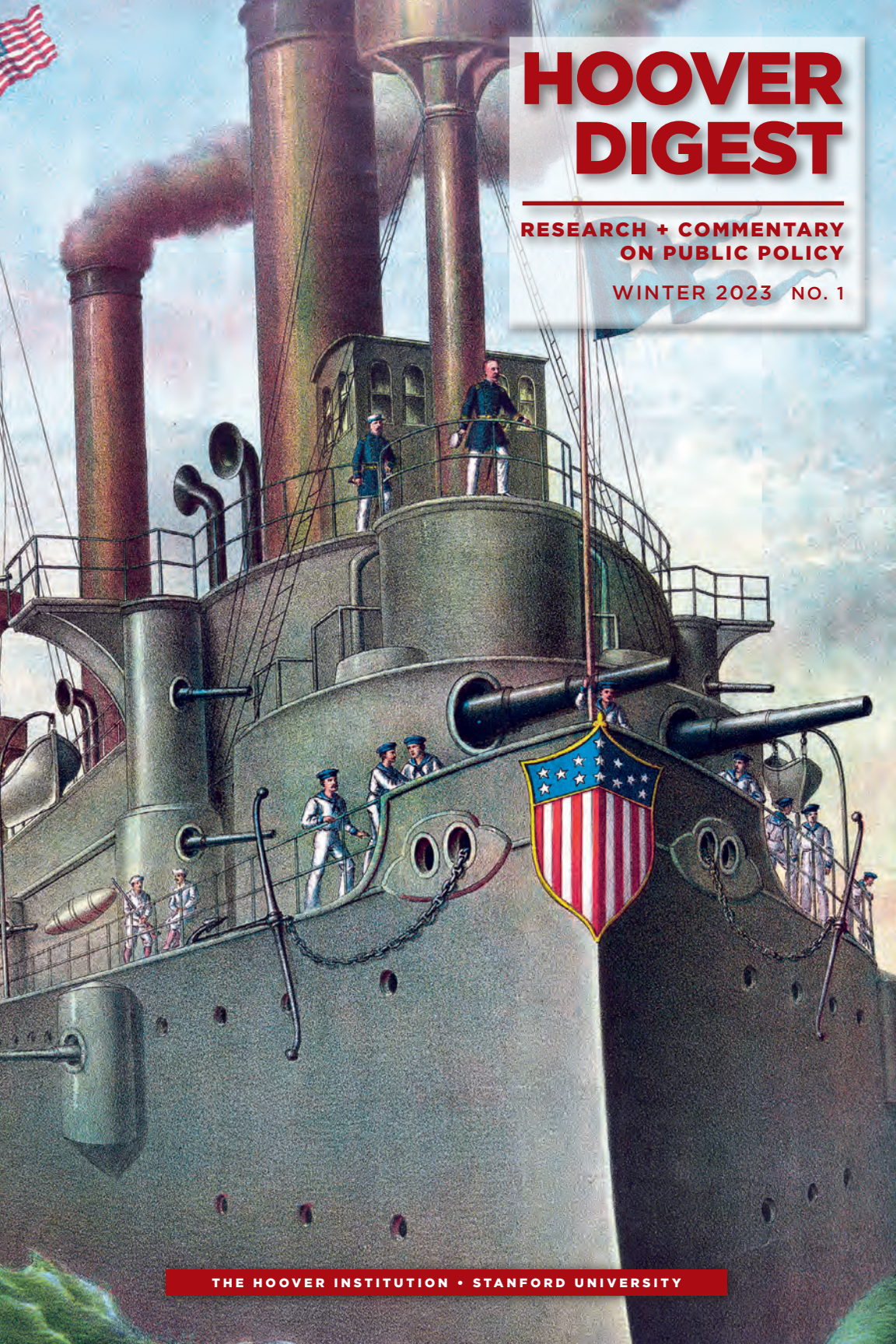

HOOVER DIGEST

RESEARCH + COMMENTARY ON PUBLIC POLICY

WINTER 2023 NO. 1

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ON THE COVER

This confident, colorful print dates from 1898 and shows Commodore George Dewey commanding his flagship, the cruiser *Olympia,* and gazing steadily forward. The ship wears warlike grey, not the peacetime white worn by American ships of the Spanish-American War era. Dewey may be about to deliver his famous line: "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley." Dewey was to win the Battle of Manila Bay, sending an entire Spanish fleet to the bottom. The commander and the ship became legends, symbols of a turning point in world events. **See story, page 190.**

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Fighting Inflation: Divided We Fall

The Federal Reserve can't conquer inflation by itself. Victory will demand fiscal fortitude and economic reform.

By John H. Cochrane

The Fed cannot cure this inflation alone. Relying on it to do so will only lead to cycles of stagflation.

Our inflation stems from fiscal policy. We are seeing the effects of about $5 trillion of printed or borrowed money, most sent out as checks. But that alone need not cause inflation. The new money is reserves, which pay interest, and so are equivalent to Treasury debt. The United States can borrow and spend without inflation, if people have faith that debt will be repaid, and that Treasury debt is a good investment. Then those who wish to spend will sell it to those who wish to save. With this faith, the United States has had many deficits without inflation. The fact that this stimulus led to inflation implies a broader loss of faith that the United States will repay debt.

The Fed's tools to offset this inflation are blunt. By raising interest rates, the Fed pushes the economy toward recession. It hopes to push just enough to offset the fiscal boost.

***John H. Cochrane** is the Rose-Marie and Jack Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, a member of Hoover's Working Group on Economic Policy, and a contributor to Hoover's Conte Initiative on Immigration Reform. He is also a research associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research and an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute.*

[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

But an economy with a floored fiscal gas pedal and monetary brakes is not healthy. Our economy is not a simple Keynesian cup, which one can fill or empty with "aggregate demand" from any source. Raising interest rates can tank asset markets and raise borrowing costs, cutting house building, car purchases, and corporate investment. The Fed can interrupt the flow of credit. But higher interest rates don't do much to discourage the consumption spending that fiscal stimulus checks shot off—the desire to spend the government's money and debt on something. We have at best an unbalanced economy. Our economy needs investment and housing. Today's demand is tomorrow's supply.

VICIOUS CIRCLES

Slowing the economy is not guaranteed to durably lower inflation anyway. Even during the 2008 recession, with unemployment above 8 percent, core inflation fell only from 2.4 percent in December 2007 to 0.6 percent in October

2010, and then bounced right back to 2.3 percent in December 2011. At this rate, even temporarily curing the 6 percent May 2022 core inflation would take an astronomical recession.

In 1970 and 1974, the Fed raised interest rates more promptly and more sharply than now, from 4 percent to 9 percent in 1970, and from 3.5 percent to 13 percent in 1974. Each increase produced a bruising recession. Each lowered inflation. Each time, inflation roared back.

The "Phillips curve," by which the Fed believes slowing economic activity via interest rates lowers inflation, is ephemeral. Some recessions and rate hikes even feature higher inflation, especially in countries with fiscal problems.

A recession would trigger more stimulus and another financial bailout. But that's how we got in this mess in the first place. Those would lead to more inflation. A recession without the expected spending, stimulus, and bailout would be severe.

Higher interest rates would directly worsen deficits by adding to the interest costs on the debt. In 1980, federal debt was under 25 percent of GDP. Lowering inflation was hard enough. Now the debt exceeds 100 percent. Each percentage point of higher interest rate means $250 billion more inflation-inducing deficit.

Our governments are now addressing inflation by borrowing or printing even more money to pay people's higher bills. That will just make matters worse. A witch hunt for "greed," "monopoly," and "profiteers" will fail, as it has for centuries. Price controls or political pressure to lower prices will just create long lines and worsen supply-chain snafus. Endless excuses and spin just convince people that our governments have no idea what they're doing.

Each crisis is met by a river of printed or borrowed money. We need to break that cycle.

TIME FOR GROWTH

The Fed can't do it alone. To durably end inflation, the government also has to fix the underlying fiscal problem. Short-run deficit reduction, temporary measures, or accounting gimmicks will not work. Nor will a bout of high-tax, growth-killing "austerity," which would only make matters worse. The United States has to persuade people that over the long haul of several decades, it will return to its tradition of running small primary surpluses that gradually repay debts.

That outcome needs, most of all, economic growth. Tax revenue is tax rate times income. Raising tax rates is like climbing a sand dune, as each rise hurts income growth. Over decades, only the much larger income from the accumulation of growth will work. The United States also needs spending reform, especially entitlement reform. And it needs to break the cycle that each crisis will be met by a river of printed or borrowed money, bailouts for finance, and stimulus checks for voters.

Price controls or political pressure to lower prices will just create long lines and worsen supply-chain snafus.

Good news: inflation can end quickly, and without a bruising recession, when there is a joint fiscal, monetary, and economic reform. Inflation targets adopted by New Zealand, Israel, Canada, and Sweden in the early 1990s offer good examples. Their strategies included deep fiscal and economic reforms. More dramatic examples include the sudden end of German and Austrian hyperinflations in the 1920s, when fiscal problems were resolved.

In the United States, tight money in the early 1980s was quickly followed by tax, spending, and regulatory reform. Higher economic growth produced large fiscal surpluses by the end of the 1990s. Without those reforms, the monetary tightening might have failed again. If those reforms had come sooner, disinflation might well have been economically painless. ◘

Reprinted from John H. Cochrane's blog,* The Grumpy Economist *(http://johnhcochrane.blogspot.com).

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After the Deluge

When $2 trillion worth of fiscal "stimulus" flooded into the US economy, inflation was sure to follow. Hoover fellow Tyler Goodspeed tracks the inundation.

By Jonathan Movroydis

Tyler Goodspeed, a Kleinheinz Fellow at the Hoover Institution, argues that the current inflationary pressures are in large part a consequence of the American Rescue Plan of 2021. That $2 trillion bill (equal to 10 percent of US GDP) resulted in historic levels of aggregate demand. In this interview, Goodspeed explains why home purchase and rental markets are experiencing high inflation, why sharp reductions in gasoline prices at the end of last summer had no noticeable impact on the cost of food, and what measures the Federal Reserve might have to take to bring about price stability.

Jonathan Movroydis: Inflation has remained at a forty-year high even though gas prices in August decreased dramatically, by 10 percent. What accounts for this?

Tyler Goodspeed: In terms of the discrepancy between the fact that inflation was still high even though gas prices came down, that is attributable to the weights to which the Bureau of Labor Statistics assigns different prices in the overall CPI. While gas is an important component of the CPI, it's not

Tyler Goodspeed *is a Kleinheinz Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is a former member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, where he served as acting chairman and vice chairman.* ***Jonathan Movroydis*** *is the senior content writer for the Hoover Institution.*

the most important. The single largest proportion of the index is shelter (40 percent of core CPI), which includes both rent and the implicit rent that homeowners pay.

The price of shelter alone is growing at an annual pace of almost 9 percent. Even though we had declining gas prices in August 2022, that was offset by rising costs of not only rent but also of food, which increased at an annual rate of 10 percent that month. We have seen a significant broadening of inflationary pressures in recent months beyond some of those initial categories that we saw in much of 2021 and early 2022.

There is a lot of pass-through from energy prices into other categories. It can operate with variable lags. But if we look at food, for example, its costs remained high despite any pass-through that we might have seen in August from lower energy prices. Food price inflation might have been even higher were it not for whatever energy pass-through we may have experienced in August.

"Consumers, households, workers, and businesses have now had over a year of very elevated inflation, so they now expect higher inflation."

Movroydis: What accounts for price increases for both housing purchases and rentals?

Goodspeed: It is interesting what has happened in the housing market over the past two years. The single most interest-rate-sensitive sector in the US economy is housing, because a great number of people started taking out thirty-year mortgages to buy homes at the ultra-low interest rates set at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 and maintained until early 2022. Even as inflation was beginning to rise, the Fed was keeping interest rates at zero. And on top of that, it was buying $40 billion a month in mortgage-backed securities.

This was just a lot of pouring monetary gasoline onto housing, and that is why we saw this large increase in housing prices in 2020 and 2021. We have also seen rents increase because, as the economy slows, many people can't afford a down payment on a new home. I believe we are going to see shelter inflation quite elevated for the next year.

Movroydis: Do you expect housing price increases to keep their current pace?

Goodspeed: During the great inflation in the 1970s, the asset class that delivered the best real returns was housing. Today, we have already seen

double-digit price gains in new home prices, and that is now crowding out a lot of would-be buyers. Thirty-year mortgage rates have risen substantially and may be on course to go up even further. As a consequence, the combination of historically high housing prices and rising mortgage rates is going to really deter home sales and push more people into renting.

Movroydis: What can we expect from the Fed to slow inflation? Do we need the Fed to be more orthodox in imposing monetary policy rules?

Goodspeed: Our colleague John Taylor can make a strong claim that the Fed should have followed some sort of rule in 2021, because its exercise of discretion turned out to be quite a mistake. I think that when core measures of inflation are running at 8 percent at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, that would imply that at a Fed funds rate of 4 percent, the ex-post real interest rate is still in deeply negative territory. So I think the Fed is ultimately going to have to hike rates even higher.

Movroydis: You explained during the Hoover Monetary Policy Conference that the 2021 fiscal stimulus of $2 trillion, equal to 10 percent of GDP, caused a dramatic increase in aggregate demand. Meanwhile, the bill's provisions that expanded unemployment benefits and the Child Tax Credit through 2021 constrained output and severely impaired a supply-side recovery by raising the implicit marginal tax rates on Americans choosing to return to work. Do you think the August 2022 inflation numbers reflect the consequences of the administration's fiscal policies?

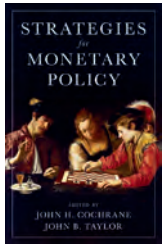
Goodspeed: Yes, in two principal ways. One is that there is still a good chunk of fiscal stimulus that was authorized in 2021 and which is just now being spent. I would add that when you have a large boost in demand as we had in 2021—a massive fiscal stimulus bumping up against a supply side that was still recovering—the resulting price shocks will eventually get baked into inflation expectations. Today, survey measures of inflation expectations are very high. Individual consumers, households, workers, and businesses have now had over a year of very elevated inflation, so they now expect higher inflation. In that sense, inflation can sort of build on itself.

"This was just a lot of pouring monetary gasoline onto housing, and that is why we saw this large increase in housing prices in 2020 and 2021."

Movroydis: Do you foresee any relief in supply chains or improvement in other supply-side factors that can bring about price stability?

Goodspeed: I do see continued normalization on the supply side as helping to mitigate the inflation problem, but I really don't see supply as having been the primary cause of the inflation that we have seen over the past year. When you look at the volume of imports handled by our ports in 2021, it was actually 20 percent more than in 2019. That is a lot of volume and demonstrates that supply wasn't really the primary issue. Rather, the inflation we are experiencing is symptomatic of the big increase in demand for goods that we had in 2021 in response to a massive fiscal stimulus.

Special to the* Hoover Digest. *This interview was edited for length and clarity.



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Bridging the Wage Gap

A new case study says unpredictable, inflexible work schedules shrink the paychecks of female workers, mostly because they have greater caregiving duties. Smarter scheduling would help.

By Valentin Bolotnyy and Natalia Emanuel

Despite substantial progress toward pay equity, women in 2022 still earn 17 percent less than men on average. Many explanations for this gap have been proposed: women may choose to work in lower-paying occupations; they may have less experience because of having taken time off to have kids or care for elders; they may shy away from negotiation or competition; they may be passed over by managers, perhaps because of conscious or

Key points

» Women in 2022 still earn an average of 17 percent less than men. One study found that among identical workers, scheduling issues were the culprit.

» Women are more likely to need predictable schedules: for instance, to bring elderly parents to medical appointments or pick children up from school.

» Rigid policies on absences, meant to reduce absenteeism, made penalties for women more likely.

***Valentin Bolotnyy** is a Kleinheinz Fellow at the Hoover Institution. **Natalia Emanuel** is a labor economist at Princeton University's Industrial Relations Section.*

unconscious bias. But what would happen to the earnings gap if we eliminated all these factors?

To explore this question, we analyzed a setting where none of these explanations is at play, yet women still bring home just $89 for each $100 that men do. We obtained seven years of pay data for bus and train operators employed by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), where union-negotiated contracts leave no room for managerial gender bias or employee negotiation. Instead, objective structures determine pay: each worker's hourly rate is set according to his or her tenure, and seniority dictates who gets to pick a schedule first and who gets offered overtime opportunities.

Nevertheless, even among people in exactly the same role at the same seniority level, we found an 11 percent gender gap in take-home pay.

What drove this earnings gap? We found that the more unpredictable, unconventional, or uncontrollable workers' schedules were, the greater the resulting gender gap. We also found that the right approach to scheduling can boost both pay equity and productivity.

THE COMMITMENTS

Much of the earnings gap arose because women are more likely than men to have responsibilities outside of work that necessitate predictable schedules, such as bringing elderly parents to doctors' appointments or picking children up from school. These inflexible commitments make women less able to take on shifts when scheduling is unpredictable and last-minute, leading to gender disparities in workers' ability to take on overtime shifts (which are compensated at 1.5 times the regular wage). We found that when overtime shifts were offered on short notice—i.e., day-of or the day before—women accepted the opportunities almost 50 percent less often than men, but when given the chance to plan ahead and build overtime into their schedule three months in advance, women were only 7 percent less likely than men to take on the extra hours.

Employees often used excused, unpaid leave to avoid working an unconventional shift when it was assigned.

Similarly, commitments outside of work often mean that female employees may need to work more-conventional hours than their male counterparts, making them less able to take on weekend shifts, holiday shifts, or split shifts. (A split shift refers to a day's work that is interrupted by a several-hour,

SEPARATE BUT UNEQUAL? A photo from the 1980s shows white-collar professionals sharing an office. A new study of transit workers sought to explain why even among people in exactly the same role at the same seniority level, there was an 11 percent gender gap in take-home pay. [Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums]

unpaid break.) Indeed, we found that among operators who had first pick when choosing schedules, women avoided these unconventional shifts more than men.

In principle, gender differences in workers' likelihood of taking unconventional shifts should not create differences in pay, since the MBTA pays the same rates for these shifts as for conventional ones. However, we found that employees often used excused, unpaid leave to avoid working an unconventional shift when it was assigned, and then made up the difference by taking on overtime. But, as noted earlier, men tend to be able to take on more overtime than women. So, when they skipped an undesirable shift, men more than made up for the forgone earnings with overtime, while women often did not work enough overtime hours to make up for earnings that were lost due to unpaid leave.

Finally, we found that when policies reduced employees' control over their schedules, women were more likely than men to take unexcused leave—again likely because of commitments outside of work. This made women more likely than men to face penalties, including suspension and discharge. Moreover, although these rigid policies were meant to increase productivity by reducing employee absenteeism, they actually ended up hurting service delivery because it is very hard for managers to plan around unexcused leave. As a result, these policies ultimately resulted in more canceled bus and train trips as well as disgruntled employees.

SCHEDULERS, GET CREATIVE

Of course, the MBTA is far from the only employer with unpredictable, unconventional, and uncontrollable schedules. Retail and service employers often use similar scheduling practices, with some even dynamically changing workers' schedules based on the weather. Employees such as consultants and lawyers are also often called upon to work late or on off days when a client presentation or legal brief demands it. While such on-call policies are ostensibly gender-neutral, our research suggests that they can contribute to a substantial earnings gap.

Fortunately, our research also points toward strategies that can help employers reduce the adverse effects of scheduling policies that implicitly or explicitly demand constant availability. First, employers should schedule shifts as far in advance as possible and allow workers to swap shifts when needed. They can also hire "float" employees—that is, workers who are not scheduled for regular work and are responsible only for handling last-minute crises, a practice that hospitals have used for decades to meet unpredictable fluctuations in demand for nursing staff. Finally, firms can encourage employees to work in teams so it is easier to hand off projects when needed, rather than demanding that any individual worker commit to unpredictable or excessively long hours. For example, in pharmacology and anesthesiology, investments in IT solutions and a culture of building client relationships with entire teams rather than with individual employees have contributed to the sector's smaller earnings gap.

When overtime shifts were offered on short notice, women accepted them almost half as often as men.

As the pandemic has intensified caregiving duties for many, it is more important than ever for employers to acknowledge and support their

employees' obligations outside of work. Predictable, conventional, and controllable schedules can be a win-win: boosting productivity, helping workers balance demands at work and at home, narrowing the gender earnings gap, and creating a better workplace for everyone.

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The Saudi "Special Relationship"

What happened to the Biden administration's tough talk about Saudi Arabia? The Ukraine invasion happened. Not for the first time, Riyadh's importance as a regional ally outweighed US objections to the way it conducts itself.

By Cole Bunzel

It's no secret that the United States' relations with its Gulf Arab partners have suffered greatly under the first years of the Biden administration. As Yousef al-Otaiba, the United Arab Emirates ambassador in Washington, observed last March of his country's relationship with the United States, "It is like any relationship. It has strong

Key points

» The US-Saudi relationship has had multiple ups and downs.

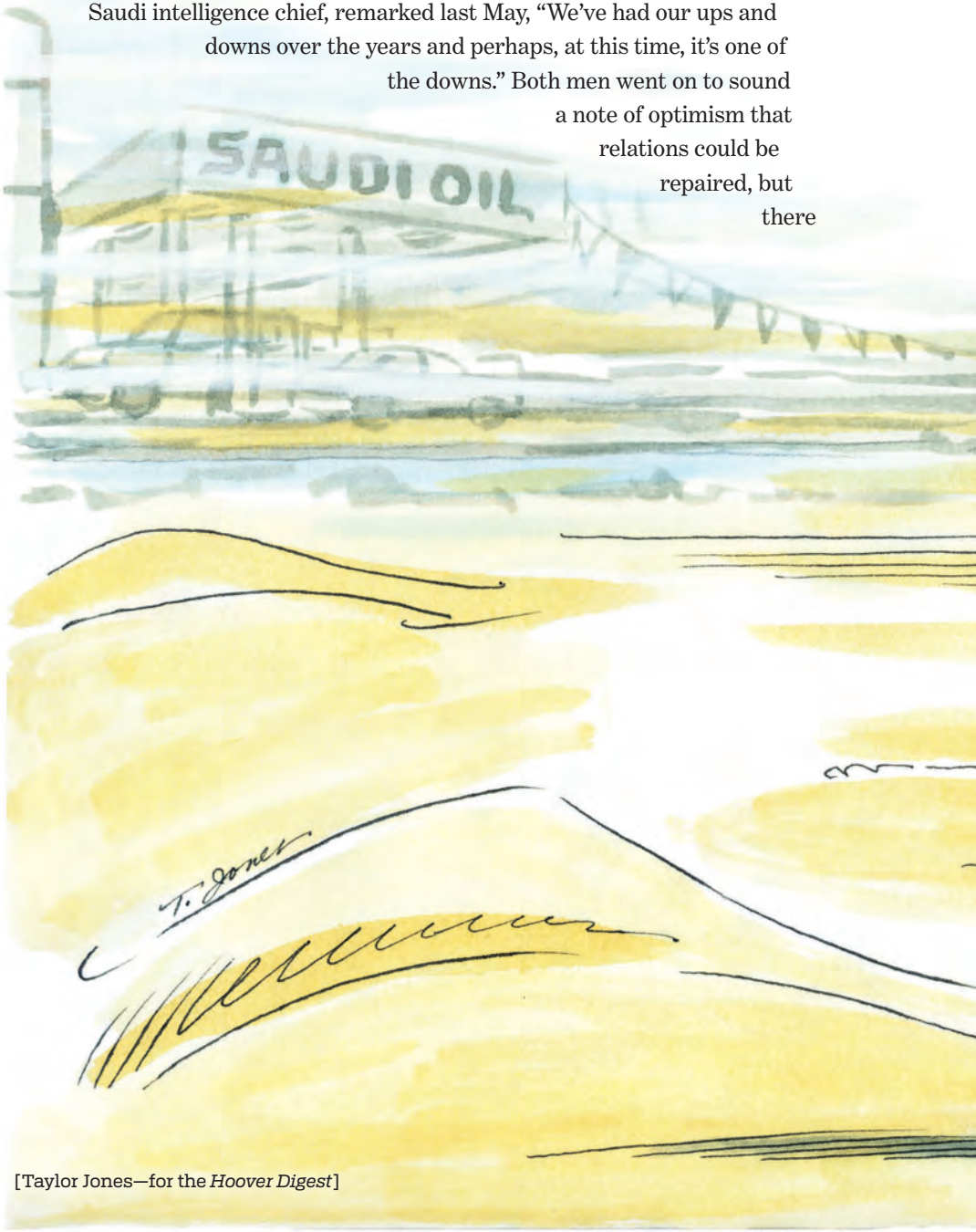
» The Biden administration's efforts to treat Saudi Arabia as a "pariah" backfired.

» The first oil shock, in the 1970s, emphasized Saudi differences with US policy. So do today's OPEC production caps.

» Saudi Arabia remains an imperfect but essential regional ally.

Cole Bunzel *is a fellow at the Hoover Institution and contributes to Hoover's Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on the Middle East and the Islamic World. He is the editor of the blog* ***Jihadica*** *(jihadica.com).*

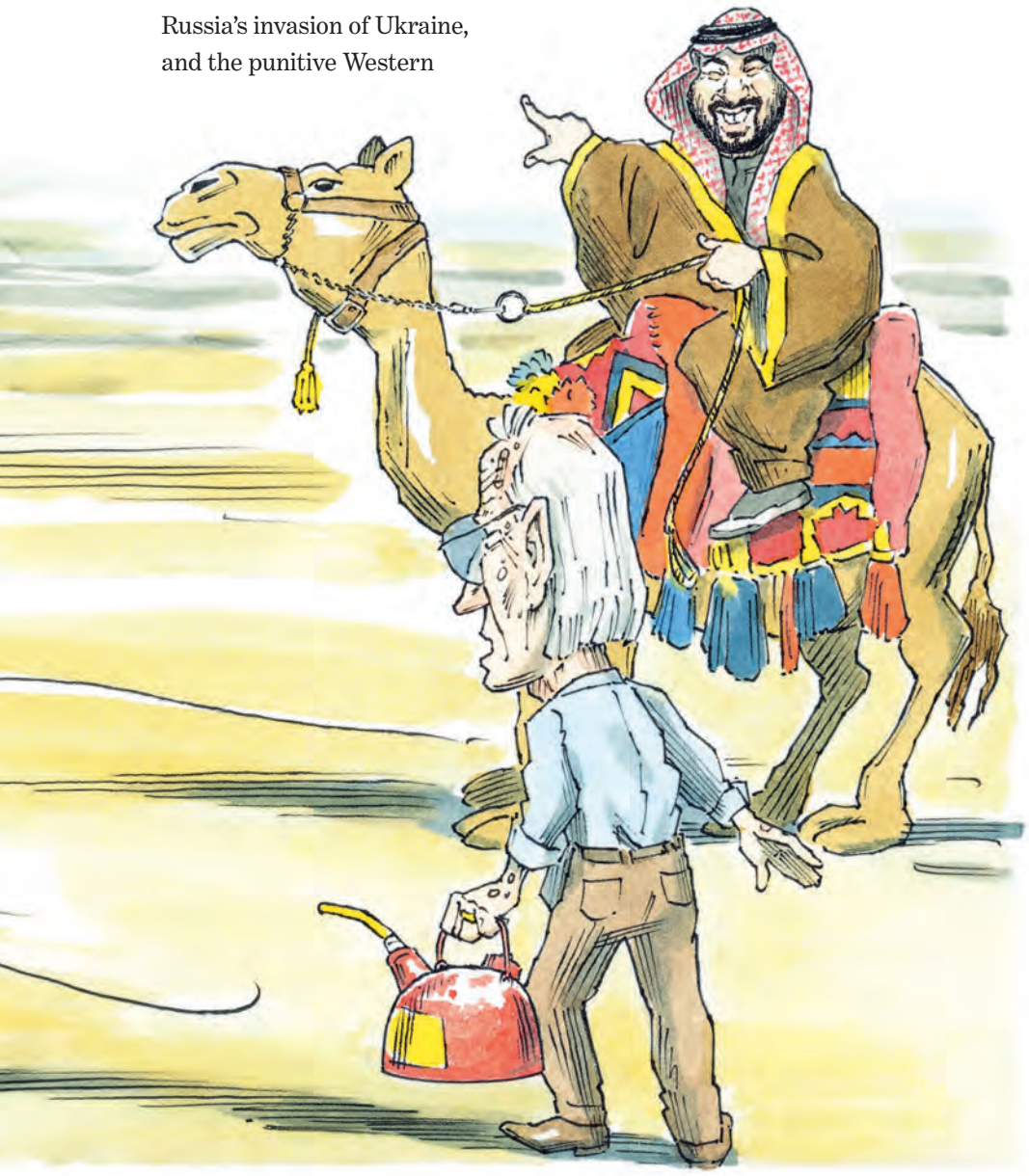
days where the relationship is very healthy and days where the relationship is under question. Today, we're going through a stress test." Similarly, Turki al-Faisal, a former Saudi ambassador to the United States and the former Saudi intelligence chief, remarked last May, "We've had our ups and downs over the years and perhaps, at this time, it's one of the downs." Both men went on to sound a note of optimism that relations could be repaired, but there



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

was no denying that the damage was significant, particularly in the case of Saudi Arabia.

In April 2022, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the US relationship with Saudi Arabia had "hit its lowest point in decades"—and this was no overstatement. President Biden came into office promising to treat Saudi Arabia as a "pariah," and to a large extent he did—at least until the crisis in Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the punitive Western



RETHINKING: Saudi King Salman said in October that the kingdom was seeking stability and balance in oil markets. US officials had lobbied hard for Saudi Arabia to delay any decision on production cuts for another month, but Riyadh refused. [Bandar al-Galoud]

response, caused global oil prices to surge above $100 per barrel for the first time since 2014. The Biden administration pressed Riyadh to increase oil production to help compensate for Russia's shortfall and thereby lower prices—Russia is the world's third-largest oil producer, Saudi Arabia the second-largest—but the Saudis demurred. They reportedly refused phone calls from the White House, even as they took calls from Russian and Chinese officials.

All of this was a result of the Biden administration's deliberate policy of downgrading the relationship with Riyadh, or "recalibrating" the relationship, as administration officials frequently said. "We've made clear from the beginning that we're going to recalibrate our relationship with Saudi Arabia," then–White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a press conference in February 2021. Days later, she reaffirmed "the intention of this government . . . to recalibrate our engagement with Saudi Arabia." And again, days later: "Our objective is to recalibrate the relationship." Similarly, in a briefing in

March 2021, State Department spokesman Ned Price underscored the "effort to recalibrate the terms of our relationship with Saudi Arabia" in accordance with America's interests and values.

Reports in summer 2022, however, indicated that the Biden administration was beginning to climb down from this get-tough stance on Saudi Arabia. As the president prepared to visit Riyadh in July, recalibration seemed to be giving way to rehabilitation. The reasons for this shift in policy run deep.

A BOND WITH ROOSEVELT

The US relationship with Saudi Arabia dates to the 1930s, when American companies played a leading role in developing the nascent Saudi oil industry. In February 1945, King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud, the founding monarch of the Saudi kingdom, met with President Franklin Roosevelt in the Great Bitter Lake of the Suez Canal, where the two sides sowed the seeds of an enduring partnership. The Saudis and the Americans had little in common culturally—one an absolute monarchy, the other a constitutional democracy—but they were united by shared commercial interests and a shared fear of communism and radical Arab nationalism.

There was also a strategic energy component to the relationship. From the 1940s onward, the Americans saw the oil resources of the Persian Gulf as of paramount importance, not for domestic energy consumption but rather for the energy security of Western Europe. It was for this reason that the United States, in the early years of the Cold War, proclaimed a policy of safeguarding Saudi Arabia from foreign assault. In October 1950, President Harry Truman wrote to King Abd al-Aziz affirming that "the United States is interested in the preservation of the independence and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia. No threat to your kingdom could occur which would not be a matter of immediate concern to the United States."

In the ensuing decades, the oil resources of the Gulf continued to be viewed in Washington as indispensable. President Jimmy Carter, as he recalled in his memoirs, saw the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 as "a threat to the rich oil fields of the Persian Gulf area and to the crucial waterways through which so much of the world's energy supplies had to pass." In January 1980, in the annual State of the Union address, he articulated a policy known as the Carter Doctrine: "Let our position be absolutely clear: an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

The same strategic calculation obtained a decade later, even after the Cold War ended. When Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, appearing poised to seize the nearby oil fields of eastern Saudi Arabia, President George H. W. Bush deployed air and ground forces to Saudi Arabia. In an echo of Truman and Carter, he stated: "Let me be clear. The sovereign independence of Saudi Arabia is of vital interest to the United States. This decision . . . grows out of the long-standing friendship and security relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia."

The United States has thus been strategically invested in Saudi Arabia since the early days of the Cold War, and both countries have benefited from the partnership. This is not to say that the relationship has not been marred by serious disagreements and tensions. The Saudi leadership's anti-Zionism—and sometimes outright anti-Semitism—was long a source of friction, and for decades the Saudis forbade Jews to enter the country. The kingdom's frustrations with US support for Israel led to the first oil shock of the 1970s, when Riyadh announced an embargo on oil sales to the United States during the October 1973 war. The relationship took another hit after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001—fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi citizens, and the Wahhabi version of Islam promoted by Riyadh was seen as contributing to the ideology of Al-Qaida. The 2003 Iraq War, which the Saudis publicly opposed, was another source of strain.

President Truman wrote to the Saudi king: "No threat to your kingdom could occur which would not be a matter of immediate concern to the United States."

FRICTION FROM IRAN DEAL

Another major disagreement emerged during the presidency of Barack Obama, whose pursuit of a nuclear deal with Iran was deeply troubling to the Saudis. In July 2015, the Obama administration and Iran agreed to the deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which provided Iran with broad sanctions relief in exchange for temporary restrictions on its nuclear program. Though publicly supportive of the deal, the Saudis were highly critical of it in private, complaining that it provided Tehran with a financial windfall with which to pursue its destabilizing policies across the Middle East. Making matters worse was an interview with the *Atlantic* in which Obama appeared dismissive of Saudi Arabia's security concerns,

saying, "they [the Saudis] need to find an effective way to share the neighborhood" with Iran.

It was thus a great relief to the Saudi leadership when Obama was replaced by Donald Trump, who had repeatedly criticized his predecessor's Middle East policies during the presidential campaign. In May 2017, Trump made Saudi Arabia the site of his first overseas visit, signing security and investment agreements and extolling "the enduring partnership" between Washington and Riyadh. The *Washington Post* described the affair as a "love fest," one that contrasted sharply with the "years of growing estrangement under President Barack Obama." A year later, much to the Saudis' delight, Trump withdrew the United States from the JCPOA.

All of this occurred during the rise of Mohammed bin Salman, or MBS, the ambitious son of Saudi King Salman, reigning since 2015. MBS was appointed prime minister in September 2022. Under the leadership of MBS, who became crown prince in 2017, the kingdom introduced sweeping social reforms that empowered women and curbed the power of the conservative religious establishment, opening Saudi society to opportunities more attuned to Western mores. MBS also made Saudi Arabia into a more repressive autocracy, however, overseeing an unprecedented crackdown on political dissent at home and abroad.

This dimension of his rule led to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a dissident Saudi journalist, in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018. MBS was widely accused, including by the US intelligence community, of ordering the operation that resulted in Khashoggi's death, and the fallout in Washington was severe. Already the Saudis were under fire for their unpopular war in Yemen. Nonetheless, Trump stood by the young crown prince, vetoing punitive bipartisan legislation and bypassing Congress to push through a massive arms sales package. Trump's support for MBS only made the crown prince, and by extension Saudi Arabia, more controversial in American politics.

