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- » Analyze the effects of government actions and public policies
- » Use reasoned argument and intellectual rigor to generate ideas that nurture the formation of public policy and benefit society

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Comments and suggestions: digesteditor@stanford.edu (650) 497-5356

Reprints:

hooverpress@stanford.edu (650) 723-3373

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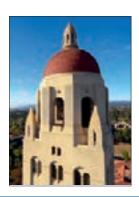
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ON THE COVER

Hoover Tower, Stanford's iconic landmark, shows off its architectural beauty in a drone's eve view. The Tower, which looks over the historic sandstone-and-tile Quad while serving as a beacon for the campus, turns eighty years old this year. The records it holds "should attract those who search for peace," former president Herbert Hoover said at its dedication in 1941. Today, the purpose of the Hoover Institution's holdings is just as relevant, but the role of the Tower-and all it contains-is evolving for the digital age. See story, page 197. [Photo by Tim Griffith]



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Red Lines

The United States and its allies must refuse to let Beijing hold them hostage.

By Matt Pottinger

n the weeks surrounding President Biden's inauguration in January, Chinese leaders waged an information campaign aimed at the United States. Their flurry of speeches, letters, and announcements was not, as the press first assumed, addressed mainly to the new administration. This was an effort to target the US business community.

The Communist Party's top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, spoke to a virtual audience of American business leaders and former government officials in early February. He painted a rosy picture of investment and trade opportunities in China before warning that Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are "red lines" that Americans would do well to keep quiet about. Yang excoriated Trump administration policies toward China and was unsubtle in pressing his audience to lobby the Biden administration to reverse them.

Key points

- » China's grand strategy: to accumulate and exert economic leverage to achieve its political objectives around the world.
- » Beijing pressures business leaders as a way to influence Washington.
- » Manufacturers would be wise to find ways to diversify their supply chains.

General Secretary Xi Jinping, seated before a mural of the Great Wall of China, beamed himself to business elites in Davos, Switzerland, in late January. He urged them to resist efforts by European and American policy

Matt Pottinger is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. He served as deputy White House national security adviser in 2019–21.

makers to "decouple" segments of their economies from China's. Xi also wrote a personal letter to a prominent US businessman exhorting him to "make active efforts to promote China-US economic and trade cooperation."

To make clear that these were requirements, not suggestions, Beijing announced sanctions on nearly thirty current or former US government officials (me among them). These were in addition to the sanctions Beijing placed on American human rights activists, prodemocracy foundations, and some US senators last year.



Beijing's message is unmistakable: you must choose. If you want to do business in China, it must be at the expense of American values. You will meticulously ignore the genocide of ethnic and religious minorities inside China's borders; you must disregard that Beijing has reneged on its major promises—including the international treaty guaranteeing a "high degree of autonomy" for Hong Kong; and you must stop engaging with security-minded officials in your own capital unless it's to lobby them on Beijing's behalf.

Another notable element of Beijing's approach is its explicit goal of making the world permanently dependent on China and exploiting that dependency for political ends. Xi has issued guidance, institutionalized in March by his rubber-stamp parliament, that he is pursuing a grand strategy of making China independent of high-end imports from industrialized nations while making those nations heavily reliant on China for high-tech supplies and as a market for raw materials. In other words, decoupling is precisely Beijing's strategy—so long as it's on Beijing's terms.



ALERT: Chinese sailors line the railing of the destroyer Qingdao during a port call at Pearl Harbor. Beijing is putting special emphasis on what it calls "powerful countermeasures and deterrent capabilities." [Joe Kane—US Navy]

Even more remarkable, the Communist Party is no longer hiding its reasons for pursuing such a strategy. In a speech Xi delivered early last year, published only in late October in the party's leading theoretical journal, *Qiu Shi*, he said China "must tighten international production chains' dependence on China" with the aim of "forming powerful countermeasures and deterrent capabilities."

FEELING THE LEVERAGE

This phrase—"powerful countermeasures and deterrent capabilities"—is party jargon for offensive leverage. Beijing's grand strategy is to accumulate and exert economic leverage to achieve its political objectives around the world.

Here's a recent example. After building significant trade volume with Australia over the years, Beijing last year suddenly began restricting imports of Australian wine, beef, and barley for purely political reasons. Beijing released a list of fourteen "disputes"—political demands of the Australian government. They include rolling back Australian laws designed to counter Beijing's covert influence operations in Australian politics and society and even muzzling Australia's free press to suppress news critical of China.

Australia's travails are a foretaste of what Beijing has in store for the rest of the world. American businessmen, wishing for simple, lucrative commercial ties, have long resisted viewing US-China relations as an ideological struggle. But strategic guidance issued by the leaders of both countries makes clear the matter is settled: the ideological dimension of the competition is inescapable, even central.

Biden last spring published his Interim National Security Strategic Guidance. The document puts China in a category by itself as "the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system."

In his signed introduction to the document, Biden wrote:

I believe we are in the midst of a historic and fundamental debate about the future direction of our world. There are those who argue that given all the challenges we face, autocracy is the best way forward.... We must prove that our model isn't a relic of history; it's the single best way to realize the promise of our future.

This candor is helpful. Beijing's dirty secret is that Xi, in his internal speeches, has for years been describing the competition in precisely these ideological terms. Consider a passage from his seminal speech—kept secret for six years—to the Communist Party Central Committee on January 5, 2013:

There are people who believe that communism is an unattainable hope, or even that it is beyond hoping for—that communism is an illusion. . . . Facts have repeatedly told us that Marx and Engels's analysis of the basic contradictions in capitalist society is not outdated, nor is the historical-materialist view that capitalism is bound to die out and socialism is bound to win. This is an inevitable trend in social and historical development. But the road is tortuous. The eventual demise of capitalism and the ultimate victory of socialism will require a long historical process to reach completion.

The Biden and Xi quotations are almost mirror images. The president's quotation serves as a belated American rejoinder to Xi's furtive call for the defeat of capitalism and democracy, which he made during President Obama's first term.

Biden's guidance also signals that while his tactics will deviate from those of the Trump administration, there is significant continuity in US strategy.



GUIDANCE: Li Ye, a maritime pilot, watches shipping in the port of Tianjin, China. Many Washington officials are pondering a "selective" or "managed" decoupling from the Chinese economy that would address new geopolitical realities. [Zhao Zishuo—Xinhua]

It reflects the bipartisan consensus on China that has emerged over the past few years. No wonder, then, that Beijing is focusing its influence activities on other segments of American society—the business community in particular. Beijing knows that its efforts to influence Washington are increasingly in vain.

A LIMITED, AND PRUDENT, DECOUPLING

So what should American CEOs do? First, they should come to grips with how much the situation has changed over the past few years—and acknowledge that those changes are almost certainly here to stay.

CEOs will find it increasingly difficult to please both Washington and Beijing. Biden's strategic guidance flatly states: "We will ensure that US companies do not sacrifice American values in doing business in China." Chinese leaders, as mentioned, are issuing loud warnings that multinationals must abandon such values as the price of doing business in China. Like sailors straddling two boats, American companies are likely to get wet.

One prudent step would be for CEOs to review formally how the new geopolitical reality affects them on both sides of the Pacific. The great-power competition with China has introduced a thicket of new regulatory, fiduciary, and reputational risks to which corporations are only waking up. Beijing's intensifying use of extrajudicial tools is another threat. The Communist lead-

ership's decision to take hostage two Canadian citizens, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, is a case in point.

China warns that Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are red lines that Americans would do well to keep quiet about.

Another prudent step would be to draw up con-

tingencies for diversifying supply chains. The rush to concentrate so much of the world's manufacturing on the east coast of an autocratically ruled country was an aberration, and an unsustainable one.

No one in Washington is seriously threatening a wholesale decoupling of the two economies. That's a strawman argument put forward by Chinese propagandists and a few alarmists in the United States. But decoupling of a more limited variety—particularly in key technologies—is well under way, as it should be. In the Trump administration, we called it *selective decoupling*. Some Biden administration officials use the term *managed decoupling*. Senator Tom Cotton and others on Capitol Hill have adopted *targeted decoupling*.

When so many different political voices are using such similar language, CEOs need to pay attention.

MANY CONTESTS TO COME

A favorite analogy in Beijing and Washington is that our countries are running a marathon, and only one contestant will win. It's a fine metaphor, but closer to the truth is that we're in a 400-meter dash that we have to win to qualify for the next leg of the race. If, over the next four years, we fail to set the right conditions,

we could put ourselves on track to lose the race, although we might not realize it

CEOs will find it increasingly difficult to please both Washington and Beijing.

until several years after it's too late to win.

Above all, it will require America and its allies to consider in every policy we adopt, every bill we introduce, and every partnership that government and industry undertake whether it increases our collective leverage in this competition or surrenders leverage to a hostile dictatorship in Beijing. The present balance of the leverage is heavily in our favor. It's up to us to keep it that way.

Beijing knows it is in a sprint, too. Xi's January 2013 speech shows he is aware that members of his own party harbor doubts about their system. His

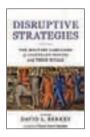
Beijing is explicit: if you want to do business in China, it must be at the expense of American values.

fellow party members know its advantages are fleeting and its shortcomings—including waste, bureaucratic inertia, and the unforgivingly magni-

fied consequences of each miscalculation—will start to show before too long, if they haven't already.

Beijing is trying to engineer victory from the mind of a single leader; free societies like ours harness the human spirit. Therein lies our ultimate advantage. The Communist Party's leaders are right about one thing: American CEOs, their boards, and their investors have to decide which side they want to help win. \blacksquare

Special to the Hoover Digest. Adapted from a speech delivered at the Hoover Institution on March 10, 2021.



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Battery Power

China's pursuit of a global green-energy monopoly includes locking up the battery supply chain. The Pentagon has a strong interest in not letting that happen.

By Nadia Schadlow and Arthur L. Herman

he future will see widespread adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and of advanced lithium batteries, their primary power source. Changing consumer preferences and government policies are driving this profound change in transportation networks and civilian markets. But the batteries used in EVs are vital in another area: military applications. Electrical energy stored in batteries can help platforms operate in a more stealthy, agile, and decentralized fashion. As adversaries such as China make it more challenging for US forces to operate, advanced batteries can help the Pentagon accomplish its missions in contested environments.

Unfortunately for the United States, China dominates the current battery supply chain,

Key points

- » Future US security depends on access to advanced batteries and the supply chain that goes with them.
- » China has leaped ahead in the entire "new energy" supply chain: mining, processing, assembling, and recycling. Its trade goals go hand-in-hand with its military goals.
- » The United States cannot be dependent on energy sources controlled by a strategic rival. It must arrange its own "leap" into advanced battery technologies.

Nadia Schadlow is a national security visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. She is a former deputy national security adviser for strategy. Arthur L. Herman is a historian and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

from the extraction and processing of critical minerals like lithium to the production, packaging, and recycling of battery cells. In today's era of great-power competition, control of the supply chains for advanced technologies such as lithium batteries will have a direct impact on national power. The United States must view advanced batteries—and energy storage more broadly—as critical to its defense industrial base, and then implement a national battery strategy that addresses the importance of batteries to national security.

OPERATIONAL ENERGY

For the past decade and a half, the Department of Defense has approached the problem of energy mainly from the perspective of cost savings and the need to reduce the vulnerability of supply lines during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. At the height of those wars, Defense Department energy bills ran in excess of \$20 billion a year. Thus, when Congress directed the Pentagon to create an office for operational energy in 2008, the mission for the new office was to "address how the US military consumed energy on the battle-field." (US code defines operational energy as "energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations.") In 2011, the Pentagon released its first Operational Energy Strategy. Senior leaders in Afghanistan were its main audience.

US leaders had long been concerned about personnel killed or wounded during attacks on fuel and water convoys. A 2007 Army Environmental Policy Institute analysis of the toll found one casualty for every twenty-four fuel resupply convoys in Afghanistan; in Iraq, the figure was one for every thirty-nine. The AEPI estimated there were 5,133 fuel convoys in Iraq and

"Nobody has contested our supply lines in seventy years."

897 in Afghanistan that year, and 170 US servicemembers were killed or wounded securing them. Former Marine Corps

Commandant General Jim Amos observed at the time that the Corps was consuming "in excess of 200,000 gallons of fuel per day in Afghanistan" and that our enemies understood the effects of disrupting the energy supply chain. Our "addiction to oil," he pointed out, "came at a heavy price."

Ten years after the release of the first Operational Energy Strategy, concerns about the vulnerabilities posed by the energy supply chain linger. The Defense Department consumes more than ten million gallons of fuel each day, plus some thirty terawatt-hours of electricity per year, according to a Pentagon news release last March. America's adversaries have identified the



STANDING BY: The Laser Weapon System (LaWS), developed by the Office of Naval Research, undergoes testing on the USS Ponce in the Arabian Gulf in 2014. Futuristic devices such as high-energy lasers and microwave weapons promise a cost-effective way to counter unmanned systems and have drawn increased defense funding. Whether on ships, in the air, or on the ground, directed-energy weapons will need advanced sources of power. [John F. Williams—US Navy]

US military's reliance on energy supply chains as a significant weakness. As Lieutenant General Clinton Hinote, the Air Force deputy chief of staff for strategy, integration, and requirements, has explained, "When we play our wargames, almost always, our opponents will target energy as a major source of vulnerability."

Such concerns are especially relevant as the US military seeks to deter China. Beijing's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy is designed to inhibit the United States and its allies from moving freely into and within a theater of operations. This strategy combines the use of long-range anti-ship missiles with submarine attacks, air interdiction, and cyberattacks, putting the US Navy in a more vulnerable position and eliminating unfettered access for maritime forces. The Pentagon has focused anew on operational energy to explore how new forms of power generation and energy storage, including advanced batteries, can improve the military's ability to sustain its platforms, weapon systems, and personnel in the field.



ON TARGET: A prototype Stryker armored vehicle takes the field in an Army exercise in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, last summer. The vehicle was testing lasers to defend against unmanned aircraft, rockets, artillery, and mortars. The directed-energy "shoot off" was declared a success and a "gateway to the future." [US Army]

Defense officials sometimes refer to the "tyranny of distance." Unfavorable geography in the Pacific means that resupplying US forces during a conflict would be complicated and dangerous. To reach troops in the western Pacific, ships departing the US Navy hub at Naval Base San Diego must sail across the largest ocean in the world, a journey that can take several weeks. In an age of satellite imagery, ever-present sensors, and long-range missiles, this would be a risky proposition during wartime.

Pentagon strategists are responding to these challenges by developing ways to fulfill missions in decentralized, agile formations that could operate far from supply lines. These concepts seek to use forward-deployed, highly capable units spread across a large area. But for these concepts to succeed,

US forces must transition towards energy sources that can operate independently of legacy supply chains. General David Berger, commandant of the Marine Corps, has called logistics and supply chain management "the hardest problem going forward" for defense planners. He adds, "Nobody has contested our supply lines in seventy years."

WHAT BATTERIES CAN (AND CAN'T) DO

Battery innovation also will create capabilities that boost force projection and mobility. One operational benefit is additional stealth: batteries are quiet and lack the heat signature created by internal combustion engines, so hybrid vehicles or EVs can operate in a "silent watch" mode, evading detection in contested environments. Eventually these developments could alter the Army's force structure. "In ten years, some of our brigade combat teams will be all-electric," Donald Sando, deputy to the commanding general at the US Army's Maneuver Center of Excellence, told an audience in 2017. Sando said he envisioned seventy-five-ton vehicles powered by electric motors, fed by high-capacity batteries that would be recharged by a ten- to fifty-kilowatt generator. "Does that mean in ten years the Abrams tank will be fully electric? No. We're going to replace it" and thousands of other combat vehicles over time, initially with hybrid-electric technology, Sando said.

Unlike military vehicles powered by a traditional internal combustion engine, EVs or hybrids can also function as an energy-providing "platform" for other systems in the field, such as electromagnetic warfare systems, satellite communication terminals, command and control links, high-performance edge computing for artificial intelligence, and unmanned systems.

 $\label{eq:mobile} \mbox{Mobile battery packs will allow the individual soldier to operate more}$

independently, keeping him or her linked to the command network while conducting distributed operations. Implement-

Advanced batteries are an essential building block for US military goals.

ing the highly mobile "decision-centric warfare" that Pentagon strategists envision requires soldiers be equipped with lighter and more mobile batteries with increased longevity and range. A 2011 Army Research Laboratory report said that on an average seventy-two-hour mission in Afghanistan, the typical American soldier already carried about seventy batteries, adding almost twenty pounds.

Beyond stealth and mobility benefits, batteries will play a significant role in powering unmanned systems, which are key to the future of warfare.



Unmanned systems come at a fraction of the cost of those involving crews and can perform more dangerous missions. They use a number of different power sources, depending on their size and mission requirements. Electric unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) can be charged almost anywhere, are relatively easy to transport, offer reduced noise and thermal signatures, and are easily "refueled" by replacing the battery pack. But current limitations in battery technology constrain endurance and range; typical battery-powered UAVs can fly for a maximum of ninety minutes before they need to be recharged. Moreover, batteries alone cannot power medium or large systems, or those that must fly for long periods.

Batteries also help power next-generation weapons, including electromagnetic warfare systems. Over the past few decades, the proliferation of cheap sensors and digital communications has made the electromagnetic spectrum a much busier place. In the civilian world, cheap sensors and Internet connectivity—with signals sent via 5G networks—have helped create the so-called "Internet of things" and open the door to a host of commercial applications. In the military world, opposing forces use the electromagnetic spectrum to disrupt communications, destroy enemy equipment, spy on potential adversaries, detect enemy forces, and counter attacks—in short, to gain any advantage in an increasingly contested information environment. Militaries around the world have made domination of the spectrum a priority. The bipartisan and independent National Defense Strategy Commission, co-chaired by Hoover Distinguished Military Fellow Gary Roughead, in 2018 labeled electronic warfare "critical in any future conflict, especially those against major-power rivals."

Electromagnetic warfare systems play important roles in countering unmanned systems. Since unmanned systems are cheaper than manned counterparts and can be deployed in large numbers, they are tactically challenging to oppose with traditional precision-guided munitions. Electromagnetic warfare offers an inexpensive way to disable or destroy unmanned systems.

Directed-energy weapons are part of this evolving environment. The Pentagon defines a directed-energy weapon as one that "uses directed energy to incapacitate, damage, or destroy enemy equipment, facilities, and/or personnel." They come in two main forms: high-energy lasers and high-powered microwave weapons. Each also promises a cost-effective way to counter unmanned systems. Pentagon spending on research into directed-energy weapons doubled from fiscal year 2017 to 2019, rising to \$1.1 billion.

Finally, satellite systems demand advanced energy storage technologies. Batteries on current satellites can be massive. Lighter and more efficient batteries would mean not only less mass launched into space but less hazardous debris in orbit. Space is crucial for twenty-first-century military operations—satellites enable GPS navigation and communications, allowing the US military to communicate and to track enemy forces—and deserves to be thought of as a strategic domain in its own right. "The next major conflict may be won or lost in space," former acting defense secretary Patrick Shanahan warned in a 2019 symposium.

But safety concerns and poor battery performance remain an obstacle in all these endeavors. Lithium-ion batteries can present a fire risk, especially when punctured or used improperly. Technological advancements are needed to address this issue. In addition, batteries offer a low energy density compared to traditional fossil fuels. In terrestrial use, they must be recharged frequently from a nearby ground station with an accessible energy source. Last year, for instance, a report noted that the batteries in the Army's Stryker vehicles were insufficient to power some electromagnetic warfare systems, including

The electromagnetic spectrum is an arena to disrupt communications, destroy enemy equipment, spy on potential adversaries, or counter attacks.

the Tactical Electronic Warfare System (TEWS). A Stryker equipped with TEWS "could operate on battery power for twenty minutes before requiring the engine to run to recharge the vehicle batteries," the report noted.

They also have fallen short as a power source for AI-enabled platforms, which need abundant energy to perform calculations and transmit data.

To unlock the stealth, mobility, and AI benefits that batteries provide, and to dominate the electromagnetic spectrum and the emerging frontier of space, the US military must develop longer-lasting, more powerful batteries. And that task depends on securing the supply chain for these power sources—a project that will take time, funding, and persistence. The US military cannot be dependent on energy sources produced by a strategic rival.

WHERE CHINA COMES IN

Energy storage technologies, including batteries, have been a focus of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for the past decade or two. These technologies appeared in the Made in China 2025 Plan under the label "new energy." This sector is a direct application of China's civil-military fusion model: Beijing has aligned the benefits of its state support for EVs and battery



BIG WHEELS: Trucks transport ore in Anhui province. China has acquired major stakes around the globe in lithium, cobalt, graphite, and other materials critical to battery manufacture, and has surged ahead in building giant factories to assemble and recycle those batteries. [Newscom]

development with its defense goals. In 2018, the CCP outlined guidelines to strengthen research and development into defense technologies, including energy storage and batteries. The operational emphasis is clear. The guidelines focus on the role that energy storage can play in "adapting to harsh environments," improving reliability, and "power[ing] systems that are high-performance, lightweight, and have low energy consumption."

Helping drive these developments is the fact that China dominates each of the four stages of the battery supply chain: mining, processing, assembly, and recycling.

» Mining: China has solidified some degree of control over global supplies of critical minerals needed for battery production, including lithium, graphite, and cobalt. Chinese firms account for some 80 percent of the total global output of raw materials for advanced batteries. Thanks to favorable deals signed with companies in South America and Australia, Chinese firms boast direct or indirect control of some 70 percent of global lithium production. China is also the world's largest source for natural graphite, supplying more

than 60 percent in recent years. More than half of the cobalt reserves in the world are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and China now controls over half of the production in that country.

- » *Processing:* China boasts the largest minerals processing industry in the world. According to Benchmark Mineral Intelligence, China controls the processing of almost 60 percent of lithium, 65 percent of nickel, and more than 80 percent of cobalt. China also refines more than four-fifths of the world's battery-grade graphite. These minerals are then combined to form the battery cathode and anode, and Chinese firms dominate this step as well, manufacturing 61 percent of cathodes and 86 percent of anodes.
- » Assembly: China is far ahead in battery assembly "gigafactories." These specialized facilities create battery cells from cathode and anode materials, then wrap these cells into battery packs. More than 130 of the approximately 180 gigafactories planned or operational in the world are located or will be located in China. Just ten will be in the United States. A number of battery and auto companies have announced new American factories, but more work needs to be done.
- » Recycling: China dominates lithium-ion battery recycling, in part because China has built up critical infrastructure to recycle batteries from consumer electronics. About 70 percent of the lithium-ion batteries in the world are recycled in China and South Korea. In less than one decade, eleven million metric tons of lithium-ion batteries will reach the end of their service lives.

Ultimately, China's dominance across the battery supply chain should not come as a surprise: the CCP has carefully worked to identify and control

The United States should treat clean energy technologies as a competitive space, establishing a national battery strategy. foundational technology sectors, including digital financial technology and 5G networks. But batteries are a technology that also carries critical implications for US security.

Breaking China's dominance over the supply chain will require US planners to work closely with industry and government to reshore this key part of our defense innovation base.

The Pentagon has not been blind to the importance of batteries. Since the 1990s, the Defense Department has sought ways to keep its supply reliable and secure. Since 2017, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has run a Battery Network R&D Program dedicated to overseeing the transition from

lead-acid to lithium-ion batteries. The Pentagon has also joined the Federal Consortium for Advanced Batteries (FCAB), which brings together federal agencies interested in ensuring a domestic supply of lithium batteries.

Yet these efforts are not enough. The Defense Department needs not only to oversee a search for battery innovations but to look beyond existing supply

chains and adopt a realistic timeline for developing scalable domestic sources to meet the military's battery needs, including the ability to manufacture cells. Recent efforts by the

More than 130 of the 180 or so battery "gigafactories" planned or under construction worldwide are, or will be, in China. Just ten are in the United States.

executive branch, including the Biden administration's National Blueprint for Lithium Batteries, released last summer, fail to address these critical defense-related needs.

Beijing long ago predicted the strategic shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and, in response, has spent years tightening its grip on the supply chains. For the United States to grow its EV industry and fully capitalize on the military capabilities that batteries offer, policy makers must develop a national battery strategy that does the following:

- » Make and encourage investments in mining, processing, battery production, and recycling. Given the strategic importance of batteries and their inputs, government support is necessary to build an American battery industry. This will require the use of diplomatic and economic tools to work with friendly countries to ensure a sustained source of critical minerals, plus incentives for domestic mining and processing firms, cathode and anode manufacturers, and battery producers.
- » Drive innovation in mineral substitutes, next-generation battery technologies, and manufacturing to minimize supply-chain vulnerabilities and leapfrog Chinese suppliers. The United States must develop alternative battery chemistries to substitute for costly or scarce minerals, boost R&D for next-generation technologies, and increase funding for improved manufacturing techniques for lithium-ion batteries.
- » Use Defense Department tools to strengthen the supply chain for military batteries, with a goal of putting new capabilities in the field.

 The Pentagon must employ its policy tools to secure the supply chain for military-grade batteries, which are built to more extreme specifications than commercial versions. Policy makers should start by launching a study of the

Pentagon's battery needs, then integrate the findings into the next Operational Energy Strategy.

» Invest in workforce development and cultivate skills across the supply chain. The United States needs to nurture domestic battery talent by investing in educational opportunities, supplemented by foreign expertise.

To break free of Chinese leverage, American policy makers must communicate and implement a national battery strategy that builds a domestic supply

Chinese firms account for some 80 percent of the total global output of raw materials for advanced batteries.

chain, with a special focus on military-grade batteries. Establishing a more resilient battery supply chain will require years of sustained effort from

dedicated policy makers. Ultimately, it is a question of will. If the United States intends to win the battery race, reframing energy policy as another front in the US-China strategic competition is a crucial first step. **m**

Special to the Hoover Digest. For a full discussion of these issues, see Towards a Strategic Approach to Batteries: A Hamilton Commission Report. Read it at https://www.hudson.org/policycenters/45-hamilton-commission-on-securing-america-s-national-security-innovation-base.



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Inside the Ministry of Fear

Like all totalitarian states, China is a master of propaganda. It's no surprise that even Americans are seduced—and threatened—into following the party line.

By Miles Maochun Yu

ropaganda is older than the medieval printing press, and every communications innovation increases the propagandists' reach. Westerners most often think of propaganda coming from its two ardent twentieth-century practitioners: the German Nazis and the Soviet communists. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda, laid out plainly the role of propaganda in a totalitarian regime: "It is the absolute right of the state to supervise the formation of public opinion . . . not every piece of news should be published, but instead those who control news policies must make every piece of news serve a certain purpose."

Key points

- » To Beijing, propaganda is the most crucial regime support mechanism.
- » China's external propaganda campaign is sophisticated and chillingly effective.
- » Through "elite capture," China has created a permanent class of propaganda proxies in the United States.
- » "Consciousness raising" was born from totalitarian propaganda.

Miles Maochun Yu is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is a participant in Hoover's Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict, and Hoover's project on China's Global Sharp Power.

Today's totalitarians hold the same view. Like the Nazis and the Soviets, twenty-first-century communists in Beijing also place a premium on propaganda as the most crucial regime support mechanism. And in comparison to their predecessors' propaganda, the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have been greatly enabled by advanced technologies, becoming much more systemic, sophisticated, and dangerously effective. In today's China, the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee commands enormous authority and resources, employing tens of millions of "propaganda workers" at all levels of the communist state, with an unlimited budget.

Closely following the guidelines on propaganda laid out in classic Marxist-Leninist writings, the CCP has conducted a century-long propaganda campaign against two targets: its own people and the world's democracies. For communists, propaganda is not a morally reprehensible act characterized by false representation of truth. Rather, propaganda is a virtue, a necessarily positive and crucial practice of governance.

The CCP's domestic propaganda campaign against its own people is blunt and direct. It is achieved through absolute monopoly and total control of all news and information platforms, complete censorship, and coerced, systemic indoctrination. Outside information is kept out behind a Great Firewall.

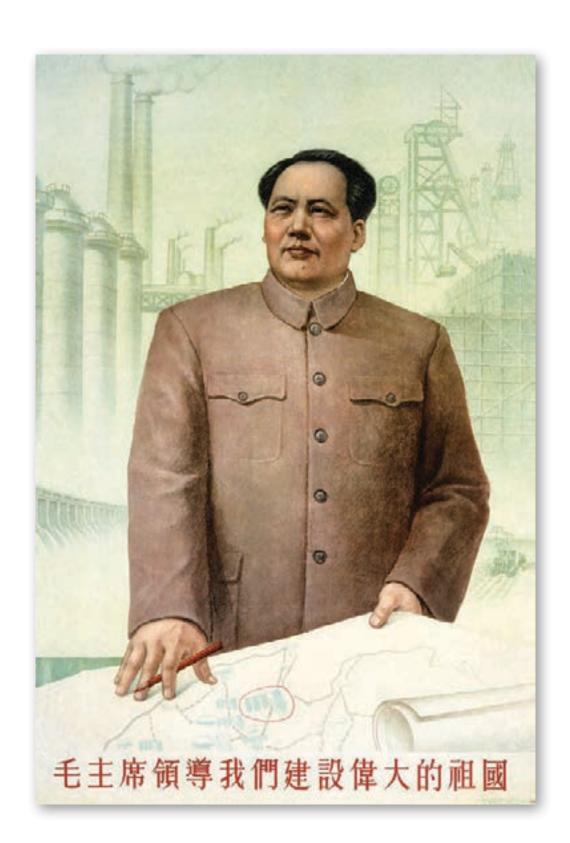
The party's foreign propaganda is more sophisticated, and chillingly effective. Leveraging Western elites' weakness and gullibility, plus the vulnerability of open societies, the CCP's overseas propaganda campaigns can be delineated into four general categories: disinformation, elite capture, coerced self-censorship, and brainwashing.

ENGINE OF FALSEHOOD

The disinformation campaign in the United States is broad. Moreover, the propagandists determined to undermine America's confidence are aided and abetted by our country's growing self-denunciation, from opinion-setting editorial boards to opinion-forming classrooms that see only vice in the world's oldest democracy and ignore the systemic goodness at its core.

In 2020 alone, Twitter—a social media platform banned inside China, along with all other Western social media apps—had to shut down close to 200,000 accounts linked to the Communist Party's state-sponsored

RED TIDE: A poster from 1953 (opposite) shows Mao Zedong, founder of communist China. "Chairman Mao leads us to build a great country," it says. [Hoover Institution Archives]



disinformation campaign. One since-removed tweet, from the Chinese embassy in Washington, described Xinjiang as a place of "emancipated women" who are no longer "baby-making machines," a nauseating euphemism for genocide.

While the CCP conducts wholesale racist genocide against its ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Muslims in Xinjiang, Beijing denounces America's so-called "systemic racism" using those same tools. Hua Chunying, spokeswoman for the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), more than once led her anti-American Twitter tweets with "I can't breathe" in the aftermath of the tragic death of George Floyd. Tens of millions of Chinese citizens, especially ethnic Tibetans, Uighurs, and Kazakhs in the regime's massive indoctrination and labor camp systems, are unavailable to comment, on Twitter or any other platform.

Today's technologies have emboldened propagandists further. With Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, the CCP spreads false information that the PRC is an ordinary democracy with guaranteed individual freedoms. The most breathtaking example in this regard is the recent episode of top Chinese diplomats lecturing their American counterparts, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan, in a meeting in March in Alaska. In a long, uninterrupted disinformation diatribe they expounded on the advantages of "the Chinese democracy" over American democracy.

Elite capture, often euphemistically referred to as united front work, also has been a seasoned practice of the CCP in conducting propaganda in the United States.

On July 13, 1990, the vice consul of culture, propaganda, and exchange in the PRC's San Francisco consulate general, who had defected to the United States in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Massacre, told a Berkeley audience how easy it was for CCP propagandists like himself to capture American intellectual and social elites to function as the CCP's proxies:

The tactic Chinese propagandists use is not really very complicated. It is simple. It is always to work on your ego, on your business interests, on your curiosity, and especially with the Chinese students (in the US), on your patriotism.

The former propagandist further disclosed that

in the early 1970s when Nixon visited China, his visit was followed by a swarm of China experts from Hong Kong and the West. Surprisingly, these people were the easiest targets of all because they were self-important. They thought they knew everything about China.

Indeed, since President Nixon's visit to China in 1972, the American elite's ego, business interests, and curiosity about Chinese culture have supplied fertile ground for the CCP to create a permanent class of propaganda proxies in the United States.

But elite capture goes further. Former senior government officials, including cabinet-level figures, routinely defend the Communist Party's murderous acts, including the Tiananmen Massacre and other egregious human rights violations. Some of these former officials have even become registered agents

for the Beijing regime and its party-controlled business interests in the United States. Many of our leading universities and their professors are co-opted by the CCP

For communists, propaganda is not a morally reprehensible act characterized by false representation of truth. Rather, it is a virtue.

to voice Beijing's views in the United States, in messages masquerading as research and objective surveys.

Not every captured elite is a hapless useful idiot. Yet, a significant portion of America's intellectual and political elites share the responsibility for perpetrating key Chinese propaganda agendas, including misleading the American public to minimize the degree to which China is still a country ruled by a Marxist-Leninist communist party.

SELF-CENSORSHIP AND FEAR

The manipulation of language is a prime example of this endeavor. Few people in the United States refer to the Chinese supreme leader by his real title, the only one that matters: general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, who is without exception a die-hard communist ideologue in command of a ruthless Leninist dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead, most Americans have almost universally, and falsely, rebranded him "president" of China, a much more democratic-sounding yet meaningless honorific.

The CCP uses such doublespeak to sell the American people a false ethos of modern China as a justly aggrieved nation, with its 1.4 billion diligent, party-loving people, being led by enlightened leaders toward a historic comeback after a "century of humiliation." Too many of our own intellectual and political elites have helped perpetrate this falsehood, and too often they hold



a paternalistic view of the Chinese people as a monolithic bloc burdened by five thousand years of history.

The real history of the past century is very different from the party's lies. In fact, ever since the 1919 May Fourth Movement, the real guiding ethos of

modern China has been one of striving toward universal values such as democracy and constitutional rule, and fighting against tyranny and

It's Marxist-Leninist thought that divides people into progressives and reactionaries.

dictatorship. If the CCP truly represented the 1.4 billion people of China, it would allow them to vote and stop gagging them.

Beyond disinformation and elite capture, Beijing's propaganda is effective in the United States because key cultural institutions practice self-censorship out of fear of the CCP.

Hollywood and the National Basketball Association are the most obvious examples. Maverick's jacket in the upcoming *Top Gun* sequel will be missing a patch with the flag of Taiwan. The villains in the *Red Dawn* sequel were to be Chinese military officers, but the insignias were swapped with the North Korean flag—it doesn't matter much to the bottom line if Pyongyang bans a studio's film. The Houston Rockets—a basketball team close to Chinese citizens' hearts because of former player Yao Ming—also got into hot water when the general manager retweeted in support of Hong Kong pro-democracy protests. He was forced to apologize, and few figures from the NBA have spoken up since.

"REMOLD THE BRAIN"

The most severe form of communist propaganda today is brainwashing. The party-controlled Confucius Institutes and the affiliated Confucius Classrooms have penetrated hundreds of college campuses and K-12 classrooms in the United States. Rather than being centers for the competition of ideas focused on the teaching of Chinese language and culture, they have introduced to American youths the principle and practice of unanimity of

SEAMLESS: Mao continues to have a place in modern Chinese propaganda, although the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party have moved beyond posters to include much more sophisticated technologies. Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are among the modern platforms for Beijing's propaganda campaigns. [Francisco Anzola—Creative Commons]

opinions and self-censorship on topics considered ideologically incorrect by a communist dictatorship thousands of miles away. Those topics include the Tiananmen Massacre, the Dalai Lama, and Falun Gong.

The effects of this brainwashing are shown in the American left's adoption of the CCP's key concepts and nomenclature. The Black Panthers got

"These people were the easiest targets of all because they were self-important. They thought they knew everything about China."

their initial ideological grounding and many of their political slogans from Chairman Mao's *Quotations*, given to them for free in Oakland by the Revolutionary Commu-

nist Party, USA. Today's common use of the word *progressive* by the radical left traces its intellectual origin straight to the Marxist-Leninist "dialectical" categorization of people into reactionaries and progressives. It is not from the modern legacy of the American Progressive movement represented by William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Robert M. La Follette, and Henry A. Wallace.

Beijing's newfound power in the twenty-first century and the new technologies at its disposal make the problem of communist propaganda especially urgent in our time. But the most brutal and disturbing brainwashing campaign in modern history took place in the early 1940s in the enclave of Yenan in North China, in an episode known as the "Yenan Rectification." The primary method of Mao Zedong's brainwashing in Yenan was "consciousness raising," which has become since the 1960s the main strategy of the American left.

