarian diet, with meals specially prepared for him by the hotel chef. Increasingly reclusive, he admitted very few visitors. A hotel manager was quoted as saying, “He made everybody keep at a distance greater than three feet.” Tesla’s eccentric behavior included the daily feeding of thousands of pigeons at St. Patrick’s Cathedral and the New York Public Library. When physical incapacity prevented him from continuing this activity, he hired a Western Union messenger boy to feed corn to the pigeons twice daily. “Tesla probably could have become a rich man had he chosen to become an employee of a large industrial concern,” wrote the *New York Times* after his death, “but he preferred poverty and freedom.”

In these final years, Tesla’s bold promises of inventions that would defend empires and turn back invaders became inseparable from his desperate pleas for financial help. An outsider reading Tesla’s letters and unaware of his tremendous accomplishments and his high self-regard might easily mistake them for the ravings of a bluffer desperate for money—never

Only “the disgusting stinginess of the British Government,” Tesla complained, stood between him and realization of his wonder weapon.

mind that the requested assistance was intended almost exclusively to fund his science, not himself. The incongruous coexistence of the genius and the scrounger is best captured in a telegram he sent to Fotic in May 1942, referring to the mortal threat posed by Hitler, which opens with a request for \$100 in one-dollar bills. “It is of unspeakable importance to the United States, Yugoslavia, England, Russia, and other countries under the yoke of

“He would have lived much longer had it not been for the terrible news of the sufferings which the war had inflicted upon all humanity.”

the beast. My discoveries will destroy him like thunder out of a blue sky within the year.”

Every July 10, Tesla celebrated his birthday with a luncheon at the

Hotel New Yorker, the occasion for the great scientist to unveil for the press his newest super-invention. Reporters marveled at the spectacle, though not all scientists were impressed, as a report in the *New York Times* noted on his eighty-second birthday, in 1938:

For the last forty years Dr. Tesla has been the storm center of scientific controversy. Recognized in the early part of his career as the father of modern methods of generating and distributing electrical energy, and pre-dating even Marconi in his experiments with wireless, Dr. Tesla has been decorated by many governments for his accomplishments. In recent years, however, it has been his custom to announce at his annual parties the perfection of inventions which some scientists have challenged as fantastic.

As the doubters pointed out, nearly all of Tesla’s major discoveries and inventions had come in the final two decades of the nineteenth century. In a 1934 profile of Tesla in the *New York Herald Tribune*, American journalist Joseph Alsop noted that “over and over again he has been ridiculed as a lunatic.” After Tesla died, author Gerald W. Johnson wrote that toward the end of his life “his eccentricity touched the very verge of sanity.” And yet even the doubters were reluctant to dismiss him outright, conscious of the fact that he was not some crackpot inventor but the great Nikola Tesla.

It was a point driven home by William Laurence, a Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* science reporter, in a profile published in September 1940, as the Battle of Britain was in full swing and the unrelenting German bombardment Tesla had warned about was making headlines. Laurence, an old acquaintance of Tesla’s, wrote that he “stands ready to divulge to the

United States Government the secret of his ‘teleforce,’ with which, he said, airplane motors would be melted at a distance of 250 miles, so that an invisible Chinese Wall of Defense would be built around the country against any attempted attack by an enemy air force, no matter how large.” The inventor stipulated that he would require a free hand, Laurence noted. “He would suffer ‘no interference from experts.’”

Laurence understood the arguments of the skeptics, the idea that Tesla had become a pathetic figure whose glory days were now long behind him. It would require an act of faith to meet Tesla’s demand for money up front to fund his project.

In ordinary times such a condition would very likely interpose an insuperable obstacle. But times being what they are, and with the nation getting ready to spend billions for national defense, at the same time taking in consideration the reputation of Mr. Tesla as an inventor who always was many years ahead of his time, the question arises whether it may not be advisable to take Mr. Tesla at his word and commission him to go ahead with the construction of his teleforce plant.

