

# THE NATIONAL INTEREST

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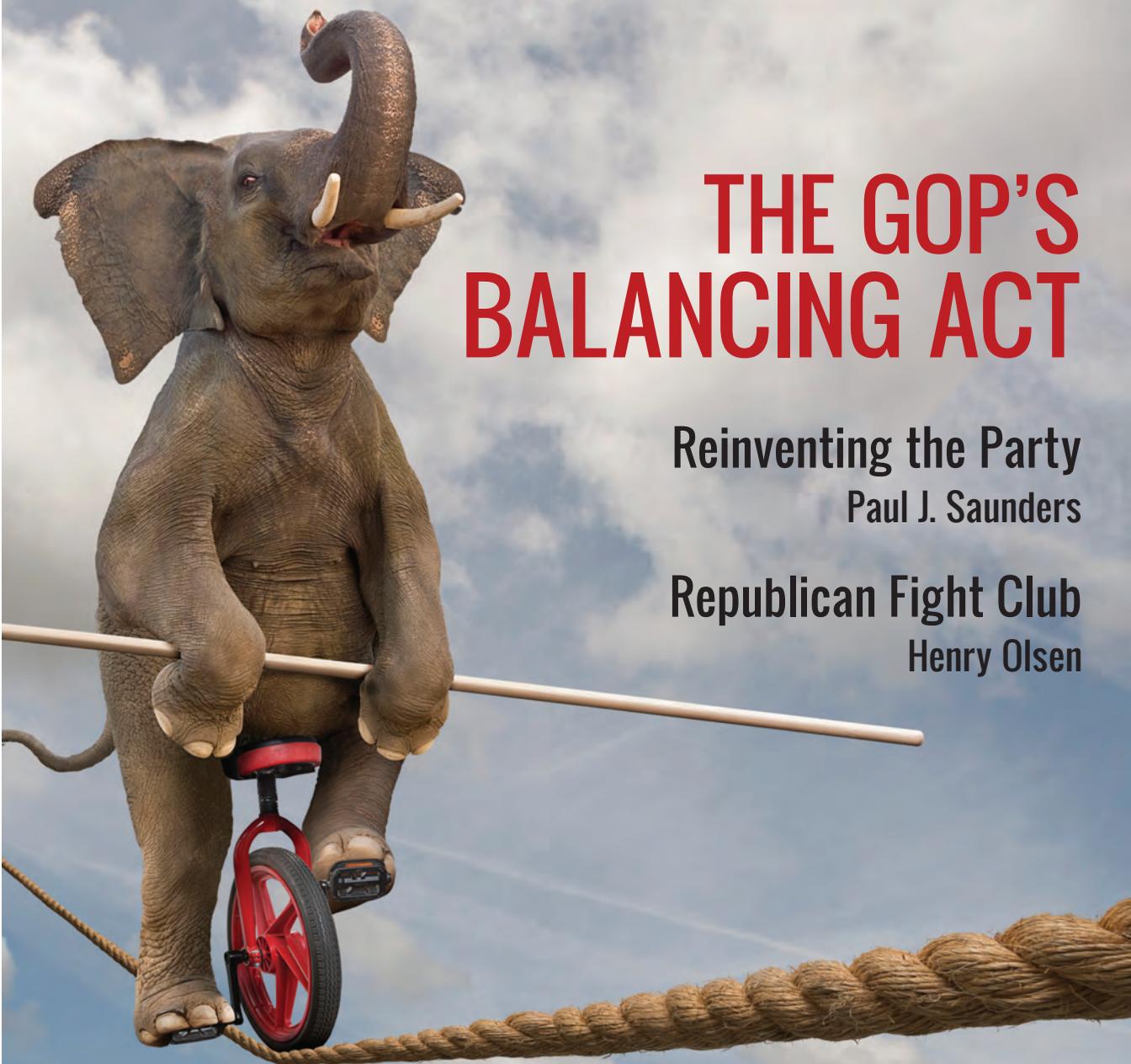
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## THE GOP'S BALANCING ACT

Reinventing the Party  
Paul J. Saunders

Republican Fight Club  
Henry Olsen



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—Jacob Heilbrunn, *The National Interest*



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# THE NATIONAL INTEREST

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## Asia First

By Robert W. Merry

**O**n February 7, 1845, Congressman John D. Cummins rose in the House of Representatives to add his voice to those clamoring for U.S. possession of the Oregon Territory, then occupied jointly by the United States and Britain. He declared that these opulent Northwest lands were “the master key of the commerce of the universe.” Put that territory under U.S. jurisdiction, he argued, and soon the country would witness “an industrious, thriving, American population” and “flourishing towns and embryo cities” facing west upon the Pacific within four thousand miles of vast Asian markets. Contemplate, he added, ribbons of railroad track across America, connecting New York, Boston and Philadelphia to those burgeoning West Coast cities and ports.

Furthermore, he said, the “inevitable eternal laws of trade” would make America the necessary passageway for “the whole eastern commerce of Europe.” European goods, traversing the American continent, could get to Asia in little more than seven weeks, whereas the traditional sea routes generally required seven months. “The commerce of the world would thus be revolutionized,” said Cummins.

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“Great Britain must lose her commercial supremacy in the Pacific; and the portion of its commerce which forced its destination there must pay tribute to us.”

Cummins’s speech reflected a fundamental reality about America: its quest for expansion and national grandeur was pretty much irrepressible. There were, as always, the naysayers and critics. Henry Clay argued for confining American settlement to lands east of the Rocky Mountains and postponing occupation of Oregon for some forty years. But most Americans recoiled at such a cramped view, and Clay’s similarly blinkered opposition to the annexation of Texas probably cost him the presidency in 1844. If America was a country of vast designs, as Emerson said, then its westward push, known then and now as Manifest Destiny, was never destined to stop at the Pacific.

This history is worth pondering in the aftermath of China’s declaration last November that its so-called air defense identification zone now encompassed most of the East China Sea. U.S. secretary of defense Chuck Hagel promptly called the action “a destabilizing attempt to alter the [region’s] status quo.” And Paul Haenle, director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy at Beijing’s Tsinghua University, warned that the move could set China on a collision course with Japan over disputed islands in the area. China’s provocation, he said, renders “the already dangerous area surrounding the islands even more ripe for an inadvertent collision.” Such a collision almost inevitably would draw in America, given its defense treaty with Japan.

*America has considered its Pacific dominance to be a national birthright almost from the time it first conceived of itself as a potential transcontinental nation.*

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It wasn't surprising that commentators and analysts would see China's action, and the tensions it could unleash, as a harbinger of growing hostility between China and the United States over which country will dominate East Asia. Many see the situation as a classic confrontation of the kind that ensues when a rising power challenges an established power—as when, for example, Rome challenged Carthage, Britain challenged Spain, America challenged a reduced Spain and Wilhelmine Germany challenged Great Britain for preeminence. As the BBC's Jonny Dymond put it, "For seven decades the US has been the dominant military power in the region. China has given Washington notice that change is afoot. Peaceful management of that change is one of the great strategic challenges of the 21st Century."

Dymond has a point. But it doesn't capture the extent to which America has considered its Pacific dominance to be a national birthright almost from the time it first conceived of itself as a potential transcontinental nation. Cummins's prophecy, in other words, was widely shared.

Consider America's attitude toward Hawaii. Even before California entered the Union in 1848, President John Tyler declared that no foreign power except the United States should control Hawaii—what might be called the Tyler Doctrine. These strategically positioned islands, in effect, belonged to America's sphere of influence. Presidents James Polk and Zachary Taylor affirmed this doctrine. Then, even as the

country struggled with the explosive issue of slavery, President Franklin Pierce's secretary of state, William Marcy, negotiated an annexation treaty with Hawaii's King Kamehameha III, which was aborted only by the king's untimely death.

After the Civil War, American officials renewed their interest in gaining dominance over Hawaii. An 1876 effort to craft a reciprocal trade agreement hit a snag in the U.S. Senate until negotiators inserted a provision that Hawaii could not lease or grant any "port, harbor, or territory" to a third-party nation.

Two decades later America's interest intensified with some big naval developments—the advent of coal-fueled steam power, armored ships and long-range guns with explosive shells. Hawaii, possessing the only protected harbor in the North Pacific, suddenly became a "Pacific Gibraltar," as historian William Michael Morgan put it in his book of that title. If the United States could dominate Hawaii, which was the only feasible staging area for an Asian attack on America, it could greatly enhance its security; without it, menacing raids and challenges would be a constant threat. Conversely, with Hawaii, America could project power and influence far into Asia; without it, U.S. power projection would be infinitely more difficult.

Alfred Thayer Mahan's famous book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, laid out the lineaments of America's embryonic naval strategy. It was largely a historical treatise, but to enhance the book's sales potential Mahan added a section on the strategic challenges and opportunities

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of the United States as seen through the prism of sea power. America, he wrote, could produce vast surpluses of goods. It should pursue three goals: moving beyond its traditional focus on domestic markets and protective tariffs by promoting overseas trade; developing a capacity to protect sea lanes and trade routes; and creating a robust navy capable of projecting power into strategic areas of the world.

Few books have captured the American consciousness as powerfully as Mahan's volume, which was heralded as a blueprint for the country's future. Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed it "by far the most interesting book on naval history which has been produced on either side of the water for many a long year." Overseas it was a sensation. Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm ordered that a copy be conspicuously displayed on every ship in his growing navy.

Mahan's book, though not precisely a new strategic vision for America, brought coherence and power to strategic impulses and ambitions that had been percolating within the American polity for generations. But the timing was propitious because a few years later, when America found itself at war with Spain over the destabilization of Cuba under Spanish rule, the country was ready to exploit the war and seize strategic territories according to Mahan's formula. America was succumbing to the imperial temptation.

Of course, opposition voices, including Mark Twain's, decried the new expansionism and warned of its consequences. Many of these arguments were salient and prescient. But the country

wanted empire and Washington ignored the adjurations of the anti-imperialists. A half century later, when it crushed Japan and its sparkling navy, the United States emerged as the unchallenged regional hegemon.

Since then, Americans have, by and large, credited themselves with handling the responsibilities of their country's Pacific dominance with moderation and wisdom, serving as a stabilizing influence, and protecting the commercial and geopolitical interests of less powerful nations in a more or less disinterested and fair-minded manner. It's a valid appraisal when placed in the perspective of history.

But China sees it differently. It views the region's international system as the baleful creation of an outside force whose legitimacy as an Asian power is questionable and whose presence thwarts its own national self-realization. Thus, we are likely to see further challenges similar to China's declaration of its air defense identification zone. Indeed, Beijing has signaled that further declarations are coming. Ultimately, it seems, China wants to push America back—back to Hawaii.

For America, the geopolitical stakes in this face-off are big. But the psychological stakes are possibly even bigger. That's because the country's position in the Pacific is wrapped up in its national identity, in its destiny concept going back far beyond the mere seven decades of its regional dominance following World War II. It goes back to America's first stirrings of ambition when Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase, Tyler's annexation of Texas and Polk's westward

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push to the Pacific helped to forge a budding superpower. Thus, it isn't accurate to say that, without its role in the Pacific, America would be the same country, only one shorn of a Pacific role. It would be an entirely different country, bereft of a central element of its national consciousness going back at least to the 1840s.

But, if America's Pacific position is indeed intrinsic to its identity, Washington hasn't conducted itself in recent years as if it comprehends the challenge. Quite the contrary. It has squandered blood and treasure, and sapped its economic strength, with civilizational wars in the lands of Islam, where the definitional and strategic imperatives are much less salient. It has otherwise undermined its economic fortitude by piling on public debt, much of it in the hands of China, and failing to generate significant economic growth. It has failed in its effort to transfer its focus from the Middle East to Asia.

That's not the way to protect America's Pacific interests. A pertinent object lesson can be found in Spain back in 1898, facing war with that upstart nation on the American continent. Like many countries on the wane, Spain remained oblivious to its own internal decay. But it received a jolt of reality when it learned that the U.S. Congress, anticipating conflict, had appropriated \$50 million for national defense, to be spent at the discretion of President William McKinley. Spain had no

such capacity to draw on financial reserves; any war it got into would have to be paid for with borrowed funds.

Within a few months, Spain's entire Pacific fleet had been destroyed, and it was kicked out of Asia (as well as the Caribbean). Might it happen to America? Not if the Obama administration and its successors follow a carefully calibrated policy in which America shows some empathy to legitimate Chinese security concerns, while also demonstrating that it will not simply wink at bellicose actions. Both countries have more to lose from confrontation rather than cooperation. Areas of cooperation should include proposing clearer rules of the game. A *détente* also needs to be encouraged between China and its neighbors. Japan's nationalist grandstanding has unnecessarily exacerbated tensions between Tokyo and Beijing. America should support its allies in South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, but it should also discourage reckless behavior that could drag Washington into an unnecessary regional conflict. It won't be an easy course to navigate, but skillful navigation can put Sino-American relations onto a safer course without sacrificing important U.S. interests. This will require more than rhetoric about a pivot to Asia; it will demand actual pivoting. If America wants to preserve the dreams of its heritage, it will have to pursue an Asia-first strategy. □

# The GOP's Identity Crisis

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By Paul J. Saunders

In 1958, after the Republican Party suffered a stinging defeat in the midterm elections that compounded the 1954 loss of its briefly held control of Congress, Whittaker Chambers sent a letter to William F. Buckley Jr. Buckley, who had founded *National Review* three years earlier, was trying to create a conservative insurgency. Like many other conservatives, including Ronald Reagan, he revered Chambers for his searing break with Communism and his exposure of Alger Hiss as a Soviet agent, which he chronicled in his memoir *Witness*. Chambers had warned the youthful Buckley against consorting with the radical Right, arguing that politicians such as Senator Joseph McCarthy discredited rather than bolstered a fledgling conservative movement. Now Chambers diagnosed the woes of the GOP:

If the Republican Party cannot get some grip of the actual world we live in, and from it generalize and actively promote a program that means something to masses of people—why, somebody else will. There will be nothing to argue. The voters will simply vote Republicans into singularity. The Republican Party will become like one of those dark little shops which apparently never sell anything. If, for any reason, you go in, you find, at the back, an old man, fingering for his own pleasure some oddments of cloth. Nobody wants to buy them, which is

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fine because the old man is not really interested in selling. He just likes to hold and to feel.

If this sounds familiar, it should. Then, as now, the GOP faced an identity crisis. Then, as now, ideologues attacked pragmatists. In the late 1950s, the trends seemed clear enough. Though the Democrats went into the 1958 election already controlling Congress, they won a historically unprecedented fifteen seats in the Senate (including two in a special election upon Alaska's statehood) as well as forty-nine additional seats in the House of Representatives. When the newly elected Eighty-Sixth Congress started its first session in 1959, the Democrats enjoyed a thirty-seat majority in the Senate and a 130-seat majority in the House. Republicans also lost thirteen of twenty-one gubernatorial elections.

At the time, analysts attributed the outcome to several factors, including a recession, intra-Republican divisions and the Soviet Union's successful Sputnik satellite launch, which Democrats used to attack President Dwight Eisenhower. But the GOP's message also had clearly fallen short. After the election, the political scientist Frank Jonas, an expert on the western states, pointed to the superficiality of Republican candidates' "glittering generalities" and appeals to "faith and freedom" when voters were more interested in "their stomachs and their pocketbooks." Rather than "recognizing and meeting

issues which arise from the needs and desires of the people,” he wrote, “gimmicks were invented and straw men set up.”

Since then, Chambers’s view has been confirmed again and again. It occurred most immediately and dramatically in Barry Goldwater’s dismal showing in 1964. And it was repeated in congressional elections over the subsequent decades. As MSNBC commentator and former Republican House member Joe Scarborough has recently written in his book *The Right Path*:

In the early 1950s the Republicans began a gradual but unmistakable shift from being a political institution that was a pragmatic collection of various factions to being an ideological institution that would, when at its very worst, choose nominees in state and national elections who could check every box required to advance an ideological agenda except one: winning.

In fact, a dispirited Republican Party struggled to define an agenda throughout the 1960s and would not win control of the Senate until 1980. Republicans would not prevail in the House until the revolution of 1994. Though Republican Richard Nixon was seen as the biggest loser of the 1958 election—an assessment strengthened by his 1960 defeat, which he discussed at length in his book *Six Crises*—he absorbed the political lessons of these losses as well as Goldwater’s and won the presidency in 1968. Nevertheless, neither Nixon’s election nor his landslide reelection in 1972 would significantly shape the Democrat-dominated Congress. The GOP’s later success on Capitol Hill took place only after a fresh generation of conservatives had emerged, with a new agenda and message.

Once again, Republicans are energetically debating the reasons underlying the GOP’s recent electoral losses. In the aftermath of what then president George

W. Bush memorably described as the party’s 2006 midterm “thumping” in the Senate and the House of Representatives, followed by President Barack Obama’s 2008 and 2012 presidential election victories, the GOP is engaged in a fresh bout of soul searching. Yet even after seven years, not to mention losing the popular vote in five of the last six presidential elections, neither leaders nor rank-and-file Republicans have managed to agree on the causes or cures of the party’s troubles, even as a new election looms.

Obama may have handed the GOP a powerful campaign issue in 2014 with Obamacare’s many problems, but party leaders should not allow optimism about 2014 to short-circuit Republicans’ continuing reflection. Obamacare can hardly form the basis of a political strategy beyond this fall. Without corrective action, the Republican Party may face yet another defeat in 2016. Still, there is a clear path that the GOP can follow to regain its former luster.

Finding the way ahead requires an honest assessment of where the Republican Party stands today. In fairness, much of the speculation is overblown—voters’ rejection of the war in Iraq, the 2008 financial crisis and a few weak but high-profile Republican candidates do not necessarily add up to a struggling party. Further, there is no shortage of commentators who have a vested interest in generating a sense of crisis, including ratings-driven media outlets, liberal activists and pundits rallying their own supporters, and political insurgents seeking to overturn the GOP’s established hierarchy to win roles for themselves and the candidates they support.

Still, it would be reckless to wave away the divisions inside the party. They exist, they are serious and they could bring it down. The Tea Party faction has crystallized widespread disenchantment with the

mainstream Republican Party—and fear of the Democrats’ policy agenda—to raise millions of dollars and mobilize millions of voters. Though sympathy with the Tea Party faction in the GOP has fallen sharply, some 38 percent of Republicans continue to support it, according to a fall 2013 Gallup poll. The movement has also had a demonstrable impact, moving taxes and spending to the top of the national political agenda and contributing to major confrontations over Obama’s health-care law, the budget and the debt ceiling in the process. Perhaps most important to Republican politicians and Republican-leaning donors, Tea Party activists have demonstrated that they can defeat long-term incumbent GOP legislators. To paraphrase the eighteenth-century English essayist Samuel Johnson, the prospect of losing a primary election concentrates the mind wonderfully. It has visibly shaped the conduct of many Republicans on Capitol Hill.

What the Tea Party movement really represents is less clear, though some of its self-appointed leaders profess great ambitions. Speaking during the fall 2013 dispute over the debt ceiling, Matt Kibbe, president of the Tea Party group FreedomWorks, argued that the Republican Party was experiencing “a disintermediation in politics” in which “grassroots activists have an ability to self-organize, to fund candidates they’re more interested in, going right around the Republican National Committee.” Party leaders want to control this but can’t, he continued, and if they keep trying “there will absolutely be a split” in which Kibbe and his allies “take over the Republican Party” and the party establishment and its supporters “go the way of the Whigs.”

This is grandiose language. But while the Tea Party may have emerged as a self-organized movement, it seems much less

so today. Now FreedomWorks and similar groups are commonly led by professional political operatives and funded by wealthy donors as well as the ordinary individuals who first defined the Tea Party, a combination that allows them to employ sophisticated and expensive methods to expand their organizations and increase influence. Whether one interprets this change as a necessary step in the Tea Party’s maturation or, conversely, as evidence of its capture by a new segment within



America’s political establishment is a matter of perspective. Michael Medved and John Podhoretz, for example, suggest the latter in *Commentary*, writing that “the incentive to engineer and profit from conflict is even greater for those who are not running for office but who are making a name and an increasingly good living”—“a new class of political activists” that is “remarkably entrepreneurial” and “aggressively seeks marketing opportunities.”

*Standing athwart history yelling “stop” may sound like a glorious cause, but history almost always wins.*

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On the other hand, could Tea Party voters have had a similarly significant and sustained role without this new class? Probably not. The activist-operatives provide a critical link between political leaders and a national constituency without which neither could be as effective. Senator Ted Cruz and other politicians identified with the Tea Party have had outsized impact in no small part because they have appeared to be riding a rising wave—and sympathetic voters are empowered by organizations that are far more well connected than most grassroots groups could hope to be.

Of course, any new class must contend with the current order—and establishment figures, not to mention many Republicans on both Wall Street and Main Street, seem newly motivated to fight to preserve the status quo. Notwithstanding the hype surrounding the Tea Party, the establishment has many advantages in such a contest precisely because it is the establishment and thus largely controls the organizational levers of power within the Republican Party, including the Republican National Committee as well as state and local party bodies and a lot of political money. In Congress, establishment-oriented leaders control the allocation of committee posts—which Republican House leaders have now reportedly linked to votes in support of the party’s House leadership. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker John Boehner have also each publicly expressed frustration with outside groups exhorting members of Congress to vote against leadership preferences.

GOP officials can also influence the selection of candidates and seem newly motivated to do so. Charged with securing a Republican majority in the Senate, Rob Collins, executive director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, has implicitly rebuked Tea Party groups. He said, “The path to getting a general election candidate who can win is the only thing we care about”—a clear reference to the failed and sometimes loopy Republican Senate candidacies in the 2010 and 2012 election cycles, including Nevada’s Sharron Angle, Indiana’s Richard Mourdock and Missouri’s Todd Akin. Other Republican officials have expressed similar sentiments.

Influential outside groups are also aligned with the establishment. One pillar of Republican politics, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, recently helped an establishment Republican defeat a Tea Party candidate in a special election for an Alabama seat in the House of Representatives and, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, has committed at least \$50 million to support establishment candidates in 2014 Republican primaries, particularly the Senate, with the goal of “no fools on our ticket.” State and local business leaders are reportedly supporting establishment candidates as well, including a Republican challenger to incumbent Michigan Tea Party star Representative Justin Amash.

By comparison, FreedomWorks reported consolidated total revenue of just \$20 million in its unaudited 2011 annual report, the latest disclosed. The like-minded Senate Conservatives Fund, which does not provide an annual report on its

website—audited or otherwise—and states that it limits donations to \$5,000, spent \$16 million in the 2012 election cycle, according to federal records.

So is the GOP nearing a truly historic collapse brought about by this internecine warfare? Probably not.

Until now, establishments in both major political parties have prevailed far more frequently than insurgent movements. America's winner-take-all elections structurally privilege a two-party system and marginalize niche groups that cannot build a winning coalition—meaning that emerging political forces can become one of the two dominant parties only by destroying an existing party or, alternatively, by transforming one from within. The Whigs disappeared over 150 years ago, and no major party has disintegrated since. Though the Republican establishment has thus far failed to co-opt the Tea Party and channel its energy—an intensely valuable resource—it may yet succeed. If the Tea Party simultaneously redefines the GOP, it might too.

However, if the two groups continue to fight rather than merging, time favors the Republican establishment. Eventually, Tea Party groups will need not only rhetoric but also practical accomplishments to maintain the support of their donors and voters, and they will need them even more so if they hope to win sufficient power to determine or heavily influence the Republican Party's agenda, strategy and tactics over time. In a divided party within a divided government, positive accomplishments will require the kind of compromise that many Tea Party figures have thus far rejected. The GOP's fall 2013 surrender on the debt ceiling after poor handling of an ill-chosen fight and its early 2014 support for a budget compromise illustrate just how difficult it is to sustain a strategy of governance by obstruction.

The bigger problem facing the Republican Party lies outside rather than inside, in defining an agenda to win elections beyond red-state Senate seats and gerrymandered House districts. Intraparty divisions exacerbate this problem by forcing candidates to make statements and adopt positions that alienate potential supporters (a regular problem in GOP primaries) and by muddling the party's national message (as with the varied formal responses to the president's last State of the Union address), but disunity is not the main challenge. As Whittaker Chambers wrote of the party in 1958, the real threat to the GOP is that despite its widely supported principles, the Republican Party has failed to define a constructive agenda that can win national support. As a result, according to a December 2013 Gallup poll, just 32 percent of Americans have a favorable view of the Republican Party—ten percentage points below the share that see the Democrats positively.

Though the reasons for these attitudes are widely discussed, and Republican pollsters and political operatives have studied them extensively, the Republican Party as a whole has been unable to draw shared lessons or come to agreed conclusions about how to proceed. Until recently, Republicans have devoted more time to debating how conservative the party and its candidates should be than to defining what it means to be a conservative in America today and proposing policies that apply conservative principles to public concerns. Republicans must change this if they want to be seen as something other than the party of “no.” Standing athwart history yelling “stop” may sound like a glorious cause, but history almost always wins.

Nothing illustrates Republicans' failure to “promote a program that means something to masses of people,” as Chambers put it, as clearly as the GOP's abysmal handling of the Affordable Care Act, also known as

Obamacare. Simply put, Republicans have been fighting a losing battle to overturn the law because they were not able to make a meaningful health-care proposal of their own of sufficient appeal either to force compromise or to create a deadlock on Capitol Hill by putting real public pressure on moderate Democrats. In that environment, the president's imperfect effort was for many Americans better than no effort at all.

The GOP's inability to produce an attractive alternative to Obamacare was particularly unfortunate because the law's clear weaknesses provided a very real opportunity for practical reforms. Leaving aside conservatives' philosophical concerns, as a policy and political matter the Affordable Care Act may well expand access to health care in the future but has been decidedly mixed in its impact on costs, particularly for those who already had insurance. This group makes up a much greater share of the voting population than the uninsured.

Finally, while the jury is still out on the public's eventual attitudes toward Obama's health-care plan—and many Republicans clearly hope that its flawed implementation will be a potent weapon in the 2014 midterm elections—Obamacare's fundamentals appear likely to stick regardless of the election outcomes in 2014 or even in 2016.

Consider whether a Republican-controlled Congress could actually repeal Obamacare in the real world as opposed to the fantasy world of direct mail and online fundraising appeals. If Republicans win the Senate and keep the House in 2014, or win control in both houses while a Democrat follows Obama in the White House in 2016, this would require a veto-proof majority at both ends of the Capitol Building—a remote prospect. But even if Republicans achieve a national-

level political trifecta in 2016 by taking the presidency and winning majorities in both houses of Congress, GOP leaders may quickly find that repeal is much more attractive as a campaign issue than a legislative program. A newly elected Republican president would be sorely tempted to discourage repeal, as the divisive effort could easily dominate and define a first term much as the law's passage did for Obama. Blue-state Republicans, who would mathematically have to make up an important part of any GOP-controlled Congress, would probably be even less enthusiastic. It seems likely that a new Republican president and Congress would have bigger priorities—starting with the economy and jobs.

**T**he Republican Party is ceding considerable territory to the Democrats in other policy areas as well—some much more promising than post-Obamacare health care. While Republicans have been more successful in blocking flawed legislation on energy and climate change (like a cap-and-trade bill to set limits on greenhouse-gas emissions) and have continued to press the Obama administration to approve the Keystone XL pipeline, they have otherwise offered little on energy, a potent issue that routinely leads surveys of the public's domestic and international policy priorities. Like health care, energy touches Americans deeply in daily life—as we heat or cool our homes, drive to work or to shop, and plug in more and more new electronic gadgets. Because Republicans have offered little on energy policy, Americans believe the Democrats do a better job on energy; a 2013 NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll showed 36 percent preferring the Democrats and 26 percent the Republicans, with 18 percent saying that they were “about the same” and 15 percent suggesting that neither would do well. The 33 percent who today see no

*The GOP's inability to produce an attractive alternative to Obamacare was particularly unfortunate because the law's clear weaknesses provided a very real opportunity for practical reforms.*

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difference between the parties provide a huge opportunity for Republican ideas and policies, especially when combined with the collapse of President Obama's misguided "green jobs" agenda.

