

A stylized, high-contrast illustration of Abraham Lincoln. He is depicted from the waist up, seated and leaning forward with his right arm resting on a column. The image uses a limited color palette of dark blue, light blue, and yellow against a tan background. The style is graphic and modern, with bold lines and flat areas of color.

# HOOVER DIGEST

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RESEARCH + COMMENTARY  
ON PUBLIC POLICY

SUMMER 2022 NO. 3

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## ON THE COVER

"Now he belongs to the ages." Secretary of War Edwin Stanton's words at Abraham Lincoln's deathbed are also true of the Lincoln Memorial, where a sculpture of the president sits in eternal contemplation. The monument, visited by millions every year, was dedicated a hundred years ago on Memorial Day weekend. This 1955 poster communicates, as does the memorial itself, both the power of Lincoln's ideas and an undercurrent of humanity. At the same time, it does something the Great Emancipator never did: it urges the viewer to *Fly United*. See story, page 192.



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# “We Can’t Let Ukraine Lose”

**Hoover director Condoleezza Rice says Russia’s invasion is “disastrous for the liberal world order. It’s disastrous for Europe. It’s disastrous for all the values that we hold dear.”**

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**By Rachel Martin**

**Rachel Martin, Morning Edition:** In your estimation, was this war in Ukraine predictable?

**Condoleezza Rice:** I don’t think that the war, as it has unfolded, was predictable. But I think that it was predictable that Vladimir Putin would eventually try to realize through some means his dream of reconstituting, really, the Russian empire. So perhaps he thought this was his last chance to pull Ukraine back from the West. What was unpredictable, maybe even to Vladimir Putin, was that this would be such a hard slog for the Russian armed forces, which have not been able to subjugate the Ukrainian people, despite the extraordinary force that they’ve thrown at them. And so he miscalculated. But even if it’s a miscalculation, I do think that to come to this point,

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*Condoleezza Rice is the Tad and Dianne Taube Director and the Thomas and Barbara Stephenson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution. She is the Denning Professor in Global Business and the Economy at Stanford University’s Graduate School of Business as well as a professor of political science at Stanford. She served as secretary of state from 2005 to 2009. Rachel Martin is co-host of NPR’s Morning Edition.*



there is something going on with him that is less calculating, less rational, in a sense, than before.

**Martin:** I want to ask another question about the resistance—I mean, these posts from Ukraine’s president, photos of civilians being attacked by Russian forces . . .

**Rice:** Yes.

**Martin:** . . . which are all horrific. I was recently struck by this video of a group of women. They’ve joined Ukraine’s military. They’re all dressed in fatigues, face masks, automatic rifles in their hands—saying, we have taken our children to safety, now we’re fighting, and “we will destroy the enemy on every inch of Ukrainian land.” Is Putin prepared to occupy a democratic country and fight an insurgency like this?

**Rice:** This has to be a moment of truth, if you will, in Russia. You know, they’re a little bit familiar with insurgencies, and they know that they can be very, very tough. It’s hard to imagine that they want to actually try to bring their soldiers into the center of a city like Kyiv and watch sixty-year-old women shoot their soldiers

every time they come around

a corner. That won’t be a pretty picture. It looks to me that what they are trying to do instead is to bomb the

***“Perhaps he thought this was his last chance to pull Ukraine back from the West.”***

populations into submission, make it so difficult for the Ukrainian people that eventually the Ukrainian leadership, just to save their people, will have to negotiate in some way.

**Martin:** President Zelensky asked for a no-fly zone. Do you agree with the Biden administration that to issue a no-fly zone would trigger a “full-fledged war in Europe,” as Secretary Blinken put it?

**Rice:** No-fly zones are a very, very serious undertaking. And it’s easy to throw it around. It sounds defensive. But you would probably have to suppress Russian air defenses. You would have to be prepared to shoot Russian aircraft out of the sky if, in fact, they were attacking. And so, I do think it risks wider war. If I could wave a magic wand and go back a little bit and arm the Ukrainians more quickly and more fully with the kinds of munitions that we now see going in, maybe even earlier with air power, that could have done this . . . but I think that at this point, a no-fly zone is probably, wisely, not in the offing.

**Martin:** You say you wish you could go back in time and have the US be funding, sending more military aid to Ukraine.

**Rice:** This should have started after the Crimea invasion in 2014. That's when the arming of the Ukrainian forces should have started.

**Martin:** I must ask, then, about President Trump's now-infamous phone call with President Zelensky in which President Trump appeared to be withhold-

ing military assistance in exchange for a Zelensky investigation into President Biden.

**Rice:** I have said publicly, I think that the call with President Trump and President Zelensky was



[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

inappropriate. But the Trump administration actually did then arm the Ukrainians with lethal weapons for the first time in our history. And so had we continued that and maybe accelerated it, we might be in a better position now.

**Martin:** It seems so complicated to give Ukrainians air power right now. The US turned down Poland's offer of fighter jets for Ukraine because of concerns that Putin would see this as a sign of aggression. How do you get around that?

**Rice:** It is hard once the





war has begun to figure out how to get MiGs and Sukhoi aircraft to the Ukrainians, because they're going to have to fly from somebody's airbases, and one can understand why the Poles might feel that that would make them a target.

**Martin:** Do you think NATO should own this and send these planes?

**Rice:** I'm not on the ground and familiar with the ins and outs of the real difficulties they may be facing in getting the planes there. But I do think that we

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***"I think we have to throw everything at it that we can that the administration believes will not widen the war."***

need to figure out a way to continue to deny the Russians air superiority. The good news is they haven't been able to establish air superiority. If we can con-

tinue to get Javelins and Stingers in to the Ukrainians, the Russians are going to have a tough fight trying to fly low. So, while I hope they can find a way to get the fighter aircraft there to enhance Ukraine's capabilities, I hope we can also accelerate this ground-to-air war that appears to be at least bringing down some of the Russian air force and particularly their helicopters.

**Martin:** There are only so many ways this can end. Could you lay out what you believe to be the most likely scenarios?

**Rice:** I will give you my hopeful scenario, which is that the Russians have had enough, that they recognize that the goal of overthrowing the Zelensky

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***"No-fly zones are a very, very serious undertaking."***

government, bringing the Ukrainian people into submission, is not going to be realized, and that Vladimir Putin—who,

after all, controls the narrative inside Russia at this point—decides that he is going to dress this up as victory.

**Martin:** NATO and the US are now in this bind, wanting to support Ukraine's defense without further provoking Russia in a way that could broaden the war to other former Soviet republics or even beyond. If the young democracy of Ukraine dies in Vladimir Putin's hands, what does that mean for the liberal world order, as someone who studies democracy?

**Rice:** It's disastrous for the liberal world order. It's disastrous for Europe. It's disastrous for all the values that we hold dear. And that's why we can't let



Ukraine lose. Ukraine is the last defensible territory between the Russian military and our Article 5 commitments to the Baltic states and Poland and Romania, and so I think we have to throw everything at it that we can that the administration believes will not widen the war, do it as quickly as we can. And I want to say one other thing.

**Martin:** Please.

**Rice:** This is not the fault of the Russian people. I ache for them. For thirty years, they have come out of their isolation—the ability to travel, the ability to go to school in

California and in London

and in Boston. This is a

horrible time for them,

too. My greatest hope is

that when this is over—

and God willing, it will

be over—that Vladimir Putin does not think he can continue to be president

of Russia, because who can imagine Vladimir Putin ever again walking into

Number 10 Downing Street or into the White House? His is an isolated

Russia. And once we have hopefully helped Ukraine save an independent

Ukraine, we have to turn to the question of, what is Russia's future? ■

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***“The Trump administration actually did arm the Ukrainians with lethal weapons for the first time in our history.”***

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# *The Strongman Got It Wrong*

Hoover fellow **Stephen Kotkin**, while taking the measure of the calculating Vladimir Putin, notes, “war is always a partial—or full—miscalculation.”

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**By Peter Robinson**

**Peter Robinson, Uncommon Knowledge:** On February 24, Russian forces invade Ukraine. You and I are speaking on day eight of this war. The entire event seems so shocking. Nine days ago, so unthinkable, maybe Vladimir Putin would try to nibble off a piece of Ukraine, maybe he might even move into the Donbass region, the extreme eastern portion of Ukraine, but a full invasion of the entire country . . . first, I would like to begin simply by asking you to make this coherent for us. To help us to understand what the Russians could possibly have been thinking. Henry Kissinger said in 2014: “The West must understand that to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country, Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries.” Is Kissinger right?

**Stephen Kotkin:** Far be it from me to disagree with Henry Kissinger, but Ukraine *is* a separate country. It is a separate nation, an independent and

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sovereign nation, and it is no longer part of Russia. That has been true since 1991 and it should be true going forward.

So, Peter, war is always a partial—or full—miscalculation. You miscalculate how strong you are, miscalculate how weak the enemy is. You miscalculate how easy it is going to be, how low the costs are going to be, how great the benefits are going to be. It is very rare that people understand the complexities and their own weaknesses and the other side's strengths before they launch a war. Let's think about Stalin and North Korea in 1950 for a second.

**Robinson:** Right.

**Kotkin:** Stalin had said no many times when Kim Il Sung, the Soviet-supported dictator of North Korea, begged him to allow North Korea to invade South Korea and “unify the peninsula.” In other words, to conquer and annex South Korea. Finally, Stalin said yes. Normally, people consider Stalin to be a person who calculated risks really well; he was cautious in the sense of never incurring crazy risks, taking advantage opportunistically of things where he could extract great advantage at low cost.

However, that is not an accurate picture of Stalin. He thought the United States would not fight. He thought America would not stand up to him, nor did he think the South Koreans would put up a fight. He massively miscalculated the power and resolve of the West and the United States. Stalin got himself out of the situation in part by dumping the war on Mao and the communist Chinese. Putin does not have that option.

It is very clear that Putin understood wrongly just how weak Russia was, how strong Ukraine was, and above all what the Western response might be. It looks like it is irrational, but only because we know what we know. Prior to the war, many people underestimated Ukrainian society. They underestimated the president of Ukraine. Many people thought the Europeans would not stand up and rally and make sacrifices. Many people thought President Biden was not up to it, especially after the fiasco in Afghanistan. Many people thought the Russian military is a serious military, well run and modernized. There are a lot of assumptions on which a war is based and when those assumptions are wrong, it can look insane, retrospectively.

**Robinson:** Right.

**Kotkin:** All the capitals in Europe were surprised. All the capitals in Asia were surprised. The chattering classes were surprised. The establishment in Russia that was out of the loop, they were also surprised. Of course, many



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]



people in the American establishment were surprised, but not the intelligence agencies. We shared real-time intelligence with our European allies, showing them Russia's capabilities and possible intentions and predicting that they would invade. Our intelligence agencies, along with the British, nailed this. Their sharing of information, first with our allies and then publicly, rallied the support of the West in a big way. They had Putin's number, and that is a really big story not just for Russia but also for China.

That is the great thing about a democracy, too: it can learn, it can improve, and even people who perform poorly can get better. There are corrective mechanisms in a democracy, whereas in an authoritarian regime people are afraid to bring bad information to the autocrat. The autocrat thinks he knows better than anybody else anyway, and the autocrat starts to believe his own propaganda.

## **WAS IT A MISTAKE TO EXPAND NATO?**

**Robinson:** Stephen, does this event settle a debate that has been taking place in foreign policy circles for two decades? The debate is over NATO expansion. In 1998, we bring into NATO Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Then in 2004, we bring in the Baltic states: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which of course border Russia. Jack Matlock, ambassador to the Soviet Union under President Reagan and a great Cold Warrior—this is not a softie—said “NATO expansion was the most profound strategic blunder since the end of the Cold War.”

**Kotkin:** Ambassador Jack Matlock was one of the best people ever to serve in the embassy in Moscow. This is a fundamental debate about which there is a great deal of confusion. There is a misunderstanding of



“democracy in Russia in the 1990s.” There are internal processes in Putin’s Russia that started in Boris Yeltsin’s Russia which predate both of them by a long, long time. The recourse to autocracy, the recourse to repression, the recourse to militarism, the suspicion of foreigners—these are not reactions to something that the West does or doesn’t do. These are internal processes that had a dynamic of their own and NATO expansion became a pretext or an excuse, post facto. For many years, we have been having this, I would say, self-flagellation.

Let’s imagine that we do not expand the security perimeter and the realm of freedom. Where would those countries be right now? Czechoslovakia, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania . . . where would they be right now? They would potentially be in the same place as Ukraine. We did make many mistakes, as we do in policy. We did sometimes prevaricate and mislead the Russians when we should not have. But the Russians are responsible for their internal development.

The biggest mistake of all is when we conflate Russia with a personalist regime. Putin feels insecure and NATO threatens him personally in his mind. The EU threatens Putin; democracy threatens him and his personalist regime. Does this threaten Russia? Does it threaten Russian security? Does a flawed democracy like Ukraine threaten the security of a giant nation, a full civilization like Russia? Let’s be honest: it does not, it never did. It is a fictitious threat, and it is a conflation of a country and its security with an individual. I am sorry, but I must disagree with eminent analysts and say NATO is not responsible for the Putin regime or for the war in Ukraine.

The ability of countries to choose their foreign policy and their alliances voluntarily is written into the UN Charter. It is written into the 1975 Helsinki Act. It is written into the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe. And it is

*T. Jones*







***NO TURNING BACK: The Red Army enters Tbilisi, Georgia, in February 1921. The Russian Civil War raged for more than five years, the culminating act of the Russian Revolution.*** [Wikimedia Commons]

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written into the 1997 NATO/Russia Founding Act. Russia's signature is on every one of those documents.

**Robinson:** Stephen, I want to pursue that point one step further. You wrote in *Foreign Affairs* six years ago: "Russia is right in thinking that the post-Cold War settlement was unbalanced, even unfair." And I have sat in a lecture hall when you said that there were aspects of the post-First World War settlement at Versailles that were mistaken. Likewise, the post-Cold War settlement was at least shortsighted because Russia had all the capacity to become, not technologically a great nation, perhaps, but still in one way or another was likely to rise again and we did not take that into account. Is that right?

**Kotkin:** That is 100 percent correct. I stand by that. There is a way in which you can defend principle, but you can do it in practical and realistic ways. To say that NATO expansion worked positively for the West is not to say that NATO expansion alone was the smart policy. The problem with our policy vis-à-vis Russia, as always, was Pygmalion syndrome. We were going to go in there and remake them, transform them, transform their personality, make them like us. We always like to think that if another country gets the opportunity, it is just dying to become like America. That is not true, Peter. They have their own history, their own cultures, their own institutions, and their own

pride. We continued the NATO expansion and there was no real diplomacy taking account of any strategic interest Russia might have as they rebuilt the power to push back. But that is not to conflate it with NATO expansion.

Move the borders of freedom when you have the opportunity to do so, when countries are begging to get in and are willing to make all the sacrifices to do so. When you are willing to make those commitments and stand by those commitments, as they were, it is hard to say the door to the West is closed to you because we are afraid we might offend somebody in another country as they get more powerful. Remember the Reagan/Shultz approach: “get strong and get a diplomatic channel at the same time.” You may not like them, they may not like you, there are fundamental differences in values and culture, but they live on the same planet as you and they have a lot of things that can do you harm.

We are left where we are now, where Russian elites need a stake in the international order. That stake would mean that instead of being incentivized to disrupt and overturn, they would be incentivized to help that international order be stable. But we cannot allow the price for the incentivization, for that stake in the international order, to be the freedom of other countries.

## THE VIEW FROM TAIPEI

**Robinson:** Taipei 101, the tallest building in Taiwan, was illuminated in blue and yellow, the colors of the Ukrainian flag. Now of course, if you are in the middle of Taiwan, you do not illuminate your tallest building in blue and yellow just to support Ukraine. You do that as an act of defiance against the People’s Republic of China. You are Xi Jinping, and you see blue and yellow on Taipei 101. How do you respond?

**Kotkin:** It is the biggest part of the story. Ninety-five percent of this right now is about Ukraine and Russia. Ninety-five percent of this long-term is about Taiwan and China. Can you sanction the central bank of a very large economy and not destabilize your own international financial system? We are experimenting with that right now, and we are learning the answer to that. Many of the techniques we are now employing against Russia potentially could be employed against China, and we know that and the Chinese know that. Moreover, Xi Jinping is now a dictator—an autocrat like Putin—and he may not get information delivered to him that he does not want to hear. We do not know what it looks like on the inside of China. But we do know what happens retrospectively with autocracies that fall, that they get narrower and narrower, people do not bring bad or negative information to the ruler and the ruler begins to make even more mistakes. The corrective mechanisms are not there.

The Chinese elites can see this, and they can ask themselves a question: is it possible Xi Jinping miscalculates because he is making decisions by himself without consulting and without considering the full range of information? Is it possible the West is not a paper tiger but is actually pretty strong, and that the West can do things that we did not fully understand they could do? And moreover, they have the resolve to do that. Is it possible that the Taiwanese might not capitulate but might resist an invasion? Is it possible that resistance by the Taiwanese might galvanize the rest of the world?

Yes, this is an opportunity, a lesson for everyone in real time. There are some differences though, Peter. Ukraine is connected to Russia, as well as Belarus and Crimea, by land. This is a land invasion. Taiwan is an island, and so you are talking about an amphibious landing, which is a much different proposition from just rolling across someone's border with tanks and artillery and armored personnel carriers. Amphibious landings, fighting on the water, is the hardest thing to do. Ukraine's economy was maybe \$180 billion prior to the invasion; Taiwan's is over \$800 billion. Taiwan supplies 93 percent of high-end chips globally; Ukraine does not have an industry like that.

It is very important that Taiwan's freedom be defended, but the status quo is our power. The status quo is failing for Beijing, but it is working for the free world. We made a mistake thinking we would integrate communist China economically and it would transform them politically, modernization style, which of course did not work. The communists in Beijing made the same mistake vis-à-vis Taiwan: "we will integrate them economically and they will get to love us and want to be part of us." In fact, the opposite has happened.

**Robinson:** The Chinese thought time was on their side. But they were wrong: time was moving against them in Taiwan. Is that correct?

**Kotkin:** Yes. What Xi Jinping did in Beijing is what Putin did in Moscow. Putin made Ukraine more nationalist, less pro-Russian. For the first time in its history, Putin created a consolidated Ukrainian idea across all of Ukraine—it had been ambivalent before and divided, partly pro-Russian. Xi Jinping's repressions have done the same in Taiwan. He has made Taiwan more Taiwanese. ■







# “Democracy Is Threatening”

Hoover fellow **Norman M. Naimark** explains how Ukrainian freedom became entangled in Russia’s dream of Eurasian empire. Unfortunately, “there is no Russian empire, to which Putin aspires, without Ukraine.”

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*By Melissa De Witte*

**M**oscow’s obsession with Ukraine is not new: since the seventeenth century, Ukraine has been an integral part of how Russian rulers have thought about their realm of power, says Stanford historian Norman M. Naimark, a Hoover senior fellow.

For centuries, the two entities have had a complicated relationship. Russia sees Ukraine as integral to its empire, while Ukrainians frequently see themselves differently and independent from the common Eastern Slavic heritage they share, says Naimark. Vladimir Putin wants Ukraine to be integrated into a larger Russian polity, not an independent sovereign state with the functioning parliamentary system it has today. The more Ukraine, a thriving young democracy, continues to establish democratic freedom, rule of law, and

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*Norman M. Naimark is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of Hoover’s Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict. He is also the Robert and Florence McDonnell Professor of East European Studies at Stanford University and a senior fellow at Stanford’s Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. Melissa De Witte is deputy director, social science communications, for Stanford University Communications.*

integration with the West, the more it becomes a threat to Putin's sense of Russia's mission.

Naimark, a scholar of Russian and East European history whose current research focuses on Soviet policies and actions in Europe after World War II and on genocide and ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century, discusses some of the historical and geopolitical context around Putin's fixation on restoring a Eurasian empire.

*Melissa De Witte, Stanford News Service:* A number of historical comparisons about the invasion have been made: For example, British Prime

Minister Boris Johnson said that in terms of scale, it could be the largest conflict Europe has experienced since 1945; others are likening it to the start of a new Cold War. And

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***“A Ukraine that is heading towards democratic freedom, the rule of law, and integration with the West particularly galls Putin.”***

there are some people, including US Representative Michael McCaul, who fear a World War III. How useful are these comparisons? What historical parallels come to mind for you, if any?

*Norman M. Naimark:* Historical analogies are useful heuristic devices to give us perspective on contemporary events. To some extent, these references to past and future conflicts make sense. We have not seen this kind of major invasion of one country of another in Europe since World War II. Think about older Ukrainians who can remember the invasion of their country by the Nazis in 1941, but also the retaking of their lands by the Red Army in 1944 and the insurgent warfare by underground Ukrainian formations against the Soviets that went on in the west of the country until the late 1940s and early 1950s. This kind of bloody insurgency may emerge again if Ukraine loses this present war and is occupied by troops of the Russian Federation.

The Cold War question is a complicated one, since the structured ideological struggle that was so central to the Cold War is not really part of this renewed bellicose hostility between Russia and the United States. That doesn't mean, though, that there aren't serious differences between what we might call "Putinism" and Western values and norms. It is deeply troubling that the antagonisms between Putin and the "West" have reached such alarming proportions that nuclear strikes are threatened by Moscow and severe sanctions are imposed on the Russians that will clearly damage their

economy and their ability to live a normal productive life. In my view, this is a pointless invasion on the part of Moscow, can only damage Russian interests, and will sour US-Russian relations for a very long time.

Can World War III come from this situation? I really don't think so. Putin has reacted irrationally in moving into Ukraine, to be sure, but NATO has held firm and acted wisely and in concert to protect its eastern flank. I can't imagine Putin would challenge the combined forces of the United States and its allies. He is interested in his Eurasian empire, not world hegemony. Still, there can be nuclear mistakes and miscalculations, and we have to be very careful, in conjunction with the Russians, to make sure that such accidental conflicts don't happen.

**De Witte:** In Putin's February 22 address, he talked about "the historical destiny of Russia." What in particular in Russia's history might help people better understand Putin and his motivations and intentions?

**Naimark:** There is no Russian empire, to which Putin aspires, without Ukraine. Since the seventeenth century, Ukraine has always been an integral part of how Russian rulers have thought about their realm of power. This is both conceptual and geostrategic. Stalin ostensibly worried about "losing Ukraine" in the 1930s to Pilsudski's Poland. Putin does not seek to reconstitute the Soviet Union, as so many commentators have suggested. In fact,

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***"There are also plenty of reasonable Russians who reject this kind of national chauvinism."***

he recently denounced Lenin and the Soviet government for having "given" Ukraine a sense of its statehood. He doesn't admit that Ukrainians have frequently thought of themselves differently from Russians and for many centuries have looked for autonomy within and independence from a larger Russian entity. But Putin simply refuses to recognize that. He is right that Russian and Ukrainian histories have been "entangled," but not in the way he asserts.

Relations between Russia and Ukraine have been complicated since the turn of this century by the fact that Putin's Russia has moved increasingly in the direction of autocracy, kleptocracy, and control over domestic politics and society. Ukraine has become, with lots of bumps on the road and problems with corruption, a thriving young democracy. A Ukraine that is heading towards democratic freedom, the rule of law, and integration with the West particularly galls Putin because Ukraine is ethnically Slavic and primarily Orthodox in religion, like Russia. It shares the Russians' own Soviet and imperial past and therefore should be complicit, in Putin's view, in Moscow's anti-democratic ideology.

For Putin, it's one thing if Estonia or Latvia has a well-functioning parliamentary democracy. These former Soviet republics that also share common borders with Russia did not have the same integral nexus with Russia that Putin thinks Ukraine does. Ukrainian democracy is seen as threatening and undermines his sense of the larger Russian mission.

**De Witte:** What aspect of Putin's obsession with Russia's past do you find the most troubling?

**Naimark:** Putin's version of Russian history is both distorted and pernicious. Alas, given heavy censorship it's also the only version of history that is proffered in the Russian media. (Note the closing last December in Russia of the impressive civil society organization, Memorial, which was dedicated to accurately documenting and interpreting the Soviet past.) To be sure, since the late nineteenth century, there have been Russian nationalist thinkers who, like Putin, extol the special role of the Russian people, the superior moral quality of Orthodoxy, the justifiable dominance of Russians in Eurasia, and the unique place of the Russian collectivity in the world.

But there are also plenty of reasonable Russians who reject this kind of national chauvinism and would like to live normal lives in peace with their neighbors and in a democratic society. This war really hurts these good people. They live under a brutal autocrat, and there is not much they can do to change their country's policies. They have had to experience Soviet dictatorship and now Putin's with the accompanying historical distortions. This is another reason the Ukrainians are fighting so hard: they just don't want to go back to denying their national aspirations and giving up the ability to tell their own story because of Moscow's dictates. ■

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# Once Burned

**When Europe made itself dependent on Russian natural gas, it fueled Putin's aggression and made itself vulnerable. New sources of energy, especially from the United States, can fix that.**

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***By Kenneth C. Griffin and Niall Ferguson***

On June 24, 1948, Soviet forces blockaded the Allied-controlled areas of Berlin. The United States and Britain responded by airlifting food and fuel from Allied airbases in western Germany. At the height of Operation Plainfare, one plane landed every forty-five seconds at Tempelhof Airport. It worked. On May 11, 1949, Moscow lifted the blockade of West Berlin. Stalin blinked.

No such airlift can relieve the pressure being exerted on Ukraine by the huge military force Russia has assembled, with Russian troops entering Donetsk and Luhansk. But the principle can be applied to the broader problem raised by the Ukrainian crisis.

The foundation of Russian power today is the energy industry, which funds Russia's foreign policy, including its formidable armed forces. Russia is an energy superpower in no small part because European consumers buy Russian gas. Europeans wagered that energy interdependence would temper Russian militarism, but instead Europe has funded the

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Kremlin's rearmament. Europe would be safer if it had relied on allies for its gas.

The problem isn't simply Europe's energy dependence, but Russia's use of energy to co-opt European politicians. In early February, former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder was nominated to join the board of Gazprom, Russia's state-owned gas monopoly. He already sits on the board of Rosneft,

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***Green-minded Europeans should also note that buying American gas would be better for the environment.***

Russia's state-owned oil giant. These appointments highlight Germany's dependence on Russian gas. Is it any surprise that Chancellor

Olaf Scholz initially sought to exclude energy explicitly from any sanctions on Russia if it invaded Ukraine? He halted Nord Stream 2, the natural-gas pipeline between Russia and Germany, only after Vladimir Putin asserted the "independence" of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Since West Germany launched its *Ostpolitik* policy in the late 1960s, the bet that energy interdependence would produce peace involved building a network of gas pipelines. Rather than pacifying Europe, however, these pipelines empowered Russia. Without Russian energy, European citizens would struggle to get through winter. Putin has long understood the leverage this gives him.

The United States should encourage its European allies to reduce their reliance on Russian gas exports. The sanctions against Russia arranged by the Biden administration pose a tremendous cost to Americans without

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***Europeans gambled that energy interdependence would temper Russian militarism. Instead, Europe paid for the Kremlin's rearmament.***

addressing the long-term source of Putin's power. Tougher US financial sanctions would only further reduce the attractiveness of the dollar as a reserve currency. With-

holding US technology from Russia would inflict both direct and indirect damage on American companies, which have many international competitors, not least in China.

Reducing reliance on Russian gas will require substantial investment and political will. Europe needs to replace as much Russian gas as possible with liquefied natural gas, ideally with long-term contracts to buy gas from allied countries such as the United States. The American capacity to export liquefied natural gas is growing every year. Some European countries have



***SEA ROADS: The specialized carrier ship Fuji LNG prepares to transport liquefied natural gas. Transport by sea has taken on new importance with the interruption of arrangements to move natural gas from Russia to elsewhere in Europe. This shift could produce both political and environmental benefits.***

[Ken Hodge—Creative Commons]

already begun building substantial infrastructure to take advantage of this growth. Poland and Lithuania now no longer rely on Russian gas because they can import supplies from as far away as Australia.

The biggest laggard is, predictably, Germany. One reason is that the initial costs of building liquefied natural gas infrastructure can be steep. Russia's supposed price advantage, however, no longer looks so compelling.

Europe could also move itself toward energy independence by adopting a more realistic approach to climate change. Germany's decision to phase out nuclear power looks increasingly like a historic error. And "doubling down on renewables" for short-term effect is delusional.

The United States has a role to play, too. It needs to produce more gas, not less. Washington should recognize that the American gas industry produces a relatively clean-burning fuel that the world will need for decades. Bans on fracking are misguided and neutralize a critical economic and geopolitical advantage. The United States should frack more, so it has the gas needed to wean Europe off Russian pipelines.

Green-minded Europeans should also note that buying American gas would be better for the environment. In the United States, gas companies

face stricter regulations for methane capture and other environmental priorities. The Russian energy industry pays little heed to such concerns.

In addition, the United States should push its friends and allies to sign long-term supply agreements with Europe. Australia is a major gas producer, as is Qatar. The more sources of natural gas Europe has, the safer its energy supply will be.

Germany's bet that importing Russian energy would promote peace in Europe has been a losing one. It is time for a new strategy. The United States should not have to absorb the cost of sanctions on behalf of Germany if Berlin

is not willing to change its policy. Regardless of the outcome of the war in Ukraine, the Russian government has shown

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***The US capacity to export liquefied natural gas is growing every year.***

itself to be an incorrigibly aggressive autocracy with no compunction about coercing its neighbors.

In 1948, American supplies broke the Russian stranglehold on Berlin. Today, American energy can end Berlin's dependence on Russia. If plane-loads of food can get the better of Stalin, boatloads of gas can get the better of Putin. ■

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# Bear Baiting

**In holding out future NATO membership to Ukraine, the West ignored the danger of angering Russia, says Hoover fellow Robert Service.**

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**By Tunku Varadarajan**

**T**he Russian invasion of Ukraine resulted from two immense strategic blunders, Robert Service says. The first came on November 10, when the United States and Ukraine signed a Charter on Strategic Partnership, which asserted America's support for Kyiv's right to pursue membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The pact made it likelier than ever that Ukraine would eventually join NATO—an intolerable prospect for Vladimir Putin. “It was the last straw,” Service says. Preparations immediately began for Russia's so-called special military operation in Ukraine.

Service is a veteran historian of Russia. He has written biographies of Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky. The last work, published in 2009, attracted the ire of die-hard Trotskyites worldwide for saying that their hero shared many basic ideas with Lenin and Stalin on the “one party, one ideology terror state.” Service says they still “mess around” with his Wikipedia entry.

The November agreement added heft to looser assurances Ukraine received at a NATO summit five months earlier that membership would be open to the country if it met the alliance's criteria. Service characterizes these moves as “shambolic mismanagement” by the West, which offered

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Ukraine encouragement on the NATO question but gave no apparent thought to how such a tectonic move away from Moscow would go down with Putin. “Nothing was done to prepare the Ukrainians for the kind of negative response that they would get.”

After all, Service says, Ukraine is “one of the hot spots in the mental universe of Vladimir Putin, and you don’t wander into it without a clear idea of what you’re going to do next.” The West has known that since at least 2007, when the Russian ruler made a speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy that was, in Service’s words, “a rage against Ukraine ever joining NATO.” He was about to step down from the Russian presidency (to become prime minister for four years), “so it was his last lion’s roar

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### ***The KGB is still in Putin’s soul.***

in the jungle.” When he returned as president in 2012, he made it clear again that “the Ukraine-NATO question wasn’t negotiable.”

In July 2021, Putin wrote an essay that foretold the invasion. Service sums it up as saying, “more or less, that Ukrainians and Russians are one people.” Putin had said so many times before, “but not as angrily and punchily—and emotionally.”

It rankles Putin that Ukraine would seek to join the West—and not merely because he wants it as a satellite state. He also “can’t afford to allow life to a neighboring Slav state which has even a smidgen of democratic development. His Russian people might get dangerous ideas.”

As a result of the invasion, “the US has started to get its act together,” Service says. “But I don’t think American diplomacy covered itself in glory in 2021.”

## **RECKLESS AND RESENTFUL**

The second strategic error was Putin’s underestimation of his rivals. “He despises the West and what he sees as Western decadence,” Service says. “He had come to believe that the West was a shambles, both politically and culturally.” He also thought that the leaders of the West were “of poor quality, and inexperienced, in comparison with himself. After all, he’s been in power twenty years.”

In Putin’s cocksure reckoning, the invasion was going to be “a pushover—not just in regard to Ukraine, but in regard to the West.” He’d spent four years “running rings around Donald Trump,” and he thought the retirement of German Chancellor Angela Merkel had left the West rudderless. That set the scene for the “surprise he got when he invaded Ukraine, when he found



that he'd inadvertently united the West—that what he'd done was the very opposite of what he wanted.”

Service calls Putin “reckless and mediocre” and scoffs at the notion that he is “some sort of genius.” What kind of Russian leader, he asks, “makes it impossible for a German leader *not* to build up Germany’s armaments”?

