

# FOREIGN POLICY

THE  
BACK  
TO THE  
FUTURE  
ISSUE

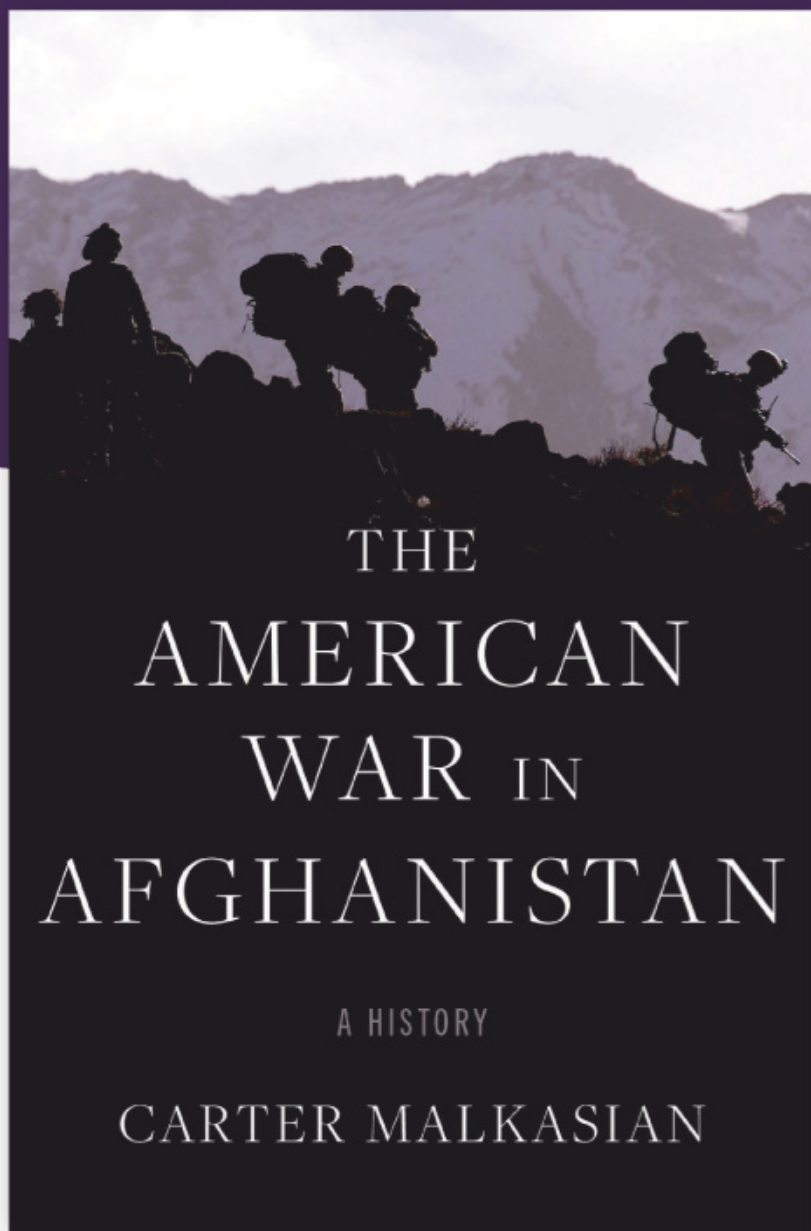


DAVID A. BELL ON HOW HISTORICAL ERAS BEGIN | M.E. SAROTTE ON THE NEW IRON CURTAIN  
SHIVSHANKAR MENON ON THE RETURN OF NONALIGNMENT | NINA TANNENWALD ON  
NUCLEAR DETERRENCE | ADAM TOOZE ON TACKLING INFLATION | HAL BRANDS ON  
ANOTHER ARMS RACE | PRIYA SATIA ON GANDHI'S LESSONS FOR TODAY



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# FOREIGN POLICY

SUMMER 2022

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## *Arguments*

- 4** Why the World Isn't Really United Against Russia  
HOWARD W. FRENCH
- 8** The New Cold War Is Here  
ANGELA STENT
- 12** Ukraine's Cultural Heritage Is Desperate for Help  
LAURA BALLMAN
- 14** Beijing Is Used to Learning From Russia's Failures  
ORIANA SKYLAR MASTRO  
AND DEREK SCISSORS
- 16** Don't Ignore India's Delusions  
SUSHANT SINGH
- 19** Bolsonaro Has Been Watching Trump  
OLIVER STUENKEL
- 22** Stop Private Oil Companies From Dictating Energy Policy  
GREGORY BREW
- 24** The World Bank Needs a New Approach on Africa  
VIJAYA RAMACHANDRAN  
AND ARTHUR BAKER

---

## *Essay*

- 52** The Intellectual Catastrophe of Vladimir Putin  
PAUL BERMAN

## *Features*

- 26** Back to the Future  
DAVID A. BELL
- 30** A New Iron Curtain  
M.E. SAROTTE
- 34** The Return of Nonalignment  
SHIVSHANKAR MENON
- 36** Is Nuclear Still Taboo?  
NINA TANNENWALD
- 39** The Art of the Arms Race  
HAL BRANDS
- 44** The 1970s Weren't What You Think  
ADAM TOOZE
- 49** Learning to Rule Ourselves  
PRIYA SATIA

---

## *Review*

- 79** Happily Ever After  
*The Dragon Daughter and Other Lin Lan Fairy Tales*, edited by Juwen Zhang  
MARIA TATAR
- 83** Liberalism, More Or Less  
Yascha Mounk's *The Great Experiment* and Francis Fukuyama's *Liberalism and Its Discontents*  
JAMES TRAUB
- 86** The Art Thieves  
Bénédicte Savoy's *Africa's Struggle for Its Art*  
NOSMOT GBADAMOSI
- 90** Who Got China Wrong?  
Aaron L. Friedberg's *Getting China Wrong* and C. Fred Bergsten's *The United States vs. China*  
BOB DAVIS

---

## *Decoder*

- 94** 'Protocol' in Ghana  
ANAKWA DWAMENA



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**HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF, WE'RE OFTEN TOLD.** And it seems as if it's happening more than usual these days. Interstate war is back. The world is once again worried about nuclear weapons. A pandemic has killed millions of people and shut down commerce—just as it did a century ago. Inflation has hit levels unseen since the 1970s. The world is running out of food. There's an energy crisis. In a replay of the Cold War, the United States is aligning nations against Russia—and once again, despite unity in the West, several large countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America would rather stay out of the tussle.

But as much as our current moment feels marked by echoes from the past, there is plenty about our world today that is better described as unprecedented. Perhaps it's the rapid rise of a country as large as China, a phenomenon without any real historical parallel; maybe it's the bite of climate change, a truly transnational challenge that is already changing our planet (and on which countries simply must cooperate); or it could be the rise of artificial intelligence and all the change it promises to usher in.

Our Summer 2022 issue tries to find ways to make sense of current affairs by delving into the past. If the cover looks familiar, it's meant to: It is, of course, inspired by the 1985 summer blockbuster *Back to the Future*, in which a high school student inadvertently finds himself transported three decades into the past—and then realizes his actions could alter the future. FOREIGN POLICY hasn't quite figured out time travel, but we reckoned we could assemble some of the smartest historians and experts we know to try to explain our world today—and perhaps impact the course of policy.

**David A. Bell** kicks things off by taking on the many commentators who have called Russia's war on Ukraine the start of a new era in history (Page 26). How do we know when a historical period ends or begins? Doesn't it all depend on the perspective from which the historian writes? **M.E. Sarotte** builds on that theme in her essay about a new Iron Curtain (Page 30). The collapse of the Soviet Union is often portrayed as a set of events that took place in one day. But, she writes, if you see the world as Russian President Vladimir Putin does, the humiliations of Nov. 9, 1989, never really ended. The West has inflicted a thousand perceived cuts that explain his actions today.

There's a danger here of seeing the world purely from a Western lens. **Shivshankar Menon**, a former Indian national security advisor, gives us a different perspective. Many countries in the global south, he writes, share a "basic disquiet at having to choose sides" between Beijing, Moscow, and Washington (Page 34). You can call it strategic autonomy, as is the fashion today, but it could also be the return of Cold War-era nonalignment.



Remember "duck and cover"? The reality is that the average FP reader is now too young to have memories of a world when we worried about nuclear war. **Nina Tannenwald**, who wrote *The Nuclear Taboo* to much acclaim in 2007, revisits her research to warn us of a "whiff of nuclear forgetting in the air" (Page 36).

Nobody is forgetting inflation, obviously. But trying to draw too many parallels with the 1970s won't help us, FP columnist **Adam Tooze** writes (Page 44). Calling on central bankers to continue with only mild monetary intervention, he points out that the cost of living will likely plateau by next year.

Switching gears a bit—in our custom-built DeLorean, of course—**Hal Brands** explains why the world has a new arms race on its hands and why that might not be a bad thing (Page 39). "An arms race is only futile if you lose," he writes, before laying out a plan for the United States to win.

Lastly, as a coda to our package of feature essays, **Priya Satia** scours recent history to find a cure for the world's present maladies (Page 49). She draws on the example of Mohandas Gandhi and his nonviolent struggle to suggest we should seek to remake ourselves rather than the world. In practice, Satia writes, that would entail sustained civil disobedience to confront broken systems and political injustice.

As every character in a time travel fantasy learns, changing something in the past transforms a future timeline. Maybe adapting our understanding of history can help us rethink policy today. Or, at the very least, we can provide you with a thought-provoking read.

Lots more in this issue. Enjoy!

As ever,

Ravi Agrawal



# ARGUMENTS

EUROPE



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## Why the World Isn't Really United Against Russia

By Howard W. French

As Russian President Vladimir Putin's army reduced one Ukrainian city after another to rubble, many observers in the rich world bemoaned the dysfunction of the United Nations for being unable to overcome an obstacle written into its charter: Russia, like the Soviet Union before it, is one of the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members and, as such, enjoys veto power—allowing it

to block any measure it disapproves of.

The calls for U.N. reform this provoked came against the backdrop of another source of Western displeasure. After exuberant claims in Washington and European capitals that the world was united against Russia's brutal and unprovoked invasion of its neighbor, people who paused to take more careful stock of the situation began to note that, in fact, much of the world was sitting on the sidelines.





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Setting aside China because of its special relationship with Moscow, this included large nations, such as India, and small nations—and left no continent spared. In fact, a tally of their collective population would show that governments representing a majority of the human population have not taken a position in a conflict many see as having familiar echoes of previous contests between East and West.

Instead of mere coincidences, what if these two issues were deeply connected? An examination of the history of the institutions at the heart of what we casually refer to as the international community provides powerful but overlooked reasons to believe just that.

This is a history that far predates the alienating contests of the Cold War. And it's one that reveals an international political infrastructure that from its very inception in the early 20th century consigned the nations of the so-called Third World to all but permanent second-class status—or what Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has called “the imaginary waiting room of history.”

The proximate birth of today's international civil society should probably be situated at the end of World War I when the Treaty of Versailles was signed, eventually leading to the formation of the League of Nations amid much high-flying rhetoric.

The League of Nations failed for many reasons, not least that the United States, an early proponent of a new system of international governance, never joined. Much less famous, though, are the many ways that the progressive-sounding diplomacy begun at Versailles failed a vast majority of the world's people by not prioritizing—or even considering—their interests. China's Nationalist government, to take one example, was surprised to learn that due to horse-trading among Britain, France, and Italy, the league granted legitimacy to Japan's takeover of its territories that Germany had controlled before World War I. As a result, China refused to sign the treaty.

Japan, for its part, was disgusted by the league's failure to address notions of racial hierarchy then so dear to the West. As scholar G. John Ikenberry noted in his book *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order*, then-U.S. President Woodrow Wilson “projected a vision of universalism in rights and values, but quickly compromised when it was expedient.” When the Japanese put forward a resolution affirming equality among nations with no distinctions based on race or nationality, Washington backed down in deference to Britain, which saw the idea as a threat to the legitimacy of its settler colony project in Australia. This may have been the operative rationale, but it should not be forgotten that the United States at the time was itself a country that practiced legally enforced white supremacy and separatism. Wilson himself praised the Ku Klux Klan and oversaw the segregation of the federal work force.

Yet as bad as the humiliations that China and Japan suffered were, they were of a categorically smaller nature than the insults delivered to then-still-colonized lands. The League of Nations gave powerful endorsements to Western imperialism, granting European countries the authority to extend their control over broad stretches of territory under the guise of the league's so-called mandates.

These arrangements especially targeted Africa. African colonies had just supplied hundreds of thousands of troops and invaluable economic support to their European masters during World War I, and returning African veterans clamored for independence. In response, European powers argued that Africans had not yet reached a level of civilization required to begin contemplating self-rule. The irony was lost on the Europeans, who themselves had just emerged from what was arguably the most barbarous war in history.

This was not the end of the insults. To impose their authority on the few

independent African states, the league—at European direction—challenged self-rule in Liberia and Ethiopia, claiming a humanitarian obligation to do so because of alleged enslavement in those states. As political scientist Adom Getachew wrote in her book *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, “That the charge of slavery became the idiom through which black self-government would be undermined should strike us as deeply perverse not only because of Europe's central role in the transatlantic slave trade and slavery in the Americas but also because of the labor practices that characterized colonial Africa in the twentieth century.” At the time, and for decades to come, European powers brutally imposed forced labor on their African colonies to ensure high production rates of coveted raw materials such as rubber and cotton.

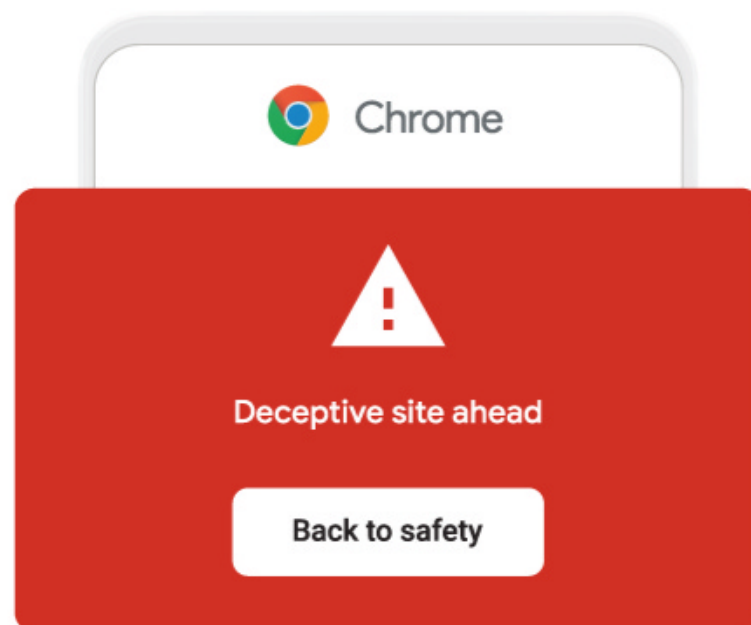
The next big opportunity for a Western-led international community to introduce more democracy and equity in global governance came after the next world war. Similar lofty rhetoric ensued, as did similar compromises at the expense of the world's colonized people. After even greater sacrifices—measured in the lives of colonial soldiers fighting in European wars—and greater extractions of wealth were made to keep the imperial powers' economies afloat, expectations were still higher this time, especially among Africans, that the great powers would support their independence.

Amid renewed rhetoric about freedom, accountability, and timetables for self-rule, the discussions that produced the Atlantic Charter fueled this optimism. But much as Wilson had done with Japanese expectations of an enshrined equality among nations, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, principally concerned with the emerging great-power rivalry with the Soviet Union, bowed to the interests of Britain and other European imperialist nations in deferring talk of universal self-government and independence.



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As Harvard University professor Caroline Elkins points out in her book *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire*, in the aftermath of the charter Roosevelt wasted no time saying that the promises made to colonized people were aspirational, merely “pronouncements” that would have to wait.

A sense of the spirit in the halls of Western power in this moment when a new global order was being designed can be felt through the words of one of its most important architects: economist John Maynard Keynes. As delegates from 44 nations gathered in New Hampshire to design a new international monetary system, Keynes groused about the presence of representatives from what would soon become known as the Third World. As historian Vijay Prashad notes in his book *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*, Keynes denounced the composition of the delegates as “the most monstrous monkey-house assembled for years” and said the representatives of the poorer and weaker nations “clearly have nothing to contribute and will merely encumber the ground.”

The two-track nature of the world being built would soon become fully evident. The United States devoted billions of dollars to rebuilding Europe after World War II. Left unaddressed—at the time and ever since—was the West’s obligations toward the world’s newly decolonized countries. As I argue in my book *Born in Blackness: Africa, Africans, and the Making of the Modern World, 1471 to the Second World War*, the extraction of wealth and labor from Africa alone over centuries played a central yet still largely unacknowledged role in modern European prosperity.

Indeed, the pillaging of Africa of human beings created what we call “the West.” Although few stop to define it these days, this means the condominium between Atlantic-facing Europe and that continent’s colonies and, later, allies in the Americas. Until 1820, four times as many people were

brought to the New World from Africa than from Europe, and it was the labor of these enslaved millions of people—producing commodities such as sugar and cotton on a vast scale, clearing lands, and performing all kinds of other unpaid labor—that made the American colonies profitable for Europe and the so-called Old World new and rich.

This may feel like ancient history to some, but the subordination of justice for the colonized—and especially for peoples and lands subjected to slavery—is of a piece with every other chapter of history discussed here, and this topic won’t magically go away because people wish to ignore it or find it intractable or bothersome.

In fact, the current structure of the United Nations, whose impotence in the face of a moral horror like Ukraine some bemoan today, is lodged in the special rights of a select few through the U.N. Security Council. This arrangement is little different from the Wilsonian-era arguments that colonized people were inadequately civilized to be granted full rights.

The Security Council was democratized to some extent by China’s entry as a permanent member in 1971. But other than China, whose size made it difficult to deny, the Security Council is composed of predominantly white nations whose history is bound up in imperial rule. The United States is the only one with a very large population, currently third in the world. Russia, whose economy is roughly the size of Italy’s, will soon drop out of the top 10 most populous countries. France and Britain trail far behind. Where is India? Where is Nigeria, which is projected to have more citizens than the United States by the middle of this century and will likely trail only India and China by 2100? Where is Brazil or Mexico or Indonesia?

In his book *The World That FDR Built: Vision and Reality*, historian Edward Mortimer writes, “A world war is like a furnace, it melts the world down and makes it malleable.” Many people have

begun to speak of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in these terms—as a portal to a new, if as-yet-undefined, global order. Few, however, have begun to address the unfinished business of the major reorderings of the 20th century, which left the people of the Third World completely out of the picture. Can this be justified based on civilization or race? Or is it a matter of raw wealth or sheer power in which might is allowed to make right?

Morality aside, few of the big problems facing humanity this century are amenable to being managed well based on exclusion on such a scale—not prosperity and inequality, not global warming, not migration, not even war and peace. ■

**HOWARD W. FRENCH** is a professor at the Columbia Journalism School and columnist at *FOREIGN POLICY*.

## The New Cold War Is Here


By Angela Stent

Russian President Vladimir Putin made four major miscalculations before invading Ukraine. He overestimated Russian military competence and effectiveness and underestimated the Ukrainians’ will to fight back. He assumed a distracted West would be unable to unite politically in the face of the Russian attack and that the Europeans and Washington’s Asian allies would never support far-reaching financial, trade, and energy sanctions against Russia.

But he did get one thing right: He correctly estimated that the non-Western world—what I call “the Rest”—would not condemn Russia or impose sanctions. The day the war broke out, U.S. President Joe Biden said the West would



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make Putin a “pariah on the international stage”—but for much of the world, Putin is not a pariah.

For the past decade, Russia has cultivated ties with countries in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Africa—regions from which Russia withdrew after the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991. And the Kremlin has assiduously courted China since annexing Crimea in 2014. When the West sought to isolate Russia, Beijing stepped in to support Moscow, including by signing the “Power of Siberia” gas pipeline deal.

The United Nations held three major votes after the war began: two to condemn Russia’s invasion and one to suspend it from the Human Rights Council. These resolutions passed. But tally up the populations of the countries that abstained or voted against the resolutions, and it amounts to more than half of the world’s population.

The world is not united in the view that Russia’s aggression is unjustified, nor is a significant part of the world willing to punish Russia for its actions. Some countries are seeking to profit from Russia’s situation. The Rest’s reluctance to jeopardize relations with Russia will complicate the West’s ability to manage ties with allies and others both now and when the war is over.

Leading the Rest in refusing to condemn Russia is China. Without the understanding that China would support Russia, Putin would not have invaded Ukraine. The Russian-Chinese joint statement on Feb. 4, signed when Putin visited Beijing at the beginning of the Winter Olympics, extols their “no limits” partnership and commitment to push back against Western hegemony. According to the Chinese ambassador to the United States, Chinese President Xi Jinping was not informed of Putin’s plans to invade Ukraine when the two met in Beijing. What Putin said to Xi—whether a wink or something more explicit—we will probably never know.

Yet China has undeniably supported Russia since the invasion. Beijing



Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres at the Kremlin in Moscow on April 26.

abstained on U.N. votes condemning Russia and voted against the resolution to suspend it from the Human Rights Council. Chinese media reiterate Russian propaganda about “denazifying” and demilitarizing Ukraine, blame the United States and NATO for the war, and question whether Russian troops committed atrocities such as the massacre in Bucha, Ukraine.

There is some equivocation in the Chinese position. They have called for an end to hostilities and reiterated their belief in the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states—including Ukraine. China has been Ukraine’s top trading partner, and Ukraine is part of the Belt and Road Initiative, so Beijing cannot welcome the country’s economic devastation.

Nevertheless, Xi has chosen to ally with fellow autocrat Putin, and they share deep grievances against a U.S.-dominated world order they believe has neglected their interests. They are determined to create a post-Western global order, though they differ in what this order should look like.

For Xi, it would be a rules-based order in which Beijing has a much greater role in setting the agenda than it currently does. For Putin, it would be a disruptive world order with few rules. Both are allergic to Western criticisms of their domestic systems and human rights records, and both need each other in their joint quest to make the world safe for autocracy. Xi would not like to see

Putin defeated. Hence, despite China’s discomfort at the scale of violence and brutality in Ukraine and the risks of escalation, it remains unwilling to speak out against Russia.

Major Chinese financial institutions have largely complied with Western sanctions, though, as China’s economic stake in relations with Europe and the United States is far larger than that with Russia. Moreover, given the extensive Western sanctions against Russia, Beijing must wonder what the Western reaction might be should it invade Taiwan and is undoubtedly studying the sanctions carefully.

The other major holdout against criticizing Russia has been India, the world’s largest democracy and a U.S. partner in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. India abstained on the three U.N. resolutions and has refused to sanction Russia. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called reports of atrocities against civilians in Bucha “very worrying,” and India’s ambassador to the United Nations said the country “unequivocally condemn[s] these killings and support[s] the call for an independent investigation”—yet neither blamed Russia.

Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar called Russia a “very important partner in a variety of areas,” and India continues to purchase Russian arms and oil. India obtains two-thirds of its weapons from Russia and is Moscow’s top arms customer. U.S. Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland admitted this stems partly

from Washington's reluctance to supply India with more weapons. The United States is now contemplating stronger defense cooperation with India.

Modi has several other reasons for refusing to condemn Russia. The China factor is key. India views Russia as an important balancer against China, and Russia acted to defuse Indian-Chinese tensions after border clashes in 2020. Moreover, India's Cold War tradition of neutrality and skepticism toward the United States has created considerable public sympathy for Russia in India. India must balance its traditional security relationship with Russia against its new strategic partnership with the United States in the Quad.

One of Putin's major foreign-policy successes has been Russia's return to the Middle East, reestablishing ties with countries from which post-Soviet Russia withdrew and establishing new ones with countries that had no previous ties with the Soviet Union.

Russia is the only major power that talks to all countries in the region—including Sunni-led countries such as Saudi Arabia, Shiite-led countries such as Iran and Syria, and Israel—and has ties with all groups on all sides of every dispute. This cultivation of Middle Eastern countries has been evident since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Although most Arab countries voted to condemn Russia's invasion in the first U.N. vote, the 22-member Arab League subsequently did not. Many Arab countries abstained in the vote suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council. Staunch U.S. allies including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Israel have not imposed sanctions on Russia. Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have spoken at least twice since the war began.

Israel's position is largely determined by Russia's support for Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, where both Russian and Iranian forces are present. Israel negotiated a deconfliction agreement

with Russia that enables Israeli forces to strike Iranian targets in Syria. Israel fears that antagonizing Russia could endanger its ability to defend its northern border. It has sent a field hospital and other humanitarian assistance to Ukraine as well as some nonlethal military equipment. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett even briefly acted as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine, but his efforts proved unsuccessful.

Middle Eastern countries' stances toward Russia are also shaped by their skepticism of the United States as a reliable partner and their irritation at U.S. criticisms of their human rights records. The only truly pro-Russia country is Syria, whose leader, Assad, would be long gone if not for Russian military support.

Russia's return to Africa and the support the paramilitary Wagner Group gives embattled leaders there have produced a continent that has largely refused to condemn or sanction Russia. Most African countries abstained in the vote condemning Russia's invasion, and many voted against suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council. South Africa, a democratic member of the BRICS group of emerging economies, has not criticized Russia.

Many African countries see Russia as the heir to the Soviet Union, which supported them during their anti-colonial struggles. The Soviet Union was a major backer of the African National Congress during the apartheid era, and the current South African leadership feels gratitude toward Russia. As in the Middle East, hostility toward the United States also influences African views of the invasion.

Even in the United States' own backyard, Russia has its cheerleaders. Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua have supported Moscow—as expected—but others have also refused to condemn the invasion. Brazil, a BRICS member, declared a stance of “impartiality,” and President Jair Bolsonaro visited Putin in Moscow shortly before the invasion and declared himself “in solidarity with

Russia.” Brazil remains highly dependent on imports of Russian fertilizer.

More disturbing was Mexico's refusal to present a common North American front with the United States and Canada and condemn the invasion. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Morena party even launched a Mexico-Russia Friendship Caucus in the lower house of the country's Congress in March, inviting the Russian ambassador to address the caucus. Traditional leftist 1970s-style anti-Americanism may explain a large part of this embrace of Russia, and it presents Russia with new opportunities to sow discord in the West.

The Rest may represent more than half of the world's population, but it is the poorer half, composed of many less developed countries. The West's combined GDP, economic power, and geopolitical heft far outweigh the influence of those countries that have refused to condemn the invasion or sanction Russia.

Nevertheless, the divisions between the West and the Rest will shape whatever world order emerges after the war. The two key countries are China and India, which will ensure Putin is not an international pariah after the conflict ends. Indonesia, which hosts the G-20 Summit in November, has said it will welcome Putin's presence, though it has also invited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

In the aftermath of the war, the United States will have enhanced its military presence in Europe and will likely permanently station troops on NATO's eastern flank. If Putin wanted to weaken NATO, his war against Ukraine has achieved the opposite: reviving the alliance, giving it new purpose after Afghanistan, and, with Sweden's and Finland's potential accession, possibly expanding it. NATO will return to a policy of enhanced containment of Russia as long as Putin remains in power and possibly thereafter, depending on who the next Russian leader is.

In the new Cold War, non-Western countries will refuse to take sides as



many did during the original Cold War. The nonaligned movement will reemerge in a new incarnation. This time, the Rest will maintain their ties to Russia even as Washington and its allies treat Putin as a pariah.

Russia's economy will be diminished, and if it succeeds in creating a "sovereign internet," it will demodernize and become ever more dependent on China. But it will remain a country that many states will be content to do business with—and careful not to antagonize. ■

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## Ukraine's Cultural Heritage Is Desperate for Help

By Laura Ballman

**A**mid the enormous suffering inflicted on Ukrainians, another less heralded tragedy is unfolding. Russian President Vladimir Putin is attempting to not only wipe Ukraine off the map but eliminate the cultural objects that frame the country's national narrative.

Although immediate human needs, the equipping of Ukraine's military, and the quest for an end to the war inevitably capture global attention, Ukrainian cultural objects also should be protected and preserved. This is another form of resistance against Putin's assault on democracy.

In addition to refugee assistance and armaments, the Biden administration should publicly emphasize and activate its extensive cultural property protection resources and experts who know how to safeguard treasures during times of war. Doing so will foil Putin's grotesque mission to wipe Ukrainian heritage off the map. Failing to do so will advance Moscow's monstrous goals, help rob the world of historic treasures, and undermine Washington's leadership in cultural diplomacy—which helped win the Cold War in the last century and may do so again this century.

Consider what Putin has done thus far to Ukraine's heritage. Within the first four days of the invasion, Russian forces incinerated the Ivankiv Historical and Local History Museum and its trove of Ukrainian folk art, located northwest of the capital, in staggering violation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. A few days later, Moscow damaged the Holocaust memorial at Babyn Yar, where Nazis slaughtered nearly 34,000 Jews in 1941. Russian soldiers subsequently looted the Popov Manor House museum complex and continue to obliterate Ukrainian cultural treasures unabated. So threatened are they by Ukrainian cultural expression that they bombed an art school.

Even, or perhaps especially, amid gruesome battles and the fog of war, the world must protect art, antiquities, monuments, and other cultural properties that are the tangible expressions of a society and its existence. There are seven UNESCO-designated World Heritage sites in Ukraine, one of which, in Crimea, has been under Russian control since 2013 and the rest of which are vulnerable. The world risks losing the 11th-century gold-domed St. Sophia Cathedral; 15th-century wooden churches; medieval coins; Renaissance-era religious icons; early 20th-century ceramics from Kosiv, Ukraine; contemporary paintings; and hosts of other Ukrainian cultural objects.

During the last 25 years, starting as a foreign correspondent in Ukraine soon after its independence from the Soviet Union, later as a CIA officer overseas, and more recently as the head of intelligence for the FBI's Art Crime Team, I came face to face with anti-democratic forces that defiled, stole, and destroyed cultural symbols. Rarely were the perpetrators signatories to the 1954 Hague Convention, which obliges Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and all other signatories to protect cultural objects during times of war. Most perpetrators were nonstate actors, such as the Islamic State, or criminal traffickers who sold objects for hard currency.

Not since Nazi Germany has a powerful European nation so blatantly targeted a people's cultural objects for destruction. Putin, like Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler, understands that suppressing and destroying a society's cultural objects quickens the suppression and destruction of its people. Russia's behavior is all the more shocking because just five years ago, on March 24, 2017, the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted its first resolution focused on cultural heritage protection as a peace and security matter.

The timing is right for the White House to convene federal agencies, scholars, and practitioners from the cultural heritage community for a Ukraine emergency response summit. Drawing on lessons learned in other war zones, the White House should appoint a National Security Council official to drive a coordinated response.

Washington already is well positioned and resourced to contribute, so the White House won't need to create a new policy apparatus. Facing global condemnation after U.S. military personnel passively watched looters ransack the Iraq Museum in 2003, the U.S. government established a loose but effective coalition of federal agencies, nonprofits, and scholars who protect cultural objects around the world. As an example, the U.S. Defense, State, and Justice

departments as well as the U.S. intelligence community together dismantled the Islamic State's so-called Ministry of Antiquities, which looted and trafficked Syrian cultural objects to finance terrorism. The U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned Syrian cultural objects to thwart their black market sales. The Smithsonian trained foreign museum professionals on how to preserve collections under threat from shelling. Scholars assisted the FBI with identifying and repatriating stolen art and antiquities. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York provided a venue for U.S. officials to present evidence, including satellite photos, and discuss potential solutions with art trade specialists. All this and more can be done to help Ukraine maintain its cultural patrimony.

At the outset, U.S. government cultural property programs must connect with Ukrainian counterparts to understand what type of aid they require. In some regions of Ukraine, it may be too late to safeguard cultural property from Russian aggression. However, Washington can, without putting Americans inside Ukraine, support people who are urgently posting the Blue Shield emblems (like Red Cross symbols) on

vulnerable cultural property as well as securing and evacuating objects in areas where fighting is minimal or nonexistent. The greatest immediate need seems to be technical assistance identifying the location and condition of cultural heritage objects, protecting those that remain intact, and documenting evidence of destruction and theft.

The Smithsonian's Cultural Rescue Initiative (CRI), a crown jewel in the cultural heritage community, provides a useful example of how Washington can help from afar. The CRI today offers emergency technical advice via internet and remote video to museum professionals still inside Ukraine, such as those with the Lviv-based Heritage Emergency Response Initiative. The CRI also has transferred field-expedient packing materials to wrap, ship, and store significant art collections.

One can presume that the Pentagon has already mapped significant cultural sites and objects in Ukraine that are off-limits to military attack, as this is a routine part of war-planning exercises today. Pentagon leaders should share this information with NATO and Ukraine as well as engage Fort Drum's Cultural Resources unit,

which specializes in military and cultural institution collaboration. Like the U.S. Army's World War II "monuments men," who rescued thousands of artworks stolen by the Nazi regime, the team out of Fort Drum knows how to speak both military and cultural institution languages.

The State Department, with its Cultural Heritage Center and Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, has long supported cultural property protection inside Ukraine. Now, Foggy Bottom should elevate the topic to the U.N. Security Council and diplomatic negotiating table. It also should press UNESCO and other international member organizations to direct funding toward the situation in Ukraine. For example, the State Department should urge the International Council of Museums to prepare an emergency "Red List" for Ukraine, which international law enforcement agencies can use to identify (and therefore seize) cultural property likely to be trafficked during and after the war. The department should consider establishing a mobile app that would permit Ukrainian civilians to document the state of cultural property on the ground by uploading images anonymously.

Finally, without siphoning scarce resources, the U.S. intelligence community has a role to play. The government's full spectrum of intelligence assets should collect information about Russian plans and operations against cultural targets in Ukraine and should share this information with Kyiv and NATO allies. Likewise, the U.S. Justice Department and Department of Homeland Security should share what they already know about transnational criminal trafficking networks that feast off vulnerable cultural objects in Europe.

Amid this emergency, I'm reminded of when I lived in Ukraine in the mid-1990s and a museum tour guide named Masha told me that Moscow had forced her to lie to survive. She'd had to blame murderous Christians for the skulls on



A woman walks by a church damaged by Russia's devastating but unsuccessful attempt to seize Kyiv in Malyn, Ukraine, on the outskirts of the capital, on May 4.



display in the Monastery of the Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Kyiv. After independence, she told the truth, that the remains belonged to Christians, buried within one of the Eastern Orthodox Church's most important cultural sites. When the war ends, Ukraine's cultural property will serve as an important link to Ukraine's past and inspiration for its future. I hope Masha will still live in a democracy and be free to tell its truth. ■

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## Beijing Is Used to Learning From Russia's Failures

*By Oriana Skylar Mastro  
and Derek Scissors*

**R**ussia's invasion of Ukraine has been a double disaster for Russian President Vladimir Putin, as he faces a poorly performing military combined with an inability to shield his country from economic punishment. Both of these possibilities historically have also been sources of apprehension for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

But China's leadership turned its anxiety into action about 10 years ago, deliberately working to fix many of the problems and minimize the risks currently plaguing Russia in Ukraine.

One result is that the Chinese military is more likely to perform well even though it has not fought a war since 1979, when it lost thousands of troops in a punitive but brief invasion of Vietnam. Adding to that, China's economy is both far larger and deliberately more diversified than Russia's, making sanctions much harder to sustain against China. These two observations do not mean deterrence won't hold, only that the unfolding events in Ukraine will likely do little to make Beijing more cautious.