The central lesson of America's energy sector over the last several years is that government programs to subsidize existing technologies like solar and wind have not delivered on their promises even as a private-sector revolution in oil and gas production has created enormous new economic activity and huge numbers of jobs. The contrast powerfully demonstrates both the critical role of technology in generating growth and jobs and the validity of conservative economic principles. Republicans can and should find a way to combine these two facts to develop a strong energy program.

This will require more than quoting Adam Smith or Ronald Reagan and then standing back to see what happens—it means writing policies to promote genuine energy innovation, with respect to both fossil fuels (which generate enormous benefit and will be with us far longer than some seem to think) and other sources. Many Republicans are tempted by the myth that hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling, the key technologies of the energy revolution, spontaneously burst out from America's energy companies like the ancient Greek goddess Athena springing from the forehead of Zeus. As a result, some think, there is no need for government-supported research. This is wrong. In reality, both fracking and horizontal drilling began as federally

funded research projects before being combined and commercialized by energy companies.

There is an important role for government here, though it must be precisely defined. Needless to say, a conservative energy agenda should not increase the size of government—and it need not, if Republicans can reallocate resources away from subsidies to existing technologies that can't compete in the marketplace in favor of research to produce genuinely new ways to generate and transmit energy. When necessary to avoid disruption, the GOP can apply creative approaches like reverse auctions to phase out tax credits or other subsidies over time, asking those who seek U.S. government support to compete in part on the basis of how little federal funding they seek.

The Republican Party's approach to immigration reform is worse than a missed opportunity; it is a significant political liability. Many in the GOP have taken the first step toward recovery by admitting that the party has a problem, but too often the intra-Republican policy debate on immigration conflates two separate issues—U.S. policy toward illegal immigrants and the Republican Party's political appeal to America's expanding population of Hispanic voters—and misunderstands the relationship between them. The GOP's future electoral prospects depend in no small part on understanding each challenge separately and redefining their connection.

The core misunderstanding is the idea that supporting an immigration-reform bill can fix the GOP's weak support among

Hispanic voters. This is unlikely to prove true for three reasons. First, it is not clear how much credit the Republican Party and individual GOP legislators would receive for supporting an immigration bill, especially because they are unlikely to outdo the Democrats in rhetoric. Second, and more seriously, congressional Republicans appear unlikely to be unified on immigration reform—particularly in the current environment inside the party—and bitter debate is entirely possible. This debate is bound to include precisely the kind of nasty rhetoric that has alienated many Hispanic voters in the past. Third, immigration reform is not in fact the top policy priority for Hispanic voters, who, like other Americans, are more concerned about issues that affect their daily lives. This is regularly demonstrated in polls; for example, a 2012 Gallup survey showed

Hispanic voters for its policy consequences than for the GOP attitudes they believe it reveals. Thus, a political strategy to attract Hispanic voters should focus first and foremost on avoiding hostile rhetoric and on repudiating those who continue to use it. This includes Republican politicians who publicly decry Hispanic immigration, which essentially tells Hispanic Americans—twenty-three million eligible voters, and possibly forty million by 2030, accounting for 40 percent of the growth in the electorate—that the GOP doesn't like them and doesn't consider them to be true Americans. It's hard to win votes that way.

After it stops some individuals from repelling potential supporters, the Republican Party should reach out by concentrating on the same concrete, real-life issues that the party needs to address anyway—and doing it in a way that

draws a stark contrast between Republicans and Democrats. The GOP can have a clear message: while Democrats approach Hispanic Americans and other minority groups on the basis of their ethnicity and propose collective solutions that make few distinctions among those in diverse circumstances, Republicans care about individuals and are pursuing policies to generate jobs and expand opportunities for

real people rather than applying labels so that they can easily check a political box. Republicans themselves must recognize the fundamental fact that appealing to group interests rather than individual interests means ceding the terms of debate to Democrats. Conversely, if Republicans have a policy that appeals to Americans—no



that among Hispanic registered voters, immigration ranked fifth in importance after health care, unemployment, economic growth, and the gap between rich and poor—and only slightly above the federal budget deficit.

This suggests that America's immigration-reform debate may well be less important to

hyphenation needed—and avoid offending potential voters in whatever social group, they can do quite well.

From a political perspective, Republicans on Capitol Hill may do best by deferring legislative action on immigration; in the current situation, pursuing a bipartisan bill may actually damage the GOP brand rather than improving it. And waiting need not have damaging political consequences if Republicans take other needed steps to appeal to Hispanic and other voters. Meanwhile, congressional Republicans should consider policies to offer an extra helping hand to recent legal immigrants who need it (whatever their origin) in finding jobs and integrating themselves into American society; this is important both in ensuring that new immigrants do not become long-term recipients of government assistance and in assimilating them. It could also help in demonstrating sympathy to those who follow the rules when they enter the country.

Controversial social issues, and particularly gay marriage, seem likely to remain a problem for the Republican Party. Socially conservative positions appear increasingly to be alienating many younger voters, who see the GOP as not only the party of “no” but also the party of “don’t”—a major factor in the appeal among the young of libertarianism and libertarian candidates inside or outside the Republican Party. The libertarian desire for a combination of less government with social permissiveness is already draining support away from Republicans in general elections. This trend may become worse; Virginia’s 2013 gubernatorial election demonstrated the cost starkly, when Democrat Terry McAuliffe prevailed over the state’s socially conservative Republican attorney general, Ken Cuccinelli, by only 2.5 percent of the vote even as Libertarian Party candidate Robert Sarvis won 6.6 percent. Cuccinelli’s

positions on abortion and other social issues clearly turned off some Republicans. Like McAuliffe’s election, Colorado’s voter-driven legalization of recreational marijuana was made possible by an alignment of libertarians with Democrats against social conservatism. Watch this space.

The answer to this, as many have argued, is for Republican Party leaders to de-emphasize social issues as campaign issues—they are too polarizing and may push libertarians and many independents into the Democrats’ arms or into staying home on Election Day. By 2011, two-thirds of Americans under thirty-five supported gay marriage, a share that has grown significantly over the last decade and continues to rise. Perhaps most significant, policy on social issues tends to follow public opinion rather than the reverse—suggesting that social-conservative activists should work harder to shape opinion and strengthen the values they care about from the bottom up rather than looking for rule-based answers that may not last beyond the next election, referendum or judicial appointment and contradict the Republican Party’s overall limited-government philosophy.

**I**t will be very difficult to define a new agenda for the Republican Party that can simultaneously unify a divided party and appeal to new voters in the wider electorate, but some of the ideas above could be components in such an effort. Of course, this agenda must include other key areas as well, starting with a jobs plan that goes beyond tax policy—an issue that despite its great importance has fueled considerable cynicism. There may also be opportunities in education policy, particularly in vocational education; two-thirds of Americans between twenty-five and twenty-nine do not have a college degree and many are unemployed. Finally, Republicans must build a foreign policy that establishes a clear strategic

framework, sets priorities and advances U.S. national interests without relying excessively on military force.

Republican political leaders must redefine the party as a home for principled but pragmatic problem solvers rather than ideologues. In a left-leaning echo of Whittaker Chambers, former Democratic Leadership Council policy director Will Marshall argued that in the 1980s, “voters had heard what Democrats were selling. They just weren’t buying.” The DLC’s new ideas and practical approaches helped propel Bill Clinton to the presidency and set the stage for much of what followed. No less important—as Clinton’s case demonstrates—the Republican Party will need a presidential candidate who can personify and persuasively articulate its message.

Moving forward, the GOP does have many important strengths. First, America remains a center-right country in many respects. This provides favorable terrain. Second, some congressional Republican leaders—including strong conservatives and even Tea Party favorites—now see the need to respond to what voters want. Speaking to Virginia Republicans in the wake of his party’s failure to secure any of the state’s top three offices in November 2013, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor said this clearly: “If we want to win, we must offer solutions to problems that people face every day. We have not done this recently and it has allowed Democrats to take power.” Likewise, Senator Mike Lee, who deposed Utah’s Republican establishment Senator Robert Bennett in 2010, recently argued that “there is a hole within the Republican Party that is exactly the size and shape of a conservative reform agenda.” The recognition that it is not enough for Republicans to fight higher taxes, spending and borrowing when Americans want solutions that help them in their daily lives is a significant step.

Third, Republicans should take heart in the fact that Democrats have their own divisions and flaws. In a mirror image of the GOP, the Democratic Party is divided between a liberal activist wing and a more pragmatic establishment faction—and left-wing rhetoric and policy turn off many American voters, whatever its advocates may think. In addition, despite the obvious benefits of controlling the executive branch, President Obama is constantly torn between satisfying and disappointing the party’s most progressive elements. Since some of the steps necessary to placate them may also mobilize broad opposition, this is a lose-lose choice.

Finally, the elections of 2014 and 2016 will inherently be referenda on the president’s policies, at least in part, and Obama’s record has been mixed. This may be enough for Republicans to do well in the midterm elections. It will probably not be enough to win the White House in 2016.

In considering the longer term, Republicans should also pause to compare growing populist sentiments in the Democratic Party to those in the GOP and to reflect on both the origins and possible destinations of these trends. Although the Occupy movement may have quickly lost steam in the streets of Washington and New York, left-wing populism in general has been on the rise in parallel with the Tea Party’s populist messages. In both cases, the sentiments likely stem from a combination of rage at politicians and frustration with the country’s slow economic recovery after the 2008 financial crisis.

The fact that some have abandoned the Tea Party or its analogues on the left because of their ineffective tactics should not blur the reality that Americans are angry and that statistics across the political spectrum are disturbing. In a September 2013 Gallup survey, just 42 percent of Americans had a great deal or a fair amount

*Republican political leaders must redefine the party as a home for principled but pragmatic problem solvers rather than ideologues.*

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of confidence in the federal government's ability to handle domestic problems; a Pew Research Center poll earlier that year found only 28 percent had favorable views of the federal government. Congress enjoys historically low, single-digit approval ratings in several polls.

Even as Americans see the federal government as less and less effective, they also rate our economy and society as less and less fair. A Rasmussen poll found that just 32 percent of likely voters see the U.S. economy as fair to the middle class, while a Fox News poll found only 62 percent of Americans professing to believe that with hard work, it is possible to achieve the American Dream—down from 72 percent in 1997. A 2012 Pew Research Center study showed that 77 percent of Americans, including a majority of Republicans, say that big corporations and a small number of wealthy people have too much power. Here, the Tea Party and the Occupy movement appear to agree on the problem, though not the solution.

A critical question is whether today's resurgent populism is a natural and ultimately ephemeral reaction to events or something more. While the former seems more likely, anyone seeing statistics like these for a foreign country in the news would not be surprised to hear about massive strikes, violent demonstrations and widespread instability, or even

a crisis of legitimacy. Politicians of both parties who don't want to see the same in America's future should stop trashing their own country every day in the media—Democrats assailing its lack of fairness and Republicans its government. After decades of attacks on our government and society by our own elected leaders and what many see as growing dysfunction, who can be surprised that the American people are starting to believe what they hear? How long can a situation like that endure? Republicans, who often claim special pride in our form of government, should have no less commitment to maintaining it. Public frustration can be an indispensable force in improving policy and governance—or a wrecking ball tearing through American society.

From this perspective, defining a positive agenda that builds on conservative principles to address widespread public concerns could help not only to improve the Republican Party's electoral prospects, but also—with some policy successes—to direct and defuse rising populist anger. The GOP's little shop needs some new products, better lighting and a welcome mat if party leaders want to attract new customers. If the proprietors instead argue loudly on the sidewalk, pausing occasionally to insult onlookers, they should not be surprised by falling sales—or, eventually, a brick through the window. □

# *The Republican Battlefield*

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*By Henry Olsen*

**T**he common wisdom holds that the GOP 2016 presidential race will boil down to a joust between the “establishment” and the “insurgents.” The former will allegedly be more moderate and the latter more conservative. Since most polls for two decades have shown that around two-thirds to 70 percent of self-described Republicans call themselves conservative, this elite narrative will focus on just how much the establishment candidate will need to be pulled to the right in order to fend off his insurgent challenger. And since the Tea Party has clearly become a vocal and powerful insurgent element in the GOP, the narrative will focus on two other questions: Who will gain Tea Party favor and emerge as the insurgent candidate? And can the establishment candidate escape becoming Tea Partyized during the primary season and therefore remain a viable general-election candidate?

The common wisdom has the advantage of being a neat, coherent and exciting story. It also allows political journalists to do what they like to do most, which is to focus on the personalities of the candidates and the tactics they employ. It has only one small problem. It is wrong.

Exit and entrance polls of Republican primaries and caucuses going back to 1996 show that the Republican presidential electorate is remarkably stable. It does

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not divide neatly along establishment-versus-conservative lines. Rather, the GOP contains four discrete factions that are based primarily on ideology, with elements of class and religious background tempering that focus. Open nomination contests during this period are resolved first by how candidates become favorites of each of these factions, and then by how they are positioned to absorb the voting blocs of the other factions as their favorites drop out.

This analysis allows us to explain what we consistently observe. It explains why a conservative party rarely nominates the most conservative candidate. It explains why the party often seems to nominate the “next in line.” And, perhaps most importantly, it explains why certain candidates emerge as the “surprise” candidate in each race.

Analysts and advisers who understand this elemental map of the Republican electorate will be better positioned to navigate the shoals of the Republican nominating river and bring one’s favored candidate safely home to port.

**R**epublican voters fall into four rough camps. They are: moderate or liberal voters; somewhat conservative voters; very conservative, evangelical voters; and very conservative, secular voters. Each of these groups supports extremely different types of candidates. Each of these groups has also demonstrated stable preferences over the past twenty years.

The most important of these groups is the one most journalists don't understand and ignore: the somewhat conservative voters. This group is the most numerous nationally and in most states, comprising 35–40 percent of the national GOP electorate. While the numbers of moderates, very conservative and evangelical voters vary significantly by state, somewhat conservative voters are found in similar proportions in every state. They are not very vocal, but they form the bedrock base of the Republican Party.

They also have a significant distinction: they always back the winner. The candidate who garners their favor has won each of the last four open races. This tendency runs down to the state level as well. Look at the exit polls from virtually any state caucus or primary since 1996 and you will find that the winner received a plurality or even ran roughly even among the somewhat conservative voters.

These voters' preferred candidate profile can be inferred from the characteristics of their favored candidates: Bob Dole in 1996, George W. Bush in 2000, John McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012. They like even-keeled men with substantial governing experience. They like people who express conservative values on the economy or social issues, but who do not espouse radical change. They like people who are optimistic about America; the somewhat conservative voter rejects the "culture warrior" motif that characterized Pat Buchanan's campaigns. They are conservative in both senses of the word; they prefer the ideals of American conservatism while displaying the cautious disposition of the Burkean.

The moderate or liberal bloc is surprisingly strong in presidential years, comprising the second-largest voting bloc with approximately 25–30 percent of all GOP voters nationwide. They are especially strong in early voting states such as New Hampshire (where they have comprised

between 45 and 49 percent of the GOP electorate between 1996 and 2012), Florida and Michigan. They are, however, surprisingly numerous even in the Deep South, the most conservative portion of the country. Moderates or liberals have comprised between 31 and 39 percent of the South Carolina electorate since 1996, outnumbering or roughly equaling very conservative voters in each of those years.

Moderate and liberal voters prefer someone who is both more secular and less fiscally conservative than their somewhat conservative cousins. In 1996, for example, they preferred Tennessee senator Lamar Alexander over Bob Dole. In 2000, they were the original McCainiacs, supporting a candidate who backed campaign-finance regulation, opposed tax cuts for the top bracket and criticized the influence of Pat Robertson. In 2008, they stuck with McCain, giving him their crucial backing in New Hampshire and providing his margin of victory in virtually every state. In 2012, they began firmly in Ron Paul's or Jon Huntsman's camp. Paul and Huntsman combined got 43 percent of their vote in Iowa and 50 percent in New Hampshire. Once it became clear that their candidates could not win, however, the moderate or liberal faction swung firmly toward Romney in his fights with Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum.

This latter movement is perhaps most indicative of their true preferences. The moderate or liberal voter seems motivated by a candidate's secularism above all else. They will always vote for the Republican candidate who seems least overtly religious and are motivated to oppose the candidate who is most overtly religious. This makes them a secure bank of votes for a somewhat conservative candidate who emerges from the early stages of the primary season in a battle with a religious conservative, as occurred in 1996, 2008 and 2012.

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The third-largest group is the moderates' bête noire: the very conservative evangelicals. This group is small compared to the others, comprising around one-fifth of all GOP voters. They gain significant strength, however, from three unique factors. First, they are geographically concentrated in Southern and border states, where they can comprise a quarter or more of a state's electorate. Moreover, somewhat conservative voters in Southern and border states are also likelier to be evangelical, and they tend to vote for more socially conservative candidates than do their non-Southern, nonevangelical ideological cousins. Finally, they are very motivated to turn out in caucus states, such as Iowa and Kansas, and form the single largest bloc of voters in those races.

These factors have given very conservative, evangelical-backed candidates unusual strength in Republican presidential contests. The evangelical favorite, for example, surprised pundits by winning Iowa in 2008 and 2012, and supplied the backing for second-place Iowa finishers Pat Robertson in 1988 and Pat Buchanan in 1996. Their strength in the Deep South and the border states also allowed Mike Huckabee rather than Mitt Romney to emerge as John McCain's final challenger in 2008, and that strength combined with their domination of the February 7 caucuses in Minnesota and Colorado allowed Rick Santorum to emerge as Romney's challenger in 2012.

This group prefers candidates who are very open about their religious beliefs, place a high priority on social issues

such as gay marriage and abortion, and see the United States in decline because of its movement away from the faith and moral codes of its past. Their favored candidates tend to be economically more open to government intervention. Santorum, for example, wanted to favor manufacturing over services, and Buchanan opposed NAFTA. This social conservatism and economic moderation tends to place these candidates out of line with the center of the Republican Party, the somewhat conservative voter outside the Deep South. Each evangelical-backed candidate has lost this group decisively in primaries in the Midwest, Northeast, Pacific Coast and mountain states. Indeed, they even lose them in Southern-tinged states like Virginia and Texas, where McCain's ability to win the somewhat conservative voters, coupled with huge margins among moderates and liberals, allowed him to hold off Huckabee in one-on-one face-offs.

The final and smallest GOP tribe is the one that DC elites are most familiar with: the very conservative, secular voters. This group comprises a tiny 5–10 percent nationwide and thus never sees its choice emerge from the initial races to contend in later stages. Jack Kemp and Pete DuPont in 1988; Steve Forbes or Phil Gramm in 1996 and 2000; Fred Thompson or Mitt Romney in 2008; Herman Cain, Rick Perry or Newt Gingrich in 2012: each of these candidates showed promise in early polling but foundered in early races once voters became more familiar with each of the candidates. Secular moderates and somewhat conservative voters preferred

candidates with less materialistic, sweeping economic radicalism while very conservative evangelicals went with someone singing from their hymnal. Thus, these voters quickly had to choose which of the remaining candidates to support in subsequent races.

This small but influential bloc likes urbane, fiscally oriented men. Thus, they preferred Kemp or DuPont in 1988, Forbes or Gramm in 1996, Forbes in 2000 and Romney in 2008. In 2012, this group was tempted by Rick Perry until his lack of sophistication became painfully obvious in the early debates. It then flirted with Newt Gingrich until his temperamental issues resurfaced in Florida. After that, faced with the choice of Rick Santorum or Mitt Romney, it swung behind Romney en masse.

The latter example is in fact this group's modus operandi. They invariably see their preferred candidate knocked out early, and they then invariably back whoever is backed by the somewhat conservative bloc. Forbes's early exit from the 2000 race, for example, was crucial to George W. Bush's ability to win South Carolina against the McCain onslaught. In New Hampshire, Bush won only 33 percent of the very conservative vote; Forbes received 20 percent. With Forbes out of the race, however, Bush was able to capture 74 percent of the very conservative vote in South Carolina.

The fact that these factions have remained very similar in preferences and in strength over the past twenty years provides a clear guide to anyone who wants to understand how the 2016 Republican nomination contest will unfold.

**T**he first thing a prospective analyst needs to understand is the crucial role that the year preceding the actual contests plays. In this "preseason," candidates compete to become favored by one of the four

factions. Sometimes no one is competing with a candidate for that favor, which frequently happens on the moderate or liberal side. Other times, though, there is intense competition and the preseason maneuvering determines if someone survives until the actual early contests. We can see this in the maneuvering between Steve Forbes and Phil Gramm in 1996, George W. Bush and Elizabeth Dole in 2000, a number of people in 2008, and between Mitt Romney and Tim Pawlenty in 2012.

The Gramm-Forbes battle centered on who would lead the secular, very conservative forces. Gramm focused on shrinking government, Forbes on tax cuts. Despite Gramm's strong national presence and Forbes's complete lack of one, it became clear by December 1995 that the issue of cutting taxes stirred this group's voters much more than shrinking government. Forbes, not Gramm, therefore became the secular, very conservative hope and presented a serious challenge to other candidates before becoming the focus of attacks in January.

The 2000 Bush-Dole battle (with sideline competition from Lamar Alexander and Dan Quayle) was for who would be favored by somewhat conservative voters. Bush could not compete with Forbes on taxes, although his own tax-cut plan crucially cut into Forbes's advantage. Nor could he dominate evangelical conservatives in the early races, being challenged by the more overtly religious and fiery Alan Keyes and Gary Bauer. So his chance to win rested on his ability to win enough votes among both groups of very conservative voters to supplement a strong advantage among somewhat conservatives. Dole was his only serious competition here, and to that end Bush poured resources into the Ames straw poll in an effort to drive her from the race by showing donors she could not win.



He succeeded, defeating her by a large margin. She dropped out shortly thereafter with her bank account nearly dry, giving Bush the leadership role for the largest GOP faction.

2008 saw three separate subprimaries: Kansas senator Sam Brownback versus Mike Huckabee for the very conservative, evangelical vote, McCain versus Rudy Giuliani for the moderate or liberal vote, and Romney versus Thompson for the very conservative, secular vote. In each case the off-year preseason gave one man a clear early advantage. Thompson's lackadaisical effort caused him to lose ground to the less ideological but more focused Romney; Brownback dropped out in the summer, being unable to excite the evangelical grassroots like Huckabee; and Giuliani failed to capitalize on an early lead, giving McCain time to reestablish his support. The early races simply confirmed what polls in December 2007 were already showing among each faction.

The 2012 Pawlenty-Romney primary was short, with Pawlenty trying to show somewhat conservative voters and donors that he was more electable than Romney. His effort fizzled, with large donors unconvinced and his poor debate performances showing voters Pawlenty

lacked the instinct to win. His poor Ames showing also doomed his effort, causing a nearly broke candidate to drop out within a week. With every other candidate competing for the two very conservative groups, and with Paul and Huntsman competing for moderates, Romney sailed into the early contests.

The 2016 field is still developing, but it's already possible to discern which candidates are focusing on which factions. Ohio governor John Kasich is staking out ground in the moderate-to-liberal wing with his focus on expanding Medicaid and rhetorically supporting active government. New Jersey governor Chris Christie is trying to make himself the mainstream, somewhat conservative favorite by eschewing fiery rhetoric, emphasizing commonsense governing and attacking Washington. If they run, this will also be Representative Paul Ryan's and former Florida governor Jeb Bush's faction. If neither of those two run and Christie falters, Wisconsin governor Scott Walker stands to benefit, as Walker is displaying a similar approach to his competitors. Rick Santorum and Mike Huckabee could face off for the very conservative, evangelical nod. Santorum's 2012 support in primaries and caucuses came in the same areas and from the

same people who backed Huckabee in 2008. There would not be room for both candidates in 2016, so the preseason jockeying between these two could be intense.

Virtually everyone else in the race is competing for the favor of the smallest, least influential group: the secular conservatives. All focus on some sort of fiscal issue as their primary focus, and most also try to adopt an anti-Washington tone. Some have secondary messages designed to appeal to other factions, much as George W. Bush did in 2000. Senator Rand Paul's focus on civil liberties and limiting overseas military actions would hold some appeal for GOP moderates and liberals, as would Senator Marco Rubio's occasional forays into antipoverty efforts. Rubio's backing of immigration reform is of interest to somewhat conservative donors, and his authoring of federal antiabortion legislation creates some support among the socially conservative wing. But Paul's, Rubio's and Texas senator Ted Cruz's hope must be that the secular, very conservative wing is in fact much larger in 2016 than it has been in the past.

Tea Party-backed victories in senatorial and congressional primaries give them some reason for hope. In race after race in 2010 and 2012, a populist conservative focusing on fiscal issues upset a more establishment candidate from the somewhat conservative or moderate-to-liberal wings. Many observers say this has pushed the national party to the right, something that also should help a Tea Party fiscal conservative. A careful analysis of the data and of these races, however, shows that these hopes are likely unfounded.

**T**he national data suggest that any Republican move to the right after the election of Barack Obama was muted. We have exit polls from Republican primaries

or caucuses in eighteen states from both 2008 and 2012. The share of GOP voters identifying themselves as very conservative did rise between those years, but only by about three and a half percentage points. It shrunk or rose less than two points in Virginia, Alabama, South Carolina, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Moreover, some of that gain seems to have come from those who were previously somewhat conservative becoming slightly more intense about their conservatism. The overall share of the electorate calling themselves any brand of conservative rose only two and a half percentage points. The total number of conservatives shrunk or stayed even in Iowa, South Carolina, Alabama, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Virginia, Nevada and Tennessee. 2012 candidates who banked on a change of the GOP electoral map were thus cruelly disappointed.

Nor do the Tea Party Senate primary victories appear to presage a sea change in GOP attitudes. They generally have two characteristics unlikely to pertain in the 2016 presidential race. First, they occurred primarily in smaller states in the South and West. While these states hold the balance in the Senate, they do not elect most of the delegates needed to win a presidential nomination. Larger states, especially California and those in the Midwest and Northeast, still have substantial power to influence the nomination contest. As importantly, these victories tended to occur in one-on-one races or races with only two serious candidates. Tea Party candidates fared much worse in multicandidate races. In presidential contests, multicandidate races are the norm until well into March, suggesting a Tea Party candidate will find it difficult to win in the early stages.

Most observers accept that Florida (Rubio), Utah (Mike Lee), Nevada (Sharron Angle), Colorado (Ken Buck), Alaska (Joe Miller), Delaware (Christine O'Donnell),

Texas (Cruz), Kentucky (Paul) and Indiana (Richard Mourdock) represent clear cases of a Tea Party candidate defeating a more conventional, “establishment” Republican. Of these, only the Texas and Florida victories occurred in states that will matter except in a protracted 2016 fight, and it’s worth noting that Rubio prevailed without a contested primary vote as his opponent, then governor Charlie Crist, dropped out before the primary. O’Donnell’s win came against the most liberal Republican in Congress, someone far to the left of anyone who is expected to run in 2016. Buck’s and Miller’s wins were in one-on-one races and very narrow; Lee’s was in a convention, not a primary; and Mourdock’s came against a thirty-six-year senatorial veteran with residency issues. None came in circumstances likely to resemble those in a seriously contested presidential contest with the sort of field that is so far assembling.