Amid last summer's oil spikes, the get-tough attitude toward Saudi Arabia—dubbed "recalibration"—seemed to be giving way to rehabilitation.

It was in this context, during the Democratic presidential primary campaign, that then-candidate Biden made his "pariah" comment. In a Democratic primary debate in November 2019, he explained that as president he would punish senior Saudi leaders for the murder of Khashoggi and treat

the Saudis as "the pariah that they are," adding that "there's very little social redeeming value in the present government in Saudi Arabia." Under his watch, he declared, the Saudis would be held at arm's length and the US-Saudi relationship would be subjected to review and re-evaluation.

CHANGING THE TERMS

In the first months of the Biden presidency, the watchword for this critical approach to Saudi Arabia was "recalibration." The term, together with many of the associated policies, appears to have had its origins in a monograph written by Daniel Benaim, a former Middle East policy adviser and speechwriter for then–vice president Biden. Today, Benaim is deputy assistant secretary of state for Arabian Peninsula affairs at the State Department. Titled "A Progressive Course Correction for US-Saudi Relations," the monograph was published by the Century Foundation, a progressive think tank, in June 2020. In it, Benaim made the case that the Trump administration's policy of "maximum latitude" toward Saudi Arabia was out of step with American interests and values. Trump, he claimed, had effectively encouraged MBS's repression and provocative behavior. What was called for was a "recalibration" of the relationship whereby "US policy should press Saudi Arabia to make meaningful policy changes." The "pressing" was to be harsh.

The next administration, Benaim wrote, ought to present the Saudis with a "stark choice": either they decide to chart "a more constructive path forward" or they suffer the consequences of "diminished ties." Both paths were to remain open and dependent on Saudi decisions. The "constructive path forward" would include "a cease-fire and easing air and sea passages into Yemen, releasing political prisoners, pledging to end extraterritorial abuses of dissidents, and participating in a regional dialogue with Iran." In the meantime, Benaim recommended that the next administration begin by "impos[ing] a temporary moratorium on major new arms sales" and "institut[ing] a time-bound, six-month strategic review of US-Saudi cooperation." If the kingdom did not meet US demands by this time, then a more fundamental rethinking of the relationship was to be considered.

From the start, despite their differences, the United States and Saudi Arabia shared security and commercial interests.

Many of Benaim's outlined requests, such as releasing political prisoners and stopping attacks on dissidents abroad, were of course reasonable and

desirable. Yet the idea of presenting the Saudis with a "stark choice," and presumably reprimanding and threatening them in public, was imprudent. Such an approach was bound to sow distrust and risked compromising an eight-decade security partnership. Yet that is the path Biden chose.

In its initial months, the Biden administration followed many of the steps mapped out by Benaim in his paper. In addition to adopting the term "recalibration," it announced the pause of a $478 million sale of precision-guided munitions to Riyadh, the end of arms sales for the Saudi war effort in Yemen, and the removal of the Houthis—the Iran-backed militant group in Yemen that has fired rockets at Saudi cities—from the list of foreign terrorist organizations. It further announced that Biden would not work directly with MBS but only with his counterpart as head of state, King Salman, who is largely retired. The administration also released a classified US intelligence report that concluded that MBS had personally approved the operation "to capture or kill" Khashoggi.

Though publicly supportive of the Iran nuclear deal, the Saudis were highly critical of it in private.

During a press conference, Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that this step and others were in line with the policy of recalibration. "The relationship with Saudi Arabia is an important one," he stated. "But we also want to make sure, and this is what the president has said from the outset, that the relationship better reflects our interests and our values. And so what we've done by the actions that we've taken is really not to rupture the relationship, but to recalibrate."

In his monograph, Benaim had similarly written that "the goal is to recalibrate rather than rupture." In this way he sought to present his plan as a moderate one that paid heed to the importance of the historic US-Saudi relationship. And yet, Benaim's recalibration was not aimed at a restoration of the status quo ante. For in his view, the days of harmonious relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia were in some ways irretrievable. "These recommendations won't return US-Saudi relations to the high points of the past," he wrote. "Each side, in its own way, has evolved." This appears to have been the Biden administration's view as well.

TWO CAN PLAY

Predictably, Riyadh did not respond well to the administration's recalibration rhetoric and the associated punitive actions. While the kingdom did end its

embargo of Qatar before Biden took office and has sought to de-escalate the war in Yemen, these steps were likely to have been taken anyway. The larger impact of the recalibration strategy was to alienate the Saudis and lead them to reconsider their strategic options. In August 2021, Riyadh signed a military cooperation agreement with Russia to encourage "joint military cooperation between the two countries," and it has enlisted the support of the Chinese military in producing its own ballistic missiles. Asked about the Biden administration's critical approach to the kingdom in an interview with the *Atlantic,* MBS replied: "Simply, I do not care." As the Biden administration was learning, recalibration could be repaid in kind.

It was not the Saudis' strategic hedging, however, that forced a change in policy. Rather, it was the war in Ukraine and the subsequent spike in oil prices. Shortly after the war broke out in February 2022, senior administration officials visited the kingdom in hopes of mending ties and encouraging Riyadh to increase oil production. The charm offensive ultimately had some effect. After initially refusing to boost production, the Saudis eventually helped, in June, by leading an effort in OPEC+, the expanded oil cartel that includes Russia, to "raise output by 648,000 barrels a day in July and in August." While the effect of the new OPEC+ agreement would have only a modest impact on oil prices, it was a step in the direction of improved cooperation with the United States.

The move was warmly received in Washington, where Karine Jean-Pierre, the new White House press secretary, tweeted, "We recognize the role of Saudi Arabia as the chair of OPEC+ and its largest producer in achieving this consensus amongst the group members." Days later, she commented favorably on the US-Saudi relationship, saying, "Saudi Arabia has been a strategic partner of the United States for eight decades. Every president since FDR has met with Saudi leaders. And the president considers Saudi Arabia an important partner on a host of regional and global strategies, including other efforts to end the war in Yemen, contain Iran, and counter terrorism." There was no talk here of recalibration or pariahdom; rather, the emphasis was on the enduring relevance of a strategic partnership going back decades. Jean-Pierre also spoke of raw American interests, or the "deliverables" that Biden would be seeking for the American people in meeting with MBS. As the White House then confirmed,

A monograph said Washington "should press Saudi Arabia to make meaningful policy changes." The "pressing" was to be harsh.

Biden would visit Saudi Arabia in July and meet with the crown prince—a step seen as marking the end of the ill-fated recalibration policy.

A few months later, however, in October, the Biden White House erupted in fury at Riyadh after OPEC+ announced cuts to oil production targets over US objections. On October 5, citing "uncertainty that surrounds the global economic and oil market outlooks," OPEC+ announced cuts of two million barrels per day, a move that would raise gas prices in the United States and elsewhere just a month before the US midterm elections. US officials had lobbied hard for Saudi Arabia to delay any decision on production cuts for another month, but Riyadh refused, wishing to keep prices high and stable amid projections of falling demand and the view that US requests were politically motivated by the upcoming elections. In response, Biden vowed "consequences" for the Saudis, his national security spokesman noting that "[t]his is a relationship that we need to continue to re-evaluate, that we need to be willing to revisit. And certainly, in light of the OPEC decision, I think that's where [the president] is."

As the Biden administration learned, "recalibration" could be repaid in kind.

The White House press secretary then accused the Saudis of "aligning their energy policy with Russia's war [and] war aims and against the American people," underscoring the need "to realign that relationship, to re-evaluate that relationship with Saudi Arabia." The White House and Riyadh were seemingly back to square one.

FAMILIAR TROUBLES

The return to the rhetoric of recalibration is unfortunate, for the US-Saudi relationship still holds considerable value for both sides. Saudi Arabia may be an imperfect ally, and Washington and Riyadh may not always see eye to eye on oil price targets, but it is nonetheless a wealthy, stable, status quo power in a volatile region. It possesses the second-largest proven oil reserves in the world; it has made numerous positive steps in terms of social reform over the past five years; and it is on increasingly good terms with Israel. It is strategic malpractice to risk compromising the pro-American orientation of Riyadh.

This saga shows that pressuring the Saudis in public is probably not the best way to go about achieving desired behavioral changes. Private criticism and respectful deliberation are more likely to work than naming and shaming, even if the United States does not achieve a desired result in a given

instance. In the case of last fall's OPEC+ decision, Washington overreacted to a legitimate disagreement over economic forecasting in the oil markets. It was inevitable that Riyadh would seek to cut production to prevent oil from falling below $80 per barrel, as it simply cannot sustain its economic reforms at a lower price. The only questions involved size and timing.

If nothing else, this saga shows that pressuring the Saudis in public is probably not the best way to achieve behavioral changes.

The Biden administration would benefit by retreating from anti-Saudi rhetoric in the near term and seeking ways to affect Saudi behavior positively, including in regard to human rights, through a more discreet approach. The relationship is too important to be discarded over an oil price dustup. ◘

Available from the Hoover Institution Press is ***Crosswinds: The Way of Saudi Arabia,*** *by Fouad Ajami. To order, call (800) 888-4741 or visit www.hooverpress.org.*

Conservatism: The View from Israel

Israel is seeing a growing interest in US-style political conservatism. Why? The American tradition balances freedom and tradition.

By Peter Berkowitz

Israelis on the right have discovered conservatism's rich intellectual tradition. Of special interest to them, especially among the religious Zionists at the forefront of the expanding effort to develop a distinctively Israeli conservatism, is American conservatism's relation to their fledgling movement. The transnational appeal of US-style conservatism should be of special interest to Americans as well.

Last summer, Ben Shapiro, the outspoken and acerbic American conservative commentator and Orthodox Jew, addressed an enthusiastic Tel Aviv crowd at a Conservative Political Action Conference. At the event, which CPAC convened as part of its ambition to develop ties with conservatives abroad, Shapiro told the thousands in attendance that Israel could find reliable support in the United States only from Republicans and, among Jewish Americans, the Orthodox. Reporting on the event, *Israel Hayom* journalist Ariel Kahana cautioned against uncritical acceptance of Shapiro's counsel. In the United States, he noted, many non-Orthodox Jews, independents, and

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Democrats also back Israel, and Republicans don't always control the White House and Congress.

As they turn to American ideas and experience to refine their views, members of the Israeli conservative movement would do well to recognize not only the intricacies of US politics but also the complexities of American conservatism.

These complexities spring from the blending of the several traditions that formed the United States. The numerous Protestant sects to which most Americans belonged in the founding era tended to agree that toleration and separation of church and state reflect God's will. The educated class in eighteenth-century America embraced the classical Roman ideal of a public-spirited citizenry that maintains freedom through the exercise of civic virtue. And most Americans at the time of the country's founding took as axiomatic the view—elaborated by seventeenth-century British thinker John Locke and affirmed in 1776 by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence—that human beings are by nature free and equal and that the principal purpose of government is to secure unalienable rights shared equally by all.

This founding inheritance reverberates throughout American history. It was instrumental in enabling the United States to overcome the evil of slavery; vindicate the fundamental rights of women and other classes of citizens who have been wrongly denied the equal protection of the laws; and build a prosperous, democratic superpower composed of citizens from every region of the world.

FAMILY, FAITH, NATION

Last year, in a feature in the Hebrew-language daily newspaper *Haaretz* titled "The right has an opportunity to formulate a clear agenda. It should take advantage of it," my friend Gadi Taub argued that Israeli conservatives must appreciate better not only the complexities of conservatism in America but also the complexities of the conservative challenge in Israel. He is suited to make the case.

A leading conservative voice in Israel, Taub holds a doctorate in American history from Rutgers University and is a senior lecturer in the School of Public Policy and the Department of Communications at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is also a *Haaretz* columnist and a podcast host. Polemical and scholarly; well versed in America and deeply rooted in Israel; a respecter of tradition and a lover of freedom; an accomplished and well-traveled intellectual and a defender of ordinary people, local communities, and national traditions; and a lifelong Zionist who migrated from the left to

the right, Taub is keenly attuned to the layers of paradox that mark the effort to transplant American conservatism in Israel.

In his lengthy essay, Taub emphasized that American conservatism itself is marked by "internal contradictions." The most basic, he argues, is between America's classical liberal heritage and the seminal critique of abstract rights and individual choice in the name of tradition, knowledge grounded in experience, and gradual reform championed by eighteenth-century British statesman Edmund Burke, the founding father of modern conservatism. But, Taub observed (citing the report of the US State Department's Commission on Unalienable Rights, for which I served as executive secretary), individual rights and limited government are woven into the very fabric of America's traditions. Consequently, in the United States, preserving freedom is essential to the conservative task.

Is the American synthesis of Burke and Locke—the balancing of freedom and tradition—appropriate for an Israeli conservatism?

Preserving freedom, however, can't be the entirety of the conservative task, Taub hastened to add. That's because freedom is neither self-sustaining nor the comprehensive good and the last word about justice. Freedom depends on citizens' character. Moreover, while carving out room for individual choice, freedom does not determine which choices and attachments best promote flourishing lives.

Accordingly, conservatives also undertake to encourage the virtues on which freedom and flourishing depend and to counteract excesses to which the individualism that freedom fosters gives rise. Instead of turning to government to fortify freedom and mitigate its disadvantages, however, conservatives seek to safeguard other essential features of the American tradition that restrain wayward impulses, teach duties, and bolster community and political cohesiveness. Foremost among these for American conservatives are family, faith, and nation.

In clarifying their core principles, Taub advises, Israeli conservatives should neither get lost in the policy debates such as gun rights and abortion that currently preoccupy American conservatives, nor should they expect definitive answers to the controversies that roil Israeli politics. For the moment, they should focus on the larger question concerning the character of their movement: is the American synthesis of Burke and Locke—the balancing of freedom and tradition—appropriate for an Israeli conservatism?

TRADITIONAL BACKBONE

One obstacle, Taub observed, is the socialism bound up with Israel's founding ethos and which exerted influence throughout the Israeli political spectrum. That cuts against the easy implantation into the Israeli body politic of an American conservatism for which free market principles are a central component.

Yet, Taub argues, a commitment to free market ideas, spurred by four decades of government reform, has taken root in Israel. Today, free market beliefs are found where one might expect—among wealthy, predominantly secular high-tech elites who are in large measure Ashkenazi Jews who immigrated to Israel from Europe. But capitalism has also been embraced by Mizrachi Jews of North African and Middle Eastern descent. Many are working class, vote for Likud Party leader and former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and see themselves as scorned by Israel's progressive elites.

Israel's sizeable population of Mizrachi Jews, Taub argues, must form the backbone of any organic and viable conservative movement in Israel. Indeed, many among the Mizrachi community are known as "traditionalists" because of their propensity to cherish family, faith, and the nation. In contrast to progressive elites, who tend to believe that Zionism and religion are incompatible, Mizrachi traditionalists typically see a smooth fit between Jewish nationalism and Jewish faith.

In the United States, preserving freedom is essential to the conservative task. But freedom depends on the character of citizens.

Moreover, having suffered discrimination in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s at the hands of Israel's then-semi-socialist establishment, Mizrachi Jews played a major role in the mid-1970s in ending the control over government enjoyed by the Israeli left since the country's 1948 founding. In 1977, large numbers of the Mizrachi community embraced Menachem Begin's mix of classical liberalism and Zionism, which propelled the Likud Party leader to the prime ministership. That mix also served Netanyahu well.

Over the decades, the combination of nationalism and freedom, according to Taub, "not only promised, but operated to open paths to, mobility." Since the mid-1990s, Israel's GDP per capita has increased by more than 50 percent and the income gap between Ashkenazi and Mizrachi has steadily decreased. As a result, writes Taub, "Milton Friedman was integrated into the Likud, and the liberal-national synthesis was established as a fundamental principle among its traditionalist voters."

To make good on their aspiration to develop a self-conscious Israeli conservatism, maintains Taub, religious Zionist intellectuals must grasp that the Mizrachi traditionalists represent the "wide and sturdy base of that which deserves to be called conservatism in Israel." Beyond publications and conferences, according to Taub, it is vital for conservative intellectuals in Israel to form a coalition with the traditionalist voters who live their conservatism without need of lectures, seminars, and learned writings.

In this, Taub provides further confirmation of Burke's pertinence to Israeli conservatism. Like his heirs in the post–World War II conservative movement in America, Burke defended the moral outlook and everyday ways of ordinary people from the pretensions of those keen to use government to dictate morals and manage citizens' lives.

Taub also confirms the importance to Israeli conservatism of Locke and liberal democracy. Democracy, he stresses, enables the people to give political expression to their culture and national identity. Taub does not stress it, but individual freedom—basic civil and political liberties of the sort that flow from unalienable rights—is essential in a pluralistic democracy like Israel's as well. By limiting state power, individual rights both safeguard minorities from oppressive expressions of majority will and protect the majority from managerial elites and judges and government bureaucrats determined on their own authority to override majority preferences and moral judgments to implement their class's preferences and moral judgments. Individual rights and the respect for human dignity which they reflect, moreover, have strong roots in Zionism, as attested to by the abundant appeals to fundamental rights in Israel's Declaration of Independence.

Well understood, carefully translated, and prudently applied, American conservatism's synthesis of Burke and Locke is highly relevant to the cultivation of a distinctively Israeli conservatism. ■

Turkey Is the Wild Card

Ankara is edging closer to Damascus and Moscow—a shift that could make humanitarian and security problems even worse. Washington, meantime, continues only fumbling efforts to reconcile with what remains a key NATO ally.

By Russell A. Berman

Syria is the humanitarian catastrophe of the century. The regime of Bashar al-Assad has been systematically attacking its own population, not only to suppress a movement calling for democratization—the Syrian version of the Arab Spring—but to carry out a program of demographic re-engineering. By forcing masses of refugees into exile, the regime intends to diminish the historical Sunni majority in order to protect the minority Alawite ruling circles, while strengthening the alliance with Shia Iran. Of course, this violence is not truly about religion; it is pure power politics carried out by sadism, compounded by Tehran's pursuit of a "Shia crescent."

According to a Brookings Institution publication published last year, the numbers of Syrian refugees are enormous, especially if one includes the

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full populations and not just those who have gone through official registration processes. The broader numbers are 1.3 million in Jordan, 1.5 million in Lebanon, and 4 million in Turkey. (In 2015, the arrival in Europe of a much smaller number, slightly more than 1 million Syrians, set off populist political revolts that threaten the European Union and contributed to the Brexit vote.) In addition to the human suffering of the refugees themselves, one must consider the prospect of intentional destabilization in the region more broadly. Damascus is not waging a war only against its own population; in collusion with Tehran and ultimately Moscow, it is weaponizing population flows to achieve political goals further afield.

In fact, the number of refugees understates the problem, since nearly as many people have been displaced within Syria. It is stunning that this calamity has not captured the attention of the Biden administration foreign policy leadership. If one remembers the centrality of human rights in the Carter years, or the prominence that President Reagan gave to human rights abuses in the Soviet Union, or even the rhetoric around a "responsibility to protect" in the Clinton administration, Syrian suffering today provokes nothing but hand wringing.

THE TURKISH CARD

Against the backdrop of these crimes against humanity, the news that Turkey may pursue an opening toward Damascus is deeply troubling. In the wake of meetings last summer with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said he hoped to meet with Assad. In addition, last August, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu called for a "reconciliation" between the Syrian opposition and the Assad regime, with the result that the next day protesters filled the streets of Idlib and many other cities in northern Syria outside the regime's control, denouncing the apparent revision of Ankara's long-standing opposition to Assad. Social media spread a hashtag that translates to "we will not reconcile."

The Syrian regime is weaponizing population flows to achieve political goals further afield.

Turkey's agenda is surely complex, including security concerns with regard to Kurdish terrorism and aspirations to return refugees to Syria, especially in light of Erdoğan's domestic political calculations. The Turkish electorate harbors significant anti-refugee sentiment. Yet in terms of geopolitics, these

WHAT NEXT? Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan meets with President Biden at last June's NATO Summit in Madrid. Turkey's agenda is complex, including security concerns with regard to Kurdish terrorism and aspirations to return refugees to Syria. Turkey may pursue an opening with Damascus.
[Adam Schultz—White House]

diplomatic initiatives also involve Ankara's misguided outreach to Russia: given the fragility of the Turkish economy, Erdoğan may be hoping for financial infusions from Putin. Russia, meanwhile, is trying to exploit Turkey as a route to circumvent sanctions, in addition to firming up its own presence in the Middle East. One of the lasting effects of the Obama administration's foreign policy is the return of Russia to the Middle East, particularly in Syria.

If this coordination between Ankara and Moscow makes sense for Russia, it is a strategic error for Turkey. In the context of the Ukrainian war and Turkey's support for Kyiv, it appeared for a moment that Ankara was well on its way to normalizing relations with the West. Now, Turkey is squandering that potential for goodwill. Perhaps Erdoğan and Çavuşoğlu believe they can play Russia and the United States against each other. In reality, the appearance of a cozy relationship with Putin will make it even more difficult to address Turkish interests in Washington, especially in Congress.

Even more disappointing is the ethical dimension of the Turkish willingness to "reconcile" with the Assad regime, despite all its crimes. The

politician Erdoğan has in the past taken the admirably high road with regard to Syrian refugees, welcoming them into Turkey, even though he pays a domestic price for his pro-refugee advocacy. Yet any move to accommodate Assad will diminish the credibility of that principled and humane position. If he turns against the refugees, he will in effect be denouncing his own prior leadership and aiding his stridently anti-refugee opponents. Meanwhile, he is aligning Turkey with a Russia increasingly likely to lose the Ukraine war and from which Moscow will emerge weakened. Choosing the losing side is not a good strategy.

AMERICAN FAILINGS

Yet while Erdoğan failed to take sufficient advantage of the diplomatic opportunity for an improvement of relations with Washington, ultimately a larger share of the blame has to be attributed to the inadequacy of Biden administration foreign policy. Turkey is a linchpin of NATO, with the second-largest military in the alliance, after the United States. US nuclear weapons are housed at Incirlik Air Base. Turkey's geostrategic location is self-evident, with its command of access to the Black Sea and therefore control of Russian maritime activity, and Turkey is central to the sensitive question of the flow of refugees into Europe. The United States needs Turkey. Meanwhile, a set of specific issues has troubled US-Turkey bilateral relations, including Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system, US support for the Kurdish YPG, which Turkey regards as indistinguishable from the terrorist PKK, and human rights issues.

Russia, meanwhile, is trying to exploit Turkey as a route to circumvent sanctions.

None of these problems is simple, yet the need for a good relationship is overwhelming. While Turkey did not make the best use of the Ukraine context to ameliorate relations with Washington, neither did the United States. President Biden might not be able to meet with Erdoğan, but Putin is happy to find time in his schedule.

If Turkey reaches a normalization with the regime in Damascus, it will be a political and an ethical mistake for which Ankara will bear responsibility. Even so, Turkey is being compelled to go down this route in part because the "eastern card"—Russia, Iran, Assad—seems easier to play than the western card of NATO and Washington. The United States is running the risk of losing a key NATO ally while doing so little in the face of mass killings—and

this by an administration that promised to put human rights at the center of American foreign policy.

The Syrian revolution popularized a particular chant that called for Assad's departure, and among the many accusations hurled at the dictator, the chant denounces him as an "agent of the Americans." The claim is hardly plausible: Assad is no American agent. This bizarre assertion reflects the generic anti-Americanism of the region, compounded by a predisposition to conspiracy theories, the bane of Middle Eastern political culture. Yet the seeming inactivity on the part of the American superpower in the face of enormous crimes against humanity is evidently viewed, incorrectly, as intentional support for the regime. It behooves US foreign policy makers to understand why parts of the Syrian movement against the dictatorship imagine that Washington stands with Assad and not with the democratic opposition. US foreign policy should take steps to prove them wrong.

Turkey is finding that the "eastern card"—Russia, Iran, Assad—is easier to play than the western card of NATO and Washington.

All Roads Lead to Damascus

The Syrian war, and the violence rippling outward from it, haven't gone away—and it's time for the Biden administration to find solutions. Here are several.

By Joel D. Rayburn

Two years into its tenure, the Biden administration studiously avoids having a Syria policy. The dangers that compelled the Obama and Trump administrations to adopt a hands-on approach to Syria, however, are still present. Terrorism, genocide, refugees, chemical weapons, ISIS detainees in weak northeastern Syrian jails, Iranian regime aggression, great-power competition involving Russia, a Turkey-PKK conflict—any of these could escalate into a regional or international crisis in Syria in any given week.

Against this broad problem set, the Biden administration has chosen to narrow

Key points

» Syria overflows with potential tinder for a wider conflict.

» The Biden administration's hands-off policy carries heavy risks. Syria, moreover, is disconnected from US policy toward Iran and Russia.

» Economic pressure against the Assad regime could be transformative.

» The United States should join legal efforts to hold Assad responsible for war crimes and atrocities.

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PARTNERS: US and Turkish flags fly at a base in Syria. Turkey's outreach to Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad is born of Ankara's frustration with an unresolved border conflict—and is a consequence of the leadership vacuum left by the United States. [Ahval News]

its focus, retaining the rhetorical goals of its predecessors but applying no plans or means to achieve any of them save counterterrorism and humanitarian assistance. What actions the United States does take are disconnected. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, has been energetic in trying to keep UN aid flowing into Syria, and CENTCOM commander General Erik Kurilla has leaned forward in stopping the Iranians from attacking his troops inside Syria. But these two initiatives stand alone, without a comprehensive Syria policy above them.

The administration's hands-off approach carries heavy opportunity costs and risks for other policy areas. Aside from Kurilla's recent effort to stop Iranian attacks against US bases, Syria is disconnected from the administration's broader Iran policy. Syria is also strangely disconnected from the broader US policy on Russia and Ukraine; had Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad been dealt with forcefully, Russian leader Vladimir Putin might also feel the squeeze.

Little is said or done in Washington about other threats that emanate from Syria to endanger close US allies. The Iranian regime's ongoing campaign to turn Syria into a deadly Revolutionary Guards outpost compels the Israeli air force to strike Iranian targets inside Syria multiple times a week. These strikes would have prompted an international crisis before 2011, but today they barely make the news. The recent rapprochement between Israel and Turkey after a decade of broken relations ought to be an opportunity for the United States to help two of its allies coordinate their efforts on a common Assad-Iran problem, but there's no indication the Biden administration is doing so.

On Syria's southern border, Jordan finds itself alone waging a violent border war with the Assad regime and Hezbollah gunmen who are pushing narcotics into Jordan and the Gulf on a massive scale. And on the northern border, the US shuttle diplomacy that sought, before 2021, to end or mitigate the dangerous conflict between Turkey and the YPG has gone dormant.

Turkey's outreach to Assad is born of Ankara's frustration with this border conflict—and is an example of what happens when the United States leaves a leadership vacuum. Other US allies in Europe and the Arab world also privately express frustrations with US inaction and explore their own solutions that may or may not be compatible with US interests.

EASY STEPS

Back in Washington, Congress, too, has grown impatient with the Biden administration's passivity on Syria, especially the administration's failure to enforce the Caesar Act, a law that came into force in 2020 to sanction Assad's regime. Key members of Congress have repeatedly warned the administration to stop encouraging an "Arab gas pipeline" that would cross Syrian territory and deliver transit fees and gas to Assad himself. Already, key congressional committees have signaled that they are ready to pass an updated Caesar Act that would close sanctions loopholes, thwart the pipeline deal, and make some sanctions against Assad and his allies mandatory. There will also probably be bills targeting Assad's massive narcotrafficking and prohibiting the United States from recognizing or engaging with Assad's government.

Among other problems, Syria is disconnected from the US administration's broader Iran policy.

Against this backdrop, it would be advisable for the Biden administration to take a handful of policy steps—none of which would be costly—to put the United States back in a leadership role and protect against the risks that Syria poses to US and international interests.

» ***First, restore economic pressure against Damascus.*** Doing so would give the United States its best chance to compel Assad to end his war against the Syrian population, which is the fundamental driver of all else that is going wrong in Syria. Washington should implement a comprehensive plan to shut down the main streams of Assad's revenue: drug trafficking, skimming from UN aid, and forcing Syrian expatriates to pay extortionate fees to renew passports and register vital documents. Where UN aid is concerned, the

Biden administration and Congress should work together to stop US funds from going to the World Food Program and other UN agencies in Damascus until they do transparent due diligence on their contractors and subcontractors. There is compelling evidence that UN contracts now go mainly to front companies associated with the Assad regime.

The administration should also act against sanctions defiance outside Syria. The most prominent example is Assad's sanctioned airline Cham Wings, which despite US sanctions is flying into the UAE, Jordan, Kuwait, Armenia, and other countries. The UAE, Jordan, and Kuwait know they are violating the Caesar Act by letting Cham Wings have ground services at their airports, but they calculate that Washington is not serious about enforcing the sanctions against them. It would probably require one warning letter from the Treasury Department to put a stop to this.

International Civil Aviation Organization certification for Damascus and Aleppo airports should also be on the table. If the IRGC and Hezbollah are using Assad's airports to wage war, why should those airports be certified for commercial airlines' use?

Concerning Assad's extortionate passport fees, it would be a creative, constructive move for the United States to advocate for a new UN agency to provide travel documents and vital records registration circumventing the Assad regime until a different government rules in Damascus.

» ***Second, connect Syria to the broader US policies on Russia and Iran.*** The Caesar Act was meant to enable sanctions against Russian and Iranian involvement in Syria, but the United States has not used this authority. Washington should put Kurilla's deterrence operations against the IRGC into a broader policy of pressuring the Iranians into withdrawing their troops and militant proxies from Syrian soil. It would defy reason to grant Tehran vast relief from US sanctions through a renewed nuclear deal when the IRGC is actively trying to kill US troops in Syria and Iraq.

US allies in Europe and the Arab world privately express frustrations with Washington's inaction.

Where Russia is concerned, the administration should sanction every Russian company and military unit that is now or has ever been active in Syria. The United States should also make it impossible for Russia to gain concessions by continually threatening to veto UN cross-border aid into Syria. It's long past time for the United States and other allies to develop a viable alternative to UN aid to feed the more than four million people of northwest Syria.

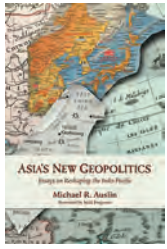
» ***Third, the United States should immediately join the emerging effort by European courts to hold the Assad regime accountable for war crimes and other atrocities.*** The United States should support the formation of an international tribunal on Syria in The Hague, as previous administrations did with the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon that investigated the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. And the Biden administration should instruct the Justice Department and FBI to prioritize cases of US citizens who have disappeared into Assad's jails.

THE COMING STORM

US diplomacy on Syria doesn't have to replicate the exercise in futility that saw Secretaries Clinton, Kerry, and Tillerson expending vast energy and hours going around in circles with Sergey Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister. But US diplomacy on Syria needs to be more than it is today. The Biden administration needn't do things that are high cost. But it can and should do things that are low or no cost. Syria will not sit still as the American superpower looks the other way.

Compelling evidence suggests UN contracts now go mainly to front companies associated with the Assad regime.

The Syrian people are primed to explode again because life in almost all parts of Syria has become unsustainable. When it comes, the explosion could take any number of forms. Are the United States and Europe ready for the risks or opportunities that could emerge then? Better to awaken from policy slumber now than to wait and be overwhelmed later. ◼



The Meaning of Syria

Syria's agony teaches one lesson above all others: maintaining order in the Middle East can never be left to chance—or to chancy alliances.

By James F. Jeffrey

If the Middle East is the graveyard of American foreign policy in this century, then Syria has been the ghostly denizen rising repeatedly to torment US policy, from Barack Obama's 2013 chemical weapons "red line" to Donald Trump's repeated, wrong-headed efforts to withdraw US forces. It also has seen the most sustained direct Russian and US military tension since the Cold War. Both countries initially intervened for limited objectives: the United States to support the opposition in the civil conflict against the brutal Assad regime, and later to combat the Islamic State unleashed by that conflict; the Russians to back their key regional ally and maintain their sole regional military platform.

Key points

» Syria will probably become the scene of latent great- and regional-power competition.

» The Syrian war is essentially three conflicts: a civil war, the interaction of five outside states with that civil war, and a broad struggle over regional security.

» For now, the United States accepts a frozen Syrian conflict marginally in its favor.

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Eventually, however, the Syria conflict expanded into a question of who would determine the regional security order. There, Russia played consistently and well a weak regional hand with limited military and economic assets, first securing its immediate at-risk Syria goals and then exploiting Washington's inconsistency, despite its far superior regional assets and much greater investments in the regional order.

Today, in the shadow of the Ukraine conflict, Syria will probably become the scene of latent great- and regional-power competition. To understand where we are now, a glance back at the Syrian conflict should be helpful.

THREE WARS, ENTANGLED

From 2011 to roughly 2018, the Syrian conflict expanded into three linked wars. The first was the civil war between the Assad regime and much of its population, mainly with Sunni Arab and to a lesser extent Kurdish Syrians, carried out with much brutality by Bashar al-Assad, with more than five hundred thousand killed and half the population of twenty-four million now refugees or internally displaced. The opposition was supported initially by Arab states, Turkey, and the United States, but now only Turkey supports the armed opposition. By 2016, with the entry of Russia, the regime had clearly avoided defeat.

The second war involves the engagement of the forces of five outside states—Israel, Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States—with goals beyond taking sides in that first, internal war. For Russia, the goal became advancing an alternative regional security model, possibly even to "dethrone" the US collective security system; for Iran, to advance its own regional vision, including another "rocket front" against Israel; for Israel, to contain that Iranian rocket front; for the United States, to defeat the ISIS terrorist "state"; and for Turkey, to pursue multiple goals: combat the Kurdish PKK offshoot, the YPG (renamed by the United States the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF), but also protect its frontiers from ISIS, the Iranians, and Assad. The presence of these five outside military forces, most of which at some point clashed with others, vastly complicates the Syrian conflict.

The third war is the largely political struggle, centered in Syria, over the regional security structure. Once Iran and Russia had saved the Assad regime, they shifted attention to the larger prize: their somewhat coordinated, somewhat contradictory efforts to rewrite Middle East security. The United States, Israel, and Turkey recognized these ambitions, but, generally focused more on their immediate Syria goals, they have been inconsistent in defending their security system, which is their primary policy goal. This

third war was long the least identified and analyzed, but the Ukraine crisis is changing this.

"RED LINES" AND BEYOND

The Obama administration initially supported the Syrian opposition, including militarily, as part of the administration's overall embrace of the Arab Spring, but there was no deep commitment to win. The administration soon lost interest, its position highlighted by the "red line" fiasco costing it much credibility, and the shift in priorities to a nuclear deal with Iran and the fight against ISIS. Nevertheless, Secretary of State John Kerry continued pursuing a solution, browbeating the Russians in December 2015 to accept UNSCR 2254, a classic diplomatic compromise calling for a cease-fire, a new constitution, and the Syrian state's reconciliation with the opposition. The Russians, confident of a military victory, then blocked the implementation of UNSCR 2254. Kerry unsuccessfully sought from President Obama a military response to stymie such a victory and compel the Russians and ultimately Assad to compromise.

For the Trump administration, the initial focus of the Syria policy was to prioritize fighting ISIS and manage tensions with Turkey over Washington's support of the YPG/SDF, a US ally against Islamic State. That changed with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in mid-2018. By that time the "big war" against ISIS was largely over, and the administration focused on containing Iran, including in Syria, where Iranian rocket deployments had drawn in Israeli airpower. But part of the American bureaucracy still sought to restrict efforts in Syria to containing the ISIS remnants and avoiding confrontation with Assad, Iran, and Russia. Pompeo, however, saw Syria increasingly through the prism of that third war, the struggle over whose collective security system would dominate, the traditional American-led one, or the Iranian and Russian alternatives.