China's military once had many of the same deficiencies Russia has shown in Ukraine. Over the past decade, it has embraced significant reforms, creating a much more capable fighting force that should give even the United States pause.

First, while Russia allowed its conventional capabilities to atrophy, Chinese military spending has exploded over the past three decades, increasing by 740 percent (in comparison to Russia's 69 percent) from 1992 to 2017. According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2020 China spent almost four times as much as Russia did on its military (\$244.9 billion to \$66.8 billion).

In 1999, less than 2 percent of its fighter jets were fourth-generation, 4 percent of its attack submarines were modern, and none of its surface ships were. Twenty years later, not only did China have much more of everything, but the majority was the most advanced, modern versions available—with China exhibiting advantages over Russia even in combat aircraft, a traditional area of weakness for China.

Russia's poor performance does remind us that it takes more than just a lot of fancy systems to win a war (though having more advanced systems and more of them surely would have helped). The human element of

Russia's failures is front and center. Putin probably did not have an open and honest communication channel with the military, which was fearful of providing unfavorable information to the erratic leader. Russian troops were largely considered incompetent, but Putin thought superior technology could overcome human deficiencies.

Chinese President Xi Jinping identified similar training and competency issues in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) 10 years ago. But under his command, the PLA has been proactively implementing significant reforms to avoid similar pitfalls. And unlike Putin, who apparently believed technology could overcome deficiencies in personnel, Xi came to the opposite conclusion. When he came to power, he took one look at the military and recognized that with all its fancy equipment, the PLA probably could not fight and win wars and perform the missions it had been assigned.

Of particular importance, according to China's national military strategy, was to fight local wars under informationalized conditions. This meant that the network between platforms and people—the ease of connectivity—was the main feature of modern warfare. China needed the best equipment; an advanced command, control, computers, communication, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) network; and tons of precision-guided munitions. But perhaps most importantly, it needed troops that could leverage these systems to conduct seamless operations across services and top down through the chain of command.

What followed was a series of slogans—the two incompatibles, the two disabilities, the two big gaps, the five incapables—all designed to point out the organizational and personnel issues of the military and focus leadership attention and resources on fixing them. A massive military reorganization followed with moves such as reorganizing effective combat units to be smaller so that they can mobilize more

quickly and can remain self-sufficient for long periods of time. This means, in contrast with the Russian military, the PLA will likely have less reliance on generals at the front lines.

China also established theater commands to facilitate joint operations and prioritized realism in its military exercises to help it prepare for real combat. Part of all of this was Xi's demand that the military communicate its failures and weaknesses so that they could be addressed. Moreover, to improve command and control, China has moved toward engaging in multidomain joint operations all while standing up a new joint operations center that will ensure that, unlike with the Russian military, orders will be communicated and understood at the lowest levels. Indeed, the main reason that Xi has not yet made a play for Taiwan is likely his desire to hone this command and control structure and practice joint operations in realistic conditions for a few more years—a cautious and pragmatic approach that the situation in Ukraine only encourages further.

The PLA itself acknowledges that it still has some distance to go with training, particularly with regard to joint operations, but it looks as if the hard work is paying off. The complexity and scale of China's national military exercises are eye-opening. It takes a great deal of planning, synchronization, and coordination to take service-level operations to the joint level. China appears to have made great strides in this area. The United States has observed, for example, China executing deep-attack air operations in its exercises that have combined intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance with multidomain strike; lift for rapid mobility; and advanced fighter maneuvers. Russia has relied heavily on artillery and tanks, now and historically, while the PLA is showing a more balanced approach to combined arms operations.

The PLA is structurally superior to the Russian military. And the Chinese

know it. Granted, it's hard to know whether some of the outlandish claims in the Chinese media are true—that the PLA Air Force would actually “be able to take out the Ukrainian air force in one hour.” But one thing is for certain: The Chinese military is learning lessons from Ukraine—whether it is to stockpile more precision-guided munitions, ensure solid command and control, or cut off internet access to prevent the leaking of information to the West—which will only serve to improve its war-fighting capability in the future.

Fear of sanctions could still have an impact. As tempting as it is to make snap observations in the case of Russia's invasion, the impact of economic sanctions cannot be properly evaluated over a short time period. The need for a longer time horizon also applies to Russia-China economic comparisons, as it will generally require more extensive and more durable sanctions to deter or compel China than it would Russia.

Russia is thought, at least, to be highly vulnerable to the sanctions applied to date. And it is certainly the case that China can be harmed by sanctions. Beijing is more integrated in global trade and finance than Moscow and thus has more to lose. But integration cuts both ways—compared with Russia, more countries would be harmed to a greater extent by equivalent actions

taken against China. Further, China has demonstrated greater capacity to weather extended economic blows. This combination of features reduces the willingness of the United States and others to enforce durable sanctions, a fact that Beijing well appreciates.

The CCP survived three decades of worse poverty than experienced by the Soviet Union at the time, a self-inflicted depression in 1989-90 paralleling in some respects the events that ended the Soviet Union, the global financial crisis, and another partly self-inflicted economic wound via China's determination to maintain its zero-COVID policy in 2021-22.

During more recent events, Beijing has been able to mobilize first greater capital resources than Moscow and then far greater. In 2020, the World Bank put China's gross fixed capital formation at 20 times Russia's. Xi attacked some of China's richest citizens, as well as other elements of the private sector, in part because he believed them too intertwined with foreign capital. These were voluntary steps by China that mirror how the world currently seeks to punish Russia. Whatever their wisdom, Xi knows China can afford them, while Russia's capability is in doubt.

Some Russian foreign reserves have been effectively frozen and some financials excluded from the SWIFT banking



A flag bearing Ukraine's national colors and a white dove is waved in opposition to Russia's invasion during a protest in front of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei, Taiwan, on May 8.



system, limiting international transactions. In the short term, these steps could have a similar impact on China, but they would be much harder to sustain.

Beijing has conducted currency swaps with dozens of countries that will want their yuan to be useful. China also holds foreign government bonds in amounts that countries cannot ignore. U.S. Treasuries see the largest holdings, but there are also sizable quantities of Japanese government bonds, for instance. With official Chinese reserves upwards of \$3 trillion, perhaps five times Russia's, a partial freeze would quickly wear on governments and firms looking for bond buyers.

For any SWIFT restrictions that interfere with outbound U.S. portfolio investment, that volume stood at \$85 billion in Russia and \$1.15 trillion in China in 2020. The stock of U.S. direct investment was 10 times higher in China than Russia—companies willing to exit Russia would face leaving a lot more behind in a China contingency. Most broadly, the yuan can erode the role of the dollar; the ruble certainly cannot. Beijing lacks the will to allow free movement of the yuan and make it a true reserve currency, but heavy, durable sanctions might change that.

On the goods side, existing pressure to spare Russian vital exports would be more intense in China's case. The loss of Russian oil and gas exports of \$230 billion in 2021 threatens energy markets. Chinese exports are at least as important within chemicals, textiles, household appliances, industrial machinery, and consumer electronics. Would they all be exempted?

Certain Russian exports, such as palladium, play supply chain roles beyond their direct financial value. As expected from its manufacturing and export volumes, China's supply chain participation is far larger than Russia's, extending from inputs crucial to global pharmaceuticals to processed rare earths crucial to clean-energy applications. Russian ships have been banned from some ports. By

tonnage, Russia accounts for a bit over 1 percent of the world's commercial fleet, while China accounts for more than 11 percent. Banning Chinese ships would cause seaborne trade to noticeably contract, hitting supply chains that would already be strained by the diversion of Chinese goods.

Even an area of clear Russian advantage—lower import dependence—is double-edged. Inhibiting Chinese imports of iron ore or integrated circuits, for example, would hit the country hard. But China is such a huge purchaser that many producers would refuse to join a sustained embargo against it. As elsewhere, the barriers to Russian imports adopted thus far could hurt China only in the unlikely event that they are maintained for many months.

From how to remain in power to how to advance on the international stage, militarily and economically, the CCP has been learning what not to do from the Soviet and then Russian experience for decades. Chinese strategists are unquestionably evaluating whether the nature of warfare has changed or if they failed to consider some critical factors necessary for success. Chinese economists are certainly looking to identify missed vulnerabilities based on how the economic dimension of the war in Ukraine plays out—and will work to address them to prevent exploitation by the United States and others.

Not that it will all be easy for Beijing. But China is already better prepared than Russia, economically and militarily. The steps to support Ukraine and punish Russia are immediately less potent in a China contingency. And an unfortunate side effect of the tragedy in Ukraine is that China has a relatively low-cost opportunity to learn—it may become a more formidable challenger than it would've been otherwise. The United States and its allies should realize that their effectiveness with regard to Russia is highly unlikely to translate. In a Taiwan contingency, the United States must be able to immediately

implement both a stronger package of actions aimed at China and also a second package aimed at minimizing the long-term cost of the first. ■

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## Don't Ignore India's Delusions

*By Sushant Singh*

**L**eaders have long relied on manufactured history to justify invasions. Russian President Vladimir Putin denied the existence of an independent Ukrainian state in his bid to take over the country and restore Russia's perceived greatness. Chinese President Xi Jinping argues that China must recover what his party sees as historical territory to overcome its so-called century of humiliation.

Neither leader seems to care that Russia and China were never previously politically contiguous states.

Others around the world harbor similar irredentist dreams, and we ignore these ambitions at our own peril. For decades, India's Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—a Hindu-nationalist organization with close links to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—has put forward the idea of Akhand Bharat, or “unbroken India.” The proposed entity stretches from Afghanistan on India's western flank all the way to Myanmar to the east of India, encompassing all of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has mentioned it: In a 2012 interview, while chief minister of Gujarat, he argued that Akhand Bharat referred to cultural unity.

In April, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat told a public gathering that India would become Akhand Bharat in 10 to 15 years, providing the first timeline for a Hindu-nationalist pipe dream. Besides heading the RSS, Bhagwat is a very powerful figure in today's India because of his personal relationship with Modi. The BJP is one of a few dozen institutions under the direct control of the RSS. Modi was a full-time RSS campaigner before it assigned him to the BJP, and he considers Bhagwat's late father to be a mentor. Indian corporate leaders and foreign diplomats recognize Bhagwat's clout, visiting him at RSS headquarters in Nagpur, India. His words must be engaged with seriously, not dismissed offhand as the fantasies of an old man.

The idea of Akhand Bharat is a core tenet of Hindutva ideology, a century-old doctrine of Hindu nationalism. Now, with its own map and nomenclature, it is being taught to students in RSS-run schools. Modi's government seems to assert that this political geography transcends present-day borders. Its proponents imply that achieving Akhand Bharat will come after India is refashioned as a *de facto* Hindu Rashtra, or

“Hindu nation”—even if it remains a constitutional republic. This does not bode well for India's democratic values. Modi has often presented himself as a Hindu ruler, a shift accompanied by increased violence against Muslims in India.

Beyond India, this ideology could also be dangerous for the region: It is likely to breed further insecurity in nuclear-armed Pakistan and will weaken India's position against China, its more powerful regional rival. Furthermore, although the notion of a Hindu Rashtra may seem far-fetched today, the same was said of Putin's expansionist ambitions until recently. The very public desire of Hindu nationalists to create a new, unbroken India could have global ripple effects—and it must be taken seriously.

Although often assumed to undo the British partition of India in 1947, the idea of Akhand Bharat invokes an Indian kingdom from more than 2,000 years ago. An RSS textbook teaches that India once included “Brahmadesh [Myanmar] and Bangladesh to the east, Pakistan and Afghanistan to the west, Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan to the north, and Sri Lanka to the south.” The text uses its own Sanskritized names for oceans and seas, ridding them of any perceived Islamic influence: The Bay of Bengal becomes the Ganga Sagar (sea of the Ganges). An RSS publishing house produces a map in which Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Tibet are also given new names. This nomenclature dates at least to the 1960s, when the second RSS chief, M.S. Golwalkar, included it in his book.

Policies enacted by Modi's government increasingly reflect this desired political geography, which asserts that Hindutva goes beyond India's current borders. In 2019, India passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which selectively creates a path to citizenship for religious minorities—mainly Hindus—from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and excludes Muslims. Indian Home Minister Amit Shah then linked the CAA criteria to a countrywide

National Register of Citizens, raising fears among Muslims that they could be denied citizenship. The same year, Modi's government stripped Jammu and Kashmir—India's only Muslim-majority state—of its autonomy, bringing it under direct federal rule.

The idea of Akhand Bharat also shapes the current Indian government's relationship with its neighbors. Within India, Modi refers to the country as Vishwa Guru, or “teacher to the world”; right-wing propaganda suggests that only he can restore the greatness of Hindu India. He has paid high-profile visits to temples in Bangladesh, Nepal, and elsewhere to suggest that those countries fall under Hindutva's umbrella. Under Modi, India has also selectively raised diplomatic objections about the ill treatment of Hindus in neighboring countries; it pledged to fast-track visas for Hindus and Sikhs from Afghanistan after the Taliban took over last year.

Despite this narrative, most historians figure that present-day India never included Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Tibet, or Sri Lanka, even in ancient times. The areas that did belong to India—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan—never fell under the same direct leader, except while under British colonial rule. Even then, the government operated through numerous princely states with their own limited sovereignties. To treat India as a much older political entity is a powerful act of revisionism. South Asia's history is one of a multiplicity of kingdoms with rulers of various ethnicities who spoke different languages. Their states occupied parts of present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—often concurrently.

Furthermore, India's past is not one of perpetual conflict along sharp religious lines. Hindu leaders historically employed Muslim generals to fight Muslim rulers and vice versa. But by describing India as having suffered under 1,200 years of Muslim rule, as Modi did after his 2014 election, RSS ideologues argue that India is a Hindu nation that must



be restored to its supposed former glory. This idea of a linear path to glorious Hindu rule ended by Muslim invaders was, in fact, a British colonial construct intended to divide and rule the region; the RSS has lapped it up.

Hindu nationalists have deployed their distortion of history to support divisive policies and even violence against India's more than 200 million Muslims. This religious persecution has recently reached alarming levels. Hindu-nationalist campaigns have targeted Muslim Friday prayers, BJP leaders have conflated Muslims with criminals in campaign speeches, and Muslim students have been barred from class for wearing headscarves. Following communal violence targeting Muslim neighborhoods, authorities have bulldozed houses, shops, and religious structures—despite an order by India's Supreme Court temporarily banning such demolitions. Modi has remained silent on the matter, instead using a recent speech to demonize a 17th-century Mughal emperor.

Bhagwat has expressed satisfaction with these recent events without naming them explicitly. Having already declared India a Hindu Rashtra, he recently described the country's trajectory: "Those who want to stop it will

be either removed or finished, but India will not stop. Now, a vehicle is on the move, which has an accelerator but no brakes. No one should come in between. If you want to, come and sit with us, or stay at the station." In another speech, Bhagwat said if Hindus want to remain Hindus, then India must be "unbroken."

Akhand Bharat has long been a part of Hindu-nationalist ideology, connected to the core RSS principles of *sangathan* (organized unity) and *shuddhi* (purification of race). Local RSS units observe Aug. 14—the day before India and Pakistan became independent countries in 1947—as Akhand Bharat Sankalp Diwas (Pledge Day for an Unbroken India). In 1948, Mohandas Gandhi's RSS-linked assassin, Nathuram Godse, told the jury during his trial that he killed Gandhi because he held him responsible for "the cursed vivisection of India." Before he was hanged, Godse shouted, "*Akhand Bharat amar rahe*," or "Long live unbroken India."

Likewise, Bhagwat's recent rhetoric around achieving the goal of Akhand Bharat is troubling. "We will talk about nonviolence, but we will walk with a stick. And that stick will be a heavy one," he said in his April speech. Small countries in South Asia are already concerned about India's hegemony; Bhagwat's

proclamations are bound to increase insecurity in the region, breeding anger and hatred against India. Recent events in Bangladesh could be a harbinger of what's to come: Last year, Modi visited Dhaka and was met with violence and protests against his anti-Muslim policies, leaving at least 12 people dead.

The RSS has especially focused on Pakistan, with its leaders calling for undoing the reality of partition. Such rhetoric has contributed to the persistent animosity between the two neighbors, and it appears in Modi's own embellished history. In 1999, then-Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited the Minar-e-Pakistan monument in Lahore, Pakistan—where Pakistan declared independence. It was seen as a signal that the Hindutva ideologues had accepted Pakistan's existence. But Modi has now diminished Vajpayee's narrative: When he claims that nothing was achieved in the 70 years before his own premiership, Modi does not exclude the late BJP leader.

In any case, the idea that a nuclear-armed Pakistan would somehow become part of a unified India—because Bhagwat's followers wield a heavy stick—is ridiculous. To include Tibet in the equation is even more so, given that Chinese soldiers have denied Indian patrols access to the disputed territory in nearby Ladakh for nearly two years. The relative difference in power between India and China has only widened under Modi's watch; a demand that Tibet become part of Akhand Bharat would certainly provoke Beijing. Akhand Bharat propaganda could further weaken India's position in the neighborhood, where China has successfully challenged India's influence in countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Scholars of the RSS say that as a secretive organization, it hasn't publicized any official document related to Akhand Bharat. Its contours must be gleaned from speeches, books, or interviews from the organization's top



A bulldozer demolishes a structure during an anti-encroachment drive led by North Delhi Municipal Corp. in New Delhi's Jahangirpuri neighborhood on April 20.

MONEY SHARMA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

leaders. Public communications from the RSS and the BJP also diverge on the issue: Akhand Bharat has, at times, been described as a cultural entity, a political group with a single military and a common president, a federation, or a political monolith. By speaking in different voices, RSS propaganda leaves enough wiggle room for these leaders to escape uncomfortable questions while camouflaging their actual idea.

But the devil lies in the details of RSS rhetoric. Last February, Bhagwat said tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan had arisen because they had been separated from India, “the energy of life,” adding that “we are open to treat them as our own as they were before.” Other RSS ideologues have explained that refers to the period before Islam came to South Asia—a crafty way of saying that India’s neighbors should accept their Hindu origins. At its core, the idea of Akhand Bharat is not a confederation of sovereign states where all citizens are equal; it rejects the Westphalian state system for a revanchist vision of an expansionist Hindu nation. That should be clear from the track record of the RSS, which treats India’s religious minorities poorly and appears hellbent on destroying India’s secular, democratic constitution.

No political leader would dare attempt to carry out the RSS idea of a Hindu Rashtra today, but those blinded by manufactured nostalgia and religious zeal will go to any extent to pursue what they see as a righteous cause. Sharing the stage with Bhagwat in April, a Hindu saint said, “Undivided India is the dream of all in the country, and this dream will certainly be realized during the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.” If the RSS did not control the levers of power in India, these ideas could be dismissed as fantasies. But Bhagwat’s yearning to change the map comes with a cost. Under Modi’s influence, India will suffer more bigotry and violence as its heritage and democratic values are squandered in the pursuit of Akhand Bharat. Instead of ignoring it, the world must recognize

what the nature of this dangerous idea portends for India and beyond. ■

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## Bolsonaro Has Been Watching Trump

By Oliver Stuenkel

**A**s millions of Brazilians watched in disbelief the live images of the U.S. Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021, many commentators in the United States and Brazil were quick to agree that then-U.S. President Donald Trump had overplayed his hand. They believed the attack—which failed to accomplish its objective of obstructing a democratic transition of power—would damage

the outgoing president’s political fortunes and complicate the U.S. Republican Party’s future.

A year and a half later, however, the way Brazilians interpret that day and its meaning has changed as the Republican Party—which failed to condemn Trump and now propagates an increasingly revisionist narrative about the Jan. 6 events—looks set to take back control of the U.S. Congress in November’s mid-term elections. Guga Chacra, an influential Brazilian political commentator, flatly stated in an analysis this January that “we were wrong” to assume Trump would be ostracized in the attacks’ aftermath, pointing out that “the Capitol invasion didn’t debilitate Trump.” This shift in perspective among Brazilians is buttressed by the real possibility of Trump returning to the White House in 2025.

Today, Trump’s decision to incite a violent mob to disrupt an electoral certification process no longer looks like a high-risk gamble but one of several carefully planned steps to consolidate the false narrative of a rigged election among his followers and maintain control of the Republican Party. Indeed, while the Democratic Party is currently in power at the national level, Trump retains de facto control of the Republican Party and its agenda. On Feb. 4, the party declared the Jan. 6, 2021, riots “legitimate political discourse” and censured Reps. Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger for taking part in Congress’s inquiry into the attacks.

Taken as a whole, the remarkable successes of Trump’s party in controlling the narrative surrounding Jan. 6 since his tumultuous exit from the White House makes emulating his strategy seem all the more attractive—and far less risky.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is no doubt watching closely. Bolsonaro has never hidden his authoritarian ambitions and admiration for Trump, whom he described as his greatest international ally. Ahead of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, Bolsonaro often expressed his hope that Trump would win reelection. This October, the



“Trump of the Tropics,” as Bolsonaro is often called abroad, is headed into a presidential election of his own.

In addition to frequently embracing Trump’s argument that the 2020 election was rigged, Bolsonaro has eagerly promoted conspiracy theories about Brazil’s electoral system in recent years, leading electoral officials to say they consider a challenge by Bolsonaro to the outcome of October’s vote “inevitable.” In particular, Bolsonaro seeks to systematically discredit electronic voting, which has been used across Brazil since 1996.

Bolsonaro frequently argues without evidence that Brazil’s electoral system is susceptible to fraud, calling for the reintroduction of paper ballots. After the Jan. 6 riots, Bolsonaro warned supporters, “If we don’t have the ballot printed in 2022, a way to audit the votes, we’re going to have bigger problems than the U.S.” Pro-Bolsonaro WhatsApp and Telegram groups are rife with fear-mongering about election fraud.

For Bolsonaro, the events of Jan. 6 initially held more lessons of what to avoid than what to emulate. To succeed where Trump had not, the Brazilian president would have to co-opt the armed forces, further erode public trust in the electoral system, and mobilize a larger number of followers to act. Although all of these options seemed possible, they could have posed serious risks for Bolsonaro and his family, such as being prosecuted for sedition or losing control over Brazil’s conservative camp.

In the aftermath of Jan. 6, Bolsonaro’s son Eduardo—a congressman—focused on the attackers’ mistakes while presiding over the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies’ Commission on Foreign Affairs and National Defense. The younger Bolsonaro said that if the invaders had been better organized, “they would have taken the Capitol,” ominously adding that if the rioters—described as “good citizens” by Ernesto Araújo, Brazil’s foreign minister at the time—“would have had a minimal war power ... [none of them] would have died,” allowing them

to “[kill] all the police inside or the congressmen they all hate.”

But now, the second coming of Trump’s party may lead Bolsonaro and his advisors to believe that rejecting electoral results—even if futile where maintaining power is concerned—could provide him with long-term benefits, including by helping to consolidate a core cadre of loyalists. After all, the fact that the Republican Party today remains in lockstep with Trump despite his 2020 electoral loss suggests Bolsonaro could utilize his own “Stop the Steal” myth to prevent the emergence of rival politicians on the right, labeling anyone who accepts his opponent’s victory as a traitorous false conservative.

Put differently, Bolsonaro may now reason that even if he incites an armed revolt that ultimately fails to prevent the transition of power after an electoral loss in October, doing so could still be worth it.

Pollsters agree that Bolsonaro’s chances of winning reelection in October against his likely opponent, leftist former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, are relatively low. Surveys show Lula, who governed Brazil from 2003 to 2010, well ahead of the far-right incumbent. Yet despite the Bolsonaro government’s numerous woes—a pandemic response likened to a “crime against humanity” by some Brazilian lawmakers and a sluggish economic recovery—polls have tightened in recent months, and even Lula allies publicly acknowledge that the president’s approval ratings are likely to improve as public spending increases ahead of the election. A narrow loss, then, would make Bolsonaro’s claims of voter fraud seem more credible in the eyes of supporters.

Granted, Brazil’s electoral system is different from the United States’. Unlike the United States, Brazil has a Superior Electoral Court, which concentrates the authority to confirm electoral results and is less vulnerable to outside pressure. Due to the absence of an electoral

college, Bolsonaro and his supporters also cannot bully lowly state officials into submission to sow confusion about an electoral result’s legitimacy. Moreover, the Brazilian president lacks firm control over a large national political party, which Trump has achieved. And Brazil’s multiparty landscape may make it more difficult for Bolsonaro to monopolize his influence among conservative voters.

Still, if Bolsonaro loses October’s election and refuses to accept the result—which I believe to be the most likely scenario—he may succeed in turning support for his narrative into a proxy for patriotism in the eyes of his followers. Erstwhile Bolsonaro allies in Brazil who broke with him to position themselves as center-right presidential candidates are so far faring just as badly as Republicans who questioned Trump’s claim that the 2020 election was stolen. Both Sergio Moro, Bolsonaro’s former justice and public security minister, and João Doria, the former governor of São Paulo—whose views are comparable to those of the Republican Party’s moderate wing—are currently stuck in a political no man’s land, vilified by both the left and Bolsonaro’s supporters. Despite Doria’s notable successes as governor—including taking the lead on vaccine procurement while Bolsonaro embraced COVID-19 denialism—few Brazilians supported his presidential bid, and he dropped out of the race in May.

Even without an insurrection, Bolsonaro’s quest to undermine public trust in the Brazilian electoral process poses a severe threat to the country’s democracy. Assuming he will cry fraud if he loses in October, millions of Brazilians will not consider the president’s successor legitimate. A poll conducted last year confirms that the percentage of Brazilians who share Bolsonaro’s concerns about electronic voting—seen by the vast majority of specialists as baseless—is on the rise, at more than 45 percent.

What is particularly worrisome in this context—and what makes copying Trump’s strategy even more attractive to

Bolsonaro—is that parts of Brazil’s armed forces are eagerly embracing Bolsonaro’s narrative about possible voter fraud and his call for electoral reform to reintroduce paper ballots. Last year, Brazil’s then-defense minister, Gen. Walter Souza Braga Netto, reportedly told the president of the Chamber of Deputies, Arthur Lira, that the Bolsonaro government would not allow the 2022 election to go ahead without the reform. The day before Brazil’s National Congress voted on the proposal—introduced by a Bolsonaro ally—the armed forces organized a military parade outside the legislature, a gesture largely understood as another thinly veiled threat. Refusing to be bullied, lawmakers rejected the measures, which experts believe would have sown the seeds of chaos on election day.

Brazil’s armed forces are unlikely to support a classic self-coup that involves surrounding the National Congress and the Supreme Federal Court with tanks. However, provided that the election is close, a narrative about voter fraud similar to that promoted by Trump in the United States may allow pro-Bolsonaro elements in the security forces to frame their support for the president as a defense of democratic order. This may involve appealing the results in court, asking for a rerun of the vote, or

declaring a state of emergency should protests break out. Some generals have publicly criticized the president, yet generous budget increases and access to power have ensured that most continue to support Bolsonaro, who likes to refer to the military as “my armed forces.”

There are currently more than 6,000 members of the armed forces working in the Bolsonaro government, about half of whom are active duty, and some are concerned that Lula could adopt a “revanchist” posture vis-à-vis the armed forces if elected. The former president’s attempts to reach out to the armed forces have so far been unsuccessful. In January, Lula commented that the armed forces would return to the barracks in his government—meaning, many would lose their political appointments.

Just as in the United States, countless Bolsonaro supporters are thus susceptible to considering a violent post-election insurrection not as an attack on democracy but as a heroic attempt to defend a righteous leader from a corrupted system. In this context, Bolsonaro’s attempts to centralize power over the military could be interpreted as setting the stage for a coordinated uprising after the election, if needed. The Brazilian president has also overseen the deregulation of gun ownership in the

country, which worries many observers.

Bolsonaro and his allies do not even need to study Trump’s strategy from afar. Brazil has become a global battleground for the proliferation of U.S. alt-right values, and Trump strategists and supporters such as Steve Bannon, Jason Miller, and Mike Lindell have established an ample dialogue with the Bolsonaro administration.

At an August 2021 symposium organized by Lindell and attended by Eduardo Bolsonaro, Bannon described Brazil’s upcoming presidential election as the “second-most important election in the world” (presumably after elections in the United States) and predicted that Jair Bolsonaro would win unless the election were “stolen.” Donald Trump Jr., who also attended the meeting remotely, argued that Brazil provided “hope for the conservative movement.”

Although it’s tempting to focus on Brazil’s risk of experiencing its own Jan. 6 in the aftermath of its 2022 presidential election, the true lesson Bolsonaro derives from Trump’s staying power is that eroding democracy is a long-term effort, involving years of systematically sowing seeds that may produce tangible results down the line. The specter of a Trump-dominated Republican Party triumphing in November could thus provide even greater inspiration to Bolsonaro and other populists with authoritarian tendencies than the 2016 election that brought Trump to power—or even the 2021 insurrection that saw him out. ■

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A man takes part in a demonstration in support of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro in São Paulo on Sept. 7, 2021, Brazil's Independence Day.



# Stop Private Oil Companies From Dictating Energy Policy

By Gregory Brew

**I**n the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, concerns over energy security have surged. The price of crude oil soared past \$120 per barrel, while the average price of a gallon of gasoline in the United States exceeded \$4. Despite the looming threat of climate change and the need to decarbonize the economy, Sen. Joe Manchin and other congressional lawmakers argue that the best way for Washington to address the current crisis is to increase domestic oil and gas production.

On the surface, that appears to make sense. Fossil fuel production is intimately linked to energy security—that is, a nation's ability to meet its energy needs with steady supplies at manageable prices. The more oil a nation produces, the less vulnerable it is to outside supply shocks.

But unlike other major oil-producing nations such as Saudi Arabia or large consumers such as China, the United States depends on private companies—rather than state-owned entities—to execute the exploration, production, refining, transportation, and marketing of its energy products. And unlike those state-owned entities, which pursue commercial opportunities in service of national priorities, private oil companies are motivated only by profit.

Although the partnership of public interest and private capital has worked to meet U.S. energy needs in the past, Washington's traditional approach may not be enough for its current dilemma. The United States faces a triple problem: how to supply the country with energy, meet

the energy needs of its allies in Europe, and take action to mitigate global climate change, all without causing negative economic repercussions. History suggests that expecting corporate actors to meet public needs will not be sufficient for tackling these problems—and could even endanger U.S. national security by subordinating it to the narrow commercial interests of a single industry.

Throughout the 20th century, concerns over impending oil shortages frequently compelled U.S. policymakers to push U.S. oil companies to increase production at home and abroad.

In the wake of World War I, as U.S. oil production experienced a brief decline after years of high wartime demand, U.S. officials encouraged private companies to expand their activities. During World War II, U.S. companies received backing from the State Department to develop their holdings in the Middle East. To support their operations, the U.S. Treasury allowed the companies to deduct taxes paid to Middle Eastern governments.

As a result of this public-private partnership, cheap oil flowed to the industrial West, fueling a postwar economic boom. The State Department saw the companies as effective tools for furthering the national interest and strengthening energy security. But differing commercial priorities among the companies frequently produced conflict that threatened national security or warped policy to serve commercial interests.

After World War II, the large “majors,” such as Exxon, Mobil, and Chevron, began importing oil from their cheap reserves in the Middle East. Smaller U.S.-based oil companies, such as Sinclair Oil, Marathon, and Atlantic Richfield, sought protection from these imports, which could outcompete oil produced at home.

In the early 1950s, these “independents” lobbied Congress for an import ban. Rather than make commercial arguments, the companies argued that imports undermined national security by hurting the domestic oil industry

and making the United States dependent on foreign oil.

They claimed the United States could be made self-sufficient—“energy independent,” as it would later be known—provided the domestic industry received sufficient support and prices stayed high enough to sustain investment in new production. What the independents wanted, in effect, was federal policy to subsidize domestic drilling.

The federal government was pulled in two directions. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's special energy committee concluded that restricting imports would be necessary “in the interest of national defense,” since domestic production would be needed in the event of a war against the Soviet Union, which would likely make overseas oil unobtainable. But relying on domestic supplies in the short term would drain U.S. reserves and leave Washington more vulnerable to outside pressure once domestic output was maximized. It would also harm consumers by keeping the price of oil at home artificially high.

The State Department was irate, complaining that “domestic political pressures” were now dictating foreign policy “under the guise of a narrow concept of national security.”

Ultimately, pressure from the companies won out. Eisenhower initiated voluntary import quotas in 1957. Representatives from the Independent Petroleum Association of America, a lobbying group for the smaller companies, appeared before Congress in 1958 calling for mandatory quotas. Accepting more imports, they argued, would devastate U.S. production and “lay the free world helpless at Russia's feet.” Eisenhower made import quotas mandatory the following year.

Whether the companies could actually protect national security came under heavy scrutiny during the 1970s energy crisis. As domestic consumption increased, production declined, and domestic reserves were drained. Eisenhower's quotas had not kept the

industry competitive, and in 1973 they were abandoned, facilitating a flood of imports to meet rising demand. That October, major U.S. companies lost control of Middle Eastern oil fields as Arab governments cut production and placed an embargo on the United States while raising the price of oil by 400 percent.

The oil companies became deeply unpopular and were subjected to extensive congressional investigations, where powerful Democrats such as Sen. Henry M. Jackson accused them of price gouging. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger regarded oil company executives as “idiots” and preferred to forge closer relationships with the king of Saudi Arabia and the Shah of Iran. In 1973, President Richard Nixon called for gaining independence from oil by developing alternative energy sources and increasing efficiency; his successor, Gerald Ford, passed sweeping legislation in late 1975 that created the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and gave Washington the power to intervene in oil markets in an emergency. Public anger at the companies culminated in windfall profit taxes that cut into their earnings.

Yet at the same time, the embargo and the ever rising price of oil pushed policymakers to support proposals that would boost domestic production, such as expanding offshore drilling and opening up Alaska’s North Slope. After years of price controls that protected consumers from the global price shock, President Jimmy Carter, a progressive Democrat, carried out the “decontrol” of oil prices in 1979. This policy allowed oil companies to charge more at the pump as an incentive to invest in domestic exploration.

While deregulating the oil industry at home, Carter laid the foundation for a permanent U.S. military presence in the Middle East through the declaration of the Carter Doctrine and the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force (what would later become U.S. Central Command). Carter’s policy and that of subsequent administrations aimed at securing Middle Eastern oil through military power,

ensuring that producing states such as Saudi Arabia continued to pump oil in adequate quantities to guarantee acceptable prices back in the United States.

Energy security now looked like deregulating energy at home while using the U.S. military to secure it abroad.

While Washington spent decades pursuing elusive energy-related goals in the Middle East—spending trillions of dollars on wars while arming petrostates, with little apparent impact on oil prices—high prices pushed domestic U.S. companies toward new extraction methods. In the so-called shale revolution, private firms drove a rapid recovery in U.S. oil production through hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling. Between 2010 and 2019, U.S. oil production grew from 5.5 million barrels per day to 12.3 million barrels per day. Combined with natural gas liquids, the United States produced enough oil in 2021 to become a net exporter for the first time since 1948.

This new status as an energy exporter has brought private companies back to the forefront of U.S. national security thinking. As the European Union seeks to end its decades-long dependence on Russian energy, the Biden administration wants to help fill the gap, pledging to increase shipments of liquefied natural gas to Europe by 15 billion cubic meters by the end of 2022, with the goal of 50 billion additional cubic meters per year

by 2030. Such supplies would require increased investment in U.S. production.