Ted Cruz’s victory appears impressive, but it too is less so upon further examination. Cruz won only because Texas requires a candidate to receive 50 percent in a multicandidate primary to avoid a runoff. Cruz finished second in that first race with a mere 34.2 percent. He won handily (by a 13 percent margin) in a one-on-one runoff in which nearly three hundred thousand fewer votes were cast than in the first race, a setup that nearly all observers said benefited the most conservative candidate.

Note that successful Tea Party challenges have yet to occur in statewide races in large states that do not reliably vote Republican. The purple and blue states touching the Great Lakes will select a combined 398 delegates to the 2016 Republican convention, all by primaries. California will select another 172 delegates through its primary, and the New England states of Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut will select another 104. States whose Republican electorates, then,

are heretofore indisposed to elect Tea Partiers will retain a substantial voice in the Republican race.

Careful observers will note that I excluded Representative Todd Akin’s win in the 2012 Missouri Senate primary from the above list. That’s because it was a race with three serious candidates, and as such is more indicative of the circumstances any fiscally focused Tea Partier will face in 2016. Akin drew his support from social conservatives; Lieutenant Governor John Brunner was the conventional, “establishment” candidate; and Sarah Steelman, the state treasurer, ran as a populist fiscal conservative. Akin came out on top with 36 percent to Brunner’s 30 percent and Steelman’s 29 percent. This is quite similar to the state’s 2008 Republican presidential primary, which was also a three-way race between social conservative Mike Huckabee, conventional Republican Mitt Romney and John McCain. Comparing these two races yields a cautionary tale for any Tea Party candidate.

A county-by-county analysis shows that Akin’s vote tracked Huckabee’s quite closely in most areas of the state. Where Huckabee did well so too did Akin, and vice versa. Steelman’s support also tracked Huckabee’s, although not as well: the rural evangelical vote was split between the two outsiders. Akin’s margin, though, came from suburban St. Louis, where he won handily while Huckabee lost big. This is easily explained by the fact that Akin represented a suburban St. Louis district for many years. In 2008, these counties provided John McCain’s victory margin, supporting the most moderate of the three serious contenders. While Akin’s constituents knew him and supported him, a nonlocal, populist conservative is unlikely to do well enough here to avoid relying, as Akin did, on evangelical votes elsewhere in the state.

*The likely outcome will be a repeat of the traditional GOP three-way war between its somewhat conservative center and the two ideological wings: the moderate secularists and conservative evangelicals.*

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Missouri shows that an identifiable social conservative will eat into the support for a more fiscally oriented Tea Party populist. Ted Cruz did not face a serious candidate to his social right in his Texas multicandidate race; the only other serious candidate, Dallas mayor Ted Leppert, campaigned as a more moderate, establishment candidate. If Tea Party populism overlaps substantially with social conservatism for its voter support, and if social conservatives will prefer one of their own when given that choice, then Tea Party presidential hopefuls' chances rest upon the social conservative getting knocked out of the early races. Unfortunately for them, the early races tend to favor the candidates coming from the moderate-to-liberal or the evangelical factions of the party.

Iowa is the first state to vote, and its preference for evangelical candidates is clear. Not only did Huckabee and Santorum win their races but, going as far back as Pat Robertson's surprise second-place finish in 1988, culturally conservative candidates have always done very well. The state has traditionally "winnowed" the field to at most three candidates and usually two, a social conservative and a somewhat conservative. Iowa, therefore, is a crucial first test for a fiscally conservative Tea Partier.

New Hampshire, the next state to vote, is not an easier challenge. New Hampshire's primary is open to registered independents and is one of the most moderate or liberal GOP electorates in the country. It also has one of the lowest shares of evangelicals of any Republican electorate. A socially

conservative Iowa winner will not do well there unless he is Catholic (New Hampshire's GOP electorate is plurality Catholic) and the non-social-conservative field is split between at least three serious candidates (which allowed Catholic social conservative Pat Buchanan to eke out a narrow win in 1996). The challenge for the somewhat conservative favorite will likely be to forestall a challenge from his left, as Romney did successfully in 2012 but which he and Bush failed to do against McCain in 2000 and 2008.

South Carolina and Nevada then round out the first four states to vote. Newt Gingrich's breakthrough victory in South Carolina in 2012 gives hope to a Tea Party conservative, but it is worth noting that the Palmetto State is an evangelical state that also has large numbers of moderates and somewhat conservatives. Nevada's caucuses are perhaps the most fertile ground for a Tea Party fiscal conservative to win early. In both 2008 and 2012, the electorate was wealthy (28 percent or more make \$100,000 or more), secular (only about a quarter are evangelical) and very conservative (between 40 and 49 percent). The one caveat is the strong Mormon presence (25 percent), but it is not clear that Mormons will turn out in such large numbers without a coreligionist among the top flight of candidates.

The next states to vote have not yet been determined, but it's worth noting two patterns that have held for three cycles. First, Arizona, Michigan and Florida tend to vote early. Arizona is another secular, conservative state with a strong Mormon



minority: Steve Forbes won here in 1996. Michigan has a strong social-conservative element among Catholics and Dutch Calvinists in the western part of the state, but it is also one of the more moderate states in the GOP electorate. Florida also tends to the moderate side (39 percent in 2008 and 31 percent in 2012) and is the home to the only significant Hispanic Republican community in the early states, Miami's Cubans. These voters broke sharply for John McCain in 2008, giving him his margin of victory over Mitt Romney. It is also unfavorable to evangelical candidates, who tend to do well only in the rural counties in the northern part of the state. Marco Rubio or Jeb Bush would clearly be viewed as home-state favorites should either run.

Second, Southern states dominated by socially conservative evangelical voters also tend to cast their ballots shortly after the first four states and Florida. In 2008, six Southern states voted on February 5. Mike Huckabee won or came in a close second in all of them, establishing him rather than Mitt Romney as John McCain's final challenger. In 2012, when fewer states overall voted early, four Southern states voted on March 6, followed quickly by the Kansas caucuses, which were dominated by religious conservatives, and by two more

Southern primaries on March 13. Rick Santorum won six of these seven states, dropping only Virginia, where he was not on the ballot. If this pattern continues in 2016, the Tea Party favorite is again likely to stumble if faced by a strong religious conservative.

In sum, a Tea Party candidate either needs to clearly deny any breathing space to a more evangelical candidate or he must emulate George W. Bush in 2000 in

having enough appeal to other factions to gain enough strength to survive the early states. The likelier outcome will be a repeat of the traditional GOP three-way war between its somewhat conservative center and the two large ideological wings: the moderate secularists and conservative evangelicals.

Past need not be prologue, however. In the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*, Peter O'Toole's Lawrence decides to go back into a hellish desert to rescue a straggler. His close aide, Sherif Ali, tells him not to bother, that the straggler's fate is foreordained. "It is written," Ali tells the Englishman. "Nothing is written," Lawrence angrily yells back. He then goes into the desert and returns with his man.

Lawrence could conquer the desert and its heat through his will, but he could not will the desert away. GOP aspirants would do well to emulate Lawrence's will and resourcefulness, but they too cannot will away their surroundings. Whichever candidate from whichever faction emerges, he or she will have done so by understanding the four species of GOP voters and using their wiles and the calendar to their advantage. For truly, as Ali said of Lawrence, for some men nothing is written until they write it. □

# Taiwan's Dire Straits

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By John J. Mearsheimer

**W**hat are the implications for Taiwan of China's continued rise? Not today. Not next year. No, the real dilemma Taiwan will confront looms in the decades ahead, when China, whose continued economic growth seems likely although not a sure thing, is far more powerful than it is today.

Contemporary China does not possess significant military power; its military forces are inferior, and not by a small margin, to those of the United States. Beijing would be making a huge mistake to pick a fight with the American military nowadays. China, in other words, is constrained by the present global balance of power, which is clearly stacked in America's favor.

But power is rarely static. The real question that is often overlooked is what happens in a future world in which the balance of power has shifted sharply against Taiwan and the United States, in which China controls much more relative power than it does today, and in which China is in roughly the same economic and military league as the United States. In

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essence: a world in which China is much less constrained than it is today. That world may seem forbidding, even ominous, but it is one that may be coming.

It is my firm conviction that the continuing rise of China will have huge consequences for Taiwan, almost all of which will be bad. Not only will China be much more powerful than it is today, but it will also remain deeply committed to making Taiwan part of China. Moreover, China will try to dominate Asia the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere, which means it will seek to reduce, if not eliminate, the American military presence in Asia. The United States, of course, will resist mightily, and go to great lengths to contain China's growing power. The ensuing security competition will not be good for Taiwan, no matter how it turns out in the end. Time is not on Taiwan's side. Herewith, a guide to what is likely to ensue between the United States, China and Taiwan.

**I**n an ideal world, most Taiwanese would like their country to gain *de jure* independence and become a legitimate sovereign state in the international system. This outcome is especially attractive because a strong Taiwanese identity—separate from a Chinese identity—has blossomed in Taiwan over the past sixty-five years. Many of those people who identify themselves as Taiwanese would like their own nation-state, and they have little interest in being a province of mainland China.

According to National Chengchi University's Election Study Center, in 1992, 17.6 percent of the people living in Taiwan identified as Taiwanese only. By June 2013, that number was 57.5 percent, a clear majority. Only 3.6 percent of those surveyed identified as Chinese only. Furthermore, the 2011 Taiwan National Security Survey found that if one assumes China would not attack Taiwan if it declared its independence, 80.2 percent of Taiwanese would in fact opt for independence. Another recent poll found that about 80 percent of Taiwanese view Taiwan and China as different countries.

However, Taiwan is not going to gain formal independence in the foreseeable future, mainly because China would not tolerate that outcome. In fact, China has made it clear that it would go to war against Taiwan if the island declares its independence. The antisecession law, which China passed in 2005, says explicitly that "the state shall employ nonpeaceful means and other necessary measures" if Taiwan moves toward *de jure* independence. It is also worth noting that the United States does not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign country, and according to President Obama, Washington "fully supports a one-China policy."

Thus, the best situation Taiwan can hope for in the foreseeable future is maintenance of the status quo, which means *de facto* independence. In fact, over 90 percent of the Taiwanese surveyed this past June by the Election Study Center favored maintaining the status quo indefinitely or until some later date.

The worst possible outcome is unification with China under terms dictated by Beijing. Of course, unification could happen in a variety of ways, some of which are better than others. Probably the least bad outcome would be one in which Taiwan ended up with considerable autonomy, much like

Hong Kong enjoys today. Chinese leaders refer to this solution as "one country, two systems." Still, it has little appeal to most Taiwanese. As Yuan-kang Wang reports: "An overwhelming majority of Taiwan's public opposes unification, even under favorable circumstances. If anything, longitudinal data reveal a decline in public support of unification."

In short, for Taiwan, *de facto* independence is much preferable to becoming part of China, regardless of what the final political arrangements look like. The critical question for Taiwan, however, is whether it can avoid unification and maintain *de facto* independence in the face of a rising China.

**W**hat about China? How does it think about Taiwan? Two different logics, one revolving around nationalism and the other around security, shape its views concerning Taiwan. Both logics, however, lead to the same endgame: the unification of China and Taiwan.

The nationalism story is straightforward and uncontroversial. China is deeply committed to making Taiwan part of China. For China's elites, as well as its public, Taiwan can never become a sovereign state. It is sacred territory that has been part of China since ancient times, but was taken away by the hated Japanese in 1895—when China was weak and vulnerable. It must once again become an integral part of China. As Hu Jintao said in 2007 at the Seventeenth Party Congress: "The two sides of the Straits are bound to be reunified in the course of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

The unification of China and Taiwan is one of the core elements of Chinese national identity. There is simply no compromising on this issue. Indeed, the legitimacy of the Chinese regime is bound up with making sure Taiwan does not become a sovereign

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state and that it eventually becomes an integral part of China.

Chinese leaders insist that Taiwan must be brought back into the fold sooner rather than later and that hopefully it can be done peacefully. At the same time, they have made it clear that force is an option if they have no other recourse.

The security story is a different one, and it is inextricably bound up with the rise of China. Specifically, it revolves around a straightforward but profound question: How is China likely to behave in Asia over time, as it grows increasingly powerful? The answer to this question obviously has huge consequences for Taiwan.

The only way to predict how a rising China is likely to behave toward its neighbors as well as the United States is with a theory of great-power politics. The main reason for relying on theory is that we have no facts about the future, because it has not happened yet. Thomas Hobbes put the point well: “The present only has a being in nature; things past have a being in the memory only; but things to come have no being at all.” Thus, we have no choice but to rely on theories to determine what is likely to transpire in world politics.

My own realist theory of international relations says that the structure of the international system forces countries concerned about their security to compete with each other for power. The ultimate goal of every major state is to maximize its share of world power and eventually dominate the system. In practical terms, this means that the most powerful states seek to establish hegemony in their region

of the world, while making sure that no rival great power dominates another region.

To be more specific, the international system has three defining characteristics. First, the main actors are states that operate in anarchy, which simply means that there is no higher authority above them. Second, all great powers have some offensive military capability, which means they have the wherewithal to hurt each other. Third, no state can know the intentions of other states with certainty, especially their future intentions. It is simply impossible, for example, to know what Germany’s or Japan’s intentions will be toward their neighbors in 2025.

In a world where other states might have malign intentions as well as significant offensive capabilities, states tend to fear each other. That fear is compounded by the fact that in an anarchic system there is no night watchman for states to call if trouble comes knocking at their door. Therefore, states recognize that the best way to survive in such a system is to be as powerful as possible relative to potential rivals. The mightier a state is, the less likely it is that another state will attack it. No Americans, for example, worry that Canada or Mexico will attack the United States, because neither of those countries is strong enough to contemplate a fight with Uncle Sam.

But great powers do not merely strive to be the strongest great power, although that is a welcome outcome. Their ultimate aim is to be the hegemon—which means being the only great power in the system.

What exactly does it mean to be a hegemon in the modern world? It is almost

impossible for any state to achieve global hegemony, because it is too hard to sustain power around the globe and project it onto the territory of distant great powers. The best outcome a state can hope for is to be a regional hegemon, to dominate one's own geographical area. The United States has

dominate Asia the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. It will try to become a regional hegemon. In particular, China will seek to maximize the power gap between itself and its neighbors, especially India, Japan and Russia. China will want to make sure it is so powerful



been a regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere since about 1900. Although the United States is clearly the most powerful state on the planet today, it is not a global hegemon.

States that gain regional hegemony have a further aim: they seek to prevent great powers in other regions from duplicating their feat. Regional hegemons, in other words, do not want peer competitors. Instead, they want to keep other regions divided among several great powers, so that those states will compete with each other and be unable to focus their attention and resources on them. In sum, the ideal situation for any great power is to be the only regional hegemon in the world. The United States enjoys that exalted position today.

What does this theory say about how China is likely to behave as it rises in the years ahead? Put simply, China will try to

that no state in Asia has the wherewithal to threaten it.

It is unlikely that China will pursue military superiority so it can go on a rampage and conquer other Asian countries, although that is always possible. Instead, it is more likely that it will want to dictate the boundaries of acceptable behavior to neighboring countries, much the way the United States lets other states in the Americas know that it is the boss.

An increasingly powerful China is also likely to attempt to push the United States out of Asia, much the way the United States pushed the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere in the nineteenth century. We should expect China to come up with its own version of the Monroe Doctrine, as Japan did in the 1930s.

These policy goals make good strategic sense for China. Beijing should want a militarily weak Japan and Russia as its

neighbors, just as the United States prefers a militarily weak Canada and Mexico on its borders. What state in its right mind would want other powerful states located in its region? All Chinese surely remember what happened in the previous two centuries when Japan was powerful and China was weak.

Furthermore, why would a powerful China accept U.S. military forces operating in its backyard? American policy makers, after all, go ballistic when other great powers send military forces into the Western Hemisphere. Those foreign forces are invariably seen as a potential threat to American security. The same logic should apply to China. Why would China feel safe with U.S. forces deployed on its doorstep? Following the logic of the Monroe Doctrine, would China's security not be better served by pushing the American military out of Asia?

Why should we expect China to act any differently than the United States did? Are Chinese leaders more principled than American leaders? More ethical? Are they less nationalistic? Less concerned about their survival? They are none of these things, of course, which is why China is likely to imitate the United States and try to become a regional hegemon.

**W**hat are the implications of this security story for Taiwan? The answer is that there is a powerful strategic rationale for China—at the very least—to try to sever Taiwan's close ties with the United States and neutralize Taiwan. However, the best possible outcome for China, which it will surely pursue with increasing vigor over time, would be to make Taiwan part of China.

Unification would work to China's strategic advantage in two important ways. First, Beijing would absorb Taiwan's economic and military resources, thus

shifting the balance of power in Asia even further in China's direction. Second, Taiwan is effectively a giant aircraft carrier sitting off China's coast; acquiring that aircraft carrier would enhance China's ability to project military power into the western Pacific Ocean.

In short, we see that nationalism as well as realist logic give China powerful incentives to put an end to Taiwan's de facto independence and make it part of a unified China. This is clearly bad news for Taiwan, especially since the balance of power in Asia is shifting in China's favor, and it will not be long before Taiwan cannot defend itself against China. Thus, the obvious question is whether the United States can provide security for Taiwan in the face of a rising China. In other words, can Taiwan depend on the United States for its security?

**L**et us now consider America's goals in Asia and how they relate to Taiwan. Regional hegemonies go to great lengths to stop other great powers from becoming hegemonies in their region of the world. The best outcome for any great power is to be the sole regional hegemon in the system. It is apparent from the historical record that the United States operates according to this logic. It does not tolerate peer competitors.

During the twentieth century, there were four great powers that had the capability to make a run at regional hegemony: Imperial Germany from 1900 to 1918, Imperial Japan between 1931 and 1945, Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945 and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Not surprisingly, each tried to match what the United States had achieved in the Western Hemisphere.

How did the United States react? In each case, it played a key role in defeating and dismantling those aspiring hegemonies.

The United States entered World War I in April 1917 when Imperial Germany

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looked like it might win the war and rule Europe. American troops played a critical role in tipping the balance against the Kaiserreich, which collapsed in November 1918. In the early 1940s, President Franklin Roosevelt went to great lengths to maneuver the United States into World War II to thwart Japan's ambitions in Asia and Germany's ambitions in Europe. The United States came into the war in December 1941, and helped destroy both Axis powers. Since 1945, American policy makers have gone to considerable lengths to put limits on German and Japanese military power. Finally, during the Cold War, the United States steadfastly worked to prevent the Soviet Union from dominating Eurasia and then helped relegate it to the scrap heap of history in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Shortly after the Cold War ended, the George H. W. Bush administration's controversial "Defense Planning Guidance" of 1992 was leaked to the press. It boldly stated that the United States was now the most powerful state in the world by far and it planned to remain in that exalted position. In other words, the United States would not tolerate a peer competitor.

That same message was repeated in the famous 2002 National Security Strategy issued by the George W. Bush administration. There was much criticism of that document, especially its claims about "preemptive" war. But hardly a word of protest was raised about the assertion that the United States should check rising powers and maintain its commanding position in the global balance of power.

The bottom line is that the United States—for sound strategic reasons—worked hard for more than a century to gain hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. Since achieving regional dominance, it has gone to great lengths to prevent other great powers from controlling either Asia or Europe.

Thus, there is little doubt as to how American policy makers will react if China attempts to dominate Asia. The United States can be expected to go to great lengths to contain China and ultimately weaken it to the point where it is no longer capable of ruling the roost in Asia. In essence, the United States is likely to behave toward China much the way it acted toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

China's neighbors are certain to fear its rise as well, and they too will do whatever they can to prevent it from achieving regional hegemony. Indeed, there is already substantial evidence that countries like India, Japan and Russia as well as smaller powers like Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam are worried about China's ascendancy and are looking for ways to contain it. In the end, they will join an American-led balancing coalition to check China's rise, much the way Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and even China joined forces with the United States to contain the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

How does Taiwan fit into this story? The United States has a rich history of close relations with Taiwan since the early days of the Cold War, when the Nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-shek retreated

to the island from the Chinese mainland. However, Washington is not obliged by treaty to come to the defense of Taiwan if it is attacked by China or anyone else.

Regardless, the United States will have powerful incentives to make Taiwan an important player in its anti-China balancing coalition. First, as noted, Taiwan has significant economic and military resources and it is effectively a giant aircraft carrier that can be used to help control the waters close to China's all-important eastern coast. The United States will surely want Taiwan's assets on its side of the strategic balance, not on China's side.

Second, America's commitment to Taiwan is inextricably bound up with U.S. credibility in the region, which matters greatly to policy makers in Washington. Because the United States is located roughly six thousand miles from East Asia, it has to work hard to convince its Asian allies—especially Japan and South Korea—that it will back them up in the event they are threatened by China or North Korea. Importantly, it has to convince Seoul and Tokyo that they can rely on the American nuclear umbrella to protect them. This is the thorny problem of extended deterrence, which the United States and its allies wrestled with throughout the Cold War.

If the United States were to sever its military ties with Taiwan or fail to defend it in a crisis with China, that would surely send a strong signal to America's other allies in the region that they cannot rely on the United States for protection. Policy makers in Washington will go to great lengths to avoid that outcome and instead maintain America's

reputation as a reliable partner. This means they will be inclined to back Taiwan no matter what.

While the United States has good reasons to want Taiwan as part of the balancing coalition it will build against China, there are also reasons to think this relationship is not sustainable over the long term. For starters, at some point in the next decade or so it will become impossible for the United States to help Taiwan defend itself against a Chinese attack. Remember that we are talking about a China with much more military capability than it has today.

In addition, geography works in China's favor in a major way, simply because Taiwan is so close to the Chinese mainland and so far away from the United States. When it comes to a competition between China and the United States over projecting military power into Taiwan, China wins hands



down. Furthermore, in a fight over Taiwan, American policy makers would surely be reluctant to launch major attacks against Chinese forces on the mainland, for fear they might precipitate nuclear escalation. This reticence would also work to China's advantage.

One might argue that there is a simple way to deal with the fact that Taiwan will not have an effective conventional deterrent against China in the not-too-distant future: put America's nuclear umbrella over Taiwan. This approach will not solve the problem, however, because the United States is not going to escalate to the nuclear level if Taiwan is being overrun by China. The stakes are not high enough to risk a general thermonuclear war. Taiwan is not Japan or even South Korea. Thus, the smart strategy for America is to not even try to extend its nuclear deterrent over Taiwan.

There is a second reason the United States might eventually forsake Taiwan: it is an especially dangerous flashpoint, which could easily precipitate a Sino-American war that is not in America's interest. U.S. policy makers understand that the fate of Taiwan is a matter of great concern to Chinese of all persuasions and that they will be extremely angry if it looks like the United States is preventing unification. But that is exactly what Washington will be doing if it forms a close military alliance with Taiwan, and that point will not be lost on the Chinese people.

It is important to note in this regard that Chinese nationalism, which is a potent force, emphasizes how great powers like the United States humiliated China in the past when it was weak and appropriated Chinese territory like Hong Kong and Taiwan. Thus, it is not difficult to imagine crises breaking out over Taiwan or scenarios in which a crisis escalates into a shooting war. After all, Chinese nationalism will surely be a force for trouble in those crises, and

China will at some point have the military wherewithal to conquer Taiwan, which will make war even more likely.

There was no flashpoint between the superpowers during the Cold War that was as dangerous as Taiwan will be in a Sino-American security competition. Some commentators liken Berlin in the Cold War to Taiwan, but Berlin was not sacred territory for the Soviet Union and it was actually of little strategic importance for either side. Taiwan is different. Given how dangerous it is for precipitating a war and given the fact that the United States will eventually reach the point where it cannot defend Taiwan, there is a reasonable chance that American policy makers will eventually conclude that it makes good strategic sense to abandon Taiwan and allow China to coerce it into accepting unification.

All of this is to say that the United States is likely to be somewhat schizophrenic about Taiwan in the decades ahead. On one hand, it has powerful incentives to make it part of a balancing coalition aimed at containing China. On the other hand, there are good reasons to think that with the passage of time the benefits of maintaining close ties with Taiwan will be outweighed by the potential costs, which are likely to be huge. Of course, in the near term, the United States will protect Taiwan and treat it as a strategic asset. But how long that relationship lasts is an open question.

So far, the discussion about Taiwan's future has focused almost exclusively on how the United States is likely to act toward Taiwan. However, what happens to Taiwan in the face of China's rise also depends greatly on what policies Taiwan's leaders and its people choose to pursue over time. There is little doubt that Taiwan's overriding goal in the years ahead will be to preserve its independence from China. That aim should not be too difficult to achieve for the next

decade, mainly because Taiwan is almost certain to maintain close relations with the United States, which will have powerful incentives as well as the capability to protect Taiwan. But after that point Taiwan's strategic situation is likely to deteriorate in significant ways, mainly because China will be rapidly approaching the point where it can conquer Taiwan even if the American military helps defend the island. And, as noted, it is not clear that the United States will be there for Taiwan over the long term.

In the face of this grim future, Taiwan has three options. First, it can develop its own nuclear deterrent. Nuclear weapons are the ultimate deterrent, and there is no question that a Taiwanese nuclear arsenal would markedly reduce the likelihood of a Chinese attack against Taiwan.

Taiwan pursued this option in the 1970s, when it feared American abandonment in the wake of the Vietnam War. The United States, however, stopped Taiwan's nuclear-weapons program in its tracks. And then Taiwan tried to develop a bomb secretly in the 1980s, but again the United States found out and forced Taipei to shut the program down. It is unfortunate for Taiwan that it failed to build a bomb, because its prospects for maintaining its independence would be much improved if it had its own nuclear arsenal.

No doubt Taiwan still has time to acquire a nuclear deterrent before the balance of power in Asia shifts decisively against it. But the problem with this suggestion is that both Beijing and Washington are sure to oppose Taiwan going nuclear. The United States would oppose Taiwanese nuclear weapons, not only because they would encourage Japan and South Korea to follow

suit, but also because American policy makers abhor the idea of an ally being in a position to start a nuclear war that might ultimately involve the United States. To put it bluntly, no American wants to be in a situation where Taiwan can precipitate



a conflict that might result in a massive nuclear attack on the United States.

China will adamantly oppose Taiwan obtaining a nuclear deterrent, in large part because Beijing surely understands that it would make it difficult—maybe even impossible—to conquer Taiwan. What's more, China will recognize that Taiwanese nuclear weapons would facilitate nuclear proliferation in East Asia, which would not only limit China's ability to throw its weight around in that region, but also would increase the likelihood that any conventional war that breaks out would escalate to the nuclear level. For these reasons, China is likely to make it manifestly clear that if Taiwan decides to pursue nuclear weapons, it will strike its nuclear facilities, and maybe even launch

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a war to conquer the island. In short, it appears that it is too late for Taiwan to pursue the nuclear option.

Taiwan's second option is conventional deterrence. How could Taiwan make deterrence work without nuclear weapons in a world where China has clear-cut military superiority over the combined forces of Taiwan and the United States? The key to success is not to be able to defeat the Chinese military—that is impossible—but instead to make China pay a huge price to achieve victory. In other words, the aim is to make China fight a protracted and bloody war to conquer Taiwan. Yes, Beijing would prevail in the end, but it would be a Pyrrhic victory. This strategy would be even more effective if Taiwan could promise China that the resistance would continue even after its forces were defeated on the battlefield. The threat that Taiwan might turn into another Sinkiang or Tibet would foster deterrence for sure.