Pompeo adopted a new strategy to mobilize the considerable international support, including in the EU, the Arab League, Turkey, Israel, the Syrian opposition, the SDF, and the United Nations, for a compromise solution based on UNSCR 2254. To back that effort, the diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions on Damascus that were begun by Kerry would be strengthened. The administration also hammered together a military coalition, which Kerry had sought in vain, to block further Assad military advances. This required enhanced coordination with Turkey, whose occupation of much of northern Syria and support for the armed opposition was essential, along with greater operational support to the Israeli air campaign and continued stationing, at times against President Trump's instincts, of US forces in

Syria, to both contain ISIS and deny terrain to Assad. This "alliance" was creaky—Israel and Turkey were barely on speaking terms, and the relationship with the latter, America's ally in areas that Turkey controlled in northwest Syria, was complicated. Nevertheless, it has held.

A PAUSE

The result has been a de facto military stalemate from 2018 until the present, with about half the population under Assad's control, and one-third of the country and much of its agricultural and oil wealth controlled by Turkey, allied opposition forces, and the US-supported SDF. The United States, with the support of its eclectic coalition, offered the Russians, all the way up to a Pompeo-Putin meeting in May 2019, a step-by-step resolution of the conflict by implementation of UNSCR 2254. The Russians were not won over, but the Trump administration had a fallback: enough diplomatic and military assets to freeze the conflict, denying Russia and Iran a strategic victory in that "third war" for regional security. While a compromise solution was preferable, the administration considered this fallback sufficiently advantageous to warrant the effort to keep it afloat.

The Biden administration initially downplayed Syria, ending talks with the Russians while focusing on the anti-ISIS effort and humanitarian assistance. This near-indifference to the conflict reflected the administration's broader inconsistencies regarding the Middle East. President Biden entered office emphasizing great-power competition with Russia and China but was unclear on whether this extended to the Middle East. Indeed, Russia's threatening regional role was largely ignored, and the policy priority with Iran was the JCPOA nuclear agreement, rather than countering its regional advances.

Israel, Russia, Turkey, and Iran are not satisfied with their gains in Syria. One or more could up the ante.

Still, the US military maintained overall regional force levels, including in Syria. In fact, while Biden's Syria policy did not have a recognizable overarching policy approach, it continued essentially most of the previous specific policies including isolation of Assad, sanctions, commitment to UNSCR 2254, support for Israeli operations and Turkey in the northwest, and the cease-fires that have frozen the conflict.

The key shift in American regional policy came with the Ukraine war, which brought home the extent of threats to the international order and Washington's reliance on Arab states and Israel. It thus took Ukraine to

convince Washington that, once again, maintaining that order against an outside challenge is job one. These new realities inspired Biden's July regional trip, at bottom an initiative to deepen the Trump administration's Abraham Accords–led effort on a regional anti-Iranian alliance.

The extent of this new American commitment to contain Iran and implicitly Russia is not yet clear. But that commitment in practical terms rules out any weakening of the US position in Syria to the advantage of those spoiler states.

MANY DANGERS

To sum up, the administration now implicitly accepts the criticality of that "third war" in Syria for the regional security order, and thus is maintaining a frozen conflict marginally in its favor, given low costs and Washington's distaste for the alternatives. A negotiated resolution with Moscow, as sought by the past two administrations, is nigh impossible while the Ukraine war rages.

The current American policy has risks. Various regional states seek rapprochement with Damascus, but Assad's refusal to compromise with the half of the population that opposes him has so far blocked real movement. More seriously, the "second war" conflicts involving those five outside states could escalate. Four of them—Israel, Russia, Turkey, and Iran—are not satisfied with their gains, and one or more could up the ante. Finally, the wrong incident between any combination of these states, Assad's forces, and the myriad sub-national actors could reignite major fighting.

Thus Syria remains, apart from the Iranian nuclear program, the most dangerous issue in the region. ◼

Charles in Charge

King Charles III is a man **both familiar and new.**

By Andrew Roberts

Although Queen Elizabeth II was a monarch for seventy years—a record beaten only by Louis XIV, who became king of France aged five—we have known King Charles III for even longer. The seventy-four-year-old who ascended the throne last year is therefore a very well-known commodity, about whom everyone will have formed an opinion long ago.

Over the years, despite all his hard work for good causes—his Prince's Trust has helped almost one million young people since its founding in 1976—Charles has attracted much criticism, some justified, but most of it wildly unfair. As king, a different person will emerge from the seemingly often frustrated one who was prince of Wales, and I believe those people who have overall negative opinions of him will change their minds.

The job of prince of Wales is not an easy one, as Prince William will find as he tries to fill his father's shoes. There is no constitutional prescription for what princes of Wales should do. The earlier ones in British history tended to be soldiers. Some later ones, like Edward VII and Edward VIII, simply enjoyed themselves, with the bare minimum of serious work (although Edward VII did sit on the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes). By contrast, King Charles III when prince of Wales involved himself profoundly in issues that often tended to verge on the political, such as

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[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

climate change (which he stated warning about as long ago as 1970), architecture, the prayer book, history teaching, interfaith connections, and so on.

For a monarch, however, many of the day-to-day tasks are specifically prescribed. Opening Parliament with a speech from the throne, investitures awarding honors, approving bills and attending some Privy Council meetings, receiving ambassadors, welcoming foreign heads of state, touring the Commonwealth and other countries, broadcasting at Christmas, opening schools and hospitals: these take up huge amounts of time throughout the year and leave little time for interfering in politics even if King Charles wanted to, and he has made it very clear in both of his speeches upon accession that he no longer does.

The king will meet the prime minister every Tuesday for an hour, which will give him plenty of opportunity to make his (already well-known) opinions clear to the best person to receive them, but the prime minister is under no constitutional obligation to take much more than a polite notice of them. There was a time in the early 2000s that Prince Charles wrote a series of letters to Labour cabinet ministers on every subject imaginable, from education to the plight of the Patagonian toothfish, but those days are very much over. (Most of the letters, once published in the *Guardian* years later, in fact showed how sensible and worthy he was in his views.)

The king's happy and stable domestic life will be another positive aspect of the new reign. From having been unpopular back in the dark days of her extramarital affair with Prince Charles, Queen Consort Camilla is now one of the most popular members of the royal family, appreciated both for making her husband happy and for her own sterling qualities of charm, accessibility, unstuffiness, and genuine noblesse oblige in its best sense. The tragic days of the 1990s involving Diana, princess of Wales, are now more than a quarter-century in the past, and can stay consigned there.

King Charles is ideally placed to bring the monarchy into a new era. He has been thinking about and planning for his new role for over half a century, and will have plenty of ideas of how the House of Windsor will need to evolve in order to stay relevant throughout the rest of the twenty-first century. If he enjoys the longevity of his parents—his mother died at ninety-six, his father at ninety-nine—let alone that of his maternal grandmother, who lived to one hundred and one, then King Charles might spend a quarter of a century on the throne, in which time Britain will become as different a place as it was in the late 1990s, the era before iPhones, iPads, and Google.

The genius of the survival of the House of Windsor—which Queen Elizabeth II knew better than anyone, and has taught her son—lies in its uncanny

capacity constantly to evolve and embrace change half a step after the rest of society, but never being caught two or three steps behind. It does not try to lead fashion or push radical agendas, but neither is it a drag or a reactionary force standing against societal change once it has happened. Take the issue of divorce, for example. When Elizabeth II came to the throne, divorceés were not allowed into the Royal Enclosure at Ascot and her sister Princess Margaret was effectively banned from marrying Group Captain Peter Townsend because he was divorced. The queen changed the rules for Ascot in 1955, and in the end three of her four children got divorced. The Windsors move with the times, and Charles III recognizes that.

Charles III is king of no fewer than fifteen countries, and as an excellent forthcoming book, *The Enduring Crown Commonwealth,* by Stephen Klimczuk-Massion and Michael J. Smith, points out, he will have to fight an expected tide of republicanism in some of them after the queen's death. Should Australia hold another referendum, for example, it might not return the same 55 percent to 45 percent result in favor of the status quo as in November 1999. A timely visit of the new king and queen consort to all the countries of the Crown Commonwealth, even the smallest ones like Tuvalu in the Pacific and St. Kitts and Nevis in the West Indies, would be an excellent start for a fight-back for constitutional monarchy, especially in those regions increasingly threatened by an aggressive China.

In his TV message on acceding, King Charles promised to continue his mother's famous commitment made in Cape Town in 1947 to lifelong service. It will necessarily be a very different type of service than it was when he was prince of Wales, but it will be equally effective. He said in his first Buckingham Palace broadcast that his mother's had been "a life well lived, a promise of destiny kept." His will be the same. ◘

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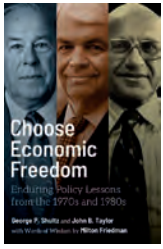

. . . And Carry On

Britain continues to seek its post-imperial place in the world. Whatever it might find, it also will find the strength to change.

By Timothy Garton Ash

What's in store for post-Elizabethan Britain? Whatever you think of the institution of monarchy in a democracy, there must be huge respect for the late Queen Elizabeth II and her seventy years of dedicated service as an impartial head of state and a unifying figure in Britain and beyond. Yet so much of what she represented is now in doubt.

She stood for the almost paradoxical unity of four nations in a single nation, the United Kingdom. But now the Scots are quite likely to leave the British union in order to rejoin the European one. Northern Ireland increasingly sees its future with the Republic of Ireland, as a kind of informal member of the European Union. Even if Britain doesn't go all the way back to being just England and Wales, it will need a constitutional reordering.

Key points

» Despite profound challenges and the loss of its long-reigning queen, Britain still has great strengths.

» Britain has accommodated the diversity that flows from immigration better than most other European democracies.

» Last year's transition to a new head of state suggests a constitutional democracy in decent shape.

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The queen represented continuity, security, certainty. But Britain today faces a cost-of-living crisis, a soaring national debt, a probable recession, a chronic productivity problem, and political turmoil. Not much certainty there. Despite the optimism expressed by short-lived prime minister Liz Truss, 69 percent of those asked in a recent opinion poll said Britain is "in decline."

The queen commanded global attention and respect. In fact, for many decades she was probably the most famous woman in the world. An estimated one billion people watched her cameo appearance with James Bond at the 2012 London Olympics. On the news of her death, NASA tweeted: "As we join the planet in marking her passing . . ." Some of this magic rubbed off on the United Kingdom, the state she embodied. But after Brexit, Britain's international standing and influence is at a new low.

She smoothed the transition from empire to Commonwealth and, for the United Kingdom, from imperial great power to middle-sized Euro-Atlantic power. But several of the former colonies and dominions of which she was still head of state are actively considering dispensing with the services of her successor, King Charles III. One expert on the Commonwealth even suggests that there may be a "rush for the door." Charles III will also face growing calls to acknowledge and atone for the harms done by that empire.

More serious than any potential loss of those largely symbolic overseas offices is the geopolitical uncertainty about Britain itself. In 1962, Dean Acheson, a former US secretary of state, famously quipped that Britain had "lost an empire and not yet found a role." Forty years later, at the time of the queen's golden jubilee in 2002, it was possible to believe that Britain had finally found that role. Britain would be firmly anchored both in Europe and in the Anglosphere. It would have a special relationship with the United States, but also with countries such as France, Germany, and Poland.

Even if Britain doesn't go all the way back to being just England and Wales, it will need a constitutional reordering.

Few outside Britain think it has a clear and strong strategic position today. This is the tragedy of my country: to have found a post-imperial role and then to have lost it again. Since the vote for Brexit in 2016, the United Kingdom has descended from a hapless but still relatively pragmatic Conservative prime minister (Theresa May) to a parody of Winston Churchill (Boris Johnson) and thence to a parody of Margaret Thatcher (Liz Truss). The

STEPPING OUT: King Charles III greets a crowd in October in Aberdeen, Scotland, where he met with refugees resettled from Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine. Charles faces both geopolitical and domestic uncertainty. His "Global Britain" remains undefined. [Polaris/Newscom]

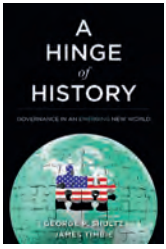
proportion of grandiose bluster has increased as that of fact-based realism has declined. There's a lot of waffle about "global Britain"; nobody knows what it means.

Yet if the wall-to-wall British coverage of the obsequies for Elizabeth II had an element of psychological escape from current woes, some of the foreign coverage exaggerated the weakness behind the pomp and circumstance. This country still has great strengths. Many observers suggested that, after Brexit, Britain would be hopelessly divided between two hostile tribes, remainers and leavers. The national unity around the National Health Service during the COVID pandemic, and then in mourning for the queen, suggests otherwise. Looking at the faces of the grieving crowds and, for that matter, at those of the new cabinet (with no white man in any of the four great offices of state), you see that Britain has accommodated the diversity that flows from immigration better than most other European democracies. Britain has great scientists and universities, some of the world's best media (as well as some of its worst), creative industries, financial services, and tech.

Last year's seamless, almost simultaneous transition to both a new head of state and a new prime minister suggests a constitutional democracy in decent shape. Despite some speculation to the contrary, I see no reason to believe that King Charles will be anything but a dignified, restrained head of state. If the government makes a mess of things, we will vote it out at the next election. Unlike in the hyper-polarized United States, no one will seriously question whether this was a free and fair election. (Not even our Official Monster Raving Loony Party will chant "Stop the steal," let alone brandish rifles.) A better proportion of realism to rhetoric will be restored.

This is Britain's tragedy: to have found a post-imperial role and then to have lost it again.

Post-Elizabethan Britain is in for some very difficult times in the 2020s. But, to invoke that most British of consolatory phrases, which one feels the queen herself must have used now and then: it could be worse. ■



How Ukraine Ends

The Russian invasion is a war of attrition, but not merely of troops. Ukraine, to win, must survive an economic onslaught.

By Niall Ferguson

Modern war is in many ways the continuation of economics by other means.

In a realist perspective, Russia would seem bound to prevail over Ukraine sooner or later. Its territory is 28 times larger; its population is 3.3 times larger; more important, its GDP is 9 times larger. Western sanctions do not alter the fact that Russia still has significant (if reduced) revenue from exporting its gas and oil, whereas Ukraine is heavily dependent on Western economic and military assistance. Time might seem to be more on Russia's side than Ukraine's.

But Russia could still lose this war. Size is not everything. Thirteen American colonies vanquished the British empire. North Vietnam defeated the United States. The Soviet Union could not win in Afghanistan. Empires decline and new nations break free.

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The invader is at an inherent disadvantage in the face of a strong nationalist sentiment. Vladimir Putin has inadvertently turned the formerly divided and disgruntled inhabitants of Ukraine into the Ukrainian people. And wars of national liberation against declining empires are more often successful than not. That is why there are few empires left.

One may debate whether the United States and the Soviet Union were empires between the 1940s and the 1980s (both denied it). What no one denies is that they waged a Cold War. That meant that World War III did not take place, but many proxy wars were fought in which one or more of the superpowers backed one or more sides in regional conflicts.

Ukraine is not only fighting for its freedom; it's a proxy for a US-led effort to weaken Russia (and perhaps also to deter China from similar aggression). The Ukrainian war effort is sustainable only thanks to large-scale military and financial aid from the United States and its Anglosphere and European allies. At the same time, US-instigated sanctions (especially technology export controls) are driving the Russian economy and military back into the late twentieth century.

This is an asymmetric war in Cold War terms. The combined resources of the countries actively supporting Ukraine vastly exceed Russia's, while China has thus far offered minimal support to Russia.

If the United States further increased its supply of precision weaponry to Ukraine and added tanks to the mix, the Russian positions in Kherson, Luhansk, and Donetsk could probably be made unsustainable. Similarly, if the EU further increased its economic support for Ukraine, the risk of an inflationary crisis would recede.

There is a scenario in which the Russian position in Ukraine now unravels. This is a largely colonial army, its best battalions severely depleted by six months of highly destructive warfare, its ranks replenished by raw recruits from impoverished provinces east of the Urals. Its morale is low. Such armies can be brought to a tipping point if they encounter well-armed, well-organized, and well-motivated opponents. Defeat in land war is much less about killing enemy soldiers than getting them to surrender, flee, or desert.

In Cold War terms, this is an asymmetric war.

The question in the scenario of a Russian collapse would be whether Putin was willing to risk direct NATO retaliation against Russia by resorting to tactical nuclear weapons or (an option less discussed but potentially

BLEEDING: The market in Barabashovo, northeastern Ukraine, lies in ruins after Russian shelling. As is typical in such a conflict, an invaded country suffers a severe decline in output because productive land and assets are seized or destroyed, and millions of people displaced. [Pavlo Bahmut—Avalon]

more effective) strikes on Western satellites aimed at disrupting Ukrainian communications.

Because neither Washington nor Moscow wants to go head-to-head, I suspect Western assistance to Ukraine will continue at around the current level, ensuring that the war lasts not for just a few more months but for perhaps a year or more.

Most wars are shorter. Of eighty-eight wars between states since 1816, nearly a quarter lasted less than two months and 38 percent between two and six months. Of the remaining thirty-five, twelve were over within a further six months, seven lasted up to two years, twelve lasted two to five years, and four more than five years.

In other words, a war that continues for six months has a roughly one-in-three chance of lasting no longer than a year in total, but an equal chance of lasting between two and five years. We should not forget the Korean War, the first "hot" war of Cold War I, which lasted three years and did not end with a conclusive peace agreement—merely an armistice.

In March, Ukraine's armed forces defied almost everyone's expectations by winning the battle of Kyiv. Six months later, they again surprised the so-called realists with their eastern counteroffensive. However, to win this war, Ukraine cannot afford to lose economic stability.

Even when the Ukrainian army appears to be winning, the Ukrainian economy is losing. As is typical in a war of this sort, the invaded country suffers a severe decline in output simply because productive land and assets are taken over by the enemy or destroyed. At the same time, one-third of Ukrainians have been displaced by the war; more than 6.8 million have left the country and the rest are internally displaced. A large proportion have lost their jobs and homes.

Wars of national liberation against declining empires are more often successful than not. That is why there are few empires left.

Ukraine's GDP shrank by 15.1 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2022. In the second, it shrank by 37 percent. The overall annual contraction of output will be around 33 percent, according to government estimates. Unemployment is at Great Depression levels. Inflation, which began last year at 10 percent, was at 24 percent and rising by autumn.

If the United States and the European Union want to see a Ukrainian victory, they must step up their support immediately to reduce the Kyiv government's budget deficit and help the central bank avoid runaway inflation.

If, on the other hand, they would privately prefer this war to just keep going—in the belief that Ukraine is "bleeding Russia dry"—they may be striking the optimal balance between military and economic assistance. ■

Special to the **Hoover Digest.**

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In Our Own Defense

The Ukraine war has drained US armories of the weapons we need to defend our own interests and our homeland. Rebuilding our stocks won't be easy.

By Jacquelyn Schneider

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, onlookers imagined a quick rout for Kyiv; then, when Ukraine held out, a humiliating and precipitous defeat for Russia. The two countries now appear to be locked in a long war of attrition. Russia can bank on both military and economic advantages as it seeks to deplete Ukraine's arsenals, starve its citizenry, and erode Western support. Whether Ukraine can continue to hold out against this much bigger adversary appears to depend largely on the sustainability of US military aid.

At a NATO press conference, President Biden affirmed that the United States would support Ukraine for "as long as it takes" to secure its victory. Already, the United States has provided billions in security assistance, including air defenses, ammunition, rockets, missiles, loitering munitions, drones, helicopters, communications, and intelligence systems. Congress has approved billions more.

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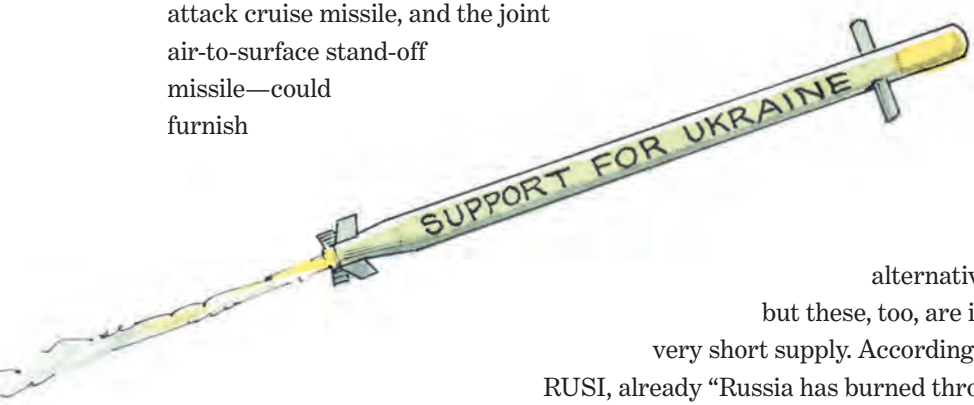
The United States is drawing from a sparse stockpile of weapons, however. Over the past decade, its priority has been to produce the low-yield precision bombs and missiles favored in counterterrorism campaigns, such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States has therefore cut back on producing legacy munitions, including versions of the antitank Javelin and antiaircraft Stinger missiles, and on purchasing more expensive, high-yield smart missiles. The initial months of support to Ukraine already depleted much of the stockpile of such weapons.

US stockpiles of artillery ammunition are similarly dwindling. The last three budget cycles have seen cuts in this area, leaving the United States without enough ammunition in storage to keep up with a conflict in

[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

which the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Britain's oldest security think tank, estimates that Russia is firing more than seven thousand artillery rounds a day. RUSI concludes that the artillery ammunition that the United States currently produces in a year would last for only ten days to two weeks of combat in Ukraine. Smart munitions—such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) precision-strike missiles, the Tomahawk land attack cruise missile, and the joint air-to-surface stand-off missile—could furnish an alternative, but these, too, are in very short supply. According to RUSI, already "Russia has burned through four times the US annual missile production."



The natural answer to stockpile shortages is to increase production. But here, too, the United States has reduced capacity. After the Cold War, the United States consolidated its defense industry, leading many small-arms production plants to shut down completely. A February 2022 Department of Defense report on industrial capacity warned that companies producing tactical missiles, fixed-wing aircraft, and satellites had reduced their output by more than half and in some cases by as much as two-thirds, and that 90 percent of all missiles now come from just three sources. Many of the legacy weapons whose arsenals we now seek to rebuild were bought in such small quantities that they were essentially hand-produced. Production lines for generating larger quantities of them were long ago dismantled, such that they cannot simply be activated or modernized.

The US defense industry is now called upon to build back this lost production capacity at a time when supply chains for such crucial components as semiconductors have been disrupted. As Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo testified in April regarding defense production, the "biggest pain point is chips." In the first place, the semiconductor market suffered from pandemic-related supply-chain holdups. Now there are further problems that also affect domestic production. Many of the raw resources used to make semiconductors and weapons are choked off by the Russia-Ukraine conflict,

including neon (Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, estimates that Russia and Ukraine produce 70 percent of the world's supply), which is critical for semiconductor manufacturing, and also aluminum, titanium, palladium, and nickel, which are used in batteries, aircraft, and munitions.

US defense firms will need to obtain these supplies, recruit workers in a tight labor market, and cast off decades of countervailing incentives if they are to both outfit Ukraine and rebuild US arsenals.

Legacy weapons systems are expensive to produce, and the Pentagon has made clear over the past four years that its priority is research and development rather than procurement. When defense contracts do come, firms are saddled with cumbersome bureaucratic processes. Even recent attempts to speed up the procurement of commercial off-the-shelf systems for Ukrainian defense have been stymied by administrative processes. For example, on April 22 the Pentagon called on firms to send information about immediately available weapons technology. It received more than 1,300 replies, according to *Politico,* but responded only a month later, saying it might need further details and would get back to the companies over the summer.

After the Cold War, many small-arms production plants shut down completely.

There is little time to lose, as Russia's war in Ukraine drags on amid economic conditions that are hardly auspicious. US defense budget top-lines are already struggling to keep pace with inflation, for example, and threats of a recession loom. US foreign policy makers must consider other budget priorities, including commitments in Asia.

Support for Ukraine can dovetail with these priorities, however. Investing in defense production capacity and weapons stockpiles can help shore up US deterrence in Taiwan and elsewhere—convincing states looking for a quick win that the United States is willing and prepared to sustain support for the long term. That message will be especially important as the United States balances both a rising China and a revisionist Russia. Moreover, the United States can draw on its history, as it has successfully surged its economy to support wartime weapons

Many of the weapons whose arsenals we seek to rebuild were bought in such small quantities that they were essentially hand-produced.

production in the past: the US "arsenal of democracy" was a key factor in the Allies' victory in World War II.

The United States can support Ukraine through its war of attrition with Russia. But to do so, it will need to make significant reforms to its defense acquisition and production policies. Those changes will have to happen fast, because Ukraine might not have "as long as it takes" to survive.

Too-soft Power

American restraint was not reciprocated. Russian and Chinese aggression are the result.

By H. R. McMaster and Gabriel Scheinmann

The Biden administration failed to deter Russia from its second invasion of Ukraine. Like his predecessors in the White House, President Biden went to great lengths to placate and reassure Russian President Vladimir Putin in return for stable relations. Biden defied Congress when he refused to sanction the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, unilaterally extended US adherence to the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty without reciprocation by Russia, and honored Putin with a bilateral summit during his first overseas trip.

As Putin amassed his troops on Ukraine's borders, Biden pulled US naval forces out of the Black Sea, refused to send additional weapons to Ukraine, enumerated everything the United States would not do to help Ukraine defend itself, and evacuated US embassy staff and military advisors. More broadly, the administration proposed a real cut to the defense budget; sought to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in US defense strategy; restricted US production capacity for oil, gas, and refined products that might have displaced Russian supplies; and signaled its willingness to overlook Russian and Chinese aggression in exchange for hollow pledges of cooperation on global issues such as climate change.

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After surrendering Afghanistan to a terrorist organization and conducting a humiliating retreat from Kabul, the administration's attempts to deter the Russian invasion with threats of punishment were simply not credible.

WRONG MOVES

Deterrence, however, does not disintegrate overnight. Contrary to the narrative of US belligerence and imperialism that has been impressed on countless university students, the United States has, since the end of World War II, largely pursued a policy of restraint despite its considerable military power. Unlike other superpowers, it has not sought territories or treasure—on the contrary, it incurred considerable expense to foster a peaceful international order where other nations could thrive. Under the belief that a market economy, normal trading relations, and a democratic wave would foster liberal democracy everywhere, Washington even sought to elevate, embrace, and enrich its former Cold War enemies.

From the World Bank to the International Space Station, the World Trade Organization to the Paris Agreement, Washington welcomed Moscow and Beijing into Western institutions—in other words, into the order Washington had previously tried to keep them from tearing down. Seeking to partner with Moscow and Beijing in the pursuit of global prosperity and a peaceful planet, Washington bridled its power by undertaking a generational drawdown of military forces and capabilities. Indeed, global prosperity grew and the number of democracies in the world steadily rose. As conviction rose in Washington that both China and Russia had transformed from adversaries to partners, US restraint seemed a rational choice.

The military services have significantly deferred modernization because of inadequate, unpredictable defense budgets.

However, restraint was not reciprocated. As the United States reduced its defense spending to the lowest share of GDP since 1940, Russia and China embarked on the largest military modernization and expansion programs their countries had seen in generations. They bullied their neighbors (or in Russia's case, attacked and occupied them), corroded the institutions they joined, and sought to eliminate their citizens' liberties. US restraint was interpreted as weakness. Ignoring these menaces has now led the West to the most dangerous precipice since the depths of the Cold War.

EMBOLDENED: Belligerence and militarism by Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin have persisted for years. China perpetrated the Tiananmen Square killings and threatened Taiwan, and Russia invaded Chechnya and assassinated dissidents abroad. [Russian Presidential Press and Information Office]

PROVOCATIONS IGNORED

Even before the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, Russian and Chinese militarism and belligerence were evident. In June of that year, Chinese tanks put down peaceful protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, killing thousands of people. In late 1995 and early 1996, Beijing tried to intimidate Taiwan in the run-up to its first democratic election, firing missiles into Taiwanese territorial waters. In April 2001, a Chinese fighter jet rammed a US reconnaissance aircraft in international airspace, forcing the naval airmen into an emergency landing in China, where they were detained for ten days.

Moscow engaged in two brutal wars against Chechnya and launched an assassination campaign against political opponents that continues to this day. In 2004, the Kremlin nearly killed then–Ukrainian presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko in an attempt to secure victory for its preferred candidate. In 2006, a Russian agent poisoned and killed Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian spy who had defected. Anna Politkovskaya, an investigative

journalist, was assassinated for opposing Putin's wars. From the killing of Boris Nemtsov, a liberal critic of Putin, in 2015 to the poisoning and incarceration of dissident Alexey Navalny in 2020 to the most recent imprisonment of Russian opposition politician Vladimir Kara-Murza, Putin and his thugs have worked tirelessly to extinguish any criticism of, let alone challenge to, his iron rule.

Washington still did not waver from its predisposition toward restraint. Even after Putin made plain his goal of undermining the United States and the West at the 2007 Munich Security Conference, the US military drawdown from Europe and Asia continued. The United States welcomed Russia into the G-7 in 1998, turning it into the G-8. China and Russia became part of the G-20 in 1999 and the World Trade Organization in 2001 and 2012, respectively. Putin's 2008 invasion of Georgia was even rewarded with a positive "reset" of relations. The 2010 US national security strategy called for a "stable, substantive, multidimensional relationship with Russia, based on mutual interests" and sought "Russia's cooperation to act as a responsible partner in Europe and Asia."

Similarly, even as Chinese ships began clashing with those of their neighbors, even as China built and militarized twenty-seven artificial islands and other outposts in the South China Sea, and even as Beijing claimed sovereignty over the sea and established air and sea superiority in an area where one-third of global trade passes, Washington remained withdrawn. The 2015 national security strategy "welcome[d] the rise of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous China" and sought "to develop a constructive relationship with China that delivers benefits for our two peoples and promotes security and prosperity in Asia and around the world."

BELLIGERENCE BY THE NUMBERS

Instead, the two autocracies' belligerence only expanded. In 2014, Russia invaded, occupied, and annexed parts of Ukraine, initiating a long war it has now expanded. The following year, Russian troops propped up the murderous dictatorship of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, and soon thereafter, Putin sent his private mercenary army, the Wagner Group, into Libya. In 2016, Russia interfered in elections in Europe and the United States, exploiting domestic political divisions to sow discord and mistrust in the democratic process.

Not to be outdone, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched a genocide of its own citizens, imprisoned 1.8 million Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in concentration camps and forcing them to undergo compulsory

sterilization, forced labor, medical experiments, mass rape, torture, renunciation of their religious beliefs in favor of the Communist Party, cutting and selling of their hair, and organ harvesting. In 2020, Beijing cracked down in Hong Kong in direct contravention of the "one country, two systems" policy it had committed to by international treaty. Chinese soldiers also attacked Indian troops across their disputed border, initiating skirmishes leading to several dozen deaths.

As if that was not enough, Beijing's deceit, dishonesty, and dissimulation about the nature and origin of COVID-19 helped transform a local and possibly containable outbreak into a horrific global pandemic that has cost more than fifteen million lives so far.

Russia and China were emboldened, in part, because the United States undertook the greatest drawdown of military power since the collapse of the British empire. In 1990, the US military had about 266,000 servicemembers stationed in Europe; by the end of 2021, it had only about 65,000. In 1989, the US Army had five thousand tanks permanently stationed in West Germany alone; by 2014, there were zero on the entire continent. In 1990, the United States had five thousand nuclear bombs forward deployed in Western Europe; today, it has around a hundred and fifty. Until the 2014 start of Russia's war in Ukraine and despite NATO enlargement, not a single US servicemember was permanently stationed farther east than during the Cold War.

In Asia, where the Chinese People's Liberation Army has more than two million ground forces personnel and the Chinese navy is now the largest in the world, the United States' active-duty Army has been cut by one-third since 1990. The US Navy has 40 percent fewer sailors in Asia and will soon have only half the number of active warships it had stationed there in 1990. In 2019, China conducted more ballistic missile tests than the rest of the world combined. Recent reports show that China is expected to quadruple the size of its nuclear arsenal by decade's end.

The United States should not tolerate violations of bilateral and international trade agreements.

The policy of restraint continues to limit the US defense budget. At the close of the century, China and Russia together spent 13 percent of what the United States spends on defense. Today, that number is 67 percent. Whereas US defense spending fluctuated between 4.5 percent and 11.3 percent of GDP during the Cold War, Biden's budget request for 2022 would have put defense spending at less than 3 percent of GDP—the lowest level since 1940, when

Washington was still trying its best to stay out of international affairs. And although the White House's recently released 2023 budget request contains a small nominal increase, rampant inflation makes it another de facto cut. By comparison, the Chinese defense budget—which is chronically understated by the CCP and does not include, for example, what local authorities spend on military bases or investments in research and development—grew 7.1 percent in 2021.

Not only are US armed forces too small to deter or respond effectively to aggression, but the services have also significantly deferred modernization because of inadequate and unpredictable defense budgets as well as the Pentagon's dysfunctional acquisition and procurement system. The United States is weaker, less secure, and less prepared to fight and win than at any time since the beginning of the Korean War.

US restraint was interpreted as weakness.

SLEEPERS, AWAKE

Putin's launching of the largest war in Europe since World War II therefore should not have come as a surprise. For more than three decades, Moscow and Beijing have eroded, flouted, mocked, and assaulted the order the United States and its allies built. Restraint encouraged that agenda, as the United States and its allies dismantled the ramparts that had been vital to preserving peace and protecting the sovereignty of nations on the peripheries of two revanchist powers.

And the drawdown continues, even as Russia continues its brutal invasion and China repeats its claims to Taiwan and the South China Sea. In its new national defense strategy, the Biden administration uses the term "integrated deterrence" to create the illusion that better-coordinated policies can substitute for modernized, ready, forward-positioned forces capable of operating at a sufficient scale to deter conflict and, should that deterrence fail, fight and win.

The United States must end its unilateral restraint vis-à-vis Russia and China and be realistic about the nature of the adversaries it faces.

First, the United States must re-arm, and the defense budget must increase. It must pay for new capabilities that counter and exceed those China and Russia have invested in. The joint forces must be substantially bigger to deter Russian and Chinese aggression as well as be able to respond to multiple, simultaneous contingencies.

Second, the United States must end its diplomatic restraint. Where it can, it should counter Beijing's and Moscow's efforts to subvert and co-opt international institutions and turn them against their purpose. If some of those institutions are beyond rescue because of discord and corruption, the United States and likeminded partners should form new groupings to advance the original values and principles. The Biden administration must stop describing Russia and China as partners in arresting nuclear proliferation, combating climate change, and curbing pandemics.

Deterrence doesn't disintegrate overnight.

Finally, the United States must end its economic restraint against the predatory practices and outright criminal behavior of the Chinese regime. US policy makers should not tolerate violations of bilateral and international trade agreements, the use of forced labor and other inhumane labor practices, and supply chains that leave US national security vulnerable. Free trade only works among free people.

The longer the United States operates under the delusion that restraint will appease authoritarian regimes that have made their hostile intentions abundantly clear, the bolder Russia and China will become. The risk of a catastrophic war—for which Ukraine was the prelude—will only grow. As Putin's brutal war has reminded the world, weakness is provocative. Strength is the best way to preserve peace and secure a better future.

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The Mother of All Data Breaches

Quantum computing holds new promises and dangers. Such devices could overturn our whole cybersecurity regime, revealing not just mountains of data but secrets from years past.

By Herb Lin

In May 2022, the White House issued a national security memorandum that stated:

> A quantum computer of sufficient size and sophistication—also known as a cryptanalytically relevant quantum computer (CRQC)—will be capable of breaking much of the public-key cryptography used on digital systems across the United States and around the world. When it becomes available, a CRQC could jeopardize civilian and military communications, undermine supervisory and control systems for critical infrastructure, and defeat security protocols for most Internet-based financial transactions.