Like their predecessors in the 1950s, however, private U.S. oil and gas companies are putting their commercial interests ahead of national security. Drilling in the United States has been a perilous business, with price collapses from 2015 to 2016 and again in 2020. The oil and gas industry is more interested in offering stock buybacks and maximizing dividends, focusing on restoring profitability and rewarding shareholders, rather than growing supply.

Industry leaders want unequivocal support from the federal government—including looser environmental regulations and fewer restrictions on pipeline construction—before they’ll agree to invest in more production.

As private companies make these demands, the Biden administration, like its predecessors, is being pulled in different directions. The Democratic Party is committed to policies that combat climate change. But high gas prices, the threat of a global supply crisis, and pressure from industry allies within the party such as Manchin have pushed the administration toward a policy more openly supportive of boosting domestic production.

Even after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, President Joe Biden has said he hopes to reduce the United States’ dependence on oil. A good first step is the plan he announced on March 31 to inject oil into the market via the Strategic Petroleum Reserve while using the Defense Production Act to accelerate the development of batteries used in electric cars and renewable energy systems.

But the administration could go further by expanding its authority to oversee energy development.

The most extreme course would be the so-called public option put forward by Sen. Jackson during the 1970s: in effect, nationalizing the oil and gas industry so that it can better serve the public good. Such action may be necessary if Washington wants to avoid the worst effects



A pump jack casts a shadow as it pulls oil from the Permian Basin in Odessa, Texas, on March 14.



of climate change, though it is certain to be unpopular with most Democrats and an absolute nonstarter for Republicans. However, Washington can still do much to encourage private investment along channels that meet the country's real national security needs and not the parochial views of fossil fuel executives.

If the Biden administration wants to augment oil production in the short term, it could adopt a plan put forward by the advocacy organization Employ America and use the Defense Production Act and other methods to reduce oil price volatility by easing supply chain bottlenecks, particularly for equipment and raw materials needed to expand domestic production.

Limiting energy exports while expanding waivers for the Jones Act—which would allow domestic producers to ship energy products between U.S. cities much more easily—and freeing domestic energy to meet domestic needs would strengthen energy security while still allowing private companies to market their products. At the same time, tougher regulations on emissions, particularly methane leaks at production sites and in midstream operations, would help clean up U.S. fossil fuel production.

Washington should also reduce fossil fuel consumption by expanding funding for renewable energy. Biden's now-stalled Build Back Better plan included billions of dollars in support for clean energy, and there is currently limited progress toward a new bipartisan energy bill in the Senate that would include provisions supporting carbon capture technology and nuclear energy. Immediate cuts to consumption could be achieved by championing efficiency measures such as heat pumps. The EU may soon require its members to implement conservation and efficiency measures to reduce its dependence on Russian energy. The United States should do the same while helping NATO allies meet their needs in the absence of Russian imports.

The current strategy assumes that

greater fossil fuel production is ultimately conducive to U.S. security. Both history and the encroaching threats of climate change suggest this is a risky course for the United States to take. Instead of allowing the oil and gas industry to dictate energy policy, the United States should take the initiative and define national security on its own terms. ■

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## The World Bank Needs a New Approach on Africa

*By Vijaya Ramachandran and Arthur Baker*

**W**ith more than 3 billion people still living on less than \$5.50 a day, poverty reduction is central to human flourishing. It's also key to preventing the worst effects of climate change—people are much less vulnerable to climate shocks if they aren't poor.

That should be the main task of the two key multilateral institutions tasked with reducing poverty and promoting

development: the World Bank, which provides loans and grants for development projects, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which helps poor countries overcome currency crises and keep their finances stable.

Now, however, both institutions are under pressure from their rich donor governments to sideline economic development and poverty reduction and shift focus to reducing carbon emissions. In April, the IMF set up a Resilience and Sustainability Trust to help countries tackle climate change, where support could be contingent on recipient countries' plans to reduce emissions. Similarly, the World Bank has unveiled a climate action plan promising to align all future projects with the Paris Agreement. Already, the World Bank has severely restricted investments in natural gas projects, no longer funding exploration, development, production, or transportation of gas in the developing world.

In their zeal to reach emissions targets, rich countries are conflating two things, both of which are crucial to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Mitigation—the reduction of emissions—mostly needs to take place in rich and middle-income countries, which are responsible for the vast majority of carbon emissions. Adaptation—improving resilience to a warming climate—is lifesaving in poorer, more vulnerable countries. Adaptation requires investments in better housing, transportation, education, infrastructure, water management, agricultural technology, and other sectors. And it requires reducing poverty—so that more people have the resources to cope with weather-related extremes. Until now, these kinds of investments have been the bread and butter of the World Bank and other development institutions. By shifting development funding to emissions reduction, they are taking money from the poor and making them less resilient than they would otherwise be.

The shift of focus from poverty to climate is unjust, ineffective, and

disastrous for the world's poor. It's unjust because rich countries are forcing the World Bank and IMF to deprioritize poverty reduction despite this mission being vital to protect developing countries from the climate shocks caused by rich countries' emissions. It's ineffective because poor countries make up only a tiny fraction of global emissions—and their share will remain small, even if they grow rapidly using fossil fuels. And it will be a disaster for the 3 billion people struggling to escape misery because every dollar spent on the new carbon reduction mission is a dollar that could instead go into education, medical services, food security, and critical infrastructure.

Rich countries—the majority shareholders of both agencies—are responsible for pushing the shift away from poverty alleviation. The Biden administration states that the World Bank should be at the forefront of cutting emissions and minimize support for fossil fuels. Germany argues that the climate co-benefits of development projects must be increased to at least 30 percent—a vague metric whose meaning Berlin has not specified. Sweden wants the World Bank to take on a transformative role to align developing countries with global temperature and net-zero targets. While most of these proposals mention adaptation, they show little understanding that making poor countries more resilient will entail energy-intensive investments in housing, transportation infrastructure, and agricultural technology. Resilience also goes hand in hand with economic development and higher incomes, which in turn require the availability of cheap, reliable, and abundant energy.

The countries hit hardest by the new priorities will be the world's poorest, which are eligible for highly concessional World Bank loans. Emissions from these countries will remain very low for decades to come, even if their economies grow rapidly and without action to reduce emissions.



Senegalese President Macky Sall shakes hands with Kristalina Georgieva, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, at a conference in Diamniadio, Senegal, on Dec. 2, 2019.

Prioritizing carbon mitigation over adaptation and poverty reduction in low- and lower-middle-income countries stands the relationship between climate change and development on its head. The basic fact is that the world's poorest are also the least resilient to the effects of global warming. Rich countries, on the other hand, have the resources to protect their citizens. Nothing illustrates this better than the rapid decline in deaths from weather-related events—such as floods and storms—in developed countries. Such deaths have plummeted to a tiny fraction of their historical levels because citizens no longer live in slums and shacks, seas and rivers are largely contained by well-engineered dikes, hospitals have a reliable source of electricity, and emergency services are there when needed. If organizations ostensibly committed to development take funding from climate resilience and adaptation to spend on reducing carbon emissions, they will exacerbate the harms of climate change for the world's poor.

Developing countries are on the record rejecting these changes. By pushing climate mitigation on African countries, the West will “forestall Africa's attempts to rise out of poverty,” Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni warned last October. Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera reminded rich countries that they are responsible for the climate crisis and must provide resources to poor

countries for adaptation. Nigerian Vice President Yemi Osinbajo has eloquently described why a ban on financing of fossil fuels would be devastating for Africa. And in a TED Talk that has been viewed 1.4 million times, Rose Mutiso, a Kenyan activist and scientist, said forcing emissions mitigation on the world's poor is widening economic inequality and equivalent to “energy apartheid.” She continued: “Working in global energy and development, I often hear people say, ‘Because of climate, we just can't afford for everyone to live our lifestyles.’ That viewpoint is worse than patronizing. It's a form of racism, and it's creating a two-tier global energy system, with energy abundance for the rich and tiny solar lamps for Africans.”

To address climate change, rich countries must cut their emissions while supporting the poorest countries to reduce poverty and become more resilient. To achieve this, poverty reduction must remain central to the mission of the World Bank and IMF. A coherent strategy on climate change would differentiate among countries. The poorest countries eligible for concessional financing should not be forced to pivot to emissions reduction to qualify for loans. Climate action in these countries should focus on poverty reduction, increasing energy access, and building resilience through investments in housing, transportation, infrastructure, and agricultural technology. ■

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# BACK TO THE FUTURE

IS THIS REALLY A NEW PERIOD IN HISTORY?

BY DAVID A. BELL



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arlier this year, a student asked me how I thought historians would characterize the period of world history he believed had just begun with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I couldn't resist replying: "I have no idea. I just hope they won't be calling it the 'prewar period.'"

But are we, in fact, at the beginning of a new period in history? Many have been quick to affirm the idea. Even before the invasion began, the *Wall Street Journal* columnist Gerard Baker was opining that "the crisis over Ukraine ... marks the definitive end of the post-Cold War era." And no sooner had Russian forces crossed the Ukrainian border than the Brookings Institution's Daniel S. Hamilton agreed: "The post-Cold War period has ended. A more fluid and disruptive era has begun." A few days later, the political scientist Sean Illing called the invasion a "world-historical event," adding that "the effects of it will likely ripple out for years to come." All three were confident that one day, historians would begin new chapters in their textbooks with the year 2022.

Historians themselves, though, have never had a single, obvious, agreed-on way of slicing up history into distinct segments, and they quarrel endlessly about how to do so. Some speak of a "long 18th century" that stretches from 1688 to 1815 and others of a "short 18th century" that runs only from 1715 to 1789. Did the Middle Ages end with the Italian Renaissance in the 14th century or with European voyages of exploration in the 15th? Or perhaps the Reformation in the 16th century? Was there such a thing as a "Global Middle Ages," or does that term impose a European concept on areas of the world unsuited for it? As long as historians disagree about the relative importance of different factors of historical change—i.e., forever—they will disagree about periodization.

It's worth remembering that it has been only two years since the start of another world crisis that many observers understandably thought had inaugurated a new era in world history. "The pandemic," *FOREIGN POLICY* itself proclaimed in March 2020, "will change the world forever." The actual

predictions it elicited on this occasion have, for the most part, stood up quite well. But did 2020 really mark the start of a new era? Today, with the initial shock having receded and with COVID-19 possibly (hopefully) descending to the level of an endemic but manageable disease, its world-changing character seems at least somewhat less apparent.

Even moments of particularly massive, violent upheaval do not necessarily constitute transition points between distinct eras. Adolf Hitler's invasion of Poland on Sept. 1, 1939, might seem one such moment. But many historians argue that World War II had a crucial prologue in the Spanish Civil War that began in 1936. Asian historians often date the start of the war to 1931 and Japan's invasion of Manchuria. Some historians, including Princeton University's Arno Mayer, have lumped together both world wars, and the years between them, as the "Second Thirty Years' War." The pie of history gets endlessly resliced.

It is the end of wars, and the collapse of regimes, that most reliably marks the end of an era. Historians frequently cite British statesman Edward Grey's remark, at the start of hostilities in 1914, that "the lamps are going out all over Europe." But at the time, most Europeans expected what became World War I to last no more than a few months and for it not to cause regime change. It was the end of the war in 1917-18, and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, German, Ottoman, and Russian empires, that—*pace* Mayer—marked the clear end of one era and the start of another. A similar point could be made about the end of the Cold War in 1989-91.

The end of the post-Cold War period is far harder to measure. Indeed, it has already been proclaimed many times: with the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999; with 9/11; with



# 1931

Japan's invasion of Manchuria  
—one pivotal prologue  
to World War II.



# 2001

The 9/11 attacks  
and the end of the  
post-Cold War period.



# 2020

The COVID-19  
pandemic.

Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia; with Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea; with the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president. I would not be at all surprised if, 10 years from now, following some new international horror, a fresh chorus of instant analysts declares it over yet again. Some periodizations are simply more convincing than others. Social scientists frequently call our current era one of "late capitalism," although that phrase has been in common use since at least the mid-1970s. But as capitalism has stubbornly refused to end, they have no alternative.

Of course, historians do need ways to organize their material chronologically. The pie does need to be sliced. But premature expostulations about how a new era has started all too often amount to nothing but empty rhetorical gestures, reflecting what can only be called "Fukuyama envy." (You, too, can have your name forever attached to "the end of" something!) Worse, they flatter the egos of dictators like Vladimir Putin, who want nothing more than to be seen as world-historical figures, bending the course of human events to their superhuman will. They also generally require attributing to earlier periods a degree of stability that observers at the time singularly failed to perceive. Calling the era that supposedly began this February more fluid and disruptive than the one that preceded it plays down the enormously disruptive effects attributed at the time, with reason, to the breakup of Yugoslavia, to 9/11, to the Iraq War, to Trump's election, and to much else.

In the shock and horror that accompany events like the invasion of Ukraine, it is easy to forget the obvious point that observers most often can start to gauge the true significance of an event only once its long-term consequences have begun to

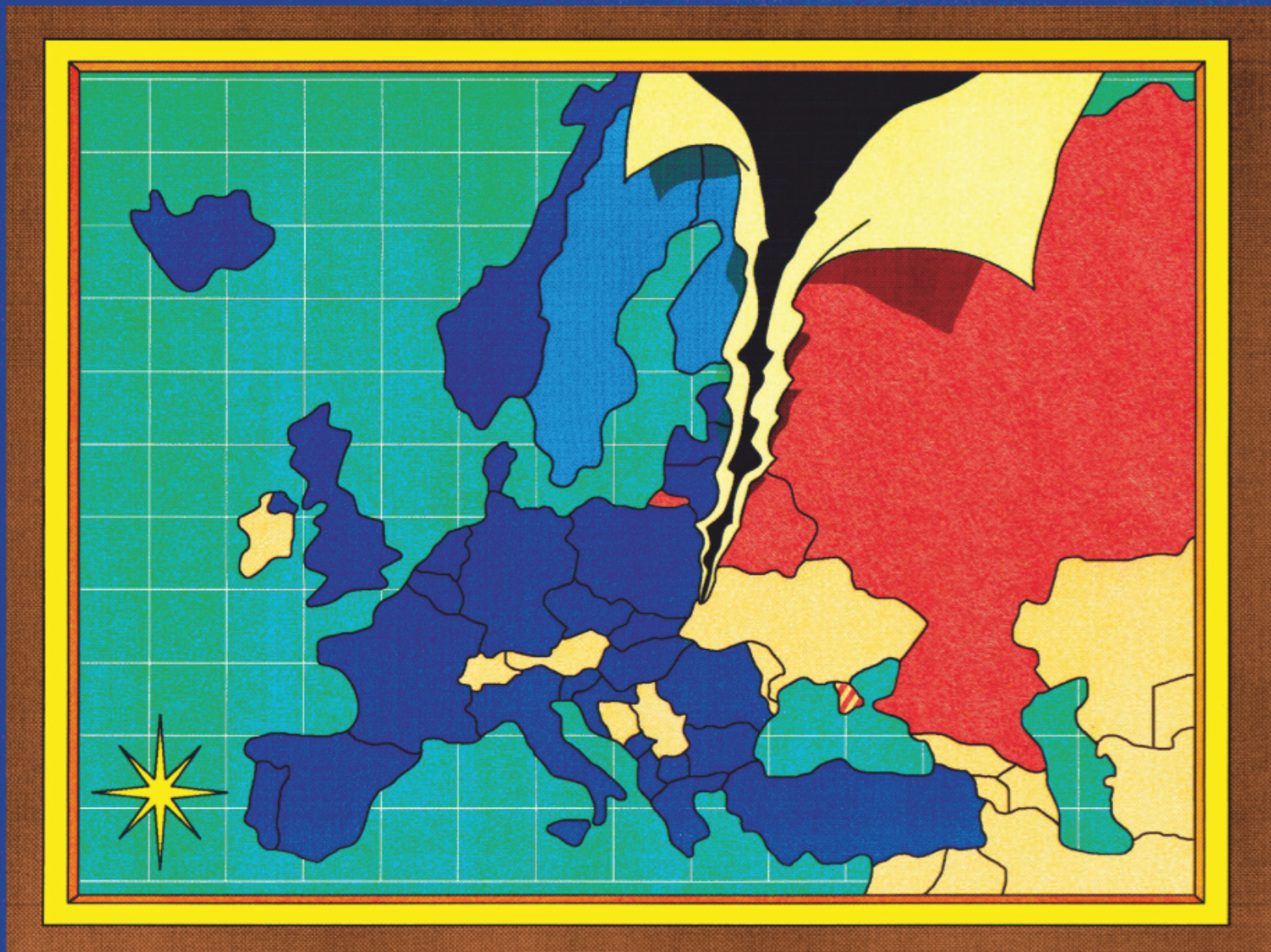
emerge. Will the war in Ukraine degenerate into another frustrating, low-level frozen conflict like so many others around the world? Will it lead to new and even more destabilizing aggression by Russia? To nuclear war? Will it cause Putin's fall from power? At the end of 1991, we knew that whatever else the future held, the pre-1989 communist bloc would not be part of it. We don't have even that degree of certainty about Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Its outcome, still enormously unpredictable, is what will ultimately determine whether it deserves to mark the end of an era—or something else entirely.

The story used to be told that Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, on being asked in the early 1970s about the meaning of the French Revolution of 1789, replied: "It is too early to tell." It has since come to light that he was really talking about the French student revolts of 1968, but there is a reason the story's original version struck such a chord. It takes time—often a very long time—for the effects of an event to come into reasonable focus. And even then, historians will continue to produce competing interpretations, depending on the perspective they write from and the questions they ask.

We should also remember that history all too often offers up unpleasant surprises. The coming year could be the year of a plague that overshadows even COVID-19. It could be the year of a stock market crash and a second Great Depression. We could, in fact, currently be living in the "prewar period." Until we know for sure, we won't know what to make of the past few months, either. ■

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## A NEW IRON CURTAIN

*On paper, the Soviet Union  
collapsed in one day.  
In reality, it is still collapsing.*

BY M.E. SAROTTE

**EARLY IN THE BLOCKBUSTER FILM** *Back to the Future*, Dr. Emmett Brown, a wacky but lovable scientist who goes by “Doc,” slumps to his death after an attacker pumps multiple bullets into his chest at short range. This surprisingly violent moment disrupts what was, until then, an upbeat teen comedy released to entertain Americans during the Fourth of July holiday in 1985. Doc’s young protégé Marty McFly escapes the same gruesome death only by fleeing in the scientist’s newly built time machine. As a result, Marty unexpectedly finds himself stuck in a frightening past—without a way to get back to a future that had seemed so full of promise only moments before the murder.

Sudden feelings of profound disruption, of panic at finding

oneself in the throes of struggles seemingly past, of despair at being robbed of a promising future: These feelings have once again dawned—not in comic Cold War-era fiction but tragic post-Cold War reality. In the short space of time since Feb. 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin has catapulted the world backward into a dangerous past, one characterized by localized bloodshed under the shadow of potential global nuclear confrontation. This dizzying dislocation induces many questions: Why now? What’s coming next? And is there a way back?

Putin himself has provided some partial justifications for why he dragged Europe backward by amassing troops on Ukraine’s border late in 2021 and then launching a major and



unspeakably brutal invasion. In his opinion—vehemently rejected by Ukrainians—Moscow has an unlimited right to dominate Kyiv, thanks to the long, tangled histories of Russians and Ukrainians. He needs to assert his domination now, he claims, because of the way Ukraine and Russia's other neighbors created threats on Russian borders by joining, or cooperating closely with, the European Union, NATO, or both.

Among the many problems with Putin's justifications, however, is that they are not new. None of these developments arose in late 2021 or early 2022. In other words, the Russian president's statements don't answer the question, why now? The answer to that question lies instead in biography, both of Putin and of the Soviet Union, and they are closely intertwined.

**PUTIN'S PAST ACTIONS SHOW** that he considers the dates of significant events in his life—and in the life of the former Soviet empire—as occasions meriting displays of violence. Although the decision to shed blood on these dates is Putin's personal choice, such emphasis on anniversaries is not unusual among Russian leaders. They routinely conduct parades and commission artworks and installations to mark historical dates. World War II commemorations remain common nearly 80 years after that conflict ended. And while the significance of June 22 is often lost on Westerners, Russians rarely forget the Nazi invasion of their country that took place on that day back in 1941.

Putin takes the observation of anniversaries and birthdays to gruesome new lows, however. The killing of the human rights activist and journalist Anna Politkovskaya was achieved with a gunshot, likely fired by a professional, at close range on Oct. 7, 2006—Putin's birthday. The leaking of emails hacked from the account of John Podesta, aimed at undermining the campaign of U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, occurred on Oct. 7, 2016—Putin's birthday a decade later. And the large-scale cyber-interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election came the same year as the 25th anniversary of the Soviet Union's collapse. Given that Putin has described that collapse as the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the previous century, he was clearly not going to let its 30th anniversary in December 2021 simply pass without comment. Instead, he spent it massing troops on the border with Ukraine.

Why does Putin care so much about this anniversary? Because of the close links between the history of the Soviet Union's collapse and of his personal humiliation during that era. To understand, it is necessary to go back to 1989 in what was then East Germany, where Putin was stationed at the KGB outpost in Dresden. When, after the Berlin Wall's unexpected opening on Nov. 9, peaceful protesters flooded the nearby headquarters of the Stasi, the East German secret police, Putin resolved not to let the same happen to his

outpost once protesters showed up there as well. Seeking armed support, he called the Soviet military forces in Dresden. The person who answered the phone refused to grant Putin's request, however, without explicit permission from Moscow—and then added, "Moscow is silent."

Putin decided to act on his own. He walked toward a small crowd that had gathered at the front gate in what a witness later described as a slow and calm manner. After a brief conversation during which the protesters were surprised to hear his fluent German, he informed them that if they entered, they would be shot.

The protesters paused, murmured, and decided to join their friends at the Stasi headquarters instead. Putin returned to the house, where, according to his own account, he and his crew "destroyed everything," burning "papers night and day" until "the furnace burst"—it was the final humiliating act of a man, and an empire, in retreat. Soon thereafter, Putin carried out his own personal retreat, from a collapsing East Germany to a collapsing Soviet Union. He struggled to find a future and was reduced, by his own admission, to working as a taxi driver.

Throughout, the phrase "Moscow is silent" continued to haunt him and gave rise to a lasting personal conviction. As he later put it, "Only one thing works in such circumstances—to go on the offensive. You must hit first and hit so hard that your opponent will not rise to his feet." As he saw it, "We would have avoided a lot of problems if the Soviets had not made such a hasty exit from Eastern Europe."

Political events inside the Soviet Union itself in the years immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall were, in Putin's view, even more damaging. What he calls the "sovereignty parade" of 1991—the sequence of declarations of independence by Soviet republics—had tragic results. These declarations meant that "millions of people went to bed in one country and awoke in different ones, overnight becoming ethnic minorities," Putin said in a speech announcing Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russians became, in his opinion, "the biggest ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders"—with the most painful division being the split between Russia and Ukraine after the latter's December 1991 referendum on independence, which Ukrainians overwhelmingly supported.

As Robert Strauss, the U.S. ambassador to Moscow at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse, advised Washington, "The most revolutionary event of 1991 for Russia may not be the collapse of communism but the loss of something Russians of all political stripes think of as part of their own body politic and near to the heart at that: Ukraine." The so-called color revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia in the 2000s exacerbated Putin's sense of grievance. The announcement by



NATO in 2008 that both of those countries would become members inspired Putin to turn to violence.

Russian troops essentially seized disputed regions of Georgia during a short war in 2008. Putin also began using force against Ukraine in 2014—creating the fiction that Moscow was not involved, however, by having troops without identifying markers, known colloquially as “little green men,” cross Ukrainian borders. He then escalated the violence to a new level this February, this time employing the fiction that he needed to “denazify” the country.

In short, to understand why Europe is at war now, it is essential to understand that 2008, 2014, and 2022 are not separate incidents. Rather, they are links on a chain of events meant to undo what Putin sees as his and his country’s intertwined histories of loss going back to 1989.

As the military analyst Michael Kofman has rightly put it, the Ukraine invasion is the latest in the wars of Soviet succession. These wars began in Chechnya in 1994 (and escalated there in 1999), continued in Georgia and Ukraine, and have now reached a new level. Put differently, even though the Soviet Union collapsed on paper in one day, in reality it is still collapsing. Its component parts continue to go through violent agonies as Moscow tries to claw back lost territory.

**THE MOST RECENT OF THESE WARS**, the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, is by far the most important because it is so much larger in scale than any of the preceding conflicts. It has already reordered international relations profoundly and will continue to do so, much like the 1950 invasion of South Korea by North Korea. A saying emerged after the outbreak of that conflict: The Korean War put the “O” in NATO. To be sure, the Atlantic alliance already existed, having come into being with the 1949 Washington Treaty. But the Korean War inspired that new alliance to prepare for a similar invasion across Europe’s own main line of division, namely the one between East and West Germany.

Putin’s 2022 attack is having a similarly catalytic effect. Just as the 1950 Korean invasion created a willingness among Western Europeans to overcome their bitter memories of combat with Nazis and allow West Germans to become NATO allies, so too has Russia’s war on Ukraine changed minds in profound ways. Among other consequences, it has created a willingness for NATO’s further enlargement to countries that had long avoided such a move: Finland and Sweden. Turkey is, at the time of writing, blocking their accession, but Turkish objections are more about extracting gains for Ankara than anything else, and there is little doubt that the alliance will find a way to address Turkey’s concerns and add two new members.

Moreover, extensive, long-term deployments of U.S. forces to Europe—during the Cold War, more than 15 million Americans

served in Germany alone—will become a reality once again. As they once did in divided Germany, these troops will deepen not just military but also cultural and personal connections across the Atlantic, this time in places such as Poland and Romania. And thanks to the ongoing decoupling of Russia from the Western world, there will once again be an Iron Curtain, although farther east, brushing much more of Russia’s borders than the old one as it sweeps shut. The biggest change will almost certainly be the addition of an 830-mile stretch of border between Russia and Finland, which will cause NATO’s land border with Russia to more than double.

There will be, as a result, a much longer front line with Russia on land; for that and other reasons, the new cold war will not look exactly like the old one. New forms of cyber- and space conflict will also add layers of complexity. But there will be strong similarities, most notably in the biggest risk: nuclear war. It is therefore essential to relearn how Cold War deterrence helped prevent such an escalation in the past.

This is a tricky balancing act. On the one hand, Putin is a thug who will go as far as allowed, so resistance—such as the astonishingly courageous and fierce kind offered by Ukraine—is necessary. But, on the other, he often likes to talk about how a cornered rat will lash out. He would presumably do the same. In awareness of this risk, the West must deter Russia without giving rise to escalation, as it did during the Cold War.

This won’t be easy, not least because of Russian failures in the early weeks of the 2022 war. Moscow’s hopes of swiftly seizing Kyiv and toppling Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky proved delusional. Multiple retrenchments have now yielded a grinding land war for small pockets of territory in eastern Ukraine. Yet even the jaw-dropping courage of Ukrainians cannot undo the reality that Americans and Europeans find themselves trapped in a past they’d hoped never to revisit.

Yet revisit it they must, because the sad reality is that there is no easy way back. Even if Putin decides tomorrow to cease all military operations on what was Ukrainian territory prior to 2014—an extremely unlikely development—Americans and Europeans will not, as a result, find themselves transported back to the future they were expecting prior to Feb. 24. It would still not be possible to agree to some kind of settlement for Ukraine’s, or Europe’s, future as if the attack had never happened. Just as Marty discovers in *Back to the Future*, Western leaders are now grasping that once you return to the past, you inevitably change the future.

And just as it’s unlikely for Putin to change course, it’s also unlikely that someone who does want to change course will come to power in Russia, as desirable as that may be from the Western point of view. While there is a precedent for such a development—the rise of the reformist Soviet leader Mikhail



## 1989

The fall of the Berlin Wall.



## 1991

Ukraine declares independence from the Soviet Union.



## 2000s

The color revolutions in Georgia (above in 2003) and Ukraine.

Gorbachev—the very existence of that precedent makes the rise of another reformer less likely because of how Putin and other contemporary Russian leaders still regret the consequences of Gorbachev’s reforms.

To understand the shadow cast by Gorbachev’s legacy, it’s useful to consider Russia’s neighbor China. The Chinese Communist Party paid close attention to the collapse of its fellow Communist Party in the Soviet Union. For years afterward, Beijing funded extensive research into, and distribution of the findings about, the causes of that collapse.

Among other party outputs from this research is a kind of training video, specifically for viewing by party officials. The goal of this video is to teach a new generation of Chinese leaders that the terrible Communist collapse ultimately arose from Gorbachev’s misdeeds. The takeaway from the training video is clear: Gorbachev was simultaneously stupid and evil—and similar reformers must not come to power if the current leadership is to survive. Presumably leaders in Moscow have the same view. In short, the fact that there was a Gorbachev in the past makes the likelihood of a new Gorbachev coming to power in the future much lower.

A period of prolonged hostility with Russia is now likely. The sheer uncertainty about the scope of the current conflict—will it go chemical, biological, or nuclear, as some of Putin’s more hard-line advisors are reportedly urging—is paralyzing. Eliminating that uncertainty, by doing everything possible to move away from violent conflict toward what will presumably be contentious but at least nonviolent relations with Russia, is an urgent need.

This won’t be straightforward. With the odd exception—such as Boris Bondarev, a Russian diplomat in Geneva who chose to resign rather than defend his country’s “warmongering, lies and hatred”—Moscow’s diplomats seem willing to employ whatever rhetorical strategies their leaders prefer. For Western diplomats to have to sit and listen to them will be an excruciating process—although nowhere near as excruciating as what Ukrainians are suffering. But there is no way around this process. The diplomats will need to focus on what remains of mutual benefit, such as resuming military-to-military

contacts in the hope of avoiding, at a minimum, dangerous miscalculations that might lead to a widening of the war.

If there is any silver lining to developments since Feb. 24, it is that the crisis in Ukraine has created a sense of cohesion inside the EU and NATO. Despite recent suggestions of cracks in alliance unity, fundamentally there’s a new shared sense of the imperative to push back hard against what Putin is doing. Even problematic member states and allies such as Hungary and Poland are acquiescing in workarounds to enable measures such as an EU oil embargo.

As they push back in the short term, it’s important for Western diplomats to maintain an awareness that Russia achieved democracy once and may be able to do so again. In other words, when dealing with Russia now, keep in mind those who dissent from Putin’s rule. They most certainly do not have the upper hand at present; for now, Bondarev is a lonely exception in his public actions. Such people exist, nonetheless, and they symbolize a better Russia, one that had admittedly imperfect democratic governance within living memory—but in the long term may be able to achieve it once again.

But, for now, dealing with the Russian leadership means dealing with precisely those individuals who ordered the unspeakable slaughter in Bucha and elsewhere in Ukraine. It is impossible to forget their violent and repressive actions, but it is necessary to deal with them to avoid escalation—the classic Cold War conundrum.

There’s no escaping the reality that, 30 years after the end of the Cold War, Moscow and Washington still control more than 90 percent of the world’s nuclear warheads. The conflict in Ukraine raises the chance of their use, which is what Western countries need to reverse—because if there’s a nuclear exchange, there will be no future to go back to at all. ■

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# THE RETURN OF NONALIGNMENT

*Why a growing number of countries  
want to avoid getting stuck in  
a great-power tussle—again.*

BY SHIVSHANKAR MENON

**AT FIRST GLANCE, THE POLICY OF NONALIGNMENT** may seem irrelevant in today's increasingly polarized world. The Western alliance is more united than since the Cold War, with even Finland and Sweden abandoning neutrality to join NATO. Other sharpening divides—between democracies and autocracies, rich and poor—dominate international affairs and contribute to the fragmentation of economies and polities.

Yet after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, nonalignment has become an attractive option for countries in the global south. Several states in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have displayed ambiguity toward the Western coalition, a reluctance to endorse sanctions against Russia, and discomfort with the idea of a new cold war. For these countries, the existing order does not address their security needs, their existential concerns about food and finances, or transnational threats such as climate change.

The international system is in transition between orders. The unipolar moment that followed the Cold War was predictable, but the rise of China and other countries in Asia has redistributed economic power. The result is a globalized world where the sole but reluctant military superpower operates in an economically multipolar context. In such uncertain times, nonalignment—or, to use its more fashionable contemporary name, strategic autonomy—attracts leaders who see global polarization as harming their interests.

Nonalignment took shape as the world divided into two competing blocs at the start of the Cold War. The global order was shifting rapidly: The United States had just used weapons of unprecedented mass destruction for the first time, and freedom was in the air for the world's colonized majority. For newly independent India, Indonesia, Egypt, Yugoslavia, and many other countries, joining neither NATO nor the Warsaw Pact increased their bargaining power with both blocs and limited their entanglement in others' quarrels.

India was one of the earliest advocates of nonalignment; it was a natural impulse to protect the freedom of decision-making that came with its independence in 1947. It was also a realistic policy response, since neither NATO nor the Warsaw Pact was ready to meet India's development or security concerns. Competition to prevent India going over to one side or the other ultimately resulted in some of its needs being addressed. Meanwhile, New Delhi benefited by cooperating with countries from either bloc that showed congruence with Indian policies.

Nonalignment gained the most traction in the 1950s and early 1960s, when the policy achieved major successes in decolonization, disarmament, and fighting racism and apartheid. The Bandung Conference, a meeting of Asian



and African countries held in Indonesia in 1955, included U.S. allies such as the Philippines and Iraq and Soviet allies such as China. In 1961, the policy was partially institutionalized in the Non-Aligned Movement, which today has 120 member states and 20 observers.

For Cold War crusaders such as John Foster Dulles, non-alignment was immoral—an attitude that has echoes today in some U.S. commentary as well as hard-line Chinese opinion. During the Cold War, the United States, as the stronger superpower, adopted a “with us or against us” attitude. Even before the death of its leader Joseph Stalin, the weaker Soviet Union instead quickly realized that cooperation with and co-option of the nonaligned countries were more productive than working against them.

After the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s and the U.S.-China rapprochement in the 1970s, the international context for nonalignment changed. The economic pressures of globalization and a marked decline in the effectiveness of the multilateral system—its primary area of focus—meant that nonalignment was less relevant to the immediate concerns of its adherents and less capable of delivering real-world outcomes. Export-led growth and new alignments in Asia replaced multilateral solutions. The end of the bipolar Cold War era cemented these trends; after 1991, some Indian thinkers even argued that the entire world was nonaligned.

Three decades later, the world again appears divided as it was at the start of the Cold War, with local balances of power shifting rapidly, particularly in Asia. This time, the binary has appeared between the United States and the West on one side and China and Russia on the other. But at the same time, the reaction of most countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to the Russian attack on Ukraine suggests a basic disquiet at having to choose sides.

Even regimes close to or dependent on Moscow or Washington have balked at or resisted calls to vote a certain way or to join in condemnation of the other side. Several of these states are preoccupied with the widespread debt crisis in developing countries, which the pandemic and the war in Ukraine have only exacerbated, and by the overall state of the world economy. The current world order—or its absence—does not seem to address their interests, and they seek alternatives.