This option is akin to Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz's famous "risk strategy," which Imperial Germany adopted in the decade before World War I. Tirpitz accepted the fact that Germany could not build a navy powerful enough to defeat the mighty Royal Navy in battle. He reasoned, however, that Berlin could build a navy that was strong enough to inflict so much damage on the Royal Navy that it would cause London to fear a fight with Germany and thus be deterred. Moreover, Tirpitz reasoned that this "risk fleet" might even give Germany diplomatic leverage it could use against Britain.

There are a number of problems with this form of conventional deterrence, which raise serious doubts about whether it can work for Taiwan over the long haul. For starters, the strategy depends on the United States fighting side by side with Taiwan. But it is difficult to imagine American policy makers purposely choosing to fight a war in which the U.S. military is not only going to lose, but is also going to pay a huge price in the process. It is not even clear that Taiwan would want to fight such a war, because it would be fought mainly on Taiwanese territory—not Chinese territory—and there would be death and destruction everywhere. And Taiwan would lose in the end anyway.

Furthermore, pursuing this option would mean that Taiwan would be constantly in an arms race with China, which would help fuel an intense and dangerous security competition between them. The sword of Damocles, in other words, would always be hanging over Taiwan.

Finally, although it is difficult to predict just how dominant China will become in the distant future, it is possible that it will eventually become so powerful that Taiwan will be unable to put up major resistance against a Chinese onslaught. This would certainly be true if America's commitment to defend Taiwan weakens as China morphs into a superpower.

Taiwan's third option is to pursue what I will call the "Hong Kong strategy." In this case, Taiwan accepts the fact that it is doomed to lose its independence and become part of China. It then works hard to make sure that the transition is peaceful

and that it gains as much autonomy as possible from Beijing. This option is unpalatable today and will remain so for at least the next decade. But it is likely to become more attractive in the distant future if China becomes so powerful that it can conquer Taiwan with relative ease.

So where does this leave Taiwan? The nuclear option is not feasible, as neither China nor the United States would accept a nuclear-armed Taiwan. Conventional deterrence in the form of a “risk strategy” is far from ideal, but it makes sense as long as China is not so dominant that it can subordinate Taiwan without difficulty. Of course, for that strategy to work, the United States must remain committed to the defense of Taiwan, which is not guaranteed over the long term.

Once China becomes a superpower, it probably makes the most sense for Taiwan to give up hope of maintaining its *de facto* independence and instead pursue the “Hong Kong strategy.” This is definitely not an attractive option, but as Thucydides argued long ago, in international politics “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”

By now, it should be glaringly apparent that whether Taiwan is forced to give up its independence largely depends on how formidable China’s military becomes in the decades ahead. Taiwan will surely do everything it can to buy time and maintain the political status quo. But if China continues its impressive rise, Taiwan appears destined to become part of China.

There is one set of circumstances under which Taiwan can avoid this scenario. Specifically, all Taiwanese should hope there is a drastic slowdown in Chinese economic growth in the years ahead and that Beijing also has serious political problems on the home front that work to keep it focused inward. If that happens, China will not be in a position to pursue regional hegemony and the United States will be able to protect Taiwan from China, as it does now. In essence, the best way for Taiwan to maintain *de facto* independence is for China to be economically and militarily weak. Unfortunately for Taiwan, it has no way of influencing events so that this outcome actually becomes reality.

When China started its impressive growth in the 1980s, most Americans and Asians thought this was wonderful news, because all of the ensuing trade and other forms of economic intercourse would make everyone richer and happier. China, according to the reigning wisdom, would become a responsible stakeholder in the international community, and its neighbors would have little to worry about. Many Taiwanese shared this optimistic outlook, and some still do.

They are wrong. By trading with China and helping it grow into an economic powerhouse, Taiwan has helped create a burgeoning Goliath with revisionist goals that include ending Taiwan’s independence and making it an integral part of China. In sum, a powerful China isn’t just a problem for Taiwan. It is a nightmare. □

# The Real Origins of Realpolitik

By John Bew

In 1934, a young British historian published his first book, *The Italian Problem in European Diplomacy, 1847–1849*. In it, he announced that a nation's foreign policy "is based upon a series of assumptions, with which statesmen have lived since their earliest years and which they regard as so axiomatic as hardly to be worth stating." It was the duty of the historian, he wrote, "to clarify these assumptions and to trace their influence upon the course of every-day policy."

By that apodictic verdict A. J. P. Taylor, who soon became one of the greatest British historians of the past century, meant realpolitik, which he believed was the true motor of international relations, with moralism serving at best as a pious smokescreen for a battle for power, or, as he put it in the title of one of his best books, for the struggle for mastery in Europe. Since then, realpolitik has had its ups and downs, both in Britain and America. In the late 1930s, for example, it became a convenient excuse among much of the

British aristocracy for doing nothing in the face of Nazi terror and aggression, but, then again, it also underlay Winston Churchill's declaration that he would sup with the devil to defeat Hitler, which is what he did in forming a wartime alliance with Stalin. Now that this elastic term is once again coming back into vogue, it is worth taking up Taylor's challenge again.

For what does this portentous Teutonic word actually mean and what implications, if any, does it hold for the assumptions of contemporary Western statesmen? As realpolitik undergoes a renaissance in the English-speaking world, it is surely worth investigating what the word, coined in 1853, was originally supposed to entail. The answer to that question might surprise but will also enlighten. *Real* realpolitik has been used and abused beyond all recognition over the last 160 years. But the original concept is still relevant to the challenges of the twenty-first century, if not quite in the way one might expect. It contains notions within it that both bolster and act as a useful counterweight and corrective to the mantras of modern American realism. *Real* realpolitik, you could say, is ripe for excavation and rediscovery.

The reasons for the most recent return of realpolitik are no mystery. The optimism and sense of triumph which crept into Anglo-American political culture following the end of the Cold War and which peaked with the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad's Firdos Square just over

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*The creation of the concept of realpolitik was an early attempt to answer an enduring conundrum: how to achieve liberal, enlightened goals in a world that does not follow liberal, enlightened rules.*

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ten years ago have been replaced by the “return of history” and the “end of dreams.”

As periodically happens when the world becomes a more challenging place, a slew of new books on Niccolò Machiavelli have appeared on both sides of the Atlantic, including offerings by Jonathan Powell (Tony Blair’s former chief of staff) and Philip Bobbitt. Last December, in a review of four recent books on the Florentine statesman in the *Atlantic*, Michael Ignatieff announced the coming of the latest “Machiavellian moment” (a phrase introduced by the historian J. G. A. Pocock in 1975). By that he meant “an instance when public necessity requires actions that private ethics and religious values might condemn as unjust and immoral.” Other familiar heroes of realpolitik—such as Lord Castlereagh and Count Metternich (the focus of Henry Kissinger’s *A World Restored*) and Otto von Bismarck and George F. Kennan—are also enjoying a return to prestige.

This time around, realpolitik also has some new friends and unlikely advocates. The most liberal president to inhabit the White House in many years has been as realist as any of his predecessors in the conduct of foreign affairs, with a zero-sum security policy in which “interests” are paramount. Last May, the German weekly *Der Spiegel* ran an article declaring that President Obama was the heir to “Kissinger’s realpolitik,” quoting *National Interest* editor Jacob Heilbrunn to the effect that he “may even start speaking about foreign affairs with a German accent.” “Everybody always breaks it down between idealist and

realist,” said Obama’s then chief of staff Rahm Emanuel in April 2010. “If you had to put him in a category, he’s probably more realpolitik, like Bush 41 . . . you’ve got to be cold-blooded about the self-interests of your nation.”

In the 1990s, some regarded realpolitik as a thing of the past—a relic of the Cold War and a “needs must” approach to the world which could now be tossed into the dustbin of history. Even at the height of their influence, Western realpolitikers have often faced resistance and criticism from within their own societies. As a foreign import, lifted from the heart of the great Anglo-American bogeyman of the two world wars, the word does not sit comfortably alongside such soothing terms as “enlightenment,” “morality” and “virtue.” In a world where great-power rivalries have returned, however, realpolitik is once more discovering a receptive audience. The chastening of American ambitions in the Middle East also allows realpolitikers to point out, with some justification, that idealism can lead to worse moral outcomes than the cool, circumspect approach to statecraft that they purport to employ.

So the exponents of realpolitik have rediscovered their voice and their swagger. Yet realpolitik is one of those words borrowed from another language that is much used but little understood. Its true meaning remains occluded by the fact that it has so often been caricatured—but also because realpolitikers caricature the naive idealists whom they set themselves up against. “I will leave it to the self-described

realists to explain in greater detail the origins and meaning of ‘realism’ and ‘realpolitik’ to our confused journalists and politicians,” said Robert Kagan in 2010, in a discussion of President Obama’s realist credentials. In fact, few satisfactory definitions exist, largely because international-relations theorists have remained uninterested in its historical origins.

In picking up the gauntlet thrown down by Kagan, then—to explore the origins and meanings of realpolitik—one discovers some surprising answers. Both realists and their critics should take heed. Rediscovering *real* realpolitik is, in fact, a more useful exercise than simply dusting off a copy of Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. We can do better than revert to Renaissance-era statecraft every time we get our fingers burned. That is because *real* realpolitik was born in an era that more closely resembles the one in which we find ourselves today. It emerged in mid-nineteenth-century Europe from the collision of the Enlightenment with the realities of power politics: a world that was experiencing a unique combustion of new ideas about freedom and social order alongside rapid industrialization, class war, sectarianism, great-power rivalry and the rise of nationalism. In other words, it was a response to the quintessential dilemmas of modernity, some of which we are still grappling with today.

Above all, the creation of the concept of realpolitik was an early attempt to answer a conundrum that has been at the heart of Anglo-American foreign policy ever since: how to achieve liberal, enlightened goals in a world that does not follow liberal, enlightened rules; and how to ensure political and social progress in an unstable and unpredictable environment.

**R**ealpolitik is not, as is often assumed, as old as statecraft itself. Nor is it part of a seamless creed stretching back

to Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Richelieu, though, as Jonathan Haslam points out in *No Virtue Like Necessity: Realist Thought in International Relations since Machiavelli*, it has a place within it. It is something distinct from *raison d’état*, strategic thought or Machiavellianism—though all played a part in its formulation.

Realpolitik is of more recent vintage. The neologism was invented by the German thinker Ludwig August von Rochau in his 1853 treatise *Grundsätze der Realpolitik* (*The Principles of Realpolitik*). Rochau, who added a second volume in 1869 and wrote a total of eleven books, is a largely forgotten figure today. His work has attracted comment in his homeland, including Natascha Doll’s perspicuous 2005 study, but has never been translated into English and there are no extended discussions of his life and work in the English language (notable exceptions here are brief mentions in Jonathan Haslam’s history of realism and James Sheehan’s work on nineteenth-century German liberalism).

So who was Rochau and what did he mean by the word realpolitik? Rochau, to borrow a loaded phrase, was what might be called a “liberal mugged by reality.” The illegitimate son of an officer of the Braunschweig hussars, he was a publicist, journalist and radical participant in the *Vormärz*, the movement for liberal political reform in the German states. The efforts of this liberal movement—like those of its sister movements across Europe—culminated in the rebellions of 1848, which were intended to establish constitutional and representative government. Rochau, who had been forced into exile before the uprising, tried to attain a seat in the liberal Frankfurt Parliament, which was established that year. Although he failed, he became a well-known figure in the National Liberal Party and eventually became a deputy in the German Reichstag in 1871.

In some respects, the 1848 revolutions were nineteenth-century Europe's equivalent of the Arab Spring. Uprisings that began in the name of freedom and constitutional rights quickly fell victim to other political phenomena. The liberal gains of 1848 were soon lost as the would-be revolutionaries were swatted down by coercive governments who restored their authority or were overtaken by more powerful social forces such as class, religion and nationalism.

The liberal dream of a united Germany under the rule of law was thwarted. In the multifarious states and principalities of Germany, autocrats, monarchists and the landed classes quickly reestablished their control and scattered the revolutionaries into prison or exile. Over the following two decades, Germany was indeed to be united but not by the means that the men of 1848 envisaged. Rather than constitutionalism and representative government, it was the "blood and iron" of the Prussian chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, that forged the creation of the German Empire in 1871.

Nor was this all. In France, the Second Republic was established in early 1848 and the French people were granted universal suffrage. But democracy did not prove to be a vehicle for liberalism, as might have been expected. The people (chiefly the peasants) elected Napoleon's nephew Louis, who used this mandate to abolish the representative assembly, marginalize the liberals and install himself as emperor in 1852. It was the implosion of the 1848 French revolution that Karl Marx wrestled with four years later in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, noting—referring to the resurrection of Bonapartism—that history tends to repeat itself, "the first time



as tragedy, the second time as farce." In Italy, meanwhile, where Rochau also visited, a series of local rebellions were swiftly suppressed.

As Rochau watched the dreams of the liberals dissipate in smoke, he thought it time for some hard thinking. Liberals had to get real. "The castles that they have built in the air have evaporated into blue mist," he wrote. "A work that had begun with aimless enthusiasm and carried out with an overestimation of one's capabilities ended in dishonour and injury."

It was as an antidote to their failure to understand the nature of power and politics that this budding realist invoked the need for a new *realpolitik*. This was juxtaposed with "*idealkolitik*," which had inspired Rochau and his comrades but won them no real gains. "*Realpolitik* does not move in a foggy future, but in the present's field of vision," he wrote. "It does not consider

*For those watching the rise of the German nation from outside,  
realpolitik soon became a byword for German dastardliness.*

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its task to consist in the realisation of ideals, but in the attainment of concrete ends.”

Rochau was far from ready to give up on the ideas he had held so far. In his view, the great achievement of modernity had been to undermine the notion that might is right in politics—or that kings or certain classes had a God-given right to rule *because* they were strong. But that did not mean liberals could simply dismiss the laws of politics. In making such progress, they had mistakenly assumed that the “law of the strong” had simply evaporated overnight. In reality, this law was as unavoidable as the “law of gravity over the material world.” The foundational truth of politics was the link between power (*Macht*) and dominance (*Herrschaft*).

Rather than abandoning his liberalism, he challenged his fellow liberals to think of smarter ways to achieve their goals. They had much to fight for. The regimes that had been restored after 1848 were “anachronisms” because they did not adequately reflect the balance of social forces within German society. The only viable government for Germany, he argued, was one that was constructed around and harnessed the full potential of the *Mittelstand* (the middle classes). But the intellectual progress made by the Enlightenment had hit the brick wall of reality. To get through that wall, it needed more than ideological purity. When it became “a matter of trying to bring down the walls of Jericho, the Realpolitik thinks that lacking better tools, the most simple pickaxe is more effective than the sound of the most powerful trumpets.”

The strange afterlife of realpolitik showed just how difficult it was for liberals to balance their ideals with a true understanding of means and ends. After Rochau, the concept became entrusted into the hands of the historian and fellow National Liberal politician Heinrich von Treitschke, a virulent anti-Semite—his credo was “the Jews are our misfortune”—who set out to show the German people “how brilliant Realpolitik is.” But Treitschke’s influence—and his ideas of racial struggle and war—represented an increasingly rightward turn in German liberalism. Among the National Liberals, liberal values were increasingly subordinated to the German national cause, which had been seized upon and exploited by Bismarck. Rochau had regarded anti-Semitism as repugnant, absurd and delusional.

Rochau remained a fierce critic and opponent of Bismarck until his death in 1873. Bismarck’s government banned the publication of the weekly journal that Rochau edited in the 1860s. By a strange twist of fate, however, the phrase that Rochau coined became increasingly associated with Bismarck himself. Detached from its original meaning, it was used to describe Bismarck’s brand of practical and ruthless statecraft in the domestic and international arena: his astute management of different social forces within the state and his ability to combine diplomacy with the threat of force. Thus the true meaning of realpolitik began to be drowned out as it was harnessed by conservatives for a very different cause. For those watching the

rise of the German nation from outside, therefore, *realpolitik* soon became a byword for German dastardliness.

From its German origins, *realpolitik* seeped into the English language (and the Anglo-American conscience) in two ways, and in two distinct waves. The first was in the slow buildup of Anglo-German antagonism in the late nineteenth century. For Britons, increasingly conscious of threats to their position as the leading global superpower, *realpolitik*—as practiced by Bismarck and then the kaiser—was an unpleasant and disconcerting discovery. It was taken to imply cynical and uncivilized conduct on the international stage—a lack of respect for the treaties and laws that provided some semblance of order in global affairs and a fetishization of naked self-interest as an end in itself.

The first mention of *realpolitik* in the English language came in 1872. It was in a translation of an attack on Rochau by the Prussian nationalist Constantin Frantz, who believed that the very notion of *realpolitik* betrayed the Christian spirit of benevolence that was central to the essence of liberalism. After this, the word was barely mentioned again until the 1890s, when it began to seep into the press with growing frequency, as Wilhelmine Germany became an increasingly aggressive and assertive actor on the international stage. Following Frantz, *realpolitik* was identified as the source of a sort of gangrene in German philosophy and intellectual life. The traditions of Goethe and Kant, which had been so admired in England, had been marginalized by what seemed to be a neo-Machiavellian obsession with power and the interests of the state.

In 1895, the *Times*, for example, bemoaned the fact that there were few “survivors of a period when the old-fashioned idealism of the German character

had not been superseded by what is now called ‘*realpolitik*.’” By 1904, as German naval rearmament gained pace, the *Fortnightly Review* noted how the German state “works exclusively upon a science of self-interest, more definitely methodized than in any other Foreign Office, and applied with more tenacious consistency.”

Not everyone accepted the implication that *realpolitik* was a uniquely German condition. In 1902, the English radical economist J. A. Hobson published *Imperialism: A Study*, in which he suggested that the growing ambitions of the great powers—reflected in colonialism and huge military and naval rearmament programs—were all symptoms of the same sickness. It was a

greedy type of Machiavellianism, entitled “*realpolitik*” in Germany, where it was made, which has remodelled the whole art of diplomacy and has erected national aggrandisement without pity or scruple as the conscious motive force of foreign policy.

What Hobson called “earth hunger”—the scramble for markets and resources and the repudiation of treaty obligations—was reflected in the “sliding scale of diplomatic language” and words like “hinterland, sphere of interest, sphere of influence, paramountcy, suzerainty, protectorate.” Even the Americans, too, were being drawn into the imperial game, engaging in what the Germans now called *Weltpolitik* (world politics).

In India, the philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a future president of the country, echoed Hobson’s views:

*Realpolitik*, which has for its principle, “It is good when I steal your cow, and bad when you steal my cow,” has been the governing force of European relations all these four or five centuries. Self-interest is the end; brute-force, the means; conscience is taboo.

The Great War, he added, was “the penalty which Europe pays for its steadfast loyalty to a false ideal.”

**O**f all the great powers, America came late to realpolitik. It was, after all, in Rochau’s pithy description, one of those nations that “have hardly stepped out of the shoes they wore as children.” Before its entry into the Great War, America was often chided in the English press for its lack of understanding of the true nature of realpolitik, much as Rochau rebuked his liberal colleagues for their naïveté about the nature of politics after 1848.

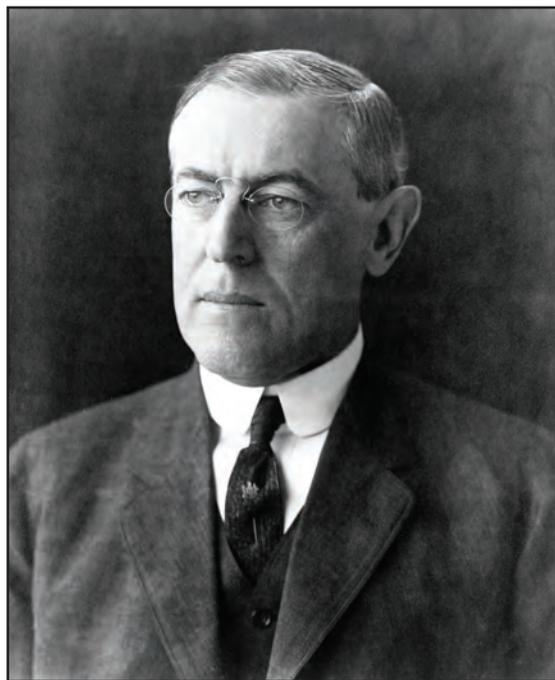
In 1911, the British writer Sydney Brooks—a regular contributor to *Harper’s*—suggested that America was a geographically cosseted nation and that its understanding of international politics was blunted by its relative security (a theme recently revisited by John Mearsheimer in *The National Interest*). Americans “live in an atmosphere of extraordinary simplicity,

spaciousness, and self-absorption, until from very boredom they are forced to make international mountains out of molehills, a diversion which by itself is proof enough of their unique immunity from the serious realities of *Weltpolitik*,” Brooks wrote.

The exponential growth of American power soon caused Europeans to adjust their opinions about the American capacity for realpolitik. As pressure grew on the United States to enter the war in 1916, Walter Weyl, the editor of the fledgling *New Republic* and one of the intellectual fathers of the progressive movement, returned from a trip to Europe with some advice for his countrymen. “They ascribe to us more foresight than we possess, not realizing how often we have happily blundered into success, how often we have pursued Realpolitik in our sleep.” To illustrate the point, he recounted a conversation he had with a German academic about America’s position: “‘We

Germans,’ a Berlin professor recently assured me, ‘write fat volumes about Realpolitik but understand it no better than babies in a nursery.’ ‘You Americans,’ he added, I thought enviously, ‘understand it far too well to talk about it.’”

When Woodrow Wilson did eventually take America into war in 1917, some of his supporters began to style his support for democracy and liberal values as a direct assault on realpolitik. The word had begun to seep into the American press in preceding years. Like in England, it was used interchangeably with Machiavellianism, for which the *El Paso Herald* provided a helpful definition in 1918: “Machiavellianism [*sic*]—pronounced ‘mak-ee-ah-vel-eean-izm.’ A term descriptive of



unscrupulous diplomacy. Derived from the name of Machiavelli, a Florentine statesman . . . Michiavellianism has been revived by the Prussian military autocracy, and is called Realpolitik.”

Wilson’s vision of politics—along with his emphasis on liberal values—was presented as a powerful alternative to the shortsighted cynicism that realpolitik seemed to denote. Wilsonianism was no longer seen as naive; it was a potent weapon in the international arena in its own right. “How curious it is that these professors of realpolitik in European chancelleries, who lately saw nothing in the President but an academist, and nothing in his phrases but dreamy vaporings of the millennium, should be changing their tune at this time!” declared the *Washington Herald* in April 1917. “Of course diplomats and militarists who deal exclusively in ‘facts’ and the realities of force never see much farther than their own noses.”

The irony of this was that Wilsonianism was closer to Rochau’s version of realpolitik than anyone imagined.

**A**s the Great War turned in the Allies’ favor, and they began to write the victor’s version of its origins, realpolitik featured heavily in their explanations.

Sir Charles Waldstein, an Anglo-American academic with extensive experience of Germany, reiterated the common view that it had been part of the poisoning of German philosophy and political culture in the years preceding the war: “Real-Politik and Interressen-Politik were constantly in the mouths of its leaders, from the Kaiser down to the political stump-speaker.” Even the British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, stated in 1918 that “Realpolitik . . . has been the true and dominating doctrine of every important German statesman, German soldier, and German thinker for two generations at least.”

Liberal Germans, Rochau’s true heirs, also joined in the criticism. Father W. Foerster, an exiled German pacifist, educationalist and ethicist, said the country had succumbed to “hallucinations of ‘Realpolitik’” that were brought on by a destructive sense of national superiority:

In spite, therefore, of all our talk of “Realpolitik,” we have remained altogether incapable of assessing the surrounding world objectively, or of emerging from our own drunken egoism; and this especially because, in addition, a fundamentally false political philosophy has taught us to look upon egoism as the only true world policy.

By the end of the Great War, therefore, realpolitik was already taken to mean a variety of sins—which were long removed from anything that Rochau had written in 1853. These included militarism, illiberalism, imperialism, naked self-interest and recklessness in the international arena. Realpolitik was understood not as a science of realism but, rather, as a glaring symptom of what had gone wrong in Germany. Insofar as other nations had participated in it, they had contributed to the unprecedented death and destruction of the Great War.

First Wilsonianism, and later the construction of the League of Nations, were conceived as an antidote to the realpolitik that had seeped into international affairs in the years before 1914. Realpolitik was to remain a dirty word in the Anglo-American world in the interwar years.

**T**he second way Central European realism—and realpolitik more specifically—seeped into Western political consciousness was through the wave of German emigrant intellectuals who arrived in America before and after the Second World War. This brought a raft of uniquely talented

historians and theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, Fritz Kraemer, Felix Gilbert and Henry Kissinger. In addition, the Dutch American Nicholas J. Spykman, who taught at Yale, made an important contribution to the establishment of classical realist thought in postwar America.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, *realpolitik* was sufficiently established in the American political lexicon to no longer need elaborate definition. It had crept into discussions about Hollywood in the 1930s, as some called for an “awakened sense of *Realpolitik*” in the movie industry as a corrective to the “sugar-coated” endings that contributed to the decline of cinema audiences in the period of the Great Depression. In 1940, the journal *American Speech* included it in a list of loan words from Germany that had become increasingly prevalent in the American press in the preceding years, alongside some other unfortunate imports: Reich, gestapo and putsch.

As those who had been trained in the way of German realism recognized, it was not a word with which one would typically want to associate oneself in this period. Despite the fact that they were entirely cognizant of the Mitteleuropean origins of *realpolitik*, the German émigrés generally steered clear of using the term.

In his 1951 *In Defense of the National Interest*, for example, Hans Morgenthau largely concealed the German influences in his thought and emphasized an English-language canon of realist thinking, which included the Federalist Papers and Lord Castlereagh’s work as British foreign secretary at the time of the Congress of Vienna.

Morgenthau’s critics recognized the sleight of hand. A review in the *Economist* declared his book to be the latest addition to the now “considerable American library of sermons based on the theology

of *realpolitik*.” In 1952, he was attacked by the Austrian American theorist Frank Tannenbaum, who stated that “the advocates of *Realpolitik* would sweep away all of our old beliefs as foolish, sentimental, and moralistic.” Carl J. Friedrich, another émigré and a theorist of totalitarianism, called Morgenthau’s book “an American version of the German *Realpolitik*.”

Even by the time Morgenthau expanded his views in 1960 in *The Purpose of American Politics*, which he defined as “the achievement of freedom,” yet another émigré, the Marxist intellectual Herbert Marcuse, wrote to him asking what “might have driven the theorist of *Realpolitik* to transcend *Realpolitik*.”

Typically, it was President Obama’s favorite philosopher, Reinhold Niebuhr, who in 1944 came closest to finding a happy medium between what he called “the most rarified heights of constitutional idealism” and “the depths of *realpolitik*.”

For the most part, however, anything resembling traditional German *raison d’état* was seized upon by the critics of the realist school as the most recent incarnation of *realpolitik*. Leo Strauss, another German émigré, was perhaps the most vigilant of all, comparing Machiavelli, whom he believed had lowered men’s sights, to the “teacher of evil.” In *The Road to Serfdom*, Friedrich Hayek wrote that if the West were to convince Germans that there was an alternative to Nazism, it would “not be by concessions to their system of thought.” According to him, “We shall not delude them with a stale reproduction of the ideas of their fathers which we have borrowed from them—be it state socialism, *Realpolitik*, ‘scientific’ planning, or corporativism.”

The label was hard to shake. “The advocates of a realist foreign policy are caricatured with the German term *Realpolitik*,” noted Kissinger many years

later, “I suppose to facilitate the choosing of sides.”