The true meaning of "consciousness raising" was perhaps best described in the 1978 book *In Search of History*, by Theodore White, the wartime China correspondent for *Time* magazine. He wrote about his 1941 interview with one of Mao's right-hand men, a senior communist military commander, and detailed how Mao's "consciousness raising" percolated into American political life:

The men who came in from the field, he said . . . had to have their minds washed out, had to be remolded in ideology . . . a full year was necessary to "remold the brain" before they could go on to study military matters, or economics, or heal, or administration. His interpreter and I searched for a word better than "brain remolding" and finally the interpreter came up with the phrase

"raising the level of consciousness." This was the first time I heard that phrase, which, over the years, moved out of China and on to the streets and fashions of America in the 1960s.

Such has been the tale of much of the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda. Theodore White is dead, but the CCP is not. America is ever more vulnerable to the Communist Party's propaganda today.

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How Lies Go Viral

Beijing peddles a tale of American involvement in the origins of COVID-19. Social media does the rest.

By Gordon G. Chang

o let me say here that, in front of the Chinese side, the United States does not have the qualification to say that it wants to speak to China from a position of strength," said China's top diplomat, Yang Jiechi, to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan at the now-famous showdown in Anchorage last March.

Yang's words, part of a long tirade, were immediately amplified by Chinese state and Communist Party media. His comment was carried for weeks, first by reporting and then by analyses. Foreign commentators picked up the storyline that the Americans in Alaska were taken by surprise, thereby giving credence to Beijing's narrative of Chinese strength. It appears that Yang's rant and its coverage were planned well in advance. Blinken and Sullivan were, in short, ambushed.

Is Chinese propaganda effective in enhancing Beijing's strategic objectives? The answer, evident from this tactically brilliant and seamless operation, is yes.

"China controls the most expansive, heavily resourced, and sophisticated propaganda capabilities available to any regime in history," Kerry Gershaneck, author of the recently released *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China's Plan to "Win Without Fighting,"* told *Strategika*. "This massive propaganda juggernaut has reaped tremendous benefits for China's Communist

Gordon G. Chang is a columnist, author, and lawyer.

rulers in pursuit of their strategic objectives. Through its state-run propaganda organs, United Front organizations, and foreign enablers, Beijing has been able to effectively shape perceptions globally, if not perfectly at least well enough for its purposes."

INTIMIDATION ALL AROUND

In this case, Yang's assertive comment, flaunting China's rise, served Beijing's most important foreign policy objective: maintenance of Communist Party rule at home. The comment was relayed to the Chinese people, with especially inflammatory commentary. Fei-Ling Wang of Georgia Institute of Technology pointed out to me that China's huge and well-funded propaganda effort has worked well in promoting the party's leadership.

Yang's comment also served to intimidate foreigners. As Cleo Paskal of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies said to this publication,

Chinese propaganda media launched a "made in America" charge about the disease that spread around the globe.

"Berating the US delegation in Alaska served the propaganda purpose of showing smaller countries 'look at what we are willing to do to the US, so imagine what we will do to you.' "Paskal says Beijing has been "increasingly shifting to a 'fear us' message."

That message is usually presented these days in an America-is-in-irreversible-decline packaging, implying, without subtlety, that countries can no longer rely on Washington for help.

The messaging works not only because of repetition but also because it feeds into existing perceptions of China and America's different trajectories.

Chinese propaganda, of course, does not work as well when it tries to establish a narrative that seems false, but the propaganda does what China's regime needs it to do. Take the matter of the origin of COVID-19. Beijing continues to suggest—maliciously, without factual foundation—that the disease originated in the US Army's Fort Detrick, in Frederick, Maryland.

On February 23 of last year, *People's Daily*, the Communist Party's self-described mouthpiece and therefore the most authoritative publication in China, suggested the US military spread the disease to Wuhan. The Fort Detrick narrative appeared on WeChat, a popular Chinese social media platform, on March 9, and from there the story spread fast inside China.

"When did patient zero begin in the US?" asked Zhao Lijian, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, in a now-infamous tweet. "It might be US Army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan." That and his ten other tweets were cited 99,000 times in at least fifty-four languages in the following six weeks, according to an Atlantic Council–Associated Press investigation. Criticism of Zhao's messages spread the theory even further. The wide dissemination of the narrative created what the *New York Post* correctly called a "self-feeding cycle."

China since then has, through social media and other means, given new life to the Fort Detrick theory. For instance, on March 31 of this year, after the World Health Organization mission to Wuhan released its report on the origin of the disease, foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying again raised the Fort Detrick theory, something she also talked about previously this year. China's propaganda line may be ludicrous, but Beijing, using social media and other means, knows how to keep a story going.

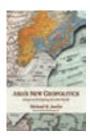
STOPPING THE AVALANCHE

As they say, quantity has its own quality. Gershaneck, now at Taiwan's National Chengchi University, refers to "the sheer mass of the daily bombardment of Communist Party messaging through Chinese state-owned and co-opted foreign media."

"Upright Voice Needed Globally Against Western Public Opinion Hegemony," a *Global Times* headline from April tells us. There is, in fact, no longer any Western "hegemony" in public opinion, if there ever was. China's giant—and effective—propaganda effort has seen to that.

As Gershaneck points out, "The democracies have abdicated the information battlefield to China for roughly three decades and are only recently beginning to recognize the egregious price they are paying for this failure." \blacksquare

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Is the Fed Losing Focus?

A hard lesson from the recent past shows how neglecting monetary policy feeds inflation. We mustn't let that happen now.

By John B. Taylor

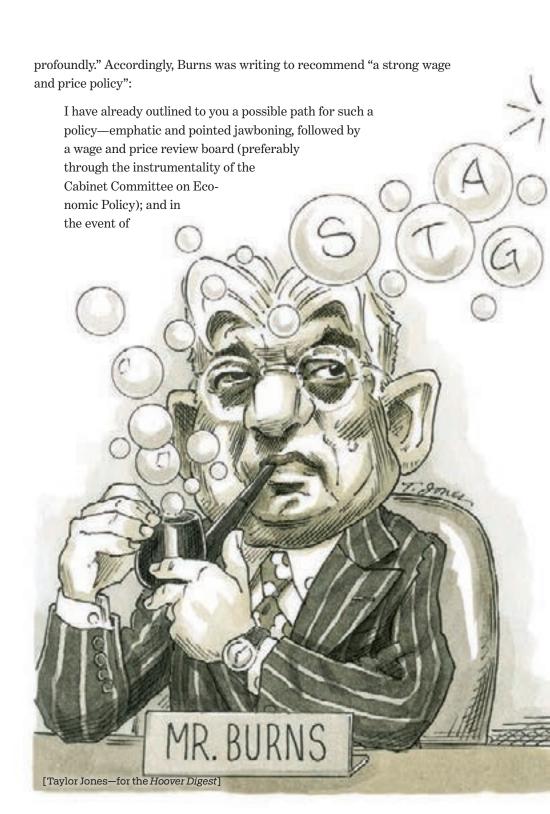
ust over fifty years ago, on June 22, 1971, Federal Reserve Chair Arthur Burns wrote a memorandum to President Richard Nixon that will long live in infamy. Inflation was picking up, and Burns wanted the White House to understand that the price surge was not due to monetary policy or to any action that the Fed had taken under his leadership. The issue, rather, was that "the structure of the economy [had] changed

Key points

- » A 1971 memo from Fed chief Arthur Burns persuaded President Nixon to impose wage and price controls. Meanwhile, the Fed ignored its chief responsibility.
- » Bad ideas lead to bad policies, which in turn lead to bad economic outcomes.
- » The Fed's policy is even more interventionist now than it was in Burns's day.

John B. Taylor is the George P. Shultz Senior Fellow in Economics at the Hoover Institution, chairman of Hoover's Working Group on Economic Policy, and a participant in the Shultz-Stephenson Task Force on Energy Policy and the Human Prosperity Project. He is also the Mary and Robert Raymond Professor of Economics at Stanford University and directs Stanford's Introductory Economics Center. His most recent book (with the late George P. Shultz) is Choose Economic Freedom: Enduring Policy Lessons from the 1970s and 1980s (Hoover Institution Press, 2020).

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or two ago), followed—perhaps no later than next January—by a six-month wage and price freeze.

Perhaps owing to Burns's reputation as a renowned scholar (he was Milton Friedman's teacher) and his long experience as a policy maker, the memo persuaded Nixon to proceed with a wage and price freeze, and to follow that up with a policy of wage and price controls and guidelines for the entire economy. For a time after the freeze was implemented, the controls and guidelines seemed to be working. They were even politically popular for a brief period. Inflation inched down, and the freeze was followed by more compulsory controls requiring firms to get permission from a commission to change wages and prices.

But the intrusive nature of the system began to wear on people and the economy because every price increase had to be approved by a

federal government bureaucracy. Moreover, it soon became obvious that the government controls and interventions were making matters worse.

Ignoring its responsibility to keep inflation low, the Fed had started letting the money supply increase faster, with the annual growth rate of M2 (a measure of cash, deposits,

and highly liquid assets) averaging 10 percent in the 1970s, up from 7 percent in the 1960s. This compounded the impact of the decade's oil shocks on the price level, and the inflation rate shot into double digits—rising above 12 percent three times (first in 1974 and then again in 1979 and 1980)—while the unemployment rate rose from 5.9 percent in June 1971 to 9 percent in 1975.

As we know now, the US economy's performance in the 1970s was very poor owing at least partly to that era's monetary policies. This was when the word "stagflation" was coined to describe a strange mix of rising inflation and stagnant economic growth. As James A. Dorn of the Cato Institute recently recounted, Nixon's "price controls went on to distort market prices" and are rightly remembered as a cautionary tale. "We should not forget that the *loss of economic freedom* is a high price to pay for a false promise to end inflation by suppressing market forces" [emphasis mine].

As it happens, *Choose Economic Freedom* is the title of a book that I published last year with George P. Shultz, who passed away in February at the age of one hundred. Shultz had gained decades of wisdom and experience as both a diplomat and economic policy maker, serving as the Nixon administration's budget director when Burns wrote his audacious memo. In an appendix to our book, we included the full text of that document, because it had only recently been discovered in the Hoover Institution Archives. It should now be recognized as required reading for anyone seeking to understand the recent history of US economic policy making.

The Burns memo is a perfect example of how bad ideas lead to bad policies, which in turn lead to bad economic outcomes. Despite Burns's extraor-

It was soon obvious that the government controls and interventions were making matters worse.

dinary reputation, his memo conveyed a set of terrible policy recommendations. By blaming everything on putative structural defects sup-

posedly afflicting the entire economy, the memo's worst effect was to shun the Fed's responsibility for controlling inflation, even though it was clearly responsible for the rising price level.

By the same token, good ideas lead to good policy and good economic performance. As Shultz and I showed, this was certainly the case in the 1980s. The Fed reasserted itself as part of a broader economic reform, and the economy duly boomed.

The message from this historical experience—and many other examples in the United States and elsewhere—should be abundantly clear. And while

history never repeats itself, it often rhymes, so consider where we are now: inflation is picking up, and the Fed is once again claiming that it is not responsible for that development. Instead, Fed officials argue that today's surge in prices merely reflects the bounce back from the low inflation of the past year.

Worse, the Fed's policy is even more interventionist now than it was in Burns's day. Its balance sheet has exploded from massive purchases of

Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities, and the growth rate of M2 has risen sharply over the past year. The federal funds interest rate is now lower than

A new word was born: "stagflation." It described a strange mix of rising inflation and stagnant economic growth.

virtually any tested monetary policy rule or strategy suggests it should be, including those listed in the Fed's own February 2021 Monetary Policy Report.

It's not too late to learn from mistakes and turn monetary policy into the handmaiden of a sustained recovery from the pandemic. But time is running out. \blacksquare

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Another Trillion-Dollar Baby

The Biden administration is eager to midwife a huge expansion in entitlement payments. More than half of all Americans would be on the federal dole.

By John F. Cogan and Daniel L. Heil

he federal government's system of entitlements is the largest moneyshuffling machine in human history, and President Biden intends to make it a lot bigger. His American Families Plan—which he recently attempted to tie to a bipartisan infrastructure deal—proposes to extend the reach of federal entitlements to twenty-one million additional Americans, the largest expansion since Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society.

For the first time in US history—except possibly for the pandemic years 2020 and 2021, for which we don't yet have data—more than half of working-age households would be on the entitlement rolls if the plan were enacted in its current form. Contrary to

Key points

- » The American
 Families Plan, billed
 as a no-cost expansion, will actually
 add more than \$1 trillion to the national
 debt over the next
 decade.
- » Most of the plan's benefits would go to middle- and upperincome households.
- » The proposal uses gimmicks to hide its true cost.

John F. Cogan is the Leonard and Shirley Ely Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project and its policy task forces on energy, the economy, and health care. **Daniel L. Heil** is a policy fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Biden's assertion that his plan "doesn't add a single penny to our deficits," his plan would add more than \$1 trillion to the national debt over the next decade.

The American Families Plan proposes several new entitlement programs. One promises students the government will pick up the entire cost of community-college tuition; another promises families earning 1.5 times their

state's median income that Washington will cover all day care expenses above 7 percent of family income for children under five; still another promises workers up to

The American Families Plan would add twenty-one million Americans to the list of federal entitlement beneficiaries.

twelve weeks of federally financed wage subsidies to take time off to care for newborns or sick family members.

The American Families Plan would follow long-standing government practice and make temporary emergency programs permanent. In March, Congress enacted the American Rescue Plan, which expanded Affordable Care Act subsidies and refundable tax credits for child care and low-wage workers. The expansions were sold as temporary measures to combat the effects of pandemic lockdowns. A month later, Biden asked Congress to make them permanent.

These programs extend eligibility for benefits high up the income ladder. Two-parent households with two preschool-age children and incomes up to \$130,000 would qualify for federal cash assistance for day care. Single parents with two preschoolers and incomes up to \$113,000 would qualify. And some families with incomes over \$200,000 would be eligible for health insurance subsidies. Other parts of the plan, such as paid leave and free community college, have no income limits at all.

Our analysis shows that the American Families Plan would add twenty-one million Americans to the list of federal entitlement beneficiaries. With these additional recipients, 57 percent of all married-couple children would receive federal entitlement benefits, and more than 80 percent of single-parent households would be on the entitlement rolls.

The share of households receiving assistance would be higher in some areas of the United States than in others. This is primarily because federal eligibility for many of the American Families Plan's programs, particularly its refundable tax credits, don't account for geographical differences in incomes and living costs.

We estimate that most of the Biden plan's entitlement benefits would go to middle- and upper-income households. Households in the upper half of the non-elderly income distribution would receive 40 percent of the new entitlement benefits.

Our estimates are for a full-employment economy, not one in recession. So the percentage of US households receiving benefits from at least one federal entitlement program would only increase if the US economy were to falter.

Where will the money come from to finance this largess? The president claims that taxes on the rich will entirely finance his American Families Plan. But his proposed revenue heist falls woefully short of the plan's true cost. Presidential budgets for years have been littered with gimmicks to hide their

true expense. The American Families Plan is no exception. The plan proposes that the \$100 billion annual expansion of the child tax credit will suddenly expire at the end of 2025, reducing the tax credit from a high of \$3,600 to \$1,000. All other programs in the plan are assumed to be permanent. Why phase out only the child WE TRUS! [Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

tax credit? The obvious answer: its expiration reduces the ten-year estimated cost by \$465 billion.

The gimmicks don't stop there. The Biden administration proposes to use more than \$200 billion in new business taxes to finance the American Familian and the American American Familian and the American American American and the American American American American and the American American

lies Plan. Amazingly, it also proposes to use that same money to finance future Medicare spending.

Properly account-

The plan would follow long-familiar government practice of making temporary emergency programs permanent.

ing for these gimmicks, and the plan's overly optimistic revenue assumptions from its Internal Revenue Service compliance initiatives, pushes the American Families Plan deficit to more than \$1 trillion during the next ten years. The president claims that his plan is part of a budget that is "putting the nation on a fiscally responsible path." Hardly. If passed, it would accelerate the pace of entitlement expansions that began in the late 1960s. Improving the safety net is one thing, but spending more than \$1 trillion on mainly middle-class entitlements and financing this expenditure with debt robs future generations while enriching today's. \blacksquare

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Debtors' Prison

Federal borrowing is soaring—and the debt the nation is amassing will long outlast any pandemic.

By Michael J. Boskin

merica needs to rein in its soaring national debt, but President Biden seems eager to do just the opposite. The risks are too big to be ignored.

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, President Obama ran the largest budget deficits of any president since World War II (adjusting for the automatic revenue and outlay effects of the business cycle). His successor, Donald Trump, surpassed him.

Biden plans to top them both. Though America's gross federal debt now stands at 107 percent of GDP—a post-World War II record—the Biden administration's 2022 budget has the country running by far the largest-ever peacetime deficits.

To be sure, I support policies to mitigate the short-run economic pain caused by a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic and help spur recovery, as long as the long-run cost is reasonable. But Biden's spending plans don't meet that condition. Instead, they would create huge deficits that persist long after the economy is back to full employment.

For the five fiscal years from 2022 to 2026, the Biden administration would run deficits of 5.9 percent of GDP, on average. That level was reached only once between 1947 and 2008—in 1983, when the unemployment rate

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, and contributes to Hoover's Human Prosperity Project.

averaged above 10 percent. But the administration's projections put unemployment at 4.1 percent in 2022 and 3.8 percent from 2023 onwards.

Biden claims his proposals will add only modestly to the public debt (which is set to grow anyway, owing primarily to ever-rising expenditure on Social Security and Medicare). But there are good reasons to believe otherwise.

For starters, the Biden administration hopes to offset higher spending by increasing corporate and capital-gains taxes. But these tax hikes are unlikely to pass an evenly divided US Senate as proposed. Moreover, such taxes are particularly harmful to growth, so if some version of them is enacted, the Biden administration will likely find that its revenue projections were overly optimistic.

Biden's spending proposals also include several expensive entitlements, such as improved home care for the elderly and people with disabilities, universal free preschool, and two years of free community college for young adults. History suggests that such programs are likely to become permanent, with costs that grow far in excess of projections.

Meanwhile, even as China and Russia build up their militaries, Biden has placed a lower priority on defense spending, with an increase that does not keep up with inflation. Under his administration's budget, defense spending will fall to its lowest share of GDP since before World War II.

Some argue that the United States has nothing to worry about. Deficits

supposedly don't much matter when an economy borrows in its own currency; the US Federal Reserve just needs to buy up the debt from the Treasury. And

Sooner or later, there will be another crisis.

with government-borrowing rates lower than the projected growth rate, the debt can be rolled over forever. Deficit finance becomes a "free lunch."

These claims merit considerable skepticism. The reasons are highlighted in recent technical papers by me, my Hoover Institution colleague, John Cochrane, Greg Mankiw and Laurence Ball (of Harvard University and Johns Hopkins University, respectively), and Boston University's Larry Kotlikoff, along with his co-authors.

Historically, huge debt buildups have usually been followed by serious problems: sluggish growth, an uptick in inflation, a financial crisis, or all of them. We cannot be certain which problems will occur or what debt-to-GDP ratio will signal trouble for which countries. And the United States does have the advantage of issuing the world's leading reserve currency. But inflation

risks are rising—a trend that more deficit-financed spending will only accelerate.

Higher debt also increases the temptation to stoke inflation, particularly if foreigners hold a large share of it. The grossly simplistic assumption that debtors are rich and creditors are poor is likely to reinforce this temptation, especially in a political climate where many politicians and voters support tax and other policies that target the wealthy.

Yet another problem is that more public debt will eventually push interest rates higher, crowding out investment and harming the economy's potential growth. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) expects ten-year Treasuries to rise sooner and faster than the Biden budget does.

While large changes in interest rates are unlikely in the near term, the fact is that financial markets and government and private forecasters have often failed to anticipate them—for example, during the inflation of the 1970s and the disinflation of the early 1980s. After 2008, all grossly underestimated how long the Fed would keep its target interest rate at zero.

Sooner or later, there will be another crisis. If the US government continues to expand its debt now, lack of fiscal capacity could hamstring its policy responses when the economy really needs the support. In the meantime, the advanced-economy debt deluge is making it harder for poor countries with

The Biden spending plan would create huge deficits that persist long after the economy is back to full employment.

limited debt capacity to respond adequately to the COVID-19 crisis, worsening the human tragedy.

Despite all of this, the argument that the US can finance its debts for free

is pervasive, and it is encouraging elected officials to disregard fiscal discipline. This raises the risk that the Biden administration will not only spend too much; it will effectively throw money away, by funding projects with low—even negative—returns, much as the Obama administration did with its 2009 "stimulus."

The content of Biden's spending proposals is not encouraging on this score. Consider the \$2 trillion American Jobs Plan. It is billed as an "infrastructure bill," yet only a small percentage of the spending it includes would go toward traditional infrastructure. And even here, the CBO estimates a rate of return half that of the private-sector investment that will be crowded out.

In the near term, strong economic growth could shield the Biden administration from the consequences of its reckless spending. But if its mediocre

long-run growth forecasts prove accurate—or worse, turn out to be optimistic—all of us, including President Biden, may come to regret it.

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The Tax Cartel Cometh

Big-government control of the international tax system looks a lot like imperialism—and a bad deal for American workers and consumers.

By Joshua D. Rauh and Aharon Friedman

he G-7 summit of the world's largest economies in June was a display of biggovernment arrogance. In a blow to our form of government and independence, President Biden led a push to force all countries to increase taxes on income, foreign and domestic.

In an article co-written with four foreign counterparts, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen paid lip service to the principle that each government has the right to set its own tax policy. Yet the authors asserted that "exercising these sovereign rights together" to impose a global minimum tax would generate "a sustainable and inclusive recovery more effectively than if we stand alone." What about countries with governments that disagree with

Key points

- » Exercising "sovereign rights together" looks like a tool to force countries to surrender part of their sovereignty.
- » What the G-7 proposes is a "super tax" that would apply to a much broader income base and forbid some deductions and credits.
- » American workers will suffer from lost jobs and lower wages.

Joshua D. Rauh is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project. He is also the Ormond Family Professor of Finance at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. Aharon Friedman is a director and senior tax counsel at the Federal Policy Group.

Yellen that increasing taxes will improve productivity and economic growth? Not to mention a future US president—or even the current Congress.

An agreement by powerful countries and their allies to use "sovereign rights together" to effectively force dissenting countries to abandon a key element of their sovereignty looks a lot like imperialism to us.

Over the past several decades, countries have been steadily lowering their corporate tax rates, spurring economic growth and expanding opportunity for workers. Some smaller countries, such as Ireland, have significantly lowered rates and dramatically boosted employment.

The US Treasury is effectively ganging up with international bureaucrats and like-minded foreign governments to bully countries into increasing their taxes to a minimum rate of 15 percent. The administration apparently believes this would prevent its planned tax increases from causing an exodus of American companies and jobs.

But this theory doesn't even meet its own premises, which are conceptually flawed and will in the end hurt consumers and workers.

In 2017, Congress changed the rules governing the taxation of the foreign profits of American companies. For US companies that were most aggressive in trying to avoid tax by deferring their gains into the distant future, those rules imposed significant tax increases and gave the United States the

world's harshest regime for taxing income earned abroad. The Biden administration wants to go much further and would put American

Tax policy is one of the most vital aspects of sovereignty. It should be decided locally.

companies and workers at a severe disadvantage.

The 15 percent headline goal does not reflect the full scope of the increase in the tax burden that the plan would require. In fact, it requires tax increases from virtually all countries, including the United States, not just countries with low rates like Ireland and Hungary. That is because the G-7's 15 percent is actually a much higher super tax that would apply to a much broader income base and disallow some deductions and credits.

A minimum tax rate presupposes uniform rules for measuring taxable income, along with allowable preferences. The merits of many tax preferences are debatable, but the fact that countries come to heterogeneous conclusions indicates there is no one-size-fits-all answer. The bureaucracy needed to sit in judgment over each country's tax system would have to have breathtaking scope and power.



RECKLESS: President Biden and German Chancellor Angela Merkel meet during the June G-7 summit in England. During that summit, the major industrial nations agreed to impose a minimum global tax, a move that would permanently bind Americans to high tax rates. [Adam Schultz—White House]

Revealingly, the one rule specified by the G-7 was that the 15 percent minimum must be on a "country by country" basis, meaning that every country must conjure a tax code that ensures that its companies, including foreign subsidiaries, are effectively subject to a tax rate of at least 15 percent in each and every foreign country, rather than just being subject to an overall rate of 15 percent or above. Given that some countries already have much higher rates, the overall tax rate would be much higher. The obsession with making sure each country imposes a sufficiently high tax on profits earned by its companies in every other country in which they or their subsidiaries operate betrays the reach of the proposed new scheme. A much more convincing policy would have countries generally impose zero tax on the foreign profits of their companies' foreign subsidiaries, the very territorial system most countries currently have.

The Biden administration has proposed much higher taxes on all American companies than it is trying to force other countries to adopt only for very large companies. This means American workers will suffer from lost jobs and lower wages even if the global agreement is reached and implemented. And allowing other countries to tax American companies on the income they earn in the United States (assuming those foreign taxes would offset US taxes)

would transfer US revenue to other countries, while probably raising prices on end consumers.

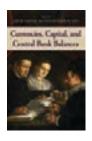
More fundamentally, the administration's imperialist tax adventure is morally wrong and antidemocratic. The United States should not dictate tax hikes to other countries. Going back to the principles of the American Revolution and the Boston Tea Party, tax policy is one of the most important

aspects of sovereignty. It should be decided locally, not by foreign governments and international bureaucracies unaccountable to those subject to the tax.

At home in the United States, attempting to permanently bind the governOver the past several decades, countries have been steadily lowering their corporate tax rates, spurring growth and expanding opportunity for workers.

ment to high tax rates is profoundly antidemocratic. A future Congress has every right to decrease tax rates, no matter the policy preferences of this administration. Under our Constitution, the address for the Biden administration to change tax policy is Congress, not the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development or an international tax police. Creating international laws and norms dictating each country's tax laws is inherently illegitimate, as it rejects government by the people in each country. Congress should reject the call to do so. \blacksquare

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Free Trade Refresher Course

The not-so-secret ingredient of prosperity: comparative advantage. It's a concept neither Trump nor Biden seems to grasp.

By David R. Henderson

n recent years I have written multiple articles on free trade, many of them critical of former president Donald Trump's thinking and policies on the subject. My objections were based not on his personality but on his economics, and those objections don't disappear when the president responsible for tariffs and import restrictions is voted out of office. Some of my free trade friends hoped that Biden would be different from Trump, but Biden has kept many of the tariffs and other restrictions that he inherited from his predecessor.

It's worthwhile to point out again why restrictions on trade are bad and free trade is good. Among economists, it's not a partisan issue. A survey of 211

economists in the late 1970s found that 97 percent of them agreed with this statement: "Tariffs and import quotas reduce general economic welfare." It

Key points

- » Free trade is based on comparative advantage, a phenomenon that benefits both sides.
- » Comparative advantage works across state and even national borders.
- » Trade wars are, in the end, selfdestructive.

David R. Henderson is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and an emeritus professor of economics at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey.

follows, therefore, that they think free trade increases general economic welfare. But why? It has to do with what economists call *comparative advantage*. We usually explain comparative advantage with a simple arithmetic example. But I'll do it without the math by considering three people: Babe Ruth, Paul McCartney, and Dikembe Mutombo.

THE ESSENCE OF ADVANTAGE

The easiest way to understand comparative advantage and gains from trade is to consider two people deciding which of two goods to produce. John and Jason can both produce wheat and apples. The more of one good that John or Jason produces, the less of the other good he can produce. Let's say John must give up fewer bushels of apples per bushel of wheat than Jason. That necessarily means that Jason must give up fewer bushels of wheat per bushel of apples than John. The fancy economists' way of putting it is to say that John has a comparative advantage in producing wheat and Jason has a comparative advantage in producing apples. The less-fancy way of putting it is to say that John is the lower-cost producer of wheat and Jason is the lower-cost producer of apples.

If John and Jason didn't know about each other and, therefore, didn't trade, each would produce some combination of wheat and apples. But if they find out about each other, they can find a price of wheat in terms of apples that makes them each better off by trading. That allows each to do better by specializing in producing the good for which he is the lower-cost producer and trading that good for the one for which he is the higher-cost producer.

The bottom line is that there is more total output if each person specializes in the good for which he is the lower-cost, or in the case of more than two people, the least-cost, producer.

To make the point more concrete, consider baseball legend Babe Ruth. Trivia question: what was Ruth's first position when he started playing professional baseball? Answer: pitcher. Moreover, he was not a so-so pitcher; his win-loss record with the Boston Red Sox was 94-46. But he was also quite good as a hitter. Even back then, pitchers had to take off multiple games between pitching outings. So although Babe Ruth was a great pitcher, the cost of having him pitch was quite high because his team, the Yankees for most of his career, would do without his prodigious hitting skills in at least three games out of four. Babe Ruth's comparative advantage, therefore, was in hitting, which is why he became an outfielder.

Which member of the Beatles was the better drummer, Paul McCartney or Ringo Starr? Answer: Paul McCartney. But Paul McCartney was also a

high-cost drummer because if he specialized in drumming, he would not be able to play the guitar. The lower-cost drummer, therefore, was Ringo Starr.

Finally, when Dikembe Mutombo came to Georgetown University in 1987, what was his career plan? Answer: to become a doctor and return to

Sugar is subsidized in the United States, providing a sweet windfall for importers but a much larger cost for consumers.

the Congo and help his people, who badly needed doctors. But then Georgetown Hoyas basketball coach John Thompson recruited Mutombo to play basketball. He

excelled at the game and had a lucrative eighteen-year career in the NBA, playing for the Denver Nuggets, the Atlanta Hawks, and the Houston Rockets for fifteen of those years.

But Mutombo didn't forget his original goal. He donated \$3.5 million of his earnings toward building a hospital in the Congolese capital of Kinshasa. If he had stuck with his plan to become a doctor, he would have been only one doctor in the Congo. Instead, by specializing in basketball, he earned enough to pay multiple doctors in the Congo.

FREE TRADE, LOW COST

All three of these examples make the point about comparative advantage and low cost. More is produced when each person specializes in producing the good or service for which he or she is the lowest-cost producer.

This conclusion applies to the simplest case: that of John and Jason and two goods. It also scales for more than two people and more than two goods. It applies between people in two different states. Trade across state borders is beneficial for traders in each state. In fact, for most of the twentieth century the largest free trade zones was the United States. The principle also applies to trade between people in two different countries.

The existence of international borders in no way undercuts the case for free trade across borders. Moreover, because costs of production vary greatly between countries, free trade allows us to buy goods from countries with much lower costs for some items than ours. Can a country with low wages have lower costs for everything so that if we buy from them, we will have nothing to sell? That's mathematically impossible. As in the simple case of John and Jason, so also in the more-complex world, a country that has a comparative advantage (lower cost) in one item will necessarily have a comparative disadvantage (higher cost) in another.

Other than the Dikembe Mutombo example, none of these ways to make the case for free trade is original with me. Economists have made the case for at least two centuries. Indeed, Scottish economist Adam Smith, in his 1776 book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, argued for free trade in some detail. Here's a quote from Smith in which he makes the case succinctly:

What is prudence in the conduct of every private family can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom. If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them with some part of the produce of our own industry employed in a way in which we have some advantage.

DON'T CONSUMERS MATTER?

If free trade is such a good policy, why do so many noneconomists think it's controversial? Part of the answer lies in the asymmetry between producers and consumers.

Consider the case of sugar. We in America pay approximately double the world price of sugar because the US government sets tight quotas on sugar imports. That, incidentally, is why Coca-Cola is produced with corn syrup in the United States but with sucrose (sugar) in Canada and Mexico. Over three hundred million of us pay a little more annually for higher-price sugar but the few major sugar producers in the United States make tens of millions to hundreds of millions more in revenue, and their employees make a few thousand dollars more in annual income than they would make in their next

best use. The overall loss to consumers calculated by Washington State University economics professor William S. Hallagan a few years ago was \$2.25 billion annual-

A survey of economists found 97 percent of them agreed with this statement: "Tariffs and import quotas reduce general economic welfare."

ly. The offsetting gain to domestic sugar producers was \$0.85 billion and the gain to the lucky importers who got to buy the sugar at the world price and then sell it at the higher US price was \$0.30 billion. The loss to consumers outweighs the gain to producers and importers but the average consumer's loss is only about \$10 per year, while the average producer's gain is large. This gives producers a large incentive to be involved in the setting of sugar quotas, while the average consumer pays virtually zero attention.

That's why it's true that even though the intellectual case for free trade is largely settled, those interest groups that want to limit trade are creating most of the buzz.

That buzz occasionally misleads even some scholars who study trade and generally understand it. Zack Beauchamp of *Vox* recently quoted the following comment on Biden's trade policy by Tufts University scholar Dan

There is more total output if each person specializes in the good for which he is the lowest-cost producer.

Drezner: "It's totally America First." No, it's not. It's American producers first; consumers don't seem to count. Are US consumers not

Americans? To ask the question is to answer it. Of course they are. If Trump truly favored or Biden favors an "America first" policy on trade, both would be strong *advocates* of free trade because with rare exceptions, the consumer losses from restrictions on trade exceed the gains to producers.

The fact that restrictions on imports hurt a country's consumers puts trade wars in perspective. A government that engages in a trade war is, in essence, saying to the government of the country against which it retaliates, "You have hurt your consumers and our producers by restricting imports from our country, so we are going to respond by hurting your producers and our consumers." The bottom line is that trade wars are self-destructive.

Just as trade between people in a city, in a state, or in a country benefits both sides and makes people more prosperous than otherwise, trade across international borders does the same thing. Let's not forget that and let's not throw it away. \blacksquare

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Don't Sacrifice Ideals

Still utterly central to American foreign policy: human rights. We must defend them abroad and at home.

By Russell A. Berman

n American foreign policy that includes the promotion of human rights can draw on a tradition rooted in the Declaration of Independence. The assertion of universal equality and the designation of unalienable rights, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," have shaped American political culture. That the reality of American life has never fully realized these ideals and at times failed them egregiously, notably in the institution of slavery, does not negate the validity of the ideals themselves.

For the country's first century and a half, it was not a major actor in international affairs, and

Key points

- » A foreign policy around rights advocacy generates certain structural challenges.
- » If the United States were to withdraw from the Middle East, Russia or China would rush in to fill the vacuum.
- » In many nations, the challenge for US foreign policy is to maintain alliance and regime stability while pushing for human rights.

Russell A. Berman is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, co-chair of Hoover's Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on the Middle East and the Islamic World, and a participant in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project and its working groups on military history and national security. He is also the Walter A. Haas Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University.

there was therefore little room for a foreign policy involving rights promotion abroad. One exception that deserves mentioning is the role that the US Navy played in suppressing the Atlantic slave trade decades before the domestic abolition of slavery. Yet it was only in the wake of the First World War that the United States gained the foreign policy clout to begin to project its ideals globally, notably in Wilsonian democracy promotion and later in the terms of the Atlantic Alliance during the Second World War.

Those agendas, reflecting political visions of presidents Wilson and Roosevelt, eventually took more formal shape in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights followed, coming into force in 1976. Still, it was not until the Carter administration that human rights became a key watchword of American foreign policy, amplified during the Reagan presidency with its vocal condemnation of rights violations in the Soviet Union.

THREE PROBLEMS

A foreign policy around rights advocacy generates certain structural challenges. First, in a world of competition and conflict, where alliances are necessary, the available allies do not necessarily share all our values. The obvious example is America's wartime alliance with Stalinist Russia in order to defeat Nazi Germany. One could also point to the tolerance for dictatorships during the Cold War as part of the global struggle against communism: António de Oliveira Salazar's Portugal, the Greek junta, martial law in Taiwan under Chiang Kai-shek. In such cases, the battle for freedom seemed to

Anti-American rhetoric is common in academic postmodernism, which misrepresents the very notion of universal human rights. require collaboration with unfree regimes in order to defeat a greater threat.

Second, inconsistencies appear when norms are used to criticize some countries but not

others. At stake is the inevitable tension between ideals and realpolitik, between abstract aspirations and the diverse regimes with which a foreign policy interacts. Applying the same metric rigorously everywhere can prove impracticable. The State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report tries to solve this problem by measuring each country in terms of its own progress toward a goal rather than with a single measurement for all. This attention to local circumstances introduces useful suppleness into the practical activity of a foreign policy pursuing rights.

Third, as soon as rights advocacy enters foreign policy, adversaries quickly argue that America only uses the rhetoric of rights as a tool rather than sincerely pursuing rights as a goal. Such an alleged instrumentalization of rights results in a politicization of rights claims, i.e., the suggestion that the accusation of a rights violation is merely a pretext to pursue a political

agenda hidden behind the rights discourse. The Soviet Union responded in this way to the Reagan administration's persistent protesting of rights

In a world of competition and conflict, the available allies don't necessarily share all our values.

violations: for Moscow, American interest in human rights was exclusively an expression of American imperialism, and communist propaganda did not have a difficult time in pointing to contradictions between our foreign policy and domestic rights failures. A similar anti-American rhetoric has become commonplace in the context of academic postmodernism, which misrepresents the very notion of universal human rights as an effort to project American power globally and suppress local cultural differences.