In Asia, the rise of China and a limited U.S. pushback have led countries on China’s maritime periphery to improve their own capabilities and to begin unprecedented security and intelligence cooperation with each other in the last 15 years. The United States should welcome this development, which means more capable and willing partners to counter China. The transformation of U.S.-India security ties, the

upgrading of Japan’s and South Korea’s roles in the U.S. alliance system, and the changing function of the Quadri-lateral Security Dialogue all reflect a rebalanced effort to protect a rules-based and open Indo-Pacific region that is not dominated by any single power.

Whether this approach can coexist with or accommodate China’s ambitions seems doubtful. Judging by Beijing’s rhetoric and propaganda, the conflict in Ukraine and the Western reaction to it have only strengthened the Chinese Communist Party’s conviction that the United States is determined to contain and prevent China’s rise. Strategic competition between the United States and China has sharpened; other countries, reluctant to choose between their major economic and security partners, are more likely to look for a third way and seek self-reliance. In any case, China and the United States represent two of the biggest trading partners for many countries—losing one or the other is simply not a viable option.

Furthermore, Russia’s war in Ukraine has highlighted the fraying of the international nonproliferation regime. Moscow has made nuclear threats, leading to widespread discussion about the possible use of nuclear weapons. The invasion has exposed the ineffectiveness of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in which Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom pledged to respect Ukrainian territorial integrity and sovereignty in exchange for Ukraine’s accession to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and giving up nuclear weapons on its soil.

When the international system is failing or absent, and when it seems to be each country for itself, it is no surprise that leaders turn to nonalignment. The more the United States, Russia, China, or other powers pressure other countries to choose sides, the more those countries will be drawn to strategic autonomy, which could create a poorer and crueler world as countries reduce external dependence and consolidate their homefronts.

As long as countries see nonalignment as a logical complement to such policies, it is likely to find new adherents. How far governments and leaders take this logic will greatly influence our future. In the longer term, Russia’s war in Ukraine and the consolidation of the Western alliance today could lead to a new incarnation of the ideas, approaches, and policies pioneered by nonaligned countries more than half a century ago. ■

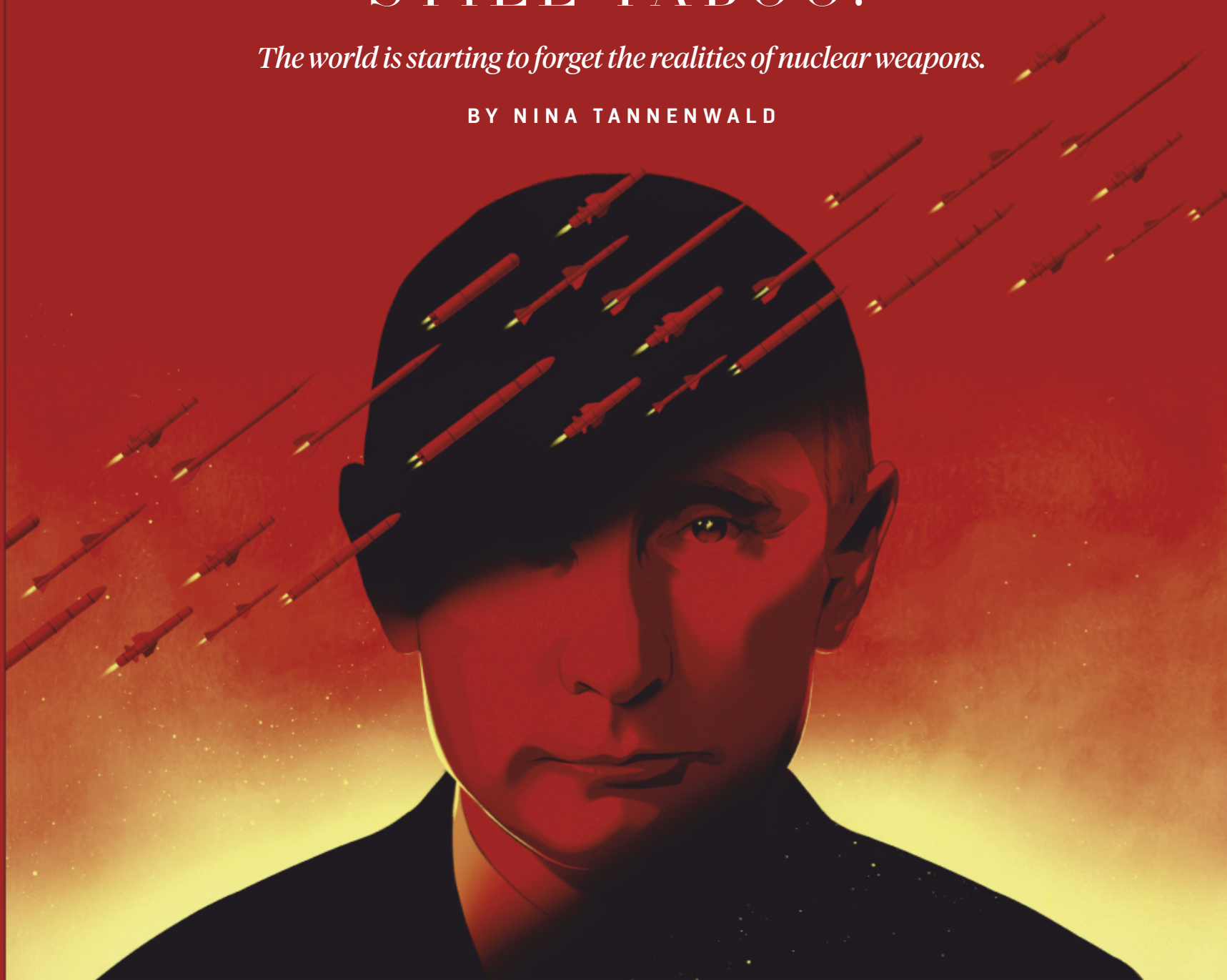
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# IS NUCLEAR STILL TABOO?

*The world is starting to forget the realities of nuclear weapons.*

BY NINA TANNENWALD



**IN MARCH 1990, THE NEW YORKER PUBLISHED** a cartoon by Jack Ziegler that captured the optimism at the end of the Cold War. The cartoon shows an executive sitting at his desk as a worker enters the office carrying a large bomb with fins. “Bring that H-bomb over here, will you, Tom, and just slip it into my ‘out’ box,” the executive says. “Sure thing, boss!” the worker responds.

The image of putting nuclear bombs “in the outbox” was emblematic of the hope many had that a new era of cooperation between the United States and the former Soviet Union was emerging. The fear of a nuclear war breaking out between

the world’s two superpowers receded, and many hoped that nuclear weapons, although they would still exist, would no longer be central to international politics. Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union’s last leader, declared in June 1991 that “the risk of a global nuclear war has practically disappeared.”

Today, more than 30 years later, nuclear bombs are back in the inbox. Fear of nuclear war between the United States and Russia has returned with a vengeance. As a result of Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine and Russian officials’ alarming nuclear threats, the world is closer to the use of nuclear weapons out of desperation—or by accident or

miscalculation—than at any time since the early 1980s.

The Russia-Ukraine war serves as a harsh reminder of some old truths about nuclear weapons: There are limits to the protection nuclear deterrence provides. (Usable conventional weapons may get you more protection.) In a crisis, deterrence is vulnerable, not automatic and self-enforcing. There is always the chance that it could fail.

In the first decades after World War II, many U.S. military and political leaders, and much of the public, expected or feared that nuclear weapons would be used again. Hiroshima and Nagasaki made the horrors of atomic bombings visible for all. The notion that nuclear war could happen at any moment permeated American society. Many Cold War-era buildings—including schools, airports, and even motels—were constructed with a fallout shelter in the basement. The instruction to “duck and cover” in the event of a nuclear attack (rather than run to a window to look out) became part of U.S. civil defense drills that every U.S. citizen, including schoolchildren, was encouraged to practice.

Movies such as *On the Beach* (1959), a piece of post-apocalyptic science fiction, depicted a world annihilated by nuclear war. Military strategists such as Herman Kahn, one of the historical inspirations for the madman title character of Stanley Kubrick’s classic black comedy *Dr. Strangelove*, proselytized about “thinking the unthinkable”—the need to think about how we would fight and survive a nuclear war. Events such as the Cuban missile crisis made these fears palpably real. For 13 days in October 1962, the world came the closest it ever has to nuclear war. Many people at the time believed the world was about to end in mushroom clouds.

Yet, during the same period, norms of restraint developed. A nuclear taboo—a normative inhibition against the first use of nuclear weapons—emerged as the result of both strategic interests and moral concerns. A global grassroots anti-nuclear movement, along with nonnuclear states and the United Nations, actively sought to stigmatize nuclear weapons as unacceptable weapons of mass destruction. After

the scare of the Cuban missile crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union also pursued arms control agreements to help stabilize the “balance of terror.” These norms of nuclear restraint helped foster the now nearly 77-year tradition of nonuse of nuclear weapons, the single-most important feature of the nuclear age.

But today, most of these arms control agreements have been torn up, and nuclear-armed states are once again engaged in costly arms races. We are in a period of nuclear excess rather than restraint. All of this brings us to the current moment and the big question suddenly on everyone’s minds: Do Russian leaders share the nuclear taboo? Would Russian President Vladimir Putin use a nuclear weapon in the war in Ukraine?

He certainly wants the world—and in particular the United States—to at least think he might. On the day he announced the beginning of a “special military operation” in Ukraine, Putin warned that any country that attempted to interfere in the war would face “such consequences that you have never experienced in your history,” which many took to be a veiled nuclear threat. Other Russian officials have made similar statements over the course of the war.

So far, it is likely that these threats are more about deterring NATO than actual use. Russia has apparently not increased the alert levels of its nuclear forces but rather activated a communications system that could transmit a launch order. Russian officials are certainly aware that any use of nuclear weapons would bring devastating consequences for Russia and for Putin himself, including widespread condemnation and global opprobrium. As Anatoly Antonov, Russia’s ambassador to the United States, claimed in early May, “It is our country that in recent years has persistently proposed to American colleagues to affirm that there can be no winners in a nuclear war, thus it should never happen.” Still, the risk that Putin would use a nuclear weapon is not zero, and the longer the war goes on the more the risk goes up.

The United States and NATO have reciprocated neither the discourse of Russian officials (nuclear threats) nor the

## 1950-60s

Duck-and-cover drills in case of nuclear attack (as practiced by New York schoolchildren in 1963).



## 1962

The Cuban missile crisis.



claimed behavior (enhanced readiness of nuclear arsenals) but rather have funneled vast amounts of conventional weapons to Ukraine while promising to pursue accountability for Russian war crimes. Despite scattered calls in the United States for the creation of a “no-fly zone” over some or all of Ukraine, the Biden administration wisely resisted. In practice, this would mean shooting down Russian planes and risk igniting World War III.

Yet, as the war drags on, the United States may be sleepwalking into an expanded—and therefore more dangerous—war. Russia’s weak military performance has tempted defense hawks and unrequited Cold Warriors to shift the goals from simply helping to prevent Ukraine’s defeat to, as U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin suggested on April 25, creating a “weakened” Russia. An alarming number of foreign-policy commentators, including retired U.S. military officers and NATO supporters who should know better, have cavalierly urged the Biden administration to get much more aggressive in helping Ukraine or even pursue total victory, despite the risk of nuclear escalation.

Using the war to reassert U.S. hegemony is a dangerous game. There is a whiff of nuclear forgetting in the air. One reason the Cold War remained cold was that U.S. leaders recognized that confronting a nuclear-armed adversary imposes constraints on action. When the Soviet Union invaded Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, the United States refrained from responding with military force. Yet today there is an entire generation (or more) of people for whom the scary realities of the Cold War and “duck and cover” are the stuff of history books, rather than lived experience. As the historian Daniel Immerwahr wrote recently, “This is the first decade when not a single head of a nuclear state can remember Hiroshima.”

In making nuclear dangers vivid again, the Russia-Ukraine war reminds us of not just the benefits but also the significant risks and limits of nuclear deterrence. Deterrence has likely kept Russia from expanding the war to NATO countries such as Poland and Romania. Russia’s nuclear arsenal has kept NATO from intervening directly, but it has also failed to help Russia take or hold significant territory in Ukraine or compel Kyiv to surrender. Most importantly, the war reminds us that controlling escalation is a giant unknown. We have no idea what would happen if a nuclear weapon were actually used.

The war also reminds us that norms are ultimately breakable. In the last few years, numerous norms that we once thought were robust have been undermined. Norms of democracy are under siege in the United States and elsewhere. Internationally, states have eroded norms of territorial integrity, multilateralism, arms control, and humanitarian law. The nuclear taboo, while widely shared, is more fragile than other kinds of norms

because a small number of violations would likely destroy it.

Some might argue that the taboo and deterrence are robust because no rational leader would see a benefit to starting a nuclear war. The prominent international relations realist Kenneth Waltz, a proponent of nuclear deterrence, famously wrote that nuclear weapons create “strong incentives to use them responsibly.” The problem is that, even if true some of the time, this may not always be true. Not all leaders may be rational or responsible. This view also overlooks the possibility that nuclear war could begin through accident, misperception, or miscalculation. In short, the nuclear taboo and deterrence are always at risk.

Which brings us back to Putin. In 1999, Putin launched himself to power as Russia’s prime minister, overseeing the country’s shockingly brutal second war in Chechnya. Since then, Russia under Putin has shown itself willing to violate important international norms, including those against territorial conquest (Crimea, Ukraine) and against attacking civilian targets. Shredding the rules of war, the Russian military has inflicted devastation and cruelty on civilians in Chechnya, Syria, and now Ukraine. In Ukraine, Russia shelled Europe’s largest nuclear power plant at Zaporizhzhia, a reckless act that set part of the facility on fire. Such strikes risk nuclear disaster.

Russian officials have portrayed Ukraine’s national identity and existence as a threat to Russia and have employed increasingly exterminationist language in their stated quest to “denazify” Ukraine as well as to justify the war to the Russian public. Coming on top of what appear to be appalling Russian war crimes in the Ukrainian cities of Bucha, Kherson, Mariupol, and elsewhere, such talk raises the specter of genocide. Leaders who are willing to engage in genocide might not feel many inhibitions about using a nuclear weapon.

We do not know what is in Putin’s head, of course. But the worry is that if the war continues going badly for Russia, Putin might reach for a tactical nuclear weapon—a low-yield bomb designed for use on the battlefield—out of frustration. While smaller than the big city-raiding strategic ones, they are still tremendously destructive thermonuclear weapons with all the devastating effects of the Hiroshima bomb.

The United States and Ukraine do not have identical interests in this war. While Russia’s aggression, protected by nuclear threats, must not pay, the United States has an obligation to avoid a wider war that could increase the risk of direct U.S.-Russian confrontation. Of all the lessons of the past, the risk of nuclear war is one we forget only at our deepest peril. ■

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# THE ART OF THE ARMS RACE

*To avoid disaster, the United States must relearn crucial Cold War lessons.*

BY HAL BRANDS

**ARMS CONTROL IS DYING**, and arms races are roaring back to life. Over the past two decades, key pillars of the superpower arms control regime erected during the Cold War have collapsed, one by one: the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and the Open Skies Treaty. The most important U.S.-Russian agreement that remains, New START, may become a casualty of Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. China, meanwhile, is rapidly building up its conventional and nuclear forces as part of a push for dominance in the Pacific and beyond. Around the globe, emerging technologies are promising dramatic advances in military power.

Welcome to a world primed for arms races—a world in which tensions are sharp, the military balance is hotly contested, and there are ever fewer constraints on which kinds and what quantity of weapons great powers can wield. This

new world will, in fact, be replete with challenges reminiscent of an earlier era of rivalry. To avoid disaster, the United States must relearn what it knew during the Cold War: how to arms-race well.

To be sure, arms races—in which two or more rivals compete to secure a favorable military balance—have an awful reputation. At best, they are viewed as a mindless accumulation of weapons or the product of a sinister military-industrial complex and, at worst, as a principal cause of spiraling tensions and cataclysmic war. “[T]he United States is piling up armaments which it well knows will never provide for its ultimate safety,” U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower told his National Security Council in 1956, according to a memo of the meeting. “We are piling up these armaments because we do not know what else to do.”

But arms-racing has unfairly gotten a bad name. As the



geopolitical environment becomes nastier, it helps to take a more objective look.

As the United States' sharpest Cold War thinkers understood, arms-racing is hardly mindless. Preserving a favorable balance of power against an aggressive adversary is the best means of deterring war, not an incitement to it. An arms race, moreover, is a deeply strategic interaction that can be shaped through smart investments and tilted in one's favor over time. Arms control, finally, is properly seen not as an alternative to arms-racing but as a vital component of a strategy for attaining a competitive edge. Today, the United States has a chance to thrive amid intensifying military rivalries—but doing so will require Washington to reacquaint itself with the art of the arms race.

**ARMS RACES ARE TIMELESS**, but the term became commonplace only in the early 20th century. New technologies, such as the dreadnought battleship and the airplane, were creating the potential for rapid shifts in the military balance. Intensifying great-power tensions made the search for military superiority more urgent. In the decades before World War I, for instance, the competition between Britain and a rising Germany played out in a feverish contest to build the most and best battleships.

Yet it was during the Cold War, with the advent of nuclear weapons and the rise of strategic studies as an academic discipline, that our understanding of arms races really matured. Scholars such as Samuel P. Huntington and Colin S. Gray sharpened the definition of an arms race—essentially, an open-ended, back-and-forth contest in which rivals sought to dominate the military balance and reap the strategic rewards that followed. In government and academia, analysts studied the development of the U.S. and Soviet military arsenals and the degree to which moves by one side influenced moves by the other. Amid a long bipolar struggle for supremacy, the intricacies of the superpower arms race became a veritable obsession for intellectuals and policymakers alike.

The U.S.-Soviet military competition, of course, soon took on terrifying proportions. And as Moscow and Washington each acquired the ability to destroy human civilization with nuclear weapons, “arms race” became a term of opprobrium. The nuclear arms race was often seen as an exercise in absurdity—a reminder of how the search for security could cause existential insecurity instead.

The arms control pacts of the 1970s and later were, in part, an effort to reduce this insecurity by capping the superpowers' nuclear arsenals and constraining those capabilities that were considered destabilizing, such as missile defense systems. (The theory was that one side might more readily consider launching a nuclear first strike if it had the ability to shoot

down the other side's retaliatory barrage of missiles.) The language of mutual assured destruction—the idea that no one could win a nuclear arms race and that it was dangerous to try—became pervasive. “We do not want a nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union,” U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara declared in a 1967 speech. “The action-reaction phenomenon makes it foolish and futile.”

**BUT IN REALITY, THINGS WEREN'T SO SIMPLE.** “The armaments race,” Eisenhower acknowledged to U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1957, “was a result rather than a cause”: The superpowers armed themselves because they were enemies, not vice versa. Winning the arms race—or at least not losing it—was imperative: The threat of war, or simply of a Western geopolitical collapse, would surely increase if an expansionist rival attained a decisive military edge. The shrewdest observers realized, moreover, that arms-racing was not a foolish, robotic endeavor. It was a discipline that rewarded creative thinking and strategic insight.

This more sophisticated U.S. approach to arms-racing was epitomized by Andrew Marshall, a longtime defense intellectual who became the first director of the Office of Net Assessment, the U.S. Defense Department's in-house think tank that rigorously assessed the military balance. Marshall argued that McNamara's “action-reaction” model was too simplistic: Soviet and U.S. arms programs reflected historical legacies and bureaucratic biases as much as any tit-for-tat process. More importantly, since Washington could not responsibly avoid a military competition with Moscow, it needed to shape that interaction to its advantage. “[T]he United States will have to outthink the Soviets,” Marshall wrote in 1972, since it could not “continue to outspend them substantially.” The key was making Soviet costs rise and difficulties multiply by identifying “areas of U.S. comparative advantage” and steering “the strategic arms competition into these areas.”

Case in point was the U.S. strategic bomber program. Moscow, Marshall pointed out, had an exaggerated fear of aerial attack, because Adolf Hitler's Luftwaffe had destroyed much of the Soviet air force on the ground in 1941. By building even a modest bomber fleet, Washington could—and, indeed, did—goad the Kremlin to invest heavily in air defenses, diverting resources from offensive capabilities more threatening to the West. And during the decisive final decade of the Cold War, Marshall's logic was pervasive: An array of targeted U.S. military investments put great strain on the Soviet Union by negating plans and capabilities that Moscow had assembled at enormous cost.

The development of precision-guided munitions, low-flying cruise missiles, and stealth aircraft upended the Soviet concept



## 1906

The HMS *Dreadnought* ushers in a naval arms race between Britain and Germany.



## 1950-60s

In response to the U.S. strategic bomber program, the Soviet Union invests in air defense—including S-25 surface-to-air missiles deployed in a ring around Moscow.



## 1980s

The United States leaps ahead in the development of high-accuracy ICBMs.

of operations in Europe by giving the Pentagon the ability to wreak havoc deep in the enemy's rear. The deployment of highly accurate intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), along with improved targeting capabilities, threatened Moscow's plan to keep its leaders alive during a nuclear war by sheltering them in a fantastically expensive bunker complex. U.S. President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative—a plan for a space-based missile shield—posed a potentially dire, if distant, peril to the efficacy of the land-based missile force Moscow had spent decades developing. U.S. defense programs, a 1982 Pentagon planning document stated, should “impose disproportionate costs, open up new areas of major military competition and obsolesce previous Soviet investment.”

Contrary to most predictions, aggressive arms-racing actually enabled historic arms control: Reagan's strategic buildup gave Moscow an incentive to make deep, disproportionate cuts in its arsenal of intermediate-range ballistic missiles and heavy ICBMs. It also put an economically and technologically declining Soviet Union at such a steep competitive deficit that its leaders eventually opted to sue for peace. “If we won't budge from the positions we've held for a long time, we will lose in the end,” Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev conceded in 1986. “We will be drawn into an arms race that we cannot manage.” For the United States, winning the superpower military competition was a prerequisite to winning the larger Cold War.

**WASHINGTON'S APTITUDE FOR ARMS-RACING** declined after the Cold War ended: The United States possessed such military dominance that it seemingly had less need for a creative, ruthless strategy. Yet that generous margin of safety is now gone, which means that Washington must master an old discipline anew.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine marked the culmination of a two-decade buildup of conventional and nuclear forces meant to allow Moscow to batter its neighbors while using the threat of nuclear escalation to hold Washington at bay. Russia's military may have performed abominably in Ukraine, but its conventional and nuclear capabilities—paired with Putin's increasingly aggressive behavior—

will threaten NATO for years to come. China is following a similar playbook by developing power-projection capabilities to coerce its neighbors, anti-access and area denial capabilities to keep U.S. forces at a distance, and a growing nuclear arsenal to deter U.S. policymakers from intervening in the first place. Russia and China have been arming themselves to support their determined programs of geopolitical revisionism—and they have absorbed many lessons about arms-racing the United States has forgotten.

For years, Beijing did not try to match Washington's military platform-for-platform. It invested in specific capabilities—anti-ship missiles, air defenses, and anti-satellite weapons, to name a few—that threaten the aircraft carriers, communications satellites, and regional bases the United States uses to project power worldwide. Beijing, in other words, has taken Marshall's advice to heart: It is forging a Chinese way of war that could make the American way of war obsolete, much as Washington made Moscow's way of war obsolete in the 1980s.

There isn't much relief in sight. If current trends continue, Washington will confront not one but two nuclear peer challengers by decade's end. Notwithstanding Russia's losses in Ukraine, the balance of conventional forces along the Eurasian peripheries of the U.S. alliance system will be fraught—if not unfavorable. As during the Cold War, a dangerous military imbalance could tempt U.S. rivals to forcibly contest the status quo, or it could simply eat away at the foundation of confidence on which the U.S. alliance network rests. Preserving U.S. interests will once again require running an arms race—and winning it.

Victory will be partially a matter of money. Even the most brilliant brains cannot forever compensate for a dearth of dollars. The Pentagon will require greater defense spending to preserve a conventional edge vis-à-vis China and Russia simultaneously. It will also need a larger nuclear arsenal to deter two nuclear peers rather than one. Major outlays may be necessary to turn tantalizing technologies—artificial intelligence, quantum computing, synthetic biology—into real capabilities that can be fielded at scale. Military outlays equivalent to at least 5 percent of GDP, as compared with the less than 3.5 percent



CHINA 🔔  
SECURITY 🔔  
U.S. FOREIGN POLICY 🔔  
GEOPOLITICS 🔔  
RUSSIA 🔔  
FOREIGN & PUBLIC DIPLOMACY 🔔  
CLIMATE CHANGE 🔔  
MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA 🔔  
EUROPE 🔔  
MILITARY 🔔  
POLITICS 🔔  
U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT 🔔  
AFRICA 🔔  
IRAN 🔔  
SOUTHEAST ASIA 🔔  
ECONOMICS 🔔  
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that the United States currently spends, will probably be the minimum price of peace through this decade and beyond.

But even if the money flows, Washington must also out-think its rivals in order to outperform them.

**OUTTHINKING ONE'S RIVALS** first requires not deceiving oneself. Arms control advocates sometimes argue that Washington should unilaterally limit its own capabilities—whether the development of thermonuclear weapons in 1950 or military applications of AI today—in hopes that adversaries will do likewise. This almost never works.

We now know that a U.S. decision to defer building the hydrogen bomb in the early 1950s would simply have allowed the Soviet Union to build it first. When McNamara halted the U.S. strategic buildup during the 1960s, Moscow raced forward to claim a position of parity. “When we build, they build. When we cut, they build,” U.S. Defense Secretary Harold Brown quipped in 1979. The particular technologies change, but the hard truth doesn’t: Securing restraint from an autocratic adversary typically requires demonstrating that it can’t run an arms race unopposed.

Second, arms-racing effectively requires knowing the enemy intimately. One of Marshall’s insights was that understanding what made the Soviets tick was vital to throwing them off balance. Similarly, there is no good way to make decisions about present-day U.S. military programs without grasping what Russia and China want, what they fear, and how they intend to operate. There are, alas, no shortcuts: During the Cold War, it took a generational investment in Sovietology to get inside the enemy’s head.

This knowledge is so important because an arms race neither requires nor rewards competing equally everywhere. The United States doesn’t need to emulate every Chinese breakthrough in hypersonic weapons. These weapons can’t provide, at a reasonable cost, the volume of firepower Washington would need in the Western Pacific. The Pentagon also shouldn’t match the Kremlin’s vast short-range nuclear arsenal: The United States simply needs enough limited nuclear options to keep adversaries from feeling emboldened to probe the space between U.S. conventional forces and the strategic nuclear arsenal.

The better approach is to think asymmetrically—to use distinct U.S. advantages to disrupt the enemy’s theory of victory and drive up its costs. The way to devalue China’s military buildup vis-à-vis Taiwan, for example, is for Washington and its allies to exploit a key advantage: Defending a rugged island surrounded by rough seas is far easier than conquering it. They should do so by fielding overwhelming numbers of anti-ship missiles, sea mines, unmanned aerial and underwater

vehicles, and other cheap capabilities that can turn a cross-strait invasion into a bloody nightmare for Chinese forces. Likewise, if Beijing wants to run an intermediate-range missile race, Washington can use its network of allies to turn a present Chinese advantage into a future liability. After all, U.S. intermediate-range conventional missiles based on allied territory can easily reach the Chinese mainland, whereas Chinese intermediate-range missiles cannot reach the United States. And as China pours more money into aircraft carriers and other large vessels, Washington can hold a generation's worth of naval modernization at risk by maintaining its edge in under-sea warfare. By consistently challenging Beijing's plans and depreciating its capabilities, Washington can eventually force Chinese leaders to question what an arms race will achieve.

Here, a related rule is helpful: Don't forget the defensive side of the arms race. Today, as in the past, arms control advocates often claim that ballistic missile defenses are destabilizing, or simply useless, because they can be beaten by cheap countermeasures. Yet U.S. missile defenses are improving rapidly, while the use of directed energy weapons (such as lasers) and other new technologies may soon mitigate problems such as the high cost and limited quantity of interceptors. Fielding limited ballistic missile defenses against Russia and China—not just rogue states like North Korea—can complicate Moscow's and Beijing's doctrines of nuclear coercion, which envision using a small number of nuclear strikes to disrupt or deter U.S. intervention in a regional conflict. It can also push Russian and Chinese costs skyward by forcing them to invest more in expensive, novel nuclear delivery vehicles—such as a nuclear-armed submarine drone and other doomsday device-like weapons Putin has brandished—that can defeat missile defenses only at a very high price.

Arms races, of course, have both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. That reminds us of another principle: Numbers are not the only things that matter. The key U.S. achievement in the 1980s was to leap ahead even in a situation of numerical parity. Revolutionary improvements in the accuracy of U.S. ICBMs made Soviet officials fear for the survival of their nuclear forces. While it's clear that Washington's nuclear arsenal will need to grow in the coming years, maintaining a favorable balance will equally require exploiting U.S. advantages in missile accuracy, ISR (the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities that provide unparalleled global awareness), and other qualitative factors.

Deterrence, though, is a state of mind: It hinges entirely on what one side thinks the other can and will do. So U.S. policymakers should remember that perception is as important as reality. During the 1980s, the Pentagon used crafty informational strategies—dribbling out news about stealth tech-

nology, advertising the ability to sink Soviet nuclear missile submarines, dramatically revealing (and sometimes exaggerating) the effects of precision-guided munitions—to manipulate Moscow's perceptions of the military balance. This time around, the United States may try to instill caution in Russia or China by demonstrating some sophisticated new capability—or lure them into unrewarding areas by making them fear some technological breakthrough that has not in fact occurred. New technology creates new possibilities, with the cyber field particularly ripe for deception because the true balance of capabilities is so difficult to know.

All this implies a sharper, tenser competition. Yet a final lesson from the past is that arms-racing can go hand in hand with arms control. Sometimes, the latter abets the former: During the 1970s, Washington used the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to slow the defensive arms race until the United States had recovered from the Vietnam War and was better prepared to sprint ahead. And the former can also lead to the latter, as Reagan's experience in the 1980s showed.

Arms control is still a good idea: The extension of New START in 2021 made sense from an arms-racing perspective because Moscow is better positioned to build up its strategic nuclear forces in the near term, even if it will struggle to outpace an economically superior United States over time. And building up to build down is still the right formula. Trilateral agreements to limit intermediate-range missiles, strategic nuclear forces, or the potentially destabilizing applications of AI and other new technologies may eventually become possible—but it will very likely require the United States to demonstrate first that an unconstrained arms race will leave its rivals poorer and more vulnerable in the end.

**"THE TERM ARMS RACE,"** Gray wrote in *FOREIGN POLICY*'s Winter 1972-73 issue, "suggests hostility, danger and high taxes." Yet running an arms race may be necessary to avoid uglier outcomes, such as defeat in war or the gradual loss of influence that results from military inferiority. And the rewards of arms-racing can be substantial if an intelligent strategy forces a revisionist adversary to adjust its approach—and perhaps even reconsider its long-term objectives. High-stakes military competitions are already raging today, and the United States badly needs to shape them. An arms race is only futile if you lose. ■

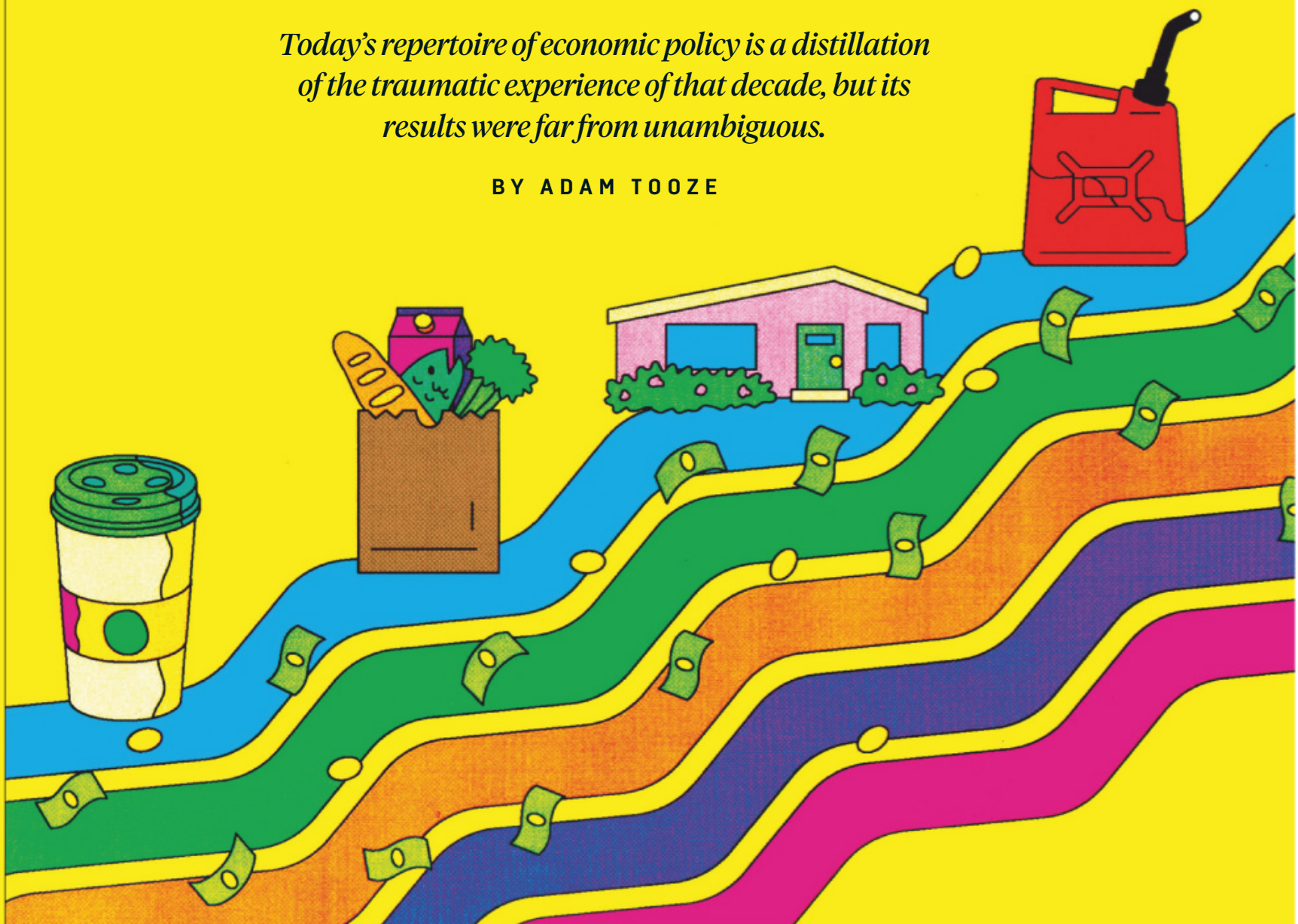
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# THE 1970s WEREN'T WHAT YOU THINK

*Today's repertoire of economic policy is a distillation  
of the traumatic experience of that decade, but its  
results were far from unambiguous.*

BY ADAM TOOZE



**SOME HISTORICAL ANALOGIES ARE PLAYFUL.** Some require elaborate academic justification. Others are native to our world. The lessons learned from them are so ubiquitous as to be part of our intellectual furniture. They are built into our very institutions. The European Union, for instance, repeatedly invokes the need to avoid anything that resembles the violent European politics of the first half of the 20th century. NATO abides as an organization dedicated to, in the words of its first secretary-general, keeping “the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down”—all three imperatives learned from the experience of the early 20th century.