The Cold War—and perhaps above all, the association with Kissinger—breathed new life into *realpolitik* and meant that the term outlasted the vituperative debates of the 1940s and 1950s. To this day, the word also enjoys a unique position in contemporary political discourse in that it is one of the few terms in international-relations theory that practitioners and diplomats both recognize and use.

In the Frontline Diplomacy archive at the Library of Congress, which contains transcripts of 1,743 interviews with senior American diplomats from the postwar era to the present day, the word *realpolitik* appears in fifty-seven of those interviews, often with expansive expositions as to what it means to the interviewee.

In truth, in contemporary usage, *realpolitik* has become interchangeable with “realism” or “realistic.” Simply speaking, it denotes an unflinching and nonideological approach to statecraft and the primacy of the *raison d'état*. It involves an intuitive suspicion of grandstanding and moralizing on the international stage. In theory, it most closely resembles Morgenthau's contention that a nation could not “escape . . . into a realm where action is guided by moral principles rather than by considerations of power.” More recent versions of this creed include the neorealist theories advanced by the prominent political scientist Kenneth Waltz, who died recently. Weighty disputes between the champions of liberal institutionalism, rational-choice theory and realism continue

to dominate the international-relations field. But it is realism that holds the oldest pedigree and attracts the most ire.

The Frontline Diplomacy archive demonstrates that usage of *realpolitik* peaked in the 1970s in the Nixon-Carter era. About half of diplomats viewed it positively, and about half used it unfavorably, as something with which they preferred not to be associated. By the 1990s and with the fall of the Soviet Union, perspectives were changing. In 1991, at the end of the Gulf War, a provocative editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* suggested that the power of twenty-four-hour news television presented a serious challenge to traditional notions of *realpolitik*. “We recognize that there are significant dangers in trying to create a foreign policy that must incorporate the imperatives of national interest, a common national morality and the information stream of global communications,” it noted,



*Much of what masquerades as modern realpolitik has strayed quite far from the original essence of the term.*

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but “Realpolitik is not so readily separated from national values, from a country’s common idea of itself.”

But in its journey from 1853 to the modern day, it has been purged of much of its original meaning. It has become a label or a badge of identification. In that sense, the hand-wringing about realpolitik is, as much as anything, part of an internal monologue in Western liberalism rather than a fully developed view of world affairs. For both its critics and its advocates, it is used to denote a philosophical disposition—an instinct or an inclination—rather than a hardheaded way of analyzing political circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

President Obama’s imaginative use of Reinhold Niebuhr’s work—the subtle strains of which crept into his Nobel Peace Prize speech in 2009—to explain his liberal realism does not, in that sense, represent the true spirit of realpolitik. It is, like much before it, an attempt to square the circle—to articulate an intellectually coherent worldview. Like much of the scholarly practice of international relations, this is theology rather than realpolitik.

**W**hat, then, would Rochau have made of all this? Going back to his original definition, it appears that much of what masquerades as modern realpolitik has strayed quite far from the original essence of the term.

The first thing to note is that he was an enemy of lazy thinking. He would have been unimpressed with those versions of realism that resemble a knee-jerk reaction that responds to idealism with a roll of the

eyes and retreats to its own set of tropes and doctrines.

Realpolitik does “not entail the renunciation of individual judgement and it requires least of all an uncritical kind of submission,” he wrote. It was more “appropriate to think of it as a mere measuring and weighing and calculating of facts that need to be processed politically.” Above all, it was not a strategy itself, but a way of thinking: an “enemy of . . . self-delusion” and “the misguided pride which characterises the human mind.”

What Rochau was attempting to articulate was not a philosophical position but a new way of understanding politics and the distribution of power. “Experience has shown that treating it along abstract-scientific lines, or on the basis of principles is hardly useful,” he wrote. One had to contend “with the historical product, accepting it as it is, with an eye for its strengths and weaknesses, and to remain otherwise unconcerned with its origins and the reasons for its particular characteristics.”

Here, once again, his work is distinct from the Renaissance statecraft of Machiavelli because of its attempt to incorporate the conditions of modernity into his analysis. Sovereignty was not the natural property of God, the king, the people or the aristocracy. It was simply a reflection of the balance of different societal forces. The best forms of government were those that mediated between them most effectively; for this observation Rochau was indebted to the Scottish Enlightenment, Edmund Burke and the French social theorist Charles Fourier. In the race among

nations, the most successful state would be the one that harnessed the energies and industry of its most productive classes to the cause of the nation. By this he chiefly meant the middle classes, by virtue of their “education, wealth, entrepreneurial spirit, and appetite for work.” In the Renaissance era it had been easier to suppress new societal forces that challenged the authority of the state, but the “increased mobility of the more recent centuries” had made this impossible.

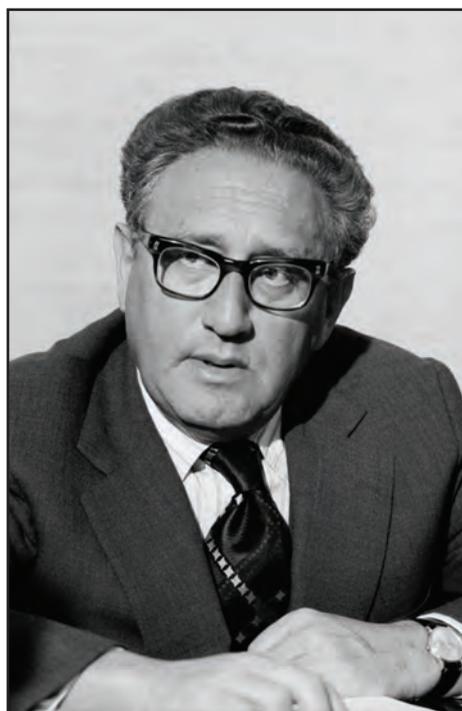
At the same time, however, modernity also presented social and political forces—such as sectarianism or ignorance—which also had to be taken into account. A true realpolitiker could not ignore “those latent forces of habit, tradition and sluggishness” such as “poverty, lack of knowledge, and prejudice” and even “immorality.” Here again, modernity intervened. The “great masses,” too, which “formerly appeared only in exceptional situations in the political arena,” were now an established fact of political life.

Above all, however, in a lesson that modern realists often miss, Rochau refused to dismiss the power of ideas and ideology. “Things like bourgeois class consciousness, the idea of freedom, nationalism, the idea of human equality are completely new factors of social life for many of today’s states,” he wrote, and good policy should not “deny these forces the appropriate recognition.” Such manifestations of “public opinion,” as Rochau called it, “can be potentially very influential and a force that even oriental despotism has to bow to.”

Indeed, it was as a theorist of public opinion that Rochau was perhaps at his most original. He painstakingly laid out different gradations of it, in ascending order of importance. In the first instance, he believed that the “feeble self-conscious opinion of the day is not entitled to claim political consideration,” as it was merely

fleeting and unfocused. From this starting point, however, the more “consolidated it becomes, and the more it transforms itself into a firm conviction, the more important it becomes for the state.” The most important expression of public opinion was “*Volks Glaube*” (popular belief), which should always be treated with “care and protection, not blandishment.”

While the popular belief was the highest “peak” of popular opinion, the zeitgeist



was its broadest foundation and a central component of realpolitik. The zeitgeist amounted to the “consolidated opinion of the century as expressed in certain principles, opinions and habits of reason.” An opinion transformed itself into the zeitgeist to the extent that it stood the test of time. And the zeitgeist represented “in all circumstances the most important influence on the overall direction of politics.” For a

state to “enforce its own aims in defiance of the zeitgeist” was to court serious trouble.

Realpolitik, therefore, was much more than *raison d'état*. In fact, Rochau made this distinction clear: “Statecraft, as its name suggests, is nothing more than the art of success, applied to the specific ends of the state.”

Realpolitik was about the art of politics in the post-Enlightenment world. He wrote in an age of mass ideological awakening, economic transformation, social upheaval and international rivalry. The job of statesmen was not to remain studiously aloof from these forces but rather to manage and mediate them. For Rochau, too, patriotism and nationalism were not delusions and distractions from *raison d'état* but one of its most effective tools. A shared sense of national purpose was a “natural conciliatory force” between conflicting parties within a state. This was why “human judgement has been very firm regarding the view that it is the utmost sacrilege to question the national spirit (*Nationalgeist*), the last and most valuable guarantee of the natural order of society.” Any policies designed to break this spirit, or ignore it, “thereby descend to the lowest ranks of despicability.”

Most importantly, Rochau was a critic of utopianism, not idealism. As befitted a man of the Enlightenment, he understood that ideology played the “role of a harbinger and trailblazer of events.” “Realpolitik would contradict itself if it were to deny the rights of the intellect, of ideas, of religion or any other of the moral forces to

which the human soul renders homage,” he wrote. The political importance of ideas was not dependent on how rational or noble they were. On the one hand, it was common that “the most beautiful ideal that enthuses noble souls is a political nullity.” When it came to “phantasms” like “eternal peace,” international fraternity and equality, with “no will and no force” behind them, “Realpolitik passes by shrugging its shoulders.” On the other hand, he noted—casting his eyes to the socialist movement emerging in Germany at the time—“the craziest chimera may become a very serious realpolitical matter.”

“Formless ideas, impulses, emotional surges, melodic slogans, naively accepted catchwords . . . [and] habitual self-delusions”—these were the targets that Rochau had in mind when he published *The Principles of Realpolitik* in 1853. By the time he wrote the second volume of his book fifteen years later, however, he had already recognized that the word he had coined had taken on a life of its own: liberals condemned it out of hand; conservatives adopted it without actually understanding what it meant. Looking at the way realpolitik has been used since that time, one can see that old habits die hard. For some the word has become a synonym for evil; for others it has been an accoutrement of sophistication. “I reject at this occasion the criticism which has been levelled at the title of my book from different directions,” Rochau wrote, with a hint of exhaustion, “if not so much against the content itself.” □

# *Frack to the Future*

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*By Leonardo Maugeri*

**T**he world has been caught by surprise by the United States' shale-oil boom. Analysts and experts are still clashing about both its true extent and the possibility of extending a shale revolution beyond North America. In just a few years shale oil could make the United States the world's top oil producer. But a shale revolution is unlikely in the rest of the world, due to some unique factors that characterize the U.S. oil and gas patch. The single-minded focus on the future of shale oil, however, risks obscuring another evolving dimension of the global oil picture that defies the past pessimism spread by peak-oil theorists who claimed that shortages loomed: beyond the United States, the world's oil-production capacity is also growing much faster than demand.

So far, this imbalance has been offset by two things: continuous outages of existing oil supply affecting several Arab and African countries, and the recurring fears of escalating crises in the Middle East. But supply capacity is bound to grow in the future as well, so that unless demand rebounds strongly in the next few years, a significant downturn of oil prices may well occur. The connections among a number of factors—the U.S. shale boom, the global

rise of oil supply, and the inner volatility of oil prices due to temporary outages and political crises—provide a somewhat contradictory picture of the global oil market. These contradictions may, in turn, trigger unexpected changes in the direction of the oil market. All of these changes may have deep and sometimes paradoxical consequences for U.S. energy security.

**T**here are several issues in the current debate over the boom in so-called U.S. tight and shale oil (hereafter referred to as shale oil) that serve to reinforce extreme and seemingly irreconcilable attitudes. One of the central questions revolves around the real potential of this boom and can be formulated simply as follows: Is oil production from shale formations just a temporary bubble, or is it capable of significantly altering the U.S.—and possibly global—energy outlook? To answer this question, I studied more than four thousand shale wells, along with the activities of about one hundred oil companies involved in shale-oil exploitation. The main results of this analysis are multifaceted. On the one hand, the large resource size and the ability of the industry to develop it through steady improvements in technology and cost suggest that the United States may become the largest global oil producer in just a few years, and maintain a high output for many years to come. The U.S. shale-oil boom is thus not a temporary bubble but a long-term, transformational phenomenon.

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*The U.S. shale-oil boom is not a temporary bubble  
but a long-term, transformational phenomenon.*

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However, the unique characteristics of shale oil—the drilling intensity in particular—make it vulnerable to both price drops and environmental opposition in new and populated areas. What’s more, shale development benefits from some specific factors that are especially present in the United States but not worldwide, and that makes the global extension of a shale boom unlikely, at least in this decade. Even with a steady decline of crude-oil prices (for example, from \$85 per barrel in 2013 to \$65 per barrel in 2017), the United States could be producing 5 million barrels per day (MBD) of shale oil by 2017. With the present output of 1.5 MBD, that would more than triple the current production. More than 90 percent of such production will come from just three large shale-oil formations: Bakken-Three Forks (North Dakota), Eagle Ford (Texas) and Permian Basin (Texas). Together with a relatively resilient production of conventional oil, an increasing production of natural-gas liquids (NGLs) and a steady output of biofuels (NGLs and biofuels are considered part of the overall oil production in most statistical sources), the United States could become the leading oil producer in the world by the end of 2017, with an overall oil production of about 16 MBD and a sheer crude-oil production of 10.4 MBD.

Reinforcing this prospect is the resilience of U.S. conventional-oil production, once deemed bound to decline irreversibly. In fact, thanks to the extensive application of advanced technology to mature and once-declining oil fields, U.S. conventional-oil production is also doing better than generally expected.

Among the fourteen main oil-producing states or areas of the United States, so far nine have already witnessed a reverse of their declining oil production. What’s more, the relative decline in the Gulf of Mexico is just a result of postponed development following the *Deepwater Horizon* incident in 2010. Yet the driving force behind the U.S. oil boom—namely, its huge shale-oil potential—depends crucially on the U.S. oil industry’s ability to bring on line an astonishing number of wells each year. In fact, the extremely low porosity of shale reservoir rocks limits the recoverability of oil from one single well. On average, each loses 50 percent of its output after twelve months of activity; by the end of the fifth year of production, output almost stabilizes around 8–10 percent of initial production. To offset this dramatic decline in production, an oil company must thus drill an ever-increasing number of wells.

For example, in December 2012 it was necessary to bring ninety new wells on stream each month to maintain the production rate at Bakken-Three Forks (so far, the largest shale-oil play in the United States)—770,000 barrels per day. But as production grows in North Dakota, the number of producing wells also must grow exponentially. Given the current state of knowledge and technology, the growth of shale-oil production is based on a “drill or die” logic that is not that easy to apply elsewhere. The large and less populated areas of North Dakota and Texas are capable of sustaining such ever-increasing drilling intensity for many years to come—to over one hundred thousand active shale-

oil wells, compared to around ten thousand to date. This relies on an approach called “down spacing,” which means increasing the density of wells within an area. Oil companies are realizing that it is possible to drill more wells in the same area without provoking a negative interference between one well and another. Nevertheless, the “drill or die” logic will probably represent

a major obstacle to the expansion of shale activity even in most areas of the United States that—unlike Texas, North Dakota and a bunch of additional states—are densely populated, and have neither vast territories nor a long history of drilling intensity. In fact, in the eye of public opinion and local residents, drilling intensity will likely emphasize the environmental problems associated with shale activity, triggering in several states a vigorous opposition to the expansion of such activities.

**W**hile drilling intensity may prove a limiting factor in expanding shale activity in the United States outside of its core areas, it will likely prove an insurmountable obstacle for the rest of the world—for several reasons. First, the United States holds more than 60 percent of the world’s drilling rigs, and 95 percent of these are capable of performing horizontal drilling that, together with hydraulic fracturing (fracking), is crucial to unlocking shale production. No other country or area in the world has even a fraction of such “drilling power,” which takes several years to build up. For example, all across Europe (excluding Russia) there are no more than 130



drilling rigs (compared to 180 in North Dakota alone), and only one-third of them are capable of doing horizontal drilling. And it’s not only a problem of drilling rigs. Shale activity also requires highly specialized tools and people that are in short supply in the world—and all this also requires years to be built up. Moreover, no other country has ever experienced the drilling intensity that has always characterized America’s oil and gas history.

In 2012, the United States completed 45,468 oil and gas wells (and brought 28,354 of them on line). Excluding Canada, the rest of the world completed only 3,921 wells, and brought only a fraction of them on line. To my knowledge, Saudi Arabia brings on line no more than two hundred wells per year. Other factors will contribute to prevent the development of shale resources in the rest of the world. One is the absence of private mineral rights in most countries. In the United States, landowners also own the resources under the ground—and have a very strong incentive to lease those rights; in the rest of the world, such resources usually belong to the state, so that landowners often receive nothing from drilling on their lands apart from the damage created by such activity.

Also absent outside North America are independent oil companies with a guerrilla-like mind-set, a crucial aspect of the U.S. boom. Until now, the development of shale resources has not proved to be Big Oil's strength—since shale oil requires companies capable of operating on a small scale, pursuing a number of objectives and leveraging short-term opportunities. Only the United States (and partly Canada) possesses a plethora of such aggressive companies. It is no accident that they have been, and still are, the avatars of the shale revolution. Finally, we don't even know with any reasonable accuracy either the real size of the shale formations in the world or the cost associated with their development. Indeed, the geology of the United States is by far the best known, explored and assessed with respect to any other country. As a consequence, global shale deposits outside North America are still just a matter of pure speculation.

**H**uge as it may be, U.S. crude-production potential is still insufficient to allow for the much-sought-after goal of U.S. crude-oil independence—the only missing point in the overall equation of U.S. energy independence. America is already largely self-sufficient in terms of all other primary-energy sources (coal, nuclear, natural gas, NGLs, etc.), while it still imports about half of its daily consumption of crude oil, which is now a little more than 15 MBD. True, imports have plummeted steadily from their peak in 2007 (when they outpaced 10 MBD), and they will continue to decline in the next few years. However, even in the most favorable scenario outlined above, 25 percent of U.S. crude-oil requirements will have to be imported in the future.

This implies that if the United States wants to target the highest degree of oil security, it should rely not only

on an increase of its domestic crude-oil production, but also on energy-efficiency measures that could curtail crude-oil consumption. Together with a structural shift in consumers' behavior, the latter has already played a role in reducing American addiction to oil—and that occurred well before the economic crisis erupted in 2008. The yearly total vehicles-miles traveled by the American people peaked in 2006 at 3.1 billion, and is now down to less than 2.9 billion. On a per capita basis, the mileage peak was reached in 2004 at around ten thousand miles per year and then dropped to the current 9,100 miles annually. Nor is this all. Americans are not only consuming less, but they are also consuming better—choosing smaller, more efficient vehicles or alternative modes of transportation, whereas many among the younger seem to have turned their backs to cultural patterns which regarded the car as the embodiment of emancipation. In short, it's no longer a caddy for daddy. The change is evident both in the urban landscapes—which are now punctuated by a large number of midsize cars once abhorred by consumers—and in the numbers: according to the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, in 2013 the average fuel efficiency of passenger cars and light trucks sold in the United States was close to 24.8 miles per gallon, up from 20.1 in October 2007.

Although it's highly probable that demand for oil has already peaked in the United States, as it did in Europe in the mid-1990s, and will follow a pattern of secular decline, the economic recovery will surely be accompanied by a rebound in consumption of both cars and oil—a phenomenon that is already showing up. This, in turn, could reduce American energy security. That's why a sound approach to energy security cannot look just to supply, but also to consumption.

*Whatever the degree of energy security and independence the United States can achieve through the shale revolution, it will always be inextricably linked to what happens across the global oil market.*

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What's more, in terms of security it's likely that a lower rate of U.S. crude-oil imports would have paradoxical consequences for U.S. energy security. In fact, among the most endangered foreign sources of supply would be countries traditionally considered to be "safe." The most important of these is Canada, because it relies almost completely on the U.S. market as an export outlet for its oil.

A shrinking U.S. market implies a short- and medium-term blow to the development of the massive potential of Canadian oil sands that currently have no alternative markets. This also explains why the construction of additional pipelines to the United States—such as the highly debated Keystone XL—is key for Canada if it wants to expand its oil production. To a lesser extent, lower U.S. crude-oil imports will pose challenges for Venezuela and Mexico: along with Canada, these "safe" oil exporters to the United States will need to secure new, reliable markets and partners for their crude in the future so as not to be overly dependent (as in the past) on the shrinking U.S. oil market. This potential shift will represent an opportunity for U.S. energy competitors like China, and it will make the United States a bit more vulnerable in the future to an oil crisis because it will no longer be able to count on the Western Hemisphere's oil as its almost-exclusive domain. Finally, even the highest degree of oil independence will not insulate the United States from the global oil market. To the contrary, any major event concerning the world's oil will always affect the United States and could

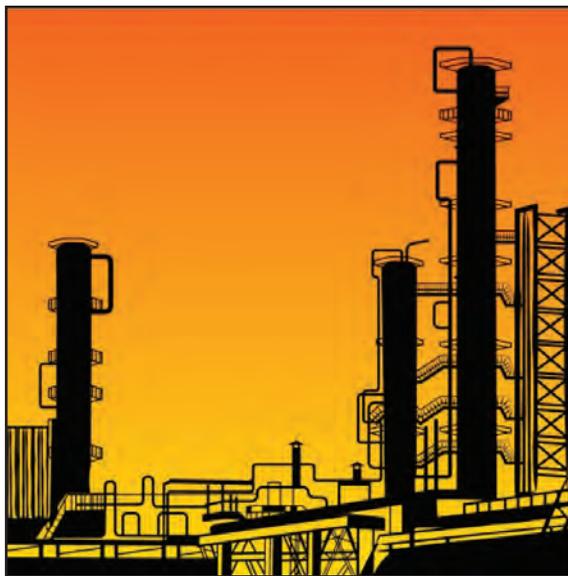
also endanger its own oil boom. The latter possibility involves a careful consideration of both global oil-production capacity and demand, as well as the price of oil.

**T**he continuation of the current U.S. oil boom will require, at least in the next few years, adequately high prices of oil that, in turn, would allow for escalating shale activity. Such a scenario, however, cannot be taken for granted because, almost unnoticed, the world too is facing a production boom. By December 2013, actual oil production reached almost 93.5 MBD. On top of this, there were more than 2.5 MBD that couldn't be produced or marketed either because of different kind of disruptions (mainly due to political tensions, strikes or accidents in countries such as Libya, Egypt, Nigeria and Sudan), or because of international sanctions against Iran. What's more, there were 3 MBD of voluntarily shut-in production—what the oil-industry jargon calls "spare capacity"—mostly concentrated in Saudi Arabia.<sup>1</sup> When actual production, supply disruptions and spare capacity are combined, the world seems to possess a potential oil-production capacity in excess of 99 MBD—also an all-time record.

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<sup>1</sup> Spare capacity is defined as the difference between the total oil-production capacity (usually within a country, or the world) that can be reached within thirty days—and sustained for ninety days—and the actual production. Generally, it's voluntarily shut in by a country (or group of countries) either to avoid depressing the oil price, or to preserve a cushion of additional production to be used in case of a major market crisis.

Conversely, oil demand is growing sluggishly, as a consequence of the troubled global economic situation, the slowdown in China, India and other emerging economies, the unsolved problems of the euro zone and the impact of energy-efficiency legislation across the world. Due to all these factors, according to the International Energy Agency world oil demand was just 91.2 MBD in 2013 on average, meaning that by December of last year almost 8 MBD of oil formed stocks or simply were not produced or marketed. This imbalance is not only big, but it's also growing, as a consequence of a bullish investment cycle in global



exploration and production that started in 2003 and dramatically escalated from 2010 onward. High oil prices, the need of most companies and countries to replace their reserves, and the extensive application of new technologies to oil recovery are the major factors driving this unprecedented spending spree that in just four years has totaled almost \$2.4 trillion in upstream investments.

The impact of these investments on new production capacity could be particularly acute by 2015. In particular, if the United States, Iraq, Canada, Brazil and Venezuela could deploy their full oil potential, supported by investments already under way, global oil-production capacity could reach 110 MBD by 2020. This evolution could be helped by a lower decline rate in aging oil fields, whose maturity is now contrasted by means of either massive redevelopment plans (such as in the case of Iraq), or by the application of more advanced production technology. In addition, the world's current production leaders, Russia and Saudi Arabia, are continuing to increase their production capacity—defying the dire predictions of most pundits, who deemed those countries destined to face an irreversible decline of their oil output.

For over a decade, year after year, most experts have been predicting an immediate decline of Russian output. However, the country's oil production has continued to rise, and it's now at around 10.6 MBD, with the potential to grow more if the fiscal system is modified to incentivize the redevelopment of mature oil fields. As for Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom has been a preferred target of oil doomsters since the 1980s, when it was first accused of manipulating the real extent of its oil reserves. Since then, according to the "peak oil" theorists, the country should have been producing less and less. This bogus perception earned a revival in the middle of the last decade, when Matt Simmons's book *Twilight in the Desert* recast doubts on the Kingdom's effective oil potential, predicting a sudden fall of its production. By the time of Simmons's book, however, Saudi Arabia

announced a plan to expand its oil-production capacity by about 2 MBD—or the equivalent of Brazil’s production today—in just four years, and in late 2009 it reached its target.

Furthermore, last year the Kingdom brought on line another big oil field, Manifa, which in 2014 will reach its full production at nine hundred thousand barrels per day. Then, by 2017, Saudi Arabia plans to add another 550,000 barrels per day by expanding the capacity of two additional oil fields, Khurais and Shaybah. Apparently, this expansion should not add new net capacity to the country’s potential, because the Kingdom’s decision makers want to relax older fields’ production as the fresh capacity comes on. If this is the case, Saudi Arabia will just preserve its current production capacity of about 12.3 MBD (including the output from the “neutral zone” shared with Kuwait), the largest in the world. As a consequence of the upward trend in global oil production, unless a substantial rebound of oil consumption takes place across the world in the next few years, the gap between global oil supply capacity and demand will widen. This phenomenon may not affect oil prices so long as new political crises scare market operators and threaten the stability of the entire Middle East. But the basic truth remains: in the long term, a growing imbalance between supply capacity and consumption will turn into a prerequisite for a collapse of oil prices. Because the full development of shale oil in the United States requires an oil price higher than \$80 per barrel in the short term, and higher than \$65 per barrel in the longer term (five years), the above scenario could have a dramatic impact on the U.S. oil boom.

**I**n order to manage the growing imbalance between supply and demand, so far

the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has been relying on two pillars: first, Saudi Arabia’s willingness not to inundate the market with its full production capacity, which is obliging the Kingdom to preserve a spare capacity of at least 2.5 MBD; and second, Iran’s inability to export a sizable amount of its oil-production potential—more than 1 MBD—due to international sanctions. In the coming years, however, OPEC’s ability to manage growing global oil supplies will continue to decline, due to an Iraq struggling to become one of the world’s top producers, African countries looking for new outlets for their oil, the great potential of the United States, Canada and other countries—and an oil demand still stagnating due to a global economic crisis that shows little prospect of improvement.

What’s more, the recent interim agreement between Iran and the group of countries—including the United States—that are negotiating a solution to the long-debated Iranian nuclear program is now raising the prospect of the full return of Iran’s oil production to the international markets, perhaps as soon as the second half of 2014. All these elements will likely put OPEC under stress in the next few years, and Saudi Arabia in particular. Due to its spare capacity, the Kingdom remains the central bank of the world’s oil market, and holds the capability to stabilize or destabilize it. Faced with an effective oil-production surge from OPEC’s countries that hold the highest potential to grow, namely Iraq and Iran, and an overall rise of global oil production, Saudi Arabia will have to consider two opposite policy options.

On the one hand, it could opt to act as the world’s swing producer, reducing its output dramatically to make room for others’ in an attempt to support oil prices, as the Kingdom did in the early 1980s. But if such a reduction became an endless

retreat, the Saudi government could also consider producing at full capacity to get rid of more expensive oil producers and oblige other OPEC members to taper their own output, as it did in 1986. In this case, a mild version of the 1986 oil-price collapse could not be ruled out, and that would put in danger both U.S. shale oil and the more expensive Canadian oil sands. The final result would be highly detrimental to U.S. energy security.