Tesla told Laurence he needed \$2 million (about \$44 million today) to proceed with his project. The price might seem steep, Laurence observed, but \$2 million was “a very small

sum compared with what is at stake. If Mr. Tesla really fulfills his promise the result achieved would be truly staggering.... Considering the probabilities in the case even if the chances were

100,000-to-1 against Mr. Tesla, the odds would still be largely in favor of taking a chance on spending \$2,000,000.” As for the notion that Tesla was over the hill—or had wandered over the edge—Laurence countered that “he still retains full intellectual vigor” and urged US defense officials to take his proposals seriously. “The sum is insignificant compared with the magnitude of the stake.”

An obituary noted Tesla’s “world of fantasy crackling with electric sparks, packed with strange towers to receive and emit energy and dreamy contrivances to give utopian man complete control of nature.”

“POOR TESLA”

“Tesla passed away last night,” Ambassador Fotić wrote in his diary on January 8, 1943. “The hotel maid found him dead in his bed. Poor Tesla,



Augtera

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was convinced that he would live 125 years.” Tesla’s death inspired reverent tributes to the great scientist and his wondrous achievements. “If ever an inventor satisfied the romantic requirements of a Jules Verne novel, it was Nikola Tesla,” declared a *New York Times* editorial on January 9. “It was the Jules Verne future that engrossed him, for which reason the last half of his life was spent in the isolation of a recluse. For forty years he lived and worked in a world of fantasy crackling with electric sparks, packed with strange towers to receive and emit energy and dreamy contrivances to give utopian man complete control of nature. It was a lonely life.” The elegiac tone makes it seem as if the great Tesla had passed on long ago.

Tesla received an official state funeral under the auspices of the Yugoslav government-in-exile, a service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan conducted in Serbian by the rector of the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Sava, in New York. The estimated 1,500 to 2,000 mourners included an impressive array of inventors, scientists, government officials, and people of distinction. Ambassador Fotić attended as chief representative of his government. His papers contain the text of a eulogy he wrote for Tesla, which he planned to read at the funeral:

Those of us who were privileged to be close to Tesla in his latter days well know how hard he concentrated on his supreme task, an invention which would transcend all other inventions, through which he could banish war from the face of the earth. Pursuing mankind’s endless quest to master still more of nature’s mysteries, Tesla spent many a long and solitary hour seeking to harness the energy of the earth, of the sun, indeed of the whole universe to work for the benefit of mankind... His own life followed the pattern of the world’s great poets, martyrs, and saints... He was good to his friends, to young people needing encouragement, to the poor who needed help, but his great love was reserved for science and for his two fatherlands.

At the end of the Second World War, Yugoslavia was restored, this time as a federation of six “republics” under communist rule. Identification

LIGHT THE WAY: A bronze statue of Nikola Tesla (opposite) has stood at the corner of Birch Street and Sheridan Avenue in Palo Alto since 2013. Artist Terry Guyer created the figure, which re-enacts a Tesla experiment in wireless light, and used crowdfunding to pay for it. True to its likeness, the statue emits invisible energy—in this case, a wi-fi signal. [Bertrand M. Patenaude]

with Tesla remained strong there. His name was ubiquitous, used to designate streets and squares, schools, companies, and scientific institutions. His face was visible on banknotes, in textbooks, and as sculptures along city streets. Tesla's name was a potent common denominator for all citizens of Yugoslavia.

Today, Yugoslavia is no more. More than twenty-five years after a vicious ethno-national war among people in whose common future Tesla sincerely believed, there are now separate South Slavic states—Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and North Macedonia. In those new states, historical figures—their ideas and achievements—are being enlisted in the construction of new national historical narratives. One of the most contested figures is Nikola Tesla, whose image appears today on both the Serbian 100-dinar note and the Croatian euro cent coins. Belgrade's international airport is named for him. What would Tesla, a fervent believer in a South Slav identity, have said about this? "I am equally proud of my Serbian origin and my Croatian homeland," Tesla once wrote to Dr. Vlatko Maček, a leading Croat politician in the kingdom of Yugoslavia. "Long live all Yugoslavs!" Perhaps his Yugoslavia was one of those inventions destined to be regarded as fantastic. ■