These three problems around human rights—alliances, inconsistencies, and politicization—are present in abundance when discussing the challenges of US foreign policy in the Middle East. America has played a central role in the security architecture of the region since the Second World War (in the wake of the withdrawal of colonial powers England and France), and there was good reason to do so: the strategic significance of the Middle East in the competition with the Soviet Union and the importance of oil. The Soviet Union is gone now, but great-power competition continues, and despite the global interest in transitioning away from nonrenewable energy sources, Middle East oil remains vital to the world economy. If the United States were to withdraw from the Middle East, Russia or China would rush in to fill the vacuum; under either of their hegemonies, rights would suffer.

The mandate to promote human rights is therefore a further justification for continued US engagement in the Middle East. The question is how to do so most effectively, especially in an era of constrained resources.

THE CONSISTENCY ISSUE

To operate in the region, the United States needs allies and, as discussed, allies do not always meet our ideals in terms of rights. An effective foreign policy should urge such allies to move toward greater freedom and it should intervene in specific cases of gross abuse, but without destabilizing the

regime. It is important to avoid repeating the mistakes of the Carter administration with Iran. No one can argue that the fall of the shah was due exclusively to President Carter's human rights policies, but they did contribute to the administration's inability to save our ally or to steer the transition. In the end, the United States was viewed as having abandoned a longtime friend—that alone was a blow to American prestige—while a new regime came to power in Tehran that has been a catastrophe for human rights domestically and viciously anti-American for more than four decades.

That is the outcome the United States must avoid, for example, with regard to Egypt, also a long-standing partner burdened with extensive human rights violations. The challenge for US foreign policy is to maintain the alliance and regime stability while also pushing for human rights progress.

The problem of inconsistency is particularly salient in two cases involving assassinations of journalists: Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent critic of Saudi leadership, and Ruhollah Zam, a vocal opponent of Iran. Both had been in exile, Khashoggi in the United States, writing as a columnist for the *Washington Post*, and Zam in Paris. Khashoggi was murdered on October 2, 2018,

Democracies should concede their inadequacies in order to improve. Dictatorships try to hide their problems by silencing speech.

in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul; Zam was lured to Iraq, where he was kidnapped and brought to Iran for execution on December 12, 2020. Both killings elicited interna-

tional outcries from political leaders and human rights organizations alike. President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo were forceful in their criticisms of both executions: no inconsistency there.

Yet an inconsistency has become apparent in the Biden administration's treatment of the Khashoggi and Zam cases. Both cases involved brutal killings of journalists, wrong in their own right, but also wrong as assaults on the freedom of the press in general. Both cases deserve firm condemnation. However, while the Zam execution has quickly disappeared from the headlines, the Khashoggi murder has turned into a pivotal topic in US-Saudi relations. It could seem that the administration values journalists in one country more than in the other. Are human rights less important in Iran than in Saudi Arabia? What drives this distinction?

To explain the lack of concern for the Zam case, it is fair to say that the Biden administration has as a key foreign policy goal a reconciliation with Iran via a return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the "Iran Deal." It has made clear that it does not want to raise extraneous issues, such as Iran's ballistic missile systems, and it is therefore even less likely to call out Iranian human rights violations. Making an issue now out of the Zam execution—or the myriad other human rights abuses that make up everyday life in Iran—would only get in the way of a different priority, the nuclear question. This is, therefore, a clear case of a subordination of rights to another goal, even though the Biden administration promised that it intends to place rights at the center of American foreign policy.

The Khashoggi case can be explained in several ways. It is possible that the president genuinely feels moral outrage over the murder, as he suggested in campaign statements. Alternatively, the claim of the culpability of the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, may be being used by the administration to gain negotiating room with Saudi Arabia or, to use Secretary Blinken's term, to "recalibrate" the relationship between Washington and Riyadh. A further interpretation, cynical but plausible, posits that the high-profile accusations against the crown prince are intended only to appease part of the president's party through a symbolic display but with little genuine impact on the deep partnership between the United States and the kingdom. (The Biden administration's exploration of establishing a new base on the Saudi coast and the lack, initially at least, of genuine sanctions against the crown prince point to this interpretation.)

The difference between the prominence of the Khashoggi killing for the administration and the invisibility of Zam's death demonstrates the problem of inconsistency in the pursuit of human rights as well as their politicization. Pursuing the perpetrators of the Zam killing would work against the administration's primary political goal. Hence the silence and hence, also, the refusal to blame the murder of Lebanese dissident Lokman Slim on Hezbollah, the proxy of the same Iran that the administration is trying to court: politicization overrides justice.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Meanwhile, the real pursuit of human rights may take place more effectively at levels below statements by principals or newspaper headlines. An important way the United States can pursue rights in its foreign policy is the less visible but persistent work by diplomats abroad, identifying rights violations and working to correct them one by one: to get a political prisoner released, to attend trials as observers, to provide support to social movements dedicated to women's rights, the protection of minorities, religious freedom, or other similar topics. Getting individual prisoners out of torture chambers may contribute more effectively to improved human rights conditions than headline-grabbing

statements. It remains to be seen if calling out the Saudi crown prince will make US human rights advocacy in Saudi Arabia easier or harder.

Finally, we should not forget that US rights advocacy has over decades elicited the criticism of hypocrisy. Hostile voices ask how Washington dares to criticize other countries when its rights record at home is flawed. This is a genuine vulnerability that it would be foolish to disregard. Part of the answer involves the response that even our own flaws do not relieve us of the responsibility of speaking out when we see abuses elsewhere. But it is even more important to face the accusations of flaws honestly and to try to correct them. Democracies should concede their inadequacies in order to improve, in contrast to dictatorships that try to hide their problems by silencing speech, especially journalism.

The American case for human rights abroad is strongest when we can lead by example from home. Yet whenever rights are under assault domestically, our advocating for them overseas will ring hollow. The favorite tool of regimes afraid of criticism is the suppression of the press: hence the executions of journalists, but also the shutdowns of the Internet, whether in Iran or Myanmar, not to mention China's "Great Firewall." Our ability to criticize those restrictions on press freedom elsewhere will weaken if the current domestic efforts to limit speech on the Internet succeed. Those efforts include tagging on social media, banning certain topics as "disinformation," discrimination against unwanted opinions, blocking individuals' accounts, or Congress's encouraging service providers to exclude conservative voices.

Freedom of the press, like other human rights, is under assault around the world. America will not be able to defend press freedom credibly in the Middle East or anywhere else unless we preserve it at home.

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Misogyny Knows No Borders

In the face of indifference and political correctness, Hoover fellow Ayaan Hirsi Ali defends women's rights.

By Brian Stewart

n the time of the British Raj, a range of cultural customs in the Indian subcontinent perplexed the colonial power, and a select number perturbed them. One especially distressing spectacle was the practice of suttee, an antique tradition of burning widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands.

One British officer, General Sir Charles Napier, was appalled upon coming across this ghastly scene, but he was beseeched by village elders to respect the time-honored rite. Napier's response was at once sensitive and unsparing: "You say that it is your custom to burn widows. Very well. We also have a custom: when men burn a woman alive, we tie a rope around their necks and we

Key points

- » Sexual violence against women in Europe has increased alongside immigration from Islamic nations.
- » European authorities are reluctant to crack down on the violence, fearing they will appear hostile to migrants.
- » Many male migrants regard Western doctrines of gender equality and sexual liberalism as an affront to their religion and way of life.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and the founder of the AHA Foundation. Her latest book is Prey: Immigration, Islam, and the Erosion of Women's Rights (Harper, 2021). Brian Stewart writes for Commentary.

hang them. Build your funeral pyre; beside it, my carpenters will build a gallows. You may follow your custom. And then we will follow ours."

The gallant Victorian approach toward women, if that is not too genial a description, is no longer fashionable in the West today. In spite of the great advances in women's autonomy and Western society's growing recognition of women's equality with men, it is a sad fact that the concept of universal women's rights has lost precious ground in the commanding heights of Western culture. Even the above retelling of Napier's exploits is more liable to disturb contemporary readers than it is to delight them. "Well," many people will say, "what were the British doing in India in the first place?"

In the more "progressive" precincts of the left, the notion of women's rights has largely been reduced to sexual freedom and reproductive rights. And there is often a subliminal identification of the Muslim faith with the wretched of the earth that inhibits any criticism of those (even brutish misogynists) hailing from what was once deemed the Third World. The American right, for its part, has also turned inward and barely registers how endangered women's rights have become in the world beyond our borders. Since the disappointments of the Iraq War, American conservatives have found less and less to like about the role of morality in foreign policy, never mind showing solidarity with the oppressed and the downtrodden.

PRINCIPLED SYMPATHY

This manifest betrayal of feminism, and the jeopardy in which it has placed multitudes of women, is the theme of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's provocative new book, *Prey*. Hirsi Ali's subject is (as the subtitle says) "immigration, Islam, and the erosion of women's rights," but the negative reviews of the book and its author in civic society and the prestige press offer a microcosm of the crisis roiling the West. The Council on American-Islamic Relations and other Muslim groups do not even want the book to be read. In a peevish review of *Prey*, Jill Filipovic of the *New York Times* chastised Hirsi Ali for her unapologetic defense of the rights of women in a Europe struggling to cope with mass migration from societies marked by patriarchy and polygamy.

Most readers will be aware that Hirsi Ali is a Somali-born women's-rights activist with impressive bona fides on this question. After growing up in Muslim communities in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Kenya (and suffering female genital mutilation), Hirsi Ali became a refugee and migrant to the Netherlands (in order to escape an arranged marriage). Having abandoned her faith, she rose to be a Dutch member of parliament and a prominent voice for the protection and empowerment of women in migrant



SHE PERSEVERED: Hoover fellow Ayaan Hirsi Ali, author of the new book Prey, writes with both evident sympathy for traumatized refugee populations and an unflinching belief in the cause of liberal democracy. Her theme of feminism betrayed has been attacked in the media. [Stefan Boness—IPON]

communities. She collaborated with Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh to produce *Submission*, which criticizes the mistreatment of women in the name of Islam. After van Gogh was murdered by an Islamist fanatic and Hirsi Ali was pronounced the next target, she began to live under armed guard. Eventually she fled to the United States and became an American citizen.

Hirsi Ali writes with both evident sympathy for traumatized refugee populations and an unflinching belief in the cause of liberal democracy. This uncommon fusion allows *Prey* to delve intelligently into a devilish issue that has been marked by a ceaseless stream of sentimentalism and sanctimony. The predicament is most acute in Europe, where the connection between large-scale migration from majority-Muslim lands (which often hold regressive views of women's place in society) and the concomitant dwindling of women's rights and safety has been unmistakable. The old continent became the cockpit for this story after the hasty decision in 2015 by Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, to do away with restrictions on the number of asylum seekers who could come to Germany—and, thanks to the EU's Schengen

Agreement that dissolved internal borders, much of the rest of Western Europe. The result was a chaotic scramble for Europe's frontiers, which quickly produced a spike in sexual harassment and violence in Europe's streets and squares. "It is one of the rich ironies of early-twenty-first-century history," Hirsi Ali writes, "that the single decision that has done the most harm to European women in my lifetime was made by a woman."

Hirsi Ali freely confesses that compiling robust data about the sexual menace enveloping certain quarters of multiethnic Europe is profoundly

The concept of universal women's rights has lost precious ground in the commanding heights of Western culture.

difficult, but it is essential if a proper moral and material balance sheet of this decision is ever to be drawn up. *Prey* doesn't fail to note that unscrupulous populist parties in

Europe, assisted by Russian "information warfare," have a vested interest in exaggerating the negative side of the ledger, though this hardly means it has been fabricated. Indeed, it should not escape notice that the ruling parties on the continent have an equal and opposite interest in downplaying the negative effects, since cultural segregation and alienation reflect poorly on their governing judgment. A further challenge is that the official data generally understate the problem of sexual violence: A host of factors—from difficulty identifying or apprehending the assailant—deter victims from reporting or successfully prosecuting an offense.

DISTURBING DATA

Without purporting to offer a complete picture of this complex phenomenon, *Prey* nonetheless marshals a wealth of data and presents them to the reader with considerable care and scruple. Almost three million people have arrived illegally in Europe since 2009, close to two million in 2015 alone. Two-thirds are male, and 80 percent of asylum applicants are under the age of thirty-five. "The intensification of the Syrian civil war," Hirsi Ali writes, "was the largest proximate cause for the migrant influx."

Hirsi Ali avoids the routine mistake of imagining that Syrian nationals were the majority of displaced persons who entered Europe after Merkel threw open its gates. Relying on internal data from Frontex (the EU border agency), Frans Timmermans, a left-of-center Dutch politician who serves as the first vice president of the European Commission, has claimed that roughly 60 percent of the migrants who arrived in Europe in 2015 were

economic migrants rather than refugees. Anyone who has lately spent any time in Saint-Denis, Malmö, Molenbeek, or Düsseldorf will have no trouble testifying to the ethnic diversity of the multitudes who have recently arrived in Europe. And anyone familiar with the current state of Europe's frontiers, from the Italian island of Lampedusa to the Greek island of Lesbos, can attest to the distinctly multicultural and polyethnic character of the exodus still headed Europe's way.

Even if the costs of this vast migrant wave are hard to quantify, they can be easily discovered by those who are not determined to miss them. Recall the single worst incident of sexual assault that occurred one night in Cologne, Germany. On December 31, 2015, hundreds of men (most of them newly arrived asylum seekers of Arab and North African origin) "mobbed together to entrap women" near the city's grand cathedral during a celebration of what locals call Silvesternacht. Eventually, 661 women came forward to report themselves as victims of sexual attacks that night. The response from the authorities was sluggish, as police and prosecutors did not wish to appear hostile to migrants and minorities or incur the censure of the politically correct public. By the spring of 2019, a mere fifty-two of the alleged assailants had been indicted, of whom only three were convicted of sex offenses.

The climate of sexual harassment and violence has scarcely been confined to occasions of revelry. The diligent research within the covers of Prey is too

various to rehearse here, but a thumbnail sketch will suffice: there was a 17 percent increase in rapes in France from 2017 to 2018; in Germany, the number of victims of

The author delves into a devilish issue that has been marked by a ceaseless stream of sentimentalism and sanctimony.

rape and "sexual coercion" rose by 41 percent in 2017; and in Sweden, there was a 12 percent increase in reported sex offenses in 2016—alarming trends that may have abated recently, the author explains, only because of fewer social encounters amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hirsi Ali contends that all this constitutes strong prima facie evidence "for the view that the surge of immigration into Europe" after 2015 led to "a significant increase in sexual violence in the countries that accommodated the largest numbers of migrants." This reading does not mistake correlation for causation. Since most European countries don't report the ethnic background or religion of criminals, conclusions can only be tentative. But in countries that do collect and publish data, a striking causal relationship

emerges between increased migration and increased sexual violence. Since 2009 in Austria, for instance, sex offenses increased by 11.8 percent. "Of the 936 rape cases reported in 2018, more than half of the suspects (55 percent) were not Austrian citizens. In 2017, asylum seekers were suspects in 11 percent of all reported rapes and sexual-harassment cases in Austria, despite making up less than 1 percent of the total population." Danish authorities also input the ethnic background of criminals in their database. In Denmark, non-Western immigrants and their descendants account for a high proportion of convictions for sex offenses.

A great number of Muslims and others who have recently arrived in Europe undoubtedly embarked on the perilous journey for the same noble

A growing tendency on the left defends nearly any belief or behavior that goes under the banner of Islam.

purposes that once stirred a young Hirsi Ali—seeking asylum and the chance for a better life. But this doesn't necessarily mean they

have bright economic prospects in advanced market democracies, nor does it mean they are primed to integrate smoothly in the host societies, especially when so many Europeans lack the will to acculturate newcomers to Western norms and laws. It doesn't help matters that the migrants in question are overwhelmingly drawn from traditional societies with benighted views on the rights of minorities within minorities: among these double minorities are gay Muslims, feminist Muslims, secular Muslims, and ex-Muslims. And women—the largest minority—are often treated as "commodities."

The derelict states and illiberal societies inspiring so much human flight are particularly wrenching environments for this half of the population. In these lands, women and girls are exposed to all manner of mistreatment and brutality. Writing with firsthand knowledge of some of these torments, Hirsi Ali explains that across the southern and eastern rim of the Mediterranean, it is not out of the ordinary for women to be "killed, raped, enslaved, beaten, confined, and debased." She goes on: "Female fetuses are aborted and baby girls abandoned. Girls are denied education or have their genitals cut and sewn. Girls and young women are forced into marriage with men they hardly know."

Of course, upon reaching European soil, many migrants have a decided preference, as Hirsi Ali once did, to adapt to local customs and become productive members of their new society. Although she fully acknowledges this in *Prey*, the number isn't presumed to constitute a majority. In fact, a

not-insignificant percentage of the predominantly male migrant population tends to regard Western doctrines of gender equality and sexual liberalism as an affront to their religion and way of life. Some are given to antisocial behaviors and open anti-Semitism, and in extreme cases may be vulnerable to recruitment by jihad. These men, Hirsi Ali explains, "see no reason to alter their views simply because they now live in Western Europe."

SHOOTING THE MESSENGER

What's notable, beyond the bounds of the book, is the tremendous slander and calumny to which Hirsi Ali has been treated by the political left for refusing to bite her tongue about the subjection of women in today's world. Progressives of various sorts have learned to shudder at her full-throated denunciation of the miseries inflicted on women by the violent votaries of a patriarchal faith. Following a tested pattern of decrying Hirsi Ali's "Enlightenment fundamentalism," even self-described feminists such as Filipovic have rushed to indict *Prey* for its "illiberalism" and "absolutism." Filipovic insists the book promotes nothing more than a "feminism of reaction." She even purports to detect elements of "bigotry" in Hirsi Ali's brief against Europe's one-way multiculturalism and its accommodation of old orthodoxies.

This is representative of a growing tendency on the left to defend nearly any belief or behavior that goes under the banner of Islam. Since the deni-

zens of an ancient faith centered in the Arabian Peninsula are widely considered victims of racism and colonialism (even the perpetrators of sexual or political violence among them), they

She doesn't fail to note that unscrupulous parties have a vested interest in exaggerating the problem, though this doesn't mean the problem has been fabricated.

enjoy considerable deference from the virtuous elite in the West. The principles of anti-racism seem to dictate staunch opposition to their critics and foes. This way of thinking is made more plausible because a large number of those arguing that there is a dangerous anti-women problem among Muslim immigrants are openly xenophobic and throw in with the forces of populist nationalism disfiguring political culture across the West.

Filipovic recycles the cheap slander pushed by the Southern Poverty Law Center that Hirsi Ali is an anti-Muslim "extremist" (Maajid Nawaz, a Muslim reformer, successfully sued the SPLC for defamation after being similarly accused). "She calls herself an 'infidel,' "Filipovic writes of Hirsi Ali, "while many Muslims say she's just an Islamophobe." In fact, it was the Muslim sadist and fanatic who butchered Theo van Gogh on an Amsterdam street, and who told her that she was next on the list, who deemed Hirsi Ali an "infidel fundamentalist."

It is true that some Muslims and non-Muslims who play the dull game of moral equivalence in the West allege that she is an Islamophobe. But what of it? The facile association of Islam with the poor and the vulnerable has long been expressed in the stupid neologism "Islamophobia," which seeks to promote criticism of Islam to the rank of special offenses associated with racism. This freighted term obliterates the distinction between criticism of religious dogma (even heresy or blasphemy) and anti-Muslim bigotry. A Europe that observed this crucial distinction would, as Hirsi Ali recommends, devise a new approach to integration that privileged immigrants who conformed to the values of the societies giving them sanctuary.

A Europe too morally or intellectually enfeebled to do so will continue to cause immeasurable harm to individuals traduced by the most reactionary elements in the "faith community" of Islam: both to the minorities within minorities and other targets of Islamist wrath—Hirsi Ali, here, has the honor of being counted twice.

The feminists who have taken such a soft and conciliatory line on the nexus between large-scale migration and reactionary Islam have outdone the most committed misogynists: they have insidiously rolled back women's

The failure to defend human rights gives a tyrannical minority such powers as the imperialists of old never imagined.

rights in ways that would have been unimaginable a few decades ago. And these rights will be hard to recover. Squeamish feminists took what was supposed to be the crown-

ing glory of modernity—women's freedom to live by no man's leave—and instead of enlarging its circle to lands where the civil rights of women are radically circumscribed, they emboldened and empowered those promulgating contempt for Enlightenment values near and far.

This tension forms what Hirsi Ali calls "the feminist predicament." In the very recent past, the feminist mission has been challenged, and undermined, by issues of racism, religion, and intersectionality. "Liberal feminists today care more about the question of Palestinian statehood," she writes, "than the mistreatment of Palestinian women at the hands of their fathers and

husbands. In the battle of the vices, sexism has been trumped by racism." This is undoubtedly true and is itself a symptom of the sloppy equation between the proletarian masses and the Islamic faith. (That the Palestinians, about 20 percent of whom were Christian until their numbers began to decline, have become an "Islamic" cause in the Western mind is only one symptom of such sloppiness.)

It cannot be said too often—indeed, it is not being said nearly often enough—that human rights are universal, and the failure to assert this claim gives a tyrannical minority such powers as the imperialists of old never dreamed of. Whenever Europe decides to think more seriously about its duties to the women and girls in its care, it will find it has little choice but to follow the path Ayaan Hirsi Ali has laid down. Until then, the most vulnerable among them will be compelled to walk alone in streets ruled by the customs of others.

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A Caliphate in the Making?

The election of a new, hard-line president shows that moderation—whether foreign or domestic—remains a mirage.

By Abbas Milani

ran's presidential election in June was the most farcical in the history of the Islamic regime—even more so than the 2009 election, often called an "electoral coup." It was less an election than a chronicle of a death foretold: the death of what little remained of the constitution's republican principles. But in addition to being the most farcical, the election may be the Islamic Republic's most consequential.

The winner, Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi, is credibly accused of crimes against humanity for his role in killing some four thousand dissidents three decades ago. Amnesty International has already called for him to be investigated for these crimes. Asked about the accusation, the new president-elect replied in a

Key points

- » Iran no longer appears to be a competitive authoritarian regime.
- » The key issue underlying the election is the selection of the next supreme leader. The new president may be a contender.
- » Normalizing regimes such as Iran works to the detriment of America's long-term interests.

Abbas Milani is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, codirector of Hoover's Iran Democracy Project, and a member of the Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on the Middle East and the Islamic World. He is also the Hamid and Christina Moghadam Director of Iranian Studies at Stanford University.

way that would have made even George Orwell blush, insisting that he should be praised for his defense of human rights in those murders.

The regime mobilized all its forces to ensure a big turnout for Raisi, who until the election was Iran's chief justice. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei decreed voting a religious duty and casting a blank ballot a sin, while his clerical allies condemned advocates of a boycott as heretics. But even according to the official results, 51 percent of eligible voters did not vote, and of those who did, more than four million cast a blank ballot.

Despite the constitution's republican elements, real power has always been in the hands of the supreme leader. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, virtually all elections, except those in the first couple of years, were to varying degrees engineered. The Islamic Republic has always been closer to a traditional Islamic state than a modern republic. But after Raisi's election, it will be a stretch to call Iran even a competitive authoritarian regime where factions compete in managed elections to divide power.

THE NEXT SUPREME LEADER

This election was about not just the presidency but also the selection of the next supreme leader. Khamenei is eighty-two and has long been battling prostate cancer. Some believe the plan is to anoint Khamenei's son, Mojtaba, as the next supreme leader, making the post hereditary (and moving Iran

closer to becoming a caliphate). In this scenario, Raisi is to be the pliant president who enables Mojtaba's rise. But

Iran's grave structural challenges can be solved only by a national concordance that includes all strata of society.

others think that Raisi himself is Khamenei's designated successor.

Despite this important ambiguity, two things seem clear. First, both candidates are bad news for Iran and the region. Mojtaba is a shadowy figure who for many years has been his father's de facto chief of staff and, more important, has close ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' brutal intelligence forces. And Raisi's bloody record in the judiciary speaks for itself. Second, the IRGC—a political, economic, cultural, military, and intelligence juggernaut—will be calling the shots in selecting Khamenei's successor.

More broadly, it is also clear that the regime, enfeebled by structural challenges—including a drought, COVID-19, a collapsing financial system, a determined women's movement demanding an end to gender apartheid, and rising discontent among young people—has been flexing its muscles at home



ROGUE REGIME: Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi, winner of Iran's presidential election in June, is accused of crimes against humanity for his role in killing some four thousand dissidents three decades ago. The regime he now heads must confront a drought, COVID-19, a collapsing financial system, a determined women's movement demanding an end to gender apartheid, and rising discontent among young people. [Rouzbeh Fouladi—ZUMA Press]

and abroad. Its response to these challenges has been continued brutality against its citizens, abduction of dual nationals to use as bargaining chips, a rapid increase in uranium enrichment, and more attacks on US forces in Iraq by regime proxies.

Raisi will be in office when and if the ongoing negotiations with the United States resurrect some version of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. A revived JCPOA would bring an end to some of the sanctions reimposed by former president Donald Trump when he withdrew from the deal in 2018. While the Trump administration's policy of "maximum pressure" hurt ordinary Iranians, it also weakened the regime.

If human rights are not a crucial part of any new deal with Iran, then the gains from an end to sanctions will strengthen the regime's most strident elements. For the United States, negotiating with a roguish regime is prudent policy, but normalizing such regimes is to the detriment of America's long-term interests.

IRAN NEEDS DEMOCRACY

The debate in the United States about Iran has often devolved into a false binary between advocates of "regime change" and "appeasers." In conducting its negotiations, President Biden's administration must avoid both sides.

And while Iran has rightly criticized the United States for unilaterally renouncing a binding agreement, Washington should demand that Khamenei take direct responsibility for negotiating with the United States. According to both Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and outgoing president Hassan Rouhani, Khamenei was involved in every step of the JCPOA negotiations but remained in the shadows, and even allowed his minions to attack the deal long before Trump walked away from it.

The United States neither can nor should accept the responsibility of changing Iran's regime. Only the people of Iran can and should make that decision. But any US negotiations with the Islamic Republic must recognize

that America's long-term interests, and those of the people of Iran, can be realized only with a modern democracy, not an Islamic caliphate. The country's grave structur-

Even official sources admit that 51 percent of eligible voters didn't vote.

Among those who did, more than four million cast a blank ballot.

al challenges can be solved only by a national concordance that includes all strata of Iranian society, particularly women, as well as the Iranian diaspora.

The election of Raisi indicates that Ayatollah Khamenei and his allies are moving in the exact opposite direction, which all but guarantees domestic turmoil in the coming months and years. A prudent and effective US strategy toward Iran must place this reality at the center of its calculations.

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Conciliation Will Fail

The case for putting maximum pressure on the Islamic Republic.

By H. R. McMaster

Anyone who will say that religion is separate from politics is a fool; he does not know Islam or politics.

—Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

merican policies toward Iran have produced disappointing results because, in part, of a lack of appreciation for the ideology that drives Iran's theocratic dictatorship. Conciliatory approaches toward Iran across multiple administrations have suffered from a narcissistic, self-referential tendency to assume that US actions were the principal determinants of Iranian

Key points

- » Washington is again poised to pursue a failed policy of conciliating Tehran.
- » A revolutionary ideology drives Iran's aggression and regional interference.
- » Successive US administrations have been burned by the belief that Iran responds to gentle measures and reason.

H. R. McMaster (US Army, Ret.), a former national security adviser, is the Fouad and Michelle Ajami Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of Hoover's working groups on military history and Islamism and the international order. He is also a participant in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project, the Bernard and Susan Liautaud Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute, and a lecturer at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. His latest book is Battlegrounds: The Fight to Defend the Free World (Harper, 2020).

attitudes and behaviors. Despite the record of failures of Western efforts to mollify Tehran since the revolutionaries took power in 1979, President Joe Biden's administration is poised to again pursue conciliation with proposals to lift economic sanctions against Iran in exchange for temporary commitments to curb its nuclear program.

Conciliation will fail. It is past time to base Iran policy on what the historian Zachary Shore calls *strategic empathy* and the fundamental recognition that a revolutionary ideology drives and constrains Iran's theocratic dictatorship. A strategy of maximum pressure that aims to force Iranian leaders to make a choice between either acting as a terrorist state or suffering the consequences of economic and diplomatic isolation is the best approach. The long-term goal should be to encourage a shift in the nature of the Iranian regime such that it ceases its permanent hostility and ends its proxy wars.

TRAIL OF DELUSIONS

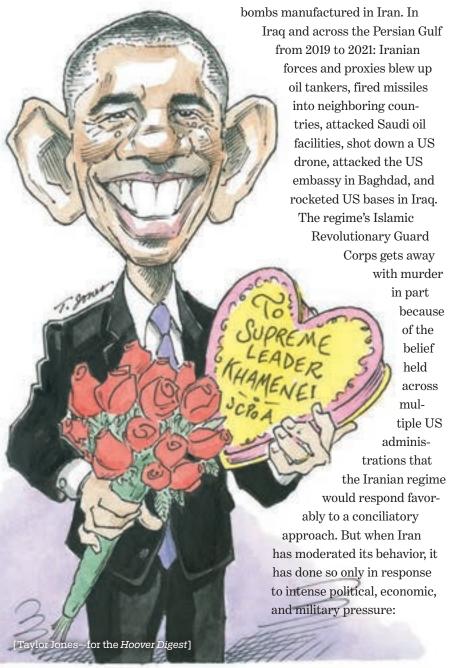
After the revolution in 1979 the Iranian regime turned hostile to the "Great Satan" (the United States), the little Satan (Israel), and others including its Arab neighbors, Britain, and Europe more generally. The destructive war with Iraq from 1980 to 1988 convinced Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini and the clerical order that protecting the revolution required exporting its ideology and pursuing hegemonic influence across the Middle East. Specifically, exporting the revolution requires driving the United States out of the region, weakening Arab states, and threatening Israel with destruction.

Although Iranian strategy is often described as "forward defense," it is better understood as forward offence. The leaders of the Quds Force, the element of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) that directs unconventional warfare and intelligence activities, believe that they are protecting the "purity of the revolution." After suffering more than a million casualties and losing nearly \$645 billion during the Iran-Iraq war, those leaders committed to extraterritorial operations. The IRGC oriented its strategy on two principal enemies: Saudi Arabia and Israel. But US support for those countries led Iran to prioritize acts of aggression against the United States.

Consider a short highlight reel from Iran's proxy war against the United States. In Tehran in 1979: revolutionaries stormed the US embassy and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. In Lebanon in October 1983: Iranian-trained terrorists killed 241 servicemen in a Marine barracks and 58 French paratroopers in their headquarters. Six months earlier, a truck bombing of the US embassy killed 63 people, including 17 Americans. Across the 1980s and early 1990s, Iranian-sponsored terrorists kidnapped 100 foreigners and

tortured to death a CIA station chief and a Marine colonel. In Saudi Arabia in 1996: a Hezbollah truck bomb outside Khobar Towers killed 19 American airmen. In Iraq from 2004 to 2011: Iranian-backed militias killed more than

600 American servicemen and women with



- » Late in the 1980s when it was in shambles from the Iran-Iraq War, Iran released all US hostages.
- » In 2013, under pressure from sanctions, cyberattacks, covert action, and the prospect of a military strike, the regime agreed to nuclear talks.
- » In January 2020, a US strike killed IRGC Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad. Iran's retaliation was muted and proxy attacks diminished. Subsequently, unrest spread throughout Iran because of popular discontent and the IRGC's accidental downing of a civilian airliner.

Another reason the regime gets away with murder and has been able to escalate its proxy wars with relative impunity is that the United States tends to view incidents of Iranian hostility in isolation rather than to see them as part of a pattern of sustained aggression stemming from the Islamic Republic's regional ambitions and its foundational anti-American and anti-Israel ideology.

For example, despite having been tarnished by the arms-for-hostages scandal under the Reagan administration while he was vice president, President George H. W. Bush sought the release of nine US hostages held in Lebanon. He offered an olive branch to Tehran in his inaugural address on January 20, 1989, observing that "goodwill begets goodwill" and expressing his hope that "good faith can be a spiral that endlessly moves on."

But after his administration expressed goodwill with the release of \$567 million frozen after the Tehran embassy attack in 1979, the IRGC terrorist network went global. The IRGC supplied terrorist cells in Europe with weapons to attack their political enemies and Western interests. New Supreme

Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the IRGC, and the Iranian-supported Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah directed worldwide attacks including a 1989 failed

When Iran has moderated its behavior, it has done so only in response to intense political, economic, and military pressure.

bombing in London in an attempt to assassinate the author Salman Rushdie, a 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Argentina that killed twenty-nine people, a 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Argentina that killed eighty-five people, and the bombing of Flight 901 on its way from Colón to Panama City, Panama, that killed all twenty-one of its passengers.

President Bill Clinton did not give adequate attention to the ideology of the regime or the context of its sustained proxy war when he decided not to retaliate against Iran for the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers complex in Saudi Arabia. New Iranian president Mohammad Khatami, a former librarian with whom Clinton thought a conciliatory approach might work, categorically denied—as Iranian leaders always do—that Iran supports terrorist operations overseas. Khatami played to Americans' serial gullibility as he held out hope for reform in Iran, describing an internal political competition in which "one political tendency firmly believes in the prevalence of logic and the rule of law" and "another tendency believes it is entitled to go beyond the law." He even called for a "dialogue between civilizations." But the proxy war went on.

MONEY FOR NOTHING

The Obama administration took the conciliatory approach to a new level. The administration's high hopes for the nascent nuclear deal led it to scale back what had been a promising effort to constrain Iran's aggression. From 2008 to 2016, Project Cassandra disrupted Iran's ability to fund its proxies abroad including Lebanese Hezbollah's international funding networks. But as Treasury Department official Katherine Bauer later recalled, "the investigations were tamped down for fear of rocking the boat with Iran and jeopardizing the nuclear deal."

And once the deal went into effect, the Obama administration was determined to avoid confrontations that might undo it. As American money flowed

Goodwill did not beget goodwill.

into Iran and Iranian exports tripled, funding for terrorist organizations and IRGC operations across the region soared.

Hezbollah received an additional \$700 million per year; an additional \$100 million went to various Palestinian militant and terrorist groups including Hamas, which in May of 2021 fired nearly four thousand rockets into Israel. The Obama administration's conciliatory approach strengthened the Iranian regime psychologically as well as financially.

In contrast to the language in the preamble of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that signatories would "implement this JCPOA in good faith and in a constructive atmosphere" and "refrain from any action inconsistent with the letter, spirit, intent" of the agreement, the IRGC intensified operations in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and eastern Saudi Arabia. For example, in October of 2015, only months after the signing of the JCPOA, hundreds of Iranian troops arrived in Syria over a ten-day period to bolster offensive operations in Idlib and Hama. The IRGC also continued a series of ballistic missile tests in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

It was clear that the Obama administration was considering neither the ideology that drives the Iranian regime nor the historical record of Iran's proxy war against the United States. Just before Iran signed the agreement



metaphorical "outstretched hand" of conciliation that President Obama had offered in a June 2009 speech in Cairo.

The lie that the cash payment and the hostage release were disconnected encouraged Iran's long practice of using hostages for coercion to extort favorable terms, and the revolutionaries in Tehran portrayed the ransom payment as admission of American guilt and weakness. Hossein Nejat, deputy intelligence director of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, stated that ransom

Engagement with the Iranian people could be helpful.

payments demonstrated that "the Americans themselves say they have no power to attack Iran." In the months that followed

the payoff, in addition to multiple missile launches, the regime boasted about its nuclear stockpiles; awarded an IRGC commander with American blood on his hands a medal; seized two US Navy vessels; and arrested ten sailors and paraded them in front of cameras before releasing them fifteen hours later.

As they had done in the past, after receiving the payoff Iran took new hostages, detaining Princeton graduate student Xiyue Wang in 2016 while he was conducting research on the Qajar empire and learning Farsi for a PhD in Eurasian history. As in the past, goodwill did not beget goodwill and conciliation led to Iranian escalation, not moderation.

LEARN FROM HISTORY

The Biden administration's latest efforts at conciliation will give the regime resources to intensify its proxy wars and embolden Iranian leaders. From 2008 to 2018, Iran spent nearly \$140 billion on its military and combat operations abroad. Between 2017 and 2019, the United States sanctioned approximately one thousand Iranian individuals and organizations. In 2018, the Iranian rial declined sharply against major currencies, and oil exports, which generate most of the regime's income, dropped to 1 million barrels a day from a high of 2.5 million. Sanctions, a decrease in gross domestic product, and high inflation resulted in a 10 percent reduction in military spending. Hezbollah's stipend was halved and Iran was having trouble meeting payroll for its proxy army in Syria. But in anticipation of the Biden administration's conciliatory approach, the pressure on Iran is already dissipating. China has signed a strategic partnership agreement with Iran and is purchasing a million barrels of Iranian oil per day.