This concern is not new. The theoretical possibility that quantum mechanics could be used as the basis for computation was first posed in the physics

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literature around 1980. In 1994, Peter Shor developed an algorithm that could rapidly factor large numbers into their constituent primes if run on a quantum computer. The development and publication of Shor's algorithm raised the possibility of undermining the RSA algorithm that underlies most secure messaging over the Internet. The security afforded by the RSA algorithm is based on the difficulty of factoring large numbers, and thus Shor's algorithm presents a potential threat to RSA.

Since 1994, the cryptography community has speculated about the forthcoming availability of quantum-computing hardware that could run Shor's algorithm. In the early days of such speculation, the range of estimates for that time frame ranged from "pretty soon" to "probably never." However, in recent years, the emerging consensus seems to be that quantum computing, as it applies to cryptanalysis, cannot be dismissed as mere puffery.

Data breaches may reveal embarrassments with potentially harmful policy implications.

Scientific and engineering progress in quantum computing over the past twenty-five years has been nontrivial, and many nations are involved in supporting extensive research efforts into quantum computing. In 2016 under the Obama administration, the US National Institute of Standards and Technology initiated the first public US government effort to develop cryptographic algorithms that would be resistant to quantum computing. The Trump administration continued this interest in quantum computing by proposing substantial increases in funding for quantum information sciences. And, as noted above, the Biden administration's 2022 White House national security memorandum has continued to emphasize the importance of quantum computing and has directed federal agencies to begin preparing for a transition.

Congress has also expressed concerns about encryption vulnerabilities that may result from quantum computing. For example, the House of Representatives passed the Quantum Computing Cybersecurity Preparedness Act in July 2022. This bill directs the Office of Management and Budget to begin the migration of US government information technology systems to post-quantum cryptography (PQC) a year after the National Institute of Standards and Technology issues post-quantum cryptography standards. In July 2022, a bipartisan group of senators introduced the same bill in the Senate.

These efforts have generally focused on the future by developing the technology base to support what the United States should do to ensure the

security of its sensitive communications. However, policy makers have given little or no attention to what could be called a retrospective post-quantum problem.

Here is the problem: pre-quantum public-key encryption algorithms such as RSA have almost certainly been used to protect nearly all classified US government messages since the 1970s, when the mathematics for public-key encryption were first discovered. A properly encrypted message is useless to anyone without the decryption key or the technology to discover that key, but even encrypted messages can be recorded for future analysis. Indeed, intelligence agencies have a habit of collecting information just in case it might be useful in the future, and there is no reason to suppose that these encrypted messages have not been recorded somewhere by some adversary government.

In a PQC world, those recorded encrypted messages will be vulnerable to decryption. In their decrypted form, they potentially hold a treasure trove of secrets. Though these are secrets from the past, decrypted messages may reveal embarrassments and dangers with potentially detrimental policy implications for today and tomorrow. The possibilities for these secrets are endless: Salacious information about a world leader currently believed to be a right and upstanding patriot to his country? Operational instructions regarding an assassination attempt or a coup supported or encouraged by US authorities despite public denials? A communique about alien technology discovered by accident on the ocean floor?

Policy makers have the luxury of knowing that a data breach is coming. They just don't know when.

As Chris Jay Hoofnagle and Simson Garfinkel rightly point out in their book *Law and Policy for the Quantum Age,* even a remarkable breakthrough resulting in a quantum computer capable of factoring the large numbers characteristic of RSA public keys would not automatically undo all RSA-enabled encryption everywhere. Rather, the owner of such a computer would have to use its quantum-computing resources to decrypt one message at a time. And since an encrypted uninteresting message cannot be distinguished from a similarly encrypted interesting message, it may be necessary to dedicate a significant portion of time, effort, and money to decrypt a large volume of recorded messages before an interesting message is found.

That said, this is largely a matter of economics. The cost of PQC cryptanalysis is likely to eventually drop to a level where it makes sense to devote

quantum-computing resources to decrypting old encrypted messages. Policy makers would be wise to consider the possibility that in a PQC world, messages they once believed would be kept secret could in fact be made public.

The adversary cannot be confident that it will be able to retrieve a large volume of interesting information from its trove of encrypted recorded messages, at least not in the immediate aftermath of a true quantum-computing breakthrough. Still, the United States cannot be fully confident that any of its secrets encrypted with pre-quantum algorithms will never be revealed. Thus, the danger that such secrets will be revealed will only grow as the adversary is able to devote more quantum-computing resources to retrospective decryption.

Eventually, the cost of post-quantum cryptanalysis is likely to drop to a level where it makes sense to decrypt old messages.

It is a common best practice for organizations to do a damage assessment in the wake of a data breach to identify what information may have been compromised and then to develop and implement a strategy to deal with that compromise. Here, policy makers have the distinct luxury of knowing that a data breach is looming, even though they do not know precisely when. Every US government agency that has sent a confidential message should have at least a small effort devoted to developing plans for what that agency should do if and when particularly sensitive messages from the past are revealed in the PQC future. ■

Sticker Shock

Electric cars won't put the brakes on climate change. Worse, **their own environmental costs** are buried in the fine print.

By Bjorn Lomborg

We constantly hear that electric cars are the future—cleaner, cheaper, and better. But if they're so good, why does California need to ban the sale of gasoline-powered cars? Why does the world spend $30 billion a year subsidizing electric ones?

In reality, electric cars are only sometimes and somewhat better than the alternatives; they're often much costlier; and they aren't necessarily much cleaner. Over its lifetime, an electric car does emit less CO_2 than a gasoline-powered car, but the difference can range considerably depending on how the electricity is generated. Making batteries for electric cars also requires a massive amount of energy, mostly from burning coal in China. Add it all up and the International Energy Agency estimates that an electric car emits a little less than half as much CO_2 as a gasoline-powered one.

The climate effect of our electric-car efforts in the 2020s will be trivial. If every country achieved its stated ambitious electric-vehicle targets by 2030, the world would save 231 million tons of CO_2 emissions. Plug these savings into the standard United Nations Climate Panel model and that comes to a reduction of 0.0002 degree Fahrenheit by the end of the century.

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Electric cars' impact on air pollution isn't as straightforward as you might think. The vehicles themselves pollute only slightly less than a gasoline car because their massive batteries and consequent weight lead to more particulate pollution from greater wear on brakes, tires, and roads. On top of that, the additional electricity they require can throw up large amounts of air pollution depending on how it's generated. One recent study found that electric cars put out more of the most dangerous particulate air pollution than gasoline-powered cars in 70 percent of US states. An American Economic Association study found that rather than lowering air pollution, on average each additional electric car in the United States causes additional air-pollution damage worth $1,100 over its lifetime.

The climate impact of cheerleading for electric cars in the 2020s will be trivial.

The minerals required for those batteries also present an ethical problem, as many are mined in areas with dismal human rights records. Most cobalt, for instance, is dug out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where child labor is not uncommon, specifically in mining. There are security risks too, given that mineral processing is concentrated in China.

Increased demand for already-prized minerals is likely to drive up the price of electric cars significantly. The International Energy Agency projects that if electric cars became as prevalent as they would have to be for the world to reach net zero by 2050, the annual total demand for lithium for automobile batteries alone that year would be almost twenty-eight times as much as current annual global lithium production. The material prices for batteries in 2022 were more than three times what they were in 2021, and electricity isn't getting cheaper either.

Even if rising costs weren't an issue, electric cars wouldn't be much of a bargain. Proponents argue that though they're more expensive to purchase, electric cars are cheaper to drive. But a new report from a US Energy Department laboratory found that even in 2025 the agency's default electric car's total lifetime cost will be 9 percent higher than a gasoline car's, and the study relied on the very generous assumption that electric cars are driven as much as regular ones. In reality, electric cars are driven less than half as much, which means they're much costlier per mile.

In part this is because electric cars are often a luxury item. Two-thirds of the households in the United States that own one have incomes exceeding $100,000 a year. For nine in ten of electric-vehicle-owning households, it's only a second car. They also have a gasoline-powered car—usually a bigger

one, such as an SUV, pickup truck, or minivan—that they use for long trips, given its longer range. And it takes additional costs to make electric cars convenient—such as installing a charger in your garage. Those who can't afford it, or who don't have a garage, will have to spend a lot more time at commercial chargers than it takes to fill up a car with gasoline.

This is all why electric cars still require such massive subsidies to sell. Norway is the only country where most new cars are electric, and that took wiping away the sales and registration tax on these vehicles—worth $25,160 a car—on top of other tax breaks such as reduced tolls. Even so, only 12.6 percent of all Norwegian cars on the road are electric. The country has the wealth to pay for them partly because of its oil revenue, and the trade is dubious: to cut one ton of CO_2 emissions through the subsidization of electric cars, Norway has to sell one hundred barrels of oil, which emit forty tons of CO_2.

Electric cars are much costlier per mile to operate.

Needless to say, other countries' car stocks aren't likely to be anywhere close to 100 percent electric anytime soon. The US Energy Information Administration estimates that barring new legislation only about 17 percent of all new US cars will be electric by 2050, which translates to 13 percent of the total American car stock. As consumers continue to vote with their wallets against electric cars, it is hard to imagine places like California continuing to demand that they can purchase only electric ones.

Electric vehicles will take over the market only if innovation makes them actually better and cheaper than gasoline-powered cars. Politicians are spending hundreds of billions of dollars and keeping consumers from the cars they want for virtually no climate benefit. ◘

Ice Escapades

"Glacial retreat" in Antarctica may, or may not, be worrisome. But panic is clearly premature.

By Steven Koonin

Alarming reports that the Antarctic ice sheet is shrinking misrepresent the science under way to understand a very complex situation. Antarctica has been ice-covered for at least thirty million years. The ice sheet holds about 26.5 million gigatons of water (a gigaton is a billion metric tons, or about 2.2 trillion pounds). If it were to melt completely, sea levels would rise 190 feet. Such a change is many millennia in the future, if it comes at all.

Much more modest ice loss is normal in Antarctica. Each year, some 2,200 gigatons (or 0.01 percent) of the ice is discharged in the form of melt and icebergs, while snowfall adds almost the same amount. The difference between the discharge and addition each year is the ice sheet's annual loss. That figure has been increasing in recent decades, from 40 gigatons a year in the 1980s to 250 gigatons a year in the 2010s.

Key points

» Modest ice loss is normal in Antarctica. The loss has been increasing in recent decades, but it does not signal catastrophe.

» The announced retreat of the Thwaites Glacier likely happened more than seventy years ago, if not several centuries ago.

» Absurd statements like "London, Venice, and Mumbai would become aquariums" go far beyond any scientific conclusions.

***Steven Koonin** is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, a professor at New York University, and the author of **Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, and Why It Matters** (BenBella Books, 2021).*

But the increase is a small change in a complex and highly variable process. For example, Greenland's annual loss has fluctuated significantly over the past century. And while the Antarctic losses seem stupendously large, if they continued at that rate, they would raise sea level by only three inches over one hundred years.

Many fear that a warming globe could cause glaciers to retreat rapidly, increasing discharge and causing more rapid sea-level rise. To get beyond that simplistic picture, it is important to understand how glaciers have flowed in the past to predict better whether they might flow faster in the future.

An accurate headline would say, "Thwaites Glacier retreating less than half as rapidly today as it did in the past."

Two recent studies reported in the media focus on the terminus of glaciers—i.e., where the ice, the ocean, and the ground come together. One study used an underwater drone to map the seabed at a depth of two thousand feet, about thirty-five miles from the terminus of the Thwaites Glacier in Antarctica. Detailed sonar scans showed a washboard pattern of ridges, most less than eight inches high. The ridges are caused by daily tides and serve as a record of where ice touched the seabed in the past. Researchers could read that record to infer that at some time in the past the glacier retreated for half a year at more than twice the fastest rate observed between 2011 and 2019.

The cause of the specific event at the Thwaites Glacier remains unknown, in part because the time of the rapid retreat hasn't yet been determined. It likely happened more than seventy years ago, if not several centuries ago. But the media go with this angle: "A 'doomsday glacier' the size of Florida is disintegrating faster than thought." A correct headline would read: "Thwaites Glacier retreating less than half as rapidly today as it did in the past."

Even though scientists are cautious about their conclusions, reporters usually aren't.

A second study tested the idea that freshwater from the melting of one glacier could be carried by currents along the shore to accelerate the discharge of nearby glaciers. Because global climate models are insufficiently detailed to describe the ocean near the coast, researchers constructed a special model to prove out their idea. If ocean currents can connect the discharges of

COLD STORAGE: The change in the ice content of glaciers such as this one in Antarctica is a complex, highly variable process. Careless reporting of such events denies the public the right to make informed decisions about "climate action." [PaoMic—Creative Commons]

distant glaciers, that would add to the complexity and variability of changes in the Antarctic ice sheet.

Under scenarios deemed likely by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a connection between ocean currents and discharge would increase the overall discharge rate in one region of the continent by some 10 percent by the end of the century. But to emphasize the idea being tested, the modelers used human influences almost three times larger. Even though that fact is stated in the paper, reporters rarely catch such nuance, and the media go with headlines such as "Antarctic ice melting could be 40 percent faster than thought" with the absurd statement that "a massive tsunami would swamp New York City and beyond, killing millions. London, Venice, and Mumbai would also become aquariums." A more accurate headline would read: "Ocean currents connecting Antarctic glaciers might accelerate their melting."

These two studies illustrate the progress being made in understanding a dauntingly complex mix of ice, ocean, land, and weather, with clever methods

to infer past conditions and sophisticated computer modeling to show potential future scenarios. These papers describe the science with appropriate precision and caveats, but it is a shame that the media misrepresent the research to raise alarm. That denies the public the right to make informed decisions about "climate action," as well as the opportunity to marvel at the science itself.

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Latinos Come into Focus

Hoover fellow David L. Leal explains why Hispanics are a more complex population than either political party fully appreciates. Ultimately, he says, "their votes will better reflect the partisan dynamics of the nation."

By Jonathan Movroydis

Hoover senior fellow David L. Leal argues that Latino voters are less different from the political mainstream than both liberals and conservatives assume. While demographic change is significant and has the potential to transform American politics, in reality Latinos are acculturating in terms of politics, economics, and many other dimensions of American life. Leal finds that Latinos want to achieve the American dream, not change it. Demographic change, he says, makes no guarantees to any party or ideology.

Key points

» Latinos want to achieve the American dream, not change it.

» Latinos are acculturating in politics, economics, and many other dimensions of American life.

» Messages that promote opportunity, entrepreneurship, and limited government are attractive to Latino voters.

***David L. Leal** is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project. He is a professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin. **Jonathan Movroydis** is the senior content writer for the Hoover Institution.*

Leal argues that a better lens to understanding the political future is "the politics of similarity." This means that Latinos' beliefs about politics more or less reflect the dynamics that shape the political views of all Americans and are not inevitably distinctive. He suggests that while Latinos today generally hold more liberal perspectives on economic issues, as their incomes rise and they continue to acculturate into American society, they will become more attracted to principled conservative messages that promote opportunity, entrepreneurship, and limited government.

Jonathan Movroydis: When did Latinos become a significant voting population in the United States?

David L. Leal: Latinos have been in the United States from the start of the nation, but their numbers began to grow considerably because of nineteenth-century foreign policy. The Mexican-American War (1846–48) and the Spanish-American War (1898) added much territory and many people from Mexico and the Spanish empire.

For instance, 50,000 to 100,000 Mexicans became Americans overnight at the end of the Mexican-American War. And many "Tejanos" became Americans after Texas rebelled against Mexico and joined the United States. This is why many Mexican-Americans say, "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us." And because this border is basically an artificial line in the sand, we should not be surprised by the strong economic, migration, and cultural ties between both countries.

"The most important 'ideology' is the American dream and core values like freedom, democracy, and capitalism."

Migration from Mexico and Latin America increased throughout the twentieth century, driven by both the "pull" of the United States and the "push" of difficult economic and political conditions in Mexico and Latin America. Such population growth does not automatically translate into political influence, however. Even today, as the Latino share of the population continues to grow, many Latinos are under eighteen or are not citizens, so they cannot vote.

While media coverage suggests that Latino electoral influence is growing everywhere, the reality is that it varies according to local, regional, and national contexts. Latino voting power is better characterized as "contingent," meaning it depends on how other populations vote. In a close election, Latinos can in theory make the difference, although the number of times this

has happened is not large. We sometimes hear claims that Latinos swung this or that presidential election, but those are big exaggerations.

A better approach is to study whether and how Latinos were part of what is called the "winning coalition" of a presidential campaign. How did they, and other voting groups, together help to elect or defeat the candidates?

Movroydis: How influential are Latinos in national politics today?

Leal: While Latino votes have been influential in certain places and in certain election years, they have yet to transform the balance of partisan power. Historically, Latinos voted in large numbers for fellow Catholic John F. Kennedy in 1960, and Lyndon B. Johnson benefited in his many campaigns from his good relations with Latino leaders in the Texas border counties.

The idea that Latinos may systematically realign American politics is relatively new and has yet to occur. While Latino population growth helped move California and Nevada into the Democratic camp, it benefited Republicans in

[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

Florida. Some claim that Latinos may "turn Texas blue," but even if Democrats start winning in Texas, that would be a result of many political changes, not just growing Latino populations. In 2020, the Pew Center estimated that a third of eligible Texas voters were Latino, which means that the large majority of voters were *not* Latino. And the Latino eligible-voter populations of California and Texas are almost identical percentages, so why is California deep blue and Texas still red? There's more to the story than just Latino population growth.

We also need to understand that the category of "Latino" is complex. It includes people from many different national backgrounds. It includes those who recently entered the country and others whose heritage here dates back to the 1800s. Some are more liberal, and some are more conservative. These groups also have different party ties.

Movroydis: What ideologies have historically shaped Latino populations in the United States?

Leal: The most important "ideology" is the American dream and core values like freedom, democracy, and capitalism. They have attracted people from around the world for centuries and continue to do so today. On social media and cable news, however, you see divisive claims that Latinos are socialists or Marxists. This is all laughable; there is zero evidence in favor of it, and lots of evidence against it. Latinos have a high labor force participation rate, are churchgoing and family-oriented, many are social conservatives, and maybe a third voted for Trump—tell me how that's socialist!

I would not even describe most Latino Democrats as ideologically liberal, not in the way that Manhattan and Hollywood are liberal. My sense is that they are more of a New Deal electorate. I've also heard the term "bread and butter" electorate, which captures the same concept. As a lower-income population that often takes difficult jobs with fewer benefits and has less in savings, many Latinos are open to a Democratic Party message that says, "We're from the government and we're here to help." Over time, as Latinos move into the middle class, they may believe that higher taxes and greater regulation are contrary to their interests and consequently reconsider their partisanship.

"Why does red-state Texas currently have more Latino elected statewide officials than does blue-state California?"

Some scholars see parallels between the contemporary Latino experience and the previous waves of Italian, Polish, and Irish migrants in the 1800s and 1900s. I would add that these earlier immigrant groups were predominantly Catholic and initially joined the lower-skilled rungs of the workforce, but as they gradually acculturated and moved into the middle class, their partisanship diversified. These past ethnic groups were not really on the left as much as they were in favor of New Deal–style tax-and-spend policies at an early stage in their American experience. As the 1960s and 1970s took American politics in a more leftward direction, these ethnic communities were not on board.

Movroydis: What about the "demography as destiny" argument?

Leal: This is a theory that both parties believe is true, but the evidence is weak. My message to both sides is to calm down and realize that the politics of population change are complicated and have no guaranteed outcomes.

Some people are surprised that millions of Latinos vote Republican. My answer is, "Well, why do many Americans vote for Republicans? Why should it be different for Latinos?" Latinos, like other Americans, are complex and take

a variety of stances on policy issues. We should not expect all Latinos to agree on politics, and recent elections show that many see their home in the GOP.

Democrats need Latinos to be more liberal than they really are, and the party is often shocked by, and seemingly in denial about, evidence to the contrary. The party also engages in patronizing outreach, rhetorically supports Latinos during elections but largely forgets them when in power, prays for turnout miracles that never happen, and adopts socialist labels that turn off Latino communities who have experienced socialist regimes.

Why does red-state Texas currently have more Latino elected statewide officials than does blue-state California? Why are the most pro-Latino presidents in American history George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan? How did Donald Trump attract so many Latino votes in 2016 and especially in 2020 when liberal pundits and activists said he would drive Latinos en masse to the Democrats?

Movroydis: Are there any specific issues, such as immigration, that have shaped and driven Latino voting behavior?

Leal: The Latino issue "agenda" is typically very similar to that of Americans in general. This surprises people who assume that Latinos are focused on issues that are said to be particularly relevant to them. The Pew Center has done great work surveying Latino voters about their political attitudes. One question their pollsters ask Latinos is which issues are the most important. It's not as if the top issues are immigration, abortion, bilingual education, and the kinds of things that people think Latinos care about. Latinos care about the same issues as everyone else: jobs, the economy, war and peace, education, and terrorism, to name just a few. Yes, many Latinos care about immigration, but so do many non-Latinos.

"As Latinos move into the middle class, they may believe that higher taxes and greater regulation are contrary to their interests."

Movroydis: Let's talk about the 2016 election. Did Donald Trump's rhetoric about Mexico and Mexican immigrants impact the Republican Party's ability to garner Latino votes?

Leal: We should first ask a larger question: how do Republican presidential candidates in general do among Latino voters? We need to compare Donald Trump's support among Latinos with that of prior Republican candidates.

The answer is that the Latino vote varies from year to year, depending on the candidate and the context of the election. There is no clear up or down partisan pattern over time. This is not entirely unique, as we also see shifts in other voter groups from election to election. I sometimes hear pundits and other self-declared "experts" arguing that a new trend is emerging among Latino voters, but this is usually just a reaction to the most recent election. When you look at the data, the votes of whites and Latinos trend in the same direction in what I once termed "parallel rollercoasters." Popular candidates like Reagan in 1984 attracted more votes from whites and Latinos alike. Conversely, candidates like Bob Dole in 1996 received fewer votes from both groups.

"Population growth does not automatically translate into political influence."

How did Trump do among Latinos in 2016? Depending on the poll, it varied from 18 percent all the way up to 30 percent. Surveys are often conducted with different kinds of statistical approaches and take place at different points in time. I believe Trump's Latino vote was probably in the mid- to upper 20 percent range. That is very similar to Mitt Romney's share in 2012. It suggests that while Trump's rhetoric was a concern to some Latinos, it may not have shifted many votes vis-à-vis 2012, which was contrary to pundits' expectations.

In 2020, Trump may have received up to a third of the Latino vote, and regardless of the exact percentage, he certainly increased his share. This was a stunning outcome for Democrats, who have convinced themselves that Latinos are more liberal than they really are, as well as for many Republicans, who have convinced themselves that all Latinos are socialists.

Democrats need to get down to earth, and Republicans need to stop panicking, about Latinos.

Movroydis: But neither Trump nor Romney did as well among Latino voters as George W. Bush?

Leal: That's right, both Trump and Romney considerably underperformed Bush as well as Reagan. In my view, the Republican Party often leaves many Latino and immigrant votes on the table. Respect, outreach, and goodwill matter. Bush probably received a record 40 percent of the Latino vote in 2004. In the right context, a GOP candidate who strikes a respectful tone with Latinos can get into that 40 percent range, and potentially higher. The more negative the tone of a candidate and party, the more votes left on the table.

Movroydis: You talked earlier about the Cuban-American vote and how it traditionally trends Republican. How did Donald Trump perform significantly better than his Republican predecessors in garnering almost 60 percent of that largely South Florida vote during the 2020 election?

Leal: I'm not sure if I have a definite answer, but I see a couple potential explanations. One of them involves the rhetoric of some Democratic politicians that made them seem sympathetic to socialism. They can qualify it all they want as "democratic socialism," but if you and your family were affected by Fidel Castro or Hugo Chávez, you are probably allergic to any use of this term. This may also help to explain Trump's gains among Latinos in Texas, and among Latinos and immigrants in California, which helped Republicans win back some congressional seats.

Movroydis: Would it be accurate to say that immigrants of years past rarely returned to their European countries of origin while people from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, while culturally assimilated, frequently return to see family in their homelands?

Leal: Past waves of immigrants were not entirely cut off from their homelands. For instance, I once read that maybe a third of Italian immigrants to the United States eventually returned to Italy. But as the saying goes, home is where the heart is, so the key question is which nation is in the heart of Latino immigrants. America slowly but surely becomes the permanent home for Latino immigrants, and it is the only home for their children and grandchildren. And surveys show that patriotism levels are very high for Latino immigrants, hardly different at all from those of native-born Americans, so they are liking what they see.

"The more negative the tone of a candidate and party, the more votes left on the table."

In the past, we saw a great deal of "circular migration." People would come from Mexico to the United States for the harvest of crops. When the season was over, they would return home. While some people did stay, there was much movement back and forth. One of the unintended consequences of immigration restrictions and border walls is that they encourage immigrants to make one-way journeys. They also encourage immigrants to bring their families. So, the irony of efforts to restrict immigration is that they actually encourage more permanent migration and family migration.

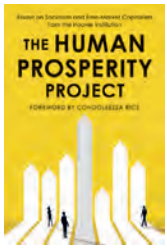
Movroydis: How do Latinos react to the "America first" agenda of economic populism and nationalism promoted by Trump and others in the Republican Party?

Leal: I'm not sure I have a clear answer to whether an "America first" agenda will prove popular among Latinos. I guess it depends on what it means. In terms of economics, many Democrats assume their party's tax-and-spend-and-regulate policies will continue to attract Latino voters. This may not be true. Trump did better among lower- and middle-income voters than did Romney, which could indicate a populist edge to parts of the Latino electorate. One hypothesis for Trump's improved showing among Latinos in 2020 was that he was perceived by some as better on the economy and jobs. Democrats will find that alarming, as they are counting on Latinos to indefinitely favor a New Deal–style approach to economics. But just as Irish, Polish, and Italian ethnic communities found this less appealing over time, so it may prove for Latinos.

It's not difficult to imagine that some Latinos saw Trump's "America first" agenda as justifiable and resonating with their own views of the nation and its place in the world.

Even if "America first" means less support of immigration and immigrants, there is evidence that some Latinos will be on board. For instance, survey research has shown that Latinos can be less supportive of immigration than many assume. We also should remember that the Latino electorate is not the same thing as the overall Latino population. The Latino electorate consists of the people who vote, which means they were born in the United States or have naturalized. The issue is complicated for Latino voters when family and friends are noncitizens. I don't think Latino citizens care any less about them, but when it comes to voting, other issues may grow in importance over time and across the generations, and to the benefit of the GOP. H

Special to the* Hoover Digest. *This interview was edited for length and clarity.



Hispanics and the Big Tent

Latinos are at last insisting that politicians stop taking them for granted and address their deepest concerns.

By Lee E. Ohanian

Hispanic people account for more than 30 percent of California's population of eligible voters. If they were to vote as a bloc, they would have a large influence on who is elected to govern, and they could significantly change the state's economic policies, many of which are disproportionately harming them.

A case in point is a conversation I had with a Hispanic man whom I met at a high school tennis match, where his son's team was hosting my son's team in the California CIF playoffs. After asking me what I did for a living, he proceeded to tell me an interesting story, one with a theme that I suspect is common among Hispanic families, and one that represents a ticking time bomb for California's progressive Democratic Party. I have paraphrased our conversation here:

> "Our town is not rich. I run a small landscaping company, and most of my customers are professionals, our town's doctors and dentists and lawyers. My wife works as my bookkeeper and

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helps manage the business. I work six days a week. It seems my wife is working all the time, between managing the business and taking care of our three kids. We earn about $75,000 after paying our expenses. But now the cost of gas is killing my business. My trucks are older and don't get great gas mileage, particularly if we are doing a big job and hauling stuff. I pass a little of the higher gas costs on to my customers, who so far have stuck with me.

"We live in a small, three-bedroom home that costs $2,800 a month to rent. That is a stretch, but that is how much it costs to live in a low-crime neighborhood here, without gangs and without having to worry about my family being hurt. The schools could be much better. You yourself can see how old this school has become [he points to buildings, including Quonset huts, that are at least fifty years old and in obvious need of maintenance]. The best teachers leave for better teaching jobs or leave teaching altogether. The best ones are young, but they get paid a lot less because they don't have seniority. My son's math teacher last year got him really excited about math, he earned an A, but that teacher is gone now. The worst teachers are older, some have been here for thirty-five years, and they are burned out. They don't care, but they can't be fired because they have tenure. I can't understand that. My men and I must do a good job for our customers. If we don't, our customers will hire another landscaper.

"I love this country. We are so lucky to live here. I vote for politicians who talk about freedom and lowering taxes and fixing up our city and making schools better and lowering gas prices and increasing water supplies, which is important to landscapers. But some of our friends vote blindly for Democrats because they say Republicans don't like Hispanics, that they are racists. I respond by saying, 'Do you think the people you are voting for are doing a good job? And how do you know these Republicans are racists? My customers are mostly whites, and they treat me and my men with respect and are honest with me, they pay me on time. My wife doesn't have to worry about chasing them for an unpaid bill.' My friends don't have much to say to this. But they still vote blindly for Democrats."

In just a ten-minute conversation, this voter described so much of what is wrong with California and why our problems persist, decade after decade. California is the biggest virtue-signaling state in terms of adopting green energy policies, but because carbon emissions are a global issue, California is too small to move the carbon needle. However, California's green energy policies substantially raise the price of gasoline and electricity, disproportionately hurting this man and his family and millions of other middle-income households.

California desperately needs political competition. Latino voters could encourage it.

California gas prices are the highest in the country. Our electricity costs are third-highest in the country and electricity has become very unreliable, reflecting outages, brownouts, and blackouts that are the consequence of an overreliance on renewable energy. This overreliance makes it extremely difficult for electricity-grid operators to manage the transition between renewables and gas-fired electricity when the sun goes down, and which occurs about the same time that household demand for electricity spikes. If this tightrope-walking act is not managed near perfectly, then an outage occurs.

California schools, particularly those in less-affluent cities, underperform substantially because of policies that protect schools and their teachers from competition. These include restrictions on starting new charter schools, and teachers' unions that continue to fight sensible reforms to teacher tenure and to merit-based pay. Fewer than 20 percent of Hispanic students are proficient in mathematics. This outcome could be improved enormously if policy were changed so that families had some options of where they could send their kids to school, rather than having no choice other than a poorly performing neighborhood school; and if schools paid successful math and science teachers a market-based salary. But these policy changes are anathema to the status quo favored by the teachers' unions and the Democratic Party.

California's green energy policies disproportionately hurt millions of middle-income households.

This voter is accurate in saying that many of his friends vote Democrat. Fifty-eight percent of California Hispanic voters are registered as Democrats, and just 16 percent are registered as Republican. But this may be

changing. A poll last spring showed that national support among Hispanic voters for President Biden had plummeted from 55 percent to just 26 percent in the previous year, while 60 percent of Hispanic voters disapproved of Biden.

This poll was conducted at the national level, but it clearly has implications for California, as the policies and outcomes that are most concerning to Americans in this poll include inflation, energy costs, and a deteriorating economy and quality of life. What concerns American voters should also be concerning to California voters, and even more so.

Hispanic voters have been voting for politicians who have exploited the race card but who have not delivered on making the lives of their constituents better. If Hispanics were to vote in their economic best interests, which this poll suggests will begin to happen, they could make a big difference in California politics. Hispanics in other parts of the country, including Texas, are increasingly shifting their support to GOP candidates and away from Democratic candidates.

All families deserve options of where to send their kids to school, rather than being forced into a poorly performing neighborhood school.

California desperately needs political competition. The significant shifts we are seeing among Hispanic voters represent the best opportunity in many years for the California Republican party to make political inroads in a state whose policies and institutions continue to fail California's most vulnerable households. ■

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).

Catching up with COVID

The enormous pandemic learning loss is beyond dispute. Now it's critically important to recruit the best teachers—and to keep them.

By Eric Hanushek

By far the largest economic costs of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States will come from shortfalls in student learning from school closures, inferior hybrid and remote instruction, and the general disruption of normal schooling. The best estimates place learning losses at the equivalent of a year or more of schooling, resulting in 6 to 9 percent lower lifetime earnings for the average student and much more for disadvantaged students. The country as a whole will face a less well-prepared workforce, with enormous cumulative losses to GDP over the coming decades.

Primary and secondary schools are struggling to return as much as possible to where they were in March 2020. But the learning losses will be permanent if we just restore the pre-existing schools. The biggest problem of education during the pandemic was depriving students of the full abilities of their most effective teachers, and recovery from the damage of these years can come only from an expanded role for these teachers.

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CONSISTENT FINDINGS

Over the years, researchers have found extraordinarily consistent results about the relationship between teacher effectiveness and student achievement. A study that I conducted in the public schools of Gary, Indiana, in the early 1990s considered reading and vocabulary tests for a sample of low-income black students in grades two through six. The best teachers provided a year and a half of academic growth for students each school year, while the least effective provided only half a year's learning. A 2014 study of instruction in New York City found a clear link between the effectiveness of teachers in grades three through eight and students' future incomes. Other researchers have reached similar conclusions in Los Angeles, Tennessee, Texas, and elsewhere.

It should be emphasized that teacher effectiveness is not just an issue for inner-city schools or minority students. Researchers have adjusted for student backgrounds and for what each child knows at the beginning of the year, and their findings have held for suburban and rural schools as well.

The United States faces a poorly prepared workforce, with enormous cumulative losses to GDP over the coming decades.

The pandemic undoubtedly made the job of teaching more difficult and stressful. Beyond potential health risks, teachers faced more challenging classrooms. At each grade level, students arrived with widely varying degrees of preparedness, often amounting to a difference of several years in terms of achievement. This made effective instruction more complicated but all the more important.

How, then, to deal with the profound learning losses that occurred during the pandemic? Unfortunately, we do not yet have very good ways to improve the general effectiveness of teachers. A more compelling solution lies in keeping and rewarding the most effective teachers while getting rid of the least effective ones.

This prescription is energetically resisted by the teachers' unions, who argue that such policies promote favoritism, drive out teachers even as we face shortages, and distract from the need to improve salaries and benefits across the board. But reforms focused on teacher effectiveness have been implemented in several places, and the results show a clear path to improving the schools.

In 2009, Michelle Rhee and Adrian Fenty, then the schools chancellor and mayor in Washington, DC, were able to implement a sophisticated, multidimensional system called IMPACT for evaluating the school district's teachers. Based on these assessments, and over the fierce objections of

the teachers' union, the most effective teachers were highly rewarded with annual bonuses and increases in base salaries of up to $25,000, and the least effective were asked to leave.

In the first three years of IMPACT, almost 4 percent of teachers were dismissed for poor performance and an even larger percentage, under threat of dismissal, voluntarily left. At the same time, the retention rates for the most effective teachers increased significantly. Since the introduction of IMPACT more than a decade ago, the test scores of Washington students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress have risen faster and more consistently than those in any other large city district with significant disadvantaged populations.

Another instructive case is the Dallas Independent School District, where former superintendent Mike Miles was able to persuade the school board to implement a new evaluation and pay system for teachers (and principals) starting in 2014. Teachers are rated by a combination of structured supervisor evaluations, student scores on assessments, and student surveys.

A key part of the Dallas system is to send the best teachers where they're most needed. In 2016, teachers at the top three rating levels got bonuses of $12,000, $10,000, and $8,000, respectively, to move to schools with the lowest student performance and stay there. Within three years, these schools moved close to the Dallas average, and student performance in Dallas as a whole has improved relative to other large Texas districts.

Studies find a clear link between the effectiveness of teachers in grades three through eight and students' future incomes.