Putin evidently “hoped there wouldn’t have to be a war” because the massing of troops on the border would lead to the collapse of the Ukrainian government. He underestimated Volodymyr Zelensky, whom he’d met in Paris in December 2019, six months after the Ukrainian president took office. Putin had “done his usual brutal discussion performance with him. Zelensky came out of these talks obviously shaken.”

Service says the key to understanding Putin is his adamant belief that Russia is “a great global power” and that the Russian sphere of influence should extend to as many of the former Soviet republics as possible: “There’s no state that’s more important to him than Ukraine.”

He describes the Russian ruler as “not a communist but an anticommunist.” In Service’s telling, Putin regards the Soviet period as “a rupture” with the path to greatness

that Russia should have

taken. “Putin believes

in Eternal Russia” and

regards Lenin with “ridi-

cule and detestation” for

stunting Russia’s expan-

sion. While Putin may say “occasionally pleasant things about Stalin, he has never said anything positive about Lenin.”

In Putin’s view, according to Service, Lenin committed a primordial sin in 1922 when the Soviet constitution set up a federation of republics with their own boundaries within the Soviet Union. “This made possible the breakup of the USSR into separate independent states in 1991,” Service says. Putin, like Stalin—who fell out with Lenin over these constitutional arrangements—would have liked all these republics to have been merged into a Greater Russia, ruled from Moscow.

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***The West, offering Ukraine encouragement on future NATO membership, ignored how such a tectonic move would go down with Putin.***

## **NO DEMOCRAT**

“Putin despises democracy,” Service says. “He believes in the right of the leadership to impose the authority of the state on society.” In the Russian president’s view, this is good for citizens because it brings stability and predictability into their lives. He also believes in the importance of the secret

police as an adjunct of government. In this, Service points out, many of his methods are “reminiscent of the Soviet period,” even if his ideology isn’t.

Putin “sees himself messianically,” Service says—as a leader come to deliver Russia to its destiny. He runs his government like “a court, though the czars were much more polite to their ministers.” Unless they go into political opposition, he doesn’t get rid of people who don’t share his vision. Instead, he “bats them down, and overawes them, treating them like schoolboys.” He “peppers them with questions” to keep them on their toes. He was a senior officer in the KGB, and the KGB is still in his soul. Rebranded as the FSB, “it’s the one agency from the old Soviet Union that has survived.”

Service is pessimistic, certain that the war will end in the subjugation of Ukraine. “He’ll win the war,” Service says, “by flattening Ukraine. By devastating a brother people, he could win the war. But he won’t win the peace. The task of tranquilizing the Ukrainians is beyond the Russians. There’s too much bile that’s been let loose in the stomach of Ukraine.”

Looking to history for analogies, he cites Hungary in 1956, when Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest to quell a major uprising. “When the Soviets sup-

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***Putin “can’t afford to allow life to a neighboring Slav state which has even a smidgen of democratic development. His Russian people might get dangerous ideas.”***

pressed the Hungarian Revolution, they had to pay for it economically,” Service says. “They had to subsidize Hungary with oil and gas.” Moscow bore a huge economic burden for “the retention

of Hungary within its political orbit, and that would be the case with Ukraine. And they’d be hated at the same time—hated.” Not to mention taking on the weight of appeasing a conquered people at a time of impoverishment in Russia itself.

“Putin’s got to be removed from power,” Service says. That is the only way to end Ukraine’s torment. But how?

It could happen in two ways. The first is “a palace coup,” which at the moment “looks very, very unlikely” but could become plausible. The second is a mass uprising, “a tremendous surge in street demonstrations as a result of the economic hardship” imposed by the war and Western sanctions.

For a palace coup to succeed, there would need to be palpable disaffection in the Russian establishment. “By and large, the establishment has been quiescent,” but the “personal and collective interests” of the ruling elite are at stake. Not only will sanctions stop them from traveling to the French Riviera

or sending their sons to Eton; they'll have to line up behind "a really reckless line of policy, which will require Russia to patrol the biggest state in Europe, now full of angry, vengeful people."

Reaching for the history books again, he cites the case of Lavrentiy Beria, Stalin's all-powerful state security chief, who was almost certain to succeed the latter on his death in 1953. But the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, as the Politburo was known

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***"Putin believes in Eternal Russia."***

at the time, got together with Nikita Khrushchev and decided that they "weren't safe with Beria." With the help of the army, they arrested, tried, and executed him. "The thing that makes me think about this," says Service, "is that the Presidium at the time seemed to be working under the impetus of Beria's various initiatives quite peacefully." His end came as a surprise to the world—and undoubtedly to Beria himself.

Yet Putin is surely aware of the history of Beria, and is accordingly prepared: "He's very elusive, and very, very edgy. I should imagine his security orders are quite severe."

## **GROWING UNREST**

The longer the war goes on, the likelier it is that Russia will see protest movements that are hard to contain, Service says. "Especially if the police themselves have elements in their ranks who sympathize with the people they're meant to be suppressing."

There have been frequent uprisings in Russian history, and Service lists them. "In 1905, they nearly led to revolution. In February 1917, they did." There were also "very, very powerful" street demonstrations in the early 1930s that shook Stalin; disturbances in the labor camps in the late 1940s, and also at Stalin's death. "There were whole cities that erupted against the Soviet order in 1962, because of high meat prices, and there were strikes in 1989 among the coal miners, which destabilized Soviet politics." And in 1991, an attempted coup against Mikhail Gorbachev prompted a demonstration outside the parliament, where future Russian president Boris Yeltsin famously faced down a Soviet tank.

Service acknowledges that only twice did opponents succeed in toppling the political establishment, but he says that "if there's a combination of political disorder on the streets and political unease in the ruling group," as in 1917 and 1991, these factors could converge to powerful effect: "This is a distant possibility at the moment, but it can't be ruled out."

Service is certain, however, that the Russians will find conquered Ukrainians as difficult to control as free ones. “The Ukrainians have become more nationally conscious over the twentieth century, and they’re a proud people who’ve seen what happened to them when they were subjugated by the USSR.” It is inconceivable that they will accept subjugation again. “They had it in the early 1930s, when millions died under Stalin’s famines. They had it again in the late 1940s, after the war ended. I don’t think they’re going to let history repeat itself.”

The invasion of Ukraine, Service says, is not a tragedy for Ukraine alone. It’s a tragedy for Russia. “Russian people don’t deserve a ruler like Putin. They’ve not had very much luck with their rulers in the last 150 years. In fact, they’ve had appalling luck.” ■

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# *Lands of the Lost*

**Modern history teems with irredentism—a bloody march of messiahs and autocrats trying to “reclaim” lost lands. Where will Putin’s forces halt?**

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**By Victor Davis Hanson**

**I**rredentism—the romance of reclaiming “unredeemed” old lands—is a symptom of messianic presidents and premiers, and national paranoia and insecurity. Leaders demagogue about the recovery of ancient territories whose departures are said to have weakened the nation’s imperial grandeur and power.

Supposedly long-scattered and oppressed peoples with common linguistic, religious, and cultural affinities are recombined—usually by violently overthrowing their contemporary governments and forcing them into a new ethnic superstate. Yet irredentism is often a one-way street. Supposedly homeless expatriates—the Greeks of Constantinople, Italians in Malta, Germans in the Sudetenland, Serbs in Bosnia, and Russians in Ukraine—are said to be even more zealous nationalists than their kindred in the motherland. But just as often the territory to be reunited in a grand imperial scheme is more reluctant than the would-be uniter.

Early twentieth-century Greek romantics fancied resurrecting the old “Great Idea,” the dreamy re-creation of a panhellenic Eastern Mediterranean. The New Byzantium was to be ringed by Greek-speakers in the motherland, Asia Minor, the Aegean Islands, Cyprus, and northern Egypt.

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Yet, like most irredentists, the Greeks never had the troops or the material wherewithal to re-establish such a modern Byzantine empire. The restored fifteenth-century vision rested entirely on the opportunistic implosion of the Ottoman empire; the 1918 defeat of the Central Powers, especially in Asia Minor, the Middle East, and the Balkans; the international chaos after World War I; and the pledges of the victorious allies.

A new secular Turkish government soon emerged to undermine the quixotic Greek effort.

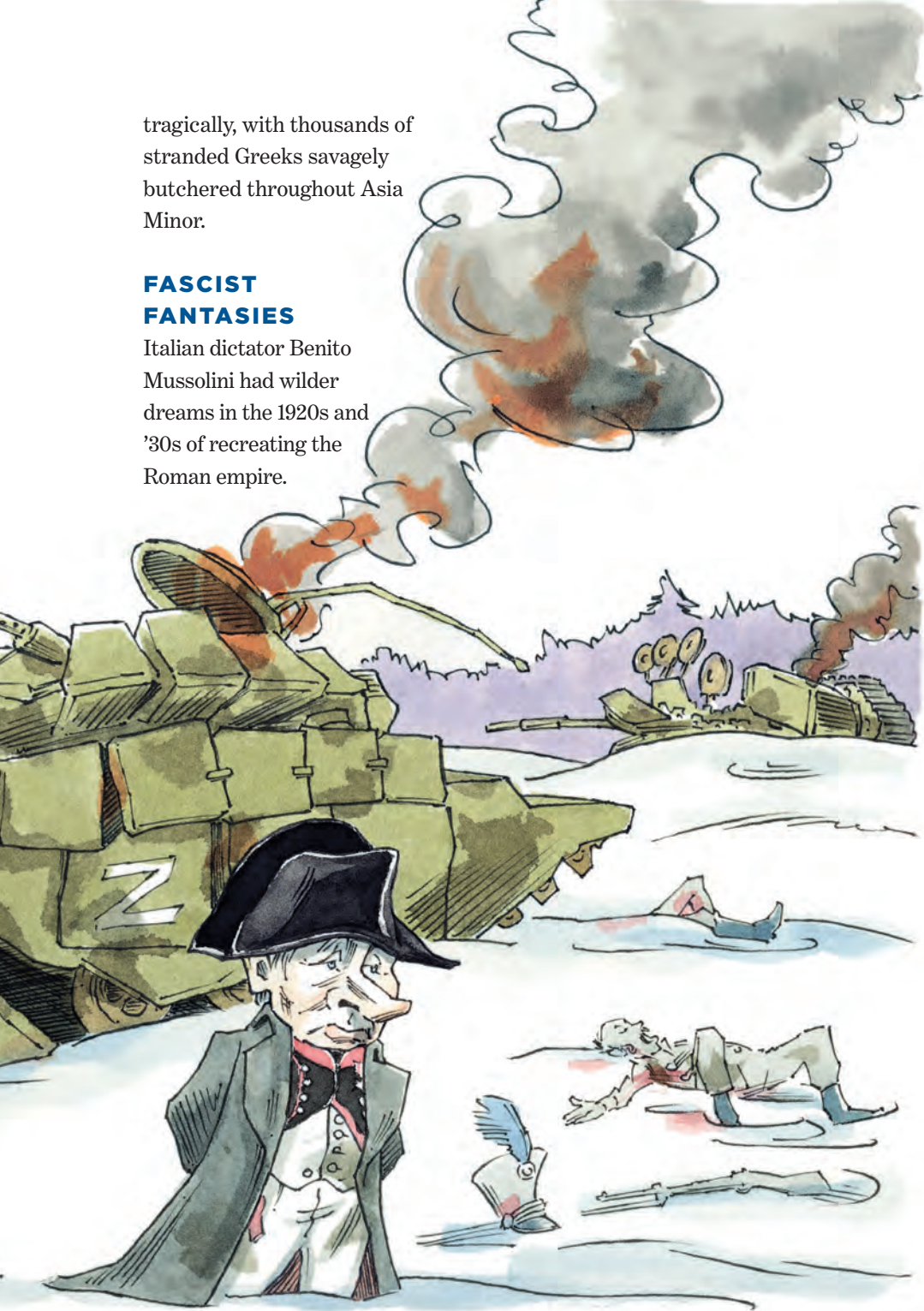
The Great Idea's British sponsors betrayed it. It ended



tragically, with thousands of stranded Greeks savagely butchered throughout Asia Minor.

## **FASCIST FANTASIES**

Italian dictator Benito Mussolini had wilder dreams in the 1920s and '30s of recreating the Roman empire.



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

In his irredentist fantasies, anywhere Italian was spoken—or where Latin once had been—there would follow the new Italian empire. Mussolini endlessly complained about the fetters of British Suez and Gibraltar that had unfairly boxed in his new Rome. Mussolini's Mare Nostrum—"Our Sea"—would remake the Mediterranean into an Italian lake. The reborn Rome would be flanked by an Italian-speaking Southern Europe, an Italian North and East Africa, an Italian Aegean, and an Italian Dalmatia and Balkans.

Mussolini could achieve his dreams only through a host of "ifs"—if France and Britain appeased him, if their Mediterranean navies disappeared or would not fight, if Nazi Germany threatened Mussolini's common enemies, if the so-called international community, like the League of Nations, failed to deter him, and if Germany ultimately won World War II.

So the dictator sequentially grabbed Ethiopia, expanded out from his Libyan colonies, and invaded Egypt, Albania, and Greece—until finally Britain and America destroyed Mussolini and his fascist fantasies.

Adolf Hitler was the century's most ambitious and most barbaric irredentist. He came to power by screaming about a drawn-and-quartered German Reich, carved up by the Versailles Treaty, with millions of German speakers

and lands scattered and lost to his native Austria, to Poland, to France, and to Czechoslovakia. In Hitler's mind, these were all "unredeemed" lands that

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***Often the territory to be reunited is more reluctant than the would-be uniter.***

he alone in his genius would reclaim for the German *Volk*. He even included the ancient Volga Germans in the distant domains of the Soviet Union as legitimate claimants on a new Third Reich.

Unlike Italy, Hitler had the military, the economy, and the population for a time to bully his way into reclaiming almost every German-speaking minority in Europe and blow up the borders of the continent. Ultimately, Hitler engulfed the world in a war that cost seventy million dead, invading all of Europe, the Soviet Union, and North Africa and encouraging Japan to act accordingly in Asia and the Pacific. By 1941, the expanded Third Reich numbered over eighty million Germans. It had obliterated Poland and Czechoslovakia. And Berlin ruled over an area larger in population and territory than the current European Union. Only Britain was left to be destroyed.

But in truth, Germany had already overreached, drunk on easy victories and blind to the resources and manpower of his new enemies, the Soviet Union and the United States. By 1944, the United States alone had produced





***OBEDIENT: Soldiers of the Red Army raise their rifles as they swear an oath to the Bolshevik regime in 1919. A century later, many of the old Soviet republics are already Vladimir Putin's de facto satellites or puppets, but the Russian leader's crowning goal would be the recapture of Ukraine. [Yakov Vladimirovich Steinberg (1880–1942)]***

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a military larger than all the Axis militaries combined, a GDP larger than those of all the combatants—friend and foe—put together, and a navy larger than all the aggregate navies of the world.

When the wreckage of the war cleared, Hitler's dream was a satanic irony. Millions of Germans were dead and millions more expelled from once-annexed nations and forced to walk back into a vastly shrunken Germany.

At century's end, after the 1990s breakup of the former Yugoslavia, Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic dreamed of a new Greater Serbia. He sought to force neighboring Montenegro, Northern Albania, Bosnia, and Herzegovina into a new version of the fourteenth-century Serbian empire. Serbia's near-decade-long Balkan Wars cost 140,000 dead, earned global denunciation of Serbia, made Milosevic a hated pariah, and ended with the independence of all his would-be new conquests.

## RUSSIA'S TURN

Vladimir Putin is history's most recent, and first nuclear, irredentist. He believes any group of Russian speakers anywhere, or former residents of imperial Russia or the Soviet Union, or Russian Orthodox worshippers, all belong to Putin's new Russian empire. Even if Russian speakers are independent or happy as minorities in other countries, Putin has a grandiose plan to force them into his new mother Russia.

Only in that way can a huge new Russia of 270 million to 300 million people, with a vast area comparable to the old Soviet Union, again be a player on the superpower stage to rival China and the United States.

In Putin's mind, he has already forced Georgia, Crimea, and Eastern Ukraine back into the Russian fold. Many of the old Soviet republics are already his de facto satellites or puppets. If he can get back all of Ukraine, the crown jewel of the old Soviet Union and mother Russia—41 million people, 230,000 square miles of territory, the best farmland in Europe, rich in oil and minerals—Putin feels he would achieve his irredentist goal. The remaining

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### ***Mussolini overextended himself in his quest for a "New Rome."***

few lost Russian territories then will either be easily absorbed, or their puppet governments will

obey Russian orders. Then, he believes, the former Warsaw Pact nations, in terror, will shed their NATO alliance or at least become no-fly zones.

Putin may have initially underestimated Ukrainian resistance. He foolishly discounted any chance of NATO defiance. He had no idea how much the supposedly decadent West still controls the levers and wheels of the international financial and commercial system now directed at Russia. He was clueless that new weapons such as cheap drones and improved anti-armor weapons put into the hands of relative amateur shooters could allow them to blow up multimillion-dollar tanks and huge trucks full of soldiers—the destruction recorded on video for global social media consumption.

In the United States, the public is ebullient at the scenes of defiant Ukrainians and hopeful that Putin has at last met his irredentist Waterloo. In truth, Ukraine is vastly outnumbered, out-equipped, and outmanned. It was armed by the West far too late.

Yet Putin, our century's first irredentist, is not yet deterred even by catastrophic financial losses inflicted by the sanctions of the Western world. He ignores his military casualties and the savagery he inflicts on others. He rants about using nuclear weapons and spreading ruin worldwide to any who defy him. He attacks nuclear power plants.



In other words, he is a typical twentieth-century irredentist.

Remember, all of these irredentists of the past hundred years have failed—and imploded in suicidal fashion. History suggests that Putin will not find a happy solution either. Europe and the United States are slowly learning a new paradigm to check aggressions such as Putin's: crippling global financial and commercial sanctions; a new confidence in sophisticated asymmetrical weapons that can nullify tanks, planes, and helicopters; a new attitude that the United States and Europe can remain closer than they had thought; and a new ability to inflict international psychological and cultural ostracism against Russia and its leaders.

China is watching the fate of Ukraine. If it is crushed and Putin reasserts his power abroad, then Beijing sees a pathway to absorbing what would be left of a much smaller Taiwan. But if a larger Ukraine survives and Putin is permanently crippled, then Xi Jinping may worry that the Taiwanese could fight like Ukrainians, that China might be sanctioned and ostracized like Russia, that new deadly weapons will be airdropped into Taiwan. He may recall that unlike Russia and Ukraine, there is a sea separating China and Taiwan—and that a moonscaped Taiwan would not be worth the cost that Putin may pay for Ukraine. ■

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# *Deterrence: An Art of War*

**Deterrence is not just the ability to fight; it's the will to fight. By announcing that the United States possessed no such will for Ukraine, the White House told Putin all he needed to know: he would not be deterred.**

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***By Nadia Schadlow***

A credible deterrent is designed to alter a potential aggressor's calculations of risk and reward. Vladimir Putin determined that the potential cost of invading Ukraine was relatively low, and on February 24 he attacked. It will be the job of historians to try to understand why deterrence failed.

Deterrence involves two factors: capability and will. Capability means having the military strength to deliver intolerable damage to an adversary. Will is the determination to use that strength and deliver that damage.

The United States spends hundreds of billions of dollars a year to strengthen its military capabilities, and they are formidable. Resolve costs nothing, but it is priceless when it comes to deterring aggression. By signaling that the United States had no intention of using its capabilities, the Biden administration seriously weakened their deterrent value.

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*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.*

The White House has consistently broadcast what it won't do, removing a crucial component of deterrence: the ability to amplify risk through ambiguity. Putin now knows exactly how much to escalate the conflict because US officials have told him exactly what the maximum US response will be.

In early December, President Biden ruled out the possibility of using US military power, stating that any consideration of American combat troops in Ukraine was "off the table." In January, even after trying to explain his comment that a "minor incursion" wouldn't warrant a forceful response, Biden repeated what he wouldn't do. There wouldn't be "any American forces moving into Ukraine," he said. In February he did it again, explaining that US actions were "totally defensive" and that we "had no intention of fighting Russia."

What is particularly puzzling is that these messages were broadcast against a backdrop of increasing intelligence that Russia was preparing for war. While the White House apparently had a strategy to "aggressively release" intelligence, it concurrently made clear that it wouldn't act on this intelligence to deter Putin.

Most recently, Secretary of State Antony Blinken discounted the possibility of deploying North Atlantic Treaty Organization warplanes to support the Ukrainian resistance. He explained publicly that he was worried such an arrangement might drag

the United States and NATO into open conflict with Russia. This view was repeated by top military leaders. The commanding general of the

US European Command announced that the American intelligence community had assessed that the "transfer of MiG-29s to Ukraine may be mistaken as escalatory." In case this wasn't clear, the command further clarified that it had no plans to "facilitate an indirect, or third-party, transfer of Polish aircraft."

Such statements consistently play down the will of the United States. The Biden administration's repeated statements that it is unwilling to escalate under any circumstances increases the risks of unintended escalation. Putin and his military are measuring American will based on what they see and hear. This is probably why they are acting as though there is little threat of resistance from any power more potent than the Ukrainian military.

This doesn't necessarily mean that the United States should deploy its troops to Ukraine or establish a no-fly zone by contesting Russian aircraft.

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***Could this conflict have been averted with a more convincing demonstration of US resolve? We will never know.***

The current bipartisan consensus is that such actions aren't in the American interest. But there is no reason to broadcast our reservations and reveal the weakness of our will.

Why share internal policy discussions and military deliberations with an adversary? A plausible explanation is that the White House has decided to

give priority to the US domestic audience, as opposed to signaling to Russia. But by openly taking options off the table, the administration not only undercuts its opera-

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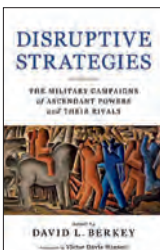
***There's no reason to broadcast our reservations and reveal the weakness of our will. There are plenty of reasons not to.***

tional flexibility but it also gives the enemy additional clarity. There is value in ambiguity—especially when Russia is a master at it.

The Russians, with their vivid history of resisting better-equipped armies from imperial Sweden, France, and Germany, understand the importance of will. It is a key component of their military doctrine and is expressed in their concept of “escalate to de-escalate.” That means that the Russian military has stated its willingness to increase the intensity of violence to end a war on favorable terms. Few observers doubt either Putin's ability or his willingness to do so.

Could this conflict have been averted with a more convincing demonstration of American resolve? We will never know for sure. Deterrence is an art, not a science. But the United States almost certainly faces a challenge if it wants to keep the peace in the future. Restoring the perception of American will to deter conflict may, ironically, require an even more forceful manifestation of that will on the battlefield. In a world of diminished deterrence, the desire for peace could make conflict more certain. ■

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# *A Time for Peace, a Time for War*

**Permanent world order is an illusion. Seasons of violence always return, and the United States must learn to endure and manage them.**

**By Jakub Grygiel**

**T**he Biden administration has been vocal in defending what it calls the “rules-based international order,” but there is no such thing. An Earth-spanning security space governed by global rules or a few key powers doesn’t exist, as the war in Ukraine should remind us. There is also no “global threat” facing all states equally but, rather, regional revisionist powers threatening nearby states. Temporary regional equilibria with their own power dynamics are driven by local historical competitions. They are unstable and prone to wars. They require persistent attention and management.

## **Key points**

- » The world is made up of temporary equilibria, not permanent settlements between nations.
- » Local conflicts are based on, or justified by, historical claims. These can be both long-lasting and resistant to negotiation.
- » As a distant power, the United States must learn to navigate instability and regional conflicts—and to stay the course.

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Over the past three decades these regional orders—in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia—have been relatively stable and the local competitions subdued. The resulting order. Liberals saw this global international rules, a growing and greater international order” enhanced by mercial peace. Real-underwritten between the

ly stable and the local competi-  
impression was of a world  
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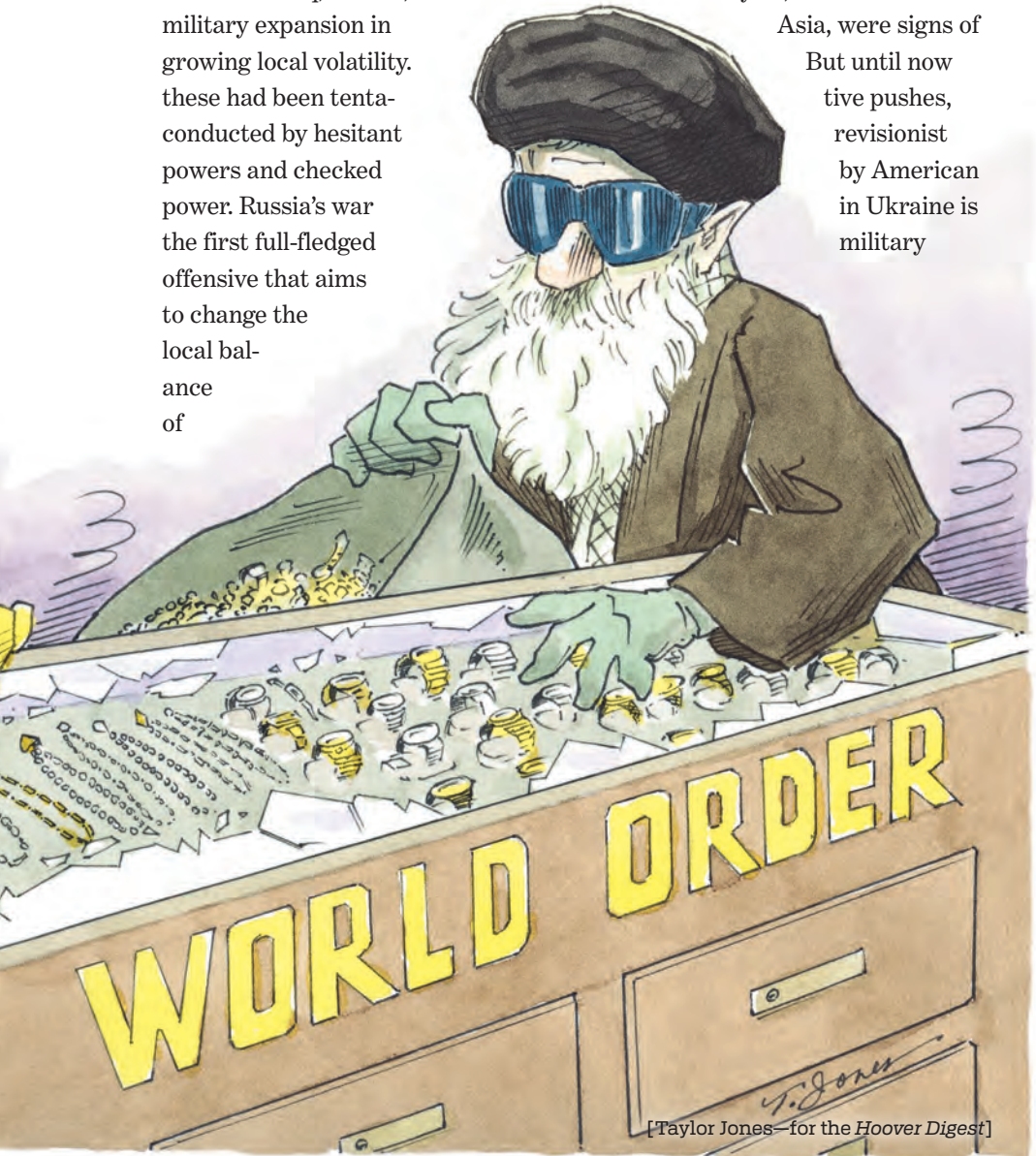


United States, Russia, and China—with nuclear weapons as an effective pacifying equalizer.

Both visions of world order put too much emphasis on the global nature of this stability. If we look at the world through the lens of regional orders, the picture is more worrisome.

Russia's wars in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine since 2014, as well as Iran's actions in Iraq, Yemen, and Syria, and China's military expansion in Asia, were signs of growing local volatility. But until now these had been tentatively pushed, conducted by hesitant powers and checked by American revisionist power. Russia's war in Ukraine is the first full-fledged offensive that aims to change the local balance of military

Syria, and China's Asia, were signs of But until now tive pushes, revisionist by American in Ukraine is military



[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

power drastically. Russia seeks to be the decisive power in Europe, and for that it needs to dominate Ukraine.

Regional orders are fragile for two reasons. First, military force is more likely to be used in local contests than in disputes between distant rivals. The stakes are high for the local parties, the perceived risks limited. A revisionist power is likely to pursue its goals, such as conquest of territory or control over a neighboring state's political life, through war more than through negotiations. And the revisionist power's targets won't accept a hostile takeover without a fight. In the end, both sides are interested less in preventing war than in making war usable for their own objectives. War is an enduring regional reality.

The United States tends to think of stability as a broad goal of its grand strategy. As President Biden has said, the goal is to "strive to prevent" World War III. But regional revisionists in Eurasia aren't afraid of putting pressure on their own frontiers to extend their influence. The states they threaten will also choose war over submission, regional disorder over lost independence. The United States will have to figure out how to navigate, even embrace, instability and war in regions that are important to its national interests.

The second reason regional orders are unstable is that local contests are geographically limited but last a long time. Local conflicts are based on, or justified by, historical claims. Perceived or real offenses committed in the past generate desires for revenge; aspirations to grandeur spur territorial demands; and national self-confidence motivates a stubborn hostility to

aggressive neighbors.

When the roots of a political action lie in national claims to greatness, diplomatic compromise becomes difficult. Lengthy conflict begins to look

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***For three decades, regional orders in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia were relatively stable. This gave the impression of a world order.***

preferable to a negotiated settlement. It is more legitimate to dig trenches than to sit at negotiating tables.

Local antagonists are willing to incur high costs both when attacking (like Russia) and when defending (like Ukraine). The expectation is that the high risk will be rewarded with a high payoff: the aggressor anticipates greater influence or a larger territory, while the defender expects independence and greater security.

For a distant power such as the United States, the enduring nature of regional conflicts in Eurasia is a political challenge. Managing such conflicts



requires consistent involvement and a permanent presence. But the US approach is to participate in regional geopolitical dynamics only when necessary to restore an equipoise, and then to move to a different region. Thus we hear talk of “uniting” Europe and “pivoting” to Asia.

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***Military force is more likely to be used in local contests than in disputes between distant rivals.***

It is historically rare for a local contest to come to a permanent end—usually only when a devastating war redraws the map in blood. The Franco-German conflict of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries turned into friendship only after two gruesome world wars. The end result was good for Europe but getting there was tragic and something to be avoided.

The current war between Russia and Ukraine will end at some point, but the contest between the two nations won’t. The best that can be hoped for is a delicate local equilibrium demanding constant maintenance through Western economic and military support of Ukraine.

If Ukraine survives Russian aggression as an independent state, the Biden administration’s liberal temptation will be to call it a victory for world order based on rules and democracies. That would be a mistake. The victory will be Ukraine’s, resulting in a moment of fragile regional stability and not in a renewed world order. ■

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# *Ukraine's Bad Neighbor*

**How Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko sacrificed his nation—and his people—to Russian ambitions.**

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***By Markos Kounalakis***

**V**ladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine was criminal on multiple counts, but some of them should be leveled at one of his main accomplices: Belarus's dictator, Alexander Lukashenko.

Russia's military executed an unprovoked and unprecedented attack on a peaceful neighbor on many fronts, from the air and sea. The land war, however, would not have been as lethal were it not for Lukashenko providing a front along Belarus's southern border, not far from Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.

Indeed, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky put it bluntly—Belarus is “not neutral,” he said—when weighing potential negotiations in the country's capital, Minsk. “Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest, Istanbul, Baku—we proposed all that to the Russian side,” he said. “Any other city would work for us, too, in a country from whose territory rockets are not being fired.” Belarus is, in fact, far from neutral. It is complicit with the Russian attacks, and Zelensky reckoned that any negotiations on its land would be on enemy territory.

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*Markos Kounalakis is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in Hoover's National Security Task Force and its project on China's Global Sharp Power.*



It didn't have to be this way. Belarus was early roadkill on the path to Putin's widening Ukraine war. While the world's shocked attention is now understandably fixed on Ukraine, the people of Belarus long ago lost any real shot at their own independence. Lukashenko stole a recent presidential election, used lethal violence to put down popular dissent, surrendered the nation's sovereignty to Putin, and has since welcomed Russian troops to overrun and occupy the nation. The country has since become the most important staging area for an ongoing war against Russia's neighbors and NATO strongholds—all of it coordinated and conducted by Moscow. It looks and feels like a throwback to the days of the USSR.

There was a brief moment when Belarus, along with Ukraine and other former Soviet states, appeared to be on the verge of independence and political reform. An independent, modern Ukraine painfully and painstakingly grew out of that moment and became an inconvenient fact for Putin and his hopes of reconstituting a Soviet-lite territorial Slavic Leviathan.