For economic policy, there are two such formative moments. One is the Great Depression of the 1930s, from which we learned

the lesson not to allow aggregate demand, the money supply, or global trade to implode. Those lessons informed economic policy in response to the crises of 2008 and 2020.

The other formative moment for economic policy is the 1970s. It is barely an exaggeration to say that today's repertoire of day-to-day economic policy is a distillation of the traumatic experience of that decade. Between 1971 and the early 1980s, the postwar monetary order anchored on Bretton Woods fell apart, currencies gyrated, inflation surged, and so too did unemployment. The disorder was brought to an end after 1979 by the application of an unprecedentedly severe dose of high interest rates, which precipitated a major recession both in the United States and much of Europe.

In the subsequent decades, avoiding a return to the 1970s was the *idée fixe* of economic policy. And it seemed to have succeeded, so much so that in the aftermath of the unprecedented economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2021 we seemed finally to be escaping the grip of this historical analogy. But history is moving fast. Since last summer, inflation has been back with a vengeance. And once again references to the 1970s are everywhere. Policymakers and pundits fret that having left it too late central banks may now have to hike interest rates so high that we will tumble into a recession.

At a superficial level, the analogy is striking. As in the 1970s, commodity markets are disrupted by a war. In early 2022, prices in the United States were rising by more than 8 percent per year. As in the 1970s, fiscal policy and monetary policy seemed stuck for too long in expansionary mode. But these similarities hide huge differences below the surface. To view the 1970s as a data set from which to draw technical lessons is to mistake for a laboratory experiment what was, in fact, a historic power struggle. That power struggle ended with the conclusive victory of the forces of disinflation. It could perhaps have gone another way. But, for better and for worse, there is no way back.

**THE EXPERIENCE OF THE 1970S** informs today's mainstream view that it is important to act preemptively to forestall the buildup of inflationary expectations. This is crucial because it is the expectation of future inflation among workers and industries that drives wage and price increases, which in turn generate further inflation. To ensure that the central bank acts promptly to stop an acceleration of the inflationary cycle, it is important that control over monetary policy be handed to an independent central bank staffed by technocrats of a broadly conservative disposition and not beholden to voters, as they may prefer to avoid the pain of disinflation.

Of course, the history from which we learn lessons is itself a matter of interpretation and argument. And this raises the question, were the 1970s really that bad?

As far as the U.S. economy and world economies are concerned, the main damage was confined to 1973-75. Otherwise, growth was somewhat better than in subsequent decades. In many countries, the 1970s were a period of social advance. Welfare states and welfare rights expanded. Even inflation created winners: Anyone who owned a home financed with a mortgage did well, as did taxpayers, who by the 1980s were shouldering a much lower real value of public debt. It was in the 1970s that the debts accumulated during World War II by Britain and the United States were finally burned off.

The decade was also a last high of trade union power. It was the last moment in which capitalist democracy was still

checked on both sides of the Atlantic by a truly powerful countervailing force in the form of organized labor. That power sometimes expressed itself with disruptive strikes, but labor's fight was a losing battle. Particularly in the United States, real wages fell over the decade, driven down by automation and digital technology, competitive pressures from globalization, and price increases. Nevertheless, the trade unions exercised a voice in economic policy to a degree barely imaginable today.

The 1970s also saw a rebalancing of the world economy, which had long favored the former imperial powers over recently decolonized raw material exporters. The OPEC oil boycott was no doubt a shock but could be read as an overdue correction of those fundamental imbalances.

When we say that economic policymakers learned lessons from the 1970s, what we typically mean is that they are focused on a conservative interpretation of their own ostensible failures during that decade. The '70s were a time when many of the West's economic and political elites sensed they were losing their grasp on control after having failed to sufficiently discipline oppositional forces both at home and in the world at large.

According to this version of events, complacent policy by central bankers and politicians in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the form of low interest rates and undisciplined spending compounded the problems created by economic shocks such as the OPEC price hike of 1973. This is said to have set in motion runaway inflation. Politicians were cornered by powerful interest groups—forces such as the British National Union of Mineworkers, which effectively challenged and toppled a Conservative government in 1974. The Trilateral Commission, formed in 1973 as a discussion group for leaders from Japan, Western Europe, and North America, warned in ominous tones that democracy was becoming ungovernable. Expectations of welfare and consumption were set too high for the economy and politics to satisfy. What was at risk was nothing less than the viability of capitalist democracy.

It was against this dark backdrop that the independent central bankers appeared in the role of saviors. In Europe, the Bundesbank, Germany's central bank, anchored a conservative commitment to low inflation throughout the decade. In October 1979, the U.S. Federal Reserve under Paul Volcker, nominated as chair by President Jimmy Carter, pivoted to a tougher stance. Hiking the federal funds rate to 19 percent, he squeezed inflation out of the system by making credit scarce.

As Rudiger Dornbusch and other master thinkers of contemporary economic policy liked to proclaim, the aim of the game was not simply to stop inflation but to roll back political influence, to put an end to what Dornbusch dubbed "democratic money." In inflicting the savage shock of 1979-80,



the Fed, according to the likes of Dornbusch, demonstrated that it stood above interest groups and would not be swayed by public opinion. That description is self-serving. It would be more accurate to say that central banks delivered for the constituency of savers, business owners, and investors—none of whom liked inflation—as well as a swath of conservative political opinion that wanted stability restored. Independent central banks were not truly above politics; they were the extension of conservative politics by technocratic and nondemocratic means.

The economic results of this counterrevolution were far from unambiguous. Growth in the early 1980s slumped. Entire industrial sectors were rendered uncompetitive by soaring interest rates and surging exchange rates. Unemployment hit postwar records. It was painful, but on the conservative reading there was, as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher liked to say, no alternative. If the struggles of the 1970s had continued, she suggested, the result would have been a slide toward ever more rapid inflation and threats to the institutional status quo. Ultimately, the Cold War order was in peril, and if avoiding that fate required turning monetary policy into a more blunt-force form of political struggle, then so be it. In fighting the mineworkers into submission in 1984-85, she was waging war on enemies within, as she waged war on the Soviet enemy without. The prize was nothing less than a permanent shift in the balance of social and economic power and the exclusion of alternatives to the rule of private property and markets.

The alternative that Thatcher wished to rule out was exemplified in France by the Socialist government of President François Mitterrand, elected in 1981 with the backing of the French Communist Party, which embarked on a social and economic experiment that included the nationalization of industry and finance. Through a state-directed program, the French Socialists hoped to restore growth and tame inflation in cooperation with the trade unions. It would have been a gamble under any circumstances. The high interest rate policy being driven by the Fed and the Bundesbank, and the appeal to global investors of the market revolution, further lengthened the odds. In 1983, under huge pressure from bond markets, Mitterrand abandoned the fight. Thatcher's slogan "There Is No Alternative" was not so much a statement of fact as a performative act—a claim designed to sideline alternatives and to encourage the bond vigilantes who killed them dead.

In both Europe and the United States, the labor movement never recovered from the deflationary shock of 1979. Globalization, which gathered pace in the 1970s, put downward pressure on wages and prices. Japan's long boom came to a sudden stop in 1991 with the bursting of the real estate bubble. The following year in Europe, the agreement to create

the eurozone anchored disinflation across the EU, making low inflation secured by the European Central Bank (ECB) into a quasi-constitutional requirement. By the early 2000s, Ben Bernanke, soon to take over at the Fed himself, could quip that the Great Inflation of the 1970s had given way to a new era of the Great Moderation—a characterization more apt for those earning median or low wages than it was for those at the top of the income distribution, whose wealth and incomes soared. In 2006, billionaire investor Warren Buffett succinctly summarized the history of economic policy since the 1970s: "There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning."

**THE COMPREHENSIVE VICTORY** of the disinflationary forces was undeniable. But rather than loosening up, the conservative vision of the 1970s was now endlessly repeated as a mantra. Implicitly, the suggestion was that unless central bankers remained on guard, there would be a constant risk of sliding back to the future. Central bank economists habitually produced exaggerated forecasts of inflation, helping to impart a restrictive bias to policy. In 2008, even as the banking systems of Europe and the United States were collapsing, central bankers called for rate rises to counter the rising price of commodities and energy. In 2011, in the midst of the eurozone crisis, the ECB convinced itself to raise interest rates for fear of runaway inflation.

It was only in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, 30 years on from the 1970s, that the paradigm seemed finally to be shifting. The recovery from the 2008 crisis was painfully slow, especially in Europe. Despite huge expansion in central bank balance sheets, inflation remained well below the central bank upper limit of 2 percent. In Europe, inflationary expectations threatened to slide into negative territory, signaling Japan-style long-term stagnation. In 2013, economist Larry Summers in a highly influential address to the International Monetary Fund recast the new era as one not of repressed inflation but of secular stagnation. The risk was not that prices and wages would surge but that investment would be insufficient to sustain economic growth. Without artificial stimulus from the central bank, in the form of ultra-low interest rates and monetary stimulus, the economy would slide into a slump. The better alternative, according to Summers at the time, was government-financed investment, a line with which many on the left since the 1970s could have agreed.

This was a radical reworking of the post-1970s script. And it seemed to be borne out by the data. Between 2013 and the 2020 COVID-19 shock, central banks talked repeatedly about the "normalization" of monetary policy, trying to remove the stimulus they had created, but every time they did so, they

## 1973

Vehicles line up for petrol in the United Kingdom during the OPEC price hike.



## 1970-80s

Young people crowd a job center in Milan during a period of record unemployment.

risked upsetting financial markets and tipping the economy into recession. Meanwhile, rather than launching irresponsible spending plans, as they were accused of doing in the standard 1970s scenario, politicians, at least in Europe, systematically opted for tight fiscal policy. Wage and price pressure was muted at best.

In 2021, in the wake of the COVID-19 shock, which threatened not inflation but a gigantic global recession, both the ECB and the Fed adopted new and more permissive inflation targets. The ECB proposed to target 2 percent inflation—no more but also no less. The Fed adopted average inflation targeting, which allowed it to tolerate periods of higher inflation if that was necessary to offset periods of undershoot. Finally bidding adieu to the 1970s, Fed Chair Jerome Powell told journalists that on his watch he did not expect to see the kind of inflation that had characterized his younger years.

That was in January 2021. And it was, it seemed, a historic turning point. But more than a year later, the picture has entirely changed. Inflation has accelerated to levels not seen in 40 years, and the 1970s analogy once again screams from countless op-ed pages.

**THE TRIGGER TO OUR CURRENT INFLATION**, it is commonly agreed, was the unprecedented dislocation created by the COVID-19 shutdown. Supply chains were disrupted and demand and supply thrown out of balance. Nevertheless, some similarities to the 1970s are undeniable. Then as now, energy prices are driving the surge in the inflation indices. Then as now, a war is disrupting supply. In 2021, fiscal and monetary policy helped stoke demand, as fiscal and monetary policy did in the early 1970s.

The critical questions are the extent to which the first round of rising energy and commodity prices will spread to broader categories of goods and whether the increase in prices will become self-sustaining. All eyes are on inflation expectations, the anchor that broke loose in the 1970s. So far this year, medium-term expectations over the five-year time horizon have hardly budged, but short-term expectations

are rising. This sets alarm bells ringing at the Fed and ECB headquarters in Washington and Frankfurt.

But if inflationary pressures are now spreading, the reasons for this upward drift are telling. In 2021 and 2022, on both sides of the Atlantic, two factors have counted. One is the cost of inputs—raw materials and energy. The other is profit margins. Firms are taking advantage of the surge in demand to reap whatever advantage they can. What is missing is any sustained wage pressure. Wages in the United States have risen. But they have not kept up with prices. Real wages in early 2022 were below the upward trend they appeared to have been on before COVID-19 struck. In Europe, trade unions are beginning to make more significant claims. But there, too, wage growth has lagged behind prices.

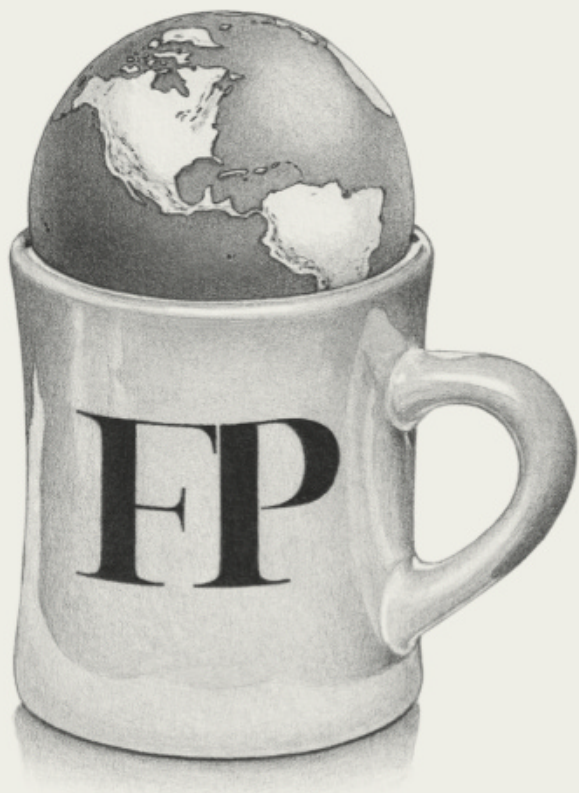
What the facile 1970s analogy ignores is the basic shift in the balance of social forces. Whereas in the 1970s the response to inflation was strikes and loud demands for welfare state expansion, today the cost of living crisis is a matter of media reporting, Twitter campaigns, and philanthropic concern, not social protest or a workers' struggle. In 2022, the radical energy of the early Biden administration has largely dissipated. In Europe, to address the hardship of the worst-off faced with the energy price hike, politicians promise remedies in the form of price-fixing for energy or increased welfare payments. But when it comes to changes that might permanently alter the balance of wage negotiations, such as wage indexation or measures to strengthen the bargaining position of trade unions, the “lessons of the 1970s” are readily at hand. Such mechanisms, central bank economists warn, risk unleashing a spiral of higher prices and higher wages, so-called second-round effects.

It is important, sage central bankers remind us, to recognize that the shift in the balance between supply and demand in energy markets means that consumers must learn to live with less purchasing power. The less fuss they make, the easier the eventual stabilization will be. After all, no one would want to have to repeat the bitter medicine dispensed by Volcker in 1979. Some central bankers, such as Andrew Bailey of the Bank



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of England, come straight out and demand that employees should refrain from asking for any wage increase, implicitly advocating a real wage cut at a time that profits are surging.

Tellingly, neither the ECB nor the Fed has so far indulged in talk that smacks so openly of Buffett's class war. The 1970s analogies have remained mainly in the realm of punditry. Sensibly, what the two leading central banks are betting on is that the disruption is transient, that the basic economic conditions of recent decades still hold, and that they will be able to pull off a soft landing with only mild monetary intervention. After all, in the last half-century, the Volcker shock is the only instance of inflation that was suppressed by the force of a savage interest rate hike. As the Fed and the ECB edge interest rates upward, they are hoping simply that markets will do their job, prices will ease, and wage growth will cool. This would allow them to achieve stabilization without either ongoing losses in real income for workers due to inflation or, on the other side, a surge in unemployment provoked by a slide into recession. They are not vying for a counterrevolution of the 1980s variety because they are hoping the original one is still in effect.

As central banks tread this narrow path, inflation hawks continue to urge that the greater risk lies in accelerating inflation. The evidence for that is frankly slim. Practically all serious forecasts predict a calming of inflation in 2023. And if this proves correct, if the central banks stick to their guns and succeed in bringing inflation under control, perhaps we can finally acknowledge that for better and for worse history has moved on and that the old balanced constitution of democratic capitalism that is thought of as falling into crisis in the 1970s is gone for good. In the new constitutional economic order, the countervailing power of labor has been permanently diminished, and the freedom for technocratic action has been enhanced.

That would mark a loss for democracy and should provoke calls for both a rebalancing of economic power and a democratization of economic policy. But in the current moment, the crucial priority is to ensure that those in charge of policy do not slam on the breaks too hard. And to do that, it would be good if we can rid ourselves of the ghosts of the past. If in the face of inflation rising toward 10 percent the central bankers hold their nerve and manage to engineer a soft landing, perhaps then we can finally bury the 1970s analogy and its mistaken portrayal of history. ■

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# LEARNING TO RULE OURSELVES

*The Indian anti-colonial movement is not an analogy from the past. It's where we actually are in history.*

BY PRIYA SATIA

**EVERY HISTORIAN WORTH THEIR SALT** knows that historical and local specificities ultimately render all analogies inaccurate. Yet people navigating times of great change and uncertainty habitually seek reassurance from the past. In 1852, Karl Marx observed how revolutionaries “anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past ... to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise.” By helping to legitimize major change, historical analogies have played a key role in the very making of modern history, including its ugliest episodes: The Nazis defended their camps, for instance, by pointing to British concentration camps in the South African War at the turn of the 20th century. Much of what has transpired in history has been justified by reference to some precedent.

Making new comparisons thus helps shift the paradigms and

false equivalences through which we inherit the past so that we might make new history in the present. Despite their own inevitable inaccuracy, fresh analogies help uncover the darker historical truths obscured by the more flattering comparisons that enabled them. The question is not so much whether to analogize but whether the analogies we invoke serve ethical ends.

Today, the world faces climate crisis, a pandemic, vast inequalities, war—a litany of troubles that makes our time seem unprecedented but also profoundly continuous with the past: The climate crisis is a product of the accumulated pollutants of the industrial age, and inequalities are partly the legacies of the historical processes of slavery and colonialism that were never redeemed. If our goal is to identify a propitious historical analogy that will help us cope with and



overcome polluting industrialism, racist oppression, and violence, we might look to the Indian noncooperation movement that began in the 1920s—not as something done, over, in the past, but as an ongoing struggle that we might resume.

The Indian struggle for independence from British rule had begun much earlier, but tactics of nonviolent protest burst on the scene under the leadership of Mohandas Gandhi from the 1920s to 1940s. Gandhi's approach built on earlier struggles in India and South Africa and was the product of a global intellectual history, including Jainism and Leo Tolstoy's Christian pacifism. In a series of mass movements, protesters engaged in tax resistance, marching, and boycotting British educational institutions and British-manufactured cloth (in favor of local hand-spun cloth). Autonomy was achieved and proved through the very act of nonviolent refusal of British rule, whatever its consequences. In this sense, it was fundamentally about redemption of the self.

Among the movement's actions that seized global attention was the Salt March of 1930, when Gandhi and dozens of followers set out on a 25-day, 240-mile march to protest the British salt monopoly and extortionate salt tax. Tens of thousands joined as Gandhi spoke to crowds along the way. On reaching Dandi on the Arabian Sea coast, Gandhi picked up a lump of salt-rich mud on the shore and declared the British law breached. Over the next several weeks, masses around the country violated the salt laws and other repressive laws. Hundreds of nonviolent protesters were beaten; more intense British violence was checked by extensive international press coverage. Gandhi was among the 60,000 arrested by the end of 1930—but the following year, the British conceded his demand to participate in negotiations about India's future.

The British departed India in 1947, but, to many, the struggle for decolonization remained unfulfilled, as the institutions and values the British had established remained intact. In the Gandhian vision, the mere transfer of power was not decolonization, for the enemy was not the British but British civilization's centering of material desire as the key to prosperity and progress. A regime in which white rulers were simply replaced by brown ones would also have to be resisted. It would remain, in Gandhi's words, "foreign rule."

This warning that the struggle for decolonization had to be permanent is the movement's most compelling legacy for our time. It emerged from an understanding, shared by other anti-colonial groups, that liberation—in the sense of a recovery of our full humanity, not just political freedom—is something experienced in the course of common struggle. Man's purpose, Gandhi's contemporary the philosopher and poet Muhammad Iqbal argued, is to remake oneself ethically rather than to remake the world.

The idea that struggle is meaningful itself, regardless of its effects, pushed back against European colonizers' claims that history is a story of progress in which evils such as colonialism are sometimes necessary. To Gandhi, this vision of history discounted the sustaining force of love that routinely defuses would-be conflicts in a manner illegible to history. Nonviolence embraced such quotidian practices of love, creating new possibilities for the future by calling on humans to be morally accountable exclusively in the present. Insofar as it was about being ethical—and thus civilized—now, nonviolence was the end in itself, not a means to some political end. It was self-rule ("*swaraj*") in the most substantive form.

"It is *swaraj* when we learn to rule ourselves," Gandhi explained in 1909. "It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands." Freedom might be attained instantly, entailing only refusal to be ruled by another. Each person would thus "become his own ruler," he wrote in 1939; government itself would be redundant. Such utopianism was necessary to meaningful decolonization, he insisted: "To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man." Straining after the ideal mattered more than arriving at it: "Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness," he affirmed in 1946.

For Gandhi, then, moral transformation at the level of the self, more than the departure of the British, was the movement's real goal. It meant recovery from the values of colonialism: that material attainments (rather than ethical being) were a measure of civilization, that evil might be justified by some future vindicating effect, that society thrived through individual self-interest rather than the reciprocity of interests. Such values were incompatible with planetary habitation: "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West," Gandhi warned in 1928. "If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts."

Given these goals, Gandhian noncooperation, or *satyagraha*, relied on boycotts and strikes against British economic dominance and unjust laws but also everyday practices aimed at redeeming the mind and soul—walking, singing, fasting, and spinning yarn. Sacrifice, of conveniences or even life, for the sake of ethical action demanded by the present—as opposed to instrumental sacrifice in the name of some future purpose—was at its core. Satyagrahis' willingness to endure deprivations, violent punishment, imprisonment, and even death sought to awaken the suppressed humanity of their oppressors. The point was not to punish but to open themselves up to punishment to instigate the conversion, or decolonization, of their oppressors' minds. As Faisal Devji, a historian at the University of Oxford, recently put it, Gandhian

## 1930

Gandhi during  
the Salt March in India.



## 1960s

Black civil rights leaders in the United States,  
including Martin Luther King Jr., draw inspiration  
from Gandhi's noncooperation movement.

noncooperation was “motivated by love for the opponent’s humanity, no matter how residual it might have become.”

Gandhi recognized that challenging the entrenched values of colonialism was a formidable task. Though moral transformation of the self was in the palm of one’s hand, the power of colonial educational institutions propagating instrumental views of evil and centering consumption as the key to civilization meant that it would take time for each individual to realize the need for it.

**MANY ANTI-COLONIAL THINKERS** perceived that empire’s shape-shifting capacity meant permanent anti-colonial struggle, rather than a moment of decisive victory. Satyagraha—literally, insistence on truth—was necessary precisely because of the way empire was so easily normalized and obscured. Liberation would be experienced in, rather than as a result of, that unresolved struggle. Colonialism valorized “a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity,” the Martiniquan philosopher Frantz Fanon wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), but human nature is essentially intersubjective, and the very forms of collective organization necessary to anti-colonial struggle allow the colonized to recover the kinship and solidarities that are integral to lived experience: “[T]he community triumphs and ... spreads its own light.”

In the wake of such anti-colonial movements and the horrors of World War II, many European philosophers, too, recognized that history was not a narrative moving in a particular direction but the unceasing flux of life through which individuals strive to redemptively transcend their humanity—a continual quarrel between ethics and circumstances that shapes the ends of each of our lives.

This is a way of living in a state of constant aspiration, aware that fulfillment of struggle lies in the struggle itself. The search for analogies with this understanding of history is not about tracing history’s direction or lamenting our failure to learn from the past; it is about grasping human capacities

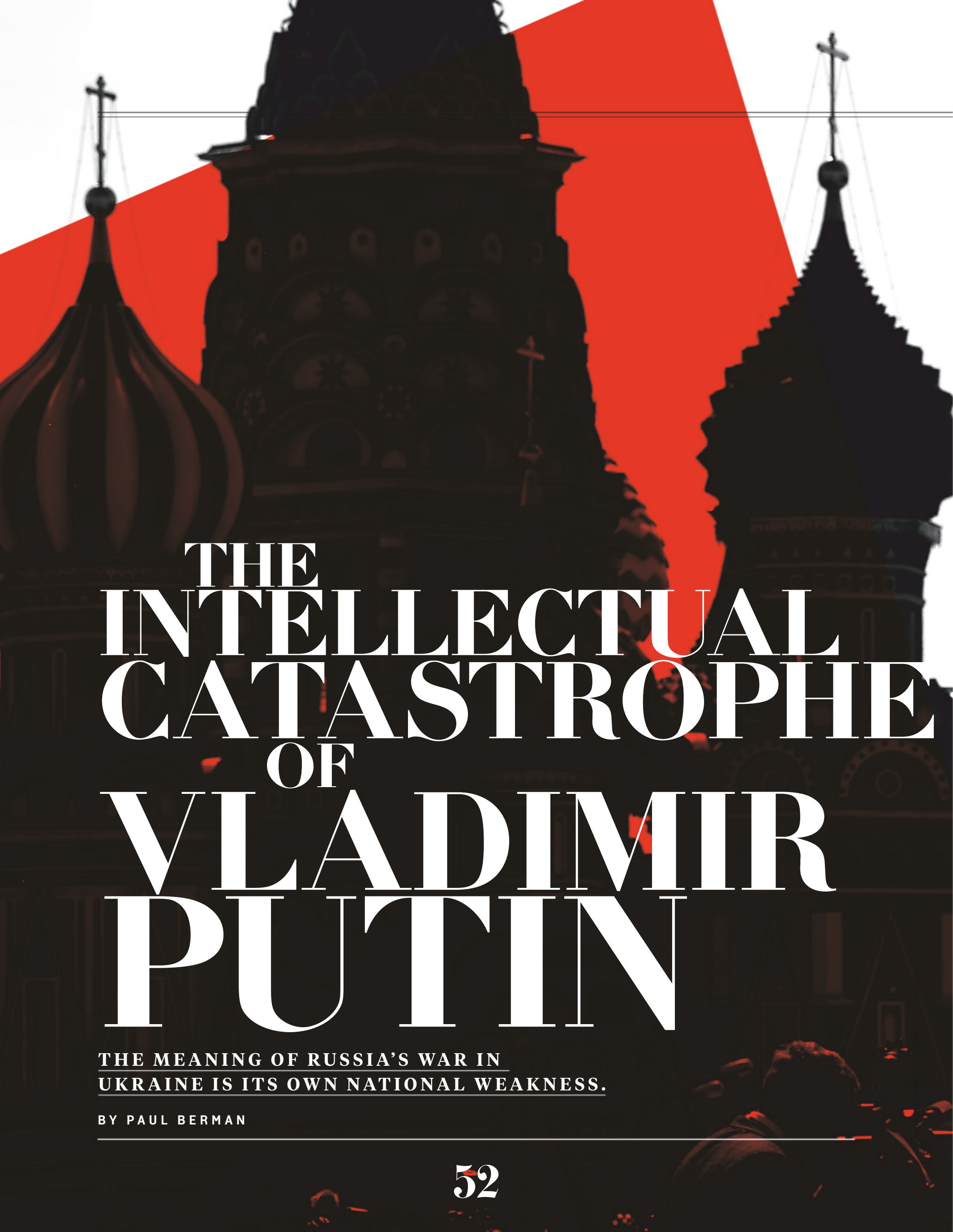
so that we don’t mistake our predicament as exceptional and lose sight of it as part of a continual quarrel in which our life’s meaning is at stake. The Indian anti-colonial movement is not an analogy from the past offering lessons but where we actually are in history—trying to recover our humanity in the face of state oppression and destructive materialism.

Nor is it a story about another place, and so, irrelevant to the United States. Descendants of the Indian and other anti-colonial struggles are there—U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna, for one, frequently refers to his ancestors’ participation in the Gandhian movement. Moreover, early Indian anti-colonial activists drew inspiration from contemporary American anti-racist struggles. And precisely because the redemptive power of love is a universal value, the Gandhian movement’s ideas and tactics also watered American struggles. Black civil rights leaders met with Gandhi in the 1930s, and Gandhian tactics profoundly influenced the postwar civil rights struggle led by Martin Luther King Jr. and the anti-war and pro-environment movements that followed—whose descendants are among us, too. These movements are all ours. The collective heritage of global struggles against oppression is an American strength.

The past is not a series of self-contained moments behind us—pearls that we might squint at to find a reflection of our times—but something everlasting in the way it structures the world we inhabit. It’s time to join the salt march, to go beyond single-day rallies and endure the deprivations needed to seriously confront the military-industrial structures causing existential climate crisis and rampant violence. As Americans despair at their political institutions’ failure to alleviate the epidemic of mass shootings, it’s time to ask: What would happen if, during the school year, teachers launched a monthlong march to their state capitols to demand gun regulations and Americans joined in their thousands along the way? ■

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# THE INTELLECTUAL CATASTROPHE OF VLADIMIR PUTIN

THE MEANING OF RUSSIA'S WAR IN  
UKRAINE IS ITS OWN NATIONAL WEAKNESS.

BY PAUL BERMAN

**V**ladimir Putin may have gone out of his mind, but it's also possible that he has merely gazed at events through a peculiar and historical Russian lens and has acted accordingly. To invade one's neighbors is not, after all, a novel thing for a Russian leader to do. It is a customary thing. It is common sense. It is hoary tradition. But when Putin looks for an up-to-date rhetoric capable of explaining the whys of hoary tradition to himself or the world, he has trouble coming up with anything.

He grasps at political rhetoric from times long gone. It disintegrates in his hands. He delivers speeches and discovers that he is speechless or nearly so. This may have been the original setback, well before the military setbacks that have afflicted his army. It is not a psychological failure, then. It is a philosophical failure. A suitable language of analysis eludes him; therefore, lucidity eludes him.

The problem that he is trying to solve is the eternal Russian conundrum, the actual "riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma" that Winston Churchill ascribed to Russia (and could never define, though he considered that "national interest" offered a key). This is the conundrum of what to do about a very odd and dangerous imbalance in Russian life.

The imbalance consists of, on one side, the grandeur of Russia's civilization and its geography, which are massive strengths, and, on the other side, a strange and persistent inability to construct a resilient and reliable state, which is a massive weakness. Russian leaders across the centuries have tried to cope with the imbalance by constructing the most thuggish of tyrannies, in the hope that brutality would compensate for the lack of resilience. And they have complemented the brutishness with a foreign policy not like any other country's, which has seemed to do the trick.

**BRUTISHNESS AND AN UNUSUAL FOREIGN POLICY** helped the Russian state make it through the 19th century without collapsing, which was an achievement. But twice in the 20th century, the state collapsed. The first time, in 1917, led to the rise to power of extremists and madmen and some of the worst disasters of world history. Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev returned the state to a stable condition.

Then it collapsed again. The second collapse, in the era of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, was not as calamitous. Yet the empire disappeared, wars broke out along Russia's southern borders, the economy disintegrated, and life expectancy fell. This time, Putin led the recovery. In Chechnya, he did it with a degree of thuggishness that qualifies him alone, among the belligerents in the current war, for an accusation of something like genocide.

Yet Putin was no more able than Khrushchev or Brezhnev to achieve the ultimate success, which would be the creation of a Russian state sufficiently sturdy and resilient to avoid any further collapses. He worries about this. Evidently, he panics. And his worries have brought him to a version of the same fundamental view of the problem that one after another of his predecessors arrived at in times past.

The view amounts to a species of climate paranoia. This is a fear that the warm principles of liberal philosophy and republican practices from the West, drifting eastward, will collide with the icy clouds of the Russian winter and violent storms will break out and nothing will survive. It is, in short, a belief that dangers to the Russian state are external and ideological, instead of internal and structural. The fear has a basis, too, and such collisions have taken place. The earliest example took a very crude form and was not at all characteristic of subsequent collisions. But it was traumatic. Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Russia in 1812 crashed the French Revolution in a debased and dictatorial form into the frozen medievalism of the tsars. The collision of the French Revolution and the tsars brought the French army to the embers of Moscow and the tsarist army to Paris.

But the characteristic collisions, the ones that have taken place repeatedly over the centuries, have always been philosophical, with military aspects confined to a Russian response. A decade after the tsarist army's entrance into Paris, a circle of Russian aristocrats adopted liberal ideas under influences from the French Revolution and the American Revolution.





They conspired together on behalf of a new and liberal Russia. They were arrested and exiled, and their enterprise was crushed. But the tsar at the time, Nicholas I, felt less than confident of his victory over them. And he reacted by adopting a policy that would forever more protect the Russian state against such subversive danger.

A new French revolution broke out in 1830, which sparked sympathetic and liberal stirrings here and there in Europe, notably in Poland. Nicholas I recognized that an upsurge of liberalism on the borders of his own country was destined to revive the conspiracies of the arrested and exiled liberal aristocrats. He responded by invading Poland, and for good measure he swallowed the Polish state into the tsarist empire.

Still another revolution broke out in France in 1848, which led to liberal and republican uprisings in yet more parts of Europe—very nearly a continental revolution, in plain indication that a new civilization was struggling to emerge in Europe, no longer royalist and feudal, no longer obedient to the dictates of whatever church might be locally in power, a new civilization of human rights and rational thought. But the new civilization was precisely what Nicholas I feared. He responded by invading Hungary. Those two invasions of his—the invasions of Poland and Hungary—were, from Nicholas I's point of view, wars of defense, which took the form of wars of aggression. They were “special military operations” designed to inhibit the spread of subversive ideas into Russia by crushing the revolutionary neighbors, with the added hope of stamping out the revolutionary inspiration in broader regions, too.

The wars were successful. The continental revolution of 1848 went down to defeat continentally, and Nicholas I had a lot to do with it. He was dubbed the “gendarme of Europe.” And the tsarist state endured for another two or three generations, until everything that he had feared finally did occur and inspirations from the German Social Democrats and other liberal and revolutionary currents in the West penetrated fatefully into his own Russia. That was in 1917. His great-grandson, Nicholas II, was tsar.

Down went the fragile Russian state. It reemerged as a communist dictatorship. But the basic dynamic remained the same. Joseph Stalin's view of liberal or liberalizing currents from the West was identical to Nicholas I's, even if Stalin's vocabulary for expressing his worries was not a tsarist one. Stalin set out to crush liberal or liberalizing inspirations in the Soviet Union. But he set out to crush them also in Germany—which was an early goal of his Germany policy, aimed at destroying the Social Democrats more than the Nazis—and in Spain during the Civil War there, where his policy aimed at destroying the non-communists of the Spanish left as much as or more than the fascists. When World War II came to an end, Stalin set about crushing those same inspirations in every part of Europe that had fallen under his control. It is true that he was cracked.

But Khrushchev, who was not cracked, also turned out to

be a Nicholas I. In 1956, when communist Hungary decided to explore some faintly liberal possibilities, Khrushchev detected a mortal danger to the Russian state, and he did what Nicholas I had done. He invaded Hungary. Brezhnev came to power. He turned out to be the same. A liberalizing impulse took hold among the communist leaders of Czechoslovakia. And Brezhnev invaded. Those were the precedents for Putin's small-scale invasion of a newly liberal and revolutionary Georgia in 2008 and his invasion of Crimea in revolutionary Ukraine in 2014. Every one of those invasions in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries was intended to preserve the Russian state by preventing a purely philosophical breeze of liberal thoughts and social experiments from wafting across the border. And the same reasoning has led to the most ferocious invasion of all: the one going on right now in Ukraine.