The Texas legislature has now provided financial support to encourage other districts to evaluate teacher effectiveness more closely and to induce highly rated teachers to work in disadvantaged schools where they are most needed. A number of districts in Florida, Tennessee, and elsewhere have made similar changes, but most of the country's more than thirteen thousand school systems still use rigid salary schedules unrelated to teacher effectiveness and do nothing to distribute teaching talent more equitably.

Such reforms may stand a better chance today than before the pandemic. Educators and public officials understand the urgency of improvement if we are not going to abandon the COVID cohort of students. The past few years also have given parents a closer look at the instruction that their children receive, and many have come away disappointed and determined to push for change.

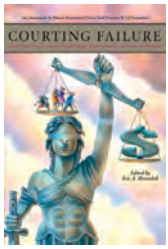
Public schools may be uniquely open to new approaches over the next few years. Many need to work to retain students whose parents, frustrated with closures and poor instruction during the pandemic, are considering other options. And schools have significant extra resources, at least for now, thanks to unexpectedly large emergency federal grants that have been provided by three separate COVID relief acts.

DON'T WAIT

To rescue today's COVID cohort of students, there's no need to wait for further retirements, a new crop of entry-level teachers, or radically changed personnel systems. A focus on more effective teachers could be implemented quickly by providing salary incentives to effective teachers to take on more students. Buying out the contracts of ineffective teachers would move schools in the same direction. In the longer run, providing incentives for effective teachers will attract and retain more of them.

What remains to be seen is whether teachers' unions will continue to resist any effort to assess the work of their members and reward them accordingly. We know from surveys and the experience in Dallas and elsewhere that teachers will respond to financial incentives. What will not work is the solution touted by the unions of simply increasing all teacher salaries, because the incentive to stay then applies to all teachers, regardless of talent. It would also lead to fiscal problems in the future, particularly as temporary federal funding for COVID relief runs out.

The window for addressing the profound learning deficit created by the pandemic will close before long, leaving millions of students at a lifelong disadvantage. There is no other solution except to ensure that as they work to catch up, they are helped by the best teachers we can find. ■



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Private Schools Stay on Course

The coronavirus storm all but sank many public schools. But private schools, by and large, stayed afloat and sailed on.

By Paul E. Peterson

The National Assessment of Educational Progress has reported steep drops in student achievement at the nation's public schools. How will parents respond to the news? Is the downward trend in private-education enrollments about to be reversed?

Before COVID-19, private school enrollments were headed downhill. From 1964 to 2019, the percentage of students attending private schools fell from 14 percent to 9 percent of all school-age children, an all-time low.

Then, in fall 2020, most public schools kept their doors closed. Only 24 percent of public school students attended school in person, as compared to

Key points

» In May 2021, nearly 80 percent of private-schoolers were in class every day. Only half of those at public schools were.

» Private schools reported greater success in curbing the damage to children's social relationships, emotional well-being, and physical fitness.

» Rising costs are likely to limit private school enrollments.

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60 percent of private school children, according to an *Education Next* parental survey (which I helped design). The following May, nearly 80 percent of private-schoolers were in class every day, compared to only half of those at public schools.

Learning online was not good for students. Parents reported learning losses for 64 percent of children at public schools but only 43 percent of children at private ones. Private schools also had greater success in curbing adverse effects on children's social relationships, emotional well-being, and physical fitness.

When they opened, private schools were accused of gambling with their students' health. Tom Carroll, superintendent of the Catholic archdiocese in Boston, recalls he "started getting letters, people saying, 'Well, are you going to go to the funeral of every single child that you killed by opening all the schools?' " Kathleen Porter-Magee, head of a Catholic school network in New York, remembers, "it was a scary time . . . the fear was palpable."

A worry: what many middle- and working-class families could once afford is now available to them only at considerable sacrifice.

When COVID spread at school proved minimal and mild, the private school bet paid off. "From the point [when schools announced closures] to roughly the middle of October, the phones kept ringing," Carroll recalls. "So we gained about 4,400 students." Our poll indicates a 2 percent gain in private school share between 2019 and 2022. If the survey is on the mark, it means a shift of one million students from the public to the private sector.

Despite these short-term gains, ever-rising costs still impede further growth. In 1979, median school tuition was $554. Since that time prices have escalated at twice the rate of the consumer price index. Today, the average tuition at private schools is more than $12,000 annually. What many middle- and working-class families could once afford is now available to them only at considerable sacrifice.

Tuition hikes are likely to continue indefinitely. Education is a labor-intensive industry. It takes as much time today for a teacher to instruct a class of twenty as it did a century ago. For as long as that continues, schools must charge higher tuitions to pay salaries that keep pace with rising wages in the rest of the economy.

Private educators must also worry about competition from charter schools. Like private schools, most charters claim to offer safe,

well-disciplined classrooms. But, unlike private schools, charters are tuition-free. “In New York we have to bring our A game, because we’re competing for students against the most well-known and top-performing charter networks in the country,” says Porter-Magee.

Homeschooling is emerging as another challenge. The percentage choosing that option has doubled from 3 percent to 6 percent since the pandemic. Homeschooling is also morphing into hybrid forms, such as neighborhood pods, home-private combinations, and micro-schools where parents teach.

Parents reported learning losses for 64 percent of children at public schools but only 43 percent of children at private ones.

The 1,200 high-prestige schools that belong to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) have the fewest worries. Even though tuition for the approximately 1 percent of the school-age population attending these schools averages a hefty $26,866 a year, they will survive if “1 percenters” continue to do well.

Catholic-school leaders are more concerned. According to Carolyn MacGregor, professor at University of Waterloo, Catholic schools educated more than 75 percent of schoolchildren in private education at their peak in the mid-1960s. But the Catholic share of the private sector dropped to around 50 percent by 1993, and today it is less than 35 percent—an extraordinary loss in market share.

Catholic schools have a fine academic track record. Most studies of college enrollment rates show that Catholic schools typically outperform nearby public schools. Positive impacts of a Catholic education are especially large for African-Americans.

But as the supply of teaching nuns waned, Catholic education costs have skyrocketed. Also, dioceses were forced to pay out more than $3 billion in lawsuit settlements to victims of clergy abuse. Nor did it help when increasingly prosperous Catholic immigrants abandoned their cramped religious schools in central cities for spacious public schools and playgrounds in the suburbs.

Non-Catholic Christian schools are now the fastest-growing segment of the private sector. White Southerners rushed to these institutions when public schools desegregated in the 1960s. Today, school leaders say they welcome African-American students, who constitute 11 percent of their enrollments. According to Jeff Keaton, a leader of the Christian-school movement in

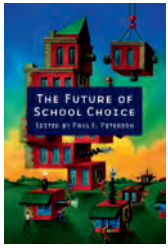
Virginia, the country is entering a "second Great Awakening in Christian education."

In Virginia, applications spiked when controversies over critical race theory, "The 1619 Project," and school gender policy filled the airwaves during the state's 2021 gubernatorial campaign.

Is a Great Awakening for private schools at hand? Perhaps. "Millions of American parents . . . are fed up with being considered nuisances and dismissed by the public school establishment," says Betsy DeVos, former US secretary of education. Since the pandemic, more than twenty red and purple states have enacted or expanded school-choice laws of direct benefit to private schools.

One million students shifted from the public to the private sector.

But the new laws are limited in scope. Even if all the new options were fully utilized, private school enrollments would increase by only 3 percent, leaving the share of students in the private sector below its 1964 level. Unless governments offer larger subsidies to every family that wishes to have a child attend private school, major expansion of the private sector is unlikely.



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"Civics" Is Too Small an Idea

Schools need to teach children not just the mere mechanics of government but the art of citizenship.

By Chester E. Finn Jr.

In the realm of elementary and secondary education, we so often focus on one or two trees instead of the forest. We argue about the best way to teach reading, about which books belong in the school library, about whether everyone should take "college prep" courses, about how to teach race or evolution or climate change or even algebra. We fret about gifted kids and kids with disabilities, about teachers' unions and school bus routes, about cafeteria food and parent engagement, about test scores and discipline codes.

Yes, there are lots of trees. But why is there a forest to begin with? It's to develop tomorrow's American citizens and prepare our young people for citizenship. Yet that profound and fundamental mission is so easy to forget, both because it's so basic and because most

Key points

» How and what to teach in civics, history, and social studies are questions worth taking seriously.

» People have more power and agency in our democracy when they learn how it works.

» Schools also teach by example, not just by curriculum.

Chester E. Finn Jr. *is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in the Hoover Education Success Initiative. He is Distinguished Senior Fellow and President Emeritus of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.*

of the time it's not newsworthy like those hot-button issues mentioned above. Except, of course, when it gets tangled up in them.

We also sometimes err by thinking that the way schools prepare students for citizenship is simply by teaching them "civics."

How and what to teach in civics (and history and—more broadly—social studies) is its own issue and one worth taking seriously. A handful of states—both red and blue—are doing so today, at least setting exemplary expectations for what their students should learn during the K–12 years. But getting this part of the curriculum right is just part of what goes into preparing citizens.

The rest of the curriculum matters, too. Although every American has a right and responsibility to participate in our democracy even if illiterate and innumerate, people will have more power and agency if they can read newspaper articles, possess the background to understand what they're seeing on television and their screens, make sense of data graphs, have some grounding in science, and more.

Yet the formal curriculum itself—the whole curriculum—is just part of what schools need to get right if they're to do as much as they can to form citizens. At least as important are the values, habits, principles, convictions, and patterns of behavior that kids acquire in school. Those don't just come from classroom instruction. They also come from extracurricular activities, from playground time and basketball games, from how the principal handles misbehavior (and rewards good behavior), from the examples that teachers set through their own personal conduct, from whether the school climate is one of integrity and mutual respect or corner-cutting and suspicion. Are students' rights and responsibilities taken seriously? Are parents taken seriously? I don't go quite as far as the late Theodore Sizer—the Harvard education dean who decades ago handed me two graduate degrees—whose "Coalition of Essential Schools" wanted every participating school to "model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school." But it's clear to me that how schools function as organizations and the lessons in citizenship that they convey by example and precept are at least as consequential as what happens in civics class.

This is also what distinguishes great education from skills training and what differentiates the schools of a democracy from those of totalitarian regimes. We're not just making kids learn things and obey orders. We're turning them into tomorrow's voters, neighbors, public servants, and community leaders.

If our schools do this well, they'll have fulfilled their most vital responsibility. We know, of course, that even at their best they can't do it all, that the citizens kids grow up to be are also shaped by family, community, news and

entertainment media, and myriad institutions of civil society. But the schools' part is indispensable, both in the formal curricular sense and in the types of communities that they model.

That's all getting harder, to be sure, as today's political divisions, racial tensions, and "culture wars" enter more forcefully into school governance, curricula, and operations. Autonomous schools of choice, including private and (most) charter schools, find it somewhat easier to navigate these turbulent waters because they're not pummeled quite so hard by external pressures and politics (Sizer and his colleagues understood this). Yet district-operated schools, whether on purpose or incidentally, also convey values, habits, and precepts to their pupils. Those kids are far likelier to acquire key elements of good citizenship when their schools are intentional and consistent about what they're conveying.

The values, habits, principles, convictions, and patterns of behavior kids need don't just come from classroom instruction.

This naturally varies by community—and if it varies too much, it can widen rather than narrow the country's divisions. I view the usual version of "local control of the schools" as a mixed blessing, but on the positive side, this form of governance adds flexibility and a degree of diversity to the enterprise such that the precepts and practices embodied in schools—including the district-operated kind—can to some extent reflect the values and priorities of the communities they serve.

Yes, it's a balancing act. We recognize that some of the values and priorities conveyed by the schools of Portland, Oregon, say, or Brookline, Massachusetts, won't be the same as what kids see and learn in Amarillo, Texas, or Knoxville, Tennessee. But all four communities are building Americans in their schools, and it's important all four—and all the others—convey what it means to be an American and what it means to be an honest, truthful, tolerant, and engaged citizen.

At the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, we've delved into this in several ways. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and subsequently, we asked thinkers and leaders across the political spectrum to write about America and citizenship in ways that would help educators address these core topics. Over the years, we have evaluated states' academic standards for teaching US history and, more recently, civics, thereby conveying our judgment as to how well individual states are (or aren't) setting their K–12 expectations, as well as our criteria for what those expectations should contain.

We've also addressed social and emotional learning and school discipline, two realms that intersect with the signals schools send and the examples they set for up-and-coming citizens.

It would be a fine thing if the information available to students and parents (and taxpayers and policy makers) about schools included their effectiveness on the citizen-prep front. It would also be great if states' school-accountability systems incorporated this along with academics. Elements can be gleaned from civics tests, school-climate surveys, and the incidence (and handling) of discipline challenges.

Schools must convey what it means to be an American and what it means to be an honest, truthful, tolerant, and engaged citizen.

Bits may also be gathered from the media and certainly from the parent grapevine. Longitudinal studies—such as the propensity of their graduates to vote—can supply further clues. Yet much that we would like to know about schools' impacts in this realm would require multi-year information about the life trajectories of those who once attended them. Even if we had such information, we'd need to remember that what young people take from school is only part of what molds the adults they become.

Yet to end where I began, the preparation of those young people for citizenship is the ultimate reason we send them to school in the first place. It's not just to teach them the three R's, important as that is, or to expose them to chemistry or poetry or computer programming. We educate kids in many ways and for many reasons. But none matters more in the long run than their readiness to participate in sustaining the vitality and integrity of our democratic republic.

*Available from the Hoover Institution Press is **What Lies Ahead for America's Children and Their Schools,** edited by Chester E. Finn Jr. and Richard Sousa. To order, call (800) 888-4741 or visit www.hooverpress.org.*

Starving the Grid

Why the lights are still blinking off in the Golden State.

By Lee E. Ohanian

Late last summer, during the hottest time of the year in California, the state's electricity grid was again coming up short. A forecast suggested that as many as two million households were vulnerable to power outages over the Labor Day weekend. "It's pretty clear Mother Nature has outrun us," Governor Gavin Newsom said. He then issued an executive order, calling for increased power and energy conservation, that highlighted both how unreliable the electricity supply becomes when renewable sources are a bigger part of the equation and what little can be done to increase that supply without heavier reliance on nonrenewable sources.

Most of the items in Newsom's order, such as docked ships using their generators for power rather than using electricity from the California grid, don't come close to making a difference. The ones that matter are those that suspend air quality rules and other regulations to allow more natural gas–fired electricity to be produced. Ironically, California has aggressively closed natural gas power plants over time as it has pursued renewables at virtually any cost. But renewable energy generates only 20 percent of national energy production, because there currently is no feasible technology for storing this power on a broad scale.

California has doubled down on renewables in its quest to be the leader in carbon emissions reductions, as it produces one-third of its electricity from

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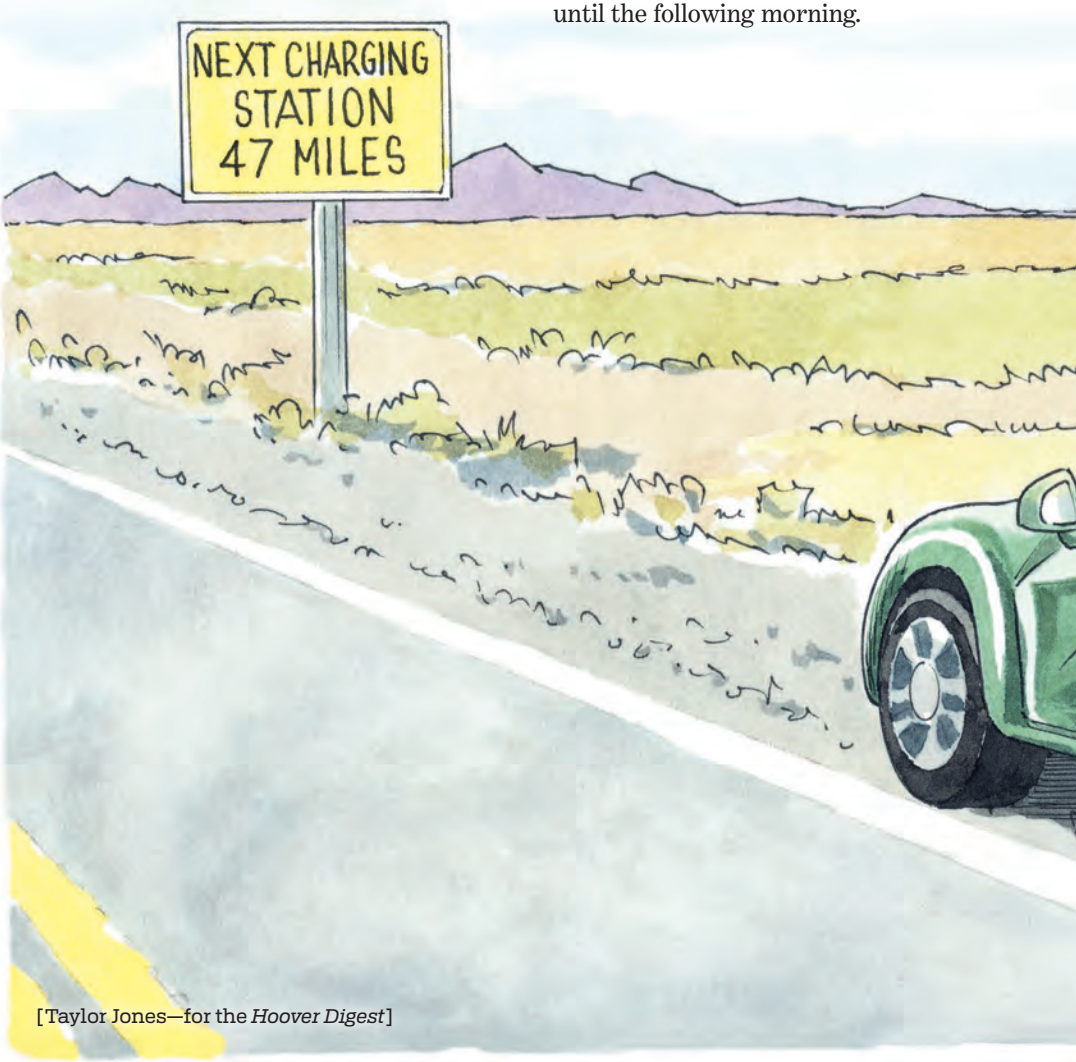
renewables. But this comes at a huge cost to consumers, particularly in the late afternoon and evening, when the sun sets and when household demand for electricity spikes. During this period, system operators must walk a tightrope in transitioning the system from renewables to natural gas. One false step, and voilà, blackouts or brownouts occur. Operators face the opposite problem around noon, when so much solar power is produced in California that it risks damaging the grid.

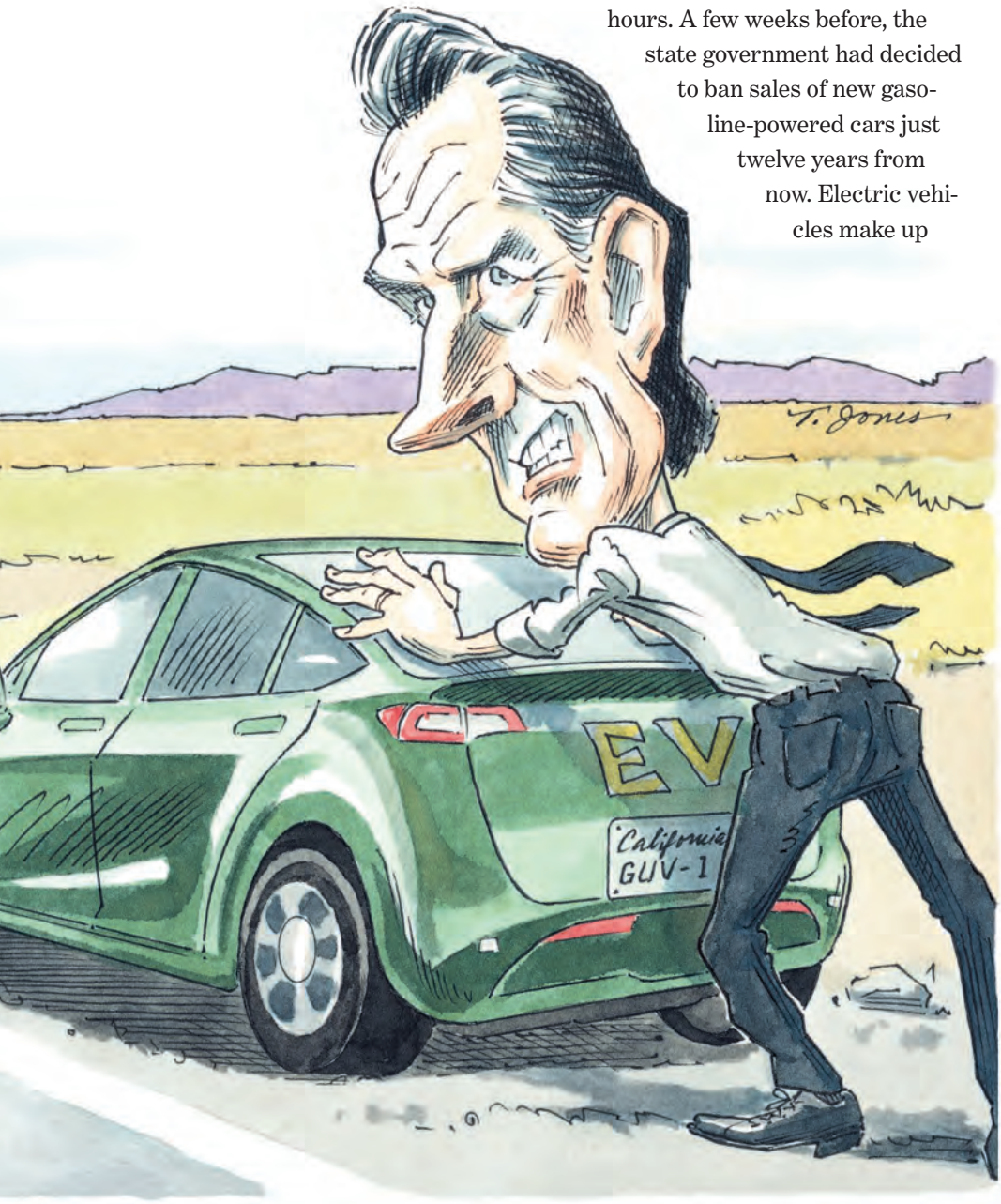
What do we do about this? We pay other states to take our excess solar production off our hands. We can't even give it away. Way too much renewable energy at noon, and nothing from the late afternoon until the following morning.



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

Not exactly a great model for efficiency or reliability. But this is what California politicians have chosen.

During the September heat wave, the state electricity system operators recommended that consumers not charge their electric vehicles at peak demand hours. A few weeks before, the state government had decided to ban sales of new gasoline-powered cars just twelve years from now. Electric vehicles make up



only about 1 percent of the cars in California today. How is California going to be able to cope with electricity demands when it bans gasoline-powered cars? There will be technical advances and energy innovations before D-Day comes for gasoline-powered vehicles, but the history of renewables gives little hope that this transition will occur without enormous costs.

The United States and many other countries have tried desperately to replace fossil fuels with renewables since the OPEC energy disruptions of the early to mid-1970s. But despite nearly fifty years of effort, hundreds of billions of dollars spent in subsidies, and more than a quarter-million people working in the solar industry, we remain critically tied to nonrenewables to survive. We are nowhere close to having a renewable energy solution, no matter how much California policy makers pretend we are.

Eliminating all gas-powered cars in California would reduce global greenhouse emissions by about 0.2 percent. That's not even a drop in the bucket.

The rush to renewables in the 1970s was to insure against further oil disruptions from OPEC. Today, the rush to renewables is to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, particularly carbon dioxide and methane. But irrespective of where you come down on the contribution of greenhouse gases to changing climate patterns, these gases are a global phenomenon. California is a mere drop in the bucket, accounting for less than 1 percent of global carbon emissions. Cars account for about 25 percent of California carbon emissions, which means that eliminating gasoline-powered cars would reduce global emissions by about 0.2 percent. This doesn't even qualify as background noise.

We are nowhere close to having a renewable energy solution, no matter how much California policy makers pretend we are.

These efforts to reduce carbon emissions have been expensive. Among states, California has the third-highest electricity cost per kilowatt-hour produced, with a cost well over twice that of the most efficient states.

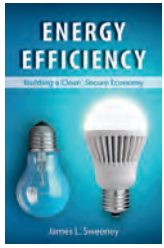
If California can't move the greenhouse-gas emissions needle, then why is it doing all this? Wealthy, politically important donors love the idea of reducing emissions, no matter the cost. For some, there is a feel-good aspect

to driving an electric vehicle and living in an overinsulated house with solar panels. Not to mention all the tax credits they receive.

California's latest climate regulations—which range from requiring solar panels and over-the-top efficient appliances on all new homes to banning natural gas stoves in a growing number of communities—drive up housing costs even further beyond the means of most of the state's residents. But these costs are irrelevant to those political benefactors who can impose their preferences on others and receive subsidies at the same time. In fact, all those subsidies add up, so that the wealthy can easily pay for generators for their homes in case the power does go out—generators, it should be noted, that run on gasoline, diesel, or natural gas, not renewables.

The quid pro quo between politicians and their donors is as old as government. But never has this relationship been hidden so remarkably well as it is today in the guise of "fighting climate change." And never have those without much of a political voice mattered so little. ■

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).



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Shelter Stalemate

Hoover fellow Josh Rauh's study of California's stubborn homelessness crisis finds that throwing money at it didn't make it go away. What's needed now? A new kind of spending—targeted, transparent spending.

By Jonathan Movroydis

Hoover senior fellow Josh Rauh and his coauthor, Jillian Ludwig, have released a new report on California's vexing challenge of homelessness. The research emerged with the help of Stanford MBA students who were enrolled in Rauh's policy-lab course at Stanford University during the 2022 spring quarter. The policy lab was launched in 2021, when Hoover director Condoleezza Rice asked Rauh to create a student component for Hoover's report to the Alabama Innovation Commission that recommended ways to foster scientific and technological innovation in that state.

Last year, Rauh and his team of researchers turned in a new direction: toward the crisis of homelessness in California, where, despite a 43 percent increase in construction of permanent supportive housing since 2016, the rate of unsheltered homelessness had risen 45 percent.

Rauh's team identified some of the roots of homelessness and offered guidance to lawmakers in Sacramento on how to enact fiscally responsible and

***Josh Rauh** is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and participates in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project. He is also the Ormond Family Professor of Finance at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. **Jonathan Movroydis** is the senior content writer for the Hoover Institution.*

transparent policies, targeted so as to help people find permanent housing and build meaningful lives.

Jonathan Movroydis: How did you come to address the crisis of homelessness in California?

Josh Rauh: After our rewarding work with the Alabama Innovation Commission, I wanted to keep the policy lab going and needed to come up with a topic for the 2022 class. Understandably, a great many policy makers in Sacramento have been concerned about the homelessness problem in the state. We had the great fortune to be able to team up with Assemblymember Robert Rivas, who represents Salinas, about seventy-five miles south of the Stanford campus. Over the spring quarter, I divided students into teams with specific work streams, and at the end of the class, we reported our findings to Rivas and other officials in the legislature.

> ***" 'Housing first' does not necessarily address the root causes of why someone became homeless."***

The nature of the policy lab is that my team and I basically do a crash course on a brand-new topic. I am not an expert in homelessness. I also was not an expert in economic development in Alabama. However, I believe that we can still make a difference by applying our knowledge about data-driven analysis to policy challenges.

I believe that despite not entering this topic as experts, we can look at data from a fresh and unbiased perspective and understand how it may help us develop policy prescriptions. This subject matter was certainly a steep curve and deep dive for us.

Movroydis: Why do you call the homelessness issue in California complex?

Rauh: What we discovered is that when many people speak about homelessness, they anchor it in a specific narrative that says the problem can be solved by providing more housing. This "housing first" policy has not worked. Our report demonstrates that over the past decade, the number of permanent supportive housing units increased by 43 percent since 2016, while unsheltered homelessness rose by 45 percent in the same period. As we also note in the report, taken together, the state's homelessness programs have cost taxpayers $13 billion over the past three fiscal years.

We discovered that because the housing-first approach was required by law, local agencies could not employ innovative solutions. Those

WHAT WORKS: A report co-written by Hoover senior fellow Josh Rauh offers guidance to lawmakers in Sacramento about how to deal with California's increase in homelessness. [Patrick Beaudouin—Hoover Institution]

organizations that attempted to circumvent this one-dimensional policy orientation were denied state funding for lack of compliance.

The main challenge is that housing first does not necessarily address the root causes of why someone became homeless, including factors such as mental illness and drug addiction. The approach has been viewed as successful because research shows that after one or two years, people are still living in units the state offered them to live in, free of charge. We discovered, however, that after five years, once rent subsidies have run their course, many people move out to avoid eviction and end up back on the streets. Moreover, it is not financially feasible to provide free housing on a permanent basis.

Movroydis: Why hasn't the state been able to solve homelessness?

Rauh: There is a mix of factors that cannot entirely be found in existing data. We need more information. The dearth of data is related to one of the major recommendations of our report, which is that we must have a better data collection effort around one, where that $13 billion has been allocated, and two, how government spending and programs have impacted outcomes for people

who are homeless. It would be as though you were going to the hospital for a medical condition and the doctor could not review your medical history.

Movroydis: You favor a contingency management approach [a type of behavioral therapy] as opposed to a housing-first approach. How would contingency management work?

Rauh: One point I should make is that the California legislature voted by an overwhelming bipartisan majority to allow counties that administer Medi-Cal to include contingency management (CM) services in the mix of treatments that they offer. The adoption of this policy was based on very sound research. The US Department of Veterans Affairs is the primary government agency that provides CM services, and it has been very successful in addressing opiate dependency and other substance-abuse challenges.

The second point is that there are different measures of what percentage of people who are homeless are experiencing mental, substance-abuse, or physical illnesses. Some studies show that as many as 70 percent of the people experiencing homelessness are facing some of those challenges. While CM frameworks are not going to solve all mental health challenges by any stretch, the data show that they have had a large share of success in offering individuals struggling with substance abuse well-designed financial incentives to stay clean, and ultimately helping them secure longer-term housing stability. The legislature was right in passing state funding for CM programs. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed the bill and instead opted for a lengthy and unnecessary pilot program. Still, we are hopeful that a more robust program will be enacted in the future.

"If a person lost their job or could no longer afford rent in a costly city such as San Francisco, they would most likely not pitch a tent and camp out on the street."

Movroydis: Are any community-based approaches to homelessness proving to be successful?

Rauh: One person we spoke to is a gentleman named Del Seymour, who used to be homeless in San Francisco. He now runs a very successful charitable organization in the Tenderloin district dedicated to addressing homelessness in the city. It's called Code Tenderloin. This organization and a number of others apply a holistic approach. Code Tenderloin helps individuals with substance-abuse issues bring them under control. It also supports job

training, so that homeless people can live productive and meaningful lives and hopefully not turn back to vagrancy and, for some, drugs. Organizations such as Code Tenderloin do amazing work. This is one of the very important reasons, again, why it is necessary to collect data on what programs and policies are successful.

Movroydis: Does the scarcity of housing in California contribute at all to homelessness?

Rauh: If a person lost their job or could no longer afford rent in a costly city such as San Francisco, they would most likely not pitch a tent and camp out on the street. They would probably move to another city where housing was more affordable. But some people don't. And I would say that if they don't, then the question is why. Oftentimes the reason is that these people experience mental health or substance-abuse issues.

There is certainly an interaction between these two problems. It's easier to scrape money together for rent if it is $300 a month than if it is $3,000 a month. Even if you are suffering from physical ailments, mental health challenges, or substance-abuse issues, you are less likely to end up homeless when rent is cheaper. There is little question that the barriers to building new housing in California are very high. The high price of housing persists despite some very good efforts by the legislature in 2021—in Senate Bills 9 and 10—to try to speed up authorizations of new housing construction and limit the extent to which local governments can restrict new housing. The high cost of housing in California just reflects the fact that there is a lot of demand chasing relatively little supply.

"When many people speak about homelessness, they anchor it in a specific narrative."

Movroydis: It has been argued that recent ballot measures that reduce certain drug-related crimes from a felony to a misdemeanor [Proposition 47] and grant early release for nonviolent offenders [Proposition 57] have degraded the ability of law enforcement and the courts to help people find the drug treatment they need, and ultimately for society to curb homelessness. How do you see this?

Rauh: We certainly don't believe in criminalizing homelessness. It's a good thing that there has been a decrease in the prison population. But we also need to make sure that the people who are not going to jail are getting

treatment, if one of the causes of their criminality is the need to finance a drug habit. The utilization of drug courts, and the ability to bring people into that system, would be a huge part of any increased enforcement of laws.

Movroydis: What else have you learned about homelessness?

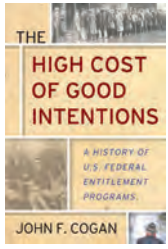
Rauh: I would reiterate that funding and spending transparency is so lacking in this area. The Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council, which is now called the California Interagency Council on Homelessness, was formed to provide oversight and coordinate homeless services systems, but it has not been effective.

"It's easier to scrape money together for rent if it is $300 a month than if it is $3,000 a month."

Some bills have mandated increased data collection, but more needs to be done. We need to be able to know where every dollar is going and clearly understand outcomes of individual people who are experiencing homelessness when they interact with the state system. It would just be senseless to have $13 billion spent in every cycle without knowing whether it's solving the problem or just making it worse.

There are organizations that are being supported by state funding that are helping. We need to direct money to help build on those successes. ■

Special to the* Hoover Digest. *This interview was edited for length and clarity.



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Why the "Population Bomb" Fizzled

Today's demographic danger is different. The entire modern world, including China and the United States, is seeing birthrates fall below the replacement level. Scholar Nicholas Eberstadt on an ominous development.

By Peter Robinson

Peter Robinson, **Uncommon Knowledge:** Throughout almost all our history, the population of the United States of America has grown and grown and grown, from 2.5 million people in 1776 to 330 million people today. But what if that growth stops? What if our population shrinks, what then? One man has

Key points

» The human "replacement level" in most countries is declining, in some cases by large amounts.

» Shrinking numbers of young workers pose an economic problem for aging societies.

» Immigrants to the United States score higher on assimilation than in many other countries.

» Incentives offer only temporary increases in birthrates. They do little to change ideas about family size.

Nicholas Eberstadt *holds the Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute. His latest book is* ***Men Without Work: America's Invisible Crisis*** *(Templeton Press, 2016).* ***Peter Robinson*** *is the editor of the* ***Hoover Digest,*** *the host of* ***Uncommon Knowledge,*** *and the Murdoch Distinguished Policy Fellow at the Hoover Institution.*

devoted himself to studying that very question: Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt. The title of a long essay he has just published in *National Review* is "Can America Cope with Demographic Decline?" Nick, thank you for joining me.

Nicholas Eberstadt: Thank you for inviting me, Peter.

Robinson: You wrote that since the crash of 2008 and the Great Recession, American birth trends "have taken a fateful turn, veering well below the replacement level." What makes us suppose this is ominous?

Eberstadt: The replacement level—or a net reproduction ratio of one—means that there's one baby girl born for every childbearing woman who's going to make it up to childbearing age herself. What this means is that a society is on a long-term trajectory for population stability without compensating immigration to keep things at stability or above. For almost thirty years before the crash of 2008, the United States was the lone large rich society that was at replacement or slightly above the replacement level, roughly speaking 2.1 births per woman. We have slumped steadily since 2008. And of course, the COVID shock didn't get everybody into the bedrooms, having babies. It actually had the opposite effect. The United States is now maybe on track to be 20 percent below the replacement level, if current trends continue—on track, without compensating immigration, to shrink 20 percent for each succeeding generation.