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***Belarus is far from neutral. It is complicit with the Russian attacks.***

In Belarus, however, the independence movement and reformist moment were barely a blip; in fact, the same communist boss who ruled with an iron fist shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union remains in place today. Lukashenko is one of the longest-running illegitimate leaders in the world, having climbed to power in 1994. He almost makes Putin look like an authoritarian slacker.

Belarusian citizens pay the price for Lukashenko's power-grabbing impunity. The nation's economy is rated forty-fifth out of forty-five in Europe. The people's attempt to elect a legitimate leader was thwarted by a Lukashenko-driven suppression machine that aimed to kill, jail, disappear, crush, or cast out any opposition during last year's presidential referendum.

In a free election, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya would have had a real shot at victory when she ran for president in 2020. She became an opposition leader after her video-blogger husband and erstwhile presidential candidate, Sergei Tikhanovsky, was capriciously arrested that year. He was tried and sentenced to eighteen years in prison for doing what video bloggers do: pointing out political corruption and organizing for political change. Tikhanovskaya now lives in exile in Lithuania and tries to make her voice heard over the deafening sound of Putin's beating war drums in Ukraine.

In late winter, in a Twitter video, she declared herself the national leader of Belarus—a move reminiscent in part of Venezuela's Juan Guaidó, who is



***FALSE FRIEND: Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko shakes hands with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at a regional meeting in October 2019. Amid the current invasion of Ukraine, Lukashenko has made Belarus the most important staging area for Russian aggression.*** [President of Ukraine—Creative Commons]

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currently recognized as the legitimate government representative by nearly sixty nations. It is highly unlikely she will be at the negotiating table representing Belarus anytime soon, but if the Putin-Lukashenko axis is defeated or overthrown, she may be first in the line of succession.

In the meantime, Ukraine has been subjected to a bloody invasion aided and abetted by Russian troops crossing the Belarus border. Many of the forty-five thousand Russian troops that were stationed in offensive positions throughout Belarus moved into Ukraine. Those Russian troops served as both a Belarusian occupying force and an assembled offensive corps poised to threaten Europe further.

Russian forces made themselves at home in Belarus, operating in a quasi-recognized Russo-Belarusian “Union State” that effectively melded Minsk into a vassal capital of an aggressively muscle-flexing Putin-led Russian empire bristling with tanks, missiles, and cyberweapons. If those offensive conventional forces and digital tools aren’t enough, not only did Putin’s ally in Minsk threaten to host nuclear weapons pointed at the West, but he has also

now voted to allow Russian forces and nuclear weapons to be permanently based in Belarus.

This is perhaps the most dangerous move and moral affront to the civilized world. Amid Putin's war of choice, a new nuclear power has arrived on the international scene.

Nuclear weapons are the most dangerous of armaments and effective of deterrents; they are the

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***An independent, modern Ukraine was an inconvenient fact for Putin.***

latest, greatest threat to peace and security. But the current hot war started a long time ago as a hybrid war against the West initiated by both Putin and Lukashenko.

Indeed, a synchronized Minsk-Moscow hybrid assault on NATO member states Poland and the Baltics started a few years back—and has been steadily picking up steam. The weaponization of refugees last year was an early offensive assault on Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. It was a cynical move that took advantage of desperate people and allowed Minsk to profit from human misery. The Putin-Lukashenko tag team leveraged a weak Western moment, and the poorly executed US withdrawal from Afghanistan further amplified the narrative of NATO division and decline. Moscow mocked the alliance as America tried to manage a peaceful end to its longest war—and as Washington's friends and allies felt abandoned.

During this time, Minsk enticed migrants to buy one-way plane tickets to Belarus. Once there, they were shuttled to weak points on the European Union's borders, then pushed over the semi-permeable boundaries to plead for refuge. To add insult to injury, the Russians then set off a disinformation campaign to draw scorn upon Poland and the Baltic nations, whom Moscow depicted as not wanting to accept these vulnerable refugees.

The first shots fired in Putin's latest war were not just the cyberattacks beyond Belarus's borders, they were also the cynically sent shock troops made up of tired, poor, and huddled masses of men, women, and especially children. The younger

the involuntarily conscripted people, the more effective the propaganda of pity. News cov-

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***Ukraine cannot become another Belarus.***

erage of the assault on Ukraine brings steady streams of images of the new refugee class spilling into Poland and other Ukrainian border states. These people are being welcomed and accommodated for now, but the attackers are

counting on the refugee flows toward the West to further destabilize NATO and the EU. Instead, they seem to have stiffened the resolve of these institutions and of the European citizenry.

This is the year that Putin's war on Europe aims to destroy a sovereign Ukraine and turn it into a more resource-rich subjugated nation—a big-

ger Belarus. For a man bent on survival, Putin seems to see the destruction he wreaks on this border nation as simply the cost of

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***Lukashenko has now voted to allow Russian forces and nuclear weapons to be permanently based in his country.***

doing business. But such an action could sow the seeds of his demise.

NATO, the EU, and most of the world witnessed Ukrainian citizens' bravery and its leaders' resolve and answered the call for support and unity. Ukraine cannot become another Belarus.

Still, as the world watched troop movements and listened to Moscow's disingenuous diplomacy, Putin pulled off a neat trick. He completed a task he had initiated only a few years earlier. He took over a pliant Belarus without firing a shot or raising a discordant voice in the international community. If he survives this moment, Putin's gambit will still result in him bringing one more nation into his irredentist game. Belarus is now Russia. ■

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# *No Time to Stand Alone*

**The Russian invasion of Ukraine threatens to create a power vacuum in the Mideast—which means we need a new network of regional allies.**

**By Russell A. Berman**

**I**t is bitterly ironic that just as world leaders and diplomats were gathering in Munich in February to participate in the annual Security Conference, the threat of enormous insecurity loomed over Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russia, in collaboration with Belarus, tested ballistic and cruise missiles, clearly intended as a reminder that Russia was prepared to escalate the conflict. Against that backdrop, China came out in support of Russia's demand that Ukraine be forever excluded from NATO, as if Beijing had the right to limit the political choices

## **Key points**

» A weaker US presence in the Middle East would create a power vacuum, and that would empower US adversaries.

» Washington should take the lead in developing a regional security structure for the Middle East. It can include cornerstones such as India and Saudi Arabia.

» Maintaining new networks of allies will require diplomatic skill, and the recognition that those allies will not be perfect.

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***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.*



of independent countries. With that support, Russia invaded Ukraine. Major land war returned to Europe.

How this confrontation will play out and what strategies the United States and the West should pursue in the Ukraine crisis are questions with profound, long-term implications for the Middle East. The United States, the ultimate guarantor of the international order—in the Middle East and elsewhere—faces a combined threat from Russia, China, and their de facto companions, Iran and North Korea. Their shared goal is to reduce American influence across Eurasia and in the Pacific. Russia wants Ukraine, and China is planning on seizing Taiwan not only for the specific territorial gains but in order to degrade the credibility of the United States in international affairs.

This consideration is the focus for all the foreign policy discussions concerning a “pivot to Asia,” or, in the less catchy phrasing, a deprioritization of the Middle East. According to one version of the argument, China is the ultimate challenge to US hegemony in the twenty-first century and therefore the United States should redeploy its military assets away from the Middle East, moving them to the Indo-Pacific to contain China there. Yet as correct as this assessment of the Chinese challenge is, the conclusion is wrong. Russia has just reminded the world that China is not the only threat. As far as the Middle East is concerned, ceding advantages there in order to expand investments in the Pacific will only create a vacuum which our adversaries will exploit. Russia is already ensconced in Latakia in Syria, and China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti. If we move out, our enemies move in. Because the conflict is global, there is in fact no part of the globe we can leave without benefit to our opponents: see Afghanistan.

Yet at the same time, domestic resource constraints increasingly limit the US ability to project power around the world, given the dynamics of the federal budget under pressure from entitlements, unleashed inflation, and debt. Add to this the political pressure of isolationism on the left and on the right, which will increasingly limit defense spending and direct deployments. We are caught between the urgency of maintaining power to push back against ambitious adversaries and a systemic cap on the resources necessary to support that power.

## **FRIENDS AND BENEFITS**

There is a clear solution: building networks of allies. While Washington is the strongest voice in the current response to Moscow, the Western stance is based on NATO, which, despite the disappearance of the Soviet Union, apparently does still have a role to play, thanks to Putin’s revanchism. In the



***FLEXIBLE: Vladimir Putin meets with Mohammed bin Salman al-Saud in Moscow in 2017. Saudi Arabia could be an anchor of a new regional security arrangement in the Middle East, but US leaders will have to thread a path between security needs and the pursuit of human rights among their allies.***

[Kremlin]

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Indo-Pacific the “Quad”—Japan, India, Australia, and the United States—has emerged as a comparably powerful network, as different as it is from NATO. However, alliances by definition bring together several sovereign states, and they can therefore present challenges that are due to divergent, if not fully antagonistic, interests. Such intra-alliance diversity requires perpetual diplomatic skill to manage, but in the agonistic context of competing superpowers, it is better to have allies than to stand alone. Indeed, the Russian goal has long involved efforts to split the United States from its European allies.

And the lesson for US policy in the Middle East? The Middle East lacks a security architecture comparable to NATO or the Quad. US diplomacy should take a lead in building it. Obviously, any security arrangement in the Middle East will not be identical to either NATO or the Quad because of the different circumstances, histories, and geographies. However, in the face of intrusions by Russia and China and the efforts at regional destabilization by Iran—and given the implausibility of any major US military re-engagement

in the region—we need an alliance structure to maintain order, protect freedom of navigation, engage in counterterrorism, and counter malign activities supported by our adversaries.

Fortunately, a number of factors have set the stage for US leadership to build a network of like-minded states. It is now up to Washington to seize this historic opportunity. The current Israeli government is ideologically broad, including, for the first time, an Arab party as part of the governing coalition.

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***Partnerships are strategic. Entering into a partnership with another country doesn't mean a blanket endorsement of all its policies.***

Israeli diplomacy has also built important bridges to some Arab states in the wake of the Abraham Accords. The Western inclination of key Gulf states is being reinforced

by interests in technological integration and by their perception that Iranian ambitions are threatening. The Saudi government has been carrying out a bold reform process unimaginable only a few years ago.

The thread that could stitch these diverse elements together is India, whose relations with Israel are flourishing and whose presence in the Gulf, in terms of investment and diaspora populations, is unmistakable. Because it is in the American interest to oppose China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has made substantial inroads in the region, India is a likely partner to counter Beijing and could become the cornerstone of a larger regional security strategy stretching from the Indo-Pacific to the Suez Canal and into the eastern Mediterranean, perhaps even to Turkey.

That is a grand vision that will require committed American diplomatic leadership. There are also undeniable obstacles. Some problems are relatively local and specific, such as differences among the Gulf states, which

Washington could work to resolve. The Palestinian question has lost much of its prominence, but it persists nonetheless;

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***Russia has long tried to split the United States from its European allies.***

given current leadership in Gaza and Ramallah it may be intractable, but a compromise solution ought to be in reach. The Biden administration's unwillingness to back Saudi Arabia firmly against missile attacks by the Houthis in Yemen is bizarre and should be corrected.

With regard to each of the large states that could become the anchors of a security network—Saudi Arabia, India, and potentially Turkey—bilateral

relations with Washington are stuck in unproductive ways: for India and Turkey, because of their purchases of the Russia S-400 air defense system and the deleterious role played by sanctions based on Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) legislation; and for Saudi Arabia, the animosity toward the crown prince in the wake of the Jamal Khashoggi killing. Potential partners are surely not always blameless, but American foreign policy leadership has to ask tough questions. Does standing on principle obstruct larger American strategic interests? Entering into an arrangement with another country does not mean a blanket endorsement of all its policies, but it can mean building a partnership to withstand a larger adversary.

In fact, entering into a partnership may even increase the leverage America has to influence a partner's policies, particularly in human rights. At the very least, Washington has to grapple with the question of whether it will treat criticism of rights issues in Saudi

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***Russia has reminded the world that China is not the only threat.***

Arabia, Turkey, and India as reasons to refrain from entering into an alliance structure. Pursuit of rights and pursuit of international security are both legitimate goals; political leadership should find a way to navigate the competition between them and find the right balance.

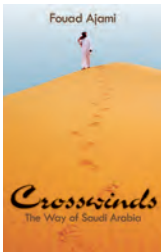
## **HEDGING OUR STRATEGIC BETS**

Finally, the geostrategic perspectives of the various countries that might be part of a Middle East security structure are by no means identical. As the United States is perceived to be withdrawing from the area, some regional states are hedging their bets. As Washington cold-shouldered Saudi leader Mohammed bin Salman, he could fly to Beijing. In a multi-polar world, countries have more than one option. Given the ambiguity of US positions in Syria, Israel has had to coordinate with Russia in its attacks on Hezbollah and Iranian positions there. India remains open to Iran, given long-standing historical ties, in obvious contrast to the United States.

Worth pondering, in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, was India's decision to abstain from the UN Security Council vote calling for a General Assembly emergency session. It remains to be seen whether this was an indication of vestigial affinity for Russia or an effort to carve out a diplomatic role as a potential mediator between the sides of the conflict.

Organizing a security structure in this vast region will not be an easy problem to solve, but doing so is vital for US interests in the face of competitive adversaries. Washington should devote considerable diplomatic energy—and other resources—to building connections linking India through the Gulf and into the core of the Middle East. One might think of this as a multidimensional expansion of the Abraham Accords across a much larger area. The payoff in terms of regional stability and maintaining American influence could be long-lasting. ■

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# Axis of Troublemakers

**China and Russia have formed an alliance of disruption. Both culture wars and shooting wars play into their hands.**

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**By Michael R. Auslin**

**F**our years ago, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping made pancakes together in Vladivostok while thousands of their military forces conducted joint exercises in Siberia. In February, as China hosted the Olympics, Putin and Xi announced that a new era in international relations had begun, one in which the two great authoritarian powers of the twenty-first century would reshape the liberal international order established in 1945 and reaffirmed in 1991. Some call it Cold War II, yet the blossoming relationship between Moscow and Beijing may best be thought of as an alliance of disruptors.

As Russia roils Europe over Ukraine and China turns its attention to Taiwan after crushing Hong Kong's democracy over the past two years, these two historically major powers are reasserting themselves almost in tandem. As a result, prospects for global destabilization are greater than at any time since the last gasp of Soviet adventurism in the 1980s.

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Beijing and Moscow are increasingly confident in their ability to disrupt Western influence in areas near and far from their borders. They are becoming bolder in their attempts to frame narratives—even if that means peddling outright falsehoods—in order to delegitimize liberal institutions. They grow more and more comfortable with conducting aggressive behavior in the name of “self-defense” or global peace.

## **PROFITING FROM PROBLEMS**

One should not go too far in presuming that Moscow and Beijing have become (as Mao Zedong once put it) as close as lips and teeth. A binding military treaty between the two is unlikely ever to happen, and centuries of distrust will remain under the surface.

Since the seventeenth century, the two have clashed over territory in Siberia and jockeyed for power in eastern Asia, along with Japan and the United States. As recently as 1969, they fought an undeclared war for seven months along their Ussuri River border.

Moscow has watched warily as Beijing has made economic and political inroads in Central Asia through its Belt and Road Initiative, gaining influence in areas once under Russian sway. Meanwhile, a resource-starved China has long looked covetously at the abundance of natural resources in thinly populated Russian Siberia and is eyeing a polar navigation route through Russian Arctic waters that might cut weeks off the transit to Europe for cargo ships.

By objective geopolitical calculations, Moscow and Beijing should consider each other their biggest obstacle in dominating Eurasia. Yet ideology, opportunism, and ambition make strange bedfellows. Indeed, Xi and Putin declared in their sprawling five-thousand-word press release that there were “no limits” to either their friendship or their cooperation.

The nature of that “cooperation” is aimed at the “redistribution of power in the world,” according to their joint statement. The document warns of the “negative impact of the United States’ Indo-Pacific strategy,” criticizes Japan, and expresses “serious concern” about the new Australia-UK-US (Aukus) agreement, among a host of other complaints about Western attempts to shore up the power of democracies in the east.

“Communist China is the biggest threat to freedom in the world,” notes Nikki Haley, former US ambassador to the United Nations. “With Russia as its junior partner, the threat is even more formidable.” Russia, for its part, gains a heavyweight diplomatic voice by working with Beijing. Moscow can use China to limit damage from Western sanctions and gain access to alternative financial systems beyond Western-controlled Swift bank transfers.

Knowing that China is friendly, Russia can potentially shift military forces from the east to its western front, according to Jakub Grygiel, who worked on Eastern Europe affairs for the US State Department's Policy Planning Staff.

Buried in boilerplate statements of support for “global governance” and international organizations, the new allies are waging an intensely ideological campaign against free-market democracy—and the West underestimates this strategy at its peril. The two antagonists can coordinate their ideological attacks on Western values, undermining the legitimacy of liberal societies while stoking class and racial divisions by feeding the culture wars that so dominate our media.

Ukraine is the immediate crisis. Beijing has made clear it won't help the West defuse tensions, at the same time cannily refusing to support Russia. Yet in joining Russia in opposing the expansion of NATO and calling for “legally binding security guarantees” in Europe (for Russian interests), China shows more interest in keeping Putin happy than it does European leaders.

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***Moscow and Beijing should be clashing in the drive to dominate Eurasia. Yet ideology, opportunism, and ambition make strange bedfellows.***

Conflict over Ukraine therefore suits Xi's agenda perfectly. Any trouble in Europe that absorbs American (and Russian) attention is a geopolitical boon to China's goals in the Indo-Pacific region. And even if NATO becomes reinvigorated in response to Putin's threat, Western powers are unlikely to take the added risk of challenging Chinese moves in Asia.

## **AMIALE NEIGHBORS—WHEN IT SUITS THEM**

There is little that Russia can do to help with China's number one priority, Taiwan. However, as the joint communique indicates, Moscow can help Beijing's long-term goals by further undermining the legitimacy of a US-led alliance and Western efforts to build multinational networks in Asia.

Russia and China can together paint new US security initiatives, such as Aukus and the “Quad” grouping of Australia, India, Japan, and America, as a threat to regional peace. That gives Beijing and Moscow a means to gain influence with smaller countries in Asia and positions their Shanghai Cooperation Organization as the legitimate alternative.

On the economic front, former president Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership helped strengthen China's own Regional

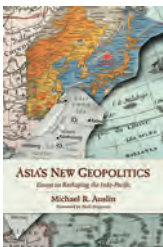
Comprehensive Economic Partnership and benefited Belt and Road. Despite some warm words, the Biden administration has not yet indicated that it will join the Japanese-led alternative to Chinese economic dominance, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Xi and Putin feel unchecked. The West's failure to respond meaningfully to atrocities against the Uighurs in Xinjiang or the takeover of Hong Kong, as well as America's shambolic withdrawal from Afghanistan in the first months of the Biden administration, only confirm their sense of ascendancy. "America's capacity to defend itself from great powers diminishes the more our adversaries are able to call our bluff and see we are not able to bear the cost of proactive security," argues Iowa senator Joni Ernst. Any further weakening of the United States will reduce Washington's effectiveness throughout Asia, call into question the credibility of its alliances, and help further isolate Taiwan.

In other areas—such as global governance, arms control, cyber activity, and space exploration—China and Russia proclaim their support for international cooperation. In reality, they prefer disruptive actions, such as their attempts to politicize international groups such as the World Trade Organization, the rapid modernization of their nuclear forces, continued rampant cyberattacks, and anti-satellite missile tests. Moreover, China and Russia continue to destabilize both hemispheres, whether by shoring up North Korea or stirring up Argentine fantasies of retaking the Falklands.

The age of Russo-Chinese disruption has been going on for a while, often supported by junior partners such as Iran, Pakistan, or Venezuela. Moscow and Beijing's recent announcement of their relationship simply formalizes policies long decided and actions already undertaken. The question those who wish to downplay the Moscow-Beijing axis must ask is: how much disruption is the West willing to bear? ■

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# *Would We Really Defend Taiwan?*

**Washington has played a long diplomatic game—unofficial ties, “strategic ambiguity”—with the Republic of China. If China tries to take Taiwan by force, it’s game over.**

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***By Jacquelyn Schneider***

**F**or the past four decades, the United States and China have maintained a delicate compromise regarding Taiwan. The United States describes its relationship with the island as “robustly unofficial” and affirms the Chinese view that “there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China”—and for that reason does not support explicit Taiwan independence. Its unofficial relationship with Taiwan, however, extends to selling the government American weapons, sending a limited number of advisory troops to the island, and maintaining a “cultural” presence (for instance, economic and cultural offices that act as de facto embassies). US presidents since Richard Nixon have played this diplomatic game, opting for strategic ambiguity about US commitments to defend Taiwan.

But in some quarters these days, strategic ambiguity is sounding a lot less ambiguous. Republican members of Congress have introduced

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legislation that increases US military sales to Taiwan and expands military exchanges between the two countries. At least two bipartisan congressional delegations have visited the island recently; there's a new Taiwan Assurance Act—requiring the United States to advocate Taiwanese membership in international organizations—and President Biden, in an off-the-cuff statement, surprised observers by seeming to say the United States was committed to defending Taiwan in the event of an invasion. Further, recent polling suggests that for the first time in many years, a majority of the American public support defending Taiwan, while an even greater percentage support a more formal alliance with the island. And some influential foreign policy elites share that view: in December, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, writing with research fellow David Sacks, asserted that “Strategic ambiguity was a shrewd and effective approach for decades; now, however, it has run its course.”

While there is increasingly bipartisan support for more assertive declarations in support of Taiwanese defense, the discussions tend to remain fairly abstract. When there is public discussion of what a war might look like, it tends toward descriptions of long-range air and naval campaigns in which stealthy submarines, fighter jets, and cruise missiles use American satellites and intelligence resources to defeat an invading Chinese force. This is a narrative of technological overmatch that has dominated the American public narrative about war since Desert Storm.

But Xi Jinping is not Saddam Hussein, nor is the People's Liberation Army the Iraqi military. Instead, the PLA is the largest army in the world and has,

under Xi's leadership, expanded its nuclear forces, developed hypersonic missiles, and acquired aircraft that approach the sophistication of the American F-35. Further, the PLA has devoted sig-

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***Telling the American public that the United States can come to the rescue of Taiwan without significant loss of life is potentially dishonest. It's also bad for deterrence.***

nificant resources to amphibious invasion capabilities, including eight marine brigades, new amphibious vessels, and a large maritime militia. All of these developments, coupled with the logistical difficulty the United States would have defending Taiwan without forces that have been placed in advance on the island, mean that the defense of the island could be the bloodiest conflict the United States has experienced since Vietnam.



***WE WILL RESIST:*** Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, speaks in front of a domestically produced fighter jet during a visit to Penghu Air Force Base in September 2020. Recent polls suggest that for the first time in many years, a majority of the American public supports defending Taiwan. What that might mean, however, is unclear. [Sam Yeh—AFP]

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## UNKNOWN S

It's hard to say exactly how bloody it would be. Even while declassified war gaming results, think tank reports, and congressional testimony ring alarm bells about rising Chinese capabilities, very few of these detail the human losses the hypothetical clash would bring. For example, while commentators sometimes discuss the strategic impact of the Chinese DF-21 missile, dubbed an "aircraft carrier killer," they rarely specify that the sinking of a Nimitz-class carrier could kill as many as 6,000 sailors.

So even a high-tech air and naval fight to defend Taiwan could lead to thousands of lives lost. But if the United States were to commit land forces to defend the island, the Army would face a difficult and potentially contested deployment, arriving to fight alongside a Taiwanese military with whom it has limited to no experience. There is no official estimate for Army casualties in such a scenario, but when the United States defended the Philippines against an invading Japanese force in World War II, it lost 25,000 troops, and almost 100,000 were captured. If the United States had to re-invade

the island after a Chinese invasion, that would lead to even more casualties. The United States lost about 23,000 troops in its re-invasion of the Philippines. Even the most successful re-invasion campaigns—for example, the US landing at Inchon in 1950, during the Korean War—killed more US personnel than died in all but four of the twenty years the United States was in Afghanistan.

Finally, there is the ever-present threat of nuclear escalation as the United States and China struggle to defeat each other in Taiwan without inadvertently crossing each other's red lines. The costs of such a miscalculation would be incomprehensibly catastrophic.

## **HARSH LESSONS IN KOREA, VIETNAM**

Defending a democracy from an autocratic China may very well be worth even an extremely steep cost. And I would warn Chinese onlookers not to underestimate US capabilities and will when the nation chooses a fight—especially after American lives are lost.

But the United States needs to have a conversation about what defending Taiwan really entails *before* a Chinese invasion. Selling a narrative to the American public that the United States can come to the rescue of Taiwan without significant loss of life is potentially dishonest, bad for deterrence, and disastrous for military effectiveness. Washington runs the risk of falling into traps that confounded the United States in both Korea and Vietnam. In the case of Korea, the United States didn't fully understand its own commitment to South Korea until after a calamitous North Korean invasion. In the years after World War II, the Truman administration had been debating US interests in the Pacific, withdrawing forces from South Korea,

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***Even a high-tech air and naval fight to defend Taiwan could lead to thousands of lives lost.***

and sending ambiguous signals about the United States' willingness to come to the country's defense. When North Korea launched a surprise

attack, South Korean troops couldn't combat the invasion and were pushed to the far southern tip of the peninsula. It took a major US re-mobilization and a gutsy invasion of the peninsula to win back the territory that had been lost.

In Vietnam, more famously, the public felt duped about the cost of an "advisory force" that turned into a large-scale war and conscription.

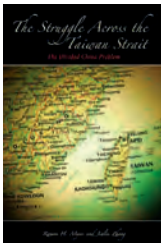
Some hawks are keen to galvanize public support for firm assurances to defend Taiwan. They're concerned that a perception of public uninterest in the island's fate might decrease deterrence and ultimately lead China to invade.

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***Xi Jinping is not Saddam Hussein.***

But it would be a grave mistake for the United States to promise to defend Taiwan without preparing its public—and its soldiers—for the tough fight they could face. ■

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# Ostpolitik Meets West

**Vladimir Putin just gave Berlin a wake-up call. But how long will Germany stay awake?**

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*By Josef Joffe*

Vladimir Putin must feel like a lapdog that's suddenly banished from the couch to the basement. Since 2008, when he set out to restore the Soviet empire, he has piled up territory at little risk and cost. He subdued Georgia, grabbed Crimea, pushed into the Middle East, and sliced off Ukraine's southeast. All the while, the West refused to raise the price. It slapped him with mild penalties while preaching the virtues of diplomacy. Presidents Obama and Trump actually pulled troops from Europe.

Now, after the lunge into Ukraine, the biggest surprise is Russia's loss of Germany, for decades a most reliable partner. Suddenly, the country at the fulcrum of the European balance has stopped seesawing, plunked down in the West, and traded striped pants for fatigues. The country is promising to re-arm. It has imposed nasty sanctions on Russia and is letting weapons get to Ukraine.

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***MAINLINING: The Nord Stream 2 pipeline, owned by a subsidiary of Gazprom, is shown under construction in Russia. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced in February that the project would be halted because of the invasion of Ukraine. At the time of the invasion, Germany was drawing 55 percent of its gas and 45 percent of its oil from Russia.*** [Nord Stream 2/EyePress]

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For more than fifty years, Bonn and later Berlin had taken a pacific approach: Don't rile the Russians; enmesh them in trade and diplomacy. Huddle under America's nuclear umbrella but stay on Moscow's good side. Nord Stream 2, the gas pipeline from Russia, was but the latest symbol of *druzhba*—friendship.

Since 1970, the Federal Republic has financed a vast network that would feed the country's industrial machine with plentiful Russian gas. Never mind the carping from Washington. All presidents since Richard Nixon correctly foresaw the strategic dependence trillions of cubic feet would impose. Yet as late as 2021, when Chancellor Angela Merkel stepped down, Berlin clung to the deal. As Gazprom's best customer, Germany draws 55 percent of its gas and 45 percent of its oil from Russia.

The larger point is geostrategic. Germany has been in and of the West but not always with it, balancing and mediating between the blocs. Blame geography and Otto von Bismarck, who famously counseled: "Never cut the link to St. Petersburg." Russia is so near, and America so far. So, don't confront,

don't provoke, even while Putin shifts toward imperialism.

Germany, the world's fourth-largest economy, shrugged off military power, though it could afford it. With the end of the Cold War, the Bundeswehr turned into a waif. Three thousand main battle tanks dwindled to 260;



[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]



the backbone of the Luftwaffe, the Tornados, are destined for the scrap heap. Even as Russian divisions encircled Ukraine, Chancellor Olaf Scholz went off on a mission to Moscow, competing for the broker's fee with President Emmanuel Macron of France.

Thus, the cosmic surprise. Scholz, this peace-minded Social Democrat, unleashed a diplomatic revolution, turning *Ostpolitik* upside down. Nord Stream 2, which Merkel had defended to the last, won't be completed, at least for now. Defense spending is to be increased to 2 percent of gross domestic product, a long-standing NATO goal honored consistently in the breach. Germany will buy advanced F-35 fighters from the United States. It is joining the rest of the West with sanctions that bite. Scholz also wants to have two liquefied natural gas terminals to cut into Russia's blackmail potential.

Reluctant to provoke the bully in the Kremlin, Germany had always denied arms to Kyiv. Now it wants to send not only armor and antitank gear but also Stinger anti-aircraft missiles that come with a sly message. In the 1980s these hand-held devices tilted the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets.

Suddenly, all Bundestag factions save the pro-Russian Left Party, descendant of the East German Communists, project a mood change that defies past pliancy. Who would have thought Scholz would call for the "strength" that must "impose limits on Putin, the warmonger"? Propitiation was baked into Germany's postwar soul. And not only the political class is fuming. Resentment reaches all the way to the soccer pitch where Schalke, a prominent club, has torn the Gazprom logo from its blue jerseys.



Which raises a question: how long will the revulsion last—not only in Germany but in the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, even eternally neutral Switzerland, which has joined in? Realism suggests caution. A perfect welfare state like Germany is unlikely to max out defense spending overnight, especially while COVID is claiming billions of euros.

Nor will Germany cut itself off from Russian gas, given that the country wants to save the planet by ditching coal in 2038. Its last three nuclear power

plants are still slated to be decommissioned by year's end. Will Germans really shiver for Kyiv next winter? Will the West fully expel Russia from Swift,

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***Reluctant to provoke the bully in the Kremlin, Germany had always denied arms to Kyiv.***

the global payments system? If so, Germany in particular can say goodbye to billions in Russian credit as long as the lockdown lasts.

The biggest question transcends Germany. It is posed by the Chinese joker in the game. Beijing shares with Moscow the ambition to topple the United States from its perch as the world's number one. Pressed too hard, Putin will demonstrably move into Xi Jinping's embrace to damage the United States. Never mind that China and Russia are natural rivals. Right now, intensified collusion is a no-brainer. If China sidles up to Russia, the United States will pay the price of justice for Ukraine.

If Putin does ultimately crush Ukraine, he will shift the balance of power against Europe, which breeds intimidation. And in any case, Europe will still have to live with Russia and won't want to anger this ruthless giant forever. Baiting the bear isn't a sustainable strategy. Geography is destiny. ■

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# *Feeding the Fires of Inflation*

**“Modern monetary theory” holds that a profligate government can always just print more money. Is there a more reckless belief?**

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**By Kevin A. Hassett**

**T**he Federal Reserve’s announcement in January that it was gearing up for a round of tightening in response to runaway inflation raised the question: where did this inflation mess come from?

To some extent, we might stop to blame the word *modern*. That word used to be grand; you would be happy to have a kitchen filled with modern appliances, or to be a modern man. But today, the word has become a weapon wielded by cancel culture’s activists. In economics, the most infamous use of the word is in the creation of “modern monetary theory” (MMT), which suggests that the government can just print money to finance runaway expenditures. There is a strong case to be made that inflation is spinning out of control right now in large part because of MMT.