This is not the only Persian Gulf scenario that may negatively affect the United States. Needless to say, if a major political crisis endangers the oil production of Saudi Arabia or another big oil producer in the short term, oil prices would skyrocket, no matter how much oil America could produce. This could be good for U.S. shale but awful for the U.S. and world economy.

These scenarios show that it would be a mistake for the United States to confuse notions about energy security and energy independence and, above all, to envisage the possibility of abandoning its historical involvement in Persian Gulf affairs, not to mention turning its back on Canada and other secure oil suppliers. Whatever the degree of energy security and independence the United States can achieve through the shale revolution, it will always be inextricably linked to what happens across the global oil market, and particularly in the Persian Gulf. This is also true when it comes to the evolution of its relations with suppliers of oil such as Canada. Shale oil may bring more energy security to the United States, but it cannot bring energy independence. Thinking otherwise can only lead to a rude reawakening. □

# Low-Tech Terrorism

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By Bruce Hoffman

Among the more prescient analyses of the terrorist threats that the United States would face in the twenty-first century was a report published in September 1999 by the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, better known as the Hart-Rudman commission. Named after its cochairs, former senators Gary Hart and Warren Rudman, and evocatively titled *New World Coming*, it correctly predicted that mass-casualty terrorism would emerge as one of America's preeminent security concerns in the next century. "Already," the report's first page lamented, "the traditional functions of law, police work, and military power have begun to blur before our eyes as new threats arise." It added, "Notable among these new threats is the prospect of an attack on U.S. cities by independent or state-supported terrorists using weapons of mass destruction."

Although hijacked commercial aircraft deliberately flown into high-rise buildings were not the weapons of mass destruction that the commission had in mind, the catastrophic effects that this tactic achieved—obliterating New York City's World Trade Center, slicing through several of the Pentagon's concentric rings and killing nearly three thousand people—

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indisputably captured the gist of that prophetic assertion.

The report was also remarkably accurate in anticipating the terrorist organizational structures that would come to dominate the first dozen or so years of the new century. "Future terrorists will probably be even less hierarchically organized, and yet better net-worked, than they are today. Their diffuse nature will make them more anonymous, yet their ability to coordinate mass effects on a global basis will increase," the commission argued. Its vision of the motivations that would animate and subsequently fuel this violence was similarly revelatory. "The growing resentment against Western culture and values in some parts of the world," along with "the fact that others often perceive the United States as exercising its power with arrogance and self-absorption," was already "breeding a backlash" that would both continue and likely evolve into new and more insidious forms, the report asserted.

Some of the commission's other visionary conclusions now read like a retrospective summary of the past decade. "The United States will be called upon frequently to intervene militarily in a time of uncertain alliances," says one, while another disconsolately warns that "even excellent intelligence will not prevent all surprises." Today's tragic events in Syria were also anticipated by one statement that addressed the growing likelihood of foreign crises "replete with atrocities

and the deliberate terrorizing of civilian populations.”

Fortunately, the report’s most breathless prediction concerning the likelihood of terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has not come to pass. But this is not for want of terrorists trying to obtain such capabilities. Indeed, prior to the October 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, Al Qaeda had embarked upon an ambitious quest to acquire and develop an array of such weapons that, had it been successful, would have altered to an unimaginable extent our most basic conceptions about national security and rendered moot debates over whether terrorism posed a potentially existential threat.

But just how effective have terrorist efforts to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction actually been? The September 11, 2001, attacks were widely noted for their reliance on relatively low-tech weaponry—the conversion, in effect, of airplanes into missiles by using raw physical muscle and box cutters to hijack them. Since then, efforts to gain access to WMD have been unceasing. But examining those efforts results in some surprising conclusions. While there is no cause for complacency, they do suggest that terrorists face some inherent constraints that will be difficult for them to overcome. It is easier to proclaim the threat of mass terror than to perpetrate it.

**T**he terrorist attacks on September 11 completely recast global perceptions of threat and vulnerability. Long-standing assumptions that terrorists were more interested in publicity than in killing were dramatically swept aside in the rising crescendo of death and destruction. The butcher’s bill that morning was without parallel in the annals of modern terrorism. Throughout the entirety of the twentieth century no more than fourteen terrorist incidents had

killed more than a hundred people, and until September 11 no terrorist operation had ever killed more than five hundred people in a single attack. Viewed from another perspective, more than twice as many Americans perished within those excruciating 102 minutes than had been killed by terrorists since 1968—the year widely accepted as marking the advent of modern, international terrorism.

So massive and consequential a terrorist onslaught naturally gave rise to fears that a profound threshold in terrorist constraint and lethality had been crossed. Renewed fears and concerns were in turn generated that terrorists would now embrace an array of deadly nonconventional weapons in order to inflict even greater levels of death and destruction than had occurred that day. Attention focused specifically on terrorist use of WMD, and the so-called Cheney Doctrine emerged to shape America’s national-security strategy. The doctrine derived from former vice president Dick Cheney’s reported statement that “if there’s a one percent chance that Pakistani scientists are helping Al Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon, we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response.” What the “one percent doctrine” meant in practice, according to one observer, was that “even if there’s just a one percent chance of the unimaginable coming due, act as if it’s a certainty.” Countering the threat of nonconventional-weapons proliferation—whether by rogue states arrayed in an “axis of evil” or by terrorists who might acquire such weapons from those same states or otherwise develop them on their own—thus became one of the central pillars of the Bush administration’s time in office.

In the case of Al Qaeda, at least, these fears were more than amply justified. That group’s interest in acquiring a nuclear weapon reportedly commenced as long ago as 1992—a mere four years after its

creation. An attempt by an Al Qaeda agent to purchase uranium from South Africa was made either late the following year or early in 1994 without success. Osama bin Laden's efforts to obtain nuclear material nonetheless continued, as evidenced by the arrest in Germany in 1998 of a trusted senior aide named Mamdouh Mahmud Salim, who was attempting to purchase enriched uranium. And that same year, the Al Qaeda leader issued a proclamation in the name of the "International Islamic Front for Fighting the Jews and Crusaders." Titled "The Nuclear Bomb of Islam," the proclamation declared that "it is the duty of Muslims to prepare as much force as possible to terrorize the enemies of God." When asked several months later by a Pakistani journalist whether Al Qaeda was "in a position to develop chemical weapons and try to purchase nuclear material for weapons," bin Laden replied: "I would say that acquiring weapons for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty."

Bin Laden's continued interest in nuclear weaponry was also on display at the time of the September 11 attacks. Two Pakistani nuclear scientists named Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majeed spent three days that August at a secret Al Qaeda facility outside Kabul. Although their discussions with bin Laden, his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri and other senior Al Qaeda officials also focused on the development and employment of chemical and biological weapons, Mahmood—the former director for nuclear power at Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission—

claimed that bin Laden's foremost interest was in developing a nuclear weapon.

The movement's efforts in the biological-warfare realm, however, were far more advanced and appear to have



begun in earnest with a memo written by al-Zawahiri on April 15, 1999, to Muhammad Atef, then deputy commander of Al Qaeda's military committee. Citing articles published in *Science*, the *Journal of Immunology* and the *New England Journal of Medicine*, as well as information gleaned from authoritative books such as *Tomorrow's Weapons, Peace or Pestilence* and *Chemical Warfare*, al-Zawahiri outlined in detail his thoughts on the priority to be given to developing a biological-weapons capability.

One of the specialists recruited for this purpose was a U.S.-trained Malaysian microbiologist named Yazid Sufaat. A former captain in the Malaysian army, Sufaat graduated from the California State University in 1987 with a degree in biological sciences. He later joined Al Gamaa al-Islamiyya (the "Islamic Group"), an Al Qaeda affiliate operating in Southeast Asia, and worked closely with its military operations chief, Riduan Isamuddin, better known as Hambali, and with Hambali's

*As mesmerizingly attractive as nonconventional weapons remain to Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, they have mostly proven frustratingly disappointing to whoever has tried to use them.*

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own Al Qaeda handler, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed—the infamous KSM, architect of the September 11 attacks.

In January 2000, Sufaat played host to two of the 9/11 hijackers, Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, who stayed in his Kuala Lumpur condominium. Later that year, Zacarias Moussaoui, the alleged “twentieth hijacker,” who was sentenced in 2006 to life imprisonment by a federal district court in Alexandria, Virginia, also stayed with Sufaat. Under KSM’s direction, Hambali and Sufaat set up shop at an Al Qaeda camp in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where their efforts focused on the weaponization of anthrax. Although the two made some progress, biowarfare experts believe that on the eve of September 11 Al Qaeda was still at least two to three years away from producing a sufficient quantity of anthrax to use as a weapon.

Meanwhile, a separate team of Al Qaeda operatives was engaged in a parallel research-and-development project to produce ricin and chemical-warfare agents at the movement’s Derunta camp, near the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad. As one senior U.S. intelligence officer who prefers to remain anonymous explained, “Al Qaeda’s WMD efforts weren’t part of a single program but rather multiple compartmentalized projects involving multiple scientists in multiple locations.”

The Derunta facility reportedly included laboratories and a school that trained handpicked terrorists in the use of chemical and biological weapons. Among this select group was Kamal Bourgass, an Algerian Al Qaeda operative who was convicted in

British courts in 2004 and 2005 for the murder of a British police officer and of “conspiracy to commit a public nuisance by the use of poisons or explosives.” The school’s director was an Egyptian named Midhat Mursi—better known by his Al Qaeda nom de guerre, Abu Kebab—and among its instructors were a Pakistani microbiologist and Sufaat. When U.S. military forces overran the camp in 2001, evidence of the progress achieved in developing chemical weapons as diverse as hydrogen cyanide, chlorine and phosgene was discovered. Mursi himself was killed in 2008 by a missile fired from a U.S. Predator drone.

Mursi’s death dealt another significant blow to Al Qaeda’s efforts to develop nonconventional weapons—but it did not end them. In fact, as the aforementioned senior U.S. intelligence officer recently commented, “Al Qaeda’s ongoing procurement efforts have been well-established for awhile now . . . They haven’t been highlighted in the U.S. media, but that isn’t the same as it not happening.” In 2010, for instance, credible intelligence surfaced that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula—widely considered the movement’s most dangerous and capable affiliate—was deeply involved in the development of ricin, a bioweapon made from castor beans that the FBI has termed the third most toxic substance known, behind only plutonium and botulism.

Then, in May 2013, Turkish authorities seized two kilograms of sarin nerve gas—the same weapon used in the 1995 attack on the Tokyo subway system—and arrested

twelve men linked to Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, Al Nusra Front. Days later, another set of sarin-related arrests was made in Iraq of Al Qaeda operatives based in that country who were separately overseeing the production of sarin and mustard blistering agents at two or more locations.

Finally, Israel admitted in November 2013 that for the past three years it had been holding a senior Al Qaeda operative whose expertise was in biological warfare. "The revelations over his alleged biological weapons links," one account noted of the operative's detention, "come amid concerns that Al Qaeda affiliates in Syria are attempting to procure bioweapons—and may already have done so."

Indeed, Syria's ongoing civil war and the prominent position of two key Al Qaeda affiliates—Al Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant—along with other sympathetic jihadi entities in that epic struggle, coupled with the potential access afforded to Bashar al-Assad's chemical-weapons stockpiles, suggest that we have likely not heard the last of Al Qaeda's ambitions to obtain nerve agents, poison gas and other harmful toxins for use as mass-casualty weapons.

**N**onetheless, a fundamental paradox appears to exist so far as terrorist capabilities involving chemical, biological and nuclear weapons are concerned. As mesmerizingly attractive as these nonconventional weapons remain to Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, they have also mostly proven frustratingly disappointing to whoever has tried to use them. Despite the extensive use of poison gas during World War I, for instance, this weapon accounted for only 5 percent of all casualties in that conflict. Reportedly, it required some sixty pounds of mustard gas to produce even a single casualty. Even in more recent times, chemical weapons claimed the lives of less

than 1 percent (five thousand) of the six hundred thousand Iranians who died in the Iran-Iraq war. The Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo succeeded in killing no more than thirteen people in its attack on the Tokyo underground in 1995. And, five years earlier, no fatalities resulted from a Tamil Tigers assault on a Sri Lankan armed forces base in East Kiran that employed chlorine gas. In fact, the wind changed and blew the gas back into the Tigers' lines, thus aborting the attack.

Biological weapons have proven similarly difficult to deploy effectively. Before and during World War II, the Imperial Japanese Army carried out nearly a dozen attacks using a variety of germ agents—including cholera, dysentery, bubonic plague, anthrax and paratyphoid, disseminated through both air and water—against Chinese forces. Not once did these weapons decisively affect the outcome of a battle. And, in the 1942 assault on Chekiang, ten thousand Japanese soldiers themselves became ill, and nearly two thousand died, from exposure to these agents. "The Japanese program's principal defect, a problem to all efforts so far," the American terrorism expert David Rapoport concluded, was "an ineffective delivery system."

The challenges inherent in using germs as weapons are borne out by the research conducted for more than a decade by Seth Carus, a researcher at the National Defense University. Carus has assembled perhaps the most comprehensive database of the use of biological agents by a wide variety of adversaries, including terrorists, government operatives, ordinary criminals and the mentally unstable. His exhaustive research reveals that no more than a total of ten people were killed and less than a thousand were made ill as a result of about two hundred incidents of bioterrorism or biocrime. Most of which, moreover, entailed the individual poisoning of

specific people rather than widespread, indiscriminate attacks.

The formidable challenges of obtaining the material needed to construct a nuclear bomb, along with the fabrication and dissemination difficulties involving the use of noxious gases and biological agents, perhaps account for the operational conservatism long observed in terrorist tactics and weaponry. As politically radical or religiously fanatical as terrorists may be, they nonetheless to date have overwhelmingly seemed to prefer the tactical assurance of the comparatively modest effects achieved by the conventional weapons with which they are familiar, as opposed to the risk of failure inherent in the use of more exotic means of death and destruction. Terrorists, as Brian Jenkins famously observed in 1985, thus continue to “appear to be more imitative than innovative.” Accordingly, what innovation does occur tends to take place in the realm

of the clever adaptation or modification of existing tactics—such as turning hijacked passenger airliners into cruise missiles—or in the means and methods used to fabricate and detonate explosive devices, rather than in the use of some new or dramatically novel weapon.

Terrorists have thus functioned mostly in a technological vacuum: either aloof or averse to the profound changes that have fundamentally altered the nature of modern warfare. Whereas technological progress has produced successively more complex, lethally effective and destructively accurate weapons systems that are deployed from a variety of air, land, sea—and space—platforms, terrorists continue to rely, as they have for more than a century, on the same two basic “weapons systems”: the gun and the bomb. Admittedly, the guns used by terrorists today have larger ammunition capacities and more rapid rates of fire than the simple revolver the Russian revolutionary Vera Zasulich used in 1878 to assassinate the governor-general of St. Petersburg. Similarly, bombs today require smaller amounts of explosives that are exponentially more powerful and more easily concealed than the sticks of TNT with which the Fenian dynamiters terrorized London more than a century ago. But the fact remains that the vast majority of terrorist incidents continue to utilize the same two attack modes.

Why is this? There are perhaps two obvious explanations: ease and cost. Indeed, as Leonardo da Vinci is said to have observed in a completely different era and context, “Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.” The same can be said about *most* terrorist—and insurgent—weapons and tactics today.

Improvised explosive devices (IED) and bombs constructed of commercially available, readily accessible homemade materials now account for the lion’s share



of terrorist—and insurgent—attacks. The use of two crude bombs packed in ordinary pressure cookers that killed three people and injured nearly three hundred others at last April's Boston Marathon is among the more recent cases in point. Others include the succession of peroxide-based bombs that featured in the July 2005 suicide attacks on London transport, the 2006 plot to blow up seven American and Canadian airliners while in flight from Heathrow Airport to various destinations in North America, and the 2009 attempt to replicate the London transport bombings on the New York City subway system.

The account of the construction of the bombs intended for the New York City attack presented in the book *Enemies Within* vividly illustrates this point. Written by two Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists, Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman, the book describes how the would-be bomber, an Afghanistan-born, permanent U.S. resident named Najibullah Zazi, easily purchased the ingredients needed for the device's construction and then, following the instructions given to him by his Al Qaeda handlers in Pakistan, created a crude but potentially devastatingly lethal weapon:

For weeks he'd been visiting beauty supply stores, filling his carts with hydrogen peroxide and nail polish remover. At the Beauty Supply Warehouse, among the rows of wigs, braids, and extensions, the manager knew him as Jerry. He said his girlfriend owned hair salons. There was no reason to doubt him.

On pharmacy shelves, in the little brown plastic bottles, hydrogen peroxide is a disinfectant, a sting-free way to clean scrapes. Beauty salons use a more concentrated version to bleach hair or activate hair dyes. At even higher concentrations, it burns the skin. It is not flammable on its own, but when it reacts with other chemicals, it quickly releases oxygen, creating an

environment ripe for explosions. . . . Even with a cheap stove, it's easy to simmer water out of hydrogen peroxide, leaving behind something more potent. It takes time, and he had plenty of that.

Preparing the explosive initiator was only slightly more complicated, but considerably more dangerous. Hence, Zazi had to be especially careful. "He added the muriatic acid and watched as the chemicals crystallized," the account continues:

The crystals are known as triacetone triperoxide, or TATP. A spark, electrical current, even a bit of friction can set off an explosion. . . .

The white crystal compound had been popular among Palestinian terrorists. It was cheap and powerful, but its instability earned it the nickname "Mother of Satan". . . .

When he was done mixing, he rinsed the crystals with baking soda and water to make his creation more stable. He placed the finished product in a wide-rimmed glass jar about the size of a coffee tin and inspected his work. There would be enough for three detonators. Three detonators inside three backpacks filled with a flammable mixture and ball bearings—the same type of weapon that left 52 dead in London in 2005. . . .

He was ready for New York.

These types of improvised weapons are not only devastatingly effective but also remarkably inexpensive, further accounting for their popularity. For example, the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee, which investigated the 2005 London transport attacks, concluded that the entire operation cost less than £8,000 to execute. This sum included the cost of a trip to Pakistan so that the cell leader and an accomplice could acquire the requisite

bomb-making skills at a secret Al Qaeda training camp in that country's North-West Frontier Province; the purchase of all the needed equipment and ingredients once they were back in Britain; the rental of an apartment in Leeds that they turned into a bomb factory; car rentals and the purchase of cell phones; and other incidentals.

The cost-effectiveness of such homemade devices—and their appeal to terrorists—is of course not new. Decades ago, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) demonstrated the disproportionate effects and enormous damage that crude, inexpensive homemade explosive devices could achieve. In what was described as “the most powerful explosion in London since World War II,” a PIRA fertilizer bomb made with urea nitrate and diesel fuel exploded outside the Baltic Exchange in April 1992, killing three people, wounding ninety others, leaving a twelve-foot-wide crater—and causing \$1.25 billion in damage. Exactly a year later, a similar bomb devastated the nearby Bishops Gate, killing one person and injuring more than forty others. Estimates put the damage of that blast at \$1.5 billion.

Long a staple of PIRA operations, in the early 1990s fertilizer had cost the group on average 1 percent of a comparable amount of plastic explosive. Although after adulteration fertilizer is admittedly far less powerful than plastic explosives, it also tends to cause more damage than plastic explosives because the energy of the blast is more sustained and less controlled.

Similarly, the homemade bomb used in the first attack on New York's World Trade Center in 1993—consisting of urea nitrate derived from fertilizer but enhanced by three canisters of hydrogen gas to create a more powerful fuel-air explosion—produced a similarly impressive return on the terrorists' investment. The device cost less than \$400 to construct. Yet, it not only killed six people, injured more than

a thousand others and gouged a 180-foot-wide crater six stories deep, but also caused an estimated \$550 million in damages and lost revenue to the businesses housed there. The seaborne suicide-bomb attack seven years later on the USS *Cole*, a U.S. Navy destroyer anchored in Aden, Yemen, reportedly cost Al Qaeda no more than \$10,000 to execute. But, in addition to claiming the lives of seventeen American sailors and wounding thirty-nine others, it cost the U.S. Navy \$250 million to repair the damage caused to the vessel.

This trend toward the increased use of IEDs has had its most consequential and pernicious effects in Iraq and Afghanistan during our prolonged deployments there. As Andrew Bacevich, a retired U.S. Army officer and current Boston University professor, has written, “No matter how badly battered and beaten, the ‘terrorists’ on these and other recent battlefields were not “intimidated, remained unrepentant, and kept coming back for more, devising tactics against which forces optimized for conventional combat did not have a ready response.” He adds, “The term invented for this was ‘asymmetric conflict,’ loosely translated as war against adversaries who won't fight the way we want them to.”

In Iraq and Afghanistan, both terrorists and insurgents alike have waged low-risk wars of attrition against American, British, allied and host military forces using a variety of IEDs with triggering devices as simple as garage-door openers, cordless phones and car key fobs to confound, if not hobble, among the most technologically advanced militaries in the history of mankind. “The richest, most-trained army got beat by dudes in manjammies and A.K.'s,” an American soldier observed to a *New York Times* reporter of one such bloody engagement in Afghanistan five years ago.

Indeed, terrorists and insurgents in both

*Terrorists continue to rely, as they have for more than a century, on the same two basic “weapons systems”: the gun and the bomb.*

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Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated the effectiveness of even poorly or modestly armed nonstate adversaries in confronting superior, conventional military forces and waging a deadly war of attrition designed in part to undermine popular support and resolve back home for these prolonged deployments. Equally worrisome, these battle environments have become spawning grounds for continued and future violence: real-life training camps for jihadis and hands-on laboratories for the research and development of new and ever more deadly terrorist and insurgent tactics and techniques. “How do you stop foes who kill with devices built for the price of a pizza?” was the question posed by a *Newsweek* cover story about IEDs in 2007. “Maybe the question is,” it continued, “can you stop them?”

At one point, IEDs were responsible for nearly two-thirds of military fatalities caused by terrorists and insurgents in Iraq and a quarter of the military fatalities in Afghanistan. According to one authoritative account, there was an IED incident every fifteen minutes in Iraq during 2006. And, after the number of IED attacks had doubled in Afghanistan during 2009, this tactic accounted for three-quarters of military casualties in some areas.

These explosive devices often were constructed using either scavenged artillery or mortar shells, with military or commercial ordnance, or from entirely homemade ingredients. They were then buried beneath roadways, concealed among roadside refuse, hidden in animal carcasses or telephone poles, camouflaged into

curbsides or secreted along the guard rails on the shoulders of roadways, put in boxes, or disguised as rocks or bricks strewn by the side of the road. As military vehicle armor improved, the bomb makers adapted and adjusted to these new force-protection measures and began to design and place IEDs in elevated positions, attaching them to road signs or trees, in order to impact the vehicles’ unarmored upper structure.

The method of detonation has also varied as U.S., allied and host forces have adapted to insurgent tactics. Command-wire detonators were replaced by radio-signal triggering devices such as cell phones and garage-door openers. These devices were remote wired up to one hundred meters from the IED detonator to obviate jamming measures. More recently, infrared lasers have been used as explosive initiators. One or more artillery shells rigged with blasting caps and improvised shrapnel (consisting of bits of concrete, nuts, bolts, screws, tacks, ball bearings, etc.) have been the most commonly used, but the makeshift devices have also gradually become larger as multinational forces added more armor to their vehicles, with evidence from insurgent propaganda videos of aviation bombs of 500 lb. being used as IEDs. In some cases, these improvised devices are detonated serially—in “daisy chain” explosions—designed to mow down quick-reaction forces converging on the scene following the initial blast and first wave of casualties.

By 2011, the U.S. Defense Department had spent nearly \$20 billion on IED countermeasures—including new technologies, programs, and enhanced and

constantly updated training. A “massive new military bureaucracy” had to be created to oversee this effort and itself was forced to create “unconventional processes for introducing new programs,” as a 2010 New America Foundation report put it. Yet, as the British Army found in its war against Jewish terrorists in Palestine seventy years ago, there is no easy or lasting solution to this threat. IED attacks had in fact become so pervasive in Palestine that in December 1946 British Army headquarters in Jerusalem issued a meticulously detailed thirty-five-page pamphlet, complete with photographs and diagrams, describing these weapons, their emplacement and their lethal effects. Even so, as military commanders and civilian authorities alike acknowledged at the time, IEDs were then as now virtually impossible to defend against completely.

Perhaps the most novel and innovative use of IEDs, however, has been when they have been paired with toxic chemicals. Much as the Iraq conflict has served as a proving ground for other terrorist weapons and tactics, it has also served this purpose with chemical weapons. Between 2007 and 2010, more than a dozen major truck-bomb attacks occurred in Iraq involving conventional explosions paired with chlorine gas.

The most serious incident, however, was one that was foiled by Jordanian

authorities in April 2004. It involved the toxic release of chemicals into a crowded urban environment and was orchestrated by the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the founder and leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq. The Amman plot entailed the use of some twenty tons of chemicals and explosives to target simultaneously the prime minister’s office, the General Intelligence Department’s headquarters and the U.S. embassy. Although the main purpose of the coordinated operations was to conduct

forced-entry attacks by suicide bombers against these three heavily protected, high-value targets, an ancillary intention is believed to have been the infliction of mass casualties on the surrounding areas by the noxious chemical agents deliberately released in the blasts. An estimated eighty thousand people, Jordanian authorities claim, would have been killed or seriously injured in the operation.

The above attacks in Iraq and the foiled incident in

Amman all underscore the potential for terrorists to attack a domestic industrial chemical facility with a truck bomb or other large explosive device, with the purpose of triggering the release of toxic chemicals. In this respect, the effects of prior industrial accidents involving chemicals may exert a profound influence over terrorists. In 2005, for instance, a train crash and derailment in South Carolina released some sixty tons of liquefied chlorine into



the air, killing nine people and injuring 250 others. Considerably more tragic, of course, was the 1984 disaster at a Union Carbide chemical facility in Bhopal, India. Some forty tons of methyl isocyanate were accidentally released into the environment and killed nearly four thousand people living around the plant. Methyl isocyanate is one of the more toxic chemicals used in industry, with a toxicity that is only a few percent less than that of sarin.

**T**he war on terrorism today generates little interest and even less enthusiasm. A decade of prolonged military deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan has drained both the treasuries and willpower of the United States, Great Britain and many other countries, as well as the ardor and commitment that attended the commencement of this global struggle over a dozen years ago. The killings of leading Al Qaeda

figures such as bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki—along with some forty other senior commanders and hundreds of the group's fighters—have sufficiently diminished the threat of terrorism to our war-weary, economically preoccupied nations.

But before we simply conclude that the threat from either Al Qaeda or terrorism has disappeared, it would be prudent to pause and reflect on the expansive dimensions of Al Qaeda's WMD research-and-development efforts—and also to consider the continuing developments on the opposite end of the technological spectrum that have likewise transformed the threat against conventionally superior militaries and even against superpowers. Like it or not, the war on terrorism continues, abetted by the technological advances of our adversaries and thus far mercifully countered by our own technological prowess—and all the more so by our unyielding vigilance. □



## Reviews & Essays

### Max Americana

By John B. Judis

**Stephen Sestanovich**, *Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 416 pp., \$28.95.

In *Maximalist*, Stephen Sestanovich, a former official in the Reagan and Clinton administrations and now a professor of international relations at Columbia, has written a history of American foreign policy since World War II. Many of the details are not original. Sestanovich relies for the most part on published histories and memoirs rather than on archival sources. But Sestanovich tells the story well and his interpretation of what the history means makes the book worth considering.