Robinson: And this is entirely new in our history.

Eberstadt: We had a blip in the 1970s, which some of us are old enough to remember, when snapshot calculations of replacement rates had us below replacement for a while. What was really going on in those days was that there's a big shift in timing of kids.

Women were deciding to have about the same number of babies, they just decided to have them later. What's going on now does not look like a shift in timing; it looks like there may be a shift in the total number of desired children that young people wish to have.

Robinson: The next question, of course, is, well, what does it matter? The European Union is ahead of us, if that's the way to put it. Russia's in a worse case. China, from the point of view of population, is in worse circumstances still, in spite of having eliminated the one-child policy. It seems to happen all over. Why does that matter to our health, our buoyancy, our economic growth?

Eberstadt: We can look at what we might call the productivity of human capital, the quality of human resources.

ON AGING WELL: Nicholas Eberstadt points out that late in the past century, "the population exploded not because we were breeding like rabbits but because we stopped dying like flies. It was a health explosion." Today's world, he says, "is bursting with health and bursting with innovation and technological potentialities." [American Enterprise Institute]

I was always a skeptic of the population scare back in the Seventies and even into the Eighties, the idea that we were going to end up denuding the world, like locusts. But the population exploded not because we were breeding like rabbits but because we stopped dying like flies. It was a health explosion. And you've got a lot of potential there. I would caution against people who are alarmist about population decline in a world that is bursting with health and bursting with innovation and technological potentialities. We have to be pretty mindful about what you do, but if so, an aging and shrinking society can not only maintain its prosperity but improve it.

Everybody agrees that fewer deaths is better than more deaths and longer lives and better health are better than the opposite. But the United States has been moving in a very troubling direction for the past decade. We've basically flatlined in improvements in life expectancy, even before COVID. With COVID of course, we had a severe, almost catastrophic setback in health levels. And apart from COVID itself, as you know, we've had this problem of deaths of despair in the United States—suicide and drug poisonings and cirrhosis and all the rest—which looks a little bit too much like Russia for comfort. So the increase in deaths that we have seen over the past decade and more should be a flashing red warning sign for us.

It appears that our net immigration has tanked as well. We're already seeing a spike in unfilled job openings since COVID. I happen to be of the variety that thinks that on the whole immigrants have made terrific Americans and that we've benefited tremendously from the international talent that has come to our country. That if we want to fix the immigrant welfare problem, we fix the welfare state and we have rule of law and control our own borders. But that said, immigration has tanked.

A DEFICIT OF DYNAMISM

Robinson: In your article, you write, "In theory, it should be perfectly possible for a modern society not only to maintain prosperity but to increase it steadily in the face of pervasive population aging and demographic stagnation or depopulation." This would involve innovation, it would involve being smart about education, developing human capital . . . you list the things. "Yet dynamism in our economy and society is on the wane in some significant and easily verifiable respects," you write. "America's vitalizing churn is heading down." What do you mean about "vitalizing churn"?

Eberstadt: One way of looking at it is new business creation, new startups in relation to the existing number of enterprises or businesses. As best we can

measure this, it's been going steadily south since we started to collect these numbers in the late Seventies, early Eighties.

Robinson: Despite the rise of Silicon Valley.

Eberstadt: Despite Silicon Valley, despite new McDonald's everywhere, despite everything that we see. Another obvious measure of mobility is whether people get up and move the way Americans used to. Leaving aside COVID, because that was a lockdown time, from the mid-Eighties until the day before the Wuhan virus came to the United States, America's proportion of population moving in any given year, even to an apartment next door in the same building, has dropped by about half. Now there is a lot of remote work, you can do stuff at home that you never could do before. But I'm not sure that that gets us over this particular hump that we just described.

"The COVID shock didn't get everybody into the bedrooms, having babies. It actually had the opposite effect."

Robinson: You write that "between the end of the Civil War and the late 1970s, the United States was almost always the global leader in educational attainment." But "adult educational attainment has been advancing at scarcely a third of that historical pace, even as other countries manage to surpass us." What happened?

Eberstadt: We still haven't got a good answer to this. It's one of the big problems in America that somehow are managing to hide in plain sight. This problem has been in our face for almost forty years. I do not have the answer for why it has happened, but I can tell you where it is happening. The epicenters are native-born American Anglo men. There's a big overlap with the deaths-of-despair problem. There's a general correspondence between improved educational attainment and improved productivity.

Robinson: Here's a related item, I think. "In an aging society making the most of existing manpower is of the essence," you write, but America is also failing at this task. The current prime-male work rate "is 2.5 points lower than it was in 1940."

Eberstadt: We have Depression-level employment rates for prime-age men in the United States.

Robinson: You write that "budget discipline and social-policy reform are necessary for maintaining prosperity in an aging society, but America appears to have no appetite for either of them. Pay-as-you-go arrangements for old-age pensions and health care may be an ingenious contrivance for a society where working-age taxpayers greatly outnumber elderly beneficiaries, but the arithmetic becomes suddenly and harshly unforgiving if the ratio of funders to recipients plummets." You're talking about Social Security, which accounts for roughly a quarter of the federal budget; medical spending, Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and ObamaCare, another 25 percent.

Eberstadt: We've got a kind of Ponzi scheme problem on our hands. And as you indicated, as long as you've got a growing base to the pyramid in relation to the recipient peak, you can be pretty generous. When things flip around, you got whipsawed really fast. We have gotten into the very dangerous habit of borrowing to pay for current consumption. Today's consumption for seniors like myself is being financed by the unborn, and that's not a good business model.

IMMIGRATION AND AFTER

Robinson: On immigration, you say that "only one policy can hope to affect long-term consequences in population size, and that policy is immigration." On the whole, this is a straightforward, simple declaratory sentence, but it's not straightforward. You go on to say that the Biden administration's "witless posture on immigration, its maddening insouciance about our southern border and stubborn lack of concern about illegal immigrants, seems almost designed to provoke anti-immigration outrage." Your larger point is that assimilation works well, so some kind of sensible immigration policy, where we control our borders but let people in according to sensible criteria and then don't demonize them, ought to command bipartisan support. In fact, it's as maddening an issue as we have in American politics. But let's start with assimilation.

"In the service industries, where really the only skills you need are showing up on time every day, drug free, we've had two years of this and it has not been drawing people back off the couch."

Eberstadt: Take a look at what happens with the children of newcomers in the United States. Overwhelmingly, they end up as loyal and productive Americans, as great citizens. They learn English; they get an education. They work hard and they believe, maybe more than native-born Americans, in the American dream. Risking all of your human capital in the passage to the United States takes a certain amount of guts. Our record of assimilation is very good by international comparison. There are other countries that also look pretty good—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel—but for a large country, there's no country that's got an assimilation record as good as ours.

"You're talking about all the things that bring meaning to humanity, and fears to humanity."

Robinson: All right, but there may be a tickle of a worry here. You've just said native-born American males, especially native-born white American males, are underperforming.

Eberstadt: Yes.

Robinson: Deaths of despair are up. Workforce participation is down. "We have here a sorry group of people, so let in the immigrants to do the jobs these guys should be doing."

Eberstadt: I took Economics 1, admittedly back in the Stone Age, but I learned that if you have more of a supply of something, you make it less expensive. We have a big supply of lower-skilled labor from abroad in the United States. That economics class would tell me that that would have a depressing impact on wage levels for less-skilled Americans. And I think that is true. However, the employment patterns for less-skilled American men don't correspond to what we would expect to result from that natural experiment. The differences in attachment to the workforce seem to have to do a lot with things like family structure, attachment to various social welfare programs, and one's criminal record. It isn't necessarily a jobs/wage question.

And we've just run an almost perfect natural experiment in the COVID time: we had a drop-off of about a million immigrants who would have been in the labor force, and what happened? We had an increase in unfilled jobs by about four million. Employers are begging for workers. And this isn't all for coders, it's in the service industries, in restaurants, hotels, and other things where really the only skills you need are showing up on time every day, drug free. We've had two years of this, and it has not been drawing people back off the couch.

HOW ABOUT "BABY BRIBES"?

Robinson: Why don't we just get the birthrate right back up? Encourage higher birthrates through various forms of subsidies, tax relief, and so forth. Attempts to subsidize births in one way or another are taking place in Singapore, France, Hungary, and I think Sweden as well.

Eberstadt: Baby-bonus programs have got a lot of proponents in Europe and some here in the United States. My reading is that they're very expensive for temporary blips in fertility increase, which lead to subsequent slumps. If some parents are on the fence about a second or a third child, let's say, and all of a sudden there's a baby bribe that's offered to them, they may decide to have the child now instead of three or four years later. So you get what the Swedish demographers call the Swedish roller coaster: you put in a new subsidy for kids, the birthrate goes up, and then it goes back down further to below where it was when you first put the subsidy in. You haven't changed people's mentality, their desires about family size.

Robinson: You write that "the challenge may ultimately prove to be civilizational in nature." I think back to how we had low birthrates during the Depression because everybody was poor, and people were discouraged and didn't want to bring children into that world. But this is an achievement of American history: that we struggle through the Depression and we win the Second World War and then we achieve enough stability and prosperity to permit people to do what they most want to do, and that is to have children. Don't those of us who've had children feel that having children was the best thing we've ever done in our lives? Why don't we have more of them as we become a richer society?

"It appears that our net immigration has tanked as well."

Eberstadt: Demographers cannot actually put the parameters into the black box. Economics is fine so far as it goes, but what you really need instead of a Nobel laureate in economics is a Nobel laureate in literature, because you're talking about *zeitgeist;* you're talking about the human heart. You're talking about all the things that bring meaning to humanity, and fears to humanity. As parents, we know how wonderful children are and what a blessing it is to be a parent. But one thing that I will say about children is for all of their boundless benefits, they're not convenient. And we have moved increasingly into a world—and this is just one take on a much more complicated

set of questions that you've asked—in which convenience is prized and in which personal autonomy is cherished. And in which constraints on personal autonomy are increasingly viewed as onerous.

People who were thinking about having children today do not live in Reagan's America. They live in a place that's got this new misery shaping it so much.

The devilish difficulty, I think, is this swamp of attitudes and values that are associated with sub-replacement fertility in the richest and most productive societies that humanity has ever yet created or seen. In Europe and in the United States, in affluent societies, we have seen this revolution over the past several generations that has led to the triumph of solipsism and the downgrading of the very sorts of obligations that are necessary to nurture a rising generation and to continue a society. We can outsource, we can increase immigration from abroad to take care of the head-count question. But what we can't do without a sort of moral transformation is get back to a place where people are confident and brave enough to maintain a natural rate of replacement for society.

"We've got people in our country who of course can do this again."

What strikes me so strongly about young people I meet today is just how afraid they are. They're afraid the planet's doomed. They're afraid about committing to a job, much less committing to a relationship, much less committing to having kids. They're afraid of everything.

Robinson: The world is a dangerous place, and for all its faults and all our crudeness and stupidities and the way we've conducted our foreign policy over the past seventy-five years, the world is a freer and a safer place because of Americans willing to sacrifice. Would a 1.5-child America be willing to make the sacrifices?

Eberstadt: There's no scientific reason that a sub-replacement population shouldn't be able to step up to patriotism or see the challenges in the world and deal with them.

RENEWAL

Robinson: If we're stuck with this America of creeping despair and a continuing loss in its relative importance in the rest of the world, what do you say to your kids about how to lead a good life in different circumstances from the ones in which you yourself grew up?

Eberstadt: There's no reason that you can't be micro-optimistic even if you see some pretty pessimistic things going on. And if you believe you are in charge of your own destiny, that's a pretty good starting point. There's a lot that went on that we missed, I'm afraid to say, after we won the Cold War: the failure to generate wealth for the bottom half of our society decade after decade, the slowdown of education. But these are not immutable. None of these trends are. I still don't think that we're at the stage in the game where it's smart to bet against the United States of America. There are things that government and experts can't predict that have revolutionized and transformed our society before, including great religious awakenings. And as my much better half, Mary Eberstadt, has said from time to time, she'd settle for a minor awakening. That wouldn't be so bad either.

Robinson: That Reagan re-election slogan of "morning again in America" rang true enough to the American people to enable him to carry forty-nine out of fifty states. Today do we possess the resources—political, spiritual, human capital? Is this country capable of another act of national self-renewal?

Eberstadt: Absolutely. I mean, we have strangely similar circumstances today, not least an incompetent, humiliating, misbegotten White House, a lot of Carter flashbacks these days for those of us old enough to have the pleasure of having lived through that. And of course, we have the resources. We do not have the same absolutely unlimited reach we had at the end of the Cold War, but that was an unnatural, historically unusual situation. We've got people in our country who of course can do this again.

The one thing that I would caution is that we have had forty years of poison distributed through our society through an increasingly malign university system. And we have seen a Gramscian march through the institutions of severely problematic points of view that in the old days would have been unmockingly called un-American, or anti-American. We have to drain that poison from our society before we can, I think, really flourish again. But that's certainly not impossible either. ◘

Rich Man, Poor Man

A new paper by Hoover fellow Stephen H. Haber addresses the biggest of questions: How are societies born? And why are they so different from each other?

By Jonathan Movroydis

Why do wealthy countries tend to be stable democracies? Why do levels of per capita income and democracy also correlate with a range of other development indicators, such as investments in human capital, the strength of intellectual-property systems, freedom from government expropriation, and financial

Key points

» Societies make costly investments in legal systems, political institutions, and human capital when there's a return to doing so.

» People form four basic kinds of social organization, depending on their environments.

» In the American colonies, a lack of centralization led to a pushback against the British governing elites.

Stephen H. Haber *is the Peter and Helen Bing Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, a participant in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project, and the A. A. and Jeanne Welch Milligan Professor in the School of Humanities and Sciences at Stanford University. He is a professor of political science, professor of history, and professor of economics (by courtesy), as well as a senior fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research and the Stanford Center for International Development.* ***Jonathan Movroydis*** *is the senior content writer for the Hoover Institution.*

development? Why are the prosperous democracies not randomly distributed across the planet?

Hoover senior fellow Stephen H. Haber and his co-authors, Roy Elis and Jordan Horrillo, have published a new research paper, *The Ecological Origins of Economic and Political Systems,* that seeks to explain such puzzles. The core of their theory is that societies make costly investments in legal systems, political institutions, human capital, and the like when there is a return to doing so—that is, when there is a fundamental challenge that must be addressed. The hard constraints imposed by nature yielded very different incentives. The result was the formation of dramatically different forms of social organization.

Jonathan Movroydis: How did this project begin?

Stephen H. Haber: I have been interested in the question of why there are rich countries and poor countries since I was an undergraduate. I became involved with this line of research about ten years ago, after publishing a co-authored paper with Victor Menaldo, a former graduate student who is now on the faculty at the University of Washington. Our paper, *Do Natural Resources Fuel Authoritarianism? A Reappraisal of the Resource Curse* [*American Political Science Review,* vol. 105, no. 1], countered a lot of academic literature arguing that an abundance of oil and gas in an economy distorts incentives and therefore discourages democratization and economic development. We demonstrated that this argument was a fallacy based on errors in thinking and in statistical inference. This prompted a colleague of mine to ask: "If it isn't oil, then what accounts for the variance in economic development across the globe?" I had no ready answer to the question, and so I started reading about countries that have been poor for a very long time.

"All modern states emerge directly from a civilization's largest and most powerful city around the beginning of the nineteenth century."

What I found was that these countries' climates tended to be very wet or very dry. This led me down the path of studying the long-run effects of climates on how human beings prior to the nineteenth century organized themselves to survive against starvation. The dynamics of each form of social organization in turn ultimately affected the way the populations living in each environment absorbed modern technologies and political and economic innovations, such as railroads and steamships, as well as universal suffrage and patent systems.

A large part of this ten-year effort was understanding the conditions under which different crops grow, the conditions under which they can be stored, the distance crops could be transported given eighteenth-century technologies, and the like. We were fortunate in that we were able to consult experts in several disciplines across Stanford—including biologists, economists, and political scientists. Having access to these resources is one of the advantages of the Hoover Institution being on the campus of a major university. I don't think this type of study would have been possible if I were based at another think tank.

Movroydis: Can you describe your methodology?

Haber: My team and I constructed two big datasets to test the theory. One dataset was designed to re-create the ecological conditions of the densely populated nuclei from which modern nation-states later emerged. Modern Germany, for example. Until 1871, it was a congeries of more than three hundred independent principalities, duchies, free republican cities, and kingdoms. Those entities were politically and culturally subordinated to the region around Berlin, the Margraviate of Brandenburg, over the course of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. If you look across the world, you'll see that all modern states emerge directly from a civilization's largest and most powerful city around the beginning of the nineteenth century.

"It's no wonder that the United States was the first colony in the world to throw off colonialism."

We then used geographic information systems to estimate the size and ecological characteristics of these densely populated nuclei of today's nation-states in 1800. One can think of it as using Google Maps, but instead of measuring travel time by car, train, or bus, we calculated energy expended using three eighteenth-century transportation technologies: a Conestoga wagon, the boat that Lewis and Clark rowed and poled up the Missouri River, and a human porter using a tumpline. We had to work out the physics of how much energy it took to move a ton of bulk goods using those technologies over flat terrain or navigable water.

We also had to factor in that these regions were not flat. So, we estimated the size and shape of what are called hinterlands, the regions surrounding the largest cities, in 1800. Our team then applied our Global Information Systems techniques to datasets from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations so that we could calculate the quantity of twenty-two different crops that could be grown in these hinterlands and how long they could be stored. We also looked at how frequently agriculture in each hinterland could be devastated by weather shocks, mainly droughts, as well as how they could be impacted by endemic malaria and tsetse flies, which kill horses and oxen. Ultimately, we tried to re-create as closely as we could the conditions that human beings faced when producing and storing calories needed for survival.

Movroydis: What were the conditions like just before 1800?

Haber: Humans have always faced several big challenges. Foremost was the challenge of ensuring against starvation, which confronted humans up until the advent of railroads and steamships because it was very expensive to move food over long distances. There was of course trade in all kinds of luxury goods, but moving staple crops was cost-prohibitive until the nineteenth century. That meant that societies had to solve the problem of preventing starvation based on their local environmental characteristics. The way in which humans survive in a rainforest is very different from in a desert.

What we demonstrate in the paper is that there were basically four forms of social organization that emerged from various groups of human beings adapting to their respective environments. By adaptation, we mean *cultural adaptation*—the way people behave and plan and expect others to behave and plan, not adaptation in the Darwinian sense. Human beings are the same everywhere.

The first type of ecology is called *transactional*. An example I like to use is the mid-Atlantic United States. It is a place where crops ripen only seasonally, are rarely destroyed by weather shocks such as droughts and floods, and can be stored for a long period of time. Stored food in the mid-Atlantic could also easily be transported, because the terrain is mostly flat and the rivers are navigable. What emerged was an ecosystem where people prevented against starvation by trading with one another. If you look at the geography of the mid-Atlantic, even in 1800 you'll notice that there were many small cities and large towns. These were loci of trade, places where farmers traded with one another to mitigate idiosyncratic droughts and other production shortfalls.

"In places like northern China, weather shocks are large, severe, and widespread, and last for very long periods."

One of the interesting features about the colonial history of the mid-Atlantic United States is the absence of any attempt at central planning or administration. Rather, independent economic agents made decisions coordinated by the market. The lack of centralization translated into a political culture that pushed back against the British elites who governed the colonies starting in the seventeenth century. It's no wonder that the United States was the first colony in the world to throw off colonialism.

Transactional ecologies work from the bottom up. This meant that when confronted by the next great challenge—the shock of modernity in the nineteenth century—the mid-Atlantic states not only quickly absorbed technologies that were developed elsewhere but even invented some of their own that other societies had to absorb. This was more than just industrialization and railroads. Societies had to figure out how to absorb a broad suite of advancements in law, finance, military planning, university-based research, and production technologies.

"The further they fall behind, the harder it is to successfully transition to a modernized economy."

In contrast were places like northern China, where weather shocks are large, severe, and widespread, and lasted for very long periods. Such ecologies were proficient at growing low-moisture annual crops that are very high in calories. But because of their weather shocks, to prevent starvation they needed to construct compulsory insurance systems. These have taken various forms around the globe. In Mexico, the system took the form of the colonial hacienda; in China, a state-run granary system.

This was a top-down solution in which everyone was forced to participate. Such a system more naturally translates into centralized political authority. It was much more difficult for these *risk-pooling ecologies* to absorb modern technologies in the nineteenth century. One consequence was that countries that emerged from risk-pooling ecologies tended to become dominated by countries that emerged from transactional ecologies. A classic example is China's defeat in the Opium Wars.

Self-sufficient ecologies emerged in regions where it was too rainy to grow most low-moisture annual crops and where it was too hot and humid to store those that could be grown. People therefore ensured against starvation by growing high-moisture perennial crops that, while difficult to store, ripen year-round or can be left in the ground until they are needed. This meant, however, that there was little to trade and tax. The Congo is a quintessential

example of these conditions. Human beings certainly survived, and even thrived. But because there was neither a market that could coordinate a response to modernity from the bottom up, nor a centralizing authority that could engineer a response from the top down, it was extremely difficult to absorb the technologies of the modern world rapidly and as a broad suite.

A somewhat similar situation emerged in what we call *pastoral ecologies,* places where it was too dry and cold to grow crops of any type, but where the conditions favored grasslands. In this kind of environment, people herded herbivores. These historically low-population ecologies have weak decentralized states because it's very hard to tax mobile animals.

Both subsistence and pastoral ecologies fell behind in the technological race of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and were usually overrun by risk-pooling or transactional ecologies.

Movroydis: Modern Russia is a powerful state that covers a considerable amount of the world's landmass. What type of ecology emerged there?

Haber: Modern Russia emerged from the area around Moscow, which has two ecological characteristics: the growing seasons are very short; and the propensity for weather shocks that wipe out crops is very high. As in northern China, the dominant form of social ecology that emerged in Russia was risk-pooling. People in eighteenth-century Russia were not independent farmers trading in urban markets. They were dependent peasants. The landlords would provide food to the peasantry during weather shocks, but the rest of the time they extracted every kopek from the peasants.

"The way in which American society is organized is going to affect how quickly we can make the next technological leap."

Movroydis: Do these risk-pooling societies eventually absorb modern technologies?

Haber: Centralized political systems tended to engineer the absorption of new technologies from the top down. When these societies absorb technologies, they do so in fits and starts, and ultimately fall behind. The further they fall behind, the harder it is to successfully transition to a modernized economy.

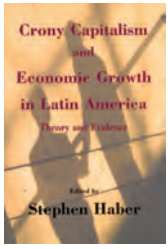
Movroydis: Does your research have implications for the future?

Haber: The goal of the research was to understand why things are the way they are today, not to predict the future. I want to be very clear here. We are not claiming that we can explain 100 percent of the variation in levels of development based on our ecological variables from the past.

What we're saying is that we can account for about 60 percent of the variance. The remaining 40 percent of the variance is the result of human agency, idiosyncratic events, and other factors outside of our model. That said, explaining 60 percent of the variance in levels of development around the globe today is far more than anybody else has been able to achieve in this literature.

That said, I think there are insights that can be drawn from this research of the past about the questions that societies face today—mainly how ecological factors impacted the way people organized themselves and, in turn, how they adapted to their next great challenge. One could glean insights, for example, on the challenges the United States faces with a rising China. This is essentially a contest between a decentralized market-oriented system and a politically centralized system. The way in which American society is organized is going to affect how quickly we can make the next technological leap in areas of artificial intelligence, digitization, quantum computing, and the like. There's an open question as to whether we or the Chinese are going to be better at absorbing those new technologies.

Special to the* Hoover Digest. *This interview was edited for length and clarity. Download a copy of Stephen Haber's new publication at https://www.hoover.org/research/ecological-origins-economic-and-political-systems.



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Can't You See I'm Right?

The title of David McRaney's podcast warns listeners: "You are not so smart." His new book argues that accepting—or rejecting—new information isn't about smarts at all, or even about facts. It's about trust.

By Russ Roberts

***Russ Roberts,* EconTalk:** My guest is journalist and author David McRaney. He hosts the podcast *You Are Not So Smart*. His latest book and the topic for today's conversation is *How Minds Change: The Surprising Science of Belief, Opinion, and Persuasion*. Underlying this book is the simple but often unappreciated idea that we are not fully aware of what we know, what we don't know, and what motivates us about what we think we know. How did you get interested in these ideas?

David McRaney: There are a lot of things. One was growing up in the deep South but being part of a generation that had so much media coming at you that you started to feel like "hmm, there's another world out there." It was clear there were other voices, other people living in other places thinking

David McRaney *is a journalist and author. His latest book is* ***How Minds Change: The Surprising Science of Belief, Opinion, and Persuasion*** *(Portfolio/Penguin, 2022).* ***Russ Roberts*** *is the John and Jean De Nault Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, a participant in Hoover's Human Prosperity Project, host of the podcast* ***EconTalk****, and the president of Shalem College in Jerusalem.*

different things. My dad is also a Vietnam vet who has a pretty strong conspiratorial streak in him. And that's understandable sometimes, and not understandable at others. When I finally found my way into a university setting, I had my first psychology professor just overwhelm me with ideas and perspectives and ways of seeing the world that played into all these things, especially when it came to motivated reasoning. If you're not familiar with motivated reasoning, anybody listening to this, you are! You're very familiar with it, I promise.

This is my favorite example. When someone is falling in love and you ask them, "Why do you like this person?" they say, "Oh, wow. They've introduced me to this interesting music. They have all these wild opinions. The way they talk, the way they walk, the way they cut their food." And if that same person is breaking up with that person and you ask them, "Why are you doing that?" they'll say, "Oh, they have these stupid opinions and the music they choose is bad. The way they talk, the way they walk, the way they cut their food."

"There's an idea that people believe or not believe things purely based on how much ignorance they have about the issue."

The reasons *for* become reasons *against* when the motivation for searching for reasons changes. That's sort of the essence of motivated reasoning, and I find that immensely fascinating and applicable to so much in life.

Roberts: It's discomfiting to one's self to think that you might not understand why you believe what you do. We think we know exactly why we believe what we do. "I've got the facts on my side. The theory behind this is ironclad. I've learned so many things that point me toward the truth."

I think most of us, most of the time, we don't change our minds at all. We put it down, that new piece of information—push it back and ignore it. Don't want to think about it. Sometimes we can convince ourselves it must not really be a fact, this new thing we were told. It's the bad people who are propagating this story about this person I like.

McRaney: It really depends on the motivation, right? Some things you feel strongly motivated: I need to resolve those. And, for other things, you can let it go.

That phrase, "change your mind" is so fascinating to me; oftentimes, something does change. A political example: people become very motivated. They're a group identity. They're a self-identity. They're a value. There are so

many things wrapped up in a political concept or a political candidate. And if you have a strong, positive emotion toward the political candidate or a party or people in the party or support the candidate, and then something happens that seems quite negative—"this violates my other values, this makes me feel very negative emotions about what just occurred"—you feel that dissonance. So, which way do I go?

There's an easy way out of it for a lot of people, which is, "I'll interpret what just happened as actually being positive." Or "that was not actually something that happened. I will interpret that it didn't happen." Or "the people doing that, they actually aren't people in my political party or who support my candidate. Those are actors of some kind or those are agents from another force."

It can go the other way, too. You can have a very strong negative opinion toward a political candidate or a party. And then, they do something nice or something good, and it's very easy to interpret that as "oh, well, they're just doing that for gain." Or "they're just doing that to trick me."

A RATIONALIST DELUSION

Roberts: Now, a chunk of the book is about people's—I would call them "facts." What happened on 9/11? Is the Earth flat? I'm pretty sure the answer is no, but there are people who think the answer is yes. There are people who think 9/11 was a conspiracy from the US government. What's interesting to me is that—as you point out in the very opening of the book—sharing facts with people is actually remarkably unhelpful in getting them to change their mind. It takes a massive cornucopia of facts to get people to think "maybe I'm not right about this."

"It takes a massive cornucopia of facts to get people to think 'maybe I'm not right about this.' "

A long, long time ago, and partly from being the host of *EconTalk,* I used to think I had the facts, and the other side, of course, in terms of economic policy, they're just wrong. They don't know. What they believe isn't true. Fortunately, for my own well-being, I think, I've come to believe that's not the case. They have their facts and I have mine, and they don't always overlap. Now what?

McRaney: This is something that comes up so often. Scientists are not immune to this, and certainly journalists are not. No academic is immune.

It used to be called the *information deficit hypothesis* in science communication. The founding fathers of the United States said, "All we have to do is build a bunch of public libraries and then everyone will have all the access, the same information. Democracy will finally reach this utopian dream." The nineteenth-century rationalist philosophers said, "All we need is public education. Once all the people who are working on the farms and the fields and the factories have public education, everyone will have all the access to all the same facts," and then comes the rationalist utopia of democracy.

Timothy Leary had this thing called "power to the pupil," his idea that once every single person in the world gets rid of all the gatekeepers and they have total power over what goes into their eyeballs, a rationalist, democratic utopia will prevail.

I'm not starting a beef with Neil deGrasse Tyson, but I've seen him put this forth, too: the whole idea of rationality, of this beautiful utopian democracy where everybody has a degree in science. "We're all STEM people. We'll have *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in a generation." It's the idea that people believe or not believe things purely based on how much ignorance they have about the issue. And, if you just give them all the facts, their attitudes will change. Their values will change. The policies they support will change. Their behavior will change. And strangely, the way it will change will be to be just like you.

"Scientists are not immune to this, and certainly journalists are not. No academic is immune."

Psychology and neuroscience and other social sciences have had an incredible amount of research over the past hundred years. The evidence just keeps piling up: the smarter you are, the more educated you are, the better you become at rationalizing and justifying whatever it is you already felt, valued, and believed.

Not only are you driven to come up with reasons for what you think you're going to believe, you want them to be plausible. What would your most trusted peers, your social network think? The great sociologist Brooke Harrington told me that, if there was an $E = mc^2$ of social science, it would be: the fear of social death is greater than the fear of physical death. If your reputation is on the line, if the ship is going down, you'll put your reputation in the lifeboat and you'll let your body go to the bottom of the ocean.

We saw that with a lot of reactions to COVID. As soon as the issue became politicized, as soon as it became a signal—a badge of loyalty or a mark of

shame to wear a mask or to get vaccinated—as soon as it became an issue of "will my trusted peers think poorly if I do this thing or think this thing or express this feeling or attitude or belief?" people were willing to go to their deathbed over something that was previously just neutral. As neutral as talking about volcanoes.

These all come together into one thing in psychology called *elaboration*. When you're trying to convince somebody to change their mind about something or see a different perspective, you can't start at the end of the process. You went through all this reasoning to get to your conclusion. Well, they went through a whole reasoning process to get to theirs. So, you can't copy and paste your reason into another person.

And that's what I'm talking about in the book. Facts can work in a good-faith environment where everybody's playing by the same rules. But it's very difficult to establish that kind of environment where you just put out raw facts.

RESISTANCE

Roberts: Once I was at a meeting with a group of people who wanted to educate other people about the power of markets and capitalism. They were funders of this project. We were batting around a bunch of different ideas. Finally, somebody said, "I've got it!" This person was so excited. And he said, "We just need a book that explains how capitalism works!" I didn't know what to say for a while. I said, "I don't mean to discourage anybody, but, you know, there have already been a few books. Many of them very good. Maybe a hundred. One hundred and one wouldn't be a bad thing." But, in their minds, if you just had the right arguments, I'd give that book to you and you'd read it and you'd go, "I have been wrong my whole life."

"The fear of social death is greater than the fear of physical death."

McRaney: Exactly.

Roberts: I suggested they'd be better off making a movie, because a movie would have an emotional kick. Maybe we should have an anthem. I've tried to write a couple myself.

McRaney: There are two things that make appeals not work well and there are ways around them.

The first one is something called *reactance*. It's something in the brain we're issued at birth, a feature of human thinking, rationality, psychology. You feel motivationally aroused to remove the influence of the attitude object, which just means: "you made me feel a feeling I don't like and I want it to go away. So, I'm going to push you away" or "I'm going to disengage." What is the feeling that's causing the motivational arousal? It's the sense that your agency is under threat—your autonomy is under threat. It's the "unhand me, you fools!" feeling. If you've ever been a teenager or ever spoken to a teenager, you know what I'm talking about. The person's feeling that you have approached them in some way and said, "I want you to think, feel, believe, or act in a certain way that you're not doing right now," and it feels coercive. Threatening.

"You can't copy and paste your reason into another person."

What you're saying is, "I have a goal and I'm not even concerned with what your goal is." And then you enter into this horrible feedback loop. What ends up happening, and I hate this phrase, is "let's agree to disagree." Of course! We *already* agreed to disagree. That's how come we're having an argument!

But this is what happens when we have a conversation with someone where we disagree on an issue. Very often, if we create that feedback loop, they will walk away with *more* arguments in their mind than they had coming in to continue believing or feeling in the way they had before we had the conversation.

You're right, though, that if you offer a person a movie or a TV show, oftentimes it's much more effective because there's a thing called *narrative transport* in psychology, which is when a person gets completely immersed in a story, they basically forget to counterargue.

"The facts can be on your side. You can have the moral high ground. But if you generate reactance . . . you lose."

The second thing is to make a person feel that they should be ashamed for their current position. You may not mean to come across this way. Even if they *should* be ashamed, if you communicate it that way, then you're going to activate the person's fear of ostracism. And there's nothing more fearsome than the suggestion that they may be ostracized. So it's going to cause them to feel viscerally upset and angry, and they're going to push away from the conversation.

Everything I've discussed in this long-winded answer falls under a giant category called *cognitive empathy*. It all plays into what we've been talking about: that naive realism where you think "all people have to do is see the things that I've seen and they'll naturally agree with the things that I think." It shows a complete lack of cognitive empathy that other people come from completely different priors and experiences and social influences that affect the way they form their beliefs and also the way they interpret evidence.

HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

Roberts: But forget teenagers. When we're talking to another adult about a political phenomenon or a policy disagreement, a lot of the intellectual sparring that takes place, I think, is about control.

McRaney: I see it all the time. That moment when a person comes in white hot, barreling in. This is too ancient of a mechanism. You can't trick this thing. What it feels like is someone pulling a weapon out and saying, "Step into this room, please."

What I want to emphasize is you can be very much correct. The facts can be on your side. You can really be trying to reduce harm in this world. You can have the moral high ground. And yet, if you generate reactance from the other person to what we're talking about, you will not be able to change their mind. You lose.

"Give the other person a chance to feel like, instead of being face to face, you're going shoulder to shoulder."

It's very difficult to give them the respect that would avoid reactance when you feel like they don't deserve that treatment. I totally understand that. But there is a way out of it. All you have to do is get out of the debate frame. Don't make this feel like "I need to win and you need to lose." And the easiest way to get out of that frame is to say something along the lines of "you seem to know a lot about this issue and you seem to care about it a lot. You seem to see that these problems are problems. I'm wondering, given what you know, I wonder how it is that—because I look at a lot of this stuff, too—I wonder why we disagree on this issue? I would love to talk to you a little bit more about that."

What you want to do is give the other person a chance to feel like, instead of being face to face, you're going shoulder to shoulder. And instead of looking at each other as obstacles, we're going to turn and face in the same direction and look at the problem and collaborate. "Well, you've got your side of

things, and your views, and your experiences; I've got mine. I bet if we joined forces, we could get to an even deeper truth on this or a solution that works well for both of us."

I no longer believe anyone is unreachable. I no longer believe anyone is unpersuadable. I think that a lot of the frustration we feel is the frustration you would feel if you were trying to reach the moon with a ladder, and then you don't get there and you say, "The moon is unreachable." ◘

Fouad's Gift

A memoir by the late Hoover fellow Fouad Ajami retraces his path from a child in an obscure village to masterful interpreter of the Arab world.