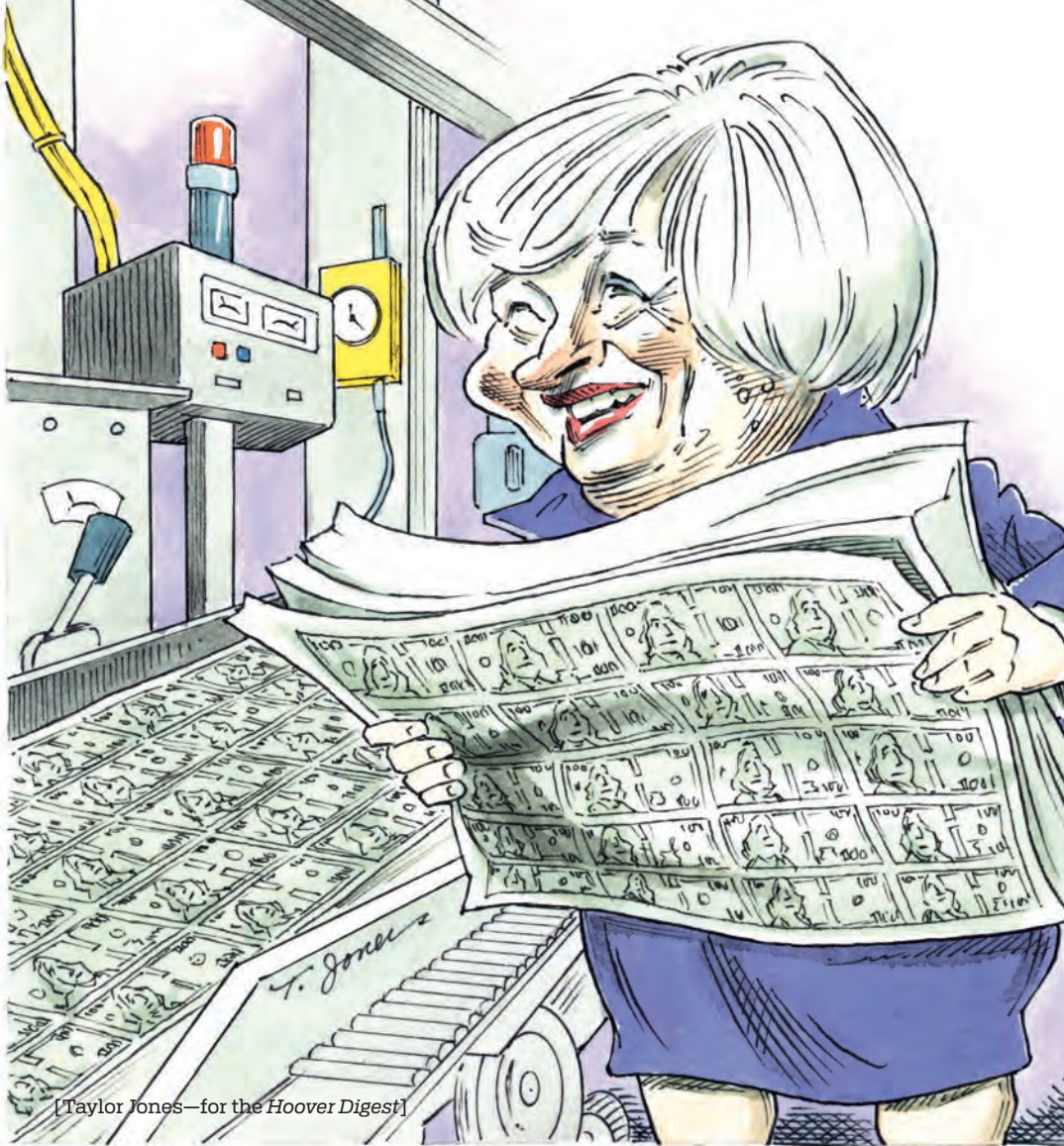
There are two reasons MMT is to blame. First, Democrats embraced MMT at the beginning of the Biden administration and then passed astonishingly large spending increases when the economy was near full employment. This was true at the fringe, where Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Bernie Sanders explicitly referenced the theory, but also in the

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establishment, where Janet Yellen asserted that it was important to “go big” with spending because inflation was easy to control. Second, if markets began to believe that policy makers truly embraced MMT, they would



[Taylor Jones—for the Hoover Digest]

expect more inflationary policies in the future. This would remove the expectations anchor that has stabilized inflation for decades.

As we look ahead to a year of Federal Reserve tightening, the effectiveness of the central bank's policy will depend both on the interest-rate sensitivity of economic activity and on the Fed's ability to restore markets' faith in the commitment of policy makers to policies that restore price stability. For that, they need the Biden administration's help. In other words, if we want to whip inflation now, the Democratic threat of continuing to use MMT as an excuse for runaway spending must be addressed as well, lest expectations be completely unmoored.

Against this backdrop, one would have to classify Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's Davos speech as one of the most serious policy threats to the future of our economy launched by a treasury secretary. In it, she introduced the idea of "modern supply-side economics," or MSSE—unfortunately for Yellen, this will forever be (appropriately) pronounced "messy." Indeed, instead of rejecting the word *modern* to address the expectations crisis, the administration is recklessly spreading it like inflationary fertilizer.

What is "modern" supply-side economics? According to Secretary Yellen, it begins with the rejection of traditional Reaganesque supply-side economics that advocates a policy focus on stimulating capital formation through low taxes and deregulation. "Significant tax cuts on capital have not achieved their promised gains," the secretary said in the speech. "And deregulation has a similarly poor track record." On this assertion, the treasury secretary was factually challenged. As documented extensively in the 2018 and 2019 *Economic Reports of the President*, the academic literature decisively supports traditional supply-side economics, as does the evidence after the Trump tax cuts. Second, the literature and evidence also strongly support the view that deregulation has large positive economic effects.

Continuing her journey away from the facts, Yellen added that "this approach has deepened disparities in income and wealth by shifting the burden of taxation away from capital and towards labor," ignoring the fact that income inequality *declined sharply* after the Trump tax cuts.

So how did she intend to replace this "failed" theory? With President Biden's troubled Build Back Better plan, evidently. Yellen argued that BBB, which doubled down on the idea that government spending can "go big," would deliver economic growth that isn't "just focused on achieving a high top-line growth number that is unsustainable—we are instead aiming for growth that is inclusive and green."



Yellen then cited four agenda items that exemplify the “modern” version of the theory. The first is the enormous expansion of child care expenditures in the BBB plan. This, she argued, would increase the labor supply because parents could go back to work supported by almost-free child care. The second is the commitment to large increases in federal spending on training and education—despite the remarkable dearth of evidence that either has improved productivity. The third is the continued interest in ever more infrastructure spending. This, at least, plausibly has supply-side effects—Arthur Laffer himself never argued against bridges, so this leg of the stool hardly deserves the moniker “modern.” Finally, she argued for a higher corporate-tax burden, ignoring the literature on the negative effects it has on supply and, accordingly, on inflation.

In other words, “modern supply-side economics” is just a “messy” corollary of modern monetary theory. If you want to deliver a strong economy, let the government finance enormous spending with the printing press and high taxes. These policies, of course, will not have the desired effect, but they will run the risk of dramatically increasing inflation expectations—even if they’re not enacted. After all, Democrats may well be able to enact this agenda in the future, and, in the meantime, they will choose the members of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve.

Since the days of Alexander Hamilton, it has been the role of the treasury secretary to defend the value of US debt—including, as Secretary Robert Rubin did so effectively, reminding Congress of the risks of runaway spending.

No more. The inflation pot is boiling, and Secretary Yellen has poured gasoline on the fire. ■

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# Renewing Indigenous Economies

**For decades, patronizing laws and government inertia have held Native Americans hostage. It's time the tribes were free to prosper on their own terms.**

**By Terry L. Anderson and Kathy Ratté**

**T**he history of Indigenous economies in the Americas presents a puzzle: the societies encountered by the first Europeans were generally prosperous but Indian

## Key points

- » American Indians were well-acquainted with private property long before European contact.
- » Indigenous norms and customs focused on managing shared resources such as foraging territory, fisheries, and hunting grounds.
- » Romantic views toward Native American property rights continue to erode those rights.

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peoples today are devastatingly poor. Archaeology and history confirm that precontact American Indian cultures did, indeed, generate wealth and well-being. Let us explore why they no longer do so and whether they could once again.

Indigenous Americans were neither antagonistic to wealth nor ignorant of how it is created. The Native American wealth encountered by European explorers did not materialize like manna from nature's bounty; it was the product of human ingenuity, productivity, and exchange. As a result, American Indians did not just survive; they thrived.

Former chief of the Canadian Kamloops Indian Band C. T. Manny Jules has long been an active advocate for empowerment of Native peoples through economic development and self-administration based on the successful dynamics of their precolonial cultures. In a foreword to a book about aboriginal property rights, Jules recounts the experience that awakened him to the sophistication of precontact Indigenous institutions.

In autumn 1997, I travelled . . . to eastern Mexico. It was the first time I had been there. The reason I had gone was to visit Chichen Itza, where every year during the spring and fall equinox the sun casts a shadow which resembles a snake descending to the ground. The shadow joins up perfectly with the carved stone snake's head at the base of the pyramid. The pyramids, monuments, and other public infrastructure at Chichen Itza were built around AD 600, or 1,400 years ago.

As I stared, I had an epiphany. Our people built this without the aid of federal government funding. We had governments that financed themselves. Our governments were able to provide the infrastructure and institutions to build a thriving economy that supported millions of us. . . . Market economies were not foreign to us. We created them ourselves. We traded goods over hundreds of miles. . . . Trade cannot be financed without capital. . . . We had to build transportation methods such as boats. We had to build large public buildings and maintain armies to provide order. These required community investments based on a future return to the community and to individuals. We used money such as dentalium shells and wampum strings. We had individual property rights. . . . According to our written history, my community had





***CATCHING UP: A member of the Yurok Tribe uses a dip net to fish for salmon on the Klamath River in California. In times past, weirs built to trap spawning fish were among the property held by Native American tribes.*** [Newscom]

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individual property rights dating back to the early 1800s to specify where our potato crops were.

Although these institutions were undermined by colonization, they remain a part of Indigenous heritage that begs for renewal. As Jules notes, “We achieved success because we created a balance between our individual creativity and our collective responsibility.” Or, to put it in the words of his ancestors, “We will make each other good and great.” This is a powerful mantra in the struggle for economic revitalization.

## **THE LIVES OF INSTITUTIONS**

Manny Jules was describing what economists call *institutions*, and he recognizes that institutions adapt and evolve as environmental conditions change, and that they can be destroyed. Understanding institutions and institutional

change is key to understanding both the relative prosperity of precolonial Indian tribes and the persistent poverty of today's reservations.

Nobel Prize-winning economic historian Douglass C. North awakened us to the importance of institutions, which he dubbed "the rules of the game." These are the accepted and expected behaviors of social interaction—sets of formal and informal rules that range from the simplicity of table manners to the complexity of electing presidents.

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***"Market economies were not foreign to us. We created them ourselves. We traded goods over hundreds of miles."***

Incentives are the rewards or punishments created by institutions and are inherent to the strength or weakness of any set of rules of the

game. Waitstaff in restaurants are rewarded for courtesy and promptness with tips. Businesspeople are rewarded or punished by reputations that attract or repel customers. Families, neighborhoods, and other groups that interact face to face have their own rules of the game. In the larger society, markets—our fundamental economic institutions—facilitate interactions with strangers. Markets generate wealth because they allow us to enter into exchanges, at low cost, with an ever-widening circle of people we do not know.

The institutions of our everyday lives were also part and parcel of precontact Native American life. Their norms and customs were not written down and were therefore less formal than laws today, but they were just as important. Whether the institutions were in the form of norms and customs or of more formal rules, they provided, in the precontact era, incentives for individuals and groups to be productive. Those institutions are generally lacking today.

One characteristic unique to human beings is the notion of what is mine and what is thine. In asserting ownership, individuals claim exclusive use of things and the right to enforce that claim against others. When a precontact Indian said "mine," it meant the same thing that "mine" means to us today. It asserts that the person saying it has a right to use the resource or capital good and to exclude others from use without his or her permission.

Claiming an exclusive right to use something need not mean "mine," singular. "Ours" broadens the claim to include others—the family, clan, or tribe—who collectively hold the right to use. Saying "mine" or "ours" requires the ability to enforce the right to exclude others from using the resource or good. Among the Plains tribes, for example, a tipi typically belonged to the wife as a family leader. It was up to her to determine who had rights of access. A

horse, however, was the property of an individual Indian and could not be used as if it were common property. It took strong, well-disciplined horses to run into a stampeding buffalo herd and keep up with the stronger buffalo. Such horses required considerable investment by the owner in training and discipline. An owner of a horse might lend it out, but there was an expectation of payment and of restitution if the horse were injured.

At the tribal level, claiming territory and claiming it as “ours” meant the tribe had to keep other tribes out of the territory unless they were invited in. Pekka Hämäläinen, in his book *Lakota America*, documents how the Lakota moved from the upper Great Lakes region onto the Great Plains in pursuit of buffalo. In so doing, they developed elaborate institutional structures for engaging in warfare to take territory from others or to defend their own territorial boundaries.

## MYTHS OF THE OLD WEST

The mythical Indian who did not believe in ownership of land and other resources is largely a romantic stereotype, unrecognizable to the people encountered by colonizing Europeans. In modern times this myth has been promoted by an advertisement in which Chief Seattle is quoted, fictitiously, as saying, “All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.” Yet the words in this oft-quoted speech are not his. They were written by Ted Perry, a scriptwriter who paraphrased a translation of the speech by William Arrowsmith, a professor of classics. Perry’s version added ecological imagery, according to one researcher.

The speech reflects a romantic view of Native Americans as stewards of the Earth based on

spiritual beliefs—which did undoubtedly play a role—rather than on ownership institutions that rewarded good stewardship.

The myth of non-ownership or totally communal ownership by American Indians was also promoted by European governments wanting to use the doctrine of discovery to establish sovereignty over vast tracts of land. Under the legal notion of *terra nullius*, meaning land deemed unoccupied or uninhabited, the colonies used the doctrine of discovery to justify claiming land. Robert Miller, author of *Reservation “Capitalism,”* reports a Virginia Company chaplain questioning the morality of occupying Native American lands: “By

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***When a precontact Indian said  
“mine,” it meant the same thing that  
“mine” means today.***

what right or warrant can we enter into the land of these Savages [and] take away their rightful inheritance?" The answer was *terra nullius*, meaning there was no need to trade with the Indians because the land was not theirs in the first place.

The mythically expedient assumption that Indians did not understand or utilize ownership ignored the fact that Indigenous peoples identified as personal property things that required a significant amount of time to produce and maintain. Ownership was an incentive to invest time and skill creating capital suited to harvesting the particular resources that sustained the tribe. In the hunting-based economies of the Plains tribes, bows, arrows, arrowheads, and spears were all privately owned. Marks on arrows identified the hunter or hunters responsible for the kill and entitled to the animal hide and choice pieces of meat. Throughout Indigenous America, clothes, weapons, utensils, and housing were owned by those who made them—often women.

Native American property rights provided the incentive for capital investments, and the returns on investments provided wealth that could be traded or given away as a matter of reciprocity. For example, rock walls used to channel buffalo over buffalo jumps or weirs to trap spawning fish required

significant human investment. This could not occur unless those humans had the capacity to produce surplus food to sustain them while

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***The mythical Indian who rejects ownership of land and other resources is largely a romantic stereotype.***

making this investment. Hence, property rights were key to producing surpluses—wealth—that could be consumed or used later.

Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, noted that although the Wampanoag lived in a loose scatter, they knew who had the right to use which plots of land, and were “very exact and punctual” in caring for property lines. Both communal and private property—some formal and some informal—emerged because tribes and individuals benefited from institutions that supported markets, lowered the costs of trade, and helped prevent the dissipation of scarce, valued resources.

Nomadic tribes practiced systems of use (usufruct) rights to identified territories. It made no sense for roving peoples to “own” land in the way sedentary Europeans did, but it did make sense to define access to hunting, and capture rights were generally awarded to successful hunters and trappers.

## SPECIALIZATION AND TRADE ARE UNIVERSAL

Markets are social institutions in which both formal and informal rules of the game emerge to facilitate and support trade. They exist whenever and wherever buyers and sell-

ers engage in voluntary exchange and are pervasive throughout time and across locations. Historically they have emerged and spread as the promise of mutual benefit created

powerful incentives for voluntary exchange among an ever-broadening circle of friends, neighbors, and strangers. The incentive to engage in voluntary exchange is the anticipation of being better off as a result of the trade, a reward expected by both parties in an exchange. If either party expects no benefit, no exchange will take place.

Adam Smith's enduring contribution to our understanding of economics was explaining how and why markets based on voluntary trade make individuals and societies wealthier. In *The Wealth of Nations*, he argued that markets improve citizens' well-being, no matter their rank or position in society, by expanding their choices about how to earn and what to consume. He identified the source of this market magic as human beings' natural tendency to specialize and trade, or, as he put it, "the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another is common to all men, and to be found in no other race of animals."

Long before Native Americans encountered Europeans and before any of them might have read

Adam Smith, they recognized that specialization is the process of limiting production to specific goods or services in order to increase output

by lowering costs and encouraging innovation, and that trade—voluntary exchange—based on specialization gives people access to the things they do not or cannot produce for themselves. By freeing individuals from having to produce everything they consume, trade generates greater wealth, whether material, cultural, or spiritual.

Specialization and exchange are basic human instincts, not unique features of political systems. People do not have to be taught how to create markets,

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***Under the legal doctrine of terra nullius, colonizers concluded that there was no need to trade with the Indians because the land was not theirs in the first place.***

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***Ownership, in the traditional way, meant investing time and skill to create capital suited to harvesting the resources that sustained the tribe.***



nor must they be able to quote Adam Smith to reap benefits from participating in them. If the institutional rules of the game allow it, they discover on their own that specialization and trade serve their self-interest. Such was

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***Long before Native Americans might have read Adam Smith, they recognized the value of trade.***

clearly the case for Indigenous peoples, who created sophisticated trade networks long before Europeans crossed the Atlantic Ocean.

Markets do not operate in a vacuum. Initiating and sustaining economic growth requires institutions that support specialization and voluntary trade and that increase production. Almost everything that is produced requires physical and human capital, so economic growth depends on continual capital improvement and accumulation—from land, buildings, tools, and technology to the skills of people who design, build, and operate machinery and software, and who organize and innovate. It is difficult to accumulate capital without property rights, stable government, and sound banking and financial systems.

Native North and South Americans fully understood the need for capital investment and for currency and accounting that would reduce the cost of market transactions. Without capital markets—i.e., wealth produced, saved, and invested in future productivity—how could these “primitive” societies have built the Maya, Aztec, and Inca pyramids; the Anasazi cliff dwellings; or the Monks Mound? In short, Native Americans were capitalists. ■

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# *A Rational Immigration Policy*

**Between the recklessness of throwing open the borders and the shortsightedness of slamming them shut, there remains a reasonable middle way.**

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**By Richard A. Epstein**

Nations both large and small must define their approach to immigration, that is, the movement into their territories of individuals who are not citizens by birth. On the one side are nations like Japan, which have historically tolerated virtually no permanent immigration. On the other side are nations that have for extended periods opened their borders to extensive immigration, often with great

## **Key points**

- » The need for communal security is ancient, and it depends on newcomers upholding and contributing to it.
- » Immigration, like trade, must be a win-win proposition to succeed.
- » US policy must focus on the gains from legal immigration and work to avoid the many downsides of illegal crossings.

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success, as was the American experience from about 1900 to the beginning of the First World War. There are many workable approaches to immigration, but open borders is not among them. Expanding the categories of lawful immigrants is.

Understanding this issue requires a robust account of why nations uniformly adopt exclusive territories in the first place. National borders are latecomers in the origin of the species. Individual families could never have survived on their own, but clans of closely related individuals could as hunter-gatherers, moving by necessity from place to place as natural resources were consumed. Long-term ownership of land—the precursor for national territories—arose only with the development of agriculture. The old maxim “only those who sow shall reap” is an early recognition of the principle. Agriculture requires a front-end investment to clear the land and tend to the crops. That system would collapse if outsiders could harvest crops (perhaps before they were fully ripe) for themselves, leaving the planters with no returns for their extensive labor. Cultivation thus required exclusivity, as did the construction of other complementary long-term assets like homes, granaries, stores, and factories.

But how to secure these borders? No individual could do that alone, so communities had to form collective structures. It is far cheaper to build a

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***For reasons of communal safety, newcomers to a society had to participate on a par with the insiders—that is, as citizens.***

single wall around the checkerboard of individual owners than it is to build a wall around each individual unit. City walls thus became an early form of common property,

which the Romans called *res sanctae*, that could not be partitioned by any citizen. All were required to contribute to the upkeep and guarding of these walls to ensure that they would not be breached.

However, the smallish clans viable in a hunter-gatherer society were not large enough to organize, maintain, and defend these larger entities. Key deals thus had to be cut to make sure that some outsiders were allowed into any closed community on condition that they observe its norms and contribute their fair share to the common defense. Thinking of this venture as an extended partnership quickly makes clear that the territorial incumbents had to be careful in the selection of their new partners. They must prevent enemies from coming within their gates. And, even among friends, the ultimate test was whether the admission of the new group members left the incumbents at least as well off as they were before.

In other words, state expansion had to be a win-win proposition, just as with extended partnerships, and this implies that open borders were never viable historically. Outsiders could not be let into that community, especially permanently, on the simple, one-time, unsecured promise that they would respect the persons and property of the current citizens. Such a situation would motivate perverse incentives, and win-lose transactions are politically and socially unstable.

## ONE FOR ALL

Indeed, for existing communities, it was not enough historically that the outsiders agreed to follow all the libertarian norms of respect of others' property or reliance on voluntary agreements without force and fraud. Those conditions go a long way to allowing entry into a given territory to be a win-win transaction, but they are not sufficient. As with contemporary communities, every person has to contribute the creation of the necessary public goods concerning protection against outsiders, as well as the organization of the necessary social and political infrastructure. These contributions required outsiders to participate on a par with the insiders—akin to citizens of the state.

Private organizations have long understood that all collective decisions are easier to make if the group members have common values, a common heritage, and a common language. The smaller the variance of any of these dimensions, the easier it is to converge on a solution that does not effectively disenfranchise those persons who may otherwise lose out in some political tussle. Thus, every institution must impress on its members that public officers hold a public trust to give equal treatment to their supporters and opponents alike, but given the

temptation for self-

interest, the enforcement

of this duty is far easier

where the preferences of

the community fall within some band that is likely to get smaller over time. In this regard, modern democracies have expansive conceptions of public goods that ironically are less able to tolerate a diversity of citizen preferences than those societies that commit far less to the central government.

But when nations have within them individuals of different ethnic and religious clans, the distribution of preferences may no longer assume a normal distribution—it is heavily weighted at both tails, such that small shifts in power can result in dramatic shifts in policies, creating high levels of instability with deadly consequences against indigenous peoples. It was not for

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***The United States never practiced a system of completely open borders.***

nothing that at the very last moment, the greater India that existed under British rule had to separate with much bloodshed and turbulence into India and Pakistan upon independence; religious commitments only increase the spread of preferences. These points suggest that territorial separation—no easy matter—combined with free trade (including movement of persons on short-term arrangements) is a safer way to proceed in such cases.

So what does this suggest about the modern United States? To some writers, such as Ilya Somin, the indisputable gains from trade from immigrant communities with high skill levels will be lost to a focus on high barriers to immigration. That insight, as I have long argued, should lead the United States to abandon the crude protectionism that prevents foreigners from taking jobs from Americans performing the same services. It should also lead to a determined effort to ensure that the current DACA program is not scrapped by political intrigue, with the goal of developing a permanent solution.

Yet this argument does not call for a system of open borders that admits all sorts of people who do not satisfy the win-win condition I mentioned. Historically, the United States never practiced a system of completely open borders. At the height of immigration from Europe from 1900 to 1915, most potential

immigrants came by boat, which made it far easier to monitor them. In a highly sensible regime, medical examinations and

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### ***City walls were an early form of common property.***

quarantines were required of passengers who were at greater risk of carrying infectious diseases and were given the opportunity to heal, such that they were simply sent home (the steamship company that brought them to the United States had to pay if they did not return to health). At the same time, assistance to new immigrants was supplemented by private organizations like the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

These conditions are impossible to replicate under today's far greater levels of mobility. And there are dire and dangerous consequences from illegal immigration at the Southern border. Illegal immigration brings acute problems: for example, it can include entrance into the United States by people infected with contagious diseases and it permits continuous and destructive trespasses on border lands. Border control forces performed some 1.9 million arrests at the Southern border in 2021—of whom about four hundred thousand were released into the United States pending some asylum hearing. The further these new illegal immigrants move inside the United States, the greater the conflicts between the federal government that claims exclusive



jurisdiction over these matters and state attorneys general, who claim that local arrest and detention of these immigrants is not pre-empted by federal statute—itself a knotty legal dispute. On the one side, Washington state asserts its reserved powers to limit the Trump administration efforts at deportation. On the other, recent lawsuits by Republican attorneys general in Texas and Florida try to coax the federal government to regain control over the border, where illegal immigration has continued under President Biden.

On top of this, an open-borders policy allows foreign governments, families, and underground entrepreneurs to send minor children into the United States unattended—a heartbreaking tragedy.

## FOCUSED IMMIGRATION

In light of the current situation, I have come to agree with Tim Kane, whose new book, *The Immigrant Superpower*, makes “the conservative case for more *legal* immigration and zero *illegal* immigration.” The first part of that program seeks to promote legal immigration by expanding the various categories of legal immigration that have long helped make this nation a superpower. Ending illegal immigration need not require this country to turn its back on problems of poverty and starvation throughout the world. It remains possible to create legal channels to provide explicit legal support for some indigent immigrants. And it makes eminently good sense to provide—perhaps in cooperation with other wealthier nations—substantial assistance to blighted countries to reduce the pressure for migrants to flee to other countries.

This approach also countenances a stronger military policy to prevent the human tragedies in lands like Afghanistan, which in the wake of last summer’s US pullout faces a famine, a problem that in turn creates an appalling refugee problem. Sensible ideas about immigration balance the interests at stake. ■

*Special to the Hoover Digest.*



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# Humanizing Migrants

**Vladimir Putin specializes in turning refugees into pawns. Amid the mass migration from Ukraine, Europe must learn how to handle the push and pull of conflict.**

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**By Ayaan Hirsi Ali**

For the past three decades, Europe's leaders have pursued a noble strategy to prevent conflict using trade, aid, and diplomacy. But their reliance on soft power has had an unintended consequence: it has left them divorced from reality.

Soft-power tools are honorable and often pragmatic methods of conflict prevention and, at times, resolution. Just look at America's Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after the Second World War, or the foreign aid provided today by the wealthy West to smaller and poorer nations.

However, as we now see, it is deluded to conclude that evil men can be stopped by soft power alone. In the months since Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Europeans have been reminded of the necessity of having a well-funded and well-trained military.

But a key battlefield in the conflict playing out in Ukraine continues to be overlooked: immigration policy. This is, of course, nothing new: just as soft

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power has been divorced from hard power, so immigration policy has been divorced from national security, even though it has been a destabilizing factor in Europe for at least a decade.

Both sides of the immigration equation—the push and pull factors—dramatically affect Europe’s national security. The flow of immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia remains a source of civil unease. Social cohesion and national

identity have become incendiary issues in polling stations across Europe. Intolerance towards immigrants is

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***Hybrid warfare includes the abuse of migrant flows as a weapon to blackmail Europe.***

high and extremist parties remain popular. At the same time, radical Islamist extremism and the constant threat of terrorism still linger.

Add to this the burden on local resources—on housing, health care, education, and policing—and it’s hardly surprising that the status quo exacerbates resentment towards immigrants while undermining trust in the political class. It is no accident that Putin and other adversaries have been using misinformation and disinformation to support anti-immigrant parties and other groups on the far right.

What is less well-known, however, is how immigrants have become a tool of war—one that is increasingly deployed by cruel, inhumane autocrats such as Putin.

## **HUMAN SHIELDS**

Since the start of this conflict, millions of Ukrainians have crossed into neighboring countries; according to the EU’s warnings, that figure could rise to seven million. To put that in perspective, when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, roughly 1.5 million Ukrainians were displaced. But even then, there was no exodus to the EU; the refugees simply relocated to other regions within the country. This time, however, it’s unclear if Putin will leave any Ukrainian territory for them to flee to.

And make no mistake: this is all part of his plan. Indeed, Putin has become the world’s leading advocate of hybrid warfare. In 2016, American general Philip Breedlove, head of NATO forces in Europe, recognized this, warning that “Russia and the Assad regime are deliberately weaponizing migration from Syria.”

In recent years, Libya is where Putin has pursued his most fierce—and secret—weaponization of migrants. There, Russia exploits its increased



***WHERE TO NOW? A migrant carrying a child waits in a camp in the Grodno region, near the Belarusian-Polish border, last November. Large numbers of migrants, in a flow encouraged by Belarus, have been shunted through Belarus in attempts to cross into Poland. Abuses have been reported on both sides of the border.*** [Oksana Manchuk—Belta]

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presence by collaborating with militias to foster and facilitate crippling migrant flows into Europe. By deploying Russia's "private" military companies in the region, Putin all but controls the most significant routes for mass migration from Africa and the Middle East to Europe, and therefore has the power to cripple economies and sow societal division.

Take Khalifa Hafar, the commander of the Libyan National Army, a nominal national force that is really an amalgamation of local militias. Hafar is currently trying to rebrand himself as Libya's next president, but in reality is nothing more than a Russian-speaking warlord who benefits from the support of at least 1,500 Russian mercenaries associated with the Wagner Group.

What would drive Putin to dirty his hands in the chaotic, tribal world of North African politics? As Mark Grey, adjunct professor at the US Army War College, has observed: "Large tribes control vast territories in the region, operate beyond the control of nation-states, and ignore borders. Just as Italy

pays militias to curtail migration from western Libya, Russia can pay tribes and militias to just as easily encourage and facilitate migration as control it.”

## **AN URGENT REASON TO START OVER**

The impact on the West must not be ignored, and neither must the failure of our leaders to recognize it. Europe needs immigrants and immigrants need Europe. Years ago, as this mutual need became apparent, European leaders could have developed a rational system to manage the issue. Instead, they found themselves unable to break an ideological impasse: one moment, they issued virtue-signaling declarations of solidarity and compassion for immigrants; the next, they made panic-stricken concessions to populist

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***It's no accident that Vladimir Putin has been using disinformation to support anti-immigrant parties.***

parties. How else should we characterize former German chancellor Angela Merkel's 2015 wild reception of Syrian refugees, followed just a year later by her €6 billion deal with the president of Turkey after he threatened to open the floodgates?

For too long, Europe has maintained a contradictory stance towards mass migration from poor countries, lurching from compassionate rhetoric about asylum seekers to the development of an elaborate and ineffective system of migration management. But as the recent months—indeed, the recent years—have shown, with the advent of hybrid warfare and the abuse of migrant flows as a weapon to blackmail Europe, it is time not only to review minor features of the existing system but to overhaul the entire framework.

What needs to happen is not easy, but it is clear. Some of the measures we should take have

dominated discussion for years but have yet to garner widespread political support. For instance,

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***Europe needs immigrants and immigrants need Europe.***

for all the outcry they inspire in Western countries, border walls and fences do have their uses. When used appropriately, they deter not only crime syndicates and human traffickers but also aggressive autocrats such as Putin. If EU countries had a functioning immigration system, the Kremlin's use of hybrid warfare would be rendered ineffective.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine has created a unique opportunity to challenge all the untouchable positions of European policy. A few short months ago,



it was unthinkable to have a serious conversation in Germany about the retention of nuclear energy. Now, faced with the stark reality that energy is inseparable from national security and that it is foolish to depend on Russia, we are witnessing a welcome change in attitude.

The same must happen with immigration policy. Yes, there must always be a place for compassion—and it's encouraging to see the European Union and

Britain welcome Ukrainian refugees where they can. But if we really want to incapacitate Putin, that won't be enough.

We need to simplify the international and Europe-

an treaties that govern migration flows and those seeking asylum. And as the current crisis demonstrates, this requires the West to integrate immigration policy into the broader national security agenda. It should be an issue for the defense departments, rather than interior and justice civil servants. Whether we like it or not, mass immigration is now a military weapon. And it should be treated as such. ■

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***Border walls and fences do have their uses. They deter not only criminals but also aggressive autocrats like Putin.***

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# *Should I Stay or Should I Go?*

**A new poll looks at the Americans who say they're considering leaving the country for good. (They probably won't.)**

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***By David Brady and Brett Parker***

Since the George W. Bush administration, Gallup in its World Poll has asked this question: “Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move PERMANENTLY to another country, or would you prefer to continue living in this country?” During the Bush and Obama administrations the number of Americans responding positively was right around 10 percent (11 for Bush and 10 for Obama). During the Trump presidency that number (in 2017) jumped to 16 percent. In comparison (2017), the percentage for Latin America was 27 percent while in European Union countries it was 21 percent; in Australia and New Zealand it was below 10 percent.

In 2019, Gallup acknowledged the increase in the United States and reported that this new interest in emigration was concentrated primarily among women under thirty (40 percent wanted to leave) and those who disapproved of Donald Trump (22 percent, compared to 7 percent of Trump’s supporters). The Gallup article summarized this trend by pointing out that the rise in leavers “has come among groups that typically lean Democratic and that have

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disapproved of Trump's job performance so far in his presidency: women, young Americans, and people in lower-income groups." The World Poll does not ask about respondents' political leanings, depriving us of the opportunity to determine how ideology rates as a factor in the desire to emigrate.