The conciliatory approach will give the regime psychological as well as financial strength. In November 2019, after attacks on US bases in Iraq,

IRGC commander Hossein Salami crowed that "you have experienced our power in the battlefield and received a powerful slap across your face and could not respond. . . . If you cross our redlines, we will annihilate you." Just before the US strike that killed Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad on January 3, 2020, the supreme leader, referring to the prospect of US retaliation for Iranian proxy attacks on US bases and the US embassy in Iraq, taunted President Donald Trump, saying, "you can't do anything." The regime had clearly been conditioned to believe so. The Biden administration's effort to resurrect the Iran nuclear deal in the face of continued Iranian aggression is no doubt encouraging Khamenei to return to his conclusion that the United States cannot do anything to counter his proxy wars against the United States and our allies and partners in the region.

The Biden administration should learn from history, abandon its conciliatory approach, and return to a policy based on the recognition that when Tehran has moderated its behavior, it has done so only in response to intense political, economic, and military pressure. A strategy based on an empathetic understanding of the nature of the regime and the ideology that drives and constrains its leaders' behavior should prioritize three actions. First, work with partners to improve collective defenses against Iranian military and terrorist capabilities. Second, disrupt Tehran's path to a nuclear weapon, but not by trying to resurrect a weak nuclear agreement that could provide

cover for a clandestine program while the regime uses sanctions relief to accumulate the resources to fully

The Obama administration's conciliatory approach strengthened the Iranian regime psychologically as well as financially.

realize its nuclear goal. Third, impose heavy financial costs on the Iranian regime to limit the resources available to Tehran for the development of destructive weapons and the prosecution of its proxy wars across the Middle East and beyond.

Finally, while understanding what drives and constrains Iranian leaders is critical to US policy, so is an appreciation for the broad range of beliefs and perspectives held by the Iranian people themselves. The Iranian people's attitudes are neither uniform nor immutable, which is why a long period of friendship between the US and Iranian people preceded the revolution. While the Iranian regime cannot be changed from the outside, engagement with the Iranian people can help constrain the regime's use of demagoguery

to justify external aggression and internal repression and can help counter the regime's narrative. Dialogue might also increase social pressure on the regime by reducing Iranian leaders' ability to blame the Great Satan, the little Satan, and others for the tragedy of the modern Islamic Republic.

The United States and other nations should not take blame for the failing Iranian economy in place of those whose corruption and militarism are preventing normal economic engagement and Iranian prosperity. Iran is a tragedy not only because of the devastation and suffering it has caused, but also because of its leaders' failure to take advantage of the tremendous potential of its people and natural resources.

In public statements, foreign leaders should be careful to distinguish the Iranian regime from the Iranian people. Failure to do so only allows the regime to continue to deflect criticism away from its own failures to take advantage of the country's tremendous gifts, including its educated population, geostrategic location, and natural resources.

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Distant Warnings

In their eagerness to be done with "forever wars," especially in Africa. Americans and their leaders may just bring the danger closer.

By Thomas H. Henriksen

resident Biden's retreat from Afghanistan has generated deep concern about US anti-terrorism policy. Two time zones to the west of the mountainous country, the president's actions raise questions about other possible withdrawals from small quasi-wars against terrorist militias in Africa. The news media give scant publicity to the terrorist activities, including attacks, recruitment, and territorial domination, in all parts of the continent.

Over the past few decades, the Pentagon has assumed a growing role in combating Islamist militias that pillage, murder, rape, and intimidate across wide swaths of Africa. Pentagon leaders also fear that African terrorist groups will follow in Al-Qaeda's footsteps and launch attacks on the American homeland. Some politicians and

Key points

- » The Pentagon's smallscale operations across Africa address not only area instability but the possibility of fresh terrorist attacks on the United States.
- » The Pentagon focuses on indigenous recruits, not large-scale interventions.
- » The broader goal—local stability-will be elusive until local governments reduce grievances and injustices.

Thomas H. Henriksen is a senior fellow (emeritus) at the Hoover Institution. This article was adapted from his forthcoming book, America's Wars: Interventions, Regime Change, and Insurgencies after the Cold War (Cambridge University Press, 2022).



BE PREPARED: Corporal Ali-Bachir Ladieh Billeh, a member of Djibouti's international intervention force, participates in bilateral training with US Marines in Cheik Moussa. For several decades, the Pentagon has assumed a role in combating Islamist militias across wide swaths of Africa. The US Africa Command (AFRICOM) was established in 2007 to counter just that threat. [Supunnee Ulibarri—Defense Department]

pundits have grown increasingly eager to cancel all "forever wars," but they ignore the dangers of doing so.

SOMALIA AND BEYOND

Radical Islamism found ready adherents in Africa, which has religious and cultural affinities with the Middle East, a center of violent extremism dating from the 1970s. Somalia was an early arena of this contemporary bloody sectarian upsurge. Somalia, in fact, was on Washington's radar well before Al-Qaeda hijacked jetliners and flew them into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in 2001. President George H. W. Bush sent more than twenty thousand soldiers to Somalia to restore peace and save the population from starvation as the Horn of Africa country descended into chaos and clan warfare. The Clinton White House then tried to build a modern nation from a failed state. After the star-crossed raid of special-operations forces into Mogadishu in 1993, President Bill Clinton withdrew all US military forces. Filling the political vacuum, Islamist militias established order, erected courts, and imposed sharia, or strict Islamic law, on the population.

Fearful that the Salafi-jihadis would use their territorial gains to establish launching bases for overseas terrorism, Washington had first sent CIA field operatives and then special-operations forces to ally with anti-Islamist clan lords in the mid-1990s. The spiraling disorder and bloodshed

motivated the White House to step up covert military actions by the end of the decade.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush initiated the "global war on terror" to stamp out Salafi-jihadi cells wherever they might sprout. Rather than mount large-scale, expensive ground invasions, like those into Afghanistan and two years later into Iraq, the Pentagon turned to low-profile special-forces teams (Green Berets) to train, equip, and mentor indigenous forces beyond Somalia. These teams deployed into the Philippines, for example, to coach soldiers on how to take on Islamist-inspired bands, which were kidnapping American tourists and missionaries for ransom in the archipelago's southern islands. These efforts kept the lid on most, but not all, of the violent extremism in the island chain. Moreover, they provided a model for the Pentagon's African interventions.

Also as part of this counterterrorism strategy, the Bush White House authorized the CIA to conduct targeted killings of Al-Qaeda figures. Among the first struck by a Hellfire missile fired from a Predator drone was Abu Ali al-Harithi, a prime suspect in the bombing of the USS *Cole* in Yemen's Aden harbor in 2000. Soon afterward, the Pentagon deployed special-operations forces in Yemen to battle jihadi fighters. It also set up a four-thousand-mem-

ber US counterterrorism base in Djibouti. In 2007, the Pentagon established the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), one of its six geographical combat-

Turbulence allows jihadists to protect endangered communities and pose as defenders of insecure populations.

ant commands, to counter the advancing threat on the continent.

Far to the northwest of Somalia, the revolt in Libya fueled the smoldering fire in the region to the south of the Sahara Desert. In the Maghreb region, known for its medieval Islamic kingdoms, political conditions were ripe for Islamist penetration and domination. Ethnic animosities, cattle-versus-farming squabbles, and corrupt, arbitrary, or uncaring governments created fertile ground for extremist sects.

When rebels ousted Libyan strongman Muammar Gadhafi from power in 2012 as a consequence of the Arab Spring, the repercussions were felt in the Maghreb, particularly in Mali. Arms poured in from Libyan armories. Disbanded Tuareg fighters from Gadhafi's military returned home to northern Mali. The former soldiers garnered popular support because the Tuareg community had felt marginalized since Mali's independence in 1960.



LIGHT FOOTPRINT: A member of the US Agency for International Development waits for a flight on a military aircraft in Maputo, Mozambique. After billions of dollars were misspent in Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington has shied away from the astronomically priced infrastructure-building so prevalent in post-invasion "nation building." [Chris Hibben—US Air Force]

The outbreak of turbulence in Mali—as in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen—created opportunities for Salafi-jihadis to protect endangered communities and portray themselves as defenders of insecure populations.

It should come as no surprise that militants intentionally provoked violence to pose as protectors of villagers. Salafist movements like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith) soon prevailed over the tribalist Tuareg and instituted strict religious codes. The militants consolidated their hold by using mediation and arbitration in ways similar to those used by the Prophet Muhammad more than fourteen centuries before.

NEW MODELS, NEW THREATS

As the Mali crisis unfolded, the Pentagon reinforced its strategy for combating the rising terrorist dangers elsewhere in the transregional Sahel and Maghreb. As in other countries, the Pentagon strove to establish surrogate forces using indigenous recruits to tackle the Salafi-jihadis. The United States no longer looked to its own armed forces to pull the triggers in waging

counterterrorism; instead, it worked to minimize US boots on the ground by carrying out its counterextremist missions "by, with, and through" local partners.

This light-footprint model was replicated across the desert and scrub terrain as threats surfaced. In Chad, for example, the Pentagon temporarily dispatched eighty US soldiers to work with Chadian soldiers. It also assigned surveillance drones in May 2014 to locate more than two hundred Chibok schoolgirls who had been snatched in northern Nigeria by Boko Haram, which a year later swore a *bayat* (oath of loyalty) to the Levant-based Islamic State emir, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The abduction of the students was followed by several other kidnappings for ransom that threw into sharp relief the integration of terrorism and criminality that often characterized Salafijihadi behavior.

At the request of Mali's government, France dispatched military forces in 2013 that ultimately topped five thousand troops in Sahelian Africa—the most of any US partner by far—with a mission to confront the creeping jihadist peril. Paris needed intelligence, transport, and logistical support. President Barack Obama authorized the Air Force to airlift many of the French forces to Mali and Niger, both former French colonies.

Mali and its neighbors secured no lasting peace, however, even with the aid of US and European Union forces, the G-5 Sahel states (Burkina

Government criminality, abuse of power, and official wrongdoing are recruiters for jihadism.

Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, and Mali), and MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali), a sixteen-thousand-strong entity of troops, police, and civilian experts assigned to protect population centers. Midway through 2020, European governments in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Sweden, and other countries put commandos in the field to bolster the performance of regional troops. This task force, named Takuba (meaning "saber" in the local tongue), was the signature initiative of Emmanuel Macron, the French president, who had pushed for a stronger European military capability in Africa.

All the while, jihadi groups kept exploiting local disputes—among the Fulani ethnic community, for example—to boost their ranks and influence. Operating among the Fulani, whose roughly thirty-eight million people span West and Central Africa, they sowed chaos and death, with the radicalized Fulani preying on the Dogon and Bambara ethnic communities.



NO QUICK EXIT: Chadian soldiers secure a building during a beach training exercise in N'Djamena, the capital. The annual "Flintlock" special-operations exercise brings together forces from more than twenty nations to strengthen security and cooperation. US special forces and civilian agencies alike stress a broader security goal beyond the battlefield: reducing grievances and venality in Africa. [Derek Hamilton—US Army]

Long-standing grievances over stolen livestock, land, and water sharpened disagreements among the groups. All this murderous strife earned Mali the dubious distinction of being the most dangerous UN peacekeeping assignment.

BEYOND ARMED ACTION

From the last years of the George W. Bush presidency to the present, Washington went from almost no military presence in Africa to operating a web of almost thirty small bases for training and surveillance purposes to battle the expanding jihadi incursions. Drones and manned aircraft flew from airfields in Niger, Cameroon, and Chad, along with flights from Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Niger grew to be an AFRICOM hub for the roughly twelve hundred US troops deployed in West Africa, some in secret outposts. In the Agadez region, the US Air Force constructed a base that cost more than \$100 million and took four years to complete. Starting in the

Trump presidency, the seventeen-acre facility hosted military personnel and launched drone flights.

Much of this military activity remained, and remains, unknown to the wider public. There were occasional news reports on counterterrorism operations, but in general, armed actions were staged behind a shroud of secrecy. Journalists had to accept specific guidelines, such as not identifying special-operations warriors by name or mentioning the super-secretive SEAL Team 6 or Delta Force in their stories.

The curtain was pulled back briefly when an ill-fated patrol in Niger lost four Green Berets in an ambush in October 2017. Twice the size of Texas, the Republic of Niger has loomed large in Pentagon worries because of its political and ethnic precariousness. It has been the scene of sustained special-forces instruction and mentorship of Niger's soldiers, thirty of whom were part of the patrol that was attacked. Roughly a hundred fighters from the Islamic State of Greater Sahara (ISGS), affiliated with Syria-based Islamic State, surprised the small American-led patrol near Tongo Tongo, a little more than a hun-

dred miles north of Niamey, the capital. The ISGS militants inflicted severe

Jihadists continue to exploit local disputes to boost their ranks and influence.

casualties on the joint detachment partly because it lacked air cover. Undeterred by bounties on its leaders, the ISGS went on to wreak carnage among poorly defended populations in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, pointing to an extended conflict and the need for US and allied forces.

Counterterrorism operations concentrate on removing from the battle-field radicalized clerics, facilitators, and hitmen. But this tactic alone cannot eliminate terrorist insurgencies. The broader goal—working to reduce grievances, injustices, and venality—needs wider recognition by local officials. US special forces and civilian agencies alike stress this goal. The March 2021 terrorist assault in northern Mozambique bears witness to its government's manifest shortcomings in the southeast African country. Government criminality, abuse of power, and official wrongdoing are essentially recruiters for Salafi-jihadism.

After billions of dollars were misspent in Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington shied away from the astronomically priced infrastructure building so prevalent in the post-invasion "nation building" phases. Many of these elaborate construction projects, of course, were never completed, or fell into disrepair or malfunction with no skilled local staff to tend them. Subsequent

administrations downplayed nation building and largely curtailed the construction of hydroelectric dams, modern highways, high-tech facilities, or hospitals, the kind of infrastructure that was put up by giant American conglomerates under US contract. Good-governance practices remain a priority today with US military forces and civilian experts.

America's interventionist response to terrorist networks did notch a victory in forestalling another 9/11 attack on the homeland. Critics have called

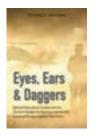
Critics have no realistic counterplan if Washington washes its hands of the partner strategy in Africa.

attention to the costs of this strategy, as it keeps the United States tied down in numerous small proto-wars at a time when the United States faces

great-power rivalries with China and Russia. But given that the US Special Operations Command spends about \$13 billion a year—a figure largely unchanged over the past four years—it appears to be a defense bargain. By contrast, the total of all defense-related expenditures, including the base budget, the Veterans Administration, Homeland Security, and others, comes to \$933.8 billion for the current fiscal year.

Critics have no realistic counterplan to offset the risks of Washington washing its hands of the partner strategy in Africa. The nature of the low-intensity insurgencies makes for no quick exits. Even if victory is elusive, the military forces committed to Africa present the only realistic plan to degrade and contain violent extremist organizations.

Adapted from America's Wars: Interventions, Regime Change, and Insurgencies after the Cold War, by Thomas H. Henriksen (Cambridge University Press, 2022).



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Divided We Fall, Together We Heal

Every country fell short in the battle against COVID-19. The future demands we improve international cooperation, not abandon it.

By Abraham D. Sofaer

he COVID-19 pandemic established, once again, that the United States and the rest of the world need to do far better at protecting their populations from infectious disease. Virtually every government missed opportunities to limit the damage at every stage.

As US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, "China didn't do what it needed to do," resulting in the virus getting "out of hand faster and . . . with much more egregious results than it might otherwise." It failed to inform other states of the outbreak promptly and to prevent infected individuals from traveling abroad. Many other countries, including the United States, failed to implement known mitigation measures, accelerating the spread of

Key points

- » The coronavirus pandemic illustrated deep deficits in international health efforts.
- » The World Health Organization, despite its problems, should be strengthened and reformed.
- » Careful policy will both separate pandemic policy from international frictions and enhance its importance.

Abraham D. Sofaer is the George P. Shultz Distinguished Scholar and Senior Fellow (Emeritus) at the Hoover Institution and a member of Hoover's Shultz-Stephenson Task Force on Energy Policy.

the pandemic. Moreover, the World Health Organization (WHO) acted too slowly.

Across much of the globe, no one was prepared. Moreover, in almost every country, the response was immediately so politicized that it probably multiplied the ultimate toll. Without the huge investment made by the United States in vaccine development and production, and the impressive speed with which the world's pharmaceutical industry mobilized, we could well have experienced a catastrophe equivalent to the flu pandemic of 1918–20.

The United States should take the lead in preparing for future pandemics. But that will require improving and reforming—not abandoning—the WHO and coordinating an international effort that could—but does not necessarily need to—entail a new treaty addressed specifically to pandemics.

A MULTILATERAL RETURN

Of course, relying on an international agency has its costs, but the United States has often advanced its interests and international well-being through multilateral efforts. During my time as the State Department's legal adviser, the United States helped develop or ratified such agreements as the Antarctica Convention, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the International Space Station, the Maritime Terrorism Convention, the Chicago Convention concerning air pollution, and the Genocide and Torture Conventions.

The United States also continues to support and benefit from "specialized"

Improving the performance of states and international agencies demands genuine engagement.

(as opposed to "political") UN agencies. They include the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime

Organization (IMO), which have adopted standards that provide indispensable guidance for commercial aviation and maritime safety.

From the early 1990s, however, the United States has soured on multilateral efforts. This was particularly the case with the International Criminal Court (ICC), where the negotiations were seen as controlled by states determined to criminalize US departures from a narrow view of the legitimate use of force. That treaty, and other disappointments, led both Republican and Democratic administrations of the United States largely to give up on engaging internationally through multilateral agencies, even to advance its own interests.

The United States needs to return to engaging constructively with international organizations. Committing to a more robust international effort to respond to transnational health threats does not mean surrendering sovereign authority or essential interests. Rather, it means recognizing that improving the performance of states, including the United States, and of relevant international agencies requires genuine engagement with governments

and NGOs to rectify weaknesses that are widely acknowledged.

The United States should take the lead in preparing for future pandemics.

One essential aspect of an effective plan: the

United States and other governments are more likely to cooperate in dealing with health threats in a context that avoids national security issues and accusations. A division of policy here would separate the issue of whether biological or chemical health threats may have been created deliberately in violation of the Biological & Toxin (BTWC) or Chemical (CWC) Weapons Conventions. To cite previous examples, when governments agreed to support the creation of standards for civilian aviation, they also agreed to exempt military aircraft. Global maritime conventions also became practicable by exempting national navies. This policy division is evident today in WHO's limited authority to consider radiological threats caused by nuclear activities.

Even as the United States extends support to the WHO, it must also deal forthrightly with the organization's weaknesses. The WHO is, among other things, spread too thin. It has many less-concrete and less-urgent objectives than protecting against biological or chemical threats. The United States should insist that the agency address biological and chemical hazards through a separate entity to ensure that these concerns get the intense attention they warrant, and to enable states to target financial support for related activities.

This issue in part explains the current push to create a separate multilateral agency (somehow related to the WHO) to deal exclusively with pandemics. That seems an unlikely and unnecessarily costly and complicated outcome. But whatever path is taken, infectious disease requires a separate, higher priority than regular health concerns.

A POLICY PRESCRIPTION

Reform must include providing the WHO with new powers and capacities and should focus on the following areas:

- » Reporting requirements: Information is at the heart of the WHO's role, and the need for accurate and prompt reporting is acute when dealing with pandemics and emergencies. Reporting requirements related to biological or chemical threats should be mandatory. Enforcement will be difficult, but this aspect of international cooperation should be recognized as indispensable.
- » Scientific input: The WHO process for identifying needs and developing proposals relies on a thirty-four-member expert committee. A smaller group should deal with infectious-disease issues, based on its members' expertise and political independence. Other specialized international organizations have apolitical technical committees that generate and screen proposals, as do the US National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration.
- » Safety standards: The WHO has adopted safety standards for labs engaged in potentially dangerous research. These standards should be mandated so that member states are required to certify facilities, regardless of whether they are private or under government control.
- » *Preparedness:* Recent pandemics have demonstrated the need to improve international preparedness. Necessary equipment should be manufactured in advance and stored at convenient centers. Teams should be organized and kept in readiness, as the WHO has done in the past with member state assets.
- » Global assistance: The United States should lead efforts to assist needy populations, not only with supply and advice but also with financial aid and pricing arrangements based on need. The Biden administration is correct in accepting that role regarding the COVID-19 crisis in India, and the WHO is the proper forum in which to rally other key developers and manufacturers to join this effort. Their combined strength should effectively ensure that states can meet their moral duties without sacrificing the health of their own populations, or surrendering benefits based on intellectual property, natural resources, facilities, or contractual arrangements.
- » Relations with member states: Effective international action will require independent personnel operating out of WHO offices. They should act as partners of national personnel, however, rather than as superiors, recognizing that member states will enhance the WHO's authority only if its role is limited to assisting national systems to satisfy their obligations as well as the needs of their populations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused great damage. But it should also lead states to address international health threats more urgently and effectively. The need to strengthen the WHO's capacity to resist political pressure

should not obscure the ultimate interest in advancing global health. As thensecretary of state George P. Shultz testified after the Soviets shot down a Korean Air Lines passenger plane in 1983: "President Reagan made sure the world knew the full unvarnished truth about the atrocity; nevertheless, he also sent our arms control negotiators back to Geneva, because he believed

that a reduction in nuclear weapons was a critical priority."

In that monstrous case, the United States and others did not abanInfectious disease requires a separate, higher priority than regular health concerns.

don ICAO, despite its limited capacity to force remedial action, but US representatives insisted upon holding a hearing and developing a public record of Soviet misconduct. Similarly, while maintaining its support of the WHO, the United States and other members should insist upon a full explanation of the spread of COVID-19. Even though China will do all that it can to prevent such a hearing, it is the sort of constructive demand for accountability that would demonstrate the US determination to hold the WHO and its members to the high level of conduct needed to increase global health security in the future. \blacksquare

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To Everyone's Health

The pandemic provided fresh evidence of a very old problem: members of certain minority groups suffer worse health and shorter lives than does the average American. Fixing that will require transforming Medicaid.

By Scott W. Atlas

ne important lesson we should draw from the tragic loss of life during the coronavirus pandemic: socioeconomic differences correlate to health outcomes. This point seems obvious because disparities in outcomes have been documented for decades. For COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has calculated the risk of hospitalization for African-Americans and Hispanics as triple that of whites and Asians; the risk of death is double.

Beyond this illness, many disease outcomes

Key points

- » Medicaid has worse outcomes than private insurance, carries a huge cost, and is not accepted by most doctors.
- » All single-payer systems hold down costs by limiting access to doctors, treatments, drugs, and technology.
- » The solution to Medicaid's woes is to expand America's world-class, privately insured medical care.

Scott W. Atlas is the Robert Wesson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He participates in Hoover's Health Care Policy Working Group and is the co-chair of Hoover's Human Prosperity Project.

and health measures are worse for certain minority groups in the United States. Infant mortality by race of the mother for African-Americans and Native Americans is about double that of infants born to whites and Hispanics. Black Americans have a life expectancy of seven fewer years than Hispanics, who live three years longer than whites. Undoubtedly, several factors contribute.

That health outcomes are worse for America's minorities and the poor has been put forth as a key motivation for expanding government coverage. A fundamental flaw in that argument is that this problem is not unique to the health system of United States. The very same health disparities for minorities are seen in countries with the longest history of using single-payer care. For instance, in Canada, Inuit and First Nation infant mortality is two to four times that of non-indigenous Canadians and Quebecois. The same goes for the United Kingdom, where black Caribbean and black African infant mortality rates are two to three times those of whites.

President Biden's American Rescue Plan pays for remaining states to expand Medicaid. That removes some fiscal considerations by states, but is no one concerned about Medicaid's performance, compared to alternatives, before expanding it?

MINORITIES HARDEST HIT

Medicaid, our single-payer system for the poor, is the main outlier to the uniquely private US health care system. Low-income Americans are the only US citizens who have no choice other than pure government coverage. It is typically unacknowledged that more than 70 percent of seniors on Medicare exercise their choice for private insurance to supplement or replace the traditional single-payer plan with Medicare Advantage, Medigap, and employer-sponsored coverage; millions more depend on private drug coverage.

One thing is strikingly clear: the quality of Medicaid falls squarely on the shoulders of minorities. Medicaid covers more than seventy million people and costs more than \$600 billion per year; 21 percent are Black, 25 percent are Hispanic, and 40 percent are white. Yet, of the 250 million American adults, only 12 percent are black and 16 percent Hispanic, whereas 64 percent are white. Likewise, Medicaid covers almost thirty million of America's children; most black children (57.1 percent) and most Hispanic children (54.7 percent) use Medicaid, while fewer than one-third (32.8 percent) of white children do.

What's wrong with expanding Medicaid? First, half of doctors don't even accept it. Worse, 51 percent of those doctors with contractual agreements to

accept new Medicaid patients in practice do not, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. This is especially true of family-practice doctors, pediatricians, and psychiatrists, all of whom accept Medicaid patients at far lower rates than they accept private insurance patients. Why don't doctors accept more Medicaid patients? Because Medicaid pays below the cost of administering the care. Doctors cannot be expected to lose money per patient.

Far more troubling are the data on disease outcomes. Medicaid patients fare worse than those using private insurance, even after standardizing for medical differences among patients. And that's the relevant comparison to make: to private insurance. Those bad outcomes include more frequent complications and lower survival rates from cancers (e.g., head and neck, pediatric, liver, lung, colon), heart procedures, transplants, and major surgeries. Should we keep ignoring this poor performance and continue to expand Medicaid for disadvantaged Americans, just as long as "something" is done?

DO WE CARE ABOUT THE POOR?

There is an alternative. The contrarian idea that has never been seriously entertained is to equalize everyone upward with private insurance. That would mean converting the poor to similar coverage choices as the rich, the proven pathway to broader access and higher quality care.

The obvious reason for Congress's non-interest in this idea is the anticipated cost. Single-payer systems have significantly lower health expenditures. But all single-payer systems hold down costs using one unacknowledged strategy: limiting the availability of doctors, treatments, medications, and

The goal of health care reform should be to ensure that everyone has access to excellent care—not to label everyone "insured." technology. That is also true in the United States for Medicaid, and that limitation will persist.

That is precisely why approval of an innovative drug for hepatitis C, a disease concentrated

in low-income minority patients, was delayed by Medicaid while patients died from liver cancer. That is precisely why there are long waiting lists in single-payer countries. In England alone, a record-setting 4.4 million patients were on National Health Service (NHS) waiting lists as of late 2019. According to NHS statistics, in the fourth quarter of 2019, more than 22 percent

of patients referred for "urgent treatment" of cancer waited more than two months for their first treatment. Likewise, in Canada's single-payer system, the 2019 median wait from general practitioner appointment to specialist was ten weeks; the total median wait to begin treatment was a stunning five months.

Waits are so long that many countries, including Finland, Ireland, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Denmark, have needed to pay for private care. In Denmark, patients can even choose a

private hospital outside the country if their wait time exceeds thirty days.

Holding down costs is precisely why singlepayer offers far fewer new cancer drugs, limIt's not just an American problem. The very same health disparities appear in countries with the longest history of single-payer care.

ited technology like MRI and CT scanners, long delays to see surgeons and other specialists, and fewer high-tech ICU beds per capita than in the United States. Let's also not deny what no one admits: single-payer waiting lists will eventually explode, given the incalculable medical care skipped during the lockdowns.

America has world-class, privately insured medical care. Why don't we use it for everyone? The goal of health care reform should be to ensure that everyone has access to excellent medical care, not to label someone as "insured."

If conservatives believe their talking points about competition, then they should commit to this. Price transparency reduces prices. Let's break supply monopolies by eliminating state-based licensure, limits on specialists and medical school graduates, certificates of need for technology, unnecessary restrictions on physician assistants and nurse practitioners, and overregulated drug development pathways. For those who want it, allow cheaper insurance less burdened by mandates, and expand health savings accounts. And finally have the courage to limit the tax exclusion; it drives up health care costs for everyone, and it incentivizes the affluent to spend more on their own care.

If politicians are truly concerned about the health care of the poor, then it's time for a radical change of thinking about Medicaid. It seems indefensible to expand a substandard program that is proven to have worse outcomes than private insurance, costs hundreds of billions of dollars per year, is not accepted by most doctors, and provides coverage that no one

in Congress (the very lawmakers who expanded it) would choose for their own families.

Considering the hidden costs—including pain, suffering, death, permanent disability, and forgone wages—we are on the verge of creating a trillion-dollar Medicaid program that is undeniably second class. It's unconscionable.

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Crowdsourcing and the Mobs

The Internet has enabled the rise of citizen spies.
They're making money, pushing social causes—
and sometimes running roughshod on privacy and
civil rights.

By Amy B. Zegart

n January 6, throngs of supporters of outgoing president Donald Trump rampaged through the US Capitol in an attempt to derail Congress's certification of the 2020 presidential election results. The mob threatened lawmakers, destroyed property, and injured more than a hundred police officers. Only a

Key points

- » Open-source intelligence has permanently changed information gathering.
- » Nonstate "citizen spies" have chalked up both notable successes and notable failures.
- » Open-source intelligence is a loose, unregulated field, without formal training, peer review, or penalties for being wrong.
- » Mere information is never enough. Interpreting the data is essential.

Amy B. Zegart is the Morris Arnold and Nona Jean Cox Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of Hoover's working groups on national security and on intellectual property, innovation, and prosperity. She is also a senior fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies and professor of political science (by courtesy) at Stanford University. Her latest book, Spies, Lies, and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence (Princeton University Press), will be published next January.

handful of the rioters were arrested immediately; most simply left the Capitol complex and disappeared into the streets of Washington. But they did not get away for long. It turns out that the insurrectionists were fond of taking selfies. Many of them posted photos and videos documenting their role in the assault on Facebook, Instagram, Parler, and other social media platforms. Some even earned money livestreaming the event and chatting with extremist fans on a site called DLive.

Amateur sleuths immediately took to Twitter, self-organizing to help law enforcement identify and charge the rioters. Their investigation was impromptu, not orchestrated, and open to anyone, not just experts. Partici-

Higgins disdains the hierarchy and bureaucracy of government intelligence agencies, but red tape has some benefits.

pants didn't need a badge or a security clearance just an Internet connection. Within hours, this crowdsourcing effort had collected hundreds of videos and photographs

before rioters could delete them or social media platforms started taking them down. Beyond merely gathering evidence, citizen detectives began identifying perpetrators, often by zeroing in on distinctive features captured in images, such as tattoos or unusual insignias on clothing. Soon, law enforcement agencies were openly requesting more online assistance. By March, the volunteer community of amateur investigators had sent some 270,000 digital tips to the FBI; hundreds of suspects have now been arrested and charged.

This is the emerging world of open-source intelligence. Tracking criminals at home and adversaries abroad used to be the province of governments, which enjoyed a near monopoly over the collection and analysis of essential information. In the old days, law enforcement agencies had special access to data used for identifying perpetrators—such as fingerprint records—that ordinary citizens did not. Intelligence agencies had unique data, too; they were the only organizations with the resources and knowhow to launch billion-dollar satellites and collect information at scale. Publicly available information mattered, but information residing in government agencies mattered more.

Not anymore. Today, new technologies enable nonstate actors and individuals to collect and analyze intelligence, too—sometimes more easily, more quickly, and better than governments. Commercial firms are launching hundreds of satellites each year, offering low-cost eyes in the sky for anyone who wants them. More people on earth have cell phones than have running water,

enabling them to post what they are seeing in real time from anywhere. More than half the world is online, producing and acquiring open-source intelligence even if they don't know it. According to a 2019 World Economic Forum report, Internet users post some five hundred million tweets to Twitter and three hundred and fifty million photos to Facebook every day.

THE HUNT IS ON

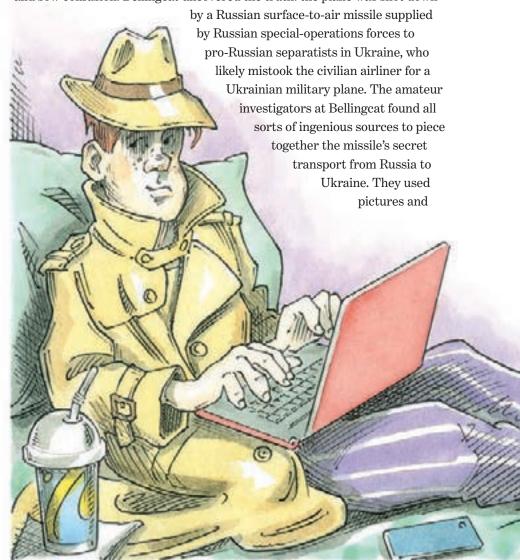
Bellingcat is a key member of this new open-source intelligence ecosystem. Formally founded in 2014, Bellingcat eludes easy definition. It conducts activities traditionally performed by a wide variety of players, including journalists, activists, hobbyists, and law enforcement agencies. Led by Eliot Higgins and a small staff, Bellingcat draws on the work of thousands of volunteers around the world, united by a shared passion for using openly available information to investigate crimes, battle disinformation, and reveal wrongdoing. The group's name was inspired by a fable about a cat that terrorizes a group of mice. The mice are faster than the cat, but they realize they cannot protect themselves unless they hear the cat coming. Their solution: find a brave mouse to hang a bell on the cat's neck. Higgins sees his mission as "belling" the cats of global injustice. He calls his organization "an intelligence agency for the people," an "open community of amateurs on a collaborative hunt for evidence."

In *We Are Bellingcat*, Higgins traces his improbable journey from college dropout and videogame player to open-source intelligence pioneer. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, in 2001, Higgins, a British citizen then in his twenties, was struck by the slowness of traditional media. "News was happening so fast," he writes, "and the papers were so slow." He became obsessed with current affairs and started joining online message boards. By 2011, when the Arab Spring protests were erupting across the Middle East, Higgins was arriving early to his office job to scour the Internet for news. It was then that he had a realization: reporters were often posting more information in their personal Twitter feeds than in their published stories; social media had facts that traditional media did not.

Higgins eventually moved from consuming information to producing it, posting comments on the Something Awful message board and the *Guardian's* live blog, then creating his own blog under the handle Brown Moses, after the Frank Zappa song of the same name. His self-described forte was using Google Earth to determine the locations of events and identifying unusual weaponry he found in photos. Imagery, he discovered, could be a gold mine in the hands of a careful investigator. Photographs often contained

telltale clues—a distant road sign, a certain type of tree, a time of day, a specific kind of munition—that the subjects and photographers themselves didn't realize were present. "What people mean to show is not all they are revealing," writes Higgins.

Bellingcat is best known for investigating the shootdown of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, which crashed in Ukraine in 2014, killing all 298 people aboard. The Russian government insisted that Ukrainians were behind the tragedy and launched disinformation campaigns to spread false narratives and sow confusion. Bellingcat uncovered the truth: the plane was shot down



videos of separatist military hardware that Ukrainians liked to post on social media; dashboard camera footage of daily drives in the region, which car owners posted on YouTube (a popular local hobby); an app called SunCalc, which measures shadows in pictures to pinpoint the time of day of an image; and Instagram selfies of a Russian undercover soldier posing at the border.

Bellingcat's volunteers identified the specific Russian military unit and individuals involved. They even pinpointed the exact weapon that shot down the plane by tracking photos of its transport and identifying the unique pattern of bumps and tears that appeared on a rubber part of the missile transporter's exterior.

Bellingcat has notched many other successes: unearthing and compiling overwhelming evidence that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own citizens; identifying neo-Nazis involved in violent protests in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017; and unmasking members of a Russian hit team that in 2018 tried to assassinate a former Russian military officer who had spied for the British and was living in the United Kingdom. In one case, Bellingcat investigators identified someone photographed assaulting an African-American man in Charlottesville by examining social media photos of white nationalist rallies held in the summer (when it was hot and people tended to open their shirts) and matching the distinctive pattern of moles at the top of the suspect's chest.

In another case, Higgins saw a late-night video tweeted by a Syrian activist, Sami al-Hamwi, that showed a man picking through strange turquoise canisters on the ground in Syria. "Anyone know what this weird [bomb] is?" Hamwi asked. Higgins found another video from the same area showing a split shell that had fins and a distinctive shape. Another amateur sleuth sketched it and posted the drawing so people could more easily hunt for matches at specialty

weapons sites online. Eventually, Higgins concluded that the videos showed parts of a Russian-made RBK-250-275 cluster bomb, a widely denounced munition that releases bomblets that often fail to

[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

explode, posing risks for civilians (including children) who later find them. The turquoise canisters the man was picking through on the video were live bombs.

CROWDS, MOBS, AND FLASH JUDGMENTS

Perhaps unsurprisingly, *We Are Bellingcat* gives a glass-half-full view of opensource intelligence, focusing almost entirely on its promise and glossing over its potential risks. But the downsides are important to consider.