**ONLY, PUTIN HAS RUN INTO A PROBLEM** of language or rhetoric that afflicted none of his predecessors. Nicholas I in the 1830s and '40s knew exactly how to describe his own wars against the liberal ideas and movements of Central Europe. This was by invoking the principles of a mystical and Orthodox royalism. He knew what he was for and what he was against. He was the champion of the true Christianity and sacred tradition, and he was the enemy of satanic atheism, heresy, and revolutionary disorder.

His principles aroused a loathing among friends of the French and American revolutions. But they aroused respect and admiration among friends of royalism and order, who were, with help from Nicholas I himself, dominant in Europe. His principles were noble, solemn, grand, and deep. They were universal principles of a sort, which made them worthy of the grandeur that is Russia—principles for the whole of humanity, with the Russian monarchy and the Orthodox Church in the lead. They were living principles, grounded in realities of the era, even if hidden behind smoke and incense, and they put the tsar and his advisors in a position to think lucidly and strategically.

Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev likewise knew how to describe their wars against the liberals and subversives. This was by invoking the principles of communism. Those principles, too, were majestic and universal. They were principles of human progress, with Russia still in the lead—principles for the entire world. The principles aroused support and admiration in every country where communist parties were strong and sometimes among non-communists who accepted the argument that Soviet invasions were anti-fascist. In those ways, the communist principles were likewise grounded in the realities of their own era, and the grounding put the communist leaders in a position to make their own strategic calculations in a spirit of lucidity and self-confidence.

But what sort of philosophical doctrine can Putin claim? The pro-Putin theoreticians ought to have worked up one for him, something superb, capable of generating a language useful

## Putin's nationalism is a nationalism with an oddly tiny voice. It is a voice of resentment, directed at the victors in the Cold War. It is the voice of a man whose dignity has been offended.

for thinking about Russia's situation in our own moment and the eternal conundrum of the Russian state. But the theoreticians have let him down. Perhaps the failure is not really their fault; a philosophical doctrine cannot be worked up at will, the way speechwriters work up speeches. Powerful doctrines exist or do not exist. The Eurasianist doctrine among Russian intellectuals, which purports to be powerful, has turned out to be, instead, a soup of anti-liberal inspirations of every kind from across the centuries, unto a nostalgic appreciation for Genghis Khan and the Mongol horde. And so Putin has had to make do with whatever ideas are floating about, grabbing one idea and another and compiling them into a soup of his own.

He has drawn almost nothing from communism, except for the hatred for Nazism that remains from World War II. He has put a lot of emphasis on his anti-Nazism, too, and his emphasis accounts for a good deal of the support he has succeeded in arousing among his Russian compatriots. But anti-Nazism is not, in other respects, a strength of his doctrine. The role of neo-Nazis in Ukraine in recent years has been a visible one, if only in the form of graffiti and occasional street demonstrations. But it has not been a major role or even a minor role. It has been minuscule, which means that Putin's emphasis on Ukrainian neo-Nazis, which is helpful for his popularity in Russia, also introduces a major distortion into his thinking.

Here is a source of his deluded belief that large numbers of Ukrainians, frightened by the neo-Nazis, would be grateful to see Russian tanks rolling through the streets. But nothing else of communism survives in his thinking. On the contrary, he has recalled with regret that official communist doctrines of the past were encouraging of the autonomy of Ukraine instead of encouraging a Ukrainian submission into the greater Russian nation. Vladimir Lenin's position on what used to be called the "national question" is not his own position.

**FROM THE MYSTICAL ROYALISM OF THE TSARS** he has drawn, by contrast, rather a lot. He has drawn a sense of ancient tradition, which leads him to invoke the role of Kyiv in the founding of the Russian nation in the ninth century and the religious wars of the 17th century between the Orthodox Church (the good guys) and the Roman Catholic Church (the bad guys). Royalism is not a nationalism, but Putin has given to his own reading of the royal and religious past a nationalist interpretation, such that Orthodoxy's struggle against Catholicism

emerges as a national struggle of the Russians, who, in his interpretation, include the Ukrainians, against the Poles. He invokes the heroic 17th-century Cossack rebellion of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky, though he discreetly chooses to leave unmentioned Khmelnytsky's additional role as the leader of some of the worst pogroms in history.

But there is nothing grand or noble in Putin's nationalist reading of the past. His invocation of church history implies the greatness of Orthodox spirituality but does not seem to reflect it, quite as if Orthodoxy were, for him, merely an afterthought or an ornament. His nationalism resembles only in a surface way the sundry Romantic nationalisms of Europe in the 19th century and the years leading up to World War I. Those nationalisms, the ones from the past, tended to be versions of universality in which each separate nationalism, in rebelling against the universalism of the Jacobin dictators or the multiethnic empires, claimed a special mission for the whole of humanity.

But Putin's nationalism claims no such special mission. It is a small nationalism instead of a grandiose one. It is a nationalism for a tiny country—a nationalism with an oddly tiny voice, like the voice of Serbian nationalism in the 1990s ranting about events of the 14th century. It is, to be sure, an angry voice but not in the deep and thunderous fashion of the communists. It is a voice of resentment, directed at the victors in the Cold War. It is the voice of a man whose dignity has been offended. The aggressive encroachments of a triumphant NATO enrage him. He simmers.

But his resentment, too, lacks grandeur. It lacks, in any case, an explanatory power. The tsars could explain why Russia had aroused the enmity of the liberal and republican revolutionaries: It was because Russia stood for the true faith and the liberals and republicans were the enemies of God. The communist leaders could likewise explain why the Soviet Union had aroused its own enemies: It was because the enemies of Soviet communism were the defenders of the capitalist class, and communism was capitalism's undoing.

But Putin speaks of "Russophobia," which means an irrational hatred, something inexplicable. Nor does he identify an ultimate virtue in his resentment. The tsars believed that if only they could defeat the subversives and atheists, they could offer the true faith to humanity. The communists believed that after defeating the capitalists and capitalism's tool, the fascists, the liberation of the world was going to be at hand. But Putin's resentment does not point to a shining future. It is a backward-looking resentment without a forward-looking face.

Here, then, is a Russian nationalism without anything in it to attract support from anyone else. I realize that here and there around the world, people do support Putin in the present war. They do so because they harbor their own resentments of the United States and the wealthy countries. Or they do so because they retain a gratitude for Cold War help



from the Soviet Union. There are Serbs who feel a brotherly connection. There are people who share Putin's revulsion at modern feminism and at the modern tolerance for sexual minorities. Yet no one at all shares the idea that Ukraine's destruction will usher in a new and better era.

The doctrine does not offer hope. It offers hysteria. Putin believes that under the supposed neo-Nazi leadership that has taken over Ukraine, millions of Russians within Ukraine's borders have become victims of a genocide. By "genocide," he sometimes appears to mean that Russian speakers with an ethnic Russian identity are being forced to speak Ukrainian, which will deprive them of their identity—which is an implication in his 2021 essay "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." Other times, he is content to leave intact the implication of mass slaughter. Either way, he appears to have been singularly unpersuasive on this important point. Nowhere on Earth has anyone held a protest to denounce the genocide of millions of Russians in Ukraine. Why not? It is because Putin speaks in the tone of a man who does not even aspire to be believed, except by people who require no convincing.

Still, he clings to his ideas. It suits him. He considers himself to be a cultured person who thinks in the loftiest manner—someone who could not possibly invade another country without being able to invoke a magnificent philosophy. He does seem to crave reassurance on this point, which is why, I imagine, he has spent so many hours on the phone with Emmanuel Macron, the president of the motherland of intellectual prestige, which has always been France. But his attachment to magnificent philosophies is the heart of the disaster. For how can a man think lucidly if he is awash in ideas as small and ridiculous as those? He knows that real-world problems and challenges beset him, but his imagination bubbles with resentments over medieval history, the religious wars and Cossack glories of the 17th century, the parallels between Polish Catholicism of the past and NATO's "Russophobia" today, and the dreadful fate of the Ukrainian Russians at the hands of Western-encouraged neo-Nazis. And amid the bubbling resentments, the best that he can come up with is the foreign policy of Nicholas I from the 1830s and '40s.

**NOW, IT IS TRUE THAT FROM THE STANDPOINT** of a traditional foreign-policy realism, everything I have just recounted ought to be dismissed as irrelevant. Realism is an ideology that stipulates the insignificance of ideologies in favor of attending strictly to power relations. This can mean only that Putin's nationalist maunderings are pretty much meaningless, except for the complaint about NATO and its aggressions, which is deemed not to be ideological. That one part should attract the whole of our attention.

But should it really? People who take seriously the complaint about NATO always treat the danger to Russia as something so

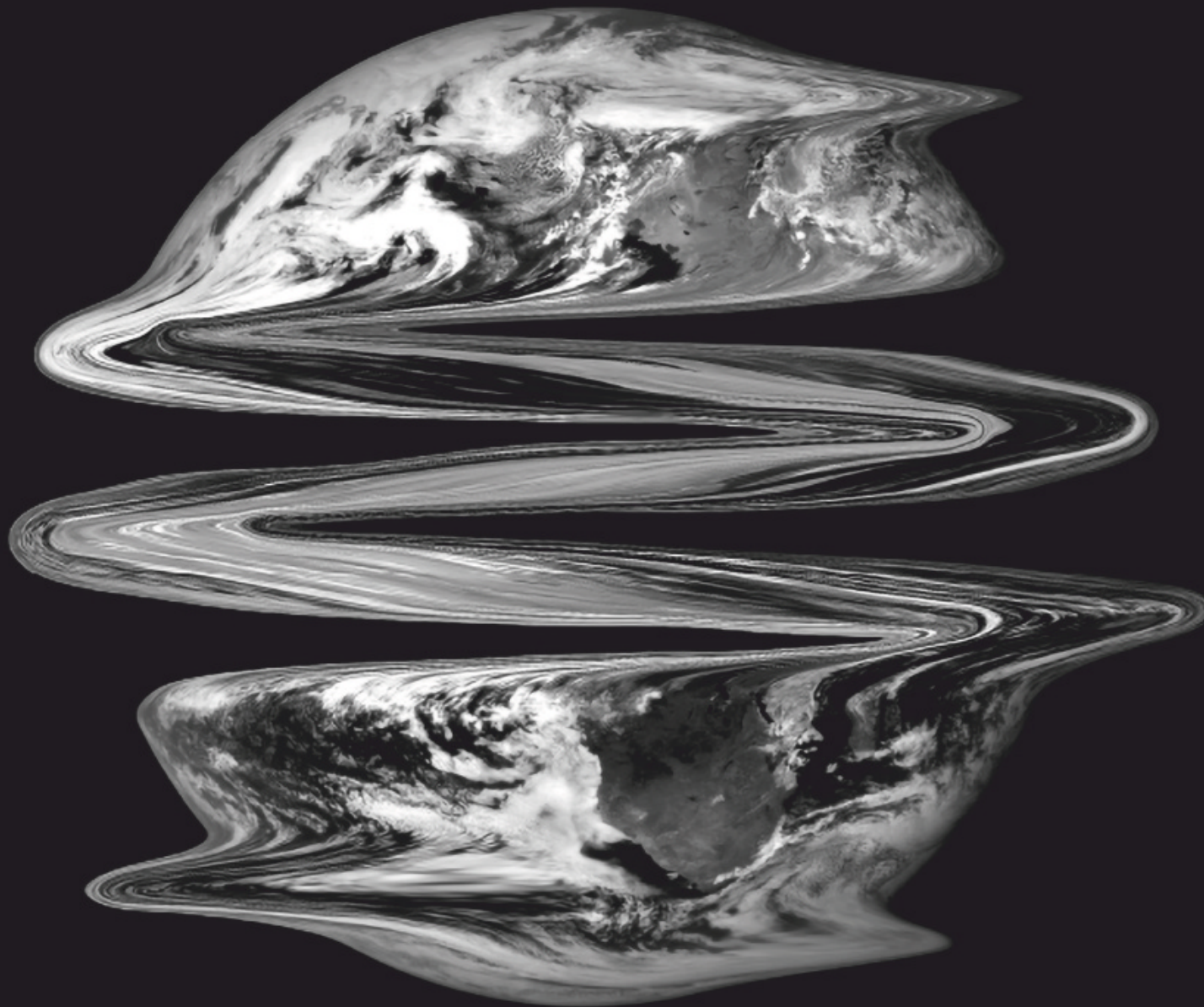
obvious as not to need an explanation. Putin himself points to NATO's eastward encroachments, slams his fist on the table, and leaves it at that, without laying out the basis of his objection. We are supposed to infer that NATO's expansion poses a danger to Russia because someday, out of the blue, NATO armies might pour across the border into Russian territory just as, in 1812, Napoleon's army poured across the border.

Yet if we are to restrict the analysis to hard facts, as realism advises us to do, we might recall that during its more than 70 years in existence, NATO has given not a single indication that it is anything but a defensive alliance. There is no reason at all to suppose that one day NATO, which is anti-Napoleonic in principle, will turn Napoleonic in practice. NATO's purpose in expanding eastward has been, instead, to stabilize Europe and put an end to border disputes, which ought to be in Russia's interest, too.

Still, it is unquestionable that NATO's expansion has, even so, infuriated Putin, and it has frightened him. Only, why? I think the answer is obvious. And it is obvious why no one wants to say it aloud. The European revolutions that frightened Nicholas I eventually did take place, in spite of his best efforts. The liberal republics arose. And in 1949, the liberal republics joined together quite as if they earnestly believed that liberal and republican principles do make for a new civilization. And they protected their civilization with a military alliance, which was NATO. In that manner, the liberal republics produced a military alliance that contained within it a spiritual idea, which was the beautifulness of the liberal and republican project. Here was the continental revolution of 1848, successful at last and protected by a formidable shield. And Putin sees the problem.

NATO's eastward expansion infuriates and frightens him because it stands in the way of the sound and conservative Russian foreign-policy tradition established by Nicholas I: the policy of invading neighbors. Where NATO expands, Russia can no longer invade, and the achievements of the liberal and republican revolution can no longer be undone—not by the Russian army, anyway. Opposition to NATO expansion amounts, then, to an acceptance of Russian expansion. It is an acceptance of the very strange Russian expansionism whose purpose has always been to impede the eastward spread of the revolutionary concept.

**NATO's eastward expansion infuriates and frightens Putin because it stands in the way of the Russian foreign-policy tradition established by Nicholas I: the policy of invading neighbors.**



# GLOBAL REBOOT

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But Putin does not say this, and neither does anyone else. It is unsayable. Anyone who acknowledged an acceptance of the Russian policy of invading neighbors would be saying, in effect, that tens of millions of people on Russia's borders or in nearby countries should be subject to the most violent and murderous of oppressions for the simplest of reasons, which is to spare the Russian people from contact with ideas and beliefs that we ourselves believe to be the foundations of a good society. So no one says it. Instead, the supposition is allowed to linger that Russia is endangered by NATO because it faces the prospect of a Napoleonic invasion. Realism, in short, is a principle of intellectual fog that claims to be a principle of intellectual lucidity.

**WHY, FINALLY, HAS PUTIN INVADED UKRAINE?** It is not because of NATO aggression. And it is not because of events in nineteenth-century Kyiv and the Orthodox-Catholic wars of the 17th century. It is not because Ukraine under President Volodymyr Zelensky has gone neo-Nazi. Putin has invaded because of Ukraine's 2014 Maidan Revolution. The Maidan Revolution was a facsimile of the revolutions of 1848 precisely—a classic European uprising animated by the same liberal and republican ideas as in 1848, with the same student idealism and the same romantic flourishes and even the same street barricades, except made of rubber tires instead of wood.

I know this because I am a student of revolutions and I have seen revolutionary uprisings repeatedly on different continents. I saw the Maidan Revolution and felt the revolutionary electricity in the air—and so did Putin from afar. The Maidan Revolution was everything that Nicholas I set out to oppose back in 1848. It was dynamic, passionate, and capable of arousing the sympathies of vast numbers of people. Ultimately, the Maidan Revolution was superior to the revolutions of 1848. It did not result in outbreaks of crazy utopias, demagoguery, programs of extermination, or chaos.

It was a moderate revolution in favor of a moderate Ukraine—a revolution that offered a viable future for the country and, in doing so, offered new possibilities to Ukraine's neighbors, too. And it did not fail, unlike the revolutions of 1848. So Putin was terrified. He responded by annexing Crimea and stirring up his wars in the breakaway territories of eastern Ukraine, in the hope that he could inflict a few dents on the country's revolutionary success.

He had some victories, too, and Ukrainians may have joined him in inflicting a few dents of their own. But he saw that, even so, the revolutionary spirit went on spreading. He saw the popularity in Russia of Boris Nemtsov, his own opponent. He found it terrifying. Nemtsov was duly assassinated in 2015 on a bridge in Moscow. Putin saw Alexey Navalny step forward to offer still more opposition. He saw that Navalny, too, turned out to be popular, quite as if there was no end to these reforming zealots and their popular

appeal. Putin poisoned Navalny and then imprisoned him.

Even so, a new revolution broke out, this time in Belarus. Still more revolutionary leaders stepped forward. One of them was Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in Minsk, who ran for president in 2020 against Aleksandr Lukashenko, the old-school thug. She won—though Lukashenko succeeded in a "Stop the Steal" maneuver and declared himself the winner. Putin racked up another victory in his unending counter-revolution, on a small scale. Tsikhanouskaya's success at the polls terrified him, nonetheless.

And Putin was terrified by the emergence of Zelensky, who might have seemed, at first glance, a nonentity, a mere television comedian, a politician with a reassuringly accommodationist program. But the transcript of Zelensky's phone call with then-U.S. President Donald Trump showed that Zelensky was not, in fact, a pushover. Putin saw that Zelensky was pleading for arms. The transcript of that phone call might even have given him the sense that Zelensky was one more heroic figure in the mold of the people he had already assassinated, poisoned, imprisoned, or overthrown—someone unyielding, therefore dangerous.

He concluded that Ukraine's revolution was destined to spread to Moscow and St. Petersburg, if not this year, then next year. So he consulted with the ghosts of Brezhnev, Khrushchev, and Stalin, who referred him to the master thinker, Nicholas I. And Nicholas I told Putin that if he failed to invade Ukraine, the Russian state would collapse. It was life or death.

Putin might have responded to this advice by coming up with a project to move Russia in a democratic direction and preserve the stability of Russia at the same time. He might have chosen to see in Ukraine the proof that Russian people are, in fact, capable of creating a liberal republic—given that he believes Ukrainians are a subset of the Russian people. He might have taken Ukraine as a model, instead of an enemy—a model for how to construct the resilient state that Russia has always needed.

But he lacks the categories of analysis that might allow him to think along those lines. His nationalist doctrine does not look into the future, except to see disasters looming. His doctrine looks into the past. So he gazed into the 19th century, and he yielded to its allure, the way that someone might yield to the allure of the bottle or the tomb. Down into the wildest depths of tsarist reaction he plunged. The calamity that has taken place has been, then, an intellectual calamity first of all. It is a monstrous failure of the Russian imagination. And that monstrous failure has brought about the very collapse into barbarism and the danger to the ever fragile Russian state that Putin thought he was trying to avoid. ★

PAUL BERMAN is the author of *The Flight of the Intellectuals*, *Power and the Idealists*, and other books.



The background of the top half of the page features a person with glasses and a blue circular graphic. The person is looking down, and the blue circle is partially visible on the right side. The overall color scheme is a mix of orange, blue, and white.

# Charting a Career Path

## in Global Affairs

GRADUATE  
EDUCATION  
SUMMER 2022

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### **Graduate degree and certificate programs prepare students for a fulfilling international career.**

More than ever, graduate schools are designing degree programs that emphasize experiential learning. This approach has been shown to fast-track skill development and effectively bridge the gap between theoretical teachings in the classroom and real-world applications.

Key to the success of these programs is their ability to accommodate the needs of a diverse student body that includes domestic and international students who are a mix of mid-career professionals and those coming directly from undergraduate studies. Class schedules often provide night and weekend options, as well as in person, online, and hybrid formats.

Distance does not limit opportunities for hands-on learning. The schools featured in this *FP Guide* assign students such things as fieldwork projects, consulting for partner organizations, and the completion of professionally produced reports.

Schools' thoughtful approach to program design also includes hand-selecting distinguished faculty to guide student development and creating a strong, supportive alumni network. Such well-connected individuals play a critical role in expanding students' real-world exposure and extending networking opportunities for post-graduation employment.

All of the aforementioned elements are important for prospective students to take into account when deciding which program is right for them.





**"The most important tools are understanding how to do quantitative analysis and empirical research. That's the cornerstone of most economic work."**

—Gordon Bodnar, Director of International Economics, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

**JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

## **"Tooling Up" for Today's Jobs in International Economics and Finance**

Gordon Bodnar, director of international economics at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, is candid when he talks about what to expect from the school's 11-month MA in International Economics and Finance (MIEF) program.

"It is intensive," says Bodnar, who is also director of the MIEF program. "The first thing students will tell you is that from the moment you get here, you're running pretty fast. I always tell people it's like boot camp. If you survive it, you think it's great."

The degree calls for students to take 14 courses in just 11 months, while a traditional master's degree requires 16 courses over two years. The MIEF program was created almost a decade ago to fill a growing need in the job market for economics and finance experts with advanced analytical and technical skills.

"The professional economists out there want the people who work for them to have a good tool set," Bodnar says. "The most important tools are

understanding how to do quantitative analysis and empirical research. That's the cornerstone of most economic work."

Bodnar's boot camp analogy is apt. Students join a cohort of approximately 50 peers who make their way through the rigorous program together. They are required to take three courses in quantitative analysis and complete two major research projects. "Skills courses" in R programming and Python are taught to help students master industry technology.

This accelerated approach has proven to prepare students well for their post-graduate career. The program often boasts 100 percent employment within six months of graduation, with students taking positions at organizations such as the Federal Reserve, US Department of the Treasury, International Monetary Fund, S&P Global, and Deloitte, or pursuing further graduate work.

The MIEF program is STEM-designated, which increases external scholarship opportunities and, in some cases, salaries upon graduation. The STEM designation also gives international students the opportunity for three years of post-graduate Optional Practical Training.

The MIEF cohort has a mix of mid-career professionals and students who come straight from undergraduate study. The 11-month structure also allows students to return to the workforce faster and at a lower opportunity cost.

"You can come here, work closely with world-renowned faculty, work on research projects, and work in a cohort where you get to know your classmates really well," Bodnar says. "Eleven months later, you walk out highly tooled and highly sought-after."

### **Contact**

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202-663-5600

### **RESEARCH PROJECTS LEAD TO PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT**

Students in the MA in International Economics and Finance program are required to complete two research projects in 11 months. The process requires them to choose a topic, select and analyze data, and work with faculty to produce a professional report.

Projects in recent years included "Modeling Food Price Inflation in Canada's Territories," "Quantifying the 2018 USA-China Tariff Escalation in Terms of Welfare and Trade Effects," and "Climate Change and Crop Yields: Evidence from Rural Punjab, Pakistan."

"Writing a 25-page, professionally structured and highly edited paper prepares them very well for either economic research or financial analysis," Bodnar says. "We're designed to get you out there and into a career in international economics or finance. That's our primary goal."





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## New Certificate Offers a Practical Pathway to Global Policy Work



**"The Global Commerce and Policy program helps you understand the world better. Our students leave the program feeling like they have finally understood things they have always wondered about."**

—Kenneth A. Reinert, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Global Commerce and Policy program, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University



Graduate certificates can offer flexibility for working professionals looking to expand their skills without committing to a full master's degree. This spring, the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University debuted the new Global Economic Policy Certificate in addition to its renowned master's equivalent.

Like the master's degree, the certificate program is available in person, online, or in a hybrid format. Students can start by pursuing the certificate and then continue on to the master's degree, if they wish.

"It's a certificate for individuals who may not have the time and resources to do a master's degree or want to explore graduate school in a realm that would be relevant to them," says Kenneth A. Reinert, professor of public policy and director of the Global Commerce and Policy program.

The multidisciplinary and professionally oriented program has long been the top choice for those looking to develop a broader skill set and expertise in global economic and business policy. The program has three official concentrations: global risk and strategy; global development and governance; and global finance, investment, and trade.

A vast electives offering allows students to explore their interests, whether they go on to choose careers in the public or private sector.

"When students get to their electives, things are wide open in all sorts of areas of policy: national security, international relations, global political economy, global public health, and biodefense," Reinert points out.



### TAILORED CERTIFICATES EXPAND KNOWLEDGE AND STRENGTHEN CREDENTIALS

The Global Commerce and Policy program's new graduate certificate is just one of 11 graduate certificates offered by the Schar School in specialized areas, including illicit trade analysis, strategic trade, and nonprofit management.

#### Certificate program advantages

- Option of online and evening classes
- Less time and financial commitment
- Credits are transferable to relevant master's programs at the school
- Effective professional development

Prospective students can set up one-on-one appointments with graduate admissions staff at any time to ask questions or receive guidance on which program might be the right fit.

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# Creating **change-makers**



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## At the Integration Lab, Practical Experience Is a Must



**"We bias toward action. We learn by doing. Instead of talking about a problem, we have to execute a strategy to make a meaningful contribution. All our i-Lab teams learn through active practice."**

—Tracy Kijewski-Correa, Co-Director, Integration Lab, Keough School of Global Affairs, University of Notre Dame

The Keough School of Global Affairs was the first new school created at the University of Notre Dame in almost 100 years when it opened in 2014 and welcomed its inaugural class three years later. This presented an opportunity to do things differently.

Founded to provide solutions to timeless global threats such as poverty and disease, the Keough School draws upon nine institutes that focus on disciplines ranging from religion to international business. One unifying thread is the school's Integration Lab, which gathers students from different disciplines to spend a year working with global organizations on real-world problems.

"No problem in the world is ever going to be solved by looking through a single disciplinary lens," says Tracy Kijewski-Correa, co-director of the Integration Lab (i-Lab). "That's the big problem with higher education. We put everyone in a silo by discipline. The Keough School is different. It's a nexus."

The i-Lab is different, too. Rather than writing a thesis, students pursuing a two-year Master of Global Affairs degree can spend a year in a team-based consulting role, completing a project—which includes deliverables—for organizations such as Oxfam and Catholic Relief Services.

The Integration Lab puts students into cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary teams of three and four that work directly for an organization, under faculty supervision. Projects are designed to tackle an objective or solve a problem and often involve data collection and fieldwork outside the United States.



### BUILDING A REAL-WORLD TOOL HELPED START A CAREER

When Jenna Ahn McGuire entered the Keough School, she found far more than classes. Through the school's Integration Lab, she joined a team that was developing an assessment tool to better understand markets in human shelter, working for the Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter at Habitat for Humanity International. The tool is still in use by professionals today, and McGuire now works for Catholic Relief Services.

"Joining Catholic Relief Services after the Keough School has been a natural fit, since at the heart of both institutions is a commitment to integral human development," McGuire says. "What helped my transition was learning from so many experienced development professionals at the Keough School, where I was exposed to everything from proposal writing to monitoring and evaluation."

#### Contact

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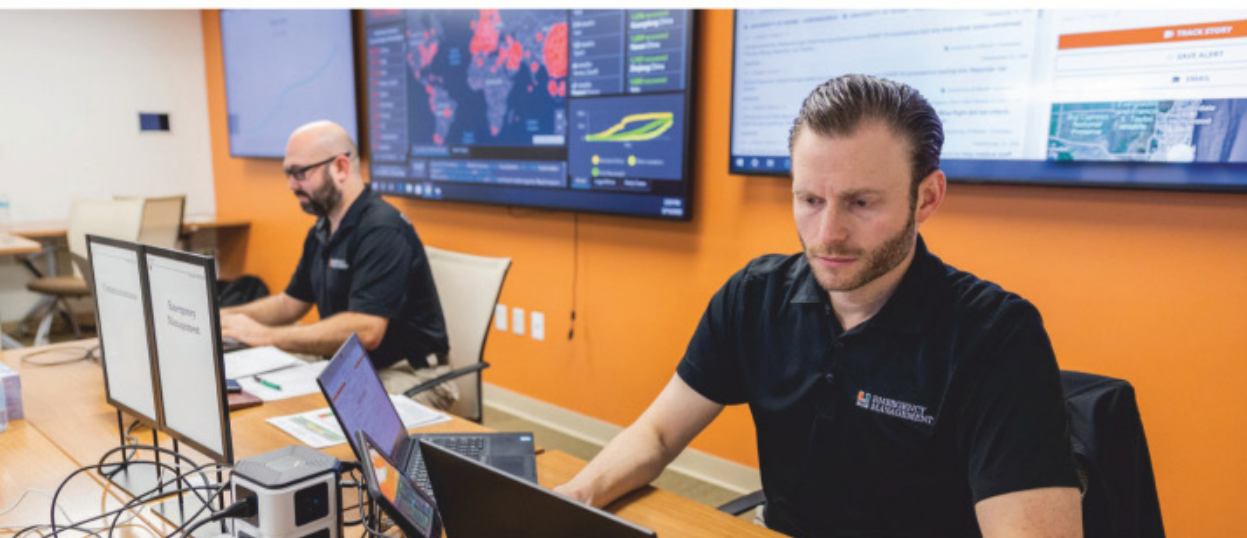
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## Security Management Credentials Equip Students to Manage Today's Threats



**"It's not about crime. It's about wellness and safety. We have security because there are operations behind the scenes keeping us safe."**

—Maryann Tatum Tobin, Assistant Dean for Professional Education, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Miami



The University of Miami (UM) offers a new line of defense against a host of security threats that confront the world these days, including school shootings, the effects of climate change, a pandemic, and hacking of personal information.

UM offers a wide-ranging Certificate in Security Management, launched three years ago, that graduate students can take either as a stand-alone micro-credential during a summer, or as part of UM's yearlong MA in International Administration (MAIA).

"It's not about crime," says Maryann Tatum Tobin, assistant dean for professional education, who runs the MAIA program. "It's about wellness and safety, and how do we have a more secure world? We have security because there are operations behind the scenes keeping us safe."

The certificate program benefits from its location in South Florida, an area that must manage hurricanes and rising sea levels, as well as domestic crises like the June 2021 collapse of the Champlain Towers in the Miami suburb of Surfside and the nearby school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. MAIA guest lecturers have included Carol Bellamy, a former director of the Peace Corps, who spoke about humanitarian aid during global disasters, and Major Greg Terp (ret.), formerly with the Miami-Dade Police Department, who described his experience in overseeing the logistics of major events, such as the Super Bowl, as well as the essentials of emergency management.

In addition to preparation for and response to disasters, the security certificate classes cover issues of energy (including nuclear) and

environment (including water resources and sustainable food systems), plus human trafficking and cybersecurity.

The breadth of issues covered in the curriculum has launched graduates into an assortment of careers. For example, 2021 graduate James Cunningham interned at the Department of Defense's US Southern Command and was hired from his internship as an information operations planner. A 2021 classmate, Benjamin Kling, developed during his MAIA coursework a concept of a drone that would survey damage to agricultural areas to determine what mitigation steps are required. Kling took his concept to the UM small business incubator, which helped him get funding for a start-up venture, Precision Ecology.

"You can take this content anywhere you want," Tobin says. "Every job these students take requires them to have some knowledge of how to be prepared and what to do with the aftermath."

### COMBINATION OF THEORY AND REAL-WORLD INSIGHTS LAUNCHES GRADUATE'S CAREER



Both theoretical classes in international relations and real-world lessons intrigued 2021 MAIA graduate James Cunningham. The 24-year-old from Newport, Rhode Island, whose coursework included the Certificate in Security Management, wrote a capstone essay on the evolution of the Cuban

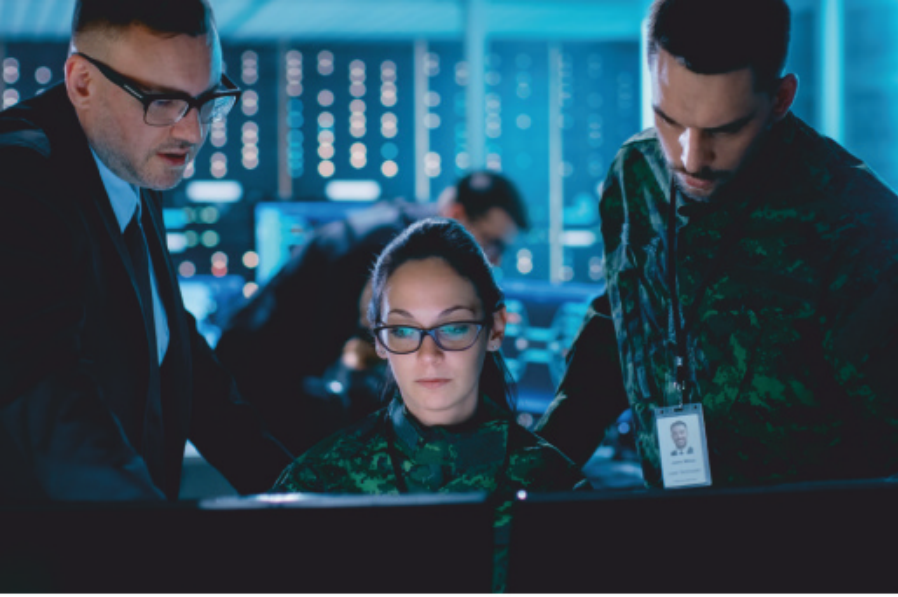
Communist Party's outsized foreign policy by conducting research in the Cuban Heritage Collection in the University of Miami's Richter Library, as well as by drawing insights from conversations with Cuban political exiles.

"The MAIA program prepared me for professional success by combining academic considerations of international relations with the real-world lessons of industry leaders," says Cunningham, who parlayed his academic studies into an internship and then, after graduation, a job with SOUTHCOM. "It gave me the opportunity to borrow wisdom from people far more experienced in the industry."

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## Executive MS Program Offers Accelerated Degree for Mid-Career Professionals



**"There's a lot of flexibility in the course selection. You're creating a portfolio that matches your professional experience and allows you to move ahead in your career."**

—Catherine Ruby, Ph.D., Assistant Dean of Graduate Enrollment Management and Director of Internships and Career Development, School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University

For professionals with several years of experience, the Executive MS in International Affairs at Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations offers a compressed path to higher-level training that can elevate a global career.

The program accelerates students' hands-on learning by omitting some of the standard theoretical courses that are offered with the traditional degree program. "Students come in and do the 30 credits that are more practice-oriented," explains Catherine Ruby, Ph.D., assistant dean of graduate enrollment management and director of internships and career development. This allows the Executive MS to be completed in one year of full-time study, including summers, or on a part-time basis.

Incoming students select two specializations from 13 options, such as international security, foreign policy analysis, international economics and development, and global negotiation and conflict management. The specializations also enable students to earn micro-credentials.

"Post-COVID, we have great interest in the global health and human security specialization," Ruby notes. For example, the current student body includes a dentist who, Ruby explains, wants to transition into the public policy side.

"There's a lot of flexibility in the course selection," she says. "You're creating a portfolio for yourself that matches your professional experience and allows you to move ahead in your career."



Faculty members who lead these areas of expertise have "one foot in the professional side of the field," Ruby explains. For instance, Professor Yanzhong Huang leads the school's Center for Global Health Studies and is also a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "He's testified before Congress, and his expertise was called upon during COVID," Ruby explains. "I can't even tell you how many times he was on TV or in the media. He is very well regarded."