Fortunately, the first YouGov poll of 2022 also asked a series of questions about emigration. The first question was: "Have you ever thought about leaving the US and moving permanently to a foreign country?" Thirty-eight percent of respondents said they had considered leaving, with 62 percent saying they had not. Those who said they had considered leaving permanently were decidedly more liberal. More than two-thirds of those describing themselves

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***Thirty-eight percent of all respondents said they had considered leaving, with 62 percent saying they had not.***

as very liberal answered yes, as did slightly more than one-half of those identifying as liberal. Among self-described moderates, 39 percent

indicated that they had ever thought of leaving, while slightly fewer than one-quarter of conservatives said they had thought about it. However, among the very conservative, about three in ten had contemplated leaving the country.

The questioning then turned to specific reasons a person might want to exit the United States: "Is there anything that could happen in the US that would make you leave the US and move permanently to another country?" Among the very liberal and liberal, the most common event by far was Donald Trump being elected president again. Here are some exact quotes to give the flavor of the responses:

"If Trump became president again, I'm leaving."

"The Republicans take over the country and the criminal mob boss Trump becomes president again and we become a true fascist government." The very liberal were particularly fond of terms like "fascist" ("fascist takeover of the federal government").

And finally, "If Trump gets elected in 2024, I think he will set up a dictatorship. I do not want to live under such a regime."

Liberals also mentioned issues like racism (for example, "The continued police violence, unfair legal system racism") and government actions against LGBTQ groups—however, a Trump return to the presidency was by far the dominant response.

On the conservative side, there were anti-Biden remarks such as:

"Biden being re-elected or another Democrat like Biden."

But the dominant theme among conservatives was a socialist or communist takeover of the government: "Continue socialist programs that we

can't continue to pay for" or "the continuous loss of freedom and government intrusion on past way of life."

Mask mandates and loss of religious freedom were often mentioned as further examples of freedom under attack by the government. As was the case for the very liberal and liberal, the very conservative were more likely than conservatives to picture extreme scenarios (e.g., a communist or Chinese takeover of the country) rather than more run-of-the-mill socialism. Nevertheless, major themes were consistent: socialism-communism is eroding our freedom as Americans.

Meanwhile, moderates (as one would expect) were less likely to say they were leaving. However, among those who said they had considered it, the reasoning was often a mixture of the economy and some concern for freedom. The moderates' worries were more measured, though, judging by the tenor of their comments.

It is not surprising that ideology affects one's predisposition to leave the country. After all, the very liberal and the very conservative have the strongest opinions about issues, institutions, political parties, and events. It's natural that they would react most dramatically when the political tide flows in the opposite direction. For example, when asked whether Joe Biden had legitimately won the presidency, the results follow the expected pattern as shown in Table 1. Among the very liberal, the number is 94 percent, which falls approximately linearly over ideology to 22 percent among the very conservative.

	Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative
Biden Legitimately Won the Election	94%	90%	71%	33%	22%
Biden Did Not Legitimately Win the Election	6%	10%	29%	67%	78%

No matter how much one wants to leave the United States, however, it is a challenge to actually take the plunge. Hence, the follow-up question: "How likely do you think it is that you will leave the US?" Table 2 provides the results.

Introducing this question provides a more accurate picture of the types of Americans who would seriously consider moving. Only 19 percent of the very liberal would not consider leaving, while majorities of the conservatives are certain

**TABLE 2: LIKELIHOOD OF LEAVING THE US BY IDEOLOGY**

How likely do you think it is that you will leave the US?	Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative
Very Likely	5%	3%	5%	2%	4%
Somewhat Likely	13%	12%	12%	7%	13%
A Small Chance	63%	57%	40%	35%	32%
Would Not Consider Leaving	19%	28%	43%	57%	51%

they are staying put. However, as was the case in the original question, the very conservative were more likely than conservatives to say they would leave.

Taken together, these results indicate that liberals of various strengths are currently most likely to consider emigrating, with their most salient concern being the potential re-election of Trump (followed generally by concerns about discrimination). On the right, the conservative are less likely to say they would leave. When asked what would push them to do so, however, they consistently espoused fears about the country moving toward socialism/communism and a loss of freedoms (for these individuals, often as exemplified by vaccination and mask mandates). Liberalism and conservatism translate relatively smoothly into Democratic and Republican, with only 2 percent of Republicans in this survey liberal and only 7 percent of Democrats conservative. The combination of ideology and partisanship that pervades American politics includes the desire, if not the actual ability, to leave the country. ■

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# *The Polarizing Express*

**Among the things Hoover fellows David Brady and Douglas Rivers learned in their latest poll: Americans are feeling better about the police but worse about each other, and political divisions still run hot.**

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***By Jonathan Movroydis***

**T**he Hoover Institution, in partnership with YouGov, released last spring its second annual Vital Signs national poll of the American electorate. The 2022 survey measured voters' attitudes on the same themes as the initial poll in 2021: government power and liberty; social and environmental justice; and populism.

Hoover senior fellows David Brady and Douglas Rivers, managers of the Vital Signs project, analyze the findings of the survey, which demonstrate that Republicans and Democrats remain deeply divided on traditional issues such as the appropriate level of government intervention in the economy. They explain that although new divisions have opened on issues related to COVID-19-directed public health measures (including vaccine mandates),

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most Americans across the political spectrum agree that the coronavirus is here to stay and that the nation needs to learn to live with it.

Brady and Rivers show that significant proportions of both Republicans and Democrats share a general distrust of social and political institutions and don't feel that their voice matters in the policy making process. And while each side largely differs on the specific institutions that they trust and distrust, a majority of both parties express some or a lot of confidence in law enforcement. This is a drastic difference from the 2021 survey, in which Democrats expressed less confidence in the police.

Finally, Brady and Rivers describe the results of an additional theme of the 2022 poll (not included in last year's survey), which examines how Democrats and Republicans perceive each other and whether partisan attitudes shape and impact personal relationships.

**Jonathan Movroydis:** What are the origins of the Vital Signs poll?

**Douglas Rivers:** In 2020, Director Condoleezza Rice asked David Brady and me to create an annual survey in which we would track issues that are relevant to the topics of research at the Hoover Institution, and in par-

ticular, policies that are related to the integrity of American democracy and the preservation of individual liberty. In February 2021, we published

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***“You can’t find a Democrat who believes that the 2020 election was stolen.”***

the first poll, which surveyed voters' attitudes on issues including government power and liberty, social and environmental justice, and populism. This year, we conducted a second iteration on these themes and added an additional theme that covers how voters perceive members of the opposing major party.

**Movroydis:** What are some of the key differences in results between the 2022 and 2021 surveys?

**David Brady:** I think the one major change from 2021 to 2022 was that a large proportion of Democrats had backed off supporting the national movement to “defund the police.” Now, most Americans have some level of confidence in law enforcement. Throughout the entire country, far-left groups had advanced resolutions to defund the police, most of which did not pass. The reason they didn't pass was because crime has dramatically risen nationally. This was not a winning issue for Democrats.

**Rivers:** The other big change was in attitudes about the pandemic. When we conducted the first survey, Donald Trump was still president. He had advanced policies that were in part responsible for the rapid development and deployment of vaccines. Despite this accomplishment, Republicans have turned against vaccine mandates. It's become an issue of personal freedom. Support of the anti-vax movement has become stronger among Republicans and is almost nonexistent among Democrats. Just a few years ago, anti-vaxers were a mix of far-left and far-right people. Now it has become a much more mainstream Republican view.

The interesting feature of the current polarization is that on most issues, such as abortion, people's positions have not changed a whole lot over time. What has changed is that Republicans have become universally anti-abortion and Democrats pro-

abortion rights. There are also some new issues that didn't exist a few years ago, including the argument that the 2020

election was stolen and the public health policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In both cases, the parties have ended up on completely different sides. You can't find a Democrat who believes that the election was stolen, and just a small proportion (5 percent) of them remain unvaccinated.

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***“A large proportion of Democrats had backed off supporting the national movement to ‘defund the police.’”***

**Brady:** I would add that there are more Americans who now agree that COVID-19 is here to stay and we must live with it. We conducted this year's survey during the height of the omicron wave. We found that people across the board are done with the pandemic. They want to reopen schools and relax mask mandates.

**Movroydis:** An interesting finding of the Vital Signs poll is that both sides of the political aisle felt that there was a high degree of discrimination against blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. What do you think accounts for this convergence?

**Brady:** I think it's just a recognition of reality. However, the main difference between the parties on this issue of race is that a lot more Republicans think whites are also discriminated against and Democrats do not.

In the poll, we didn't go into any of the details about how much discrimination there was in our society and the ways in which it should be corrected. In such cases, I think we would see many differences. Republicans, for example,

would not be in favor of affirmative action for admissions into colleges and universities.

**Rivers:** Democrats and Republicans are fairly close together on the belief that Hispanics and Asians are discriminated against. The big difference is that 91 percent of Democrats think blacks are discriminated against, versus 59 percent of Republicans. Only 15 percent of Democrats believe whites are discriminated against, as opposed to 60 percent of Republicans.

**Movroydis:** The survey demonstrates that populism has become popular on both sides of the political aisle. What are some of the differences and similarities between Democratic and Republican brands of populism and why, as you indicate, are more independents aligned with the Republican version?

**Brady:** What we typically mean by *populism* is a distrust of the elite. It is the idea that the elite has advanced policies that are self-serving and destructive to the rest of the nation. It turns out that when we asked voters if they believed the federal government is run for a few big interests, 76 percent of Republicans and 65 percent of Democrats agreed.

Another question posed was, do you believe that politicians “lie most of the time or all the time about what they will do once elected”? Sixty-three

percent of Republicans and 47 percent of Democrats responded in agreement. The difference here between members of both parties depends in part on who is holding political

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***“That a majority of respondents are willing to have friends in the opposite party demonstrates just how little politics occupies the average person’s life.”***

office. When Donald Trump was president, larger proportions of Democrats were suspicious of politicians than they are today.

There are also sharp partisan divides on the level of confidence in higher education. Only 29 percent of Republicans said that they had a lot or some confidence, while 39 percent said they had no confidence, in higher education. Meanwhile, 69 percent of Democrats had a lot or some confidence, and 10 percent had none. It seems to me that colleges and universities don’t have a steady, prosperous future if they are essentially backed by just one political party.

I think that the most disturbing finding was how, across the board, many of our respondents believe that nothing they do will influence what happens in politics (59 percent of Democrats and 51 percent of Republicans).

**Rivers:** Both Democrats and Republicans are populist in the sense that they distrust the political process at the moment, primarily because they think the other party is somewhat illegitimate and corrupt. Beyond these general issues, there are specific institutions that garner significantly more support from one party over the other. For instance, Democrats tend to have positive views of universities and the media, whereas Republicans are extremely negative on those. The institutions Republicans have greater trust in are the military and, to a lesser extent, business. Democrats have tended to historically distrust the military, although these negative views have decreased in recent years.

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***“When Donald Trump was president, larger proportions of Democrats were suspicious of politicians than they are today.”***

In terms of policy issues that ignite populist sentiments, like immigration and trade, the parties have been very polarized. We didn't include these issues in the poll, but it used to be that large numbers of Democrats were anti-trade and somewhat distrustful of immigration. However, since Trump ascended on the political scene six years ago, more and more Republicans have adopted anti-trade and anti-immigration positions, and the Democrats have moved in the opposite direction.

**Movroydis:** Is there a broad political consensus on trade issues that involve China?

**Rivers:** If you ask your average economist about trade, they will say it's always a good thing. However, the public at large has been more distrustful.

Democrats and Republicans in Congress used to be fairly supportive of free trade. At one point, the Republican base was more supportive than the Democratic side. It's now the opposite. Democrats became more pro-trade during the Trump administration. But that may just be their perception of Trump's contempt for liberal values. With that said, a majority of Democrats still don't support free trade with China given its aggressive behavior on the world stage and egregious human rights abuses.

**Movroydis:** How do respondents perceive members of the opposite party?

**Brady:** We started by asking two questions to respondents: “Do you think most Democrats are socialists?” And “Do you think most Republicans are racist?” The majority of Republicans thought that most Democrats were socialists, and 44 percent of Democrats thought Republicans were racists.



Needless to say, members of both parties didn't see themselves in those ways. Sixty-six percent of Democrats said that members of their own party were not socialists and fewer than 5 percent of Republicans said the GOP was racist. We went on to ask the respondents if they would describe people who support the Democratic and Republican parties with any of the following words: patriotic, intelligent, honest, open-minded, generous, closed-minded, hypocritical, selfish, mean, or none of the above. It turns out that Republicans describe Democrats in not-so-friendly terms and Democrats describe Republicans very much the same way.

We then asked the question: "Do you have friends that are either Republicans or Democrats?" Fifty-six percent of Democrats responded by saying that they have friends who are Republicans. Conversely, 71 percent of Republicans said that they have friends who are Democrats. As well, about 10 percent of both Democrats and Republicans said that their best friend was in the other party.

When asked whether they talk politics with friends of the opposite party, a majority (70 percent of partisans of both stripes) responded positively and said they had no problem expressing their views.

**Rivers:** Political scientists call this "affective polarization." There is this view, which I think is exaggerated, that people hate others on the opposite side of the political aisle. When we asked in general what they think about Demo-

crats and Republicans, the respondents' negative perceptions—in my opinion—were shaped by polarizing figures whom they observe in the news media. However, the fact

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***"The most disturbing finding: across the board, many of our respondents believe that nothing they do will influence what happens in politics."***

that a majority of respondents are willing to have friends in the opposite party demonstrates just how little politics occupies the average person's life.

**Movroydis:** Does this polling reflect the relationships among members of the US Congress?

**Brady:** In Congress, there has always been a game of politics where partisan groups will describe each other as adversaries in order to raise money. However, it used to be that members spent much more time in Washington and built relationships with others on the opposite side of the aisle. Now it's a Tuesday-to-Thursday club. They spend Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

in Washington and then fly back to their home districts. Many members don't even have a home in Washington. Some actually sleep in their Capitol Hill offices. Bottom line, there is much less personal interaction and therefore much less friendship. On top of this, the public is so polarized that it is more difficult for politicians to find a middle ground.

**Rivers:** Plus, there are many junior members of Congress who spend lots of time on TV, and that's something that didn't happen fifty years ago. Politicians can now raise a lot of money by acting like a firebrand on TV. This is especially evident in the behavior of the most extreme members of both parties. I think this factor has led to much less of the cooperation that we saw when members of Congress were relatively anonymous and derived their power from committee chairmanships. ■

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# Renewable Optimism

**Doomsday keeps getting postponed. Why? Because human ingenuity, unlike human speculation, doesn't fail.**

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**By Bjorn Lomborg**

**T**his is an age of fear—particularly fear of climate change. One picture summarizes this age for me. It is of a girl holding a sign saying: “You’ll die of old age. I’ll die of climate change.”

This is the message that the media are drilling into our heads: climate change is destroying our planet and threatens to kill us all. The language is of apocalypse. News outlets refer to the “planet’s imminent incineration,” and analysts suggest that global warming could make humanity extinct in a few decades. Recently, the media have informed us that humanity has just a decade left to rescue the planet, that 2030 is the deadline to save civilization, and that we must radically transform every major economy to end fossil-fuel use, reduce carbon emissions to zero, and establish a totally renewable basis for all economic activity.

The rhetoric on climate change has become ever more extreme and less moored to the actual science. Over the past twenty years, climate scientists have painstakingly increased knowledge about climate change, and we have

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more—and more-reliable—data than ever before. But at the same time, the rhetoric that comes from commentators and the media has become increasingly irrational.

The science shows us that fears of a climate apocalypse are unfounded. Global warming is real, but it is not the end of the world. It is a manageable problem. Yet we now live in a world where almost half the population believes that climate change will extinguish humanity. This has profoundly altered the political reality. It makes us double down on poor climate policies. It makes us increasingly ignore all other challenges—from pandemics and food shortages to political strife and conflicts—or subsume them under the banner of climate change.

This singular obsession with climate change means that we are now going from wasting billions of dollars on ineffective policies to wasting trillions. At the same time, we're ignoring ever more of the rest of the world's more urgent and much more tractable challenges. And we're scaring kids and adults witless, which is not just factually wrong but morally reprehensible.

If we don't say "stop," the current, false climate alarm—despite the good intentions behind it—is likely to leave the world much worse off than it could be.

We need to dial back on the panic, look at the science, face the economics, and address the issue rationally. How do we fix climate change, and how do we prioritize it amid the many other problems afflicting the world?

## **POLITICS BEAT SCIENCE**

Climate change is real, it is caused predominantly by carbon emissions from humans burning fossil fuels, and we should tackle it intelligently. But to do that, we need to stop exaggerating, stop arguing that it is now or never, and stop thinking that climate is the only thing that matters.

Many climate campaigners go further than the science supports. They implicitly or even explicitly suggest that exaggeration is acceptable because the cause is so important. After a recent UN climate-science report led to over-the-top claims by activists, Joel Smith, one of the scientist authors, warned against exaggeration. He wrote, "We risk turning off the public with extremist talk that is not carefully supported by the science." He is right. But the impact of exaggerated climate claims goes far deeper.

We are being told that we must do everything right away. Conventional wisdom, repeated ad nauseam in the media, is that we have only until 2030 to solve the problem of climate change. This is what science tells us!



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]



But this is *not* what science tells us. It's what politics tells us. This deadline comes from politicians asking scientists a very specific and hypothetical question—basically, what will it take to keep climate change below an almost impossible target (2 degrees centigrade, or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit)? Not surprising, scientists responded that doing so would be almost impossible, and getting anywhere close would require enormous changes to all parts of society by 2030.

Imagine a similar discussion on traffic deaths. In the United States, forty thousand people die each year in car crashes. If politicians asked scientists how to reduce the number of road deaths to zero, an almost impossible target, one good answer would be to set the national speed limit to 3 mph. Probably nobody would die. But science is not telling us that we must have a speed limit of 3 mph—it

only informs us that if we want zero deaths, one simple way to achieve that would be through a nationwide, heavily enforced 3 mph speed limit. Yet how to make the trade-off between a

low speed limit and a connected society is a political question for all of us.

Today, such is our single-minded focus on climate change that many global, regional, and even personal challenges are almost entirely subsumed by climate change. Your house is at risk of flooding—climate change! Your community is at risk of being devastated by a hurricane—climate change! People are starving in the developing world—climate change! With almost all problems identified as caused by climate, the apparent solution is to drastically reduce carbon dioxide emissions in order to reduce the effects of climate change. But is this really the best way to help?

If you want to help people in the Mississippi floodplains lower the risk of flooding, there are policies that will help more than cutting carbon dioxide, and they would also be faster and cheaper. These could include improving water management, building taller dikes, and implementing stronger regulations that allowed some floodplains to flood so as to avoid or alleviate flooding elsewhere. If you want to help people in the developing world avoid starvation, it is almost tragicomic to focus on cutting carbon dioxide. Better crop varieties, more fertilizer, market access, and general opportunities to get out of poverty would help them so much more, faster, and at lower cost. If

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***Progress has not ended. The world has been radically transformed for the better in the past century, and it will continue to improve in the century to come.***

we insist on invoking climate at every turn, we will often end up helping the world in one of the least effective ways possible.

As a species, we are not on the brink of imminent extinction. In fact, quite the opposite. The rhetoric of impending doom belies an absolutely essential point: in almost every way we can measure, life on earth is better now than it

was at any time in history.

Since 1900, we have more than doubled our life expectancy. In 1900, the average life span was just thirty-three years—today it is more than seventy-

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***The singular obsession with climate change means that instead of wasting billions of dollars on ineffective policies, we are wasting trillions.***

one. The increase has had the most dramatic impact on the world's worst-off. Health inequality has diminished significantly. The world is more literate; child labor has been dropping; we are living in one of the most peaceful times in history. Between 1990 and 2015, the number of people in the world practicing open defecation dropped from 30 percent to 15 percent.

The planet is getting healthier, too. In the past half century, we have made substantial cuts in indoor air pollution, previously the biggest environmental killer. In 1990, pollution caused more than 8 percent of deaths; this has almost halved, to 4.7 percent, meaning that 1.2 million people survive each year who would have died. Higher agricultural yields and changing attitudes to the environment have meant that rich countries are increasingly preserving forests and reforestation. And since 1990, 2.6 billion more people have gained access to improved water sources, bringing the global total of people

with access to improved water to 91 percent.

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***Some climate campaigners suggest that exaggeration is acceptable because the cause is so important.***

Many of these improvements have come about because we have gotten richer, both as individu-

als and as nations. Over the past thirty years, the average global income per person has almost doubled. That has driven massive cuts in poverty. In 1990, nearly four in ten people on the planet were poor, meaning they made less than \$1.90 per day. Today, it is less than one in ten.

When we are richer, we live longer and have better lives. We live with less indoor air pollution. Governments provide more health care, build better safety nets, and enact stronger laws and regulations to battle pollution and protect the environment.

Significantly, progress has not ended. The world has been radically transformed for the better in the past century, and it will continue to improve in the century to come. Analysis by experts shows that we are likely to become much, much better off in the future. Researchers working for the United Nations suggest that by 2100, average incomes will greatly increase, perhaps to 450 percent of today's incomes. Life expectancy will continue to increase, to eighty-two years or possibly beyond one hundred. As countries and individuals get richer, air pollution will reduce even further.

## **A RISING TIDE—OF PROSPERITY**

Climate change will have a negative impact on the world, but it will pale in comparison with all the positive gains that we have seen so far and that we will continue to see in the century ahead. These gains that we both have seen and will see come from the general economic development described above. The best current research shows that the cost of climate change by the end of the century, if we do nothing, will be less than 4 percent of global GDP. This includes all the negative impacts—not just the increased costs from stronger storms but also the costs of increased deaths from heat waves and the lost wetlands from rising sea levels.

This means that instead of seeing incomes rise by 450 percent by 2100, they might increase by “only” 434 percent. That's clearly a problem. But it's also clearly not a catastrophe. As the members

of the UN Climate Panel put it themselves: “For most economic sectors, the impact of climate change will be small

relative to the impacts of other drivers [such as] changes in population, age, income, technology, relative prices, lifestyle, regulation, governance, and many other aspects of socioeconomic development.”

This is the information we should be teaching our children. The young girl holding the sign that reads “I'll die from climate change” will not, in fact, die from climate change. She is very likely to live a longer, more prosperous life than her parents or her grandparents, and she will be less affected by pollution or poverty.

In my new book, I examine the culture of fear that has been created around climate change. I clarify what the science actually tells us. What is the cost of rising temperatures? After that, I assess what's wrong with today's approach.

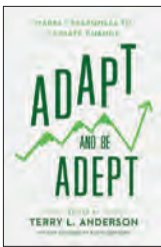
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***If you want to help starving people in the developing world, it is almost tragicomic to focus on cutting carbon dioxide.***

How is it that climate change is at the front of our minds, yet we are failing to solve it? What do we achieve by making changes to our lifestyles? What are we achieving collectively, with promises made under the Paris agreement on climate change? And finally, the book explores how we can actually solve climate change. We need to prioritize policies such as green innovation and adaptation in order to rein in temperature rises and leave the planet in the best shape possible for our grandchildren.

We have it within our power to make a better world. But first, we need to calm down. ■

*Adapted from False Alarm: How Climate Change Panic Costs Us Trillions, Hurts the Poor, and Fails to Fix the Planet, by Bjorn Lomborg (Basic Books, 2020). Reprinted by permission. © 2020, 2021 by Bjorn Lomborg.*



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# Spy vs. Spy

**Why was the United States so eager to publicize secret intelligence as Russia prepared to attack Ukraine? Because cyberspace is a battlefield, and data a weapon.**

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**By Amy B. Zegart**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine looks like a horrific Cold War throwback. Once again, a strongman rules in Moscow, Russian tanks are rolling across borders, and a democratic nation is fighting for its survival, street by street, day by day, initially armed with little more than Molotov cocktails and a fierce belief in freedom. For all the talk of emerging technologies and new threats, the violence in Ukraine feels raw and low-tech, and the world suddenly looks old again.

And yet, amid all these echoes of the past, Russia's invasion has ushered in one development that is altogether new and could dramatically change geopolitics in the future: the real-time public disclosure of highly classified intelligence.

Never has the US government revealed so much, in such detail, so fast, and so relentlessly about an adversary. Each day seemed to bring new warnings. Not vague "Russia may or may not be up to something" kind of warnings,

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but “here’s the satellite imagery showing up to 175,000 Russian troops in these specific locations near the border” kind of warnings. Even as Russian leader Vladimir Putin claimed that he had no plans to invade and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky complained that the United States was hyping the threat and roiling his economy, the intelligence disclosures kept coming—detailing updated troop numbers and locations, invasion timetables, casualty estimates, and more. It felt like watching a hurricane barreling toward landfall.

The disclosed intelligence wasn’t just about military movements. It was about secret plans at the core of Russia’s intelligence operations. American and British intelligence agencies sounded the alarm about plots to stage a coup in Kyiv, install a puppet regime, and conduct “false-flag operations” designed to generate phony pretexts to justify a real invasion. According to US officials, one Russian scheme involved sending saboteurs to Eastern Ukraine to attack Russian separatists there, making it look like Ukraine was the aggressor and Putin’s troops were coming to the rescue. Another involved making a phony video depicting Ukrainian atrocities, complete with actors and corpses.

### THREE HINTS

It’s hard to overstate how much of a shift this represents. Intelligence is a closely guarded world, one in which officials are loath to publicly air what they know, or how they know it, for fear of putting sources at risk or revealing to their rivals just how much information they have. In the past, the United States has openly shared intelligence only with the closest of allies

and restricted its use.

Why has the White House been so open this time?

So far, the Biden administration isn’t saying much about the aims of its

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***The first-mover advantage in information warfare is huge. Once lies are believed, they are hard to shake.***

radical-candor intelligence strategy. But three explanations seem likely.

The first has to do with inoculating the world against information warfare by getting the truth out before the lie. The essence of US and allied intelligence disclosures has been “Don’t believe a word the Kremlin is going to tell you. It’s all a con.” The Russians are deception pros, and in previous episodes—as recently as the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2016 US election—they’ve had the upper hand. Putin’s strategy has been to flood the zone with falsehoods, spreading disinformation early and often. Psychology



research suggests why this is so effective: once lies are believed, they are hard to shake, even in the face of overwhelming facts. The first-mover advantage in information warfare is huge. Getting the truth out before the con helps rally allies and shore up support in the United States and abroad.

Revealing intelligence also generates friction for Putin, knocking him off balance. Instead of calling the shots and managing the Ukraine crisis on his schedule, Putin has to react to Washington. And instead of acting with impunity, he has to spend his most precious asset—time—worrying about his own intelligence weaknesses.

How do the United States and its allies know what they know? What will they do with this advance knowledge? What Russian intel-

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***Never has the US government revealed so much, in such detail, so fast, and so relentlessly about an adversary.***

ligence vulnerabilities must be fixed? The more Putin stewes about his own intelligence lapses, the less attention he can devote to hurting others.

US Cyber Command adopted a similar approach in 2018 and called it *persistent engagement*. The idea is simple but powerful: weaken an adversary's offense by making it work much harder at defense. Putin is an ideal target for this kind of strategy. He's a former intelligence operative with a paranoid streak who obsesses about domestic enemies, not just foreign ones. You can take the man out of the KGB, but not the KGB out of the man.

Finally, proactively disclosing intelligence makes it much harder for other countries to sit out the conflict or provide quiet support to Putin by hiding behind his fig-leaf narratives. Think of it as covert action in reverse—a forced outing of what's really going on so that everyone must take a side.

In covert action, governments conceal their official involvement in an activity. One of the key benefits of covert action is that it enables other countries to help on the sly. Even if everyone knows the truth, they pretend not to, and history suggests even the flimsiest of excuses can give countries surprising room to maneuver. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, for example, the United States launched a huge covert operation to arm the Afghan mujahideen. The Soviets knew what the United States was doing, and the United States knew that the Soviets knew. But the covert action enabled Pakistan and Egypt to quietly help American efforts without fear of Soviet reprisal. It benefited the Soviets, too, keeping a proxy war in Afghanistan from spiraling into a hot war against the United States and its nuclear arsenal.

In the current Ukraine crisis, intelligence disclosures are doing the opposite. By removing the fig leaf, Washington and its allies are leaving precious little room for other countries to stay on the sidelines or assist Putin easily. Switzerland, a country famous for its neutrality and willingness to bank with bad guys, signed onto European Union sanctions. Germany is wobbling no more, finally nixing the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline and moving from NATO defense-spending laggard to leader with head-spinning speed. Not long ago, about a hundred diplomats literally turned their backs on Russia, walking out of a United Nations Human Rights Council meeting as Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov was speaking.

## **TACTIC COULD BACKFIRE**

To be sure, world unity on any crisis never lasts long. China still tilts heavily toward Moscow in almost everything. And intelligence is just one among many factors at play. No country wants to be caught in the crossfire of global sanctions, castigated as the weak link in NATO, or seen as being on the wrong side of history. But intelligence disclosures have become a powerful new tool in the mix. It's a lot harder for countries to hide behind Russia's false narrative when the narrative is debunked before it even comes out of Putin's mouth.

This intelligence strategy is new and clever, but it's not risk-free. Using secrets now may mean losing secrets later. Any time intelligence is publicly disclosed, there's a danger that sources and methods will be discovered by the enemy, threatening lives and jeopardizing the ability to keep collecting

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***Diplomacy is giving the other guy a way out even if you hate him for what he's done.***

intelligence from technical and human sources in the future. That's why intelligence agencies have always so fiercely resisted disclosures.

Intelligence disclosures can also make crises harder to manage. Going public with an adversary's secret intentions and capabilities can be humiliating. That may feel good, but the key to resolving crises isn't backing your enemy into a corner; it's finding face-saving exits. Diplomacy is giving the other guy a way out even if you hate him for what he's done.

Finally, in a radical-disclosure world, intelligence successes can be misconstrued as failures. Imagine, for example, that the intelligence revelations about Putin's invasion plans had changed his mind, and he decided not to invade Ukraine. The intelligence would have been accurate and effective but

it would have looked wrong and feckless. Many would have concluded that Putin must never have intended to invade in the first place, and that US spy agencies—criticized over the Iraq war, the failure to stop 9/11, and countless other missteps—had erred again. Confidence in America’s intelligence community would erode, even though it shouldn’t.

So far, however, evidence from the Ukraine war suggests that the rewards of this intelligence-disclosure strategy far outweigh the risks. Until now, cyber-enabled deception seemed to have the upper hand. Ukraine has taught us that truth and disclosure can still be powerful weapons, even in the digital age. ■

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# Trust Is the First Casualty

**Cyberwarriors braced for big, showy attacks that have never come, at least so far. But a quiet subversion of markets and governments has caused plenty of damage.**

**By Jacquelyn Schneider**

When sounding the alarm over cyberthreats, policy makers and analysts have typically employed a vocabulary of conflict and catastrophe. As early as 2001, James Adams, a co-founder of the cybersecurity firm iDefense, warned that cyberspace was “a new international battlefield,” where future military campaigns would be won or lost. In subsequent years, US defense officials warned of a “cyber Pearl Harbor,” in the words of then-defense secretary Leon Panetta, and a “cyber 9/11,” according to then-homeland

## Key points

- » Focusing too closely on theoretical catastrophes ignores the need for ordinary resilience.
- » Regaining trust in a digital world depends on restoring confidence in systems of commerce, governance, military power, and international cooperation.
- » Critical systems must be decentralized and redundant.
- » Courageous leaders can help people repair the damaged bonds of trust.

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security secretary Janet Napolitano. In 2015, James Clapper, then the director of national intelligence, said the United States must prepare for a “cyber Armageddon,” but acknowledged it was not the most likely scenario. In response to the threat, officials argued that cyberspace should be understood as a “domain” of conflict, with “key terrain” that the United States needed to take or defend.

The twenty-one years since Adams’s warning have revealed that cyber-threats and cyberattacks are hugely consequential—but not in the way most predictions suggested. Spying and theft in cyberspace have garnered peta-, exa-, even zettabytes of sensitive and proprietary data. Cyber-enabled information operations have

threatened elections

and incited mass social

movements. Cyberat-

tacks on businesses have

cost hundreds of billions

of dollars. But while the

cyberthreat is real and growing, expectations that cyberattacks would create large-scale physical effects akin to those caused by surprise bombings on US soil, or that they would hurtle states into violent conflict, or even that what happened in the domain of cyberspace would define who won or lost on the battlefield, haven’t been borne out.

In trying to analogize the cyberthreat to the world of physical warfare, policy makers missed the far more insidious danger that cyber operations pose: how they erode the trust people place in markets, governments, and even national power.

Correctly diagnosing the threat is essential, in part because it shapes how states invest in cybersecurity. Focusing on single, potentially catastrophic events, and thinking mostly about the possible physical effects of cyberattacks, unduly prioritizes capabilities that will protect against “the big one”: large-scale responses to disastrous cyberattacks, offensive measures that produce physical violence, or punishments only for the kinds of attacks that cross a strategic threshold. Such capabilities and responses are mostly ineffective at protecting against the way cyberattacks undermine the trust that undergirds modern economies, societies, governments, and militaries.