Bellingcat is part of an eclectic, expanding ecosystem that is home to a wide range of inhabitants with varying motives and capabilities. There are hobbyists, journalists, activists, academics, part-timers, profiteers, volunteers, fact checkers, conspiracy peddlers, and everything in between. Higgins's outfit is one of the most capable and responsible members of this emerging world, with high standards for verification and a commitment to training. Those values are shared by a number of academic experts and former government officials who also conduct valuable open-source intelligence work. But open-source intelligence is a loose, unregulated field, open to anyone: there are no formal qualifications, rules, or standards. Operating online means that errors can go viral. And participants don't risk losing a promotion or a job for making a mistake. Higgins disdains the hierarchy and bureaucracy of government intelligence agencies, but red tape has some benefits: the best intelligence agencies insist on rigorous hiring standards and procedures, formal analytic training, mandatory peer review of intelligence products, and penalties for poor performance.

Higgins is also passionate about the benefits of crowdsourcing to find the truth. But a thin line separates the wisdom of crowds from the danger of mobs. The herd is often wrong—and when it is, the costs can be high. After two terrorists detonated explosives near the finish line of the Boston Marathon in 2013, killing three people and wounding more than 260, users of the online forum Reddit who were eager to crack the case identified several "suspects" who turned out to be innocent; the crowdsourced investigation quickly devolved into a digital witch-hunt.

Recent research has found that facial recognition algorithms—which are widely available and easy to use online—are far less accurate at identifying darker-skinned faces than white ones. Thus Robert Julian-Borchak Williams, an African-American man, in 2020 became the first known person in the United States to be charged with a crime he did not commit because his face was erroneously identified by a faulty facial recognition algorithm.

After the January 6 siege of the US Capitol, an anonymous Washingtonarea college student used imagery posted online and simple facial detection software to create Faces of the Riot, a website with six thousand photographs of people believed to have been involved in the attack. "Everybody participating in this violence, [which] really amounts to an insurrection, should be held accountable," said the student. But Faces of the Riot did not distinguish between people who broke into the Capitol complex and those who only attended protests outside it. Nor did the site's image dump identify or remove mere bystand-

ers, members of the press, or police officers.

Flawed open-source investigations can also lead intelligence officials In the old days, law enforcement agencies had special access to data denied to ordinary citizens.

and policy makers astray, sapping resources from other missions and priorities. In 2008, a former Pentagon strategist named Phillip Karber was teaching a class at Georgetown University when he decided to guide his students on an open-source intelligence investigation to uncover the purpose of a massive underground tunnel system in China. The existence of the tunnels had been known for years, but their use remained uncertain. Karber's student sleuths produced a 363-page report that concluded that the tunnels were secretly hiding three thousand nuclear weapons—which would have meant that China possessed a nuclear arsenal around ten times as large as what most experts and US intelligence agencies believed, according to declassified estimates.

Experts judged that the report was flat wrong and found the analysis to be riddled with egregious errors. Among them, it relied heavily on an anonymous 1995 post to an Internet forum—a source that was "so wildly incompetent as to invite laughter," wrote the nonproliferation expert Jeffrey Lewis. Nevertheless, the report was featured in a *Washington Post* article, was circulated among top Pentagon officials, and led to a congressional hearing. It was all a wild goose chase that consumed the most valuable resource in Washington: time. As open-source intelligence grows, such distractions are likely to proliferate. Increasingly, US intelligence agencies may have to serve as verifiers of last resort, debunking crowdsourced claims that make head-lines instead of giving policy makers the intelligence they need.

SMALL TRUTHS, BIG DISTORTIONS

Tracking criminals at home and adversaries abroad used to be the province of governments. Not anymore.

Open-source intelligence investigations also tend to focus on details to illuminate the big picture. In Higgins's view, truth is truth, small things add up,

and everyone knows it. This approach is seductive but riskier than it sounds. Intelligence is a murky business in which individual facts often support many competing hypotheses. In 1990, for example, US satellite imagery clearly showed Iraqi forces mobilizing near the Kuwaiti border. But nobody knew whether the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was bluffing to gain leverage in his dispute with the Kuwaitis or whether he was really preparing to invade. The facts were obvious, but Saddam's intentions were not.

Small truths can also lead to big distortions. Humans often place too much weight on information that confirms their views and too little weight on information that contradicts them. General Douglas MacArthur was blindsided by China's entry into the Korean War mostly because he was convinced that the Chinese leader Mao Zedong wouldn't dare join the fight; MacArthur put stock in intelligence that supported that belief and discounted anything that challenged it.

Asking the wrong question can also produce information that is narrowly accurate yet highly misleading. Michael Hayden highlighted this danger during his 2006 confirmation hearing to serve as CIA director. "I have three great kids," Hayden told the Senate intelligence committee, "but if you tell

More people on earth have cell phones than have running water.

me to go out and find all the bad things they've done . . . I can build you a pretty good dossier, and you'd think they were

pretty bad people, because that was what I was looking for and that's what I'd build up." Truths can deceive even when nobody intends it.

The revolution in open-source intelligence is here to stay, and US intelligence agencies must embrace it or risk failure. Innovators such as Bellingcat are harnessing publicly available information with new technologies in exciting ways. But like anything in intelligence, this emerging landscape holds both promise and pitfalls.

Maximizing the benefits and mitigating the risks of this open-source world requires action on three fronts. First, governments and nongovernmental actors need to develop closer partnerships to make it easier to collaborate and share open-source intelligence. Meanwhile, governments need to create intelligence agencies dedicated to open-source collection and analysis, which remains a peripheral activity in most intelligence bureaucracies. In the United States, the CIA, the National Security Agency, and other intelligence agencies have promising open-source initiatives under way. But these will not be enough: a new open-source intelligence agency is needed. Secret agencies

will always favor secrets. Just as the US Air Force was hobbled until it split from the Army, open-source intelligence will remain underfunded, underpowered, and underutilized as long as it sits inside agencies whose missions, cultures, and capabilities are all designed for a classified world.

Finally, nongovernmental open-source groups such as Bellingcat have work to do. The ecosystem as a whole needs to codify and institutionalize best practices, create shared ethical norms, establish

quality standards, and improve collection

The herd is often wrong.

and analysis skills to reduce the risk of errors and other bad outcomes. Here, too, efforts are under way. Bellingcat is running training programs, and the Stanley Center for Peace and Security, a nonprofit, is convening international workshops with leaders in open-source intelligence to examine ethical challenges and develop recommendations for addressing them.

Today, open-source intelligence is dominated by Americans and the United States' Western democratic allies. Many of the leading organizations are filled with experts who are driven by a sense of responsibility, who have exacting quality standards, and who work closely with government officials and international bodies. But the future is likely to bring more players from more countries with less expertise, less sense of responsibility, and less connectivity to US and allied intelligence officials and policy makers. China already operates commercial satellites, and the internationalization of the commercial satellite business is expected to grow significantly in the next several years. The open-source world will soon be more crowded and less benign. Now is the time to prepare.

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Green Screens

Environmentalists see the future as either apocalypse or utopia. We need to address the climate, but hyperbole of any stripe only gets in the way.

By Bjorn Lomborg

ur current climate conversation embodies two blatantly contradictory claims.
On one side, experts warn that promised climate policies will be economically crippling. In a new report, the International Energy Agency (IEA) states that achieving net-zero in 2050 will likely be "the greatest challenge humankind has ever faced." That is a high bar, surpassing the Second World War, the black plague, and COVID-19.

On the other side, politicians sell net-zero climate schemes as a near-utopia that every nation will rush to embrace. As US climate envoy John Kerry told world leaders gathered at President Biden's climate summit in April: "No one is being asked for a sacrifice."

Key points

- » Politicians alternate tough talk and utopian reassurances to get their way on environmental policy.
- » People are being told only the worst estimates of damage from climate change.
- » Sacrifices won't lead to wise, or sustainable, benefits. Innovation will.

Both claims can't be true. Yet they are often espoused by the same climate campaigners in different parts of their publicity cycle. The tough talk aims to shake us into action, and the promise of rainbows hides the political peril when the bills come due.

Bjorn Lomborg is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, president of the Copenhagen Consensus Center, and a visiting professor at Copenhagen Business School. His latest book is **False Alarm: How Climate Change Panic Costs Us Trillions, Hurts the Poor, and Fails to Fix the Planet** (Basic Books, 2021.)

George Orwell called this willingness to espouse contradictory claims *doublethink*. It is politically expedient and gets climate-alarmed politicians re-elected. But if we want to fix climate change, we need honesty. Currently promised climate policies will be incredibly expensive. While they will deliver some benefits, their costs will be much higher.

SACRIFICES MUST MAKE SENSE

Yes, climate change is real and manmade, and we should be smart in fixing it. But climate impacts are often vastly exaggerated, leaving us panicked. The UN Climate Panel estimates that if we do nothing, climate damages in 2100 will be equivalent to 2.6 percent of global GDP. That is a problem, but not the end of the world.

Because climate news reports only the worst potential outcomes, most people think the damage will be much greater. Remember how we were repeatedly told 2020's Atlantic hurricane season was the worst ever? The reporting ignored that almost everywhere else, hurricane intensity was feeble, making 2020 one of the globally weakest in satellite history. And even within the Atlantic, 2020 ranked thirteenth.

When Kerry and many other politicians insist that climate policies mean no sacrifice, they are clearly dissembling. In the UN Climate Panel's overview, all climate policies have real costs. Why else would we need recurrent climate summits to arm-twist unwilling politicians to ever-greater promises?

The IEA's new net-zero report contains plenty of concrete examples of sacrifices. By 2050, we will have to live with much lower energy consumption than today. Despite being richer, the average global person will be allowed less energy than today's average poor. We will all be allowed less energy than the average Albanian used in the 1980s. We will also have to accept shivering in winter and sweltering in summer, lower highway speeds, and fewer people being allowed to fly.

But climate policy sacrifices could still make sense if their costs were lower than the achieved climate benefits. If we could avoid the 2.6 percent climate damage for, say, 1 percent sacrifice, that would be a good outcome. This is common sense and the core logic of the world's only climate economist to win the Nobel Prize (2018 laureate William Nordhaus of Yale). Smart climate policy costs little and reduces climate damages a lot.

GREEN ENERGY IS THE ANSWER

Unfortunately, our current doublethink delivers the reverse outcome. One new peer-reviewed study finds the cost of net-zero just after 2060—much later than

most politicians promise—will cost us more than 4 percent of GDP by 2040, or about \$5 trillion annually. And this assumes globally coordinated carbon taxes. Otherwise, costs will more than double. Paying 8 percent or more to avoid part of 2.6 percent damages half a century later is just bad economics.

It is also implausible politics. Just for China, the cost of going net-zero exceeds 7 to 14 per cent of its GDP. Instead, China uses green rhetoric to placate Westerners but aims for development with 247 new coal-fired power plants. China now emits more greenhouse gases than the entire rich world.

Most other poorer countries are hoping to follow China's rapid ascendance. At a recent climate conference, where dozens of high-level delegates dutifully lauded net-zero, India went off script. As other participants squirmed, power minister Raj Kumar Singh inconveniently blurted out the truth: net-zero "is just pie in the sky." He added that developing countries will want to use more and more fossil fuels and "you can't stop them."

If we push on with our climate doublethink, rich people will likely continue to wring their hands and aim for net-zero, even at considerable costs to their own societies. But three-quarters of future emissions come from poorer countries pursuing what they regard as the more important development priorities of avoiding poverty, hunger, and disease.

As with most great challenges humanity has faced, we solve them not by pushing for endless sacrifices but through innovation. COVID is fixed with vaccines, not unending lockdowns. To tackle climate, we need to ramp up our investments in green energy innovation. Increasing green energy currently requires massive subsidies, but if we could innovate its future price down to below that of fossil fuels, everyone would switch. Innovation is the most sustainable climate solution. It is dramatically cheaper than current policies and demands fewer sacrifices while delivering benefits for most of the world's population. \blacksquare

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Civics and Its Discontents

A host of social struggles converge on a familiar battlefield: civic education.

By Peter Berkowitz

ivic education has emerged as a major front in the bitter clash spilling over into many domains between left and right in America. Since the civiceducation battles revolve around the nation's core principles and fundamental character, they may prove the decisive front.

Education in general and civic education in particular shape students' understandings of themselves, their fellow citizens, the nation, and other nations and peoples. Consequently, the outcome of the raging debate about the content and goal of civic education is bound to have a major effect on America's ability to secure freedom and

Key points

- » Civics has become a battleground for the nation's future.
- » A proper understanding of America's values and history is essential to keeping freedom alive.
- » Students should be empowered by civic education to be free citizens. Civics should not be a place for leftist indoctrination.

protect equality under law, provide economic opportunity and spur growth, revitalize civil society, and defend the free and open international order

Peter Berkowitz is the Tad and Dianne Taube Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is a participant in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project and a member of Hoover's task forces on foreign policy and grand strategy, and on military history.

against antidemocratic and unfree regimes' ambitions to bend it toward authoritarianism.

AN ANCIENT IDEAL

Civic education is an old idea. According to the classical tradition rooted in Plato and Aristotle, the whole of education should aim at forming the soul by cultivating the virtues. Education, in this view, involves both the training of the body through disciplined physical exertion and the formation of the mind through study of science and the humanities—not least the principles of one's own nation's political order. For the classical tradition, education is civic education.

To a significant extent, the modern tradition of freedom agreed, with the crucial proviso that education's principal goal was to prepare students for the rights and responsibilities of freedom. Accordingly, liberal education puts study of the principles of a free society at the core of the curriculum. At the same time, liberal education places a good deal more emphasis than did classical education on introducing students to the diversity of views on the great moral, economic, legal, political, philosophical, and religious questions, and on equipping students to think for themselves. Such study—concentrating on great works of literature, history, philosophy, and theology—is part and parcel of civic education well understood because it cultivates the virtues of reasoned inquiry, tolerance, and civility, all of which contribute to good citizenship in a liberal democracy.

Civic education as Americans tend to think of it today involves telltale innovations. Contemporary American educators treat civic education as a specialized undertaking, walling it off from other subjects. They increasingly ascribe to it a participatory component, believing correctly that engagement in political affairs and the life of the community is an important part of citizenship in a free and democratic society while supposing, dubiously, that schools are well-suited to direct outside-the-classroom action. And for some time now, a large swath of American educators have treated the proposition that the United States is "systemically racist" as civic education's indisputable premise.

In general, American progressives want more of the civic-education innovations. For them, civics is a stand-alone subject. In their view, it involves to a considerable extent, and in some cases primarily, the promotion of social justice in and beyond the classroom. Instead of concentrating on teaching the basic facts and pre-eminent ideas of US history and exposing students to different perspectives on the American experience,

progressive educators betray a tendency to inculcate as a self-evident truth that the nation was conceived in, and remains suffused with, racism.

Meanwhile, conservatives incline to the traditional view that civic education should be grounded in the study of the nation's self-proclaimed moral

and political ideas—the principles of freedom and self-government set forth in the Declaration, Constitution, and other seminal writings from the founding. Such an approach includes

In one recent effort, "transformation" counts for almost everything in civic education while preserving the constitutional heritage counts for little.

exploration of the many ways the nation has fallen short of its professed standards, but it does so in light of the United States of America's distinction as the first nation ever to come into existence by declaring its dedication to the universal principles of individual freedom and human equality. It also brings into focus how the American experiment in ordered liberty, despite the legal protection it gave to slavery at its founding, has made great progress in honoring unalienable rights, the securing of which, the Declaration states, is government's first task.

IDEOLOGICAL TEMPTATIONS

In a recent Atlantic essay titled "Can Civics Save America?" distinguished journalist George Packer attempts to broker a viable accord in the civiceducation battles. The country could certainly use a level-headed and intelligent mediator—not nonpartisan, necessarily, but capable of reporting the situation accurately and identifying the common ground on which education in a pluralistic and, at the moment, deeply divided, nation can take place. A writer of the center-left, Packer seems to fit the bill. He is devoted to classic liberal notions of individual freedom, human equality, toleration, civility, and reasoned discourse. In 2019, he wrote judiciously and movingly, based on his own experience as a New York City parent, about schools' damaging efforts to inculcate progressive orthodoxy. And he recognizes that we face a dire situation in which schools today barely teach civics—that goes for the facts of American government as well as the virtues of persuasion and compromise on which liberal democracy depends—even as citizens demonstrate shocking ignorance about the basic operation of our constitutional system and trust in government plummets.

Packer's ambitions at mediation, however, are thwarted by his softening and sprucing up of the progressive position, and his crude distortion of the conservative alternative.

Packer finds hope in an initiative led by Harvard professor Danielle Allen

In the classical tradition, education is civic education.

and iCivics executive director Louise Dubé. Their report, funded by the Department of Education and the National

Endowment for the Humanities, was released to the public in March. According to Packer, the Educating for American Democracy initiative "tries hard not to choose sides in the culture war." It seeks "to reconcile love of country and its ideals with rigorous criticism of its failings." It aims to make students "more skilled and empowered as democratic citizens." And rather than "tell schools what to teach or students what to think," its purpose is "to guide the education of students in how to think."

These are admirable goals in the abstract, but Packer overlooks the invitation to politicization of the schools woven into the initiative's emphasis on, as he puts it, "acting on issues of the present." He dismisses Ethics and Public Policy Center senior fellow Stanley Kurtz's critique of "action civics" on the strange grounds that it is unreasonable "to believe that children in twenty-first-century America can be made to sit quietly at their desks as they did in 1957, learning how a bill became a law." But human nature has not changed so

The main goal of a modern liberal education is to prepare students for the rights and responsibilities of freedom.

greatly in the past sixtyfive years as to extinguish students' capacity—or obviate the political imperative—to learn how government works. Nor has human nature

undergone alterations that would lead one to doubt that an overwhelmingly progressive educational establishment will exploit "action civics" to enlist students in progressive causes while discouraging participation in conservative ones.

Packer, moreover, misses the pronounced leftward tilt in the accompanying Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy. Writing in *City Journal*, Mark Bauerlein shows that despite its conciliatory rhetoric, the initiative downplays the American founding while celebrating the history of the country's supposed successive refoundings. The report's decidedly progressive

message is that "institutional and social transformation" counts for almost everything in civic education while preserving the nation's constitutional heritage counts for little.

COMMON GROUND WAS THERE ALL ALONG

Packer would have been less likely to overlook these serious flaws in Educating for American Democracy had he paid more attention to conservative views about civic education. Instead, he derides conservatives for wanting to institute "a fixed view of civics and US history in place of inquiry, debate, and disagreement." In contrast to Packer's caricature, however, Kurtz argues—consistent with long-standing conservative thinking—for bringing into the civics classroom that vigorous examination from many angles of important moral and political questions central to liberal education.

All Americans should want to conserve liberal education because in a free society it is the comprehensive civic education. It provides the common ground and encourages the habits of mind and heart that enable individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives to appreciate the nation's core principles and fundamental character. \blacksquare

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Three Cheers for the Old Normal

Armed with a year's worth of improvised failures during the pandemic, schools should quit while they're behind.

By Michael J. Petrilli

crisis like a pandemic can spark unpredictable changes in trends and behavior, like widespread mask wearing in the United States. But it also can accelerate changes that were already under way but otherwise would have taken root much more slowly. For example, working remotely was a relative rarity in early 2020; now many organizations may never again expect all employees in the office five days a week. And outdoor eating spaces, an occasional curiosity in some cities, have popped up nearly everywhere. Lots of cities and small towns have made it clear that they would like to keep this innovation even after the crisis recedes.

So too in the world of K-12 education, where some new pandemic-era practices are likely to persist for the long term. Some of these are simple and straightforward. Using Zoom for parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings makes life easier for working parents. Online curriculum materials rather than printed textbooks may also have staying power, since so many students have Chromebooks or other Internet-connected devices. Others are

Michael J. Petrilli is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and the president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

more complicated, such as recording a school's or district's best teacher giving key lessons and using those videos in multiple classrooms. That frees up other teachers to provide support and individualized instruction—a nimble, but politically sensitive, way to rework teachers' roles and use technology to improve instruction.

But as both common sense and classic conservatism would submit, not all of the changes that have occurred in education during the pandemic are positive. And just as there are some innovations that we should strive to maintain in the post-COVID era, there are others we should leave behind.

Here are my top five—including several that are close cousins of more promising ideas.

ROOMIES AND ZOOMIES

First, and perhaps most obvious, we should never again ask teachers to instruct half of their students in person and the other half remotely at the same time. Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, called it "not humanly possible"—and she's right.

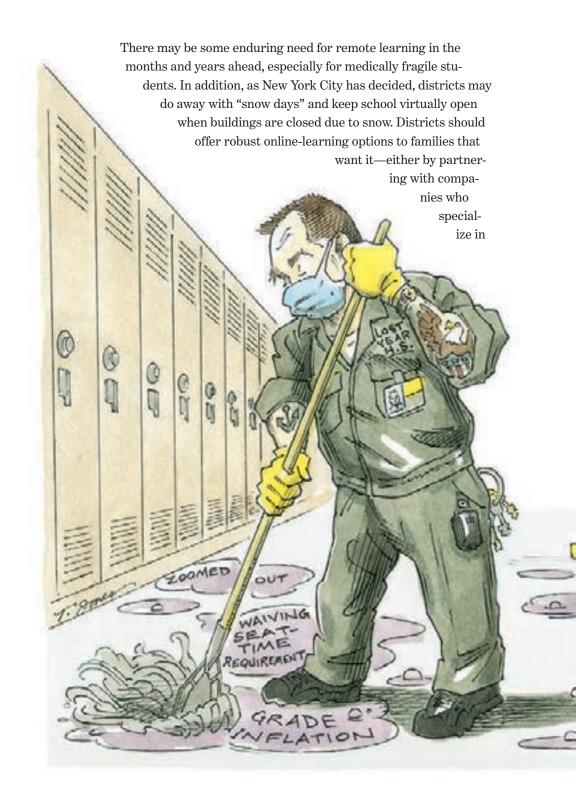
This hugely unpopular "concurrent" model is surely the worst of both worlds, just as a videoconference with half the participants in person and half logging in from afar is particularly unworkable. We know that, done right, remote instruction can work well for some teachers and students. But not when teachers are also trying to engage students in person at the same time. There's little doubt that this approach has created an enormous amount of stress for teachers and a subpar learning experience for kids.

Careful readers might wonder how I can square this with my previous advocacy for keeping teachers' cameras turned on once everybody returns

to the classroom. And that's a fair question. As I (and others) see it, it's much more manageable for teachers working in a live classroom to have

We should strive to maintain some innovations in the post-COVID era. Others we should abandon.

a handful of students following along at home, or even watching later via a recorded lesson, than try to engage what the Center for Teaching Quality calls "Zoomies and roomies" in real time. If kids are home sick or down the hall because of in-school suspension, administrators can make it clear that teachers are not expected to call on them or otherwise engage them. But allowing absent students to watch what's happening in class is better than nothing at all.



this or by standing up their own programs. But this should be separate from in-person instruction.

SEAT TIME DOES MATTER

We need to make similar distinctions with the second item on my list: the cancellation of so-called "seat time" requirements, which award course credit based on a minimum amount of instructional time. Given the need for social distancing and the public health priority of keeping adults and kids safe, many states understandably waived requirements that schools hold session for a certain number of hours or days in 2020 and 2021, while allowing students to progress through their classes. Likewise, states temporarily let go of many or all mandates dictating the number of hours allocated to particular subjects.

Education reformers who have been advocating for mastery- or competency-based learning were excited about that development, as moving away from seat-time rules was something they have advocated for years. But during the pandemic, many states simply got rid of seat-time requirements

without substituting anything else. They did not ask schools to make sure that their students demonstrated competency in critical subject areas, as adopting mastery-based learning standards would require.

Nor did they make sure the kids were getting the comprehensive educational experience that states are morally and legally obligated to provide.

By all means, let us continue to experiment with ways to move toward competency-based programs, especially for older students. But while we work towards that vision, we need to put those seat-time requirements back in place.

NO MORE "ASYNCHRONOUS" DAYS

My third item on the list of "innovations" that should go away: so-called "asynchronous" learning days, which are school days without

live, or "synchronous," instruction.

In Montgomery County, Maryland, where my two sons attend traditional public schools, every Wednesday is asynchronous. The

[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

CAUTION

Hilliam

idea, as far as I can figure it out, is that custodians would spend Wednesdays doing deep cleaning (which is now understood to be "hygiene theater"), while teachers would provide individualized instruction to the kids who need it most. Meanwhile, the majority of students would do independent work at home.

I don't think I am ratting out my sons by reporting, though, that very little independent work was happening on Wednesdays, beyond some regular homework that would and should be expected any day of the week. Without a clear plan, "asynchronous" days are just extra time off.

I am broadly in favor of allowing schools to experiment with new schedules. For example, "half-time high school" could include having kids learn from home several days a week, or several hours a day, or even shift to a

A videoconference with half the participants in person and half logging in from afar is particularly unworkable.

college-like schedule, with more time for independent work. But that's not what happened during the pandemic. In that case, some school districts

simply gave up on providing a five-day-a-week educational experience to their students and expecting students to put in effort every day, as well. A recent study found that even before the pandemic, districts and schools that downshifted to a four-day school week rarely offered meaningful learning opportunities for students on the fifth, out-of-school day, and student test scores in math and reading declined. There is no reason to keep asynchronous-learning days once the pandemic is over.

GRADE INFLATION

The fourth big change that isn't worth celebrating is the rampant rise in grade inflation. When the school shutdowns struck in the spring of 2020, many districts decided that it would be unfair to apply normal grading policies for the fourth quarter, given the unevenness of access to remote learning. Some simply assigned students the grades they had already earned by mid-March or, like my home district of Montgomery County, rounded up their mid-March scores to the next highest letter grade. Others shifted to pass-fail systems.

Those policies could be defended during an emergency, but the downside is obvious. It sends a clear message that kids will not be held accountable for paying attention, doing their homework, and learning new material. Until we reach the day when intrinsic motivation is enough to get most kids and

teenagers to prioritize their schoolwork (in other words, never), or when we've transitioned to a system focused on mastery, we're going to need grades to get kids to put in the necessary effort.

DIPLOMA DEVALUATION

Finally, let us never again decide to promote tens of thousands of students from high school regardless of whether they have mastered learning expectations. A cynic might say that high schools and school systems have been doing that for years, and in some parts of the country that is probably true. But before the pandemic, in about twenty states, students were expected to pass some sort of exit exam or end-of-course exam to graduate (though that number has been trending down). And in the others, students had to pass a certain number of courses to earn that diploma.

States canceled those examination mandates in 2020 and 2021, for obvious reasons. But school districts waved the white flag as well, patting themselves

on the back for letting kids graduate regardless of whether the students had even come close to meeting standards. In Chicago public schools,

Some school districts simply gave up on providing a five-day-a-week educational experience.

for example, officials celebrated a record-high graduation rate after easing graduation requirements and shifting to a pass/incomplete grading system. It was essentially impossible for students to fail.

To be sure, helping more students graduate from high school is an urgent goal. But it is also urgently important to make sure they graduate well prepared for what's ahead. It does students little good to pass them along and give out diplomas without ensuring the kids can read, write, and do math at an accomplished high school level. Consider Miami-Dade County public schools, where a recent review of high school achievement found a majority of students failed state tests in English, math, and science, despite the district's graduation rate of 85 percent.

Let's return to common sense: if a high school diploma does not reliably guarantee a minimum base of knowledge and skills, then we have created a policy that punishes graduates who earned their diplomas but now have no way to signify to employers that they achieved something worth paying attention to. We are also signifying to students who have not fully earned their diplomas that they are ready for life after high school, and they are not.

It's become a cliché to say that post-pandemic American schools shouldn't try to go back to normal. That's true in many respects. But in some cases, back to normal is exactly where we need to go—the sooner, the better.

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Charters Turn Thirty

Charter schools are here to stay. But they, like their students, should never stop learning and growing.

By Chester E. Finn Jr. and Bruno V. Manno

oday, forty-four states—plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam—have public charter school laws on their statute books, laws that have led to more than 7,500 schools employing 200,000-plus teachers and serving 3.3 million students. The thirtieth anniversary of the nation's first charter law on June 4, 2021, inspires us to recall their fundamental purpose and bipartisan political origins; their contributions to advancing educational opportunity; and the lessons we've learned over these three decades that should inform what happens going forward. While recognizing its remarkable accomplishments, its impressive growth, and its immense promise, we also do well to acknowledge that the charter movement has ample room to improve.

Why chartering?

The purpose was clearly stated in 1990 by Ted Kolderie, senior associate at the Minnesota-based Center for Policy Studies. Kolderie is arguably the foremost theoretician of chartering, and that year he wrote a policy report for

Chester E. Finn Jr. is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in the Hoover Education Success Initiative. Bruno V. Manno is a trustee emeritus of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and senior adviser to the Walton Family Foundation's K-12 Education Reform Initiative.

the DC-based (and center-left) Progressive Policy Institute. Two paragraphs bear quoting:

It is time to say this: our system of public education is a bad system. It is terribly inequitable. It does not meet the nation's needs. It exploits teachers' altruism. It hurts kids. Instead of blaming people . . . we need to fix the system [and] organize public education in America on a new basis. The proposal outlined in this report is designed to introduce the dynamics of choice, competition, and innovation into America's public school system.

How can we use the powerful idea of choice to improve our schools while retaining the essential purposes of public education? This report proposes a simple yet radical answer: allowing enterprising people—including teachers and other educators—to... create new public schools, and ultimately a new system of public education, [by having] the states... simply withdraw the local districts' exclusive franchise to own and operate public schools. [We need to undertake] divestiture, or allowing the districts to get out of running and operating public schools altogether.

One year later, Minnesota governor Arne Carlson, a Republican, signed bipartisan legislation creating the nation's first charter school law, introduced by Democratic-Farmer-Labor senator Ember Reichgott. A year after that, California enacted the second such law, also bipartisan. It was introduced by Democratic state senator Gary K. Hart, a former teacher, and signed into law by Republican governor Pete Wilson.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed legislation creating the federal Charter School Program, co-sponsored by Connecticut Democratic senator Joe Lieberman and Minnesota Republican senator Dave Durenberger. Procharter bipartisanship continued in Washington with Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump, and was paralleled in almost every statehouse that engaged in chartering.

That's because this education reform addresses important priorities on both the left and right. It allows families the choice of a free K–12 public school that meets their child's needs, rather than forced assignment to a district school. It has created an alternative delivery system that affords long-neglected families access to potentially higher-quality schools than they find within the traditional structure of public education. Yet charters remain



THE NEXT STEPS: High school senior Zachary Deshommes poses against a wall decorated with student portraits outside the Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School in May. The best charter schools consistently chalk up greater student achievement gains than traditional public schools, but the movement as a whole still has much room to improve. [Anthony Behar—Sipa USA]

public schools: open to all, tuition-free, and accountable for their results to duly constituted public authorities.

THE LESSON PLAN

The best charters consistently make greater student achievement gains than traditional public schools. They show what University of Michigan economist Susan Dynarski calls a consistent pattern of improvement among "students [who] are overwhelmingly low-achieving, poor, and nonwhite." Additionally, analysts at Stanford University's CREDO and the National Bureau of Economic Research show that a sizable subset of charters—sometimes termed "high expectations/high support" schools—have significant achievement impacts, especially for students of color and those from low-income communities.

Chartering has also pioneered new forms of governance for public education, including statewide Recovery School Districts that restart low-performing schools as charter or charter-like schools, with post-Katrina Louisiana the most prominent example.

The District of Columbia is another example, where almost equal numbers of its more than 94,000 students are enrolled in separately governed district and charter sectors, both ultimately answerable to the mayor.

Other charter-inspired governance models include "portfolio" districts and partner-run schools where districts transfer school governance to independent nonprofit organizations like Innovation Schools in Indianapolis, Luminary Learning Network in Denver, and District Campus Charter Schools in Texas. There are also district-run schools operating with waivers from policies like collective bargaining agreements, as in the Fulton County Georgia Charter System, which converted twenty-two of its own schools to charters.

The first thirty years of chartering have taught us key lessons about what should happen. We must acknowledge that placing a charter sign on a school building actually reveals surprisingly little—mostly just that it's a "school of choice" with some freedom to be different. Early advocates, ourselves included, were eager, earnest, and sometimes effective, but we were also naive about a few things. These include:

- » Authorizing: Not enough attention was paid to authorizing, governance, and quality control. We have focused on quantity rather than quality, assuming that a barely regulated marketplace would provide more assurance of school quality than it has in reality. That's partly because—another admission—we have learned that not everyone who wants to start a school knows (or cares) how to do it well and that not every parent choosing a school for their child places academic achievement at the top of their priorities.
- » *Financing:* Supporters did not demand sufficient funding (or facilities) for charters. And while we welcomed the infusions of capital and entrepreneurialism that have accompanied private sector participation in the charter venture, we didn't take seriously enough the risk of profiteering.
- » School autonomy: The many forms of governance and operational autonomy that charters enjoy allowed them to respond more quickly and effectively to the challenges created by COVID-19. Yet policy makers and advocates in most places never insisted on sufficient autonomy for their charters—nailed into place, not just vaguely promised. The result has been too many schools that are still fighting for crucial operational, financial, and governance freedoms.
- *» Accountability:* Charters are doubly accountable, both to the parent marketplace and—via their inclusion in ESSA and other statewide accountability regimes—to public authorities. Yet one tenet of the original charter

bargain—if a school doesn't produce the desired results, don't renew its charter—has been a mixed success. Even mediocre charter schools are usually cherished by those attending them, and often the available alternatives for those children are worse. So the bargain needs some work—and authorizers need more flexibility when schools don't perform.

- » *Minority student focus:* The laudable impulse to concentrate first on poor and minority kids trapped in abysmal inner-city schools contributed to a perception of charters as merely schools for impoverished city dwellers. At the same time, despite much improvement on this front, not enough charter schools and networks are yet founded or led by people who "look like" the youngsters they seek to serve.
- » Research and development: Though many charters have innovated in various ways, there is still a regrettable sameness across the sector, which hasn't functioned as well as an "R&D" center for public education as many early supporters hoped. Neither has it fulfilled the vision of the late Albert Shanker that charters would emerge as teacher-created, teacher-run schools. At the same time, we must add, the district sector and teachers' unions have generally shunned chartering rather than seeking to engage with and learn from it.
- » Educational pluralism: Thirty years ago, few imagined how many different forms of educational choice would take root in so many states and communities. Today, in addition to charters, we have school vouchers or scholarships, education savings accounts, tax credit scholarships, individual tax credits and deductions, micro schools, and more, including far more choices within and between traditional districts. While charter waiting lists are still long, the proliferation of these other options has no doubt lessened the demand for more charters while creating additional opportunities for many families.

STEP INTO THE FUTURE

Not everyone is thrilled, but chartering is now a durable part of the public education landscape. It's not going away, however much its foes would like it to. But it ought not stand pat, for we see plenty of fresh challenges and unresolved questions for the future. For instance, as charters come to serve a sizable fraction of schoolchildren in a given community, who is responsible for the "education safety net" by which every kid has access to some school that can satisfactorily address her educational needs? Must every individual charter school be expected to accommodate the singular challenges of every child, no matter how difficult or esoteric?

How do we handle the challenges of pupil discipline and the related question of whether charters must retain every youngster they admit, regardless of behavior or academic performance?

What about encouraging more charters to serve other populations that would benefit from school alternatives: middle class kids, gifted children, just girls or just boys, children of military personnel, and so on? Why not select students for some charters—gifted kids, future violinists, Mandarin learners, for example, rather than conduct random lotteries? Why not open the sticky door to religious charters?

What about charters that want to deviate from state academic standards to focus on particular specialties, including some that opt to concentrate on high-quality career and technical education rather than college prep?

How can charters form relationships with other education providers, including those spawned by the pandemic? What can be done to build bridges with micro schools, home schooling, private schools, pods, etc.?

What about developing more ways to transfer students to successful operators through methods like mergers?

Through a combination of choice, competition, and innovation, chartering has bettered the academic and life outcomes of K–12 students, thereby reducing inequality, widening opportunity, strengthening parents, and enhancing civil society. These are remarkable accomplishments for a thirty-year period, worth protecting and cultivating.

Yet charter promoters have sometimes been naive, occasionally selfinterested, and often set in their ways. Because many of today's challenges could not have been anticipated, there's no embarrassment in acknowledging shortcomings while also welcoming recalibration and further innovation.

The long-standing support for charters from both center-left and center-right has all but collapsed. On the right, some see charters as an overly regulated marketplace of faux choice. On the left, some see charters as elitist, exclusive, or otherwise inequitable. Rebuilding that coalition is an important political task for ensuring that the advances in educational opportunity spurred by charters continue to grow.

This is not the first time—and surely won't be the last—that a grand policy initiative has encountered bumps, surprises, and some backlash. As Kolderie foresaw in 1990, "Resistance [to chartering] will be fierce."

When dealing with so many complex institutions across so many different jurisdictions, the challenges of politics, resources, talent, and implementation were sure to be profound. And when what's being changed contains as many ingrained practices, hidebound regulatory regimes, and vested interests as American public schooling, these trials are even greater.