Following the lead of Arthur Schlesinger Sr., who divided American political history into cycles of liberalism and conservatism, Sestanovich divides the history of post-World War II foreign policy into periods of what he calls “maximalism” and periods of retrenchment. It’s an old demarcation—first voiced by Walter Lippmann and George Kennan after World War II in a debate over the extent to which the United States should attempt to counter Soviet

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Communism—but Sestanovich brings it up to date and by the book’s end tips his hand about which course he would prefer.

He doesn’t say in so many words what maximalism and retrenchment are, but his meaning can be gleaned from his examples. Maximalists want to increase the military budget; they want American power to shape the world, with or without allied backing, and are willing to risk war to get their way. Maximalists, Sestanovich writes, “assumed that international problems were highly susceptible to the vigorous use of American power.” Retrenchers, by contrast, believe that America must cut back its global reach either for budgetary reasons or because of opposition from other powers. They preach the limits of power. They think America needs to pay more attention to “nation building” at home than overseas.

Sestanovich arranges the cycles by presidential administrations in the following way:

*Maximalists*: Harry Truman (after 1946), John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson (after 1965), Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush (after September 11, 2001).

*Retrenchers*: Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama.

*Mixed*: George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

Sestanovich is critical of both maximalists and retrenchers, but he attributes the great successes of American foreign policy to maximalism. “The United States achieved a great deal precisely by being uncompromising and confrontational,” he writes. “Had Truman accepted a graceful exit from Berlin, had Kennedy found a

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way to live with missiles in Cuba, had Reagan backed away from his zero option, the Cold War would have unfolded very differently—and in all likelihood, not nearly so well.”

Sestanovich sees little virtue in retrenchment. “Retrenchment can go from being seen as a strategy for averting decline to being seen as one that accelerates and even embraces it,” he writes. Sestanovich uses a passive, evasive formulation (“being seen” by whom?), but he seems to be suggesting that the United States is always facing new challenges for which retrenchment invariably leaves it unprepared—Sputnik for Eisenhower, Soviet heavy missiles for Nixon and Henry Kissinger, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan for Carter and the Arab Spring for Obama.

Sestanovich is certainly right that maximalism is responsible for notable foreign-policy successes, but he acknowledges that it is also responsible for our greatest failures, which brought forth periods of retrenchment. Truman’s abortive attempt to unify the Korean Peninsula, which precipitated a Chinese invasion, led to Eisenhower’s retrenchment; Johnson’s escalation of the Vietnam War led to Nixon’s retrenchment; and George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq led to Obama’s retrenchment. The United States is still reeling from Bush’s decision to invade Iraq.

But Sestanovich blames these failures on what amount to correctable errors. The Truman administration screwed up in Korea because of overreach. Having

driven the North Koreans out of the South, Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, discounting the Chinese threat, became determined to unify the peninsula. Sestanovich suggests that if General Douglas MacArthur, the American commander, had pulled his forces back from the Chinese border at the first inkling of China’s intervention, the United States could have held most of North Korea against the Chinese.

Likewise, Sestanovich says that in Vietnam, Johnson should have accepted the advice in 1966 of General Victor Krulak to limit troop involvement in the South while escalating the air war in the North. And in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, he argues, the U.S. strategy became hostage to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s rejection of nation building. “This early mishandling of the occupation,” Sestanovich writes, “had a lasting impact on U.S. policy.”

But in most of these cases, Washington’s strategy was probably irredeemable. The Chinese still could have created a stalemate in Korea. During the Vietnam War, Krulak’s advice to Johnson anticipated what would become Richard Nixon’s strategy of escalation in the North and Vietnamization in the South. At best, following this advice would have let Johnson achieve the kind of agreement that Nixon later signed with the North Vietnamese. But it certainly would not have prevented the fall of South Vietnam. In Iraq, a larger occupation force and a more sophisticated occupation strategy might at best have delayed the onset of the anti-American rebellion and the civil war between Sunni and Shia



forces. The lesson I would draw is that maximalism and retrenchment succeed or fail depending upon the circumstances in which they are pursued. The real difference is in the circumstances.

If you look at the different successes and failures, Sestanovich's instances of success came from America facing down the Soviet Union, and his failures from America attempting to impose its will on nations that had been the victims of European, American and Japanese colonialism. In the latter situations, the United States ended up replicating the strategy and assumptions of an imperial power, and it encountered a resistance that was based on a century-old nationalism, even if sometimes, as in Latin America or Asia, it came under the banner of Communism. The United States failed in Vietnam as the French had earlier, and it encountered the same resistance in Iraq that the British had faced after World War I. These failures didn't have to do with specific tactics, but with an unwillingness to accept basic facts about what came to

be called the North-South conflict. Two world wars had been fought over the spoils of empire. Woodrow Wilson and Vladimir Lenin had already endorsed self-determination for the colonized, and new anti-imperial movements and leaders had emerged that brooked no compromise.

Take Sestanovich's portrayal of John Kennedy as the arch maximalist. "John Kennedy and his team were probably the most activist group ever put in charge of American foreign policy," he writes. Kennedy and his foreign-policy advisers became reluctant to act, however, because they had difficulty making decisions. "They were exceedingly indecisive managers of policy, given to protracted and inconclusive deliberation," he writes. But where Kennedy most exhibited indecision was in choosing whether, and to what degree, to intervene in Southeast Asia, and that wasn't just a product of being indecisive, but also of the special circumstances of the region.

Sestanovich depicts Kennedy as eager to intervene in Vietnam, quoting him as saying that the Roman Empire's "success was dependent on their will and ability to fight successfully at the edges of their empire." But he recounts how Kennedy was undecided about how to wage the fight. That may have been because Kennedy understood that he was getting into a situation that didn't call for activism.

In *Lessons in Disaster*, an excellent study of the Kennedy era based on the papers of McGeorge Bundy, the president's national-security adviser, Gordon M. Goldstein attributes Kennedy's reluctance to escalate American participation in the Vietnam War

to his understanding of colonialism and nationalism:

Kennedy had visited Vietnam as a congressman in 1951 when 250,000 French troops, aided by 200,000 pro-French Vietnamese, were fighting the Vietnamese Communist forces. From the French defeat, he drew the lesson that if the United States were to send troops, and not merely attempt to advise and train the South Vietnamese regime, it would turn what had been a civil war against a Communist insurgency into a struggle between the U.S. and a colonized people struggling for independence. The U.S., like France, would be bound to lose this kind of war. It wouldn't be fighting communism, but nationalism.

Goldstein also writes that Kennedy told his aides that if he were reelected in 1964, he would withdraw from Vietnam. In this respect, as in his accepting a neutral Laos, Kennedy may not have been such a maximalist after all.

The jury is still out on what Kennedy would have done, and whether he really understood the perils of a neoimperial strategy in Southeast Asia, but there is no question that Lyndon Johnson did not. Johnson and his advisers saw nationalism and anticolonialism through the prism of the Cold War struggle against Soviet Communism. Other presidents also failed to distinguish East-West from North-South conflicts. Truman and Acheson were under enormous political pressure from Republicans charging that they had "lost" China, but still they seem to have accepted the false premise of this charge—

that the loss of the former victim of European and Japanese colonialism was tantamount to a defeat in a worldwide struggle against Soviet Communism. In 1950, they dismissed a British suggestion that they distinguish Chinese from Soviet Communism. Johnson, Nixon and Reagan didn't understand anti-imperialism in Latin America or the Middle East, and George W. Bush and his neoconservative and liberal boosters certainly didn't understand Iraq. Those failures, more than any commitment to maximalism or retrenchment, doomed the foreign policy of these presidents.

Some presidents did make the appropriate distinctions in relation to some countries. Nixon and Kissinger realized—after almost fifteen years of open Sino-Soviet conflict—that China was not a dependable part of the Soviet empire, and George H. W. Bush understood that America's motives in the Gulf War had to be limited to ousting Iraq from Kuwait. These American presidents understood that if the United States didn't want to incur a nationalist backlash, it would have to make clear that its aims were limited.

One way to do this—going back to Wilson's attempt to dismantle imperialism in 1919—has been for great powers to act through international organizations when intervening in other countries. George H. W. Bush understood the need for collective action in the Gulf War. Five years before his son invaded Iraq, Bush wrote:

I firmly believed that we should not march into Baghdad. . . . To occupy Iraq would instantly

*Sestanovich is right in saying that a policy of retrenchment can lead to failure. But the history of retrenchment, like that of maximalism, is studded with successes as well as failures.*

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shatter our coalition, turning the whole Arab world against us, and make a broken tyrant into a latter-day Arab hero . . . assigning young soldiers . . . to fight in what would be an unwinnable urban guerrilla war.

Bill Clinton also understood the importance of collective action. That's why he insisted on acting through NATO in the Balkans. If the United States had acted alone, it could have sparked a war of national liberation that might still be going on. (The British military historian Michael Howard is said to have remarked during the 2003 Iraq War that it was fortunate that the United States had lost the Vietnam War, because if it hadn't, it might still be there.)

Sestanovich, on the other hand, points with favor to Acheson's skepticism about the United Nations and Reagan's dissatisfaction with his European allies. And he misunderstands George H. W. Bush's commitment to collective security. He writes that Bush "managed to mobilize a global coalition without really limiting American freedom of action." But in fact, Bush's collective commitment did limit American action—and greatly to America's benefit. When America has abandoned this strategy for some version of unilateralism, as Johnson did in Vietnam or George W. Bush did in Iraq (where Washington's only significant ally was the former imperial power in the region), the United States has provoked a nationalist backlash. Erstwhile villains have been turned into martyrs. And American forces, hopeful to be seen as "liberators," have become seen instead as imperialists.

Sestanovich is right, of course, in saying that a policy of retrenchment can lead to failure. Carter's attempts to reach accords with the Soviet Union may have convinced Moscow that it could meddle in Africa without repercussions. In his first two years, Clinton's attempt to steer clear of international conflict contributed to massacres in Bosnia and Rwanda that probably could have been avoided with a minimal show of American determination.

But the history of retrenchment, like that of maximalism, is studded with successes as well as failures. Eisenhower's winding down of the Korean War, Nixon's opening to China and his closing of the gold window, Reagan's belated decision in his second term to wind down American intervention in Central America and George H. W. Bush's decision not to invade Iraq have to be counted as successes that were based upon a recognition of the *limits* of American power.

What I would conclude from this mix of successes and failures is that the difference between maximalism and retrenchment is not the most telling way to divide the history of American foreign policy since World War II. American policy makers have debated what to do along these lines, but the debate has often been muddled. The debate between Kennan and Lippmann over how to respond to the Soviet threat—with Kennan initially prescribing aggressive "counterforce" around the globe, which Lippmann considered entirely unnecessary and dangerous—was really about Soviet intentions. Lippmann and his successors did worry about America turning into

a militarized society, but they would not have expressed these concerns if they didn't disagree with the prevailing "maximalist" view of the kind of threat that the Soviet Union, Communist China, a Communist Vietnam or Saddam Hussein's Iraq posed.

It is also hard to draw a sharp line between administrations that practiced maximalism and those that practiced retrenchment. Sestanovich concedes that George H. W. Bush's and Clinton's administrations represented a mix of the two approaches, but that is also true of many other administrations as well. Kennedy stared down the Russians during the Cuban missile crisis, but afterward signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty; he also agreed to a neutralized Laos. Nixon, the retrencher, tried to secure a graceful exit from Vietnam, but he attempted to do so initially by winning the war—a strategy that Sestanovich himself describes as "maximalist." Reagan is Sestanovich's archetypal maximalist, but his courting of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his advocacy of nuclear abolitionism can be construed as retrenchment as well as maximalism. His withdrawal of support for the contras in Nicaragua—which the conservative advocates of maximalism loudly denounced—could also certainly be



interpreted as an act of retrenchment.

What Sestanovich seems to have done is to project the difference he sees in America's approaches to the Soviet Union, typified by the difference between Carter before 1979 and Reagan, onto the entire history of foreign policy

since World War II. He also seems to have endorsed the neoconservative excuse (it's all Rumsfeld's fault) for the failure of the George W. Bush administration's invasion of Iraq, as well as the neoconservative critique of George H. W. Bush for not going to Baghdad and provoking a decade-long guerrilla war. That leads Sestanovich—without saying so in so many words—to mount a one-sided defense of "muscular" and sometimes unilateral foreign-policy initiatives and to reject policies that suggest the limits of American power. That's not helpful, particularly in guiding foreign policy now.

Sestanovich sees Barack Obama as an advocate of retrenchment. That's certainly true in some respects. Obama has had to dig America out of the hole in the Middle East that George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq created. He has had to govern on behalf of an American public skeptical about the use of American force overseas except in obvious cases of self-defense. And he has had to



face Republican opposition to government spending, including military spending. These factors certainly reinforced Obama's decision to withdraw from Iraq and to limit America's intervention in the Arab Spring, most recently in Syria's civil war.

But Obama, like his predecessors, has also been faced with having to come to terms with situations in Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan and Israel/Palestine, as well as in China/Taiwan and North Korea, where the scars from the long history of Western and Japanese colonialism are still visible. Sestanovich is critical of Obama for undermining the effort at nation building in Afghanistan by setting a deadline for withdrawal, but Obama's real mistake may have been in listening too closely to the advocates of counterinsurgency (the heirs of Maxwell Taylor in Vietnam) who wanted him to commit the United States to long-term intervention. And Obama's greatest success may come in defying the neoconservatives and America's Israel lobby by extending a hand to Iran's rulers.

Is Obama in these cases "retrenching," or is he displaying a better understanding of the conflicts that have divided the world for a century? Sestanovich wants to see American foreign policy in the light of cycles of retrenchment and maximalism; I prefer to see it as two long twilight struggles—one to wage the Cold War and the other to come to terms with the turmoil unleashed by the age of imperialism and nationalism. The United States has won the Cold War, but in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and the Far East the other struggle is far from over. □

## The Enigma of Mr. X

*By Christian Caryl*

**George F. Kennan, ed. Frank Costigliola,** *The Kennan Diaries* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 768 pp., \$39.95.

A friend recently described me in an email as "irascible." She meant it in an offhanded, affectionate sort of way—but I have to admit that her choice of adjective gave me a chill. Could it be that, unnoticed to myself, I had slipped into the ranks of the most tiresome group of people in the United States? I refer, of course, to the Grumpy Old White Guys. You know the type. They're the ones who corner you at a party to complain about the use of Spanish in official announcements on the bus, or cut you off in the supermarket parking lot to compensate for early retirement-induced rage. Their public mascot is John McCain, that walking tantrum-in-waiting—but that doesn't mean that all of them are conservative. To the contrary: you can also find plenty of crabby old liberals out there, griping about the collapse of manufacturing or the hopeless egotism of today's materialist youth. (I'm actually pretty sure that cantankerous boomers rep-

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resent a core demographic for *Rolling Stone* and the *New Yorker*.) It's gotten to the point where I automatically steer a wide berth around any portly, bearded over-sixty wearing glasses on a lanyard.

I've tended to think of this as a strictly contemporary phenomenon, along with *Duck Dynasty*, retiree Pilates and websites for Christian singles. How wrong I was. It turns out that the Grumpy Old White Guys actually have a venerable and quite august pedigree—and among them was one of the most influential American foreign-policy thinkers of the twentieth century. I speak of George F. Kennan (1904–2005), the man who provided the intellectual underpinnings of the Cold War concept of containment, who served as the first head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, and who made vital contributions to the Marshall Plan as well as the design of overall U.S. strategy toward Europe and the Far East in the wake of World War II. He met with everyone from Joseph Stalin to Mikhail Gorbachev, from Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan. George H. W. Bush awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His friend Charles Bohlen, who served as ambassador to Moscow, wrote a fine memoir called *Witness to History*. But Kennan was truly it.

Few American public-policy intellectuals have been comparably lionized during their lifetimes. But Kennan deserved it. There weren't many in Washington who could compete with his remarkable breadth of learning and experience, which included flawless knowledge of multiple languages, a deep immersion in the life of Central

and Eastern Europe, and a silky and ironic prose style, modeled partly on Edward Gibbon, that reflected his intense, private engagement with the great Russian writers. He was a *rara avis* in Washington, a deeply cultured man who had an intuitive understanding of the European civilization that disappeared in August 1914. He never ceased mourning its disappearance, dedicating his last books to analyzing the diplomatic machinations of Germany, France and Russia preceding the plunge into the abyss.

Upon his graduation from Princeton University in 1925, where he never quite fit in, Kennan entered the State Department, where he was posted to Riga, Latvia. There he learned Russian and absorbed anti-Communist precepts. He never had any illusions about the thugs that surrounded Stalin, and he served as an aide to the first American ambassador to the Soviet Union, William Bullitt, who entered his post sympathetic to Soviet aspirations only to become a virulent anti-Communist after witnessing the depredations of Stalinism. Kennan went on to serve in posts in Berlin and Prague, where he saw the Nazi dictatorship firsthand. It would be difficult to think of anyone who had a clearer understanding of totalitarianism in the past century. Kennan may have been somewhat maladroit as a diplomat—he was banished from the Soviet Union as ambassador after World War II for making the true but impolitic observation that the Soviet Union's methods reminded him of those of the Nazis—but he was a remarkably clear-eyed observer.

Indeed, it was his deftness as a writer that helped to magnify the impact of both his “Long Telegram” of February 1946, which warned about malign Soviet intentions and arrived like a thunderbolt in official Washington, and his July 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” which, appearing under the pseudonym of Mr. X, posited that “the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.” It neatly summarized the future of Cold War strategy, setting up a lifelong, agonized confrontation between Kennan himself and the policy that he had helped to birth. A national-security state, which engorged itself on massive budgets and perpetual enemies, had emerged, and Kennan viewed it as wholly inimical to true American republican traditions, a trend that was confirmed once neoconservative triumphalism about the end of the Cold War morphed into a global crusade to crush America’s real and imagined foes.

Despite his obvious intellectual integrity, Kennan retired from the State Department



at the age of forty-nine—if “retired” is really the right word to use. (He was actually frogmarched to the exit by the baleful John Foster Dulles after Kennan dared, in one of his public talks, to repudiate the idea of the rollback of Communism in Eastern Europe as “replete with possibilities for misunderstanding and bitterness.”) The author of containment soon ended up at the

Institute for Advanced Study at his alma mater of Princeton. There, he cemented his reputation by churning out a string of histories, memoirs and analyses that brought him two National Book Awards and two Pulitzer Prizes (as well as an Einstein Peace Prize, in recognition for his passionate opposition to the Vietnam War and the nuclear-age balance of terror). It quickly became clear that Kennan was the supreme realist, almost

always skeptical of America’s intentions and ability to effect beneficent change abroad. In 1957, when he delivered the Reith Lectures at Oxford, he caused an international stir by advocating that the West work toward a neutral and unified Germany. He wanted cooperation, not confrontation, with Moscow. He was denounced by Dean Acheson as espousing delusional pacifist

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views. But Kennan was the wisest of the wise men, a profound thinker who had a tragic sense of history, particularly in the atomic age, that his coevals lacked. He despised the assumption, still embarrassingly common among American politicians, that all you need to get a foreign leader to come around to Washington's position is a bit of personal quality time (just think of Clinton's sauna sessions with Boris Yeltsin or George W. Bush's notorious soul gazing with Vladimir Putin). Kennan believed that foreign policy should be based on a sober assessment of national interest, not on the caprices of personality or temporary political advantage. At a moment when much of the foreign-policy establishment was championing war with Iraq in 2002, Kennan, at the age of ninety-eight, vigorously decried the notion that it would end in anything but disaster. "Today, if we went into Iraq, like the president would like us to do, you know where you begin," he said. "You never know where you are going to end." He was right. All his life he liked to quote Gibbon's passage in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* about the "unnatural task of holding in submission distant peoples." Not until 2005, when he died at the age of 101, was his perspicuous voice stilled.

That was the public Kennan. But it turns out that there's a lot more to the story. The man who reveals himself in *The Kennan Diaries* is a compulsive grouser, relentlessly downbeat about his personal prospects as well as those of his country, tormented by his nagging attraction to women not his wife, plagued by intense loneliness,

bedeviled by a sense of his own inadequacy and grimly obsessed with the extent of his clout. He was an unapologetic reactionary. It was his neighbor J. Richardson Dilworth who put his finger on Kennan's personality: "George is ultra-conservative. He's almost a monarchist." Kennan was the ultimate realist about the country that he alternately loved and loathed. Like Henry Adams, with whom he had much in common, he never fully trusted it. He viewed democracy itself with profound misgivings, contemptuous of gusts of public opinion, embodied in the Red Scare and the rise of McCarthyism, that could buffet foreign affairs and prevent elites from calmly steering the ship of state. Like Acheson, he viewed apartheid South Africa with indulgence and the lower orders with mistrust.

To be sure, we've caught glimpses of this Kennan over the years—like this brief bit of 1952 self-analysis in the second volume of his memoirs, where he berates himself for his abortive stint as ambassador to the USSR:

I was probably too highly strung emotionally, too imaginative, too sensitive, and too impressed with the importance of my own opinions, to sit quietly on that particular seat. For this, one needed a certain phlegm, a certain contentment with the trivia of diplomatic life, a readiness to go along uncomplainingly with the conventional thinking of Washington, and a willingness to refrain from asking unnecessary questions—none of which I possessed in adequate degree.

Though Kennan's contempt for his peers comes through loud and clear, this is still

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relatively restrained. When it was a matter of public consumption he knew how to keep his demons in check. To be sure, it was widely understood around the Washington of Kennan's day that he was—how shall we put it?—a bit of an eccentric. Yet he also managed to eke out a pretty spectacular career over two decades in the State Department, one of Washington's most staid bureaucracies, and his subsequent triumphs in the academic stratosphere at Princeton suggest that he knew how to maintain his place in the establishment. Throughout his career his desperate urge to wield influence seems to have held him back from expressing his most outré views in public. The major exception, perhaps, was his 1993 book *Around The Cragged Hill: A Personal And Political Philosophy*, in which, among other things, he proposed dividing the United States into twelve more manageable minirepublics. But by then he was eighty-nine, and could afford to indulge his inner curmudgeon without much fear of the consequences.

Even so, these newly published diaries—actually a smoothly edited sliver of the twenty-two thousand pages he produced during eighty-eight years of writing—still come as something of a shock. Kennan wasn't just a Grumpy Old White Guy *avant la lettre*; he was already deep into the role just a few years after graduating from college. Here he is at age twenty-four:

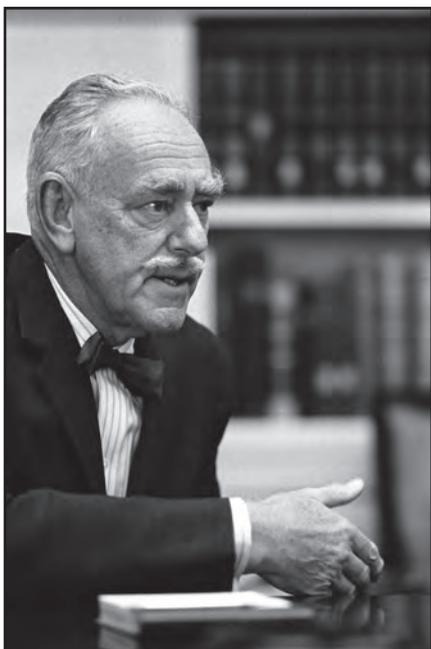
The Americanization of Europe, the flooding of the continent with the cultural as well as the economic goods of the New World: all this is something which Europe owes to its own im-

perfection. Americanism, like Bolshevism, is a disease which gains footing only in a weakened body. I have lost my sympathy for the Europeans who protest against the influx of American automobiles and American phonograph records. If the Old World has no longer sufficient vitality, economic and cultural, to oppose these new barbarian invasions, it will have to drown in the flood, as civilizations have drowned before it.

He was nothing if not consistent; his views changed little throughout the eighty-eight years that he devoted to his diaries. They are rife with ruminations about the horrors of unbridled democracy, vulgarian culture and deracination. In 1930, he wonders whether a fascist party could ever arise in the United States. Probably not, he concludes: "Somehow, I just can't conjure up an image of the American who is prepared to put the public good before their personal lives, including love and society." Or take this characteristic entry from 1977: "A lost people, we WASPS, living out our lives, like displaced people, in a cultural diaspora, unrelieved even by any consciousness of the existence, albeit far away, of a lost homeland." A 1969 visit to the National Portrait Gallery in London prompts him to express his astonishment that

the obvious erosion of the genes, brought about over this past century by the effect of modern hygiene in keeping alive the weak, should be so central a fact of our time, and yet never talked about, as though contemporary Western humanity were afraid of insulting itself.

A 1978 trip to California inspires a soliloquy about how the intermingling of the state's various regional groups inevitably leads to a "vast polyglot mass, . . . one huge pool of indistinguishable mediocrity and drabness. Exceptions may be only the Jews and the Chinese, who tend to avoid intermarriage, and, for a time, the Negroes



as well." This could mean, Kennan reflects, that these three groups would ultimately subjugate the rest of the populace to their will—"the Chinese by their combination of intelligence, ruthlessness, and ant-like industriousness; the Jews by their sheer determination to survive as a culture; the Negroes by their ineradicable bitterness

and hatred of the whites." It's tempting to dismiss this sort of lazy bigotry as a product of Kennan's times; such views were, after all, quite common among white Americans born in the early years of the century. (Kennan's biographer, the admirable John Lewis Gaddis, makes just this plea for clemency in his book.) But the thought does not entirely console.

Some of his crankiest observations deal with the shortcomings of democracy. During his time as a government official Kennan had often witnessed how the principles of good policy were undermined by the short-term thinking of elected politicians, and he had concluded from the experience that democracies were inherently incapable of devising and pursuing rational strategy. On some deeper level, the whole notion of popular rule simply rankled. In a 1984 diary entry, he sketches out his ideal vision of the United States. Plank number one: a national military "directed strictly to the defense of our own soil," including an army "based on universal national service along Swiss lines." This is followed by a set of policies for population control: "Men having spawned more than 2 children will be compulsively sterilized. Planned parenthood and voluntary sterilization will be in every way encouraged." His economic model is based on a comprehensive rejection of all forms of computerization and mechanization: "Everything possible will be done to re-primitivize and localize the economic process: encouragement of the handicrafts, restriction of elaborate processing, break-up of the national dis-

*The man who reveals himself in The Kennan Diaries is a compulsive grouser, relentlessly downbeat about his personal prospects as well as those of his country.*

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tribution chains, maximum development of local resources, & local distribution.” Public transportation is to be actively encouraged, the use of cars and airplanes restricted to cases of hardship or emergency. In agriculture he favors government support of the “small family farm” (aided by dramatic reductions in the use of artificial fertilizers as a means of restoring the soil). He then concludes:

Well, enough of this nonsense. The question at once arises: could any of this, even if desirable, be done other than by the most ferocious dictatorship? The answer is obviously: no. It could never be done by popular consent. The “people” haven’t the faintest idea what is good for them.

There can be little doubt that Kennan was quite sincere in these opinions. They’re simply too frequent, and too zealously expressed, to conclude otherwise. So is it time for us to topple him from the policy Olympus, to dismiss him as a simple lunatic? Do his ugliest or most bizarre beliefs invalidate his worth as a strategist and historian?