If trust is what’s at stake—and it has already been deeply eroded—then the steps states must take to survive and operate in this new world are different. The solution to a “cyber Pearl Harbor” is to do everything possible to

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***The key is not finding a way to defeat all cyberattacks. It’s learning how to survive despite the disruption and destruction they cause.***



***CAREFUL ENOUGH? A team competes at the DEF CON 17 hacker convention in 2009 in Las Vegas. That year, according to news reports, a phony ATM placed in the DEF CON conference center collected personal data from an unknown number of the presumably savvy attendees. Cyberattacks, in addition to the financial risks they pose, prey on “soft” points: sowing distrust in information, creating confusion and anxiety, and exacerbating hatred and misinformation.*** [Nate Grigg—Creative Commons]

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ensure it doesn't happen, but the way to retain trust in a digital world despite the inevitability of cyberattacks is to build resilience and thereby promote confidence in today's systems of commerce, governance, military power, and international cooperation. States can develop this resilience by restoring links between humans and within networks, by strategically distributing analog systems where needed, and by investing in processes that allow for manual and human intervention.

The key to success in cyberspace over the long term is not finding a way to defeat all cyberattacks. It's learning how to survive despite the disruption and destruction they cause.

The United States has not so far experienced a “cyber 9/11,” and a cyberattack that causes immediate catastrophic physical effects isn't likely in the future, either. But Americans' trust in their government, their institutions, and even their fellow citizens is declining rapidly—weakening the very foundations of society. Cyberattacks prey on these weak points, sowing distrust



in information, creating confusion and anxiety, and exacerbating hatred and misinformation.

## **TRUSTED AND VERIFIED**

Trust, defined as “the firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something,” plays a central role in economies, societies, and the international system. It allows individuals, organizations, and states to delegate tasks or responsibilities, thereby freeing up time and resources to accomplish other jobs, or to cooperate instead of acting alone. It is the glue that allows complex relationships to survive—permitting markets to become more complex, governance to extend over a broader population or set of issues, and states to trade, cooperate, and exist within more complicated alliance relationships.

Those extensions of trust have played an essential role in human progress. Primitive, isolated, and autocratic societies function with what sociologists call “particularized trust”—a trust of only known others. Modern and interconnected states require what’s called “generalized trust,” which extends beyond known circles and allows actors to delegate trust relationships to individuals, organizations, and processes with whom the truster is not intimately familiar. Particularized trust leads to allegiance within small groups, distrust of others, and wariness of unfamiliar processes or institutions; generalized trust enables complicated market interactions, community involvement, and trade and cooperation among states.

The modern market, for example, could not exist without the trust that allows for the delegation of responsibility to another entity. People trust that currencies have value, that banks can secure and safeguard assets, and that IOUs in the form of checks, credit cards, or loans will be fulfilled. When individuals and entities have trust in a financial system, wages, profits, and employment increase. Trust in laws about property rights facilitates trade and economic prosperity. The digital economy makes this generalized trust even more important. No longer do people deposit gold in a bank vault. Instead, modern economies consist of complicated sets of digital transactions in which users must trust not only that banks are securing and safeguarding their assets but also that the digital medium—a series of ones and zeros linked together in code—translates to an actual value that can be used to buy goods and services.

Trust is a basic ingredient of social capital—the shared norms and interconnected networks that, as the political scientist Robert Putnam has famously argued, lead to more peaceful and prosperous communities. The

generalized trust at the heart of social capital allows voters to delegate responsibility to proxies and institutions to represent their interests. Voters must trust that a representative will promote their interests, that votes will be logged and counted properly, and that the institutions that write and uphold laws will do so fairly.

Finally, trust is at the heart of how states generate national power and, ultimately, how they interact within the international system. It allows civilian heads of state to delegate command of armed forces to military leaders and enables those military leaders to execute decentralized control of lower-level military operations and tactics. States characterized by civil-military distrust are less likely to win wars, partly because of how trust affects a regime's willingness to give control to lower levels of military units in warfare. Trust also enables militaries to experiment and train with new technologies, making them more likely to innovate and develop revolutionary advancements in military power.

Trust also dictates the stability of the international system. States rely on it to build trade and arms control agreements and, most important, to feel confident that other states will not launch a surprise attack or invasion. The proverb "trust, but verify" has guided arms control negotiations and agreements since the Cold War.

How do you trust the creators of information, or that your social interactions are with an actual person? How do you trust that the information you provide others will be kept private? These are relatively complex relationships with trust, all the result of users' dependence on digital technologies and information in the modern world.

## **HIGH STAKES**

All the trust needed to carry out these online interactions and exchanges creates an enormous target. Cyber operations generate distrust in how or whether a system operates. They can lead to distrust in the integrity of data or the algorithms that make sense of data. Are voter logs accurate? Is that artificial-intelligence-enabled strategic warning system showing a real missile launch, or is it a blip in the computer code? Cyber operations also create distrust by manipulating social networks and relationships and ultimately deteriorating social capital. Online personas, bots, and disinformation campaigns complicate whether individuals can trust both information and one another.

The inability to safeguard intellectual property from cybertheft is similarly consequential. The practice of stealing intellectual property or trade secrets

by hacking into a company's network and taking sensitive data has become a lucrative criminal enterprise—one that states including China and North Korea use to catch up with the United States and other countries that have the most innovative technology. North Korea famously hacked the pharmaceutical company Pfizer in an attempt to steal its COVID-19 vaccine technology, and Chinese exfiltrations of US defense industrial base research have led to copycat technological advances in aircraft and missile development. The more extensive and sophisticated such attacks become, the less companies can trust that their investments in research and development will lead to profit—ultimately destroying knowledge-based economies.

And nowhere are the threats to trust more existential than in online banking. If users no longer trust that their digital data and their money can be safeguarded, then the entire complicated

modern financial system could collapse. Perversely, the turn toward cryptocurrencies, most of which are not backed by government guarantees, makes trust in the value of digital information all the more critical.

Societies and governments are also vulnerable to attacks on trust. Schools, courts, and municipal governments have all become ransomware targets—whereby systems are taken offline or rendered useless until the victim pays. And while the immediate impact of these attacks is to temporarily degrade some governance and social functions, the greater danger is that over the long term, a lack of faith in the integrity of data stored by governments—whether marriage records, birth certificates, criminal records, or property divisions—can erode trust in the basic functions of a society.

State-sponsored campaigns that provoke questions about the integrity of governance data (such as vote tallies) or that fracture communities into small groups of particularized trust give rise to the kind of forces that foment civil unrest and threaten democracy.

Cyber operations can also jeopardize military power, by attacking trust in modern weapons. With the rise of digital capabilities, starting with the microprocessor, states began to rely on smart weapons, networked sensors, and autonomous platforms for their militaries. As those militaries became more digitally capable, they also became susceptible to cyber operations that threatened the reliability and functionality of these smart weapons. Whereas

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***Former intelligence chief James Clapper said the United States must prepare for a “cyber Armageddon.” He acknowledged that was not the most likely scenario.***

a previous focus on cyberthreats fixated on how cyber operations could act like a bomb, the true danger occurs when cyberattacks make it difficult to trust that actual bombs will work as expected. As militaries move farther away from the battlefield through remote operations and commanders delegate responsibility to autonomous systems, this trust becomes all the more important.

## **STRONGER BY DESIGN**

How does one build systems that can continue to operate in a world of degraded trust? Here, network theory—the study of how networks succeed, fail, and survive—offers guidance. Studies on network robustness find that the strongest networks are those with a high density of small nodes and multiple pathways between nodes. Highly resilient networks can withstand the removal of multiple nodes and linkages without decomposing, whereas less resilient, centralized networks, with few pathways and sparser nodes, have a much lower critical threshold for degradation and failure. If economies, societies, governments, and the international system are going to survive serious erosions of trust, they will need more bonds and links, fewer dependencies on central nodes, and new ways to reconstitute network components even as they are under attack. How can states build such networks?

First, at the technical level, networks and data structures that undergird the economy, critical infrastructure, and military power must prioritize

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***Bad actors in cyberspace are like termites, hidden in the recesses of foundations, gradually eating away at structures that support people's lives.***

resilience. This requires decentralized and dense networks, hybrid cloud structures, redundant applications, and backup processes. It implies planning and training for net-

work failure so that individuals can adapt and continue to provide services even in the midst of an offensive cyber campaign. It means relying on physical backups for the most important data (such as votes) and manual options for operating systems when digital capabilities are unavailable. Users need to trust that digital capabilities and networks have been designed to gracefully degrade, as opposed to catastrophically fail: the distinction between binary trust (that is, trusting the system will work perfectly or not trusting the system at all) and a continuum of trust (trusting the system to function at some percentage between zero and 100 percent) should drive the design of digital capabilities and networks.

Solving the technical side, however, is only part of the solution. The most important trust relationships that cyberspace threatens are society's human networks—that is, the bonds and links that people have as individuals, neighbors, and citizens so that they can work together to solve problems. Solutions for making these human networks more durable are even more complicated and difficult than any technical fixes. The distrust that is building online, for instance, leaks out into the real world, separating people further into groups of “us” and “them.” Combating this requires education and civic engagement—the bowling leagues that Robert Putnam said were necessary to rebuild Americans’ social capital.

After two years of a global pandemic and a further splintering of Americans into virtual enclaves, it is time to re-energize physical communities, time for neighborhoods, school districts, and towns to come together to rebuild the links and bonds that were severed during the pandemic. The fact is that these divisions

were festering in American communities even before the pandemic or the Internet accelerated their consolidation and

amplified their power. It will take courageous local leaders who can rebuild trust from the ground up, finding ways to bring together communities that have been driven apart. It will take more frequent disconnecting from the Internet, and from the synthetic groups of particularized trust that were formed there, to reconnect in person.

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***The more sophisticated such attacks become, the greater the harm to knowledge-based economies.***

## **PEST CONTROL**

There's a saying that cyber operations lead to death by a thousand cuts, but perhaps a better analogy is termites, hidden in the recesses of foundations, that gradually eat away at the very structures designed to support people's lives. The previous strategic focus on one-off, large-scale cyber operations never addressed the fragility within the foundations and networks themselves.

Will cyberattacks ever cause the kind of serious physical effects that were feared over the past two decades? It is of course impossible to say that no cyberattack will ever produce large-scale physical effects similar to those that resulted from the bombing of Pearl Harbor. But it is unlikely—because the nature of cyberspace, its virtual, transient, and ever-changing character, makes it difficult for attacks on it to create lasting physical effects. Strategies

that focus on trust and resilience by investing in networks and relationships make these kinds of attacks yet more difficult.

If a stolen password can still take out an oil pipeline or a fake social media account can continue to sway the political opinions of thousands of voters, then cyberattacks will remain too lucrative for autocracies and criminal actors to resist. Failing to build in more resilience—both technical and human—will mean that the cycle of cyberattacks and the distrust they give rise to will continue to threaten the foundations of democratic society. ■

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# *Yes, Charters Raise the Bar*

**Urban charter schools present a vivid success story, and not just for their students. In communities with good charter schools, all students benefit.**

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***By Michael J. Petrilli and David Griffith***

**T**hirty years ago, when the charter school movement was just getting off the ground, devotees of big-city school systems worried that these new options would drain critical funding, hurt the kids who were left behind, and make a system in which race played a central but often unacknowledged role even more unjust. Yet, in recent years, it has become increasingly clear that concerns about charter-inflicted damage are misplaced—as demonstrated by a pair of new studies that find broad and statistically significant gains for all publicly enrolled students as charter schools expand.

If you're familiar with the research on charter schools, these results shouldn't be surprising. After all, for the better part of a decade, a steady stream of studies have found that enrolling in urban charters boosts the academic achievement of low-income black and Hispanic students. For example, a 2015 CREDO analysis found that black students in poverty gained almost nine weeks of learning in English and almost twelve weeks in math per year by attending an urban charter school instead of a traditional public school.

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Other research has found that charter schools' effects on the achievement of students in neighboring district schools are neutral to positive. For example, a recent review of the literature on this question identified nine studies that found positive effects, three that found negative effects and ten that found no effects whatsoever.

Put those two findings together—that urban charters boost the achievement of their own students and that they have a neutral to positive impact on the achievement of children in traditional public schools—and the logical implication is clear: The growth of charter schools should boost achievement overall for students in a given community.

Yet, for complicated reasons related to data collection and accessibility, direct evidence is limited to a handful of studies. The first, a 2019 Fordham Institute report titled *Rising Tide: Charter School Market Share and Student Achievement*, found a positive relationship between the percentage of black and Hispanic students who enrolled in a charter school at the district level

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**To fulfill their potential, charter schools must be allowed to grow.**

and the average achievement of students in these groups—at least in the largest urban districts.

The second, by Tulane University's Douglas N. Harris and Feng Chen, found a positive relationship between the percentage of all students who enrolled in charter schools and the average achievement of all publicly enrolled students, especially in math.

Now, both of those studies—which include more than nine out of ten American school districts and nearly twenty years of data on charter school enrollment—have been updated with additional years of data and estimates, and their findings are beginning to converge.

First, both studies find that charter schools' overall effects are overwhelmingly positive. For example, according to the Tulane study, moving from zero to greater than 10 percent charter school enrollment share boosts the average school district's high school graduation rate by at least 3 percentage points. Meanwhile, the Fordham study suggests that a move from zero to 10 percent charter school enrollment share boosts math achievement for all publicly enrolled students by at least a tenth of a grade level.

Second, both studies find that the growth of charter schools leads to bigger and more consistent benefits in math than reading. For example, according to the Tulane study, moving from zero to greater than 10 percent charter school enrollment share leads to a 6 percentile increase in math scores and a 3 percentile increase in reading scores.

Third, both studies find that achievement gains are concentrated in major urban areas, consistent with much previous research on charter school performance. For example, according to the Tulane study, moving from zero to greater than 10 percent charter enrollment share in the average school district is associated with a 0.13 standard deviation increase in math achievement. But in metropolitan areas, this change is associated with a 0.21 standard deviation increase in math scores.

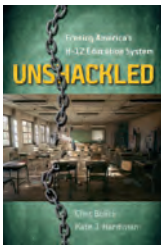
Finally, both studies find that poor, black, and Hispanic students see big gains. For example, according to the Fordham study, a move from zero to 10 percent charter school enrollment share boosts math achievement for these children by about 0.25 grade levels. Poor students also see a 0.15 grade level increase in reading achievement.

These findings are incredibly important, given long-standing concerns that the growth of charter schools would hurt kids in traditional public schools, and given the opposition that charter schools still encounter in some places. To fulfill their potential, charter schools must be allowed to grow. But for that to happen, policy makers and the public need to understand what the best research about charters actually says.

At a time when the whole country seems to be in a foul mood, here's some good news: as charter schools grow and replicate, parents gain access to high-quality schools that better meet their children's needs, students who remain in traditional public schools see better outcomes, and racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps that have resisted many other well-intentioned reforms begin to close.

In short, nobody needs to take sides on this issue—because it truly is a win-win. ■

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# Left Coasting

**The “California Way.” The phrase once suggested innovation and efficiency. On the lips of Governor Gavin Newsom, the words ring hollow.**

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**By Lee E. Ohanian**

**T**he “California Way” was the theme of Gavin Newsom’s State of the State address last March as the governor tried to draw parallels between California today and the state’s remarkable history of economic success and growth. But Newsom’s attempt to rekindle California’s past glories failed, precisely because what once was the “California Way”—the most innovative private sector in the country, working together with a cooperative, efficient, and highly functional public sector, a public sector that focused on capital investments—is long gone.

Newsom tried hard, but his words rang hollow:

California is doing what we have done for generations, lighting out the territory ahead of the rest, the horizon of what’s possible.

That was the California that many of us knew back in the day. But today’s “California Way” has turned that previous simple model of success on its head, with current state and local governments overtaking and overregulating and getting in the way and failing any sense of accountability. Governments whose basic functional responsibilities fail to deliver, despite an

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inflation-adjusted per capita state budget that is seven times higher than it was during California's fastest growth years.

## THE WASTEFUL WAY

The new "California Way" is top-heavy with government bureaus that restrict economic freedom, such as passing laws that make it illegal for many to work as independent contractors, while bureaucrats sit by and watch public infrastructure crumble. Innovative businesses, creative entrepreneurs, and highly skilled workers remain, but more and more of these engines of growth are leaving for states with better business climates and lower costs of living, particularly for housing.

There have been so many departures that California lost a seat in the House of Representatives and the Electoral College last year—a fact

that we all knew but that was absent from an address that was little more than a re-election speech eight months early. There were plenty of self-congratulations for throwing money at problems, including \$38 billion for climate change over the years and nearly \$13 billion for homelessness in just the past two years.

For all the money that has been spent, what are the outcomes? Homelessness continues to worsen, and housing projects for the homeless cost taxpayers far more than the cost of building a luxury mansion on a per-square-foot basis. But no one leading state government seems to care about this travesty. As the old saw goes, it is easy to spend other people's money.

And what of all those billions spent on climate change? California is responsible for only around 1 percent of global carbon emissions, meaning that anything California does in the climate change sphere can't move the carbon needle.

But much worse is the fact that for decades, California failed to manage forests and grasslands to prevent fires. This failure has led to off-the-charts wildfires, which in 2020 created 25 percent higher carbon emissions than otherwise would have occurred.

Ironically, this completely offset the cumulative 25 percent statewide reduction in carbon emissions that California had achieved from those billions and billions spent in the name of climate change. Of course, these fires also exacted a horrendous human toll, wiping entire towns off the map. This is what happens when government doesn't practice commonsense economics.

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***Wildfires in 2020 completely offset the statewide emissions reductions that cost California's taxpayers billions and billions of dollars.***

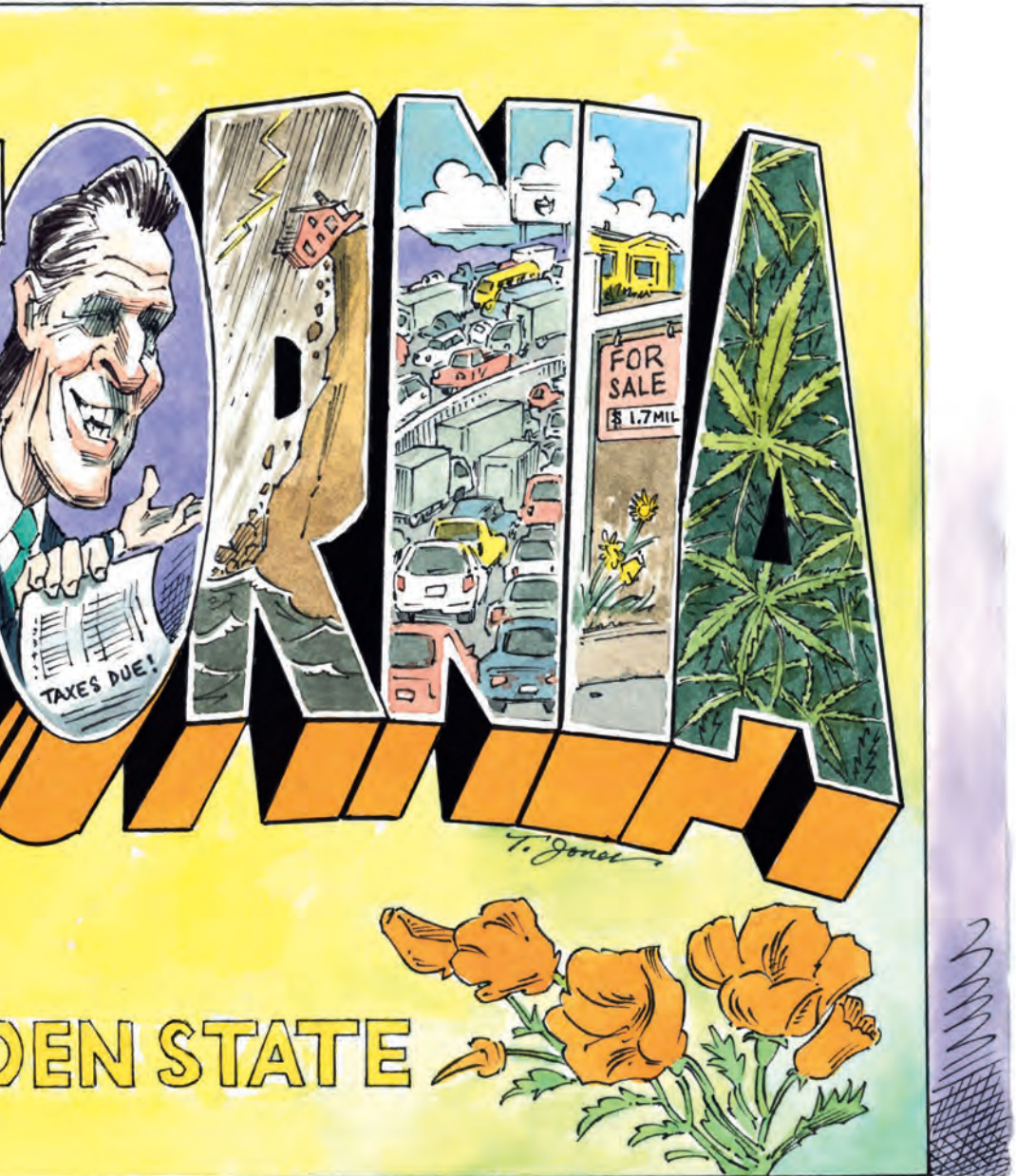
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emphasize forest management and the creation of firebreaks. But California has been woefully neglectful on this front for decades.

As energy costs, particularly the price of gasoline, rise sharply, the governor admonished those who support increasing the supply of fossil fuels, referring to the oil industry as “petro-dictators.” Over a thousand new



permits to drill in California wait for approval, but there is almost no chance they will get approved. So what of the economic distress caused by higher gas and electricity prices? Newsom promised some type of tax rebate. But in the meantime, higher energy prices punish lower-income households, particularly the thirteen million people in the state who are poor enough to qualify for Medi-Cal health care.

What did the governor have to say about crime? Newsom quoted Bobby Kennedy (whose assassin, Sirhan Sirhan, was denied parole by Newsom last year) regarding the fundamental importance of citizens being able to walk their streets safely. But California streets are far from safe today. The state's homicide rate rose 30 percent last year. Gun violence in Los Angeles is up 50 percent. Smash-and-grab robberies have skyrocketed.

Newsom touted the spending of hundreds of millions to determine the root causes of crime. But we already know two of them: treating theft below \$950 as a misdemeanor is a major reason why smash-and-grab is now so high, and district attorneys are unwilling to prosecute those criminals. Meanwhile, Newsom's party killed a bill within committee that would have repealed Proposition 47, which set the \$950 misdemeanor limit.

Newsom spoke about reforming education in California by giving parents "real choices," but this will not be school choice, in which parents would receive scholarship vouchers allowing them to take their kids to a spectrum of schools rather than be stuck in a neighborhood school that is performing poorly. And far too many public K-12 schools are performing badly. In fact,

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***Homelessness just gets worse, and housing projects for the homeless cost taxpayers far more than the price of a luxury mansion.***

Newsom signed a bill last year that sharply limits school choice by placing restrictions on new charter schools, which for some families were the only alternative to a badly

run neighborhood school. Charter schools were drawing too many students from other schools by providing a better education, hence the new bill to protect the uncompetitive schools that are failing our kids.

How badly are schools failing? Only about 20 percent of Hispanic and black students are evaluated to be proficient or higher in math, and speaking as a teacher myself, I can tell you that the proficiency bar is not very high.

This failure puts these kids at risk of never being able to compete for a career that requires technical and mathematical knowledge. Say goodbye to careers such as software development, electrical engineering, biomedical

research, finance, analytics, and even auditing for these kids. All in the name of protecting the massive education-political machinery within the state that protects its own at the cost of damning these kids to a lifetime of financial struggles—because they *will* struggle to find a well-paying job.

## A BUG, NOT A FEATURE

Newsom closed his address by stating, “We know that government cannot be the entire solution, but we also know that government has always been part of the solution . . . by creating a platform for people, and the private sector, to thrive.”

Reading this, you get the feeling that the governor is living in an entirely different California—a California of yesteryear, not the state we live in today. Not the California that is the state judged to be the least business friendly in the country; to be among the worst in taxation; to have the highest living costs; and to have some of the worst schools and infrastructure. Not a

state whose government

pushes the private sector

underwater rather than giving people and businesses a leg up. Not a state that is bleeding businesses and people, all of whom are looking for a better way, and who are escaping today’s “California Way.” ■

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***Nothing California does in the climate change sphere can move the needle.***

***Read California on Your Mind, the online Hoover Institution journal that probes the politics and economics of the Golden State ([www.hoover.org/publications/californiaonyourmind](http://www.hoover.org/publications/californiaonyourmind)). © 2022 The Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. All rights reserved.***



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# *The Price Isn't Right*

**Higher taxes are driving Californians out of the state—especially the big earners on whom the state coffers depend. Don't believe it? Here's the evidence.**

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***By Joshua D. Rauh and Jillian Ludwig***

**H**eadlines have announced that many wealthy individuals and businesses are fleeing California. Elon Musk with Tesla and Larry Ellison with Oracle are among the highest-profile departures. According to recent data, 2020 was the first year since 1900, when such information began to be collected, in which California's population declined. Even so, the idea that the wealthy are leaving California has primarily relied on anecdotes rather than systematic evidence, and the actual costs to the state and its tax base of these departures have been unknown.

In a new paper, we use data directly from California state tax filings to study how migration has varied across tax brackets over the past two decades. Reports of overall population decline are cause for concern, but for the economy, it matters whether the outflow is in fact driven by higher-income or lower-income taxpayers. While an overall population loss is

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problematic, one where high-income citizens are leaving at a particularly high rate translates more quickly into reduced public resources and contracting economic activity, given the relatively large share of income earned by, and taxes paid by, high earners. Declines in population driven by high earners mean reduced tax revenues for Sacramento, and reduced job opportunities for middle- and lower-income Californians who are less mobile.

So, what is responsible for this decline? While California's high tax burden has been a prime suspect, there are other potential culprits: some of the highest housing costs in the nation, an inhospitable regulatory environment for businesses, comparatively poor-quality public services, and so on.

By studying the departure rates of taxpayers around major tax events, specifically California's Proposition 30 (passed in 2012) and the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA, signed in 2017), we document the role that taxes play for high-income filers when making location decisions. Out-migration spiked for the highest earners, particularly those making over \$5 million a year, around both tax policy

changes. Even worse, in-migration did not keep pace, resulting in net out-migration rates of about 1.75 percent in 2012 and 1.7 percent in 2017 for high earners mak-

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***While many destinations levy no income tax, they benefit from the economic activity and other tax revenues generated by high-income arrivals from California.***

ing more than \$5 million per year. Furthermore, net departure rates for top bracket filers remained elevated in the pre-pandemic years.

We found in this research that these migration trends may have significant implications for the state and its residents. From 2003 to 2018, income tax revenue as a share of Sacramento's total revenue grew by approximately 20 percentage points, totaling \$93.8 billion (in 2015 dollars) by the end of the time period.

At the same time, the state's reliance on the top income tax bracket for these revenues also increased considerably. We show in the paper that by 2018, those earning more than \$5 million a year—just 0.1 percent of the income-tax-paying population—paid more than a fifth of California's income tax in that year. Bearing in mind this group's high level of mobility and propensity to respond to tax policy changes, the state's dependence on top earners for revenue is risky at best.

But while Sacramento may be most concerned with the amount of revenue filling its coffers, the losses to overall economic prosperity associated with



out-migration are perhaps best reflected in the taxable income that may be lost when people leave the state. A person living in the state likely spends a large share of his income within the state, thereby producing other revenues

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***It matters whether the outflow is driven by higher-income or lower-income taxpayers.***

for the state through property, sales, and gas taxes. His spending also supports California businesses, employment, and general economic opportunity within the state.

When an individual moves to a new state, California loses out on more than just income tax revenues; it also misses out on that future income and the spending that comes with it.

We find that the taxable income that is potentially moving out with emigrants is not consistently replaced by that coming into California with in-movers. In the early 2000s, this trend was likely due to continued effects from the dot-com bust or the state's energy crisis. Later in the time period, however, we see spikes in out-moving taxable income associated with Proposition 30 and the TCJA, particularly for the highest earners. In 2017, net taxable income (out-movers minus in-movers) reached \$3.8 billion, nearly half of which can be attributed to out-movers earning more than \$5 million a year.

Yet this focus on the level of income departing or arriving in California misses part of the picture of total economic activity.

One state's loss is another state's gain. Our research shows that a few states in particular have become increasingly popular destinations for movers from California. Zero-income-tax states like Florida, Nevada, Texas, and Washington have seen larger numbers of high-earning movers from California, while high-tax states like New York have become less popular for departing Californians over time,

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***We suspect that the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these trends.***

particularly after the TCJA was passed. This lends further support to the idea that the location decisions of the wealthiest individuals are tax-motivated.

While many of the most popular destination states levy no income tax, they benefit nonetheless from the economic activity and other tax revenues generated by these high-income arrivals from California.

Sacramento's increasing reliance on a small group of highly responsive, highly mobile top earners for revenues undoubtedly places the state in a



precarious financial position. Though our research provides a clearer picture of California's population decline and its deleterious economic implications over the past two decades, we suspect that the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these trends as the positive network externalities to living in the Golden State have further unraveled.

In early 2022, state policy makers proposed a new top marginal income tax rate of 18.05 percent and further increases to tax rates on businesses. Further tax increases are likely to drive even more taxpayers out of California and further affect the state's economic dynamism, in effect killing the goose that lays the golden egg. ■

*Special to the Hoover Digest.*



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# “We’ve Never Seen It This Bad”

**Hoover fellow John B. Taylor on surging inflation: “They’re coming around to the idea that this has to be taken care of.”**

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**By Russ Roberts**

**Russ Roberts, EconTalk:** My guest is John B. Taylor, the Mary and Robert Raymond Professor of Economics at Stanford University and the George P. Shultz Senior Fellow in Economics at the Hoover Institution.

For the first time in a long time, there’s inflation in America, and elsewhere, and people are unnerved by this. When we say inflation is 3 percent, or we say inflation is a problem, or we say inflation is rising, what does that mean?

**John B. Taylor:** That’s a good place to begin. First, you have to think about a measure of prices. What economists and statisticians do is measure the average level of prices. Sometimes it’s the average level of consumer prices,

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which gives you something called the consumer price index. It's an average—it gives higher weight to items that people purchase more of, and less weight to items people purchase less.

Inflation is how much that changes over time: from month to month, year to year, or over a longer period.

The concern that many people have is that these average prices are rising quite a bit. The consumer price index over the past year is up around 7 percent. That's quite a large increase, and it includes all sorts of stuff—gasoline, meat, food, rent, etc. Not everything is going up, but a lot has gone up.

**Roberts:** So, there's a basket of stuff that the government measures the average price of. And they try to base that basket on what people spend money on. The basket is not the same for you as it is for me. It's not the same if you live in Palo Alto, California, versus Biloxi, Mississippi. It's a crude measure of the overall impulse of prices to be rising over a period of time. When was it last close to 7 percent, which is pretty high relative to recently?

**Taylor:** It's very high. It's been much lower than that, and hasn't been a concern. Of course, if you go way back in time, it was even higher. In the 1970s, it was quite high. And each time it was high, there's evidence that monetary policy was too aggressive in the sense of letting

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***“Recessions are always possible, but I’m not predicting a recession.”***

inflation rise. If you look at the 1970s in the United States, inflation got up to double digits. And what had to happen was the Fed had to undo that, and it was very painful. So, what we hope is that the undoing is not so painful. Ultimately, the broader-based movements that you're referring to are very closely related to monetary policy.

The Fed and other central banks think the best rate of inflation is 2 percent—that's the target. In fact, for a long time, we had 2 percent, which was good. But now the inflation rate is close to 7 percent. That's a concern because we don't want it that high forever.

**Roberts:** Why is it a concern? Yes, the Fed has a target of 2 percent, but let's say it's 7 percent year in, year out. What's wrong with that?

**Taylor:** It's bad if it's not across the board. We just talked about prices. If prices are rising that much and wages are not rising, then it's cutting into people's income quite a bit. I think you're asking what's so bad about 7 percent inflation with wages and prices both increasing. Probably the number



***CAUTION: Amid surging inflation, Hoover senior fellow John B. Taylor weighs the actions of the Federal Reserve: “People are worried it will be draconian because in the past it has been, but it doesn’t have to be. As the Fed begins to make these adjustments, we’ll have a better recovery than we might otherwise have.” [Tom Williams—CQ Roll Call]***

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one problem is that it erodes the ability of monetary policy to work. And that’s taking away a big part of stabilization in the economy.