As the charter movement looks to decade number four, can it adapt and respond with the creativity and nimbleness that the present situation requires? We surely hope so. \blacksquare

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Don't Knock Opportunity

Demography may not, after all, be destiny. Republicans could earn the Latino vote in California by emphasizing values, personal and financial freedom, and compassion.

By David L. Leal

and California Republicans played nativist politics in the 1990s by supporting Proposition 187 and other Latino-bashing ballot initiatives. The strategy was a short-term success but a long-term disaster. While Republicans made gains in the 1994 elections, the hunter became the hunted: Latinos mobilized in reaction, overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party, and realigned California politics. As Latino and immigrant populations continue to grow, Republicans fall further behind every year.

Key points

- » California Republicans have many natural touchstones with Latinos and immigrants. One of the strongest is opportunity.
- » Over the generations, Latinos move to the mainstream across key social, economic, and political dimensions.
- » If Republicans seem hostile to immigrants, the party will leave millions of votes on the table.

David L. Leal is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project.

If this story is true, then the California GOP has no realistic path to power. At best, it must hope for a quirky set of circumstances that bring an occasional Arnold Schwarzenegger to the governor's mansion. If the story is more complicated, as this essay argues, then a political way forward exists despite the irreversible demographic transformation of the state. In short, the state GOP can attract new voters and rebuild a conservative coalition by reinventing itself in the image of Ronald Reagan, the two-term governor and immigrant-friendly optimist who championed the opportunity society.

The question of what happened in California is crucial to understanding the political implications of demographic change in the United States. In the twenty-first century, almost all of America's population growth will consist of "minorities," who collectively constitute a majority in a growing number of

states. According to the "demography as destiny" theory—eagerly anticipated by Democrats but feared by Republicans—minority and immigrant

Both the left and the right repeat a misleading narrative of Latinos who do not assimilate.

voters will power a blue wave that realigns national politics in a progressive direction. Under this domino theory, California is just the first in a series of states that will fall to Democrats.

Some conservatives see a dystopian future of Anglo population decline, minority and immigrant population growth, and increasing support for socialism and "cultural Marxism." This is called "replacement" in nativist-populist circles, and the result is America somehow becoming Nueva Cuba.

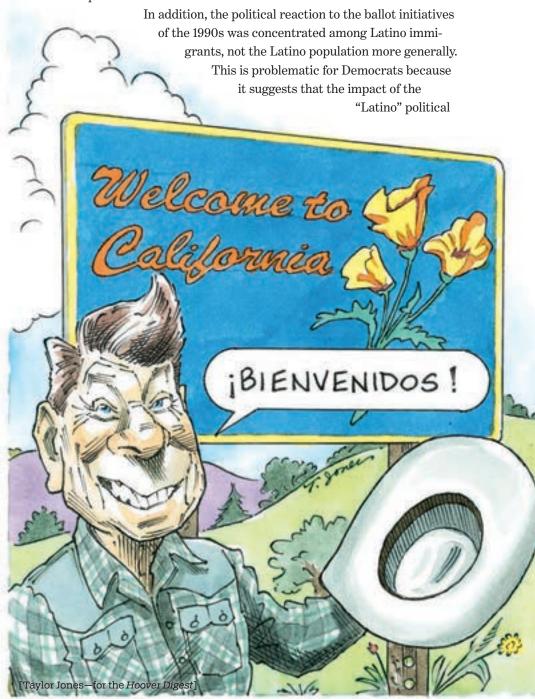
This is hogwash, of course. As with so many political tales, the reality turns out to be more complicated. In particular, the claim that Latinos and immigrants are die-hard Democrats and ideological leftists who will change America is false to the point of slander.

The political future of California and America is not, and never has been, preordained by population change.

VOTING BLOCS AREN'T FIXED

The claim that California politics was reshaped by the ballot initiatives of the 1990s is debatable. One reason is that it does not clearly map onto election results. We do not see a simple pattern of one party losing or gaining in the 1990s and 2000s. While Republicans did make gains in statewide offices and the state legislature in 1994, the national red wave of that year may have been more consequential than Proposition 187. While this was followed by

Democratic gains in subsequent elections, that appears more like a return to the status quo than a new blue wave.



reaction is limited. If the party's advantage is strongest among newer arrivals, they have the extra hurdle of naturalization before they can vote.

While Democratic gains were evident by the 2010s, we cannot assume that this is only about Latinos. Two events in the 1990s changed California's electorate. The first was the end of the Cold War and the resulting decline in spending and employment in the California defense industry. (Remember the movie *Falling Down?*) At the same time, the tech industry boomed, attracting a large number of workers, including many migrants from other parts of the country and immigrants from abroad. The state therefore saw conservatives leaving; liberals and libertarians entering; and Latino, Asian-American, and immigrant populations growing. None of these changes was good for the GOP, but the story was not simply about Latinos and ballot initiatives.

Both the left and the right are invested in a narrative of Latinos who do not assimilate. Liberals need Latinos to remain distinctive, while conservatives drastically underestimate their ability and motivation to assimilate. You would not know it from the political debate, but research overwhelmingly finds that over time and across the generations, Latinos have moved to the mainstream across key social, economic, and political dimensions.

Some on the left and some on the right also believe that Latinos are ideological leftists who want socialism and open borders. In reality, Latinos are best understood as a New Deal electorate, a bread-and-butter constituency; they resemble the ethnic Italian and Irish voters of the twentieth century more than they resemble today's Hollywood liberals. They have relatively low

levels of income and education, so they mostly support the party that says we're from the government and we're here to help. But over

time, as Latinos, Asian-Americans, and immigrants achieve the American dream, they will be increasingly open to the message that the government that governs best, governs least. Many of them are already open to that view.

Latino values are therefore American values, and immigrants want to achieve the American dream, not change it. If Republicans seem hostile to immigrants, the party will leave millions of votes on the table.

OPEN DOOR TO A "CITY ON A HILL"

Luckily for the GOP, Democrats seem determined to underperform with Latinos. The party takes them for granted, fails to understand their beliefs and motivations, neglects them until the end of election cycles, engages in questionable outreach tactics, and hopes for turnout miracles that never happen. Democratic ineptitude all but invites the GOP to move in and make

gains with Latino and immigrant voters, which actually happened in 2020 despite predictions to the contrary.

For California Republicans who want to win elections and shape policy, the answer is staring them in the face: Reagan showed the philosophical compatibility—and electoral potential—of pro-immigrant politics and principled conservatism.

Reagan not only signed into law the broad 1986 immigration amnesty and never regretted it, but he also welcomed the world to America. In 1952, he said that "any person with the courage, with the desire to tear up their roots, to strive for freedom, to attempt and dare to live in a strange and foreign place, to travel half across the world, was welcome here." In his 1989 farewell address to the nation, in describing his vision of America as the "shining city," he said that "if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here." In a 1984 presidential debate, Reagan said,

I believe in the idea of amnesty for those who have put down roots and who have lived here even though some time back they may have entered illegally.

Imagine a California GOP that broke away from the tone and in some cases the substance of the national Republican Party. Imagine a party that emphasized "compassionate conservatism" and "the opportunity society" to expand the conservative coalition in a way that worked in hyper-diverse California.

As part of this effort, the party might consider the following: actively welcome people from across America and around the globe who believe in these

Two-term California governor Ronald Reagan was an immigrant-friendly optimist who championed the opportunity society. ideals. See the diverse voters who are open to a principled conservative message of smaller government, lower taxes, lighter regulation, timeless values, local com-

munities, and personal freedom. Argue that Democrats divide the pie while Republicans make it bigger. Cultivate a new generation of Latino, Asian-American, and immigrant leaders. Take a page from the LIBRE Initiative, which is busy making the case for opportunity and freedom to Latinos.

This might lead to fractures among current party supporters, but if a business is spiraling toward bankruptcy, you either close it or change the product.

REPUBLICANS' MINORITY LEGACY

California Republicans, maybe to their own surprise, can build on a long history of connections to minority and immigrant communities. In 1875,

Romualdo Pacheco, a Republican, became the state's first Latino governor (he remains its only one) and was subsequently the first

The national red wave of 1994 may have been more consequential than Proposition 187.

Latino in the US Congress to represent a state. The first Latino outreach by a presidential campaign was Dwight D. Eisenhower's effort to recruit Mexican-American veterans in California. The late Matt Fong, the son of long-time Democratic secretary of state March Fong Eu, was a Republican state treasurer in the 1990s; his career illustrated how party allegiances can shift across the generations. And we all remember Arnold, the two-term governor and Republican immigrant in an era of supposed Democratic dominance.

The Pacheco-Eisenhower-Reagan-Fong-Schwarzenegger legacy is a counter-narrative to the Pete Wilson-Proposition 187 story, if the party is willing to use it.

A Latino and immigrant-friendly approach might also persuade more Anglos to support the party. Such an effort would recognize that many such voters want to support the party of limited government but do not want to be associated with unnecessarily divisive politics. Some believe that by his outreach to Latinos, George W. Bush not only attracted a record-high level of the Latino vote but also enhanced his support among non-Latino independents and moderates.

Republicans often forget that despite the anti-immigrant elements in the party, a significant share of Latinos nevertheless support GOP candidates.

For instance, the 2018 California exit polls indicate that 36 percent of Latino (and 35 percent of Asian-American) voters supported the Republi-

Latino values are American values. Immigrants want to achieve the American dream, not change it.

can gubernatorial candidate. Two years later, 23 percent of California Latinos (and 22 percent of Asian-Americans) supported Donald Trump—a much smaller number, but even that share was not trivial. Such numbers contradict the story of Latinos as implacably and uniformly opposed to Republicans because of Proposition 187.

Republicans do not need to collect every Latino and immigrant vote—just enough to create a winning coalition. Rebuilding a conservative coalition that can win in California may be a slow process. Democrats did not make electoral gains overnight because of Latino and immigrant population growth, and Republicans will not reverse them immediately. Over time, as Latinos and immigrants continue to assimilate in the classic American manner, they will be increasingly open to the Reagan message, as many already are.

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A Lesson in Power

With help from their friends in Sacramento, teachers' unions still shrug off all attempts to reduce their political clout.

By Michael T. Hartney

harles Chapel, a California state assemblyman in the 1950s and 1960s, once said that he feared just three things: God, his redheaded wife, and the California Teachers Association (CTA). One wonders what Chapel, who passed away in early 1967, would have thought had he lived a bit longer.

Nearly a decade after his death, California mandated teacher collective bargaining under 1975's Rodda Act. The state later amended the law to require that all teachers (even nonunion members) pay union fees. By the mid-2000s, the CTA had 330,000 members—four times as many as in Chapel's day. Those numbers came in handy in politics, as in 2005 when the union assessed each teacher \$180 to raise \$50 million

Key points

- » California legislators helped teachers' unions blunt the effects of a key Supreme Court ruling.
- » School board candidates backed by teachers' unions still hold an overwhelming electoral advantage.
- » California ranked dead last in providing in-person teaching last year, at least in part because teachers' unions refused to let schools reopen.

to defeat Governor Schwarzenegger's special election measures. (Schwarzenegger replied in kind by releasing a video cartoon on his now-defunct "Join Arnold" website showing two union thugs dragging a teacher out of

Michael T. Hartney, an assistant professor of political science at Boston College, is a Hoover national fellow.

her classroom, flipping her upside down, and shaking money out of her pockets.)

The CTA's power also began to reach far beyond Sacramento. In the early 2000s, Hoover senior fellow Terry Moe documented that 76 percent of union-backed school board candidates won seats on their local districts' boards.

But then came the Great Recession and, along with it, a series of unfore-seen events that put teachers' unions on the defensive. In 2008, Barack Obama defeated staunch union ally Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination. As president, Obama supported charter schools and pushed Democrats to support several union-opposed education reforms. During the economic downturn, state officials in both parties advocated for reforms to teacher tenure, evaluation, and defined pension benefits.

The CTA was hardly immune from this changing landscape. Much to its chagrin, charter school enrollment tripled in California between 2000 and 2010. Meanwhile, the union narrowly defeated a lawsuit that threatened to weaken teacher tenure rights. Finally, in 2015, an educator from Southern California named Rebecca Friedrichs challenged the state's requirement that she and her nonunion colleagues financially contribute to the CTA.

In 2018, the US Supreme Court embraced Friedrichs's position. In *Janus v. AFSCME*, the high court prohibited states like California from allowing teachers' unions to charge nonunion teachers fees. At the time, many predicted the swift erosion of union power. Once teachers were no longer compelled to pay the CTA, the union stood to lose both fee revenue and dues revenue from members who would opt out of the union. With fewer members and less money, unions like the CTA were supposed to become much weaker.

But a funny thing happened. While many journalists had begun writing their obituary, teachers' unions in the United States made an impressive comeback. Here are three illustrations of the clear resilience of teachers' union power in the Golden State.

POWERFUL ALLIES

California was the first state to pass a law intended to counteract the Supreme Court's *Janus* decision. As longtime education activist and union critic Larry Sand explains, "When *Janus* was looming, legislators enacted a law which stipulates that a [school district] must give the union the 'name, job title, department, work location, work, home, and personal cellular telephone numbers, personal e-mail addresses, and home address of any newly hired employee within thirty days of the date of hire' and requires them to

attend a mandatory union 'orientation' meeting, during which the captive audience is harangued about the joys of union membership."

Legislators also ensured that it would be illegal to discourage union membership and prevented outside groups from contacting teachers to inform them of their rights to resign under *Janus*. As Dan DiSalvo and I argued in *Education Next*, these provisions matter, "because they mute the efforts of

organizations that seek to run informational campaigns to convince employees to drop their union membership. The result is that the messag-

With fewer members and less money, unions like the CTA were supposed to become much weaker.

ing environment in public employment in several states now has a strongly pro-union bias."

On the whole, the state's effort worked. According to labor economists Barry Hirsch and David Macpherson, whose website Unionstats tracks union membership across states, California's public sector unions have maintained strong membership rates. In 2017 (the year before *Janus*), 55 percent of California's public employees were union members. In 2020, that number stood at 52 percent.

The CTA's membership numbers are a bit more difficult to track, but the union continues to claim 310,000 members, with its only significant loss coming from the disaffiliation of a higher education affiliate: the California Faculty Association (19,000 members). Elsewhere the union has sought to capitalize on the state's friendly post-*Janus* legislation by organizing new members. The CTA has already had some success organizing teachers in charter schools. It also launched a campaign to organize the only remaining large district in California that has operated without a union, Fresno's Clovis Unified. Clovis provides an attractive opportunity for the CTA to organize an additional 2,000 members.

Overall, there is simply no evidence that the CTA has experienced a significant loss of membership as a result of *Janus*. To the contrary, with the help of its friends in Sacramento, the CTA has retained members and identified attractive new organizing opportunities.

SO MUCH WINNING

Over a period of several years, I hand-collected data on CTA endorsements of school board candidates in more than 2,300 local school board elections. Since these elections occurred both before and after the *Janus* decision, they

are helpful in determining whether the CTA became any less influential after it lost access to agency fee revenue.

The short answer is no. In 2016, two years before *Janus*, union-endorsed candidates won 66 percent of competitive board races. In 2020, I found that they won 68 percent of the time. This seven-out-of-ten success rate essentially mirrors what Moe found in his studies of union electioneering in the early 2000s.

The CTA's success rate in this past November's school board elections is noteworthy for another reason. In 2015, the state enacted SB 415, requiring that school districts (and other political subdivisions) move their elections to even-numbered years—ostensibly to boost voter turnout. This meant that November 2020 marked the first time that many California districts had held their board elections in higher-turnout even-numbered years.

Since union-endorsed candidates tend to do better in odd-year elections (I found that they won 76 percent of odd-year races between 1995 and 2017), the fact that CTA-endorsed candidates won 68 percent of competitive races in 2020 is even more impressive—it's completely on par with the union's even-year win rates prior to the Great Recession.

The bottom line: teachers' unions are clearly still the ones to beat in local school board elections. And this matters because local control in education is still alive and well in California. The best evidence for that is, as I explain below, COVID-19.

KEEPING DOORS CLOSED

Fifty out of fifty: dead last in America.

That's where California ranked among states, according to Burbio data, when it came to providing in-person instruction during the 2020–21 school year. Although the CTA's political power wasn't the sole reason that California lagged behind other states, the union's power played a key role. After all, California reopened its schools far more slowly than other equally deep-blue states.

The clement weather in Southern California should have provided a builtin advantage for public schools to creatively transition back to in-person learning. Yet many school districts told the state that their inability to secure cooperation from the local teachers' union is what kept them from being able to bring students back to campus.

Based on California's own database tracking district reopenings this past spring (obtained via a public records request), I found that many directly cited their inability to ink a union reopening agreement as the primary barrier to reopening. Even after both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health relaxed

social distancing guidelines for schools in March 2021, and after President Biden's CDC director Rochelle Walensky stated that vaccines should not be a prerequisite to reopen schools, California districts continued to cite educator resistance to reopening in April. The net result was that students in blue states like California got sixty-six fewer days of in-person instruction than their counterparts in red states like Florida that had been open since the fall.

And, in a move that put the state to the left of the Biden administration, the CTA successfully lobbied the state

The CTA's power reaches far beyond Sacramento into local school boards.

board of education to allow local school districts to substitute their own academic assessments next year in lieu of standardized statewide examinations. Rather than getting a consistent measure of how much learning loss occurred across districts, this will mean that each district will be permitted to rely on its own assessments, making it harder to identify learning loss from one district to the next.

Altogether, the California Teachers Association begins the 2020s in a far stronger position than many would have assumed possible just a few years ago. In hindsight, the Great Recession era of labor retrenchment appears more like a pinprick than a serious battle scar for the nation's largest teachers' union. Instead, the CTA now has more friends and more influence in Sacramento than it did just a short time ago. While it doesn't win all the time, given its enduring political power, the CTA is poised to play a key role in debates over important education issues from charter schooling to how COVID-relief dollars are spent in the years to come. \blacksquare

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Doom with a View

Hoover fellow Niall Ferguson's new book represents a grand tour of COVID-19 and other catastrophes and the people who have had to face them.

By Peter Robinson

Peter Robinson, Uncommon Knowledge: A worldwide plague, the American economy shut down, schools closed, masks, social distancing. How did it happen? The historian Niall Ferguson explains. A fellow at the Hoover Institution, Ferguson has taught at Oxford, Cambridge, the Stern School of Business, the London School of Economics, and Harvard. The author of more than a dozen works of economics, military history, and diplomacy, Ferguson has just published *Doom: The Politics of Catastrophe*. Not the cheeriest of titles.

Niall Ferguson: Well, there's a certain irony in there, which I think the dust jacket also makes clear. The US edition depicts a golfer sinking a putt with a wildfire raging behind him. Part of the point of this book is to explore our very strange, ambivalent relationship to doom, which fascinates us and often leads us to exaggerate the scale of disaster. I wanted to write the book to put our recent disaster into some kind of historical context. And part of what I do is to show that, by historic standards, COVID-19 is not a really massive

Niall Ferguson is the Milbank Family Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, where he is chairman of the History Working Group and participates in the Human Prosperity Project and Hoover's task forces on military history and national security. He is also a senior fellow of the Center for European Studies, Harvard. Peter Robinson is the editor of the Hoover Digest, the host of Uncommon Knowledge, and the Murdoch Distinguished Policy Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

disaster. And so, in a way, *Doom* is a kind of reassuring, comforting, and at times even amusing book.

Robinson: "Reassuring" taking the very long view. But you have some very sharp things to say, particularly about public health officials. You describe the response in this country and in Britain as a straightforward failure. Doom on events a year ago last spring: "It was all a circus, in which journalists and Trump made believe that it was all about him. In truth, what happened was a disastrous failure of the public health bureaucracy at the Department of Health and Human Services, and particularly at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a subject much less discussed in the press." So, there's a double failure: of the public health bureaucracy and the press.

Ferguson: We know that there was a better way because there were countries much closer to China that handled it far better. Taiwan and South

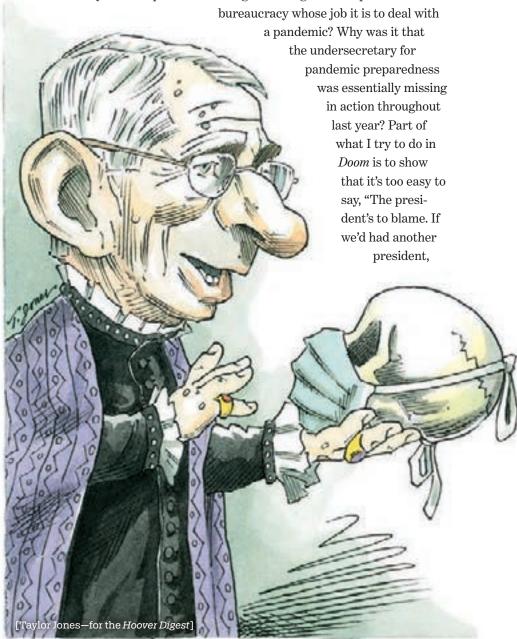
Korea spring to mind, but there were others that avoided the very high excess mortality of more than half a million people that we've witnessed in the United

"We decided to shut the economy down to try to stop the disease from spreading. And this was the worst of both worlds."

States. What did [Taiwan] do right? First, they ramped up testing as soon as they were able to devise a test for this new coronavirus coming out of Wuhan, China. Secondly, they used a system of contact tracing so that once they identified an infected person, they could then see who else that person had been in touch with. And the third thing they did was to quarantine people who were suspected of being infected.

Those three steps taken together in an integrated way made it possible to limit the spread of the virus. We took none of them. We not only failed to ramp up testing, the CDC managed to make it *harder* to get tested by intervening to prevent any nongovernmental entity from providing testing. I came back from a trip to Asia in January 2020 suspecting that I had this new coronavirus, but I couldn't find out if I had it for months. As for contact tracing, even though we have the world's biggest and most powerful technology companies in this country, they opted not to make available an effective nationwide system of contact tracing. It was a deliberate choice by Google and Apple. And as for isolating people who were infected or suspected of being infected, we didn't even try.

So, it was very easy during 2020 to tell a story that blamed it all on Donald Trump because he, of course, wanted it to be all about him. This is partly his responsibility for putting himself front and center, but it was obviously what the media wanted to say. So, it all became his fault, and that meant that we didn't really ask the question: what's gone wrong with the public health



none of this would have happened." I'm not saying Donald Trump didn't make mistakes; he made a great many. But they don't explain all of the excess mortality. For that, you have to look much further afield.

Robinson: You quote the Stanford political scientist Frank Fukuyama: "The overall quality of American government has been deteriorating for more than a generation. The apparently irreversible increase in the scope of government has masked a large decay in its quality." What did the pandemic teach us about the federal government that we didn't already know?

Ferguson: Well, we already knew that the federal government was a bloated administrative state with a diminishing effectiveness in nearly every domain. But what was fascinating was the way in which the pandemic shed light on CDC and HHS, which I don't think many of us had thought much about before, except to assume that they were quite competent. But it turned out that they were every bit as bad at their job as, let's say, California state government is at doing infrastructure or the Transportation Security Administration is at getting people through airport security. I think that was really the critical point.

Remember that the point of *Doom* is not to write a history of COVID-19, but to write a history of disasters generally. If you go back in time, you can see that when a comparably dangerous respiratory disease caused by a new virus struck the United States in 1957, the federal government operated altogether more nimbly, and I think much more efficiently. The public health

officials under the Eisenhower administration said that this new Asian flu is not something we can stop from spreading, so we're just going

"It was very easy during 2020 to tell a story that blamed it all on Donald Trump."

to have to accept that there will be people who will fall ill and some will die. They decided to focus on getting a vaccine and minimizing the disruption to daily life.

What happened in 2020 was almost completely different. We dithered around in January, February, and the first half of March when there was ample evidence to go into rapid action. And then we did something that would never have crossed the minds of officials in 1957: we decided to shut the economy down to try to stop the disease from spreading. And this was the worst of both worlds because it meant that we went from complacency when we should have been acting, to using a sledgehammer to crack a nut,



DIAGNOSING DISASTER: Niall Ferguson speaks at a conference in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2017. Today he says the US response to the coronavirus pandemic stumbled "because it meant that we went from complacency when we should have been acting, to using a sledgehammer to crack a nut." [Luiz Munhoz—Fronteiras do Pensamento]

which I think many of the measures taken last spring were. To me, this is interesting more because of the light that it sheds on the state of our government than for the specific public health problems that it reveals. As I've said, we know from Taiwan and South Korea that there was a way to deal with it. The public health bureaucracies there had learned lessons from SARS and MERS that their counterparts in the United States and the United Kingdom and many other Western countries simply hadn't learned.

But I think there's a more general point to be teased out of this, and it's one that came to me from a completely unexpected source as I was researching the book last year. A colleague said to me I should read Richard Feynman's account of the space shuttle *Challenger* disaster. In the run-up to the launch of the space shuttle, there was a good deal of public interest because a young woman—a teacher—was going to be aboard the shuttle. And there was discussion of including that in President Reagan's State of the Union address. When the shuttle blew up, the media attempted to pursue the line that the

launch had been accelerated in order to get the timing to coincide with the speech. In other words, they sought to blame Reagan in just the same way that the media's impulse last year was to blame it all on Trump. This turned out to be a red herring, because there never had been any serious intention

to use the space shuttle launch in the speech. And what Feynman discovered as he became involved as a physicist

"The choice wasn't between do nothing and shut everything down."

from Caltech in the investigation was that the point of failure wasn't at the top at all; it was in middle management and the bureaucracy. For me, this was an epiphany because I suddenly realized that there was a similar kind of failure within the public health bureaucracy, not only in the United States but elsewhere. And that failure must've been somewhere in the midst of CDC or HHS, where nobody really learned the lessons of SARS and MERS and they remained ready for an influenza pandemic but not for a coronavirus pandemic. And that's one of the lessons that I think we haven't learned in our excessive focus on Trump's role last year.

RETHINKING THE LOCKDOWN

Robinson: We've touched on this, but let's take on the lockdown in and of itself. Again, from *Doom:* "Were the lockdowns a mistake? A growing body of research indicated that containment of the contagion was a function of social distancing. If social distancing was done effectively, lockdowns were more or less superfluous." Princeton economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton developed this concept of deaths of despair. You're familiar with their work.

Ferguson: Of course.

Robinson: We know there are heuristics that every *x* increase in unemployment in a given region leads to suicide, drug overdoses, alcohol-related liver disease, and so on. So, first of all, you would argue that public officials had good reason to suppose that shutting down the economy was unnecessary and that social distancing would have been enough. But Drs. Fauci and Birx say, "Shut it down." And Trump shuts it down. I understand now that Birx went to all fifty governors with a kind of Project Fear presentation about all the deaths that would take place in their states if they didn't shut down. Why did public officials and journalists fail to ask about the costs? Cost-benefit analysis is Public Policy 101. Even now, you very seldom hear any effort to



FOG OF WAR: Workers spray disinfectant in Taiwan last February. Niall Ferguson points out that Taiwan limited the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by ramping up testing immediately after the virus was detected and assertively contact tracing and quarantining residents. None of these steps was taken in the United States. [Zhou Lihang—Taiwan Military News Agency]

balance the high costs of shutting down the economy with any gain from saved lives as a result of COVID-19.

Ferguson: This is an immensely complex question that kept getting over-simplified. The oversimplified version was: we should just let the virus rip and we'll get to herd immunity and we can save the economy. Now, this was wrong, because if you really had done nothing and let the virus rip, we'd certainly have got to a million American dead. And countries that tried that quickly found that the costs in terms of excess mortality were too high. But not many countries really did try that. Sweden didn't because Sweden actually had all kinds of limits on public meetings. Social distancing was practiced.

Robinson: They did the social distancing without the lockdown.

Ferguson: The choice wasn't between do nothing and shut everything down. *Lockdown* is a rather blanket term and it can be split up into a variety of different measures. Let me, for the sake of simplicity, put it this way. A

nice paper by Austan Goolsbee, who served in the Obama administration, confirms our colleague John Cochrane's hypothesis. Early in the pandemic, Cochrane wrote a brilliant blog post saying we should expect behavior to adapt. Public behavior will adapt to data about illness and hospitalization and death, and that will be something that will cause people to alter their behavior spontaneously. Goolsbee showed that this in fact did happen, and that often before shelter-in-place orders, people were reducing the amount of their movement and the amount of travel they did to retail or leisure locations. So, there was adaptive behavior ahead of regulation happening in most places.

A lot of what was done in the spring was much more economically disruptive than it needed to be, because you couldn't make everybody work from home. Clearly there were a lot of people who could work from home, including us, and we're doing it now. But to essentially shut down manufacturing, which for a time happened, really didn't make sense because the places where the virus was likely to spread were identifiable. We knew where the superspreader locations were from very early on. Cruise liners, definitely not a place to be. Jails, a place where the virus spread very easily, indeed. Crowded restaurants and bars—don't go to karaoke. Weddings, funerals,

crowded stadiums. We actually had pretty good data early on about the virus, which has this really low dispersion factor—a small number of people do a lot of the

"We've ended up with some very simplistic narratives about what went wrong because they were simply the line of least journalistic resistance."

infecting. As for manufacturing plants, the only places where there really were big superspreader outbreaks were meatpacking factories.

So, instead of a kind of targeted approach that would have aimed at getting rid of superspreader events in March and April 2020, particularly in New York and California, there were these blanket lockdowns, the costs of which were probably in excess of their public health benefits. I say *probably* because we haven't really rigorously sat down and figured this out. But the research that's been done so far basically tells us that people would have adapted their behavior even if there had been no shelter-in-place orders to reduce their exposure, because people are not stupid in a pandemic even if they're being bombarded with misinformation. Secondly, and we saw this in the later part of 2020, there were ways of reducing social interaction that were much less disruptive than the lockdowns of the spring of 2020. So, although we did

restore restrictions in the later part of the year, in Europe in particular, it was much less economically disruptive that second time around.

I think it's pretty clear that there were a great many costs associated with lockdowns that were left out of the policy calculation. So far, we do know that there wasn't a spike in suicides, but there was a spike in overdoses. That's clear. We're gradually seeing the true costs of the lockdown filtering through.

The cost in terms of educational loss is absolutely huge and will be very hard to calculate because a generation has lost a year of education. And unfortunately, it's been in the public schools that the disruption has been greater, so it's poorer kids who have lost the most in the past year. And it's just silly to pretend that that isn't a very meaningful cost. Does that mean that schools should just have been left open as they were in 1957–58? I think if we'd done that, a great many more elderly people would have gotten infected, because the problem is that children, although they didn't get sick in large numbers at all, could spread the disease, especially teenagers.

So, there were some really tricky policy trade-offs, no question, last year. And I think it would be a great mistake to simply say we should have done nothing. That, I think, would have led to a much higher death toll than we saw. But the right counterfactual is to go back to where we started. Early detection and early action on the Taiwanese or South Korean pattern would have led to a much lower death toll. The real question to ask is: why was that not even considered? And it wasn't just in the United States that this mistake was made. And it wasn't just by populist leaders, though they've had a great deal of the blame—not only Trump, but also Boris Johnson in the United Kingdom. Belgium had as bad if not worse an experience as Britain and the United States, and in terms of excess mortality, it was actually worse. But Belgium didn't have a populist leader in 2020; a liberal woman was the prime minister. So, I think we've ended up with some very simplistic narratives about what went wrong because they were simply the line of least journalistic resistance.

COLD WAR II

Robinson: In *Doom* you write: "The COVID-19 crisis is widely regarded as dooming the United States to decline relative to China. This is probably wrong." Explain the proposition and then explain why it's only *probably* wrong.

Ferguson: Part of the point of writing a general history of catastrophe is to remind people that disaster can take multiple forms. A pandemic is one.

Climate change is another. That's the one that elites prefer to talk about. But war comes pretty close to pandemics when it comes to causing excess and premature mortality. If the United States and China were to have a war, which is not inconceivable, that would have a far more clear and present impact on humanity than climate change.

I've been thinking a lot about this for a while, and it was striking to me that even before the pandemic we'd already kind of entered Cold War II, only with the People's Republic of China taking the place of the Soviet Union. I remember asking Henry Kissinger about this in late 2019, and he came up with a great phrase: "We're in the foothills of a Cold War." Well, I think in 2020, we left the foothills and we ascended into full-blown hills, if not mountains. First,

because the pandemic originated in China and in murky circumstances reminiscent of the Chernobyl disaster, only with far higher casualties

"We won the vaccine race and we won it handily. That wasn't predictable."

around the world. Second, because the Chinese sought to bend, if not wholly break, the narrative by denying that the virus had originated in China. And third, because in the course of 2020, China sought to flex its muscles even more visibly than before, whether on its border with India or with respect to Taiwan.

It's interesting that the Trump administration's tough line on China—one of the most important things about that administration—is being carried on by its successors almost uninterruptedly. We're entering a very fraught period in US-China relations, and it could escalate at any point, most obviously over Taiwan. I think that will be one of the most important consequences of this pandemic, not only in the United States, but in many other countries. Scales have fallen from eyes about the nature of Xi Jinping's regime. Sentiment on the Chinese government moved in the United States quite dramatically, and the same is true in most European countries and India. Most democracies have a far dimmer view of the regime in Beijing than they did at the end of 2019. I think ultimately China's inner weaknesses are far greater than we realize. The population is shrinking, but aging is only one of the many problems they have to contend with. The fact that the system produced the catastrophe of COVID-19 tells its own story.

But the reason I say that it will probably fail rather than certainly fail is that we seem in much worse shape than we were in Cold War I. In Cold War I, the United States could win with a strategy of containment that assumed that eventually the Soviet Union would succumb to its own internal contradictions. That was the diplomat George Kennan's argument, and it was right. But is the United States of 2021 able to pursue that same strategy against

"The reason cold wars are worth waging and winning is that the other side stands for unfreedom." an economically much stronger opponent? For me, the most troubling thing about writing *Doom* was realizing the decay of our strength as a society

and the decay of the federal government's competence. Compared with its predecessors in Cold War I, this seems a much less formidable opponent for China.

Robinson: Let me quote George Kennan in the 1950s at the beginning of the first Cold War: "The thoughtful observer will experience a certain gratitude to Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear." Are you optimistic that we can do it again?

Ferguson: I'm *just* optimistic, otherwise I wouldn't be here. It tends to be the immigrants, the legal ones, anyway, who have the most faith in this country. And if one looks at the challenge that we currently confront, then it ought to be the case that the United States can come together as, of course, a pretty divided America did back in the 1950s to confront the challenge. Ultimately,

"People would have adapted their behavior even if there had been no shelter-in-place orders to reduce their exposure, because people are not stupid." there are a couple of reasons to be optimistic. The first is we won the vaccine race and we won it handily. That wasn't predictable. I had to finish the book about six months ago, and I said that I think

we'll win this vaccine race and I think the Chinese will lose it because I don't think that they're anywhere near as good as Western companies in doing vaccines. And that proved to be right. So, we still have an edge.

Secondly, I think we also have an edge when it comes to the new technologies like artificial intelligence that are clearly going to be crucial not only in the economy, but in national security terms.

It's really the enemy within that concerns me—that sort of self-defeating impulse that I wrote about ten years ago in *Civilization*. And the fact that that is so entrenched in our educational system seems to be our biggest problem. It's interesting how much Chinese talking points now include woke talking points.

They've spotted our vulnerability on this—on critical race theory, ideas of equity and social justice, and anti-racism. These are much more toxic ideas than meet the eye. And it will require the courage of public intellectuals, politicians, and journalists to speak out against this stuff and remind Americans that the reason cold wars are worth waging and winning is that the other side stands for unfreedom and our raison d'être is individual liberty. If we lose sight of that, we might as well not contest Cold War II, because Cold War II won't be a meaningful choice between freedom and unfreedom. \blacksquare



An Honest Man

Jason Riley offers a biography of Hoover fellow Thomas Sowell, the maverick scholar and fierce defender of fact over faction.

By Peter Robinson

Peter Robinson, Uncommon Knowledge: Jason Riley grew up in Buffalo, New York, earning a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and then getting his start in journalism at the Buffalo News. In 1994, Riley joined the staff of the Wall Street Journal as a copy reader. Today, Riley is a columnist for the Journal and a member of the Journal's editorial board—not many people have made that kind of climb at the Wall Street Journal. A fellow at the Manhattan Institute, Riley is the author of a number of books, including Please Stop Helping Us: How Liberals Make It Harder for Blacks to Succeed (2014) and False Black Power? (2017). Earlier this year, Riley narrated a new documentary, Thomas Sowell: Common Sense in a Senseless World. Riley's newest book, published earlier this year, is Maverick: A Biography of Thomas Sowell. Jason, welcome.

Jason Riley: Thank you for having me.

Robinson: Tom Sowell isn't just an economist or an educator or an author. Tom is in a category that I'm going to ask you to define. How is it that this man means so much to so many people?