I think there are several reasons why the answer must be no. First, there’s the simple fact that these are diaries, not documents for public consumption. Frank Costigliola, who edited the present volume, notes that Kennan’s diary entries tended to thin out when he was in the most productive phases of his career, and especially at the end of the 1940s, when he was at the peak of his influence in Washington. Kennan sought recourse to diary writing above all when

he was at his most depressed, Costigliola writes. These diaries are the exercise ground of Kennan’s id, the one realm where he could allow himself to vent, to meditate, to express his darkest fears—all of it with the greatest candor. Kennan did make some of the diaries available to trusted historians while he was still alive, of course, and I’m sure he expected them to be presented to the general public after his death—but he certainly didn’t intend for them to be treated like his memoirs. So even if the diaries can help us to illuminate the wellsprings of Kennan’s thinking, we still need to be careful to balance their content with the polished products of the man’s mind and to situate his ideas in the broader context of an impossibly complicated and eventful life. Indeed, there’s a distinctly unfinished quality to the diaries since they often glide over the most important moments in Kennan’s life and career while dwelling at great length over marginal events and momentary impressions—a pattern entirely in keeping with the notion of the journals as an intellectual sketchbook.

Yet illuminate the wellsprings they do—and Costigliola is quite right to see depression as one of the keys. The editor isn’t kidding when he suggests that Kennan kept his diary as a way of responding to onslaughts of melancholy. Pretty much anything can set the man off: a bad dream, sound films, a perceived slight, a passing glimpse of an attractive woman. Political events are a frequent trigger. Here’s Kennan in 1956 after Dwight D. Eisenhower announced his intention to seek a second

term as president: “There can be, for me, only one refuge: learn, at long last, the art of silence, of the commonplace, of humor, anything but serious discussion.” Needless to say, Kennan followed this remark with another forty-nine years of speaking engagements, book writing and polemicizing. He frets when he isn’t working enough, and whines when he’s too busy. In 1968, he muses:

The extreme unhappiness with which I confront the prospect of returning home arises not just from the hopeless profusion of my obligations and involvements there, but also from awareness of my own personal failings & the lack of success I have had in overcoming them. My congenital immaturity of bearing and conduct, my garrulousness, the difficulty I find rejecting hard liquor when it is offered to me as a part of hospitality, the uncontrollable wandering eye—all these things are unworthy of the rest of me, & they limit what I could make out of myself and what I could contribute in these final years of active life.

Despising his own era, he wishes that he’d been born in a different century. He ponders the sad mystery of his mother, whom he never knew because she died shortly after his birth. He endures nervous breakdowns, ulcers and shingles. (The index of the book offers seven references to “Kennan, George Frost, intestinal problems of.”) Whenever Kennan was confronted with a serious problem, as Gaddis notes in his biography, he would suffer some sort of breakdown that would allow him to enter a hospital and be cosseted by sympathetic

nurses who perhaps served as the surrogate mother he never met. (This isn’t just psychoanalytical license on Gaddis’s part—Kennan himself often considered the possibility that his longings for the opposite sex had a great deal to do with the big hole in his life where his mother should have been.) He struggles with financial straits and the myriad complications of a fantastically peripatetic life (despite his contempt for modern transportation, particularly the automobile). Flashes of titanic arrogance alternate with spurts of virulent self-loathing. As Kennan himself recognized in that remark about his lack of “phlegm,” his was not a personality entirely suited to the harsh give-and-take of high-level politics. Isaiah Berlin, the British philosopher who did a stint as a diplomat at his country’s Moscow embassy in the 1940s, once said of his friend Kennan: “He doesn’t bend. He breaks.”

Yet these character traits can’t be seen in isolation from the rest of the package. Kennan’s great virtue as an analyst was his ability to see things from the outside. No one was better at tracing out the logical implications of a particular policy in all their elaborate permutations (even if, in so doing, he often ended up overlooking the grubbier but no less important aspects of everyday politics). And this was not despite but because of his own proudly cultivated sense of alienation, his persistent suspicion that he’d been born into the wrong era, or that, above all, he was really a Russian at heart. In a famous interview with George Urban in *Encounter*, for example, Kennan



praised the Soviet Union for its ability to control pornography and expatiated upon his horror at seeing a recent Danish youth festival that was “swarming with hippies—motorbikes, girlfriends, drugs, pornography, drunkenness, noise—it was all there. I looked at this mob and thought how one company of robust Russian infantry would drive it out of town.” (An early draft of this sentiment can be found here in the diaries.)

The notion of “depressive realism,” which argues that sadder people are often better at judging situations for what they really are, has become quite popular these days. (Just think of books like Nassir Ghaemi’s *A First-Rate Madness: Uncovering the Links Between Leadership and Mental Illness* and Joshua Wolf Shenk’s *Lincoln’s Melancholy*.) But Kennan was already writing about it (referring to himself in the third person) in his diary in 1942, describing

the conviction that when in a depression he was nearer to reality, to a certain tragic and

melancholy reality, than at other times. It was, in other words, not the depression which was abnormal, but the irrational hopefulness, which prevailed at other times.

I think he’s on to something here (even if I’m a bit reluctant to fetishize the insight). For whatever reasons, Kennan certainly had a remarkable ability to step outside of himself and envision alternate realities. I was particularly moved by a moment in the diaries in 1949 when he contemplates the ruins of Hamburg, a city he had lived in before the war and which was obliterated by several days of Allied firebomb air raids. Kennan, who had a complete command of German, is anguished by the destruction of the noble Hanseatic city. He suddenly feels “an unshakeable conviction that no momentary military advantage . . . could have justified this stupendous, careless destruction of civilian life and of material values, built up laboriously by human hands, over the course of centuries.” And then this:

And it suddenly appeared to me that in these ruins there was an unanswerable symbolism which we in the West could not afford to ignore. If the Western world was really going to make valid the pretense of a higher moral departure point—of greater sympathy and understanding for the human being as God made him, as expressed not only in himself, but in the things he has wrought and has cared about—then it had to learn to fight its wars morally as well as militarily, or not fight them at all; for moral principles were a part of its strength.



This critique of the military and moral rationale of the Allied bombing campaign during the war has, over the past decade or so, come into its own—not least, I’m sure, thanks to the comfortable historical distance that has opened up between us and those who actually planned and implemented the destruction. Yet one wonders how many U.S. government officials during the 1940s would have been able to behold the fruits of the policy with the sort of critical distance that Kennan demonstrates. His black, razor-sharp diagnosis of Stalinism—at a time when pro-Soviet wartime propaganda in the United States presented a diametrically opposed picture of the regime—is of a piece with this innate skepticism and independence of thought. He viewed the mendacious pro-Soviet ambassador to Moscow, Joseph Davies, who hailed the show trials and Stalin, with undisguised contempt and revulsion. As his diaries demonstrate, not everything that he concluded was fruitful or wise or perspicacious—and I have to confess that some of the things I learned about the man from this book did diminish his image in my eyes. But I would still insist that it was precisely Kennan’s ability to ask big questions, and his gift for transforming his insights into powerful prose, that made him so unique. Has today’s Washington become more or less inviting to talents of his stature? I’m not entirely sure, though the Kennan chair has yet to be filled and may well remain empty. What I do know is that we condemn him, and those like him, at our own risk. A dose of grumpiness in the right place can work wonders. □

## Revisiting Zionism

By *Bernard Wasserstein*

**John B. Judis**, *Genesis: Truman, American Jews, and the Origins of the Arab/Israeli Conflict* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 448 pp., \$30.00.

**T**he security outside my neighborhood temple in Hyde Park, Chicago, like that around many Jewish institutions throughout the world these days, is conspicuous, though not as rigorous as at comparable buildings in Germany, France or Sweden. But in this case there is a special reason: Temple KAM Isaiah Israel stands just across the road from the residence of the Obama family. The house is rarely occupied now, but when the Obamas lived there full-time they used to “pal around” (to use Sarah Palin’s felicitous expression) with the congregation’s notoriously radical rabbi, the late Arnold Wolf.

In *Genesis*, John B. Judis credits Wolf with providing the future president with “his view of Israel.” The rabbi, he says, described himself as a “religious radical” and a “liberal activist.” As Judis writes, he “supported Israel’s existence, but he wanted the Israelis to pursue policies that fully recognized the rights of the Palestinians.” Wolf’s view of Israel represented “a return

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to the universalism of nineteenth-century Reform Judaism.” In a confessional passage at the outset of his book, Judis, a senior editor at the *New Republic* and the author of several well-regarded books on domestic and foreign policy, declares his own attraction to Wolf’s teaching “that the role of Jews was not to favor Jews at the expense of other people but to bring the light of ethical prophecy to bear upon the welfare of all peoples.”

Reform Judaism, as Judis notes, was historically opposed to Zionism. Yet several of the early leaders of American Zionism, notably Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver, were Reform Jewish clerics. Judis traces the awkward relationship between the universalist values of Reform Judaism and the nationalist cause that these men espoused. He sees a profound contradiction between their liberal political outlooks and their general failure to recognize the political rights of the Palestinian Arabs. He admits of only rare exceptions such as Judah L. Magnes, an American Reform rabbi who became the first head of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In some ways this is an old-fashioned book that might have been written by a member of the American Council for Judaism, an association of Reform Jews, formed in 1942, that propagandized vigorously against Zionism in the early years of the Jewish state (it still exists, albeit in diminished form). The “main lesson” of the book, Judis writes, is that “the Zionists who came to Palestine to establish a state trampled on the rights of the Arabs who already lived there.”

Of course, one does not need Reform Judaism, historical or current, as one’s guide in order to arrive at this conclusion. Others have reached the same destination by different routes. Perhaps the most effective presentation of this point of view was written a generation ago from a Marxist standpoint by the great French Jewish orientalist Maxime Rodinson in his *Israel: Fait Colonial?* (published in English as *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?*). Even those who disagreed with its basic contention (among them the pro-Israeli Jean-Paul Sartre, who commissioned the essay in May 1967 for a special issue of his journal *Les Temps Modernes*) had to recognize the power of Rodinson’s argument, which derived from a scrupulous welding of theoretical framework and historical data and from an aversion to unexamined moralizing. The same cannot be said for Judis’s enterprise.

**T**his book is divided into three parts. The first and weakest presents a history of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine up to 1939. “The moral contours of that early history,” he writes, “are remarkably clear. From the 1890s . . . until the early 1930s, the responsibility for the conflict lay primarily with the Zionists.” Judis here develops the proposition that British imperialism and the Zionists, using the vehicle of the mandate for Palestine granted by the League of Nations, “conspired to screw the Arabs out of a country that by the prevailing standards of self-determination would have been theirs.” (The crude wording is not indicative of what is the generally elegant prose style of this book.)

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incompatible with either nationalism or imperialism.*

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The League of Nations was itself the supreme contemporary arbiter, in international law and in general public legitimacy, of international standards of conduct. Judis is fully entitled to disagree, albeit retrospectively, with those standards. But he cannot simultaneously invoke and condemn them. Yet that is, in essence, what he does in this section of his book.

Judis's historical knowledge is sometimes shaky: the Jews of Palestine, he maintains, "suffered religious persecution" under Ottoman Turkish rule. He cites no examples; indeed, it would be hard for him to do so since this persecution is a figment of his imagination. Until the mid-nineteenth century, it is true, Jews in the empire labored under a number of irksome restrictions. But they also enjoyed some privileges, including freedom from conscription for military service and protection by the *millet* system, which accorded them communal autonomy in several important spheres of life. In the mid-nineteenth century, Jews, like Christians, were accorded full legal equality with Muslims. Admittedly, this did not bring immediate social equality. But to describe their condition in late Ottoman Palestine as one of "religious persecution" is quite misleading.

A number of other errors pepper Judis's text. Earl Curzon would have been surprised to learn that he was the House of Lords representative in the war cabinet. One might as well say that President Clinton was the saxophonists' representative in the White House. Vladimir Jabotinsky's political movement was not the National

but the New Zionist Organization. There are other bloopers: Saudi Arabia makes a premature appearance in 1915; Jordan, formed in 1946, steps on to the stage in 1919; and Guyana, born in 1966, pops up in 1937. But these are all trivial mistakes.

Of more substantial importance is Judis's claim that the British attempted "to stoke sectarian division" in Palestine. Such an allegation is often made against the British in relation to Jews and Arabs. It is erroneous. But we need not pursue that here further because what Judis has in mind are relations between Muslims and Christians, which he believes the British deliberately sought to impair in pursuit of a divide-and-rule policy. The sole proof that he offers for this contention is the fact that the British sponsored the creation in 1921 of a "Supreme Moslem Council." But there is no credible evidence in the archives of the British or Palestine governments, neither of which Judis has consulted, nor anywhere else, that would substantiate such a characterization of the motives of the British in establishing this body. In reality, as all concerned recognized, some such body was urgently required at the start of the mandate for straightforward practical and legal reasons in order to administer Muslim religious endowments and institutions in the wake of the demise of the Ottoman state.

Such errors undermine the reader's confidence in Judis's historical understanding and judgment, but they do not fundamentally shake his argument. The real problem is that Judis's thesis is based on

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unexamined principles. He lays great stress on the doctrine of national self-determination, which, he reminds us, was given memorable expression in President Wilson's Fourteen Points address of January 1918—though, by the way, the precise term does not appear there. Judis asserts that early American Zionists, who were mainly liberals, had a blind spot when it came to the political rights of Palestinian Arabs. He points out that men like Justice Louis Brandeis, champions of the rights of laboring men and black people at home, tended to dismiss Arab rights in Palestine as of no great account. As a matter of historical

peacemakers at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 also thought that this concept was a supreme guiding light. But what they failed, for the most part, to reckon with was the hotchpotch intermingling of ethnic groups in many of the areas in which they were engaged in drawing borders. Just two decades later such certitude dissolved in the crises over the Sudetenland, the Polish Corridor and Danzig. The murder of six million Jews during the Second World War and the expulsion thereafter of twelve million Germans from areas of Eastern Europe where their ancestors had, for the most part, lived for many generations,



description, he is quite right. But what he draws from this is more questionable.

In the first place, his argument rests on the assumption that the doctrine of self-determination offered a mechanical solution to all nationality problems. Here he is in good company, since many of the

put paid to the idea that national self-determination, tempered by international protection of minorities, was any kind of panacea. If any confirmation of that lesson were required, it was furnished by the events that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

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The trouble with self-determination on a territorial basis was that the outcome inevitably depended on the precise area to which it was to be applied. Irish nationalists demanded freedom from British rule over all of Ireland—ignoring the political rights of the Unionist majority in the northern part of the island. One could point to similar problems in almost every region of the world, particularly in territories formerly under imperial control, among them Palestine, that achieved independence after the Second World War.

Ethnic intermingling was not the only problem. There was the related difficulty of defining the national group that was to be granted self-determination. Take Scotland. If Scots have such a right, the question immediately arises: Who is a Scot? In the referendum on independence to be held in Scotland in September of this year, all residents of that country over the age of sixteen will be able to exercise a vote. But many—perhaps a majority—of those voters are settlers from England, Ireland and Bangladesh, or descendants of such settlers over the past couple of centuries. Is it reasonable that they should have a say in this matter while most Scots living abroad have no say at all?

What that example shows is that there is a further difficulty contained within the concept of self-determination, that of indigeneity. According to the principle of national self-determination, as generally understood by its advocates, a significant criterion for the exercise of national political rights is place of birth. That is why Judis believes that a great political

wrong was done to the Palestinians when they were denied by Zionism the ability to determine their own destiny in their own land.

But are such rights heritable? Certainly, most Palestinian Arab nationalists and their supporters think so. Third- and fourth-generation inhabitants of Lebanon, Jordan and Syria still think of themselves not only as Palestinians but also as refugees with an inherent right of return.

How long do such rights inhere? The great majority of so-called Palestinian refugees were not, after all, themselves driven out of their homes in 1948. If Palestinians' rights as refugees are heritable through the generations, is there some end point, or does that right endure, as Palestinian nationalists claim? Judis, while remaining silent on the issue of a right of return for the Palestinians, expresses eloquent sympathy for their plight:

Israel's Jews had gained a world of their own but at the expense of another people. History, of course, often works that way. And if the people who are vanquished disappear, or are relatively weak and few in number, the victors can eventually lay aside the memory of what they have done. Few Georgians today remember or regret having driven the peaceful Cherokee Indians off their lands.

Perhaps the Cherokees and the Palestinian refugees deserve to have inherited rights recognized (let us leave aside, for the moment, which rights and in what form). But if so, does that not pull the rug out from under one of the chief

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complaints that is made against Zionism by its critics, including Judis—namely, that the Jewish claim to Palestine is based on an illegitimate appeal to inherited ancestral rights of residence and ownership? Does not Judis—as much as those he attacks—want to have it both ways?

Judis thinks he has discovered the mote in the eye of the early American Zionists. He observes that while they were for the most part liberals in American politics, they were at the same time adherents of an ethnonationalist creed when it came to their ancestral homeland. He thinks the two positions are inconsistent.

They may be inconsistent, but they are not necessarily irreconcilable. What of the Italian Americans who were part of the Roosevelt coalition yet shamelessly acclaimed Mussolini? One of the main thoroughfares in Chicago is, to this day, named after Italo Balbo, the fascist aviator, brutal *squadrista* and colonial governor of Libya. (Conveniently for the purposes of political road naming, he fell out with Il Duce and died in an air crash before the outbreak of the Second World War.) I doubt any appeal for renaming to Mayor Rahm Emanuel would meet with success. And what of those Irish Americans, a similarly solid Democratic voting bloc for many decades, who funded and propagandized on behalf of the terrorists of the IRA, hardly liberals by any stretch of definition?

Contrary to Judis's view, liberalism, viewed historically, was not at all incompatible with either nationalism or

imperialism. Herbert Samuel, the first British high commissioner in Palestine under the mandate, was one of liberalism's foremost theorists at the turn of the last century and yet a stout imperialist. Judis examines his record in Palestine, partly on the basis of a reading of my biography of Samuel. He asserts (here in no way reliant on my book) that Samuel "didn't subscribe to the view of empire as an instrument of subduing and civilizing barbarous peoples." Actually, Samuel came close to believing exactly that. So much is evident from his earliest involvement in imperial issues, when he supported Roger Casement in his denunciation of King Leopold's murderous policies in the Congo in 1904. As home secretary twelve years later, he gave further expression to that view when he granted final approval for the hanging of Casement, who had evolved into an activist on behalf of his version of national self-determination in Ireland.

The second and shortest part of Judis's book explores the early history of American Zionism, particularly in its relationship to Reform Judaism. In some effective and psychologically perceptive passages, Judis portrays the conflict of personalities and policies between Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver for control over the American Zionist movement.

But then we quickly move on to part three, which focuses on the years 1945 to 1948, with a special emphasis on the influence of the Zionist lobby over the policies of the Truman administration. In this period, Judis contends, after a brief era of ethical uplift during the Second World

War, the Zionists again descended into moral turpitude.

President Harry Truman, he shows, flip-flopped repeatedly in his attitude toward the Palestine question, as he gave way first to this, then that pressure group. There is some merit in this interpretation, but not much that will be new to readers familiar with the existing scholarly literature; for example, the works on the subject by Zvi Ganin and Michael J. Cohen.

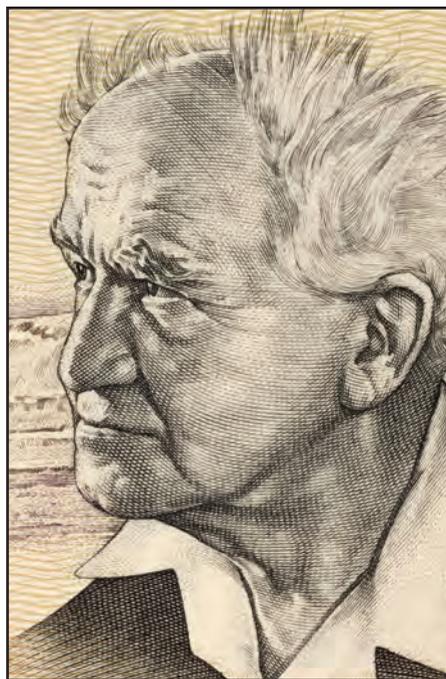
Judis applauds the efforts of American Jews such as Magnes who opposed the movement toward U.S. support for the creation of a Jewish state. He suggests that *if*, in 1946, the Truman administration had exhibited more resistance to Zionist pressure, and *if* the United States had supported the peacemaking efforts in Palestine of the British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin and *if* the Zionist leadership had been ready to postpone any demand for independence, then “the Arab states might have been able to persuade their Palestinian colleagues to go along.” This chain of conditional clauses points, of course, to the improbability of such an outcome, which Judis himself is constrained to admit “may sound implausible.” Yet he is not discouraged. A little later he opines, writing now of the background to the 1947 partition vote at the United Nations, that “the Arab leaders might even have eventually accepted a small Jewish state.” There are many might-have-beens in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but these two are among the more fanciful.

Undeniably there are some parallels between the irresolution of the Truman

administration and that of the Obama administration in their policies toward the Middle East. The tergiversation last year over intervention in the Syrian civil war is a case in point. But Judis goes further, postulating not merely analogy but genealogy.

Indeed, the central argument of his book is that there is lineal descent: Judis traces the origin of the “pattern of surrender to Israel and its supporters” back to the Truman years. Truman’s failure to impose a just settlement in Palestine, he writes, “established a pattern that plagued his successors.” This is extrapolation masquerading as explanation.

The underlying argument does not carry conviction. After all, Israel received scant



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support from the United States during the Eisenhower administration, when its main great-power protector and arms supplier was not the United States but France. Dwight Eisenhower himself was distinctly hostile to the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in the autumn of 1956, and it was American pressure that compelled the Israeli prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, to pull Israeli troops out of every inch of Sinai as well as the Gaza Strip by early 1957. The Kennedy administration began selling limited quantities of advanced weaponry to Israel, but it was only after the 1967 Six-Day War that the United States became Israel's main diplomatic patron and armament provider.

**T**he pro-Israel lobby, of which Judis is highly critical, is unquestionably powerful, but it is not and has never been omnipotent. Judis exaggerates, for example, when he writes that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was “instrumental” in the defeat in 1984 of Illinois senator Charles Percy by his Democratic challenger Paul Simon; AIPAC's hostility was merely one element in Senator Percy's downfall.

Moreover, AIPAC cannot always prevent an American administration from applying unwelcome pressure on Israel. In March 1975, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger announced the failure of his mission to secure a second agreement between Israel and Egypt regarding the Sinai Peninsula. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was refusing to budge from his position that an Israeli military presence must remain at the strategically vital Mitla and Gidi Passes

in central Sinai. President Gerald Ford, “mad as hell” at what he regarded as Israeli “stalling,” announced a “reassessment” of American policy toward the Jewish state. Over the next six months the Americans refused to sign any new arms deals with Israel. The Israel lobby organized frantic activity on Capitol Hill. Seventy-six senators were strong-armed into signing a letter of protest to the president. The episode is often cited as an example of the power of the pro-Israel lobby. What is not so well remembered is that the U.S. pressure on Israel in fact worked. In September 1975, further exhaustive mediation by Kissinger produced an Israeli-Egyptian agreement on Sinai and the Suez Canal. Rabin ate his words and reluctantly agreed to withdraw Israeli troops from Mitla and Gidi in return for face-saving U.S. commitments. This was no passing episode. The agreement paved the way for the secret talks that led ultimately to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty of 1979.

Judis tries conscientiously to analyze the different segments of opinion among American Jews but in the end he succumbs to the tendency to lump most of them in the category of donkey-like followers of guidance from Jerusalem central.

Yet, as a recent Pew Research Center survey has shown, American Jewry is differentiating, diversifying and, in important ways, disintegrating further and faster than ever before. Institutions like Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization—once the largest Jewish membership society in the country—are shadows of their former selves. The once-

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powerful Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations no longer carries much clout. And the Jewish federations in major cities are declining in significance.

When contemplating the declining figures for synagogue membership, I am reminded of the old joke about the editor of a Yiddish newspaper in New York who, looking out of the window and noticing a funeral procession file past, calls out to the manager of his printing press, "One copy fewer today!"

Jewish institutionalism has given way to Jewish individualism. This is true particularly among young adults who are ever less inclined to allow themselves to be mobilized for causes over which they have no control and in which they show decreasing interest.

Judis accords American Jewish influence a heavy share of responsibility for Israel's continued retention of occupied Arab territories. Yet according to the Pew survey, only 30 percent of American Jews describe themselves as "very attached" to Israel. And only 17 percent believe that continued building of settlements has a positive effect on Israel's security, while 44 percent declared that it hurts that security.

Many American Jews do, of course, support Israeli hawkishness, and some make noisy, self-advertising contributions to bolstering the occupation. Sheldon Adelson, a Las Vegas casino operator, has given millions to far-right causes in Israel and is the owner of the ultranationalist *Yisrael Hayom*, perhaps the country's most widely circulated newspaper. (It is given

away for free.) He recently called for the United States to launch a nuclear weapon into the middle of the Iranian desert. Irving Moskowitz, a Miami real-estate developer, has been an important financial backer of Jewish settlements in inflammatory locations, such as Arab-inhabited quarters of Jerusalem. (He also helped bankroll the "birther" movement against President Obama.) The head of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman, has been so ardent an apologist for Israeli policies that a writer in the liberal Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* satirically recommended last year that he be appointed U.S. secretary of state. (He is unlikely to accept any such offer: he would have to take a significant cut in his salary, which in 2012 was \$688,280.)

But such figures are not generally representative of those for whom they claim to speak. There are plenty of American Jews who have played a positive role in the search for Arab-Israeli peace. Even those who like to malign Kissinger can hardly deny the supple cunning of his diplomacy in the first steps toward Israeli-Egyptian rapprochement after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In recent years American diplomats who happen to be Jewish (and perhaps it is not just happenstance) such as Dennis Ross, Aaron David Miller, Martin Indyk and Daniel Kurtzer (a former dean of Yeshiva College in New York) have tried to nudge Israel toward more realistic policies.

In fact, on every significant occasion in its history when Israeli policy makers have moved decisively toward more dovish positions, the preponderant weight of American Jewish opinion has shown

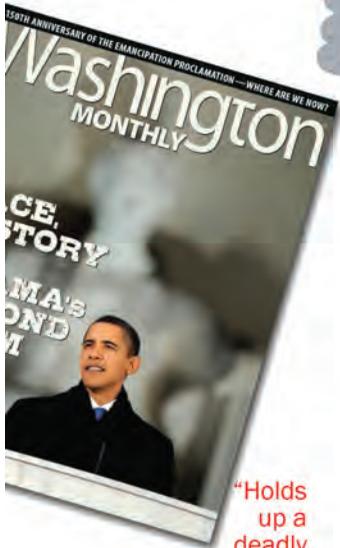
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support, as, for example, when Israel and the Palestinians signed the Oslo accords on the White House lawn in September 1993.

Judis writes fluently and forthrightly, but other authors have made a more persuasive case of a similar sort. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt stole a march on him with their (flawed) 2007 onslaught against the American Jewish lobby, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. In *The Crisis of Zionism*, Peter Beinart preceded Judis's call for a more critical view of Israeli policy on the part of American Jews. Most recently, last year Ari Shavit, in *My Promised Land*, produced an influential, revisionist critique of Israel's conventional history and of what he calls "the abnormality of occupation."

Does all this mean, then, that the basic thrust of Judis's conclusions is wrong? Not at all. Israel must, in pursuit of her own interests as a democracy, withdraw from the stance of colonial occupier that she has misguidedly adopted since 1967. The United States has no interest in supporting those in Israel who wish to perpetuate the occupation. American Jews, insofar as they give their voices, their money or their political influence to help sustain the occupation, do neither themselves nor Israel any favors. But we did not need dubious historical linkage between the Obama and Truman administrations nor shallow invocations of liberalism, universalism and national self-determination to arrive at these conclusions. Judis is right but for the wrong reasons. □

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