Graduates' career opportunities are further bolstered by the program's affiliation with the United Nations community. For example, its Semester in Washington, DC, program is offered at the UN Foundation building. Students can also take classes through the school's Center for UN and Global Governance Studies, and go to the UN to follow topics of interest to them.

The Executive MS program draws interest from a diverse pool of applicants, both domestically and internationally. The schedule is flexible, with many students working full-time and attending classes in the evening, either in person or online.

### SUPPORTIVE NETWORK ENABLES A POST-GRADUATION JOB PIVOT TO YEMEN

Sushant Naidu had offers of a Rotary Fellowship to work in Thailand and a position with Peace Corps North Macedonia after graduating with an MA in Diplomacy and International Relations in 2020—but the COVID-19 pandemic squelched those plans.

Professor David Wood, an international peace mediator with projects throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Naidu's professor while at Seton Hall University, learned of his change in plans.

He invited Naidu to become a project officer on his Yemen team, where their work centers on economic development, social cooperation, and peace.

"What is most rewarding about the work that I am doing now, with the MENA program, is seeing how things we studied in class look similar and different on the ground," Naidu says.

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## Understanding Conflict and Development in Local and Global Politics



**“Courses within the Conflict and Development concentration offer the theories, knowledge, and analytical tools to enable students to understand the local-level dynamics and the geopolitics of contemporary conflicts.”**



–Dr. Reyko Huang, Associate Professor, Bush School of Government & Public Service, Texas A&M University

For students in the Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M University who grew up after 9/11, courses in the Conflict and Development concentration help them understand how the United States became embroiled in wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and elsewhere.

“I think our students are in a difficult place, struggling to understand the conflicts that have been part of the past 20 years of American history,” says Dr. Reyko Huang, associate professor in the Bush School’s Department of International Affairs and coordinator of the concentration. “Courses within the Conflict and Development concentration offer the theories, knowledge, and analytical tools to enable students to understand the local-level dynamics and the geopolitics of contemporary conflicts.”

Dr. Huang includes a simulation in her Contemporary Civil Wars course, assigning her students to negotiate a peace agreement. They spend the semester learning about the politics of armed conflicts, studying why ordinary people take up arms against their government, how they procure weapons and mobilize their fellow citizens, and how foreign intervention alters dynamics on the ground.

Students are assigned to teams that represent different parties in an ongoing conflict, including government negotiators, an armed rebel group, and external actors, such as the US government and the United Nations. The students negotiate for three hours, sometimes reaching an agreement. But sometimes students “aren’t willing to budge” and the negotiations fail, reflecting the reality that many end without an agreement, Dr. Huang explains.



Dr. Huang notes that students who earn the Master of International Affairs often land jobs in the federal government, including with the Foreign Service or the US Agency for International Development. International students usually return to their home countries, taking jobs in the government or foreign ministry.

Students in the International Affairs Department choose two concentrations from over a dozen offered in their two primary tracks: National Security and Diplomacy or International Development and Economic Policy. They then complete at least three courses in their chosen concentrations. The Conflict and Development courses are popular because they satisfy requirements for either track.

The multidisciplinary Bush School faculty comprises political scientists, economists, and historians, as well as practitioners with decades of experience in the policy world. Classes are small and interactive, with an emphasis on critical thinking and debate, so students can learn to consider multiple perspectives, advance an argument, and work as a team, Dr. Huang says.

### CAPSTONE COURSE FEATURES ON-THE-GROUND EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

Last March, Dr. C. Silva Hamie, instructional associate professor in the Department of International Affairs, and a team of students traveled to El Salvador, where they interviewed rural laborers and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Their goal: to examine the effectiveness and impact of NGOs’ disaster risk reduction in the Central American country.

“We wanted to find out what NGOs are able to accomplish or not, given the gang violence and challenging political and economic circumstances in El Salvador,” Dr. Hamie explains.

The experience is part of the Bush School’s required capstone course, where students learn to supervise, conduct, and evaluate large-scale public policy research. “Students need to see what’s happening on the ground to have an impact on policy making,” Dr. Hamie says.

#### Contact

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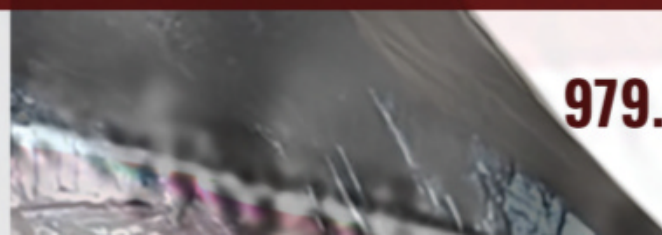
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—Brandon Merrell,  
Assistant Professor,  
Clinton School of  
Public Service,  
University of  
Arkansas

The Clinton School of Public Service, the nation's first to offer a Master of Public Service (MPS) degree, is founded on the conviction that to be effective in different capacities—whether pursuing a career in the nonprofit, private, or public sector—students benefit tremendously from the school's marriage of field service and academics. During their two years, students participate in three distinct field service experiences, with both national and international partner organizations. These hands-on field service projects expand the traditional classroom, grow the students' professional networks, and lead to unique career opportunities after graduation.

With on-the-ground knowledge and feedback from alumni and partner organizations, the Clinton School of Public Service has launched two new skill-building certificate programs to better prepare students for the latest workforce demands. This fall, in conjunction with a Master of Public Service degree, students can earn a certificate in Communication Leadership or Data Analysis for Social Change by completing three courses and a capstone project.

The Communication Leadership Certificate is designed to help public service leaders improve their impact, performance, and effectiveness as communicators. It responds to significant interest from non-governmental organizations, nonprofits, and government bodies who are seeking graduates with strong written and oral communication skills, and offers a special focus on developing leadership skills that inspire people to create solutions for complex challenges in their communities.

Likewise, the Data Analysis for Social Change Certificate teaches students how to analyze

### BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BUSINESS

Ralph Bray never imagined that he'd be researching human-elephant conflict (HEC) in Kenya for Gammadda, an organization in Sri Lanka, or that his practicum research recommendations on increasing contract spending with women and minority-owned business enterprises (WMBE) would be implemented within the city of Little Rock, Arkansas. An MPS/MBA student at Clinton School of Public Service and the Sam M. Walton College of Business, Bray hopes to help for-profit businesses become socially and environmentally responsible.

Bray has received the Boren Fellowship, which will take him to Brazil to study Portuguese for a year and focus his efforts on sustainability in the Atlantic Forest or the Amazon. "The Clinton School's world-class reputation with the global community and hands-on projects have opened many doors for me," Bray says.



data to produce real change in the communities they'll go on to serve. "Many schools are providing excellent training and data analytics, but what they're not bringing is the practitioner side, and teaching students how to apply those data analytic skills to understand and solve problems inherent within a community," says Brandon Merrell, assistant professor at the Clinton School of Public Service.

The Clinton School prides itself on its ability to provide students with individual attention, from academic to career advising. "Students entering the MPS program are paired with an adviser related directly to their interests," says Merrell. "The whole time, they have individual attention. They don't need to compete for the resources of different faculty members; we can supervise them because we've deliberately kept the program relatively small." An average of 50 students enter the program each year.

Graduates of the school have gone on to work at a variety of organizations, including The Asia Foundation, World Bank, and Heifer International.

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## In International Miami, Graduates Are Heavily Recruited to Serve, Lead



In addition to in-depth courses, the MA in Global Affairs program offers professional development seminars on topics such as grant writing, negotiation, and ethics, all of which are taught by experienced professionals. For example, a seminar on leadership and national security was recently taught by retired US Navy Admiral Craig S. Fallor, former head of the US Southern Command, who is now a senior fellow at the Green School.

Florida International University (FIU) is powering the next generation of foreign affairs leaders. Alumni have ascended to the top levels of the federal government, as well as forged careers within the private sector and at nonprofit organizations.

The pipeline for this success: FIU's Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs. The globally recognized institution is a member—one of just 38 worldwide—of the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs.

Located in diverse, metropolitan Miami, the Green School offers 37 academic programs and caters to students' interests with opportunities that jump-start and enhance careers.

### MA IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS: STUDENTS SOLVING REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS

Students pursuing an MA in Global Affairs work on critical issues—human trafficking, poverty alleviation—even before graduating.

A capstone project connects them with agencies, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations for which they rely on previous coursework as well as instruction in data-based techniques to produce 35-page research reports over several weeks.

"They are essentially consultants for that particular organization," Associate Dean Shlomi Dinar explains of students who work with US Homeland Security, the UN, US Africa Command, and others.

In exchange for work that they formally present to leadership, students receive unparalleled access, mentoring, and networking to help them develop skills for rewarding careers. Many accept full-time positions with those same organizations.



More than 100 students annually intern for Washington-based government agencies, multinational companies, and non-governmental organizations with which the school partners. Another 300 students participate in all-expenses-paid "fly-in" seminars, complete with training, mentorship, and networking, at the university's hub on Capitol Hill. The experiences have helped students and recent alumni earn prestigious Rangel and Payne fellowships to catapult their careers.

Associate Dean Shlomi Dinar attributes Green School graduates' success to the work of professors "who engage in robust research" that is well funded and published in top journals. Several former officials have joined the faculty in recent years, among them a president of Costa Rica, a UN ambassador, and a US assistant secretary of state. Students learn from cutting-edge researchers and former leaders who have confronted real-world problems.

Ana Rosa Quintana earned an undergraduate degree and a master's degree from the Green School and serves as a professional staff member for the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives. She appreciates the classroom instruction she received, as well as the ongoing support of her most valued professors, among them Eduardo Gamarra, an expert on Latin America who works in the areas of security, democratization, and elections and, Quintana says, "whose opinions and research I still rely on to this day."

Earlier this year, US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Brian P. McKeon visited FIU to address students interested in working for the State Department. His stop followed one by US Agency for International Development Administrator Samantha Power, who signed an agreement to recruit more students from FIU, particularly from underrepresented groups.

Since the 1980s, FIU has joined USAID in launching ground-breaking reforms worldwide. Other critical partnerships exist with the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Pan American Health Organization.

### Contact

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305-348-7266



# PREPARING GLOBAL LEADERS



Master's student Vanessa Huertas is just one of the success stories coming out of Florida International University's Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs. The newly named DACOR Bacon House Foundation fellow is complementing her academic coursework in global affairs with internships at the United States Southern Command and the office of the U.S. Army National Guard.

She is among hundreds of FIU students who annually boost their knowledge with real-world leadership experience. Career-impacting opportunities are made possible to them through the Green School's partnerships with Congress, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Intelligence Community, NGOs and other organizations around the globe. And FIU's center in the nation's capital actively mentors, trains and connects students and young alumni who seek to serve their country in a variety of capacities, at the highest levels.

Founded with the goal of promoting greater international understanding, FIU has remained true to its ideals as it turns out graduates ready to tackle the most-pressing issues facing the world today.



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## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are Central to Public Service



**“SPIA is distinguished by its commitment to public service. Service is central to everything we do.”**

—Steven F. Petric,  
Director of Graduate  
Admissions, Princeton  
School of Public and  
International Affairs,  
Princeton University

In a world where diversity, equity, and inclusion have moved to the forefront of the global conversation, the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) has augmented its curriculum to give students the tools and training to lead on these issues with confidence.

SPIA has added a mandatory course on race, power, and inequality—its second such addition—in an effort to better equip graduates for a global policy landscape that is evolving. It is among the first courses that new students take when they arrive at SPIA.

“This allows students to develop the necessary context to think broadly about race, equity, and inclusion,” says Steven F. Petric, director of graduate admissions. “The goal is to provide a common baseline of understanding. We felt it was important to frame the beginning of the program with that baseline.”

SPIA offers three degrees: a PhD in Public Affairs (five years), a Master in Public Affairs (two years), and a mid-career Master in Public Policy (one year). Both master’s programs allow students to choose among four fields of concentration and three optional certificate programs.

SPIA offers a unique benefit: The school pays the full cost of tuition and health insurance for every admitted student. A generous stipend to cover living expenses is also available. This practice helps make the school financially accessible to students from all communities. “We work very hard to provide financial packages that ensure students can focus on their studies while at SPIA and on their public service careers after graduation,” Petric says.

SPIA is distinguished by its commitment to public service, Petric adds. “Service is central to everything we do.”

Because more than 85 percent of graduates choose public-sector jobs, they very likely will encounter structural inequities accompanying issues such as immigration, housing, and health care. SPIA added a course requirement on diversity, equity, and inclusion that allows students to choose from a menu of options, including classes on “Citizenship, Borders, and In/Exclusion,” “Racial Democracy in America,” and “International Migration: Challenges and Policy Responses.” Petric says the school will continue to think broadly about how to address these issues across its curriculum.

As he put it, “We are a community in conversation.”

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### STUDENTS HELP SHAPE EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION

As SPIA began to increase its course offerings in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), students and alumni were important participants in that process.

Students Guillermo Herrera Nimmagadda (MPA ’22) and Yvette Ramirez (MPA ’21) served alongside faculty and administrators on a committee that recommends ways to make SPIA more inclusive.

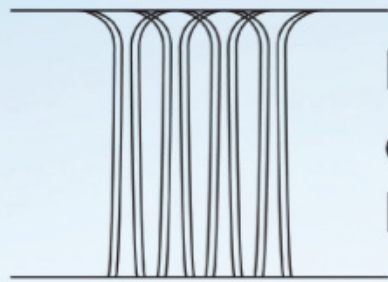
“The changes adopted by the school are an important step toward equipping students with the skills and knowledge to fully address inequities in and beyond the United States,” says Nimmagadda, 26, of Miami.



Ramirez, 31, of San Francisco, agreed that the conversation must go global. “Students need support to understand DEI in other contexts and to unpack global inequities. Students with historically marginalized identities, like students of color, are often the first to identify gaps and injustices.”







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# REVIEW

## Happily Ever After

Fairy tales are where the West and China find common ground. *By Maria Tatar*





W

ith their cannibalistic witches lurking in spooky forests, beanstalks leading to real castles in the air, and disagreeable gnomes bent on making treacherous bargains, fairy tales have a coefficient of weirdness so high that they can seem like one-offs, singular inventions rooted in one specific time and place. There's the classic French "Sleeping Beauty," the British "Jack the Giant Killer," and the German "Snow White." Then along comes the translation of a collection of Chinese fairy tales written down nearly a hundred years ago. And, presto, it becomes clear that Little Red Riding Hood is not a French or a German invention but a universal child wearing different disguises as she makes her way through a wilderness, always the innocent target of a monster with an outsized appetite for young flesh.

The publication of *The Dragon Daughter and Other Lin Lan Fairy Tales* marks a seismic shift in the English-speaking world's understanding of the fairy-tale repertoire. It features 42 *tonghua*, or fairy tales—most translated into English for the first time—chosen from more than a thousand stories published under the pseudonym "Lin Lan," a name first used in 1924 by Li Xiaofeng, a writer who recruited colleagues to collect fairy tales from across China.

Although Chinese fairy tales have trickled into the West over the past century, they have yet to receive much scholarly attention. And stories by the Brothers Grimm, along with those by Hans Christian Andersen, are still among the most widely read fairy tales in both the East and West. This is a direct product of European, British, and Russian scholars publishing monster anthologies of folklore in a push to consolidate national identity in the 19th century, collecting everything they could get their hands on, and thereby establishing the fairy-tale canon as we know it today, with all its geographical limitations.

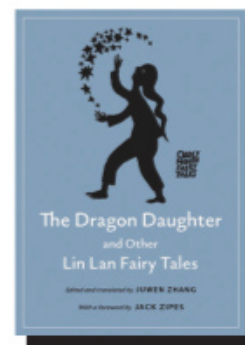
Scholars such as Juwen Zhang, the collection's editor and

translator, are trying to change that. Lin Lan, Zhang believes, should be recognized, for two reasons, as the "Brothers Grimm of Modern China." Lin Lan urged contributors to record stories drawn from indigenous oral traditions (just as the famed German scholars had done) but also welcomed the idea of adding a European touch to the tales. The result is almost unprecedented in mixing tropes from multiple cultures in pleasantly disorienting ways to a Western reader. A Chinese Cinderella is ordered to sort buckwheat hulls, wheat, and mung beans. Steamed buns substitute for porridge; flutes are made of bamboo. A jujube tree stands in for what is usually a juniper tree in European folklore. We are in a fairy-tale universe animated by silkworms and snake spirits rather than by enchanted frogs or cats sporting boots.

Instead of thinking in terms of a cultural heritage captured by 19th-century philologists and antiquarians, it may be time to investigate how fairy tales form what William Wells Newell, founder of the American Folklore Society, once casually referred to as a "golden net-work of oral tradition." Rather than dividing us along national lines, fairy tales show exactly how connected we all are in the stories we share about what it means to be part of a family, to leave home, to face down villains, and to secure a happily ever after, reminding us of just how porous the boundaries between East and West have long been.

**MUCH AS WE EMBRACE DIVERSITY** and difference today, there has always been a tug in the direction of finding what the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss called "unsuspected harmonies" in our collective belief systems around the world. In the mid-20th century, Lévi-Strauss urged us to consider how bards, griots, and other storytellers made sense of the world by turning abstract binaries (raw vs. cooked, herbivores vs. beasts of prey, nature vs. nurture) into human actors battling it out in symbolic worlds that resemble each other across cultures.

For the American writer Joseph Campbell, who worked in



*The Dragon Daughter and Other  
Lin Lan Fairy Tales*

ED. AND TRANSL. BY JUWEN ZHANG,  
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 240 PP.,  
\$19.95, MARCH 2022





Illustrations from Lin Lan's "The Golden Frog and the Three Wishes," "Stories of Birds," and "The Weird Story" (1929-1931) from a collection at the Beijing Normal University Library.

comparative mythology, the search for a “shape-shifting yet marvelously constant story” would yield a bond connecting what he called the “mumbo-jumbo of some red-eyed witch doctor of the Congo” and the “sonnets of the mystic Lao-tse” with an “argument of Aquinas” or a “bizarre Eskimo fairy tale.” The underlying racism that seeped into Campbell’s inventory is undeniable, but his assertion reminds us of the powerful drive to find kinship and affinity in mythical confabulations. Today, our use of the terms “meme” and “trope” reflects an understanding of how the narrative world is knit together by what were once referred to as themes, archetypes, and motifs.

It never dawned on either Lévi-Strauss or Campbell to turn to the repertoire of so-called old wives’ tales rather than grand epics as a source for understanding the symbolic worlds we construct to manage the cultural contradictions in the human world. Yet fairy tales, told around the fireside, in spinning rooms, and in sewing circles, are as much a part of the fabric of civilization as the epics, myths, and fables of times past. They pass on ancestral wisdom, entertain adults, socialize children, and do the heavy-lifting cultural work of helping us to process and navigate the real.

When the German Sinologist Wolfram Eberhard published *Folktales of China* in 1937, his work was a precursor of multiculturalism, an effort to acknowledge non-Western traditions and celebrate their distinctive cultural value. Other volumes followed, with titles such as *Chinese Fairy Tales and Legends* and *Chinese Fairy Tales and Fantasies*, suggesting that, although Chinese folklore is still “virgin soil” for Western researchers, as Eberhard insisted, China possessed a rich repertoire of tales taken from oral storytelling traditions. The Lin Lan fairy tales expand that repertoire in unexpected new ways. That previous Western collectors neglected to document most of the collection’s stories is nothing short of astonishing.

In the sensational Lin Lan collection, the domestic turmoil at the heart of tales known in the West is configured somewhat differently, but sibling rivalry and child-parent conflict fuel many of the plots, as do poverty, famine, and the loss of parents. In “The Toad Son,” a woman longs for a child, even if it looks like the creature in the story’s title, and—as in some European tales—she gives birth to exactly what she wished for. There are tales of two brothers, one a cruel skinflint, the other generous and kind, harking back to an ancient Egyptian story. And we find stories of boys who, like Aladdin of *The Thousand and One Nights*, have lost their fathers and are lazy, refusing to earn a living, much to their mothers’ exasperation. Throughout the tales, we learn about tables that set themselves, magical pursuits, and impossible tasks. Sound familiar?

“The Shedding Winter Plum,” like many of the stories in this collection, upends our understanding of a tale type like “Cinderella” even as it reminds us that, for women, labor and good looks are what it once took to succeed. Its heroine spins cotton, swings from trees, herds cows, and plays tricks on people. A free spirit, the pockmarked girl with sparse yellow hair and raggedy clothes turns at last into a beautiful woman with hair that is “thick and black,” a face that “shines,” and “splendid” clothes. “With people surrounding her, she gave [her] horse a kick and went on her way.” Save for the fairy-tale transformation, Winter Plum resembles Pippi Longstocking as much as she feels like a Cinderella figure.

**Rather than dividing us along national lines, fairy tales show exactly how connected we all are in the stories we share.**



A story akin to the French “Beauty and the Beast” tells of a snake who marries a woodcutter’s youngest daughter. By the end of the story, there are echoes of the Grimms’ “The Juniper Tree” when the snake’s wife returns from the dead as a bird that haunts her duplicitous sister.

Readers will discover in this collection displays of violence in its most unforgiving forms as well as repeated tributes to beauty and its seductive power. In “The Flute Player,” a boy named Abo plays his instrument with such charm that everyone stops to contemplate the music. “The Human-Bear’s Death for Love” unfolds scenes of such heartbreaking beauty that the hero forgets about everything, “even eating.” Bookending these moments are scenes of grotesque violence, with monkeys dumping a bag containing a boy named Gege and “all the pee and poop” he has released. “The Weird Brothers” (based on the same tale retold in Claire Huchet Bishop’s now controversial 1938 *The Five Chinese Brothers*) stages 10 failed executions, in contrast to the many scenes of swift, successful reprisals in other tales.

These tales enact revenge in its most unforgiving form, with what the Dutch German critic André Jolles called a naive form of morality—one that relies on our instinctive sense of justice, showing us the world as we want it to be rather than as it is, with its complex social arrangements and protracted judicial procedures. In the world of Lin Lan tales, a traumatized blacksmith’s wife steps forward and stabs a tyrant to death. A vengeful ghost is dispatched with glee by the ruler of a land. “Little Bald” manages to conjure a spell and kill the wife planning to murder him.

These stories do what fairy tales do supremely well: signaling virtue with alluring markers and staging punishments as a strategy for purging the world of evil. Like European tales in their unbowdlerized form, they promote a cult of radiant beauty and indulge in displays of stylized, theatrical violence. The aesthetics of the fairy tale are as primal and problematic as its ethics, always giving us something to contest, debate, and talk about.

**THE QUESTION REMAINS** of the extent to which the tropes in these stories belong to indigenous lore or are drawn from other traditions. In the introduction, Zhang, a Chinese studies professor at Willamette University, writes that many of the tales are hybrids of European folklore and Chinese oral tradition. Yet we are faced with something of a chicken-and-egg problem, never quite clear about who borrowed from whom, especially since it is impossible to source an original version of a tale from oral storytelling traditions that predate print and visual culture.

In a letter to a collaborator, the original editor of the Lin Lan volumes affirms that the tales must be “loyal,” presumably to the words of each teller. “Polishing” and “editing,”

## The Lin Lan fairy tales, like their European counterparts, remind us that the domestic sphere matters, and it matters deeply.

we learn, are “taboo,” and a hands-off policy when it comes to editing appears to be strictly enforced. These stories may, then, be closer to the unvarnished truths of oral storytelling than Western fairy tales, which were famously diluted when they were repurposed for middle-class children with the advent of print culture.

An appendix to the collection makes important points about how the stories were collected, even if it leaves us longing for more information about the principles guiding the work of the Lin Lan network in the 1920s. We learn about an “ailing mother” who tells a story called “The Garden Snake” and how it is recorded “in her tone”—an anecdote that makes us wonder if the informants for these stories were predominantly women, as they were in the European tradition.

Are these tales indeed capturing the voices of those working in the domestic sphere, the women who told stories to children and to each other while carrying out repetitive household chores? If all local variants of a story belong to a global “myth,” as Lévi-Strauss told us, it is all the more important to unearth these tales (which have long been overshadowed by the sacred literature so well documented in Chinese studies in the West) and let the voices of women and the common folk be heard.

Despite all that remains unknown, the Lin Lan fairy tales, like their European counterparts, remind us that the domestic sphere matters, and it matters deeply. Family life carries an urgency that finds outlets in gossip, storytelling, chatter, and a range of expressive tools to help process and heal trauma. If happy families are all alike, as Leo Tolstoy wrote, and unhappy families are all unhappy in their own way, then fairy tales enact that unhappiness with an agonizing bite of the real.

Much as fairy tales are wired for weirdness with idiosyncratic twists and turns added when new raconteurs tell an old story, giving it their own particular spin, there is clearly something at the core of these tales—whether it takes the form of navigating the perils of family conflicts, searching for romance, or using your wits to turn the tables on the rich and powerful—that resonates with us all. ■

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## Liberalism, More or Less

Yascha Mounk and Francis Fukuyama  
set out to cure an ailing patient.

*By James Traub*

**R**ussia's invasion of Ukraine has played out like a terribly grim but, so far at least, profoundly ennobling laboratory experiment in the relative virtues of autocracy and liberal democracy. Yet evidence that a (more or less) liberal democracy can defeat or withstand an autocracy even in war—the one sphere that so obviously favors the latter—hasn't meaningfully diminished the forces that have undermined liberalism in the West and around the world.

Indeed, the sharp division between Western democracies that regard the invasion as an intolerable violation of moral principle and non-Western and barely liberal ones, such as India and South Africa, that have treated it as geopolitics as usual only reinforces the idea that liberal democracy occupies a diminishing space in the world.

It is possible that liberal democracy was a historically contingent experiment that depended on underlying conditions that no longer obtain. In his 2018 book, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to*



*Save It*, Yascha Mounk describes those limiting conditions as broadly shared prosperity, relative demographic homogeneity, and sources of information that encompass the whole population. That was the last century, not this one.

Yet if you believe that all alternatives to liberal democracy are much worse—indeed, unbearable—then you must proceed as if the illness it suffers from is curable. That is the premise of Mounk’s new work, the more optimistically titled *The Great Experiment: Why Diverse Democracies Fall Apart and How They Can Endure*, as well as *Liberalism and Its Discontents* by Francis Fukuyama, also a long-standing combatant in the liberalism wars.

Liberalism, as Fukuyama describes it, functions as a political technology for the management of otherwise irreconcilable differences. Liberals since the time of Thomas Hobbes in the 17th century have erected a series of procedural rules and normative principles—above all, the rule of law and the rights of individuals to pursue their own preferences—to limit the reach of absolutist doctrines. Liberal rules and norms allow people of different views not only to get along but to subscribe to the implicit “contract” on which democratic government rests. Liberalism is endangered when the “factions,” to use James Madison’s term, that arise naturally in society cease to respect the rules and norms.

But liberalism has a problem when those factions consist not of like-minded individuals but of tribes: ethnic or religious groups bound together less by changeable beliefs than by immutable characteristics. A “diverse democracy,” in Mounk’s sense, is a heterogeneous one. In such states where “virtually everyone votes along ethnic or religious lines,” Mounk observes, “a large portion of the population forms a permanent minority,” locked out of power, while majorities use their power to dominate or marginalize minorities, as white people did to Black people in the American antebellum and Jim Crow South and as Hindus now do to Muslims in India.

Liberalism addresses people as equal, free-standing citizens, but Mounk has concluded that the wish to stand apart from kin, culture, and state is less primordial than we think. Both experience and social science research show us that people are by nature “groupish.” The chief threat to liberalism over the last decade has been majoritarian nationalism provoked by real or alleged threats to collective identity—whiteness in the United States and Europe, Hinduism in India, Judaism in Israel, Islam in Turkey. Against this rage, liberal universalism, the idea that we all have equal rights based in our common humanity, has steadily retreated.

No one has developed an entirely convincing answer to the problem of diverse democracy. The “consociational” model, where power is allocated among groups that enjoy formal status, has worked out well in the Netherlands,

divided between Catholics and Protestants, but very badly in Lebanon, where power-sharing among different religious factions has produced a vacuum of governance very close to anarchy. This April, slightly over 40 percent of French voters cast ballots for a presidential candidate who promised to restore the primacy of natives over newcomers and, not coincidentally, white people over people of color.

The first wave of rise-of-illiberalism books—including Mounk’s and Fukuyama’s earlier books as well as Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt’s *How Democracies Die* and my own *What Was Liberalism?: The Past, Present, and Promise of a Noble Idea*—focused almost entirely on the right-wing nationalism of former U.S. President Donald Trump, French politician Marine Le Pen, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and others. That’s old news by now. One of the features of the new generation of liberalism-in-peril books is worry over the rise of an identitarian left that is equally contemptuous of liberal restraints.

Fukuyama writes of a species of identity politics that “sees the lived experiences of different groups as fundamentally incommensurate.” White people cannot understand what it means to be Black; racism is not an individual attitude but is rather imprinted in the structures of power and thus in collective consciousness. Mounk describes the “strategic essentialism” of those who insist that we treat race or gender as ineradicable essences. This is the new groupishness of the left. Anyone who has spent time in the advanced institutions of American culture—universities, art museums, foundations, newspapers—will recognize this mentality.

It is, however, striking that while right-wing nationalism has circled the globe, the so-called woke left is an almost entirely U.S. phenomenon. It explains nothing about illiberalism in India or Poland and very little about France or Germany. Why is it that the most advanced progressive thinking in the United States, but not elsewhere, is obsessed with the policing of group boundaries and the honoring of group rights? Perhaps because of the unique role that racial anger and racial shame play in the United States.

The effect, in any case, is to set up a kind of reciprocal tribalism, where the left and right goad each other to greater extremes. Both agree on the need to weed out evil books from libraries but disagree violently over the books in question;

**If you believe that all alternatives to liberal democracy are much worse—indeed, unbearable—then you must proceed as if the illness it suffers from is curable.**





*The Great Experiment: Why Diverse Democracies Fall Apart and How They Can Endure*

YASCHA MOUNK, PENGUIN PRESS, 368 PP., \$28, APRIL 2022

*Liberalism and Its Discontents*

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX, 192 PP., \$26, MAY 2022

meanwhile, what the historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. called the “vital center” recedes to an ever more distant horizon.

What is to be done? Fukuyama’s answer is to defend the citadel. In this slim volume (a euphemism for a long magazine article by a famous author that publishers are eager to issue in book form), Fukuyama, in the manner of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, traces the evolutionary path of the new illiberal ideologies, locating their origin in the post-modern critique of rationality of the philosophers Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, a doctrine of the radical left later picked up by the right.

And then, like a stout crusader of liberalism, he smites them one and all. Fukuyama first refutes what might be called the neoliberal or free market heresy of liberalism, noting that while humans are indeed self-seeking, “they are also intensely social creatures who cannot be individually happy without the support and recognition provided by their peers.” But neoliberalism is a heresy, or a perversion, for liberal societies created the redistributionist state that promoted equality in the 20th century.

Fukuyama goes on to note that liberalism is not so obsessed with the individual as to inevitably atomize society, as many Catholic conservatives claim: “Private associational life has grown enormously” in the liberal societies of the West. Nor must liberal states plead guilty to colonialism. How, after all, should we explain the rise of liberal East Asian states innocent of that charge? Fukuyama reminds liberals of what they stand for and why they are right to stand for it.

Of course, that’s not a solution. Mounk writes that big books about ideas tend to be far better at explaining the

problem than at offering solutions. Another way of putting it, though, is that illiberalism is the kind of problem to which solutions inevitably feel inadequate because the problem is not a failure of policy but of collective belief. How do you create conditions that will favor a restoration of a vanished consensus?

For Mounk, that comes down to the question of mechanisms to contain and channel the tribalism that one cannot wish away. Ranked choice voting, for example, would help gain representation for minorities, he argues. Much of Mounk’s agenda resembles the current Democratic Party platform in the United States: broad-based economic growth, progressive taxation, and opportunities for social mobility—all designed to create a sense of collective rather than tribal good. In that vein, he argues—against the progressive left—for universal rather than race-conscious policies and for limits on immigration, a flash point for the nativist right.

These are good solutions, but I do not see how they will cure the patient. (For the record, I was not entirely convinced by the solutions I offered in *What Was Liberalism?*) Mounk doesn’t entirely disagree: He writes that liberalism ultimately must be defended at the level of private and social behavior. He advises all of us to think for ourselves and be prepared to criticize our own side and restrain the impulse to vilify the other. I am guessing that most readers of his book will not need that advice, whereas the tribalists of left and right would sneer at it.

I read *The Great Experiment* while thinking about India, the biggest and most diverse of the world’s democracies. India is also among the sickest patients in the liberal democracy ward. Born under the star of secularism and tolerance, India under Modi has increasingly become a theistic and intolerant society that advances the cause of Hindu nationalism at the expense of its more than 200 million Muslims. I asked myself whether Mounk had anything to offer the many Indians who believe in the nation’s secular values and deeply fear their demise. The answer is: not much.

Some diseases prove fatal; others can be cured only very slowly, as the patient’s own defenses finally rally. I am in favor of everything Mounk suggests; I am even more in favor of Fukuyama’s rousing call to truth. Only liberalism, as both authors argue, can allow us to live safely and prosperously in a diverse world. But I recognize that the restraints imposed by liberal rules and norms ask a great deal of citizens, far more than nativism, nationalism, or majoritarian tyranny does. We need to keep fighting for what is right even as we recognize that the road will be long. ■

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## The Art Thieves

Fifty years after African governments began asking for the return of looted objects from Europe, few have been returned.

*By Nosmot Gbadamosi*

**A**s a result of violent plunder over the centuries, Europe—more than any other region in the world, including Africa—holds the largest collection of ancient African artifacts. The total number of African objects in museums across the United States barely reaches 50,000. Yet Belgium’s Royal Museum for Central Africa alone has 180,000 objects, Germany’s Ethnological Museum has 75,000, France’s Quai Branly Museum has almost 70,000, the British Museum has 73,000, and the Netherlands’ National Museum of World Cultures has 66,000.

It has been 50 years since African governments, against a backdrop of hard-fought independence, started asking for the return of looted objects. Despite celebratory press coverage on returns and Western curators’ recent commitments to decolonize museums, very few items have been physically repatriated. In February, Nigeria welcomed back to Benin City just two statues out of more than 3,000 Benin Bronzes—a collection of sacred works made from ivory,

Visitors view the Benin Bronzes exhibit at the British Museum in London on Feb. 13, 2020.



bronze, and wood—still held mostly in Europe.

Western institutions' rebuttal against timely restitution has essentially boiled down to two components: Western museums, they claim, must both conduct lengthy provenance research to prove items were indeed stolen and determine whether African museums can preserve their own artifacts—notwithstanding the fact that those relics survived for centuries in Africa before they were looted.

But what if these claims, first put forward by museum officials in the 1970s and leaned on even more vehemently today, are part of a troubling historical approach to bury demands, delay the process, and lead to Africans' capitulation? This is the argument French art historian Bénédicte Savoy puts forth in her newly translated book, *Africa's Struggle for Its Art: History of a Postcolonial Defeat*—first published in German last year and now in English—a fascinating account of lies and disinformation from European institutions in the debate against restitution.