**Roberts:** Let’s back up for a second. Let’s again say inflation is 7 percent and it’s steady, year in and year out. When there’s a recession, the Fed might respond to that. Talk about how and why if inflation is 7 percent, it limits the Fed’s ability to do so.

**Taylor:** If you have 7 percent inflation, then interest rates will have to be 9 or 10 percent, because they need to be a little higher than the inflation rate to have their effect. So, a world where interest rates average 7 or 8 percent is a different world. We had that world in the past and it wasn’t pleasant—frequently because interest rates went up and interest rates went down. It caused a real problem with allocation of resources. The interest rate is a very important variable in the economy. It affects how much people invest and save.

What's good about 2 percent inflation is that it's reasonably close to zero. It's actually pretty much global—many other countries think it's a good target. And, from an international perspective, it's also good to have similar inflation rates in different countries, because then the exchange rate is not always changing. If you have a very high inflation rate and the rest of the world has low inflation, then your currency is going to be depreciating. Yes, if it's a steady rate, who cares? But it's not a steady rate.

Two percent is a good target to have. If you go to 7 percent, almost for sure central banks will want to reduce it back to some lower level. You can be sure that's what the Fed is thinking about now.

**Roberts:** But again, there is a question of why they would want to do that. To monetary theorists like yourself, there's a risk of hyperinflation, which is a rate higher than, say, 7 percent. A much higher rate can be 100 percent: prices could double every year.

Again, I think the issue isn't so much whether they're doubling. It's whether they're doubling some years and tripling in others and going up 50 percent in others. What that starts to do is discourage the use of the economic system for exchanging goods. It encourages people to barter, because goods keep their value and money doesn't. That has happened numerous times in world history. It's devastating to material well-being and devastating to civilization.

People start spending a huge amount of time trying to find people to swap stuff with, because they don't have the power of currency to exchange. They have to use goods and find people who want the things they have—chickens if you're a chicken farmer or haircuts if you're a barber. That's incredibly inefficient. So, if you start to destroy the use of currency as a way for people to exchange goods, you get a lot poorer.

**Taylor:** That's for sure.

**Roberts:** What did the Fed do that was so different a year or so ago that was concerning to people who worry about inflation? What was the change in their policy that was so dramatic?

**Taylor:** First, they held interest rates near zero when all the indicators of inflation were picking up, and the economy was returning close to normal. So, all the things you'd normally have with a higher interest rate were signaling raise the rate, and the Fed didn't do that.

It's not just the Fed. The European Central Bank had a slightly negative rate. They haven't made the adjustments yet. They're debating that with the

Bank of Japan. So, it's an international phenomenon; central banks do react to each other and think about what's happening. But the Fed continues to keep interest rates near zero. They haven't made the adjustments yet.

**Roberts:** When you say the Fed kept interest rates low, I assume you're talking about the rates they directly control, not the ones they try to indirectly control. And, if so, explain.

**Taylor:** The rate that the Fed has normally controlled—in the sense of their adjusting the supply of money to bring that rate into line—has been the federal funds rate. It's the overnight rate that banks charge when they lend to each other. Since the Fed can control the amount of liquidity—the amount of

money in the economy—they can affect that rate. So, that's the primary rate that's near zero. When I say the rate is near zero, I mean the short-term rate. That rate does feed back

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***“A world where interest rates average 7 or 8 percent is a different world. We had that world in the past and it wasn't pleasant.”***

into mortgage rates, longer term rates, rates you have to pay for borrowing a car, and rates businesses have to pay, so if that rate is very low, that increases the amount of demand in the economy. That's what you're seeing now, even though supply has not increased very much—in fact, you could argue supply is declining.

So, the federal funds rate is as low as it's ever been compared to what is the best determinant of that, which is that inflation is very high. That has to be taken care of.

**Roberts:** You're arguing that the Fed has kept that overnight rate low. Do they keep that low statutorily? Do they literally set that rate or do they intervene in the market to cause the rate to be at a particular level?

**Taylor:** For the most part, they intervene in the market to affect the rate. They buy and sell bonds and they provide the amount of so-called liquidity to make the rate low. They would supply less to make the rate higher. There are questions about how to do that and how fast to do that. They've been reluctant to do that, obviously, but again, they're as far off as I've ever seen.

**Roberts:** But hasn't that been true for a long time? Seven percent is a big number and you mentioned before we started recording that the producer price index rose 20 percent last year, which is suggestive of future consumer



price increases that will exceed 7 percent. But hasn't the Fed been off the rails for fifteen years and haven't interest rates been near zero? Hasn't this been a much bigger, longer, older problem?

**Taylor:** Well, it has been a longer one. In the 1970s, it was a problem, but there was a period in 2004–6 when rates were also low compared to inflation and compared to the state of the economy. That ultimately meant the Fed had to react, and we had this terrible recession in 2007 and 2008. That's some of the danger of providing too much. It has to be offset, and we had a terrible recession.

As you mentioned, in more recent periods it took a while for the Fed to start raising rates, but they did. It started with Janet Yellen as chair and continued with Jerome Powell. Then they gave up on it. But it still wasn't even close to the difference that we see now. Now it's zero again. So, they go up and down, but there are three periods, if you count the current one, where they were way off: the 1970s, 2004–6, and now.

**Roberts:** Are you suggesting we're going to have a recession soon in the United States?

**Taylor:** No, not if the Fed does what they need to do. Recessions are always possible, but I'm not predicting a recession. I'm predicting that what the Fed needs to do is make an adjustment. There's nothing wrong with interest rates that are 2–3 percent rather than zero. Again, I'm talking about the federal funds rate.

**Roberts:** So, the risk would be that if inflation started getting increasingly higher that the Fed would be encouraged to respond dramatically. It would have a sharp increase in

the federal funds rate, which would lead to a sharp contraction of activity by banks, which would lead to a sharp contraction of economic

activity, which would lead to a recession. You're suggesting they should start to raise it gradually now—they should have done it before, but it's not too late. They can start raising it gradually now and have a "softer landing" to a lower rate of inflation in the future, rather than trying to bring it down dramatically in a short period of time. Is that a good summary?

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***"There's no reason why they have to go all the way instantly. These things take time, and they talk about where they're going."***

**Taylor:** Exactly right. There's no reason why they have to go all the way instantly. These things take time and they talk about where they're going. That's why they publish these rules in the reports. They have something

called forward guidance.

They say what the average estimate will be of the interest rate. For example, the average interest rate at the end of this year is 0.9 percent. Just last September, they thought it was 0.3 percent. So, they've risen from 0.3 to 0.9 percent at

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***“The best way to remove that risk is to raise the interest rate. It doesn't have to be damaging. If it's announced and the reason they're doing it is clear, it can be very beneficial to the economy.”***

the end of this year. That's going in the right direction, but again, 0.9 percent is relatively low compared to 3 percent, which is where they should be.

**Roberts:** You're saying that the Fed is allowing inflation to rise and they have an opportunity to bring it down with their interest-rate policy. They're ignoring that and they're taking a risk. The risk is that inflation will rise even higher, and the reckoning will be even sharper. That's a statement about Fed policy, and you're suggesting they're making a mistake right now. But does that explain *why* we have high inflation now? In other words, I understand that if we have high inflation, there's a way to bring it down by increasing the federal funds rate. But you're also suggesting, I think, that 7 percent inflation is *caused* by keeping the interest rate too low for too long. Is that correct?

**Taylor:** Absolutely. This didn't just pop up. These are numbers that have been there really in the last year. The risk is already there. And the best way to remove that risk is to raise the interest rate. It doesn't have to be damaging. If it's announced and the reason they're doing it is clear, it can be very beneficial to the economy.

I mean, what's the advantage of running at a zero interest rate in the first place? If you have a normal interest rate—2 or 3 percent or so—then the economy will function better overall. And I think we'll have a more successful recovery. It doesn't have to be draconian. People are worried it will be draconian because in the past it has been, but it doesn't have to be. As the Fed begins to make these adjustments, we'll have a better recovery than we might otherwise have.

**Roberts:** Are you optimistic about the future of the US economy? I am anxious on political grounds for the future of the United States. And I think that has implications for free economic policy. They don't work totally independently. What do you think?

**Taylor:** I'm more optimistic than I probably should be, but I think that we're in a situation where we're having a good discussion. We're having debates. Maybe it's more pulled apart than normal.

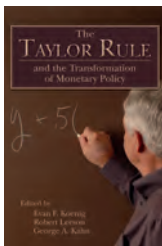
But I can't be too pessimistic, because unless the disease comes back or something like that, I think we're following the right approach. And if you compare it with other countries, it's looking better. The danger is: there's a lot of risk. We could regulate; we could get confused. We could have a terrible monetary policy. All those things are risks. I think the data and the analysis are suggesting we need to improve monetary policy. We need to improve fiscal policy. A regulatory policy is harder, but there I could give the example of the high-tech firms: let's not try to prevent them from doing good things.

So, I'm optimistic. It's a terrible tragedy that the world has faced, but I think we're going to come out of it fine. ■

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***“What’s good about 2 percent inflation is that it’s reasonably close to zero.”***

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# *The Spirit of Liberty*

**Individual liberty, however chaotic and loud, is the root of all civic freedoms. Conservatives need to remember that.**

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**By Peter Berkowitz**

“In this character of the Americans, a love of freedom is the predominating feature which marks and distinguishes the whole; and as an ardent is always a jealous affection, your Colonies become suspicious, restive, and untractable whenever they see the least attempt to wrest from them by force, or shuffle from them by chicane, what they think the only advantage worth living for.”

Because of their national spirit, Edmund Burke cautioned Parliament in his 1775 “Speech on Conciliation,” the Americans’ opposition to taxation without representation required “an unusual degree of care and calmness.” The growth of the population and the colonies’ outsized commercial contribution to the British empire by themselves counseled every reasonable effort to compromise. But beyond these exigencies, according to Burke, the “temper and character of the American people” were decisive in the search for a prudent resolution to the dispute: “This fierce spirit of liberty is stronger in the English Colonies probably than

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in any other people of the earth, and this from a great variety of powerful causes.”

The spirit of liberty in America shined brightly in the generation that produced the Declaration of Independence, prevailed in the Revolutionary War, and ratified the Constitution under which the United States grew to be a multi-religious, multi-racial, and multi-ethnic rights-protecting democracy and world power. More than two centuries later, the formal constitutional protections of religious liberty, free speech, press freedom, and the rights to peaceably assemble and to petition the government remain in place.

At the same time, established institutions threaten the culture of freedom. Schools, from

K-12 through universities, tend to conflate indoctrination and education. Leading media outlets often favor the promulgation of progressive narratives over the accurate reporting of stories. Big Tech social media platforms reward the vehement and the snide while censoring facts and perspectives that conflict with their workforces’ political sensibilities. And, not least, an overweening federal bureaucracy has made a priority of implementing fashionable theories about the supposed moral imperative to discriminate based on race to achieve social justice.

Particularly in such perilous times, one would think that a crucial task of American conservatism—a conservatism rooted in the nation’s founding principles and constitutional traditions—is to remind fellow citizens of the blessings of liberty under law. Yet many conservatives join the left in blaming the nation’s travails on the principles of individual freedom and the institutions of limited government.

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***Marx, too, argued for erasing the distinction between public and private in order to bring about “human emancipation.”***

## **IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE**

Some of the best-known intellectuals associated with “National Conservatism” lead the right-wing disparagement of the modern tradition of freedom. “[A] project of the Edmund Burke Foundation,” according to its website, “‘National Conservatism’ is a movement of public figures, journalists, scholars, and students who understand that the past and future of conservatism are inextricably tied to the idea of the nation, to the principle of national independence, and to the revival of the unique national traditions that alone have the power to bind a people together and bring about

their flourishing.” Set aside the peculiarity of self-proclaimed admirers of Edmund Burke building a transnational movement around an abstraction—“the idea of the nation.” More concerning is the tendency of the movement’s leaders to besmirch the dedication to basic rights and fundamental freedoms that is woven into the fabric of America’s “unique national traditions.”

In his plenary address last year at the movement’s conference in Orlando, Edmund Burke Foundation Chairman Yoram Hazony stressed that the

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***Many conservatives join the left in blaming the nation’s travails on the principles of freedom and limited government.***

United States stands at a crossroads because of the success of the “neo-Marxist cultural revolution which has taken over many, maybe most, of the liberal institutions that

form the backbone of liberal hegemony in the United States since after World War II.” To counter the neo-Marxists, Hazony contends, conservatives must overcome the distinction between “the public” and “the private.”

In the 1950s and 1960s, in Hazony’s telling, American conservatism followed William F. Buckley Jr. in embracing, under the name “fusionism,” the split between those two spheres. “We are going to support freedom—economic, social freedom, individual liberties—everywhere we can almost across the board,” the fusionists reasoned, according to Hazony, while relegating to the private sphere “traditionalism, nation, God, scripture, the traditional family.”

Hazony conceded (without saying how or pondering the implications) that fusionism contributed to victory in the Cold War, but he concluded that it “was also a failure.” Fusionism “didn’t work” because there is “no real separation” between the public and the private. The proof in Hazony’s eyes is that “public liberalism” spills over and corrupts “private conservatism.” To reverse the nation’s precipitous decline, he asserts, American conservatism must reinfuse the public sphere, and particularly the schools, with “God and scripture.”

Hazony, however, mistakes an imperfect separation of public and private for “no real separation.” And he erroneously implies that the separation was invented in the 1950s by conservatives, though it is bound up with the natural-rights thinking that partly constitutes America’s unique national traditions. Indeed, the separation between public and private also stems from the Christian teaching, espoused by James Madison in his 1785 “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments,” that the exercise of political authority over religion undercuts true piety.



## A MORE EXPANSIVE DOMAIN

Hazony's attack on the distinction between public and private involves a variation on a familiar critique of liberal democracy and a common ambition to employ the organs of the state to promote the true and comprehensive vision of human flourishing. Strangely enough, the classic version of Hazony's discontents with the modern tradition of freedom was put forward in 1843 by Karl Marx in part 1 of "On the Jewish Question."

The young Marx contrasted "political emancipation," rooted in liberal democracy's separation of public and private, with "human emancipation," which, to achieve the common good, merges public and private. Political emancipation, Marx maintained, fosters false consciousness by swamping the private sphere with the public concern for rights and freedom: at home, citizens dispose of their earnings as they please instead of combating the evils of capitalism; in their places of worship, individuals and their families serve God as they see fit, rather than opposing religion as a snare and a delusion. Only erasure of the distinction between public and private, argues Marx, can overcome such false consciousness and bring about "human emancipation."

That way lies authoritarianism and worse. Yet in the name of the common good, "natcons," as they call themselves, advocate the concerted use of government to direct culture, mold families, teach virtues, and empower religious faith. After all, they argue, law and public policy inevitably shape souls—which is true. Yet the natcons often overlook the great difference between, on the one

hand, government that arrogates to itself the right and responsibility to dictate morality and supervise human flourishing, and, on the other, government that maintains an expansive domain in which citizens and their communities retain the right, and shoulder the responsibility, to cultivate morality and promote human flourishing.

The natcons' problem is not that they take America's "unique national traditions" seriously but that they fail to take those traditions seriously enough. In the American constitutional tradition, the common good consists in the first place in maintaining a political order that protects all citizens' rights equally. That political order provides a wide democratic space to advance the

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***Individual liberty and limited government provide the only sturdy foundation on which Americans of diverse faiths, political views, and moral sensibilities can come together.***

public interest by, say, rescuing education, elevating culture, putting immigration under law, and reforming trade policy.

The natcons have rightly sounded the alarm about woke ideology and have illuminated the follies committed in freedom's name, permitted under its watch, and encouraged by its uneasy relation with authority. But in their zeal to remoralize American life, they foster contempt for America's distinctive national traditions, which are rooted in individual liberty and limited government. These provide the only sturdy foundation on which Americans of diverse faiths, political perspectives, and moral sensibilities can come together to address the country's daunting challenges.

"I pardon something to the spirit of liberty," Burke told Parliament in 1775 in the effort to prudently resolve the conflict with the American colonies. So should conservatives today. ■

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# Badlands

**Violence in Eastern Europe again mocks the high-flown, unworkable dream of the Versailles Treaty: firm borders in a lasting “world order,” and a world forever at peace.**

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**By Bruce S. Thornton**

In 1919, the Versailles Treaty established in international law and global institutions two ideals that have framed Western foreign policy ever since. The first is the elevation of national self-determination and democratic government as the default goods for all the world's peoples. The other is the notion that supranational institutions, international laws, and multinational treaties and covenants are the best means for peacefully settling international disputes and conflicts.

Russia's violent, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine is merely the latest example of a century's worth of repudiation of these ideals that still shape modern foreign policy—a challenge that, if we're lucky, may lead to a long-needed revision of this ideal of a “rules-based international order” and its dubious foundational assumptions.

President Woodrow Wilson articulated these ideals in his Fourteen Points and speeches during World War I. In 1918, he told Congress, “National aspirations must be accepted; peoples may now be dominated only by their own consent.” This principle perforce was opposed to colonial empires, as Wilson made clear in the Fourteen Points: “The day of conquest and aggrandizement

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is gone by,” he said, foreseeing the peaceful pursuit of its purposes by “every nation whose purposes are consistent with justice and the peace of the world.”

Of course, as we’ve seen over the past century, what the great diversity of global peoples and cultures mean by “justice” differs considerably, especially regarding the use of force to realize national ambitions at the expense of other nations. Such ideals have been vulnerable as well to the duplicitous diplomacy, propaganda, and aggression of ambitious states. Hitler brilliantly turned this ideal against its champions, such as France and Britain, during the Sudetenland crisis of September 1938. After all, didn’t the three million alleged ethnic Germans stranded in the new state of Czechoslovakia after the war deserve their “national aspirations” to be accepted? Why should they, as Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels lied during the crisis, have to tolerate the “brutal treatment of women and children of German blood” at the hands of alien Czechs?

Or consider how the Israeli-Arab conflict has exploited these same shibboleths of “national self-determination.” After World War II, Stalin’s Comintern began tutoring anticolonial revolutionary movements like those in Algeria and Palestine (the old Ottoman province), to cast these struggles as fights for “national self-determination” rather than the advance of communism or the pursuit of an Islamic Reconquista. In the case of Palestine, the real goal has always been to leave the territory *Judenrein* from the “river to the sea,” as confirmed by the PLO’s rejecting five offers to create their own nation. Other communist revolutions in Vietnam and Cuba likewise exploited the Wilsonian rhetoric of “national self-determination” as camouflage for their true goal of establishing communist governments.

And that malign tradition continues. We watch in real time as Russia ravages Ukraine under the pretext that ethnic Russians were stranded in the original homeland of Russia—first by the Bolsheviks, then by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Such a propaganda ruse is possible in part because of the recurring lack of clarity about what constitutes a “nation.” As Wilson’s secretary of state Robert Lansing asked, “What unit does he [Wilson] have in mind? Does he mean a race [“people”], a territorial idea, or a community?”

## COUNTLESS FRAGMENTS

In practice, it is impossible to give all peoples who self-identify by a shared culture, landscape, traditions, history, faith, or language their own nation. When Wilson proposed that ideal, there were thirty million ethnic minority peoples in Europe. Such groups are still with us today: the Galicians,



***"THE SHAMEFUL TREATY":*** A bitterly satirical medallion designed by German artist Karl Goetz commemorates the tenth anniversary of the 1919 Versailles Treaty, in which the victors of the Great War dictated terms to the vanquished. It shows French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau thrusting the treaty—a skull and crossbones on the cover—toward German Foreign Minister Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau. At left, President Wilson tramples an olive branch. [Karl Goetz (1875–1950)]

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Catalans, and Basques of Spain, for example. (In China, the oppressed Uighurs and occupied Tibetans still lack independent nationhood.) Even when a system of mandates was put in place after World War I to create new nations out of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, many distinct peoples like the Kurds never received the boon of national self-determination. A century later, nationalist movements from Catalonia to Kurdistan still struggle to have their identity recognized.

As for democracy, its cargo of unalienable individual rights, political freedom, and equality of all before the law is not the destiny of the whole world and its diverse peoples. The genius of these Western ideals, rather, is that they are *available* for any peoples who want to live free of tyranny. Just as any child can learn to speak any of the thousands of languages spoken in the world today, so too any human can learn to live in any other culture, no matter how different. But this does not mean that the Western way is the desired destiny of human history, as the post-Cold War “new world order” presumed.

Another of the transformational ideals established by the Versailles Treaty was Wilson’s fourteenth point, which became Article 26 of the treaty: “A

general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to

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***President Wilson’s secretary of state asked, “What unit does he have in mind? Does he mean a race, a territorial idea, or a community?”***

great and small states alike.” This became the League of Nations. The ideal’s flaw lay in the assumptions that all member nations shared a “harmony of interests,” such as peace, and foundational beliefs like the sanctity of national borders, both of which would create laws and covenants that would adjudicate, deter, and punish aggressors who violated these principles.

But that assumption clashed with the national interests and identifying cultures of sovereign states. More practically, there were no clear, binding, effective protocols for punishing violators of the league’s terms. It didn’t take long after the league’s founding for these weaknesses to be obvious. In the two decades between the world wars, three League of Nations members—the future Axis powers, Japan, Italy, and Germany—had forcibly violated national borders with impunity.

Anyone could have foreseen this outcome. Without a League of Nations military force to punish aggressors, it was up to individual member-states to spend the lives and resources to uphold the league’s principles. But that



meant enforcement was hostage to the national interests and security of each state, confirming the wisdom of George Washington: “It is a maxim founded on the universal experience of mankind, that no nation can be trusted farther than it is bounded by its interests.”

The successor to the League of Nations—which failed to prevent the massive slaughter of the Second World War—has a similar record of futility. The United Nations, like the League of Nations, has functioned primarily as a global commons that member states exploit to serve their own interests, no matter how much they violate the founding ideals like the sanctity of national sovereignty and boundaries or the nonviolent adjudication of conflict.

Indeed, this clash of interests and principles results in transparent hypocrisy. The United Nations Human Rights Council, for instance, has a rotating membership that has included blatant human rights violators like China, Cuba, and Venezuela.

The council’s politicization leads it to persecute liberal-democratic Israel, condemnations of which account for half of all such proclamations by

the council, while it ignores forty-eight “gross human rights abusers” such as China, currently conducting genocide against the minority Muslim Uighurs.

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***It’s impossible to give all people who share a culture, landscape, traditions, history, faith, or language their own nation.***

## **NEW RULES**

Commentary about the Ukraine crisis has worried that the postwar “rules-based international order,” of which the United Nations has been the prime example, may not survive Vladimir Putin’s aggression against Ukraine. The flabby response of the West helped make such outrages possible. Starting in 2008, when Putin carried out land grabs in Georgia and Moldova, through Russia’s 2014 occupation of Crimea and continued military support of secessionists in eastern Ukraine, and up to the launch of the current full-scale invasion, Europe and the United States replied only with speeches and with economic sanctions carefully crafted to avoid hurting the global economy.

Worse yet, the Biden administration took active steps to pave Putin’s way by increasing Western dependence on Russian resources. Waging the Democratic Party’s war on carbon, President Biden turned the United States from a net exporter of oil and gas into a global energy mendicant that imported 600,000 barrels of oil a day from Russia—an amount less than the Canadian oil the Keystone XL pipeline would have been transporting to the United

States if Biden hadn't stopped its construction. The White House also frustrated plans by Israel, Greece, and Cyprus to supply Europe with gas from the eastern Mediterranean.

The policies and orthodoxies that descended from the Versailles settlement need to be revised, and realism restored to our foreign policy. There are signs

that the West is waking up. Germany pledged to raise its military budget to the 2 percent of GDP agreed by NATO, and will now allow German armaments and components

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***The United Nations functions primarily as a way for member states to serve their own interests, not the founding ideals.***

to be transferred to Ukraine by the original buyers. And Germany has joined other NATO countries in approving severe sanctions on Russian banks. If such actions multiply, there may be a wider, more comprehensive reform of foreign policy orthodoxies. The alternative is diplomatic bluster, "new world order" platitudes, and feeble sanctions. ■

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# *A Country Finds Itself*

**Ukraine's struggle is a powerful reminder that history, and how we teach it, transcends facts and figures. What the war has in common with our own founding.**

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**By Paul E. Peterson**

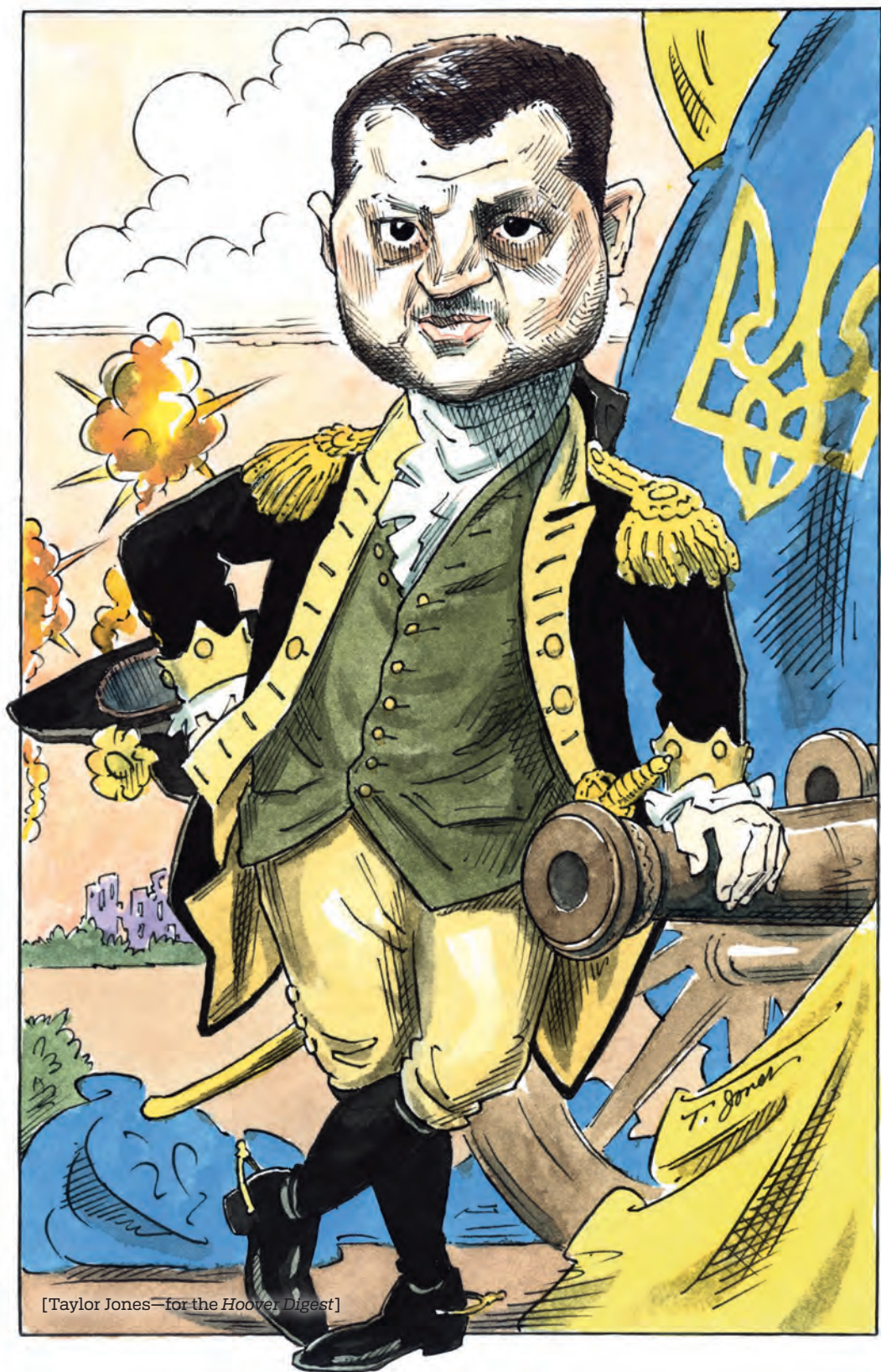
**H**istory is happening at this moment. A country is defining itself. Authentic, inspiring patriotism is surging through the Ukrainian people. Whatever happens next, President Volodymyr Zelensky personifies patriotism, honor, courage, and dedication. If Ukraine survives as an independent nation, 2022 will ring for decades, probably centuries, as Ukraine's greatest historical moment.

Now we know why civics is best taught as history. Civics is not about learning to write a letter to the editor or registering to vote. Nothing wrong about that, but civics, fundamentally, is learning one's history as a country—just how it came to be, why it is as it is, and what makes it worthy.

There is no need for history to be sugar-coated or untruthful. Defining moments are riveting, stirring, thrilling, passionate, and definitive. When Zelensky appears before the US Congress—if only virtually—we feel compelled to listen: “I see no sense in life if it cannot stop the deaths.”

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[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]



This is a teaching moment, a time for the American history instructor to remind students that when John Hancock signed the Declaration of Independence, he and his fellow patriots understood then, as Ukrainian leaders know today, the concept that “we must all hang together or surely we will hang separately.”

High school and college students might even be encouraged to read Kevin Weddle’s absorbing account in *The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

The parallels between Saratoga and the Ukrainian war burst from every page. King George III readily accepts General John Burgoyne’s sweepingly confident war plan: shoot down the St. Lawrence River, cross Lake Champlain, capture Fort Ticonderoga, and, with loyalist help, drive to Albany, sail down the Hudson River, and meet Sir William Howe’s army coming up from New York City. Nothing could be easier—other than, perhaps, watching Ukrainian morale implode once Russian tanks pour down highways into Kyiv.

Burgoyne—and Vladimir Putin—were absolutely correct, at least in the beginning. Just as Crimea was acquired with barely a Western whimper in 2014, so Ticonderoga fell with hardly a British casualty, in early July 1777. The quick and easy victories

stirred great confidence—indeed, extreme overconfidence—both inside the Kremlin and, two centuries ago, inside the Queen’s House now known as Buckingham Palace. Certain of victory, Burgoyne, instead of securing his base, dashed forward through a dense, ravine-ridden, Vermontian-infested forest.

In wartime, leadership and command count for much. Unfortunately for King George, he had passed over experienced military commanders in favor of an ambitious court favorite pitching a battle plan. Putin is no less poorly served. He has picked his top military personnel with political loyalty, not military competence, foremost in mind.

When tanks strike ditches and potholes, or horse-drawn carriages haul cannon up mountainsides, grand strategies turn into logistics. Distant from Montreal, desperate for supplies, Burgoyne dispatched a contingent to forage as far as Bennington, Vermont, only to be surrounded by an aroused patriot militia. Wounded soldiers, not feed for horses, were his reward. The size of the patriot forces increased daily even as loyalists disappeared and attrition took its toll on the British soldiers.

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***Civic lessons are being learned on the ground, in real life. Our schools and our students should pay attention.***

The patriots were not perfect. The general in charge, Horatio Gates, subsequently proved to be the coward many suspected all along. Benedict Arnold rallied the troops at critical moments but later turned traitor. Among the militia, the New York–New England divide nearly proved fatal. The increasingly skillful strategist, George Washington, held the Continental Army together but barely kept his job.

Yet the surrender of a British army at Saratoga provoked rising opposition in Parliament, triggered French entry into the war, and entrenched patriotism across the colonies. Today, heroic Ukrainian defense efforts have stirred self-indulgent Europeans and Americans to reassess their true obligations to the defense of democracy.

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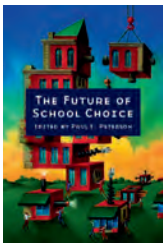
***Civics is more than just writing a letter to the editor or registering to vote.***

Although Saratoga is the beginning of the end, a signed peace agreement recognizing the United States of America does

not come for six more years. Time moves faster in the twenty-first than in the eighteenth century, but one should rather pray for than expect a quick solution to the current war against Ukraine.

In the meantime, democratic patriotism is deepening. The Ukrainians are teaching us. Our civic lessons are being learned on the ground, in real life. Our schools and our students can profit by attending to the moment. One does not need to manufacture history to teach patriotism; one only needs to explain that history has not come to an end. ■

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# *Present at the Creation*

**Ukraine, a nation in its own right, remained for centuries under Russian domination. When Herbert Hoover's famine relief workers arrived in the fledgling Soviet republic of Ukraine a century ago, they were drawn into the tensions created by a nascent Ukrainian nationalism.**

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***By Bertrand M. Patenaude***

“I would like to emphasize again that Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us,” Russian President Vladimir Putin said in his rambling February 21 speech to the nation on the eve of Russia’s military assault on Ukraine. “It is an inalienable part of our own history, our culture, and spiritual space.” Putin blamed the founder of the Soviet state, Vladimir Lenin, for what he characterized as the historical accident of today’s independent Ukraine. Lenin’s ideas about “the right of nations to self-determination” served as the basis for the federal structure of the Soviet Union, which granted its constituent republics the legal status of sovereign entities. “At first glance, this looks absolutely incomprehensible, even crazy,” said Putin. “But only at first glance.” The explanation, he said, lies in the fact that Lenin and the Bolshevik Party’s “main goal was to stay

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***HELPLESS: A refugee family, fall 1921. Many who fled the Volga region were determined to reach Ukraine, the proverbial “granary of Russia.” The Kremlin pressured Ukraine to ship food to starving populations in the Volga, even though parts of Ukraine also were suffering from famine. American relief workers, trying to avoid political entanglements, found the tug-of-war between officials in Russia and Ukraine inescapable.*** [Frederick Dorsey Stephens

Papers, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

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in power at all costs, absolutely at all costs. They did everything for this purpose.”