By Tunku Varadarajan

Fouad Ajami spent his whole life, it would seem, shaking off "the curse of Arnoun," his hardscrabble native village—joyless and inbred—in southern Lebanon. "We were from Arnoun," he writes of his family in *When Magic Failed,* a posthumous memoir of his childhood. "We would be from it no matter how far we traveled." In the world beyond, Arnoun was a badge of backwardness, proof that the Ajami clan came from a place that modernity had scorned—and left behind.

Ajami, who died of cancer in 2014 at age sixty-eight, was among America's most clear-headed thinkers on Middle Eastern affairs. He taught at Princeton and Johns Hopkins and was, at the time of his death, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. While a few others competed with him in their mastery of the politics and history of the Arab world, none could match him for eloquence and for the melodic loveliness of his prose. The author of numerous books, Ajami is best known for *The Dream Palace of the Arabs* (1998), in which he parsed the disenchantment—and disconnection from reality—of Arab intellectuals and writers.

***Fouad Ajami** (1945–2014) was the Herbert and Jane Dwight Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and the co-chair of the Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and the International Order. **Tunku Varadarajan** is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and at Columbia University's Center on Capitalism and Society.*

We have only to glance at today's carnage in Eastern Europe to be reminded that conflicts between cultures—which sometimes turn into war—are the result not just of geopolitical rivalries but of competing visions of how best to order society or interpret the arc of history. It falls to a select few at these moments of collision to act as cultural translators: to explain one civilization to another. Ajami would perform such a role many times over the course of his career, not least after 9/11, when the Bush administration sought his wisdom on the lands in which the United States was then attempting to pursue its own civilizational mission.

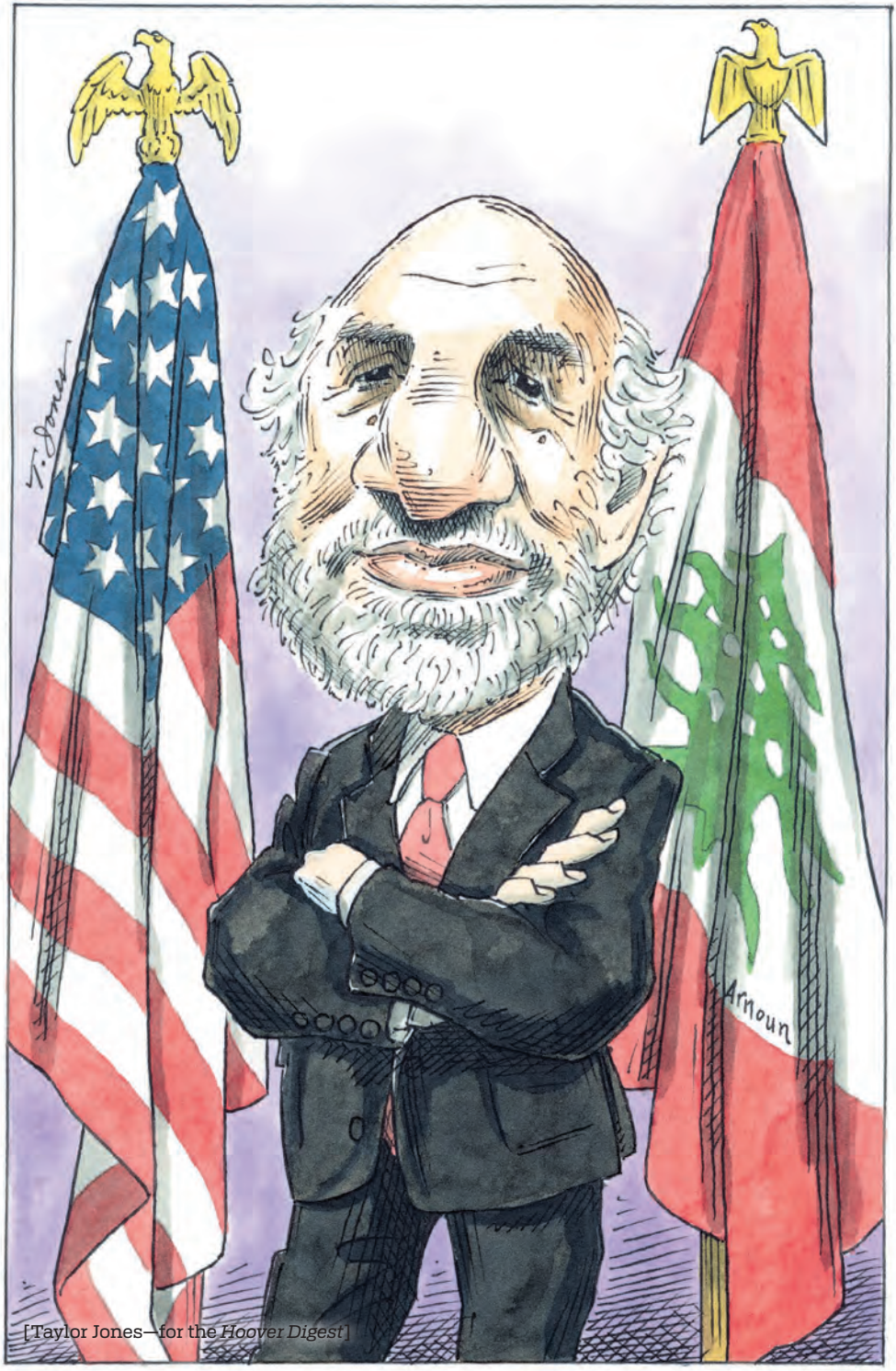
When Magic Failed offers a gentle backstory to Ajami's later, and grander, life as a sage who had the ear of an American president and his war cabinet. And its tale is a tribute not just to the seemingly improbable achievements of a Lebanese country boy but also to America, his land of adoption, which shaped and quickened the brilliance within him.

His village of Arnoun straddles history: situated at the foot of a castle built by Christian crusaders in the twelfth century, it is but a few miles from the border with Israel, which was scrapping its way into existence when Ajami was born in 1945. So the Arnounis—as the villagers are called—have in their weary bones the stuff of conflicts past and present.

Although the Ajamis were more prosperous than many of their neighbors, they lived frugal lives, eking out a profit from their olive groves and the tobacco they grew. Men of the family migrated abroad in search of fortunes that weren't always made. Even Shaykh Muhammad Ajami—Ajami's beloved grandfather, the family patriarch—had spent a few years in Montevideo, in Uruguay. His untraveled grandmother referred to the city as "Minat al-Badawi," making a Spanish place-name musically Arabic even as she mangled it.

None of the other Arabists could match him for eloquence and for the melodic loveliness of his prose.

At the age of four, Ajami moved from Arnoun with his parents to live in a ghetto in Beirut inhabited by displaced Armenians and Palestinians—"men and women who carried their homelands on their backs"—as well as fellow Shiite Muslims from the arid countryside in search of a better life. By this point, his parents had divorced, and his father had remarried, but the whole awkward *ménage* shifted to the Lebanese capital together. There young Fouad "shuttled" between the spartan room with a tin roof that his mother had rented and the house that his father had built for himself and his new



[Taylor Jones—for the *Hoover Digest*]

family. Fouad and his older brother attended a small school that his father set up in the ghetto, where "beatings and Arabic grammar were the specialty." His mother, who rarely got any money from her ex-husband, made ends meet by taking in piecemeal stitching work, which she did on a sewing machine she'd received as part of her dowry.

It is surprising to read that his mother was "an unlettered woman" who "stood in awe of those who could make out letters and pitied people like herself who had been denied that kind of power." Ajami's method of storytelling carries with it the imprint of an almost atavistic polish, as if literature had forever flourished within his family. This is suggested by his old-fashioned cadences and an almost stubborn reliance on the past perfect tense ("there had been," for example, instead of "there was"). Yet we learn that there was little or no schooling in the generations before his father—who was no scholar himself and whose proudest moment was getting a short letter published in a modest Beirut newspaper. The yellowed clipping had pride of place in his home.

At seventeen, Ajami left Lebanon for college in America, never to return for anything other than cursory visits.

Ajami's early life was dominated by the conflict between his parents and the hatred they had for one another. A melancholy book is made more so by Ajami's refusal to hide or soften his contempt for his father. "I had to do without my father," he writes, "and I had to get around him." The man who did most to nurture young Fouad was his paternal grandfather, who was pained by his own son's treatment of Fouad's mother. He ensured that she never lost his family's protection and took great pride in the achievements of his grandson.

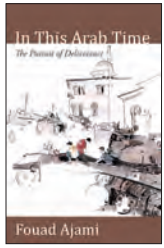
In the most heartbreaking passage of the book, the grandfather tells Fouad's father that his teenage son composes poetry. "My father asked for my poetry," Ajami writes, "and it was duly submitted to him that night." He took the notebooks to his bedroom, as the callow poet waited for a father's verdict. It was never delivered. His father never spoke to him about them. "I waited the next day. But no acknowledgment was to come. The notebooks of poetry just vanished." Ajami learned later—he doesn't tell us from whom—that his father had found his son's poems of love "unbecoming of a young man."

At the age of seventeen, in 1962, Ajami left Lebanon for college in America, never to return for anything other than cursory visits. As a child, he had often wheedled money for movie tickets out of his mother, spending it at

theaters that screened American westerns, whose posters were "pure works of seduction." It is amusing, here, to picture the incendiary impact of Jane Russell on the boys of the Beirut ghetto. "We fell for the films," he writes, "and for the country that was turning them out." He "knew so little of the distant land" that he "took its films for its reality." The reality would prove seductive in a different way, sealing a lifelong pact with America that had begun in childhood fantasy.

Ajami's departure was fueled as much by his "desperate need to get away" from Lebanon as by his hunger for the sort of education he could not get in the land of his birth. He flourished, winning a MacArthur "genius" award two decades after emigrating and the National Humanities Medal in 2006. From America, he writes, "I could do what had to be done for my mother. She had yearned for a place of her own; now I could provide it." In an acknowledgment at the book's end, Ajami's widow, Michelle—who shepherded the memoir into print—tells us that he insisted that one word be etched on his gravestone in a small cemetery in Maine. That word was the name of his village, "Arnoun." ◼

The Bush administration sought his wisdom on the lands where the United States was then trying to pursue its own civilizational mission.



Available from the Hoover Institution Press is ***In This Arab Time: The Pursuit of Deliverance,*** *by Fouad Ajami. To order, call (800) 888-4741 or visit www.hooverpress.org.*

What Do Conservatives Want?

Personal freedom, security, limited government, and meaningful lives: these remain conservatism's guiding lights.

By George H. Nash

In 2023, many American conservatives are in a state of acute anxiety, convinced that they are under siege as never before and that they are losing. Across the nation, the commanding heights of the federal bureaucracy, the news media, the entertainment industry, Big Tech, and the educational system from preschool to graduate school are dominated by people who seem increasingly hostile to conservative beliefs. In social media and elsewhere, identity politics and the ideology of "wokeism" appear to reign supreme, and a censorious left-wing "cancel culture" operates with virtual impunity.

Adding to the sense of conservative vulnerability is the declining influence of what scholars call America's civil religion. For many years, nearly all American conservatives have believed that our national experience has been

George H. Nash *is a historian, lecturer, and authority on the life of Herbert Hoover. He is a nonresident senior fellow of the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal and a former president of the Philadelphia Society.*

on the whole a success story, and that its heart has been a commitment to individual liberty, limited government, and the political philosophy embodied in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Today, for millions of Americans, this story no longer appeals. Instead, large numbers of our fellow citizens are being told that the essence of the American experience has not been freedom but slavery and that even now our nation is mired in systemic racism. This raises troubling questions: Will a rising generation of young people who have been taught to criticize and even despise their political heritage be reachable by conservatives who defend it? Is the once-powerful Reaganite rhetoric of American Exceptionalism still persuasive?

Deepening the unease on the right is the growing recognition that the conservative movement itself is in disarray. There have always been moments of ferment in modern conservative history, of course, along with sharp internal disagreements about strategy, tactics, and first principles. Yet never has there been as much dissension and feuding among conservative factions as there is now.

Why has the movement come to this point, and what might be the path forward?

MANY BRANCHES

In evaluating conservatism's discontents and prospects, we must first remember one of the most important facts about modern American conservatism: it is not, and has never been, monolithic.

It is a coalition that developed after World War II in response to diverse challenges from the left. The coalition eventually grew to comprise five distinct groupings:

» ***Libertarians and classical liberals*** who extolled individual liberty, believed in free market capitalism, and opposed overweening, bureaucratic government and the ever-expanding welfare state.

» ***"Traditionalist" conservatives,*** appalled by the weakening of the traditional religious and ethical foundations of Western civilization at the hands (they believed) of secular, relativistic liberalism.

» ***Zealous anticommunists*** focused on the titanic Cold War struggle against the "evil empire" of Soviet communism.

» ***Neoconservatives,*** disillusioned former liberals and socialists who had been "mugged by reality" (as Irving Kristol put it) and who gravitated into the conservative camp in the 1970s and 1980s.

» ***The so-called religious right,*** or (as we say now) social conservatives, incensed by what they regarded as the moral wreckage unleashed upon America by the courts and the culture wars during the 1960s and beyond.

LEADERS: President Reagan meets with William F. Buckley Jr. in January 1988. Buckley, the founder of* National Review, *and Reagan helped sustain a conservative coalition, whose differences were recognized but not insurmountable. [White House Photographic Collection]

Each of these components of the conservative revival had something in common: a deep antipathy to twentieth-century liberalism. The alliance was led and personified by two extraordinary leaders: the founder of *National Review,* William F. Buckley Jr., and, a little later, Ronald Reagan, both of whom performed an ecumenical function, giving each branch of the coalition a seat at the table and a sense of having arrived. Under the leadership of an ex-communist editor at *National Review,* Frank Meyer, the movement developed a theoretical construct and modus vivendi known as *fusionism*—that is, an attempt to fuse or at least balance the competing concerns and paradigms of the libertarians and traditionalists: the libertarians with their exaltation of individual freedom, and the traditionalists with their stress upon ordered freedom resting upon the cultivation of virtue in the individual soul.

As a purely theoretical construct, fusionism did not convince all Meyer's critics, then or later. Not everyone approved of his celebration of individual freedom as the *summum bonum* of politics. As his arch-traditionalist critic, L. Brent Bozell, mordantly put it in 1962: "The story of how the free society has come to take priority over the good society is the story of the decline of the West." Nevertheless, as a formula for political action, fusionism proved to be a considerable success. It taught libertarians and traditionalists that they needed each other and that American conservatism must not become utopian and doctrinaire.

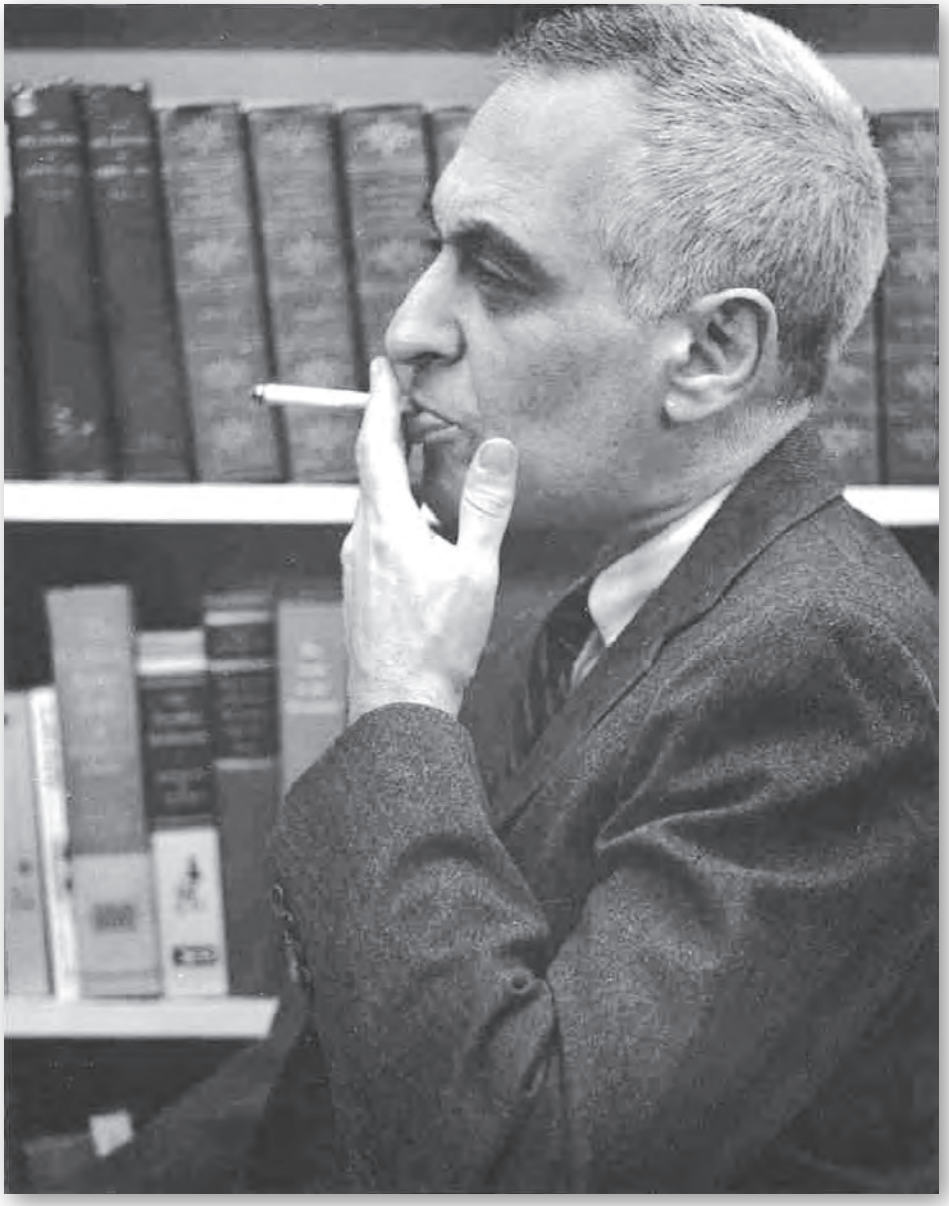
The multifaceted conservative coalition that arose after 1945 was a Cold War phenomenon. The presence in the world of a dangerous external enemy—the Soviet Union, the mortal foe of liberty and tradition, of freedom and religious faith—was a crucial, unifying cement for the emerging conservative movement. The life-and-death stakes of the Cold War helped to curb the temptation of right-wing ideologues to become sectarian and schismatic.

Needless to say, the stunning end of the Cold War in the early 1990s had immense repercussions for American conservatism and conservative thought. No longer united by unyielding opposition to a now defunct external foe on the left (Soviet communism), a number of activists on the right felt less need to stick together, and hitherto-suppressed cleavages in the grand alliance began to surface.

The most conspicuous example was the emergence in the late 1980s and early 1990s of an outspoken group of conservative traditionalists who became known as *paleoconservatives,* in fierce opposition to the neoconservatives who had risen to prominence in conservative ranks in the Reagan years. To militantly nationalist "America First" paleocons like Patrick Buchanan, the neocons were not true conservatives at all but liberal, Wilsonian, internationalist, and welfare-statist "interlopers." The conservative author M. Stanton Evans quipped: "A paleoconservative is a conservative who has been mugged by a neoconservative." The ensuing tension between the two groups became severe, and it has persisted to this day.

Never has there been so much dissension and feuding among conservative factions.

Another sign of the times in the aftermath of the Cold War was a growing search by conservative intellectuals for fresh sources of unity in a different and more perplexing era. It became commonplace to advocate new formulations of conservatism with a prefix or adjective attached and to categorize



***NO UTOPIA:** Frank S. Meyer, an editor of* **National Review**, *developed the theoretical idea of "fusionism," which brought together libertarians and traditionalists—a synthesis that succeeded despite skepticism in some quarters. Fusionist conservatism of the Buckley-Reagan variety was still the prevailing expression of conservative thought in America for some years after the Cold War.* [Meyer family photograph]

conservatives in seemingly ever-smaller groupings. Thus the Clintonian 1990s saw the rise of "leave us alone" conservatism, "national greatness" conservatism, and the "compassionate conservatism" of George W. Bush. More recently, appeals for "constitutional conservatism," "reform conservatism," and "tea party conservatism" have arisen in the land. Now and then one hears of "conservatarians" and "paleolibertarians," of "West Coast" Straussians and "East Coast" Straussians, and of "crunchy cons" (traditionalists with countercultural sensibilities). The labeling impulse has generally been well intentioned, no doubt, but it does suggest the sectarian tendencies at work.

Still, the conservative intellectual and political community did not fall apart in the 1990s. Fusionist conservatism of the Buckley-Reagan variety continued to be the prevailing expression of conservative thought in America—the language, if you will, of the conservative mainstream—for some years after the Cold War ended.

MOVE FAST, BREAK THINGS

But no era lasts forever. This brings us to the extraordinary upheaval that Americans have been experiencing in the past decade or so: insurgent populism on both the left and the right, and the political and intellectual fragmentation that it has engendered.

Traditionally, populism in America has come in two forms: a left-wing, anti-corporate version (think William Jennings Bryan, Huey Long, and Elizabeth Warren), and, more recently, a right-wing, anti-statist version (think Ronald Reagan and the tea party movement). Both variants are vocally anti-elitist, but they target different elites. For the populist left, the enemy is Big Money: the overlords of capitalist, private-sector America. For the populist libertarian right, the enemy is Big Government and the public-sector bureaucrats who administer it.

Both of these familiar forms of populism became prominent again after the Great Recession of 2008. Then, in 2016, something truly remarkable occurred: the fiery eruption of a new and even angrier form of populism containing both left-wing and right-wing elements—a hybrid we now call Trumpism.

It is not possible in this brief essay to examine at length the origins of the Trumpist rebellion. But a few observations are required. Ideologically, it bore a striking resemblance to the vehemently anti-interventionist, anti-globalist, immigration-restrictionist, and "America First" worldview propounded by various paleoconservatives like Buchanan during the 1990s and ever since: an ideological pattern that antedated the Cold War.

"PALEOCONS": President Reagan meets with Pat Buchanan in March 1982. Buchanan was among the outspoken conservative "America First" traditionalists who opposed the neoconservatives as welfare-statist "interlopers."
[White House Photographic Collection]

But instead of concentrating its fire solely on left-wing elites, as Reaganite, conservative populism had done, the Trumpist brand of populism did something more: it simultaneously assailed right-wing elites, including the Buckley-Reagan, fusionist conservative movement described earlier. In particular, nationalist and protectionist Trumpism broke dramatically with the Reaganite internationalism of the Cold War era and with the pro–free trade, supply-side economics ideology that Reagan embraced and that had dominated Republican Party policy making since 1980. It thus posed not just a political challenge to the liberal establishment, and a factional challenge to the Republican establishment, but also an ideological challenge to the separate and distinct conservative establishment, long headquartered at Buckley's *National Review*. The distinctiveness of Trumpism in 2016 was that it assailed three establishments simultaneously.

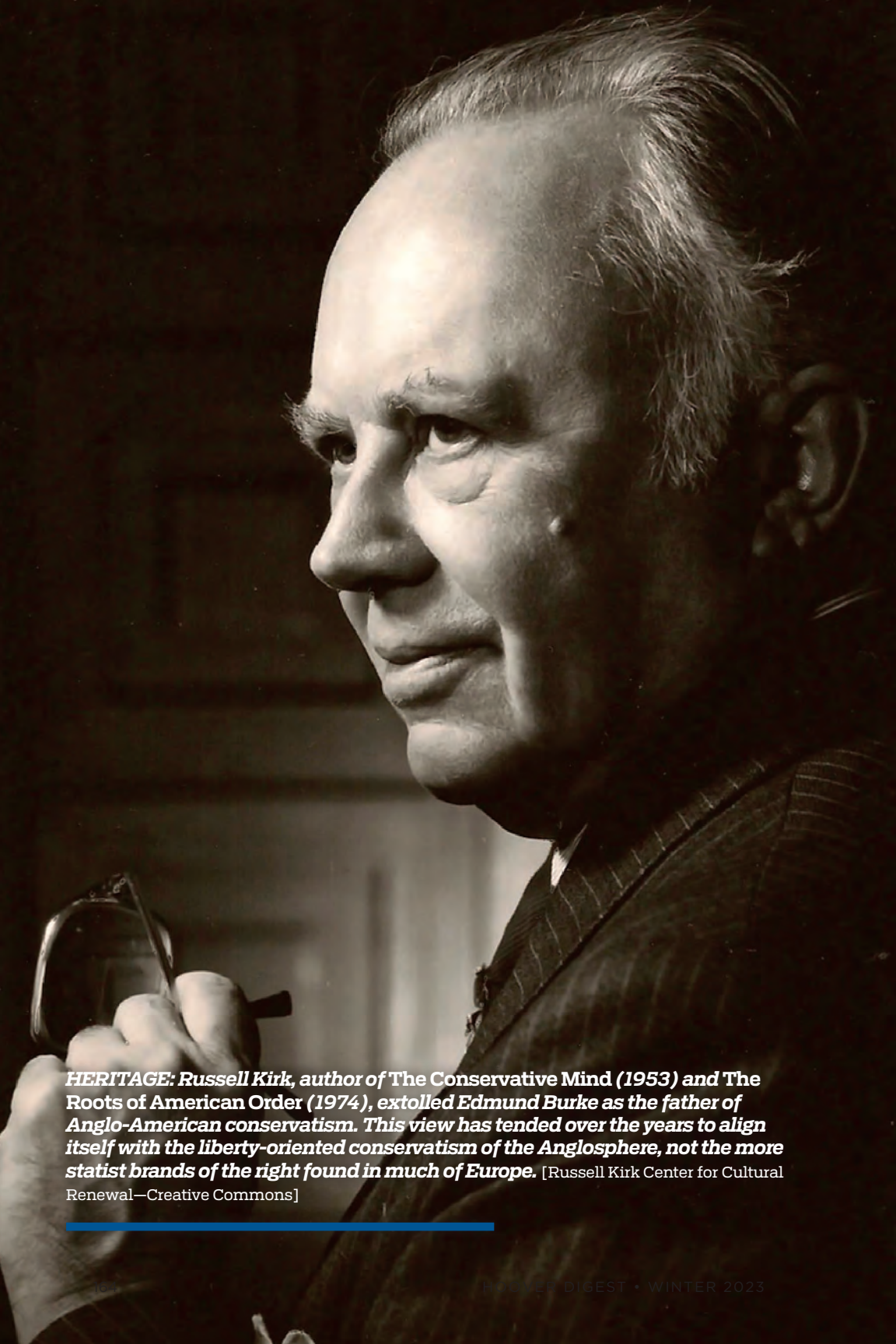
In short, as a body of populist sentiments, Trumpism boldly objected to the fundamental tenets of nearly every component of mainstream conservative thought described in this essay. At the heart of Ronald Reagan's political philosophy was a single value: freedom, especially individual freedom—the "right," in Reagan's words, of "each individual . . . to control his own destiny" and "work out" his own happiness without subjection to "the whims of the state." "America is freedom," he declared in his farewell address. At the heart of Trumpist populism, however, is a rather different yearning: for solidarity and security, especially for those who feel forgotten, disrespected, or left behind. If Reaganite conservatism, at least in theory, has been skeptical of the power of government to manage the economy and create prosperity, at the core of Trumpist populism is a willingness to use governmental power to improve the lot of people whose plight has been overlooked by arrogant elites.

SHAKEN AND STIRRED

It would be difficult to overstate the shattering impact of the Trumpist upheaval on conservative activists and networks during the past six years. The once-ascendant conservative community in America—a community built on ideas—has increasingly become a house divided over ideas, with contentious factions engaged in an often-rancorous tug of war. At such hubs of dissident conservative discourse as the *American Conservative* magazine, the *Claremont Review of Books,* and *American Greatness,* demands for a fundamental reconfiguration of the right are frequent: a right in which two of its former pillars—free market libertarians and neoconservatives—would be marginalized if not entirely absent. The once-dominant and implicitly ecumenical philosophy of fusionism has been denounced by a chorus of right-wing critics as a "dead consensus," afflicted with "zombie Reaganism" and what they bluntly deride as "free market fundamentalism." In some right-wing circles, free market capitalism has even been portrayed as an enemy of the "common good."

The distinctiveness of Trumpism in 2016 was that it assailed three establishments simultaneously.

Meanwhile, the institutional custodians of fusionism—particularly those inside the Beltway—have been openly mocked by some on the right as "Conservatism Inc.," as if the conservative establishment were just another business trying to make money. Fusionism, some critics assert,



***HERITAGE:** Russell Kirk, author of* **The Conservative Mind** *(1953) and* **The Roots of American Order** *(1974), extolled Edmund Burke as the father of Anglo-American conservatism. This view has tended over the years to align itself with the liberty-oriented conservatism of the Anglosphere, not the more statist brands of the right found in much of Europe.* [Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal—Creative Commons]

was perhaps a necessary contrivance during the Cold War but is now irrelevant.

And so a determined quest for yet another formulation of conservatism has begun: for what one might call "Trumpism without Trump."

Not so long ago, leading conservative thinkers of the Reagan era and its afterglow routinely associated their philosophy with the principles of limited government, low taxation, free trade, and entrepreneurial enterprise. In 2022, however, growing numbers of populist/nationalist insurgents on the right are criticizing these principles as outdated and even unconservative dogmas. Ditching the anti-statist rhetoric of Reaganite populism, they are calling instead for the unabashed and energetic wielding of government power in pursuit of their agenda. In their hostility to globalism and transnational progressive elites, and their dismay about economic and social disintegration at home, some of them are looking to Old World nationalists and social conservatives for inspiration and intellectual support.

Indeed, one of the most striking intellectual currents in America in the past decade has been the growing Europeanization—more precisely, Continental Europeanization—of American conservatism. Interest in Europe, of course, is nothing new on the American intellectual right. One thinks at once of Russell Kirk's magisterial volumes *The Conservative Mind* (1953) and *The Roots of American Order* (1974) and his extolling of Edmund Burke as the father of Anglo-American conservatism. One thinks also of the contributions of Friedrich Hayek, Wilhelm Röpke, and Ludwig von Mises to the classical liberal and libertarian strands of the conservative alliance that evolved after 1945. In the realm of political philosophy, the émigré scholars Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin and their students have done much to remind conservatives of their European heritage all the way back to Plato and Aristotle.

Until recently, the American right has tended to identify most with what Kirk in one of his last books called "America's British culture," and with such British luminaries as Burke, Adam Smith, and (in our time) Margaret Thatcher. It has steadfastly preferred the American Revolution to the French Revolution, and the relatively moderate Scottish Enlightenment to the more radical and anti-Christian manifestations of the Enlightenment across the English Channel. While often critical of classical liberal purism, it has tended over the years to align itself with the liberty-oriented conservatism of the Anglosphere instead of the more statist brands of the right found in the past two centuries on much of the European continent.

It is all the more striking, then, that in the past half dozen years since the Trumpist explosion, a number of conservative intellectuals and celebrity

figures in the United States have sought out right-wing political leaders and anti-liberal thinkers on the continent like Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary for guidance in fashioning an alternative political path. This fascination for non-American models is a measure not only of the seekers' intellectual curiosity but of their estrangement from what some of them perceive as an enfeebled American right—and American regime—riddled with "Lockean liberal" error and its allegedly inevitable, soul-corrupting consequences.

Intellectuals are not the only ones on the right who are now thinking outside the battered box of Reaganite fusionism. In the political arena, right-of-center members of Congress like Senators Marco Rubio and Josh Hawley are openly lambasting big business, especially Big Tech, and are advocating forms of governmental regulation to rein in offending corporations in the name of what they call the "common good." As Rachel Bovard, a rising star in conservative public policy circles, declared at the National Conservatism gathering not long ago: "Businesses like Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Apple exert state-like monopoly power over America's minds and markets, and they simply cannot be allowed to endure. The scale at which they exist is incompatible with a free society."

The mounting intellectual tumult on the right is motivated by more than economic concerns. At the heart of National Conservatism, "integralism," "post-liberalism," and the emerging self-styled new right is the conviction that America is engulfed in nothing less than a "cold civil war" over the future of our republic: an irrepressible conflict pitting conservatives against an enemy determined (they believe) to destroy them. The rapid rise of left-wing identity politics and progressive "wokeism"; the spread of social media censorship and cancel culture; the tolerance of massive illegal immigration along the southern border; the toppling of historic monuments and the wide dissemination in the schools of left-wing critiques of American history: these, to many conservatives, are manifestations of an all-out cultural revolution being waged against them by an increasingly authoritarian foe.

There's likely to be an attempt to refurbish the house of conservatism with a certain amount of Trumpian furniture but without Trump himself.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the American right is now totally preoccupied with sound and fury. In the wake of the upheavals of the past few years, efforts by serious, intellectual conservatives are under way in many places to restore the nation's civic literacy and a more balanced and

affirmative understanding of Western civilization and the American experience. The National Association of Scholars, for example, has organized the "1620 Project" to refute what it sees as the deeply flawed and divisive narrative of American history propounded by the "1619 Project" of the *New York Times*. In 2021, a group of black conservative intellectuals created an alliance called 1776 Unites in defense of America's "spiritual, moral, and political foundations" and in opposition to what they call "false history and grievance politics." Several months ago, the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal launched a conference program specifically for American high school teachers, using Kirk's book *The Roots of American Order* as a text, providing resources for teachers to draw upon when explaining to students the fundamental principles animating America's regime of ordered liberty.

Many conservatives see all-out cultural revolution being waged against them by an increasingly authoritarian foe.

Many more such examples could be given. Thus intellectual activity, quiet institution-building, and endeavors for cultural renewal continue on the right even amid its internal turmoil and the deepening polarization of American public life.

THE ROAD TO BETTER DAYS

So, where does American conservatism go from here?

Can confident, liberty-loving, Reaganite fusionism and Fourth of July patriotism be reconciled with the martial rhetoric and heterodox policy proposals now emanating from "post-liberal" sectors of the right? Can Americans who consider the values of "historic liberalism" (as Herbert Hoover termed it) to be an integral part of America's political fabric find common ground with those who claim that America was indeed liberal from the outset—and that this is its fatal flaw? Is anything more than an alliance of convenience against the left possible?

As a historian, I cannot predict precisely how the current intellectual drama on the right will unfold in the years just ahead. But I think I can predict that there will be no clear-cut restoration of the Reaganite paradigm or the fusionist status quo that existed before 2016. History does not work that way. What is more likely is an attempt by mainstream conservative figures to refurbish the house of conservatism with a certain amount of Trumpian furniture but without Trump himself as the proprietor of the house. Many

conservatives in the public arena will probably become somewhat less libertarian and anti-statist on economic and social policy, and more anti-elitist in their posture, as they try to nail down the working class vote at home and confront the military and economic threat from China.

Whether Trump himself comes again to the political arena or goes away, Trumpian populism, with its counterrevolutionary overtones, is likely to remain part of the right-wing landscape for a while, for it is being fueled by an apprehension that millions of grass roots conservatives now share: that traditional America as a free, well-ordered, and basically decent society is in peril, and that a despotism of the illiberal left is arising in its place.

Millions of grass roots conservatives now share a belief that traditional America as a free, well-ordered, and decent society is in peril.

But it is also likely that under relentless pressure from the cultural left at home, and from emboldened and aggressive authoritarian regimes abroad, many conservatives will again find inspiring the philosophy and rhetoric of individual freedom so deeply imbedded in the American political tradition—and not just economic freedom but religious freedom, freedom of speech, and the freedom to live and let live, without harassment. It is also conceivable that under the impetus of the appalling tragedy in Ukraine and its geopolitical ramifications, a more assertively internationalist and freedom-centered foreign policy posture will once again appeal to American conservatives.