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On the Cover

German-born artist and graphic designer Winold Reiss (1886–1953) created this portrait of Wades in the Water, a leader and warrior of the Blackfeet tribe. Reiss befriended many of the Blackfeet beginning in 1920, when he first sojourned on their Montana reservation. “After reading stories of the American West, my grandfather decided to come to America with the express purpose of creating a permanent living memorial to the Native culture and spiritual way of life with very accurate portraits,” a grandson, Peter Reiss, said at a 2022 exhibit at the Museum of the Plains Indian in Browning, as quoted in the *Daily Inter Lake*. Reiss also opened an art school and taught Blackfeet for free.

This calendar reframes the Old West for an age of steel. Starting in 1927, Reiss painted many Indians, including Wades in the Water, for the Great Northern Railway, whose “Empire Builder” Streamliners streaked across the country’s northern edge and right through Glacier National Park, which was carved out of Blackfeet lands. Even before Reiss came West, the railway had been using Indian imagery to attract visitors to the park, where it operated a hotel and other amenities. Under the slogan “See America First,” it invited travelers to see the first Americans. Blackfeet were hired to “camp” for tourists, performing dances, songs, and ceremonies. Their likenesses appeared on postcards, playing cards, train schedules, and menus.

Meanwhile, the Great Northern was building a future that pushed a former way of life even further into the past. Founder James J. Hill settled waves of immigrants along the tracks and boosted farming, logging, and shipping. He completed his transcontinental route in 1893, the same year Frederick Jackson Turner declared the frontier closed. Ayn Rand wrote in 1966 that the GN “was responsible, single-handed, for the development of the entire American Northwest”—a mention that has endeared Hill to many libertarians, particularly for his refusal to accept federal subsidies. (He also may have inspired *Atlas Shrugged*.) Hill wrote a manifesto/memoir titled *Highways of Progress*.

Wades in the Water was a longtime Blackfeet police chief. His ordinary chief’s attire—olive linen coat, brass buttons, red epaulets—is kept in the Museum of the Plains Indian.

—Charles Lindsey



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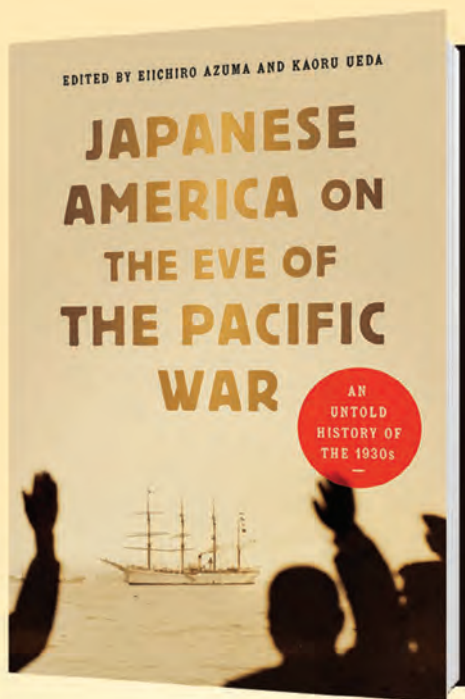
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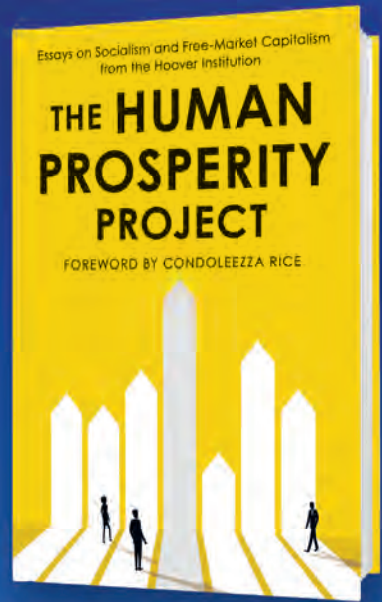


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