The speech was widely portrayed as a rant, but in fact there was a good deal of truth in what Putin had to say about Ukraine’s emergence as an independent state. As the Bolsheviks took power in the October Revolution of 1917, the Russian empire was breaking apart. The new Soviet government aspired to reconstitute that empire. During the months that followed, the Ukrainian national movement took power in Kyiv. Nationalist sentiment among the Ukrainian intelligentsia had been gathering strength in the decades before World War I, an event that catalyzed it and broadened its social base. Ukraine’s declaration of independence in January 1918 further

aroused this spirit of nationalism, even though the republic's existence was brief and tumultuous. In the period of anarchy and civil war that followed, Ukraine was overrun by successive armies of Germans, Russian Whites and Reds, and Ukrainian nationalists, as well as an assortment of bandits and outlaws. Power changed hands eleven to fifteen times, depending on which city you counted from.

In order for the Soviet government in Moscow to defeat the counterrevolutionary White armies, it had to feed Red Army soldiers and factory workers. And that meant extracting grain from Ukraine, the proverbial "granary of Russia." In attempting to win over Ukraine, the Bolsheviks offered it a special status in a confederation with Soviet Russia. This arrangement came to include official use of the Ukrainian language. In fact, autonomy and the official use of native languages for non-Russian minorities were to become hallmarks of the Soviet system of government. The ideological rationale behind this was the Bolsheviks' assumption that if nationalism were allowed, even encouraged, to blossom, it would expend itself all the sooner and be supplanted by class allegiance, with the proletariat as the chosen class.

So there were both pragmatic and ideological rationales for the Soviet government's affirmative-action policies with respect

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***"At first glance, this looks absolutely incomprehensible, even crazy," Putin said. "But only at first glance."***

to Ukraine and the country's many other ethno-national groups. But while the Bolsheviks had been keen to reap the benefits of weaponizing nationalism to undermine the czarist empire, their instincts told them that it was a reactionary force antithetical to socialism. When it came to their nationalities policy, even the party's leaders were torn within themselves and at times divided among themselves. The Americans of Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration, arriving on the scene in 1921 to combat a famine, got caught up in these tensions, and their presence helped bring them to the surface.

## **"SEND BREAD AND MEDICINE"**

In July 1921, newspaper reports told of a catastrophic famine in Soviet Russia. The famine was the result of the destruction and dislocations caused by the world war, the Russian Revolution, and the ensuing civil war, and also by the Soviet government's forcible requisitioning of grain from the peasantry. A drought in 1920 triggered the famine. Writer Maxim Gorky issued a call "To

РОССИЙСКАЯ СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКАЯ ФЕДЕРАТИВНАЯ СОВЕТСКАЯ РЕСПУБЛИКА.

*Hesperomys deserti* (Cope), *Peromyscus*



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Wissenschaftstyp (Pa. Fachwissenschaftliche Fakultät)

***“THE FIELDS BURNED”:*** This 1921 Soviet political poster says, “Stop this flow of the starving by your comradely help.” Ukraine had been inundated by a succession of migrant waves since the start of the First World War. “Greater than all these,” wrote Harold Fisher in *The Famine in Soviet Russia* (1927), “was the rush of panic-stricken peasants from the Volga, which began in the summer of 1921, as the fields burned and the crops disappeared, and continued in a rising volume like a river in spring, until the arrival of American food checked the flood.” [Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]





**FRIGHTFUL VISITATION: Refugees at a train station in the Volga region, autumn 1921. “Were a new Dante to come among us, he could write a new *Inferno* after visiting one of these railway stations,” wrote American journalist F. A. MacKenzie in September 1921.** [American Relief Administration European operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

All Honest People” to “send bread and medicine.” Gorky’s appeal was read by millions in the West, but only one person was in a position to answer the call: Herbert Hoover.

Hoover was chairman of the American Relief Administration (ARA), founded in 1919, while now also serving as secretary of commerce in the administration of President Warren G. Harding. Hoover’s demand for American control of food distribution inside Soviet Russia, against the backdrop of his reputation as an implacable foe of communism, put Lenin and his comrades on their guard during ARA-Soviet negotiations in Riga, Latvia. The signing of the Riga Agreement on August 20, 1921, took place at a time when the United States had no official diplomatic relations with the Kremlin. The agreement committed the ARA to feed a daily meal to one million Soviet Russian children. That total was later dramatically increased, and supplemented by adult feeding, so that one year later the ARA was providing a daily meal to some 10.5 million Soviet citizens in thousands of kitchens across Soviet Russia. The famine eventually claimed more than six million lives, but millions of lives were saved by this benevolent American intervention.

The famine was known at the time—and is often referred to even today—as the “Volga famine,” centered in the provinces along the Volga River and



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William H. Haskell

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the western edge of the Urals. There had been no discussion at Riga of including Ukraine in the famine zone. During the initial weeks of the mission, the relief workers came across no evidence to suggest the need to revise Ukraine's status. Indeed, the Soviet government informed the Americans that grain was being shipped from Ukraine to the famishing on the Volga. And many of the thousands of refugees in flight from the famine were desperate to reach Ukraine and spoke of it as the promised land. There was, in other words, little hint of the dire reality.

In October 1921, with American child-feeding operations under way in Moscow and Petrograd and in the Volga River Valley, the ARA signed a supplementary agreement with the Soviet government to establish a food remittance program, enabling relatives abroad to arrange for life-saving food packages to be delivered to family members and loved ones in Soviet Russia. The initial reports

of remittance sales in the United States and Europe indicated that by far the largest number of beneficiaries would be in

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***Power changed hands eleven to fifteen times, depending on which city you counted from.***

Ukraine as well as in White Russia (Belarus) and its neighboring provinces. Together these regions had in czarist times made up the greater part of the Jewish Pale of Settlement, the chief source of emigration out of late imperial Russia and still home to the greatest number of Soviet Russia's Jews, many of whom had relatives abroad looking for ways to assist them.

What this meant for the ARA was that food remittance delivery stations would have to be set up in the principal cities of these regions even though they were outside what was generally recognized as the famine zone. Technically this should not have raised any problems, as the Riga Agreement allowed the ARA to establish its operations in Soviet Russia wherever it saw fit. An American presence in Ukraine was probably inevitable, for at about this same time the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, whose New York

***WHO'S IN CHARGE? Colonel William N. Haskell (opposite), director of the ARA's Soviet Russia mission, is shown in Moscow in 1922. A graduate of West Point, Class of 1901, Haskell was a career soldier with a distinguished record of service. Trying to sort out the lines of authority in Ukraine, Haskell wrote to the ARA's London headquarters that "governmental relations and diplomatic relations are too deep for us to fathom." But the Americans had no doubt that Moscow pulled the strings.*** [American Relief Administration Russian operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]



office had been receiving reports of widespread starvation there, asked the ARA to have its Russian unit look into the matter. In mid-November, Colonel William Haskell, director of the ARA mission, requested that the Soviet government allow American relief workers to conduct investigations in Ukraine.

Permission denied. The Soviet liaison officer to the ARA, Aleksandr Eiduk, a Latvian official of the Cheka, the Soviet secret police, replied that the northern Ukrainian provinces, far from experiencing food shortages, had produced a combined

surplus of grain so large that they could afford to contribute a portion of it to the relief of the Volga. Ukraine did not require American charity.

In any case, Eiduk wrote, “it is necessary to request the ARA not to split its forces where that is not absolutely indispensable, but on the contrary to concentrate them entirely on the Volga area.” He closed by pointing out that Kyiv was under martial law, “and the appearance of foreign official persons is connected with obvious difficulties.”

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***The Bolsheviks reasoned that if nationalism were allowed, even encouraged, it would expend itself all the sooner.***

## THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATORS

Haskell persisted, invoking the ARA's rights under the Riga Agreement, and after some correspondence back and forth permission was granted to dispatch two ARA “special investigators” to Ukraine: Frank Golder and Lincoln Hutchinson. Golder is best remembered today as the man responsible for amassing the extraordinary Russia and East European collections housed at the Hoover Institution Library & Archives. He was born in Odessa in 1877. His family emigrated to Germany when he was about eight years old, and eventually he moved to the United States, where he went on to earn a PhD in history from Harvard. In 1920, he came to Stanford to teach summer courses and was recruited as a curator for the Hoover Library, founded the

***WATCHFUL: Aleksandr Eiduk (opposite), a native of Latvia, was the Soviet government's liaison with the ARA. Eiduk was a member of the collegium of the Cheka, the Soviet secret police. One American relief worker sized him up as “a tough egg and a killer.” Archibald Cary Coolidge, the Harvard historian serving in Moscow as the ARA's liaison officer to the Soviet government, wrote of Eiduk, “With some geniality and a pleasant smile, he has a cruel mouth, and a certain, underlying brutality cropped out rather easily.”*** [American Relief Administration Russian operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

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**THE CURATOR: Frank Golder's identification card, issued on September 1, 1921, by the American Relief Administration and the Central Commission for Relief of the Starving, the Soviet government relief organ. Golder was one of two ARA special investigators assigned to Ukraine. While working on famine-relief missions, Golder collected books, periodicals, government and private documents, and artworks for the Hoover Library at Stanford.** [Frank A. Golder Papers, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

previous year. During his time with the ARA mission he would collect a phenomenal amount of books, periodicals, government and private documents, and artworks for the Hoover Library. Hutchinson, a University of California economist, had been, before and since the war, a US commercial attaché and served with the ARA in Czechoslovakia. He was brought on board the Soviet Russia mission to act as chief economist and statistician in a land of notoriously unreliable statistics.

The pair arrived on November 26 in Kyiv, where they met with an official in the provincial governor's office. "When we explained our mission and the fact that our organization had made certain agreements with Moscow," Golder wrote in his diary, "he asked rather resentfully why we did not first go to Kharkov instead of coming to Kiev." Kharkov, today Kharkiv, was at



the time the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Moscow had settled on this city as the republic's seat of power because Kyiv had achieved notoriety through its fierce resistance to Bolshevik rule and because Kharkiv, situated near the heavily industrialized Donbass region in the southeast, was the center of Ukrainian industry and had a relatively large—and Russian-speaking—proletariat.

Upon arrival in Kharkiv a few days later, Golder and Hutchinson sat down with the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Mykola Skrypnyk, an ethnic Ukrainian, to spell out their intentions. Here they were met with a rude jolt when Skrypnyk informed them, “much to our astonishment,” that there was no official basis for their

investigations, as the Ukrainian republic was not a party to the Riga Agreement. The investigators explained that the

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***By 1922, the ARA was providing a daily meal to some 10.5 million Soviet citizens.***

document signed at Riga applied to all the federated republics of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR)—an interpretation supported by the central government in Moscow, they pointed out, which had after all sanctioned their trip to Ukraine. Skrypnyk countered that Ukraine was no ordinary federated republic, that Russia and Ukraine were in fact political equals, and that the Ukrainian republic conducted its own foreign relations. It was not, he insisted, a signatory to the Riga Agreement. The conversation went back and forth like this until the Americans put the question directly to him as to whether his government was willing to let the ARA operate on its territory. Skrypnyk said he had to consult with his colleagues and the meeting broke up.

Skrypnyk belonged to the Bolshevik Party's old guard and was one of the organizers of the October Revolution. In 1921 he stood out as an ardent proponent of the idea that communism and Ukrainian nationalism were not mutually incompatible. The brief period of Ukrainian independence after the revolution, he maintained, had awakened Ukrainians' sense of national identity and created genuine enthusiasm for Ukrainian sovereignty. He urged his fellow Bolsheviks to recognize and accommodate this altered state of affairs. The promotion of national communism, as he saw it, would enable Ukrainians to view Soviet communism as homegrown rather than imposed by Moscow.

Two days later, on December 3, Golder and Hutchinson again met with Skrypnyk, with similar results. He refused to recognize the authority of the Riga Agreement, a copy of which lay on the table in front of him: “Ukraine is not mentioned in this and is not a party to it because Ukraine is a state



***BY THE BOOK: Lincoln Hutchinson, shown circa 1920, was a University of California economist. His obsession with statistical information and economic analysis earned him the nickname “the Professor” among his fellow Americans of the ARA. Hutchinson and his colleague, Golder, were taken aback when a Ukrainian official told them they had no authority to work in Ukraine and that they should get special authorization from “Citizen Hoover.”*** [American Relief Administration Russian operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

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independent of Russia.” Golder and Hutchinson reaffirmed that they had no authority to discuss the question of a separate agreement, which would have to be referred to Moscow and possibly also to America. “Very good,” said Skrypnyk. He continued,

You will write to Hoover that the ARA should make a formal agreement with the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and he will write back authorizing you to conclude such an agreement. All this writing will take up time and in the meantime many will die of hunger. I propose that we come to a temporary agreement at once, to remain in force until the official understanding later when you hear from Citizen Hoover. [*On the Trail of the Russian Famine*, Golder and Hutchinson]

Golder and Hutchinson assumed that these were merely the ravings of a deluded commissar, but Skrypnyk’s argument was wholly defensible, at least in the abstract. The legal relationship of the Ukrainian republic, established in March 1919, to the RSFSR, to which it was formally linked by treaty, was ambiguous. The constitution of the Russian federation had been adopted in spring 1918 when German armies were occupying Ukraine. When Ukraine joined the union one

year later, it was granted some of the privileges of independent statehood. For a short time its diplomats represented it

in Berlin, Prague, and Warsaw, and Ukrainian leaders were able to resist the Kremlin’s efforts to subsume their foreign policy within its own. The uncertainty of this arrangement would be resolved only with the formation, in December 1922, of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a federation initially comprised of Russia, Ukraine, White Russia, and Transcaucasia, which encompassed Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The federal structure was in fact a facade; in reality, the Soviet Union was ruled as a unitary party-state.

The two Americans were partly amused and greatly irritated. They had not, they said, come to Kharkiv to discuss politics, only to fight starvation. Skrypnyk was unmovable, telling them, “you are mixing in politics when you differentiate between the two Republics; when you treat with one, and refuse to do so with the other; when you regard one as a sovereign state, and the other as a subject state.”

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***“The appearance of foreign official persons is connected with obvious difficulties.”***



***ACROSS THE WAVES: The American supply ship SS Winneconne delivers corn to the port of Odessa in winter 1922. The Soviet government was initially keen to steer the ARA away from Odessa, but in the end it proved to be a vital port of entry for the delivery of American relief.*** [American Relief Administration Russia operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

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No amount of nationalist pride could fill Ukraine's need for famine relief, however, which was substantial. Skrypnyk told Golder and Hutchinson that the situation was critical in the southern regions of his republic, where millions were threatened by hunger. Before departing, Hutchinson was able to get hold of local agricultural statistics. These confirmed that northern Ukraine, more wooded and blessed with normal rainfall the previous year, did indeed have a good crop, while the unforested southern provinces, where the steppe descends into the Black Sea, had been badly affected by drought. On top of this, the south was having to absorb a large number of refugees from the Volga. Ukraine had always been a mecca for refugees in hard times, and recent years had witnessed a succession of migrant waves, beginning with the arrival of Polish war evacuees in 1915 and now culminating in the largest influx of all, the droves of desperate people in flight from the famine.

Hutchinson was struck by the fact that until American relief workers arrived on the scene the Soviet government, in its famine policies and press coverage, had all but ignored Ukraine. The Moscow government's reticence about the true state of affairs, together with its initial outright denial of access to the port of Odessa for the delivery of American food supplies, indicated a determination to keep the ARA out of Ukraine. Politics were at the heart of the matter. Across Ukraine the dying embers of the civil war still smoldered and occasionally flared up. Pockets of armed anti-Bolshevik

resistance persisted, with partisan bands still roaming the countryside, while Ukrainian peasants, a defiantly individualistic lot who did battle with the grain requisition squads, remained bitterly hostile. Only this could explain why the infamous anti-Bolshevik warlord Nestor Makhno was able to hold out for so long, fleeing Ukraine for Romania as late as August 1921, just as the first Americans were arriving in Soviet Russia. Whatever the specific basis for it, Moscow had good reason to be wary of Ukraine's peasants and therefore of having American relief workers at liberty among them.

## THE HIDDEN HAND

Their investigations cut short, Golder and Hutchinson returned to Moscow, where their chiefs at headquarters were surprised by the news. Colonel Haskell, ever impatient with matters of politics, was miffed. "Governmental relations and diplomatic relations are too deep for us to fathom," he wrote to the ARA's London headquarters. Eiduk assured Haskell it was a misunderstanding and would soon be cleared up. Meanwhile the ARA's food package program was allowed to get under way in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odessa, so it seemed the question had been settled.

Certainly none of the Americans in Russia could work up any sympathy for the cause of Ukrainian independence, which, worthy or not, was now threatening to hinder the efficiency of their operations. Haskell reduced it to "a matter entirely of diplomatic pride or privileges" between Moscow and Kharkiv. Soviet officials, somewhat embarrassed, reassured him that it was "simply a family row," that Ukraine, though in fact only a federated republic of the RSFSR, held a more elevated status than other republics, but just how elevated was not always clear. As Golder saw it, "The Commissars acknowledge that the Ukraine is within its rights and regret that the Ukraine has that much right." Clarity,

the Americans had little doubt, would very soon be imposed by the heavy hand of the Kremlin. It came as a distinct shock, therefore, when Eiduk

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***"All this federation is merely a make-believe. The government in Moscow is for all practical purposes The Government."***

and his comrades reversed themselves. They admitted to having erred in allowing Golder and Hutchinson to undertake their journey without first consulting with Ukrainian officials. Moreover, they acknowledged the correctness of Kharkiv's understanding that Ukraine was in fact not a signatory to the Riga Agreement.



***LANDS OF HUNGER: An ARA map shows the location of foreign settlers in Ukraine, September 1922. During the interwar years, Soviet Ukraine comprised only the eastern and central territories of today's Ukraine. The Ukrainian city of Lviv was at that time known as Lwów and located in Poland.*** [American Relief Administration Russia operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

After some hesitation, the ARA chiefs decided they had no choice but to accede to the Soviet government's wishes. There ensued a series of meetings in Moscow with the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Ukraine, Christian Rakovsky—an ethnic Bulgarian—who patiently explained to the skeptical Americans that Ukraine was not merely some autonomous republic but a sovereign state with its own diplomatic corps and the right to make treaties with foreign powers. The Americans inserted into the Riga text an additional “whereas” recognizing Ukrainian independence and added a paragraph incorporating the food remittance agreement. This ARA-Ukraine agreement, signed by Rakovsky and Haskell, went into effect on January 10, 1922.

Despite the Kremlin's retreat, Haskell and his fellow Americans in Moscow were under no illusions about where the real authority lay. Ukrainian officials

told the relief workers that they had allowed the food package program to get started in Ukraine as a “special favor,” whereas in fact Soviet military officials had forced the Ukrainians to let it go forward. As Haskell wrote in a March 30 memo written for Herbert Hoover, the Soviet government had decided for political reasons to let Rakovsky have his way. “I am convinced, however, that if the matter were one in which the Soviet Government had any real interest, their full influence would be very plainly felt, even to the point of preventing any undesirable agreement altogether.” The money used in Ukraine was made in Moscow and sent to Kharkiv, Haskell noted. The postal service and railroads were under Moscow’s control. “The influence, in other words, of Moscow predominates everywhere in the Ukraine.”

Golder concurred. “On paper it looks as if the Ukraine and Russia are equals,” he noted in his diary, “but all this federation is merely a make-believe. The government in Moscow is for all practical purposes The Government, and the so-called federated states take orders from Moscow, unwillingly to be sure, but they take them nevertheless.”

## GRUESOME SIGHTS IN UKRAINE

By the time the January 10 agreement was signed, American relief workers were already on the ground in Ukraine establishing warehouses and delivery stations for its food package program. Relations between the relief workers and Ukrainian officials were somewhat tense at first, owing in part to local sensitivity about the status of the republic. The first American relief worker to take up his post in Kyiv, Kenneth Macpherson, was informed that his papers were not in order: “You know this is not Russia, but Ukraine. Where is your visa to enter this

country?” The reception was that much frostier because the ARA had initially announced that it intended to restrict its activities in Ukraine

exclusively to food remittance work, which the authorities assumed was some kind of commercial venture. The first American in Ekaterinoslav (today Dnipro), Thomas Barringer, was told by a Ukrainian official that the ARA was a great disappointment because its food packages helped “only the speculators.” The fact is, most packages went to destitute Jews, but there was no use arguing the point. Once American child-feeding kitchens began to open across Ukraine, relations with the authorities markedly improved.

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***Once American child-feeding kitchens began to open across Ukraine, relations with the authorities markedly improved.***





***THOUSANDS FED: The food remittance delivery station in Kyiv (formerly Kiev), 1922. Here the once well-to-do mingled with the perennially penurious. The ARA, working with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, delivered nearly 200,000 food packages to individuals in Ukraine. Most of those receiving packages in Kyiv were Jews with relatives in America. There is abundant testimony from the relief workers and their beneficiaries that the scene inside Kyiv's food package receiving room was a "madhouse."*** [American Relief Administration Russian operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

Hutchinson had meanwhile been cleared to conduct his own investigation of the southern provinces, and in mid-January he returned to Moscow and informed headquarters that the situation there was even worse than his initial estimate had indicated. Haskell, in relaying Hutchinson's findings to the ARA's London headquarters, wrote: "In one respect the famine area of the Ukraine is in a more serious situation than that of the Volga. The drought followed four or five years during which the peasants were ravaged by a succession of wars, insurrections, 'pogroms,' bandit raids, and other disturbances which were far more serious than anything of this nature that happened on the Volga." The area of American operations now had to be extended by eighty-five thousand square miles inhabited by an additional ten million people, out of a total Ukrainian population of nearly twenty-six million. By





***CORNUCOPIA: The contents of a sample ARA food package, photographed for display at ARA headquarters in New York. The standard food package weighed 117 pounds and provided enough food to sustain three people for one month. By mission's end, the ARA had delivered 930,500 individual packages, worth more than \$9.3 million.*** [American Relief Administration Russian operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

August 1, 1922, the ARA, working in collaboration with the Joint Distribution Committee, was serving a daily meal to nearly two million people in Ukraine: the adults receiving a daily ration of corn grits, the children their balanced daily meal of white rolls, corn grits or rice, lard, milk, cocoa, and sugar.

The Soviet government's reluctance to allow Hoover's relief workers into Ukraine was understandable. What those relief workers found incomprehensible was the fact that while starvation threatened millions of Ukrainians, the local Bolsheviks were nonetheless exhorting the people to come to the aid of their famishing brethren on the Volga. According to a report of the official Soviet famine committee, between autumn 1921 and August 1922 Ukraine's northern provinces shipped a total of 1,127 rail cars of food products out to the Russian heartland. These were sent hundreds of miles across country to the Volga, when their shipment a few dozen miles south to famishing Odessa



**GIFTS OF LIFE:** This artwork adorned the cover of a 1923 report of the ARA mission in Odessa. The Latin motto in the upper-right corner, above the image of a smiling child holding two loaves of bread, translates to “he who gives swiftly gives twice.” [American Relief Administration Russia operational records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

and Nikolaiev (today Mykolaiv) would have saved at least as many lives and done so more efficiently.

Official Soviet statistics of this kind invite skepticism, but the accuracy of the figures aside, the very fact of their public advertisement was itself remarkable. The province of Odessa, whose autumn 1921 crop was only 17 percent of normal, was credited with having exported sixty-five cars of food as famine relief; meanwhile, Nikolaiev, where the crop was estimated to be a mere 4 percent of normal, sent eight cars to the starving on the Volga. The government report stated perversely, “It is important to observe that even the famine provinces sent bread to the Volga regions.” As late as March 1922, when the famine in Ukraine was at its peak, the ARA men in the region encountered exhortatory posters such as, “Workers of Nikolaiev, help the starving of the Volga.” At that time there were three million Ukrainians facing the threat of starvation.

Odessa occupied its own circle of hell. The commanding officer of the USS *Williamson*, a US Navy destroyer assigned to help pilot ARA supply ships in the Black Sea, wrote in the ship’s diary for April 13, 1922, that two doctors had told him “that in the basements of several hospitals in Odessa the dead are piled up like cordwood.” He saw this for himself the next day during a visit to a large university hospital, where in a room in the basement “there were about 200 corpses in various stages of decomposition piled haphazard.”

In another basement room of this same hospital there were 600 bodies. Upon leaving this hospital I noticed a pile of bodies abreast a door leading into the room we had just inspected and a cart piled with dead bodies standing on the street. It is easier to haul bodies to the hospital than to carry them to the cemetery, so this is what is done. Were I to try for hours I could not paint a picture as gruesome as I saw conditions this morning.

Yet Soviet propaganda presumed that the living might somehow be prevailed upon to help ease the plight of the suffering on the Volga. Harold Fisher, the future director of the Hoover Institution serving in the ARA mission as its official historian, surmised that the Soviet government may indeed have been concerned that the ARA would spread itself too thin by taking on Ukraine and falling short on the Volga. But he sensed that there was more to it. “One cannot escape the feeling that fear or political expediency, or both, influenced the official famine policy in these regions.” Like his fellow ARA men, Fisher wondered why the Ukrainian government—which after all was so eager to demonstrate its independence from Russia—would deny food to

its own starving in order to come to the aid of needy Russians. One explanation was that this was a way for Ukraine to prove its worthiness as a “sovereign” state. But most of the Americans on the scene assumed the Kremlin was behind it. Fisher concluded that Moscow was, first, “not unconscious of the salutary effect of the frightful visitation, and, second, willing to let the Ukraine suffer, rather than take the chance of new uprisings which might follow foreign contact.”

## BEST OF ENEMIES

The question continues to reverberate in light of the fact that, a decade later, in the aftermath of Stalin’s all-out drive to collectivize Soviet agriculture, Ukraine was at the center of the country’s next famine. Ukrainian peasants, who put up stiff opposition to collectivization and to the grain requisitions that continued even as famine raged in 1932–33, perished by the millions. Ukrainians call it the Holodomor, meaning killing by hunger, and it is estimated to have killed upwards of four million people in Ukraine alone. It is rightly called the terror-famine, a term coined by Hoover Senior Research

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***A decade later, amid Stalin’s all-out drive to collectivize Soviet agriculture, Ukraine was at the center of the country’s next famine. Millions starved.***

Fellow Robert Conquest in his landmark 1986 book, *The Harvest of Sorrow*. Stalin’s enforcers came not just for the grain but for the nationalists. The championing of Ukrainian culture was now to be reined

in, its architects and organizers purged. Mass arrests followed, decimating Ukraine’s political elite. The witch-hunt eventually targeted Skrypnyk, architect of the “Ukrainization” movement. In July 1933, facing imminent arrest, he committed suicide.

Stalin now moved to elevate Russian culture and Russian nationality, making them the unifying core of the Soviet Union, even as he continued to adhere to Lenin’s line of unity through diversity. The constituent republics of the USSR, as the official slogan had it, were national in form, but socialist in content. From now on, Ukraine was to be tied more closely to Russia, and official propaganda began to emphasize the special friendship of Russians and Ukrainians. Yet, while Ukrainization was scaled back, Stalin did not attempt to subject Ukraine to Russification. In any case, it would have been difficult to reverse the transformation of the previous decade. As the ARA

was departing Soviet Russia in 1923, just over one-half of Ukraine's schools taught children in Ukrainian. In 1933 that figure approached 90 percent.

In his February 2022 speech, Putin lamented the fact that Stalin, even as he centralized power and rehabilitated Russian culture, left Lenin's federal structure in place. Through the decades, the Soviet federal system had the inadvertent effect of

nurturing ethno-national identity. Sovereignty and the right of secession were reaffirmed in the

so-called Stalin Constitu-

tion of 1936, hailed by the Kremlin as the most democratic in the world. In

1945, Ukraine and Belarus became founding member states of the United

Nations, alongside the USSR. In 1991, as the Soviet Union was fast unravel-

ing, the illusoriness of Bolshevik nationalities policy—the underlying assumption that ethno-national loyalties would inexorably give way to class alle-

giance—was dramatically confirmed. In August of that year, when Ukraine

declared itself an independent country, the permanent representative of the

Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic to the United Nations assumed the seat

of Ukraine in the UN General Assembly.

The USSR was formally dissolved that December. Putin has called the

demise of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the

century.” His military assault on Ukraine was an attempt to turn back the

clock. His allegations about Ukrainian Nazis committing genocide against

local Russians were either make-believe or self-delusion. What is irrefutable

is the criminal brutality of his invaders. Putin's war has had the unintended

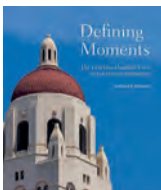
effect of solidifying Ukrainian national identity, and it will likely seal off the

possibility of any feelings of friendship between Russians and Ukrainians for a long time to come. ■

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***Putin's war has had an unintended effect: it solidified Ukrainian national identity.***

***Special to the Hoover Digest.***



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# On the Cover

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“Now he belongs to the ages.” Secretary of War Edwin Stanton’s words at Abraham Lincoln’s deathbed are also true of the Lincoln Memorial, the Doric temple in Washington where a sculpture of the president sits in eternal contemplation. The monument, visited by millions every year, was dedicated a hundred years ago on Memorial Day weekend. The 1955 poster featured on this *Hoover Digest* cover communicates, as does the memorial itself, both the power of Lincoln’s ideas and an undercurrent of humanity. At the same time, it does something the Great Emancipator never did: it urges the viewer to *Fly United*.

Joseph Binder (1898–1972) was among the best graphic and commercial artists of his day. He created a series of advertising posters for United Air Lines with vivid, inviting images of some of America’s most iconic scenes. They featured a distant airliner cruising beyond the sunlit facade of Mission Santa Barbara or a Boston steeple; gliding over San Francisco’s colorful Chinatown or a fly-fishing stream in Colorado; or looking down at the verdigris lions guarding the Art Institute of Chicago. A golden age of commercial air travel was dawning, and many graphic artists of the time were similarly inspired by these friendly skies.

Binder, an Austrian who immigrated to the United States in the 1930s, was the master of a sleek, clean, hard-edged style. A German writer in 1928 called him “a born poster artist” and praised his style for its “optical simplicity and quick comprehensibility.” In Austria he had created a signature branding look for his employer, an importer of tea and household goods. Binder’s recognizable style sold beer, women’s swimsuits, ski trips, and coffee. Later he would draw a series of biblical illustrations in which the saints seem to be robed in shards of stained glass. He could even make a jar of marmalade look heroic.

“Realism should be left to photography,” Binder wrote in a book about his line and color technique. “The artist must not compete with the camera.”



Binder flourished in the United States, creating a poster for the 1939 New York World's Fair ("the world of tomorrow"), with beams of light thrusting upward, skyscrapers glowing, a single star hanging in the sky. He had a long, fruitful relationship with the US military, starting with a 1941 prize-winning poster that advertised the Army Air Corps by teasing a single, multi-colored wingtip. For the Navy, he made recruiting posters featuring fighter jets ("supersonic") and looming aircraft carriers ("JOIN"). He signed many of his works with a tiny, lowercase b-i-n-d-e-r that crept along the edge of the poster.

Binder's streamlined art "harmonized with the tempo of our times," as a contemporary observer put it. His Lincoln poster fulfilled the artistic challenge of honoring both the sacred space of the memorial and the commercial needs of his employer. Yet there is a modern twist. The Lincoln Memorial is more than its marble statue by Daniel Chester French: it is the martyred president's words. They are "an unusually important component of the Lincoln Memorial's architecture," Allan Greenberg wrote in *City Journal* in 2013. Lines from the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural cover the walls. Thus, Lincoln speaks. Characteristically for an artist of such potent visual vocabulary, Binder's portrayal of Lincoln offers the same figure, the same reverence, the same message—but he offers no words at all.

—Charles Lindsey





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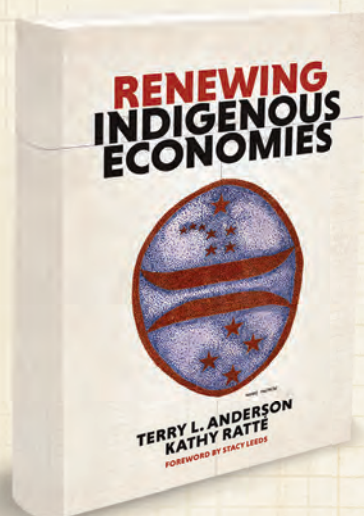
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