Faced with these multiple challenges, can conservatives in 2023 regain their moorings and lose their sense of losing? As this essay is being written, there are some reasons for hope. First, conservatives should take heart from one of their most impressive achievements of the past fifty years: the creation of a vibrant counterculture of alternative media, foundations, law firms, think tanks, homeschooling networks, classical Christian academies, and more. From the perspective of a historian, this flowering of applied conservatism, this institutionalization of conservative discourse and advocacy, is a remarkable and laudable development. Since the 1960s, what has been called a conservative

Reckless and militarized rhetoric can repel as well as attract. Successful politics, as Reagan taught, is about addition, not subtraction.

parallel universe has arisen in America, and it continues to expand. It should not be cavalierly disparaged.

Conservatives should also take consolation, if not exactly comfort, from the acts of aggression being committed by fanatics on the left. These excesses are opening up new opportunities for conservatives to cultivate alliances with dissident liberals and others in defense of free speech, civility, and a balanced interpretation of American history. One noteworthy sign on this front is the Academic Freedom Alliance, headquartered in Princeton and launched in 2021. Another is the burgeoning revolt of countless parents outraged by the egregious indoctrination of their children on racial and other matters by left-leaning ideologues in the nation's public schools.

Still, conservatives must do more than celebrate past achievements and react defensively to provocations from the left. To lose their fear of losing, they must redouble their efforts to expand their influence beyond the ranks of those already committed to the cause. Too often it seems that the conservative parallel universe does not interact sufficiently with those who live outside its boundaries. And that population includes millions of Americans—Asian, Hispanic, and black Americans—who in the past two years have been repelled by the fanaticism and illiberalism of the "woke" left. More than at any other moment in recent times, these Americans are open to conservative persuasion.

The wisdom of conservatism comes from many sources and sound-bite sloganeering will never be enough.

In pursuit of these and other opportunities, conservatives should not forsake their traditional language of liberty and persuasion for the assaultive language of war. Reckless and militarized rhetoric can repel as well as attract. And successful politics, as Reagan taught, is about addition, not subtraction. The new governor of Virginia, Glenn Youngkin, has provided an instructive lesson in how this can be done.

At this perilous juncture, it might be useful for conservatives of all persuasions to step back from their intramural polemics for a moment and ask themselves a simple question: what do conservatives want? To put it in elementary terms, I believe they want what nearly all conservatives since 1945 have wanted: they want to be free; they want to live meaningful and virtuous lives; and they want to be secure from threats both beyond and within our borders. They want to live in a society whose government respects and encourages these aspirations while otherwise leaving people alone. Freedom,

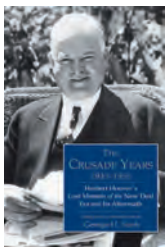
virtue, safety: goals reflected in the libertarian, traditionalist, and national security dimensions of the conservative movement as it has developed over the past seventy-five years. In other words, there is at least a little fusionism in nearly all of us. Conservatives should remember that.

Finally, if conservatives are to reclaim the culture and prosper again in the public square, they must retain a fusionist sensibility. That is to say: an ecumenical disposition, recognizing that the wisdom of conservatism comes from many sources and that sound-bite sloganeering will never suffice. They must beware of the sectarian temptation—the impulse to go it alone—and be cautious about attaching prefixes or reductive adjectives to the dignified name they have accepted for their movement.

In some right-wing circles, free market capitalism has even been portrayed as an enemy of the "common good."

But if the temptation to qualify conservatism with an adjective is irresistible, I submit this modest candidate: commonsense conservatism. This formulation has many advantages. It takes the word down from the thunderclouds of bitter disputation and associates it with the wisdom of the ages and the virtue of prudence in public life. It permits its advocates to engage with people without zealotry and in a manner that is welcoming, not threatening. It conveys the salutary lesson that conservatism is not an "armed doctrine" but the negation of dogmatic ideology, as Russell Kirk tirelessly taught.

If conservatives in 2023 remember that theirs is above all a philosophy of common sense, and if they act that way, they may again lead their fellow Americans to better days.



Available from the Hoover Institution Press is ***The Crusade Years, 1933–1955: Herbert Hoover's Lost Memoir of the New Deal Era and Its Aftermath,*** *edited by George H. Nash. To order, call (800) 888-4741 or visit www.hooverpress.org.*

Moscow on the Hudson

A century ago, the American Relief Administration launched a heroic effort to feed people in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Special efforts aimed to rescue not just Russia's artists, but art itself.

By Bertrand M. Patenaude and Sorcha Whitley

Shortly after Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet lost one of its brightest stars. Olga Smirnova, a principal dancer with the Bolshoi, chose to leave Russia and join the Dutch National Ballet because of her opposition to the war. Smirnova is far from the only person in the art world to object to Russia's invasion; many Western dancers have left Russia's great companies—the Bolshoi, and the Mariinsky in St. Petersburg—while theaters in the West have canceled visits and performances by Russian artists. For a country where ballet is a national symbol, the crown jewel of art and culture, this is a damaging blow.

Nor is this the first time Russian dancers have taken political stands against their country. The Cold War brought with it dozens of high-profile defections, including such talents as Rudolf Nureyev, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Natalia Makarova. And these Cold War defections were themselves

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predated by the exodus of artists prompted by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the establishment of Soviet communism. One of these émigrés was George Balanchine, the man who brought Russian ballet to America, who fled the USSR in 1924. Eventually, in 1962, he returned to the Soviet Union with his New York City Ballet as part of a cultural exchange. This proved to be no triumphant return, however, as Balanchine mourned the loss of the Russia of his youth along with the mother, father, and sister he had left behind. "That's not Russia," he said upon his departure. "That's a completely different country, which happens to speak Russian."

Of course, the Bolshevik Revolution was not inherently hostile to artists; for many, it brought with it inspiration and artistic fervor. There were Soviet officials who supported the artistic community, like the "commissar for enlightenment," Anatoly Lunacharsky. The Soviets were not monolithic opponents of art and artists, but the regime nevertheless fostered an unfriendly environment for artists and had little sympathy for the great men and women who had reaped material wealth from artistic success. For the Russian intelligentsia, therefore, starvation and hunger-related disease, which plagued Soviet Russia's cities in 1919 and 1920, only compounded the difficulties of living under the new regime. Many artists and intellectuals fled the country and then found themselves unable or unwilling to return. Among those who stayed behind, previously wealthy professionals saw their property confiscated and their jobs taken away. Many of them came under suspicion, at one point or another, as enemies of the state. Those who managed to find employment were overworked and underpaid, and often very hungry.

RELIEF FOR THE INTELLIGENTSIA

Then came the Great Famine of 1921, which afflicted the grain-growing regions in and beyond the Volga River valley and in southern Ukraine. Paradoxically, this new, catastrophic famine, which would claim at least six million lives, brought new hope in the form of Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration (ARA). From September 1921 through June 1923, the ARA fed millions of people a daily meal: children through its kitchens and adults through a corn ration beginning in spring 1922. The ARA conducted two supplementary programs in Soviet Russia: a medical relief campaign and a food remittance program. Though it took some time to get running, this latter operation brought aid and comfort to the country's beleaguered artists and intellectuals.

The remittance program allowed Americans to purchase bulk quantities of staple foods in $10 packages that the ARA would deliver to a specified

GRACE: Girls pose at a ballet academy in Moscow. Such schools took in children at a very early age—around nine or ten—and were responsible for feeding and sheltering them and educating them through high school. A benefit performance in New York arranged by the celebrated ballerina Anna Pavlova paid for food packages for hundreds of Russian dancers, including the youngest members of the companies. [ARA Russian operational records—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

recipient in Russia. The recipient could collect the food packages at one of the ARA delivery stations spread out across European Russia. The standard package contained 117 pounds of staple foods—flour, rice, sugar, cooking fats, tea, and canned milk—and could sustain a family for weeks. The food, acquired in bulk, was far enough below market price that the ARA turned a small profit on each purchase, which it used to expand its child-feeding operations. By mission's end, the ARA had delivered 930,500 individual packages, worth more than $9.3 million.

The food remittance system was organized by Elmer "Tommy" Burland, who had designed the ARA's food package program for Central Europe and administered it in Austria. The remittance arrangement Burland devised

for the ARA in Soviet Russia would later serve as the model for the CARE (Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe) package after the Second World War, with Burland serving as the organization's deputy executive director. The ARA launched an offshoot of the remittance program in the form of relief targeted at professional groups, such as doctors, university professors, and artists. This category of relief would be known as "special," or "general," relief; an individual, group of individuals, or organization could purchase multiple packages for a particular group of people, perhaps in a specific region or organization, and the ARA workers in Soviet Russia would determine which members of that group were the most in need. Each worker could be given packages to distribute at his discretion.

The new Soviet regime fostered an unfriendly environment for artists.

Featuring prominently among the groups that received general relief were the artists, professors, writers, and doctors who made up the Russian intelligentsia, the kinds of people who attracted the sympathies of the American relief workers as well as donors in America. George Barr Baker, the ARA's publicity chief based in New York, traveled to Russia in February 1922 and came away convinced that ARA food packages could have a real impact for artists and intellectuals, including well beyond Moscow and Petrograd. "What becomes of the intellectual class in the cities and small towns of Russia," he wrote in a report, "will be largely upon the shoulders of the American Relief Administration." The ARA received thousands of dollars in donations on behalf of aid for scholars and professors in Soviet Russia, particularly in Ukraine. In Kiev (today Kyiv), four thousand food packages were delivered to professors in the summer of 1922 alone. In December 1922, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial fund, a generous contributor to the ARA, donated $230,000 for general relief targeted at the intelligentsia.

Secondary school teachers were an especially needy, and worthy, group targeted by "general relief." While children were fed in the ARA's kitchens, their teachers went hungry, struggling to keep the schools running even when they could not feed themselves. Joseph Driscoll, an American stationed in the city of Rostov on the Don River, in southern Russia, observed, "These teachers are very poorly paid, and seldom if ever do they receive their remuneration when due. Their work is performed under distressing handicaps—lack of proper textbooks and school equipment—and in addition

IN CHARGE: The food remittance system in Russia was organized by Elmer "Tommy" Burland, who had designed the ARA's food package program for Central Europe and administered it in Austria. His arrangement later became the model for the famous "CARE packages" dispatched after World War II. Burland noted in a personal letter "the determined will of the Bolsheviks to exterminate courageous and honest Russian intelligence." [ARA Russian operational records—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

COMRADES: Workers of the American Relief Administration felt a particular affinity for Russian artists such as these dancers. ARA workers were frequent guests at ballet and opera performances in Moscow and Petrograd (today St. Petersburg) and often hosted the artists at their residences after the show. Such artists also attracted the sympathies of donors in the United States. [ARA Russian operational records—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

nearly all have constantly to battle with the everlasting question of maintaining themselves and their families."

Secondary school teachers were the beneficiaries of several general relief donations, including a gift of nearly $600,000 (about $10.5 million today) from the Rockefeller Foundation, as well as a $500,000 donation from anonymous benefactors. The latter gift made possible the distribution of tens of thousands of food packages to secondary and technical schoolteachers, who were even more underpaid than their university-employed counterparts. Those selected as beneficiaries in the Tatar Republic traveled dozens, sometimes hundreds, of miles to the city of Kazan on the Volga to collect their packages. The food deliveries to these schoolteachers allowed schools to reopen and sustained thousands of lives.

Even living in poverty, members of the intelligentsia remained proud and fiercely protective of their independence. The committee responsible for

IN NEED: Prominent among the groups that received so-called "general" relief were the artists, professors, writers, and doctors who made up the Russian intelligentsia. Here, members of the Ballets Russes wait in Moscow to collect food packages. Beneficiaries of food aid traveled dozens, sometimes hundreds, of miles to receive it. [ARA Russian operational records—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

distributing the food packages purchased for doctors and health care workers and their families in Odessa, made possible by a generous gift from the private philanthropist William Bingham II, wrote to express its thanks for this lifesaving food. The letter concludes with a promise of repayment: "As soon as circumstances will permit the Russian physicians will not remain behindhand and will pay off their debt for the assistance they received from their friends abroad." Three doctors living on the outskirts of Moscow sent an appeal to the ARA containing a proposition: in return for the provision of food packages for a year, the doctors would repay the cost of the food and all shipping costs. They backed this guarantee with a detailed record of their property and the names of their family members: in the event of their deaths, their heirs would fulfill the terms of the contract.

SURVIVAL: Students gather for food aid at the former Hermitage restaurant in Moscow. At the same time ARA food kitchens were giving millions of Russians a daily meal from 1921 to 1923, the agency was carrying out the "special" remittance program, which allowed Americans to buy bulk quantities of foods and have them delivered to specific people in Russia. [ARA Russian operational records—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

"A REPRIEVE FROM DEATH"

The critical importance of these food packages to those who received them is documented in the stacks of letters of gratitude and other testimonials received by the ARA and housed in the Hoover Institution Archives. One devoted communist sent the ARA his "proletarian thanks for the package received," while a devout schoolteacher quoted scripture: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." A geography teacher walked the twenty miles into Ufa, in the Ural Mountains, to "see the representative of that great America which has produced hearts of such magnanimity." Moscow historian Yuri Got'e found himself with something to celebrate during the holidays after a visit from Harvard historian Archibald Cary Coolidge and Stanford historian Frank Golder, who was Coolidge's former student and a curator at the Hoover Library. Got'e recorded the event in his diary on December 26, 1921: "A Christmas present from the Americans, Coolidge and Golder: a *food packet* with a very kind letter, which I append here. One

IMPRESARIO: Morris Gest (born Moishe Gershnowitz in Vilna, today in Lithuania) was an American theater producer who took the plight of artists in Russian lands to heart. His parents were living in Odessa, and he apparently hoped that an association with the ARA would help them emigrate. Gest hatched the idea of inviting the Chauve-Souris company of Moscow to the United States. For one benefit performance, he enlisted celebrities such as Al Jolson, Irving Berlin, and Dorothy and Lillian Gish to serve as house staff. [Bain Collection, Library of Congress]

BALIEFF'S THEATRE DE LA CHAUVE-SOURIS OF MOSCOW

AMERICAN SEASON UNDER THE DIRECTION OF F. RAY COMSTOCK & MORRIS GEST

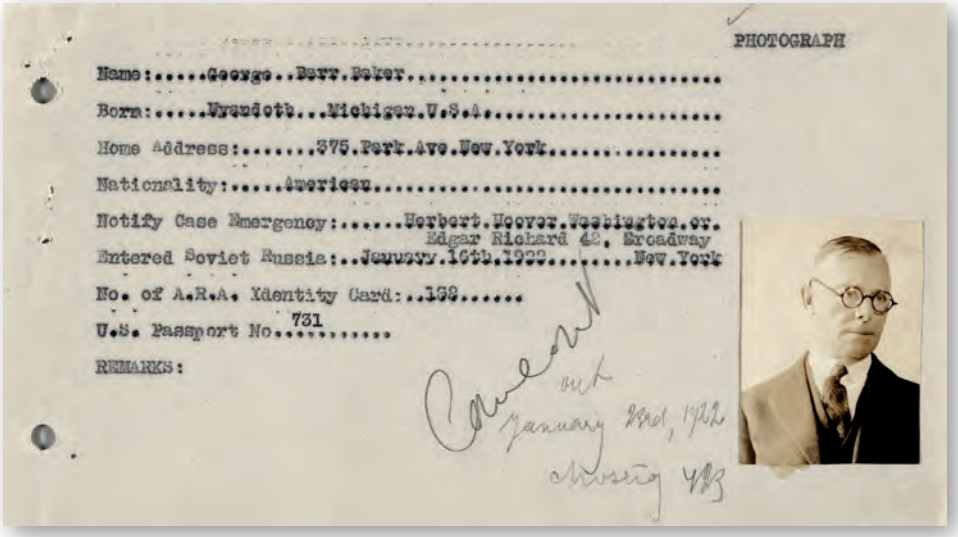
pood [36 pounds] of the finest wheat flour, twenty-five pounds of rice, fifteen pounds of sugar, three pounds of tea, a tub of lard, twenty jars of condensed milk, I admit I was touched, and contented, and a little upset." The poet Kornei Chukovskii was far less restrained in expressing his gratitude:

> Do you know what these three ARA packages meant to me, my dear Rockefeller? Do you realize how thankful I am to Columbus that he one day discovered America? Thank you, old mariner. Thank you, old vagabond. Those three packages meant more to me than simply a reprieve from death. They made possible a return to my literary work. I felt myself again a writer. . . . I doubt if any American will ever understand our poetical happiness on the great day when, dusted with flour, my whole family dragged home the cart with the long-awaited ARA packages and carried them up to our lodgings on the third floor.

The ARA men understood the impact of their work on the Russian intelligentsia. At Moscow headquarters, John Ellingston jotted a note to Burland, the food remittance chief, after reviewing a report on the condition of the intelligentsia in the Tatar Republic: "Great Christ, Tommy, that cold list of Professors from Kazan is more bitter than the news of the death of a million peasants." Burland commented on this note: "I think it expresses in a very pat way, what we all feel, after thoughtful consideration of the plight of the thinkers and culture bearers of Russia. More successful than all its land and industrial programs has been the determined will of the Bolsheviks to exterminate courageous and honest Russian intelligence."

Several relief workers remarked that the delivery of these food packages was one of the most gratifying aspects of their work. "It is impossible to adequately describe the misery, mental, moral and physical, of these various groups, nor their deep gratitude as expressed verbally and in writing," wrote the ARA's Driscoll in Rostov. He described how a local ARA employee responsible for distributing the packages, a woman of French

OVATION: A signed program (opposite) commemorates a performance in New York of Nikita Balieff's Théâtre de la Chauve-Souris of Moscow. The ARA's publicity office supported a series of performances in 1922 of a musical comedy, which was entirely in Russian. Future president Herbert Hoover attended on April 5 and received a standing ovation. One signature on this program gives thanks for "dear Mr. Hoover, who has done so much for our unhappy Russia." [ARA Russian operational records—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]


PHOTOGRAPH

Name:.....George..Barr.Baker.....

Born:.....Wyandotte...Michigan.U.S.A.....

Home Address:.....375.Park.Ave.New.York.....

Nationality:.....American.....

Notify Case Emergency:.....Herbert.Hoover.Washington.or.
Edgar Richard 42, Broadway

Entered Soviet Russia:..January.16th.1922.....New.York

No. of A.R.A. Identity Card:..139.....

U.S. Passport No.....731

REMARKS:

out January 22nd, 1922

THE WORLD'S A STAGE: George Barr Baker, the ARA publicity chief based in New York, went to Russia in 1922. "What becomes of the intellectual class in the cities and small towns of Russia," he wrote in a report, "will be largely upon the shoulders of the American Relief Administration." Baker also managed to persuade members of the stage workers' union in New York to pitch in to help their Russian counterparts. [ARA Russian operational records—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

heritage and "an exceptionally sympathetic and understanding person, very often wept when making her verbal reports upon the cases she had investigated each day. The American donor, through whose generosity this assistance was made possible, will never really know—never can imagine—the immense relief he afforded these people, their worthiness, and their gratitude."

THE STARS COME OUT

While aiding all members of the intelligentsia brought the relief workers satisfaction, there was one group for whom they had a particular affinity, and to whom they had extensive personal ties: the artists of the Russian theaters. The ARA workers were frequent guests at the performances of ballet and opera in Moscow and Petrograd as well as in the provincial cities, and they often hosted these artists at their residences after the show. Government rations had been withdrawn from the artists of the theaters with the introduction of the mixed-market economy called the New Economic Policy, and the theater companies were simply not making enough money to provide for

their performers. Artists outside the country could do a great deal to help, thanks to the ARA's food package program.

One of these artists was an American theater producer by the name of Morris Gest, born Moishe Gershnowitz in 1875 near Vilna (today Vilnius), then part of the Russian empire, today the capital of Lithuania. Gest felt keenly the plight of his fellow artists in his native country. Gest's sympathy for Russia was also deeply personal: his parents were living in Odessa, and he seemed to be hoping that an association with the ARA would help get them out. He used the ARA food remittance program to send them supplies while they struggled to clear the bureaucratic hurdles preventing them from emigrating.

It was Gest's idea to bring the Chauve-Souris company of Nikita Balieff from Moscow to the United States for a series of performances, an idea supported by the ARA's publicity office. The company's show was enthusiastically received by audiences during its New York run at the Forty-ninth Street Theater in spring 1922, despite the fact that it was entirely in Russian. The show was a comedic musical review created by the artists of the Moscow Art Theatre and led by Balieff himself, who affected a heavy accent when addressing his audience, even though he spoke very good English.

On April 5, Herbert Hoover attended the performance and received a standing ovation led by Balieff, interrupting the first act of the performance to salute the secretary of commerce and ARA chairman, who occupied a box. The name of Herbert Hoover, Balieff declared from the stage, "has stood for the salvation of five million Russian children. To us Russians it is a name to be revered forever." Balieff then gave the signal, and the entire company sang the Russian "Song of Welcome," while the audience stood. "Seldom has a similar scene been witnessed in a New York theater," the *New York Tribune* reported. "Women of the company wept as they sang. Those nearest the footlights were so overcome with emotion that tears were seen streaming down their cheeks. The song was sung with a fervor and sincerity that moved hundreds in the audience also to tears, scores of women sobbing audibly." Gest wrote in a telegram to Hoover the next day on behalf of the company: "It was the most thrilling night of our lives."

"Those three packages meant more to me than simply a reprieve from death. They made possible a return to my literary work."

The performance staged on April 9 was billed as a "Benefit for Destitute Russian Artists and Their Children in Russia," with proceeds dedicated to

HOME: A watercolor by Russian artist Ivan Vladimirov (1869–1947), who chronicled many such scenes of revolutionary Russia, shows a family towing their supplies on a sled. The flour sack is stamped "ARA." The standard package of 117 pounds of staple foods—flour, rice, sugar, cooking fats, tea, and canned milk—meant survival for a family for weeks. [Ivan Alekseevich Vladimirov Paintings—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

the purchase of ARA food packages. Gest enlisted some of the most celebrated American actors of the day to serve as house staff: among them, comedian and actor Ed Wynn, who acted as concierge, while singer and comedian Al Jolson served as a doorman and ticket-taker. Working the theater as program girls were film stars Dorothy and Lillian Gish. The Russian-born Irving Berlin was on hand to sell the music of the revue. George Barr Baker was on hand to represent the ARA. The benefit performance raised more than $10,000. Five hundred packages were delivered to Moscow, with five hundred more split between Petrograd and Odessa. Alerted to this forthcoming gift, People's Commissar of Enlightenment Anatoly Lunacharsky wrote on May 26 to express his gratitude for this demonstration of "comradely sympathy of American artists toward our own." Konstantin Stanislavsky, director of the Moscow Art Theatre, signed

a message of appreciation stating that "the value of these food packages at this time cannot be overestimated." Alexander Tairov, founding director of the experimental Kamerny Theatre, wrote to the ARA's district supervisor in Petrograd, Donald Renshaw, to express his appreciation for the packages and offer him complimentary tickets to the theater.

It was not only the performers who contributed. Gest, in addition to his work with the Chauve-Souris, arranged for Baker to give a speech to the stage workers' union of New York on the conditions of their Russian counterparts. Though many of these New Yorkers were themselves jobless and/or struggling to make ends meet, after Baker's address the union managed to collect $416 for food packages to be delivered to the stage workers of Moscow, Petrograd, and Odessa. A month later, the union donated an additional $1,500. Gest was moved by their generosity, saying it meant "more than if hundreds of thousands were donated by millionaires." For a brief moment the workers of the world could unite. "No one group of people in the United States," Baker wrote to Gest, "has responded to the call to public service more steadily and with greater personal sacrifice than the American theatrical profession." Gest's personal quest, too, had a happy ending; permission for his family to leave Russia was finally granted in late September of 1922.

A SYMPHONY OF SUPPORT

The world of traditional Russian opera played its part as well. Renowned tenor Vladimir Rosing was unwelcome in Soviet Russia, his close ties with the West and aristocratic heritage making him undesirable to the new regime despite his remarkable musical talent. His public association with the former prime minister of the short-lived Provisional Government of 1917, Alexander Kerensky, certainly did not help. But Rosing did not abandon his homeland. A benefit concert he gave at Aeolian Hall, off Times Square in midtown Manhattan, on March 10, 1922, raised nearly $1,500 for Russian artists, to be donated through the ARA food remittance program.

Fyodor Chaliapin, the greatest bass of the era, was quite well known to Western audiences, to whom he had been introduced by Sergei Diaghilev, founder of the famous Ballets Russes and, like Chaliapin, persona non grata with the Soviet regime. Before the First World War, Chaliapin had performed at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. During a US concert tour, he stopped by the ARA offices in New York, where he encountered what he called "these responsive, self-sacrificing knights of humanity." He was impressed by the sympathy of the ARA for the Russian people and their earnest dedication to their work. Although Chaliapin did not give a benefit concert, strictly

SURVIVAL ASSURED: By the end of its mission in Russia, the ARA had delivered 930,500 individual packages. Alexandre Benois, a Russian critic and artist, wrote to an ARA official in 1923: "At a moment in our history, where we seemed abandoned by all the world, at a moment when there surged before us a hideous spectre of savagery, reaching even cannibalism . . . America came and offered us her hand." [ARA Russian operational records—Hoover Institution Library & Archives]

speaking, he used proceeds from his 1921–22 American tour to purchase food packages for delivery to Russian artists.

Opera singers were not the only great Russian musicians to join forces with the ARA. More famous than even Chaliapin was composer, conductor, and concert pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff, who left Russia after the 1917 revolution, never to return. Rachmaninoff had trained at the Moscow Conservatory and conducted at the Bolshoi; many of Moscow's struggling artists were once his friends and colleagues. He was ardently anti-Soviet and felt keenly the subjugation of Soviet Russia's artists and intellectuals, the stifling of their creative spirit. The ARA, he knew, was the only organization that could safely deliver aid without interference from the Soviet authorities. He purchased

numerous food packages out of his own funds for students and teachers of the Moscow and Petrograd Conservatories and the Moscow Philharmonic School.

Rachmaninoff, too, appealed to the generosity of the American public. With the endorsement of the ARA, he organized a benefit concert of his own. In a statement to the American people published in multiple newspapers, Rachmaninoff warned that without aid, "the courage and genius of our brother artists will sink in stagnation until weeds overwhelm them." Rachmaninoff's benefit would take place at Carnegie Hall with the New York Symphony Orchestra, where he played not only two of his own concertos but also a selection from Tchaikovsky, a sampling of precisely the great works of Russian art that were under threat from the famine and the Soviets. The entire proceeds of the concert—more than $7,000—were donated to the ARA for the purchase of food packages for artists at the Mariinsky Theatre, the State Conservatory, the Academy of Painting, and the Union of Playwriters and Composers, in addition to several other schools and universities.

BABY FEEDERS AND BALLERINAS

The romantic image of the Russian ballerina, which made a deep and lasting impression on the young relief workers of the ARA—who referred to themselves ironically as "baby feeders"—was epitomized by the great prima ballerina Anna Pavlova, before the revolution principal artist of the Imperial Mariinsky Ballet in St. Petersburg and of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Although she had left Russia, Pavlova did not turn her back on the artists she had learned from and worked with in her homeland. Of most concern to Pavlova were the schools in Moscow and Petrograd, which took in children at a very early age—around nine or ten—and were responsible for feeding and sheltering the children and providing them an education through high school, in addition to training them in the art of dance. In an appeal to the American people, Pavlova wrote: "I owe all that I brought to America to those who taught me in Russia, and my debt is to them and to the children whom they have undertaken to support and whom they cannot now feed." She asked not for charity, but for attendance at a benefit performance she would give at the Metropolitan Opera House on May 4, 1922. "Will you not deal generously with me," she asked, "for one evening, that I may thus express my love of my own country, my gratitude to the school that created me, and my practical loyalty to the pupils that now suffer?" They did not disappoint.

The proceeds from Pavlova's concert sent one hundred and fifty food packages to Russia through the ARA, where they were received by the dancers of

the Mariinsky and Bolshoi Theaters. In Moscow, the three hundred dancers who came to the ARA to receive "Pavlova's Bounty" were greeted by the press, including Walter Duranty of the *New York Times*. Duranty was struck by the dignity and elegance of these destitute dancers. They ranged from prima ballerina Yekaterina Geltzer to a golden-haired girl of eighteen "whose consummate grace and proud, beautiful face indicate success already achieved," to the youngest students at the school. The principal instructor of the ballet school remarked that it was the first time he had had real white flour since the revolution. They arrived gloveless, in thin cotton clothes and worn-out shoes, at the old ballroom of the former Hermitage restaurant to collect their 117-pound "package" of food.

Nearly a year after her benefit performance, in March 1923, Pavlova sent a cable to the ARA offices to direct the delivery of two hundred more half-packages, split evenly between ballerinas in Moscow and Petrograd, against a donation of $1,000 to the ARA; she signed the cable "your grateful Anna Pavlova." Like Rachmaninoff, Pavlova never returned to Russia after the revolution. She would continue to perform until her death in 1931, touring the world with her company, but would never again grace the stages of her youth.

Sergei Rachmaninoff was ardently anti-Soviet and felt keenly the subjugation of Soviet Russia's artists and intellectuals.

It seems fitting that the American relief worker and the Russian ballerina, each representing the benign image of their respective countries, so often found themselves in each other's company during the Great Famine. Looking to build on this association, Cyril Quinn, deputy director of the ARA mission, wrote to Baker in New York in April 1923 inquiring whether a tour of the United States by the Bolshoi Ballet could be arranged. He had been approached by the Bolshoi's artistic director to suggest such a visit, a proposal involving nearly thirty dancers and ten additional dancers-in-training. Quinn asked Baker whether the ARA might be able to find an interested donor to cover the estimated $12,000 expense for the trip. Two weeks later, Quinn cabled Baker to disregard his letter, telling him he would "explain personally"—meaning in person. Quinn's cable tantalizes, leaving one to wonder who or what intervened to cause this retreat.

Without the ARA, many of the artists of Russia would have been forced out of their theaters, conservatories, and academies. Not a few would have perished. Alexandre Benois, the renowned Russian artist, critic, and set

designer, wrote movingly about this to the ARA's Donald Renshaw in June 1923, as the ARA mission was coming to an end.

> At a moment in our history, where we seemed abandoned by all the world, at a moment when there surged before us a hideous spectre of savagery, reaching even cannibalism, at a moment where the best among us had commenced to doubt the existence of an equitable order presiding over the destiny of humanity, America came and offered us her hand. . . . I have known cases where the packages of the A.R.A. have seemed like a miraculous manifestation of Providence, and where these packages have saved persons, little able to struggle for life, from dark despair which might have drawn them on toward an irremediable wasting away, or suicide!

Still, Benois feared that once the ARA departed Soviet Russia, the artists would be unable to support themselves, and that a general economic recovery would take a great deal of time to extend to the realm of the arts and sciences. A few months earlier, he had written to Burland to express his concerns about the fate of artists and what he called the "lower class" of the intelligentsia, those without a great reputation to sustain them. Burland remained keenly aware of the precarious existence of these artists even after the ARA's departure from Soviet Russia. On a return visit to Moscow in 1924 he married his sweetheart, Katia, a ballerina with the Bolshoi, and brought her to America. ◘

Special to the* Hoover Digest. *The latest exhibition at the Hoover Institution Library & Archives, "Bread + Medicine: Saving Lives in a Time of Famine," offers compelling images of this American rescue operation in the desperate lands of Soviet Russia and Ukraine. For information on the exhibit: https://www.hoover.org/events/bread-medicine-saving-lives-time-famine.

On the Cover

This confident, colorful print dates from 1898 and shows Commodore George Dewey commanding his flagship, the cruiser *Olympia,* and gazing steadily forward. The ship wears warlike grey, not her peacetime livery of buff and white. The lithograph was created by a Chicago firm, Kurz and Allison, well-known for its stylized battle tableaux—violent, crowded scenes familiar to anyone who has studied the Civil War. Dewey, curiously hatless, may be about to deliver his famous line: "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley." Dewey and the ship were to triumph in the Battle of Manila Bay, sending an entire Spanish fleet to the bottom. The commander and the ship became legends.

Olympia and her admiral had remarkably full, if mostly separate, careers embracing war, revolution, and peace. History sees both as symbols of a time when the United States was starting to take a strong military and political role in the world. The Spanish-American War, one hundred and twenty-five years ago, was a turning point.

Dewey (1837–1917), a Vermonter and Civil War veteran, had risen through the ranks and distinguished himself by his coolness under fire. In 1862 he fought well as part of David Farragut's flotilla ("Damn the torpedoes—full speed ahead!") in the daring attack on New Orleans. Dewey assumed command of the Asiatic Squadron in January 1898.

In Chinese waters when war was declared against Spain ("Remember the *Maine*!" cried the press), he sailed to the Philippines and led *Olympia* into battle on May 1. (The ship's captain, Charles Vernon Gridley, was seriously ill but did direct the gunfire. He was to die a month later.) Dewey's fleet sank the Spaniards and he accepted the city's surrender. By the time Dewey steamed home the next year, the legend-making machinery was in full swing. In Boston, he and his crew were treated to a parade and a chorus performing Handel's "See the Conquering Hero Comes." Dewey was promoted, of course, eventually to admiral of the Navy, the only person ever to hold that rank. His face was stamped on a medal. He served on an advisory board of senior admirals until he died.

Olympia went from front-line warship to obsolescence, and back again, several times. She was commissioned in 1895, first decommissioned in 1899, returned to service in 1902, and finally stricken in 1922. Remarkably, the faithful cruiser still serves. Today, she is docked at Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia and is the oldest steel US warship afloat (the *Constitution,* "Old Ironsides," is a full century older).

Olympia and the battleship *Oregon* (which also fought in the Spanish-American War, but in Cuba) were built in San Francisco by Union Iron Works, the largest yard of its kind on the West Coast. The hordes of workers who swarmed the docks, especially during World War II, are long gone. Today the moribund site is a giant public-private renewal project that promises to make creative use of its "raw surfaces, soaring ceilings, and gritty details." Most of those plans are unfulfilled. One lovely building on 20th Street announces UNION IRON WORKS on the outside, but inside the workers build software, not ships. For atmosphere, a huge, heavy crane looms over their open-plan office.

After her moment of glory, *Olympia* patrolled the Caribbean, trained sailors, supported an intervention in the Russian Civil War, policed the Adriatic, and guarded refugees. Long outgunned, she specialized in goodwill visits and showing the flag. Toward the end, she brought home America's Unknown Soldier from World War I, braving two hurricanes during the crossing, with the coffin perilously lashed onto an open deck.

Olympia was a "protected cruiser," designed with an armored deck just above the waterline to shield the engines, boilers, and magazines. Fighting ships were undergoing rapid evolution, trying to stay ahead of the rapidly evolving weapons that could destroy them, so no protection would endure. Naval doctrine also shifted with the new threats. This meant that *Olympia,* intended to be the first of her design, was instead the last.

—Charles Lindsey

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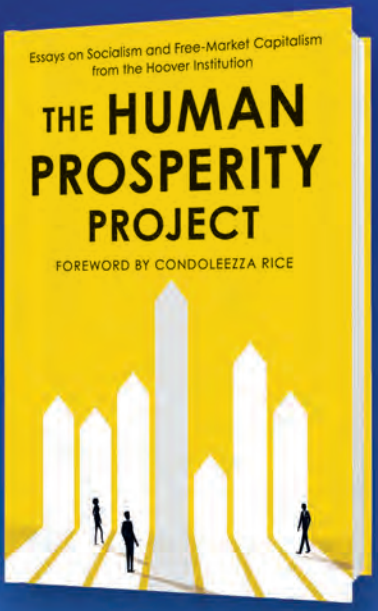

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