In examining old correspondence between government officials and museum administrators and the minutes of museum meetings, Savoy uncovers a discourse around restitution that is frozen in time. Scenes like the infamous opening sequence of Marvel's *Black Panther*, and recent popular videos of Congolese activist Mwazulu Diyabanza unsuccessfully attempting to take back looted African artworks from European museums, "had already been scripted in many minds by the mid-1970s," Savoy writes. "Nearly every conversation today about the restitution of cultural property to Africa already happened forty years ago."

**IN OCTOBER 2021, ABUJA SENT AN OFFICIAL REQUEST** to the British Museum for the return of all Nigerian artifacts looted during colonial rule. This was nothing groundbreaking—Nigeria alone has sent many requests to Western museums over the years, all received with silent indifference.

The first representative of an African government to

take up the fight for restitution was Ekpo Eyo, a renowned Nigerian archaeologist and the head of Nigeria's Federal Department of Antiquities. In 1972, Eyo sent a circular to several European embassies requesting "some" permanent loans of Benin Bronzes. Even such a "modest loan request," Savoy writes, sparked panic among officials who feared a "radical emptying" of Western museums.

In response, Hans-Georg Wormit, the president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and a former Nazi, said Berlin's holdings were legally bought, failing to mention that they had originally been violently looted during the sacking of the Benin Kingdom by British soldiers in 1897.

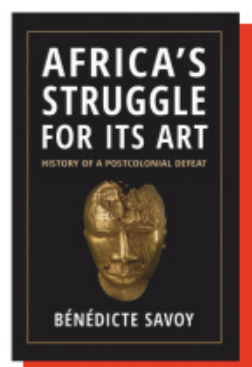
Despite claims to the contrary, Savoy writes, Europe's museum administrators "knew perfectly well that the great majority of the African objects in their collections stemmed from the colonial era." After all, most European institutions, especially in Germany, have long held detailed catalogues and inventory lists. (And, as German explorer Richard Kandt wrote to the director of Berlin's Ethnological Museum in 1897, it was "quite difficult to obtain an object without using at least a little bit of force.")

The Museum of Ethnology in Vienna followed suit, with the Viennese Ministry of Economics and Research responding that the museum's collection had been "acquired entirely legally," Savoy writes, and that a return was out of the question: "It would be better if Nigerian scholars came to Vienna to do research directly in the museum; related costs, however, would need to be borne by international scholarships." Stephan Waetzoldt, then-director general of the Berlin State Museums, later wrote that "it is indeed difficult to adopt rational arguments to confront, in my view, the absurd demand for the return of practically the entire collection holdings which come from the Third World."

After West Germany's Foreign Office decided it would not support Nigeria's loan request, Wormit noted with satisfaction to Waetzoldt, "We can probably regard this matter as closed."

A year later, in 1973, Mobutu Sese Seko, then-president of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), spoke on the floor of the United Nations and denounced the "barbarous, systematic pillaging" of Africa's artistic heritage. A draft resolution put forward by Mobutu and signed by 12 African countries was rejected by Western countries at the U.N. General Assembly on the grounds that it used the term "restitution," which had "strong moral connotations," Savoy writes.

Despite this, the General Assembly subsequently adopted a resolution on restitution that attempted to set a blueprint for how governments should respond to restitution claims. The resolution, which stated that restitution should be handled by countries that gained access to cultural property "only as a result of colonial or foreign occupation," triggered a heated global debate.



*Africa's Struggle for Its Art:  
History of a Postcolonial Defeat*

BÉNÉDICTE SAVOY, TRANSL. BY SUSANNE  
MEYER-ABICH, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
PRESS, \$29.95, APRIL 2022



Congo and Ghana then followed Nigeria's lead in making official claims to former colonial powers—although Ghana, in contrast, demanded full restitution of objects from Britain instead of a loan. Its demands were debated in the House of Lords, where Scottish Labour Party member Baroness Lee of Asheridge warned that “returning booty” to Ghana could turn into a “striptease” of British institutions.

European museum officials' response to those requests, Savoy shows, was “shameful.” Friedrich Kussmaul, the director of Stuttgart's Linden Museum, was a particularly brazen offender. Following the passing of the U.N. resolution on restitution, he wrote that African staff were “hardly sufficiently educated” to upkeep a modern museum “and unfortunately in many cases rather susceptible to corruption.” Kussmaul, who had never been to Africa, waged a successful offensive based on rumors and fabricated intelligence. He claimed that he had been in contact with a dealer who wanted to sell him West African artworks originally in the Dresden Museum of Ethnology that were now in Bamako, Mali, implying that restituted objects were being sold back to Europe via the underground market.

Throughout the book, Savoy subtly debunks the idea, often repeated by commentators, that Africans cannot look after their own art. For instance, in citing research that shows no restitution took place from Germany to Mali in the 1970s, she effectively proves that the pieces offered to Kussmaul must have come from within Germany.

Among other things, Kussmaul also accused the Nigerian government of having resold a Benin mask for a “multimillion sum,” prompting an angry response from Lagos (then Nigeria's capital), which called the statement a “complete fabrication” and urged Kussmaul to practice better museum ethics through a “more scholarly approach to provenance information.”

Despite this, African claims had “hardly any legal or moral foundation,” Kussmaul contended, and in his words, the independence movement had created among Africans a “sometimes exaggerated sense of one's own dignity, achievements, tradition.” Even as museum directors believed in the progressive role their collections played toward showcasing a “universal” heritage, Savoy writes, ideas of racial and civilizational hierarchy clearly permeated their thinking.

Years of fruitless diplomatic exchanges made African leaders ever more determined to make their demands public. In 1977, oil-rich Nigeria staged the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos, headlined by some of the world's biggest musicians, including Stevie Wonder. For the festival, Nigeria requested to showcase the Queen Idia mask, an ivory pendant from the 16th-century Benin Kingdom held at the British Museum, but Britain refused, claiming the piece was too fragile to travel.

Festival pamphlets served as a direct public statement:

Even the most basic information flyer carried an emblem of the mask, the event's official logo, accompanied by a note describing Nigeria's iconic stolen object. “[O]ne of the finest examples of known African and black art ... now rests in the British Museum,” the text stated.

Around the same time, Eyo wrote many letters—recently released by Britain's foreign office—asking for loans from the British Museum. As negotiations proved increasingly futile, Nigeria started to purchase back its own objects at auction. In June 1980, Eyo bought several Benin objects at Sotheby's in London for half a million pounds, causing a stir in London and in Lagos; in response, journalist and actor Gordon Tialobi wrote in the Nigerian newspaper *Punch* that the descendants of British soldiers still lived on “the proceeds of their fathers' shameless acts of terrorism.”

In the early 1980s, Eyo organized an impressive exhibition called “Treasures of Ancient Nigeria,” which toured Europe and the United States. The exhibition, *New York Times* art critic John Russell wrote, had “peculiar poignancy from the fact that Nigeria here speaks for itself.” It served as an undeniable answer to the racialized narrative of whether Nigeria could manage its own cultural heritage, even if the West wouldn't listen.

**SAVOY'S DEEPLY RESEARCHED BOOK** marks a shift in tone from the many articles written recently on the African restitution debate, and particularly on Nigeria, that erase African voices, focusing instead on the efforts of European intellectuals in making a case for restitution and the question of whether Europe will act.

In *Africa's Struggle for Its Art*, Savoy chooses to focus, as the title suggests, on African scholars detailing with painstaking historical accuracy the near-forgotten essays, speeches, and unanswered letters of African governments in their fight for the return of stolen heritage. Savoy's book is particularly relevant to the 70 percent of Africans who were born decades after those initial efforts. In her telling, Africans were—and still are—at the forefront of their own fight for restitution.

As they did in the past, museum curators today profess an enthusiastic willingness to engage in dialogue while simultaneously blocking the demands of African

**As they did in the past, museum curators today profess an enthusiastic willingness to engage in dialogue while simultaneously blocking the demands of African countries.**





Ewuare II (center), the Oba of Benin, the traditional ruler of the Edo people, receives repatriated artifacts that were looted from Nigeria more than 125 years ago by the British military in Benin City, Nigeria, on Feb. 19.

countries. The University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum, for example, presents itself as a world leader in the restitution debate, since it's engaged in deep provenance research and hosts the Action for Restitution to Africa program. But it has yet to return any Benin Bronzes or other prized African objects from its own collection. The British Museum has offered to loan back stolen goods but continues to ignore Nigerian letters.

There are small signs of change. One of the world's largest cultural organizations, the U.S. government's Smithsonian Institution, has agreed to unconditionally return some of its collection of 39 Benin Bronzes.

Germany, at least, has moved on from the days when museum directors vowed that "all objects in the Prussian Heritage Collection had been acquired legally," as Savoy writes. In April 2021, German politicians agreed to return a "substantive" number of Benin Bronzes beginning this year.

Together with Senegalese economist and writer Felwine Sarr, Savoy penned the seminal 2018 restitution report commissioned by French President Emmanuel Macron, which urged European museums to return their collections taken "without consent" in the colonial period. That report had groundbreaking repercussions and is partly responsible for some of the returns we are seeing today; the French parliament subsequently passed a bill in December 2020 to return 27 African objects to Senegal and Benin, though Paris has yet to take further action.

Other European governments remain doggedly wedded to their colonial loot. Current British officials continue to deploy anti-restitution rhetoric from the 1970s. David M. Wilson, the director of the British Museum from

1977 to 1992, put it firmly: "Everything we own we received legally." Similarly, in September 2021, then-British Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, a stalwart of British nationalism-turned-culture warrior, said the Benin Bronzes "properly reside in the British Museum."

Amid this resistance, the international community needs to pressure museums worldwide to publish full inventory lists of collections, often hidden in storerooms—something Germany did last year for all the Benin Bronzes in its museums. Importantly, African countries should also step up independent provenance research, like that being done in Ghana, and create autonomous bodies dedicated to their restitution efforts, like those established in Nigeria, because these entities need to be free of European influence and meddling.

There is an urgent need to break away from mechanisms historically deployed by museum officials to keep illegally obtained colonial loot in their collections. Past directors who defended their position, Savoy writes, did so due to scholarly nationalism and racial prejudice. As she puts it, on restitution, "[W]e must not shift the responsibility again to our children and grandchildren." The stories of influential African figures who worked and died longing for restitution should stir the global conscience. For decades, museum administrators have succeeded in thwarting African claims, and artifacts from Nigeria alone remain not just in large museums but also in private galleries and homes from Mexico to Russia to Thailand. Now, more than ever, museums need to repatriate their ill-gotten African treasures. ■

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## Who Got China Wrong?

Two books take very different approaches on the past and future of engagement.

*By Bob Davis*

**L**ooking to win congressional approval to bring China into the World Trade Organization (WTO), then-U.S. President Bill Clinton rhapsodized how closer economic ties would mean greater freedom for Chinese citizens. “The more China liberalizes its economy, the more fully it will liberate the potential of its people,” the president argued in a speech in March 2000. “And when individuals have the power not just to dream but to realize their dreams, they will demand a greater say.”

The growth of the internet would help ensure that hopeful outcome. “Now there’s no question China has been trying to crack down on the internet. Good luck!” Clinton said to gales of laughter. “That’s sort of like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall.”

Clinton’s comments now seem not only naive but cringeworthy. China, it turns out, perfected Jell-O nailing and destroyed its own nascent online civil society. China has become more repressive, less open to Western ideas, and far more hostile to Washington’s global leadership, as Beijing’s recent “no limits” embrace of Moscow shows.

A guard is covered by a flag during a ceremony for Gen. Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his Chinese counterpart, Gen. Fang Fenghui, in Beijing on April 22, 2013.



But does disappointment with the turn in U.S.-China relations mean the strategy of engagement—wrapping China more closely to the United States in a web of economic and political ties—is fundamentally flawed? Is any engagement strategy doomed to fail because Beijing acts in bad faith, or could it work in the future? Two new books explore engagement’s record—with an eye toward influencing the United States’ China policy.

In *Getting China Wrong*, the Princeton University political scientist Aaron L. Friedberg calls engagement a gamble that didn’t pay off; the challenge now is how to reduce ties to a Leninist regime. In *The United States vs. China: The Quest for Global Economic Leadership*, the economist C. Fred Bergsten not only argues that engagement was a success but proposes that China and the United States act as co-CEOs of the global economy.

Both authors have extensive experience with China policy—at least as made in Washington. Friedberg has warned for years of China’s rising challenge and advocates what he calls partial disengagement. Bergsten, the founding director of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, a leading center for free trade economics, argued for a U.S.-China free trade agreement in 2014. (He is silent on that proposal in this book, perhaps out of a sense of its political implausibility.)

Both label China a “revisionist” power but use the term very differently. For Friedberg, Beijing is revisionist in the sense that it’s not the “responsible stakeholder” the United States has long hoped it would be—in other words, it is a threat. For Bergsten, Beijing is revisionist rather than “revolutionary,” as it was under former leader Mao Zedong—in other words, it is more moderate and a potential partner.

In a compact, well-argued critique of U.S. policy, Friedberg traces how Democratic and Republican administrations

came to embrace engagement for ideological as well as commercial reasons. By 1989, liberal democracy was on the march. Students in China were protesting for democracy in Tiananmen Square by parading with a replica of the Statue of Liberty. The attraction of U.S. ideals and prosperity seemed irresistible.

Of course, China’s leadership opened fire on the Tiananmen protesters and violently squelched the democracy movement there. But that setback seemed temporary. “The forces of democracy” are so powerful, U.S. President George H.W. Bush said at the time, that it would be impossible to “put the genie back in the bottle.” Within months, Bush had patched up relations with China.

The United States’ largest companies, chasing the old dream of a billion customers, also competed to win friends in Beijing by lobbying for tighter U.S.-China relations. Boeing, in particular, was in the thick of the fight, organizing its many subcontractors to lobby Washington. Chinese officials rewarded its friends with orders worth billions of dollars.

Corporate lobbying frustrated Clinton early in his presidency, when he sought to pressure China on human rights. But after he dropped that campaign and sought to engage with China, the same lobbyists came to his aid. Myron Brilliant, the executive vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, has estimated that business groups spent more than \$100 million lobbying Congress for Clinton’s WTO deal—more than all the money they spent on trade lobbying since then.

Business officials and their allies in government were almost Marxist in their belief that economic materialism would lead to political change. Helping China to get richer would increase the size of the Chinese middle class. That middle class would then demand political change. Not coincidentally, a lot of U.S. businesses would get richer, too—both by adding customers in China and by slashing their manufacturing labor costs. The process had worked in South Korea and Eastern Europe. Why wouldn’t it work in China, too?

Friedberg describes the reasoning this way: “[B]y encouraging the growth of a middle class, the spread of liberal ideas, and strengthening the rule of law and the institutions of civil society, engagement would lead eventually to liberalizing political reforms.”

Except it didn’t. Instead, foreign investment in China soared, as did imports from Chinese factories often working for U.S. bosses. Factory towns in the American Midwest and Southeast couldn’t keep up.

American elites didn’t recognize China for what it was: a Leninist state looking to expand its power, as Friedberg argues in the more polemical sections of his book. He portrays the Chinese leadership as a group of men who uniformly saw engagement as a threat to their power for exactly the same reasons that Americans embraced it.



*Getting China Wrong*

AARON L. FRIEDBERG, POLITY, 246 PP., \$29.95, JUNE 2022

*The United States vs. China:  
The Quest for Global Economic Leadership*

C. FRED BERGSTEN, POLITY, 384 PP., \$29.95, APRIL 2022



“The purpose of reforming the system of Party and state leadership is precisely to maintain and further strengthen Party leadership and discipline, not to weaken or relax them,” he quotes former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping as saying. Chinese officials who followed Deng took that maxim as their marching orders, Friedberg writes.

Although it is certainly true that no Chinese leader sought to undermine the Chinese Communist Party, that doesn’t mean some weren’t willing to take big risks on economic reform, even if that weakened state control. Until recent years, for instance, the state was generally encouraging the private sector to grow, even though that diminished the party’s ability to direct the economy.

Friedberg’s analysis leads him to argue that Chinese President Xi Jinping isn’t a departure from his predecessors but just one more in a long line of Leninists. That obscures the radicalness of some of Xi’s actions, including ending the term limits on the presidency, which helped keep China from again falling under one-man rule, and asserting control over the technology, real estate, and other vibrant sectors of the Chinese economy, though that could undermine the country’s economic future.

**BERGSTEN HAS A VERY DIFFERENT TAKE.** To him, the Chinese leadership is marked by three “schools of foreign policy thought”: conservatives, liberals, and those he calls “neo-comms” who “want to revert to the hard-line stances of the past.” For Bergsten—as for U.S. treasury secretary after U.S. treasury secretary, Democrat or Republican—the key is to identify the liberals and convince them that economic reform is in the interest of China, not just in the interest of U.S. companies that want to get a bigger market.

Bergsten recounts the genuine successes of engagement, to which Friedberg gives short shrift. They include boosting Americans’ standard of living through cheaper and varied imports, curbing nuclear proliferation, and working closely together to revive the global economy after the 2008 financial crisis nearly produced a global depression. The absence of U.S.-China engagement is also evident in the weak global response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He proposes a new era of engagement. Once again, as in the early Clinton years, Bergsten urges the United States to decouple economic issues from disputes over human rights and national security. Unlike Clinton and others in the 1990s, Bergsten is not arguing that engagement can make for better human rights in China but that Washington can separate human rights concerns from economic policy. To do so, though, requires wishing away 20 years of disappointment with the results of engagement.

In the early 1990s, engagement meant the United States bolstering a weak China. Now, Bergsten argues, engagement would give the United States a way to influence a China that

is bound to surpass it as the No. 1 economy in the world. Bergsten usefully produces a series of statistics—including on GDP growth, research and development spending, education, and trade—to construct a score card for U.S.-China rivalry. The bottom line: China eclipses the United States, usually by the middle of the century.

“Time is not on America’s side as China advances,” he writes.

By this reasoning, the United States needs to engage with China to make sure it doesn’t dominate the global economy. Bergsten proposes what he calls a G-2, with the United States and China acting as an informal steering committee to handle global problems such as climate change, health, and economic development. Without their agreement, he writes, global progress is impossible, and the world could descend into what he calls the “Kindleberger trap,” after the economist Charles P. Kindleberger, who blamed the Great Depression on the failure of the incumbent power (Britain) and the rising power (the United States) to take necessary action.

Bergsten isn’t explicit about why he believes such a grouping should include China instead of longtime U.S. allies such as Europe and Japan. Although he doesn’t emphasize it, his statistics show that the United States and its traditional allies, which he dubs the “hegemonic coalition,” are far more powerful economically than China is alone and are likely to remain so through the end of the century. Predictions of an inevitable economic rise can also go wrong, from Western fears in the 1960s that the Soviet Union would overtake the West economically to panic about Japan becoming the No. 1 economy—although in this case, China, with a population four times the size of that of the United States, seems more likely to become the GDP champ.

He seems to choose China out of fear that the United States is abdicating its role as global leader and growing more hostile to Beijing. His book is laced with criticism of former U.S. President Donald Trump, whom he mentions 275 times by name, for taking that protectionist turn. In the case of a new global economic crisis, Bergsten wants to make sure the United States and China, the world’s two largest economies, work together.

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China has rebuffed previous calls to form a G-2 with the United States, Bergsten writes, because it believed Washington sought to “co-opt, and indeed contain, its rise.” But now, he says, Chinese leaders may be more receptive if the United States makes it clear that China would be “accorded a truly co-equal role.” He also says the United States would need to make sure that China is faithfully carrying out its assigned role, though it isn’t clear what Washington should do if it found that Beijing was shirking its responsibilities. Nor does he show evidence of the Chinese leadership being receptive to this.

In the clearest sign that Bergsten understands the political difficulties both sides would face in acting as global co-CEOs, he suggests the arrangement somehow be kept largely quiet. “The G-2 should announce neither its formation nor its continuing existence,” he writes. Good luck keeping that news from Congress and the U.S. media—or selling it in China, where anti-U.S. sentiments dominate the public sphere and paranoia about U.S. spying helps drive internal political purges.

Friedberg would deal with China much differently, looking to shore up that “hegemonic coalition” so it could contain China’s rise or at least influence Beijing from the outside. For inspiration, he cites former Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin, of all people, who advised his disciples to “probe with bayonets” and withdraw if they encounter steel. “China’s current leaders have yet to fully encounter steel,” Friedberg writes.

To start, Friedberg would disengage from China economically. He doesn’t advocate full decoupling, which he recognizes would be ruinous given the interconnections between the two economies. His book was written too early to take Russia’s invasion of Ukraine into account, but even disconnecting the West from Russia’s relatively small economy is proving difficult because of Moscow’s importance as an energy supplier. Imagine trying to pull apart supply chains that have China, the world’s factory floor, as a major hub.

For all the harshness of his criticism of China, most of Friedberg’s recommendations don’t go much beyond what U.S. President Joe Biden is already doing. Friedberg would restrict Chinese investment in the United States, limit U.S. technology exports to China, use tax incentives and other inducements to encourage companies to relocate their supply chains away from China, and encourage allies to do the same. He would also boost U.S. Navy spending, refocus the U.S. military toward Asia, and “look for ways to pry Russia away from China.” (Again, this is pre-Ukraine.) He doesn’t provide a road map or try to detail the costs.

He spends just a few sentences on one of his most provocative recommendations: creating an economic alliance to help democracies facing Chinese economic coercion. As with NATO, he writes, the alliance would operate on the principle that “an attack on one is an attack on all.”

At the end of the Trump administration, then-U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger tried something along these lines after China cut off some imports from Australia. Beijing was miffed that Canberra was pressing for an independent investigation into the origin of COVID-19. Pottinger wanted other countries to pledge to buy Australia’s stranded imports.

But his plan went nowhere. The administration never produced a formal proposal, and Australia’s then-trade minister, Dan Tehan, expressed no interest in the idea when he visited Washington last July. Tehan’s main goal was easing commercial tensions with China, not looking to extend the fight. Friedberg doesn’t suggest how to overcome such reluctance, which other trading nations are bound to share.

Although Friedberg considers the United States’ anti-Soviet alliance as a model, he also ignores the crucial role trade can play. Europe and Japan were wedded to the United States in good measure because America opened its markets to textile, electronic, and automobile imports, even though that hurt workers in some U.S. industries. Similar trade openings could help the United States recruit new allies in its competition with China or strengthen ties with existing ones.

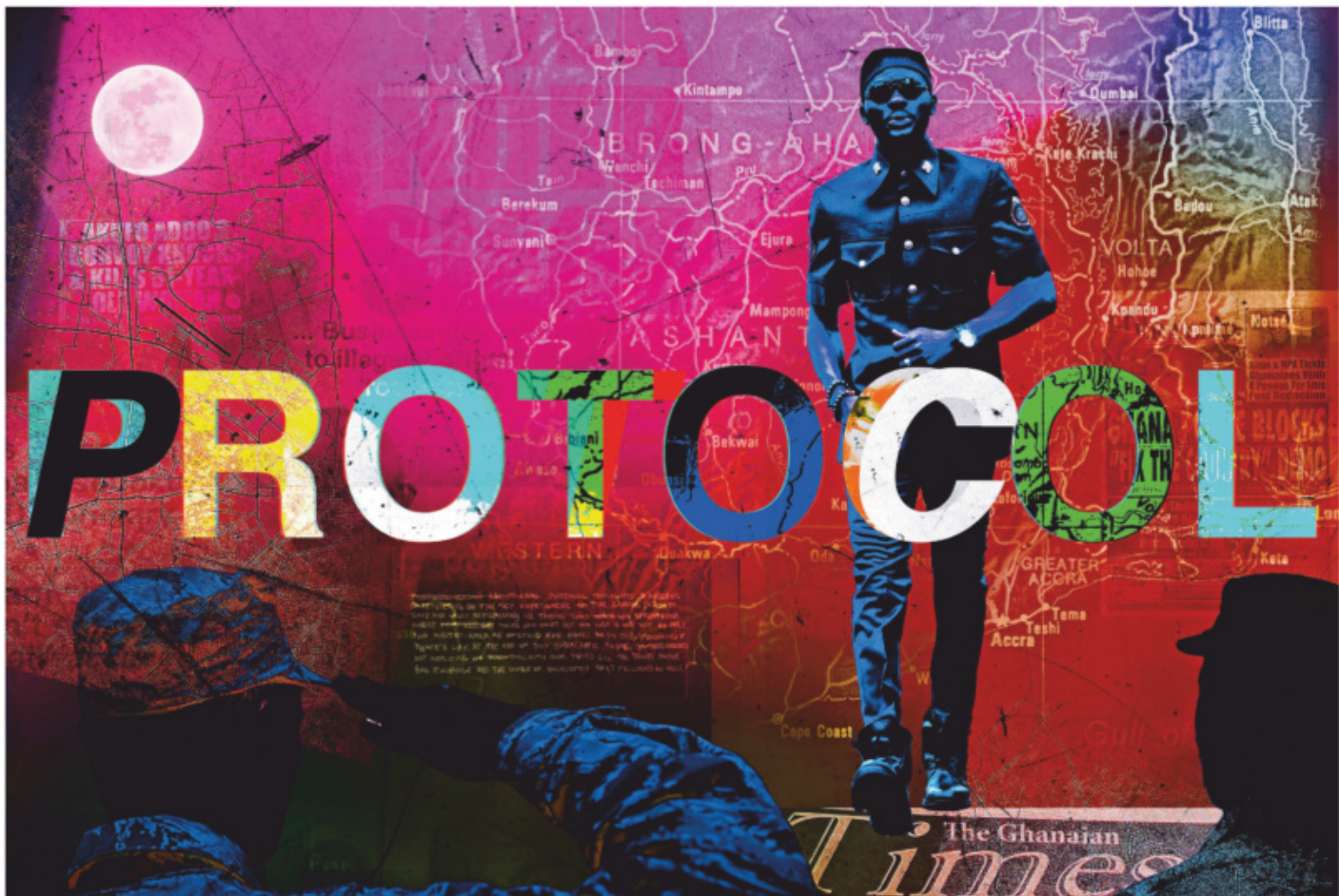
**THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION HAS NOW LAUNCHED** its Indo-Pacific Economic Framework to try to strengthen ties with Asian nations. At the moment, it’s mostly nice words. Some in the Biden administration and Congress are hoping that the framework could become a full-fledged free trade agreement, perhaps even leading to the United States rejoining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which the Obama administration negotiated but Trump—and former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, during her presidential campaign—rejected.

Winning congressional approval for a free trade deal would be tough, even if the United States renegotiated parts of the TPP. Congressional Democrats have long opposed such pacts, and free trade became anathema to many Republicans who followed Trump’s lead. But it’s probably essential to compete economically and politically with China, as both Friedberg and Bergsten want.

At the very least, passage of a new trade deal would require helping those parts of the country that would be hurt by increased imports, including retraining workers there and relocating industries to depressed regions. The United States has done an awful job aiding workers hurt by trade (or by automation) since it started liberalizing trade after World War II. But that is the true cost of engagement, whether the target is China itself or potential allies against it. ■

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## Where ‘Protocol’ Is Anything But In Ghana, special treatment has become a way of life for the privileged few. *By Anakwa Dwamena*

A friend recently told me a story about his attempt to get his first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in Accra, the capital of Ghana. When he arrived at the distribution center, he was instructed to join a line outside. An attendant gave each person a number to ensure there were enough doses for everyone. Then a familiar scene appeared: A trickle of cars was ushered into the compound, one by one. Soon afterward, the attendant informed my friend that the facility had run out of shots.

In Ghana, the inside connection that likely allowed the people in the cars to skip the vaccine line is called protocol, or “proto” for short. Paradoxically, protocol often means expedited access that circumvents established procedure. People in Ghana do not follow protocol; they have it, through kinship or a social connection. One might use protocol to quickly access a public service, while applying for a job, or to get into a good school. Its prevalence reflects how equal rights and access are becoming a mirage in Ghana, fueling disillusionment with the government and the country’s supposed meritocracy.

Although my friend was irritated that he couldn’t get a vaccine, the situation wasn’t a surprise. Family group chats, church WhatsApp groups, and alumni



## DECODER

associations across Ghana are all buzzing with people asking if anyone has protocol in one place or another. Insiders openly advertise “protocol vacancies” in the government and military. While waiting to renew a driver’s license or passport, it is common to see a protocol group standing apart from the regular line. They aren’t sure where they’re going, but they are secure in getting what they came for.

For those without protocol, routine bureaucratic interactions have become a point of stress. Its normalization means that people seeking a service the normal way may feel like second-class citizens—even if they came first. But though they complain about it, many Ghanaians have largely accepted the system. One Twitter user noted that without protocol, it takes months to get a copy of one’s birth certificate. I’ve seen another joke that the ubiquity of protocol means one needs it to make new friends in Ghana.

Beyond individual concerns, the protocol system threatens to undermine Ghana’s state institutions, which are already perennially underperforming. It casts doubt on the meritocratic idea that government staff are recruited because of their abilities and increases the likelihood of other protocol hires. After recent revelations that Ghanaian police officers were involved in the robbery of armored vehicles drew attention to the police recruitment process, *Modern Ghana* columnist Stephen Atta Owusu pointed out that protocol hiring could even increase security risks.

However, the act of seeking protocol isn’t necessarily nefarious if it lends clarity to systems that don’t function as they should, said Audrey Gadzekpo, a professor of communication studies at the University of Ghana. It’s really asking: “Does anybody know somebody that will make it easier for me to access whatever service for whatever reason because there’s a long line or I don’t see my way clearly to what exactly I need to do?” she said. “What is insidious is that it is getting into places where it didn’t use to be.”

E. Gyimah-Boadi, a co-founder of the research network Afrobarometer, traces the term’s origins to the era after Ghana’s independence in 1957. As a complement to their low wages, public servants could take advantage of a quota system for job or university openings for themselves or their family members—known as a protocol list. Even then, the system was prone to abuse, according to Gyimah-Boadi. Some public servants expanded their list to bring in more people, including in exchange for money. “There is an old saying that one doesn’t lack the opportunity to lick one’s fingers when grinding savory things,” he said.

Demand for protocol services has since expanded, with those who consider themselves important almost always seeking preferential access. Ghana’s poor job market for young graduates, especially in the public sector, may contribute to this shift. Youth unemployment has reached a record high, despite government job creation programs. Some friends have

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complained that it is not worth applying to a job without an inside connection, even in private organizations. That sort of thinking bothers Gyimah-Boadi more than the existence of protocol “because that means that we have imbibed it so deeply that it has become an iron law,” he said.

Ghana’s protocol system could fuel inequality and further erode trust in government; after all, people with backdoor connections tend to come from the elite. In a 2019 Afrobarometer survey, more than one-quarter of respondents said they had paid bribes for their own identity documents. That’s not to mention the cottage industry of scammers targeting the poor or desperate. Last year, Ghana’s Information Ministry flagged a fake recruitment portal collecting fees and promising jobs in the armed forces, the revenue authority, and the immigration service, among others. In March, local media reported that a government agency had charged its own employees for interview preparation to receive promotions.

A system that grants elites coveted services or jobs is not unique to Ghana. But it does reflect something specific about Ghanaian culture: Giving leaders premium access to services is one way of showing them respect. Now, the line between who holds authority and who doesn’t has become blurred. “Every village chief [and] even some pastors have church members they can count on to provide protocol,” Gadzekpo said. “Everybody is a little chief. There are so many ‘big’ men and women. The sense of entitlement becomes so widespread.”

Some observers say they see the protocol phenomenon reflected in the current national government, led by Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo. Gyimah-Boadi pointed to the large number of political appointees in deputy ministerial roles or deputy ambassadorships as an apparent reward for political support. Nineteen ministers have yet to comply with the constitutional requirement to declare their assets. The Afrobarometer survey found that a majority of Ghanaians felt that corruption had increased since 2017, when Akufo-Addo took office; distrust in government is rising.

Ghana’s protocol system has exacerbated the divide between ordinary citizens and the government that supposedly exists for their benefit. Among the younger generation, there is a sense of resignation but also a desire to imagine a different future. Last year, frustration with inequality and alleged corruption led to the #FixTheCountry protest movement, which echoed a massive anti-government demonstration in 1995. (Ironically, Akufo-Addo emerged as a protest leader then.) The 2021 protests represented a surprising yet significant pushback to the government. The conversation has continued on social media, fostering new coalitions and giving hope for a movement that can tilt the country back in the right direction. ■

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# What in the World?

By Nina Goldman

The following is adapted from past editions of FP's weekly online news quiz.  
Test yourself every week at ForeignPolicy.com.

**1. Who became the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine in May?**

- a. Kristina Kvien
- b. John J. Sullivan
- c. Marie Yovanovitch
- d. Bridget Brink



**2. In late March, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa avoided a no-confidence vote over what issue?**

- a. A gas tax hike
- b. Nepotism within the executive
- c. His policy on Ukraine
- d. Economic inequality

**3. The Taliban rescinded plans to allow Afghan girls to return to secondary school in March. What is the female literacy rate in Afghanistan?**

- a. 12 percent
- b. 30 percent
- c. 55 percent
- d. 80 percent

**4. In May, a commercial flight from Yemen's capital, Sanaa, became the first to take off from the city since what year?**

- a. 2019
- b. 2016
- c. 2013
- d. 2008



**5. Which Caribbean nation announced in March that it would seek to remove Britain's queen as its head of state?**

- a. Dominica
- b. Trinidad and Tobago
- c. Bahamas
- d. Jamaica

**6. Colombia held presidential elections in May and June. Who is the country's term-limited incumbent president?**

- a. Gustavo Petro
- b. Sergio Fajardo
- c. Íngrid Betancourt
- d. Iván Duque



**7. In recent months, Sri Lankans have protested a massive economic crisis, which is driven in part by high levels of government debt. What was Sri Lanka's debt-to-GDP ratio in 2021?**

- a. 41 percent
- b. 87 percent
- c. 119 percent
- d. 205 percent

**8. U.S. President Joe Biden met with representatives from most members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in May. Which of the group's members was missing?**

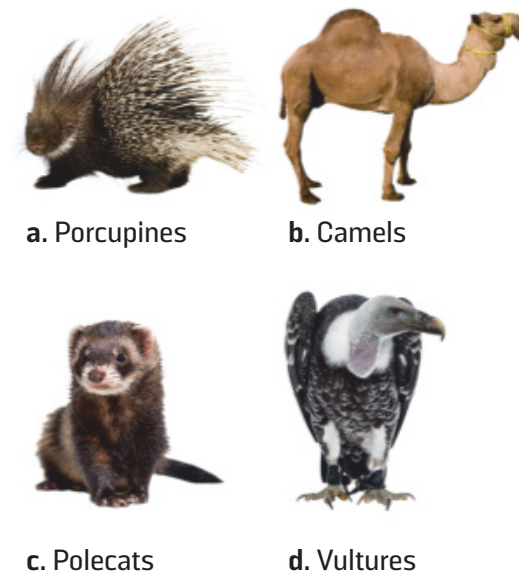
- a. Singapore
- b. Vietnam
- c. Myanmar
- d. Brunei



**9. Madeleine Albright, the first woman to serve as U.S. secretary of state, died in March at age 84. How many women have held the position after her?**

- a. 1
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4

**10. Reports emerged in April that an Israeli nuclear research facility in the Negev Desert was besieged by hordes of what creatures?**



- a. Porcupines
- b. Camels
- c. Polecats
- d. Vultures

ANSWERS: 1. d, 2. d, 3. b, 4. b, 5. d, 6. d, 7. c, 8. c, 9. b, 10. a





# THE CATCH

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