Jason Riley is a columnist and member of the editorial board at the Wall Street Journal. Peter Robinson is the editor of the Hoover Digest, the host of Uncommon Knowledge, and the Murdoch Distinguished Policy Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Riley: The word I would use to describe him is *iconic*. And he's a humble man, not someone who set out to become an icon. In one sense, it's a little disappointing that he's become iconic for being an honest intellectual, because that shouldn't make you iconic. Simply being a straight shooter, doing your homework, and following the facts where they lead—even when they lead to unpopular or politically incorrect conclusions—shouldn't make you iconic. Tom is an honest intellectual who follows the facts and is more interested in telling the truth than in being popular, and, unfortunately, among intellectuals today that makes you a standout.

Robinson: How did you first conceive of your book *Maverick?* I'm going to guess that you've been reading Tom for a long time and that you're one of the many people to whom he means a great deal, but how did the book come about?

Riley: It came about by me bothering Thomas Sowell quite a bit. He didn't have a biographer—I was surprised at that—and he didn't particularly want one. So, I started in the mid- to late 2000s trying to get him to agree to some long interviews for a book. And I eventually got some of his friends like Shelby Steele and the late Walter Williams to help me out in persuading Tom. As you know, he's not someone who changes his mind very often. But he's in his nineties now, so maybe I just wore him down. He finally agreed to cooperate.

I've been a fan of his since I discovered him in the early 1990s when I was in college. Someone said to me during a discussion at the school newspaper where I worked, "Jason, you sound like Tom Sowell." And I said, "Who's

that?" The person wrote the name of one of Tom's books on a sheet of paper. I got it from the library that evening and read it in one sitting, and then I went back the next day and checked

"With human capital, a group can overcome all kinds of adversity, and that's why he places so much emphasis on it."

out the library's entire collection of Tom's works. I've been hooked ever since, and he's had a huge impact on my journalism. I got to meet him for the first time in the mid-1990s, when I was on the staff of the *Wall Street Journal* and he came through New York on a book tour and met with the editorial board. Then in the mid-2000s, I went to the Hoover Institution for a long interview with him for the newspaper. And we sort of struck up an acquaintance that has endured over the years.



So, I've been thinking about and reading Thomas Sowell for decades and very much wanted to do this, just as I wanted to do the documentary film you mentioned earlier. The filmmakers came to me when they found out about the biography and asked if I wanted to narrate a film about Tom's life, and I jumped at the opportunity. This is something I've wanted to do for a long time.

Robinson: What did you pick up about Tom when you met him that you didn't know from reading?

Riley: He is quite similar, I would think, to the person you're reading. He's a straight shooter, very funny, and very engaging. I think that comes across not only on paper but in the interviews. You've probably done more interviews with him than anyone. I've watched a lot of interviews with Tom in preparation for the book, and I especially enjoy the *Uncommon Knowledge* ones. As you know, if you just ask Tom a short question and sit back and listen, you'll be fascinated, because he's brilliant. And that's what you allowed him to do. I think in doing that, his humanity and intelligence come across.

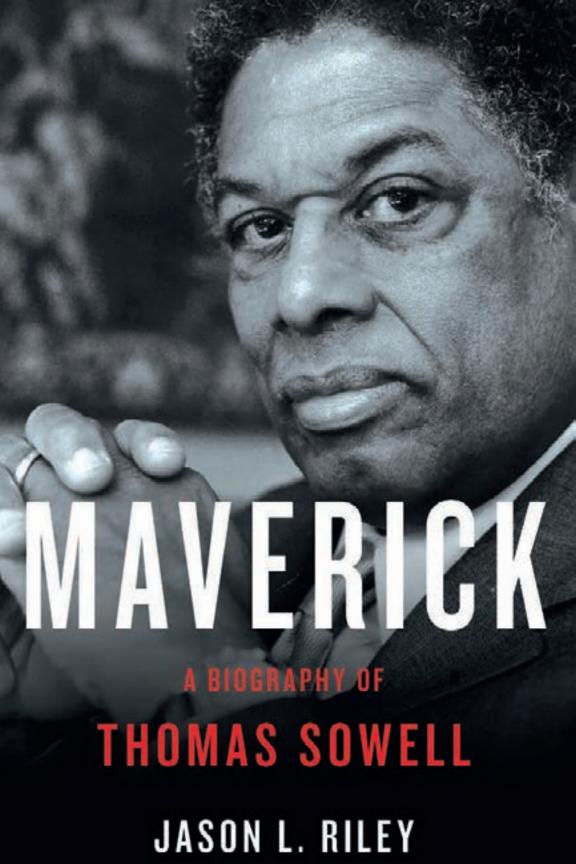
Robinson: Thank you very much. But the reason I let him talk is because he scares me. You don't want to be stupid in front of Tom.

Riley: Yes, that does come across. He's very intellectually intimidating, but he carries it well. He's not someone who's looking to put you down or put you in your place. But he's a brilliant man, and he's very generous with his time.

Robinson: You provide one quip by Tom in *Maverick* that in a certain sense sums up his whole approach to public affairs: "The first rule of economics is scarcity. The first rule of politics is to ignore the first rule of economics." In other words, economics is about reality, and reality is disappointing. We always want more than we can get. And politics is about delusions. And Tom is always trying to draw us back to reality and to what we can actually do.

Riley: Yes, and he's also reminding us that incentives matter and that politicians have their own agenda and intellectuals have their own agenda. We have to always keep that in mind that people respond to incentives. People

CLARITY: Jason Riley (opposite) says his new biography of Thomas Sowell shows the Hoover scholar's prescience on multiple pressing issues—from civil rights to economic incentives to education. "If you read inklings of Thomas Sowell in my writing," Riley says, "that is definitely by design." [Julie Brimberg—Hachette Book Group]



are motivated by certain things, and we should keep that in mind when we listen to what they're telling us. So, a policy that may serve the interests of a politician quite well may not do much good at all for the people he claims to be representing in office. Tom has been masterful at pointing out that these two things are often in conflict. And yet the political class does a very good job of obscuring that sort of thing.

In a recent conversation you had with Tom, he made the point that teachers who their union is supposed to represent would love a pay raise and it would be in their interest to get one. But a pay raise is not necessarily what the teachers' union is most interested in; it wants more teachers hired so that more of them can pay dues. You would think that the teachers and the unions must have the same shared interests, but it's not necessarily the case.

Tom spent a career pointing out those differences.

RACE, CULTURE, AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Robinson: I remember doing an interview with Tom when I think he was eighty-seven years old. I read him a list of a dozen titles and asked, "Do you know what these have in common?" He said, "Well, they're books by me, but what do they have in common?" I said, "Those are all books you've published since turning eighty." The productivity is staggering. We don't have time to go through all the books, but you spend a lot of time on the trilogy of books that he wrote on culture, which is in some ways his major achievement during the Hoover Institution years: Race and Culture (1994), Migrations and Cultures (1996), and Conquests and Cultures (1998). I'm quoting from Maverick again: "Most analyses of social and economic intergroup differences focus on the immediate surroundings in which people live. Sowell concluded that it isn't the immediate environment per se, but cultural values and human capital—skills, work habits, saving propensities, attitudes toward education and entrepreneurship, developed sometimes over long periods of time—that are the more dominant factors in explaining disparities." Explain that.

Riley: Tom has talked about this as the sort of Petri dish you had on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the first half of the twentieth century,

SOJOURNER FOR TRUTH: Jason Riley says of his subject (opposite): "Tom is an honest intellectual who follows the facts and is more interested in telling the truth than in being popular, and, unfortunately, among intellectuals today that makes you a standout." [Hachette Book Group]

where you had immigrants coming from everywhere—Russians, Jews, Italians, Irish—and you put all these kids of the same age in the same class in front of the same teacher and you were getting wildly different outcomes. Tom's point was that they're in the same environment only if you're talking about their immediate surroundings. But in Italy, when they put in compulsory school laws, schools were burned because the parents did not want their kids to attend but wanted them to start working as soon as possible. In czar-

"These policies have not just been wrong but they've in some cases been detrimental to the interests of blacks. And too few others were willing to say that out loud."

ist Russia, where most of the population was illiterate, even there most Jews had books in their homes, which gives you a sense of their value of education. So, if you take a Jewish kid and an Ital-

ian kid from those different traditions and cultures and put them in the same classroom, you shouldn't expect the same outcomes just because they're in proximity to one another.

Tom was talking about the primacy of culture and human capital and he takes it further. Tom has documented this in cases not only in the United States but globally. He talks about how those minority racial and ethnic groups who do have that human capital can withstand all kinds of bad treatment from the surrounding majority population.

Human capital is far more important to them than having people who look like them in political office with political power. It's more important than any government program you can set up for these people. With human capital, a group can overcome all kinds of adversity, and that's why he places so much emphasis on it. Look at a group like the Japanese-Americans. They couldn't own land for a period of time when they first arrived; they were interned during World War II unjustly; yet Japanese-Americans outperform white Americans academically and economically and have for decades, despite the fact that they had been treated this way. And you have groups like black Americans outperforming Mexican-Americans or Puerto Rican-Americans, even though no one would argue that Mexicans or Puerto Ricans have faced more discrimination than black people have in America. Tom showed that this whole idea that you can point to discrimination as the reason we have inequality is undermined by the cases of groups that have human capital being discriminated against and rising notwithstanding that discrimination.

HELPING CHILDREN SUCCEED

Robinson: Tom's latest book, *Charter Schools and Their Enemies*, published as he turned ninety years old, is a study of what *does* work, which is education. In particular, he studies charter schools in New York City in Harlem, where he himself grew up, and the astonishing results these schools are producing, where the scores of kids who are largely black and Hispanic compare favorably with those of white kids out in the fancy suburbs. And then you get teachers' unions and Mayor Bill de Blasio attempting to thwart these schools.

This is the closing passage from Tom's book: "This is especially important when considering children from a cultural background lacking the advantages that are common among children born into more fortunate circumstances. Children who have not received at home the educational, behavioral, and other foundation to make the most of their natural ability must get those things in school. These are the plain and harsh realities of circumstances. The stakes are huge, not only for children whose education can be their one clear ticket for a better life but also for a whole society that needs more productive members fulfilling themselves while contributing their talents to the progress of the community at large. Children who emerge from their education with a mastery of mathematics, the English language, and other fundamentals are ready to be those kinds of people, regardless of what color or class they come from. No narrow, vested interests of adults—whether financial, political, or ideological—should be allowed to block that."

Is that what Tom's work comes down to: education?

Riley: I really think it does. I hope he writes another book, but if that does happen to be his swan song, I think it will be a very fitting one. He's written extensively about education, particularly about black education—pioneering

work that he did about black high schools and grade schools back in the Seventies. And I put it in the context of what the left is doing to these poor communities. They want

"He says these black intellectuals don't represent black people any more than white intellectuals represent white people."

to defund policing in these communities. They want to take away the highest performing schools in these communities, these charter schools. Their welfare-state policies have already destroyed the black family. If you take away safe neighborhoods, good schools, and intact families, what do these people have left? This is systematically happening. Tom is absolutely right: if

these kids don't have a decent education, what hope do they have? He's gotten that for a long time, and he spent a professional lifetime trying to explain it to others.

DISCRIMINATION AND DISPARITIES

Robinson: In a certain sense I'm leery about talking about Tom's books on racial issues. One of the things you do in your book is show his magnificent, capacious mind. He ranges across economics and history and culture and even gets into disputes on genetics. And you refuse to permit him to be viewed as a black conservative. You refuse to permit this remarkable mind and this huge body of work to be reduced to just that. On the other hand, he has written a number of important books on race in America. In *Maverick* you write, "Sowell's books on racial issues were written out of a personal sense of duty." And you quote Tom himself: "There were things I thought needed saying and I knew that other people were reluctant to say them." What things needed saying?

Riley: What needed saying was that the civil rights leadership was barking up the wrong tree. Their pivot away from equal opportunity toward equal results was the wrong way to go. And Tom would say that the opportunity cost involved has been tragic. Equal results are part of that utopian vision of the

"I guess in today's parlance, we would say that Tom has been canceled."

world that is unrealistic. The left has this view that the natural state of things involves equal outcomes,

or something approaching proportionate outcomes in income or representation in certain professions and so forth. But people who have actually studied societies around the world can find no evidence that this is the natural state of things. And yet we have a Civil Rights Division premised on the notion that where we don't see proportionate outcomes, something is wrong, and it's discrimination. Tom says that was the wrong focus. Since the 1960s, the left has spent a lot of time trying to elect black officials, thinking that if we have the political power, all the rest will take care of itself. And Tom says that from an international perspective, that has generally not worked for other groups, and the ones who have tried it have risen to prosperity the slowest. It can work, but it's very inefficient, and it's not the way the black leadership should be going.

Tom also thought it needed to be said how harmful many of these policies aimed to help blacks—like affirmative action—have been. The point is that

these policies have not just been wrong but that they've in some cases been detrimental to the interests of blacks. And too few others were willing to say that out loud.

Robinson: From the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery to a century later—right up until the moment the civil rights legislation goes through—African-Americans make progress of all kinds. They started with severe dis-

advantages, but families remained cohesive and intact, and there were huge attainments in edu-

"He's very intellectually intimidating, but he carries it well."

cation and income. And then the civil rights legislation was enacted. Let me quote you again from *Maverick*: "Even as blacks were increasing their political clout in the 1970s and 1980s, black welfare dependency was rising, as was black crime, black teen unemployment, and births to single black women. None of this surprised Sowell." That's because he knew the history.

Riley: Right, he knew the history. So much of what is described by the left today as a legacy of slavery or a legacy of Jim Crow is in reality a legacy of the Great Society. If you look at the trend lines, it's so obvious. Whether you're looking at income trend lines, single parenting, crime, or educational attainment, you saw growth in the right direction at a much faster pace in the first half of the twentieth century than you did after the Great Society programs of the 1960s were enacted. Tom's point is that political clout that blacks were gaining starting in the 1970s couldn't help us return to those trends we saw in the first half of the twentieth century. This is not to say that blacks shouldn't engage politically or that we didn't need to pass the Voting Rights Act or the Civil Rights Act. Tom supported all that, but his claim was that it wasn't going to be the silver bullet, or the key to black advancement. It's not going to do what proponents thought it would do. Tom has tragically been proven right about all of this, and he was saying it back in the 1960s, when this legislation was first being considered.

MAVERICK

Robinson: In *Maverick* you write, "Thomas Sowell has not gained iconic status by going 'against the grain' of most blacks. He's done so by taking on the thinking of most black intellectuals." Explain that.

Riley: Tom is often asked in interviews what it feels like to go against the grain of other blacks in his thinking. And he always corrects the interviewer

and says, "I'm not going against the grain of other blacks. I'm going against the grain of other black intellectuals. And there's a difference." He says these black intellectuals don't represent black people any more than white intellectuals represent white people. These intellectuals are acting in their own self-interest, and we shouldn't conflate the two.

I guess in today's parlance, we would say that Tom has been canceled. This is something that the left, the black left in particular, did to him a long time ago. They wanted to make him someone that you do not take seriously, someone whose opinion doesn't matter. And because the left largely controls the intellectual circles—in academia, the foundation world, and the committees that give out awards and prizes to scholars—they have effectively canceled Thomas Sowell. It's a shame. I don't think he's gotten his due for his scholarship. This is why more people know who Ta-Nehisi Coates, Ibram X. Kendi, Henry Louis Gates, and Cornel West are than know who Thomas Sowell is, even though Tom's scholarship is far broader, far deeper, and more rigorous in its analysis and its methodology than those guys. He's working circles around them. This is one of the reasons to both write the book and narrate the documentary. I think more people should know about Tom and his work.

Robinson: You quote a letter that Tom wrote to his best friend, Walter Williams, whom we lost just last year. There was a time when they decided that

"It's a little disappointing that he's become iconic for being an honest intellectual, because that shouldn't make you iconic." they'd never travel on the same airplane, because if the plane went down the black conservative movement would be wiped out. Tom wrote this: "Today we know that there are

lots of other blacks writing and many of them are sufficiently younger that we know there will be good people carrying on the fight after we are gone." When you start thinking about legacy, it's impossible not to think about you, Jason. He means so much to you. You agree with him on the fundamentals. When I read your column in the *Wall Street Journal*, your work is always original and fresh, but I feel you're carrying on in Tom's tradition.

OK, so Tom's been canceled. We have the Black Lives Matter movement and riots and a kind of woke revolution that's taken place in the last year. Are you trying to engage in a dignified defense of a lost cause, or do you see an opening here for progress in your generation?

Riley: If it's actually possible, I might be more pessimistic than Tom Sowell about something. I'm not sure that I share the optimism he expressed in that letter. But that letter comes from the early 2000s, so it predates a little bit of what we've been seeing most recently with the rise of Black Lives Matter and

so forth. If we could use a sports analogy, I don't know that black conservatism has the farm team that the other side has. It seems to me that

"The first rule of economics is scarcity. The first rule of politics is to ignore the first rule of economics."

when the Cornel Wests are gone, there's going to be a whole army to replace them: Ta-Nehisi Coates, Ibram X. Kendi, and so on. I don't see a whole army of Tom Sowells out there, although I see more than I used to.

I think right now the progressive left, including the black progressive left, is ascendant. You see it in critical race theory dominating conversations outside of academia, getting into our workplace diversity training, and now into our elementary schools. This horrifies me.

I'll continue doing what I do as a journalist, and if you read inklings of Thomas Sowell in my writing, that is definitely by design. He has been a huge influence on my thinking. And I have consciously tried to carry on in that tradition. I see more than I used to of the type of scholarship that Tom pioneered, but I wish I saw more.

Robinson: Clare Boothe Luce used to say that it doesn't matter how significant a figure is in history, we'll give him one sentence. Churchill defeated Hitler. Lincoln saved the Union. What one sentence should history give to Tom Sowell?

Riley: Maverick intellectual.





The Case for Black Patriotism

Does the American Dream apply to black people, too? "It most certainly and emphatically does apply. And it is coming to fruition daily."

By Glenn C. Loury

here is a fashionable standoffishness characteristic of much elite thinking about blacks' relationship to America—as exemplified, for instance, by the *New York Times*'s "1619 Project." Does this posture serve the interests, rightly understood, of black Americans? I think that it does not.

Indeed, a case can be made that the correct narrative to adopt today is one of unabashed black patriotism—a forthright embrace of American nationalism by black people. Black Americans' birthright citizenship in what is arguably history's greatest republic is an inheritance of immense value. My answer for black Americans to Frederick Douglass's famous question—"Whose Fourth of July?"—is, "Ours!"

Is this a venal, immoral, and rapacious bandit society of plundering white supremacists, founded in genocide and slavery and propelled by capitalist greed, or a good country that affords boundless opportunity to all fortunate enough to enjoy the privileges and bear the responsibilities of citizenship? Of

Glenn C. Loury is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is the Merton P. Stoltz Professor of the Social Sciences and professor of economics at Brown University, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, and the host of a podcast called **The Glenn Show**.

course, there is some warrant in the historical record for both sentiments, but the weight of the evidence overwhelmingly favors the latter. The founding of the United States of America was a world-historic event by means of which Enlightenment ideals about the rights of individual persons and the legitimacy of state power were instantiated for the first time in real institutions.

African slavery flourished at the time of the founding, true enough. And yet, within a century of the founding, slavery was gone and people who had been chattel became citizens of the United States of America. Not equal citizens, not at first. That took another century. But African-descended Americans became, in the fullness of time, equal citizens of this republic.

Our democracy, flawed as it most surely is, nevertheless became a beacon to billions of people throughout what came to be known as the "free world." We fought fascism in the Pacific and in Europe and thereby helped to save the world. We faced down, under the threat of nuclear annihilation, the horror that was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Moreover, we have witnessed here in America, since the end of the Civil War, the greatest transformation in the status of a serfdom people (which is, in effect, what blacks became after emancipation) to be found anywhere in world history.

This narrative of human liberty begins in the incredible trauma of the Civil

War, with more than six hundred thousand dead in a country of thirty million. Some say that the war wasn't fought to end slavery; it was fought to preserve the Union.

Some forty million strong, black Americans are the richest and most powerful population of African descent on the planet.

Lincoln, they say, would have been happy to see the Union preserved even if slavery had persisted. I suspect that this is correct, though he surely abhorred slavery. But the fact remains that the consequence of that war was, together with the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, to make the chattel—the African slaves and their descendants—into citizens.

It shouldn't have taken a hundred years; they shouldn't have been slaves in the first place. True enough. But slavery had been a commonplace human experience since antiquity. Emancipation—the freeing of slaves en masse, the movement for abolition—that was a new idea. A Western idea. The fruit of Enlightenment. An idea that was brought to fruition over a century and a half ago here, in the United States of America, liberating millions of people and creating the world we now inhabit.



WHOSE NARRATIVE? "Black Americans' birthright citizenship in what is arguably history's greatest republic is an inheritance of immense value," says Glenn Loury. "African-descended Americans became, in the fullness of time, equal citizens of this republic." [Courtesy of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University]

This great and historic achievement surely would not have been possible without philosophical insights and moral commitments cultivated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the West—ideas about the essential dignity of human persons and about what makes a government's exercise of power over its people legitimate. But something new was created here in America at the end of the eighteenth century. Slavery was a holocaust out of which emerged something that actually advanced the morality and the dignity of humankind—namely, emancipation. The abolition of slavery and the incorporation of Africa-descended people into the body politic of the United States of America was an unprecedented achievement.

To those, like the influential writer Ta-Nehisi Coates, who dismiss the American dream as irrelevant to blacks or worse, I would ask, "Have you noticed what has happened here in the United States in the last century?"

The Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal came to the United States in the late 1930s, with backing from the Carnegie Corporation, to survey the

condition of "the Negro" in American society. In 1944, when he published his study, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, the modal

Slavery was a holocaust out of which emerged something that actually advanced the morality and the dignity of humankind.

occupation for African-American men was farm laborer, and the typical occupation of African-American women was domestic servant. The median family income of blacks relative to whites was about 50 percent. The status of African-American education, voting rights and citizenship, and access to the professions was abysmal. This is within my lifetime.

In the past seventy-five years, a vast black middle class has developed. There are black billionaires. The influence of black people on the culture of America is stunning and has global resonance. Some forty million strong, black Americans are the richest and most powerful population of African descent on the planet. There are two hundred million Nigerians, and the gross national product of Nigeria is about \$1 trillion per year. America's GNP is over \$20 trillion a year, and we forty million African-Americans have claim to roughly 10 percent of it. We have access to ten times the income of a typical Nigerian.

What is more, the very fact that the cultural barons and elites of America—who run the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, who give out Pulitzer Prizes and National Book Awards, who make the grants at the

MacArthur Foundation and run the human resources departments of corporate America—have bought in to the new woke racial sensibility hook, line, and sinker gives the lie to the pessimism that the American dream doesn't apply to blacks. It most certainly and emphatically does apply. And it is coming to fruition daily.

The central issue, then, is a question of narrative. Are we going to look through the dark lens of the United States as a racist, genocidal, white

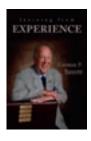
Emancipation—the freeing of slaves en masse, the movement for abolition—that was a new idea.

A Western idea.

supremacist, illegitimate force? Or are we going to see it for what it has become over the course of the past three centuries: the greatest force for human liberty on the planet? This conflict of narratives

is worth arguing about—with Ta-Nehisi Coates; with Colin Kaepernick; with the Black Lives Matter activists; with the officials who exercise power in the Biden administration; and with the editorial staff of the *New York Times*. The narrative we blacks settle upon about the American project is fundamentally important to our nation's future. \blacksquare

Adapted from a lecture at Arizona State University's School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership.



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Tear Down that Great Firewall

President Reagan's historic speech exposed a confrontation deeper than the Cold War itself.
Where is the American leader who can challenge China on the same terms?

By H. R. McMaster

his year the United States is emerging from four traumas: a pandemic; a recession associated with the pandemic; social divisions laid bare by George Floyd's killing and the protests and violence that followed; and vitriolic partisanship surrounding a presidential election in which leaders of both political parties, including the defeated candidate for re-election, disparaged democratic

Key points

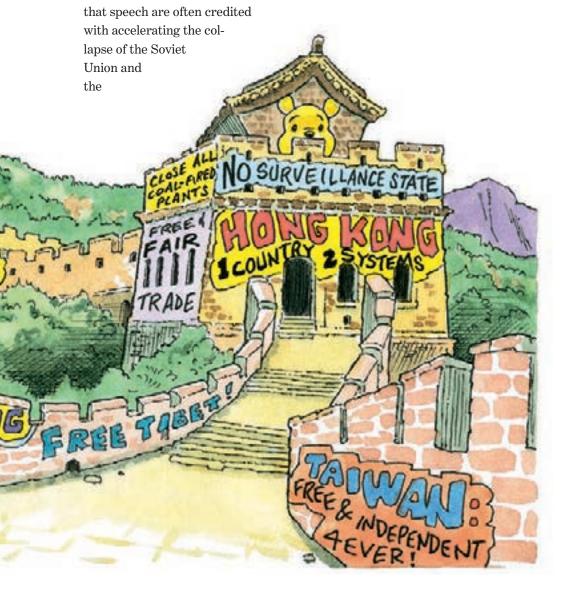
- » President Reagan's 1987 speech at the Brandenburg Gate showcased both confidence and moral clarity.
- » China's leaders fear loss of control and are driven above all to achieve "national rejuvenation."
- » Today's free nations have an opportunity to stand up to communist China's abuses of power.

H. R. McMaster (US Army, Ret.), a former national security adviser, is the Fouad and Michelle Ajami Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of Hoover's working groups on military history and Islamism and the international order. He is also a participant in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project, the Bernard and Susan Liautaud Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute, and a lecturer at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. His latest book is Battlegrounds: The Fight to Defend the Free World (Harper, 2020).

processes and government institutions to score political points. Recovering from those traumas and restoring confidence will require introspection, but American leaders would be mistaken to neglect foreign affairs. The pandemic catalyzed rather than arrested geostrate-

gic competitions, especially the free world's competition with an [Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest] increasingly aggressive Chinese Communist Party (CCP). While analogies between the twenty-first-century competition with the CCP and the twentieth-century competition with the Soviet Union are imperfect, America's experience during the Cold War demonstrated that prevailing in competitions abroad requires confidence in democratic principles and institutions at home.

President Ronald Reagan's speech in June 1987, delivered in the shadow of the Berlin Wall, is immortalized because of the exhortation, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Those words and



West's triumph over communist totalitarianism because they invoked confidence that freedom would triumph over tyranny. The Berlin Wall is an apt, albeit inexact, analogy for the Great Firewall of China, the combination of laws and technologies designed to isolate the realm of the CCP from outside influences. One was meant to keep people in, and the other is designed to stifle freedom and prevent unsupervised personal interactions that might spark opposition to authoritarian regimes.

To understand how to compete effectively with today's most powerful authoritarian regime, leaders across the free world might reflect on how Reagan's speech at the Brandenburg Gate clarified the nature of the competition with the Soviet Union, drew a strong contrast between democracy and autocracy, provided a positive vision for the future, and spoke directly to the people on the other side of the Wall.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

President Reagan's speech made clear what was at stake, not only for those living under communist oppression but for all peoples. "As long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind." Today, as the CCP perfects its technologically enabled police state, much of the world turns a blind eye to egregious violations of human rights. That is because China co-opts countries, international corporations, and elites through false promises of impending liberalization, insincere pledges to work on global issues such as climate change, and the lure of short-term profits associated with access to Chinese consumers, investments, and loans.

The CCP portrays its crimes, such as the taking of hostages and political

The pandemic catalyzed rather than arrested geostrategic competition.

prisoners or the forcing of millions into re-education and labor camps, as normal practice. Co-option incentivizes elites, cor-

porations, and countries to go along with the charade while rendering them vulnerable to coercion. The CCP uses its coercive power to force acquiescence or support for efforts to extinguish human freedom internally, extend its influence internationally, and reshape the global order in a way that favors China and its authoritarian, mercantilist model.

Within international organizations such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Human Rights Council, the CCP uses co-option and coercion to turn those organizations against their purpose and provide cover for the CCP's most egregious acts. As Reagan pointed out in Berlin, the policies and actions of an aggressive authoritarian power present a challenge not only for the United States but for all humanity.

The Berlin speech is remembered because it exposed, with a direct challenge, the nature of the free world's competition with the Soviet Union: "There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that

would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the

The Berlin Wall speech invoked confidence that freedom would triumph over tyranny.

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Today, leaders across the free world have an opportunity to clarify, with a similar exhortation to Chairman Xi Jinping, what is at stake in the competition with the CCP: tear down the Great Firewall and the many walls behind which the CCP interns its political prisoners, forced laborers, and oppressed minorities.

Reagan used the physical wall to illuminate the stark contrast between two systems, leaving little room for moral equivalence. He described the wall and the border complex that comprised the Iron Curtain as an "instrument to impose upon ordinary men and women the will of a totalitarian state" and observed that the "news photo and the television screen have imprinted this brutal division of a continent upon the mind of the world." He made that barrier and the oppression it represented important to all people. "Standing before the Brandenburg Gate, every man is a German, separated from his fellow men. Every man is a Berliner, forced to look upon a scar." Sadly, after Berliners tore down the wall in November 1989, man-made barriers that divide free and oppressed peoples persisted, such as the fences, minefields, and guard towers that run along the 38th parallel and separate South Korea's thriving democracy from the Kim family's destitute dictatorship.

But it is the 180-kilometer strait that connects the East China Sea and the South China Sea that marks the most consequential political obstacle between peoples who share a common culture—much as the Berlin Wall did during the Cold War. Taiwanese appear as today's West Berliners because Taiwan's successful democracy exposes the CCP's lie that the Chinese people are culturally predisposed toward not wanting a say in how they are governed. Reagan expressed respect for Berliners in 1987, noting "the feeling of

history in this city, more than five hundred years older than our own nation." Leaders across the free world today might show respect for the Taiwanese and all Chinese people by acknowledging that China's recent history—from the Republican Revolution of 1911 to the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 to the Hong Kong protests of 2020—reveals the CCP's Leninist system as unnatural and sustainable only through oppression.

Like West Berlin during the Cold War, Taiwan's vibrancy and openness can provide hope to those who, from Xinjiang to Hong Kong to Tibet to Beijing, might otherwise despair. The Taiwanese people need, as West Berliners did during the Cold War, the support of the free world to counter the CCP's aggression and deter conflict at a dangerous flashpoint that could lead to a devastating war.

A POSITIVE VISION

Reagan delivered a confident, positive message. It has been largely forgotten that many in the West extolled the relative strengths of Soviet communism up to the moment that the system collapsed. Reagan, however, saw the competitive advantages of America and the free world. He declared that

there stands before the entire world one great and inescapable conclusion: Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient hatreds among the nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor.

Across the world's democracies, in today's season of self-doubt brought on by the aforementioned traumas, Reagan's speech provides a reminder that self-respect is foundational to the competition with the Chinese Communist Party. The free world has a competitive advantage in unalienable rights: freedom of expression, of assembly, and of the press; freedom of religion and freedom

For Xi Jinping and the Communist Party, freedom is a problem.

from persecution based on religion, race, gender, or sexual orientation; the freedom to prosper in our free market economic

system; the rule of law and the protections it affords to life and liberty; and democratic governance that recognizes that government serves the people rather than the other way around. While the free world's democratic governments and free market economic systems are imperfect and require constant nurturing, those who extol the relative strengths of China's system and argue that the best that democracies can do is to manage their relative decline may

one day find themselves as surprised as Soviet advocates and apologists were in 1989.

Some today argue that leaders should forgo criticism of the CCP's egregious human rights violations lest CCP leaders feel insulted and withdraw from collective action in areas such as climate change. But Reagan's clear description of what was at stake in the competition between democracy and autocracy did not foreclose on cooperation with the Soviet Union. Even as he challenged Gorbachev to tear down the Wall, he also called for not merely "limiting the growth of arms but of eliminating, for the first time, an entire

class of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth." Six months later, at the Washington Summit, Reagan and Gorbachev signed the unprecedented Interme-

Today's challenge: to tear down the many walls behind which the party keeps its political prisoners, forced laborers, and oppressed minorities.

diate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which eliminated a whole class of nuclear weapons. Confidence and transparent competition might provide the best path toward cooperation on issues of mutual interest.

Reagan also spoke directly to the people of Eastern Europe: "To those listening throughout Eastern Europe, I extend my warmest greetings and the good will of the American people. To those listening in East Berlin, a special word: although I cannot be with you, I address my remarks to you just as surely as to those standing here before me. For I join you, as I join your fellow countrymen in the West, in this firm, this unalterable belief: *Es gibt nur ein Berlin* [There is only one Berlin]." Rioting erupted in East Berlin as police began arresting young people who were listening to the speech. Reagan emphasized the importance of positive personal interactions across that artificial barrier, stating that "there is no better way to establish hope for the future than to enlighten young minds, and we would be honored to sponsor summer youth exchanges, cultural events, and other programs for young Berliners from the East. Our French and British friends, I'm certain, will do the same. And it's my hope that an authority can be found in East Berlin to sponsor visits from young people of the Western sectors."

Just as Reagan advocated for the free movement of young people across a physical barrier, the United States and other free and open societies today should work to surmount the Great Firewall and reach the Chinese people.

Although some might consider expanded immigration from an authoritarian rival state risky, the United States and other free and open societies

should issue more visas as part of an effort to maximize positive interactions with Chinese people and entities disconnected from CCP efforts to stifle freedom, conduct espionage, or export China's authoritarian mercantilist model. Sadly, the CCP is reducing the space and opportunities for those interactions. As the CCP intensifies the oppression of its own people, the United States and other democracies should grant asylum or parole to those who are subject to the CCP's brutality. After the Tiananmen Square massacre, President George H. W. Bush issued an executive order that granted Chinese students in the United States the right to stay and work. In the following decade, more

Many in the West extolled the relative strengths of Soviet communism up to the moment that the system collapsed.

than three-quarters of the students stayed after graduation. Many became US citizens and went on to make tremendous contributions

to American society.

Even if leaders across the free world adopt the essential elements of Reagan's speech at the Brandenburg Gate—clarify the nature of the competition with the CCP, highlight the stark contrast between democracy and authoritarianism, communicate a positive vision of democratic governance and the rule of law, and speak directly to the Chinese people—Xi Jinping and CCP leaders are likely to tighten their exclusive grip on power and promote their authoritarian, mercantilist model. That is because Xi and the CCP princelings of his generation are driven by fear and ambition: fear of the chaos that could follow their loss of control, and the ambition to achieve "national rejuvenation."

The COVID-19 pandemic convinced CCP leaders that they have a fleeting window of strategic opportunity to strengthen their rule and revise the international order in their favor—before the economy sours; before the population grows old; before other nations realize that the party is pursuing national rejuvenation at their expense. Moreover, CCP leaders learned one fundamental lesson from the collapse of the Soviet Union's communist empire just two years after Reagan's speech: never compromise or grant the Chinese people a say in how the party governs. CCP leaders blame Mikhail Gorbachev, who visited Beijing amid the Tiananmen Square protests to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of relations between the Soviet Union and communist China, for losing faith in the primacy of the Soviet-party elites.

In his speech, Reagan welcomed Gorbachev's policies of "change and openness," expressing his belief "that freedom and security go together, that the

advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace." But Xi and his cohort see Gorbachev's effort to make the Communist Party of the Soviet Union a "party of the whole people" as misguided and the principal cause of the Soviet Union's demise. For Xi and the CCP, freedom is a source of existential angst.

STRENGTH OF PURPOSE

Perhaps the greatest lesson of Reagan's remarks on East-West relations is the importance of moral clarity and unambiguous language. Peter Robinson, then a thirty-year-old speechwriter who is now a fellow at the Hoover Institution, drafted the speech. He and his colleague Anthony Dolan advocated strong language generally and especially for the four words that constituted that historic and prophetic challenge: "Tear down this wall!" To prepare for the speech, Robinson visited Berlin, where West Berlin government officials encouraged mild rhetoric. Some stated that Berliners had gotten used to the wall. Chancellor Helmut Kohl wrote a memo in which he observed

that a large number of Germans believed that progress in the relationship with the Soviet Union was possible only if the United States

The Berlin speech demonstrated that direct language is itself an essential part of effective competition.

avoided direct condemnation. Secretary of State George Shultz and national security adviser Colin Powell believed that strong rhetoric would undermine Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika efforts and set back the fragile relationship Reagan was building with Gorbachev. State Department officials and National Security Council staff submitted seven drafts of the speech, all of which excluded the four words. But Tom Griscom, Reagan's director of communications, had given Reagan the draft speech before it went out for staffing. Griscom also persuaded the new White House chief of staff, Howard Baker, not to intervene or try to block the speech. Ultimately, Reagan retained the tone of the speech and those four momentous words.

The Berlin speech and other Reagan speeches that addressed the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, such as the Westminster Address of June 1982 and the "evil empire" speech given at the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, in March 1983, explained what was at stake, for the United States and humanity, in the competition with the Soviet Union. In the latter speech, Reagan lamented the "historical reluctance to see totalitarian powers for what they are." That

reluctance abides, as some argue that in the competition with the Chinese Communist Party, the United States faces a binary choice between accommodation and a disastrous war. Others prioritize profits over principles as they surrender to the CCP's coercive power. Some rationalize their silence over heinous human rights abuses with tortured arguments of moral equivalence.

Reagan's Berlin speech demonstrated that direct language is itself an essential element of effective competition. The speech retains its importance because it demonstrates the need for an unambiguous understanding of the nature of today's competition with the CCP, reveals how that understanding can help restore confidence in and gratitude for democratic governance, and encourages a renewed international commitment to the unalienable rights to which all peoples are entitled. \blacksquare

Adapted from the Ronald Reagan Institute's Presidential Principles and Beliefs essay series.



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Goodbye, Columbus

The now-annual ritual of pillorying Christopher Columbus is part of a crusade to defame America and its values.

By Bruce S. Thornton

ecent attacks on historical monuments and efforts to rewrite America's history as a racist plot are just the latest in the left's long assault on American history. Long before this current iconoclasm, Christopher Columbus was the archvillain in the left's Orwellian revision of American history as peculiarly and irredeemably evil from its birth.

Attacking and demonizing American history is one of the progressive left's favorite tools for undermining the patriotic solidarity that binds us together and undergirds our political order. The left can never forgive the United States for achieving "prosperity, power, the tendency towards uniformity of economic conditions," as Raymond Aron pointed out in 1957, "by private initiative, by competition rather than state intervention" and the "revolutionary code." The left has to discredit America's foundations in order to show that its success has come at too great a price—the institutionalization of racist oppression and inequality that has created "white privilege" and "white

Bruce S. Thornton is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, a member of Hoover's Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict, and a professor of classics and humanities at California State University, Fresno.

supremacy." What better place to start than with Columbus, who began the colonization of and genocide against the innocent American peoples? And Columbus's most malign heir has been the United States.

The staleness of these reductive clichés about the European contact with the New World were obvious in 1992 during the quincentennial celebration of Columbus's arrival in the Americas. A "wanted poster" circulated by an indigenous people's activist group was typical of the rhetoric at the time: "Wanted: Christopher Columbus . . . for grand theft, genocide, racism, initiating the destruction of a culture, rape, torture, and instigating the big lie." Even then, this melodramatic revision of history was stale. In 1925 poet William Carlos Williams had written, "The main islands were thickly populated with a peaceful folk when Christopher Columbus found them. But of the orgy of blood which followed, no man has written. It is the tortured soul of the world." Since then, decrying Columbus and the United States has been an annual event. Even *The Sopranos* in 2002 made the regular Columbus Day protests part of an episode's plot.

This revisionist, semi-mythic, reductionist view of history has two dimensions. The first is the inveterate evil of the Europeans, and later Americans, who colonized the land and displaced its peaceful inhabitants. From the very beginning, Europeans shoehorned Amerindians into the old classical golden age myth of a simple people living in harmony with nature, with no cities, laws, diseases, private property, or war. As Amerigo Vespucci wrote in 1505, "neither do they have goods of their own, but all things are held in common," and they "live according to nature." Sir Walter Raleigh explicitly invoked the golden age: "We found the people most gentle, loving, and faithful, void of all guile and treason, such as lived after the manner of the golden age."

The other side of the coin involved turning the Europeans into evil oppressors committing genocide against the pacifist, nature-loving indigenous peoples, the clichéd plot of hundreds of movies like *Dances with Wolves, Pocahontas*, and *Avatar*. These wicked Europeans, as Kirkpatrick Sale wrote in 1992, came from a "dark other world, a world of sorrow and evil," whose sole driving force was a "lust for gold" and the "imperative of human domination and control of the natural world" with its attendant "pollution, extermination, cruelty, destruction, and despoliation."

LEGENDS OF THE "OTHER"

Today this long tradition of idealizing American Indians as proto-communists and ecologists has made them useful clubs for beating an American capitalist culture that oppresses the innocent "other" and ravages nature



with our "technological hubris," as Al Gore put it. And idealizing the New World's indigenes, especially those in North America, has also been an advertisement for collectivist political philosophies like socialism, which promises to restore that lost golden age of communal ownership, peace, equality, and "social justice" once enjoyed by America's first inhabitants.

The reality of life in pre-contact America, of course, was radically different from these politicized myths, just as the promises of Marxism—ike Trotsky's "new man," a "higher sociological type of superman" who "will become

The sins of the West have been the sins of a universal human nature.

incomparably strong, wiser, more subtle"—were radically different from the nightmare of gulags,

torture, manmade famines, and a hundred million murdered in the name of communism. The natives of the New World were not peaceful, but like tribal bands across the globe were continuously raiding and killing each other, not to mention practicing, again like the ancient Celts or Teutons of the Old World, cruel methods of torture. Neither were they natural ecologists, "living lightly on the land," as today's ecologists claim. They exploited their environment in order to survive, using fire to shape the landscape to that end, and fire-drives and stampedes of game over cliffs to kill more than they could ever use. Their impact on nature was limited by their small numbers, and by the crudity of their stone-tipped weapons.

In other words, as in developing nations today, their first priority was not protecting "mother nature" but exploiting and managing it to ensure their survival. The tragedy of the collision of worlds begun by Columbus's voyages was not the result of uniquely evil "whites" who invaded and committed genocide against gentle, peace-loving peoples but that of human nature

The reality of life in pre-contact America was radically different from the politicized myths.

and its universal drive to invade, conquer, and appropriate the resources of others. The Oglala Sioux chief Black Hawk recognized this truth that

today's sleek, well-fed idealizers ignore. At the Fort Laramie conference with the cavalry in 1851, he justified the Sioux's rights to the lands south of the Platte River that the US forces wanted them to vacate: "Those lands once belonged to the Kiowas and the Crows," Black Hawk said, "but we whipped those nations out of them, and in this we did what the white men do when they want the land of the Indians." Like all tribal peoples, he expressed a

right to possess, exploit, and control territory that was based on force, not abstract law. The tragedy for the Indians was that a super-tribe had landed on their shores, one armed with greater numbers, superior weapons, and unfamiliar pathogens that did most of the killing.

UNIVERSAL FLAWS

If we are to criticize the Europeans, then, it should be because they should have known better, given their more advanced civilization. What is unique about the collision of cultures in the New World is that from the very beginning there were Europeans who chastised the violence and cruelty of the explorers and colonizers. In 1511, the Dominican priest Antonio de Montesinos scolded his fellow Spaniards, "You are in mortal sin and live and die in it because of the cruelty and tyranny that you use against these innocent peoples. . . . Are these Indians not men? Do they not have souls? Are you not

obliged to love them as you love yourselves?" So too Pedro de Cieza de León, who wrote, "It is no small sorrow to reflect that we Christians have destroyed so many kingdoms. For

Like developing nations today, America's first people made a priority not of protecting "mother nature" but of exploiting and managing it to ensure their survival.

wherever Christians have passed, conquering and discovering, it seems as though a fire has consumed everything." And the most passionate defender of the Indian, Bartolomé de las Casas, instructed priests to deny absolution, the forgiveness of sin, to anybody who abused and enslaved Indians.

That's the historical truth that today's self-loathing Europeans and Americans ignore: the sins of the West have been the sins of a universal human nature. What makes the West exceptional are not those sins, but its self-criticism that acknowledged and condemned them, thus creating the possibility of overcoming them. We should not, like today's rich, spoiled Westerners, just demonize the West for being more efficient at indulging those human sins because of the dynamic culture and technologies that brought Europeans to the New World and magnified their destructive power. We should also acknowledge the fact that they recognized them as sins that we should struggle to overcome.

But today's progressives, still enthralled by utopian delusions, reduce non-Western peoples to idealized stereotypes that diminish their complex humanity and historical reality. Leftists have always been "terrible simplifiers," as Jacob Burckhardt called all those utopian dreamers promising heaven on earth. They find certain ideas valuable despite their lies and distortions, despite the cost in blood and pain from their application—just as we see today, from the corruption of the federal swamp to the street-thuggery of antifa.

Demonizing Christopher Columbus and idealizing his victims are such ideas, and they persist because they are tools for transforming our country. And history—in all its complexity, mixed motives, failed good intentions, and tragic consequences—is the collateral damage of that project. \blacksquare

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A Tower to Remember

Hoover Tower, the symbol of Stanford University, was built to keep history alive—and during eighty years has led a long, meaningful life of its own.

By Elena S. Danielson

oover Tower, Stanford's iconic landmark for eighty years, looks over the historic sandstone-and-tile Quad, the heart of the university, while serving as a beacon for not just the campus but also the town that grew up around it. The Tower is fundamentally a library, housing a vast collection of books and manuscripts, fulfilling its original role as a place of research and preservation. It also offers visitors a panoramic campus view, serves as a bell tower with an illustrious history, contains offices including a lofty suite once used by Herbert Hoover, and shelters families of peregrine falcons in their concrete aerie. The thousands of visitors who take the elevator to the observation platform in a typical year go through a portal with an inscription from former president Herbert Hoover's dedication speech on June 20, 1941: "The purpose of this institution is to promote peace. Its records stand as a challenge to those who promote war. They should attract those who search for peace."

The dedication of the newly constructed Tower in 1941 was central to the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Stanford University in 1891. Herbert Hoover participated in a four-day symposium of leading

Elena S. Danielson is archivist (emerita) at the Hoover Institution.

scholars to discuss the most pressing issues of the day. For example, physicist Ernest O. Lawrence spoke on the potential of splitting the atom, "whose possibilities stagger the imagination." Herbert Hoover's concluding speech on the steps of the Tower, in front of a crowd of distinguished academicians

The Tower was dedicated in 1941 on the occasion of the university's Golden Jubilee.

from all over the United States, was broadcast nationally on radio. It was no doubt a meaningful moment for Hoover, who had entered Stanford as

a seventeen-year-old freshman in 1891. In a speech to the graduating class on June 15, 1941, former first lady Lou Henry Hoover, class of 1898, outlined the adventures that had awaited her and her husband after their education at Stanford. As part of the jubilee year celebration, the San Francisco Symphony played a concert for several thousand guests at the nearby Frost Amphitheater. In the background stood Hoover Tower, illuminated by newly developed mercury floodlights.

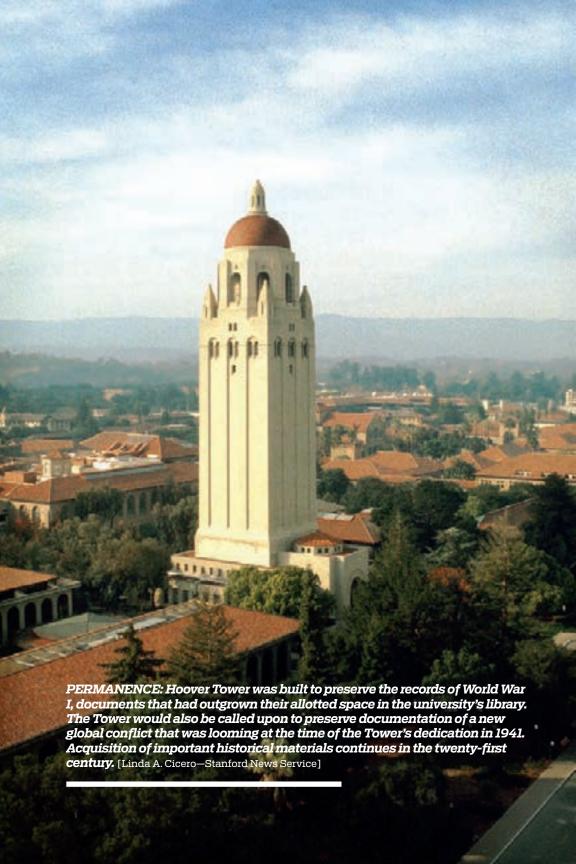
The Tower had been built to preserve the records of World War I, documents that Hoover's collectors and curators had been amassing in the Hoover War Library and which had outgrown their allotted space in the university's library. Soon the Tower would be needed to hold documentation of a new global conflict, which was on everyone's mind at the time of the dedication.

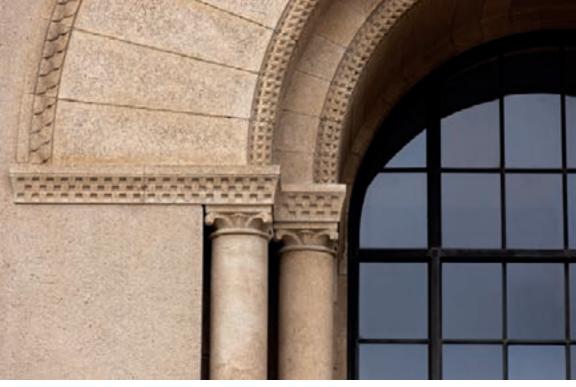
Just a few months after its dedication during the university's golden anniversary, the library began collecting documentation on World War II. Today, some eighty years after the construction of the Tower, the purpose of the institution is just as relevant. The role of the library in the Tower, however, is evolving for the digital age.

STANFORD IS HOME

The young Herbert Hoover was in the audience when Leland Stanford opened the university to its first students with a speech emphasizing the global importance of education, which he saw as an antidote to the dangerous military buildup he had witnessed in Europe. After graduating in 1895, Hoover pursued a career as an international mining engineer, but gave that up during World War I to build programs that would alleviate the suffering of civilians during wartime.

In 1918, Vernon Kellogg, a Stanford biology professor recruited by Hoover to work on this massive humanitarian project, published a history of Hoover's





FINESSE: Architectural details—surprisingly delicate in concrete—show how the Tower harmonizes with Stanford University's design. "Arthur [Brown] made the original suggestion that the library building should be a tower for good working purposes," Herbert Hoover recalled. "One day he and I were discussing how a tower could fit into the Romanesque motif of the university. Mrs. Hoover suggested that he might find justification in the towers of the Cathedral of Salamanca." [Patrick Beaudouin—Hoover Institution]

relief work in occupied Belgium as head of the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB). By 1919, Hoover was making plans to place the archival records of the CRB at Stanford as the basis of what would become the Hoover War Library. Several people inspired and encouraged his effort to document the CRB and all aspects of World War I: historian, Cornell president, and archival collector Andrew Dickson White was a role model; already in 1915 Stanford historian E. D. Adams reminded Hoover of the importance of preserving the relief records at his alma mater; and university president Ray Lyman Wilbur was supportive from the very outset. Ralph Lutz, Stanford class of 1906, had the language skills and international experience to implement the plan. As the collections grew and required more space than the university library could provide, the need for a dedicated building became clear; it was already apparent by 1925. The Great Depression delayed construction for years.





SECURE: Hoover Tower features fifteen floors of book stacks, equaling about 10.3 miles of shelves. Archival materials are protected from light and temperature and guarded by security measures. With the devastating 1906 earthquake still in living memory when the Tower was planned—the quake-toppled tower of Memorial Church was never rebuilt—former president Hoover specified that the Tower be reinforced against future shaking. [Tim Griffith—Hoover Institution]

Ultimately, the Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF) came forward with half the essential funding to build a suitable home for the growing library. The BAEF seed money attracted additional gifts, and Hoover began to make plans. The names of numerous donors are prominently displayed in the inner lobby of the Tower.

Hoover turned to a distinguished architect whom he knew well to design the new building. Arthur Brown Jr. (1874–1957) was one of the most prominent and versatile architects of his day. Born in Oakland, he attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. A photographic portrait shows him in the heavily embroidered uniform of the Institut de France, of which he was the only American member. Brown's work ranged from the highly ornate San Francisco City Hall (1915) to the sleekly modern art deco Coit Tower (1933), which in some ways suggests Hoover Tower. He designed numerous buildings on the UC-Berkeley campus as well as at Stanford, where his firm,

Bakewell and Brown, designed the University Library, which opened in 1919. His career has only recently been fully chronicled with the appearance of Jeffrey T. Tilman's biography *Arthur Brown, Jr.: Progressive Classicist,* published in 2006. The Stanford University Archives preserve some of Brown's preliminary sketches with design ideas for Hoover Tower.

Brown initially intended to place the library's reading room on the top floor of Hoover Tower to provide sweeping views of the campus setting between the foothills and San Francisco Bay. But just three months before groundbreaking, scheduled for August 1939, his proposed design with its square roof profile underwent a radical change. Herbert Hoover now suggested crowning the Tower with the carillon from Belgium's pavilion at the New York World's Fair. The Belgian exhibit and its bells, housed in a 150-foot slate tower, could not be returned to Europe after the fair, as originally planned, because the country was occupied by Hitler's forces. Hoover's laconic May 19, 1939, telegram to Ray Lyman Wilbur, Stanford's president and a lifelong friend, ends with two brief but weighty questions: "First is construction of the tower such that bells could be installed and second do you want bells at all? HH."

It was a bold move, given the financial constraints of the era. Eventually the Belgian American Educational Foundation was able to cover the considerable cost of purchase, transport, and installation of the bells. An inscription cast into the largest bronze bell of the original carillon reads "Una pro pace"

sono," which translates as "For peace alone do I ring." Brown was up to the challenge, as he wrote to Edgar Rickard on June 19, 1939: "As I believe that Mr. Hoover

As the collections grew and required more space than the university library could provide, the need for a dedicated building became clear.

has his heart set on these bells, from information I have, he will probably get them. So I want to be prepared to have them satisfactorily installed." Brown well understood the importance of Hoover's innovative relief work in wartorn Belgium and quickly reconfigured the architectural plans to accommodate the bells, which Hoover estimated to weigh eighteen thousand pounds. The reading room was moved to the ground floor.

Brown also accommodated another of Hoover's preferences. Hoover recalled: "Arthur made the original suggestion that the library building should be a tower for good working purposes. One day he and I were discussing how a tower could fit into the Romanesque motif of the university.





NEW VOICES: The newly restored carillon at the top of the Tower boasts an additional octave's worth of bells—forty-eight in total, or four octaves of well-tuned bronze. In 2002 huge cranes replaced the restored instrument on the fourteenth floor, with the keyboard on the same level in a glass enclosure.

[Kevin Scheirer—Stanford News Service]

Mrs. Hoover suggested that he might find justification in the towers of the Cathedral of Salamanca." Thus, the Tower acquired a dome. Years earlier, the Hoovers, who wanted students to have a space to socialize, had worked with Brown in the 1920s on a student union, now called the Old Union, that combined the Men's Club and the Women's Club. The Student Union featured twin faux bell towers with Romanesque domes, less monumental than the later Hoover Tower but similar in design. In a sense, the more modest Student Union building from the 1920s contributed design elements to the moderne tower two decades later, bringing the campus ensemble full circle. In total, Brown contributed about twenty-five buildings to the Stanford campus. While designed in several different styles, they all share the architect's distinctive aesthetic.

VISION

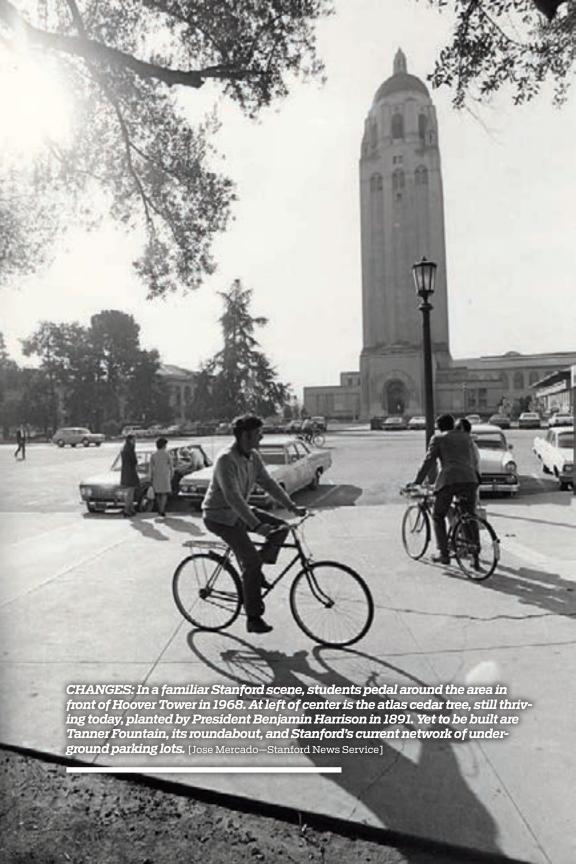
By 1939, Brown had already designed two other landmark towers within the financial limits posed by the Depression. One was Coit Tower, completed in 1933 atop San Francisco's Telegraph Hill. The second was the monumental,

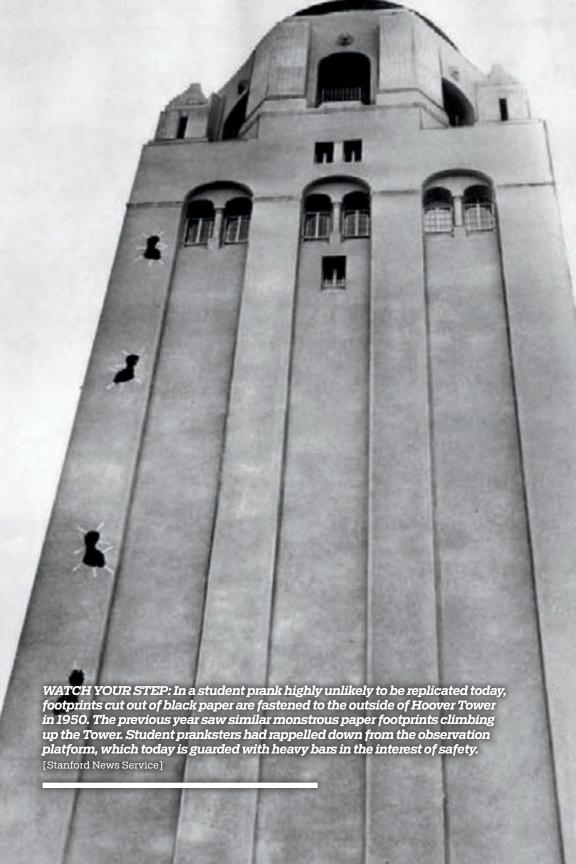
but temporary, Tower of the Sun for the Golden Gate International Exhibition, which opened in 1939 on Treasure Island. (The forty-four-bell carillon from the Tower of the Sun is now housed in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral.) During the Great Depression, these towering structures expressed the mood of resilience and optimism in the face of difficult times. For the Stanford campus, a tower was doubly symbolic: the clock and bell tower crowning Memorial Church had collapsed in the 1906 earthquake and was never replaced. (This clock and its five bells, called chimes, were rehoused many years later in a modest structure east of the Quad.)

Without the original church tower, the horizontal lines of the university had lacked a focal point to add dimension. Replacing that lost feature during the Golden Jubilee celebrations was a symbol of recovery and resilience for Brown, Hoover, and Wilbur. Such a conspicuous structure would not go without its critics, of course, as historian George Nash points out in his volume *Herbert Hoover and Stanford University*. Even as the preliminary designs were first published, some called it a "tower of Babel," but once construction was under way Wilbur wrote to Hoover: "The building is going to be the Stanford Trademark within a dozen years." (Back in 1933, Coit Tower also had its critics.) Over time, Brown's clear architectural vision has held up well. And as Wilbur predicted, the Tower stands as the university's most recognizable symbol.

Although the construction plans were implemented with great speed, completed in just two years, the work was still done with care. An atlas cedar tree, planted by President Benjamin Harrison in 1891 in an area very near the future construction site, was not disturbed and has continued to thrive. With the 1906 earthquake still a living memory for many people, Hoover specified that the structure be built with steel I-beams and able to sustain a serious jolting. Hoover expedited the purchase of steel, knowing that the coming global conflict would complicate purchasing building supplies. The success of Hoover and Brown's collaboration on earthquake safety was validated when the Tower survived the 1989 earthquake with minimal structural damage.

In the early years, the novel character of the Tower inspired the students' imagination. On May 23, 1949, passersby noticed four huge footprints going up the Tower, as though a monster had climbed up to enter it. It turned out that members of the Stanford Alpine Club had rappelled down the side using long ropes and attached the large paper footprints. Then the following year, on May 22, 1950, climbers again rappelled down from the observation platform before dawn to attach five large footprints cut from black paper as though the monster had climbed back down. Later interviews with the student perpetrators revealed how close they came to slipping. The legendary





prank cannot be repeated, as the arched observation platform openings have since been secured with heavy bars in the interest of public safety.

Hoover Tower joined the list of other world-famous towers of comparable size. The ancient bell tower of Venice, St. Mark's Campanile, which has been rebuilt several times, often to repair lightning damage, is today some 323 feet tall, following the last reconstruction in 1912. Sather Tower at UC-Berkeley, also known as the Campanile, was completed in 1914 and is 307 feet high. Coit Tower, from 1933, rises 210 feet. The temporary Tower of the Sun at the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939 rose a stunning 392 feet above Treasure Island. The other temporary tower that Hoover no doubt heard about was the soaring, statue-topped Soviet Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair, which stood 260 feet tall.

TANGIBLE HISTORY

Hoover's tower rises 285 feet. Unlike the others, however, the Tower has fifteen floors of book stacks, equaling about 10.3 miles of shelves. (Additional shelving is provided in the basement of the Herbert Hoover Memorial Building and in offsite storage, for a total of some 25 miles of historical documentation.)

The Tower was built with preservation in mind. The windowless walls of the stack area protect the paper from damaging sunlight. The original storage areas were equipped with then-innovative air conditioning units, probably the first on campus, to keep the rare materials cool and dry. From the beginning, the lobby has provided museum space to exhibit memorabilia from the

Hoovers' many careers, including fine artwork from Belgium commemorating the events of the Great War. The de Basily Room, also on the first floor, preserves a fine collection of historic

Without the original church tower, the horizontal lines of the university lacked a focal point. Replacing that lost feature was a symbol of recovery and resilience.

Russian paintings. Above the windowless stack area, the upper floors provide office space, now only occasionally used, and the Belgian carillon in the crown is regularly played for graduation and other celebratory occasions.

It is not incidental that Hoover's speech on June 20, 1941, was broadcast nationwide on radio. As secretary of commerce in the 1920s, Hoover had fostered the development of radio in the United States. There was an early radio set in the Hoovers' campus home that both Herbert Hoover and his son used. It should not be surprising that one room on the first floor of the

Tower, to the right of the entrance, would be used as a radio room to monitor wartime broadcasting. A Rockefeller Foundation grant in 1940 supported the purchase of then-advanced radio technology, first put to use in receiving and recording trans-Pacific foreign broadcasts. From 1941 to 1943, the Stanford Listening Post, as it was called, recorded foreign broadcasts for the Federal Communications Commission and transmitted American broadcasts of the United States Office of War Information to the Far East from 1942 to 1945, under the supervision of Stanford Listening Post director Inez Richardson.

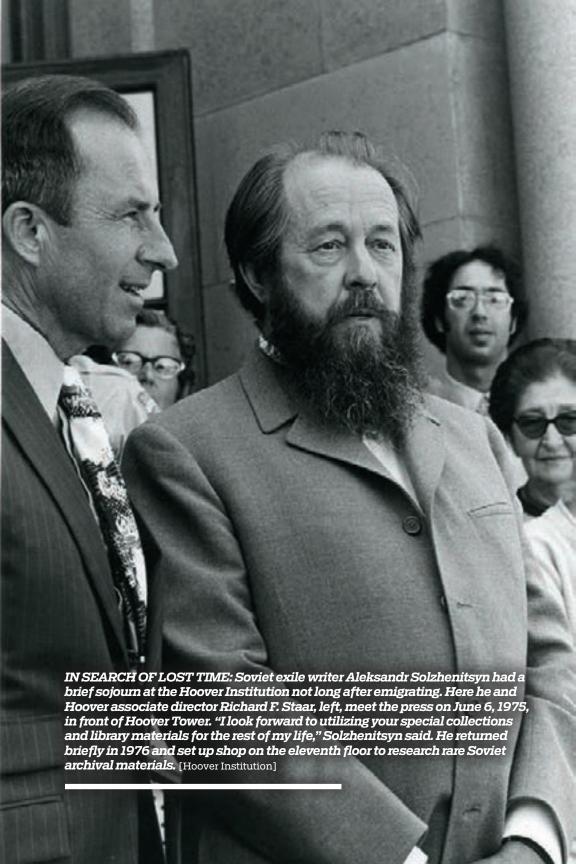
The new storage space in the Tower also was quickly put to use. The records of the czarist secret police, or Okhrana, spirited out of Paris in great secrecy by Ralph Lutz, had been stored in improvised space in the Art Museum. Now they could be held securely on the Hoover Library site. While Russia and Germany remained important, the collecting scope could be expand-

Materials collected eighty and more years ago can now be analyzed with greater precision. The result is often a new explanation of where the currents of history have taken us. ed to a global scale. China was well documented by the first curator of Asian materials, Mary Wright. Ruth Perry directed the collection of materials from Africa, making two collecting trips to Africa

in 1956 and 1958. And Christina Harris acquired invaluable documents from the Middle East.

The resulting resources have been mined by countless historians, students, and visiting researchers. Just a few examples: Alexander Kerensky, the noted Russian politician and last prime minister of Russia before the Revolution of 1917, worked in an office in the Tower for about a decade. He used the library resources to co-write a documentary history of the Russian Provisional Government published by the Hoover Institution and the Stanford University Press in 1961. This documentation is still cited as the authoritative, primary source on the Russian Provisional Government. The historian William L. Shirer, author of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, used the Tower's resources to research the history of Nazi Germany and World War II. Ambassador George F. Kennan used the famous Boris Nicolaevsky collection of materials on the Russian Revolution. More than just the documents, he consulted with Nicolaevsky's widow and curator of the collection, Anna Mikhailovna Bourguina, an acknowledged expert in the field.

Exiled Soviet writer and Nobel Prize recipient Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn arrived at Stanford to much fanfare in 1975; ensconced in an office on the





Tower's eleventh floor, the writer and his wife, Alya, dived into Hoover's resources on Russian history in search of material for his work, notably the Nicolaevsky papers. Coaxed into making a brief public appearance on the Tower's front steps, Solzhenitsyn cited his good fortune in having

access to Hoover's Russian materials: "It is the kind of original source material that the Soviets, in order to rewrite history, either destroyed

During the carillon renovation, a Dutch foundry cast additional bells to increase the total to forty-eight.

or refuse to make available to scholars.... I look forward to utilizing your special collections and library materials for the rest of my life." The next year he returned for two more months. He later wrote that "encountering the materials from the Hoover Institution, I was overwhelmed by these tangible fragments of history."

A TALE OF THE BELLS

Among their many roles, Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover were avid bibliophiles and historians, and certain holdings reflect their lives and their interests. Countless books reside in the Hoover Institution Library, in addition to thousands of manuscript collections. Most chronicle global history from 1900 to the present, but among them are many surprises.

For instance, there is a 1556 mining treatise translated from Latin to English and heavily annotated by Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover, both of whom earned geology degrees from Stanford. The Hoovers published their translation of *De Re Metallica* in 1912, bound in vellum, and it was reprinted as a paperback in 1950. Lou Henry Hoover had initiated the project in 1906, and the historic roots of their highly technical profession engaged both Hoovers, though they acknowledged that she accomplished most of the "drudgery." Their research was a major contribution to the history of technology, and the book in paperback form has never been out of print.

Occasionally the Tower itself makes news. On December 2, 1970, for instance, a bolt of lightning struck the Tower during a thunderstorm and

FOCUS: Students demonstrate in 2004 (opposite) in front of Hoover Tower, the most recognizable visible symbol of the university. Unlike similar towers, such as Sather Tower at UC-Berkeley and the ancient Campanile at St. Mark's in Venice, Hoover Tower is used for careful, long-term library storage. [Linda A. Cicero—Stanford News Service]





THUNDERSTRUCK: Lightning has struck Hoover Tower twice, recently in August 2020 when a bolt dislodged the three-hundred-pound concrete ball on top of its dome. Here, Joaquin Perez and John Curley prepare to install the rebuilt concrete ornament in February 2021. Engineers also installed a lightning arrest system—a feature the original Tower lacked—extending from eighteen inches above the Tower to eight feet into the ground. [Andrew Brodhead—Stanford News Service]

dislodged the three-hundred-pound concrete ball from the top of the dome. No one was injured when it fell. Librarians in the Tower saved several large shards of the ball, which were used to determine the curvature of the replacement, which was put in place in 1995 during general restoration work.

Lightning struck again on August 25, 2020, again dislodging the ball. This time, repairs were made promptly, and included a lightning rod—a detail somehow overlooked by Arthur Brown Jr.—to avoid further damage. In addition, nesting boxes were added for the falcons that regularly make a home near the top of the Tower.

The bronze bells from the Belgian Pavilion were cast in the Marcel Michiels foundry of Tournai, Belgium. The largest bell of the original set, the bourdon, weighed in at 1,350 pounds with a pitch of G-sharp. The belfry on the fourteenth floor provides space for the bells, with openings to permit the sound to travel. Initially, the manual keyboard mechanism was located just below



LOOK CLOSE: Young watercolorists work on their plein-air painting skills with Hoover Tower as their subject. Inside the Tower and its network of preservation and research spaces, a multitude of scholars continue to seek historical insights. William L. Shirer, author of The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, used the Tower's resources to research Nazi Germany and World War II. Ambassador George F. Kennan, the diplomat who wrote the "Long Telegram" in 1946 setting out US policy toward the USSR, used Hoover's Boris Nicolaevsky collection to research the Russian Revolution. [Linda A. Cicero—Stanford News Service]

on the thirteenth floor, far enough from the actual instrument to create an acoustic challenge for the carillonneur. The thirteenth floor also houses the unusual electric player mechanism that looks much like a giant music box; it has a large cylinder with removable pegs that can be rearranged to play different melodies. The original bells had a three-octave range suited to simple tunes but inadequate for more sophisticated compositions. The bells also were not perfectly tuned. As early as 1943, Ralph Lutz, now chairman of the Hoover board, pointed out that the carillon could use some upgrades.

The campus community responded favorably to the carillon concerts, even if the bells were considered a bit "jangly," and the instrument was played successfully for sixty years without any major repairs. Stanford carillonneurs Professor James B. Angell and Music Department lecturer Tim Zerlang long lobbied for a concert-quality instrument. The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake

left the manual keyboard undamaged, but the timing mechanism for the automatic player broke. In 1996 Nick Merz, a Stanford engineering student, took an interest in the automatic player and asked Zerlang and facilities manager Craig Snarr about the carillon's player mechanism. These discussions eventually led to serious plans for repairing and expanding the entire instrument.

Hoover Institution Director John Raisian, Deputy Director Charles G. Palm, and Hoover overseer Herbert Hoover III led the project. In 2000 the bells were removed from the fourteenth floor and sent to the Dutch bell foundry Royal Eijsbouts in Asten, as the original Belgian company was no

longer in business. The foundry tested the original bells with advanced electronic equipment and determined that a

Herbert Hoover first saw Stanford as a seventeen-year-old freshman in 1891.

few could be retuned but that most would need to be replaced. The foundry cast additional bells to increase the total to forty-eight, or four octaves of well-tuned bronze. In 2002 huge cranes installed a concert instrument with a beautiful tonal quality on the fourteenth floor, with the keyboard on the same floor in a glass enclosure.

On June 17, 2021, in honor of the eightieth anniversary of the Tower, composer and carillonneur Julie Zhu played a concert on the bells including one of her own compositions, "Allegro," which took full advantage of the enhanced musicality of the bronze bells.

FUTURE TASKS

In 2001 the Stanford University Libraries (SUL) and the Hoover Library coordinated plans, with Hoover refocusing its resources on rare materials. The standard press books in the Tower were shifted to the Stanford system, while unique and ephemeral publications that require special care were retained in the Tower. Starting in 2018, materials stored in the Lou Henry Hoover stacks have been shifted to remote storage but are still easily retrievable. These initiatives motivated other major projects to process backlogs and rehouse fragile materials.

Many hidden treasures have been discovered during the reorganization. Many of these items have been scanned to make them more readily available for research. And the Library and Archives collections continue to grow. Director Eric Wakin is overseeing advanced digitization initiatives to make the materials more accessible. Librarians and archivists are only beginning

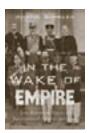


is of a digital future in which materials are collected, stored, and accessed in new ways. [Linda A. Cicero—Stanford News Service]

to comprehend the implications of globally accessible historical records for the understanding of the forces shaping our world. With digital technology, materials collected eighty and more years ago can now be analyzed with greater precision, and the result is often a new explanation of where the currents of history have taken us.

The history project begun by Herbert Hoover in 1919, which found a home in Hoover Tower from 1941 on, is still a living endeavor: a rich legacy with a future.

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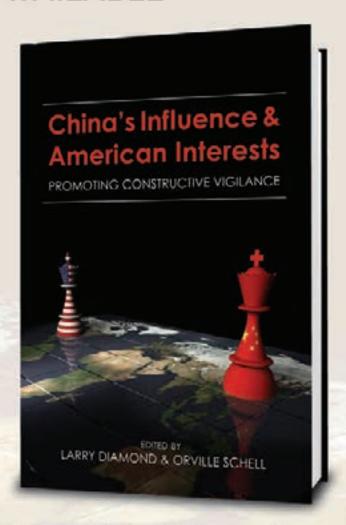
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